

"What was?" inquired Joan.

"I heard him groan! It frightened me so I ran away as fast as I could!"

"And this is all you know, Phyllis?"

"Almost. Papa went to ask how he was this morning. His head is very much hurt, and the horse had kicked him, but there was no danger. But he will be very much disfigured. Isn't it a great pity?"

"I don't know so much about that," said Carter Abbott, pulling his long mustache. "He was altogether too good looking before. No chance for us plain fellows."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Phyllis, with a pensive air. "His mother is fearfully upset. And as for Lottie!—papa said she had cried herself into a perfect fright. There, that is all! Now let us have some tennis. I see that game is finished. Joan, what do you say to Mr. Abbott and me against you and Mr. Lenthall?"

Joan excused herself and was walking away, when she found Lenthall at her side. He was extremely grave, and certain lines appeared in his forehead, which only showed when he was disturbed in mind. He saw that his companion was pre-occupied, and for awhile said nothing.

But when Joan found that they had strayed to some distance from the rest, she turned to go back. And although she did not know it, Lenthall had almost taken this opportunity to tell her of the hope he had so long cherished.

If it had not been for her pallor, and illy-concealed agitation on hearing of Emerson's accident he would have spoken the words that trembled on his lips. As it was, he kept them back, afraid to risk the almost certain "no."

An hour later Mrs. Kennet signed to her daughter that she wished to take her leave, but Phyllis caught Joan by the arm.

"Come up to my room before you go. I've something to show you," she whispered.

The two girls walked decorously in at the open French window, but once out of sight they ran up-stairs at full speed. When they reached her room, Phyllis locked the door and placed a chair for her friend.

"Sit down, Joan, while I get it out," she whispered.

Joan obeyed, half wondering what was to come, while Phyllis turned the key in a drawer and pulled it open. The next instant she held up by the brim, with thumb and forefinger, a battered, shapeless thing, hardly recognizable for it originally was—a hat.

"Look there!" And she waved it before Joan's astonished eyes. "I picked it up and brought it in here just to look at, and now I don't know what to do with it. I dare not let it be seen—anyone might think that I was in love with him. I am—rather. What would you do with it?"

"I don't know," said Joan, looking at it without the shadow of a smile.

"Wouldn't you like it, dear?"

"No, thank you. Why don't you burn it? It can't be any further use. With what a crash he must have come on his head to make that hat such a shape! Ugh! It makes me feel sick!"

"You are quite sure you would not like to have it, Joan? I thought perhaps you would like to treasure it up."

Joan laughingly declined the offer, and after the drawer was once more closed and locked they went out together.

After this she only heard of Emerson at intervals, sometimes from his sister Lottie, sometimes from the Heaths. And now and then she met Fred Lenthall, whose manner to her was quite altered from the time of his friend's accident.

About this time her mother insisted on Joan taking iron, and not being satisfied with the result of a course of that tonic, she tried steel. Joan said nothing, but took her doses with apathetic resignation.

Two months passed, and Mrs. Kennet had prescribed plenty of open-air exercise. Joan not infrequently sent little notes to Lottie asking for her company.

One day in the middle of September, the latter called for her and asked her to accompany her to the village. Lottie was in low spirits.

"Did your brother tell you of the trick he played me here?" asked Joan, pausing at the well-remembered spot on the hill. "He dressed up as a beggar and followed me."

Lottie had heard nothing of the incident, so Joan recounted it.

"Ah! That makes matters more clear to me," said Lottie, as she slipped her hand through her friend's arm. "You have not forgiven him for it, you cruel girl."

Joan made no reply to this, but her lips curved into a smile that was not easy for her friend to understand.

"The house is so gloomy now," sighed Lottie. "It seems as though Kane would never recover his old light-heartedness. Mamma is always grieving over his disfigurement; and papa is quiet and serious now, Kane never makes him laugh as he used to. I do my best, and Fred comes in very often and tries to cheer us all up; but in spite of all we do, the poor boy keeps so thin and dispirited—and the doctor says he will never be better unless he gets over those dreadful attacks of depression."

"Poor Lottie!" said Joan, tenderly, as the girl's voice became tearful.

"My happiness is all clouded," she went on, after a pause. "I once thought that if Fred were to ask me to be his wife I should be too happy to live. And things have turned out so differently! Ah, Joan, I used to be so jealous of you. He used to follow you everywhere, and was only civil to me. Everyone used to run after you. Who would have thought that Phyllis and I should be engaged first!"

"Phyllis engaged!"