Mrs. Délire's Euchre Party

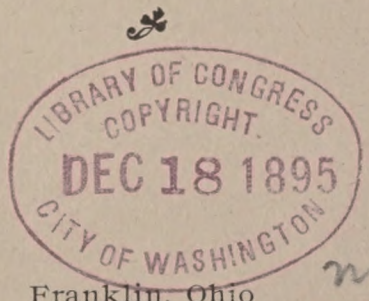

Yours truly
Evelyn Sneed Barnett

MRS. DÉLIRE'S EUCHRE PARTY

AND OTHER TALES

BY

EVELYN SNEAD BARNETT



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MRS. DÉLIRE'S EUCHRE PARTY.

ALTHOUGH her fiancé had in a measure prepared her, when Louise went to the station to meet Margaret Roy, her future sister-in-law, she was surprised at the beauty of the dignified girl who greeted her.

Had it not been for an indefinite something reminding one of the brother she never would have recognized her guest from Walter's description; although that fortunate young man thought he was being most explicit when he wrote: "Tall, reddish brown hair, blue grey eyes and a good figure."

Louise's own style being piquant, the stranger's stateliness awed her somewhat and she thought with dismay that she could never be on terms of sisterly intimacy with so perfect a piece of flesh and blood. To tell the truth the cold Northern

manner of the visitor did not encourage advances.

But if Margaret was by nature somewhat reserved with strangers, it was more from natural shyness than indifference and when this wore off her real disposition showed itself in an unvarying consideration for the rights of others and a sympathetic appreciation of all phases of character.

Louise was not long in discovering these traits and the first strangeness conquered, her awe changed to friendship, her friendship to affection and to this was soon added passionate adoration. Walter's most sanguine hopes were to be realized —his idolized sister would prove a dear companion to his future wife and the harmony of his home unthreatened.

As for Margaret herself, from the first day of her arrival she was interested. Everything in this Southern life was new to her; the manners, the language, the very food she ate proving a never-failing source of wonderment.

The house, open at all hours, received a constant stream of visitors. Balls, receptions, lunches and dinners occupied the time. The newcomer, in spite of her distant manner became a social success and Louise's delight and pride were unbounded.

Every mail brought invitations of some sort. One of these deserves mention, for, being the first of the kind she had ever received, it impressed Margaret strongly.

Louise handed her a tiny envelope and on opening it she found a lady's engraved visiting card upon which was written:

Compliments of the A. U. R Club,
for Tuesday, January 10th, 2:30 P. M.

Mrs. Francis Délire.

Euchre. *2 Fourth Ave.*

"We have no engagement for Tuesday," said Louise, "we must go to this."

"Cards, isn't it?" asked Margaret.

"Progressive Euchre. It is sure to be a nice one for Mrs. Délire always entertains beautifully."

"But I never saw the game in my life—have barely heard of it," protested Margaret.

"What a girl! Don't you know plain euchre?"

"Of course I do, but—"

"Well this is exactly the same thing, only forty or more play instead of four and the winners get prizes. There are some other points but I'll post you before you go."

"I really do not play well enough; I fear I may make mistakes and mortify you."

"No you won't; I'll keep an eye on you and help you all I can."

"Go without me; please do. Let me decline."

"I will not hear of such a thing. It will be a new experience for you and you just have to go." So she wrote acceptances for both.

Tuesday came and with it a disappointment. Louise's aunt was suddenly taken ill and Mrs. Steele went to her sister's bedside leaving her daughter home to keep peace between two tribes of savages—her own and the sick woman's.

"You will be obliged to go to the P. E. alone," said the bride-elect regretfully.

Margaret looked aghast. "Impossible! I should die of embarrassment."

"Madge, you are, without doubt, the biggest gump! What is there to embarrass you?"

"I am such a stranger."

"You'll know everybody there or nearly. It is bad enough for me to fail at the eleventh hour,

but two would put our hostess to the greatest inconvenience."

"If you really think so?"

"I do; so don't argue the matter. There is no help for it."

And Margaret with a sigh consented to the decree.

As the weather was fine she refused to take the carriage saying Louise could send for her; so giving herself plenty of time she started forth looking very stylish and *chic*.

Now our Margaret, as we have before hinted, was timid and shy about many things—most of them trifles. As she approached Mrs. Délire's residence, some of those painful sensations known only to different persons, assailed and overpowered her, suggesting disagreeable possibilities.

Suppose she were too early? Visions of a bored hostess having to entertain her until the other guests arrived arose before her. Southerners were not very prompt and it had taken much less time to reach the house than she had thought possible.

She gazed at the number above the door, then at the house. There was nothing suggestive of approaching festivity. Not a carriage in sight,

every window closed tight and the shades drawn to the bottom of the sills.

There must be some mistake! Could she have erred in the date? She decided to walk a block further to think it over.

Finally as she repassed her destination she screwed up her courage, entered the gate and started to ring the bell.

Hardly had her finger touched the button when the door was thrown open by a most stylish colored individual, disclosing a blaze of light and gorgeously furnished rooms from which came the sound of much high-pitched chattering, borne on a blast of hot air heavy with the scent of flowers and perfumes.

The hostess rushed out in a flurry of dangling jet and breezy *chiffon*.

"At last!" she exclaimed, and the words did not add to Margaret's composure. "I began to fear that you, too, had deserted me—shall I send your wraps up for you?—the club is prompt and we are just beginning to play—I was going to take your place until you arrived." She spoke rapidly as if time were precious and, not waiting for replies divested Margaret of her furs and heavy wrap, thrust a pasteboard card with a depending

blue tassel into her hand, added an ornate lace pin with which to attach it, and before that deliberate young person could recover from her bewilderment, she found herself being led to a table at which there were three ladies seated and a hand of five cards lying face downwards at a vacant place.

Here by invitation Margaret seated herself and began leisurely to remove her gloves.

Her partner she had met before—a sweet, gentle girl with hardly a word to say for herself. The other two ladies were introduced and she was about to exchange some of the polite nothings of society with them, when—

"Everybody's playing," said the sweet, gentle one feverishly. "It's your turn—heart's led."

As for some unexplained reason the young person appeared to be in somewhat of a hurry, Margaret accommodatingly hastened to lay down a heart.

Her partner fell back with a gesture of despair.

"You have put your right bower on my left and *I took it up!* Have you no other trump?" She fairly screamed.

Margaret had the eight and nine of hearts and had played the knave because the ten had been played by her right-hand adversary and, a low

heart having been led from the left, was apparently the highest card on the table.

"You did not tell me that hearts were trumps," she said apologetically. "I should have inquired before playing. It was immensely stupid of me—I am very sorry I—"

"All right—such things will happen—play on—t'chore lead."

Margaret studied awhile over her hand and then started to lead the nine of hearts but changed her mind and concluded to play the ace of diamonds. She put it down slowly and in a hesitating manner.

The card had barely left her hand before three others were on it, the trick turned and a new lead made.

"You must let me get my breath," she gasped. "It is new to me; I have never played this way before."

The smiles were polite and pitying.

"Indeed! Then it must be somewhat confusing."

"It is, very," she replied frankly. "I fear I shall prove a poor partner." (Why had Louise omitted to tell her that haste was the chief feature of the game!)

"Oh no you won't! you'll get used to it after a little. Take your time; we will play more slowly."

This speaker and her partner were two points ahead.

Thinking it good advice, Margaret did take her time and her impatient *vis-a-vis* writhed and wriggled in her chair.

Presently a bell tapped.

Half of Pandemonium arose and moved forward one table, Margaret's partner changed her seat with suspicious alacrity, while Margaret herself, for the first time, looked around.

A set of handsomer women could hardly be imagined. Many of them were young matrons and there were more smart gowns and expensive millinery than she had ever seen before. Every hand was loaded and flashing with beautiful rings; ribbons streamed and laces fell in ample folds; flowers nodded and plumes waved. Many of the guests she had met and with some she had exchanged visits, but where, oh where, were the former easy manners and soft voices of these society dames? Where the much-admired and charming languor of the Sunny South?

Two score and ten women were all talking at once and each trying to be heard above the din;

with faces flushed with excitement; with gem-decked fingers trembling nervously, they handled the cards as if in the broad earth there was nothing so rare or so to be desired as that cut-glass water pitcher resting on a small table, or the three other souvenirs at its side intended for the victors.

Every woman present could have bought herself duplicates of any or all.

Margaret was puzzled and amazed. As she gazed about her she was absent-mindedly shuffling the cards.

"Don't shuffle *the clothes off the queen*" said her new partner, laughing but fidgety.

This remark made her use all haste but her fingers were thumbs and she dealt one of the players six cards. She offered, as a mere matter of form, to give up the deal, but to her surprise the offer was quickly accepted without any demurrers or polite hesitancies whatever though she saw a black look from her friend across the board.

The zealous hostess now appeared and stood behind her chair.

"Do you others mind if I help Miss Roy a little? This is her first experience." And in the sweetest way imaginable she conducted every play and fortune began to smile on the dazed Margaret

so that, when the bell tapped, she and her partner were far ahead and passed on to table number four.

Mrs Délire now went the rounds and with a railway conductor's punch, punctured a hole in the card she had pinned to Margaret's sleeve.

"I do hope you will win," she whispered.

Margaret thought the wish extremely kind—she did not know that her hostess had softly whispered the same words to every stranger in the room.

As Mrs. Délire passed in and out among the many tables Margaret's eyes followed her in genuine admiration. She could not sufficiently applaud her tact or her gracious manner. She was the only person in the room who had time to spare. Appealed to on every side to settle questions and adjust disputes, she did so with the ability of a skilled politician. She decided as nearly as possible in favor of all parties, giving each one every advantage the law allowed—smoothing out difficulties and restoring peace with the address of a diplomat. Long practice alone could have made her thus perfect.

Margaret now won several games in rapid succession, and being naturally adaptable she soon recovered her self-possession. She looked with a

feeling of contempt at all those eager, chattering women, and their mad desire for the paltry prizes seemed nothing short of imbecile.

She continued to win.

A pleasurable feeling took possession of her. She discovered that the "nothing venture, nothing have" tactics were the ones that succeeded, so she played with increasing risks and victory crowned her efforts. She felt little quivers of excitement. Every sense was on the alert. That is, every card sense, for—must we acknowledge it?—there were little unfair actions, little meannesses, that did not shock her until afterwards. Once or twice she thought that some of the ladies *cheated*.

But surely she must have been wrong!

Before she knew it her fingers were moving with some of the haste that had at first impressed her as being so unnecessary. Then she became much interested. Finally she caught the fever of play.

It was so "lovely" to win.

Point after point she scored. She left her original partner, she who in such pitying politeness had tried to bear her faults, far behind. "Lone hands" were as common as blackberries in July but somehow hers always "went through" and by

some instinct she invariably managed to keep the proper card to catch her adversaries odd suits in the last round.

On every table was a small dish of sweets. Pounds of candy were consumed by these fair and fragile beings during the progress of the game; while in and out, amid the sweeping draperies, went the waiters dristributing a frozen punch of most delicious brew.

The heat became intense. Gas and fires and many breaths made the atmosphere stifling. But Margaret who was wont to declare that foul air made her faint; who abhorred bad ventilation; who must have oxygen and plenty of it—went on with the most eager persistence, apparently not noticing the discomfort.

On every cheek there burned a crimson spot; each ear was a flaming red. Occasionally a hand would be pressed to a throbbing brow, but—"on with the game."

Locks became disheveled; curls lost their crispiness, and crimps grew limp. Bonnet strings were lossened and gloves and handkerchiefs slid unnoticed upon the carpet. Peachy skins became oily with the intense heat and perspiration streamed from many a brow as if it were midsummer; while

fingers, sticky with much chocolate and many creams, bedaubed the cards—but still they played.

For three mortal hours there was feverish shuffling and dealing—no "cutting," that took too much time—but "passing" and "ordering up," "assisting" and "going alone;" yet no one seemed to think of fatigue.

"How many holes have you," asked a friend as Margaret took a seat at the same table.

"Don't think of counting them," interposed another in all seriousness, "it's bad luck."

Even the superstition of the gambler had infected them.

There is surely nothing so unaccountable as fashion's whims. This game, though introduced many years ago, seems all at once to have sprung into popularity. In certain cities it has become such a passion that it has suppressed nearly all other forms of entertaining. Frowned upon by straight-laced people, talked against and even condemned from the pulpit it still holds its charm and threatens not only the older, milder and less exciting forms of amusement, but the very manners and morals of "polite circles."

The excitement of winning, we must admit, is not the sole cause of its popularity. It is the only

form of entertainment where every guest is on an equality. It affords an easy way of paying social obligations without offending friends who are omitted, as the number is necessarily limited. Furthermore, the hostess has no individual responsibility as, if her guests do not enjoy themselves it is their own fault.

Its fascinations are so great that it amounts to a mania. Many enjoy it who would be horrified if husbands or sons played at their clubs for money, but where is the difference? Some of these women at Mrs. Dêlire's attended one and sometimes two euchre parties a day—except on Sunday, they did draw the line there—and the business-like way in which they sat down to a game would have been amusing had it not been pitiful.

A stranger looking into the handsome parlors that Tuesday afternoon, if by chance, he had never seen the game, would have been astounded. The noise, the flurry, the nervousness and, above all, the extreme earnestness, were nothing short of marvelous.

As time passed and each game was expected to be the last all these features were intensified, and in the very atmosphere there was a tension that had to be felt to be appreciated.

When the hostess announced "Only one game more," there is nothing to which the scene can be compared save a close race where the horses run neck and neck and all powers lend aid in reaching the goal.

Then the bell tapped.

Instantly the excitement subsided and there was a sudden collapse. Ladies were ladies again, but limp and exhausted specimens they were. Ices and cakes assisted in cooling them off, while the indefatigable hostess passed from table to table making out the score.

Margaret recovered from her delirium and felt as if she had been dreaming. She had scored the highest number of games by one point and the pitcher was presented to her. But it was in anything but triumph that she accepted the costly gift from a perfect stranger, and she had an inward spasm of repugnance as she tried to express her thanks with some cordiality.

Everyone now came up to congratulate her and a Miss Darlington, an intimate friend of Louise's, under pretext of examining the prize drew her into a corner.

"If I tell you a joke," she said, "will you swear to keep it a secret?"

"Certainly; what is it?"

"Did you notice that little Sèvres vase that was given for the Consolation?" (prize.)

"Yes; it is a beauty. What of it?"

"Well it was mine, and I traded it to Mrs. Dêlire for a prize she had won and didn't want. I won it at a party Mrs. Harris gave and—just think—*Mrs. Harris herself has just drawn it!*"

Margaret was horrified. "Perhaps she will not recognize it."

"Recognize it? She cannot fail to."

"I have seen others like it."

"That is true, but this was an imperfect piece—had a hole in it somewhere or something—anyhow when I put water in it, it all leaked out, which is the reason I traded."

"Mrs. Harris probably did not know that."

"You can just bet she did. I know she bought it cheap on account of the flaw. I'm glad she's got it on her hands again. Serves her right, stingy thing!"

"It is simply dreadful!" But at the same time Margaret could not help feeling amused.

"Isn't it? Thought I should die when I saw her draw for it—felt in my bones she was going to

get it. Don't tell on me; even Mrs. Dêlire doesn't know who owned it originally."

After the prizes had been admired the leave taking began. Margaret drew a breath of relief as she passed outside to where Homer, the coachman awaited her in the darkness.

But her euchre party was not yet over.

As she was stepping into the carriage a young lady, Miss Clark by name, came running after her saying:—

"I'm so glad you got the prize—but only fancy! After I got up stairs I counted my card again and discovered I had overlooked one punch; I was even games with you."

"Will you not please take the pitcher," cried Margaret offering it eagerly; "it would have been yours but for the mistake."

"Oh no, no; I couldn't think of such a thing! I didn't mean *that*. I only told you because I think it was so funny of me to count wrong."

"But I insist," and Margaret pressed it on her.

Miss Clark put her hands behind her and refused.

"It would have been yours anyhow, for we should have cut for it and I never do have any luck cutting."

"At least let us go in again and cut."

"Don't say another word for nothing could induce me,"—and she was off before Margaret had time to stop her, so she and her pitcher entered the brougham.

She leaned back in a corner anything but satisfied with herself, her success, her first euchre party, and dead tired.

"Well what do you think of Progressive Euchre?" was Louise's greeting.

Margaret dropped into a chair with a sigh.

"Three good hours have been worse than wasted," she answered.

"Poor Madge! You are always wanting to be improved. Don't you ever do anything for pleasure alone?"

"But this was no pleasure. It wasn't even innocent; it was—evil."

"Don't be gloomy. You are tired and disposed to criticise. Now *I* can see good in everything."

"Then tell me what good you can possibly see in Progressive Euchre?" said Margaret amused.

"Oh it could teach one lots of things. In the first place it is a splendid chance to study character."

"I admit that; what else?"

"Then one can learn self-control and unselfishness and numerous other admirable traits."

"If you look at it in that light I can agree with you."

"It's the way to look at it. Think what an exercise and training in courtesy and forbearance!"

"And what a school for the cultivation of sweetness of temper!"

"And rapidity of thought and motion."

"Really you almost persuade me that there is no moral influence equal to Progressive Euchre."

"But jesting aside, dear, tell me what enormities were perpetrated this afternoon, for I can see that you are disgusted, though evidently you met the foe on equal terms, for you have brought home a beautiful trophy."

"That's just it; Fanny Steele," said Margaret solemnly, "I hope I may never so far forget myself as I did this afternoon, for if I ever do I think my chance of Heaven is small."

Fanny laughed; "I'll take the pitcher and you can swear off."

"No; this pitcher must go to Miss Clark the first thing to-morrow."

A Wedding and a Half.

AND here was Margaret Roy in an awkward predicament. Her beloved brother Walter was to be married and she was a guest in the home of his *fiancé*, Louise Steele. That young woman had asked her to be maid of honor on a certain grand occasion and she had readily consented. Simple facts all these, but—

With a man's blindness to events passing under his very nose, Walter had asked his guardian, Dr. Mortimer, to be "best man;" and the best man and the maid of honor were to constitute one of the pairs whose business it was to add beauty and grace to the wedding tableau around the altar and march out afterward, arm in arm, to slow music.

Well, what of it? Seemingly, there could be no objection to Dr. Mortimer; handsome, of splen-

did bearing, a brand-new widower—no disparagement all this, surely, but—

When the order of the wedding procession was disclosed to her, Margaret grew cold all over. How could either of them stand such an ordeal? What thoughts, what painful reflections would not such an arrangement cause. She placed her hopes of escape upon Dr. Mortimer himself; he would undoubtedly find an excuse for declining.

But day after day went by and there was no change of programme. The doctor even wrote a letter expressing the pleasure it gave him to accept the honor. If it was to be, she must nerve herself for the trial. Whole scenes were rehearsed. She would conceal her real feeling; she would put him at his ease; no one would suspect from her manner that they were aught but the best of friends.

She sighed: "I love frankness and I hate concealment; but like all women, I must play a part."

Those last days came back to her.

"Margaret, Margaret," the poor sick wife had said, "I have not long to live; tell me the truth. Did Edward ever ask you to marry him?"

And Margaret had answered, looking her straight in the face, "No, he never did."

Then the coldness of the doctor toward her, and the pain of their last interview. How soon forgetfulness blots out for a man events indelible to a woman's mind!

"Your answer, Margaret, would have seemed right to the majority of people, and your course was the easy one, but I can hardly believe it of you. I thought you truth itself. You have destroyed a faith that has been my anchor through many trials."

That was all. He had accused her of falsifying and she, offended, had walked proudly away. He did not remember. The details of the incident that had changed her whole life had left no trace for him. She could never explain. She could not tell him that he had interpreted a few silly words as an attempt to discourage wooing.

Was ever woman placed in such a predicament?

Walter and the doctor arrived, and the meeting took place in the presence of the whole family. She heard his voice in the hall and thought she was going to faint. Surging emotions overwhelmed her.

The door opened and in came the two men. Walter kissed her tenderly. Dr. Mortimer came

forward and took her hand in a fatherly way, saying, without the slighest embarrassment:

"My dear child, how well you are looking! We can never be grateful enough to Miss Louise for this change."

And was Margaret relieved at this simple solving of her difficulty?

By no means. She had the bad grace to feel hurt and bitter; he had treated her as if she were an irresponsible child. But she would not be outdone in coldness. And her careless indifference matched his own.

This was precisely the result that the doctor had planned. Four years of married life had made him woman-wise.

Weddings are delightful things to look forward to. The ceremony itself is "scary," but the preparation affords weeks of pleasurable excitement. Such cleaning and painting and decorating; such counting of the best old china; such rubbing up of the family silver; such bringing forth of rare ornaments; such draping and festooning; such remodeling of ancient grandeur; such resurrecting of family friends that haven't been thought of for years; such unearthings of poor relatives that must

be bidden to the feast, or woe to the survivors! On it goes, milliners, mantua-makers, jewelers, caterers, presents, friends, relatives, family servants, in an endless, door-bell-ringing procession. Then after weeks of work and bustle, after it is thought that everything has been ordered and arranged beforehand, the important day comes and it's here and there and everywhere, attending to a hundred "unexpected things" up to the very moment that it is time to go to church.

And the bride herself. What an object of unquenched curiosity is she! A halo of sentiment floats in the air above her. No one thwarts her. For once she is the principal personage in her world, and she rules in absolute despotism.

With envious eyes her "unengaged" friends note her every motion. She is accredited with sensations to which, ten to one, she is a perfect stranger—with nights of sleeplessness and foodless days that she is far from suffering. She is spared the slighest exertion; her path is made easy; for whose sake? The happy groom's? By no means. Who thinks of him? It is that she may look her prettiest in that snowy gown, that bewilderingly diaphanous veil. If never beautiful before, she must be beautiful now—at least, for

the few short moments when she shall stand before the altar, the center for hundreds of admiring eyes.

Surely there is nothing so monopolizingly interesting as a wedding!

The morning dawns which is to see the marriage vows of Louise and Walter. The little bride, not being allowed to take any part in the bustle, roams restlessly over the house, tiring herself much more than if she had been given some quiet occupation.

Her old nurse, "Aunt Martha," one of the last of the dear "bandana" negroes, followed her round as if she were a toddling infant. She was supposed to have charge of the presents, but Louise was surprised to find a fragile vase, fallen from the table, broken in a hundred pieces.

"Don't fret, honey," said the old woman. "I'se glad it's gone."

"Why, Mammy," exclaimed Louise, "what do you mean!"

"Chile, you know I wanted you to send it back when it come. Ef it hadn't bin salivated it would er brung you bad luck, sholy, cause 't was sent by er enemy."

Margaret looked mystified and Louise hastened to explain:

"Your friend, Miss Clark, is the 'enemy.' Ever since she was rude to you, Mammy has dropped her from her good books, and I have strong suspicion that the salivation was premeditated."

The French hair-dresser arrives; likewise the French hair-dresser's assistant. Then the French dressmaker and her assistant. And beside them the bride herself is of small consequence, so full of airs are they. Aunt Marthy is the only one that dares oppose an opinion to their rulings; undaunted, she seats herself in her "chile's" chamber and freely gives them the benefit of her taste, opinions and previous experiences.

The supreme toilette begins.

Each article of bridal regalia is admired while Louise stands patiently waiting. Then seated before a long mirror, they pull and tug at her waving hair until she is ready to cry from nervousness.

Then, with a woman guiding it on each side, the heavy silk is lifted and put over her shoulders: the smooth-fitting corsage is laced; the wedding veil, all filmy tulle, covers her piquant, blushing face. One natural orange blossom is pinned to the bosom of her gown, and a bunch of them is fastened in her hair. Walter has scoured the South for a few belated blooms.

Then a necklace of creamy pearls, the groom's gift, is clasped around her white throat, and at this stage of the toilette the Frenchwomen fall down and worship.

The bride is now inspected, her train spread out, a pin placed here and there, and she is ready.

Mrs Steele is summoned, and comes sailing in, robed in heavy satin and rare lace. There is more than a suspicion of moisture in her fond mother-eyes, but she critically scrutinizes her child, and tells her that "she never looked better in her life."

Then enters Margaret, all in floating white, trimmed in palest green. She carries a boquet of orchids, and looks a picture, indeed. Her eyes are brighter than ever, and there is a rosy flush on her soft cheek.

"How sweet you do look, dear!" both girls say in a breath, as they gingerly implant a kiss upon each other's lips.

Next the carriages drive up and the bridesmaids begin to arrive; and the sound of their chattering comes up from below like sparrows in a sycamore tree. But though they talk, they dare not sit for fear of mussing their smart gowns.

Mr. Steele joins them, looking solemn and nervous—much adorned in a brand-new frock coat

and the stiffest of collars. He looks at his watch for the hundredth time and counts the bridesmaids to see if any be missing.

Then in comes the little bride, and the chattering ceases, and there is a hush as if in the presence of the Queen herself.

As she gives to each the flowers they are to carry and the diamond encrusted pendant that the groom has chosen for the occasion, she looks rather tremulous and catches her breath. At which sight there is a sympathetic choking of fair throats and more than one bright eye is dim; but with an effort she rallies and says:

"Good-bye, girls; this is the last time you will ever speak to Louise Steele."

At this her father coughed dubiously, and announces that it is time to start, and he and his wife head the procession, followed by Aunt Marthy and Louise's two little brothers. And the boys show a most irreverent insensibility to the gravity of the occasion—being disposed to gambols and sly kicks and pinches; and the pockets of their black velvet knickerbockers bulge in a most unfestive-like way, until Aunt Martha, with more energy than gentleness, disgorges numerous purloined confections therefrom, and separating them by

her own erect figure she marches with dignity to the carriage, where she makes them occupy the back seat while she spreads herself on the front, so that her silver-gray poplin will emerge unwrinkled at the church.

Then the bridesmaids come out, two by two, and seat themselves carefully in their respective vehicles, and the crowd increases around the front gate, and the policemen in charge bang the carriage doors.

And a lovely June sunlight spreads its golden rays over all as the hands of the clock approach the hour of noon.

Then there is a pause, and the gaping crowd catches a glimpse of the beautiful bride as she and her best maid step from under the awning into the carriage.

Old Homer, to whom belongs the honor of driving them, seems as if he will surely burst with pride, as, looking neither to right nor left, he adroitly curbs his pair of high-stepping bays, all bedecked in immaculate harness and sheeny wedding favors.

The carriages move, and they drive to the stone church. And as they draw near, strains of sweet

music come vibrating on the summer breeze; fresh young voices singing, "The Rose Maiden."

"'Tis thy wedding morning
Shining in the skies;
Bridal bells are ringing,
Bridal songs arise."

And as Louise's ear catches the tones she shivers and turns a frightened face to Margaret, and Margaret takes her hand and squeezes it very tight, but she says nothing, for she has turned stone cold herself.

Then the bride and her maids gather in the vestibule, and the ushers, clad in the swellest of garb, walk gravely in pairs down to the door of the church to meet them.

And a murmur passes over the congregation as the groom and his best man come through the vestry door and stand at the chancel rail. And everybody asks "Which is the groom?" for both men are strangers; some say Walter and some say the doctor, and, whichever of the two is thought to be the important person, all the women say "How handsome?" and none of the men agree with them.

And one of the ushers remarks under his breath that "The groom doesn't look a bit scared;" and his

mate replies that "He has Steeled himself for the ordeal," and both being afraid to smile are funereally solemn.

Next they pair off and go up to the chancel, two by two, like animals entering the Ark.

And the maidens' voices grow sweeter and gladder as the couples march to the altar, keeping step to the music and at equal distances apart.

And they are singing "Arise, fair maid, arise!" when there is a longer space. And a thrill passes over the audience as the little bride, with a deathly white face, comes up the broad aisle leaning heavily on Margaret. And it seems to Louise as if the aisle is many miles in length, and her feet are made of lead.

But to Margaret comes a sudden lightness. The hundreds of feather fans are a sea of hands waving and beckoning to her; while standing out from the many heads, so that she can recognize no other, is one who seems to tower in dignity and nobility above them all. And she forgets Louise and her brother and the staring crowd, while the organ grows jubilant and the singers sing to her alone, "Arise, arise!" And it makes her glad with an unaccountable gladness she has not felt for years.

As they approach the rail the groom leaves his best man and takes his position upon a chalk mark on the mosaic floor. And the bride leaves her best maid and stands upon another chalk mark. And all the bridesmaids and all the groomsmen likewise find their respective chalk marks. And when the symmetrical picture is completed, the singers sound their last notes, the organ tones down to sweet, low music and the ceremony begins.

Mrs. Steele takes out her handkerchief and quietly cries from the beginning to the end; Aunt Martha gazes straight at nothing with the unwinking stillness of a bronze statue, and Mr. Steele refrains from looking at either of them, but stands ready to give the bride away.

Hundreds of roses shed their fragrance on the summer air. The lights glimmer upon the marble altar and before it stand Louise and Walter, plighting their troth.

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost," the white-robed minister pronounces them man and wife. Then he shakes hands with the groom and kisses the bride while all the women present hold their breath, and everybody gives a sigh of relief when the first bridesmaid hands the bride her boquet and the organ glides into the

Mendelssohn "Wedding March" and the procession wends its way out.

The color comes back to the little bride's cheek and she no longer looks white and scared, but very sweet and happy; she even smiles at something the groom whispers to her.

And the poor mother wipes her eyes and her husband tries to stand so that the crowd will not notice her, but nobody pays the slightest attention to either of them.

And the "best man" offers the "best maid" his arm and so they all pass out.

As Margaret walked down the long aisle leaning on that strong arm, she felt as if earth held no other stay for her—that she would lean on it forever; but the outdoor brightness flashed into her face, bringing her back to a cruel reality. This is no more her lover—he had cruelly misjudged her; her only brother, for whom she had planned to devote her life, had found a nearer love and had divided his allegiance in a most unequal fashion.

Her eyes were misty as she stepped into the carriage, the door of which closed upon her and Dr. Mortimer.

The lace of her sleeve caught on the hinge. The doctor leaned forward to disengage it. He was so near that she turned her head aside, unaccountably agitated and provoked at herself for being so.

"I am awkward," he said. "Don't scold me; the lace is torn." But in saying the words he smiled that serious smile she had once so loved to see, and it forced her to look at him.

And strange to say, something in her look emboldened him to take the gloved hand and say in a tender voice:

"Just now, Margaret, as I looked down the long aisle and saw you coming toward me, I felt that all would be explained between us; that there was a mistake somewhere. That day—you remember it—some distorted sense of duty forced you to tell a falsehood."

She drew away indignantly: "I tell a falsehood? How little you know me. Not for all the earth!"

He replied in amazement: "Did not Helena, my wife—did she? Child, tell me exactly what occurred; she was ill and had strange fancies."

"What did she say to you?"

"That she begged you to tell her whether I had ever asked you to be my wife, and you said 'no.'"

"She reported me correctly."

"Then how do you reconcile your two statements?"

"I repeat that I told her the truth."

"Do you mean to insist to my face, that I never asked you to marry me?"

"I mean that very thing."

"Margaret, how can you—are you crazy? I do not remember my exact words, no man ever does—but they meant very plainly, 'Will you be my wife?' It was an unequivocal proposal of marriage."

"I remember your exact words and they were only a prelude to a proposal; the proposal itself never came."

"You puzzle me; I believe you really think you are telling the truth."

"Thank you for the concession," (frigidly).

"Do explain yourself. I say I asked you to be my wife and you say I did not; what then did I say?"

"Isn't this rather a curious subject for discussion?"

"Curious or not—won't you answer my question?"

Margaret hesitated, then took a sudden plunge;

"You said: 'If I were to ask you to marry me, I wonder what you would say?'"

"Yes, yes; or words to that effect."

"No; those identical words."

"So be it. You said 'no,' and that proves that you considered it a proposal."

Margaret was silent.

"Am I not right?"

"I did not say 'no.'"

"You did not?" His voice grew high in his surprise. Then quieting down: "What a quibbler you are! You meant 'no,' and that amounts to the same thing."

Again Margaret was silent, but a beautiful blush arose, deepened and stayed.

Dr. Mortimer looked at her intently, then leaving the seat opposite her he sat by her side, regardless of tulle and lace.

"Be frank with me, Margaret; tell me the whole. It seems that I expressed myself in a very lame fashion. Why did you repulse me? Was not my meaning clear?"

"I was young—and silly. No man had ever asked me—that question—something seemed about to end. I can hardly explain it, but an irresistable impulse to—postpone matters—for a little while—seized me—and—and my words gave a different impression."

But these last words were said to the orange bloom in his coat, for at the beginning of her halting sentence Dr. Mortimer had put his arm around her and held her fast.

She did not have to be such an actress, after all.

* * * * * * * * *

"Margaret, my curiosity is still ungratified. You remember my stupid way of expressing myself so well, tell me exactly what you answered."

"Don't make me; we were both stupid. Let's forget all about it."

"Let's tell it and then forget it. I said 'Margaret, if I were to ask you to be my wife what would you say?' And you answered—"

"I answered—you are an awful tyrant—no, not exactly that. You said, 'Margaret *if* I were to ask you to be my wife, what would you say?' A most inconsiderate, non-committal question. And I answered, 'You wouldn't be such a goose.'"

"Just so. You can hardly blame me for what followed."

"Surely you do not think that any woman on earth would have considered that a bona fide proposal!"

"It was just as definite a proposal as I—"

But Margaret put her hand over his mouth: "If you dare say it, just consider everything between us as ended."

MEDJÉ.

YES, I frankly admit my love for Katherine Evans.

Insensibility to feminine perfection not being one of my virtues, the first sight of her was enough to enslave me for evermore.

As may be imagined, I was not her only adorer. Would that I had been! Instead, I constituted but one insignificant soul in the long procession of strivers for advancement in her regard.

My great love for Katherine made me a hypocrite. It made me pretend that I loved Medjé also, and I simply detested her.

(Medjé being the pug dog of Katherine.)

Not that she wasn't a fine animal—as far as a full thoroughbred with a pedigree a mile long is fine—with tar-black face spotted with moles, cream-colored hair and a tail curling so tight it must have hurt her. She was descended from an English im-

portation, owned by Judge Munroe, of Lexington, and in addition to distinguished ancestry was possessed of unusual intelligence.

In one respect Medjê was an exception to pets of her breed; that is to say, though fat, she was neither lazy nor asthmatic. This was altogether owing to my darling's exertions, as no human being could have received more care. She was bathed, exercised and dieted; she was taught many tricks, and put through them regularly every day for fear she might forget them. Yes, she was smart enough—too smart for me!

The proverbial instinct of dogs and children was fully exemplified in Medjé's case; she knew my inimical feeling just as well as if I had mistreated her instead of constantly fawning for favor.

In vain the donations of candy and sugar; for naught those races and games prolonged until both of us were panting from exhaustion. Even the unmurmuring acceptance of a covering of cream-colored hair, which she was in a chronic state of shedding over my best clothing, failed to soften her. She allowed me to spend both time and substance in her service, but if, in return, I attempted to tease or take any liberties with her, a snarling show of her sharp teeth was my sure reward.

You may think I was a cur to object to this, but put yourself in my place for a moment. Suppose you were desperately in love with the most magnificent woman in the world, and every time you started to tell her so and sat a bit closer for the purpose, a cold little snub-nose were to poke itself between you?

Not much encouragement to eloquence in that!

Or, if you seized a soft, white hand, wouldn't you consider it a nuisance to have it instantly withdrawn in order to pat an animal that chose that very time to lick it?

It made me sick.

I suppose there was some jealousy mixed with my antipathy for the dog. Of one thing I am sure—I would have been only too glad to believe that Miss Evans would ever love me as she loved Medjê.

In our part of the country custom doesn't exact a chaperon, and young ladies often go with gentlemen alone to places of amusement and nothing is thought of it. In the North, I know, it is different.

Katherine never lacked invitations, and a fellow had to get up early in order to obtain the pleasure of escorting her.

Bernhardt was playing and the crowds that went to hear her were large and fashionable. The seats were in such demand that in order to get my choice I had to pay a man to stand in front of the box office all night, so as to be first in line the morning of the sale. By this means I was fortunate to secure the best seats in the house. We could see all the audience and all the audience could see us.

It is needless to say that I looked forward to the night with impatience. I made up my mind that as Miss Katherine could not possibly take Medjé to the theater, there was my chance to speak, so I laid my plans.

When the time arrived I made a careful toilet and, taking a carriage, went early to the Evans' house.

The moment I entered the door Medjé came tearing down the steps as if the house was afire. She had just had her bath and her coat was wet.

I knew what that meant—a romp. At such times she would rush through the parlor into the hall and back, barking and jumping as if she were mad. Katherine encouraged the habit, as it dried her coat quickly and prevented her taking cold.

On this occasion my chagrin was great upon seeing that she carried in her mouth the American

Beauty roses that I had expended good substance in obtaining for my darling.

Katherine followed her.

"Just see; doesn't she look too beautiful flying around with that lovely red in contrast to her creamy hair?" (This without bidding me "good evening" or anything.)

I assented in a feeble way, when she said, turning her grey eyes full upon me:

"Do you know, Mr. Atkinson, I may be doing you an injustice, but sometimes I think—not from anything you do, of course, but just one of those intuitions, don't you know—that you do not like Medjé as much as you pretend?"

"Who, I?" was my reply made in haste; "how on earth can you have received such an idea as that! I consider her the most intelligent dog I ever saw, and such cunning ways!" and I took the nasty, wet thing in my arms, spoiling my gloves and soiling my shirt front in my eagerness to disprove the assertion.

Miss Evans did not look convinced. I made further effort:

"Come, Miss Mudgie; let's have a first-class romp. It's too early to take your mistress to the show; nobody will be there to see the beauty of

the town come in, and we want to create a sensation, don't we?"

With which I began racing around through the halls and up and down the long drawing-room as if the foul fiend were after me.

Presently the dog stopped running and began jumping at my coat-tails.

"You cute thing!" exclaimed her mistress. "Isn't she the smartest dog alive? The last time you were here you played 'doll' with her and I remember you put her doll in your pocket for her to find. She recollects it, and is begging you as plainly as if she could speak, to play with her."

I jumped at the hint. "Where is the doll? It certainly is smart of her! Who says animals don't think?"

The doll was produced, and though already perspiring and breathless, I prepared for further exertion.

It was one of those rubber things, such as very young babies play with, and the game consisted in hiding it after the dog's eyes were bandaged and then letting her find it, which she never failed to do.

I engaged in this elevating pastime until Katherine's mother came in and said it was time to start.

I was only too glad to stop the dog's recreation and take mine.

The theatre was near, so Miss Katherine made me discharge the carriage on the plea that "it was such a lovely night for a stroll." On the way I had time to cool off a little.

We found the house seated and the curtain about to rise. Everybody, dressed in their finest, was gazing around to see how everybody else looked. We made an impression, I assure you, as we walked the length of the building.

It was a proud moment for me.

All eyes were turned on the beautiful Miss Evans, and she was more than ever beautiful that night. She wore a rose-colored wrap made of some rich material, worked in silver, and heavily trimmed with a fur that she called silver fox. Her bonnet was a veritable diadem of pink and silver, and she bore it like the queen she was.

As I walked by her side I could see the heads turn and the necks crane to get a sight of her. She herself seemed perfectly unconscious of the admiration she was exciting, and followed the usher with as much self-possession as if there were not another soul in the house.

On reaching our seats I helped her lay aside her wrap and held her fan and flowers while she settled herself.

Then I removed my overcoat and sat down.

But just fancy how startled I was to hear something under me go—

"Squeak!"

Instinctively I jumped up and sat down again, when—

"Squeak!" even shriller than before.

The truth suddenly flashed over me. It was Medjé's rubber doll! I had hidden it in my pocket just as Mrs. Evans came into the room and—I hadn't taken it out!

What on earth was to be done! Everyone near us stared at me in bewilderment, and some people in the parquette nearly fell over backwards in the anxiety to see what was happening.

I wanted to die then and there.

Miss Katherine glared straight ahead, and had it not been for the crimson flush that overspread her face, I should not have thought she had heard the very peculiar noise.

I put my hand stealthily behind me to take the beastly thing out, but every motion produced a

sound from beneath, more or less loud—generally more.

Miss Evans turned to me fiercely and whispered under her breath:

"Don't touch it! Don't dare take it out! Don't move!"

I then reflected how absurd would be the situation of both of us if I unearthed in full view of the fashionsble assembly a rubber doll with a blue sash around its waist; so I obeyed her command and sat in a stillness that was almost petrefaction.

But no one knows without trying how impossible it is to be perfectly still. There are all sorts of motions that one makes unconsciously; a little leaning to one side; sitting back in one's chair; crossing or uncrossing the legs; pulling one's mustache. I was on the point of doing any or all of these things many times when the warning would sound from that blasted rubber doll.

Finally the curtain went up and distracted the public attention, but by this time I was so nervous that I hardly knew where I was or what I was doing.

I managed to whisper: "For God's sake, if you won't let me take the thing out, let's get up and go home!"

"Walk out at the beginning of the performance before all these people? Never!"

I could not help remembering how she had "walked in before all these people," but her tone admitted of no argument, so I sat still in torture.

The two hours that followed are painted vividly on my memory. Every muscle of my body, strained; my head, so stiff I could hardly turn it; my very toes aching; and I, in all the discomfort, hardly daring to move an eyelash.

I thought of a thousand things and would have attempted any of them had it not been for my partner's piteous looks. I could not withstand those lovely, pleading eyes.

When the curtain went down for the last time no human being ever experienced the relief that I did. I sprang to my feet with a final "Squeak," and hurrying Miss Evans into her wraps, we were almost the first to leave the theatre.

The moonlight flooded everything in beauty, but it was all wasted on me. This little stroll that was to have been such an event in my life was a thing of bitterness. My companion's mortification was so intense that she did not seem to sympathize with my feelings at all. This irritated me, for I was entirely blameless in the whole affair—it all

having come about through my eagerness to be agreeable to her.

Neither of us spoke; each waiting for the other. I thought she ought to say something kind to soothe my wounded feelings, and I grew more and more indignant as, in unbroken silence, we neared her home.

Finally, when we reached the gate, I said:

"Miss Evans, you act as if this unfortunate occurrence were my fault, when the fact is, it is all your own and that damned little beast's." And as I spoke I took the rubber fiend out of my pocket and pitched it into the middle of the street.

At first I thought she was going to cry, and I repented forthwith of my brutal words; but Miss Evans was not the crying kind. In a moment she had controlled herself; then she said with dignified frigidity:

"Mr. Atkinson, after such language, neither I nor my dog ever wish to see you again."

With that she sailed into the house with an air that would have made the traditional "offended duchess" seem meek in comparison.

Perhaps you think I didn't feel miserable? I went to my room as unhappy as possible. I had lost the love of my life through a good-for-nothing pug dog!

For the next few days I went about my business in a benumbed sort of a way. I had a vague idea that after the first sharpness of her vexation wore off, Miss Evans would repent and would summon me to her side.

I little knew her.

When not in my office I paced the streets. I regretted the ungentlemanly language of which I had been guilty, but I didn't quite see my way clear to an apology as, after Miss Katherine's command, the advance would have to come from her.

One day I was walking in a locality some distance from the Evans' house, when I was surprised to hear a little bark behind me, and turning, beheld—Medjé. Her tail wagged in instant recognition.

My heart stood still, for, as the animal never went out unaccompanied, I expected to see her mistress or some other member of the family; but no one was in sight.

Then I saw at once what had happened. She had slipped out when nobody was looking—an attempt she had made hundreds of times—and was in danger of being lost or stolen.

I probably should have taken her home and have earned thereby the everlasting gratitude and

forgiveness of her adorable mistress had not an incident happened, at the bottom of which was the Evil One himself.

Some boys were passing on the opposite side of the street with a Newfoundland dog, who, seeing Medjè, bounded across and made as if he would swallow the little creature at a gulp. With difficulty I separated them. Seizing the big dog by the collar, I held it with all my strength until the boys came up, when finding that one of them was the owner, I made him call it off.

The others idled around looking at me and the rescued pug.

A dreadful temptation assailed me. Pointing to Medjé, I said: "Boys, do any of you know whose dog this is?"

None of them did.

"She is evidently a pet," I continued in glib hypocrisy; "if I had time I would look for the owner, for fear lest some bad boys might find her and take her to the Pound to get the twenty-five cents that they pay there for stray dogs."

The boys became interested and I went on:

"Now, it would be a pity to have a nice dog like this taken to one of those dirty pounds. I tell you what I will do. I will give any one of you

twenty-five cents who will hunt around this neighborhood until he finds where the dog belongs." Saying which I took the coin out of my pocket and handed it to the nearest boy.

All the others looked glum.

"Now, see that you don't pocket my quarter and take the dog to the Pound to get another, for that would be cheating, and cheating, you know, is wicked."

Whilst I was speaking one of the boys took a piece of cord from his pocket and tied it around Medjé's neck; then assuring me that they would "play fair" and find the owner of the dog, they departed.

The expression of that animal as she was led away would have melted a heart of stone. They had almost to jerk her head off she pulled back so. Her tail hung limply down until it dragged between her legs—all its crisp curl departed. She turned once before she was out of sight and gave me a mournful look that was human. She understood perfectly what I was doing.

For several hours I gloated over the occurrence. Revenge was a sweet morsel. By night, however, there was a reaction.

I could not help picturing my darling's grief

and wondering how she was taking the loss of her pet. A heavy snow was falling, but not heeding it, I went within sight of her house and watched.

From this occupation I derived but little satisfaction. The place was brilliantly lighted, and presently several carriages drove up and acquaintances arrived. I realized with disgust that while I was wasting my sympathy upon her, Miss Evans was having an entertainment of some sort—probably one of those dainty dinners at which I had hitherto been a welcome guest.

All idea of reparation fled before this discovery.

I slept but little that night, imagining all sorts of catastrophes. Medjé's last look haunted me. Suppose those boys had not taken her to the Pound? I knew they had not found her real owner; she was too far away for that; the poor thing might be even now roaming the streets in wind and snow, hunted down by boys and dogs.

Little blue-blooded aristocrat, whose whole life had been a thing of luxury and caresses! What a devil I was to have conceived of such a fiendish act!

As soon as day appeared I had the morning paper brought me. I turned to the advertisements and gave a gasp of relief when I failed to see one announcing the loss of Medjé.

She was safe, then? After all, the boys had taken her home, distant though she had been from that heaven, when I had turned her over to their tender mercies. Had it been otherwise every paper in town would have proclaimed the fact.

My conscience being relieved I began to growl. I had done more than could have been expected of me. I could not have returned the dog myself, for Miss Evans had forbidden me the house.

I went down to breakfast and found my friend Walker already at the table.

"Where were you last night?" he asked.

"Where were *you?*" I retorted, evading him.

"There is no mystery about my whereabouts. I was at the Evans' dinner."

"Well, I am sorry to say another engagement prevented my having that pleasure."

"So Miss Katherine told us."

That was kind of her, I thought, but I only said: "I suppose my friend Medjé entertained the company as usual?"

"No, strange to say, she was not allowed to appear. I always told you Miss Evans was too sensible a girl too keep up that folly long; we were told that Miss Medjé is to be tabooed from company in future."

"For what reason?" I tried to ask coldly, though a hope throbbed into being.

"You, doubtless, could tell more about that than I," answered my friend.

"Excuse me; I know nothing about either Miss Evans or her dog."

"Indeed! Since when, pray?" but looking up, Norman Walker saw my face and changed the subject.

After this conversation, I must confess to feeling more tranquil. So Katherine had banished Medjé from the drawing-room? Was it?—could it be that the sight of her recalled too painfully the friendship she had so recklessly cast away?

I ate more that morning than I had since the Bernhart experience.

Later in the day I was sitting in my office, when Walker came in.

"Have you heard the news!" he asked

"What news?"

"Your friend Medjé is lost. I have just met Miss Katherine and she is in great distress."

"When did it happen?"

"It seems the animal was missing last night, but on account of the dinner her absence was unnoticed until this morning. Miss Katherine

thought she was asleep in her basket, and the servants thought she was with her mistress. The poor girl is distracted and looks like a funeral."

"That is the worst of these pets," I managed to say. "One gets attached to them, and when anything befalls them there is an awful wrench."

"I advised her," continued Walker, "to go to the Pound."

"Then she has probably found her by this time, and is all serene again," I replied.

I felt relieved to think that Miss Evans would find her dog, as I was now sure that the boys had taken her to the Pound as I intended they should. The next morning dispelled this illusion, for all the papers contained advertisements in large type. As I read them I felt guilty, indeed!

Repentance urged me to take steps towards restitution. I sought the locality where I had last seen Medjé in the hope of meeting some of the boys and learning her fate. Their faces, I believed, I should be able to recognize.

In this I erred. Although I met numerous boys, all of them looked so much alike that I could not be sure I had ever seen one of them before. I hesitated to inquire promiscuously lest I should attract suspicion, so I returned to my office and resolved to await events.

But days went by and that advertisement still appeared.

I grew desperate. My conscience urged me to find that dog and restore her to her mistress.

Norman Walker kept me posted: "Miss Katherine's grief was excessive—silly—considering it was all for a dog. Why, she actually took no interest in anything, but moped around, refusing to be amused!"

This was the last straw. My darling suffering and through me! I forgot all my grievances—even the rubber crying-doll—I forsook the law and devoted my time to tracing the lost Medjé.

First I went to the Pound.

I had some difficulty in locating it, no one seeming to know anything about it. When I did find it, it was a sorry sight. In five large cages, all opening into one another, were dogs of all ages; pointers, setters, Skyes, Spitz—underbread, overbred and thoroughbred, fat and thin, peaceable and belligerent—in short, dogs "of high and low degree and various description."

They were squirming around and howling so that it was a hard matter to get a good look at any particular one, but I took my time and convinced myself that there was nothing that resembled the lost Medjé.

The atmosphere of the place was sickening. In addition to the doggy odor there was another peculiar smell as of burning matches. It made me cough.

"You had better come outside," said the Pound-keeper, who looked like a jolly butcher; "it's the charcoal and sulphur gets in your lungs."

"Ah," I said, "you disinfect with it?"

"Yes," he answered, "and smother."

"Smother what?"

"Dogs," he said coolly, "after they has been here more'n ten days. What d'you s'pose we'd do with 'em?"

This was more than I could answer, but a sudden thought clutched me by the throat:

"Is there a dog being smothered now?" I faltered as I looked towards a close, high box, from the cracks of which issued whitish fumes.

"There's just that very thing."

I turned deathly sick. "What kind of a dog?" I managed to gasp.

"Jim," called the Pound-keeper, "whose turn was it?"

"Jim," with a pipe in his mouth, sauntered from a doorway near the entrance and went leisurely to a piece of paper tacked on the wall.

"Number 427," he said and slouched back again.

An awful presentiment seized me. "You must get that dog out," I said eagerly. I was sure it was Medjé. Poor, poor Katherine!

"Much good it 'ud do you now; he's 'sleep long 'fore this. Say (with sudden interest) what kinder dog was your'n?"

"A Pug; a thoroughbred English Pug."

"Jim," he called once more, "what kinder dog's smotherin'?"

Jim's head appeared. "Blackantan."

I gave a gasp. A leaden load seemed lifted from my heart. It was not Medjé; there might still be time!

The Pound-keeper seemed inclined to converse:

"There's been several here that's lost pugs. The stylishest turnout came only yesterday with a lady, and, by George, if she didn't have me bring out every last dog in the Pound for her to see!"

"And did she find the one she sought?"

"No, she didn't; I felt awful sorry for her."

"Is there no other place where they take stray dogs?"

"There's only two more Pounds, if that's what you mean."

"Two more? I thought this was the only one."

The man laughed. "This is the down-town one; then there's the up-town and the one in the middle."

"Are any of them as full as this?"

"All 'bout the same. You see, this is a good season for stray dogs. While it snows they all creeps under places to get outer the weather, and as soon as the thaw comes they comes out to get somethin' to eat and the boys finds 'em an' ropes 'em in."

This speech gave me hope. I took the addresses of the other Pounds and left.

I sought the nearest one and found it a repetition of that I had just seen, with one exception. Instead of "smotherin'" they "drowned," so the keeper told me, adding: "Much quicker than the way them fellers does down town and not half so cruel."

At the end of the row of cages was a tank filled with water. Over the tank was an arrangement like a gallows, with a rope attachment. At the end of this rope was a strong, iron hook.

The first day a dog was brought to the Pound he occupied the first cage in the row; the second

day he was moved up one cage, and so on until he reached the last. This was smaller than the others and had an iron ring at the top. Here he remained until his time was up and then, if nobody claimed him, the iron hook made a close connection with the iron ring, enacting the "last scene of all this strange, eventful history."

This Pound contained fully a hundred dogs. I carefully inspected every one of them. There was but one Pug in the whole lot, and it had a "jimber" jaw, very different from Medjé's pert little muzzle.

I was unable to calculate what cage Medjé would have occupied had she been impounded, because I did not know how long those boys might have waited before taking her there. I resolved that if, after inspecting the up-town Pound, there was no news I would go to the spot of my crime and interview every small boy in the neighborhood, regardless of consequences.

The last address given me was Roderick's livery stable, on Market Street, between Brook and Floyd. This locality, I well knew, was the Bowery of the town, and I was prepared for the second-hand stores and the flourishing array of nondescript signs that met my eye.

I found the stable without trouble, but a horse sale was in progress, and a crowd blocked the entrance. One of the bystanders showed me a glass door, and said that if I passed through that into the office I would find the dogs in the rear.

There were only about a dozen animals all told, and I quickly saw that the one I sought was not among them.

"Business appears to be dull here," I remarked to the man in charge.

He looked as if he did not understand.

"You haven't half as many dogs as either of the other Pounds."

The man laughed. "I should smile, Mister; do you think this is our stock? These was all brung here this morning."

"Where are the others?"

"About a square further up."

"Why do you divide them?"

"You see, we haven't room for all of them here, and Mr. Roderick has to have them brought to him first, so that he can enter them in his book. They only stay the day, and every night we takes 'em to the other place."

I obtained the number of the "other place," and prepared to depart.

As I passed through the office into the street my heart gave a great thump. There, standing in front of the crowded stable, was Miss Evans's brougham and in it Miss Evans herself.

Without thinking of all that had passed between us, I rushed to the curbstone just as she was about to alight, exclaiming:

"Miss Katherine, this is no place for you! Permit me—may I serve you in any way?"

All those rough men were staring at my beautiful girl, the bargains in horseflesh for a time forgotten.

She turned to me haughtily:

"Mr. Atkinson," she said, "I have visited this Pound daily for more than a week and have always been treated with marked courtesy."

As she spoke I noticed that her lovely face had changed since I last saw her. It wore a sad look that was touching.

"Medjé is not in there," I said; "I have just been in to see."

She looked surprised. Her manner softened as she turned her clear eyes full upon me:

"Have you been troubling yourself about Medjé? I thought—I was afraid you would rejoice when you heard she was gone."

"Rejoice!" I exclaimed in unfeigned horror; "why I have been so grieved over the loss of that dog that I have resolved to find her dead or alive!"

I meant it. Whatever may have been my past sins, I now spoke the truth.

At this the tears came into her eyes. Putting her hand in mine she said in a voice that thrilled me through and through:

"Forgive me, dear friend, for the injustice I have done you," and she hid her face in the corner of the carriage to conceal her emotion.

Maybe you think I didn't feel mean? But I managed not to look so, and replied with great heartiness:

"From the bottom of my heart, if there is anything to forgive," and then by way of changing a subject that was most painful I continued: "Shall we go to the real Pound and see if the dog is there?"

And to my surprise I learned that Katherine had not been informed of the night and day arrangement, but had been visiting this locality under the impression that it was the entire up-town Pound.

She made me enter the carriage with her and I could hardly contain my satisfaction at being once more by her side. She was quiet, but I could see

that the renewal of our friendship did not displease her.

I wished that the Pound had been miles away instead of but one block, and the horses went so unnecessarily fast that it was no time at all before we stopped in front of the barber-shop, that was our destination.

"Let me get out first and investigate," I said.

But no. Miss Evans assured me that with such an escort she was not afraid to go anywhere.

I could hardly believe my ears, but I controlled my feelings, and asked a negro to pilot us.

Then my darling was ushered into a place that had never seen her like before, for we had to pass through a shop where several men were being shaved, and I do not know who showed the greatest embarrassment, Miss Evans or they.

Our guide led us through a back door and we found ourselves in a brick alley-way between two houses. The snow was melting rapidly, and the narrow passage was covered with mud and slush. Dirty water dripped in steady streams from the gutters on the roofs overhead.

"I hate to bring you to such a place," I said as apologetic as if I were responsible for its shortcomings.

"Pray do not worry about me," she replied; and then she gathered up her dainty skirts and made the prettiest sort of a picture as she picked her way, stepping upon the tips of her toes.

We emerged from the twilight of the passage and were once more in the open air. Then we passed through some back premises that were even worse than the alley, being dirty and malodorous. Already the yelping of many dogs informed us that our journey was nearly ended.

Entering a wooden gate we saw a yard filled with cages, so we immediately went about our business.

Carefully examining each animal we passed along the front and then continued our search on the opposite side. There were dogs by the dozen, all of them howling and making a terrible din.

All at once Katherine stopped and clutched me by the arm.

"Listen," she said. "Surely that was Medjê's bark?"

I had to admit that I could not distinguish it.

"I am certain of it," she insisted.

"Call her," I suggested.

She obeyed: "Medjé! Medjé!"

There was a second's cessation of sound and

then a little wail headed the renewal of barks and howls.

"Was that her voice?" I asked incredulously, and guided by the sound I ran to a corner of the lot, Katherine following me.

There we saw a fearful sight.

A tank with the gallows attachment, such as I had seen at the other Pound, occupied an angle of the wall. Suspended from the iron hook was a cage full of dogs, and, as we neared it, the rope slipped over the pulleys with a creaking sound and dipped that cage into the water.

It was impossible to distinguish its occupants—that is, I could not—but as it went under Katherine turned deathly white, and, pointing to it, her lips tried to frame some words, but instead she quietly fell up against me in a dead faint.

In a second I grabbed the rope and shouted excitedly to the excutioners:

"Draw up that cage and wait!"

They worked at the pulleys and soon had a lot of dripping and badly-scared dogs sputtering and gasping for air.

But I had no time to look at them; my one thought was for my unconscious Katherine. I carried her under a shed and laid her upon some

clean straw. I dashed water in her face and called her by every tender name that frantic love could suggest.

Soon she opened her eyes.

I hastened to reassure her: "They are all safe; not one shall be drowned, I promise you." I was prepared to buy out the whole Pound if necessary, never dreaming it was possible that my dearest had seen Medjê in the cage.

Katherine sat up and said:

"Bring her to me."

"Whom shall I bring?" I asked.

"Medjé, of course," and she looked in the direction of the wet cage.

I went to it and by putting my face close to the bars I could make out that one of the dogs was really a Pug, though it bore not the slightest resemblance to the pampered pet, I so well remembered.

Merely to ease my darling's mind, I turned to one of the men and said: "There's a Pug dog in this cage; won't you let him out just to satisfy the lady?"

He did so.

With one bound a dripping, haggard, lean, hollow-eyed, dirty little dog gave a howl of delight and rushed to Katherine.

The body was transformed, but there was no mistaking that recognition—it was Medjé.

All the men crowded around us with offers of assistance. One of them brought a glass of brandy, which I made my pallid darling taste, and it revived her wonderfully. As she could not begin to swallow the whole of it I poured the rest down the throat of a very moist dog.

When my lady was able to walk it was a joyful procession that wended its way back through the mud and slush to the street. Miss Evans, not disdaining assistance, permitted me to lift her into the carriage.

I was for putting Medjé up with the driver, but she said—Katherine, not Medjé—" No, both of you get in here."

We appreciated the honor and accepted the invitation.

The drive home was the sweetest episode of my life. As if to atone for all my past mortification Medjé was an active factor in the final event that crowned the day's happenings.

All wet as she was, she insisted upon occupying Katherine's lap. The intelligent animal almost talked, she was so happy. She looked up to her mistress' face, uttering funny little sounds that were

plainly words of rapture, ending in a most evident attempt to kiss Miss Evans right on her mouth.

"If *I* were to do that," I was bold enough to say, "you would be perfectly furious."

The peerless Katherine looked at me with eyes that were like two incandescent lights:

"How do you know so much?" she asked; "you never tried."

THE BURSTING OF THE CHRYSALIS.

SHE was looking at herself in a way that she had never looked before, and all because a stranger had let fall a few words in passing. He had merely said:

"What a lovely girl!" And she had sought a mirror and was wondering if he spoke the truth, for she was barely sixteen.

The mirror was non-committal, but the fact was she foretold, though she did not yet possess the bloom that comes to a girl a few months later, that indescribable softness belonging exclusively to youthful maidenhood; often seen in even the plainest of girls, but as fleeting as the wind.

There is nothing that this bloom resembles so much as the downy surface of the filling grape—a finger touch disturbs and destroys it, and then nothing can ever restore it, though the fruit within may remain sweet and luscious.

This same Helena had many ideas that were never suspected by the older people with whom she lived; unexplained mysteries for which she sought the solution; surmises and conjectures belonging exclusively to unsullied childhood.

Though she looked forward to it, marriage meant nothing to her. She could see nothing interesting in married people, and none of them were ever young, only old and settled. That is, all except brides with lovely new clothes; there was something romantic about brides.

But as for lovers, that was another thing.

She read of love, she dreamed of love, she had an imaginary lover that was all romance and heroic devotion. She cut love poems from the newspapers and pasted them in her scrap-book. There was one of these last that she thought exquisite, although it was perfectly shocking, and she wouldn't have admitted that she liked it for anything on earth.

It was entitled; "A Bridegroom to His Sleeping Bride," and it made little blushes and thrills and chills go over her even to think of it. She tried to forget it, but some of the words would recur to her, especially in the early morning, as she lay awake, fresh and fragrant after the night's slumber.

"Sleep, dearest, sleep; thy tangled hair
Flows softly over thy bosom bare.
Nought but thy lover's eye is near—"

The idea was too lovely! this vision of the watchful lover, and she "tangled her hair" and pretended she was the sleeping bride.

But she caught sight of herself in the mirror, and this time it told her something, and it made her shudder in dismay as she thought how wicked she was to harbor such thoughts.

It was while she was in this unreal, expectant state that she met *him*. She only sixteen; he, forty-two. A foreigner—a Prussian—how perfectly delightful! Taller than her handsome, eldest brother; with blue eyes that were sometimes a glittering grey and a well-shaped head covered with close-curling hair. She could hardly remove her gaze from his straight nose, that looked as if a square cut had been chiseled from the end of it, and she liked the way it moved with every word he uttered.

She had never noticed anybody's nose do that before.

The man had been a soldier, but now that France was beaten he was forced to select some means of livelihood. Gentleman, soldier, poet,

singer—Captain von Cassel, after trying many arts, concluded to give lessons in vocal music, and came with letters to Helena's aristocratic and influential family.

He met Helena's eldest sister, Margaret, and this young lady invited him to her father's house, where his music was made a prominent feature of the evening.

The half-grown girl sat unnoticed and watched him from her corner as he talked to the guests and entertained them with songs, to which he had written both words and music.

He was asked to test the girls' voices.

Margaret did not impress him, but a something opened Helena's throat and such glorious tones had never before echoed through those rooms. Untutored they were, to be sure, but clear and brilliant as a young bird's. An ecstasy of melody and sweetness that surprised the singer as much as it did her listeners.

That night Helena dreamed of the soldier-poet—his tones, his looks, his gestures. When she descended in the morning her weary look attracted attention.

"Late hours do not agree with you," said her father, pinching her pale cheek; "or was it too much singing?"

"Not the last, I am sure, she hastened to reply. "I enjoyed the music immensely. Are you going to let us take lessons from Captain von Cassel?"

Helena's parent had been pleased at the triumph of the night before and the stranger's comments on his daughter's voice. He had decided to place her under his tuition, but he thought he would tease her a little; so he said:

"I fear I cannot afford it; money is pretty scarce, now-a-days."

"Please, papa, dear, does he ask so very much? I want, above all things, to learn to sing well. Let me give up something else, won't you?"

"What, for instance? Would you do without new frocks, and pay the expense out of your allowance?"

"I would rather give up every cent of it than not learn to sing. What are his terms?"

"Well, I haven't inquired the exact figures, but I hardly think there is enough money to pay for the cultivation of that voice of yours."

"You darling papa! You are trying to fool me—you are going to let us have lessons."

"I must confess, I am not anxious," said Margaret. "He scared me to death. I don't believe I could ever sing for that man."

"You will have to try," responded her parent, "for I have entered both of you, and you are to begin work immediately."

And with this beginning came a new life for Helena. The progress in 'voice culture' was rapid and marked.

But apt as was the pupil in that branch, far more surprising developments took place in other directions. The conversant man of the world was fascinated by the school girl; her freshness, her innocence, her inexperience—all appealed to him irresistibly. Before he realized it she was monopolizing his thoughts. Her physical beauty bewitched his senses, and his poet's nature reveled in her guileless impressibility. Without thought of consequences he allowed himself to drift.

The singing lessons were delightful episodes in which there was no element of labor, and time flew by.

One day he happened to be coming out of his lodgings as she passed on her way to college, and he joined her.

She was fluttered by the rencontre, though she tried to seem cool and self-possessed. Her great inward delight was increased by the final triumph of seeing the girls peeping through the shutters at

her handsome escort, as he told her good morning at the door.

The next day her toilette was expectantly careful. The crisp green and white muslin, the straw hat with its pink roses framing her blushing face, made as sweet a picture as one could wish to see. Few could be insensible to her beauty as she passed up the street that warm June morning, and many turned to look at her.

No item of her appearance was lost on the Captain, as he joined her and asked in his gravely courteous manner if he might repeat the pleasure of the previous day.

These precedents formed a habit. Ah, those morning walks! The summer breezes, the dewy freshness of the flower-like girl, the heightening color in the soft cheek—whither was it tending?

Were Helena's parents aware how much of her time was now spent in the newcomer's society? They made him welcome at their house; he was agreeable; his manners were refined and polished. As the two girls always took their lessons together, propriety was satisfied.

Her mother surely never heard one of the many compliments he was in the habit of paying her, nor could she have ever seen the look that

unconsciously came into her young daughter's eyes as they rested on the man.

But of this look the man was only too cognizant; and had Helena known a little more of the world's ways, she would have realized how often her feelings were tested and experimented upon by her friend.

All this time character was being formed. Some emotions were being developed in an alarmingly rapid manner, while others—relics of dying childhood—were fading away.

At first too diffident and shy to think she could ever claim his serious affection, by degrees hope was born in this maiden's heart. She could see that he singled her out for marked attentions; she could no longer be blind to the pleasure he took in her society.

Her love song had found words. No more dreaming of love—the real lover, surpassing her dearest hopes, had come. Nature had intended her for him; she was his from the first. Would he claim his own?

But here, something made her despair. She was ready for a declaration that never came. At times he seemed on the point of telling her his love, but he never did. Often in the midst of

moods that were passionately tender he would suddenly check himself and become gloomy and silent.

This puzzled Helena, but she never once doubted his uprightness. Though his character and his actions were enigmatical, there was something about the man that inspired trust.

Helena's saving grace was pride. It was pride that controlled her emotions in spite of their intensity; that made her hide her heartaches and stifle her yearnings. She was naturally of a lofty mind and knowing no evil, thought none. Too shy to betray herself, too fond to criticise, she reveled in the false paradise of loving in secret. As we have elsewhere intimated she regarded marriage as a prosy, vague sort of an affair; the *finis* and an uninteresting one at that. All she wished was her dream of love, and this one seemed pure and sweet.

The adept lover, seeing through and through her soul, yielded to the fascination of her beautiful presence, without committing himself by words.

And the bud, blossoming into fairest flower under his quickening personality, was but an episode in his eventful life.

But be this thing cleary understood:

Whatever he let her infer from looks or actions his behaviour could not have been more respectful

to his own sister, and never once did he overstep the limits of strict propriety.

But his moods were changeable. After some particular evidence of devotion, a reaction would come; as if he repented any excess of tenderness and wished to efface it from her mind. He would then become instantly reserved and distant. At times a hard, black look overshadowed his face and he appeared reckless and discouraged. And this, Helena attributed to his poor success at earning a livelihood and strove to cheer and brighten him in every artless way

But time was flying and such affairs never stand still. To be sure, the girl was contented with existing conditions, but the man was becoming more and more dissatisfied. To him self-control grew harder every day.

Then came a climax.

Margaret was one day indisposed and Helena took her lesson alone. She was learning an impassioned love song. Into the words she threw all the fervor of her heart. Her young voice rang out and the meaning of its intense tones could not be disguised.

"Thee only, thee only have I loved—
Loved with a true devotion—"

As he gazed at her, Captian von Cassel lost his head. Had it not been that his part of the duet gave vent to his emotions, he must have burst all restraint, and taking her in his arms, have poured out his soul to her.

But Helena looked at him with those beautiful, trusting eyes, and he conquered himself, and left her abruptly.

The instant recognition of this delicacy and self-abnegation was to Helena the sweetest sensation she had ever known.

"He is too scrupulous to bind me to an indefinite engagement," she thought; "so he is waiting until his prospects brighten."

From that day there was no need of words.

But with a certain morning came a change; and the cause of the change was a letter that he received written in the German language, and with the letter a photograph.

Long he gazed at the face—that of a young girl, Helena's age. Not beautiful like her, but wearing the same unmistakeable look of sweet girlhood that only innocence can show. A blank page awaiting its inscription.

A sudden thought struck him. Was this girl exposed to temptations like other girls?

Why not?

Perhaps at that moment some fascinating man of the world, old enough to be her father, was misleading her!

He groaned:

"I have gloated in my power over women; will retribution come this way? But no—I have done no harm; that is, no incurable harm. I will not be a villian. I will stop while there is time."

He thought deeply. He clinched his hands and made a resolve. He would begin to-day—now—to undue his work, as gently as possible, but effectually.

As a first step towards the new order of things he remained at home and did not join Helena on her way to her classes. But when the hour approached, he could not forbear looking from his window to see her as she passed. That could do no harm.

Her graceful figure came in sight; the dainty draperies fluttering, as he knew the heart beneath them fluttered. He sighed and almost weakened, but turned resolutely away.

Helena passed a day of restless anxiety. For the first twenty-four hours since the beginning of their acquaintanceship she had failed to see him.

Something must have occurred and she waited, sick at heart, to hear, she knew not what.

The next morning he was still absent and in trepidation she longed for the hour of the singing lesson. If he did not come then she must find out what dreadful thing had happened. She resolved not to be deterred by any silly scruples, but to forget herelf in her concern for her lover. Was he not her life?

The suspense was terrible, and under it she drooped. Forebodings agitated her.

The hour of the lesson approached. Would he come?

She had hardly time to despair when he was announced. Her night changed to day and shedding radiance under the revival of hope, she went into his presence.

But what was it? An instant something quenched her happiness. There was nothing tangible to which one could give expression, nevertheless, when the lessons were ended and he had gone, Helena fled to her room and wept the bitterest tears of her life.

A change was there. Carefully she reviewed her conduct during their last walk. Had she offended him?

She went over every incident of the lesson. She could not define it, but there it was; a something that had come between them.

She was too proud to seek an explanation. She would wait—and trust.

The next morning his tall form awaited her on the crossing. She beamed on him. He was haggard and gray-looking.

"Have you been ill?" she asked in tender concern.

"Yes; I must have been imprudent. A cough with which I was once afflicted has returned most inopportunely."

"You must take it in time; don't let it get any headway."

"I know it of old—" here he coughed, actor as he was. "I greatly fear I shall not be able to stand the severity of your winter; I am thinking of going South."

At this Helena turned a face of grief towards him and it almost unmanned him. He dropped his eyes unable to meet her gaze.

Then the first doubt of him entered the young girl's mind.

This sudden cough—why had he not mentioned it before? He had often referred to his health as

perfect. He was equivocating, and it nearly broke her heart.

She said nothing and her manner was frigid as she parted from him

That night at supper her father said: "I hear you are going to lose your teacher? Captain von Cassel was in to see me to-day and he tells me he has to leave. It is provoking just as both of you were advancing so nicely."

Helena forced herself to reply: "He says he cannot stand our winter."

"It is a curious thing," pursued her parent, "how these healthy looking people may be consumptive and no one ever suspect it. Von Cassel says that he has had two or three hemorrhages in his life, and has to be most careful."

"When does he go?" asked Margaret.

"About the last of the month. It's a pity, for I had managed to give him a good start, and I do not see how the poor fellow will get along if his health breaks down. He hasn't a penny on earth."

Helena suddenly felt old; she never remembered being young or light-hearted. She tried to keep up appearances, and for two days acted an excruciatingly difficult role.

Then the mist cleared and she became the same as ever. Quick as a flash, out of her brooding had come the solution to the enigma. Why hadn't she thought of it before! He was leaving her because he could not stand the restraint any longer. Delicacy and loyalty to her father who had so materially assisted him, forbade his speech. The cough was a subterfuge. She would accept it and would trust him with her whole heart and then when he was in a position to claim her he would find her unchanged.

So, in spite of grief at the prospect of parting, she was happy once more. When von Cassel joined her the next morning he was piqued at her radiant appearance and looked black indeed in response to her cheerful greeting.

He had an enigma to solve in his turn.

Her thought opened like a page to his adroitness, and when in her childishness she unconsciously betrayed it, he became gloomier and blacker than ever.

"Have I not read her aright?" he reflected in anguish. "Must I strike a still harder blow?"

Then he saw that he was in danger of weakening. He resolved on decisive action. "I will kill all thought of me and leave forthwith!"

That night he called on her, and with his card sent up a little note:

"Am obliged to leave to-morrow. May I see you alone for a few minutes?"

This message found Helena in a state of eager excitement. Her brother was going to take her to her first opera; she was to wear her first '*grande toilette*', and hear the greatest *prima donna* in the world.

This anticipation diverted her mind, and when she entered the library she was a vision of youth and loveliness; a timid consciousness of the fact lent a new archness to her manner and made her doubly charming.

To all but a lover she would have appeared carelessly happy, but his quickened sense recognized an undercurrent of feeling, and it caused him to catch his breath like a man in danger.

He gave a fictitious reason for an abrupt departure.

"Shall I see you again before you go, or is this '*au revoir?*'" she asked.

"This is my last visit," he answered, "and it is not '*au revoir*' but 'good-bye.'"

"That sounds as if you never intended to return," she rejoined lightly.

"I hope, never."

At this the lovely color fled. "I do not understand."

Her mouth quivered a little.

He quickly said, "Don't look that way! I am not worth it. You have been good to me and I—I can say nothing of my feeling."

Her face brightened: "I understand you now," she said.

He struggled fiercely. "No, you do not understand. I have no right to be here—to look at you as I am looking now."

Some infatuation possessed her. She raised her eyes to his and said earnestly: "You have the right for I—"

"No, no!" he interrupted. "I have no right! I am going from you forever, and you must promise not to think of me when I am gone, for you will never see me again!"

Helena caught her breath. "What can you mean?"

"You make it so hard for me," he groaned. "You stand there looking so pure and beautiful—how dare I tell you the truth?"

Helena drew herself up. "Do you wish me to understand that nothing is possible between us? (Sarcastically) "Is that the terrible truth?"

"That is it," he said, and at the words, Evil, who still had hopes of conquering, left the man.

She persisted—she must know all. "You have made me believe you love me, and you do not?" Her control was marvelous.

"I do not!" His voice was hoarse and unnatural. "Child, you are young and susceptible, and men are vain and wicked; how wicked, you do not guess. Can you ever forgive me for trifling with you?"

"Trifling? Is that what you call it?" Her disdain was quite apparent.

"He answered eagerly: "That is right. Despise me, for it is best. I have allowed myself to become interested in you; how interested I am not free to say."

"You are not free?"

"No—O Helena—I must out with it! I can no longer deceive you; I should have told you at first."

"What should you have told me?"

"That I am a married man. See, this is my daughter's picture. She is just your age, and her mother—well though I have not seen her for years, she is my wife until death parts us."

Helena mechanically took the picture. The girl's calm, innocent eyes looked into her own. For a moment she was ghastly and tottering, then a revulsion of feeling brought the color back into her face. She looked like a haughty queen.

"And you fear this disclosure will affect me seriously?"

"I—I—surely not—I trust not."

"You do think so. But let me tell you," she said proudly, "that I shall not pine for you one moment. I will not let myself, for I will hate you!"

"Some day you will understand men; you will know what I have suffered, and then you will not hate me."

"Perhaps; is it worth while talking of the future? I think you have come to say, 'Good-bye!'"

He hardly knew her, her manner was so self-possessed.

"Good-bye; won't you give me your hand?"

"I would rather not." She looked towards the door.

At this he bowed and passed out.

It was time, for in great relief she sank panting on a sofa.

In the hall she heard her brother's step.

"Helena," he called, "are you ready?"

She controlled herself. "Come, see how fine I look," she said gaily.

"Upon my word, you are fine! I hardly recognize you. It's wonderful how clothes can change one—you look like a full-fledged woman of the world."