

with straight, tapering fingers, tipped with dainty, pearl-tinted nails. Her feet are small and she walks erect with a queenly bearing. Her voice, which is soft but not modulated with the refinements of cultivation, issues between teeth of pearl, and lips through whose delicate outlines the blood seems ever to burst. Everything about her bespeaks a more than ordinary person.

This, my dear cousin, is a very long and labored portrait of the Olive that I have found blooming in this wild, neglected spot. Well, indeed, the poet says—

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

I have always half doubted the existence of such female characters except in fiction; I have never believed that love or such an infatuation was born in a single glance; and to have both these doubts negatived, and the truth brought home to me in my own personal experience in so utterly unexpected a manner and in so unpromising a place, baffles me with wonder and surprise. I could not credit it if it were not true; but alas! my heart has been in such a tempest this whole week, that whether I would or not I must acknowledge the wonderful variety of the world and of our experiences in it.

Faithfully yours, W. F.

Winthrop Fairfax and I, though he was several years my junior, were old friends, united not only by the ties of blood, but by the stronger affinity of congenial comradeship. I had known him and his family from boyhood. He was born to a rich inheritance, but the death of his father, and an unfortunate disaster soon afterward, swept away all their property except a small patrimony which was in his mother's name and had thus been preserved from the general ruin. Winthrop had passed through his university career before this calamity had befallen the family, but he now found himself thrown upon the world to make his way as an artist, in which respect he was regarded by those who knew him best as a genius. Of this character I will not speak further here, as it will be better disclosed by the events which I as the biographer of a strange tragedy shall now proceed to narrate.

I immediately resolved on the facts disclosed by his letter, whether wisely or not, to attempt to save him from what I believed to be a dangerous infatuation, and one which, if indulged, would be fraught with domestic sorrow, if not death, for his widowed mother idolized her gifted son and watched over him with that solicitude which only those can feel whose pride strengthens as their penury increases. Without divulging his secret, I arranged my business as soon as I could, and in about a week I left, ostensibly for Colorado; in reality, however, taking a route which in due time landed me in the town of K—. I immediately went to the hotel and inquired for Winthrop. He was gone, but had secured lodgings at a private house. I went thither and found him in a humble apartment already bestrewn with artist's ma-

terials, while an easel, wholly enveloped with drapery, which had evidently been hastily flung over it on my approach, occupied the most favorable corner of the room. My cousin received me with constrained courtesy, and perused my face with a surprised look, while my own feelings at that moment misgave me, and an embarrassing pause ensued, which neither of us broke for several seconds. But we had been too faithful to each other in tranquil friendship to seek to dissemble now when the first reefs of life were appearing in our pathway.

"I supposed my letter," exclaimed Winthrop abruptly, "would find you in the Devil's canyon; otherwise I should not have sent it so soon, although it contained no invitation for you to intrude upon my idyllic life in K—."

"Providence or destiny," I replied, ignoring his uncivil thrust, "seems to have chosen me as the instrument to step between you and ruin."

I did not know how far events would justify my assertion, but I had taken a bold step, and concluded to act as if the worst had happened. To my surprise, Winthrop did not demur to the implied accusation. Arising from the camp chair in front of the easel, he began, as he strode to and fro across the room, to justify what he had done and purposed doing.

"I am not a child," he said, "to be dictated to and my actions scanned. Suppose I should choose to marry this girl, whose affair is it but mine and hers?"

"It is a sufficient answer to that to say that your mother, Winthrop, who scarcely lives but by you and in your future, will be made wretched by it."

"My mother has not seen Olive; she does not know how beautiful she is. If she knew my happiness depended upon my marrying her—"

"But Alice Warfield? Do you forget that your relations to her are almost tantamount to a betrothal?"

"Arthur, love is an affinity; it goes where it is sent. How silly for our parents to think they can mix the sexes like a pack of cards and cause Mary to mate with John, and Alice and Winthrop to suddenly love each other because they are placed in juxtaposition in the social shuffle. Alice is a fair girl, and worthy of the best love of a lover, and for a time I confess I mistook the desire of our parents to unite us to be love; but now that I know what real love is, I shudder to think what a wretched fate we have escaped."

"But how do you know," I insisted, "that this is not a mere infatuation, which will leave you some fine morning as suddenly as it came? A man's love is like a halcyon, which is ever diving after new prey, and reappearing at the most unexpected places. Even if this girl loves you, of which you have, I venture, no positive assurance, you run a terrible risk in as-