BY MINNIE WILLIS BAINES.

The back drawing-room of a house, furnished as most of them are, with two or three great easy chairs, a piano, cabinet and inlaid table.

A beautiful tiled hearth and fire-place, and, on the mantle piece above them, a cloisonne placque, some pieces of ham-mered brass, and two Venetian images, in brilliant colors. The floor was strewn with rugs, and before the blaze of the bright coal fire lay a large white bear skin. The walls had the usual complement of paintings and engravings, and some amateur productions in various shapes and shades of plush and velvet omed with cornations and wild ros-There were books and magazines on portieres, with their dull reds and blues, weiled the arched doorways of the room and shut in its occupants to the privilege of an uninterrupted tate a-

These occupants were a man and a woman. Not long age, when etiquette permitted, they might have been mentioned as a gentleman and lady, or lady and gentleman, as it was evident they belonged to the classes so designated in former times. There was "an air of the great world" about them both; an indefinite subtle something which is not altogether the result of familiarity with "acciety," but which, when "native and to the mancr born," improves with one's social opportunities and experi-

ences.
* The woman was, evidently, at home. She sat easily, and as if she belonged there, in the arms of a large maroon chair, and put out her foot to the fender, turning it contentedly before the fire as one does only when sgainst a familiar background.

She wore a dark blue dress with a velvet coller out of which arose an almost invisible rim of white linen. §

The lines of her drapery were long and full and plain, and her bodice was a

triumph of art, attested by the fact that while it followed every line and curve of her supple, graceful figure, it did not limit or prevent her freedom of motion. One hand hung over the side of her chair -a long, smooth hand with creamy flesh and oval nails, whose thin, pink laminal was rooted in a "silver half moon." The other, on the third finger of which was a plain worn circle of gold, lay on her

ap.

The man sat by the table. He had passed the "tree" in the hall, abstractedly, and was still holding his hat in one A nervous looking hand-dark and thin. He had the cast of countenance we call "aristocratic." would be hard to tell. The old world aristocracies, leading off with reyal precedents, produce scions of a different ilk. was close shaven, with the exception of a dark moustache which drooped over his mouth. This gave him a melancholy expression, or, in other words, "romantic."
"You weren't out to the French opera,

last night, Laura," said he.
"No," turning her foot a trifle, and
then withdrawing it from sight.

"You missed something, then. They are fine singers. But I don't see how declare I never saw such a rough locking set in my life, on the streets.

asked MIL a tone which gave evidence of a de-cided lack of interest in the French Mr Eugene Hilliard recognized the

fact and changed the subject.
"What are you reading now, Laura

Then she went up to the window

where a gilt bird-cage was hanging, and picked up and put between the wires a "Well, no! That is, I don't know. piece of cuttle bone that had fallen to "I wish you would talk, Laura-you

don't seem like yourself."
"Don't I?" She turned on him, smil-"What shall I talk about?

cold May and June that has been prophe-Give me a cue, mon ami, and I will follow it up. I fear I am getting dull, of late, in the noble art of conversation. Help me to retrieve my lost vantage ground. Let us make this room sparkle and scintillate with witty bon mots like the Parisian salons of ye olden He shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't be facetious. You appear best as nature made you. It is thus that you charm me most. Why do you make it so difficult for me to tell what I came This question was asked impulsively-

in a quick, passionate manner, at variance with the remainder of his speech. Mrs Thornhill realized that a crisis in her friendship with Mr Hilliard had arrived. She walked back to her chair

and sat down, facing him.
"I shall be very glad, Gene, to know what you have to tell me. Have you made a successful deal in real estate, or have you found some fifteenth century volume with illuminated texts, the Or, have you bought a vacht, and will you sail away, like Lord Pa eman, 'strange countries for to see?"

"Something better than either or any of these," answered he, with a burst of

"Better? How lovely? It is certainly the philosopher's stone! Where did you find it?"
"Oh, Laura? How very high your

imagination is soaring today. drop those airy nothings, and come down to earth. Although it is the philosopher's stone--in a way."
"And, no doubt, in a pleasing 'way.

I can discern as much by your eager

"And I want your sympathetic appre ciation. You know we have been such friends for years. Ever since poor Thornhill was cut off so suddenly."

At this reference to "poor Thornhill," Laura looked down and sighed and turn

ed the ring on her finger.

Thre years had elapsed since the evening referred to; each year composed of have been considerable of a fool. three hundred and sixty-five days; in which time Laura Thornhill's mind and emotions had become accustomed to the altuation. If she gave "poor Thorn-

hill's" memory one general eigh, it was as much as could be reasonably expect-"You know," said Mr Hilliard, setting his hat on the floor and drawing his chair nearer to hers, "that I never onsidered myself a marrying man."
She nodded her head, and sat waitin

for him to proceed.
"Well—by Jove, I'm caught." "No ?"

"And the lady? The 'not impossible he?' Where have you been hiding her all this time?"

Laura Thorphill was still smiling as

she asked the question. The canary had begun to sing; the fire-light danced over the blue and white tiles, and Mr Hilliard thought that the room, full of music and light, with Laura sitting in the deep red chair, amiling at him, was one of the pleasantest places he had ever

seen.
"She's a new acquaintance. It was love at first sight."
"How delightful. And who is she

A Roosevelt, a Quacken bush, Stuyvesant or Van Rensselaer? What is her 'name' and lineage long? For I know her blood must be very blue, or she could not hope to wed the fastidious descendant of the..."
"Hush, Laura! Don't laugh at m

I expect I have talked about blood and birth like a conceited popinjay. But I had it drilled into me, you know, with my A. B. C's. Do you think there is anything in it, entre nous?"
"The alphabet? Yes, millions in

"Somehow we can't seem to get on common ground today. You're perverse

"A woman? Well, forgive me. Wh is she, Gene? I do not need to ask what is she? The fact that a man of your tastes and culture has chosen her rgues well for her graces of mind and of person.

He sat for a moment, weighing her words before replying, in a sort of deprecating manner:

"She is young yet, you know.

"We outgrow youth," replied she, a little sadly, putting her foot once more toward the fire, and turning from him as she spoke.
"She's eighteen," said he.

"She is one of the two young women spending some time with Mrs Bigelow. The blonds. I—she—"
Mrs Thornhill had turned toward him, nd was listening so intently that she disconcerted him. A faint dull red

Laura Thornhill was twenty-eight.

came into his cheek, and he laughed un-'You see I don't understand this scrt of confidential talk. I never had occa-sion for it before. I always imagined I

"In bachelor meditation, fancy free Yes, I understand."
"And I've said that to myself and you

so often, you know, that it seems very odd to be telling you a different story, now. You know I was Damon to Thornhill's Pythias before we took you into the partnership, and then after he went it has always been you. And I never should have thought—You will confess it is strange.' He leaned over and took up the hand

hanging by the chair.
She waited a moment, then withdrew it indifferently.
"To be original, I will tell you, 'it

they make up so well for the stage. I the unexpected which always happens. "You are original, Laura. Very dif-ferent from the rank and file." "Thanks, And Mrs

friend ?" "Oh, she is original, too, in a way. She is wonderfully pretty, I think. But

"Is she a Middlemarch sort of Doro-

You see it is all so new. We must find out about—well, all that sort of vou know.

Laura smiled in a non committal way.
"I fancy she may not care for all the

and can be trained to assimilate. I think you and I could educate her up, "Most young women of eighteen are already 'educated up' to tastes of their own; and you may not find her plastic like Laura—that it would improve her purpose of being assimilated. She might

clay. On the other hand, she may be disposed to do a little 'guiding' on her own account. A woman of spirit might ebject to being married for the express Eugene happy.' argue that if she didn't suit as she was, their rooms that night. why did the man choose her. It will be 'nice' for you if Dorothea is a Middlemarch Dorothy, and marries you, as she did Casaubon, for your 'beautiful with a petulant, "If it wasn't for his might be Dorothea. And, somehow,

The red grew hotter in the man's thin cheek, and he pulled his moustache with in the glass, and muttered, "He sees the her. a sort of sullen petulance.
"You are laughing at me," he said;

"but "Laura," and his voice grew persuasive, "let me bring her up to see you torrow evening. Won't you?

be presented to me, or rather am I to be presented to her as a female mentor?"

them, that her interest in the presented to her as a female mentor?"

upon this pretty, piquante, unformed eighteen. She should go with them to harp on my present inability to express the commonest idea? I know you get the gist of my thought, though I quarry it but crudely. And I depend upon you so much, and shall need you in the future perhaps more than now.

Mr Hilliard had risen, and stood before her, hat in hand.

'You are very kind," she said. "And I may bring Dorothea up?" "If you like to do so." He raised her hand and kissed it in a

profoundedly respectful manner, and then, knowing the ways of the house, and being no stickler for conventionality, he went his way, and the portiere fell behind him.

The smile on Laura's lips hardened little, and then died out.

She sat down in her dark red chair, and was very still for a time. Then, as if 'hinking aloud, she said: "It seems I

met her at Mrs Constable's reception. It is a method in the present hearted, and they presumed it was nothing after all but a plantonic affair with lady in amethyst, with a bonnet like her autt, and a few stray curly locks of redbrown hair about her face. I'm sure I don't see how anybody who ever say with the arms souler fairs with which don't see how anybody who ever saw with the same savior that a could forget her."

"Dead, three years ago."
"Then 'Laura' is a widow, I presume."
"Yes, a widow. You surely recall

strange. Yes, I will go with you, if you

In a few moments she presented herself as ready. She was simply dressed as to materials (coming from a family of straitened means); but the cut of her coat was the very latest, her hat just became her, and before drawing on her Suede gloves she had settled on her bosom the generous cluster of long-stem-med pink roses which her lover had Her epistles to him were on thick, med pink roses which her lover had

ancee. There was a little compression of The Laura of the amethyst dress and bonnet must be, metaphorically speaking,

She found Mr Hilliard's long letters a

into Mrs Thornhill's back drawing-room, she met this widow at her bravest—not whenever the light from the tall wax candles struck upon it, and there were diamonds in her small pink ears that lay back close to her dainty, well-propor-

tioned head.

Dorothea Whitlock took in the situation, and circumstances seemed unpro- card on a small silver salver. pitious just then for "sitting down" up-

scension; but it was so cordial, so friendto the traveller who stumbles accident be at liberty."

Liberty and the sand dunes. And such a day and such an hour ing butterfly expanded into something

the one and the admiring appreciation of and how busy she was, and how she was the other, Miss Whitlock's manner, despite her efforts to prevent it and her consciousness that she signally failed, bestoi, and warded off a discussion of his

Hilliard as well. He started topics of conversation with which Dorothea took issue, and Laura came in, to Dorothea's lation in his letters from Dorothea, but it had a discouraged and discourage ing ficker. There was an air about her vexation, with the air of one trying to support her sister woman's position.

And then Eugene Hilliard unfortun-ately suggested that when he and Doroth He sat one m I haven't told you her name. It is whether better, as they soon tor something he failed to find, when it tor something he failed to find, when it but she has the new fad for a stately finger), she would endorse his opinion suddenly occurred to him that he would

acquiescence, but she bit her lip to feeling more like himself. keep back the repudiation of such an

And Laura smiled upon them both, lived, and, and after a hasty meal at the and changed the subject deftly, so that little hotel, he inquired the way to her thing about Dorothea, and-guide her, by and by the young guest was seated at home. the piano doing mechanically the one thing she reallly knew how to do well; half forgetting, under the soothing sounds was in progress. Among the players which came from beneath her fingers, were Dorothea, in white, and the tenor

her back, which had a defiant, protest- vexed, and did not entirely conceal it, ing air about it, and the thought cross-ed his mind that she ought to be more little desultory talk with the new comer,

Mrs Thornhill kissed Dorothea when they parted, and said she had "great and he did not fit it well. Dorothea had opes of her—she would surely make grown stouter and was not so pretty as formerly. She was also somewhat em-

One of them pierced her finger with a thorn as she unfastened the pink roses but there was no point of contact in all from her bodice, and threw them down their interests. Unless, indeed, it

money and-her-

difference. After that Mr Hilliard endeavored to make a triangular affair of his engagements with Dorothea. He would fain them together, he said: 'Upon what grounds, Gene? Is she to them, that her 'influence might be felt have introduced Laura into the most of Nonsense, Laura; why continue to the galleries to guide Dorothea's taste in pictures. She should take Mrs Bigelow's it very unlike Laura's. place as chaperon, when her attentions fell undividedly to her brunette guest

> know these things, as a clever woman"in the awim" alone could tell her. had set up a phæton of her own, with a happens."
>
> "tiger;" see was overrun with spring "Laura!" He started at the amount shopping; she was attending

-'s cooking c'ass; she was due at name. er dressmaker's, and positively couldn't.

She entertained for Mrs Bigelow's hadn't been for—her. You loved her all Dorothea Mathlide. Laura was graher dressmaker's, and positively couldn't. young ladies, and was so radiant in cream the time; you know you did. What ciously forgiving; but when he tried to colored faille, with Cornelia Cook roses, made you ever think you loved me?" that the young English catch of the seathat the young English catch of the season was at her elbow throughout the growing red.

Eugene felt his cheeks and forehead day, she informed him that the man who evening, and proposed to her two days "And who is Mrs Thornhill?" asked after.

Dorothes Whitlock, in answer to her betrothed husband's invitation to "callup" with him, and spend an hour or two in her society.

And her dowager guests, always a little fearful of her interference in their with him, and spend an hour or two in her society.

"Why, surely you remember having met her at Mrs Constable's reception. I hearted, and they presumed it was nothing as a sure of the partial but a plantonic affair with her as well as with him."

And so the weeks glided on, until final-brown hair about her face. Pm sure I by Mrs Bigelow "speeded the parting" have lived. As it was it made me furiled to a woman to have a man make love to another woman with the idea that cause it wasn't like Laura. If I had been in love with you.—"

She stopped there, crying out:—

She stopped there, crying out:—

What have I said?"

"That's all right, Dolly—if you had, without a doubt, but then he deserved what then?"

"I should have been too jealous to for Rachel if he only could get her at have lived. As it was it made me furiled that the only could get her at have lived. As it was it made me furiled the cause it wasn't like Laura. If I had been in love with you.—"

"What have I said?"

"That's all right, Dolly—if you had, without a doubt, but then he deserved what then?"

"I should have been too jealous to for Rachel if he only could get her at have lived. As it was it made me furiled that the order of the interference in their and nothing I did or said was right, because it wasn't like Laura. If I had been to will consider the love to another woman with the idea that and nothing I did or said was right, because it wasn't like Laura. If I had be not like Laura. If I had been to will consider the love of No 2 a good reason why she should take pity on him and marry him.

Eugene looked creatfalten, but did not despair. She was "taking it out" of him without a doubt, but then with the illustration of No 2 a good reason why she should take pity on him and nothing I did or said was right, because it wasn't like Laura. If I had b

gene wrote to his bride-to-be three times a week. He told her how lovely and adorable she was, sandwiching it in bet-ween ideas and ideals of the future. He was thirty and assumed that she was young. His letters, like his conversation, were constantly beckoning her to a "higher plane." He wrote out lists of books for her to read, and recommended certain papers to be perused, which she threw on the floor, and set her heel upon

brought with him.

It was evident that Eugene Hilliard and were not lengthy. Some people who was either a poor observer or that he knew not much of the moods of his finance. There was a little compression of them. She fell back into the simple untril, which signified that, like Job's war-

bonnet must be metaphorically speaking,
'sat down upon." She would 'give this
widow to understand—," etc.

But, when ushered under the portiere
into Mrs Thornhill's back drawing-room,

She found Mr shifted sold letters a
little dry. She sang in the choir, and
the tenor's eyes were handsomer than
Eugene's.

She often repeated her soliloquy in-

dulged in the first night of her meeting in amethyst this time, but in black, with with Mrs Thornhill; but after a time she daffodils to relieve it. In her hair, worn left off the first clause of it, and only said, whigh, was a butterfly, that glittered woman like, "If it wasn't for—her." whenever the light from the tall wax — Mr Hilliard naturally gravitated toward Laura Thornton's back drawing-room once more. But the trim, smiling maid met him with many regrets that her mistress was out, or indisposed, or particularly engaged, and received his

After awhile these failures to see Laura began to worry her friend. He Eugene Hilliard beamed with delight as Laura greeted her guest. Her manner did not suggest patronage or condended by being down-hearted.

Then he would write her a letter and ly, so magnanimous in its endeavor to she would answer saying that "it really put Miss Whitlock at her esse; it said was too bad, but, etc., etc., come around so plainly, like the Sheik of the desert on such a day at such an hour, she would

"Come in; my abode is yours," that he found the smiling maid ushering him in looked at their charming hostess until his eyes became dazzled, and the glitter-

that seemed a cross between a saintly au-reole and a queenly crown.

But, between the hospitable grace of Laura talked of society and of Dorothea consecrousness that she signally islied, or came crusted with a thin film of ice. She, who was usually at ease and insouciant, felt constrained and awk-ed sometimes about the young English-

> "mourned because he found it not." Her letters, always brief, were now be-He sat one morning with one of these

"Oh, nothing special—a little of every presnomen, and writes herself Dorothea."

or a stately inger), she would enturise his opinion go to see her. He would take "a week more fully.

Dorothea Whitlock made feint of of off" and see if he couldn't come back

It was a beautiful summer evening when he arrived in the town where she It was a pleasant cottage, and in the

large lawn at the side a game of tennis "I fancy she may not care for all the which came from beneath ner nugers, things that I have been used to liking; the evident fact that it was she and the evident fact that it was she and of course Mr Hilliard's advent inter-

rupted the game, although he begged Meanwhile, Eugene Hilliard looked at that it might continue. Dorothea felt went away, the tenor singer last.

And both these women soliloquized in barrassed. He was taken into a stuffy little parlor and introduced to the family. They were cordial and he was polite;

that interest seemed smaller to him this The other smiled at her own reflection night than ever before since he knew

He noticed that she was not wearing her ring, and when the household,

"Where is your ring, Dolly?" "I don't wear it always. It might be lost," she answered.

He took up her hand and held it a moment, but was conscious of thinking Mr Hilliard spent a week in the coun-

try, and tried, with commendable pa-She must drive with them behind his tience, to enjoy himself-in Dorothea's new team, because she knew so much better than he how to tell "who was who" couldn't or wouldn't adopt his. At the of the old families that lived in the imend of it, when she handed him his ring it made no difference. He was in posing houses, and give little incidents with bitter tears, and profuse prayers to of their lives, and how they made their be forgiven for loving another man betfortunes, etc. Because, really, if Doro the than him, he was heart-whole thea, was coming there to live, she ought to

e swim" alone could tell her.

"Never mind, little girl! never mind! neck. And he fiercely concluded that he would learn to hate Mrs Thornhill as

Miss of energetic venom she put into the

"What makes you think so, Dolly ?"

have lived. As it was it made me furious. But I didn't mean to tell you it last.
was your money; I didn't indeed."

don't see how anybody who ever saw Laura could forget her."

"Laura could forget her."

"Laura " repeated Miss Whitlock, straightening her slim, pretty back somewhat suddenly.

"Yes—Mrs Thornhill. We're old friends, you know. Her husband and I were great chums."

"And he #"

"Dead, three years ago."

"Then 'Laura' is a widow, I presume."

"Then 'Laura' is a widow, I presume."

"Yes a widow. You surely recall gene wrote to his bride-to-be three times

with the same savior faire with which she let upon to she had welcomed "the coming guest," and your money; I didn't indeed."

Here are burst into tears.

"But you don't know how miserable it is being poor—you don't, indeed. And station with a trifling little basket over flowing with white narcissi and a box of coatch." But I didn't wast to live on your 'high planes,' and I can't and won't. I just want some one to love me bye.

So life began again in anewgroove. Eugene wrote to his bride-to-be three times and I'm sure we can live on his salary."
"You good little Dolly! I'm sure
you can, and I will give you a house and

lot for a wedding gift."

''Oh, you are like a fairy godfather and I don't deserve it."

'Yes, you do, Dolly! Yes, you do!
No; keep the ring. You deserve it for showing me that I do and always did love Laura."

And when he was out of the house, he kept hugging the sweet thought to his heart that Laura, and she alone, was "the one woman of the world" for him. "I have been blind—blind and a fool, to pass by such a priceless gem for a glittering piece of paste. But it was so much a part of melthat I never could con-

from myself, until poor little Dolly showed me how it was. And, thinking in this strain, he stop ped to inhale the fragrant rose-laden air, lock at the far off sky, brilliaut with stars, listen to the stir and chirp of a bird in some near nest; and, lifting up his heart to Heaven, in the exquisite,

blissful agony of its first, great, only love, he cried "Thank God!" CHAPTER III. When, travel-stained and worn with neat and dust. Eugene Hilliard returned to the city, his first act, after a complete

change of dress, was to seek Laura's re-But this time not even the smiling maid received him. Laura was still out of town. He hunted among her women friends

for some one who knew her exact address. All he could learn was that she was not now in Maine, but somewhere among the Catakills.

His trip to the mountains was success

the success and the success are the success and the success are the success and the success are the success ful only in the discovery where she had

been a short time before.

He went home and went down to his office, but he was too restless to attend to business. He wondered where the young Englishman was shown g up, now —wondered why he didn't go back to his castle, if he had one, which he doubted. Then he speculated as to whether Laura might not be in love with the man, turning it over and over in his mind until he

ecame wildly jealcus.

Again and again he rang her door-bell without success. It was early in Ceptember when the ring was finally answered and he was again shown into Mrs Thorn

hill's presence.

She was in her tailor-made traveling gown, and the chairs were in bulky grey ward.

Laura took no notice when the constraint gradually extended itself to Mr straint gradually extended itself to Mr mer's outing, Eugene Hilliard felt mere dark polished floor was without covering. which we often see in those who have been away and, after seeing new people and new scenes, have not yet adjusted themselves to the old surroundings. She met him pleasantly, but her greeting was like a sunny day in which there is still

'a nipping and an eager air." Eugene the self satisfied, the dictator, guide and counselor, felt chilled. "And Dorothea!" asked she, kindly.

of speech, and the difficulty at once made evident of further explanations. has been juggling?"

petuously. 'Certainly.' Then she rang an electric bell and ordered the fire to be built up, while he sat waiting to begin.
Her manner confused him. She was

cool and self-poised that it seemed like addressing a statue. He told his story and told it badly; and while he was pleading his love, and declaring he had always felt for herever since—well, ever since it would have been right—only he didn't recognize it as love and thought it friendship, she sat playing with the little gold charm dang-

ling from her bit of watch chain, with a smile on her face.

It seemed to him that he had never seen her smile so much as during the past few moments. "Stop smiling," said he, "I cannot

She left off playing with the charm, and, rising with much dignity, left the He waited for her to return-ten.

fifteen, twenty minutes! He looked at his watch! It was half an hour. He got up and walked about the room in a sort of frenzy. She was not coming back. Then he went out into the hall and kicked a little English pug that

exclaimed the maid, who He heard the epithet as if in a dream, It made no difference. He was in love with Laura and had made her angry.

"Brute!"

Where did that dog come from? He would like to wring his ugly English much as he had loved her. This lasted two weeks. Then he went around and apologized to her, and

take her hand and wanted her to set the won her must prove that he possessed the "Why, because it was so. It was not know it, but it wasn't exactly agreepower of being faithful. That he might

So a year went by, in which he ad-dressed himself to the business of winning her. His face grew thinner, and he looked more melancholy and romantic

than ever.
When Laura at last capitalated and named the day, Eugene clasped her to him, and called her the most cruel but dearest creature on the face of the earth.
"I meant to punish you, Gene," said

Laura, between a laugh and a cry.
"Well, now," said he, "you fulfilled your intention." "Are you sure you would rather have me-very sure-than Dorothea Mathil-

And he mumbled her white hand and covered it with kisses, between which he muttered, "Hang D-rothes Mathilde!"

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"Oh, that is over," he replied, consicious of the impropriety of his formula if speech, and the difficulty at once made evident of further explanation.
"Over!—How?"
"We are not engaged any mcre."
"Oh, that is it! Presto, change! Who has been juggling?"
"Let me tell you, Laura," said he impetuously.
"Certainly." Then she rang an electric bell and ordered the fire to be built up, while he sat waiting to begin.

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