

***MARY JANE  
HOLMES***



***THE RECTOR  
OF ST. MARK'S***

**Mary Jane Holmes**

# **The Rector of St. Mark's**

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# CHAPTER I.

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## FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

The Sunday sermon was finished, and the young rector of St. Mark's turned gladly from his study-table to the pleasant south window where the June roses were peeping in, and abandoned himself for a few moments to the feeling of relief he always experienced when his week's work was done. To say that no secular thoughts had intruded themselves upon the rector's mind, as he planned and wrote that sermon, would not be true; for, though morbidly conscientious on many points and earnestly striving to be a faithful shepherd of the souls committed to his care, Arthur Leighton possessed the natural desire that those who listened to him should not only think well of what he taught but also of the form in which the teaching was presented. When he became a clergyman he did not cease to be a man, with all a man's capacity to love and to be loved, and so, though he fought and prayed against it, he had seldom brought a sermon to the people of St. Mark's in which there was not a thought of Anna Ruthven's soft, brown eyes, and the way they would look at him across the heads of the congregation. Anna led the village choir, and the rector was painfully conscious that far too much of earth was mingled with his devotional feelings during the moments when, the singing over, he walked from his armchair to the pulpit and heard the rustle of the crimson curtain in the organ loft as it was drawn back, disclosing to view the five heads of which Anna's was the

center. It was very wrong, he knew, and to-day he had prayed earnestly for pardon, when, after choosing his text, "Simon, Simon, lovest thou me?" instead of plunging at once into his subject, he had, without a thought of what he was doing, idly written upon a scrap of paper lying near, "Anna, Anna, lovest thou me, more than these?" the these, referring to the wealthy Thornton Hastings, his old classmate in college, who was going to Saratoga this very summer, for the purpose of meeting Anna Ruthven and deciding if she would do to become Mrs. Thornton Hastings, and mistress of the house on Madison Square. With a bitter groan at the enormity of his sin, and a fervent prayer for forgiveness, the rector had torn the slips of paper in shreds and given himself so completely to his work that his sermon was done a full hour earlier than usual, and he was free to indulge in reveries of Anna for as long a time as he pleased.

"I wonder if Mrs. Meredith has come," he thought, as, with his feet upon the window-sill, he sat looking across the meadow-land to where the chimneys and gable roof of Captain Humphreys' house was visible, for Captain Humphreys was Anna Ruthven's grandfather, and it was there she had lived since she was three years old.

As if thoughts of Mrs. Meredith reminded him of something else, the rector took from the drawer of his writing table a letter received the previous day, and, opening to the second page, read again as follows:

"Are you going anywhere this summer? Of course not, for so long as there is an unbaptized child, or a bed-ridden old woman in the parish, you must stay at home, even if you do grow as rusty as did Professor Cobden's coat before we boys

made him a present of a new one. I say, Arthur, there was a capital fellow spoiled when you took to the ministry, with your splendid talents, and rare gift for making people like and believe in you.

"Now, I suppose you will reply that for this denial of self you look for your reward in heaven, and I suppose you are right; but as I have no reason to think I have any stock in that region, I go in for a good time here, and this summer I take it at Saratoga, where I expect to meet one of your lambs. I hear you have in your flock forty in all, their ages varying from fifteen to fifty. But this particular lamb, Miss Anna Ruthven, is, I fancy, the fairest of them all, and as I used to make you my father confessor in the days when I was rusticated out in Winsted, and fell so desperately in love with the six Miss Larkins, each old enough to be my mother, so now I confide to you the programme as marked out by Mrs. Julia Meredith, the general who brings the lovely Anna into the field.

"We, that is, Mrs. Meredith and myself, are on the best of terms. I lunch with her, dine with her, lounge in her parlors, drive her to the park, take her to the operas, concerts and plays, and compliment her good looks, which are wonderfully well preserved for a woman of forty-five. I am twenty-six, you know, and so no one ever associates us together in any kind of gossip. She is the very quintessence of fashion, and I am one of the dangles whose own light is made brighter by the reflection of her rays. Do you see the point? Well, then, in return for my attentions, she takes a very sisterly interest in my future wife, and has adroitly managed to let me know of her niece, a certain Anna

Ruthven, who, inasmuch as I am tired of city belles, will undoubtedly suit my fancy, said Anna being very fresh, very artless, and very beautiful withal. She is also niece to Mrs. Meredith, whose only brother married very far beneath him, when he took to wife the daughter of a certain old-fashioned Captain Humphreys, a pillar, no doubt, in your church. This young Ruthven was drowned, or hung, or something, and the sister considers it as another proof of his wife's lack of refinement and discretion that at her death, which happened when Anna was three years old, she left her child to the charge of her own parents, Captain Humphreys and spouse, rather than to Mrs. Meredith's care, and that, too, in the very face of the lady's having stood as sponsor for the infant, an act which you will acknowledge was very unnatural and ungrateful in Mrs. Ruthven, to say the least of it.

"You see I am telling you all this, just as if you did not know Miss Anna's antecedents even better than myself, but possibly you do not know that, having arrived at a suitable age, she is this summer to be introduced into society at Saratoga, while I am expected to fall in love with her at once and make her Mrs. Hastings before another winter. Now, in your straightforward way of putting things, don't imagine that Mrs. Meredith has deliberately told me all this, for she has not, but I understand her perfectly, and know exactly what she expects me to do. Whether I do or not depends partly upon how I like Miss Anna, partly upon how she likes me, and partly upon yourself.

"Now, Arthur, you know, I was always famous for presentiments or fancies, as you termed them, and the



latest of these is that you like Anna Ruthven. Do you? Tell me, honor bright, and by the memory of the many scrapes you got me out of, and the many more you kept me from getting into, I will treat Miss Anna as gingerly and brotherly as if she was already your wife. I like her picture, which I have seen, and believe I shall like the girl, but if you say that by looking at her with longing eyes I shall be guilty of breaking some one of the ten commandments—I don't know which—why, then, hands off at once. That's fair, and will prove to you that, although not a parson like yourself, there is still a spark of honor, if not of goodness, in the breast of

"Yours truly,

"THORNTON HASTINGS.

"If you were here this afternoon, I'd take you to drive after a pair of bays which are to sweep the stakes at Saratoga this summer, and I'd treat you to a finer cigar than often finds its way to Hanover. Shall I send you out a box, or would your people pull down the church about the ears of a minister wicked enough to smoke? Again adieu.

"T. H."

There was a half-amused smile on the face of the rector as he finished the letter, so like its thoughtless, lighthearted writer, and wondered what the Widow Rider, across the way, would say of a clergyman who smoked cigars and rode after a race-horse with such a gay scapegrace as Thornton Hastings. Then the amused look passed away, and was succeeded by a shadow of pain as the rector remembered the real import of Thornton's letter, and felt that he had no



right to say, "I have a claim on Anna Ruthven; you must not interfere." For he had no claim on her, though half his parishioners, and many outside his parish, had long ago given her to him, and said that she was worthy; while he had loved her, as only natures like his can love, since that week before Christmas, when their hands had met with a strange, tremulous flutter, as together they fastened the wreaths of evergreen upon the wall, he holding them up and she driving the refractory tacks, which would keep falling in spite of her, so that his hand went often from the carpet or basin to hers, and once accidentally closed almost entirely over the little, soft, white thing, which felt so warm to his touch.

How prettily Anna had looked to him during those memorable days, so much prettier than the other young girls of his flock, whose hair was tumbled ere the day's work was done, and whose dresses were soiled and disordered; while here was always so tidy and neat and the braids of her chestnut hair were always so smooth and bright. How well, too, he remembered that brief ten minutes, when, in the dusky twilight which had crept so early into the church, he stood alone with her, and talked, he did not know of what, only that he heard her voice replying to him, and saw the changeful color on her cheek as she looked modestly in his face. That was a week of delicious happiness, and the rector had lived it over many times, wondering if, when the next Christmas came, it would find him any nearer to Anna Ruthven than the last had left him.

"It must," he suddenly exclaimed. "The matter shall be settled before she leaves Hanover with this Mrs. Meredith.

My claim is superior to Thornton's, and he shall not take her from me. I'll write what I lack the courage to tell her, and to-morrow I will call and deliver it myself."

An hour later, and there was lying in the rector's desk a letter in which he had told Anna Ruthven how much he loved her, and had asked her to be his wife. Something whispered that she would not refuse him, and with this hope to buoy him up, his two miles walk that warm afternoon was neither long nor tiresome, and the old lady, by whose bedside he had read and prayed, was surprised to hear him as he left her door whistling an old love-tune which she, too, had known and sung fifty years before.

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## **CHAPTER II.**

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### **SATURDAY AFTERNOON.**

Mrs. Julia Meredith had arrived, and the brown farmhouse was in a state of unusual excitement; not that Captain Humphreys or his good wife, Aunt Ruth, respected very highly the great lady who had so seldom honored them with her presence, and who always tried so hard to impress them with a sense of her superiority and the mighty favor she conferred upon them by occasionally condescending to bring her aristocratic presence into their quiet, plain household, and turn it topsy-turvy. Still, she was Anna's aunt, and then, too, it was a distinction which Aunt Ruth rather enjoyed, that of having a fashionable city woman for her guest, and so she submitted with a good grace to the

breaking in upon all her customs, and uttered no word of complaint when the breakfast table waited till eight, and sometimes nine o'clock, and the freshest eggs were taken from the nest, and the cream all skimmed from the pans to gratify the lady who came down very charming and pretty in her handsome cambric wrapper, with rosebuds in her hair. She had arrived the previous night, and while the rector was penning his letter she was holding Anna's hand in hers, and, running her eye rapidly over her face and form, was making an inventory of her charms and calculating their value.

A very graceful figure, neither too short nor too tall. This she gets from the Ruthvens. Splendid eyes and magnificent hair, when Valencia has once taken it in hand. Complexion a little too brilliant, but a few weeks of dissipation will cure that. Fine teeth, and features tolerably regular, except that the mouth is too wide, and the forehead too low, which defects she takes from the Humphreys. Small feet and rather pretty hands, except that they seem to have grown wide since I saw her before. Can it be these horrid people have set her to milking the cows?

This was what Mrs. Meredith thought that first evening after her arrival at the farmhouse, and she had not materially changed her mind when the next afternoon she went with Anna down to the Glen, for which she affected a great fondness, because she thought it was romantic and girlish to do so, and she was far being past the period when women cease caring for youth and its appurtenances. She had criticised Anna's taste in dress—had said that the belt she selected did not harmonize with the color of the muslin she wore, and suggested that a frill of lace about the neck

would be softer and more becoming than the stiff white linen collar.

"But in the country it does not matter," she said. "Wait till I get you to New York, under Madam Blank's supervision, and then we shall see a transformation such as will astonish the humble Hanoverians."

This was up in Anna's room, and when the Glen was reached Mrs. Meredith continued the conversation, telling Anna of her plans for taking her first to New York, where she was to pass through a reformatory process with regard to dress. Then they were going to Saratoga, where she expected her niece to reign supreme; both as a beauty and a belle.

"Whatever I have left at my death I shall leave to you," she said; "consequently you will pass as an heiress expectant, and with all these aids I confidently expect you to make a brilliant match before the winter season closes, if, indeed, you do not before you leave Saratoga."

"Oh, aunt," Anna exclaimed, her brown eyes flashing with unwonted brilliancy, and the rich color mantling her cheek. "You surely are not taking me to Saratoga on such a shameful errand as that?"

"Shameful errand as what?" Mrs. Meredith asked, looking quickly up, while Anna replied:

"Trying to find a husband. I cannot go if you are, much as I have anticipated it. I should despise and hate myself forever. No, aunt, I cannot go."

"Nonsense, child. You don't know what you are saying," Mrs. Meredith retorted, feeling intuitively that she must

change her tactics and keep her real intentions concealed if she would lead her niece into the snare laid for her.

Cunningly and carefully for the next half hour she talked, telling Anna that she was not to be thrust upon the notice of any one—that she herself had no patience with those intriguing mammas who push their bold daughters forward, but that as a good marriage was the *ultima thule* of a woman's hopes, it was but natural that she, as Anna's aunt, should wish to see her well settled in life, and settled, too, near herself, where they could see each other every day.

"Of course, there is no one in Hanover whom you, as a Ruthven, would stoop to marry," she said, fixing her eyes inquiringly upon Anna, who was pulling to pieces the wild flowers she had gathered, and thinking of that twilight hour when she had talked with their young clergyman as she never talked before. Of the many times, too, when they had met in the cottages of the poor, and he had walked slowly home with her, lingering by the gate, as if loth to say good-by, she thought, and the life she had lived since he first came to Hanover, and she learned to blush when she met the glance of his eye, looked fairer far than the life her aunt, had marked out as the proper one for a Ruthven.

"You have not told me yet. Is there any one in Hanover whom you think worthy of you?" Mrs. Meredith asked, just as a footstep was heard, and the rector of St. Mark's came round the rock where they were sitting.

He had called at the farmhouse, bringing the letter, and with it a book of poetry, of which Anna had asked the loan.

Taking advantage of her guest's absence, Grandma Humphreys had gone to a neighbor's after a recipe for

making a certain kind of cake of which Mrs. Meredith was very fond, and only Esther, the servant, and Valencia, the smart waiting maid, without whom Mrs. Meredith never traveled, were left in charge.

"Down in the Glen with Mrs. Meredith. Will you be pleased to wait while I call them?" Esther said, in reply to the rector's inquiries for Miss Ruthven.

"No, I will find them myself," Mr. Leighton rejoined. Then, as he thought how impossible it would be to give the letter to Anna in the presence of her aunt, he slipped it into the book which he bade Esther take to Miss Ruthven's room.

Knowing how honest and faithful Esther was, the rector felt that he could trust her without fear for the safety of his letter, sought the Glen, where the tell-tale blushes which burned on Anna's cheek at sight of him more than compensated for the coolness with which Mrs. Meredith greeted him. She, too, had detected Anna's embarrassment, and when the stranger was presented to her as "Mr. Leighton, our clergyman," the secret was out.

"Why is it that since the beginning of time girls have run wild after young ministers?" was her mental comment, as she bowed to Mr. Leighton, and then quietly inspected his *personnel*.

There was nothing about Arthur Leighton's appearance with which she could find fault. He was even finer looking than Thornton Hastings, her *beau ideal* of a man, and as he stood a moment by Anna's side, looking down upon her, the woman of the world acknowledged to herself that they were a well-assorted pair, and as across the chasm of twenty years there came back to her an episode in her life, when,

on just such a day as this, she had answered "no" to one as young and worthy as Arthur Leighton, while all the time the heart was clinging to him, she softened for a moment, and by the memory of the weary years passed with the rich old man whose name she bore, she was tempted to leave alone the couple standing there before her, and looking into each other's eyes with a look which she could not mistake. But when she remembered that Arthur was only a poor clergyman, and thought of that house on Madison Square which Thornton Hastings owned, the softened mood was changed, and Arthur Leighton's chance with her was gone.

Awhile they talked together in the Glen, and then walked back to the farmhouse, where the rector bade them good evening, after casually saying to Anna:

"I have brought the book you spoke of when I was here last. You will find it in your room, where I asked Esther to take it."

That Mr. Leighton should bring her niece a book did not seem strange at all, but that he should be so very thoughtful as to tell Esther to take it to her room struck her as rather odd, and as the practiced war-horse scents the battle from afar, so Mrs. Meredith at once suspected something wrong, and felt a curiosity to know what the book could be.

It was lying on Anna's table as she reached the door on her way to her own room, and, pausing for a moment, she entered the chamber, took it in her hands, read the title page, and then opened it to where the letter lay.

"Miss Anna Ruthven," she said. "He writes a fair hand;" and then, as the thought, which at first was scarce a



thought, kept growing in her mind, she turned it over, and found that, owing to some defect, it had become unsealed and the lid of the envelope lay temptingly open before her. "I would never break a seal," she said, "but surely, as her protector and almost mother, I may read what this minister has written to my niece."

She read what he had written, while a scowl of disapprobation marred the smoothness of her brow.

"It is as I feared. Once let her see this, and Thornton Hastings may woo in vain. But it shall not be. It is my duty as the sister of her dead father, to interfere and not let her throw herself away."

Perhaps Mrs. Meredith really felt that she was doing her duty. At all events, she did not give herself much time to reason upon the matter, for, startled by a slight movement in the room directly opposite, the door of which was ajar, she thrust the letter into her pocket and turned to see—Valencia, standing with her back to her, and arranging her hair in a mirror which hung upon the wall.

"She could not have seen me; and, even if she did, she would not suspect the truth," was the guilty woman's thought, as, with the stolen missive in her pocket, she went down to the parlor and tried, by petting Anna more than her wont, to still the voice of conscience which clamored loudly of the wrong, and urged a restoration of the letter to the place whence it was taken.

But the golden moment fled, and when, later in the evening, Anna went up to her chamber and opened the book which the rector had brought, she never suspected how near she had been to the great happiness she had

sometimes dared to hope for, or dreamed how fervently Arthur Leighton prayed that night that, if it were possible, God would grant the boon he craved above all others—the priceless gift of Anna Ruthven's love.

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## **CHAPTER III.**

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### **SUNDAY.**

There was an unnatural flush on the rector's face, and his lips were very white when he came before his people that Sunday morning, for he felt that he was approaching the crisis of his fate; that he had only to look across the row of heads up to where Anna sat, and he should know the truth. Such thoughts savored far too much of the world which he had renounced, he knew, and he had striven to banish them from his mind; but they were there still, and would be there until he had glanced once at Anna, occupying her accustomed seat, and quietly turning to the chant she was so soon to sing: "Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of His salvation." The words echoed through the house, filling it with rare melody, for Anna was in perfect tone that morning, and the rector, listening to her with hands folded upon his prayer-book, felt that she could not thus "heartily rejoice," meaning all the while to darken his whole life, as she surely would if she told him "no." He was looking at her now, and she met his eyes at last, but quickly dropped her own, while he was sure that the roses burned a little brighter on her cheek, and that her

voice trembled just enough to give him hope, and help him in his fierce struggle to cast her from his mind and think only of the solemn services in which he was engaging. He could not guess that the proud woman who had sailed so majestically into church, and followed so reverently every prescribed form, bowing in the creed far lower than ever bow was made before in Hanover, had played him false and was the dark shadow in his path.

That day was a trying one for Arthur, for, just as the chant was ended and the psalter was beginning, a handsome carriage dashed up to the door, and, had he been wholly blind, he would have known, by the sudden sound of turning heads and the suppressed hush which ensued, that a perfect hailstorm of dignity was entering St. Mark's.

It was the Hethertons, from Prospect Hill, whose arrival in town had been so long expected. Mrs. Hetherton, who, more years ago than she cared to remember, was born in Hanover, but who had lived most of her life either in Paris, New York or New Orleans and who this year had decided to fit up her father's old place, and honor it with her presence for a few weeks at least; also, Fanny Hetherton, a brilliant brunette, into whose intensely black eyes no one could long look, they were so bright, so piercing, and seemed so thoroughly to read one's inmost thoughts; also, Colonel Hetherton, who had served in the Mexican war, and, retiring on the glory of having once led a forlorn hope, now obtained his living by acting as attendant on his fashionable wife and daughter; also, young Dr. Simon Bellamy who, while obedient to the flashing of Miss Fanny's black eyes, still found stolen opportunities for glancing at the fifth and last

remaining member of the party, filing up the aisle to the large, square pew, where old Judge Howard used to sit, and which was still owned by his daughter. Mrs. Hetherton liked being late at church, and so, notwithstanding that the Colonel had worked himself into a tempest of excitement, had tied and untied her bonnet-strings half a dozen times, changed her rich basquine for a thread lace mantilla, and then, just as the bell from St. Mark's gave forth its last note, and her husband's impatience was oozing out in sundry little oaths, sworn under his breath, she produced and fitted on her fat, white hands a new pair of Alexander's, keeping herself as cool, and quiet, and ladylike as if outside upon the graveled walk there was no wrathful husband threatening to drive off and leave her, if she did not "quit her cussed vanity, and come along."

Such was the Hetherton party, and they created quite as great a sensation as Mrs. Hetherton could desire, first upon the commoners, the people nearest the door, who rented the cheaper pews; then upon those farther up the aisle, and then upon Mrs. Meredith, who, attracted by the rustling of heavy silk and aristocratic perfume emanating from Mrs. Hetherton's handkerchief, slightly turned her head at first, and, as the party swept by, stopped her reading entirely and involuntarily started forward, while a smile of pleasure flitted across her face as Fanny's black, saucy eyes took her, with others, within their range of vision, and Fanny's black head nodded a quick nod of recognition. The Hethertons and Mrs. Meredith were evidently friends, and in her wonder at seeing them there, in stupid Hanover, the great lady forgot for a while to read, but kept her eyes upon them all,

especially upon the fifth and last mentioned member of the party, the graceful little blonde, whose eyes might have caught their hue from the deep blue of the summer sky, and whose long, silken curls fell in a golden shower beneath the fanciful French hat. She was a beautiful young creature, and even Anna Ruthven leaned forward to look at her as she shook out her airy muslin and dropped into her seat. For a moment the little coquettish head bowed reverently, but at the first sound of the rector's voice it lifted itself up quickly, and Anna saw the bright color which rushed into her cheeks and the eager joy which danced in the blue eyes, fixed so earnestly upon the rector, who, at sight of her, started suddenly and paused an instant in his reading. Who was she, and what was she to Arthur Leighton? Anna asked herself, while, by the fierce pang which shot through her heart, as she watched the stranger and the clergyman, she knew that she loved the rector of St. Mark's, even if she doubted it before.

Anna was not an ill-tempered girl, but the sight of those gay city people annoyed her, and when, at she sang the Jubilate Deo, she saw the soft blue orbs of the blonde and the coal-black eyes of the brunette, turning wonderingly toward her, she was conscious of returning their glance with as much of scorn as it was possible for her to show. Anna tried to ask forgiveness for that feeling in the prayers which followed; but, when the services were over, and she saw a little figure in blue and white flitting up the aisle to where Arthur, still in his robes, stood waiting for her, an expression upon his face which she could not define, she felt that she had prayed in vain; and, with a bitterness she had never

before experienced, she watched the meeting between them, growing more and more bitter as she saw the upturned face, the wreathing of the rosebud lips into the sweetest of smiles, and the tiny white hand, which Arthur took and held while he spoke words she would have given much to hear.

"Why do I care? It's nothing to me," she thought, and, with a proud step, she was leaving the church, when her aunt, who was shaking hands with the Hethertons, signed for her to join her.

The blonde was now coming down the aisle with Mr. Leighton, and joined the group just as Anna was introduced as "My niece, Miss Anna Ruthven."

"Oh, you are the Anna of whom I have heard so much from Ada Fuller. You were at school together in Troy," Miss Fanny said, her searching eyes taking in every point as if she were deciding how far her new acquaintance was entitled to the praise she had heard bestowed upon her.

"I know Miss Fuller—yes;" and Anna bowed haughtily, turning next to the blonde, Miss Lucy Harcourt, who was telling Colonel Hetherton how she had met Mr. Leighton first among the Alps, and afterwards traveled with him until the party returned to Paris, where he left them for America.

"I was never so surprised in my life as I was to find him here. Why, it actually took my breath for a moment," she went on, "and I greatly fear that, instead of listening to his sermon, I have been roaming amid that Alpine scenery and basking again in the soft moonlight of Venice. I heard you singing, though," she said, when Anna was presented to her, "and it helped to keep up the illusion—it was so like the

music heard from a gondola that night, when Mr. Leighton and myself made a voyage through the streets of Venice. Oh, it was so beautiful," and the blue eyes turned to Mr. Leighton for confirmation of what the lips had uttered.

"Which was beautiful?—Miss Ruthven's singing or that moonlight night in Venice?" young Bellamy asked, smiling down upon the little lady who still held Anna's hand, and who laughingly replied:

"Both, of course, though the singing is just now freshest in my memory. I like it so much. You must have had splendid teachers," and she turned again to Anna, whose face was suffused with blushes as she met the rector's eyes, for to his suggestions and criticisms and teachings she owed much of that cultivation which had so pleased and surprised the stranger.

"Oh, yes, I see it was Arthur. He tried to train me once, and told me I had a squeak in my voice. Don't you remember?—those frightfully rainy days in Rome?" Miss Harcourt said, the Arthur dropping from her lips as readily as if they had always been accustomed to speak it.

She was a talkative, coquettish little lady, but there was something about her so genuine and cordial, that Anna felt the ice thawing around her heart, and even returned the pressure of the snowy fingers which had twined themselves around her, as Lucy rattled on until the whole party left the church. It had been decided that Mrs. Meredith should call at Prospect Hill as early as Tuesday, at least; and, still holding Anna's hand Miss Harcourt whispered to her the pleasure it would be to see her again.



"I know I am going to like you. I can tell directly I can see a person—can't I Arthur?" and, kissing her hand to Mrs. Meredith, Anna, and the rector, too, she sprang into the carriage, and was whirled rapidly away.

"Who is she?" Anna asked, and Mr. Leighton replied:

"She is an orphan niece of Colonel Hetherton's, and a great heiress, I believe, though I never paid much attention to the absurd stories told concerning her wealth."

"You met in Europe?" Mrs. Meredith said, and he replied:

"Yes, she has been quite an invalid, and has spent four years abroad, where I accidentally met her. It was a very pleasant party, and I was induced to join it, though I was with them in all not more than four months."

He told this very rapidly, and an acute observer would have seen that he did not care particularly to talk of Lucy Harcourt, with Anna for an auditor. She was walking very demurely at his side, pondering in her mind the circumstances which could have brought the rector and Lucy Harcourt into such familiar relations as to warrant her calling him Arthur and appear so delighted to see him.

"Can it be there was anything between them?" she thought, and her heart began to harden against the innocent Lucy, at that very moment chatting so pleasantly of her and of Arthur, too, replying to Mrs. Hetherton, who suggested that Mr. Leighton would be more appropriate for a clergyman.

"I shall say Arthur, for he told me I might that time we were in Rome. I could not like him as well if I called him Mr. Leighton. Isn't he splendid, though, in his gown, and wasn't his sermon grand?"