

## APRIL HOPES.

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

### XXIV.

**B**EFORE the end of the first week after Dan came back to town, that which was likely to happen whenever chance brought him and Alice together had taken place.

It was one of the soft days that fall in late October, when the impending winter seems stayed, and the warm breath of the land draws seaward and over a thousand miles of Indian summer. The bloom came and went in quick pulses over the girl's temples as she sat with her head thrown back in the corner of the car, and from moment to moment she stirred slightly as if some stress of rapture made it hard for her to get her breath; a little gleam of light fell from under her fallen eyelids into the eyes of the young man beside her, who leaned forward slightly and slanted his face upward to meet her glances. They said some words, now and then, indistinguishable to the others; in speaking they smiled slightly. Sometimes her hand wavered across her lap; in both their faces there was something beyond happiness—a transport, a passion, the brief splendor of a supreme moment.

They left the car at the Arlington Street corner of the Public Garden, and followed the winding paths diagonally to the further corner on Charles Street.

"How stupid we were to get into that ridiculous horse-car!" she said. "What in the world possessed us to do it?"

"I can't imagine," he answered. "What a waste of time it was! If we had walked, we might have been twice as long coming. And now you're going to send me off so soon!"

"I don't send you," she murmured.

"But you want me to go."

"Oh no! But you'd better."

"I can't do anything against your wish."

"I wish it—for your own good."

"Ah, do let me go home with you, Alice!"

"Don't ask it, or I must say yes."

"Part of the way, then?"

"No; not a step! You must take the first car for Cambridge. What time is it now?"

"You can see by the clock in the Providence Depot."

"But I wish you to go by *your* watch, now. Look!"

"Alice!" he cried, in pure rapture.

"Look!"

"It's a quarter of one."

"And we've been three hours together already! Now you must simply fly. If you came home with me I should be sure to let you come in, and if I don't see mamma alone first, I shall die. Can't you understand?"

"No; but I can do the next best thing: I can misunderstand. You want to be rid of me."

"Shall you be rid of *me* when we've parted?" she asked, with an inner thrill of earnestness in her gay tone.

"Alice!"

"You know I didn't *mean* it, Dan."

"Say it again."

"What?"

"Dan."

"Dan, love! Dan, dearest!"

"Ah!"

"Will that car of yours never come? I've promised myself not to leave you till it does, and if I stay here any longer I shall go wild. I can't believe it's happened. Say it again!"

"Say what?"

"That—"

"That I love you? That we're engaged?"

"I don't believe it. I can't." She looked impatiently up the street. "Oh, there comes your car! Run! Stop it!"

"I don't run to stop cars." He made a sign, which the conductor obeyed, and the car halted at the further crossing.

She seemed to have forgotten it, and made no movement to dismiss him. "Oh, doesn't it seem too good to be standing here talking in this way, and people think it's about the weather, or society?" She set her head a little on one side, and twirled the open parasol on her shoulder.

"Yes, it does. Tell me it's true, love!"

"It's true. How splendid you are!" She said it with an effect for the world outside of saying it was a lovely day.

He retorted, with the same apparent *nonchalance*, "How beautiful you are! How good! How divine!"

The conductor, seeing himself apparently forgotten, gave his bell a vicious snap, and his car jolted away.

She started nervously. "There! you've lost your car, Dan."

"Have I?" asked Maverick, without troubling himself to look after it.

She laughed now, with a faint suggestion of unwillingness in her laugh. "What are you going to do?"

"Walk home with you."

"No, indeed; you know I can't let you."

"And are you going to leave me here alone on the street corner, to be run over by the first bicycle that comes along?"

"You can sit down in the Garden, and wait for the next car."

"No; I would rather go back to the Art Museum, and make a fresh start."

"To the Art Museum?" she murmured, tenderly.

"Yes. Wouldn't you like to see it again?"

"Again? I should like to pass my whole life in it!"

"Well, walk back with me a little way. There's no hurry about the car."

"Dan!" she said, in a helpless compliance, and they paced very, very slowly along the Beacon Street path in the Garden. "This is ridiculous."

"Yes, but it's delightful."

"Yes, that's what I meant. Do you suppose any one ever—ever—"

"Made love there before?"

"How can you say such things? Yes. I always supposed it would be—somewhere else."

"It *was* somewhere else—once."

"Oh, I meant—the second time."

"Then you *did* think there was going to be a second time?"

"How do I know? I wished it. Do you like me to say that?"

"I wish you would never say anything else."

"Yes; there can't be any harm in it now. I thought that if you had ever—liked me, you would still—"

"So did I; but I couldn't believe that you—"

"Oh, I could."

"Alice!"

"Don't you like my confessing it? You asked me to."

"Like it!"

"How silly we are!"

"Not half so silly as we've been for the

last two months. I think we've just come to our senses. At least I have."

"Two months," she sighed. "Has it really been so long as that?"

"Two years! Two centuries! It was back in the Dark Ages when you refused me."

"Dark Ages! I should think so! But don't say refused. It wasn't *refusing*, exactly."

"What was it, then?"

"Oh, I don't know. Don't speak of it now."

"But, Alice, why did you refuse me?"

"Oh, I don't know. You mustn't ask me now. I'll tell you some time."

"Well, come to think of it," said Maverick, laughing it all lightly away, "there's no hurry. Tell me why you accepted me to-day."

"I—I couldn't help it. When I saw you I wanted to fall at your feet."

"What an idea! I didn't want to fall at yours. I was awfully mad. I shouldn't have spoken to you if you hadn't stopped me and held out your hand."

"Really? Did you really hate me, Dan?"

"Well, I haven't exactly doted on you since we last met."

She did not seem offended at this. "Yes, I suppose so. And I've gone on being fonder and fonder of you every minute since that day. I wanted to call you back when you had got half-way to Eastport."

"I wouldn't have come. It's bad luck to turn back."

She laughed at his drolling. "How funny you are! Now I'm of rather a gloomy temperament. Did you know it?"

"You don't look it."

"Oh, but I am. Just now I'm rather excited and—happy."

"So glad!"

"Go on! go on! I like you to make fun of me."

The benches on either side were filled with nurse-maids in charge of baby-carriages, and of young children who were digging in the sand with their little beach shovels, and playing their games back and forth across the walk unrebuked by the indulgent policemen. A number of them had enclosed a square in the middle of the path with four of the benches, which they made believe was a fort. The lovers had to walk round it; and the chil-

dren, chasing one another, dashed into them headlong, or backing off from pursuit, bumped up against them. They did not seem to know it, but walked slowly on without noticing: they were not aware of an occasional benchful of rather shabby young fellows who stared hard at the stylish girl and well-dressed young man talking together in such intense low tones, with rapid interchange of radiant glances.

"Oh, as to making fun of you, I was going to say—" Maverling began, and after a pause he broke off with a laugh. "I forget what I was going to say."

"Try to remember."

"I can't."

"How strange that we should have both happened to go to the Museum this morning!" she sighed. Then, "Dan," she broke in, "do you suppose that heaven is any different from this?"

"I hope not—if I'm to go there."

"Hush, dear; you mustn't talk so."

"Why, you provoked me to it."

"Did I? Did I really? Do you think I tempted you to do it? Then I must be wicked, whether I knew I was doing it or not. Yes."

The break in her voice made him look more keenly at her, and he saw the tears glimmer in her eyes. "Alice!"

"No; I'm not good enough for you. I always said that."

"Then don't say it any more. That's the only thing I won't let you say."

"Do you forbid it, really? Won't you let me even think it?"

"No, not even think it."

"How lovely you are! Oh! I *like* to be commanded by you."

"Do you? You'll have lots of fun, then. I'm an awfully commanding spirit."

"I didn't suppose you were so humorous—always. I'm afraid you won't like me. I've no sense of fun."

"And I'm a little too funny sometimes, I'm afraid."

"No, you never are. When?"

"That night at the Trevors'. You didn't like it."

"I thought Miss Anderson was rather ridiculous," said Alice. "I don't like buffoonery in women."

"Nor I in men," said Maverling, smiling. "I've dropped it."

"Well, now we must part. I must go home at once," said Alice. "It's perfectly insane."

"Oh no, not yet; not till we've said something else; not till we've changed the subject."

"What subject?"

"Miss Anderson."

Alice laughed and blushed, but she was not vexed. She liked to have him understand her. "Well, now," she said, as if that were the next thing, "I'm going to cross here at once and walk up the other pavement, and you must go back through the Garden; or else I shall never get away from you."

"May I look over at you?"

"You may glance, but you needn't expect me to return your glance."

"Oh no."

"And I want you to take the very first Cambridge car that comes along. I *command* you to."

"I thought you wanted *me* to do the commanding."

"So I do—in essentials. If you command me not to cry when I get home, I won't."

She looked at him with an ecstasy of self-sacrifice in her eyes.

"Ah, I sha'n't do that. I can't tell what would happen. But—Alice!"

"Well, what?" She drifted closely to him, and looked fondly up into his face. In walking they had insensibly drawn nearer together, and she had been obliged constantly to put space between them. Now, standing at the corner of Arlington Street, and looking tentatively across Beacon, she abandoned all precautions.

"What? I forget. Oh yes! I love you!"

"But you said that before, dearest!"

"Yes; but just now it struck me as a very novel idea. What if your mother shouldn't like the idea?"

"Nonsense! you know she perfectly idolizes you. She did from the first. And doesn't she know how I've been behaving about you ever since I—lost you?"

"How *have* you behaved? Do tell me, Alice."

"Some time; not now," she said; and with something that was like a gasp, and threatened to be a sob, she suddenly whipped across the road. He walked back to Charles Street by the Garden path, keeping abreast of her, and not losing sight of her for a moment, except when the bulk of a string team watering at the trough beside the pavement intervened. He hurried by, and when he had passed it he

found himself exactly abreast of her again. Her face was turned toward him; they exchanged a smile, lost in space. At the corner of Charles Street he deliberately crossed over to her.

"Oh, dearest *love!* why did you come?" she implored.

"Because you signed to me."

"I *hoped* you wouldn't see it. If we're *both* to be so weak as this, what are we going to do? But I'm glad you came. Yes: I was frightened. They must have overheard us there when we were talking."

"Well, I didn't say anything I'm ashamed of. Besides, I shouldn't care much for the opinion of those nurses and babies."

"Of course not. But people must have seen us. Don't stand here talking, Dan! *Do come on!*" She hurried him across the street, and walked him swiftly up the incline of Beacon Street. There, in her new fall suit, with him, glossy-hatted, faultlessly gloved, at a fit distance from her side, she felt more in keeping with the social frame of things than in the Garden path, which was really only a shade better than the Beacon Street Mall of the Common. "Do you suppose anybody saw us that knew us?"

"I hope so! Don't you want people to know it?"

"Yes, of course. They will *have* to know it—in the right way. Can you *believe* that it's only half a year since we met? It won't be a year till Class Day."

"I don't believe it, Alice. I can't recollect anything before I knew you."

"Well, now, as time is so confused, we must try to live for eternity. We must try to help each other to be *good*. Oh, when I think what a happy girl I am, I feel that I should be the most ungrateful person under the sun not to be good. Let's try to make our lives perfect—*perfect!* They *can* be. And we mustn't live for each other alone. We must try to *do* good as well as *be* good. We must be kind and forbearing with every one."

He answered, with tender seriousness, "My life's in your hands, Alice. It shall be whatever you wish."

They were both silent in their deep belief of this. When they spoke again, she began, gayly: "I shall never get over the wonder of it. How strange that we should meet at the Museum!" They had both said this already, but that did not matter; they had said nearly everything

two or three times. "How *did* you happen to be there?" she asked, and the question was so novel that she added, "I haven't asked you before."

He stopped, with a look of dismay that broke up in a hopeless laugh. "Why, I went there to meet some people—some ladies. And when I saw you I forgot all about them."

Alice laughed too; this was a part of their joy, their triumph.

"Who were they?" she asked, indifferently, and only to heighten the absurdity by realizing the persons.

"You don't know them," he said. "Mrs. Frobisher and her sister, of Portland. I promised to meet them there and go out to Cambridge with them."

"What will they think?" asked Alice. "It's too amusing."

"They'll think I didn't come," said Maving, with the easy conscience of youth and love; and again they laughed at the ridiculous position together. "I remember now I was to be at the door, and they were to take me up in their carriage. I wonder how long they waited? You put everything else out of my head."

"Do you think I'll keep it out?" she asked, archly.

"Oh yes; there *is* nothing else but you now."

The eyes that she dropped, after a glance at him, glistened with tears.

A lump came into his throat. "Do you suppose," he asked, huskily, "that we can ever misunderstand each other again?"

"Never. I see everything clearly now. We shall trust each other implicitly, and at the least thing that isn't clear we can speak. Promise me that you'll speak."

"I will, Alice. But after this all will be clear. We shall deal with each other as we do with ourselves."

"Yes; that will be the way."

"And we mustn't wait for question from each other. We shall know—we shall feel—when there's any misgiving, and then the one that's caused it will speak."

"Yes," she sighed, emphatically. "How perfectly you say it! But that's because you feel it—because you are good."

They walked on, treading the air in a transport of fondness for each other. Suddenly he stopped.

"Miss Pasmer, I feel it my duty to

warn you that you're letting me go home with you."

"Am I? How noble of you to tell me, Dan; for I know you don't want to tell. Well, I might as well. But I sha'n't let you come in. You won't try, will you? Promise me you won't try."

"I shall only want to come in the first door."

"What for?"

"What for? Oh, for half a second."

She turned away her face.

He went on. "This engagement has been such a very public affair, so far, that I think I'd like to see my *fiancée* alone for a moment."

"I don't know what in the world you can have to say more."

He went into the first door with her, and then he went with her upstairs to the door of Mrs. Pasmer's apartment. The passages of the Cavendish were not well lighted; the little lane or alley that led down to this door from the stairs landing was very dim.

"So dark here!" murmured Alice, in a low voice, somewhat tremulous.

"But not *too* dark."

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#### XXV.

She burst into the room where her mother sat looking over some house-keeping accounts. His kiss and his name were upon her lips; her soul was full of him.

"Mamma!" she panted.

Her mother did not look round. She could have had no premonition of the vital news that her daughter was bringing, and she went on comparing the first autumn month's provision bill with that of the last spring month, and trying to account for the difference.

The silence, broken by the rattling of the two bills in her mother's hands as she glanced from one to the other through her glasses, seemed suddenly impenetrable, and the prismatic world of the girl's rapture burst like a bubble against it. There is no explanation of the effect outside of temperament and overwrought sensibilities. She stared across the room at her mother, who had not heard her, and then she broke into a storm of tears.

"Alice!" cried her mother, with that sanative anger which comes to rescue women from the terror of any sudden shock. "What is the matter with you?—what do you mean?" She dropped both of the

provision bills to the floor and started toward her daughter.

"Nothing—nothing! Let me go. I want to go to my room." She tried to reach the door beyond her mother.

"Indeed you shall *not*!" cried Mrs. Pasmer. "I will not have you behaving so! What has happened to you? Tell me. You have frightened me half out of my senses."

The girl gave up her efforts to escape, and flung herself on the sofa, with her face in the pillow, where she continued to sob. Her mother began to relent at the sight of her passion. As a woman and as a mother she knew her daughter, and she knew that this passion, whatever it was, must have vent before there could be anything intelligible between them. She did not press her with further question, but set about making her a little more comfortable on the sofa; she pulled the pillow straight, and dropped a light shawl over the girl's shoulders, so that she should not take cold.

Then Mrs. Pasmer had made up her mind that Alice had met *Mavering* somewhere, and that this outburst was the retarded effect of seeing him. During the last six weeks she had assisted at many phases of feeling in regard to him, and knew more clearly than Alice herself the meaning of them all. She had been patient and kind, with the resources that every woman finds in herself when it is the question of a daughter's ordeal in an affair of the heart which she has favored.

The storm passed as quickly as it came, and Alice sat upright, casting off the wraps. But once checked with the fact on her tongue, she found it hard to utter it.

"What is it, Alice?—what is it?" urged her mother.

"Nothing. I—Mr. *Mavering*—we met—I met him at the Museum, and—we're engaged! It's really so. It seems like raving, but it's true. He came with me to the door; I wouldn't let him come in. Don't you believe it? Oh, we are! indeed we are! Are you glad, mamma? You *know* I couldn't have lived without him."

She trembled on the verge of another outbreak.

Mrs. Pasmer sacrificed her astonishment in the interest of sanity, and returned, quietly: "Glad, Alice? You know that I think he's the sweetest and best fellow in the world."

"Oh, mamma!"



"But are you sure—"

"Yes, yes. I'm not crazy; it isn't a dream. He was there—and I met him—I couldn't run away—I put out my hand; I couldn't help it—I thought I should give way; and he took it; and then—then we were engaged. I don't know what we said. I went in to look at the 'Joan of Arc' again, and there was no one else there. He seemed to feel just as I did. I don't know whether either of us spoke. But we knew we were engaged, and we began to talk."

Mrs. Pasmer began to laugh. To her irreverent soul only the droll side of the statement appeared.

"Don't, mamma!" pleaded Alice, pitiously.

"No, no; I won't. But I hope Dan Mavering will be a little more definite about it when I'm allowed to see him. Why couldn't he have come in with you?"

"It would have killed me. I couldn't let him see me cry, and I knew I should break down."

"He'll have to see you cry a great many times, Alice," said her mother, with almost unexampled seriousness.

"Yes, but not yet—not so soon. He must think I'm very gloomy, and I want to be always bright and cheerful with him. He knows why I wouldn't let him come in; he knew I was going to have a cry."

Mrs. Pasmer continued to laugh.

"Don't, mamma!" pleaded Alice.

"No, I won't," replied her mother, as before. "I suppose he was mystified. But now, if it's really settled between you, he'll be coming here soon to see your papa and me."

"Yes—to-night."

"Well, it's very sudden," said Mrs. Pasmer. "Though I suppose these things always seem so."

"Is it too sudden?" asked Alice, with misgiving. "It seemed so to me when it was going on, but I couldn't stop it."

Her mother laughed at her simplicity. "No, when it begins once, nothing can stop it. But you've really known each other a good while, and for the last six weeks at least you've known your own mind about him pretty clearly. It's a pity you couldn't have known it before."

"Yes, that's what *he* says. He says it was such a waste of time. Oh, *everything* he says is perfectly fascinating!"

Her mother laughed and laughed again.

"What is it, mamma? Are you laughing at me?"

"Oh no. What an idea!"

"He couldn't seem to understand why I didn't say yes the first time if I meant it." She looked down dreamily at her hands in her lap, and then she said, with a blush and a start, "They're very queer, don't you think?"

"Who?"

"Young men."

"Oh, *very*."

"Yes," Alice went on, musingly. "Their *minds* are so different. Everything they say and do is so unexpected, and yet it seems to be just right."

Mrs. Pasmer asked herself if this single-mindedness was to go on forever, but she had not the heart to treat it with her natural levity. Probably it was what charmed Mavering with the child. Mrs. Pasmer had the firm belief that Mavering was not single-minded, and she respected him for it. She would not spoil her daughter's perfect trust and hope by any of the cynical suggestions of her own dark wisdom, but entered into her mood, as such women are able to do, and flattered out of her every detail of the morning's history. This was a feat which Mrs. Pasmer enjoyed for its own sake, and it fully satisfied the curiosity which she naturally felt to know all. She did not comment upon many of the particulars; she opened her eyes a little at the notion of her daughter sitting for two or three hours and talking with a young man in the galleries of the Museum, and she asked if anybody they knew had come in. When she heard that there were only strangers, and very few of them, she said nothing; and she had the same consolation in regard to the walking back and forth in the Garden. She was so full of potential escapades herself, so apt to let herself go at times, that the fact of Alice's innocent self-forgetfulness rather satisfied a need of her mother's nature; she exulted in it when she learned that there were only nurses and children in the Garden.

"And so you think you won't take up art this winter?" she said, when, in the process of her cross-examination, Alice had left the sofa and got as far as the door, with her hat in her hand and her saccue on her arm.

"No."

"And the Sisters of St. James—you won't join them, either?"

The girl escaped from the room.

"Alice! Alice!" her mother called after her; and she came back. "You haven't told me how he happened to be there."

"Oh, that was the most amusing part of it. He had gone there to keep an appointment with two ladies from Portland. They were to take him up in their carriage and drive out to Cambridge, and when he saw *me* he forgot all about them."

"And what became of them?"

"We don't know. Isn't it ridiculous?"

If it appeared other or more than this to Mrs. Pasmer, she did not say. She merely said, after a moment, "Well, it was certainly devoted, Alice," and let her go.

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### XXVI.

Mavering came in the evening, rather excessively well dressed, and with a hot face and cold hands. While he waited, nominally alone, in the little drawing-room for Mr. Pasmer, Alice flew in upon him for a swift embrace, which prolonged itself till the father's step was heard outside the door, and then she still had time to vanish by another: the affair was so nicely adjusted that if Mavering had been in his usual mind he might have fancied the connivance of Mrs. Pasmer.

He did not say what he had meant to say to Alice's father, but it seemed to serve the purpose, for he emerged presently from the sound of his own voice, unnaturally clamorous, and found Mr. Pasmer saying some very civil things to him about his character and disposition, so far as they had been able to observe it, and their belief and trust in him. There seemed to be something provisional or probational intended, but Dan could not make out what it was, and finally it proved of no practical effect. He merely inferred that the approval of his family was respectfully expected, and he hastened to say, "Oh, that's all right, sir." Mr. Pasmer went on with more civilities, and lost himself in dumb conjecture as to whether Mavering's father had been in the class before him or the class after him in Harvard. He used his black eyebrows a good deal during the interview, and Mavering conceived an awe of him greater than he had felt at Campobello, yet not unmixed with the affection in which the newly accepted lover embraces even

the relations of his betrothed. From time to time Mr. Pasmer looked about with the vague glance of a man unused to being so long left to his own guidance; and one of these appeals seemed at last to bring Mrs. Pasmer through the door, to the relief of both the men, for they had improvidently despatched their business, and were getting out of talk. Mr. Pasmer had, in fact, already asked Dan about the weather outside when his wife appeared.

Dan did not know whether he ought to kiss her or not, but Mrs. Pasmer did not in the abstract seem like a very kissing kind of person, and he let himself be guided by this impression, in the absence of any fixed principle applying to the case. She made some neat remark concerning the probable settlement of the affair with her husband, and began to laugh and joke about it in a manner that was very welcome to Dan; it did not seem to him that it ought to be treated so solemnly.

But though Mrs. Pasmer laughed and joked, he was aware of her meaning business, business in the nicest sort of a way, but business after all, and he liked her for it. He was glad to be explicit about his hopes and plans, and told what his circumstances were so fully that Mrs. Pasmer, whom his frankness gratified and amused, felt obliged to say that she had not meant to ask so much about his affairs, and he must excuse her if she had seemed to do so. She had her own belief that Mavering would understand, but she did not mind that. She said that of course, till his own family had been consulted, it must not be considered seriously, that Mr. Pasmer insisted upon that point; and when Dan vehemently asserted the acquiescence of his family beforehand, and urged his father's admiration for Alice in proof, she reminded him that his mother was to be considered, and put Mr. Pasmer's scruples forward as her own reason for obduracy. In her husband's presence she attributed to him, with his silent assent, all sorts of reluctances and delicate compunctions; she gave him the importance which would have been naturally a husband's due in such an affair, and ingratiated herself more and more with the young man. She ignored Mr. Pasmer's withdrawal when it took place, after a certain lapse of time, and as the moment had come for that, she began to let herself

go. She especially approved of the idea of going abroad, and confessed her disappointment with her present experiment of America, where it appeared there was no leisure class of men sufficiently large to satisfy the social needs of Mr. Pasmer's nature, and she told Dan that he might expect them in Europe before long. Perhaps they might all three meet him there. At this he betrayed so clearly that he now intended his going to Europe merely as a sequel to his marrying Alice, while he affected to fall in with all Mrs. Pasmer said, that she grew fonder than ever of him for his ardor and his futile duplicity. If it had been in Dan's mind to take part in the rite, Mrs. Pasmer was quite ready at this point to embrace him with motherly tenderness. Her tough little heart was really in her throat with sympathy when she made an errand for the photograph of an English vicarage, which they had hired the summer of the year before, and she sent Alice back with it alone.

It seemed so long since they had met that the change in Alice did not strike him as strange or as too rapidly operated. They met with the fervor natural after such a separation, and she did not so much assume as resume possession of him. It was charming to have her do it, to have her act as if they had always been engaged, to have her try to press down the cowlick that started capriciously across his crown, and to straighten his neck-tie, and then to drop beside him on the sofa; it thrilled and awed him; and he silently worshipped the superior composure which her sex has in such matters. Whatever was the provisional interpretation which her father and mother pretended to put upon the affair, she apparently had no reservations, and they talked of their future as a thing assured. The Dark Ages, as they agreed to call the period of despair forever closed that morning, had matured their love till now it was a rapture of pure trust. They talked as if nothing could prevent its fulfilment, and they did not even affect to consider the question of his family's liking it or not liking it. She said that she thought his father was delightful, and he told her that his father had taken the greatest fancy to her at the beginning, and knew that Dan was in love with her. She asked him about his mother, and she said just what he could have wished her to say

about his mother's sufferings, and the way she bore them. They talked about Alice's going to see her.

"Of course your father will bring your sisters to see me first."

"Is that the way?" he asked. "You may depend upon his doing the right thing, whatever it is."

"Well, *that's* the right thing," she said. "I've thought it out; and that reminds me of a duty of ours, Dan?"

"A duty?" he repeated, with a note of reluctance for its untimeliness.

"Yes. Can't you think what?"

"No; I didn't know there was a duty left in the world."

"It's full of them."

"Oh, don't say that, Alice!" He did not like this mood so well as that of the morning, but his dislike was only a vague discomfort—nothing formulated or distinct.

"Yes," she persisted; "and we must do them. You must go to those ladies you disappointed so this morning, and apologize—explain."

Dan laughed. "Why, it wasn't such a very iron-clad engagement as all that, Alice. They said they were going to drive out to Cambridge over the Mill-dam, and I said I was going out there to get some of my traps together, and they could pick me up at the Art Museum if they liked. Besides, how *could* I explain?"

She laughed consciously with him. "Of course. But," she added, ruefully, "I wish you hadn't disappointed them."

"Oh, they'll get over it. If I hadn't disappointed them, I shouldn't be here, and I shouldn't like that. Should you?"

"No; but I wish it hadn't happened. It's a blot, and I didn't want a blot on this day."

"Oh, well, it isn't very much of a blot, and I can easily wipe it off. I'll tell you what, Alice! I can write to Mrs. Frobisher, when our engagement comes out, and tell her how it was. She'll enjoy the joke, and so will Miss Wrayne. They're jolly and easy-going; they won't mind."

"How long have you known them?"

"I met them on Class Day, and then I saw them—the day after I left Campobello." Dan laughed a little.

"How, saw them?"

"Well, I went to a yacht race with them. I happened to meet them in the street, and they wanted me to go; and I was all broken up, and—I went."



"Oh!" said Alice. "The day after I— you left Campobello?"

"Well—yes."

"And I was thinking of you all that day as— And I couldn't bear to look at anybody that day, or speak!"

"Well, the fact is, I—I was distracted, and I didn't know what I was doing. I was desperate; I didn't care."

"How did you find out about the yacht race?"

"Boardman told me. Boardman was there."

"Did he know the ladies? Did he go too?"

"No. He was there to report the race for the *Events*. He went on the press boat."

"Oh!" said Alice. "Was there a large party?"

"No, no. Not very. Just ourselves, in fact. They were awfully kind. And they made me go home to dinner with them."

"They must have been rather peculiar people," said Alice. "And I don't see how—so soon—" She could not realize that Maverig was then a rejected man, on whom she had voluntarily renounced all claim. A retroactive resentment which she could not control possessed her with the wish to punish those bold women for being agreeable to one who had since become everything to her, though then he was ostensibly nothing.

In a vague way Dan felt her displeasure with that passage of his history, but no man could have fully imagined it.

"I couldn't tell half the time what I was saying or eating. I talked at random and ate at random. I guess they thought something was wrong; they asked me who was at Campobello."

"Indeed!"

"But you may be sure I didn't give myself away. I was awfully broken up," he concluded, inconsequently.

She liked his being broken up, but she did not like the rest. She would not press the question further now. She only said, rather gravely, "If it's such a short acquaintance, can you write to them in that familiar way?"

"Oh yes! Mrs. Frobisher is one of that kind."

Alice was silent a moment before she said, "I think you'd better not write. Let it go," she sighed.

"Yes, that's what I think," said Dan.

"Better let it go. I guess it will explain itself in the course of time. But I don't want any blots around." He leaned over and looked her smilingly in the face.

"Oh no," she murmured; and then suddenly she caught him round the neck, crying and sobbing. "It's only—because I wanted it to be—perfect. Oh, I wonder if I've done right? Perhaps I oughtn't to have taken you, after all; but I do love you—dearly, dearly! And I was so unhappy when I'd lost you. And now I'm afraid I shall be a trial to you—nothing but a trial."

The first tears that a young man sees a woman shed for love of him are inexpressibly sweeter than her smiles. Dan choked with tender pride and pity. When he found his voice he raved out with incoherent endearments that she only made him more and more happy by her wish to have the affair perfect, and that he wished her always to be exacting with him, for that would give him a chance to do something for her, and all that he desired, as long as he lived, was to do more and more for her, and to do just what she wished.

At the end of his vows and entreaties she lifted her face radiantly and bent a smile upon him as sunny as that with which the sky after a summer storm denies that there has ever been rain in the world.

"Ah! you—" He could say no more. He could not be more enraptured than he was. He could only pass from surprise to surprise, from delight to delight. It was her love of him which wrought these miracles. It was all a miracle, and no part more wonderful than another. That she, who had seemed as distant as a star, and divinely sacred from human touch, should be there in his arms, with her head on his shoulder, where his kiss could reach her lips, not only unforbidden, but eagerly welcome, was impossible, and yet it was true. But it was no more impossible and no truer than that a being so poised, so perfectly self-centred as she, should already be so helplessly dependent upon him for her happiness. In the depths of his soul he invoked awful penalties upon himself if ever he should betray her trust, if ever he should grieve that tender heart in the slightest thing, if from that moment he did not make his whole life a sacrifice and an expiation.

He uttered some of these exalted

thoughts, and they did not seem to appear crazy to her. She said yes, they must make their separate lives offerings to each other, and their joint lives an offering to God. The tears came into his eyes at these words of hers: they were so beautiful and holy and wise. He agreed that one ought always to go to church, and that now he should never miss a service. He owned that he had been culpable in the past. He drew her closer to him—if that were possible—and sealed his words with a kiss.

But he could not realize his happiness then, or afterward, when he walked the streets under the thinly misted moon of that Indian summer night.

He went down to the *Events* office when he left Alice, and found Boardman, and told him that he was engaged, and tried to work Boardman up to some sense of the greatness of the fact. Boardman showed his fine white teeth under his spare mustache, and made acceptable jokes, but he did not ask indiscreet questions, and Dan's statement of the fact did not seem to give it any more verity than it had before. He tried to get Boardman to come and walk with him and talk it over; but Boardman said he had just been detailed to go and work up the case of a Chinaman who had suicided a little earlier in the evening.

"Very well, then; I'll go with *you*," said Maverig. "How can you live in such a den as this?" he asked, looking about the little room before Boardman turned down his incandescent electric. "There isn't anything big enough to hold *me* but all out-doors."

In the street he linked his arm through his friend's, and said he felt that he had a right to know all about the happy ending of the affair, since he had been told of that miserable phase of it at Portland. But when he came to the facts he found himself unable to give them with the fulness he had promised. He only imparted a succinct statement as to the where and when of the whole matter, leaving the how of it untold.

The sketch was apparently enough for Boardman. For all comment, he reminded Maverig that he had told him at Portland it would come out all right.

"Yes, you did, Boardman; that's a fact," said Dan; and he conceived a higher respect for the penetration of Boardman than he had before.

They stopped at a door in a poor court

which they had somehow reached without Maverig's privity. "Will you come in?" asked Boardman.

"What for?"

"Chinaman."

"Chinaman?" Then Maverig remembered. "Good heavens! no. What have I got to do with him?"

"Both mortal," suggested the reporter.

The absurdity of this idea, though a little grisly, struck Dan as a good joke. He hit the companionable Boardman on the shoulder, and then gave him a little hug, and remounted his path of air, and walked off on it.

## XXVII.

Maverig first woke in the morning with the mechanical recurrence of that shame and grief which each day had brought him since Alice refused him. Then with a leap of the heart came the recollection of all that had happened yesterday. Yet lurking within this rapture was a mystery of regret: a reasonless sense of loss, as if the old feeling had been something he would have kept. Then this faded, and he had only the longing to see her, to realize in her presence and with her help the fact that she was his. An unspeakable pride filled him, and a joy in her love. He tried to see some outward vision of his bliss in the glass; but, like the mirror which had refused to interpret his tragedy in the Portland restaurant, it gave back no image of his transport; his face looked as it always did, and he and the reflection laughed at each other.

He asked himself how soon he could go and see her. It was now seven o'clock: eight would be too early, of course; it would be ridiculous; and nine—he wondered if he might go to see her at nine. Would they have done breakfast? Had he any right to call before ten? He was miserable at the thought of waiting till ten: it would be three hours. He thought of pretexts—of inviting her to go somewhere, but that was absurd, for he could see her at home all day if he liked; of carrying her a book, but there could be no such haste about a book; of going to ask if he had left his cane, but why should he be in such a hurry for his cane? All at once he thought he could take her some flowers—a bouquet to lay beside her plate at breakfast. He dramatized himself charging the servant who should take it

from him at the door not to say who left it; but Alice would know, of course, and they would all know; it would be very pretty. He made Mrs. Pasmer say some flattering things of him, and he made Alice blush deliciously to hear them. He could not manage Mr. Pasmer very well, and he left him out of the scene: he imagined him shaving in another room; then he remembered his wearing a full beard.

He dressed himself as quickly as he could, and went down into the hotel vestibule, where he had noticed people selling flowers the evening before, but there was no one there with them now, and none of the florists' shops on the street were open yet. He could not find anything till he went to the Providence Depot, and the man there had to take some of his yesterday's flowers out of the refrigerator where he kept them; he was not sure they would be very fresh; but the heavy rose-buds had fallen open, and they were superb. Dan took all there were, and when they had been sprinkled with water, and wrapped in cotton batting, and tied round with paper, it was still only quarter of eight, and he left them with the man till he could get his breakfast at the depot restaurant. There it had a consoling effect of not being so early; many people were already breakfasting, and when Dan said, with his order, "Hurry it up, please," he knew that he was taken for a passenger just arrived or departing. By a fantastic impulse he ordered eggs and bacon again; he felt it a fine derision of the past and a seal of triumph upon the present to have the same breakfast after his acceptance as he had ordered after his rejection; he would tell Alice about it, and it would amuse her. He imagined how he would say it, and she would laugh; but she would be full of a ravishing compassion for his past suffering. They were long bringing the breakfast; when it came he despatched it so quickly that it was only a quarter after eight when he paid his check at the counter. He tried to be five minutes more getting his flowers, but the man had them all ready for him, and it did not take him ten seconds. He had said he would carry them at nine; but thinking it over on a bench in the Garden, he decided that he had better go sooner: they might breakfast earlier, and there would be no fun if Alice did not find the roses beside her plate; that was the whole idea. It was not till he stood at the door of the Pas-

mer apartment that he reflected that he was not accomplishing his wish to see Alice by leaving her those flowers; he was a fool, for now he would have to postpone coming a little, because he had already come.

The girl who answered the bell did not understand the charge he gave her about the roses, and he repeated his words. Some one passing through the room beyond seemed to hesitate and pause at the sound of his voice. Could it be Alice? Then he should see her, after all! The girl looked over her shoulder and said, "Mrs. Pasmer."

Mrs. Pasmer came forward, and he fell into a complicated explanation and apology. At the end she said, "You had better give them yourself." They were in the room now, and Mrs. Pasmer let herself go. "Stay and breakfast with us, Mr. Maverick. We shall be so glad to have you. We were just sitting down."

Alice came in, and they decorously shook hands. Mrs. Pasmer turned away a smile at their decorum. "I will see that there's a place for you," she said, leaving them.

They were instantly in each other's arms. It seemed to him that all this had happened because he had so strongly wished it.

"What is it, Dan? What did you come for?" she asked.

"To see if it was really true, Alice. I couldn't believe it."

"Well—let me go—you mustn't—it's too silly. Of course it's true." She pulled herself free. "Is my hair tumbled? You oughtn't to have come; it's ridiculous; but I'm glad you came. I've been thinking it all over, and I've got a great many things to say to you. But come to breakfast now."

She had a business-like way of treating the situation that was more intoxicating than sentiment would have been, and gave it more actuality.

Mrs. Pasmer was alone at the table, and explained that Alice's father never breakfasted with them, or very seldom. "Where are your flowers?" she asked Alice.

"Flowers? What flowers?"

"That Mr. Maverick brought."

They all looked at one another. Dan ran out and brought in his roses.

"They were trying to get away in the excitement, I guess, Mrs. Pasmer; I found them behind the door." He had flung

them there, without knowing it, when Mrs. Pasmer left him with Alice.

He expected her to join him and her mother in being amused at this, but he was as well pleased to have her touched at his having brought them, and to turn their gayety off in praise of the roses. She got a vase for them, and set it on the table. He noticed for the first time the pretty house dress she had on, with its barred corsage and under-skirt, and the heavy silken rope knotted round it at the waist, and dropping in heavy tufts or balls in front.

The breakfast was Continental in its simplicity, and Mrs. Pasmer said that they had always kept up their Paris habit of a light breakfast, even in London, where it was not so easy to follow foreign customs as it was in America. She was afraid he might find it too light. Then he told all about his morning's adventure, ending with his breakfast at the Providence Depot. Mrs. Pasmer entered into the fun of it, but she said it was for only once in a way, and he must not expect to be let in if he came at that hour another morning. He said no; he understood what an extraordinary piece of luck it was for him to be there; and he was there to be bidden to do whatever they wished. He said so much in recognition of their goodness that he became abashed by it. Mrs. Pasmer sat at the head of the table, and Alice across it from him, so far off that she seemed parted from him by an insuperable moral distance. A warm flush seemed to rise from his heart into his throat and stifle him. He wished to shed tears. His eyes were wet with grateful happiness in answering Mrs. Pasmer that he would not have any more coffee. "Then," she said, "we will go into the drawing-room;" but she allowed him and Alice to go alone.

He was still in that illusion of awe and of distance, and he submitted to the interposition of another table between their chairs.

"I wish to talk with you," she said, so seriously that he was frightened, and said to himself: "Now she is going to break it off. She has thought it over, and she finds she can't endure me."

"Well?" he said, huskily.

"You oughtn't to have come here, you know, this morning."

"I know it," he vaguely conceded. "But I didn't expect to get in."

"Well, now you're here, we may as

well talk. You must tell your family at once."

"Yes; I'm going to write to them as soon as I get back to my room. I couldn't, last night."

"But you *mustn't* write; you must go—and prepare their minds."

"Go?" he echoed. "Oh, *that* isn't necessary! My father knows about it from the beginning, and I guess they've all talked it over. Their *minds* are prepared." The sense of his immeasurable superiority to any one's opposition began to dissipate Dan's unnatural awe; at the pleading face which Alice put on, resting one cheek against the back of one of her clasped hands, and leaning on the table with her elbows, he began to be teased by that silken rope round her waist.

"But you don't understand, dear," she said; and she said "dear" as if they were old married people. "You must go to see them, and tell them; and then some of them must come to see me—your father and sisters."

"Why, of course." His eye now became fastened to one of the fluffy silken balls.

"And then mamma and I must go to see your mother, mustn't we?"

"It'll be very nice of you—yes. You know she can't come to you."

"Yes, that's what I thought, and—What are you looking at?" she drew herself back from the table and followed the direction of his eye with a woman's instinctive apprehension of disarray.

He was ashamed to tell. "Oh, nothing. I was just thinking."

"What?"

"Well, I don't know. That it seems so strange any one else should have anything to do with it—my family and yours. But I suppose they must. Yes, it's all right."

"Why, of course. If your family didn't like it—"

"It wouldn't make any difference to me," said Dan, resolutely.

"It would to me," she retorted, with tender reproach. "Do you suppose it would be pleasant to go into a family that didn't like you? Suppose papa and mamma didn't like you?"

"But I thought they did," said Maverick, with his mind still partly on the rope and the fluffy ball, but keeping his eyes away.

"Yes, they do," said Alice. "But your family don't know me at all; and your father's only seen me once. Can't you understand? I'm afraid we don't look at it seriously enough—earnestly—and oh, I do wish to have everything done as it should be! Sometimes, when I think of it, it makes me tremble. I've been thinking about it all the morning, and—and—praying."

Dan wanted to fall on his knees to her. The idea of Alice in prayer was fascinating.

"I wish our life to begin with others, and not with ourselves. If we're intrusted with so much happiness, doesn't it mean that we're to do good with it—to give it to others as if it were money?"

The nobleness of this thought stirred Dan greatly; his eyes wandered back to the silken rope; but now it seemed to him an emblem of voluntary suffering and self-sacrifice, like a devotee's hempen girdle. He perceived that the love of this angelic girl would elevate him and hallow his whole life if he would let it. He answered her, fervently, that he would be guided by her in this as in everything; that he knew he was selfish, and he was afraid he was not very good; but it was not because he had not wished to be so; it was because he had not had any incentive. He thought how much nobler and better this was than the talk he had usually had with girls. He said that of course he would go home and tell his people; he saw now that it would make them happier if they could hear it directly from him. He had only thought of writing because he could not bear to think of letting a day pass without seeing her; but if he took the early morning train he could get back the same night, and still have three hours at Ponkwasset Falls, and he would go the next day, if she said so.

"Go to-day, Dan," she said, and she stretched out her hand impressively across the table toward him. He seized it with a gush of tenderness, and they drew together in their resolution to live for others. He said he would go at once. But the next train did not leave till two o'clock, and there was plenty of time. In the mean while it was in the accomplishment of their high aims that they sat down on the sofa together and talked of their future; Alice conditioned it wholly upon his people's approval of her, which

seemed wildly unnecessary to Maving, and amused him immensely.

"Yes," she said, "I know you will think me strange in a great many things; but I shall never keep anything from you, and I'm going to tell you that I went to matins this morning."

"To matins?" echoed Dan. He would not quite have liked her a Catholic; he remembered with relief that she had said she was not a Roman Catholic; though, when he came to think, he would not have cared a great deal. Nothing could have changed her from being Alice.

"Yes, I wished to consecrate the first morning of our engagement; and I'm always going. Don't you like it?" she asked, timidly.

"Like it!" he said. "I'm going with you."

"Oh no!" she turned upon him. "*That* wouldn't do." She became grave again. "I'm glad you approve of it, for I should feel that there was something wanting to our happiness. If marriage is a sacrament, why shouldn't an engagement be?"

"It is," said Dan, and he felt that it was holy; till then he had never realized that marriage was a sacrament, though he had often heard the phrase.

At the end of an hour they took a tender leave of each other, hastened by the sound of Mrs. Pasmer's voice without. Alice escaped from one door before her mother entered by the other. Dan remained, trying to look unconcerned, but he was sensible of succeeding so poorly that he thought he had better offer his hand to Mrs. Pasmer at once. He told her that he was going up to Ponkwasset Falls at two o'clock, and asked her to please remember him to Mr. Pasmer.

She said she would, and asked him if he were to be gone long.

"Oh no; just overnight—till I can tell them what's happened." He felt it a comfort to be trivial with Mrs. Pasmer, after bracing up to Alice's ideals. "I suppose they'll have to know."

"What an exemplary son!" said Mrs. Pasmer. "Yes, I suppose they will."

"I supposed it would be enough if I wrote, but Alice thinks I'd better report in person."

"I think you had, indeed! And it will be a good thing for you both to have the time for clarifying your ideas. Did she tell you she had been at matins this morning?" A light of laughter trembled



in Mrs. Pasmer's eyes, and Mavinger could not keep a responsive gleam out of his own. In an instant the dedication of his engagement by morning prayer ceased to be a high and solemn thought, and became deliciously amusing; and this laughing Alice over with her mother did more to realize the fact that she was his than anything else had yet done.

In that dark passage outside he felt two arms go tenderly round his neck, and a soft shape strain itself to his heart. "I know you have been laughing about me. But you may. I'm yours now, even to laugh at, if you want."

"You are mine to fall down and worship," he vowed, with an instant revulsion of feeling.

Alice didn't say anything; he felt her hand fumbling about his coat lapel. "Where *is* your breast pocket?" she asked; and he took hold of her hand, which

left a carte-de-visite-shaped something in his.

"It isn't very good," she murmured, as well as she could, with her lips against his cheek, "but I thought you'd like to show them some proof of my existence. I shall have none of yours while you're gone."

"Oh, Alice! you think of everything!"

His heart was pierced by the soft reproach implied in her words; he had not thought to ask her for her photograph, but she had thought to give it; she must have felt it strange that he had not asked for it, and she had meant to slip it in his pocket and let him find it there. But even his pang of self-upbraiding was a part of his transport. He seemed to float down the stairs; his mind was in a delirious whirl. "I shall go mad," he said to himself in the excess of his joy; "I shall die!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

### THE THREE SISTERS.

BY THOMAS DUNN ENGLISH.

**H**ERE in the garden Rose rambles with me,  
Here where the flowers are all blossoming free:  
Modest white candytufts, flaunting sword-lilies,  
Low-growing pinks, and sweet-scented stock-gillies;  
Queen of them all is the rose—ah! the rose!  
Fairest and rarest it bourgeons and blows.

Bearing before us their bright spikes of fire,  
Salvias ask us to gaze and admire;  
Here in our pathway the pansies are spreading  
Purple and gold—a gay road to a wedding;  
Over them all towers the rose—ah! the rose!  
Fairest and rarest it bourgeons and blows.

Rose listens timidly here as I speak,  
Eyelids low-drooping, a flush on her cheek;  
Flashes a moment the shiest of glances—  
Glance that tells much while my soul it entrances;  
Trembling, a rose-bud she plucks—ah! the rose!  
Fairest and rarest it bourgeons and blows.

Two of the sisters to meet us have come.  
Both of them greet us, but Rose has grown dumb.  
Lily, as always, is gracious and stately;  
Pansy is curious, but stands there sedately;  
Rose deeply blushes—ah! *she* is the rose  
In my heart's garden that bourgeons and blows.