

he would look at the picture in the locket. It was one he had surreptitiously secured from the village photographer. He had not sent a letter to Helen during his exile. Many a missive he had begun, but it had ended in a shrinking sense of unworthiness and the friendly lines, budding with a more tender regard, had never met the eyes of Helen.

It was during the last stage of his journey that Morse made a discovery that led him to change his route. At a junction where there was a change of cars, he had just time to shake hands with a man he had known in Hopeton and propound an eager inquiry.

"By the way," were his words, "you remember Miss Warren? What became of her?"

"Oh," was the hasty casual response, "she left Hopeton to live with a relative in Belleville three years ago."

Morse did not therefore go to his native town. He lost time making connections and it was afternoon when he arrived at Belleville. The town was strange to him. As he paid for a lunch at a little restaurant he ventured to speak to its proprietor.

"There was a Miss Warren here," he observed.

"Oh, yes. Married. She is Mrs. Porter now. Did you know her, sir?"

Married! A blow, dull, deadening, seemed to fall upon the heart of Austin Morse. He knew not what incoherent words he mumbled as he staggered from the place. He sought unfrequented byways, he finally sat down in a lonely spot and tried to overcome the numbing influence of the intelligence he had received.

"This won't do!" he exclaimed at length. "I must face this disappointment like a man. Married! Why, then, bless her and her husband! and I hope he is a worthy man."

Morse was too true-hearted and manly to whine or entertain enmity or spite. "Brace up!" had been his

western motto and it applied just now. He was fearless as to facing the truth. With a nature just as true and honest as ever he decided to once more see the woman he had loved as a friend, and go back to the old lonely life and cheerfully work as hard as ever. He made some inquiries as to the Porter home and located it.

In its garden a dainty little miss was seated on a rustic bench making a bouquet from a lapful of flowers. Morse doubted not that this was Helen's little daughter. His heart warmed towards the child. His soul was hungry for sympathy and comfort. He crossed the unfenced lawn. With a reassuring smile he sat down beside the child and asked her name.

It was "Helen Porter," she told him, and in a pretty child-like way fastened a rose in his buttonhole. Then her attention became attracted to the locket on his watch chain. Its oddity made her curious. He removed the locket to please her. Suppose she kept it? He had no longer a right to retain the picture of a wedded woman!

As she opened it and saw the portrait within, the little one's eyes dilated. She looked up at him. His own were filled with tears. She was about to ask some puzzled question, when abruptly she started to her feet. The flowers were scattered wide.

"Oh, look! look—your picture!" shouted the child, and she ran forward to meet a lady just turning into the garden path. "The strange man showed it to me—and he's crying!"

Every sense quivering, Austin Morse arose to meet the woman he had loved Helen. She gave a great start, then the glad welcome of a sincere spirit was his. Her hand even lingered in his own, and there was unmistakable admiration in her glance for the bronzed, stalwart, manly figure he presented.

"Your little daughter coaxed the locket from me—" began Morse in an embarrassed way.

"You mean my niece, Mr. Morse,"