

Cousin Edward. HOW HE LEARNED HIS LESSON. CHAPTER I.

"Oh, what have I done! What have I done!" exclaimed Nellie, under her breath, as she dismounted her horse and hurried up the garden path.

"I have it, and all in it, left to me," she said, in a soft, sad tone, "and dear father and mother, too. A happy, happy home it has always been, and I am thankful for it! But, O, Edward, how could you be so unkind! O, how could you?"

She listened, fancying she could hear his departing footsteps yet. And perhaps, she might have done so. With lofty looks and disdainful curve of his rather thin lips, he was on his way home, along the winding lanes.

He had generally escorted Nellie to her own door, after their evening walk, but this evening he had left her just outside the gate. He was her aunt's step-son. She had known him all her young life, and had always called him Cousin Edward, all unsuspecting of the feeling which was steadily gathering strength within her heart, till this evening.

"A glorious night!" he murmured, as he leisurely pursued his way; and as he looked round at hamlet and trees and wayside brook, and picturesque farm-houses dotted here and there, all sleeping in the moonlight, the disdainful curve left his lips, and pride and hauteur smoothed themselves away from his brow.

"Poor little Nellie!" he said again, with something like a complacent smile. "I suppose, then, that she cares a little more for me than I deserve. It is a great bore, for of course it is out of the question that I should take it."

"You will go to meet Miss Bassett, I suppose, Nellie?" inquired her mother. "O, yes, mother. Edward was good enough to say that he would drive me to the station in his dog-cart, and he will bring us both home, too. He says that a rich young lady like Miss Bassett will not care to walk a mile, even along our lovely lanes, he is sure."

Edward had given Nellie, bit by bit, and with a good deal of tact, his ideas upon the subject of money, and of the comfort to be derived from a proper use of it. Outwardly the two were as good friends as ever. At heart, however, he was carefully on his guard, while Nellie, tender and gentle natured though she was, could not help slightly despising him.

Miss Bassett was an old school-fellow of Nellie's, and a great teacher, and she had taken a fancy to spend the remainder of the summer in the old tumble-down farm-house which Nellie called home.

ing that she loved him "quite enough for happiness," she had agreed that the marriage should take place as soon as all needful arrangements could be made.

"You know, Nellie," said she, "the two sat evening in the garden one hot afternoon, while Edward was out on his rounds, "it really does not do to love a person too much. You are certain to become a slave to his whims and caprices if you do. I have always made up my mind that I would marry a man who loved me, and that if I had a reasonable liking for him in return, he would not expect or even wish any thing more."

Nellie made some reply, she scarcely knew what, and then she went on thinking the matter over. Had she been exalting love to an undue value? With her heart had stood before every thing? "If a man would love it, it would utterly be contented." She had endured the sentiment. But now, was it possible that she had made a mistake? Gracie Bassett was a year or two older than herself, and probably knew better than she did. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of her cogitations, Nellie shook her head, and half smiled and half sighed as she answered:

"Well, you have of course, a right to your own opinion, Gracie, but I must say I don't agree with you. I think that I would rather die than marry a man whom I did not love with all my heart."

And Nellie gathered up her sewing and went into the house, singing as she went: "Love shall still be lord of all." CHAPTER III.

The wedding was over. The honeymoon was over also, and Mrs. Melville, richly dressed, and looking very lovely, with Edward as an attentive and devoted husband beside her, was receiving her guests.

Nellie was among them. She was paler than usual, and her free, happy, girlish laugh was gone forever. Yes, she, too, looked lovely this afternoon in her pretty blue silk dress and cottage bonnet, and there was a sweetness and beauty in the expression of her gentle young face, that went far beyond any mere beauty of feature.

The house was handsome and well-appointed, the servants were models of attentive respect. All seemed as if it should be. Nellie stayed the remainder of the day, and saw nothing that she did not like. Edward was forever on the watch to please Gracie, and she, for her part, took it all as her due, and so far gave him her sweetest smiles in return. What more could be wanted?

Only a few weeks passed. Nellie was invited to dine with them. After dinner they were moving about the drawing-room, and Gracie was exhibiting to Nellie some choice bouquets of flowers which had been sent her that morning. They had all been arranged on one table, in accordance with a whim of the young wife, who declared that the effect of their richness and color was lost when they were scattered.

But Edward had not heard her say this. "Let me put this blue vase here, Gracie," he unwittingly began, remarking, as he spoke, to another table.

moments were numbered, and she passed away, leaving her little one to Nellie. And Edward, when the first embarrassing influence of his grief was over, sold his practice—he had no need of it now—and went abroad.

Eighteen months passed away. A man, bronzed and bearded, stood at the gate of the old farm-house. A little toddling-creature ran down the path, her fair curls flying in the wind. The stranger caught her up.

"What is your name, little one?" And in a baby-voice she told him, "Grace Melville," and he covered her little face and hair with kisses. But who was this coming out to look for her?

"Annie Nellie!" she said, in pretty piping treble, and slid down from her father's arms. "Cousin Edward!" exclaimed Nellie, gladly, the color rising rapidly to her usual quiet, pale face.

And he shook hands with her; then, keeping the hand he had taken, he led indoors. "And will you tell me now, one more, Nellie, dearest, that you love me better than any one else in the world?"

Nellie swiftly covered his mouth with her hand, while burning blushes dyed her cheeks. "O, Cousin Edward, do please forget that I ever said so!"

"Ah, likely," he returned, smilingly. "No, Nellie," and he was serious now, "I have learnt my lesson since that evening. I have learnt to value ore, not as it deserves, but at least to set above every thing earthly. My Nellie! do not tell me that your love is me dead!"

Never mind! Nellie's reply. Two months from that day she became Edward's wife, and he never had the smallest need to remind her that she had promised to obey him, simply because she loved him, and to do as he wished was a pleasure.

And having at great risk and cost earned his lesson, Edward strove to teach it to others, and to more than one young man he gave in confidence the advice: "If you wish to be happy, marry only a woman who loves you. Neither money nor position, nor any thing else, can bear the comparison with love, which will outlive them all."

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