

FOR THE THIRD TIME.

"It is, and I may safely promise you a cordial welcome on the part of my fair mistress."

"Hospitality is a paramount virtue among you here," said the organist. "I have seen Miss Earle at church."

"And a very pretty girl she is," said John Sterling, "and as good as she is pretty. She is devotedly fond of music, too, so you have it in your power to make her very happy this evening."

No more was said. They reached the house, divested themselves of their hats and great-coats, and stamped the snow from their top-boots, and were ushered by a fair damsel into a pretty amber drawing-room.

Mrs. Sterling sat before the fire knitting. Miss Earle on a lounge yawning over a book. Even sensation novels, when one has had a sufficient of them, will pall upon the youthful intellect. Both started up eagerly to welcome Dr. Joab.

"How do, mother? How do, Amy? Horrid weather, isn't it? Allow me to present Mr. Victor Latour, the new organist of St. Jude's. I found him like one of the babes in the wood, nearly buried alive, and rescued him from an antineuritic end, like the good Samaritan that I am."

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Latour did not enter the house with Amy. He parted with her under the waving trees, with a long lingering lover's kiss. Dr. Sterling and Miss Earle went to the silver moonlight. He touched his hat and passed rapidly on, but not before John had seen his face. How deathly pale was what a wild gleam there was in his wild black eyes! The light of those spectral eyes made the young doctor recoil.

"Good heaven!" he thought, "he looks now like the Miltonian Lucifer with that livid face, flaming eyes, and with that dark, demonic beauty. Who is that? What is he? He is not a good man; we know no more of him than if he had dropped from the moon, although he has been among us over half a year. And that romantic child is ready to die, or go mad for his sake. My friend, Latour, I think I'll turn amateur detective, and hunt up your ante-deuts."

Dr. John met with rather a cool reception on this particular evening at the hospitable mansion. Mrs. Sterling was decidedly cross and out of sorts; perhaps she suspected or had seen the parting embrace under the hemlocks. She had no patience with her son's tardiness about marrying Miss Earle, and Miss Earle wrapped in a bliss too intense for smiles or words sat by the window and gazed on the bright silvery moonlight.

Dr. Sterling departed early with a farewell reproach to the ladies. "You are both so entertaining this evening that it is hard to tear one's self away; but I have an interesting case up in the village and business before me. The slow, sleepy black eyes wandered very often to the pretty rosy-hued face, thrilling her through with mesmeric power. It was the hero of her dreams at last—Count Lara in the flesh. Mr. Latour played the superb piano, under those slender fingers, gave forth grand, grateful tones—the room was flooded with heavenly melody. Mr. Latour had the soul of a Beethoven or Mozart, and the magnificent strains held his hearers entranced for hours. It was a charming evening, one to be remembered long after; and before it was over Miss Amy Earle was deeply, and romantically, and hopelessly in love.

She sat up late that night, quite into the small hours, nestling over the fire, listening to the wild beating of the wintry storm, and dreaming delicious dreams.

"How divinely handsome he is! How magnificently he plays! How delightfully he talks!" So ran the burden of her thoughts. "I never saw such a name. How glad I heard a prettier brought him here to-night."

That was the beginning of the end. Mr. Latour departed the next day, but only to come again and again to Blackwood Grange. Miss Earle was seized with a sudden passion for improving herself in music, and began taking lessons immediately. March, April, May flew by like swift dreams. Summer came, golden, glowing—the most glorious summer in Amy's life. She was in love—passionately, ridiculously; a romantic girl's first love—and the world was Eden, and she the happiest. Eve that ever danced in the sunshine.

And Victor Latour—as he is called in the bright little treatise Mr. Latour was a puzzle and a mystery. There were times when no lover could be more lover-like, more devoted, when smiles lit up the dark creamy face and every look was love. Then Amy's bliss was completed.

"How loves me, I know," her foolish heart would flutter. "He will propose the very next time we meet. Oh, my darling, if you only knew how much I love you!"

The next time would come, and lo! Mr. Latour came with it, dark, cold, moody, wrapped in gloom and mystery—grim and unsmiling as doom. Amy trembled before those sombre black eyes. He was more like the Corsair, perhaps, than ever. But poor Amy began to think that no-day and mysterious beings were pleasanter in Lord Byron's poem than in actual life.

"I wonder if he ever committed a murder, like Eugene Aram; or lost an idolize Medora, as Conrad did?" Miss Earle thought. "Oh! Why doesn't he speak out, when he knows—he must know—I adore him!"

This sultry August evening she stood wistfully gazing at the sunset, and thinking desolately of her ideal.

"He was positively rude to me last evening," Miss Earle reflected. "Mr. Cochrane was never more grumpy to me. I wonder if I shall see him to-night? He is always laying the organ in the church at this hour. I think I'll take a walk up to the village."

She took her hat and tripped a way walking swiftly, considering the fact that the dusty high road alone, under the wax-tinted sky. No, not alone! Her heart gave a great lunge there, coming toward her, was the solemn figure walk—ah! farther off she would have known her handsome lover!

Mr. Latour was in his brightest mood this sultry twilight. He drew Amy's arm through his own, as one who had the right, bending his steady head over her, and mesmerizing her with

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you have it; let Mrs. Sterling and her son make the most of it."

Amy was satisfied—it was a little vague, but it sufficed for her. Their ramble through the grounds was a very long one, and before it came to an end the wedding day was fixed.

"The middle of September is very soon," Amy murmured, deprecatingly.

"I can read your thoughts without a penny," retorted the elder lady, with some asperity. "Victor Latour, of course! Where were you this evening, Miss Earle?"

Miss Earle blushed celestially in the shimmering dusk.

"Up at the village."

"It appears to me you are very fond of twilight rambles up to the village of late. Mr. Latour was with you, of course?"

"Yes," very falteringly. "Mr. Latour was with me."

"And parried with you out yonder with a most affectionate embrace! You don't choose to make me your confidante, Miss Earle; but if you want to kiss gentlemen, pray take a walk on a more retired spot than the avenue."

Amy's golden head had dropped lower. She was a timid, clinging little creature, in whose nature it was not to be haughty or angry. She was very fond of this severe matron; and the starry blue eyes filled with tears now.

"Dear Mrs. Sterling," she said, "my second mother, don't be angry with poor Amy. I couldn't help it. I love him, I love him—so dearly!"

"And he?" said Mrs. Sterling bitterly. "Is it you or your fortune he loves? Oh, my dear! You foolish, sentimental child, what madness is this! This man does not love you—I know it; he has watched him. He does not love you; but he will marry you and will break your heart."

"No, no, no!" Amy cried, shrilly. "He loves me—he is true as Heaven! Say what you please to me Mrs. Sterling, but not one word against him! I will not hear it."

The little head reared itself, the blue eyes quite flashed.

"No!" cried the angry matron. "you will not hear it; no need to tell me that! I know what it is to talk to a girl in love. But tell me, what do you know of this man beyond his romantic name, beyond his effeminate handsomeness? What! you will marry him for his black eyes and his Grecian nose, and his sensation novel name; and he turns out to be a London pickpocket, or gambler, or you will have no right to complain."

"Mrs. Sterling!"

"I repeat it, Amy—what do you know of him? He may be a thief, or a murderer, for what you can tell to the contrary. My own opinion is, he has come here purposely to entrap you into this mad marriage. Pray, Miss Earle, when is it to take place?"

The blue eyes flashed defiance for the first time in Amy's gentle life, the slender little form quite towered in its indignation.

"I don't know, Mrs. Sterling; but very soon. Victor loves me, and there is no need to wait. I will marry him as soon as he pleases."

"Not a doubt of it! I wish you joy of your bargain! I have no more to say; but remember in the future that I have warned you. He is not a good man; there is guilt and mystery in his life; I am as certain of it as that I live. As his wife, your existence will be one of misery—desolation, perhaps, when he has squandered what he has hoarded for your fortune. I wish you good-night."

Mrs. Sterling stood stormily out of the room yet, more in sorrow than in anger. And Amy left alone, threw herself on a sofa, and all untried to these stormy scenes, wept as she had never wept before in her life.

"How cruel, how unjust she is!" the little heiress sobbed; "and all because she wants me to marry John. I know she does; though John doesn't want

me, nor I him. But she shall not shake my faith in Victor; no one on earth shall shake it. And I will marry him as soon as he likes; and I don't care whether he ever tells me anything about his own antecedents or not."

The elder and younger lady met very coolly at breakfast. Mrs. Sterling was sullenly gruffed, and Amy was angry. Had she not called her ideal a thief and a pickpocket? Miss Earle could forgive the grossest insults to her self, but not an insult to her dark-eyed hero.

Mr. Latour called early in the forenoon: Amy was on the watch, and met him in the grounds. There was a long long ramble through the sunlit, leafy arcades, and Miss Earle, after the fashion of young ladies, retained every word of the night's conversation. Mr. Latour's black brows contracted in a wrathful frown, and his dark face whitened with anger.

"Mrs. Sterling calls me a thief or a rascal, does she? Really, Amy, your elderly dragon is of a horribly suspicious turn, isn't she? Is it for your sake or for her son's, I wonder?"

"Mrs. Sterling has always been very good to me, Victor Latour," Amy said, deprecatingly; "and I am sure she has my welfare at heart. And you, too, dear, we don't know anything of you, except your name—and I love you with all my heart."

The frown deepened under the broad rim of his summer hat.

"And you are a little suspicious, too," Amy said. "You must know my history before you commit yourself further. And if the history proves unsatisfactory, it is not too late to draw back yet, is it?"

"Victor, I must know you are! No, tell me nothing, since you can doubt me; tell me nothing, and you will see how perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you will marry me blindefolded? Take me as I am?"

"He looked laughing down in her face with a bright look, all the clouds with a bright look, all the clouds gone."

"My darling!" She clasped his arm rapturously with both hands, and looked up into his handsome face, "I could die for your sake. What more do I need to know?"

"What, indeed, my little enthusiast? Nevertheless, I had better make a clean breast of it. Unfortunately, there is a little to tell, and that little not in the least out of the ordinary humdrum way. I never was a pickpocket, never a blackleg. I can safely say that, I am a taught musician as a profession. I came over to this country, and through friends, was recommended here as organist. There you