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THE HALF-CASTE.

AN OLD GOVERNESS'S TALE---
FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY MISS MULOCK.

We drove to the lodge gates. An English country-house is always fair to see; this was very beautiful—I remembered it seven years ago, only that it was autumn, and now spring. Zillah remembered it likewise; she drew back, and I heard her whisper uneasily: "Now we shall soon see Mr. Sutherland."

I did not answer her a word. We rolled up the avenue under the large chestnut-trees. I saw some one made me dizzy, for all grew indistinct, except a firm, kind hand holding me as I stepped down, and the words, "Take care, my dear Cassia!" It was Mr. Sutherland!

He scarcely observed Zillah, till in the hall I introduced her to him. He seemed surprised, startled, pleased. Talking of her to me that evening, he said, he had not thought she would have grown up thus; and I noticed him look at her at times with a pensive kindness. Mrs. Sutherland whispered to me that the lady he had been engaged to was a half-caste like Zillah, which accounted for it. His mother's prophecy had been right; he had come back as he went out—unmarried.

When Zillah went to bed she was full of admiration for her guardian. He was so tall, so stately. Then his thick, curling fair hair—just like a young man's, with scarcely a shadow of gray. She would not believe that he was over forty—ten years older than myself—until by some pertinacity I had impressed this fact upon her. And then she said it did not signify, as she liked such "dear old souls" as him and me much better than any young people. Her fervor of admiration made me smile, but after this night I observed that the expression of it gradually ceased.

Though I was not so demonstrative as Zillah, it will not be supposed but that I was truly glad to see my old friend, Mr. Sutherland. He was very kind, talked to me long of past things, and as he cast a glance on my black dress, I saw his lips quiver; he took my hand and pressed it like a brother. God bless him for that!

But one thing struck me—a thing I had not calculated on—the alteration seven years had made in us both. When he took me down to dinner, I accidentally caught sight of our two figures in the large pier-glass. Age tells so differently on man and woman; I remember the time when he was a grown man, and I a mere girl; now he looked a stately gentleman in the prime of life, and I a middle-aged, old-maidish woman. Perhaps something more than years had done this; yet it was quite natural, only I had never thought of it before.

So, when the first meeting was over, with the excitement, pleasurable or otherwise, which as a matter of course it brought to us all—when we had severally bidden each other good-night, and Mr. Sutherland had said smilingly that he was glad it was only good-night, not good-bye—when the whole house was quiet and asleep—to use the psalmist's solemn words, "At night on my bed I communed with my own heart in chamber and was still."

"Cassia, I want to speak to you particularly," said Mr. Sutherland to me one morning, as after breakfast he was about to go into his study. Zillah placed herself in the doorway with the pretty obstinacy, half womanish, half girlish, that she sometimes used with her guardian—much to my surprise. Zillah was on excellent terms with him, considering their brief acquaintance of three weeks. In that time she had treated him as I in my whole life-time had never ventured to do—willfully, jestingly, even crossly, yet he seemed to like it. They were very social and merry, for his disposition had apparently grown more cheerful as he advanced in life. Their relation was scarcely like guardian and ward, but that of perfect equality—pleasant and confidential, which somewhat surprised me, until I

recollected what opportunities they had of intercourse, and what strong friendships are sometimes formed even in a single week or fortnight when people are shut up together in a rather lonely country-house. This was the state of things among us all on the morning when Mr. Sutherland called me to his study. Zillah wanted to go likewise.

"Not to-day," he answered her, very gently and smilingly. "I have business to talk over with Miss Pryor." (I knew he said "Miss Pryor" out of respect, yet it hurt me—I had been "Cassia" with him so many years. Perhaps he thought I was outgrowing my baby name now.)

The business he wished to speak of was about Zillah's coming of age next week, and what was to be done on the occasion. "Should he, ought he, to give a ball, a dinner, anything of that sort? Would Zillah like it?"

This was a great concession, for in old times he always disliked society. I answered that I did not think such display necessary, but I would try to find out Zillah's mind.

I did so. It was an innocent, girlish mind, keenly alive to pleasure, and new to everything. The consequences were natural—the ball must be. A little she hesitated when I hinted at her guardian's peculiarities, and then she offered cheerfully to renounce her delight. But he, his eyes beaming with a deeper delight still, would not consent. So the thing was settled.

It was a very brilliant affair, for Mr. Sutherland spared no expense. He seemed to show a restless eagerness in providing for his young favorite everything she could desire. Nay, in answer to her wayward entreaties, he even consented to open the ball with her, though saying "he was sure he should make an old simpleton of himself." That was not likely!

I watched them walk down the room together, and heard many people say with a smile what a handsome pair they were, notwithstanding the considerable difference of age.

It was a very quiet evening to me. Being strange to almost everyone there, I sat near old Mrs. Sutherland in a corner. Mr. Sutherland asked me to dance once, but I did not feel strong, and indeed for the last few years I had almost given up dancing. He laughed, and said merrily: "It was not fair for him to be beginning life just when I ended it." A true word spoken in a jest! But I only smiled.

The ball produced results not unlikely, when one considered that it was meant for the introduction into society of a young woman, handsome, attractive, and an heiress. A week or two after Zillah's birthday Mr. Sutherland called me once more into his study.

I noticed he looked rather paler and less composed than usual. He forgot even to ask me to sit down, and we stood together by the fire-place, which I remember was filled with a great vase of lilacs that Zillah had insisted on placing there. It filled the room with a strong, rich scent, which now I never perceive without its bringing back to my mind that room and that day.

He said: "I have had a letter to-day on which I wish to consult with you before showing it to Miss Le Poer." (I was rather startled by the formal words, since he usually called her "Zillah," as was natural.)

"It is a letter—scarcely surprising—in fact to be expected after what I noticed at the dinner-party yesterday; in fact—But you had better read it yourself."

He took the letter from his desk and gave it to me. It was an earnest and apparently sincere application for the hand of his ward. The suitor, the Hon. Henry French, was of good family and moderate prospects. I had noticed he was very attentive to Zillah at the ball, and on some occasions since; still I was a good deal surprised, more so even than was Mr. Sutherland, who had evidently watched her far closer than I. I gave him back the letter in silence, and avoided looking at his face.

"Well, Cassia," he said after a pause, and with an appearance of gayety, "what is to be done? You women are the best counselors in these matters." I smiled, but both he and I very soon became grave once more.

"It is a thing to be expected," continued he in a voice rather formal and hard. "With Zillah's personal attractions and large fortune she was sure to receive many offers. Still it is early to begin these affairs."

I reminded him that she was twenty-one.

"True, true. She might, under other circumstances, have been married long before this. Do you think that she

I suppose he was going to ask me whether I thought she was likely to accept Mr. French, or had hitherto formed any attachment. But probably delicacy withheld him, for he suddenly stopped and omitted the question. Soon he went on in the same steady tone:

"I think Zillah ought to be made acquainted with this circumstance. Mr. French states that this letter to me is the first confession of his feelings. That was honorable on his part. He is a gentleman of good standing, though far her inferior in fortune. People might say that he wanted her property to patch up the decayed estates at Weston-Brook."

This was spoken bitterly, very bitterly for a man of such kind nature as Andrew Sutherland. He seemed conscious of it and added: "I may wrong him, and if so I regret it. But do you not think, Cassia, that of all things it must be most despicable, most mean, most galling to a man of any pride or honest feeling, the thought of the world's saying that he married his wife for money, as a prop to his falling fortunes, or a shield to his crumbling honor? I would die a thousand deaths first."

In the passion of the moment the red color rushed violently to his cheek, and then he became more pallid than ever. I watched him; my eyes were opened now. I held fast by the marble chimney-piece, so that I could stand quite upright, firm and quiet. He walked hurriedly to the window, and flung it open, saying the scent of the lilacs was too strong. When he came back, we were both ready to talk again. I believe I spoke first—to save him the pain of doing so.

"I have no idea," said I, and I said truly, "what answer Zillah will give to this letter. Hitherto I have known all her feelings, and am confident that while she stayed with me her heart was untouched."

Here I waited for him to speak, but he did not. I went on:

"Mr. French is very agreeable, and she seems to like him; but a girl's heart, if of any value at all, is rarely won in three meetings. I think, however, that Zillah ought to be made acquainted with this letter. Will you tell her, or shall I?"

"Go you and do it—a woman can best deal with a woman in these cases. And," he added, rising slowly and looking down upon me with that grave and self-possessed smile which was likewise as sweet as any woman's, "tell Zillah from me, that though I wish her to marry in her own rank and with near equality of fortune, to save her from all those dangers of mercenary offers to which an heiress is so cruelly exposed, still, both now and at all times, I leave her to the dictates of her own affections and her happiness will ever be my chief consideration in life."

He spoke with formal serenity until the latter words, when his voice faltered a little. Then he led me to the door and I went out.

Zillah lay on a sofa reading a love-story. Her crisp black hair was tossed about the crimson cushions, and her whole figure was that of rich Eastern luxuriance. She had always rather a fantastic way of dress, and now she looked almost like a princess out of the Arabian Nights. Even though her skin was that of half-caste, and her little hands were not white but brown, there was no denying that she was a very beautiful woman. I felt it—saw it—knew it!

After a minute's pause I went to her side; she jumped up and kissed me, as she was rather fond of doing. I half shrank back—her kisses were very painful to me just then. I came as quickly as possible to my errand, and gave her the letter to read.

As she glanced through it her cheeks flushed and her lips began to curl. She threw the letter on my lap, and said abruptly, "Well, and what of that?"

I began a few necessary explanations. Zillah stopped me—

"Oh, I heard something of the sort from Mr. French last night. I did not believe him, nor do I now. He is only making a jest of me."

I answered that this was impossible. In my own mind I was surprised at Zillah's having known the matter before, and having kept it so quietly. Mr. French's statement about his honorable reticence toward the lady of his devotions must have been untrue. Still this was not so remarkable as Zillah's own secrecy about her having a lover.

To be Continued.

\$1.50 in advance for the Reporter for 1887, means just what it says—IN ADVANCE. Not a month after the beginning.

The rare and "beautiful snow" fell in San Francisco the other day. An earthquake, or a big fire or a chicken fight, could not have excited more interest.

NEW TO-DAY.

JOHN J. SAX,
Has his

Feed Chopping Mill

In Running Order,

—AND—

Will chop Feed for \$2 per ton
or one-tenth toll.

(o)

Farmers and others having grain to chop can come to my mill, and attend to any business in the city to better advantage than driving two miles out of town to get their chopping done.

JOHN J. SAX,
McMinnville, Or.

The Central Hotel,

Dining Station of the O. C. R. R.

McMinnville, Oregon.

F. Multner, Prop.

(Late of the St. Charles.)

This Hotel has just been refitted and newly furnished throughout, and will be kept in a first class style.

The table is supplied with all the market affords, and guests can rely upon good clean beds, and comfortable rooms.

Special accommodations for commercial travelers.

SEVENTH ANNUAL



FIREMAN'S FAIR

—OF THE—

McMinnville Fire Department,

—AT—

Garrison Opera House,

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday,

February 22d, 23d and 24th,

1887.

LIST OF PRIZES.

There will be prizes given on the following named exhibits:

1st and 2d prize for best and 2d best exhibit of Kensington painting.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of Kensington embroidery.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of outline work by a child under 14 years of age.

1st and 2d best, for best and 2d best exhibit of work of any kind by a boy under 14 years of age.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of crayon work.

There will also be a prize given for the heaviest, lightest and prettiest baby under 1 year of age.

Following is a list of prizes offered: For the prettiest baby, gold necklace; lightest and heaviest baby under one year of age, each a gold ring; outline work by a child under fourteen years, first prize, ear rings, second prize, scrap book; Kensington embroidery, first prize, napkin ring, second prize, box writing paper; Kensington painting, first prize, manicure set, second prize, bracket; crayon work, first prize, paper holder, second prize, piteber; boy's work, first prize, paper holder, second prize, inkstand.

Parade of Firemen Tuesday afternoon.

Doors will be open at 7 o'clock, p. m. daily, during the Fair.

—All are invited to Attend—

Admission 25 Cents.

By Order of COMMITTEE.