

Durham Tobacco Plant.

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No. 10.

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SELECTED STORY.

OUR TEACHER.

The time for the commencement of the summer term of our high school at Nonam, was drawing near, and we—that is, the Superintendent School Committee—had published a notice for those proposing to apply for situations as teachers, either in the high school or in any other of the thirteen schools in the town, to present themselves on a certain day for examination. (The principal of our high school was already engaged, but he was without assistants.) The day arrived, and agreeable to notice the committee met at the residence of Rev. Mr. Stevens, who was our chairman. Stevens was a genial, progressive preacher, warm-hearted and impulsive, and keenly intellectual.

The other two of the committee were Clarence Seymour, Esq., and myself. Seymour was a graduate from Harvard University, four-and-twenty years of age, and just entered on the practice of his profession—Law. I hardly think I am competent to describe the man. I loved him so well—he was to me so true and so devoted—that I may have overlooked his faults. But I can say that I never saw them, though his goodness and his manliness were ever manifested to me. One thing I can say, however—because I have a daguerreotype picture taken of him by Anthony Crockett at the time of which I speak—he was a handsome man, and every inch a man.

Numerous candidates applied to us for examination, but as my story has to do with only one of them, I will say nothing of the others.

One of the young ladies desiring to be installed as teacher gave us a card, upon which, in a very chaste and well-rounded hand, was written—"Margaret Brandt." When we came to examine her particularly with reference to her qualifications for the position as first assistant to the principal of our High School, we were forced to ask questions which were not propounded to those who only sought position in the outlying districts. She informed us, very modestly, that she was an orphan—that she had been educated by a kind uncle, now deceased—and that she now found herself cast upon her own resources. She had accompanied her uncle to Germany, and to Italy, where, by his permission, she had gained something of a musical education, and where she had added to other stores of information.

Music was one of the branches we had then recently introduced into our High School, and when we had satisfied ourselves that the candidate was intellectually competent, Mr. Stevens asked her if she had any objections to giving us a sample of her musical abilities. She had none whatever. There was an excellent piano-forte in the room, and she sat down to it without hesitation of any kind.

As I saw Margaret Brandt at the time she was about twenty years of age; of medium height; fashioned for comeliness and strength; healthful and vigorous; bright and cheerful; and yet as modest and pure in every look and tone and motion as the lily when it offers its first blossom to the kiss of the sun.

And even our good clergyman, when she had brought forth a magic voice from the piano, and had mingled therewith the notes of her own surpassing melody of singing, sat like one enchanted. Suffice it to say, that we found Margaret Brandt duly qualified, and that she was installed as assistant-in-charge of the principal of our high school.

About a month after the school had commenced I had chanced to drop into Seymour's office one day while he was reading a letter. He looked up and nodded, and then went on with his reading.

"A letter from my old aunt, in New York," he said, as he refolded the missive; "and she is acquainted with Margaret Brandt."

I asked if the old lady spoke particularly of Miss Brandt.

I may say here, that Clarence Seymour, of his own accord, had long given me his entire confidence. In my dwelling he made himself at home when he pleased; my wife and children liked him; and my library to which he had free access, came very convenient to him.

"I'll tell you what she says," he replied; "and opening the letter he read aloud—

"En passant, my dear nephew, I am informed that Margaret Brandt is teaching school in your town. Her mother and I were friends—dear friends—in other years. Margaret is a dear, good girl; and, if I know her aright, her truth, honesty and sterling merit, crowned by a purity such as angels might emulate, will be to her, and to those who become her friends, of more worth than could be the golden dress which others may possess. Dear boy, I know you are one of the School Committee of your town. For my sake be kind to Margaret if you can. Poor girl! She has had a hard enough life of it; but she has a foolish notion of independence. She will not accept from others that which she can earn for herself. Have you heard her sing?"

"And so she goes on," said Seymour, refolding the letter, and putting it in his breast pocket. "My soul! haven't I heard her sing? And do you know old fellow, this word from my good old aunt, whose judgement is beyond question warms my heart!"

"Ah! Clarence," said I, "you are falling in love with our teacher."

The color of his face changed, and for a moment he hesitated and stammered, but only for a moment. Directly his face brightened, and he laid his hand upon my shoulder as he said, with solemn earnestness:

"My dear friend, why should I attempt to play shy and coy with you? I am not falling in love. If I can read my own heart, and translate aright its ardent throbbings, I love Margaret Brandt already, as deeply and truly as man can love. And I am not ashamed to acknowledge this to you, nor am I ashamed to ask your advice. You are a married man, and you have a family, at least, not inexpensive on your hands. Now, you know my situation. Perhaps you know my prospects in this place better than I do. You have had experience, and you can judge of some things better than I can. Shall I, poor as I am with my life yet to uphold, ask Margaret Brandt to become my wife?"

I did not answer in a hurry. I took time to consider. Clarence Seymour I knew from top to bottom, outside and in. The woman who took him for a husband, in love, and truth, and faith, would be surely blessed. So, of him, I felt, I knew. And now of Margaret Brandt—Ah! I had not long to think. The atmosphere of a pure Elysium could not be so continuously and so uninterceptedly exhaled except by a being pure and good of heart.

"My dear boy," said I after a due thought, "if you have courage to try, go ahead. With Margaret Brandt, for your wife I am firmly assured you cannot but prosper."

"But," said he, with a look and expression of supplication which was almost childish, "do you think she—that is—do you think I have any hope in that quarter?"

Perhaps the wish was parent to the thought—I may have spoken from impulse hastily—but I answered him as I thought I had seen.

"My dear Clarence, if I am not worse than blind, she loves you as well as you love her."

Mercy! what a transfiguration appeared upon the face of Clarence Seymour. He jumped up and caught me by the hand.

"Old fellow, you don't mean it?"

"Seriously, Clarence, I do."

"O, bless you!"

"And," I added, "I have a joy in store for you. Miss Brandt is coming to my house this evening, to sing and play with my eldest daughter. I hereby invite you to be one of our happy number."

His only answer was a warm clasp of the hand.

That evening there was music in my house fit for ears celestial. Minister Stevens was there, and Mr. Dunnell, our Principal, was there. And Addie Tenny, the sweetest songstress of all our town-people, was there, cheerfully yielding the laurel crown, and filled with enjoyment.

Towards the close of the evening, while Addie was at the piano-forte I observed Clarence Seymour and Margaret Brandt, seated close together in a far corner of an adjoining room, looking over the illuminated pages of a work on Scottish scenery. I observed for a brief space, and I need ask no more. My own courtship and marriage had been no formal, methodical affair. I had deeply loved, and had been loved in return; and I knew the sym-

ptoms well. It required but little observation on that evening to assure me beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Margaret Brandt had really fallen in love with Clarence Seymour, let alone what the young lawyer might have done in his own behalf.

And when the hours had come very near midnight I saw Margaret place her hand confidently within Clarence's arm for an escort home. I had no doubt then that the match was made.

(Thus far of my own knowledge and observation. The rest, save the simple fact of marriage, I had from Clarence.)

Christmas time was coming, and those of the pupils of our high school who lived out of town were preparing for home. One evening, in the vestry of the church, Clarence Seymour took the arm of Margaret Brandt within his own, and offered to escort her home.

She did not refuse; and on the way their troth was plighted. Clarence told Margaret of his hopes of speedy prosperity, with her to plan for, and she expressed her readiness to work by his side.

And on Christmas day they were married; and Clarence's old aunt came on from New York to witness the ceremony; and on the following day she said to her nephew,—

"My dear boy, you must return this favor by spending New Year's day with me. You can certainly afford that much of a bridal tour."

"That reminds me," he answered, with a startled expression, "that we have no teacher in Margaret's place."

"My dear husband," said Margaret, dwelling lovingly upon the word new and precious to her, "do not think that in this season of joy I have been forgetful of duty. My resignation of the office of teacher was in the hands of Mr. Stevens two weeks ago, and he has a competent successor to take my place when the holiday vacation is over. If you can spare the time, and can afford it, I should really like to go to New York."

"I can spare the time, darling, and I can afford it; and moreover, I can shake it a visit of promise as well as of pleasure, as I have a friend there whom I am anxious to see."

They prepared to set forth on Friday afternoon, and before starting Margaret went to the office and sent off a dispatch by telegraph.

"What is it?" asked Clarence.

"Only a request to a friend to meet us at the station in New York," and as they stepped from the cars, Clarence suggested to his wife and aunt that they should wait while he secured a coach.

"There will be no need, I think," said Margaret. "If my telegram reached its destination, your own carriage will be here for you."

"My own—"

But before he could finish the sentence a middle-aged man, scrupulously neat and clean, appeared upon the scene, and lifting his hat with a politeness that was reverential, said:

"Your carriage is here, my lady."

Was it to the old lady, or to the young that he spoke? It was peculiar, at all events. Margaret had told him of his own carriage. What did it mean? He gave to the middle-aged man the checks for his baggage, and then followed him to the street, where he was shown, not a common hack, but a magnificent carriage, to which were hitched a span of horses, the very perfection of equine grace and beauty.

"Margaret," said Clarence, smiling as he laid his hand upon her arm, "what good friend accommodates you thus?"

"One of the best friends I have in the world. You shall see him when we reach home."

"Home?"

"I call it home, although it is not mine."

A shadow crossed Clarence's face as he said,—

"One of your best friends, Margaret—and a man—and you have neither father nor brother?"

I have a very dear relative, nevertheless, and one of whom you shall never be jealous. Wait until you see him. You will, when you know him, call him a good man, though perhaps not handsome."

Up Broadway—up to one of the fairest and most picturesque of the squares of the great city—the middle-aged man drove the carriage, and when he stopped it was before the door of a marble palace, or it looked like a palace to Clarence Seymour.

"Do we stop here?" he asked.

"Yes."

They entered the hall, and passed into the grand drawing-room. Clarence began to feel a strange palpitation of the heart.

"Clarence," said his wife, after she had given her over-arguments to a servant who had obsequiously attended upon her, "shall I now introduce you to the dear friend of whom I have spoken; the friend who owes the team that brought us here, and who owns this house?"

"Yes, darling."

"And you will not be jealous?"

"I promise."

"Behold him there."

And she pointed to the heavenly framed pier-glass which adorned the head of the apartment.

"Margaret!"

She drew him to a chair, and sat down in his lap, and wound her arms about his neck.

"My own dear husband," she said, punctuating the address with a kiss, "do you not begin to imagine why I sought the school at Nonam?—I was unfortunate enough to be left an orphan with almost a million of dollars. You can imagine the ordeal. The really worthy—the men of strong lands and true hearts—the men fitted to fight the battle of life bravely—dare not seek my hand. Fortune-hunters were plenty; your aunt and my mother had less play-mates, and school-mates, and dear friends from childhood. One day your aunt told me the story of your risking your life to save a drowning boy, and of a still more fearful risk which you ran for the saving of a man and woman who were being run away with by an ungovernable horse. I began to love you then. Next she told how bravely you had fought your way through college. She told me, too, that you were an orphan. I asked her to get for me your daguerreotype likeness, which she did. And then I resolved to see you, and win you if I could. Really, Clarence, I had loved you before I saw you; and when I had seen you I knew—aye, I know that I had found the blessing if I could win it. I came—I saw—I conquered. Your aunt promised secrecy touching my wealth, and she gained for me the recommendations of your school committee with which I came around. Are you sorry, my darling, that you have given to me your heart, your hand, and your name?"

After a brief pause, Clarence took his wife to his bosom, and, holding her in a fond and yearning embrace, he made answer:

"I thank God for my wife!"

And from that day to this—after the lapse of years—they both gave thanks, daily, to the All Father for the blessing of their union.

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A.....	12 cts.
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Shirting, A. A.....	10 1/2 cts.
1/2 shirting at.....	8 1/2
Prints at.....	9 1/2 cts.
Bleaching yard wide at.....	12 cts.

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