

## CHAPTER IV: AN ARRANGEMENT

"That is serious," said Dick, more intellectually than he had spoken for a long time.

The truth was that Geoffrey knew nothing about his daughter's continued walks and meetings with Dick. When a hint that there were symptoms of an attachment between them had first reached Geoffrey's ears, he stated so emphatically that he must think the matter over before any such thing could be allowed that, rather unwisely on Dick's part, whatever it might have been on the lady's, the lovers were careful to be seen together no more in public; and Geoffrey, forgetting the report, did not think over the matter at all. So Mr. Shiner resumed his old position in Geoffrey's brain by mere flux of time. Even Shiner began to believe that Dick existed for Fancy no more,--though that remarkably easy-going man had taken no active steps on his own account as yet.

"And father has not only told Mr. Shiner that," continued Fancy, "but he has written me a letter, to say he should wish me to encourage Mr. Shiner, if 'twas convenient!"

"I must start off and see your father at once!" said Dick, taking two or three vehement steps to the south, recollecting that Mr. Day lived to the north, and coming back again.

"I think we had better see him together. Not tell him what you come for, or anything of the kind, until he likes you, and so win his brain through his heart, which is always the way to manage people. I mean in this way: I am going home on Saturday week to help them in the honey-taking. You might come there to me, have something to eat and drink, and let him guess what your coming signifies, without saying it in so many words."

"We'll do it, dearest. But I shall ask him for you, flat and plain; not wait for his guessing." And the lover then stepped close to her, and attempted to give her one little kiss on the cheek, his lips alighting, however, on an outlying tract of her back hair by reason of an impulse that had caused her to turn her head with a jerk. "Yes, and I'll put on my second-best suit and a clean shirt and collar, and black my boots as if 'twas a Sunday. 'Twill have a good appearance, you see, and that's a great deal to start with."

"You won't wear that old waistcoat, will you, Dick?"

"Bless you, no! Why I--"

"I didn't mean to be personal, dear Dick," she said, fearing she had hurt his feelings. "'Tis a very nice waistcoat, but what I meant was, that though it is an excellent waistcoat for a settled-down man, it is not quite one for" (she waited, and a blush expanded over her face, and then she went on again)--"for going courting in."

"No, I'll wear my best winter one, with the leather lining, that mother made. It is a beautiful, handsome waistcoat inside, yes, as ever anybody saw. In fact, only the other day, I unbuttoned it to show a chap that very lining, and he said it was the strongest, handsomest lining you could wish to see on the king's waistcoat himself."

"I don't quite know what to wear," she said, as if her habitual indifference alone to dress had kept back so important a subject till now.

"Why, that blue frock you wore last week."

"Doesn't set well round the neck. I couldn't wear that."

"But I shan't care."

"No, you won't mind."

"Well, then it's all right. Because you only care how you look to me, do you, dear? I only dress for you, that's certain."

"Yes, but you see I couldn't appear in it again very well."

"Any strange gentleman you mid meet in your journey might notice the set of it, I suppose. Fancy, men in love don't think so much about how they look to other women." It is difficult to say whether a tone of playful

banter or of gentle reproach prevailed in the speech.

"Well then, Dick," she said, with good-humoured frankness, "I'll own it. I shouldn't like a stranger to see me dressed badly, even though I am in love. 'Tis our nature, I suppose."

"You perfect woman!"

"Yes; if you lay the stress on 'woman,'" she murmured, looking at a group of hollyhocks in flower, round which a crowd of butterflies had gathered like female idlers round a bonnet-shop.

"But about the dress. Why not wear the one you wore at our party?"

"That sets well, but a girl of the name of Bet Tallor, who lives near our house, has had one made almost like it (only in pattern, though of miserably cheap stuff), and I couldn't wear it on that account. Dear me, I am afraid I can't go now."

"O yes, you must; I know you will!" said Dick, with dismay. "Why not wear what you've got on?"

"What! this old one! After all, I think that by wearing my gray one Saturday, I can make the blue one do for Sunday. Yes, I will. A hat or a bonnet, which shall it be? Which do I look best in?"

"Well, I think the bonnet is nicest, more quiet and matronly."

"What's the objection to the hat? Does it make me look old?"

"O no; the hat is well enough; but it makes you look rather too--you won't mind me saying it, dear?"

"Not at all, for I shall wear the bonnet."

"--Rather too coquettish and flirty for an engaged young woman."

She reflected a minute. "Yes; yes. Still, after all, the hat would do best; hats are best, you see. Yes, I must wear the hat, dear Dicky, because I ought to wear a hat, you know."

## PART THE FOURTH--AUTUMN

### CHAPTER I: GOING NUTTING

Dick, dressed in his 'second-best' suit, burst into Fancy's sitting-room with a glow of pleasure on his face.

It was two o'clock on Friday, the day before her contemplated visit to her father, and for some reason connected with cleaning the school the children had been given this Friday afternoon for pastime, in addition to the usual Saturday.

"Fancy! it happens just right that it is a leisure half day with you. Smart is lame in his near-foot-afore, and so, as I can't do anything, I've made a holiday afternoon of it, and am come for you to go nutting with me!"

She was sitting by the parlour window, with a blue frock lying across her lap and scissors in her hand.

"Go nutting! Yes. But I'm afraid I can't go for an hour or so."

"Why not? 'Tis the only spare afternoon we may both have together for weeks."