

PRO AND CON.



URS had been a very short engagement—a very short acquaintance even. You would probably call us mad to marry as we did. But what was to be done? It was not a very happy or cheerful life that my poor little girl was leading with our great-aunt Hepzibah. We two were not related. I had never heard of Ethel Drayton until the day when I paid one of my somewhat rare visits to Aunt Hepzibah, and found that she was bringing up an orphan niece.

"So you have come for your wife, Mark?" said Aunt Hepzibah, as she met me at the door, when a few months later I went to claim my bride. "Well, I wish you joy. I hope you will be able to teach her some things that I never could. Of all the sights—"

But just here I became deaf, for behind Aunt Hepzibah's back I caught sight of Ethel, sparkling and palpitating, with hands outstretched in shy but joyous welcome.

"Is she a sight?" I said, vaguely; and Aunt Hepzibah laughed in spite of herself. "I was not speaking of sights, but of spectacles," she said.

"A very pretty sight or spectacle, either," I said, gathering my wits together.

"Don't let Aunt Hepzibah prejudice you against me at the start," whispered Ethel.

Early the next morning Ethel and I were quietly married at the village church, and started at once for the little town on the Connecticut River which was to be our future home.

Our route lay through some of the finest scenery of the region, and I had enjoyed the prospect of showing it to Ethel; but she took scarcely any notice of it.

"Oh, Mark, don't bother me about scenery," she said when I tried to attract her attention to it. "Aunt Hepzibah was always bothering me about it, and saying that I ought to—"

"Ought to what?" I asked, as she stopped abruptly.

"Ought to appreciate it, I suppose," said Ethel. "And I couldn't; and I was ashamed that I couldn't; and don't, please don't you begin with it too."

I was a little disappointed, I must confess. One of the few points which Aunt Hepzibah and I had in common was a deep and genuine love of nature, and I had hoped that Ethel, too, would share it. But the pleading pathos in her tones and the suspicion of tears in her eyes would have softened a harder heart than mine. I not only dropped the subject, but also exerted myself, I hope with success, to make her forget the incident.

Whatever Aunt Hepzibah's failings may have been, she had certainly succeeded in making Ethel an excellent housekeeper. Never were meals so admirably served at so small a cost; never was a cottage so tastefully arranged and decorated at so trifling an expense; never did domestic affairs move so smoothly in any establishment, yet with such a total absence of fuss and cast-iron rules. Yet amid so much perfection one or two things struck me oddly. Chief among them was Ethel's total indifference to dust and litter. Crumbs, threads, and lint might

and went off to see about supper.

After the meal was over, seeing that Ethel had regained her composure, I renewed the subject, winning from her at last the reluctant promise that she would try to bring her mind to the wearing of spectacles, at least occasionally.

"But remember, Mark," she said, in conclusion "if ever you, for a single minute, are brought to acknowledge that near-sightedness is a good thing, that minute I discard my spectacles, at once and forever."

"And, conversely," I said, "if you are ever brought to acknowledge that near-sightedness is a bad thing, you promise to wear them constantly?"

"Not at all," said Ethel. "I never denied that it was a misfortune. I only said that it is not an unmitigated evil, and that it might be better to endure its inconveniences than to make a guy of one's self."

I was well enough satisfied to say no more, being quite sure that Ethel's own common-sense would triumph in the end.

The spectacles had been duly bought, but Ethel had not yet been able to bring her mind to the wearing of them. I suppose it does require some moral courage for a pretty young girl to disfigure herself, even for her own good. It struck me that it would be easier for her to begin where nobody could see her, which was one of my reasons for taking her out driving on that bright, breezy autumn day. Our road lay over acres of billowing greenery to where the Connecticut River flashed like a sapphire far below. Above us arched a sky washed clear of every film, over which the rushing wind drove masses of shining silver clouds. "The tossing waves and the tossing leaves showed shadow and gleam together," but on all Ethel looked with a careless eye.

(To be Continued.)

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