

pale, silent, but composed. The two friends clasped hands, without a word, and Mortimer turned away with bowed head, and was gone from the crowd. The next were Harry and Mabel.

"An revoir," the former said, with all his usual good cheer. "Be a good boy, and take care of yourself."

"Farewell," Mabel murmured, as she extended her cold, white hand; but her face was composed and no tear dimmed her clear, blue eyes.

"Adieu, adieu," George cried, as he waved his hand in sad good-bye to all.

The next instant he was riding away from the friends who never, till the parting hour had arrived, realized how good, how noble he was, and how much they really had loved him.

Two months later Oak Dale was as monotonously quiet as usual. To the weary wayfarer, who, having sickened of the din and confusion of the many boisterous mining camps in the surrounding country, it had always appeared like an oasis in a vast desert. This contrast was partly due to the quiet, peaceful disposition of those who had chanced to be thrown together in this little valley, and partly because the gold yield had never been so large as to cause a rush to the vicinity.

Mortimer Gray and Mabel Randall still enjoyed their long rambles over the green, grassy plain, and occasionally, for a change, they would avail themselves of a horseback ride up the valley road past the ruins of the old log hut in which Dessie Watson had met her sad fate. Mortimer never passed the place without a sigh for the girl whom he had learned to love in so short a time; while Mabel's blue eyes would fill with tears as her thoughts went back to that summer's evening, when she rode beside George Watson for the first and last time, and had witnessed the silent grief which stirred his manly breast.

People began to associate their names so freely that their position became somewhat embarrassing. At length the gossip reached the ears of Mr. Randall and his son, which angered them not a little. They began to discuss the subject earnestly. They had never given the matter a second's thought prior to this, and it suddenly occurred to Harry that the proper thing for Mortimer to do was to declare his intentions. If he loved Mabel and wished to make her his wife, it would certainly be right for him to say so, if not, perhaps it would be better to leave the field open for another, who would, in all probability, visit his sister with more serious intentions.

So, one night, when a favorable opportunity presented itself, he approached Mortimer on the subject,

alluding, with some signs of asperity, to the manner in which his name had been associated with Mabel, and dwelling at considerable length on the unfavorable position in which she was placed, all through this innocent flirtation which they evidently so much enjoyed. We will not venture to assert whether Harry did right or wrong, but we will say that he was prompted by no other motive than that of his sister's welfare.

Mortimer was struck with astonishment. All the attention he had ever bestowed upon Mabel had been solely for her own amusement, and in consideration of the debt of gratitude he justly owed her. What must he say—what must he do? He remembered, then, what George Watson had told him only a short time before his departure—that Mabel loved him. Perhaps George was right, after all; if so, he could see no reason why he should not marry her, especially since people had made themselves busy with the matter. He sat silent and with bowed head while these thoughts were revolving themselves in his mind. Suddenly rising from his chair, while a bewildered expression was visible on his handsome face, he said—

"It shall be as your sister prefers, Harry. If she thinks she can love me well enough to become my wife, it shall be so," and with that he took his hat and left the room.

Harry lost no time in hastening to his father with this piece of intelligence, after which Mabel was soon summoned to their presence. It may be as well to add here that the old man Randall had an eye ever open to pecuniary advantages, in which he fancied he saw Mortimer Gray a desirable *parti*, while at the same time he did not fail to take into consideration the youth, education and genial disposition of the young man whom he had already selected for his son-in-law. Motioning his daughter to a seat beside him, he said—

"Mabel, are you aware that your name is being freely used in connection with that of Mortimer Gray? If you are not, I can assure you that such is the fact. Well, to be as brief as possible, Mortimer loves you, and wishes to make you his wife."

"Oh, father! You are surely not in earnest! He cares little or nothing for me. His love died with Dessie Watson—every one knows that," Mabel said, evidently much surprised.

"That's all bosh, child! A good-looking fellow like Mortimer is not going to spend his life in sentimental grieving for a girl who has passed to another sphere of existence, however much he may have loved her. It rests with you, Mabel, to say whether you will be his wife or not."

"Much as I esteem Mortimer Gray, it would be wrong for me to marry him," the girl said, thinking