

AN APPOINTMENT.

A MAN in bachelor chambers, an open letter in his hand, an amused expression on his face, with a suspicion of gratified vanity and a vague hint of indulgent contempt.

This was the letter :

"Probably you have forgotten me. I was but one among the many you danced with at the S. ball a week ago. I know that you did not hear my name. To me that dance was an event—an era. Of course I am transgressing the ordinary rules of society in writing this, but I have a feeling that you ought to know it. I would like to speak to you once more. Then perhaps you would not think too hard of what I have done. I shall be at Regent's circus, at the northeast corner, the day after to-morrow, at 4 o'clock. I shall wear a pink rose at my throat."

Certainly this was very advanced. There was some excuse for the smile of gratified vanity and half contemptuous indulgence on the young man's handsome face. He tried for a few moments to recall any one among the half dozen strangers to whom he had been introduced at the S. ball likely to commit herself, but failed.

Then he hastily wrote a reply, for it was growing late, and he had more than one engagement that evening :

"I am deeply interested. Certainly I will be at the place you mention and at the hour. It seems that you know me and require no mark of recognition, but I shall wear a buttonhole of mignonette."

As he folded the letter, it occurred to him that he might be the subject of a hoax but the half timid words had the ring of truth, and he dismissed the idea. He addressed the envelope, as directed to, a circulating library where letters were received.

A girl, sitting in a morning room, just 44 hours later—a very pretty girl, young and innocent looking, too, but one of whom might be predicted divergence from beaten tracks.

The result of the first serious divergence lay before her in the shape of the young man's letter addressed to Miss M., and she was regarding it with somewhat rueful countenance.

That she had made preparations to carry out her part of the programme was apparent from the perfect bloom of *La France* languishing in a specimen glass beside the letter. The room was in a house in M—square, and there was still an hour and a half before her presence would be required at the particular corner in Regent street. She had no cause to fear any difficulty in keeping her appointment.

The door opened, and a second girl entered—tall, fair, aristocratic. The first

was fair also, but her hair was irrepressible, and fell over her forehead and round her ears in uncrimped waves and curls ; that of the newcomer was drawn tightly back and twisted into a smooth knot behind, on a well shaped head.

"Oh, Edytha, you darling, how sweet of you to come this afternoon !"

The gray gowned girl jumped up and threw her arms around her friend's neck. She was impulsive in all her actions.

"I haven't long to stay, Kittie—just half an hour. I must go down Oxford street to do some shopping. Can't you come ?"

Kittie hesitated. Her letter was in her pocket.

"No, Di," she said slowly, "not this afternoon. I—I have a toothache. I don't think I shall go out."

"Poor little girl ! Can I do anything for you ? I wish you would come, though, Kittie. I have to get a bonnet."

"A bonnet ? Where are you going—Mme. Teresa's ?"

"No ; Favart's, I think. I saw one in her window that I rather liked."

A sudden inspiration came into Kittie's pretty head. She leaned forward. The sparkle came back to her gray eyes, the curves to the corners of her mouth.

"Oh, Dytha, why don't you go to Mme. Mathilde's ? I like her style so much better. At any rate, you might try. And, now I think of it, I will come, but I must call at Mrs. Bond's first. Papa told me not to forget. I will meet you outside Mme. Mathilde's at 4 o'clock."

"Oh, will you ? That's a darling Kittie ! Then I needn't have Jane, and we'll go to Fuller's for tea."

When Edith arose five minutes afterward to bid a temporary farewell to Kittie, the latter took the *La France* from her glass.

"What an exquisite rose, Kittie ! Who gave it to you ?"

"No one. I am just going to put it in your dress. You want just a touch of color."

Four o'clock and Edytha Vansittart stood outside Mme. Mathilde's looking for Kittie, the pink rose still in her pale blue gown, nestling among the black lace at her throat, and no Kittie came.

Some one else came, half stopping, stared a moment, passed and came back—a strikingly handsome man, well dressed, with a modest buttonhole of mignonette. He hesitated and paused, because it was difficult to reconcile the letter from Miss M. with the aristocratic, haughty figure in the doorway of Mme. Mathilde's bonnet shop. He came back, because the incidents were too complete for mistake. They were there, time, place, flower and the lady herself, evidently looking for some one. He lifted his hat. It was strange she had not seen him, or, at any rate, his buttonhole.

"I am glad," he said softly, "that I have not disappointed me. I have been in a state of expectancy since I received your note."

The young lady in the doorway brought back her eyes from their voyage in search of renegade Kittie and stared at him indignantly.

"I think you make a mistake," said coldly.

He drew a step backward. There was no mistaking the tone. He still kept his hat in his hand.

"I beg your pardon. How can that be ? Did you not mention the hour, place ?—"

"I say again you make a mistake. If you persist, I must call for assistance. I am waiting for a friend."

What did it all mean ? Involuntarily his hand clasped the lapel of his coat below the mignonette.

Seeing that he still stared and did not move, she retreated indignantly into the shop, half crying :

"Oh, that false Kittie !"

Kittie meanwhile was still sitting alone in the morning room in M—square. She was wondering how her plan had progressed, whether the young man who had been there, and if he had taken any notice of Edytha.

She would certainly hear the whole story. Edytha was so correct and steady she would be dreadfully indignant. Would she, Kittie, ever see the hero of her first dream again ? Now that she had lost her chance she was half sorry and half inclined to wish she had taken it.

It was at a morning concert that Edytha Vansittart again met Dick Willoughby.

He had, in fact, gone there with a friend who happened to know Miss Vansittart slightly in the express hope of seeing her and gaining an introduction, and he succeeded. Kittie was sitting in the stall behind, but Dick did not notice her. He was entirely occupied by his desire to repair to Miss Vansittart's unfortunate mistake.

He saw that she was completely innocent of any design in wearing the pink rose. He did not care to explain the hidden meaning of the strange incidence, partly on account of weakness of his own ultra credulity, partly from a sense of honor toward his known correspondent. He still thought it possible that the letter might be genuine.

If, on the other hand, he had been tricked, it was safer to pose before Miss Vansittart as a villain, than a victim. Therefore he strove to make his position by humble avowal of folly and abject promises of amendment. She had taught him a lesson, he said.