

But this was not to last. I had outgrown newspaper selling and become flower-girl, while he was fast outgrowing the play-ground in the park. A change came.

How well I remember the last day he was there. He came to me, bought a bouquet; said he was going to college and would probably not see me again, but he did not like to think of me always on the street selling flowers. There was a great lump in my throat. I could not speak.

I had been so happy studying and working only for him, and now he was going away out of my life. The tears came to my eyes. This was too much for my brave, tender-hearted boy to stand. The firm, proud lips quivered, the dark eyes became moist as he said, "Madge; I shall have holidays in two years. Where will you be?" I said I would be in the same room where my mother left me, were it possible. "Then," said he, "in two years I will be back to London before deciding on a profession and will come and see you. Remember the date, Madge." With this he left me. Two years! What an eternity! Would I live that long, I thought. Once again I was alone. The old woman who taught me was kind, but he had talked to me as if I were his equal and yet he was the younger brother of a lord. In two years I would be fourteen. How I worked those two years, studying every spare minute, and when they had joined the ages of the past I found myself at fourteen almost a woman.

My education was very good, and I knew I was pretty, for often I heard ladies in their carriages remark "what a beautiful flower-girl?" I was not flattered, only pleased, for Ralph would perhaps think me pretty, too. At last the day arrived when he was to return. It had never entered my mind to doubt that he would keep his word, for as a child he had never broken it.

I made the room look as cheerful and comfortable as possible, and putting on the first *real* dress I had ever had, I waited for my hero.

Heaven was then kind; he came. If he was a bright, beautiful boy at fourteen, at sixteen he was far brighter, far more handsome. The same frank face, the same happy, kind smile; but instead of a boy in size, a man, almost six feet high, stood before me.

"Well, Madge," said he, after a while, "you will have to hurry up or I will not be able to look down so far."

I had to tell him all I had gone through since his departure, and when I would touch on any hardship, the tears would come to his eyes as of yore; and what large, lovely, dark eyes he had. He would rather I did not sell flowers any more. "For," said he, "the streets of London is no place for a face like yours."

I concluded to grant his request and try to get a place as day governess.

Before he left for Cambridge, I had succeeded in securing a situation and he was satisfied that I would be no longer in the streets. Teaching was for me much harder work, but I did not mind if only he were pleased. Time wore on. I was a child no longer. A woman now, with all the hopes and fears and longings that go with a warm, passionate Italian nature, and now I knew that I loved the handsome, polished Ralph Livingstone. I thought he must care very much for me else why should he take so much interest in me.

At last I was twenty-one, while he was twenty-three, with the profession of barrister-at-law. Had I doubted his love; I no longer did.

How well we seemed to know each other and how many happy evenings we had spent together, playing, singing, reading poetry or an occasional novel, arguing, discussing, till our very lives seemed one.

I had not a thought apart from him. I had forgotten that he had plenty to interest him besides me; in fact I was only a mere page in the book of his life. One happy night he told me that he loved me, only being a younger son I would have to wait till he had made a mark in his profession.