

presents! I could never break it off. Poor Arthur would be broken-hearted, and his mother would be so angry; she would never let Madge speak to me again. Oh, no! I feel better already for talking to you. I get nervous and imagine things that are not true. I shall be very happy—of course I shall be happy. Arthur is so kind—and the house is so pretty. Don't look so miserable, Norah dear; indeed, indeed, I shall be all right."

"I hope so; but, Lettice, do think over it well while there is time. It would be terrible to have to break off your engagement now, but, at the worst, all the gossip and upset would be over in two or three months, and if you married it would be for your whole life. Father would be angry, but I would help you. I would stay with you, Lettice, and help you every minute of the time."

"I know you would, I know you would." Lettice spoke in a quick, breathless whisper, and her eyes were fixed as if she were a prisoner looking through the barred window and trying to summon up courage to escape—then a shudder shook the slight shoulders, and she jumped up, holding out her hands with a gesture of dismay.

"Oh no, no! Don't talk of anything so dreadful. Arthur is coming on Saturday and I shall be quite happy. I am dull because I have not seen him for so long, but you will see how bright I am when he is here. I was very weak and foolish to speak as I did, but I can trust you, Norah. You have promised not to tell."

"Yes, I have promised." Poor Norah was only too willing to be convinced, and surely what Lettice said was reasonable enough. She would wait at any rate until Saturday before making any further attempt to persuade her sister to a step which must bring so much suffering and humiliation in its train.

Two days later the bridegroom arrived. Lettice went to the station to meet him, and a very handsome couple they looked as they drove up to the door. Mr. Newcome immaculate as ever despite the long dusty journey, and so large and impressive, that Norah was quite embarrassed by the suggestion that she should address him as "Arthur."

Lettice was all smiles and radiance, much delighted with a necklace of turquoise and diamonds which her lover had brought as his wedding present, and which she exhibited proudly to every member of the household.

Father, brothers and sisters were alike so relieved to see her happiness that they were prepared to welcome Arthur Newcome with open arms, and to acknowledge that their prejudices were unfounded. They listened with smiling faces to his tedious description of his journey north, of previous journeys, or journeys still to come; they tried to show an interest in the items of stale information which he offered in words of studied length and elegance, and with the air of imparting a startling novelty, but alas, it was all in vain. After three days' experience the unanimous verdict proclaimed that such a well-behaved and withal tiresome, and prosy young gentleman had never before worn frock coats, or walked about country lanes in a tall hat and immaculate kid gloves.

"He must be different with Lettice. She could never endure it if he bored her as much as he does us," reiterated Hilary firmly, upon which Raymond's eyes twinkled with mischievous intentions.

"Well—do you know, I should like to feel certain about that!" he said, and forthwith strolled out into the garden through the open doorway.

Lettice and Arthur Newcome were pacing their favourite walk, the narrow shrubbery path which encircled the lawn, and at intervals of every three or four minutes the two figures came into sight as the path opened to drive and tennis ground. Master Raymond strolled across to the first of these openings, leant nonchalantly against a tree, and waited the approach of footsteps. They came—a strong, steady crunching of the gravel, a pattering of quick, uneven little steps, and the sound of a deep bass voice struck on the ear.

"—And further on in the transept aisle, I came upon a particularly heavy and unattractive cenotaph to the memory of—"

Raymond gasped, and rolled his eyes; then as the footsteps died away sped lightly across the lawn, and en-

sconced himself at the next point of vantage. The boom of Mr. Newcome's big voice came again to his ear. Poor little Lettice was evidently a good listener!

"—The epitaph is in the inflated style of the period—bombastic in character, and supposed to be written by—"

"Bombastic!" echoed Raymond in despair, "I know someone else to whom that epithet would apply uncommonly well. This is worse than I expected. I'll give him one more chance, and then—"

But at the third hearing Mr. Newcome was discoursing on "Allegorical figures and pseudo-classic statues," whereupon Raymond dashed off into the house and horrified his sisters by an account of his experiences.

"What a shame to listen like that. Lettice would be very angry if she knew."

"It was for her own good. Poor little soul, I'm sorry for her. What on earth made him choose tombstones as a topic of conversation?"

"I know. He has been staying in Canterbury. Lettice told me that he had written to her about the Cathedral," said Norah dolefully. "I wonder if I ought to go and join them! She asked me, and pinched my arm to make me say yes, but I thought Arthur looked as if he didn't want me. Can't we make an excuse and call her in? She looks so tired."

"Well, they are the funniest pair of lovers I have ever seen!" said Raymond, nodding his head with a knowing look, as if he had had an extensive knowledge of engaged couples, whereas he had never been in the house with one before. And just at that moment in marched Lettice, her fair face disfigured by a weary, irritable expression.

"I think you are all very unkind! I asked you to come into the garden. It's very mean to leave me all alone, when I have only a f—f—fortnight more at home!" The last word ended in a burst of tears, and she ran hurriedly upstairs to her own room.

What was to be the end of it all! Her sisters stared at each other with wide, frightened eyes, too miserable and uneasy to speak.

(To be continued.)

## HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

It is highly dangerous to leave a gas-burner turned low unless surrounded by a globe, and even then a draught of wind may blow out the flame and leave the gas escaping.

**GAS-BURNERS** should now and then be cleaned out with a piece of wire or a long pin to clear out any impurities or dust accumulation.

**CUPBOARDS** and storerooms should periodically have the doors set open for air and light to penetrate, and the shelves should be cleaned or at least brushed out once a week.

**SPONGES** should never be used for applying a lotion to an open wound.

To keep a quill pen soft, have it always in the ink and do not let it get dry.

An old rusty pen left in the ink-bottle will be of service in attracting the corroding matter from other pens in use.

**MATTRESSES**, pillows, and bolsters should be periodically sent to the cleaners to be taken to pieces and cleaned. It is not good for health to use them for years uncleaned, as most people have them.

Do not let your neighbours have to complain of your gate squeaking for want of a few drops of oil applied to the joint. It is a most aggravating noise.

**TEACH** your children how to mend window-blinds, door-latches, and all the little things of the sort about the house; you will materially lessen your workmen's bills and give useful occupation to handy fingers.

A **PIECE** of black sticking-plaster, notched all round the edges, and applied outside a crack in the leather of a shoe, is a neat way of mending it, and shows very little.

**BLACK** alpaca is one of the nicest materials for an under-petticoat; it wears well, is light, and does not harbour dust.

**TOAST** to be crisp and well made should not be done all on one side and then the other, but the sides frequently changed to and from the fire; this evaporates the moisture more effectually. Much also depends on the kind of bread that is used and the condition of the fire.

**NEITHER** hot water nor hot ovens can be had if cleaning of the kitchen flues is neglected.