

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

Gossip - Arthur perplexed and jealous - Decides to visit Thornton - Consults his mother and is comforted

Mrs. Jones called to see Mrs. Green, full of tattle.

"Mrs. Green, had you heard that Mabel Clement has joined the Baptists?"

"Is it possible?"

"It certainly is. The information is very direct and leaves no doubt about it."

"Well, well! I never dreamed such a thing could happen."

"It has happened all the same."

"What on earth could have prompted Mabel to do such a thing?"

"She had a reason; silly enough, it is true; but enough to prompt a giddy girl."

"Do tell me her reason."

"Madam, rumor has it that she has fallen in love with a Baptist young man, and has taken this step to secure him."

"If it is true, I hope she will fail. No one knows what a woman - I mean some women - will do under such circumstances. Religion seems to be a secondary matter with them; and man is worshipped, rather than GOD. But I confess I never could have believed Mabel would be guilty of such folly. It will surely greatly mortify her parents, who seem to be so wrapped up in her, and so desirous of gratifying her every wish."

"Yes, I understand they are sick at heart."

This rumor by the help of the gossips went the rounds. No one knew the story was true; but many believed it, while others wondered if it was true.

Arthur Manly heard it. It came with stunning effect to his already sore heart. He did not know how much he prized Mabel till this rumor warned him of the possibility of losing her.

"Blessings brighten as they take their flight." He paced his room with an anxious burdened heart.

"What in the thunder did she go to Thornton for, anyhow? I wish Thornton had been swept by a cyclone, or buried in the Atlantic before she went there. I can't see anything to be gained by joining the Baptists. Confound the Baptists! Proselyting a young school girl that knows nothing at all about theology. Sycophantic tricksters! Clever sophists! Leading astray an angel, whose feet were treading the way to celestial climes." Backwards and forwards he tramped, mopping the perspiration from his brow - now his indignation rising, now tender emotions possessing his soul.

"I do not know who this young Adonis is that has enthralled my Paradisiacal bird. I guess I ought to go to Thornton and see; and - take a leaden messenger I may wish to use." He decided to go to his best friend and wisest counselor, his widowed mother, with his trouble. She was a woman of intelligence and tender sympathy. She loved her boy with an undivided affection. All her motherly heart throbbed with concern for his welfare. Arthur came in and kissed his mother. In vain he tried to appear at ease. The quick eye of the mother noted his somber countenance, and read in the tracing, the personification of anxiety.

"My son, something is troubling you."

He smiled and said:

"Mother, I must go to Thornton for a few days."

"On business?"

"Yes-no-yes."

Smiling, she said:

"I divine your business." Patting him on the cheek, she added:

"My noble boy is in love."

"Mother, I admit it; I can't help it; I am not trying to help it; in fact, I do not wish to help it."

"You have all the sympathy of a mother's warm heart in this venture. It is according to nature; it is GOD's plan for human weal; He made us to love and be loved. This love will purify and ennoble the manhood of my already noble boy. Filial love and parental companionship are the guard and safeguard of our youth; but this must end, or be superseded by a love for one whom GOD has chosen to lie in our bosom and share our fortunes forever."

"Mother, she is an angel to me - my guardian angel; her breath is pure as an infant's; the sight of her face thrills me like an electric shock; the touch of her fair hand makes my heart glow and the blood tingle in my veins for a month. Every dream and pleasure and plan and project of my life is associated with her. I dream of success, and am glad for her sake; then failure hangs like a horrid nightmare, over my life, and I weep for her sake. Take her away and the inspiration of life

is gone. Hitherto I have been perfectly contented with you; but now, while I am not conscious of any less love for you, I feel I will die if I do not get her. I find in my heart a newborn spirit that cries for companionship and will not agree to live a lonely life,"

"My boy will have love enough for us both."

"But, mother, I have heard two things that bother me. One is that Mabel has joined the Baptists. Only a few months ago she joined the church here; now she has changed her church connection. Does this mean she is fickle?"

"Not necessarily; in Mabel's case it means undoubtedly that she has changed her faith; she has been convinced the Scriptures do not teach what she believed."

"But she has acted too hastily in joining that miserably bigoted Baptist sect. I would rather have her belong to any other church in the land,"

"My dear mother, who died while you were an infant, was a devoted Baptist - lived and died in that faith."

"Mother, forgive me; I take back all the ugly things I said. Is this the reason you have never joined the church?"

"Not exactly. I do not consider the organization originated by Mr. Campbell a church sound in the faith of the gospel. I was converted when I was twenty-three years old; and, after searching the Scriptures diligently, I decided I was a Baptist in belief. And it has always been my purpose, whenever it is at all convenient, to join the Baptist church."

"You never told me as much before."

"No, I deemed it best to follow you with daily prayer, put you by faith into the hands of JEHOVAH, and by my daily walk point you to Heaven. Have I not lived before you a consistent Christian life?"

"You are the dearest mother and best woman in the world. I never believed you lacked anything, but the ordinances and church membership."

"These things, my son, though essential to duty, are not essential to salvation. The one thing essential to salvation is a penitent, believing heart. This I hope I have had for years. And if my boy's heart is not right with GOD, my faith is that some day it will be."

"I may be wrong, mother, but I think not. There is however, another cloud that overshadows me. It is rumored that Mabel is in love with some Baptist, and that this has influenced her to unite with the Baptists."

"I have heard it all, my son, but have not been troubled about it. I do not give credence to the story. Mabel has been there only a short time; and human affections cannot be handled like goods and chattels - taken from one and bestowed on another so easily as that. I know she loves you; her constant attention and kindness to your mother, not to mention many other signs, tell the

state of her heart. Love cannot be hidden; it will as surely reveal itself as life. Time, my boy, will contradict this rumor and prove it false - a cruel slander on a girl pure and good, and too noble to stoop to anything wrong to compass her ends, however desirable."

"Mother, your words soothe and stimulate me like old wine. GOD grant that what you say may be true. Pray for me that my life may be crowned with the bliss of her wifely companionship."

"If it is GOD's will."

"May not His will in answer to prayer be changed, if it is not in line with ours in this matter?"

"Nay, my son; I would not dare to ask it. But I see evidences that this is His will; and we must bide patiently and prayerfully His time for the full revelation of His will and development of His loving purpose."

"Mother, I guess I have been a fool to be so rattled by this rumor which now seems incredible. But this thing touches me in a tender place. I have hitherto been contentedly occupied with the musty tomes of my office library. But somehow my heart isn't there any more. Mother, one hopeful word from her ruby lips would be more prized by me than all the ponderous volumes ever written."

"Love makes use of hyperbole in lavish measure, my son."

"I find myself constantly saying:

The love in my heart is as strong as the hills
And as deep as the fathomless sea,
Yet pure as the breath of the rose that thrills
The soul of the summer with glee.
'Tis fair as the light of the faithful stars
That beam in the boundless blue;
No selfish mote its radiance mars,
And, sweetheart, 'tis all for you.

"The love in my heart, I know not why,
Nor how it came to be,
But the bliss that is mine no gold can buy,
Since love hath come to me.
O, love, love, love! There's nothing so sweet,
Go search the wide world through,

My heart is so full of it, every beat
Cries out it is all for you.

"All for you!
Strong and true,
No time the tie can sever,
Till the angels doubt

And the stars burn out,
I am yours, sweetheart, forever:

This is my nightly song of the soul."

The mother smiled and said: "Love, when it comes, invokes the muse and breathes forth some of the purest and noblest sentiments. The spell is on you which comes, perhaps, to every soul in time. I am glad your heart is in Mabel's possession; she will handle it tenderly. Sterling affords no nobler, sweeter girl."

"Does the world?"

She laughed and said: "Love is not only poetical, but is extravagant in its declarations."

"She is the one woman for me; with her to walk at my side with radiant face; with her to counsel me and cheer me by day, and slumber in my arms at night, my life will be a noble service to humanity."

"Your mother longs for you to have this bliss. GOD bless you, my son; I believe you are worthy of this noble and beautiful girl, and she is worthy of you. I have watched prayerfully the growth of your mutual admiration and affection; you are possessed of kindred spirits; your natures are happily congenial; you seem moulded for each other, an overruling Providence has so shaped your beings that they will readily blend into a single beautiful life picture. I believe you were born to be mated."

Arthur's eyes were full of tears. He kissed his mother fondly and went out a happier man. He did not go to Thornton.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
