

SONORA HEWITT.

BY MRS. STINE WITHERELL.

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CHAPTER II.

THE ARRIVAL OF GRACE MARSH.

An unusually happy smile rested upon the fair features of Blanche Levere two weeks after our first introduction to her, as she, with a pretty little tidy spread out before her, sat crocheting upon the piazza, enjoying the cool morning breeze as it danced among her curls.

"Throwing down her work she exclaimed: 'Oh, I am out of all patience! I do wish Sonora would come! Only one week more and then—ho for a splendid party! But hark! there comes a carriage up the walk. I do wonder if it is Grace; she was to have been here about this time,' and rising upon the little footstool, she stood gazing down the lawn in hopeful expectation. 'Oh, I am so glad! It is she! It is she!' and without any more ceremony was soon at the gate to receive her. 'Welcome once more to the homestead!' exclaimed she, as her cousin alighted from the old-fashioned stage-coach, and placing an arm affectionately around her waist, escorted her up to the house.

"How is dear grandpa and grandma?" asked Grace, as she ascended the grand old piazza.

"Both in excellent health," answered the old lady herself, coming forward; "but how is my little Grace?" and taking off her heavy gold spectacles she kissed her granddaughter, as she led the way into the comfortable, old-fashioned parlor. "Sit down, my other pet," said the old lady, "and grandma will see what she can get for you, for you must be hungry and faint after your long ride."

"You have scarcely given me time to speak, so anxious have you been about my welfare," replied Grace; "but, dear grandma, do not give yourself any uneasiness about me, for I shall get along well enough till dinner time."

"But a piece of grandma's good custard pie, and a glass of currant wine, will do wonderful things towards helping you to converse with more fluency upon all the topics so interesting to us girls," added Blanche, looking mischievously at her grandmother as she left the room. "After you get rested we will go to my room," continued she, "and have a real good chat. I have so many things to ask and to tell you. Oh, by the way, I am expecting Sonora Hewitt here every minute. They have a country seat about a quarter of a mile from us. You remember her, do you not?"

"Let me see," said Grace; "she attends Madame C—'s school; does she not? Yes, I have been introduced to her and met her once or twice in company. I have heard my sister Cordelia speak of her as a very lovely girl."

"She is, indeed, one of the sweetest girls I ever met with, though a little too fastidious about some things I think. The other day I had my fortune told, and according to the prophecy, we are to become rivals," and throwing back her head, Blanche burst into a hearty laugh.

"I hope you will not prove a dangerous one," said our heroine, just then opening the door, and overhearing the last part of her friend's speech.

"Good morning, I am so glad you are here at last," said Blanche, taking Sonora by the hand and leading her forward. "This is my cousin, Grace Marsh, whom I believe you have met before."

"I am happy to meet you once more, Miss Marsh," said Sonora, extending her hand. "May we become better acquainted?"

"Not while you call me 'Miss Marsh,'" said Grace, pretending to look very indignant.

"Well, dear Grace, then," said Blanche, each other, they were as well acquainted as if they had always known each other.

"That's the way!" exclaimed Blanche, putting an arm around the waist of each, and the three girls' voices mingled together till it became quite a difficult matter to distinguish one from the other.

"Holly! toly! what a clatter!" exclaimed the voice of good old grandpa Marsh, as he opened the door, unheeded by the occupants, followed by his better half, and a servant bearing a tray, containing "goodies" from grandma's well-stored closet. "So you are here at last," said he, addressing his lately arrived granddaughter; "and we intend keeping you, too," and he kissed the little ruddy lips, held up so temptingly to his own. Then, turning to Sonora—"Why, you little puss, you look as sweet as a pink this morning. I have a good mind to serve you the same as Grace," and patting her rosy cheek he seated himself in the large easy chair that his father had sat in many years before, while grandma Marsh entertained the girls by a lengthy recital of the superior excellence of her currant wine. While they are enjoying themselves, we will take the liberty of informing our readers more particularly of Grace Marsh. Her father and Blanche's mother had been brother and sister, so that she claimed the same relationship to Captain Marsh and his wife that Blanche did. Upon the decease of her father, which happened about a year previous to our story, Grace had taught music, endeavoring thereby to aid her invalid mother, who, being left with scarcely enough means to educate her three young daughters, had nearly given up to despair, and had it not been for the self-sacrificing daughter, would have sunk beneath the blow. Her sister Cordelia, two years younger than herself, had been placed at Madame C—'s school by a wealthy lady, after whom she was named. Grace was now eighteen. She was not beautiful, neither was she perfect as a heroine of a story is generally pictured out to be, but her delicately moulded form and fine features could be well termed "good looking"—at least so thought many a young man who had sued for her love in vain. Her large brown eyes, so full of love and tenderness, had never yet rested upon one to whom she could say, "Where thou goest I will go, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." No. Her heart was yet free, but how long did it remain so? Ah, we will not anticipate. She was noble and generous by nature, with a mind well cultivated with the useful as well as the ornamental. She could not only sing and dance, but could also "bake and brew" with the agility of a skillful hand. She could regale her guests with some of the daintiest bread and pastry, made by her own delicate hands, while the same little fingers would bring forth some of the sweetest music from the finely toned piano, which served not only for her amusement, but was also an instrument of great service in teaching her pupils. Such a girl as this was Grace Marsh. No wonder she was loved by those who knew her best.

But to return—after they had partaken of some refreshments, and the girls had retired to Blanche's little boudoir, they began arranging and talking over the anticipated party, which was to take place one week from that night.

"I hope your mother will consent to Delia's coming," said Sonora to Grace. "It quite long to see her, though it is but a month since I left her at school."

"I do not think it will be possible for her to leave when I am away," replied Grace, as she turned over some engravings upon the table. "But we shall have fine times when we return to New York, now that we are so well acquainted. Cordelia graduates next summer, I believe."

"Yes," answered Sonora, "we both enter the graduating class this year." "Then look out for two paragon's of smartness," said Blanche, her roguish eyes sparkling with mischief. "But come, what about the party, Sonora? You know that you are my 'right hand man,' and a great deal of the arrangements devolve upon you. We will appoint you captain, and we, your loyal subjects, are ready to obey."

"Well, then, to begin, let us three sit down and write the invitations," and opening a large box sitting upon the table, Sonora took out a package of note papers and envelopes, and dividing them, handed parts to each of her companions. Then, going to Blanche's little writing desk, she took out the ink and a pen for each. "There, now, let us begin," and setting the example, she seated herself with the list of guests before her and began writing. About two hours were thus occupied, when the last one was finished by Blanche, who, jumping up just as the bell sounded for dinner, exclaimed, "One hundred and fifty! Well, that is pretty good for a country party. What do you think, girls?"

"Capital!" exclaimed both at once.

"Now let us pack them nicely in this little basket," said Sonora, "and they will be ready for June to deliver this afternoon."

"Finishing this important task, they descended to the dining room, where grandpa stood carving a leg of lamb, whose savory smell might have caused the month of an epicure to water, while grandma, at the door, stood waiting to receive them.

"Oh, then you are willing to own that it was not all love in our case, but a few dollars helped us amazingly. Well, no matter; 'all is well that ends well,' and it is too late to repent now, so I will make the best of a bad bargain," and laughing, as they arose from the table, he gave his wife an affectionate slap upon the shoulder as he said, "No matter, my Alice; your heart is good, I know. You will not always esteem money the most essential thing towards happiness."

The Colonel and his lady retired to the back piazza to enjoy a cozy chat, while Harry took a stroll in the garden to enjoy a prime Havana.

Sonora, according to a custom which she had followed for a year or two, of going into the kitchen one evening in every week to teach Clarissa, or "Rissey," as she was called, an interesting little colored girl, whose mother had formerly been a slave to Mr. Hewitt's mother, and who was now cook in her young "mamma's" house. Sampson, the coachman, was her husband, and this prodigy of negroism was their only child. She was at the present time nearly fourteen years old. Her round ebony face was ornamented by a pair of eyes which might have answered the place of a tin-drum when she was angry, judging by the sparks which seemed to issue from them. She was a source of great trouble to her worthy parents, differing from them in every respect. Her disposition seemed bent on doing something wrong, and when reprimanded, would fly off into violent paroxysms of rage. Upon these occasional occasions her mother's broad palm might be heard resounding through the kitchen, while Rissey, holding on to her ears, ringing with pain, would scream at the top of her voice, and revenge herself by running pins, points upwards, into the cushion of her mother's chair, which had occupied a corner ever since she had been born. Old Kizzev had complained to her young mistress one day of her child's disobedience, when Sonora told her she would see what she could do with her, offering to teach her one evening every week.

"Bress you, missy! You too good. Kizzev love you better than her own flesh and blood, dat she does," and the tears rolled down her wrinkled cheeks as she added: "O, missy, dat child am my greates trouble. Samp says, 'Kill her, Kiz,' but I know dat am wrong, so I puts my trust in de Lord and prays for Him to tell me what to do, and den you come down and offer to 'struct her in de way she should go, and I know de Lord send you."

Sonora smiled at the old creature's enthusiastic thanks, telling her "not to despair; perhaps Rissey would yet prove a comfort to her and Sampson in their old age."

On the evening of which we spoke she was seated in Kizzev's old rocking chair with her feet upon a bench, while by her side sat the little wicked Rissey, almost a "Topsy" in appearance.

"I tell you, missy, dere be no use tryin' to make anyting out ob dis nig," and running her fingers through her woolly hair, she chuckled a low laugh, as she rolled up her large eyes at Sonora's.

"But will you not try for my sake?" asked the youthful teacher, and opening a small catechism, began learning her the lesson which she had before given her.

Just then a low rap at the door caused Sonora to start. Sending Rissey to open it, she was surprised to see Clarence Pierpont, who, equally surprised on his part at seeing her seated in the kitchen, stepped back. Then, coming forward, he said:

"Excuse me, Miss Hewitt. I was not aware I should see any of the family below stairs. Wishing to prepare some syrup for a soreness in my throat, I came down to do so by the fire, not wishing to put it into the hands of a servant, as it contains alcohol, and might prove dangerous."

"All right, Mr. Pierpont," replied Sonora, with a smile, "but as I have a great antipathy to a gentleman performing any kind of service in the kitchen, especially an invalid, allow me to prepare it for you."

"Thank you kindly," said he, handing her the bottle containing the preparation. "I will await in the library."

Sonora turned to Rissey, who stood at the farther end of the kitchen, performing all manner of grimaces, in which her lustrous eyes enacted the principal part.

She started, exclaiming "Yes, ma'am!" as Sonora caught her with her fingers elevated to her nose and her lips protruding out about an inch from their usual thickness, which was already a little more than beauty called for.

"I did not speak to you," said Sonora, "but do you not know that that is not only wicked, but very low? If you do not stop such ill behavior I shall be obliged to speak to papa and have you discharged. How would you like that to be separated from your mother?"

"O, I don't care half so much about her as I do you," pears to me 't would break my brack back to leave you, missy!" and rubbing her eyes with her fingers she again took her former seat, while Sonora, after heating the syrup, and telling Rissey that she would attend to her in a few moments, left the kitchen and proceeded to the library, where she found Mr. Pierpont standing before the book case, selecting a volume, and her brother enjoying a comfortable lay off upon the easy velvet lounge.

"Sis, I have just been telling our friend that he must hold himself in readiness for a walk to-morrow morning after breakfast. Where shall we escort him to, for it will not do to let him go alone just yet?" said Harry, as his sister entered.

"I think about our own grounds will be a sufficient walk for an invalid," said Sonora, looking at Harry. "So you may consider me at your service."

"Just as you please," remarked Mr. Pierpont, "for I am perfectly under your control, and must therefore obey."

"Well, good night. I shall be ready," said Sonora, and closing the door, she returned to her sable pupil.

(To be continued.)

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A Gondola-Ride in Venice.

Chained to her many isles, and crowned by a tiara of proud palaces, she rises, like a sea-sprite, from her watery bed, and her crumbling magnificence of Oriental splendor mirrors the haughty age when Venice was the mistress of the seas. Anchored in the Lagoon, she surveys, with a saddened majesty, the mournful Adriatic, who once bore her commerce, received her spoils, and revealed in naval dignity in her imperial festivities. The vicissitudes of centuries have rocked her ambition; her pride has been crushed.

The ages of prosperity and freedom, shimmering through the vista of her glories, trace struggles for liberty characteristic of our own. The mighty pomp with which she led her shackled captives, bowed emperors, and lashed nations, has been succeeded by a dire desolation; and she who throng her purple robe o'er empires, now sinks beneath the weight of Italy's sovereignty. Her stately halls, which once resounded with the clash of arms, now mourn their lords. Where soldiers, kings, and popes knelt with royal brilliancy, the denizen tramples.

The dogeless palace frowns with a scornful mien; her blackened marble depicts her rage at her withered power, and from her council-chambers her rulers look down, in pictures from the walls, upon her broken wand.

From the Bridge of Sighs I looked through the grated windows, out that dismal prison, where so many culprits have suffered the demented horrors inflicted by the "Immortal Ten," and I was told that within its cells victims still languish. A torchlight guided my footsteps down a worn stairway to the darkened vaults. There were two ranges, one above the other, each separated by massive walls, and distinguished as the last resting-place of some fallen hero. In one—that of Marino Falleri—I traced nail-marks upon the boarded walls, where he scratched during the half-hours of candle-light allotted to him of each day. The poor unfortunate was chained to the wall, through a loop-hole, by which they also received their brief cheerful rays. Here their luxurious beds were changed to those of stone. In another, I saw the rocky pillow left by the last night of the condemned, and before its iron-framed window the brown-robed priest was wont to come, in the gloom of darkness, and listen to the confession, and as death's herald, point to the distant Madonna, which smiled benignly through the murky hours, as the sweet consolation.

Just then a low rap at the door caused Sonora to start. Sending Rissey to open it, she was surprised to see Clarence Pierpont, who, equally surprised on his part at seeing her seated in the kitchen, stepped back. Then, coming forward, he said:

"Excuse me, Miss Hewitt. I was not aware I should see any of the family below stairs. Wishing to prepare some syrup for a soreness in my throat, I came down to do so by the fire, not wishing to put it into the hands of a servant, as it contains alcohol, and might prove dangerous."

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The ages of prosperity and freedom, shimmering through the vista of her glories, trace struggles for liberty characteristic of our own. The mighty pomp with which she led her shackled captives, bowed emperors, and lashed nations, has been succeeded by a dire desolation; and she who throng her purple robe o'er empires, now sinks beneath the weight of Italy's sovereignty. Her stately halls, which once resounded with the clash of arms, now mourn their lords. Where soldiers, kings, and popes knelt with royal brilliancy, the denizen tramples.

The dogeless palace frowns with a scornful mien; her blackened marble depicts her rage at her withered power, and from her council-chambers her rulers look down, in pictures from the walls, upon her broken wand.

From the Bridge of Sighs I looked through the grated windows, out that dismal prison, where so many culprits have suffered the demented horrors inflicted by the "Immortal Ten," and I was told that within its cells victims still languish. A torchlight guided my footsteps down a worn stairway to the darkened vaults. There were two ranges, one above the other, each separated by massive walls, and distinguished as the last resting-place of some fallen hero. In one—that of Marino Falleri—I traced nail-marks upon the boarded walls, where he scratched during the half-hours of candle-light allotted to him of each day. The poor unfortunate was chained to the wall, through a loop-hole, by which they also received their brief cheerful rays. Here their luxurious beds were changed to those of stone. In another, I saw the rocky pillow left by the last night of the condemned, and before its iron-framed window the brown-robed priest was wont to come, in the gloom of darkness, and listen to the confession, and as death's herald, point to the distant Madonna, which smiled benignly through the murky hours, as the sweet consolation.

Just then a low rap at the door caused Sonora to start. Sending Rissey to open it, she was surprised to see Clarence Pierpont, who, equally surprised on his part at seeing her seated in the kitchen, stepped back. Then, coming forward, he said:

"Excuse me, Miss Hewitt. I was not aware I should see any of the family below stairs. Wishing to prepare some syrup for a soreness in my throat, I came down to do so by the fire, not wishing to put it into the hands of a servant, as it contains alcohol, and might prove dangerous."

"All right, Mr. Pierpont," replied Sonora, with a smile, "but as I have a great antipathy to a gentleman performing any kind of service in the kitchen, especially an invalid, allow me to prepare it for you."

"Thank you kindly," said he, handing her the bottle containing the preparation. "I will await in the library."

Sonora turned to Rissey, who stood at the farther end of the kitchen, performing all manner of grimaces, in which her lustrous eyes enacted the principal part.

She started, exclaiming "Yes, ma'am!" as Sonora caught her with her fingers elevated to her nose and her lips protruding out about an inch from their usual thickness, which was already a little more than beauty called for.

"I did not speak to you," said Sonora, "but do you not know that that is not only wicked, but very low? If you do not stop such ill behavior I shall be obliged to speak to papa and have you discharged. How would you like that to be separated from your mother?"