

thusiasm of his warm heart, throwing himself upon his knees after the African fashion, seized his master's hand and kissed it.

"Thanks, Jeeki," said Alan, "very kind of you, I am sure. But we haven't come to that yet, though no one knows what may happen later on. Now sit upon that chair and take a little whiskey—not too much—for I am going to ask your advice."

"Major," said Jeeki, "I obey," and seizing the whiskey bottle in a casual manner, he poured out half a tumbler full, for Jeeki was fond of whiskey. Indeed, before now this taste had brought him into conflict with the local magistrate.

"Put back those parts of that," said Alan, and Jeeki did so. "Now," he went on, "listen: this is the case, Miss Barbara and I are—" and he hesitated.

"Oh! I know; like me and Mrs. Jeeki once," said Jeeki gulping down some of the whiskey. "Go on, Major."

"And Sir Robert Aylward is—"

"Same thing, Major. Continue."

"And Mr. Haswell has—"

"Those facts all ascertained, Major," said Jeeki,

contemplating his glass with a mournful eye. "Now come to point, Major."

"Well, the point is, Jeeki, that I am what you called just now cashless, and therefore—"

"Therefore," interrupted Jeeki again, "stick fast in honourable intention towards Miss Barbara owing to obstinate opposition of Mr. Haswell, legal uncle with control of property fomented by noble Sir Robert, who desire same girl."

"Quite right, Jeeki; but if you would talk a little less and let me talk a little more, we might get on better."

"I henceforth silent, Major," and lifting his empty tumbler Jeeki looked through it as if it were a telescope, a hint that Alan ignored.

"Jeeki, you infernal old fool, I want money."

"Yes, Major, I understand, Major. Forgive me for breaking conspiracy of silence, but if £500 in Savings Bank any use, very much at your service, Major; also £20 more extracted last night from terror of wealthy Jew who fear fetish."

"Jeeki, you old donkey, I don't want your £500; I want a great deal more, £50,000 or £500,000. Tell me how to get it."

"City best place, Major. But you chuck city, too much honest man, great mistake to be honest in this terrestrial sphere. Often notice that in West Africa."

"Perhaps, Jeeki, but I have done with the city. As you would say, for me it is 'wipe out, finish.'"

"Yes, Major, too much pickpocket, too much dirt. Bottom always drop out of bucket shop at last. I understand, end in police court and severe magistrate, or perhaps even 'Gentlemen of Jury,' etcetra."

"Well, Jeeki, then what remains? Now last night when you told us that amazing yarn of yours, you said something about a mountain full of gold, and houses full of gold among your people. Jeeki, do you think—" and he paused, looking at him.

Jeeki rolled his black eyes round the room and in a fit of absent-mindedness helped himself to some more whiskey.

"Do I think, Major, that this useless lucre could be convert into coin of King Edward? Not at all, Major, by no one, Major, by no one whatsoever, except possibly by Major Alan Vernon, D.S.O., and by one Jeeki, Christian surname Smith."

(To be continued.)

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

By MRS. HAROLD GORST

"I SUPPOSE," remarked Molly, pausing in her occupation of trimming a hat with snippets of ribbon attached by pins, "as I am determined to adopt literature as a career, I ought to study all the—the big questions of the day?"

"Such as—?"

"Oh! War, international alliances, Free reform and Tariff-what-do-you-call-it, State children, Politics, and all that sort of thing, you know."

I suppressed every sign of a smile. "A large order," I remarked.

Molly sighed. Then, looking wistfully up at me, she added, "But I suppose it really is necessary, isn't it?"

Knowing her so well I felt that the prospect bored her immensely. To save her, I ventured on an emphatic "Oh, no, not at all." Which was stupid of me, taking into consideration my original intention. It only strengthened her resolution.

"A conscientious writer should endeavour to know something of everything," she remarked, "and if you really had my interests at heart you would encourage me, instead of throwing cold water on every scheme I propose for the enlargement of my mental horoscope."

I seldom argue with the child, however unreasonable her remarks may be; and when she proceeds to the use of "Journalese" in her ordinary conversation I surrender unconditionally.

She picked up a section of polyglot bird and a cluster of mauve roses, trying the effect of each under the brim of the hat she was trimming.

"And how do you propose to begin?" I asked, when I had sufficiently recovered from the snub she had dealt me.

"Begin, oh begin?" echoed Molly somewhat vaguely, and it was clear that she was not thinking of what she was saying. "I shall—which do you think looks best, the flowers or the bird just here?"

She adjusted the hat at right angles, and placed first one and then the other monstrosity towards one side.

Privately I thought each equally hideous, but I did not venture to hint at my true opinion. "Perhaps the flowers," I said.

She chose the bird, and stabbed it with a bonnet pin.

"I shall begin with Politics," my cousin went on, surveying her handiwork with evident pride.

"By the way, what do you mean by the word Politics?" I inquired, curious to hear her definition: for she spoke of it as something quite distinct from her other subjects.

Molly reflectively nibbled a gutta-percha rose stem. "Oh! the Administration of Budgets, National Warfare, and compulsory abuses in the House of Commons," she said at length, and peeped suspiciously up at me in case she had made any mistake in her terms.

"I see," I replied with admirable gravity.

"Yes," feeling now more sure of her ground, "and then there's that other Budget on Income Tax, you know, and Labour Parties, and Woman's Sufferings, and Mr. Haldane, and Home-Something for Ireland. It's all got to do with Politics, hasn't it?"

"Well—er—yes," I allowed.

"You see," triumphed Molly, "although I'm only a woman I am not entirely ignorant of the subject. I have a little knowledge already."

"You have, indeed," I agreed fervently.

She affected modesty. "Of course, I don't pretend to know much as yet, not as much as a man naturally does; but I can easily learn the rest."

"H'm. And how do you propose to add to your knowledge? Hansard? Blue Books?"

She had never heard of either. "No, I shall go to the House and listen to the debates and quarrels and things. . . . You shall take me."

"Delighted," I murmured.

Molly threw the completed millinery on one side.

"We'll go to-night," she announced, and she looked quite delighted at the novelty of the prospect. I suggested difficulties in the way of obtaining a seat in the ladies' gallery at such short notice; but Molly does not acknowledge defeat in anything on which she has set her heart.

"Nonsense," she said. "There's always somebody who has returned a seat at the last moment. Go and find out. And come back here for me at seven and we'll dine somewhere—Prince's, I think, before we go in."

It was evident that my young cousin regarded her proposed expedition as she would have done a visit to the theatre or to any other place of amusement.

I departed to do—or endeavour to do—her bidding.

As luck would have it, I ran up against old Sir Christopher Bladen. To him I explained my cousin's wishes, and asked if he could help me.

He shook his head at first, for the balloting for seats had been keen all the Session, and to-night's debate promised to give rise to exciting developments.

Incidentally I mentioned that my cousin was a very pretty girl, not yet in the twenties. (I have known Sir Christopher for many years, and am well acquainted with his little human weakness.)

He brightened perceptibly. "Well, I'll tell you what," he said at length. "Bring the lady down about nine o'clock, on the off chance; and if I can possibly manage to get her a seat, you may depend upon it I certainly will."

I called for Molly as arranged, and we dined at Prince's. As a rule she has a great liking for that popular *restaurant*, but to-night found her unheeding of her gay surroundings. She refused champagne and drank nothing but water, saying she wanted to keep her brain clear for the purpose of studying later on.

At a quarter to nine we entered what Molly, in an awed whisper, was pleased to describe as the "sacred precincts of the vast hall of English Justice and Law." I suspected she was trying on me the effect of sentences which would figure later in her manuscript book, and I think she was a trifle disappointed at my not applauding what she evidently regarded as a well-rounded period.

The dim grey light, the stealthy approach and penetrative glances of sundry policemen on our way to the public lobby, thrilled my companion with delight, and with a vague hope that we might be mistaken for conspirators concealing deadly bombs beneath our cloaks and coats.

Sir Christopher was waiting for us in the lobby, and beamed delighted welcome upon my fair cousin. Talking all the while, he led the way into the inner lobby. He explained the subject of the debate down

for hearing that night, and Molly appeared to be greatly interested.

Sir Christopher was in no hurry to part with his new companion; and sought for every pretext by means of which he could keep her a little longer by his side. He pointed out the peep-hole, and, of course, she must softly tip-toe to it.

Bored members, leaning back listlessly in their benches, and eager for some droning speech to be over, were delighted to discover her fresh radiant young face beaming impartially on them through the murky dinginess of the dividing window.

Somebody came up to Sir Christopher. A lady had just left the Cage, and there was now room for the would-be political student. We escorted my cousin up in the lift, and left her in charge of an attendant at the door of her gaol.

I am afraid it was nearly two hours later when, after an exciting night which must forever remain famous in the history of our times, I, guiltily fearing an indignant reception at the hands of my temporarily forgotten cousin, presented myself with Sir Christopher once more at the door of the Ladies' Gallery.

Most of the ladies were leaving. I caught enthusiastic murmurs from some as they passed me. "A really brilliant evening! What magnificent oratory!" "An unqualified success —'s speech on the —!" and the like. After all, then, women did sometimes understand these things.

I looked upon my cousin, picturing with pleased delight an interesting conversation with her on the subject of the night's debate. She was gazing wistfully immediately in front of her. Then she turned and saw me.

In the lift going down she barely spoke. We said good-bye to Sir Christopher, and she thanked him very prettily, saying with great fervour that she had enjoyed her evening immensely.

"And now," I said, when at length we were alone in the carriage and bowling homewards, "now, my little cousin, tell me all about it."

"I wouldn't have missed this evening for anything," she affirmed, and there was a note of real enthusiasm in her voice. "You see, next month the Springletts are giving their moonlight fete, and I most particularly wanted to choose a dress for the occasion which would be becoming, poetical and expressively uncommon; and though I have racked my brains night and day, I couldn't think of anything which would be suitable. And there, to-night, was a woman in the loveliest shade of mauve veiled in palest *eau-de-nil* chiffon, powdered with Empire roses and—"

I do not remember the rest of the description, neither did I understand the feminine jargon in which it was couched, but I listened to her as patiently as I could until she had finished, before I asked, using her generic term for the subject:

"And Politics, what of them?"

"Politics! Oh Politics, I think they are simply childish," she replied, as the carriage stopped and I prepared to help her down the step. "Life is so full of really big things, things that matter, that I can't understand grown men getting excited over silly little trifles such as we heard to-night. . . . Good-bye—come round to-morrow, and I'll show you the preliminary sketch for my new gown."

I have sometimes, since, wondered if there was more wisdom in my cousin's verdict than she wot of.