

a state of excitement he must be in ! Imagine coming back to England in weather like this ! ”

The weather did not especially appeal to the men's imaginations. Laura showed Violet the dress, and Violet very naturally said there was very little of it. Laura said that was rather—anyway, what there was was so lovely.

Laura was absolutely ignorant as to where Dick was to arrive that night. It might be in London ; in which case Violet would not be there to meet him. That would, to a certain extent, spoil the home-coming. If he came down to the Missendens it would be really dramatic if Violet met him dressed as Salome. It would probably spoil the meeting to a greater extent.

As the hour of the ball drew near, Laura grew more and more excited. She hoped Violet would appear as Salome. She hoped her vanity would overcome her scruples.

The house-party was assembled in the hall, with the exception of Violet. They wondered why she was so long in dressing. Laura sat with her attention fixed on the staircase. A motor drove up to the door. Laura was probably the only one who heard it. She held her breath ; she knew it couldn't be a guest. Down the staircase came Violet.

Everyone turned to watch her. She had never looked more lovely.

Lady Missenden going to meet her said, “ You beautiful creature ; but it would never do if your husband saw you like that ! ”

“ My husband ? ” said Violet.

“ No, no ; I meant if he should come ! ”

The beautiful nun smiled, relieved. It was as a nun Violet was dressed. Nothing could have been