

hand to get some water to put it in. She returned immediately, but the plant was gone and she could not find it high nor low. She knew no one had been in the tent, for she was in sight of it all the time. It was too vexing. No one would believe she had found it, and they would bother her unmercifully. She would not tell—she would— But here she broke down in her meditations and began to sob. She was so engaged that she did not hear a step outside, and Paul's dismayed "Why Miss Gertrude!" brought her, startled, indignant, blushing and disheveled, to her feet.

"What is it?" said Paul, tenderly.

"Nothing. I mean I shan't tell," stammered Gertrude.

Paul looked distressed, and Gertrude, peeping through her fingers, saw it and relented.

"It's that miserable flower Dr. Raymond wants. I found it and lost it," she cried.

"Found—and lost it!" echoed Paul, blankly.

"Yes," she responded, a little testily, "and you do not believe me. I did not believe any one would."

"Oh, yes," said Paul, "I believe you; but how was it?"

Gertrude related the whole affair, and Paul listened with a grave face.

"It's bewitching, isn't it?" laughed Gertrude, with her usual good nature.

"I guess so," said Paul, "but never worry over so small a thing. Why, do you know?" he added, "I feared you had met with real trouble, or an accident, and I was—well, frightened; for to tell the truth, Gertrude, I can't keep still any longer. I love you dearly, and all that concerns you concerns me. Can I hope that you return my love?" he added, drawing near.

Gertrude put up a detaining hand, and, blushing rosily, said in her coquettish manner—

"Wait, Dr. Bernard, you have taken me by surprise, you see."

"Have I?" queried honest Paul. "I supposed you could see—"

"Oh, it would never do to imagine every gentleman who was civil to me, to be in love with me," declared the girl. "Now, would it?"

"No, I presume not," agreed Paul, "but—"

"Wait," again commanded Gertrude. "Find that flower tomorrow, and bring it to me in the evening, and say again what you have just said—"

"And you'll say yes?" said Paul, eagerly.

"It will dispose me to be favorable," replied the girl. "No more now, please, find me the flower."

"I'll find the flower if it is on the earth," declared Paul.

Gertrude could not help shivering a little as she thought of her mysterious plant, and turning, met her mother and the children coming in.

Neither Paul nor Gertrude spoke of the flower to the others, but next morning, while the drivers and cooks were picking up, ready to start away, Mr. Fenton and Paul had a conversation, which resulted in another day's stay, so the gentlemen could take a last mountain ramble.

After they had gone, the ladies strolled about, wrote, sketched and lounged, but the day seemed intolerably long to Gertrude, and she walked out by herself toward evening, unconsciously rambling in a different direction from any she had ever taken before. Suddenly, in a most picturesque spot, she came upon a man—a stranger—sitting on a rock and cleaning a gun. His long hair, untrimmed beard and odd clothing proclaimed him to be a hermit. Indeed, his shy manners when he caught sight of Gertrude, standing, half frightened,