

when you are gone—people are so stupid here."

"You do me too great an honor, Miss Turner. May I really hope—" and they passed on out of hearing.

Mr. Westward bit his lip, and darted an angry glance at the gentleman. "Heaven help me," he muttered, "I can bear it no longer," and making some excuse to the old gentleman, he turned to leave the room once more. But this time his eyes rested on me. He started, and I felt that I was recognized. Still I was greatly afraid he would go off in a jealous huff at the words he had just heard, and leave me untouched. No; he picked me up and examined me closely. Presently his whole face lighted up with glad surprise, as he pulled that long silken thread of hair from amongst my leaves.

I think he guessed directly how matters stood. The next instant I found myself transferred to his buttonhole, and he strode away swiftly, eagerly, up to where Dolly and her partner were seated.

"Will Miss Turner," he said, "spare me a few minutes?"

She was about to reply coldly when she perceived me. As if by instinct the little white hand went up to her hair, then blushing violently, and without a word to the graceful young man by her side, she rose and took Mr. Westward's arm. Her lover spoke for her. Turning to the gentleman, he said with a smile:

"You will excuse Miss Turner, I know. I have something of great importance to communicate."

"Oh, certainly," was the polite answer, accompanied by a bow; but I think he must have been taken terribly by surprise when he saw his late partner being armed off thus suddenly by a young man who made himself conspicuous by keeping his distance all the evening.

Right into the hall they went—those two—the one strong in new-found happiness, the other blushing and trembling with emotion.

Mr. Westward led Dolly to the foot of the stairs. The hall was empty just then, and he had taken the precaution to close the door of the room they had left. So seating himself beside her, he took her both hands in his, and said half laughing:

"Dolly, dearest, I fear you must give me your answer in words after all. What is it to be?"

"You have misunderstood me all this evening," she said pouting.

"How could I help it, darling, when I saw no holly in your hair, and only just this minute found the truest sprig that has caused us so much trouble?"

"And that is why you never came near me?"

"Yes, because I thought you did not want me; yet I could not go away, Dolly!"

"And I have been so, so unhappy!"

The golden head was brought against the broad shoulders.

"My own Dolly, so have I."

"And, oh! I don't know what I have been saying—but Mr. Gray was, I do believe on the point of popping the question when you appeared, and I might have accepted him, you know." This wickedly.

"Don't you wish I had never intruded upon so interesting a scene?" he questioned mockingly.

For all answer she nestled a little closer to him.

Then there was a pause. They tell me pauses are frequent among lovers.

Dolly was the next to speak.

"How did you know that holly had dropped out of my hair?"

"Firstly, because it was in a corner of the room, and not here where I gave it to you; secondly, it had entwined amongst its leaves a golden thread of hair."

"Oh! then let me have the dear nasty, delightful old thing. I'll keep it forever and ever. Hark! somebody is coming. I wonder we have not been disturbed before. Go, please. I am going to put the precious sprig in my room in case I should lose it again."

"But you must give me something first." What?"

"You know. There is a huge bunch of mistletoe just above us."

"Oh!" but she gave him what he wanted!

I have been in the drawer ever since, wrapped carefully in silver paper, and occasionally she comes and peeps at me, calling me her "dear tormenting treasure." Last time she came, I noticed a plain gold band ring on the third finger of her left hand, and that, I think, means marriage.

Only a sprig of holly—only a withered old stick, with five dry brown leaves and three poor shrunken berries! But Dolly prizes me just the same now as when my leaves were fresh and young, and my berries as red as the lips that so often come and smile down upon me, gladdening my old age!

THE END.

One's opportunity is the measure and limit of the service he should render to humanity. The humblest service will have its recognition.

"A kindly act is a kernel sown

That may grow to a goodly tree.

Shedding its fruit when time has flown

Down the gulf of eternity."