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The Girl and the Undergraduate



Grace Cooke Strong

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The Girl and the Undergraduate

A Comedy in One Act

BY

GRACE COOKE STRONG



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The Girl and the Undergraduate

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CHARACTERS

HORACE LATHAM	<i>professor of mathematics.</i>
GUY MONTGOMERY WATTS	<i>professor of literature.</i>
JACK STANDISH	<i>a junior.</i>
TED LATHAM	<i>a freshman.</i>
HAROLD GRAY	<i>the "undergraduate."</i>
MRS. FLORA DARCY	<i>a fascinating widow.</i>
SYLVIA LATHAM	<i>the "girl."</i>

Several students (may be omitted).

TIME.—Late spring of last year.

TIME OF PLAYING.—Thirty-five minutes.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Harold Gray, a popular junior, is in love with Sylvia, daughter of Professor Latham. The professor has threatened that if his lively son, Ted, a freshman, does not spend the afternoon studying for an examination he will make him leave college. Ted has planned to go canoeing with Mrs. Darcy, a fascinating young widow. Harold saves Ted by going with Mrs. Darcy himself. Sylvia thought Harold would take her. She thinks Professor Watts has proposed to her, and in a fit of jealousy tells Mrs. Darcy she has accepted him. But Watts had only been asking her to help him with a new book. Sylvia is mortified. Mrs. Darcy tries to tell her news, but Harold steps into the breach. "I am the man she's engaged to." Harold and Sylvia. "I said it only to help you." Sylvia confesses. "There was never any one but you."

COSTUMES, ETC.

PROFESSOR LATHAM. About fifty. Wears glasses, but need not be too severely intellectual in appearance or very formal in dress. He has a nervous, decided manner.

PROFESSOR WATTS. About thirty. Pale, slender, very intellectual. Wears dark suit and glasses.

STANDISH, GRAY and TED. All wear flannels or other costume suitable for boating. Ted is about nineteen, the others a few years older.

MRS. DARCY. About twenty-five. Very dashing and assured in manner. She wears a handsome afternoon spring costume with wide hat, gloves, etc.

SYLVIA. About twenty-one. She wears a pretty spring house dress. She may put on hat, if she wishes, at her first exit, still wearing it at her next entrance.

STUDENTS. These characters are not positively necessary to the play and may be omitted if desired. They may dress in any outdoor spring costume, with college caps, sweaters, etc.

PROPERTIES

Books, embroidery materials, folded papers, canoe paddles, tennis rackets, parasol, watch.

The Girl and the Undergraduate

SCENE.—*Hall or living-room in PROFESSOR LATHAM'S house on the campus of Fairbright College. Door R. leads to veranda. Door L. leads to other rooms of the house. A low table down L., with books on it, and a chair each side of it. Sofa down R. Other furnishings to suit taste. There should be several canoe paddles and tennis rackets in sight. Time, late spring of last year.*

(*As the curtain rises SYLVIA LATHAM, in a light summer gown, is sitting left of table with her embroidery; TED LATHAM is lounging on a sofa, R.; PROFESSOR WATTS, right of table, is reading aloud from Emerson's "Essay on Manners."*)

PROF. W. (*reading*). "“I overheard Jove, one day,' said Silenus, 'talking of destroying the earth; he said it had failed; they were all rogues and vixens, who went from bad to worse, as fast as the days succeeded each other. Minerva said she hoped not; they were only ridiculous little creatures, with this odd circumstance, that they had a blur, or indeterminate aspect, seen far or seen near; if you called them bad they would appear so; if you called them good they would appear so; and there was no one person or action among them, which would not puzzle her owl, much more all Olympus, to know whether it was fundamentally bad or good.'” (*Throws down book.*) There, Miss Latham, is a concrete illustration of the point in favor of which I am always arguing, namely, the debt that modern literature owes to classic mythology. Even the great Emerson could find no more fitting climax to his admirable essay than this quaint fable.

SYLVIA (*dropping her work*). That is true; but tell me, Professor Watts, does Minerva mean that we are all so indifferently good that we might as well be really bad?

PROF. W. (*gallantly*). If Minerva had lived in your

day, Miss Latham, she would have cited you as the notable exception. Your goodness is as apparent as your beauty.

TED (*sitting up and yawning*). Say, Professor, what did the owl have to do about it, anyway?

SYLVIA (*petulantly*). I wish you wouldn't ask such foolish questions; I'm sure that you annoy Professor Watts.

PROF. W. (*deprecatingly*). My dear Miss Latham—

TED (*cheerfully*). Don't mind her. I know when to take a hint, be it ever so delicately veiled. (*Rises, walks up c., then turns back.*) Read Sylvia some more about manners, Professor; she needs it.

(*Exit, R., whistling.*)

PROF. W. (*laughing artificially as he moves nearer SYLVIA*). A bright boy, your brother, Miss Latham; but now that we are really alone, I should like to talk with you upon a subject much nearer my heart than mythology—in fact, a subject that is engrossing my mind to the exclusion of all else. I—

SYLVIA (*drawing away*). Professor, why—I—

PROF. W. (*leaning over table, eagerly*). Don't say that I may not speak. During the past months, you cannot have failed to observe the esteem with which I regard you, the respect in which I hold your intellectual endowments. You see the marked congeniality of our tastes; you realize the pleasure we both experience from the society of each other—

SYLVIA (*rising in confusion*). Professor Watts, I never dreamed—

PROF. W. (*rising and coming very near to her*). The modesty that will not allow you to see your own superiority is one of your greatest charms; but now I can no longer keep from you my purpose, which needs only your consent to make me the happiest of men. I—

(*Enter HAROLD GRAY and JACK STANDISH, R.*)

STANDISH. Oh, I hope we're not intruding? Ted told us to walk right in.

SYLVIA (*who is relieved to see them*). Oh, no; come in. Professor Watts was good enough to read to me, but it's really too good a day to be indoors.

PROF. W. (*looking at SYLVIA*). Why don't we all take a walk, then?

STANDISH. Right you are, Professor. Come along. (*Draws paper from his pocket.*) You're just the man I wanted to see. Won't you give me your opinion on this article I've just finished for the "Tribune"?

PROF. W. (*in embarrassment*). Why—er—er—certainly—of course—my dear fellow.

STANDISH. We'll take a stroll along by the river, and talk it over. Gray, will you join us?

GRAY (*sitting down by table*). No, thanks; I'll chat a while with Sylvia, if she's willing.

STANDISH. All right. Come on, Professor. Good-bye, Sylvia.

PROF. W. (*to SYLVIA*). Good-afternoon. I shall see you again very soon, Miss Latham.

SYLVIA (*doubtfully*). Oh, yes. Good-bye.

(*Exit STANDISH, R., with PROF. W., the latter looking back reluctantly.*)

GRAY (*laughing*). Poor old Watts; always running about at the beck and call of somebody else.

(*Sits right of table.*)

SYLVIA (*sitting down on the other side of table*). Harold, is it true—what he has been telling me about you—that you've given up football, that you're not to play next fall?

GRAY (*with emotion*). Don't, Sylvia, that's a sore subject with me. You know my Dad's a bit old-fashioned; he doesn't believe in modern athletics, and he's begged me —

SYLVIA. But he's never interfered before.

GRAY (*reddening*). I know; but there's another reason. There's somebody else that I want to please even more than I do my poor old Dad.

SYLVIA (*leaning across the table*). Do I understand, Harold Gray, that you have given up football—your passion—just because of what I said?

(*Her hand lies on the table before her.*)

GRAY (*taking her hand*). I know you hate football; you think it barbarous, cruel. Didn't I hear you say that you could never love a man who cared only for brute sports, who had no intellectual —?

SYLVIA. Yes, yes, I said it.

GRAY (*rising and leaning over her chair*). All right; I've made my choice. Hereafter it's yours truly for the intellectual. I'll show you what I can do, and I'll drive poor Watts clear off the field.

SYLVIA (*looking up at him shyly*). You're so splendid, Harold. I believe in you, and I thank you—for what you've done for my sake, and I thank you for what you've done for Ted. You helped him so cleverly out of that scrape—about—about the broken glass, and you kept father from knowing it. Father's so irascible, and is always threatening to take Ted out of college. I want so much to have Ted finish his course.

GRAY. He's going to do it, Sylvia. I'll stand back of him.

SYLVIA. You're so good. (*Noise without.*) Some one is coming.

GRAY. Say, this is no place for us on a day like this. My canoe is waiting. Will you come out on the river, and under the blue sky, where there's no one else to listen? I want to tell you something, Sylvia—something that's only for you. Will you come?

SYLVIA (*eagerly*). Yes — Oh, I forgot. Father's aunt is coming this afternoon, and I'm scheduled to meet her at the station. It's most time.

GRAY. That's tough. Well, then, this evening?

(*Enter PROFESSOR LATHAM, L.*)

SYLVIA. Yes. What is it, father?

GRAY. Good-afternoon, Professor.

PROF. L. How do you do, Gray? Sylvia, the carriage is waiting for you to drive down for your aunt.

SYLVIA. Oh, very well; I'll hurry. Good-bye, Harold.

(*Exit, R.*)

GRAY (*watching her at door R.*). Good-bye.

PROF. L. (*sitting down right of table*). Gray, have you seen anything of my son, Theodore, this afternoon?

GRAY. I haven't seen Ted to-day, Professor Latham.

PROF. L. I'll tell you in confidence, Harold, that the boy is giving me a great deal of trouble. He is outrageously neglecting his studies, and is idling away his time with that frivolous woman, Mrs. Darcy, whom we all thoroughly detest.

GRAY. I'm sorry, Professor.

PROF. L. (*bringing his fist down on the table*). Well, I'm through with him. To-day ends everything as far as he is concerned.

GRAY (*in alarm*). What do you mean?

(*Sits on sofa, R.*)

PROF. L. I mean that my patience is exhausted. To-morrow Ted begins his examinations, and I have ordered him to remain at home this afternoon and study—something he has not done for two months. If I hear of his being in the company of Mrs. Darcy, or of leaving the house this afternoon on any pretext, to-morrow he shall leave college and shift for himself.

GRAY. Does he realize the penalty?

PROF. L. I have merely told him to remain at home. I shall trust you not to inform him of my intentions, and not to tell his sister, either. She is always trying to shield him. (*Rises.*) I can depend on you?

GRAY. Certainly, Professor; but I'm sorry for Ted.

PROF. L. He isn't sorry for himself. And now will you excuse me? I am preparing my examination questions. Good-day, sir.

(*Exit, L.*)

(*Enter TED, R.*)

TED (*waving his hand to his father's retreating figure*). By Jove, that was a narrow escape! I've been dodging Dad all day. (*Picks up paddle.*)

GRAY. Where are you bound?

TED (*turning back R.*). Canoeing with the adorable Mrs. Darcy. Think I'm going to miss being on the river a day like this?

GRAY (*putting his hand on TED's arm*). Say, Ted, exams begin to-morrow; why don't you stay at home and plug a little?

TED (*in genuine surprise*). Say, cut it out. What is it to you?

GRAY. More than you think.

TED (*grinning*). Oh, I see; you're jealous. You want Flora Darcy yourself, so all this interest in my mental welfare—

GRAY (*sternly*). That's enough.

TED (*a little awed*). Excuse me. I didn't mean that, Gray, honest. Say, I'm going up-stairs for a cap. If you see Flora—Mrs. Darcy, tell her I'll be here in a jiff. So-long.

(*Exit, L., hastily.*)

GRAY (*laughing in spite of himself*). The impudent little pup! But I must prevent his going. His father never goes back on his word. (*Moves to door R., as though going.*) Hello! Here's Mrs. Darcy. (*Struck by an idea.*) That's it! It's the only way. I'll do it. (*Calls off R.*) Oh, Mrs. Darcy! By Jove, she's coming in! (*Enter MRS. FLORA DARCY, R.*) Oh, I didn't intend to give you the trouble to come in, Mrs. Darcy.

MRS. D. Oh, I was coming in, anyway, to see Sylvia for a minute. And then Ted and I were going canoeing. How do you do, Mr. Gray? (*Puts out her hand.*)

GRAY (*shaking hands*). How do you do? I'm afraid Ted isn't to be depended on, Mrs. Darcy.

MRS. D. Why, what do you mean?

GRAY (*glancing L., nervously*). Why, he left here on an errand some time ago, and I don't believe he's going to get back in time to go with you.

MRS. D. Oh, how provoking!

GRAY. But—er, my own canoe is waiting—I was just on my way to the river. Won't you come with me, Mrs. Darcy?

MRS. D. But suppose Ted does get back? I half promised —

GRAY (*interrupting*). Oh, we never need keep promises with a Freshman. Come on. I'm lonesome to-day. Have pity on me. (*Moves R.*)

MRS. D. (*smiling archly as she follows*). Well, since you put it that way. At least I'll feel safer with you. One can never be sure just what Ted is going to do next.

GRAY. Good!

MRS. D. Wait a moment until I get my parasol. I think I left it on Mrs. Thurston's veranda.

GRAY. I'll meet you at the landing, Mrs. Darcy.

MRS. D. All right; I won't be long.

(*Exit, R.*)

GRAY (*shrugging his shoulders*). A whole afternoon of that! If the youngster wasn't Sylvia's brother, he wouldn't be worth it. (*Looks R.*) Why, what in the world? Sylvia is coming! (*Enter SYLVIA, R.*) It isn't you?

SYLVIA (*gaily*). Aunt Deborah didn't come after all; I can go — Why, what is the matter?

GRAY (*in confusion*). Sylvia, I don't know how to explain, you can't understand. I thought you couldn't — Well, I asked Mrs. Darcy —

SYLVIA (*icily*). Mrs. Darcy?

GRAY (*humbly*). You see, I thought—I never meant —

SYLVIA (*laughing unsteadily*). Don't apologize. I assure you it doesn't matter in the least. (*Crosses L.*)

GRAY. Sylvia, let me explain —

SYLVIA (*sternly*). Please say no more about it. Good-afternoon.

GRAY (*pleadingly*). Sylvia, listen —

SYLVIA. Good-bye.

GRAY. Very well, good-bye.

(*Enter TED, L. GRAY rushes out R., without speaking to him.*)

TED. Say, what's the matter with him? Can't he speak to a fellow?

SYLVIA (*sweetly*). He is in a hurry, dear; he's going canoeing with Mrs. Darcy.

TED. Canoeing with Mrs. Darcy?

SYLVIA. Yes.

TED. Who told you so?

SYLVIA. He did—just now.

TED (*in a rage, looking off R.*). By Jove, you're right. Look! (*SYLVIA looks.*) He's waiting for her on the landing. The sneaking, underhanded — I hope he drowns.

SYLVIA (*in horror*). Ted!

TED. I don't care. Mrs. Darcy was going with me. She'd promised — (*Looks sharply at SYLVIA.*) Why, sis, I thought Gray never took out any girl but you.

SYLVIA. He doesn't—I mean he does—I don't care, do you hear, Ted Latham? I don't care what Harold Gray does. (*Stamps foot.*) I don't care.

TED (*angrily*). Well, if you don't, I do. I'll teach the miserable scamp to leave my sister for anybody. Why, everybody knows he's been crazy about you.

SYLVIA (*sitting down and picking up a book*). Then every one may forget it. It is very little concern of mine what Mr. Gray does. I'm practically engaged to—to Professor Watts.

TED. You're joking! But how will Gray ——?

SYLVIA (*pretending to read*). I forbid you to mention Mr. Gray to me again; I hate him, and I'm not joking.

TED. Well, I never—Wattsy for a brother-in-law! Suffering snakes! Well, as I can't be happy, I may as well be miserable. Me for the books. (*Exit, L. SYLVIA buries her face in her hands, and cries silently for a moment, but dries her eyes as she hears TED approaching. Enter TED, L., his arms loaded with books.*) You don't look very cheerful, if you are just engaged.

SYLVIA. I'm crying—just because I'm so happy.

TED. Then forget it. (*TED assumes a comfortable though unconventional position on the sofa down R., his books strewn picturesquely about him. He dives desperately into one, then throws it down for another. Repeats this several times.*) It's no use looking at Trig—I'm hopelessly behind in that. Greek, I might do something ——

(*Enter MRS. D., R.*)

MRS. D. Oh, how do you do, Sylvia? Have you seen anything of my parasol? I thought I left it at the Thurs-ton's', but I must have laid it down here this morning.

SYLVIA (*going up L., and picking up parasol*). Is this it?

(*Hands parasol to MRS. D., with frigid politeness.*)

MRS. D. Oh, yes. Thank you so much. Teddy, boy, you'll forgive me for deserting you this afternoon, won't you? Mr. Gray teased so hard, I really couldn't refuse. You don't mind?

TED (*gruffly, without looking up*). Go ahead! I don't care.

MRS. D. How sweet of you. (*Puts arm about SYLVIA.*) Sylvia, I do believe you've been crying. I do hope that you don't mind Mr. Gray's inviting me. I'll confess I was surprised myself, for I'd always fancied he was fond of you. Of course, I was mistaken.

SYLVIA. You certainly were, Mrs. Darcy.

MRS. D. Now I'm glad to hear that, for if I thought you were grieving about it, I shouldn't enjoy myself one bit. In fact, I shouldn't go.

SYLVIA (*with dignity*). Mrs. Darcy, please don't think for a moment that I am in the least concerned as to what Mr. Gray does. You may as well know now as at any time, that I am—engaged—to—to Professor Watts.

MRS. D. (*dropping her parasol*). Mercy on us! Professor Watts! Well, there's no accounting for tastes.

SYLVIA. Mrs. Darcy!

MRS. D. (*picking up parasol*). Why, I mean you are both so well suited, so perfectly congenial. You never could have managed a lively man, Sylvia. (*Kisses her.*) I hope you'll be very happy, I'm sure.

SYLVIA. Thank you.

MRS. D. I must hurry, for I've already kept dear Mr. Gray waiting a long time. Good-bye, Sylvia. Don't get brain fever, Teddy.

(*Exit, R.*)

TED (*in disgust*). She'll have that all over town by night.

SYLVIA (*defiantly*). Why shouldn't she?

TED. I thought you were only saying that because you were mad with Gray. When did Wattsy propose?

SYLVIA. This—why, don't ask such foolish questions, Ted.

TED. Here he comes now.

SYLVIA (*in a panic*). Oh, dear, Ted, please go in. I know the professor wants to speak to me alone.

(*Enter PROF. W., R.*)

PROF. W. Dear Miss Latham, I had despaired of ever getting back to you. (*Stumbles over TED'S books, which he stoops and picks up.*) How do you do, Theodore?

TED (*ignoring SYLVIA'S furtive signs, with which she is trying to persuade him to leave them*). Not very well, Professor; too constant application to my studies is impairing my health.

PROF. W. (*laying books on the table and sitting down*). Nevertheless your perseverance augurs well for to-morrow.

TED (*reluctantly rising*). I hope so.

PROF. W. (*uneasily*). I trust that I am not disturbing you.

TED (*cheerfully*). Not in the least, Professor. I was just going up to my room for more books.

SYLVIA. You can study fully as comfortably on the veranda, Ted.

TED. Thank you for the suggestion. Good-bye, Professor.

(*Exit, R.*)

PROF. W. I'll confess that I am delighted to see such unmistakable signs of mental awakening in Theodore. I am sure it is your influence and example —

SYLVIA. I only trust that he will remain away long enough for us to talk undisturbed. (*She stands right of table.*)

PROF. W. (*coming near her*). That brings me just to the point, my dear Miss Latham; still I can hardly find words in which to frame the question that has so long been trembling on my lips.

SYLVIA (*encouragingly*). I'm listening.

(*She nervously picks up a book from the table.*)

PROF. W. (*in great agitation*). Miss Latham, Sylvia, you know me well. You know my ability, my intellectual equipment, furthermore you know my limitations, my dependence upon the mental stimulus that you have always given me.

SYLVIA (*nervously*). Yes, I know—that is, I've always tried to be a—an inspiration to you, Professor Watts.

(*Sits right of table.*)

PROF. W. You have been; will you continue to be—for an indefinite period? (*He sits on sofa R.*)

SYLVIA. I—I —

PROF. W. (*drawing papers from pocket*). I am about to begin a work that has been the dream of my life—the writing of a book, which I shall call “The Pursuit of the Impossible.” Miss Sylvia, will you collaborate with me in its preparation?

SYLVIA (*dropping book with a crash*). Collaborate—a book? Oh, that is a joke, Professor Watts.

PROF. W. (*rising indignantly*). A joke?

SYLVIA (*laughing hysterically*). Believe me, I must decline — (*Rises and looks about wildly*.) I appreciate the honor—I couldn't —

PROF. W. You have already done so much; you've helped—why, are you ill, Miss Latham? (*Drops papers*.)

SYLVIA (*grasping hold of table*). I feel a trifle faint. Perhaps you had better call my brother, Professor Watts.

PROF. W. (*stepping toward door R.*). Theodore! Your sister wants you, Theodore! (*Comes back to SYLVIA*.) Can I help you? (*Helps her into a chair*.) I trust I have not agitated you. My proposal was too abrupt.

SYLVIA (*faintly*). I assure you I shall be myself presently. I am often—I mean I always recover when I am alone.

(*Enter TED, R.*)

PROF. W. Your sister is ill, Theodore. Perhaps we had better help her to her room.

SYLVIA. Thank you. I think I prefer to remain here. Ted will stay with me.

PROF. W. (*gathering up his papers*). Then I'll leave you. Don't worry, Miss Latham. Some other time we will talk this matter out. (*To TED*.) I trust I have not wearied your sister, Theodore. We've been talking —

TED. Oh, no; Sylvia is very fond of talking to you, Professor.

PROF. W. I hope so, I'm sure. Now, I will leave her with you. Endeavor to calm yourself, Miss Latham.

SYLVIA. I—I trust your book will be a success, Professor Watts.

PROF. W. Thank you.

(*Exit, R.*)

(*SYLVIA buries her face in her hands*.)

TED. Have you and Wattsy quarreled already?

SYLVIA (*looking up*). Ted, there's been a terrible mistake. I told you I was engaged to Professor Watts. He had asked—as I supposed — Oh, Ted, he only wants me to help him write his miserable book, and I thought he meant—something else.

TED (*awkwardly trying to put his arm about her*). There, there, never mind. You don't want old Wattsy, anyway.

SYLVIA. But, Ted, I told Mrs. Darcy.

TED (*whistling*). Whew! That's bad.

SYLVIA (*crying*). Every one in town knows it by this time.

TED (*starting away*). I'll go get Watts, and make him —

SYLVIA (*holding on his coat*). Don't you dare.—I can never look him or any one else in the face again.

TED. Then we'll have to think. Run up to your room before some one comes in and finds you crying. Trust your Uncle Theodore to find a way through the woods.

SYLVIA (*kissing TED*). Thank you, Ted. I will. I know I'm a fright. You must think up something —

(*Exit, L.*)

TED. Well, heaven only knows what it will be.

(*Picks up book and looks at it fiercely.*)

PROF. L. (*entering from L.*). Well, well, Ted, I'm glad to find you working.

TED (*with a hint of sarcasm*). I trust I shall pass my exams with credit, sir.

PROF. L. I hope so; but more depends on this afternoon's work than the examinations.

TED. What do you mean?

PROF. L. Simply that I had made up my mind to take you from college and to put you to work in your uncle's store, if you did not accede to my wishes sufficiently to devote this last afternoon to your studies rather than to that—to Mrs. Darcy. I told Gray as much to-day.

TED (*rising indignantly*). Look here, Dad, did you tell Harold Gray that if I went canoeing with—with Flora this afternoon, you'd make me leave college?

PROF. L. I did, and I meant it, too.

TED (*sitting down and picking up book*). Well, I didn't go.

PROF. L. (*looking at watch*). I see that you didn't. Well, I won't longer detain you from your books. Stick to the job, Ted. If you make good, I may reconsider my decision about that motor-boat.

TED (*in glee*). Dad, you're a brick.

PROF. L. You'll have to earn it by hard work, though.

(*Exit, L.*)

TED (*throwing book in air*). Three cheers for Dad and dear old Gray! (*Enter GRAY, R. TED, cordially.*) Hello! Back so soon?

GRAY (*gloomily*). Yes, my canoe struck a rock, and Standish came along just in time to rescue us from a watery grave.

TED. Lucky Standish. I trust the fair Flora was not injured.

GRAY. Not in the least.

TED (*holding out hand*). Say, old man, father's just been talking to me, and I think that I understand why you invited Mrs. Darcy to go canoeing. Thank you.

(*They shake hands.*)

GRAY. That's all right. I didn't want you to lose your only chance, kid. You've been taking great risks.

TED. I know it, but father's half promised me a motor-boat for good behavior, and from now on it's Latham, honor man. Say, can't I do something for you?

GRAY. Not unless you can make my peace with Sylvia. She's offended with me.—I can't have it so.

TED. I'm sorry, old man, but I can't do much there. Sylvia will thank you, of course, for what you've done for me, but she has given her heart to another.

GRAY. What do you mean?

TED. Watts!

GRAY. No!

TED. Yes. Say, as a friend of the family, may I tell you in confidence about the fix Sylvia is in?

GRAY. For heaven's sake, yes.

TED (*in a stage whisper*). She's in love with Watts. Something he told her led her to believe that he was in love with her, and was at the point of proposing. Sylvia told Flora Darcy that she was engaged to him.

GRAY. Yes, yes, go on!

TED. Now it comes out that all Watts had in mind was to ask her to help him with his old book. Sylvia is crazy. Flora will have it all over town.

GRAY. She told me, but I thought she was joking. Ted, we must do something. Think hard.

TED. What is there to do?

GRAY. We will find Watts. He must—why, I love Sylvia myself beyond — I guess you know that; but, if

she cares for Watts, why, Watts must propose. I'll make him.

TED (*putting out his hand*). I'm with you. Shake!

(*They shake hands.*)

GRAY (*going R.*). We'll search — Why —

(*Enter SYLVIA, L. She draws back as she sees GRAY.*)

SYLVIA. I thought Ted was alone. I wanted —

GRAY (*appealingly*). Sylvia, I —

SYLVIA (*turning away*). I don't care to talk.

(*Noise without.*)

TED (*running to look*). It's Mrs. Darcy, and the crowd from the river.

SYLVIA. Oh, I must go. I don't want to see her.

GRAY. Wait! (*In a low tone, to SYLVIA.*) Why not squelch this Darcy person right now?

SYLVIA. I can't. You don't know —

GRAY. I do know. And if you can't—I can. Call them in, Ted.

SYLVIA. Oh, I —

TED (*calling off*). Come on in, folks. We want to hear about the accident.

(*Enter PROF. L., L. Enter R., MRS. D., STANDISH, and one or two other students with paddles, tennis rackets, etc., all laughing and talking. MRS. D. goes directly to SYLVIA and kisses her.*)

MRS. D. Darling Sylvia, you're just the one I wanted to see. It's lucky you did not go with Mr. Gray, for he nearly drowned me. Don't you dare deny it, Mr. Gray. (*Shakes finger at GRAY.*) Now, boys, I've some news for you. Don't run away, Sylvia. (*Clings to her.*) Sylvia has stolen a march on us: she's engaged, and we never knew it.

ALL. Engaged?

PROF. L. My daughter? Impossible!

ALL. Who's the man?

MRS. D. I know. You can never guess.

GRAY. I'm the man.

TED (*aside*). Hurray!

SYLVIA. He —

TED (*sternly, aside, to SYLVIA*). Keep still!

MRS. D. Why, she told me —

TED. You misunderstood the name, Mrs. Darcy. It's Harold Gray, ex-football star, the most popular —

GRAY. Ted, dry up!

MRS. D. Well, of all things! (*Stiffly, to SYLVIA*.) I'm sure I congratulate you both.

SYLVIA (*weakly*). Thank you.

STANDISH (*shaking hands with GRAY*). Best wishes, old man.

PROF. L. (*kissing SYLVIA*). My daughter, I'm delighted. (*To GRAY*.) No one could please me better, sir.

GRAY. Thank you.

(*They shake hands. All shake hands with SYLVIA and GRAY.*)

MRS. D. Dear Sylvia looks a trifle nervous. I've no doubt she and Mr. Gray would appreciate being left alone. (*Looks knowingly at SYLVIA*.) Their engagement was so sudden.

GRAY. I think your suggestion a very good one.

TED (*throwing up book*). Three cheers for Sylvia and Gray!

STANDISH. Come on over to the club, everybody. I'll give Sylvia and Gray their first engagement party right now.

(*All laugh.*)

TED (*dolefully*). Sorry, I have a previous engagement.

PROF. L. I'll excuse you for half an hour, Ted. (*To GRAY*.) Harold, we'll expect you to stay to dinner.

(*Exit, L.*)

GRAY. Thank you, sir. Run along, folks. Sylvia and I'll join you in a few minutes.

(*Exeunt R. all except GRAY and SYLVIA.*)

SYLVIA (*to GRAY*). How could you?

GRAY (*pleadingly*). Sylvia, don't misunderstand me this time. I said it only to help you. I heard—by accident—of your mistake about Watts. I wanted to set you

right before all those people. Now, you know it's easy enough for us to quarrel and break our engagement.

SYLVIA. You heard—about—Professor Watts?

GRAY. Yes. I don't blame you for loving him, Sylvia. He's more your sort. And I believe he will realize—some day. He won't let this great happiness slip by him. If I could do anything to help you—and him.

SYLVIA (*turning away in agitation*). You are very kind.

GRAY (*coming very close to her*). Sylvia, for heaven's sake, don't speak of kindness between you and me. You know that I love you —

SYLVIA (*with averted face*). It's too late.

GRAY. I know; but I want you to realize that with me there has never been any one else. I took Mrs. Darcy out to-day merely to save Ted from doing what would lose him his last chance at college. I never dreamed —

SYLVIA (*turning toward him*). I'm sure Ted thanks you.

GRAY. He has. Now, I'm not going to trouble you any longer. When you decide what you want to do about this—let me know. I'll do anything —

(*Turns away, then looks back.*)

SYLVIA (*shyly*). I know what I'm going to do—now.

GRAY (*coming back eagerly*). Yes?

SYLVIA (*putting out her hand*). I'm going to make you stay for dinner.

GRAY (*seizing her hands*). But Watts?

SYLVIA (*laughing*). We'll leave him to continue "The Pursuit of the Impossible." Harold, must I say it?

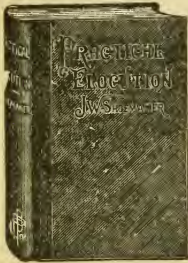
GRAY (*bending over her*). What, dearest?

SYLVIA. Don't you know what foolish things a girl will do—when she is—jealous? There was never any one but you.

GRAY (*drawing her to him*). Sylvia!

CURTAIN

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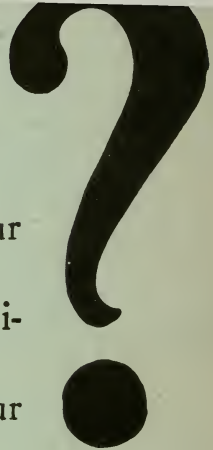
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