

of her great love for George Watson, a love which had crept into her heart so slyly, yet so effectually.

"Is there anyone else you love better?" the old man ventured to ask.

However much it might reflect to her discredit, Mabel was not the girl to shrink from the truth when the time came for a candid avowal. She freely confessed to her father the little story of her first and only love, and then looked up into his face, expecting to hear his disapproval.

"You are very foolish, Mabel. It is evident that George cares nothing for you—a fact which you admit, yourself. Banish him from your mind forever, child, and seek for happiness in the devoted love of Mortimer Gray. He is worthy of you, and you will please me by accepting him as your future husband."

"If Mortimer really loves me and wishes to make me his wife," the girl said, as she rose to leave the room, "you will have nothing to complain of in me, father. It matters little to me whom I marry now, or whether I marry at all, only for the sake of your happiness," and she turned away and was gone.

Harry, it must be said to his credit, was deeply attached to his sister, and the little story of her devoted love for George Watson affected him not a little. However, in his short-sightedness, he could not see that his father was now only hurrying her into a greater misery, and that as betrothed lovers, Mabel and Mortimer would each be doing the other a great injustice.

Next afternoon, Mabel was not surprised when Mortimer asked her to walk with him, saying there was something he wished to say to her. She went to get her hat, and if Mortimer perceived how pale her sweet face was, he certainly did not give it any consideration, being too intent with his own thoughts to think of anything else. They walked leisurely up the valley road, talking of trivial occurrences, for Mortimer found it no easy task to broach the subject for which he had specially sought the interview.

"Mabel," he said, at length, as they came in sight of all that remained of the old log hut in which Dess had so happily reigned as mistress, "you know of my exalted love for Dessie Watson—that is no secret to you, is it?"

"No, it is not," Mabel said, in a low voice.

"Next to her, I love you, Mabel. Now, can you learn to love me just a little in return?"

"I have never thought of loving you at all, save as a friend, which you have always been to me," the girl replied, frankly. "However, I esteem you very highly, Mortimer, and, perhaps—"

"Perhaps what, Mabel?" he asked, as he took her cold, little hand in his.

"Perhaps if I, too, had never really and truly loved, I might have liked you much better."

"I admire your candor, Mabel; but your love—your heart's first love—may not be as hopeless as mine."

"It is," was the reply, "utterly hopeless."

Mortimer was silent. Here he was, face to face with this girl who, he had been told, loved him. He was now inclined to believe she was only testing the depth of his affection, for he could think of no one at Oak Dale to whom she could possibly have given her heart, and he felt assured that she had arrived there perfectly heart-whole.

"Mabel," he said, abruptly, looking searchingly into the depth of her deep blue eyes, "will you be my wife?"

"I will, Mortimer, if you wish it, and will do all in my power to make you happier than you have been during the past two years. If I fail, it shall be no fault of mine," and she turned away to hide her tearful eyes from the searching gaze of her companion.

"God bless you, Mabel. My ambition henceforth shall be to make your life a happy one," and stooping down he sealed their betrothal with a kiss.

A few minutes later this strangely-affiliated pair retraced their steps homeward. Mortimer was somewhat surprised that the roses never once bloomed on the velvety cheek of the girl who had promised to be his wife, while on the other hand, Mabel was completely bewildered by the cool, undemonstrative manner of the man who professed to love her. Mortimer soon availed himself of the privilege of writing to his friend George, informing him of his betrothal to Mabel, and stating, by way of postscript, that the time for the marriage had not yet been fixed.

The inhabitants of Oak Dale were soon made familiar with the engagement existing between Mortimer Gray and Miss Randall. The gossip lovers were completely vanquished by this piece of intelligence, but they all agreed, without a single dissenting voice, that they had never seen a couple who were better suited to each other.

We must not forget our heroine. Now, after a lapse of two years, we will once more venture to penetrate the lodges of the badly-defeated savages. There now remained but a small remnant of the tribe, many having been slain during the war, while many others had been taken to the reservation set apart for them. The chief, Watumni, however, had thus far escaped the eager clutches of the whites, who were only too anxious to have him safely removed to the reservation.