

up the short staircase. His grandfather climbed slowly, breathing somewhat heavily. Richard led him to the front room and stopped with his hand on the latch.

'We furnished this room, sir,' he said in a clear voice, which nevertheless shook a little, 'just for you. We hoped you might like to stay here with us sometimes and feel that it was home.'

He opened the door and the Judge walked in—much as if he would have preferred to stay outside. A small fire crackling cheerily in the old little fireplace threw its wavering light on the quaint blue and white 'landscape' paper which covered the walls.

Grandfather Hazelton looked about with dazzled eyes. They all stood silent for a moment, then a gentle hand fell on his arm, and he stared down for the second time that evening into the well-nigh irresistible pair of eyes.

'It's been such a happiness to get it ready for you,' said the voice to which Richard had long sworn allegiance. 'Won't you forgive us for loving each other and for not being content without your approval and your—love?'

It was a long moment, and again his grandson held his breath, feeling that if the elder man spurned the girl now, he, Richard, must henceforth refuse to be to him that which he had been all his life.

But there is a temperature at which the hardest substance melts, and perhaps it was not Mr. Hazelton's heart which was at fault, after all, only his pride; and pride cannot endure before love. Suddenly he turned and laid both hands upon Evelyn's shoulders, bent and kissed her gently on the forehead. Then he went over to the fire and sat down.

Richard, with a radiant face, let Evelyn draw him quietly away out into the hall and noiselessly closed the door. Then he triumphed openly.

'You've done it, little girl; you've done it, bless you!' he whispered.

Then he went silently and joyfully downstairs. But they did not know that in the little bedroom which looked like the home of his youth an old man sat and wiped away the tears—tears which meant things the younger people, with all their love and goodwill, could never understand.

GILBERT'S CHOICE

'I cannot see why you do not make up your mind, Gilbert,' observed Mrs. Withers. 'Think of it, you will be thirty years to-morrow.'

'That's nothing, mother; I've got use to growing old,' answered Gilbert, without raising his eyes from the paper.

'You won't meet a girl like Belle Mayfield every day, my son. She is handsome and accomplished.'

'And shallow and heartless,' added Gilbert, his eyes still fixed on the paper.

'Gilbert, I wish you wouldn't speak sneeringly of Belle; you know what you owe to her family.'

'There, mother, you needn't repeat it; you have told it to me so often, I know it by heart. Because Harry Mayfield, Belle's uncle, saved my father from ruin, nearly thirty years ago, that is no reason why I should close my eyes to Miss Belle's imperfections, and take her for better or worse. I do not believe my father, had he lived, would wish me to marry Belle Mayfield. I wonder if they have heard anything of Harry Mayfield? I see they advertised for him again the other day; but precious little trouble Belle's father will take to find his missing brother. He was turned adrift because he married to please himself, was he not?'

'Yes; poor Harry! It is twenty-five years since he went away with his young wife. Poor Luella! She was so delicate; she couldn't have lived long. I think Harry must be dead, too. I wonder if they left any children?'

'I'm sure I don't know; but I suppose Belle is trembling for fear some of them will turn up and take their share of the old gentleman's property. She is utterly selfish; you know she wants to grasp all.'

'What nonsense, Gilbert! Belle is no more selfish or heartless than any girl you meet in our set.'

'Then, mother, I'll have to fill the role of crusty, cynical old bachelor to the end of the chapter, or go outside of "our set" to choose a wife.'

'Outside of our set!' and Mrs. Withers' face blanched at the bare idea. 'Gilbert, if you did, I would never forgive you.'

'Now, mother mine,' said Gilbert, rising from the table with a laugh, 'don't alarm yourself unnecessarily. Time enough, you know, to bid his Satanic majesty good morning, when you meet him.'

Toward the evening of the same day, the tall, handsome form of Gilbert Withers might be seen hurrying down the steps of his palatial business house and striding rapidly away.

'Confound these books!' he muttered as, turning the corner into Broadway, he looked at his watch. 'He'll be gone, surely. I'm fifteen minutes behind time now. Ah! I beg pardon!'

In his hurry he stood on a lady's dress.

The lady turned and bowed, in token of forgiveness, and for an instant Gilbert Withers beheld a pair of clear, brown eyes, that lit up a pale, pure face of more than ordinary beauty.

For the life of him, he could not help turning to catch another glimpse of that face as he passed its owner, and until he came to a standstill on the corner of a street, some half dozen blocks up, turn which way he would, that face was before him.

It was on this corner that Gilbert was to meet his friend, but the friend was nowhere to be seen.

Half-an-hour ago he was very anxious to meet his friend, but now—well, a man cannot be interested in two things at the same moment, and for the first time in the thirty years of his life, Gilbert Withers was interested in one of the fair sex; and his face lighted with pleasure as his eyes, wandering down Broadway, fell once more on the object of interest.

She was about half way down the block, and Gilbert, without attracting her attention, observed her closely. He saw now that her dress indicated poverty, while her graceful figure and lady-like bearing would do credit to a society belle.

She was nearing the corner where he stood, and Gilbert looked in another direction.

The working girls were now pouring out from side streets and houses along Broadway, and Gilbert fell to wondering if she was one of them.

Another moment, and he was startled by a scream, and, turning quickly, he beheld the object of his thoughts vainly struggling to extricate herself from between a number of vehicles.

Like a flash, Gilbert was beside her, holding back the team that in another instant would have trampled her to death.

He conveyed her to the opposite sidewalk in safety. How he had done it was a mystery ever after to Gilbert Withers.

'Oh, sir, you have saved my life!'

'Think of it! She is only a working girl—a mere nobody, and he wishes his mother to recognise her! Oh, dear! it will kill Mrs. Withers, I know it will! She is sick abed now!' And Miss Belle Mayfield fanned herself vigorously, as she related Gilbert Withers' horrible conduct to her friend, Marion Lewis.

Since the news leaked out that Gilbert Withers was engaged to a working girl, Belle Mayfield went the rounds of her dear five hundred friends, telling them all she knew, and a great deal she didn't know about the latest sensation.

In her secret heart Belle hated the girl whom Gilbert had chosen in preference to herself, and she held her up to ridicule everywhere she went.

Mrs. Withers, her face white and rigid, lay back in her easy chair, the fierce battle between pride and love raging within her bosom.

She had at last consented to see that girl. Gilbert had gone to fetch her, and now she was waiting for them.

Mrs. Withers closed her eyes, how long she couldn't tell. When she opened them again, Gilbert was in the room, and standing before her was a young girl with a pale, beautiful face and pleading brown eyes.

Had she been sleeping, or was she dreaming? Mrs. Withers looked once more at the girl, and, rising, involuntarily from her lips came the name.

'Luella!'

'Ah, Mrs. Withers, you loved my mother, I thought you would know her daughter!' exclaimed the girl advancing with outstretched arms.

Mrs. Withers drew back in bewilderment, her face no longer white and rigid.

'Gilbert, who is this young lady?'

Gilbert Withers advanced, and, taking the girl's hand in his, he said:

'Mother, this is my intended wife, and the daughter of your old friends, Harry and Luella Mayfield.'

'Harry Mayfield's daughter!' exclaimed Mrs. Withers, in delight, as she wound her arms around the girl. 'Oh, Gilbert, why did you keep this secret from me?'

'Because I never knew it myself until to-day,' answered Gilbert.

'And your father and mother?' asked Mrs. Withers, breathlessly.

'They are both dead,' answered the girl in a low voice. 'My mother died when I was an infant, my father ten years ago. Dying he told me never to go to his relatives, they treated him so badly. After his death I changed my name and lived with a poor relative of my mother's ever since.'

'My poor child! what you have suffered, and you look so much like your mother—so much like her that when I opened my eyes I thought it was she that stood before me.'

Belle Mayfield called to spend the evening with poor broken-hearted Mrs. Withers.

Judge her surprise when she found Mrs. Withers, Gilbert, and a young girl, whom she knew at a glance was her hated rival, sitting together, and looking as supremely happy as three mortals could look.

And what wouldn't she have given to be thousands of miles away when her cousin was introduced, and her cousin's story told.

'How shall I get over this?' thought Belle over and over again as she drove him. 'I wouldn't mind it so much if I hadn't gone around and told all my friends that my cousin was only a working girl.'