

be able to get for you, by and by! Talking of women, though, there are all sorts of drawbacks put in our way, spokes in the wheel of our advancement. What I should like to prove is that women are certainly far superior to men if they succeed in merely rivaling them, handicapped as the poor females are by so many extra difficulties."

"To whom do you want to prove it, Amy?"

"To the men, of course. They are the ones who need convincing."

"But perhaps they are the very ones who don't wish to be convinced."

"All the more need to convince them against their will. Well, never mind, a time is coming when they must be convinced. Deeds, not words, you know. And yet, on second thoughts, I am in doubt whether it is not the women themselves who need to be convinced."

"What, really?"

"They are such limp creatures, Gracie."

"You are not limp, darling, anyway," said the little sister, smiling.

She was lying back on the pillows of her bed, and at the foot sat Amelia, erect and determined, her head thrown up, her eyes flashing, looking like a young warrior ready for the fray.

Amelia was twenty, but appeared younger: her bright beauty was so thoroughly the beauty of youth and rosy freshness, and there was such abundant life and spirits in her most trifling actions.

"Does Mr. McHuish need convincing?" asked Grace, after a pause.

"I don't know," said Amelia, hurriedly slipping from the bed and going over to the other side of the room, where she began closely to examine an unfinished sketch of the day before, and to scrub it up and down with a big paint brush.

Douglas McHuish was a tall, lank young man, with hair that the Miss Wyverns would doubtless have described as "tawny," with light eyelashes closing over his keen eyes, and as many freckles as the stars of heaven showered upon his face and hands. He was much given to reading Carlyle; he seldom smiled; he nodded his head and murmured "Ay," in a deep bass tone, and said but little else. Only he adored Amelia with the persistency of ten ordinary men.

There was one subject, however, on which the young Scotchman could grow loquacious, and that, as might be expected, was genealogy. To Mrs. Wyvern the subject was as distasteful as it was dull; it denoted a misplaced affection, she argued, on the part of their descendant to go groping around the tombs of the McHuishes, who had left him nothing but an outlandish name and a few thousand freckles a year. Amelia herself was conscious that her thoughts wandered when Douglas held forth on his noble progenitors, her own mind being very strongly set in the direction of modern progress, and thoroughly attuned to the most radical, nay, communistic tendencies of the present day. Grace alone sympathized with the young Scot. She considered his monologues on genealogical topics as a kind of harmless lunacy, and treated

him with as much gentleness as any amiable Christian would show to a bear with a sore head.

Mrs. Wyvern was, however, often uneasy with regard to the young man's poverty; that she had been romantically disposed at the time of her own marriage argued nothing in favor of any folly on the part of her daughters; the most consistent people do not think it necessary to carry on till fifty the feelings they boasted of at thirty. Mrs. Wyvern would doubtless have turned a thoroughly cold shoulder on Amelia's unfortunate swain had it not been that he softened her maternal heart by the sympathetic, almost feminine, tenderness he evinced for Grace. His visits helped much to brighten the poor girl's life, and, whilst she undoubtedly liked him, he loved her dearly, this little seventeen-year-old Grace, a budding flower that might never bloom into the fullness of perfection, a sensitive plant that opened out in an instant to the sunshine of kind words.

When McHuish came to spend the evening, as for Grace's express benefit he was occasionally permitted to do, she bade him carry her to the drawing room window where she loved to watch the moonlit sky and the twinkling lamps up and down the street. There, as she lay, a mere feather in his stalwart arms, her thin little neck stretched itself out, and the hectic face leant forward, her eager gaze sweeping the dreary horizon.

Then, finally, as his best reward, she had a way of drooping her head and looking up with dreamy blue eyes, whilst she murmured very softly:

"My brother! my own brother!" and at these words the young man's very brow grew red with blushes and a sweet hopefulness filled his soul.

That was Gracie's way.

Yet this mutual understanding was unavowed; through force of habit Douglas McHuish had certainly come to be looked upon as Amelia's recognized admirer, but nothing more. Mrs. Wyvern had not the heart to prevent his coming to the house, but she could not encourage him. "Of course, he is too poor to dream of marrying," Mrs. Wyvern often said.

"Of course," returned Gracie. "And Amy never wants to marry, you know, mother."

"All the better," replied Mrs. Wyvern; "I don't wish to lose her. But wait till the right man comes."

"And then?" asked Gracie.

"Well, then things will be settled," said Mrs. Wyvern. "You always ask so much, child."

But Gracie pondered whether things were not settled already. She loved Amelia; she loved Douglas. There was that question of money, money, money; always money, thought the girl, sadly. Yet, if Douglas by and by became a great lawyer, and Amy a distinguished painter, these money problems must all be easily solved. If only Amelia could earn money now, as she was sure to do sooner or later, and as her talent undoubtedly deserved!

II.

Mr. Simpkins' academy of art was by no means planned upon any new or elaborate method. Mr. and