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## TWO ENGAGEMENTS.

Nina is sitting on the fresh young grass among the apple blossoms. Not unlike an apple blossom herself, in her pink and white dress of clear muslin, is the bright girl with the flower-like face. Nina is not a beauty by any means; but nineteen healthful, happy years have given her the charms and graces of a pure, contented maidenhood—gentle eyes, a smile like sunshine, crowded braids of light-brown hair, and a strong, quiet heart.

She has also pretty, dimpled hands, which are at present making fine tatting and weaving, all unconsciously, a web of quite another sort.

The young man whose length of supple limb lies stretched beside her, among the devastating clovers, is decidedly handsome. He has light curling hair, almost golden in its brightness, and dark eyebrows, arching over lovely, melancholy dark eyes.

There has been quite a long silence between these two, who are here alone in this blossoming orchard with the soft, fragrant petals showering down around them, and no other company but vagrant butterflies and hard-working bees to share their solitude.

When the young man speaks at last, it is in a very discontented voice.

"You know very well I want to speak to you, Nina. You know I sent the children away for no other purpose; I must speak to you. But you sit there counting your stitches and looking so cool—"

"I don't count them," she answered, good-humoredly, and letting her eyes rest on his an instant. "Dear me! what a frowning forehead! Well, then, why don't you speak? I shall be delighted to hear anything you may have—"

"I don't want you to be delighted," he interrupts her, shortly. "And do, for mercy sake, put that eternal work away! I would like your undivided attention for once."

The tatting is instantly disposed of in a convenient apron-pocket, and the nimble white hands clasp each other, at rest.

"Say am I not good and obedient? Now for the wonderful story. If you really are coming to confession, Star, why, that is just splendid!"

"For the listener? See here, Nina, you have heard me speak of—of Laura Dalton, haven't you?"

"Never. You have never mentioned her name until this moment, Star, and you know it!"

"Of course I know it. Who said I didn't? Well, I'm going to mention her now. I met her at my aunt's when they lived in Washington three winters ago. She is an orphan—a sort of ward of Aunt Maggie's—and when I had known her two months we were engaged."

"Very rational on both sides. You were then nineteen. At what period of her infancy was Miss Dalton?"

"Well, sixteen, perhaps. She has been at school in Germany ever since, until a month ago. But the worst of it is, Nina"—stretching out his hand and laying it on hers—"we are engaged at this present moment."

If he had expected to meet any stormy demonstration of surprise, or grief, or anger, he finds himself wonderfully mistaken. The tranquil blue eyes widen a little, and the color deepens slightly in the rounded cheeks, but the sweet voice replies, in its usual clear tone:

"How strange of you, Star, not to speak of this before? And why should it be 'the worst of it' that you are still engaged?"

"Because I am very unhappy, and because I do not love poor Laura. She is such a foolish, frivolous creature—just a big, warm-hearted child, that is all. Tell me Nina, dearest," strengthening his pressure on the passive fingers, "haven't you known all along—ever since that first night when we walked home through the beech woods from Aunt Maggie's—haven't you known that I loved you?"

"Yes," she says, in almost a whisper, "I have known it, Starwood."

"And you wondered that I could keep silence?"

"Yes," she says again, very softly. "But then you knew of my engagement."

"Your engagement? Nina, please don't begin about that. A wretched arrangement between fathers and mothers. I've no patience to speak of it. You know very well you will never marry Doctor Leslie."

"Of course I will marry him," opening still wider the soft blue eyes. "I wonder at you, Star."

"You won't marry Doctor Leslie, and for a very good reason, Nina; you will marry me."

"Starwood!"

"For heaven's sake, don't look at me like that; I have not proposed to kill anybody. It is only this, dearest; I cannot marry Laura Dalton when my whole heart belongs to you, and I know, too, that you care for me dearly—dearly."

"I care for you too much to let you act dishonorably," she answers, steadily; but there are tears in her drooped eyes, and she unclasps her hands to take his own into their gentle embrace. "You should have spoken before. It is all so strange to me. And the girl—Starwood. Does she love you?"

"That's the trouble. She loves me to distraction. Her little letters break my heart. She is so happy in the thought of our marriage. It was arranged to take place next month"—disconsolately—"and she's coming to Aunt Maggie's the day after to-morrow. Nina, I think I will run away."

"You could not be a coward, Star."

"Come with me, Nina," a world of entreaty in his tone. "No, but I am in earnest. Why should we sacrifice ourselves to lives of misery. Dr. Leslie cannot feel for you as I do. It is almost a year since he has seen you even."

"He does love me. Oh, Star, if you knew. I am all the world to him, and he has waited and worked. I could not be so wicked. He is coming back soon. He has finished his course in Paris, and—do you think we two could ever be happy together if we had made others wretched."

"But you love me, Nina? Tell me truth, dearest; nothing will seem so hard to bear after that. Only say it."

He has drawn so near that his cheek rests against her slender shoulder.

Shy Nina does not answer, but her arm slips timidly round his neck, and she rests her cheek against his curling golden hair. After the fashion of maidens, she has answered her love in silence.

This exquisite moment is suddenly broken in upon by the sound of scampering feet and ringing voices, and the children come rushing pell-mell through the orchard gate.

But, after all, they are Nina's brothers, and that thought reconciles him to bear for a while the noisy infliction of their company.

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A shadow darkens the morning sunshine. Nina looks up from adding the weekly household accounts, and sees in the long, open window the loveliest young woman she has ever beheld.

"Miss Marble, Nina."

Nina's heart quakes, but she goes forward with a welcoming smile.

"I am Laura—Laura Dalton. You have heard of me?" offering both hands with impulsive grace.

"Oh, yes, yes!" says Nina, blushing slightly, but looking bravely into brilliant hazel eyes—lovely, wonderful eyes, so thickly fringed with fine black lashes. "I am so glad to see you! It is so kind of you to come!"

"Star promised to bring me, but I would not wait. You will think it dreadful of me to rush in without ringing the door-bell; but I saw you from the garden, and I knew you were Nina. Star has written me so much about you! I ought to be jealous, but I won't be. You're too sweet. Aunt Maggie has told me lots about you. It is so nice for her to have such pleasant neighbors. What a lovely place they have! You know they lived in Washington when I went away, and the idea of coming to New Jersey! I have been abroad three years."

"Mr. Burley told me," says Nina, helping to divest her visitor of a coquettish hat and feather, and laying bare her magnificent coils of shining black hair.

"He has told you everything, I suppose? Dear fellow! I find him changed—so dull and spiritless."

"He was not very well," Nina hastens to say, with a tell-tale flush on her face. "At least, when he first came to Mrs. Creigh's, he was recovering from typhoid fever, and he—I suppose—"

"That was nine months ago," is the prompt rejoinder. "He wrote me all about the typhoid fever, and that he had entirely recovered. But he seems strangely altered. I think it is good for a man to have enough money to live on without work. You have seen a good deal of Star, I suppose, since you've been acquainted?"

"Oh, yes! My brother Clarence and he are quite intimate."

"He did not tell me about Clarence. He told me about you," says the young lady. "I was anxious to see you! Of course, you know that he—that I—You do know, Nina, don't you?"

"About your engagement?" asks Nina, smiling gravely. "Star will have a beautiful wife."

"I hope he may have a happy one"—with a little sigh. "He is such a lovely fellow. But, somehow, I don't think it is nice to be married so very soon. The second of next month—only think!—and I am just nineteen! No one knew of our engagement except Aunt Maggie, and now she is so anxious to have every one know, and to have us settled; and I like to be single, don't you? It seems dreadful just to leave school and then be married. I haven't had any good time."

"Why not postpone your wedding for a while?" asks Nina, smiling at the frankness of her beautiful visitor. "You are both so young!"

"Ah, but poor Star would object! He would be so terribly disappointed, you know. He has been looking forward to our marriage. But I was thinking, Nina, perhaps you could talk to him. He has such confidence in your judgment. You might tell him that you think I am too young. You understand him so well. You would just know what to say. You will think I am the strangest girl in the world to come here and talk like this; but, don't you see, I can't speak to Aunt Maggie, and I dare not to poor Star, and there is no one else. I will be married before I know it, Nina, if I don't make some effort."

There are tears dimming the lustrous dark eyes.

Nina, touched and astonished, draws a little chair close to her new friend's side, and takes her hand in a kind clasp. At this Laura's tears brim over.

"You will think I am a fool," she says, presently, with a little sob now and then between her words, "but your lovely, sweet face won me in a minute. I don't mean that you are handsome, but you are so lovely! And that dear little calico apron! I couldn't be afraid of you, Nina. Of course, I didn't mean to be so frank with you all at once; but I could never like you any better than I do now, and I can't help speaking my heart right out. I want you to reason with Star—not reason, exactly—but show him—make him understand—well, tell him something—"

"Ah, but you must tell me something first, Laura. Isn't there some one else—some one who has taken Star's place in your heart? Is not that the trouble, dear?"

"Oh, Nina, Nina!"

"I thought so. Tell me, Laura, how it happened. Tell me all about it. Then we can consult."

"You little darling! I have felt like a criminal; but if you could only see him, Nina! I met him in Paris when I was spending the holidays with a schoolmate. He was studying with her father, Professor Vieux. There were lots of students, but this one is a young American—so talented and so handsome—and we fell in love with each other at first sight. It was terrible, Nina—so awfully sudden and unexpected; but, don't you know, he was quite wild about me, and I was just as bad about him. And he is engaged to a girl out here—he would not tell me her name; but he does not love her at all—at least, since he's known me he doesn't. But then, you see, his word binds him, and he is so honorable! He is coming over in a few weeks, and I thought, if I need not be married so soon—don't you see?—that, possibly, something might happen."

"What is your lover's name, Laura, if it be a fair question?"

"His name? Do you think I ought to tell his name? I will tell you. His name is Doctor Leslie."

"Ah!"

It is a little cry, a gasp, that escapes Nina's lips, but is checked back instantly.

"Do you know?" Laura asks, with a wondering air.

"I know the girl he has promised to marry, and I have seen the letters he has written her, so full of tenderness. She never dreamed his love could waver. Laura, this is terrible!—the surprise!"

"I know it, dear," says Laura, penitently; "but what can we do? I'm sure we don't compel ourselves to love. Love compels us. How strange you should be acquainted with Doctor Leslie's affianced! It seems just like a story. Is she nice? He would never say anything about her except 'poor child!'"

"Poor child!" echoes Nina, with a smile. "She would only be poor child if she should marry him. I could tell you about her, too, Laura, how she has struggled to keep faith with her faithless lover, while her heart had given itself to some one else. She has suffered, but at least she has been strong. Ah, Laura, what must we think of men?"

"What must we think of women?" says Laura, simply. "I am sure I am ashamed of myself! If Star could know— Nina, oh, Nina, there he is!"—rushing suddenly to the long open window—"but I tell you it is he! They must have told him I was here, and he is coming. Oh, oh, oh! what shall I do? Oh, Nina, I am so glad!"

Nina, following her impetuous friend, sees, not Starwood Burley, but Doctor Leslie advancing up the graveled path in traveling coat and with a small valise in his hand.

As he reaches the veranda, which is liberally vine-covered, Miss Dalton springs through the window and rushes to him with outspread arms. At sight of this beautiful apparition an unmistakable delight flashes over his fine, dark face.

"Laura!" he exclaims, and drops his baggage to fold her promptly to his bosom; then he hastily releases her, and his joy gives place to consternation.

He actually staggers back as his betrothed advances, with her hand held out in greeting.

"Nina!"—he says no other word as she lifts her little quiet face to kiss him in friendly fashion.

Miss Dalton stands amazed.

"You know Nina, too? I thought Mrs. Creigh had sent you here? I thought you were coming to find me," she falters. "Oh, Gilbert!—oh, Nina! Oh, Nina, are you the girl?"

Miss Dalton is deadly pale, and Doctor Leslie groans and hides his white face in his hands.

Nina is trembling a little, and tears are on her lashes; but she smiles up at them both.

"I am the girl—the happy girl, dear Laura. How strange that you should come at this very moment, Gilbert! I did not expect you until the twentieth. Laura had just been telling me she met you abroad, and all the little romance. But come in. We must sit down and talk together."

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"Robbie—Robbie, will you run up to the house, like a good fellow, and tell Nina I want to speak to her. I'm going to bring you that new fishing-rod to-morrow—honor bright. Tell her I am waiting here at the gate; and don't let all the world hear you, that's a little man!"

Down through the twilight comes Nina, a minute later, in her gleaming white dress, with a white lace shawl around her head, to find Starwood Burley lurking in the maple's shadow at the gate.

"Will you walk along the road a little way?" he asks, abruptly, without greeting of any kind."

She steps down beside him, and they walk away slowly under the great branches of the elms and chestnuts, along the quiet country road.

"I suppose I must congratulate you on the arrival of your—of Dr. Leslie. Laura informed me that he had arrived this morning, while she was with you."

"Thanks, yes. He came quite unexpectedly. He wanted to give me a surprise, and it was a surprise."

"You are delighted, of course."

"I am very, very happy," she answers, gently; "I never thought to be so happy."

And of her own free will she lays her hand within his arm, and leans confidingly on its support.

"Oh, don't Nina! don't talk about it!" looking down longingly at the little clinging hand on his coat-sleeve. "You make a coward of me. In all honor, I have no right to be here with you now; but Laura intimated that you wished to see me, and I came, Nina, but only to say good-bye. I can't bear this sort of thing. We must not meet any more. By-and-bye, perhaps—"

"Star," says Nina, standing still before him, suddenly, in the darkened road, lonely now as a forest path. "I am the happiest woman in the world to-night. Do you know why? Because you love me. Something so strange has happened." And then she pours forth a story that Starwood can scarcely credit, in his amazement and delight.

"It is like a dream," he stammers. "The other two will be happy together, and I can have you! Am I really awake? Doctor Leslie is willing and it is all arranged?"

"Doctor Leslie has gone over to see Laura, and talk with Mrs. Creigh—I sent him off across fields as soon as Robbie told me you had come. And Laura thinks it would be nice to have the two marriages at once. What do you think, Star?"

Mr. Burley's answer, though silent, is decidedly in the affirmative.

## FACTS FOR THE CURIOUS.

The microscope shows the hair to be like a coarse, round rasp, but with the teeth extremely irregular and ragged

The monas crepuzculis, one of the animalcules, is only a twenty-four-thousandth part of an inch in diameter.

The African negro is remarkable for his length of arm and leg; the Aymara Indian of Peru for his shortness

A sweet potato four feet long and an average circumference of seven and a half inches has been raised in Marion county, Ky.

The Burmans assert that before the advent of Buddha they had 334,569 kings. They say also that nearly every one of these monarchs was a parricide.

There were four races in Italy in early times; the Pelasgians, the Italians, the Etruscans and the Greeks. The first came from the west, the second and third from the north.

A carpet in the palace at Versailles, France, was sixty-two years in manufacture at the Gobelins, the whole border wrought with rich garlands of flowers, embracing all the roses known in France.

Mormonism started near Troy, N. Y., in 1829, under the leadership of Eleazer Miller. Miller and others went to Victor, N. Y., and preached the doctrine, and then Brigham Young was converted to the faith. He was baptized by Miller in 1832.

In 1691 a barrel was made at Sleidelburg, in Germany, which is composed of 112 solid beams, twenty-seven feet in length, is sixteen feet across the ends and eighteen feet through the center, and contains 800 hogsheads; yet it was once drank out in eight days.

The proverb about people living in glass houses will soon lose its metaphorical significance. One of the most prominent glass manufacturers of Pittsburg announces his intention of furnishing the public with glass houses at an approximately early period. As soon as a suitable annealing process is discovered and a factory and ovens are built for the special purpose, glass blocks will become a reasonable and suitable building material.

The Roman people once gave a public pet a public funeral. The distinguished animal was a raven, which flew every day into the forum, perched on the rostra, and saluted Tiberius, Germanicus and Drusus by their names. This he did for years, till a shoemaker by accident killed the bird, the people killed the cobbler, and the corpse of this bird was placed on a bier, richly dight, and carried on the shoulders of two Moors, with music playing before them, to a field called Ridiculous, on the Appian Way. There was that bird solemnly burned, and his ashes covered with garlands of flowers.

### Wood in Paper-Making.

A recent estimate was published, which set down the paper mills of the world at 4,000, producing 1,000,000 tons of paper, of which the half was used for printing. It is now evident that the future of the paper industry will, in a large degree, depend upon the use of wood, which is already so extensively employed. For the ordinary varieties of paper, ground wood is used; but for the finer sorts, chemically prepared wood-fiber or cellulose, is employed. The practical process for the preparation of cellulose was discovered in 1852, and numerous other processes or improvements have since been invented. It comes into commerce in two forms—wood pulp in sheet or blocks and ligneou meal or wood flour. In Central Russia, aspen wood is most extensively employed; in Sweden and Finland, spruce and fir, which afford the longest fibers; in Germany, France and Belgium, mixed woods. About twenty years ago some of the American papers used the bamboo largely for making paper. The fibrous stem and leaves of the plaintain, which is so plentiful in most tropical regions, have not yet been practically utilized, although efforts were made some years ago in British Guiana by a company. Dr. King, the colonial botanist at Calcutta, recently reported: "It has been found that, during the dry months, simple exposure of the sliced stems to the sun is sufficient to prepare the fiber for paper-making, provided the paper mill be on the spot. What is still wanted is some cheap mode of removing the cellular tissue, so that the fiber may be shipped abroad without fermentation."