

## CHAPTER XXV.

### WEDDING BELLS.

Some weeks had passed in Springdale while these affairs had been going on in New York. The time for the marriage of Grace had been set; and she had gone to Boston to attend to that preparatory shopping which even the most sensible of the sex discover to be indispensable on such occasions.

Grace inclined, in the centre of her soul, to Bostonian rather than New-York preferences. She had the innocent impression that a classical severity and a rigid reticence of taste pervaded even the rebellious department of feminine millinery in the city of the Pilgrims,--an idea which we rather think young Boston would laugh down as an exploded superstition, young Boston's leading idea at the present hour being apparently to outdo New York in New York's imitation of Paris.

In fact, Grace found it very difficult to find a milliner who, if left to her own devices, would not befeather and beflower her past all self-recognition, giving to her that generally betoused and fly-away air which comes straight from the demi-monde of Paris.

We apprehend that the recent storms of tribulation which have beat upon those fairy islands of fashion may scatter this frail and

fanciful population, and send them by shiploads on missions of civilization to our shores; in which case, the bustle and animation and the brilliant display on the old turnpike, spoken of familiarly as the "broad road," will be somewhat increased.

Grace however managed, by the exercise of a good individual taste, to come out of these shopping conflicts in good order,--a handsome, well-dressed, charming woman, with everybody's best wishes for, and sympathy in, her happiness.

Lillie was summoned home by urgent messages from her husband, calling her back to take her share in wedding festivities.

She left willingly; for the fact is that her last conversation with her cousin Harry had made the situation as uncomfortable to her as if he had unceremoniously deluged her with a pailful of cold water.

There is a chilly, disagreeable kind of article, called common sense, which is of all things most repulsive and antipathetical to all petted creatures whose life has consisted in flattery. It is the kind of talk which sisters are very apt to hear from brothers, and daughters from fathers and mothers, when fathers and mothers do their duty by them; which sets the world before them as it is, and not as it is painted by flatterers. Those women who prefer the society of gentlemen, and who have the faculty of bewitching their senses, never are in the way of hearing from this cold matter-of-fact region; for them it really does

not exist. Every phrase that meets their ear is polished and softened, guarded and delicately turned, till there is not a particle of homely truth left in it. They pass their time in a world of illusions; they demand these illusions of all who approach them, as the sole condition of peace and favor. All gentlemen, by a sort of instinct, recognize the woman who lives by flattery, and give her her portion of meat in due season; and thus some poor women are hopelessly buried, as suicides used to be in Scotland, under a mountain of rubbish, to which each passer-by adds one stone. It is only by some extraordinary power of circumstances that a man can be found to invade the sovereignty of a pretty woman with any disagreeable tidings; or, as Junius says, "to instruct the throne in the language of truth." Harry was brought up to this point only by such a concurrence of circumstances. He was in love with another woman,--a ready cause for disenchantment. He was in some sort a family connection; and he saw Lillie's conduct at last, therefore, through the plain, unvarnished medium of common sense. Moreover, he felt a little pinched in his own conscience by the view which Rose seemed to take of his part in the matter, and, manlike, was strengthened in doing his duty by being a little galled and annoyed at the woman whose charms had tempted him into this dilemma. So he talked to Lillie like a brother; or, in other words, made himself disagreeably explicit,--showed her her sins, and told her her duties as a married woman. The charming fair ones who sentimentally desire gentlemen to regard them as sisters do not bargain for any of this sort of brotherly plainness; and yet they might do it with great advantage. A brother, who is not a brother, stationed near the ear of

a fair friend, is commonly very careful not to compromise his position by telling unpleasant truths; but, on the present occasion, Harry made a literal use of the brevet of brotherhood which Lillie had bestowed on him, and talked to her as the generality of real brothers talk to their sisters, using great plainness of speech. He withered all her poor little trumpery array of hothouse flowers of sentiment, by treating them as so much garbage, as all men know they are. He set before her the gravity and dignity of marriage, and her duties to her husband. Last, and most unkind of all, he professed his admiration of Rose Ferguson, his unworthiness of her, and his determination to win her by a nobler and better life; and then showed himself to be a stupid blunderer by exhorting Lillie to make Rose her model, and seek to imitate her virtues.

Poor Lillie! the world looked dismal and dreary enough to her. She shrunk within herself. Every thing was withered and disenchanting. All her poor little stock of romance seemed to her as disgusting as the withered flowers and crumpled finery and half-melted ice-cream the morning after a ball.

In this state, when she got a warm, true letter from John, who always grew tender and affectionate when she was long away, couched in those terms of admiration and affection that were soothing to her ear, she really longed to go back to him. She shrunk from the dreary plainness of truth, and longed for flattery and petting and caresses once more; and she wrote to John an overflowingly tender letter, full of

longings, which brought him at once to her side, the most delighted of men. When Lillie cried in his arms, and told him that she found New York perfectly hateful; when she declaimed on the heartlessness of fashionable life, and longed to go with him to their quiet home,--she was tolerably in earnest; and John was perfectly enchanted.

Poor John! Was he a muff, a spoon? We think not. We understand well that there is not a woman among our readers who has the slightest patience with Lillie, and that the most of them are half out of patience with John for his enduring tenderness towards her.

But men were born and organized by nature to be the protectors of women; and, generally speaking, the stronger and more thoroughly manly a man is, the more he has of what phrenologists call the "pet organ,"--the disposition which makes him the charmed servant of what is weak and dependent. John had a great share of this quality. He was made to be a protector. He loved to protect; he loved every thing that was helpless and weak,--young animals, young children, and delicate women.

He was a romantic adorer of womanhood, as a sort of divine mystery,--a never-ending poem; and when his wife was long enough away from him to give scope for imagination to work, when she no longer annoyed him with the friction of the sharp little edges of her cold and selfish nature, he was able to see her once more in the ideal light of first love. After all, she was his wife; and in that one word, to a good

man, is every thing holy and sacred. He longed to believe in her and trust her wholly; and now that Grace was going from him, to belong to another, Lillie was more than ever his dependence.

On the whole, if we must admit that John was weak, he was weak where strong and noble natures may most gracefully be so,--weak through disinterestedness, faith, and the disposition to make the best of the wife he had chosen.

And so Lillie came home; and there was festivity and rejoicing. Grace found herself floated into matrimony on a tide bringing gifts and tokens of remembrance from everybody that had ever known her; for all were delighted with this opportunity of testifying a sense of her worth, and every hand was ready to help ring her wedding bells.