

and say nothing to excite suspicion. I will be with you in time.

"Adieu, my own—my love—my wife. Adieu for a brief season; and when that is past we shall have done with parting. Your loving husband, CYRIL."

Her tears fell fast as she kissed the signature, and hid it again once more in her bosom.

"If it were not so," she sighed; "if he were not my husband, I should never have the courage or the cruelty to cling to him, and break my father's heart!"

"And yet," she went on, musing, "was it not papa himself told me, 'a woman should love her husband first of all.' Ah, I did not understand him then!"

She arose and paced slowly up and down under the old trees.

"The blow will be a heavy one to Frank. Poor Frank—he loves me so devotedly. But Cyril never cares for that. He speaks of Frank bitterly, always—surely that is cruel."

And then she shrank from her own thoughts, that had dared to suspect a flaw in her idol.

But all the same it was impossible to hide from herself the fact that Frank was being foully wronged; and less by the change in her breach of faith, than by her deception now—the bouying him up with a false hope, which she well knew, though he suspected nothing—must fail him suddenly and utterly.

"God forgive me, it will break his heart!" she thought, and remorse and pity made her manner as gentle and kind that the young man took fresh courage and forgot his former doubts of her love.

"You see I was right," said Mr. Lisle to him.

"The girl loves you, but is timid and shy. Rather hasten the wedding, my dear boy, than talk of putting it off; you'll never learn the child's true heart till afterward." But he did not dream how true his own words were.

"And when you spoke to her did she wish for no postponement?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"Never dreamt of such a thing, I assure you. Indeed the dear girl is too sensible, and her marriage day so very close at hand."

Close at hand indeed. The days and weeks had fled away more swiftly than ever before, it seemed to Dolly; there wanted but four of the fatal one that, one way or the other, was to break up the happy home, and still Cyril did not come.

The girl was half crazy with terror—terror of which she dared speak to none—a thousand fears tormented her.

"What if something had happened to Cyril? What if he should not come? Must she marry Frank? No—that was impossible—yet what else could she do?"

She grew pale and thin under the influence of this ceaseless torture. Frank and her father regarded her with anxiety; she shrank from their kind eyes, lest they should read her secret, and even while her heart seemed breaking forced herself to smile.

"I am about to leave my father and my home," she answered truthfully, when Rose, their old servant, who had known her from a child, ventured to question her. "Is it not natural that I am quiet and grave?"

"But all girls leave their fathers when they marry," argued Rose. "You oughtn't to fret and pine for that, Miss Dolly. And you wouldn't either, if you loved the man you'll wed."

"I do love him, oh, how dearly, how well!"

She made the answer with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, that saw in imagination Cyril. It was of him she thought and spoke, not dreaming that Rose could suspect it; but Rose had seen and thought a good deal of late, and was far shrewder than her mistress fancied.

"She used to blush and sparkle like that when Mr. Vernon was here," thought Rose; "and never since. Can it be him she's thinking of? I'll watch her."

And she did. The result of her care being many sighs and head shakings on her own part, and a silent but deep conviction that "Something's going wrong."

"But I'll find out what it is," she resolved energetically.

"Neither Vernon nor no other man shall wrong the little lamb while I stand by. He, indeed! Mr. Frank's worth a dozen of him, but then there's no accounting for a girl's heart—I'll watch them all."

It was in the fulfillment of this resolution that, on the very day before the wedding, she suddenly left her pies and cakes and the other important culinary operations in which she was absorbed, to use her own expression, "up to her eyes," and darted out to follow, silently and at a distance, a little ragged boy, who had passed carelessly by the front gate, and gone whistling down outside the orchard.

"Dick Ferret," was her mental remark. "He used to run errands for Mr. Vernon when he was here—he told me so; he's been here with messages from him. Never since then till to-day."

"Something's going wrong—I'm sure of it."

And she slipped in among the lilacs, unseen and unheard, but where she herself could see and listen.

Dolly was in the garden only a few yards off. Poor child, the spirit of unrest had possession of her, so that she could not remain indoors, the burden of her anxieties and fears had become

too great, she felt as if she must sink beneath them.

Frank's tenderness, her father's evident anxiety, were each a separate torture; to escape them she fled to the garden.

"I can breathe here," she said, "it feels like freedom. Oh, Cyril, Cyril, why don't you come? Only another day and night, and then, if you fail me, oh, what shall I do? What must become of me?"

She was so young, and inexperienced, that she had actually formed no plans.

At first a blind confidence in Cyril had sustained her, and now when that confidence almost appeared misplaced, she knew not what to do—the magnitude of her trouble bewildered her—she was like one who struggled vainly in a dream. She had seated herself, weary with the weight of care, with sleepless nights, and additionally discouraged by the fact that her solitary walk to the post-office that morning had been unrewarded by the long-looked-for letter, she had seated herself upon a rustic bench just at the entrance to the orchard, and there, leaning her bright head on her little hands, was trying sorrowfully to plan and arrange some course of conduct, when suddenly, upon her painful musings, broke a familiar sound.

A boy's whistle, loud and shrill and clear, piercing the air with the spirited, lively tune of "Yankee Doodle."

Dolly sprang to her feet. Light flashed to her eyes, color to her pale cheek; the dimples stole back to the red lips that parted breathlessly.

"Dick!" she whispered, gazing eagerly around; "it's Dick."

"It was Dick, staring in at the great yellow apples on the tree near which she stood, and whistling vigorously. No song of nightingale was ever half so sweet to Dolly's ears as the shrill notes of that familiar melody.

"What brings him here?" she thought. "I'll speak to him."

But Dick was too quick for her. He had come there for a purpose, and needed no one's help to carry it out.

"Miss," he called to her, softly, and glancing around to see if any other was within hearing. "Good mornin,' miss. Them's good apples, them yaller ones. Maybe you'd give me one to take with me to school."

Dolly sprang up on the bench and plucked two apples. Rose, from her hiding-place, made a threatening gesture at the unconscious whistler's head.

"School, indeed!" she muttered low. "A devil's school you were raised in! I'd school you if I could!"

And then, watching closely, she saw him take the apples, and slip a letter into Dolly's hand.

"No answer," she heard him whisper. Then aloud he said: "Thank ye, and good-mornin,' miss," and marched off again, whistling "Yankee Doodle" as merrily as before.

But Rose no longer noticed him. Her eyes and thoughts were given to Dolly. The poor child stood, all bright and flushed and smiling, like one almost transfigured by the influence of a great and sudden joy.

The relief was so entire and so immense. Believing herself alone and unobserved, she had opened the letter at once, and learned that Cyril was in the village now, and would come to her at night. She put the letter to her lips and breast, and raised to Heaven a face that glowed like a star.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" she said.

And Rose heard her.

Watching and listening still, as the girl sat down to read the note again more calmly, Rose heard her whisper to herself,

"To-night, to-night!"

Then she arose, placed the letter softly in her bosom, folded her little hands over it as a dove folds its wings above its nest, and stole away, smiling happily, to her room.

While Rose, without a word to any one, returned quietly to the kitchen and her work.

Her honest heart was sore perplexed, and her healthy, rosy face dark with anxiety and care.

"Something's going wrong," she muttered, "terrible, terrible wrong; and I don't know how to mend it."

Should she go to Mr. Lisle and tell him what she had seen? Would not that, perhaps, be to wrong Dolly? Should she tell her? It might drive her to some rash step, perhaps; besides, she had looked so divinely happy for one moment, after being so wearily sad for weeks, Rose had not the heart to dash her joy; and above all, she was ashamed to own that she had played the spy upon her.

"She'd never trust me again if she knew, never!"

Presently she remembered that one whispered word—"to-night."

"What did she mean by that word, I wonder? It was something she read in the letter—something that somebody's going to say or do to-night. I'll find that out before I say one word."

Her face brightened and grew resolute and clear.

"If she's going anywhere to-night, I'll go to," she thought. "If there's a meeting with her sweetheart, I'll be there."

To Be Continued.

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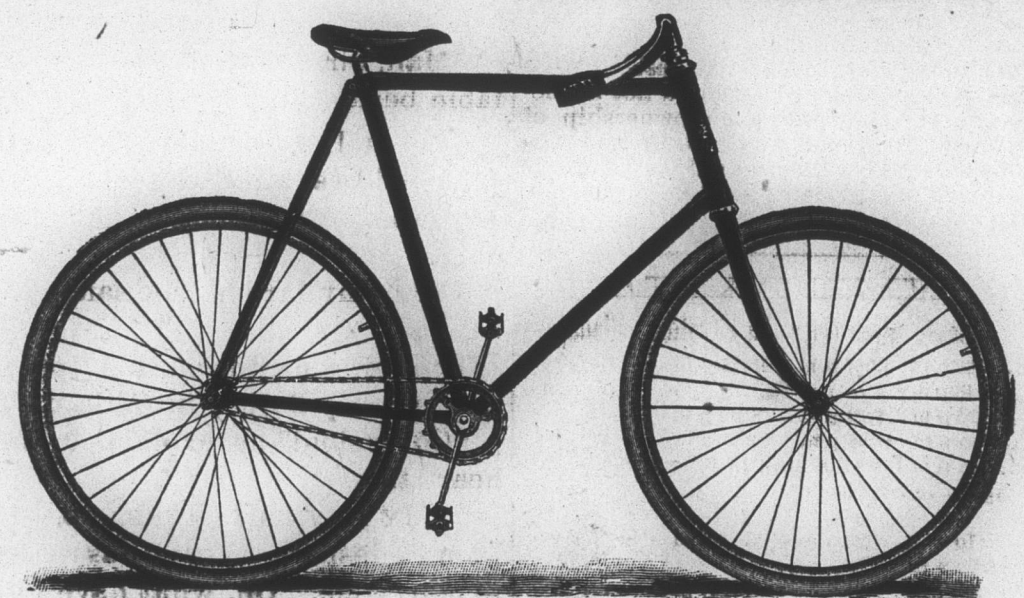
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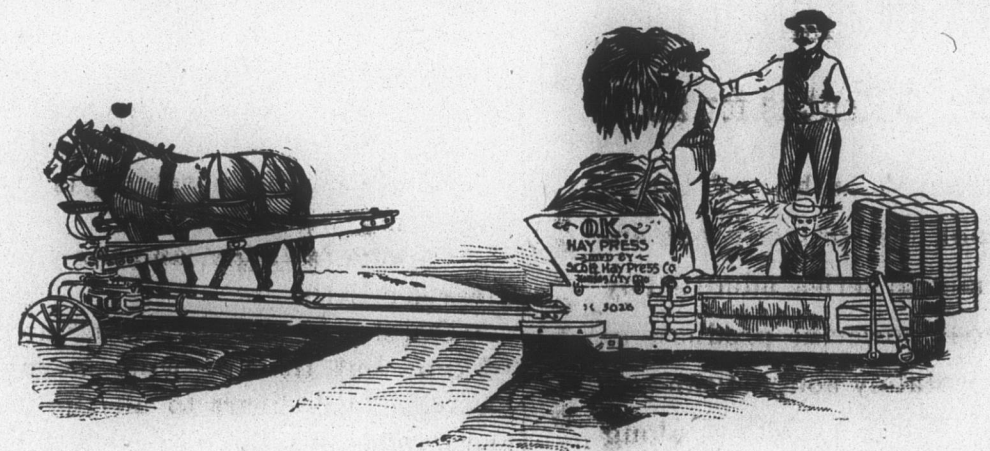
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