

[Sedgwick, Catharine Maria.] "The Elder Sister." By the author of "Hope Leslie." In *The Youth's Keepsake*, 99-126. Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830 [pub. 1829].

THE ELDER SISTER.

'Lucy loved all that grew upon the ground,
And loveliness in all things living found;
The gilded fly—the fern upon the wall
Were nature's works, and admirable all.'

'Yet not so easy was my conquest found,
I met with trouble ere with triumph crown'd.'

Crabbe.

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Mr Walsingham was seated at his family writing desk, absorbed in a literary labor, when Theresa, his eldest daughter, opened his door, advanced eagerly, paused for a moment, arrested by his deeply thoughtful aspect, and again advanced, as, without raising his eye from his paper, he stretched his hand towards her and smiled with that sweet parental smile that indicated the father was never quite merged in the student. 'I would not have interrupted you, papa,' said Theresa, 'but I have something so *very* important to say to you.'

Mr Walsingham, now the sole parent of a numerous family of children, was as much accustomed as a mother to the communication of the manifold wants, that to the magnifying vision of a child are *very important*, and affection, and necessity,

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unerring teachers, had taught him the mother's instinct, to enter completely into his children's feelings—to stoop to their point of sight. 'Come in, Theresa,' he replied to his daughter's request, 'you interrupt me no more than the passing stream is interrupted by the shadow of the pretty flower that waves on its brink. What have you so important to say?—a letter! —from whom?'

‘From dear Mrs Clifford, papa, and such a pressing invitation for me to pass a few days at Bellevue. Mr Walsingham took the letter, but before he had half read it, or at all replied to the eager petition of Theresa’s eyes, half a dozen of the younger children made a sortie from the nursery; as sturdy a little band of remonstrants as ever appeared before any tribunal. ‘Don’t let Theresa go! papa,—you must not let her go!’ they cried with a unanimous voice.

‘Softly, softly, my children—you shall all be heard in turn. Why not let her go, James?’

‘Because, papa, it is impossible for me to get my French lessons ready for Mr Rabbineau if Theresa does not assist me.’

‘Why should not Theresa go, Julia?’

‘Because, papa, my music master is as cross as thunder, when Theresa does not help me with my practising.’

‘Why should not Theresa go, Ellen?’

‘Because, papa, she has not made but just one complete suit for my new doll.’

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‘Why should not Theresa go, Ned?’

‘Because, papa, she has got to new cover my ball.’

‘And you, little Willie, have you any reason why you cannot let sister Theresa go away for a little while?’

‘Yes, indeed, papa,’ replied a bright eyed little cherub, climbing into his sister’s lap. ‘I can’t let her go, because she has done everything for me.’

‘They are unskilful petitioners, Theresa,’ said the father, his delight at the tribute each had involuntarily paid the sweet elder sister gleaming in his moistened eye. ‘Theresa does so much for us all, my dear children,’ he continued, ‘that I believe we must give her the pleasure of a visit to Bellevue.’ Theresa thanked her father warmly, and soon reconciled the minds of the young tribe to her departure, by shifting disappointment for expectation—easy juggling with juvenile subjects.

Theresa Walsingham is the eldest of eight children. At fourteen she met with that irreparable loss, one of the best of mothers. Her father, consulting only her good, and generously sacrificing his own strongest inclinations, sent her away from him for two years, to an institution where her education was successfully conducted. At sixteen she returned home to take the head of his family, and the place of mother, and elder sister, to the infant band. Theresa had no imposing personal qualifications for her official station. We have seen overgrown girls of [p. 102]

sixteen, with grave aspect, and magisterial air, and solemn voice, and dignified movement, that looked as if, like Eve, they had been born *grown up*—with nothing of the dew and freshness—and, it may be, imperfection of the morning of life about them. Not so with Theresa. She is not a hair's breadth above the medium feminine height; she has a child-like air and movement; a tender, flexible voice; a simplicity, impulsiveness, and gaiety of manner, that 'betrays inexperience at every turn.' There is nothing about her that demands respect, but every thing that inspires love. She is not a beauty, and yet who can look in that bright sweet face; at that clear laughing eye; that exquisitely compounded, ever varying red and white, that round dimpled cheek; that sweet tempered graceful mouth; that fair, waving, luxuriant hair—who can look at this combination, lighted up with intelligence, tenderly shaded by feeling, without forgetting the rule and art of criticism—feeling that she *is* beautiful.

Theresa came home to the care of a large family, without any very definite notion of what awaited her. She loved her father devotedly. The memory of her mother was so reverential and vivid, that it operated like her continual presence. But next to the ever-living fountain of love in her affectionate heart, Theresa's best qualification for her arduous duties was a most happily constituted temper, a perpetual sunshine that brightened every thing around her. This may [p. 103]

not be merit, but it is a singular physical felicity to have the instrument so perfect that no jar, no shock, no unskilful touch can put it out of tune, or bring forth a discordant note.

Theresa has ardent affections, and strong preferences in matters that all deem essential, but not a particle of sensibility to those trifles at which most persons are disquieted—and disquieted in vain. She cares not whether the day be cloudy or bright; she is unconscious even of

the appalling difference between a southwest and northeast wind. Whether she rides or walks, within walking distance, is a matter of no moment to her. She can sit with the windows up or down, as suits the temperament of her companions. She can eat of any dish, cooked in any mode, with a keen relish. She is never discontented alone; never dissatisfied in company; never annoyed by a creaking hinge, or slamming door, or any other trial of delicate nerves. I have seen her sitting in the nursery, reading undisturbed, while her two little sisters, one on each side, were busy with her beautiful tresses, pulling and snarling them into masses which they called curls. The only notice she took of them was to imprint a half-conscious kiss on each warm ruddy cheek as it touched hers. It was a picture of childhood, love, grace, and beauty that a painter should have caught and preserved.

No wonder that her father should have delighted to see her sparkling cup of happiness full to the brim;

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that he took as much pleasure in attending her to Bellevue as she did in going there; that the tear which stole down her cheek at parting, opened a gushing fountain in his heart—a fountain of remembrance and hope.

Theresa was to pass the month of June with Mrs Clifford—the jubilee month of the year. Showers and sunshine were bringing forth the prettiest and freshest decorations of the face of nature; the birds were in full choir; the physical and animal world all alive to activity and joy.

Mrs Clifford lives on a highly cultivated farm, amidst the loveliest inland scenes of our country, fertilised and embellished by a river, that seems set, like a convex mirror, to catch and reflect every visible object. The mistress of this fair domain is a widow, just past the meridian of life, with a large fortune, and an only son. Her affections and interests do not, as is common in similar cases, all flow in the maternal channel, but are diffused like the bounties of heaven. She is the sun of her little system, and her benevolence is sent forth, like rays of light, in every direction, and to every object within her sphere. She is as genuine an amateur of happy human faces as the good Vicar of blessed memory, and she contrives always either to find or make them. She has the rare felicity of delighting her friends, and surrounding herself with grateful and satisfied dependants. She devotes herself to the business of making other people

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happy, with as much ardor as a lawyer pursues his profession. She is no reformer, and yet every body becomes more reasonable and amiable in her atmosphere. She has no single form of virtue, no Procrustes standard; and yet, by a kind of softening and harmonising influence, she assimilates every thing and every body to herself.

Mrs Clifford is never offended, or in the least annoyed by the peculiarities of any individual; on the contrary, she likes to cherish peculiarities, and bring them out, only taking care to place them in a favorable light. In this benevolent art of showing her friends in becoming lights, she excels any person I have ever known. But philanthropic as her temper is, she has her favorites, and first and chiefest among these is Theresa Walsingham. She loves Theresa, she says, for her mother's sake, who was her friend; and for her father's, who is; and most of all, for her own sweet sake. There was a natural resemblance and accord between Mrs Clifford and her young friend. If Mrs Clifford had been blessed with a daughter, one would have expected to find her just what Theresa is; and not having one, it was natural for her to think of the only mode of supplying the defects of nature's gifts. She had no definite plan, no formal design in inviting Theresa at this time to Bellevue; but as soon as she was quietly fixed there, she wrote to her son Newton, then an *ostensible* student at law in New York, to remind him that his absence had

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been already too long; that strawberries were ripe; that Bellevue had put on its company suit, its many colored robe, and that he must come home.

From this moment Theresa heard of nothing but Newton's expected arrival. If an excursion was planned, or an extraordinary pleasure designed, it was deferred 'till Mr Clifford should come. Every thing was done, or left undone in reference to him. 'It is dull enough at Bellevue just now, Theresa,' Mrs Clifford said, and repeated, 'but when Newton comes he will make it all up to us.' 'Yes,' chimed in half a dozen cordial and sincere voices, 'Newton is the soul of Bellevue, that he is.'

Fortunate and gifted must be that person who can sustain the excitation of spirits occasioned by the anticipation of an important arrival in the country!

Theresa was one morning rambling alone along the river's side. She pursued a shaded footpath, 'till she came out upon a fisherman's hut, on the very verge of the water. A rheumatic, sickly-looking girl was sitting at the door, making artificial flies for angling. They were executed with taste and sufficient skill, and Theresa, after a kind greeting, seated herself, and watched the progress of the girl's work, and expressed her admiration of her success in no measured terms. Sympathy is the electric touch. Lilly, for that was the girl's name, Lilly was delighted; never had her fingers worked more dexterously, and never did tongue speak more promptly than her's replied to

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Theresa's questions of how she learned her art, where she procured her materials, &c.

Mr Newton Clifford had been at all the trouble of getting an old German to come all the way from New York to teach her. Mr Newton had sent her full twenty dollars worth of materials. Mr Newton, God bless him—and the benediction was not uttered as a phrase of custom, but with an intonation of deep feeling—Mr Newton had done every thing for her father, and herself, and little Ben. 'Had not Miss ever heard about Mr Newton Clifford and little Ben?' Theresa confessed she had not; and Lilly dropped her work, and told with such minuteness and emotion, as called forth exclamations and even tears from her pretty auditor—how little Ben, her only brother, a smart daring little fellow, had paddled his father's boat into the middle of the river; and how, in trying to regain the shore, he had fallen into the stream near the milldam; how Mr Newton, in spite of every body begging him, and screaming to him not to venture in so near the mill-dam—every body but herself—and she looked on and could not speak a word; how he had plunged in and grasped little Ben, but so near the dam, that they both went over together, Mr Newton's arm fast clasped round Ben; and how he brought him to the shore, though both were like the dead when they got there!

Sensibility and gratitude are always eloquent, and what girl of seventeen would not be moved by a

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generous deed, achieved by a living hero of twenty? Day after day Theresa stole down to the fisherman's cottage. She assisted Lilly at her pretty work; she even improved on the poor girl's

skill, and under reiterated promises of secrecy, helped her make a beautiful collection of flies, which were designed for a welcoming gift for Mr Newton Clifford.

Theresa's lively imagination seized all the traits that were presented of Clifford by his partial friends, and combined from them a beautiful portrait, colored with the rich and delicate hues of her own genuine feeling, and pure and elevated taste. Was the portrait a likeness? Was this young dream to be verified by the reality? Was the 'spirit of her imagination, resembling nothing she had seen in life, to be embodied in the heroic person—Newton Clifford?

Every successive day Clifford was expected, and each day's mail brought some trivial excuse for his delay. A fortnight of the time allotted for Theresa's visit had already expired. Mrs Clifford's habitual serenity was slightly overclouded, and there were moments when Theresa, to a keen observer, would have betrayed the condition of one who *waits*, the most unenviable state of the human mind.

She took one day her customary stroll to the fisherman's hut. She had completely won Lilly's heart; indeed, Theresa played the game of life so well, that she won all hearts.

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Her humble friend testified her affection, as women of every age and condition are apt to do, by setting the crown matrimonial on the brow of her favorite—and in this case it was, in her estimation, *the* crown of glory.

'If matches are made in heaven,' she said, as her busy fingers were plying at her work, 'I know what is to happen.'

'What do you mean, Lilly?' asked Theresa, blushing at the slight disingenuousness of asking what she well knew.

'Oh, Miss, you and Mr Newton are so much alike—you even look alike. To be sure, he is very tall, and you are short, but that difference there should be; and he is very dark, and you are pure red and white, and that difference there should be; and his hair is jet black, and yours a sunny brown; and his eyes are hazle, and yours are blue as the sky, and that difference is prettiest of all.'

Theresa laughed heartily, and asked, 'Pray, where is the resemblance, Lilly?'

‘Oh, Miss, it’s *that* look.’

Lilly was right and true to nature in her perception of harmony in discords.

It was after this last walk and conversation that Theresa returned to Bellevue, and entered the house heated, flushed, and tired. She strolled into the parlor, and went up to the glass to adjust her hair, which had fallen in disorder over her neck and face,

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and reflected in the mirror she saw the figure of a young man stretched on the sofa, with a book in his hand, that had the aspect of a fresh novel. Theresa’s color, deep as it was, deepened to an impurpled crimson. She felt as if she were under a gorgon spell. She could not turn, and nothing, she felt, could be more awkward and silly than to remain as she was. She ventured a second glance at the image, and a third and scrutinising one, for she now perceived that the young gentleman was, or affected to be asleep. ‘This must be Newton Clifford,’ thought Theresa, ‘the figure, hair, complexion, features, all correspond exactly with the description, but, oh how unlike what I expected!’ and if she had been addicted to tears, she would have shed them at her disappointment; but Theresa’s temper was entirely of the *l’allegro* cast, and she laughed, laughed aloud and heartily. Clifford, for it was he, Clifford awoke, and his mother entering at the moment, after casting a look of surprise at Miss Walsingham and of reproof at the recumbent and nonchalant attitude of her son, formally introduced them to each other. Theresa whirled round on her toe, laughed again, and then flew away like a bird startled from its perch.

‘For heaven’s sake! my dear mother’ asked Clifford ‘who is this hoydenish Blowzabella?’

‘Who? have I not just introduced her to you, Newton? Theresa Walsingham.’

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‘Heaven forefend! I thought you said so, but I could not credit my ears. I expected to see Miss Walsingham a fashionable, thorough bred girl; this little rude concern looks as if she had just come in from a bout at haymaking—heighho! what time is it?’ He looked at an exquisite little watch, that, suspended by a safety chain, was tucked into his waistcoat pocket; ‘Eleven o’clock; this country air is a delicious opiate, mother,’ and then yawning and falling back from

his half recumbent posture on the sofa cushions, he relapsed into his broken slumbers, leaving Mrs Clifford looking and feeling much like a child, who has blown a soap bubble, seen it expand and brighten, and then suddenly vanish into thin air.

Mrs Clifford was not consoled by being able in part to guess the cause of Theresa's merriment, for, even to a mother's eye, there was an appalling disparity between the present appearance of her son and the *beau-ideal* that had been portrayed to Theresa.

Eight months before, Newton Clifford had gone to New York, simple but not rustic in his taste, dress and manners. His fortune and connections in life had cast him into the most fashionable society, and accident rather than choice had involved him in an intimacy with an ultra-fashionable young man of his own age, and a married lady of *haut-ton*. Both these persons, unfortunately for Clifford, happened to be gifted by nature with uncommon talent, which was all employed in giving to the follies and insipidities of fashion a

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certain interest, grace and brilliancy. The great philosophical truth that knowledge is power, is never more strikingly illustrated than by the influence that a woman of a *certain* age (that *per se* most uninteresting period of life) exercises over a young man of ardent feeling and lively imagination.

The narrow limits of our story will not permit us to enter into any of the details of Clifford's fashionable training. Suffice it that he returned to Bellevue an ultraist of the *beau-monde*, disdaining whatever was simple and natural as much as a thorough-bred amateur of the Italian opera disdains sweet 'wood notes wild.' He was dressed in the extreme of the dominant fashion. We cannot describe the particulars, for we have no place in our memory for the coxcombries of five years since, but his whole array was equivalent to a Broadway exquisite of the present season. Oliver's curled and frizzed imitation of Hyperion's curls; the 'boundless contiguity' of hairs, called whiskers; the checked dishabille linen; the 'Jubilee stock;' the diamond studs; the webfooted (we presume to propose the descriptive epithet) the webfooted pantaloons; the person garnished with certain feminine favors, pretty trophies, such as fantastical emblematic finger rings, a porphyry smelling bottle, appended to the ribband of a quizzing glass;

and filled with *mousseline ambré* or some other exquisite perfume; an almost (would it were quite so!) an almost invisible snuff box, with Irish blackguard;

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and in short all other marks of the most refined dandyism, imperceptible to an unpractised eye, and indescribable by an untechnical pen. And this was the person that, brought into sudden contrast with the heroic image in Theresa's mind, placed her sweet fancies in so ludicrous a light, and put them to so disorderly a flight. Theresa had, in common with all rational beings, men and women, an instinctive aversion to the unmanly species called dandies—these poor and only worshippers of the image of humanity which they themselves have set up; a dull variety of the monkey race, bearing a resemblance to man, mortifying to the veritable lords of the creation, and no way honorable to themselves.

Dandyism was a sympathetic, not a constitutional disease with Clifford; this Theresa did not know, for she had only seen him when 'the fit was on him,' but his mother did. At another time she would have quietly waited for the paroxysm to pass off, but now she had wise and long cherished hopes at stake, and she felt too much either to be or to appear philosophical. Clifford's sagacity had penetrated the secret of his mother's wishes, without her having expressly communicated them, and knowing that he was a favorite of fortune, and being conscious of qualities that were at present quite hidden under his masquerade dress, and obscured by his temporary indifference to the simple pleasures of home and life, it was not an evidence of very extravagant self love that he

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should suspect Theresa of partaking his mother's views, and should consequently be as shy of her as the bird of the decoy he has discovered to be set for him. Fortunately there was no pondering of the matter in our happy heroine's gay and innocent heart; she was not disturbed by even a suspicion of Clifford's mental conclusions. Her elastic spirit soon rose from the first pressure of dissatisfaction, and she returned with her usual animation to her accustomed pleasures. She thought Mr Clifford a very conceited, disagreeable person; that Bellevue had been far pleasanter without him; that he was the last man in the world, that *if* she ever did marry (a supposition a young lady is apt to make mentally,) the last man in the world she would marry!

Theresa had yet to learn that there is nothing in this uncertain life more uncertain than the final resolution of a young lady of seventeen!

Clifford soon perceived that there was nothing affected nor equivocal in her indifference to him, and he was piqued by it. His natural tastes revived in the salutary atmosphere of home. He observed Theresa more attentively, and to observe was to feel the attraction of her loveliness. He caught himself, when he heard her laugh breaking forth in a distant part of the house, (never was a laugh more heartfelt and musical,) starting forward to listen, and involuntarily responding a faint echo; and once, when she was patting the neck of a spirited little black pony, on

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which she had been taking a solitary morning ride, he was betrayed into kissing, with real emotion, the whitest, most deeply dimpled and prettiest hand in the world.

These and some other trifling circumstances began to intimate that a change was coming 'o'er the spirit of his dream;' still he was not so deeply interested as to demonstrate Rosalind's infallible signs; the 'hose ungartered,' the 'bonnet unbanded,' the 'shoe untied,' the 'careless desolation;' but he was still 'point device in all his accoutrements.' A pastoral poet's hero may love without hope; but not so a fashionable young man of twenty one.

Newton Clifford's love, for he did actually, and that in a few days, feel an irresistible attraction towards Theresa; his love was of the most confident nature. It was true that from day to day Theresa perceived more and more of his agreeable qualities coming out, and once or twice it crossed her mind that she should, if she had not expected so much—at times—she should think Newton Clifford quite interesting.

In the meantime the period of her visit was drawing to a close. Mrs Clifford, who was eagerly watching the signs of the times, wrote to Theresa's father to beg an extension of her visit; one week more was granted, but then the order of return was peremptory.

On the day before her departure, Theresa went to take leave of her friend Lilly. She had been to the cottage but once before since Clifford's arrival. On

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that occasion she went to cull from the collection of flies designed for him, those she had made. The little fly manufacturer remonstrated, but in vain. Theresa possessed herself of them, and strewed them to the winds.

As she now approached the hut, she heard voices. Clifford was speaking in a tone of animated kindness to his poor protégé. ‘This is just what I fancied Clifford was before I saw him,’ thought Theresa, and that very thought made her pause at the threshold of the door, from an undefined feeling of awkwardness. While she stood there she heard Lilly say, ‘Here are some flies, Mr Newton, which I made for a present for you, if any thing can be called a present that I give to you.’ Clifford expressed his gratitude by admiring them extravagantly, and then selecting one, ‘This,’ he exclaimed, ‘is the very prettiest I ever saw. I can almost believe, with the poor little fish, that it is a real fly. If you could make me a dozen such as this, Lilly, for a friend of mine?’

Lilly stammered in her reply. ‘Oh!’ thought Theresa, who rightly conjectured that it was one of her own manufacture accidentally left among Lilly’s; ‘Oh, the silly girl will certainly betray me.’ Poor Lilly was confounded between the obligation of her promise to Miss Walsingham, on no account to betray her agency in the manufacture, the feminine desire of permitting the secret to *evolve*, and the necessity of confessing that she could not make flies equal to the specimen

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in Mr Clifford’s hand. In this dilemma she did what any other simple girl would have done, smiled, blushed, and faltered, and said she would do her very best for Mr Newton, but she could no way in the world make anything so pretty, her fingers were stiffened with the rheumatism, and besides, they were never handy enough for such a piece of work as that.’

‘Then you did not make this particular one, Lilly; who in the name of wonder did?’

Before Lilly could reply, and with the intention of preventing her, Theresa entered, but poor Lilly, far as she was from all duplicity, was betrayed by her surprise and confusion, into keeping the promise to the ear, and breaking it to the sense. She threw a speaking glance at Theresa, hung down her head, laughed outright, and turned away. Theresa blushed too, and was quite too much embarrassed, and provoked that she was embarrassed, to make any explanation,

while Clifford with the utmost complacency bowed in acknowledgement to her, and taking out a small tablet case, deliberately placed the fly between its leaves.

‘At any rate,’ exclaimed Theresa, half amused and half vexed, and unintentionally verifying Newton’s fortunate conjecture, ‘at any rate’. Mr Clifford, I did not mean that you should have it.’

‘Perhaps not. We anglers, Miss Theresa, can never foresee exactly which fish will bite when we bait our hook.’

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An older, a more scrupulous, or more fastidious lady than Theresa Walsingham, might have found something offensive in this ‘perhaps,’ this allusion to ‘angling’ and ‘baiting,’ but it was not in character for her to weigh and sift words; she really did not perceive any particular meaning in Clifford’s; the secret being out, she had no farther concern about the matter. She had never seen him so animated, natural, and pleasing, and after chiding, Lilly for betraying her, and kindly slipping into her hand a farewell gift, she returned with Clifford to Bellevue, but not till Lilly had contrived to say aside to him— ‘Keep the fly for a luck-penny, as they call it, Mr Newton.’ Her eye followed them, till she lost sight of them under the shadows of the lindens that grew on the river’s side, she weaving, the while, the web of destiny, as dexterously as a ‘weird sister.’

It was *not* one of the fairest days of summer, but the spirits of seventeen and twenty-one are not tempered by the weathergage. A dyspeptic may look at the sky and the vane before he smiles, but our gay pair were in a humor to smile in spite of clouds or storms. Clifford was flattered and elated by the little incident of the morning. It had confirmed all his prepossessions. He had discovered that he was under the influence of Theresa’s attractions. He had made up his mind, at the first propitious moment to tell his love; that moment had arrived, and with it

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came, not doubts of his success, but some natural shrinkings.

He began by speaking of her return in a desperate tone of voice; she replied, but not in an according key.

‘Then you will have no regrets at leaving Bellevue?’ he said half reproachfully.

‘Indeed I shall! There is no place in the world I love so well, but home; and there is nobody I love so well as Mrs Clifford, but papa.’

‘Nobody!’ echoed Clifford with a look and tone of voice that was meant to convey a world of meaning; ‘can no one rival them in your heart, Theresa?’

‘Oh the children! of course; I doat on the children; and Willie, my pet Willie, oh, I shall never love any thing half so much as I love Willie.’

‘Are you quite certain of that?’ asked Clifford.

‘Yes perfectly,’ she replied in the same careless manner.

‘Is this coquetry, the first—last sin of a pretty woman, or is it truth and nature?’ thought Clifford; but before he had solved the riddle, and as they emerged from the shaded walk into the open grounds, they were joined by his mother, who coming from a different direction, was, like them, bending her steps towards home.

Her maternal eye read the deep interest that was legible on her son’s countenance; and Theresa’s cheek bright with exercise and spirits, spoke the confirma-

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tion of her hopes. ‘The dear child has reason to feel happy,’ was the mother’s thought, and vexed that she had interrupted a tête à tête that she believed could be verging but to one conclusion, she said something about ‘old people being in the way,’ and was hurrying past them; but Theresa slipt her arm into Mrs Clifford’s and detained her; ‘I do not know how it may be with old people,’ she said, ‘but I am sure any party is the pleasanter for having you in it.’ Mrs Clifford, half gratified at her favorite’s affection, and half vexed at the inopportune moment she had taken to evince it, was obliged to yield to the gentle constraint of Theresa’s arm, and walk beside her. But her mind, still on one thought intent, she gave Clifford a bunch of flowers she had been culling during her walk. ‘There,’ said she, ‘Newton, when I was young, lovers of common ingenuity would have discoursed with those flowers for an hour, without articulating a word.’

‘I am ignorant of their language, mother, but if you will teach me, I will endeavor to profit by your instructions.’

‘Attend to me then, and do not be looking at Theresa; she knows nothing at all of the matter. There is a passion flower, the emblem of hope; there a little bachelor’s button, “hope even in the depths of misery;” that hollow hearted fox glove is insincerity; that wild geranium, cruelty; the honey-

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suckle, fidelity; periwinkle, friendship, a poor article when you want love; the Lavender confession— “She, *Lavender* to him sent, owning her love,” Hope, cruelty, fidelity! &c. It would be a poor brain that could not make a moving tale from these cabalistic words.’

‘But,’ said Theresa in all simplicity, ‘there is no emblem for love, and that is the basis of all the rest.’

‘True, true, most true, my dear Theresa,’ replied Mrs Clifford, smiling, ‘but I passed over the rosebud, for I thought the simplest, most unlearned in the floral vocabulary, knew that meant a declaration of love; and so it should, for it unfolds into what is sweetest and most beautiful in nature.’

‘True love, ma’am, you mean?’ asked Theresa; and it was a *bona fide* enquiry.

Mrs Clifford laughed, Newton thrust the rosebud, which he seemed for the last minute to have been most critically examining, into his bosom, and they all mounted the steps to the piazza, where half a dozen of the family were assembled awaiting them.

The following morning was the morning of Theresa’s departure. Mrs Clifford, as she had before promised, and Mrs Clifford’s son, which had not before been indicated, were to attend her home. As they left the town of Bellevue, on their way to the pier, where they were to embark in the steamboat, Theresa turned to give one parting look to the beautiful flowers that in unlimited profusion embel-

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lished the place. ‘Oh!’ she exclaimed ‘I wish I had thought to gather a bouquet to take with me.’

Clifford offered to repair her omission, and turned again up the avenue, and did not rejoin the ladies till they had nearly reached the shore. 'Oh,' said Theresa, as she took the flowers from him, 'have you been gone so long and got nothing but buds! What possessed him,' she continued, 'to put in this little withered wild rosebud among these fresh ones?' and she threw it away, and coolly tucked the stems of the rest under her belt riband; the withered bud was that which Clifford had the day before put into his bosom, and he had now added it to the bouquet; to him it seemed instinct with the feelings of the heart which had been throbbing against it for the last twelve hours. Fortunately he had walked on, as if to look out for the boat, and did not hear her, but his mother did, and exclaimed in a tone of reproach 'Theresa!' Theresa thought her displeasure related solely to the bouquet. 'Dear Mrs Clifford,' she said, kissing her in her own affectionate manner, 'do not be angry with me; there is, I own it, there is nothing so precious as moss rosebuds.'

Mrs Clifford always obeyed the French rule, 'Whenever there are two interpretations of a phrase, receive the most agreeable.' 'My own dear, dear child!' she exclaimed, returning Theresa's embrace with a warmth and emotion she did not at all comprehend, and which was not rendered more intelligible

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by the delighted gaze, with which, as she turned, she perceived Clifford was surveying them. Some acquaintances appeared at this moment, and no farther explanation was then possible, as they were immediately transferred to the thronged deck of a steamboat. Theresa was in irrepressible spirits, and for this, Mrs Clifford and her son had but one interpretation. The one had perhaps forgotten, and the other never yet learned, that all deep emotions are serious. The truth was, Theresa had forgotten the conventional language of the rosebuds; her mind was preoccupied with home images; no brain-woven romance, but with filial thoughts of her beloved father, and of the eager eyes and glad hearts of the little tribe awaiting her. Such a heart as Theresa's, so full of delicate, strong, and unchanging affections, was not to be lightly won, and this Clifford was yet to learn at the expense of well requited sacrifices.

Secure for the present in the estimate of all he had to confer, and in the assurance of a self-complacency that no disappointment had ever yet disturbed, he retired to a solitary corner of

the cabin to enjoy in writing to her, a more exclusive and satisfactory communion with Theresa, than he could amid the throng that encompassed her on the deck.

The letter was a joyous rhapsody; the interpreter of his soul, 'and faithful to its fires;' full of blissful feelings and blissful hopes. He filled it, crossed it, enclosed, and sealed it with the well known device of

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a laurel leaf, and the motto, 'Je ne change qu'en mourant;' a motto presumptuously applied to many a passion that has had even a briefer existence than a summer's leaf.

Thus prepared, the letter awaited an auspicious moment for delivery. That moment arrived, when Clifford handed Theresa from the carriage that had conveyed her from the boat to her father's door. 'This speaks for me,' he whispered, 'I will be with you again in ten minutes.' But joyous shouts and bounding steps were already ringing in Theresa's ears, and she heard nothing else, and did not think again of Clifford, till in *less* than ten minutes he returned, expecting to find Theresa awaiting to reciprocate the expression of those sentiments of which he had just communicated the delightful certainty. She was there, seated on her father's knee, recounting the pleasures of her jaunt; her pet Willie stood beside her on the sofa, his curly head lying fondly on her shoulder, and one little mischievous hand picking unheeded, one by one, the rosebuds from her waist, and throwing them on the floor, where two or three of the little urchins were dividing the spoil. The letter—the letter on which was suspended the destiny of life, had been dropped and forgotten by Theresa, who had never given it one glance, and if one thought, had supposed it to be one of the numerous unimportant packages belonging to her. Her sister Ellen, a busy, prying little daughter of Eve, had picked it

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up, torn off the seal, and at the moment Clifford entered was uttering a sort of jargon which she called reading it. Never, at any moment of her life, had Theresa looked more lovely than now, when her sweet face was lighted with the glow of those innocent and tender affections that are kindled at Nature's altar, and inspired by the breath of the Almighty.

But Clifford had looked for something far more precious in his eyes, and mortified and disappointed, he was scarcely conscious of Mr Walsingham's polite reception; hardly comprehended his words as he said, 'You are deafened by the noisy joy of my children; they are half wild at the return of their elder sister; and I,' he added, wiping his moistened eyes, 'am hardly less a child than any one of them.' Clifford in vain struggled to reply and to recover his self-possession. Fortunately, all were too much occupied with their own sensations to observe his, and he seized his unread letter, thrust it into his pocket, and made his escape.

I know not what, if any, explanation followed, but three years subsequent I met the same parties at Bellevue. Clifford then with a slight abatement for a very youthful imagination, might have realized the

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early visions of Theresa. The few dregs of folly in his composition, had in the first fermentation risen to the surface, and worked off. How much he might have been indebted to the purifying influence of 'le grand sentiment,' (for who shall define or limit its power,) we know not, but with all our preference for our heroine, we must confess he was worthy of her true and tender heart.'

Of his dandyism there was no relic, save the identical safety chain he had formerly worn; but instead of the fantastic watch appended to it, I discovered, (though it was scrupulously worn beneath the vest,) the little fly so elaborately wrought by Theresa, and of which, no doubt, he was well informed of the consecrating history. As to Theresa, she was unchanged; the same spontaneous flow of rich feelings, the same beautiful simplicity of character and naturalness, made more graceful, but not in the least impaired or obscured by the polish of the world.

One visible change indeed there was, and it was expressed in the quick mutations of Theresa's beautiful color; in the tender drooping of her eye; in word and action. A stronger, deeper, more controlling sentiment had taken possession of her heart than filial love, or than the affectionate devotion of an *Elder Sister*.