

look satisfied. The grey eyes seemed to grow larger and larger until her face seemed all eyes, and her cheeks showed a faint hollow where the dimples used to play. One miserable night too, Norah woke to find Lettice sobbing with her head buried in the pillow, and heard a pitiful repetition of the words, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" But when she inquired what was wrong, Lettice declared that a tooth was aching, and sat up in the bed and rubbed her gums obediently with a lotion brought from the medicine cupboard. Norah blamed herself for doubting her sister's word, but she could not help noticing that the toothache yielded very rapidly to the remedy, and the incident left a painful impression on her mind.

Norah was not the only member of the household who was anxious about Lettice's happiness. Mr. Bertrand had a serious conversation on the subject with his eldest daughter one morning when Lettice's pallor and subdued voice had been more marked than usual.

"I can't stand seeing the child going about like this. She looks the ghost of what she was five or six months back, and seems to have no spirit left. I shall have to speak to her. It is most painful and awkward on the very eve of the marriage as it were, but if she is not happy—"

"Perhaps it is only that she is tired, and feels the prospect of leaving home," said Hilary, and at that very moment the door was burst open and in rushed Lettice herself, cheeks flushed, hair loose, eyes dancing with merriment. She and Raymond had just played a trick upon unsuspecting Miss Briggs with magnificent success. She was breathless with delight, could hardly speak for bursts of laughter, and danced up and down the room, looking so gay and blithe and like the Lettice of old, that her father went off to his study with a heartfelt sigh of relief. Hilary was right. The child was happy enough. If she were a little quieter than usual it was only natural and fitting under the circumstances. He dismissed the subject from his mind, and settled contentedly to work.

One thing was certain, Arthur Newcome was a most attentive lover. Lettice contented herself with scribbling two or three short notes a week, but every afternoon the postman brought a bulky envelope addressed to her in the small neat handwriting which was getting familiar to every member of the household. Norah had an insatiable passion for receiving letters, and was inclined to envy her sister this part of her engagement.

"It must be so lovely to get long, long epistles every day. Lettice, I don't want to see them of course, but what sort of letters does he write? What does he talk about? Is it all affection, or does he tell you interesting pieces of news?"

Lettice gave the sheets a flick with her white fingers.

"You can read it if you like. There is nothing private. I must say he does not write exciting letters. He has been in Canterbury, and this one is a sort of guide-book about the crypt. As if I wanted to hear about crypts! I must say I did not think when I was engaged that I should have letters all about tombs and stupid old monuments! Arthur is so serious. I suppose he thinks he will 'improve my mind,' but if I am to be improved I would rather read a book at once and not be lectured in my love letters."

She had never spoken so openly before, and Norah dared not let the opportunity pass.

"Oh, Lettice, dear, aren't you happy, aren't you satisfied?" she cried earnestly. "I have been afraid sometimes that you were not so fond of Arthur as you should be. Do, do speak out, dear, if it is so, and put an end to things while there is time!"

"An end! What do you mean? I am to be married in less than a month, the house is ready; how could I put an end to it? Don't be foolish, Norah. Besides, I do care for Arthur. I wish sometimes that he were a little younger and less proper, but that is only because he is too clever and learned for a stupid little thing like me. Don't talk like

that again, it makes me miserable. Wouldn't you like to have a house of your own and be able to do whatever you liked? My little boudoir is so sweet, all blue and white, and we will have such cosy times in it, you and I, and Edna must come up and stay with me too. Oh, it will be lovely, I am sure it will. I shall be quite happy. I am glad father insisted upon having the wedding up here, it will be so much quieter than in a fashionable London church with all the rabble at the doors. Dreadful to be stared at by hundreds of people who don't know or care anything about you, and only look at you as part of a show. Here all the people are interested and care a little bit for 'Miss Lettice.' If only Rex were to be here! It seems hard that he should leave home just a fortnight before my wedding."

Norah sighed and relapsed into silence. It was all settled about Rex's departure by this time. The Squire had given way, Mrs. Freer and Edna had wept themselves dry, and were now busily occupied in preparing what Rex insisted upon describing as his "*trousseau*."

"I have one hundred and fifty 'pieces' in my *trousseau*; how many have you in yours?" he asked Lettice one day, and the girls were much impressed at the extensiveness of his preparations, until it was discovered that he counted each sock separately, and took each suit of clothes as representing three of the aforesaid "pieces." Having once given way, the Squire behaved in the most generous manner, and at his suggestion, Rex was to travel overland to Brindisi, spending a month in various places of interest on the continent; in order to do this and catch the appointed boat, it was necessary to leave Westmoreland at the end of August. Ten days more, and then good-bye to Rex, good-bye to the happy old days which could never come back again! Four days more, three days, two days, one day—the last afternoon arrived, and with a sinking heart Norah went to meet Rex in the drawing-room for the last time for long years to come.

(To be continued.)



PUZZLE COMPETITION.

No Puzzle Poem this month. Instead, we invite our readers to convert the following verses into a puzzle. There are no restrictions as to the form the puzzle must take. If pictures are employed, due allowance will be made for inexpert draughtsmanship, for this is not a drawing competition. The prizes will be awarded for the most ingenious efforts. If the Puzzle Editor can be tempted back to puzzle life he will act as judge.

SIX GUINEAS will be given in prizes; one being reserved for competitors living abroad.

The rules are few but important:—

1. Only a single sheet of paper or card may be used.

2. Only one side may be written upon.
3. The name and address of the competitor must appear at the top of the paper or card.
4. The puzzles are to be sent as soon as finished to The Editor, GIRL'S OWN PAPER, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
5. The last day for receiving them will be April 15 from the United Kingdom; and June 18 from Abroad.

A BAIT.

The Puzzle Editor has flown
(Although he cannot fly),
His whereabouts is quite unknown,
Because he is so shy.

He disappeared the very night
His last report was penned,
Perchance he thought by wingless flight
His puzzle work to end.
If happily this puzzle bait
Should tempt him from his lair,
No more he'll underestimate
His victims' wild despair.

CONSOLATION PRIZE, 1896-7.

This is awarded to
IDA RAFFORD,
to whom a guinea will be sent if she will forward her address to the Editor.