MR. THOMPSON'S UMBRELLA:

"Augusta, I wish you would practice Chopin's march. Mr. Thompson is very fond of music, and that, I know, will please him."

Oh! how sick I was of hearing about Mr. Thompson! My poor aunt! she meant it very kindly, of course, but she little knew how she made me hate those single gentlemen whom she so wished me to please. I was an orphan, and had forty pounds a year, and my aunt's annuity died with her; so I suppose her anxiety to see me married was both commendable and natural, but to me it was dreadful. Moreover, perhaps because I was a proud girl, and perhaps, too, because I was a foolish one, the mere fact of a man, young or middle-aged-for only the old and wedded were excluded-coming to the house on my account, made him detestable in my eyes. I should not wonder if that were not the reason why I pleased none.

I was said to be pretty-I may now say that, alas! it is so long ago-but plainer girls, with no greater advantages than I had, went off at a premium in the marriage market, and I remained Augusta Rodgers, uncared and unsought for, I did not care, not I. I only lamented that aunt would worry both these unfortunate gentlemen and me with vain efforts to make them admire me, and make me like them. She was my best friend, however, and I loved her dearly.

So I now sat down to the piano and played Chopin's march, and practiced for the benefit of the devoted Mr. Thompson, who was to come this evening, and who little knew, poor fellow, he had been invited to spend a week with us for the express purpose of falling in love with his second cousin's niece. I had not seen him since I was a shill. He cousin's niece. I had not seen him since I was a child. He was a young man then, tall, dark and grave, and already on the road to prosperity. He was a rich man—at least, rich for such a poor girl as I was; but he was Mr. Thompson, and I hated him; besides, he must be old, quite old.

I thought of all these things while I was play-ing, and then I forgot them, for the divine music bore me away, and music was a passion to me

We lived in the country, and a small but beau We lived in the country, and a small but beau-tiful garden enclosed my aunt's cottage. It was a low one, with broad rooms, a little dark, per-haps, yet strangely pleasant. At least, they seemed so to me. I dearly liked the room in which I now sat playing. It was our best room, but it was also our sitting-room. A central table was strewn with books, some of which were dear old friends, and others were new and pleasant ac-quaintances. Flower-stands, work-baskets, and delightful chairs, chairs made to read or dream in added to the attractions of this apartment. I in, added to the attractions of this apartment. I enjoyed it even as I played; but then, to be sure, the windows were all open, and every one gave me a glimpse of the green garden, with a patch of blue sky above its nodding trees, and the sweet scent of the mignonette came in with every breath

Where are you now, pleasant room and green garden? The ruthless hand of man has laid you waste, and my eyes can see you no more. Is there no home for lost places, no dreamland like the Indian's hunting-ground, where the things that have once been may enjoy a shadow existence? Are you really forever gone and lost, save when you come back every time a woman, whose hair is turning year, hears that grand, mournful men-

is turning gray, hears that grand, mournful mu-sic to which your pleasant homeliness would seem so little akin?

"My dear, Mr. Thompson," said my aunt's voice, as I closed the instrument.

I turned round and saw him; tall, dark, grave, very little altered, and not at all old. We had expected him for dinner, and he had come for luncheon; I forget how the mistake arose. As he on; I forget how the mistake arose. As he opened the garden gate, he met my aunt. They heard me playing, and stood by one of the windows to listen. When I ceased, they entered the room, and it was then that, as I said, I saw

I did not know it at the time, but I knew it later—I liked him from that very moment. I am not sure that every girl would have liked Mr. Thompson. He was decidedly good-looking, and he was both shrewd and pleasant; but he had a quaint and abrupt manner, which was apt to startle strangers. I liked it well, however. I liked that eccentricity which never took him too far, and that slight want of polish which gave flavor to everything he said or did. I liked all, excepting his umbrella. That I detested. It was large, solid, massive, and dreadfully obtrusive. He had it in his hand on that bright, warm day, and long as our acquaintance lasted, I never saw Mr. Thompson without it. Later, when our intimacy had progressed. I taxed him with this.

had progressed. I taxed him with this.

"Yes." he said, good-humoredly, "I confess it is my hobby. My earliest ambition as a boy was to possess an umbrella, and my greatest happiness as a man is to go about with one."

Of course, we did not speak about his umbrella and the first morning we speak about his umbrella.

on this the first morning we spent together. Mr. Thompson praised my music, and, looking me full in the face, told me I played divinely. He said it without preamble, and I saw he meant it. My aunt was delighted, and I felt pleased; but, somehow or other, I also felt that Mr. Thompson treated me like a little girl; and so he did, not merely then, but ever afterward. Tiresome man! I had thought him old before I saw him, and I could not make him think me old now that he

Mr. Thompson did not stay a week with us, but a month. Oh! that happy month, with long golden days and delicious evenings, with music and sweet converse! Shall I ever forget it? If the wakening was bitter, let me remember that the dream was very sweet.

Mr. Thompson was to leave us next morning, and we were in the garden together. I knew by this time how I felt toward him; and, kind though he was, I doubted if he cared much for me. And when he said, "Augusta, I have something to say to you," my heart began to beat. He used to call me Augusta now and then, having known me as a child; but never had he said it so kindly as this evening.

Ah, well! I suppose many women have to go

Ah, well! I suppose many women have to go through the bitterness which came to me then. Mr. Thompson had met my cousin Jessie at Mrs. fide Gray's, proposed to her, and been accepted. From the instant he mentioned Jessie's name, I, knew sid my fate. Without seeking it, I suppose, she had giver stood between me and every good. She had taken the friendship of my best friend, the liking has of my nearest relative—I was not really my aunt's au

ever cared for. Surely, she was not to blame in that; but oh! how hard, how very hard, it seemed

to me!

The nightingale sang in the trees above us, brilliant stars burned in the sky, the garden was full of fragrance, and Mr. Thompson went on pouring Jessie's praises in my ear. She was so handsome, so bright, so genial, and so delightfully innocent! And what do you suppose he told me all this for? Why, because he wanted me to go and live with them. My aunt's health had been failing of late, and he was aware that I knew the worst might soon come, so he wanted me to

the worst might soon come, so he wanted me to be sure of a home. I burst into tears.

"My dear, good child," he cried, warmly, "if I were not going away, I would not have grieved you so. You have, I know, a true, warm heart. four dear aunt may live for years; only, if she should not, Jessie and I-"
"Pray don't!" I interrupted.

I could not bear it. The more he praised me. the kinder he was, the more I wept and felt miserable. At length, at my request, he left me. I grew calmer after a while, and went in.
"Do play Chopin's march for us, my dear," said

my sont. Poor, dear aunt! she wanted me to fascinate him to the last. She little knew that Jessie, whom she disliked so, had been beforehand with me

I played it again. It was the knell of all my hopes. A gray twilight filled the room, and they could not see the tears which flowed down my cheeks. I played well, they said; and I believe I did. Something from myself was in the music that evening, and that something was very sorrowful. Mr. Thompson came and sat by me wi I had done. The servant brought in the lights and a letter for my aunt. While she was reading

it, he said, softly:
"You will think it over?" "Pray don't !" I entreated.

"But you do not know how much I like you," he insisted; "and then you will do my little, heed-less Jessie good—poor, childish darling! Besides, I have set my heart on something."

This crowned all. I guessed his meaning; he had a younger brother for whom he meant me. He had all but said so this evening in the garden -"It would do John, who was rather light, all the good in the world."

I could not bear it. I rose and went up to my

"What news, aunty?" I asked.
"News, indeed?" she replied, amazed. "There's Jessie going to marry my cousin, Mr. Norris, old enough to be her father! I wonder what he will do with the little flirt?"

There was a pause. Mr. Thompson came forward. I did not dare look at him. "What Jessie is that?" he asked. "Surely not

Miss Rodgers' cousin?"

"Yes; the same. Do you know her?"

"I have seen her at Mrs. Gray's."

He spoke very calmly. I suppose he did not believe it. I pitied him; from my heart I pitied

"Perhaps it is not true, aunt?" I said.

"Not true! why, she writes to me herself— there's her letter."
I looked at him now. He was pale as death, but

very firm. Neither troubled look nor quivering lip gave token of the cruel storm within. Something now called my aunt out of the room.

"Augusta, may I look at it?" he asked, glancing toward the letter, which my aunt had given

I could not refuse him. I gave him the letter. then looking for his umbrella, which he always kept in a corner of the sitting-room, he said very ealmly:
"I think I shall go and take a walk."

And he went out, and we saw him no more till the next morning, when he left us. My aunt was disappointed to find that Mr. Thompson had not proposed to me, after all, and I was hurt to the heart's core by the coldness of his adieu. My value had gone down with my cousin's faithlessness; mine had been at the best but a reflected light. I was liked because my cousin was loved.

Jessie became Mrs. Norris soon after this. She was married from my aunt's house, out of regard to Mr. Norris, who was related to her, and who disliked Mrs. Gray. "That busybody," he called her, and I am afraid she was a busybody. Jessie was very bright, and seemed very happy. She teased me unmercifully about Mr. Thompson. She was sure, she said, he had made love to me, and she looked at me with cruel significance as she spoke. But I betrayed neither his secret nor mine; and though she vexed me when she quizzed him to Mr. Norris, especially about his umbrella, I did keep silent.

"I am sure he will be married with his umbrella under his arm," she said, the evening before her

I did not answer her; I went out into the gar-den, and wondered how she had charmed him. Alas! I might have wondered how, without seek-ing it, he had charmed.

Jessie's marriage was a blow to my aunt. She had always thought I should go off first, She was also cruelly disappointed by Mr. Thompson's indifference, and perhaps she guessed the meaning of my altered looks. I believe I got pale and thin just then. And I was always playing Chopin's

"My dear," said my aunt to me one evening, is not that very mournful?"
"I like it, aunt," I replied; but I resolved to

play it no more.

"Mr. Thompson liked it," she said, with a sigh.
"I wonder he did not propose to you," she added,

I was mute.

I was mute.

"I wish I had never asked him here," she resumed: "I cannot help thinking—"

"Don't, pray don't!" I interrupted.

She did not insist, but she made me go and sit by her. She caressed me, she coaxed me, and little by little she drew my secret from me.

"My poor darling," she said, when I had confessed all, "he may value you yet."

"No. aunt, he never will. But pray do not trouble about me; I mean to get over it, and I will."

I spoke resolutely, and my aunt praised me.
"You have always been the best of girls," she said, tenderly, "and I am glad you have had confidence in me. I did not mean to leave home this year; but now I will take you to the sea-side. You must have a change, my poor dar-

She kissed me, and I remember how calm and happy I felt in that gray room, sitting by my dear aunt's side, and looking at the starry sky. The

rose to my eyes, when I remembered it, and his

rose to my eyes when I remembered it, and his last kindness, and my toolish, withered hopes; the bitterness was gone from my sorrow.

"You must have a change," said my aunt, again.

Alas! the change came with the morning. My aunt was late for breakfast. I went up to her room, and found her caimly sleeping. But oh! too calm, too deep, were those slumbers. The kind eyes which had rested on me in love were closed the voice which had ever spoken in praise closed, the voice which had ever spoken in praise and endearment was silenced forever.

I suppose it was not Jessie's fault that her husband was my aunt's heir-at-law; but I found it very hard. Poor, dear aunt! She always did mean to make a will in my favor, but she never did. Mr. Norris behaved very handsomely, I was told. He gave me the plane which had been bought for me, a few other articles of no great value, and all my aunt's wardrobe. He kept her jewels, which were fine, and the furniture, for which, as he said truly enough, I had no use. Moreover, he allowed me to remain in the cottage till Lady day; though perhaps, as he could not live in two houses at a time, and must pay the rent whether I stayed there or not, this was no great favor, after all.

God forgive me! I fear I was very sinful during the dark days that followed. I had some friends who did, or rather who said, their best; but there was one who never came near me, who gave me no token of his assistance, who had no kind word for me, who let me struggle through my hard trial, and who never offered a helping hand. He might at least have written, have condoled with me in my sorrow, but he did not. And yet he was in the neighborhood. He was often at Mr. Norris' house. Jessie herself told me so. True, he had business to transact with her husband; but still, how could he do it? He did it, and he did

Mr. Norris was thrown off his horse one morning, and brought home dead. Jessie became a widow, and a poor one, said the world. Mr. Nor-ris was not a rich man, after all, and he left many debts. I only went to see her once. I found her cold, callous and defiant under her infliction; yet I would have gone again if Mr, Thompson had not been Mr. Norris' executor. He had business to settle with the widow, and I should only interfere; besides, I could not bear to see them together. It was very wrong and very useless, but it was so.

Mrs. Gray came often to see me. I cannot say she comforted me much. She gave me a world of wearisome advice, and told me much that I would rather not have heard. What was it to me now that accounts kept him so often and so late with Jessie? They were both free; and if he chose to forgive her and marry her, and if she chose to marry once more for money—I say it again—what was it to me?

And yet I suppose it was something, after all; for when Mrs. Gray left me one afternoon in February, I felt the loneliest being on the wide earth. She had harped again on that hateful string—that Mr. Thompson seemed quite smitten with Mrs.

"And what do you think, my dear?" she added. "He thought you were gone. He seemed quite surprised when I said I had seen you on Sunday. "What, is she not gone?" he asked—'gone to

"'No, indeed! What should she go to London "He did not answer that, but, from something he said. I saw he thought you were engaged to be

"'I wish she were, poor dear!" I replied. 'It is

"I have no doubt he thinks so, too; and so it is to prevent Mrs. Norris from being lonely that he goes to see her so often." Thus she rattled on, stabbing me with every word, till at length she left me to my misery. I

sat looking at the fire; it was bright and warm, but my loneliness was heavy upon me; besides, it had been snowing, and the gray sky and white garden and silent air had something both lone and chill in them.

Yet I was not quite alone. Early in the Winter I had taken in a poor, half-starved, stray dog, and, although he was but a shaggy, half-bred cur, I had made a pet of him. He had laid by his vagrant habits willingly enough, and he now lay sleeping on the rug at my feet. Poor Carlo! he heeded not the morrow, and thought not of the future. Yet how long could I keep him? and if I cast him away? He had neither youth nor beauty to recommend him-nothing but his old honest heart, and who would care for that? "Poor Carlo! poor old Carlo!" I thought; and, perhaps because my heart was rather full just then, tears rose to my eyes as I thought of the fate that lay

I believe I thought of something else, too. remember a vision I saw in the burning coals; how it came there, Heaven knows. I saw them both, as no doubt they often were, bending over accounts which they read together, then looking up and exchanging glances and smiles which no one could mistake. I wonder why I came back I do not know how long Mrs. Gray had been

gone, when Carlo gave a short bark; the gate bell rang; I saw a tall, dark form pass the window; and my little maid opened the door, saying:

"Mr. Thompson, ma'am."

I rose. He came in with his umbrella, as usual. and Carlo went up to him and wagged a friendly welcome. I could not say one word. I was dreadfully agitated. I felt quite sure he had come to tell me that he meant to marry Jessie, and to ask me to go and stay with them, or something of the kind. Nothing else could have brought him. Or perhaps, as Jessie had, no doubt, told him that I was gone, he had, on learning the truth, felt ashamed of his long coldness, and had come to make some sort of excuse. He had none; but he asked me how I was, took a chair, looked rather hard at me, and, without waiting for my answer, feared I was not very ill.

"Oh, I am not ill, you know," I replied, a little carelessly. "I trust you are well, Mr. Thompson?"

He said he was very well, and he looked at the fire. For a while we were both silent. My remark was scarcely a gracious one.

"I heard you were so much engaged that I scarcely expected to see you," I said.

I was vexed with myself as soon as I had said it. He might think I was annoyed at his long absence, and, surely, I was not? But he took my implied reproach very well. He answered that he had, indeed, been much engaged, but that everything was over now. Mrs. Norris, he added, had left this morning. My heart gave a throb; but I

She left in no very contented mood, I believe," be resumed. "The balance in her favor was low-

niece, only her late husband's—and now she had nightingale was singing again as on that sad lower than I expected. Mrs. Norris has some-forestalled me in the love of the only man I had evening when I had felt so heart-broken; tears thing like a hundred a year. This and a felt so heart-broken; thing like a hundred a year. This and a few jew-els constitute the net profit she derives from her marriage. Unluckily, these speculations cannot be repeated often, you see. The capital of youth and beauty has but a time—a brief one; it is apt to wear out, and the first venture ought to be the best. Mrs. Norris, not having found it so, is disappointed. I suppose it is natural; but you know

I cannot pity her very much."

I supposed not; but how all that cold, hard talk = pained me.

"I have a fancy," he resumed, "that this kind lady expected some other ending to our accounts. This is not very flattering to my vanity, unless, indeed, as showing my marketable value. Is it,

I would not answer that question. His tone, his manner, vexed me. Suddenly he raised his eyes to mine.

"Did such a rumor reach you?" he asked. I could not deny it; my face was in a flame. I believe I stammered something, but I do not know what.

"Even you have heard it," he said, looking scarcely pleased; "the world is very kind. And you believe it, too! I had hoped you knew me better.

He seemed quite hurt, but I offered no justifica-tion. Then he rather formally asked me to be allowed to mention the business that brought him. So it was business! I scorned myself for my folly, which was not dead yet, and I bade him

was I asleep or dreaming? Mr. Thompson spoke of my aunt, her love for me, my forlorn position, and expressed the strongest wish to take care of me.

"But," he added, with some hesitation, "I can do so but in one fashion-as your husband. Will you overlook all those peculiarities in my temper, which used to annoy you, I fear, and take what there is of true and good in me? Can you, will

you, do this, Augusta?" He looked at me in doubt. Ah! this was one of my bitterest moments. He cared so little for me, that he had never seen, never suspected how much I loved him. And he expected me to take him so! I clasped my hands and twisted them nervously; I could not speak at once.

"And you, Mr. Thompson," I said, at last; "and you_"

"Yes."

"Can you do it?" "Why, surely, else I had never proposed it."

He half smiled at the doubt my question implied, and he looked at me as he smiled. Both ook and smile exasperated me.

"Mr. Thompson," I said, excitedly, "I have not deserved this. Carlo, come here.'

My poor shaggy Carlo came forward, wagging his tail. He laid his head on my knee and looked up at me wistfully and fondly, as only dogs can look when they vainly seek to read the meaning of a human face.

"He was an outcast," I said, looking at Mr. Thompson; "he was starving; he came to this door; I fed him, and he would not leave it. I took pity on him-I gave him a mat to lie on and a crust to eat. He loves me for it; but, Mr. Thompson, I am not quite so low as to be brought-to this poor beast's level—I can take care of my-

Mr. Thompson threw himself back in his chair and uttered a dismayed whistle as I made this free commentary upon his proposal.

"Well, well," he said, recovering slowly, "I can understand that you should not care for me, but I

did not expect you would take it so."
"And how could I take it?" I cried. "You give I scorn pity Ah. Mr. Thou were not the poor, forlorn girl I am, would you feel or speak so? Do you think I do not know how rich girls are wooed and won? If you cared an atom for me, would you dare to come to me with such language?"

"What language?" "What did you mean by taking care of me?" "What I said. Yes, Augusta, I wish to take care of you—true, fond, loving care; nothing shall

make me unsay it." He spoke warmly, and a manly glow rose to his face; but I would not give in, and I said angrily that I did not want to be taken care of.

"Do let us drop these unlucky words," he entreated; "and do tell me whether you will marry me—yes or no. Let it be, if you like, that I want you to take care of me. I am much older than you are, you know."

I don't know what possessed me. I said "No!" Oh! how I would have liked to recall the word! but it was spoken, and he rose with a clouded and disappointed face. He lingered a little, and asked to know why it was no and not yes. I said we could not be happy together. He bowed gravely and left me. I suppose he was hurt, for he did not add a word. Assurance of friendship, of good-will, no hope that I would relent or change my mind, passed his lips. The door closed upon him. I heard the garden gate fall to, and I felt in a sort of stupor. It was all over between us.

What madness had made me banish him? Every step took him away farther from menever-never again would we meet. Perhaps he would not have left me then, if I could have spoken the truth. Ah! if I could have said to him, "I cannot be happy with you because I love, and you do not; because my love and my pride would suffer all day long if I were your wife; be-cause it is easier to do without you than to have you on these terms."

If I could have said all this, would our meeting have ended thus? It was too late to think of that now, but it was not too late to suffer. I buried my face in the pillow of the couch on which I was sitting, and cried and sobbed as if my heart would

Poor Carlo's cold nose, thrust in the hand which hung down by my side in the folds of my dress, roused me. I looked up and saw Mr. Thompson. He was very red, and seemed flurried.

"I have forgetten my umbrelfa," he said, a lit-

Yes, there it was in the corner, that horrid um-brella of his! But, instead of going to look for it, he suddenly came and sat down on the couch by me. I do not know how I looked, but I felt ready to die with shame. He took my hand and kissed it. "My dear Augusts," he said, persuasively,
"why should we not be happy together? I cannot
bear to give you up—indeed I cannot!"
I looked at him in doubt.

"Then do you really like me?" I asked.
"Do I really like you? Why, what else have I been saying all along?"
"You said you wanted to take care of me."

"Oh, if we are to go back to that-" he began, resignedly.

But we did not go back to that; we went back to nothing; for a miserable girl suddenly became

J479