

## OLIVE.

It was a very unhappy young face that looked out of the window of a house in a quiet London square. One might almost fancy, looking at Olive Deering's pathetic eyes, that something dreadful had happened, but really the child was too young to know the meaning of real sorrow, and probably when it did come she would not look half so sad. She was only a little tired that afternoon, a little out of heart over things in general. She would like to go out and see the world, like other girls of her age, in place of working hard as she did all day, giving and taking painting lessons, helping her mother to keep house, running up and down after the boarders, remembering everyone's whims and crotchets.

Mrs. Deering would not like to be described as keeping a boarding-house, but she was glad to take a few nice people who were privately recommended to her into her pretty house.

She was an officer's daughter, an officer's widow. When her husband died in India, leaving her with a very small income and a baby girl of three years old, she had taken the child home and brought her up in a little old-world Normandy town, where living was cheap, and her education could be had for almost nothing.

Then, when the girl was nineteen, they had come to London. Olive wanted to study at South Kensington, to see England. She was tired of foreign life.

"Our people were all English, mother dear," she had said, and so they had come home; but now, after a lapse of a year, Mrs. Deering was not sure she had done wisely.

In times gone by she had had friends in London. But it was a quarter of a century since she had gone out to her father in India, and she found great changes everywhere.

The friends of her youth were most of them scattered, or dead, or changed.

Still there were just a few here and there who remembered her, and who were ready enough with help and advice.

If she were to take a nice house in a pleasant, open neighborhood she might easily get some nice people to live with her. They would do their best for her; and they had been as good as their word.

Mrs. Deering, for all her soft, gentle ways, was a first-rate manager. She and Olive in their long residence abroad had picked up many pretty things, and the roomy, comfortable house in the Square was never empty.

But it all wanted a great deal of thinking and planning, of downright hard work, and to Mrs. Deering, so long accustomed to foreign prices, London seemed to run away with money.

In this second year of her tenancy rent and taxes, gas and coals, began to haunt her. It distressed her too that her pretty Olive was not able to go out to make suitable friends.

The girl was very pretty. If she had her chances like other girls, could see and be seen, she would marry well. And where is the mother who would not like to see her daughter marry well?

And this morning's post has brought an invitation for Olive to a Mrs. Mannsell's. Mr. Mannsell was an artist of some repute, and with a great deal of money independently of his profession.

His wife was a gay, good-natured woman, very fond of young people in general and of Olive in particular. And Olive enjoyed going there, the house was so full of pretty things, the atmosphere so free from any anxious thought of ways and means; but—and this it is that has brought the sorrowful look to the girl's pretty face, crowning all her other troubles—she has no frock to go in, no money to buy one.

She is but a girl, and she has few pleasures; we must not be hard on her for taking such a trifle as this to heart. In ten years' time she will probably wonder at herself for having fretted over it, but to-day it is a very real trouble.

And she has borne it so well—before her mother has declared that she does not particularly care about going at all, that she will be just as happy at home. It is only now in the afternoon, when she has a few minutes' breathing time before Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Perry come in for their tea, and when she ought to be writing her refusal to Mrs. Mannsell, that she has broken down.

It is hard, very hard, that for want of a few shillings she must say "No" to this bit of pleasure.

Miss Churchill will be there, of course, beautifully dressed as usual, and looking lovely; but Olive thinks privately that if she were dressed like Constance she would not look amiss. If she could only manage any way! Even while she was composing her letter to Mrs. Mannsell, she was at the same time wondering how much would make a dress; so many yards at so much.

"I could make it myself, I am sure; but, heigho! what is the use of thinking?"

It was a chilly May evening, the outlook into the little square was rather dismal. There were few passers-by; an organ was grinding out a waltz tune at the corner, an "old clo" man, bag on back, was going his rounds, as he did every day at this hour. He was by this time as familiar a figure to Olive Deering as the lamp-post opposite. And this afternoon she took somehow a particular interest in him.

"I wonder—I wonder," she said aloud, and then her face brightened, and she clapped her hands. "The very thing!" she cried.

"Mother, dear, may I?"

It was half an hour later, and Olive was on her knees on the rug by her mother, the firelight catching reflections in her dark hair and blue eyes.

"Dear child, of course I should be only too glad you had the pleasure, but I don't like the idea, darling."

"Oh, mother, Jane would come with me. It would be all right. Mother, dear, do let me?"

And, of course, her mother kissed the pleading face, and promised she should do as she liked.

"You grow so like that picture of your grandmother, Olive," she said with a little sigh. "I often wish your father could see you; he thought so much of his mother."

"And she died when he was quite a boy."

"Yes, poor thing! I am afraid she had rather a sad life; she married your grandfather against her father's wish, and he disowned her."

"Poor grandmother! I wonder what has become of all her people."

"I don't know. I never heard much about them; your father did not like talking of them. He was very indignant at the way his mother had been treated."

"No wonder. Poor, dear grandmother! No; I shall never want to see any of her people, even if they are alive."

A little narrow street, a short-cut between two great thoroughfares; a street with many second hand shops, books, old furniture, old silver and china. Two young men coming arm in arm along the narrow pavement.

One tall, thin, fair, just a little trace of languid affectation in appearance and manner. The other broadly built and big, with a cheer, open face and honest eyes, a country gentleman every inch of him.

"What a queer, dismal street, Arthur," he says. "I don't know that I should walk across here at night from choice."

"Oh, it's all right; I pick up all sorts of things here for my studio; armour and costumes, and one thing or another. Now, there, I call that a lovely bit of color."

Arthur Faithful pulled up his friend before a shop with costumes on one side, old silver and china on the other.

"Where?" said Lawrence Waldron, staring vacantly before him.

"Where! My dear fellow, have you absolutely no artistic sense? Why, that yellow brocade, to be sure; it is simply perfect; you don't see such stuff nowadays," and Mr. Faithful put on his eyeglasses the better to admire it.

"You mean that old yellow frock hanging up in the corner. Well, I daresay if I were to see it on a woman," admitted Lawrence dubiously, "I might admire it."

"I must have it," declared Arthur excitedly. "It is a splendid piece of color."

Mr. Waldron shrugged his shoulders good-temperedly, as he followed his friend into the stuffy little shop. He could not understand Arthur's crazes. It seemed to him rather ridiculous for a man to be interested in brocades, and ribbons, and laces.

But nevertheless he was very fond of Arthur, and willing to gratify his whims.

"That brocade, sir?"

Mr. Faithful was evidently a well-known customer, the old man behind the counter greeted him with such effusion.

"It's a splendid piece of stuff, sir."

It was a dress in the fashion of fifty years before, so narrow in the skirt that you might almost wonder how anyone could get into it, with a low bodice and a waist under the armpits. Lovely stuff certainly, as thick as a board, with rich orange-colored flowers raised on a pale yellow ground. There was something very touching about this quaint little bit of finery, that no doubt had become a beauty long ago, hanging up now in this dirty little shop.

"Now, where did you get this, Marks?"

"Pretty, ain't it, sir? You'd almost wonder at anyone with taste parting with it."

"Oh, everyone is not like you and me," laughed Arthur. "Here's my friend, Mr. Waldron, would have passed by without noticing it."

"Indeed, sir," said the old man, with a bow towards Lawrence; "some gentlemen are like that. As to where I got it, Mr. Faithful, it's not my place to speak of my customers, but it's no harm to say I got it along with a bundle of other things—ordinary wear—from a young lady, a real lady, and a handsome one too, but wanting money, as I should say."

"By Jove! that's a common complaint these hard times," said Arthur, standing in another position so as to let a different light fall on the yellow frock. "I hope you gave her a decent price."

"Well, sir, I think I did what was fair. I'm pretty fair always."

"What are you asking for it?"

"Well, to you, sir—" He named a sum that seemed to Lawrence Waldron, although he was a rich man, an absurdity for what he called, in his own mind, "an old rag;" but Arthur seemed quite satisfied.

"Very well, I'll take it myself, if you'll make it up."

"I'm so pleased to get this; it's just what I wanted," he said when they got out in the street. "You'll see what a picture I'll make of it."

"I wonder if he gave that girl half he asked you."

"Not he."

"And yet he calls himself fair."

"Yes, he's fair enough; but what would you have? He's got to make his profit."

"Well, it seems to me a monstrous thing for a girl—a lady, as he says—to go to a place like that selling her things."

"Oh, lots of girls do it; a governess or something of that sort," said Arthur lightly.

He was not a young gentleman particularly interested in poor girls. He liked women of the world with artistic gowns and dainty surroundings.

"You are coming to the Mannsells' to-night, Lawrence?"

"I shall be very glad."