

"He gives me the creeps," said Mrs. Leverage. "You make him appear rather interesting," Rutherford said. "Did I understand you to say that he and Miss Manners—"

"We suspect so," said Mr. Leverage amiably. "We fear so," amended Mrs. Leverage. "But personally I think better of Margaret."

Peter finished his breakfast thoughtfully. He did not see how it could matter to him whether Miss Manners were engaged or not, yet he felt distinctly interested. Could this suitor be the man to whom she had inadvertently referred the evening before? The man whom she "did not like at all?" He found himself hoping that this were so, though what possible interest it could have had for him, a semi-engaged person, was far from obvious. "I have a cap," said Peter, as he rose from the table, "a borrowed cap, which I must return to Miss Manners. Perhaps I may meet this gentleman."

"Don't bother about the cap," remarked Leverage. "I'll send it over."

"Oh, no! It is a very particular cap. I must return it myself."

And it is a peculiar fact that while Leverage, the shrewd, noticed nothing of moment in the heat and fervency of this reply, Mrs. Leverage, who was not shrewd at all, smiled quietly, and when her husband had left the room she said:

"If you decide to stay with us longer, Peter, we shall be—delighted."

CHAPTER V.

PETER RUTHERFORD SEES A FACE.

MARGARET was standing in the hall dressed for walking when Rutherford was ushered in. Her high fur collar and little turban trimmed with sable

made the most effective framing possible for her shining hair and delicate, youthful face. She looked more lovely than Peter's most adorned memory of her and at once he began to doubt the wisdom that had counselled the slightest delay in effecting his necessary flight. There was a change in her manner also, the frank friendliness of the night before was obscured by a forced cordiality and thinly veiled nervousness. The tone in which she invited him to come in and sit down was frigid.

"Perhaps," hesitated Peter, divided between a desire to find out what had changed her and an instinct to fly, "perhaps you were going out."

"Not at all. I have just come in." Margaret began slowly to remove her gloves.

Peter, standing like an embarrassed school-boy, watched her helplessly. His usual calm and self-possessed readiness had deserted him and he felt, for the first time in many years, a disquieting consciousness of his hands and feet. With a desperate effort to appear easy and unconcerned he approached her, holding out the cap. Margaret had told herself that dignity was her only refuge after the blunders of last night and had schooled her inexperience into the most forbidding of attitudes, but when her eyes fell upon the extended parcel her sense of humour triumphed. A delicious dimple crept into the corner of her cheek, her grey eyes sparkled.

"Are you very much obliged?" she asked, severely.

"I am very much obliged," repeated Rutherford obediently.

"Then I really think you had better come in and sit down, it ought to take some time to express your

feelings properly. Only I warn you that this is not my 'day.'"

"Oh, do you have a day?" asked Peter, beginning to feel natural again. "Am I missing very much by this day belonging to someone else?"

"It depends on what you call much. But you miss the best tea-cloth and flowers on the table and newly-baked cakes and you run the risk of poisoning by Martha, who is sure to be cross and spoil the tea."

"Couldn't you tell Martha to spare me because I had to come to return the cap?"

"I might. I'll try, anyway. Please sit down."

Left alone, Peter had leisure to inspect the room. It bore, indeed, the traces of which Mrs. Leverage had spoken and in the cold light of the winter afternoon seemed bare and almost cheerless. It seemed no fitting home for Margaret. Peter found himself furnishing in imagination a very different room, and then another and another, as a master jeweller might prepare a setting for a single pearl, only to discard each masterpiece as all unworthy of its destiny. He was engaged in choosing a few choice pictures to adorn the walls of one of these creations when Margaret returned. She wore a simple house dress not unsuited to the plainness of the room.

"Tell me, Miss Manners," said Peter, still half in his dream room, "do you admire Turner?"

"Turner?" blankly. "Oh, you mean Turner. I am afraid," demurely, "that I have not made a study of Turner except through reproductions in the shop windows and on the Turner calendars. A friend of mine has a copy of his 'Guidecca.' It must be very

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WHY THEY WON

A Tragedy of Colour that Helped to Turn the Vote.

By MRS. STANLEY WRENCH

LITTLE LADY BETTY turned to me with a sigh of intense weariness. "Elections are dreadful things," she said. A sentiment which I, as a much-worried canvasser, endorsed mentally as the most sensible thing I had heard said that morning.

"What is the matter now?" I asked gently. Somehow, one always does adopt a gentle tone when talking to Betty. She is so much like a child, with her big, innocent grey eyes and trusting air.

"I am really in trouble," she said slowly, removing the smart black Marquise hat I had been admiring as she spoke.

Instantly I was all sympathy.

"What is it?" I asked. "Has Chip-chap been overfeeding again, or has the milliner forgotten to send your hat home?"

"Don't be foolish, Len," she said. "Of course, it is nothing of the kind. Women do not trouble over such trifles when the welfare of England is at stake."

I opened my eyes. This is not Betty's usual mode of expression, let me state. Then I fancied that I understood.

"Oh, I see," I said, a little testily. "You've been attending some of those Women's Suffrage meetings."

But I did not like to think of Betty getting mixed up with affairs of that kind at all. However, she shook her head very decidedly at the suggestion.

"I haven't," she retorted. "I have not been near those stupid meetings. It does not interest me in the least whether women get the vote or not; instead, I really think they are foolish to want any more responsibility than they have already."

"Wise Betty," I murmured gently; you see, I am a privileged person, being her cousin.

She rang the bell for tea, then flung herself pettishly into the biggest chair in the room and sighed.

"Don't you want to know what it is?" she pouted. "You used to be ever so much more sympathetic than you are now."

"So sorry, Betty!" I protested humbly. "You know I'm just dying to know, but I didn't want to bother you."

So Betty smiled once more.

"Now you are your own nice, dear self," she said. "Well, I'll tell you. It's just like this, Len. You know, I've promised Hubert to go with him to all his meetings, and sit on the platform."

"Oh, well, Betty," I said, "surely that isn't such

a terrible ordeal, is it? You are used to being stared at by this time."

"But that's not all of it," said Betty, dimpling and smiling. "I don't mind being looked at one bit; in fact, I'll own up to you, Len, I—I rather like it. But, you see, he wants me to go round with him to get votes."

"By Jove! Betty, and you'll get them, too," I said admiringly, and Betty's dimples came faster than ever.

Then she pouted again.

"You don't understand," she said. "You see, it is about the colours. Whatever Hubert is, his colours are blue and yellow, and he wants me to wear them."

"Well?" I said inquiringly. Truth to tell, I was wearing a tiny favour of those colours at the moment.

"Oh, Len," she cried impatiently, "cannot you understand? Don't you see it's simply impossible? I cannot wear those."

"My dear Betty," I protested, "why not?"

"Oh, you are stupid," she cried, an opinion which I began to endorse, since I was apparently incapable of comprehending what was to Betty such a simple matter.

"Please explain," I said as humbly as I could.

She flashed at me one glance of disdain.

"You used to understand me at once," she said, "and surely you who have known me all my life ought to know that blue will never suit me, and as for yellow—ugh!"

She glanced at me reproachfully. Then I understood.

She was wearing a most elegant creation, every crease, every fold of which spoke Worth, and—the colour was red.

Had it been any other person save Betty, I should have laughed; but with those eyes upon me, the gravity of the situation became more apparent. There was silence for fully two minutes and a quarter, then Betty spoke again.

"Cannot you suggest something, Len?" she said a trifle impatiently.

"Couldn't you—couldn't you wear just a tiny favour of Hubert's colours on your dress?" I asked timidly.

The withering look Betty cast upon me caused me to shiver.

"I did think you were a person of some taste," she remarked severely. "It seems I was mistaken."

I was crushed. Betty poured out a cup of tea, and handed it to me with the air of a tragedy queen. I stirred it nervously.

"Er—er—," I said, "I suppose you really do want to help Hubert?"

Betty brightened up.

"Well, yes," she said briskly. "That is, I want to do just the same as all the other women are doing. Everyone is helping someone or other, and of course Hubert would like to get in."

"Precisely," said I, "still, Betty, it does not necessarily follow that your political opinions coincide with his."

Betty looked frankly puzzled.

"I'm afraid I don't know much about politics," she said humbly, and I felt inclined to ejaculate, "Thank heaven!" but refrained. After experience with ladies whose sole aim in life seemed to be such, it was somewhat a relief to meet one who did not want to talk about "women's rights."

"You might suggest to Hubert that you cannot honestly—conscientiously give him your support," I said. "Then you can wear your red dress."

"You're a dear," said Betty, beaming at me, and pressing macaroons upon me with hospitable liberality. "Then you really think I might help Mr. MacLure instead?"

"Certainly," I responded, feeling myself an out-and-out traitor, for MacLure was my candidate's opponent.

"Good-bye, Len," she said gaily ten minutes later, "I'll let you know how many votes I win."

I did not see Lady Betty till the polling day, when I met her resplendent in that Worth costume.

"Our side is going to win," she cried gaily, waving her hand from her motor-car, just then packed with voters.

I smiled sadly. Who could resist Betty? I nearly felt ashamed of my blue and yellow favour at that minute.

MacLure did win, and by an overwhelming majority, but it was only that night I found out the solution to the problem that had puzzled my brother canvassers.

Picking up a ladies' paper, some weeks old, I read:

"Red will be the prevailing colour this winter. Ladies who wish to be dressed *en derniere mode* will unhesitatingly include a costume of this colour in their winter wardrobe requirements. . . ."

I dropped the paper with a sigh. Was it a forecast, or had some clever politician designed to win success for his party by enlisting the aid of Dame Fashion?

Who can say? By-elections are lost and won—and even a General Election may depend upon such slender issues.—M. A. P.