

The Doctor's Mistake.

"IT'S of no use to talk about my being your wife, Charley. Your father never will consent, and mother will never even let me see you—if she can help it—without his consent. No, you musn't come a step further!" And pretty Rose Carter drew her arm out of Charley Hulbert's very decidedly, when they reached the end of the village common. "You know it almost breaks my heart to say it, Charley, but I don't think I can ever meet you so again. Mother will be sure to find it out, and it would vex her so. And she has had enough trouble without my giving her any—poor mamma!"

Handsome Charley Hulbert shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Your mother comes before me, of course! It is no matter how I feel. You say coolly that you can never meet me again. That means I suppose, that we are never to see each other again."

"Why, no, Charley, if you will only have patience to wait! Everything may come out right."

"Wait! You have been telling me to wait for the last two years, and things are no nearer coming out right than they ever were."

"I can't think why your father should dislike my mother so. I think mother knows, but she never will tell me. Miss Esther Wagg says that they were lovers once, and had a quarrel that your father can never forget. But one can't believe all Miss Esther's gossip."

"I can't think it is anything more than a notion he has got into his head. He's a crotchety, set old fellow, but he's got a good big heart, Rose, if one can only get at it. If you were only my wife, he would be sure to come round and think the world of you. If you would only marry me, Rose! At the worst—if he wouldn't come around—he could only disinherit me, and I have a pair of good strong arms, and some passable brains to fight my way—our way—through the world."

The moonlight showed him her face, and he fancied that there was a little shadow of hesitation on it. But she shook her head firmly after a moment.

"Now, Rose, darling, don't tell me again to wait—"

The rest of the sentence was never spoken, for a heavy hand was laid on the young man's shoulder, and an angry voice mimicked his tender tones.

"Rose, darling! I'll teach you to—darling! her, young man!"

And there was Dr. Hulbert's face, red with anger, looking over Charley's shoulder. Rose, at the first glimpse of it, turned and ran, like a little coward as she was.

"Haven't I forbidden your seeing that young woman? What do you mean by sneaking around here with her, like a thief in the night?" pursued the doctor, furiously.

"It is not my fault that I do not walk with her openly; it is not my fault that she is not my wife. It is only because she will not consent to be so," answered Charley stoutly.

"Won't consent to be your wife, eh? It doesn't seem to me that she treats you exactly like a rejected lover!" sneered the doctor.

"She would marry me, if she were allowed to choose," answered Charley, trying hard to keep his temper. "Her mother will not consent."

"Humph! not consent? that's pretty well!" growled the doctor. "So she thinks my son is not good enough for her daughter?"

"She does not object to me. If you would give your consent to our marriage, she would give hers."

"Ah, that's it! Well, my consent you'll never have, young man, you may rely upon that. And if ever I hear of your being seen with that young woman again I'll turn you out of doors, sir. Not a penny of my money shall you ever have, sir. Remember that! I am not one to make idle threats."

Charley was about to reply, but they had reached the house by this time, and the doctor went into the office, and shut the door behind him with a bang. So there was nothing for poor Charley to do but to take his way disconsolately up stairs to bed.

In the meantime, the doctor seized the poker and stirred up the dying fire in his grate savagely.

"Won't consent, eh? That's like Rose Shepard! she always was a proud piece. Let me catch that boy with her daughter again!" And he walked rapidly up and down the room, brandishing the poker, and with a scowl still on his face, looking not unlike a midnight assassin, in spite of the venerable aspect which his gray hairs gave him.

But he cooled down very soon, sufficiently to carry the poker back to its place, and begin a search for dressing-gown and slippers, a search which proved long, and served to turn his anger from Charley to another.

"Of all the miserable housekeepers that ever I had, this Barnes woman is the worst!" he grumbled, jerking himself at last into the dilapidated, comfortless looking dressing-gown, and slippers trodden down at the heel.

"Not a drop of warm water, or any-

thing to eat in the house, I'll warrant!" And he strode into the dining-room, which indeed was cold and void of cheer.

He went into the pantry and munched a hard very dark-colored doughnut savagely.

"I'd turn her away to-morrow, she and her husband, too, only that the next one would be sure to be worse. They are all about a piece. There is nothing worse to have in the house than a housekeeper—unless it's a wife. And I don't know—"

Doctor Hulbert still stood in the pantry, solemnly deliberating, after the last morsel of doughnut had disappeared. It was so long since he had a wife that he could not decide whether one was worse than a housekeeper or not. It was a question that he had been revolving in his mind for years, without coming to any definite conclusion.

"Better bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of," the poet says. But then, a man can't bear this state of things long; he might as well live in a cave in the woods! No order, no comfort, none of the decencies of living. Some time or other I shall have to marry, and I might as well make up my mind to it at once. And there's the widow Zilpha Thomas. (Strange that boy can be such a fool as to run after that little jade of a Rose Carter!) The widow Thomas is a good housekeeper, I have no doubt; housealways looks as neat as wax. Then there's that wood lot of hers that joins mine; not that I'm looking out for property with a wife, but that lot would come very handy; and the widow is a fine woman; a little quick tempered, I'm afraid. I never did like those snapping black eyes; that girl Rose Carter, is just her mother over again, with her blue eyes and her wheedling ways—confounded little jilt! and that boy is fool enough to be taken in by her. I should like to see anybody take me in! No, I thank you! once is enough. I said to Miss Esther Wagg, the other day, 'The widow Zilpha Thomas is a fine woman; a capital manager, isn't she?'"

"Manager you may be sure of that. She managed poor Reuben Thomas into his grave," said Miss Esther.

"But then, it is of no consequence what these spiteful old maids say. Most likely she has an eye on the situation for herself!"

And the doctor drew himself up, in the proud assurance that when he did take a second helpmeet, he should leave every marriageable lady of his acquaintance inconsolable.

"I'll drive round and see the widow Thomas next week. I don't think it likely that she could manage me!"

And having made up his mind, Doctor Hulbert betook himself to his chamber. But his face was not that of a man who is quite satisfied with his decision; and he stood for a long time at the window, and looked down to the foot of the hill, where the Widow Carter's house was plainly visible in the moonlight.

"No, No! once is enough for a man to be made a fool of! And that silly boy shall never marry her daughter, if I can help it!" he said at last, turning away with a decided shake of the head. From which signs an observer would have supposed Miss Esther Wagg to be right, and the Widow Carter an old sweetheart who had "made a fool of him."

Rose Carter, with pale cheeks and downcast eyes, sat demurely sewing beside her mother the next morning, when her uncle, old Squire Carter, came in. The pale cheeks had been observed but not commented on by her mother, but the Squire was not so delicate.

"Bless me! what has become of the red cheeks? Why, they are as white as snowballs! Too much sewing and moping, and not enough air and exercise—or has its sweetheart deserted it, poor little Rosy?"

Upon which Rose's cheeks grew scarlet of course. But the squire was not satisfied.

"The child looks really ill, and something must be done," he said to Mrs. Carter, as he went away. "She hasn't looked like herself for months."

And the squire, haunted by Rose's pale face, betook himself directly to Doctor Hulbert's office.

"I want you to go and see my niece, little Rose Carter, or prescribe something for her. She says nothing ails her, but she looks pale and moped. I suppose it is nothing but want of exercise; if these girls would only do as their grandmothers did! But you know what will help her—it's nerves, I suppose," said the squire who fancied that "nerves" were at the bottom of all feminine ailments.

"Ah yes! I'll send her a prescription," said the doctor, heartily. And thinking it the heartiness of interest and good nature, the squire went on his way relieved.

And Dr. Hulbert, feeling even less amiable than on the previous night, sat down at his desk, and wrote a prescription for Miss Rose Carter.

Just as he finished it his man Barnes brought him a note. It was from the man who took care of the doctor's farm on the outskirts of the town, near the Widow Thomas's wood lot.

"The widow Thomas's man Jake wants to know if you will let the widow take Black Bess, to go down to Saugus to the quarterly conference meeting to-night. She told him to say particular that she

didn't feel very well, and thought the ride would do her good, if you would be so kind as to let her take Black Bess, which is so gentle."

SAMUEL HODGKINS."

The doctor's face cleared as he read. "Little Sam Hodgkins is waiting for the answer, if you please, sir," said Barnes.

And the doctor wrote a few words hurriedly, in answer to Samuel Hodgkins, not without grumbling at the man's stupidity in not letting the widow have the horse without applying to him. But no matter! the widow would not have to ask for Black Bess again. "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," he meant to say to her very soon.

Barnes was entrusted, with the two notes—one for Miss Rose Carter, and the other for little Sam Hodgkins to carry to his father.

In the meantime, Charley had come to a new resolve. He would see Mrs. Carter once more, and try to gain her consent to his marriage with Rose. Without her consent, Rose would never be his wife. It was evidently a hopeless task to try to overcome his father's prejudices; but he was determined that they should not be allowed to destroy his happiness, and Rose's, too, for life. Mrs. Carter liked him; she would give Rose to him willingly, she had told him, if it were not for his father's objections; she might be persuaded to, in spite of it.

And there was no time to lose, for in two days he was going away to a distant city, to establish himself in business. He had hoped to carry Rose with him, but all his pleading had been of no avail to induce her to marry him against her mother's will. All his hope now lay in influencing Mrs. Carter. So, early that morning he took his way to the cottage at the foot of the hill. Squire Carter had just left, and Mrs. Carter's mind was still filled with the anxiety regarding Rose's health which he had aroused; so perhaps Charley could not have found a better time for trying to win her over to his side.

But, though she did hesitate for a moment, his pleading was in vain.

"You know there is no one whom I would rather have for a son than you, Charley," she said. "But I know your father. He is a stern man, a very stern man, and he will never relent. He would never forgive you for marrying against his will. I cannot consent to your ruining all your prospects in life. You and Rose are both very young; you may change. The time might come Charley when you would regret disobeying your father's wish. You are his only son, and so dear to him; and before this, you say, he has never thwarted your slightest wish. You ought not to disobey him hastily. To be sure, his prejudice seems unreasonable—"

"Unreasonable! It is absurd!" interrupted Charley, hotly. "Why, he has never so much as seen you, to my knowledge!"

Mrs. Carter's cheek flushed faintly.

"I lived here when I was a girl, you know. I knew your father then. He has some reasons for disliking me, which I don't understand."

"It is only a prejudice, a notion, I am sure," said Charley. "And he has no right to dictate to me in such a matter."

And he was beginning his eager pleading over again, when Barnes appeared with the note. There was no address on the outside, and Mrs. Carter opened it, while Charley waited in a fever of suspense to know what his father could have to say to Mrs. Carter.

Her face was a picture of amazement as she read, but pleasure shone through it as she handed the note to Charley.

It was brief and to the point.

"Let him have her."

"EDWARD H. HURLBURT."

"I always told Rose he had a heart if one could only get at it!" cried Charley in a transport of delight. "Now, you can make no objection; we have your promise! And I am going away the day after to-morrow, you know, and I must take my wife with me."

"The day after to-morrow! My dear boy, you are beside yourself!" exclaimed Mrs. Carter.

"You and Rose have said wait to me for so long, that you can't have the heart to say it longer, now that there is no reason for waiting. I shall coax Rose over to my side, and then you can't refuse."

And he did coax them both over to his side, after countless arguments and objections. It was arranged that there should be a very quiet wedding, to which only a few intimate friends were to be invited, the next evening. Then Charley hurried home to express his gratitude to his father, whom he began to think he had misjudged.

While this scene was transpiring at the cottage, Samuel Hodgkins has received Doctor Hulbert's answer to his note, and being somewhat surprised and puzzled by it, had transmitted it directly to the Widow Thomas; thus relieving himself of all responsibility in the matter.

So the widow, who was adorning her best cap with new cherry ribbons, in anticipation of the doctor's taking her gentle hint and coming himself to drive her to the quarterly conference meeting, was called from that pleasing occupation to

read the following note, a mere scrawl, written evidently in haste and irritation:

"Let her take a dessert-spoonful of extract of valerian, night and morning for her nerves, common sense in as large doses as she can get it, and stop gadding about evenings."

"EDWARD H. HURLBURT."

The widow's black eyes snapped so that the doctor, if he had been there to see, would have liked them less than ever and the roses that had deserted her cheeks she thought forever, reappeared in full bloom. She had been angry often in her life—the departed Reuben had not been very easy to manage—but never before had she felt anything like the wrath she felt at that moment.

"The impertinent old scoundrel! 'Gadding about evenings' indeed! 'Valerian for my nerves!' as if I were some fidgety old maid! 'Common sense in as large doses as I can find.' How dare he write such a note! Well, I have had a lucky escape! Stupid, cross-grained old wretch! a life of it I should have had with him!"

And the widow put on the cherry-ribboned cap upside down, and fell to dusting the portrait of her deceased spouse with a vim. With all his faults Reuben was not the worst man that ever lived!

Charley was obliged to repress his gratitude for a while, for when he reached home he found that his father had gone to a neighboring town to attend a medical convention, and would not return until the following day.

When the doctor returned the next afternoon Charley was absent, busied with preparations for the approaching wedding. Dr. Hulbert, finding a leisure afternoon upon his hands made an unusually careful toilet, and drove out to call upon the Widow Thomas.

He had fully made up his mind that it would be a lesser evil to have the Widow Zilpha Thomas for a wife, than Mrs. Barnes for a housekeeper, but he had not the air of a very eager wooer, and, in truth he was not without his misgivings; he saw in imagination the widow's black eyes snapping defiantly at him, and wondered if he should not repent, if she proved to be of a quarrelsome temper.

And he cast two or three glances back at the Widow Carter's cottage, and as he did so he certainly sighed. The widow had been in the window, and she had bowed to him—bowed, and actually smiled a little, though in a shy sad way. Dr. Hulbert did not quite understand it. He had met her but twice, to be sure, since she had come back to the village, two years before, but at neither of those times had she shown any disposition to recognize him. His looks had not invited a recognition either then or now, but here she was as sweet as a May morning! It was all her artfulness, of course! She thought she could cajole him into letting Charley marry her daughter. She would see! He would send that boy to Europe, to China if need be, to get him out of Rose Carter's way.

Still it is certain that he sighed deeply as he passed the cottage, and the Widow Thomas's black eyes snapped before him all the more ominously in contrast with the Widow Carter's soft shy blue ones.

Was Miss Esther Wagg right, and was it possible that there was still a spring of sentiment in the doctor's heart, which fifty years and his crusty temper had not been able wholly to dry?

From afar off the widow Thomas saw him coming, "riding along with that grand careless air, as if he owned the whole town," as she declared, and prepared to do battle. She was in such a quiver of indignation that her cap-ribbons stood up straight, and the snapping eyes of his imagination were as nothing compared with these!

"How dare you come here, you insulting, hypocritical villain! you perfidious wretch! Leave this house, sir, and if you ever come here again I'll set Towser upon you as sure as you live!" she cried.

To say that the doctor was amazed would but feebly express his emotion.—He was thoroughly alarmed, and lost no time in escaping from the presence of the maniac (as he felt sure she must be), to his carriage.

"Insane from evil temper, ah, I knew those eyes were not for nothing! But why her anger should be directed against me I can't understand; though I suppose her wrath falls upon any one who happens to be near when the fit seizes" her. O, what an escape I have had!"

And Dr. Hulbert took his homeward way, resolved to be contented with a housekeeper, and thankful that his lot was no worse.

Barnes met him with an unusually smiling countenance.

"Mr. Charley's been waiting to see you, sir; he waited a while, but of course he couldn't wait any longer, and it's six o'clock this minute. He told me to tell you how thankful and happy he was, and that he should feel awful bad if you did not come to the wedding."

"Thankful and happy!" "Come to the wedding!" What are you talking about, you idiot?" demanded the doctor.

"To his wedding with Miss Rose Carter. I thought of course you knew. It's at half-past eight."

"The young rascal! Does he dare to do this?" shouted the doctor, and rushed

out of the house, and down to the Widow Carter's cottage. Mrs. Carter and Charles met him in the hall. His wrath had had time to cool a little in his walk, and if it had not he would have found it hard to be so demonstrative as usual under the widow's calm clear eyes. But he expressed his disapproval quite strongly enough to show them that there had been some mistake.

Charley produced the note, and the doctor saw through the mystery at once—Mrs. Thomas's lunacy and all. That stupid Barnes had changed the notes.—The widow Thomas had been advised to stop gadding about evenings, and Mrs. Carter had considered herself permitted to "let him have" her daughter! However angry he might be, the doctor saw that it was too late to interfere.

"Well, young man, you have chosen your way, and you must walk in it! She is her mother over again, they say—you had better marry her as soon as possible or she'll jilt you, as her mother did me!"

The widow Carter looked at him with something like a flash in her eyes.

"How can you say that, when you know it was you who deserted me?" she said.

"Didn't you write me a letter within a month of the day that was to have been our wedding-day, telling me, coolly, that you had discovered that you preferred another?" demanded the doctor.

"Never! I never wrote you such a letter!" said the widow. Charley began to see that an explanation was coming, at which a third party would not be wanted and took his departure. If he did, then, have a faint presentiment of what might happen as a result of that explanation at some future day, he was not at all prepared for what did occur that very night.

When he and Rose moved away from before the minister who had made them husband and wife, his father and Mrs. Carter stood up before him, and the ceremony was repeated for their benefit.—They had decided, in that brief space of time, that that was the best reparation possible for the mistake of almost a lifetime.

And it proved so agreeable an arrangement that Dr. Hulbert is often heard to say that, though he has always prospered in his practice, he never made so great a success as when he wrote a prescription for Rose Carter.

Dat ish Goot.

AS a gentleman from New York was taking a glass of wine at the St. Louis, corner of Freecun and Hopkins street, in Cincinnati, about three weeks ago, he observed at another table, seated with others, a German who seemed uneasy and anxious, as if there might have been Franco-Prussian disagreement between his beer and himself. Presently in ran a little girl, her face radiant with smiles exclaiming:

"Oh, father we've got a little boy at home!"

"Dat is goot," said the Dutchman, as the anxiety disappeared from his countenance; "fill up der glasses."

Not many minutes elapsed before in rushed the little girl again with the announcement:

"Oh, father we've got two little boys at home!"

The Dutchman looked a good deal astonished and not altogether gratified at this little family redundancy, but rising at length to the magnitude of the occasion he said:

"Vell, den, dat is also good. Fill up der glasses."

In a few minutes again appeared the radiant messenger, with the astounding proclamation:

"Oh, father, we've got three little boys at home!"

This was too much even for Teutonic impassibility. There was no further call for glasses.

"Vell den," says he, "I goes up dere and I stops ter whole tam business!"

A Question Game.

A BAND of rustic worthies were seated around the tavern fire, one winter's evening, consisting of the blacksmith, the barber, the constable, and the schoolmaster. After they had drank and smoked to their heart's content, and exhausted all the ordinary topics of conversation, the pedagogue proposed a new kind of game, in which each one was to propose a question, and whoever proposed one that he himself could not solve, was to pay the reckoning for all; Dick Dolt, whom every one thought a fool, was picked out for the first question.

"Neighbors," said Dick, drawing out his words, and looking ineffably stupid, "you have seen the way squirrels dig holes; can any one of you tell why they throw no dirt?"

That was a poser; and after a long cogitation, even the schoolmaster was compelled to give it up. It devolved on Dick to explain.

"The reason is," said he, "that they begin at the bottom of the hole."

"Stop—stop!" cried the pedagogue, surprised out of all prudence by so monstrous an assertion; "pray how does the squirrel get there?"

"Ah," answered Dick, "that's a question of your own proposing. You're in for the drinks, master."