

herself no anxiety concerning religion; thinking something new might come for her, away in the distant future, when the world had grown less fair, and her life might be less complete.

In fact, she began at that very time to feel rather strong apprehensions that the time was drawing near too rapidly, when the freedom she now reveled in would be taken from her, and the brightness and glory of the world in which she lived and rejoiced, would be shut away from her presence. She felt this because of certain circumstances which were shaping about her.

For two years she had accepted the addresses of Dean Augustus Campbell, a gentleman verging on middle age, as he was Miss Catharine's preference among many who sought the favor of both aunt and niece. It mattered little to Emily who was the attendant of her aunt and herself when they went into society, as they were always together; and the dean was so reserved and cool in his manner toward her that she had never felt the least inconvenience from his being present on any occasion. And it was not until her twenty-third birthday that anything occurred to disturb the blissful buoyancy of her pure and fresh young soul. "Miss Emily," her aunt observed to her that morning, (it was the 19th of November, 1847), "the dean wishes me to speak with you today on an important subject; come to my room in half an hour and I shall be ready to talk with you."

A number of fancies came into Emily's mind during the half hour of waiting, which she spent in attention to a window garden, the care of which she found much pleasure in. The dean wanted her aunt to speak to her on an important subject! What subject of importance could he be interested in that could concern her? Had he really concluded to arouse himself and go traveling, which she had sometimes heard hints of between him and her aunt? And were her feelings to be considered in the matter? Whether she would go or remain at home? No! That would be too good a thing. It might be something in his ecclesiastical or estate affairs, for which he would need to borrow money, and as she was expected to inherit her aunt's property, possibly they required her sanction for some transaction that was to be made.

Imagine Emily's astonishment, when in the quiet of her aunt's private sitting-room, that dignified lady made the following declaration, in her usual grave and business like way:

"The dean has been thinking for some time, Emily, that your twenty-third birthday would be an appropriate time for the formal announcement of your betrothal. He has discovered that you are far ahead of most young women at your age; that notwithstanding your vivacity there is a world of profundity within you which needs only opportunity for development, and you will do honor to his home and his saintly calling. He has therefore decided that your marriage shall take place on Christmas, in his own chapel. This is his present to you this morning, singularly appropriate, a Bible and prayer book. He will see you himself this afternoon, and we may ride with him over to the vicarage."

All Emily found voice for was "Well, aunt," spoken in a tone so low that its meaning could not have been understood by the stately lady, as she placed the dean's gift in Emily's hands.

"Go to your room now," Miss Catharine continued, "it will be best for you to spend most of the day by yourself; as you have subject matter which will require deeper reflection than anything your mind has hitherto contemplated. Marriage, you will come to see, is a very great thing."

Emily went to her room as bidden. She had, surely, something to reflect

upon. What was this her aunt and the dean were paving the way and preparing her for? Something great, indeed! Was it all right with herself? she asked. Would it be her ideal of wedded life, to live always with the dean? What did she know of his private life and character? He had always been civil, simply civil to her; was there anything more to look for? What sort of a life would it be, anyhow, with a man who kept so close within himself that after two years' intimate acquaintance with him, it was impossible to judge whether there was a spark of animation in his soul that might, under some circumstances be touched and made to appear outwardly in some form; or if the whole being were actually indicated by the serene, self-sufficient, never changing surface?

Emily found at length that her reflections were all compounded of questions, none of which she was able to answer. And she did not know whether to be glad or sorry when her reverie was broken by the announcement that the dean had arrived, and wished to see her privately.

For the first time in their lives the dean and Emily stood face to face alone. What would he say? How would he act? were the questions which flashed through her mind now. Should she be frightened or pleased at his approach? For he did condescend to step toward her as she entered the room, and stopped. Yes, he even extended his hand, a thing he had never done before. But he only touched her fingers respectfully; there was no pressure of the plump, pretty hand she reached out to him; not half so hearty a handshake as a certain good looking navy officer had taken pains to give her on several occasions when they had met. With this thought arose a sudden feeling of depression; for, could not the dean realize that, according to his own decree, they were that day actually engaged? And were they not soon to be married? Was this all the demonstration he thought necessary on such a momentous occasion? She took the seat he motioned her to on the same sofa he seated himself upon, but there was distance enough between them so that he could not have put his arm around her waist and she could not have leaned her head upon his shoulder, even had the desire for such intimacy suggested it.

"Your aunt has told you of my intentions?" began the dean.

"She has," answered Emily, in a voice which it took a great effort to make steady.

"There will be certain bounds now which we must not transcend," he continued. "For instance, you will not walk home from church with your young friends again, but accompany your aunt always, whether she rides or walks. Also avoid entering into conversations which are likely to be prolonged, with gentlemen like Sir Robert, the duke, and others, whom I have noticed seek for opportunities of drawing you into discussion on their favorite themes. And if at any time a gentleman should presume to ask your hand for more than one dance in an evening, as that brilliant but offensive young nobleman did at Lady Hamilton's, decline at once. I shall endeavor to be patient with you concerning these things for a time, but you must be guarded. We must leave no room for scandal, or for unfavorable things to be said of us. I trust you appreciate the present I chose for you as befitting the day."

"I shall try to," answered Emily, almost dazed with what she had listened to, and unable to collect her thoughts.

"You will ride with your aunt and myself to the vicarage, now; there are some changes to be made there, and as I am going over, you may as well

accompany me," said the dean, arising.

Without another word, Emily left the room, and as if compelled by the dean's word, prepared for the ride to the vicarage, and went.

She marvelled at herself now, as years before she had wondered why her mother bore some things without questioning, which she felt like rebuking most sharply.

For more than a month Emily allowed herself to be drawn steadily on towards the culminating point at which all her girlish fancies and maiden hopes were to be swallowed up, in what seemed to her a vague mystery. She felt that the little kingdom wherein she had reigned for a brief, blissful season as queen of love and song and nameless charms, was passing out of her life; that henceforth she was to be no more than mere mote in the bright circle of stars where she had been of all the most attractive, or she should pass out of sight altogether.

Why was she allowing herself to be thus placed behind immovable prison bars, or what seemed as dreadful, without even demurring?

Strange as it may seem to those born where universal freedom is the rule, there were strong reasons why Emily was being passively led along as she permitted herself to be.

One was that having lived with her aunt for ten years, without opposing her will in a single instance, it appeared to her that to attempt doing so now would be an utterly hopeless undertaking. She loved and revered her aunt also, and was deeply indebted to her as well, and dependent upon her for every earthly comfort. How could she muster strength and courage to disappoint such a friend, and incur her lasting displeasure by opposing her will or questioning her judgment? She felt unequal to such an effort.

She did not know her own strength of character, or her ability to work up a purpose to completion, so dormant had been her controlling forces because of her entire reliance upon her aunt's superior faculties.

Another reason for her compliance with the plans of her aunt and the dean, was that being possessed of strong physical, as well as mental powers, but without understanding them, she felt the natural impulses which guide most young people into the hymeneal path. And often, without knowing why, she shuddered at the thought of living a whole life time, perhaps, a long one, like her Aunt Catharine, with no husband and no child of her own. And now, to marry the cold, unpassioned, marble-hearted dean did not seem to her so dreadful, with all the sacrifices she saw she would have to make, as to remain unmarried and grow old. She did not consider very carefully what might be the consequences of such a step, however, or she never would have thought that. She would have known at a glance, could she have looked into the future but a little way, that she was selling her freedom at much too low a price.

Alas! how many innocent victims have been thus sacrificed on such unholy shrines!

The days went on until but two remained between Emily and the morning on which she was to take the fatal leap. It was Saturday, the 23rd of December; that day would pass, and there was yet the Sabbath to be lived, and then would come the sealing of her doom.

Her aunt had been rather more tender in her ways toward her of late than for years before, for Miss Catharine was not one to parade emotional feelings in a general way, or even to show that she had them. But the thought of Emily going out from her home, and of her allowing the claim of