

Selected Story. Major Desmond's Wife.

BY HILLEN FOREST GRAVER.

It was just the very spot for love-making—a rustic summer-house beside the river—

Mrs. Clermont sat among the honeysuckles, in black silk, trimmed with deep folds of crêpe.

Major Desmond stood opposite leaning against the rustic post of the summer-house door.

"My dear major, you surely cannot be in earnest," said the widow, daintily handling a small gold-stoppered smelling-bottle.

"Why shouldn't I be earnest?" demanded the major, with great composure.

"The mischief take the man!" thought she to herself.

"I know that," said Desmond, a little puzzled; "but what on earth have I got to do with that?"

"Much. I have promised dear Juliet never to marry again without her consent.

"I can't tell you that I have vowed a sacred vow not to wed a second time, unless my Juliet sanctions her mother's choice."

"And you won't break it?" "I could not," sighed the widow.

"Then I suppose there's no help for it," said Major Desmond. "Well, I'll take the first train for New York to-morrow morning."

"Just you go so soon?" cried the widow, severely infuriated at this very unnecessary haste.

"The sooner the better," said Major Desmond, gallantly kissing the plump hand, with four dots of dimples at the joints and pink nails, that lay over the rail of the rustic seat.

"The good fool!" said Mrs. Clermont, when at last she was left to herself. "If I was a man, I know I would not make such a ninny of myself."

"And now to bring Gerard Jusington to the point as soon as possible!"

"Mademoiselle Chenille's Day and Evening Establishment, on Madison Avenue, in New York, was thrown into a sort of giddy excitement, the next afternoon, by the unusual announcement:

"A gentleman to see Miss Clermont."

"Mademoiselle Chenille looked doubtful, and shook her head. "Quite against our rules, my dear, said she."

"But he's a friend of mamma's!" cried Juliet, coloring up. "He brings a letter from mamma."

"In that case, my dear, matters are quite altered," said the gracious little Frenchwoman. "Madame's sanction removes all interdiction."

Major Desmond rose, in some confusion, as Miss Juliet Clermont tripped into the room. "He had anticipated a vain, awkward school-girl; here was a beautiful young girl, with eyes like Moore's 'dear gazelle,' a cream-white skin, and a slight, bending figure, in white muslin, with a broad black sash."

"Are you Miss Juliet?" said he. "Yes, I'm Miss Juliet," the young lady answered, with great composure.

"Oh," said the major. "The fact is—I have called—it's your mamma, Miss Juliet!"

"I hope mamma is well?" "Never better, the major answered, and plunged desperately into the heart of the matter. "She's thinking of marrying again, and she sent me to see if you willing!"

"Certainly not," said Juliet, patting her prettily-shingled foot upon the

carpet, and exclaiming in a peevish crimson. "Mamma is old enough to know better!"

"You won't consent?" "No!" she flashed out.

"That's awkward," said Major Desmond, reflectively. "Then I suppose the matter is all up."

"Who—who is the gentleman?" asked Juliet, a little anxiously.

"Why, it was myself." "You, Major Desmond?" "Yes, I. Why not?"

Juliet Clermont laughed, and colored, and dropped her eyes, and they were at least an eighth of an inch longer than the widow's.

"Why, you're not thirty yet, and poor, silly mamma must be forty, at the very least!"

"I'm seven-and-twenty," said the major, with dignity, "and your mamma is only thirty-five."

"You might as well marry your grandmother!" said Juliet, satirically; "and you know there is a Scripture law against that."

Major Desmond looked with a sort of sudden inspiration into the beautiful, liquid eyes that were sparkling with merriment.

"Miss Juliet," said he, valorously, "if you won't consent to my marrying your mamma—"

"Certainly I shall not!" interrupted Juliet, more pithily than before.

"Well, then, what would you say to my marrying you?"

Juliet started, colored, and looked prettier than ever in her bewilderment and confusion.

"I—I never thought of that, scarcely knowing what else to say."

"Think of it, won't you?" said Major Desmond, persuasively. "I'll sit still and never say a word to disturb you for five minutes."

Juliet looked at the major under her eyelashes. He was young and handsome, and she knew he was a gentleman by birth and rank; he had property enough to live well, and she was so tired of Mademoiselle Chenille and those tedious French excursions, and all she was seventeen next week.

"Well, Miss Juliet, what is your answer?" spoke out the major's clear, pleasant voice.

"My a great mind to say 'Yes,' said Miss Clermont.

"Then suppose I take you back to Clermont Lodge with me at once, said the major, who believed in striking while the iron was hot.

"It wouldn't be proper," said Juliet. "It would be perfectly proper if we were to be married first, suggested the major.

"Wouldn't that be rather romantic?" said Juliet, laughing, yet not displeased.

"Well, I don't know that the romance of the thing constitutes any objection," observed Major Desmond, thoughtfully.

Major Desmond in the parlor with dear Juliet? Then of course, she has consented, sweet, thoughtful girl!" cried Mrs. Clermont, all in a flutter.

"Fate is certainly on my side at last!—although I didn't think so when Gerard Jusington told me he was engaged to that odious Celestine Marley!"

And Mrs. Clermont hurried down to greet the newcomers.

Major Desmond advanced to greet her.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Clermont!" said he. "She wouldn't consent—not on any terms!"

"Would not consent?" echoed the widow.

"And so, as you had said that was an indispensable condition—"

"But," gasped Mrs. Clermont, "I didn't mean—"

"Perhaps it would be well to hear me out first," said Major Desmond, calmly. "And so, as she was very like you, and generally extremely charming, I proposed to her, and we went and got married at once!"

"Oh, mamma, won't you give me your blessing?" entreated Mrs. Major Desmond, going gracefully down on her knees.

"Won't you give me your blessing, mamma?" pleaded the major himself, with a curious twinkle in his eyes.

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