

do say it isn't a dreadful joke."

"It isn't a dreadful joke," lied Constance cheerfully. "But run along m'dear, and get your prettiest gown on. I thought you went to dress an hour ago."

"Constance," said Sheelah solemnly. "I think he is laughing at me, and I could never bear that."

Two big tears forced themselves from her eyes.

"*Ma foi*, the child is never crying. Then I'll give you a remedy."

She darted into the dressing-room and scribbled a note. Things are going a little too far, and she had to drop out as gracefully as possible. To write a letter was the work of a moment and to sign Charlie O'Hara's name was a detail. So she carried this note back to Sheelah, who never doubted it.

"Here is a note that came for you a while back, and if I mistake not, 'tis in Sir Charles O'Hara's hand. Don't stare so, child, but open it and let's hear the news."

Sheelah, whose face was now beaming, handed the note to her friend, who read it aloud.

"Cousin Sheelah:

"Meet me at a quarter before twelve at the forked lilac-tree, and breathe not a word to anyone, but come.

"C. O'H."

"O—o—o—h, will I go?"

"Go?" asked Constance, "Lud, what a question for a love-lorn maid to ask! He might catch a cold and die if he were kept waiting; I've heard of such cases."

She laughed merrily at Sheelah's serious face, and, putting her arm around her waist, drew her to the door, pushed her outside and gently shut and locked it.

"Now for the final step," she murmured, as she crossed to the writing-desk. "This is going to be the hard part, for he knows my writing. But here is one of Sheelah's letters, and I must back out of this at once."

She sat down and laboriously copied

for about twenty minutes. Writing the note, tearing it up, and so on. At length, finishing one to her satisfaction, she stood up and flinging her long cloak over her shoulders ran out and along the hall to the rooms Sir Charles occupied. Finding the door ajar, she slipped in, placed the note on the centre table, and then flew back to her own room.

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Sheelah was restless all evening, and at half after eleven, she slipped away to her room. After a few moments of aimless wandering around she put on a long velvet cloak and hood and placed a basket over her arm as a precaution in case she met anyone and was asked where she was going, then she could say that it was for lilacs, which was true in a sense, as she really did intend to get some, because no really nice girl would go out at that hour just to meet a—well, a lover, even if he were a kinsman.

However, she was not delayed and she walked steadily across the terrace, over the lawn, and through the woods to the stream; as she intended to rest there until he came, the while utterly forgetful of her intentions towards lilacs.

"I do wish he'd come," she said to herself. "I really do believe I must be in love to have come here to-night; well, I wonder just what this is? Love—love? My definition would be that 't is the devil of the age; the seducer, methinks, the tempter. Ah, me! the basest, vilest, truest, most tempting, most excellent, falsest, dearest treasure in this whole world! I wonder why I love my kinsman? I don't—I hate him! I detest him, and he dislikes me, I am afraid, and yet I do love him. What a glorious sensation. I—in love? 'Tis vastly amusing—for others, perchance. But what is this creature I love? A man—with a strong mind, a great heart hidden by treacherous flippancy; a man who flatters and lies to a woman without winking. I loathe all men,