

THE WEST SHORE.

FOURTEENTH YEAR.

DECEMBER, 1888.

NUMBER 12.

FROM CHRISTMAS TO CHRISTMAS.



HE was one of my girlhood's choicest friends. Through the different departments of the city high school we were classmates, and for two years at the university inseparable friends. Then she told me that she must quit school a year, at least, and teach. "I am ashamed to be a burden on father any longer," she said, in her pretty, vivacious way. "John taught and paid nearly all his college expenses himself, and why shouldn't I?"

I looked admiringly into the flushed face with its dark, earnest eyes. "How noble of you to think of it!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"Oh, there's nothing noble about it, it's simply duty," she answered, indifferently, with an expressive shrug.

Her father worked hard, but managed to keep his family well housed, fed and clothed, besides helping them to an education. Of course, this last is no great task for a resident of Madison, with all its educational advantages, but Shirley felt that she ought to be doing something for herself as long as there were five children younger to be provided for.

She taught that year. Early in the spring I went east, and when I returned in the autumn they told me that Shirley had spent the summer with a relative up in the pine woods, and was going to be married to a man she had met there—"a wealthy farmer from the Pacific coast, a widower," was the summary. Soon she came to call on me, and one glance at her blushing, conscious face satisfied me that one thing was true—she was in love, or, at least, thought so.

By and by she told me all about it, how they had met, etc. "Well," she said, dimpling prettily, "it was a genuine case of 'love at first sight.'"

"There may be, doubtless is, such a thing as mutual admiration, even infatuation, at first sight; but love, true love, never," I answered, bluntly, but my words did not in the least discomfit her. She just put her arms around my neck and kissed me, saying patronizingly—

"Wait till you know by experience."

They were to be married at Christmas. He had begged for an earlier day, for he said he could not feel like leaving his children so long, but Shirley would not hear to it. Her parents approved of the match, and there was nothing to prevent the course of true love from running smooth, except John, her brother, and senior by three years.

"I never knew John could be so contrary and unreasonable," Shirley said. "He knows nothing whatever against Carlos, but he has the idea that he can read character, and he don't like his eyes, he says."

"I don't think I could be content with warmed-over affection, even in an angel," said Ruth, Shirley's sixteen-year-old sister, sagely. "Aside from that he seems quite a fine fellow, though a trifle ancient."

Shirley laughed, a little nervously, to be sure, and answered—

"Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave, you know, Ruth."

"But what if it turns out that you are an old man's slave?"

"Oh, but it won't, sister mine."

After that we tied away in silence for awhile on the pretty white puff we were making for the bride-elect.

"I wonder if this comfortable wont be a little out of place on the 'front-ear,' as the girl said," laughed Ruth, after awhile.

"Dear me! I am not going out of the world, Ruth. Carlos says he has neighbors within half a mile, and that part of Washington has been settled for twenty years. Half a mile is no further than to the park, and we do not count that far."