

"That's it," said the old lady, approvingly. "Now, dear, you jest run down to the office, an' in a few days George 'll be here, sure enough."

Mabel obeyed, returning in a short time with a light step and happy face, that surprised Mrs. Kingston not a little, though she said nothing. Next morning, before day, the doctor came. It was an attack of brain fever, he said, but, with care and attention, the patient would undoubtedly recover. All were pleased with this announcement, but none more so than Mabel, who never left the sick girl's side for a moment longer than she could possibly avoid.

"Wonder what the folks 'll think when they see the doctor's been here," Mrs. Kingston remarked, as soon as the M. D. had taken his departure. "They'll come rushing in here at a terrible rate, I'm afeard. Guess we'd better tell 'em we've got a genuine case of measles or smallpox, an' I'll bet they'll steer clear of this locality."

Mabel laughed, declaring it an admirable little ruse, that would certainly afford them the desired result; and it did.

Two weeks later, and Dess had so far recovered as to be able to sit up for a few hours each day. The fever had left her pale and emaciated, but her beauty was not greatly marred. She enjoyed Mabel's society very much, and laughed and chatted with her so merrily at times, that no one unacquainted with the fact would have guessed the sorrow that had entered into her young life.

"You have never told any one that I came to life again after that hideous massacre, have you, Mabel?" she asked, one day, as the latter sat by her side, with a book in her hand, from which she had been reading aloud.

"No, Dessie, I have not, but there is one I must tell, and that very soon," Mabel replied, with a glad light in her blue eyes that did the convalescent's very soul good to witness.

"Wait until I am safely away from Oak Dale first," Dess said, "and then I do not care."

"I can not imagine what your motive for concealment may be, my dear friend; but the one whom it is necessary I should inform of your good fortune and whereabouts is a person who loves you very much, Dessie. He has told me, many, many times, that you were his first love, and that he could never take another woman to his heart and love her as he had loved you, dear."

"Oh, Harry! Poor Harry! I did not think he cared for me in that way. I like Harry very much as a friend—a brother—but not as a lover, Mabel."

Mabel laughed merrily. "It is not of him that I speak," she said, taking the invalid's little, white

hand in her own. "Did you not know that Mortimer Gray loved you, Dessie? Can you not believe that your image is graven in his heart forever?"

"Don't, Belle," the invalid pleaded, with a despairing wave of the hand, "don't try to make me believe that, when I am convinced to the contrary. The old love is but a memory to him now; yet I never blamed him—how could I? I am glad that Mortimer loves you, Mabel, and that you are worthy of him in every respect. You both have my blessing, which is truly and freely given."

"It grieves me, Dessie, to see that you doubt me," Mabel said, sadly. "If there is anything I would shrink from with loathing, it is a falsehood, especially in a case like this. I admit that at present I am betrothed to Mortimer Gray, but though I entertain the highest regard for him as a companion, a friend, I can never, never love him as a girl should love her future husband. I told him all, I had no desire to deceive him, and he as frankly confessed the true state of his feelings toward me. He told me of a love which he had cherished more than life itself; of a little girl whose image was graven in the innermost depth of his heart, and that girl was no other than Dessie Watson. But she was gone, gone from him forever. He esteemed me very highly, he said, and he would willingly devote his whole life in trying to promote my happiness. But can a girl who has ever once truly and devotedly loved, be happy with a love like that, Dessie? I told him, then and there, of a love which I had foolishly allowed to steal into my heart—a love which was as utterly hopeless as his own. He knew all, as well as I knew the true state of his feelings for me. Urged by my father, however, I became his affianced bride. What difference did it make, at all events? Life held nothing in store for me that I valued very highly; but I could see that my promise had not gladdened the heart of the man who was to be my future husband. What I have told you, Dessie, is the truth, as I call on heaven to bear me witness. You have now heard my story, and will you not make me much happier by receiving Mortimer, who loves you as fondly as ever, as your accepted lover?"

"I can not doubt you, Mabel," Dess said, as she raised her companion's white hand to her lips and kissed it fervently. "You have acted nobly, inasmuch as you have adhered to the truth so strenuously throughout all. Poor, poor Mortimer! How he must have suffered; but scarcely more so than you, you dear, dear girl. I hope from the depth of my heart that you may yet be very, very happy. Your love may not be hopeless, Mabel. Some time in the future—"

"Hush, you little goose; don't try to inspire my heart with a hope that can never be realized. I am