

"They are delightful people. Their house is always a treat to go to, and they generally have some pretty women."

"What about that girl, that heiress you used to write to me about?"

"Miss Churchill?" The young fellow's face flushed a little. "Oh, she's there still; you'll see her to-night; but, my dear fellow, she would not look at me; she says I'm a trifle. She's horribly in earnest herself. She's always off to the East end taking conker classes, or night schools, or something of that sort. She takes me with her sometimes to all sorts of unsavory places, and she is disgusted with me because I cannot pretend to like them. Modern women are gone crazy, I think, about these sort of things."

Mr. Waldron laughed.

"I should think she was a fine girl. I'll see you married to her yet, Arthur."

"I don't think so." Arthur shrugged his shoulders. "She has a fine scorn of me. Now you are just the sort of fellow she would fancy; a model country gentleman, always sensible and in earnest. She'll be delighted with your building and draining, and so on. Oh, you'd be an excellent couple. That lovely old house of yours ought to have a stately lady like Constance Churchill to reign over it. Yes, I prophesy that is how things will fall out. It is not for nothing we are going to this party to-night."

Mrs. Mannsell had a delicious old house at Chelsea—a house all brown-stained floors and latticed windows. There was a garden-room with a flight of steps leading out on to a pretty sloping grass-plot, in the midst of which there was a lilac bush, which, this sweet May evening, was absolutely bending with fragrant bloom. The drawing-room was upstairs, a long room running all the length of the house, with pannelled walls, with low, cushioned window-seats, with tall, moon-faced daisies and palms everywhere.

Mrs. Mannsell's parties were very popular. She knew the right sort of people to get together, and she never had too many. Arthur Faithful said she might always be counted on to have pretty woman, and that young gentleman considered himself no mean judge of beauty.

He and his friend were a little late this evening. They had got talking over old college days and had forgotten the time, and when they reached Chelsea the rooms were already full.

A tall girl in grey silk, with peeps of blush color about it, was playing the violin. A handsome girl, though a little cold-looking, with large, clear eyes, and a stately head crowned with fair plaits.

"There," whispered Arthur, "is Constance Churchill."

Mr. Waldron looked at her critically. In spite of his friend's talk he was convinced he was in love with this girl, and he was obliged to confess he showed his taste.

And then Mrs. Mannsell came hurrying to meet them. Arthur Faithful was a great pet of hers. He advised her about her draperies and her gowns; told her where to get the little artistic trifles for her house her soul delighted in; and in return she laid herself out to get him well established in life, inviting pretty girls and rich girls to meet him, talking to him like a mother as to what he ought to do.

As the three stood together waiting for the music to cease, Mr. Waldron looked about him, admiring the harmonious coloring of the pretty room, the picturesque dresses of the woman. This kind of thing was rather new to him. He did not come up to town much, and society about the Court was a very different thing to Mrs. Mannsell's artistic set. And then, all at once his attention was caught by a girl sitting with her back to a stand of palms; a girl in a white frock, with yellow roses at her waist and in the crown of black braids round her pretty head.

And he heard Arthur say:

"Who is she? Where does she come from? Dear Mrs. Mannsell, you have surpassed yourself this time."

"She is a Miss Deering—Miss Olive Deering. Yes, she is very pretty, and I am very fond of her; but Arthur, you must not admire her too much."

"Why not?"

"Because she is not for such as you; her face is her fortune literally. There, Constance has finished playing; go and talk to her."

"I would much rather stay with you. Miss Churchill is so severe on poor humanity; she looks upon me as a piece of useless frivolity."

"It is very good of her to take any interest in you at all."

"Of course."

Arthur Faithful shrugged his shoulders, but he went, and Lawrence, watching him across the room, certainly thought Miss Churchill received him coldly.

But he had not much time to look at them, for Mrs. Mannsell was bringing him over to the girl in the white frock.

Somehow Olive had got her frock and come to the party, and she was enjoying herself thoroughly. She had had a glimpse of herself in one of the long mirrors, and had thought with a little blush that she looked—well, nice. And everyone had been kind to her, and this big young man was very pleasant. And so the girl's lovely blue eyes darkened, and the color grew brighter in her fair cheeks.

Arthur Faithful looking at her across the room pronounced her "divine," and told Miss Churchill so.

"She is lovely, and as nice as she is pretty," said that lady calmly. "You had better come and be introduced to her," and she brought him across the room.

Arthur had not quite meant that, but he found it agreeable enough to sink into a low chair beside Miss Deering, and who was to tell, as Constance Churchill moved quietly away, a stately figure in sweeping silvery robes, that her heart was aching sorely under that fair, smiling, indifferent face.

Certainly not Arthur Faithful, whose eyes followed her for a moment.

(To be Continued.)

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