## CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WELL," said Miss Verjoos, when her sister overtook her, Mr. Euston having stopped at his own gate, "you and your latest discovery seemed to be getting on pretty well from the occasional sounds which came to my ears. What is he like?"

"He's charming," declared Miss Clara.

"Indeed," remarked her sister, lifting her eyebrows. "You seem to have come to a pretty broad conclusion in a very short period of time. 'Charming' doesn't leave very much to be added on longer acquaintance, does it?"

"Oh, yes it does," said Miss Clara, laughing. "There are all degrees: Charming, very charming, most charming, and *perfectly* charming."

"To be sure," replied the other. "And there is the descending scale: Perfectly charming, most charming, very charming, charming, very pleasant, quite nice, and, oh, yes, well enough. Of course you have asked him to call."

"Yes, I have," said Miss Clara.

"Don't you think that mamma——"

"No, I don't," declared the girl with decision. "I know from what Mr. Euston said, and I know from the little talk I had with him this morning, from his manner and—*je ne sais quoi*—that he will be a welcome addition to a set of





people in which every single one knows just what every other one will say on any given subject and on any occasion. You know how it is."

"Well," said the elder sister, smiling and half shutting her eyes with a musing look, "I think myself that we all know each other a little too well to make our affairs very exciting. Let us hope the new man will be all you anticipate, and," she added with a little laugh, and a side glance at her sister, "that there will be enough of him to go 'round."

It hardly needs to be said that the aristocracy of Homeville and all the summer visitors and residents devoted their time to getting as much pleasure and amusement out of their life as was to be afforded by the opportunities at hand: Boating, tennis, riding, driving; an occasional picnic, by invitation, at one or the other of two very pretty waterfalls, far enough away to make the drive there and back a feature; as much dancing in an informal way as could be managed by the younger people; and a certain amount of flirtation, of course (but of a very harmless sort), to supply zest to all the rest. But it is not intended to give a minute account of the life, nor to describe in detail all the pursuits and festivities which prevailed during the season. Enough to say that our friend soon had opportunity to partake in them as much and often as was compatible with his duties. His first call at Lakelawn happened to be on an evening when the ladies were not at home, and it is quite certain that upon this, the occasion of his first essay of the sort, he experienced a strong feeling of relief to be able to leave cards instead of meeting a

number of strange people, as he had thought would be likely.

One morning, some days later, Peleg Hopkins came in with a grin and said, "The's some folks eout in front wants you to come eout an' see 'em."

"Who are they?" asked John, who for the moment was in the back room and had not seen the carriage drive up.

"The two Verjoos gals," said Peleg with another distortion of his freckled countenance. "One on 'em hailed me as I was comin' in and ast me to ast you to come eout." John laughed a little as he wondered what their feeling would be were they aware that they were denominated as the "Verjoos gals" by people of Peleg's standing in the community.

"We were so sorry to miss your visit the other evening," said Miss Clara, after the usual salutations.

John said something about the loss having been his own, and after a few remarks of no special moment the young woman proceeded to set forth her errand.

"Do you know the Bensons from Syrchester?" she asked.

John replied that he knew who they were but had not the pleasure of their acquaintance.

"Well," said Miss Clara, "they are extremely nice people, and Mrs. Benson is very musical; in fact, Mr. Benson does something in that line himself. They have with them for a few days a violinist, Fairman I think his name is, from Boston, and a pianist—what was it, Juliet?"

"Schlitz, I think," said Miss Verjoos.

"Oh, yes, that is it, and they are coming to



the house to-night, and we are going to have some music in an informal sort of way. We shall be glad to have you come if you can."

"I shall be delighted," said John sincerely. "At what time?"

"Any time you like," she said; "but the Bensons will probably get there about half-past eight or nine o'clock."

"Thank you very much, and I shall be delighted," he repeated.

Miss Clara looked at him for a moment with a hesitating air.

"There is another thing," she said.

"Yes?"

"Yes," she replied, "I may as well tell you that you will surely be asked to sing. Quite a good many people who have heard you in the quartette in church are anxious to hear you sing alone, Mrs. Benson among them."

John's face fell a little.

"You do sing other than church music, do you not?" she asked.

"Yes," he admitted, "I know some other music."

"Do you think it would be a bore to you."

"No," said John, who indeed saw no way out of it; "I will bring some music, with pleasure." if you wish."

"That's very nice of you," said Miss Clara, "and you will give us all a great deal of pleasure."

He looked at her with a smile.

"That will depend," he said, and after a moment, "Who will play for me?"

"I had not thought of that," was the reply.

"I think I rather took it for granted that you could play for yourself. Can't you?"

"After a fashion, and simple things," he said, "but on an occasion I would rather not attempt it."

The girl looked at her sister in some perplexity.

"I should think," suggested Miss Verjoos, speaking for the second time, "that Mr. or Herr Schlitz would play your accompaniments, particularly if Mrs. Benson were to ask him, and if he can play for the violin I should fancy he can for the voice."

"Very well," said John, "we will let it go at that." As he spoke David came round the corner of the bank and up to the carriage.

"How d'y' do, Miss Verjoos? How air ye, Miss Claricy?" he asked, taking off his straw hat and mopping his face and head with his handkerchief. "Guess we're goin' to lose our sleighin', ain't we?"

"It seems to be going pretty fast," replied Miss Clara, laughing.

"Yes'm," he remarked, "we sh'll be scrapin' bare ground putty soon now if this weather holds on. How's the old hoss now you got him agin?" he asked. "Seem to 've wintered putty well? Putty chipper, is he?"

"Better than ever," she affirmed. "He seems to grow younger every year."

"Come, now," said David, "that ain't a-goin' to do. I cal'lated to sell ye another hoss *this* summer anyway. Ben dependin' on't in fact, to pay a dividend. The bankin' bus'nis has been so neglected since this feller come that it don't amount to much any more," and he laid his hand



on John's shoulder, who colored a little as he caught a look of demure amusement in the somber eyes of the elder sister.

"After that," he said, "I think I had better get back to my neglected duties," and he bowed his adieus.

"No, sir," said Miss Clara to David, "you must get your dividend out of some one else this summer."

"Wa'al," said he, "I see I made a mistake takin' such good care on him. Guess I'll have to turn him over to Dug Robinson to winter next year. Ben havin' a little visit with John?" he asked. Miss Clara colored a little, with something of the same look which John had seen in her sister's face.

"We are going to have some music at the house to-night, and Mr. Lenox has kindly promised to sing for us," she replied.

"He has, has he?" said David, full of interest. "Wa'al, he's the feller c'n do it if anybody can. We have singin' an' music up t' the house ev'ry Sunday night—me an' Polly an' him—an' it's fine. Yes, ma'am, I don't know much about music myself, but I c'n beat time, an' he's got a stack o' music more'n a mile high, an' one o' the songs he sings 'll jest make the windows rattle. That's my fav'rit," averred Mr. Harum.

"Do you remember the name of it?" asked Miss Clara.

"No," he said; "John told me, an' I guess I'd know it if I heard it; but it's about a feller sittin' one day by the org'n an' not feelin' exac'ly right —kind o' tired an' out o' sorts an' not knowin' jest where he was drivin' at—jest joggin' 'long with a loose rein fer quite a piece, an' so on; an'

then, by an' by, strikin' right into his gait an' goin' on stronger 'n stronger, an' fin'ly finishin' up with an A—men that carries him quarter way round the track 'fore he c'n pull up. That's my fav'rit," Mr. Harum repeated, "'cept when him an' Polly sings together, an' if that ain't a show—pertic'lerly Polly—I don't want a cent. No, ma'am, when him an' Polly gits good an' goin' you can't see 'em fer dust."

"I should like to hear them," said Miss Clara, laughing, "and I should particularly like to hear your favorite, the one which ends with the Amen—the very *large* A—men."

"Seventeen hands," declared Mr. Harum. "Must you be goin'? Wa'al, glad to have seen ye. Polly's hopin' you'll come an' see her putty soon."

"I will," she promised. "Give her my love, and tell her so, please."

They drove away and David sauntered in, went behind the desks, and perched himself up on a stool near the teller's counter as he often did when in the office, and John was not particularly engaged.

"Got you roped in, have they?" he said, using his hat as a fan. "Scat my ——! but ain't this a ring-tail squealer?"

"It is very hot," responded John.

"Miss Claricy says you're goin' to sing fer 'em up to their house to-night."

"Yes," said John, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, as he pinned a paper strap around a pile of bills and began to count out another.

"Don't feel very fierce for it, I guess, do ye?" said David, looking shrewdly at him.

"Not very," said John, with a short laugh.



"Feel a little skittish 'bout it, eh?" suggested Mr. Harum. "Don't see why ye should—anybody that c'n put up a tune the way you kin."

"It's rather different," observed the younger man, "singing for you and Mrs. Bixbee and standing up before a lot of strange people."

"H-m, h-m," said David with a nod; "diff'rence 'tween joggin' along on the road an' drivin' a fust heat on the track; in one case the' ain't nothin' up, an' ye don't care whether you git there a little more previously or a little less; an' in the other the's the crowd, an' the judges, an' the stake, an' your record, an' mebbe the pool box into the barg'in, that's all got to be considered. Feller don't mind it so much after he gits fairly off, but thinkin' on't beforehand 's fidgity bus'nis."

"You have illustrated it exactly," said John, laughing, and much amused at David's very characteristic, as well as accurate, illustration.

"My!" exclaimed Aunt Polly, when John came into the sitting room after dinner dressed to go out. "My, don't he look nice? I never see you in them clo'es. Come here a minute," and she picked a thread off his sleeve and took the opportunity to turn him round for the purpose of giving him a thorough inspection.

"That wa'n't what you said when you see me in *my* gold-plated harniss," remarked David, with a grin. "You didn't say nothin' putty to me."

"Humph! I guess the's some diff'rence," observed Mrs. Bixbee with scorn, and her brother laughed.

"How was you cal'latin' to git there?" he asked, looking at our friend's evening shoes.

"I thought at first I would walk," was the reply, "but I rather think I will stop at Robinson's and get him to send me over."

"I guess you won't do nothin' o' the sort," declared David. "Tom's all hitched to take you over, an' when you're ready jest ring the bell."

"You're awfully kind," said John gratefully, "but I don't know when I shall be coming home."

"Come back when you git a good ready," said Mr. Harum. "If you keep him an' the hoss waitin' a spell, I guess they won't take cold this weather."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE Verjoos house, of old red brick, stands about a hundred feet back from the north side of the Lake Road, on the south shore of the lake. Since its original construction a *porte cochère* has been built upon the front. A very broad hall, from which rises the stairway with a double turn and landing, divides the main body of the house through the middle. On the left, as one enters, is the great drawing room; on the right a parlor opening into a library; and beyond, the dining room, which looks out over the lake. The hall opens in the rear upon a broad, covered veranda, facing the lake, with a flight of steps to a lawn which slopes down to the lake shore, a distance of some hundred and fifty yards.

John had to pass through a little flock of young people who stood near and about the entrance to the drawing room, and having given his package of music to the maid in waiting, with a request that it be put upon the piano, he mounted the stairs to deposit his hat and coat, and then went down.

In the south end of the drawing room were some twenty people sitting and standing about, most of them the elders of the families who constituted society in Homeville, many of whom John had met, and nearly all of whom he knew