

amusements, but vexed with no premature desire of being considered anything else than a boy. Many young fellows whom he had known at school, were already posing as "men about town", but he had no inclination to follow their example. But he felt that a little more was required of him now than formerly.

"It's only for a short time", he said to himself "in two or three months I shall be free from this bondage." He did not murmur, therefore, at his mother's request.

Chatty, good-natured Mrs. Miller, an old friend of his mother, was delighted to see him, as was also her daughter Mary, a blue-eyed and golden-haired young lady of eighteen, whom Frank had known from childhood. She had just finished her studies at the Convent of the Sacred Heart and was highly accomplished.

As she gave him her hand in greeting, Frank could not help thinking that she was a remarkably good-looking girl. But his was not a sentimental nature, and it is doubtful whether the thought occurred to him a second time. It occurred to Mrs. Miller, however, that they both had more than ordinary personal attractions. She was one of those kindly busybodies who attempt to control the destinies of all the young people of their acquaintance, so far, at least, as matrimony is concerned. Priding herself on the successes she has achieved, she was not averse to doing a stroke of business on her daughter's behalf. She could not refrain from saying to Mrs. Byrne as they went together into the conservatory, leaving the young people alone, "Are they not a lovely couple?" Frank's mother at once divined her meaning, and the thought suggested was not disagreeable. Like all good Catholic mothers, she had wished to give her son to God, but three years ago Frank had assured her in the most positive manner—youths of seventeen are peculiarly positive about most matters—that he could never gratify her desire. Of course he would marry in time, and therefore she had no objection to lending her countenance to Mrs. Miller's scheme. Thus a web was being woven for the unconscious and innocent pair. As Frank had quite forgotten for the moment that nobody but himself was

aware of his intentions, the idea that there might be a motherly plot on foot never entered his mind.

When Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Byrne returned from the conservatory, the former's active brain had already decided on a plan of campaign.

"Frank," she said, "You young people need some amusement after being confined so long to those tiresome studies. Here is Mary saying that she wants to go back to the convent and be a nun."

At this Mary blushed and dropped her eyes.

"But I tell her," continued her voluble mother, "that it is all nonsense. All girls who have been to convent schools think they want to be nuns. I thought so myself once."

Frank could scarcely repress a smile.

"But they soon get over their fancies when they are going to dinners and balls and have half a dozen young men at their feet. You shan't be a hermit either, my dear Frank. I'm going to bring you out, and I shall give a little reception next Wednesday evening just to introduce you to some nice people. It will be very quiet, but it is only the beginning."

Frank did not quite relish the thought of entering into fashionable dissipation, but he felt that it would be an ill return for Mrs. Miller's kindness if he were to slight her invitation. Besides, there was really no harm in enjoying himself a little and why should he not do so? His mind was too firmly settled to be disturbed and he would be an amused spectator rather than a participant in these frivolities. Unhappily he could not see the pleasure which shone in Mary Miller's eyes when he promised her mother to be present. Had he been more acutely observant he would have risked all other danger rather than that into which he was heedlessly running.

Wednesday's reception was decidedly a pleasant affair, and as Mrs. Miller had prophesied, it was but the beginning of a round of pleasures in which Frank became involved. Kind invitations which he could see no sufficient reason for declining reached him from all sides, and it was generally admitted that young Mr. Byrne was quite an acquisition to Felixburg society.