

THE DOUBLE WOOING OF TWO INDISCREETS.

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by Hope Hampton.

Continued from last issue.

IT was late when Billy reached his room. Daisy's laughter, natural and infectious, kept ringing in his ears as he picked up a letter he had overlooked in his hurry. It had arrived in the morning and was from Lilian. He tried to read it, but how dull it seemed, and instead of Lily smiling at him sadly from the pages, the merry triumphant face of Daisy mocked him. How dazzling were the teeth, how bright the beautiful brown eyes! The dimples came and went, and blushes flitted across the clear, olive skin. Again he tried to read the letter, but in vain. He felt Lilian's blue eyes fixed on him reproachfully, and then Daisy's brown ones flashed with fun, and brought an answering smile to his own. He turned away impatiently and looked at the photograph that always had had a subtle fascination for him, but he could see nothing but disdain in the attitude of the girl. How pure she looked—pure as the lilies at her feet! No wonder that she turned from him with contempt. After all those protestations of love, after all those entreaties to be allowed to see her, to speak to her, to have become so enamored of another girl.

The next evening he went to the rink. He had found himself sauntering in the direction of Blank street, and with a sudden fierce determination not to see Daisy, he went to skate.

The ice was good and plenty of college girls were present. The band was playing better than he ever remembered to have heard it before.

A scarlet hat flitted past that he thought he knew, and he waited till it came in view again. The light fell full upon the upturned face of the wearer, and he recognized Daisy. She saw him at the same time and smiled enchantingly. The next band he claimed her, and without a word she put her hand in his. Neither spoke; the music sounded far away. The place seemed some enchanted spot with only they two in it.

The next time he saw her she was popping corn and behaved more fantastically than ever. Her flippancy jarred upon him, though when he tried to read between the lines, he concluded that the nonsense was merely a cloak for her real feelings, but what those feelings were he could not define. At the rink after that first evening he did not skate with her. She was always surrounded, and laughingly told him she was engaged for every band. Then he received a letter from Lilian telling him that she would be in the city the following month. The intelligence had an odd effect on him. The meeting he had so longed for and looked forward to for the past eight months, or more, now presented itself in the form of a calamity.

As he had been at 38 just a few evenings previous to this they scarcely expected to see him for a week, but his wanderings brought him to the door, so he entered. He was going up to the sitting-room when the edge of a dress on the stairs arrested his attention. It was made of some light stuff covered with stars. He saw that the little feet were sandaled, and then the wearer came in view. It was Daisy. Her hair hung loosely down her back between the wings of gauze; the long, straight gown was buckled on her shoulders. A starry circlet crowned her head. She saw him and stopped

suddenly, her great brown eyes startled—frightened. Mrs. Milton coming after her stopped, strangely disconcerted, too, and the embarrassing silence might have lasted several minutes had not Hazel Laurie dressed as a Dresden China Shephdess, appeared eager for Daisy to show her the skirt-dance before they went to the dance.

After they were gone Mrs. Milton entertained Billy with a little family history of Daisy's.

"You know," she said, "Her mother is dead, and her father was in bad health. The doctors recommended a sea voyage, and he and Daisy decided that he ought to go to South Africa. It seems that there was some romance of his long ago, connected with a lady who is now a wealthy widow in Cape Colony. Daisy thinks that he never really loved her mother, though he was always kindness itself to her, and the fact that he is now engaged to be married to this Mrs. Derwent seems to verify the supposition."

"Why didn't he take his daughter with him?" queried Billy.

"Oh! he couldn't afford to. Besides he knew she would rather stay, but she was woefully lonely after he left, poor child! She was



devotedly fond of him. I think they will be sending for her before long."

Billy tried to think connectedly of the events of the day, but the apparition of Daisy as "Queen of the Fairies," was ever in his mind. Was it a mere coincidence, or was she in some way connected with Lilian? The thought of her probable departure oppressed him. Her face haunted him always. How had she bewitched him so completely? With a sigh he summed up the situation with characteristic conciseness thus, "Half engaged to one girl, and wholly in love with another."

He did not go to the Milton's for nearly three weeks, and then, inclination being stronger than his will, he turned one evening in the usual direction. He wondered how Daisy would receive him. Would she punish him for his long absence by treating him unkindly? Or would she blush with pleasure and dimple with smiles? How the bright, dark face haunted him! After all was it wise to go into temptation? For a few steps he walked on undecidedly, then with a muttered imprecation he wheeled around and faced—Daisy.

"What steps you take!" she exclaimed, amusedly. Her face was radiant, her eyes sparkling; two little dusky curls strayed over her forehead. They crossed the street together,

Daisy's light steps almost dancing, Billy with a dogged determination to have one last night of pleasure.

He was received with open arms. Teddy said he thought he must have gone travelling for his health, and Miss Le Barre was inspired by the sight of him, and retired hurriedly with pencil and paper.

Daisy allowed him to sing "Sweet Bunch of Daisies" without one single correction, and when the refrain

"Give me your promise
Oh! sweetheart, do,
Darling, I love you,
Will you be true?"

thrilled through the room, his eyes, filled with passionate adoration, met hers that glowed with shy, startled understanding.

How could he ever have thought of giving her up? he wondered as he hastened home. As if this one daisy was not worth a thousand lilies. And now what was he to say to Lilian? How her blue eyes would flash with scorn, yet was it not better to make a clean breast of it, and tell her that those letters—the very thought of them made him grow hot—were only meaningless rubbish, that he would despise himself always for having written them, and humbly beseech her pardon? After all was not she to blame? She had started the correspondence.

The following day was Saturday, and with feelings akin to desperation he opened a letter from Lilian. It had been posted in town. "I arrived unexpectedly," she wrote, "and will see you to-morrow. Come to St. James' in the morning and after service come home with me. Will you recognise me, do you think? In spite of all your protestations, I'm afraid not. Well, look for a young lady of medium height (not tall) dressed in green jacket and hat and sable caperine. I will know you, and will speak if you come near me."

Sunday morning dawned bright and cloudless. With doleful forebodings Billy went to church.

It was much easier to think of speaking to Lilian at some indefinite time than to actually go to undeceive her. He walked up the aisle slowly, filled with a nervous dread every time a green hat came in view. When the service began he tried to forget all else and enjoy it. The morning sun flashing through the stained glass windows turned the curate's fair hair to gold, and his gown to crimson and purple. The whole church was bathed in changing colored light.

After the benediction was pronounced he rose, and from his superior height took a hasty survey of the ladies of the congregation till his eyes reached the door, through which a young lady was departing. Her hat was green, the same color as her jacket and the high fur collar which hid her hair was the counterpart of the one Miss Darwin wore. If he had not been so worried he might have recognized the petite figure of the wearer. But without a doubt in his mind he hurried out. A few steps and he had overtaken her. "Lilian," he said, softly, and then again "Lilian." The girl looked up quickly, and he stopped suddenly, confused, for the eyes—half timid, half deprecating—into which he gazed were brown, not blue. The upturned face was Daisy's. Unable to recover from his surprise at once he stalked along in silence till a letter fell from Daisy's muff and fluttered to his feet. He stooped to pick it up and could not avoid seeing the address. To his unutterable astonishment he saw that it was "Miss L. Lindsley, Milville," in his own writing. Instead of returning the unlucky missive to Daisy he crammed it into his pocket, feeling angry, resentful and perplexed.

Up the steps of No. 38 they went in moody