

KITTY'S RASPBERRY FLOAT.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Mary Wylie, in tones of dismay, "the cream is all sour!"

And her handsome face darkened with positive annoyance. It was really too vexatious, for she had invited a score or more of young friends for that evening, to meet her newly arrived cousin Kitty, and of course she ought to have ice cream. The Wylies were rather famous for their delicious ice cream, which they always made themselves for company; but the thermometer at ninety-eight, and a thunder storm, had curdled all the milk in the dairy.

"The cake is all ready," said Mary, sitting down in her perplexity. "But what else are we to have. Coffee is too hot, and lemonade is too much like a fair. Kitty, can't you think of some little light thing, easy to make, to take the place of ice cream?"

Thus appealed to, Kitty inquired, thoughtfully, "Do you like float?"

"What is a float?"

"It takes eggs; mamma makes it often for us at home, evenings. She beats the whites of eggs up like a snowy mountain, and puts in sugar, and then she beats in strawberries, or raspberries, or jelly, to make it a pretty color and flavor it. We eat it in saucers like ice cream."

"It sounds good," said Mary, with a little revival of hope, "and we have plenty of eggs. But strawberries are all gone—there are raspberries, to be sure, down in the lots. But I burn so if I go in the sun, and the servants are busy—no, I'm afraid we can't make it."

"I'll pick the berries!" said Kitty, jumping up; "I'd like nothing better than a stroll in the lots, and I'm so brown already the sun won't hurt me."

"But you'll be so tired," remonstrated Mary, looking admiringly at the merry brunette face, "and I want you to look your very prettiest to-night, so that our young men may lose their hearts."

"I think I would rather have raspberries than hearts," replied Kitty, saucily, and she put on her hat and took a pail, and, with a few words of direction, went down the garden and through a gate into the back lot.

It was a burning July day, but Kitty was child of the sun, and she liked it. She had not been in the country for a long time before, and she fairly reveled in feeling the grass under her feet, the whirr of the grass-hoppers, and the little escort of brown butterflies that fluttered all the time just ahead of her.

"Here are the raspberries," she said to herself, as she came to the low stone wall; "not very many of them, either—I suppose they picked a good many for supper last night. But I'll glean as I go."

So she gleaned as she went, but the berries were scarce, and as the old wall was in a tumble-down condition, and there seemed to be more

berries in the next lot, she climbed over and wandered on, meeting with better success. A lane ran by the lot she was now in, and a black-eyed young lady walking through it stared curiously at Kitty as she passed.

"I believe I like birds better than I do people," was Kitty's mental comment on this; "you dear little robins, singing so over in those apple trees, I mean to go and watch your house-keeping, and rest a little while, for my pail is almost full."

The apple trees were in a corner of the lot, and when Kitty reached them, she found a babbling spring there, and rocks covered with lovely lichens.

"Uncle Robert has good taste," she said, "to keep such a charming little nook here." And she sat down in the shadow of a tall rock, and fanned herself with her hat. She was in a mood to thoroughly enjoy everything, and it seemed to her that she had never seen the sky so beautiful before, nor such beautiful clouds.

"I'd like to marry a farmer!" she said, impulsively, aloud; and to her utter dismay, a pleasant, manly voice, from the other side of the rock, responded:

"Would you? That's quite a rare choice nowadays!"

Kitty sprang up and started to run, when, of all calamities, in her haste she upset her pail of raspberries, and away they rolled in every direction. With burning cheeks she began to pick them up, for it would never do to disappoint Mary about the float, and she threw an indignant glance at the young man, who now came around in full view, and said he begged her pardon; he knew he ought not to have spoken, but it really seemed impolite not to answer!

"Your politeness has spilled my berries, you see!" she replied rather sharply.

"Allow me," he exclaimed instantly, and grasping the pail, he began to pick up the berries with her.

They worked together in perfect silence for a few minutes, hunting the berries among the grass, and down in the soft green moss. One large berry had caught in a spider's web; they both reached for it at the same time; their hands touched, their eyes met, and the young man smiled; and so, in spite of herself, did Kitty.

"Do forgive me," he said; "you shall not be one berry the loser by it!" And he rescued two on the brink of the spring.

"I will," answered Kitty, "but you must never tell the farmers."

After that, of course, it was absurd to be formal, and, like two happy young creatures in the heyday of youth, they made a frolic of the whole thing, and laughed over every berry. Kitty told him what she picked them for, and for whom, and he said he was well acquainted with Miss Wylie.

"Perhaps, then, you will be there to-night?" she remarked, hoping in her heart that he would.

"I have not been invited," he answered, soberly.

"Oh, well," said Kitty, merrily, "then I'll invite you, for Mary made

up the company for me, and I heard her say there were two or three more she wanted to ask, but hadn't been able to see them. Won't you come?"

The young man hesitated; he felt as if he were sailing under false colors. The truth was, he and the Wylies were not on good terms, although they had formerly been friends. But their lands joined, and a dispute about boundaries had latterly arisen, involving this same pretty knoll with its spring and apple trees. The old "mere-stone" had been lost track of, and Mr. Wylie, surveying one day after his own fashion, found, or fancied he found, that he had a right to the knoll. This claim young Hugh Greystone had refused to recognize. Mr. Wylie, who was hot and hasty, had begun legal measures, and Hugh, indignant, had naturally ceased visiting at the Wylie mansion.

"Of course, you needn't come if you don't want to!" said Kitty, piqued at his hesitation.

"I do want to come," he answered earnestly, "and will, if I can possibly arrange it so."

"I'll expect you," said Kitty, lightly; then she lifted the pail of berries and would have said "good morning," but Hugh stepped instantly to her side, and taking the pail, went with her as far as the old wall. Then he watched her until she disappeared in the Wylie garden.

When he turned his back his brow was knit but his lips were smiling. After a short deliberation, he determined to go to Mrs. Wylie's party, and to pay a royal price for it.

"Here's your raspberries!" Kitty exclaimed, gaily, as she entered the house; "and now I'll sit right down and pick them over."

"You dear little soul!" said Mary, with fervor, "you are such a comfort. But I am afraid you are tired out, your face is so flushed."

"Oh, I ran up the path," said Kitty, bending over the berries.

Together they prepared the float, beating the eggs up high and light, and gradually adding the sugar and berries, till they had a great dish heaped up like a massive mountain with the delicacy, which was in tint an exquisite pale purple. It was a house where every one liked to visit, and Mary Wylie was a popular girl. Kitty, looking very piquant and pretty, made quite a sensation; and she herself enjoyed the evening, the more, perhaps, because of a certain secret excitement that set her heart bounding every time a new-comer entered the door, and her first thought was, "Is it he?"

But time passed, and he came not. There had been dancing, and every one was tired. Presently the cake was passed around, and everyone partook, with the pleasant anticipation that ice cream was coming next. It was such a warm July evening that they were pardonable. When the high-piled purple dish was brought in, it was universally noticed, for human nature does feel interested in what it is about to eat at a party.

"I never saw lavender ice cream before," whispered one to a neighbor, and Mary Wylie heard it. She dipped it out into saucers, and, with the electric sympathy of a hostess, felt that the first taste was followed with disappointment. The

fact was the float was a delicious thing, but, for the first instant, it did fall flat in mouths that were made up for ice cream.

"It is raspberry float," said Kitty, innocently, in reply to a neighbor's question. "I picked all the berries for it myself."

"Yes," said a sharp-eyed young lady, whom Kitty had already recognized as the one she saw in the lane. "I saw you rifling the Grey-stone bushes."

"Why, Kitty!" exclaimed Mary Wylie, with deepening color, "you did not go out of our lot, did you?"

"I'm afraid I did," said Kitty, becoming embarrassed at the mischievous and meaning glances that met her on all sides, and feeling that, for some reason, her cousin was annoyed.

But just then some one passed his saucer for a little more of the float, and one after another began to praise it, till at last Mary's equanimity returned.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wylie, who had been sitting comfortably all the evening out in the honey-suckle scented piazza, had company of his own. It was Hugh Greystone, who, coming up the path and finding him there, had stopped for a talk.

"Mr. Wylie," he said, "I've come to say that I have changed my mind about our lawsuit. The wall is out of repair, the mere-stone is lost, and if you are sure about your survey, I can't say but there may have been a mistake. In fact, I concede the knoll."

"That's right, Hugh, my boy," exclaimed Mr. Wylie, his stiff dignity melting into hearty cordiality. "I knew you would do the fair thing when you came to look it over."

Some little friendly chat followed, and then Mr. Wylie took Hugh into the parlor with the most impressive kindness, making the company all feel that this was the honored guest of the evening. He finally introduced him to Kitty, who blushed like a cinnamon rose. At her side he stayed, and when Mary smilingly brought him some cake and float, he pronounced the latter perfection, and ate it in a state of beatitude.

"Why didn't you tell me I was trespassing this morning?" Kitty asked, softly.

"I had been waiting for you too long," he said, half jesting, half in earnest.

Six weeks later Mr. Wylie went out one pleasant morning to repeat his survey, and to lay the foundation of his wall anew. His measurements did not come out exactly as he expected, and he was growing puzzled, when suddenly, in driving a stake, he discovered, a few inches under the ground, the long-lost mere-stone.

"Now we can set things right," he exclaimed, exultantly. But his face fell as he went on surveying, for by the aid of the stone he rectified his survey, and was dumb-founded to discover that the old wall had been right all the time, and the knoll was not his. He looked up and saw Hugh Greystone crossing the field.

"Hugh!" he called out in his hasty way, "come here! I've been an old fool, and you've been a gentleman. The knoll is yours, sure enough."

"Oh, I've made you a present of it," said Hugh, rather grandly. "But if you don't want to keep it, you can give it to my wife."

"Your wife?" asked Mr. Wylie, amazed.

"Yes," replied Hugh, with a look of happy pride, "Kitty has just promised to be mine for life."

So the little summer episode reached its sweet conclusion, and by the time the brown autumn leaves were fluttering over the fields, instead of the butterflies, Kitty became a landed proprietor, and was mistress of the knoll.

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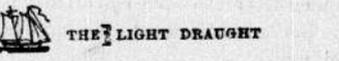
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