

MABEL CLEMENT

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CHAPTER ONE

Mabel - Her Father and Mother - Arthur Manly - Dr. Stanly - Series of meetings - Mabel and Arthur Baptized - Mabel's proposed visit to Thornton

Mabel Clement was the only child of Andrew Clement and his wife Gertrude. She was idolized by her parents who had spared neither pains nor money in giving her the most thorough education possible. She had attended none but schools of the very highest order and had been instructed by the best teachers of her day. Moreover, Mabel was a fine student. She loved books and seldom failed to stand at the head of her class. Her teachers were unanimous in giving her their meed of praise for close application. Mabel had spent four years at school away from home; and it was to the great joy of her proud parents and many friends that she was, on commencement day, pronounced a graduate with the highest honors of the school.

Mabel was also naturally attractive. She was tall, rather slender, but well proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair dark and her eyes a deep blue. She was of a nervous temperament, her bodily movement quick; and she belonged to that class of persons that are capable of the loftiest purpose and highest and more vigorous mental exercise, and that under the promptings of sound principles are prepared for deeds of heroism. Nature had endowed Mabel with a kind and loving heart; few had more of the milk of human kindness. Her beautiful soul went out in love to everybody and everything. Everything that suffered had her sympathy, from human beings to the wriggling worm beneath the foot-fall of heedless man.

She was naturally reticent and contemplative. No kin to those self-assertive women who go around the country prating about their suppressed rights, it was obvious, she was generally sedate and thoughtful. She seldom seemed to enjoy frivolous conversation on trivial subjects; but when important matters were the topic of conversation her whole being seemed to wake up and she conversed in a vivacious and earnest manner. She had a way of speaking directly to the point. She had a smile for all she met. None were beneath her notice. The poor of Sterling thought her an exceedingly kind and pleasant lady; her companions deemed her admirable; and the aged regarded her a model and fascinating child. There now, reader, is our heroine. Stand her up before your mind's eye, scrutinize her and see how you like the traits of her character. Who could not feel interest in a story, when the principal character in it is a beautiful, lovely, kindhearted, sweet-dispositioned, pure-souled, noble-minded woman?

So richly endowed by nature, with such literary attainments, and being of wealthy parentage, we cannot wonder that Mabel was the center of the social circle in Sterling, a town of about nine hundred inhabitants. No wonder she was looked to as the ideal on all occasions, after whom and like whom all the young ladies in Sterling assayed to mould themselves. Nor do we wonder that

the best young men were ever glad to attend Mabel on all occasions when it was practicable. Mabel had often assured her mother that she was perfectly invulnerable to the darts of Cupid, and that she meant to be unwooed and unwon by any of her numerous suitors, while Providence preserved to her such a home of luxury where every wish of the heart was fully gratified. Doubtless she was sincere.

But her own heart deceived her. Mingling in the best society of Sterling was Arthur Manly, a young man just entering on the practice of law. He was a noble young man, noted for his integrity and good morals. His pleadings in court had proved he was brainy; and the old lawyers who had been pleading at the bar for more than a score of years feared this young Cicero, for they saw he had the stuff in him of which men are made; and they predicted it would not be long ere he would eclipse them all. This young man of promise and polite manners, unconscious of his own greatness and intrinsic worth, found the way to Mabel's heart. In spite of herself Mabel felt drawn toward him. The feeling was mutual. From the first time they met a feeling of attachment for each other sprang up, and it kindled as their acquaintance continued.

Many a young man of Sterling envied Arthur the place he occupied in Mabel's heart. Yet all agreed that, if in all the town there was one who was worthy of the heart and hand of the beautiful Mabel Clement, that one was Arthur Manly. Andrew Clement, Mabel's father, was a wealthy merchant in Sterling, commanding a large trade, and consequently, making money very rapidly. He was about forty-five, intelligent, honest and truthful. He had convictions of his own and could not part with them without a struggle. He was also a prominent member of the Reformed, or Campbellite church, and very zealous in the advocacy of his views of Scripture.

All Sterling knew Andrew Clement was an ardent admirer and enthusiastic follower of Alexander Campbell and thoroughly saturated with his views of Scripture. Mabel's mother was a woman of forty, a kind and indulgent mother, and ever busy in Sterling. She was of French extraction, a fact in which she prided, pleasantly boasting that the blood of French royalty pulsed through her veins. She, too, was enrolled as a Christian; but she was not remarkable for piety, though nothing could be said against her morals, or conduct as a church member.

Now it was in the month of September, soon after Mabel's graduation, that the Rev. C. H. Stanly, D. D., the learned pastor of the Reformed church in Sterling, held a series of meetings. It was a meeting of extended influence. The Reformation had been in the ascendancy in Sterling for years. The leading citizens were all staunch Reformers and firmly set against everything else. There was quite an ingathering at this meeting. Among those that confessed they believed JESUS was the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, were Mabel and Arthur Manly.

About a fortnight after the close of the meeting Mabel began to prepare to pay her aunt a promised visit. Her residence was about twenty-five miles from Sterling, near a little village called Thornton. On the evening before her departure, while expecting a call from Arthur, Mabel inquired of her mother how long she must remain at Thornton.

"I do not know, Mabel," said her mother, "I should think three weeks long enough. I do not see as we can do without you longer than that."

"Certainly, that will be long enough," said Mabel. She thought it hard to be separated three weeks from Arthur, but she did not say so.

"Were you aware, Mabel, that your Aunt Norinda and her children are Baptists?" "No, mother, I had not learned it," was the reply. "What is the difference between the Baptists and the Christian church?"

"Indeed, I can hardly tell," said the mother; "but I've always heard Baptists are mostly ignorant, know but little about the Bible, - in fact they have discarded the Bible and are governed by a creed, or confession of faith. Then they believe that persons can be saved without baptism, in the miraculous operation of the HOLY SPIRIT, and a great many other unscriptural, unreasonable and impossible things. They even believe that all who are to be saved were foreknown before the foundation of the world."

Just at this juncture this edifying colloquy was interrupted by a pull at the door bell. Arthur was ushered into the parlor and Mabel rose to go in and spend the last evening with him till her return from Thornton. A rich blush mantled her cheeks, and Arthur's face flushed when their eager eyes met. It was an easy matter to tell what was in their hearts after a glance at their faces at that moment. Shakespeare says, "He does not love that does not show his love."

The hours sped on light feet that night, and the clock struck eleven much too soon to suit their pleasure, thus putting a period to their delightful conference. After a promise on Mabel's part that she would make a short stay at Thornton, the sweet "Goodbye" was said and they parted.

Mabel at once sought her pillow in order to get sufficient repose to be prepared for an early exodus in the morning. But it was long after twelve ere her eyes were closed in sleep. The night's long hours still found her thinking of him to whose departing footsteps she listened with heaving bosom; and, when at last her thoughts were turned out of that channel, they sought the home of her aunt and lingered inquiringly about each member of the family whom she had not seen for years. Ah! Mabel, little do you know what an epoch in your history this visit will be. It is destined to stamp its impress for time and eternity - to turn the whole tide of your life and moral being. But enough - let us bide patiently our time.

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