

"Then I shall endeavor to settle the question to-night," he said, deliberately adding another lump of sugar to his coffee.

After dinner he explained his financial condition fully to his parents, and showed them conclusively that his income would warrant marriage with any young lady. He made the statement much as the confidential clerk of a wealthy corporation would make his annual balance sheet clear to the stockholders, for his figures appeared as soulless and devoid of sentiment as they possibly could.

When he left the house on the path that many of us have journeyed with misgivings and many others stumbled into, Mrs. Miller said:

"Poor Walter is destined to meet his first great disappointment to-night—Mattie—"

"Nonsense, Priscilla," said her brother-in-law, the "liquid" Walter Miller, "I tell you that 'Still waters run deep,' and I have always said so."

No one knew what to say, and all appeared to content themselves with a specious agreement to Uncle Walter's ambiguous speech.

All seemed to feel that for once, at least, Walter would require his relatives' consolation, if not their congratulations, and therefore all remained at home, imagining that he would return soon. He did.

He came back in less than an hour, and, as his step sounded in the hallway, all were still, anticipating that he would go to his room, and there, alone, endeavor to heal the first heart-wound of his life. Each one of his loving relatives tried to think of some fitting words of sympathy, and his father let a thought of foreign travel slip through his mind. Poor fellow! it would be a hard thing to overcome this disappointment. Mattie Meredith's brilliant, lively, even dashing disposition, her beauty of form and mind, to say nothing of her wealth, made her the girl most sought after in the entire community; what more natural, then, but that she should refuse the hand and heart of Walter, whose staid and serious character was his only recommendation?

Walter's footsteps sounded as firm as ever; they did not take the way to his room, and—"curious indeed" all thought—a light, tripping echo seemed to follow them. The sounds went to the parlor, its door was opened and closed, and Walter's voice was heard to say, "They are in the sitting room."

"Poor fellow, he must be greatly upset, to speak to himself."

The steps approached the sitting room, and as a hand touched the knob all within felt themselves spell-bound as by that terrible stillness which oppresses all animate nature before some mighty convulsion of nature. The door opened and none dared look at Walter, all fearing to see the painful traces that his countenance would surely portray. Would the dear son, the beloved brother, ever recover from it? Would—

Like the silvery tinkle of a sweet-toned bell a voice came:

"Well—how is this? Walter told me that you all want me to be your daughter and sister."

It was Mattie. The commotion—although much different from the one expected—came. Walter's relatives crowded about Mattie, kissed her, embraced her, and assured her that she had to expect nothing but love from

them, and they had barely subsided into a semblance of calmness, when Uncle Walter sighed audibly and said, "Well, confound you, Walter, I always did say that 'Still waters run deep.'"

II.—LOST.

Walter Miller's strict attention to business, his energy and capacity bore its fruits, and Meredith & Co. flourished like the proverbial green bay tree. Marriage did not change his character or that of his wife a particle, and all the world was surprised, if not disappointed, to know how happy they were. The young mother, indeed, appeared delighted when little Walter, just entering his fourth year, endeavored to set a staid example to his little sister Mattie, then only two, and the baby but a few months old.

When Walter's mother endeavored to explain to her daughter-in-law the peculiarities of Walter's character, the young wife interrupted by saying:

"Why, mamma, you do not understand how lovely and good a man my darling is."

And when her children did not require her attentions, she was the sprightly, brilliant, ever dashing little society woman that she had always been.

Early one afternoon Walter hurried home and informed his wife that on the following day he would sail for Central America. It seemed that a large jewelry house in San José de Costa Rica, that had until then enjoyed extensive credit, had suffered from the depreciation in the price of coffee, and was near bankruptcy. The interests of Meredith & Co. needed attention there, and he deemed it his duty, as junior partner, to set out at once and give the matter his personal attention.

Mattie's heart sank at the idea of a separation from her idolized husband, but she bore up bravely with the anticipation of his return within three months.

The eight days' waiting and watching that followed Walter's departure seemed interminable to all. At last, early on the ninth day, Mattie burst into her mother-in-law's room with a cablegram in her hand. It was from Walter, dated Colon, the day before, and read: "Arrived safely. Love to all. Particulars by mail."

"Was it not real sweet of my darling to telegraph so explicitly, and to think of every one of us?" said Mattie gaily, "for he says 'Love to all.'"

"Yes, darling," said the older Mrs. Miller; "but what is that?"

A braying, penetrating voice on the street below screamed: "Extree! Turrribul accident on the Panama Railroad! Extree!"

In a trice the paper was secured. One paragraph of the report held them spell-bound, and the mother and wife clasped each other in despair. The dread words were:

"One corpse, horribly mangled. From similarity of garments in valise near it, and judging by photograph of family group found in trunk, it is undoubtedly the remains of Mr. Walter Miller, of the New York house of Meredith & Co. Documents seem to show that he was on his way to Costa Rica."

Several weeks later Walter's baggage and documents were returned to the saddened widow, who, after a prolonged illness, yet determined to live for the sake of her beloved husband's children.

Uncle Walter was the only one who dared read the crude notes that Walter had made on his voyage. He sighed sadly, and this time did not say that "Still waters run deep."

Good Sister Idelfonsa, of the order of St. Joseph, shook her head sadly when the surgeon asked her if any