

personality a vitality, an eager youthfulness, which made me all at once feel more alive. And there emanated from her the same serenity, the same restfulness, the same spirit of inward peace, which looked out of her eyes and shone in her smile.

Presently she turned a little, and included in our conversation the red-gowned woman whose hard eyes, in some unaccountable way, seemed to soften as they looked into the blue eyes of my companion.

"Where is Sylvia Grant to-night?" my new friend asked of the lady of the red gown.

"Oh, my dear Miss Larpent," came the answer, accompanied by a rather contemptuous laugh, "she took herself off this afternoon. She made this place too hot to hold her. Even you, charitable as you are, must ——"

"She is so young, and so very pretty," my blue-eyed lady interrupted gently. "If she were a little bit foolish, too, perhaps it was only natural. After all, one has not completely graduated in wisdom at eighteen."

"I believe she enjoyed breaking hearts," chimed in the small, fair lady on my left; and I noticed almost a vicious ring in her voice. I was convinced that she and the unknown Sylvia had been rivals.

But Miss Larpent turned those blue serene eyes of hers towards the fair, rather fretful face.

"I should never despair even of the Sylvias of this world," she said, and though she spoke quietly, I was struck by a firmness in her voice. "There are fine characteristics in this particular Sylvia, and when the surface froth has blown away, the real good that is underneath will come to the top."

"Is there any real good?" sneered the red-gowned dame. "You are so determined always to see the best in everybody, dear Miss Larpent, and—to ignore anything else. What is the use of pretending people are bits of perfection when they are nothing of the kind?"

"On the other hand, what is the use of picking out only the weak points in a character, and focussing our gaze upon those? I have a notion that the more you dwell upon the thought that your neighbour is a thief, a liar, a generally disreputable person, the more you help him to be all those things. But the more you single out his good qualities and dwell upon *them*, so much the more do you enable him to reach his ideal self."

Her tones had become grave, but she smiled as she looked from one of the ladies to the other; that disarming smile of hers brought answering smiles.