

thought of favour in what she had said. "I told thee I never liked thee so well as this day, and that is true," said she, "for up to this morning I have seen in thee little better than a lamb that scarce dares bleat for the terror of hearing its own voice; but to-morrow, I doubt not, thou wilt be the same sheep as before, and I shall like thee no better."

CHAPTER II.

NEVERTHELESS Amy did like me better, on the whole, though indeed she was scornful enough at times. As for me, I began from the first day of her grudging kindness towards me to lose my heart to her. Strange that this should have been so, yet so it was. In alternate close comradeship and enmity—temporary yet bitter—we passed several years of this portion of our lives; then came separation.

Amy, it so happened, was related somewhat distantly to no less distinguished a person than the very greatest in the land, Queen Elizabeth herself, through the mother of her Grace, who had been second cousin to the mother of Amy. This was not, indeed, a very close kinship, yet it served as an excuse for the parents of Amy whereupon to base a petition that Amy might be taken into the household of her Grace, which petition was presently granted to them.

As a result, away went fair Amy to the Court in London, while I remained behind in

Devonshire, aghast to find how great was the difference to me of Amy here and Amy absent, and how that a maiden, fair indeed, but with a sharp tongue and a scornful wilful demeanour, and a maddening habit of seeming inconstancy, can, in going from a place, take with her the sunshine and the joy of life, the music from the song of birds, the delight of being up and about, and the desire to walk face up to the wind in the pride and strength and exhilaration that belong to youth.

"I doubt not that I shall follow you before long," I had said when Amy departed and I bade her farewell. "I have grown accustomed to you, and shall scarcely know how to do without you."

"Am I so kind?" she laughed. "I have not meant to be."

"Kind or scornful I am accustomed to you," I said. "We have grown up together; one becomes used to the ways of so constant a companion, be they kind ways or the opposite. I know not how I shall do without you."

"As easily, doubt not, as I shall exist without the sunshine of your presence. If thou art a sentimental fool, Herbert, Heaven help thee. Why, man, I am glad to go; I have prayed

for such a chance, and here it is; are you not glad for my sake that I am making so great a step in life?"

"Of course," I replied, "I never said the contrary. I said I should miss you here, which is so true (and you know it!) that I believe I shall not remain very long in this place."

"For that I do not blame you," said Amy; "your employment here is not sufficient to procure for you an even mind, as witness the foolish words you have just spoken. A youth of your age should be up and doing something in the world, not wasting his time and energies in sighing for a maiden who is sick of a cabbage life and prefers to seek her fortune."

"I suppose I shall sigh for you whether I see you or no; there is seldom lack of sighing matter for me in your treatment of me even when we are together; but I would rather sigh for your unkindness present than for your absence in any and all moods."

"If that means anything, which I doubt, for you hesitate and falter this morning so that I think you lose hold of what you would say; if it means anything, it is that you intend to play the sheep and not the man. Come, be ashamed, Herbert; I forbid you to waste time in thinking

of me ; rest assured I shall soon forget thee ; do thou the same by me."

"Not I," I replied with spirit, for her words nettled me. "I say that I shall miss you, and miss you I shall. Moreover, it is foolish to pretend you will never think of me ; you will."

"I say I will not ;" she frowned at me as she spoke. "What, among the gallants and educated persons of her Grace's Court? Be assured, Herbert, I shall not have a thought for thee."

"Then be not surprised if I follow one day to London and assert my right to be remembered," I rejoined. Amy flashed her angry eyes at me.

"I forbid it!" she said. "I will not be shamed at the Court of her Grace."

"I shall go where I please, cousin," I replied, as angry as she. "As for shaming you—why should I do so?"

"You and your dog devotion, your long legs and long jaws, and your fool's way with a maid ; they will think a sheep's heart beats in your breast."

"They will know it is not so if any but thou speak to me thus. I wish I hated thee, Amy ; may-be after these words of thine I shall remember more thy rudeness and thy unkindness

than any good there is in thee. I shall try to do so. A sheep's heart, indeed! I will show the world one day what manner of sheep's heart is mine."

"Show me also, I pray," she laughed, clapping her hands. "Lord, it does me good to see thee reveal a man's spirit, Herbert ; go away now, quickly, lest my last impression of thee be spoiled, and thou show again that sheep's heart——"

The repetition of those words maddened me.

"No more of that," I roared at her ; "use the phrase but once more, and I will gag thy mouth with my kerchief. I swear it, and I will do it!"

"Good, good!" she cried. "So I would have it—if I think of thee it shall be as now."

She tripped to the door and stood a moment. She curtsied and kissed the tips of her fingers to me. "Farewell," she said most roguishly, "Mr. Sheep's——"

I rushed at her to kill her or kiss her, I know not which, but she banged the door in my face and disappeared.

This was our parting, and I saw no more of her for many weary months.

Though, at so much cost to my own feelings,

I had assured Amy that I should miss her, I little guessed how necessary she had become to me. I found it impossible to devote sufficient attention to my duties as squire and magistrate of the district. My father was no longer alive, but my widowed mother still lived with me, and, fortunately, by reason of her experience and aptitude, was far more capable of administering the estate than I myself. I endeavoured to apply myself to duty, but the life did not interest me, and I suppose I showed it, for my mother rallied me one day.

"The country life is tedious for you, my son," she said—"think not I do not observe it. A great fellow like you, a very giant in energy and strength, must need, I doubt not, more outlet for the forces that lie dormant within so huge a frame."

I was indeed a huge person, long of limb and broad of shoulder and deep of chest, a giant among my fellows, over whom I towered mostly by fully a head.

"Oh, I am big and strong enough, mother," I said laughing; "but my size will scarcely qualify me for any situation in which life would be more active—unless, indeed, it were for a commission as a Yeoman of the Guard."

My mother's reply surprised me.

"It is strange that you should speak of that corps," she said; "for your dear father spoke of it also many times, in connection with your rapid growth as a child. If you should grow up as great a man as you promised you should be sent to London, said your father, to my kinsman the Earl of Sussex, who might use his influence to obtain for you a commission as Yeoman of the Guard."

I was, I think, twenty-one years of age when I left our manor in the care of my mother and a younger brother, a studious lad of half my size, but with a headpiece worth a round dozen of my own, and rode away, like Amy, to seek my fortune. Well I remember that, though my soul was full of ambition for some career in which name and reputation might be gained, I had room in my mind for many a thought of Amy and of the delight of seeing her again and watching the flash of her eyes.

Indeed, my ambition was connected with the thought of Amy. To compel Amy to be proud of me, that for me was ambition. If Amy felt proud of me she would say so; she was as blunt in praise as in scorn; pleased or displeased, it was her way to show it.

I may explain that I left my country home not entirely without prospect; to a purposeless departure my careful mother would never have agreed. She wrote a long letter to her near kinsman Netherby, himself a great lord, and in her Grace's favour—or out of it, as I afterwards discovered, at the Queen's whim, as with most of her favourites. In this letter my mother described my virtues and morals, mentioning at the same time, in parenthesis, that I measured two yards and the length of my hand from crown to sole. My mother also referred her kinsman to Amy Romalyn for further particulars. His lordship's reply was uncourtier-like, we thought, but to the point. He wrote:—

“Damn his morals and virtues, but if his legs are as long as you say let him come; he shall serve with my men-at-arms, or the Queen's”.

This was the extent of the Earl's letter, but there came by the same hand another to me from Amy, in which were concentrated all the chidings and denunciations of an angry fury. His lordship, it appeared, had come to her for confirmation as to my qualifications as man-at-arms to a great courtier. She had told him, wrote Amy, of my sheep's heart, of my foolish face, of my idiotic manner with maids; but had

failed to counteract the excellent effect which, it seemed, my mother had created by her description of the length of my limbs, which, fortunately, Amy could not deny.

“Your legs have saved you this time,” she wrote, “as doubtless they will again whenever you must fight or run, Mr. Sheep's-heart.” After slipping which bolt, Amy continued with chiding and denunciation to the end of the chapter—as, how dared I follow her to London in order to shame her before men who were men and not sheep, and perhaps before the Queen herself, who detested uncouth and unmanly persons, and so forth. “Dare not claim me as kin before them all,” she ended, “or, as I breathe God's air, I will denounce thee as a sheep's heart in the face of the Queen herself!”

All of which, since I did not then understand Amy so well as, perhaps, I do at this later day of my life, was very painful to me, and caused me many a miserable hour on my long journey to London.

