

which our readers are acquainted. When she had finished Morales remained silent, contenting himself with nodding his head expressively a score of times.

"What do you think of it?" asked Carmen. "I think you are playing a mighty dangerous game, and that you are right in supposing that that good fellow your husband suspects something. His sudden change of conduct is proof enough that he is jealous of the Marquis. Do you want me to give you a piece of good advice?"

"If you like you may, but I warn you before hand that in all probability I shall neglect it."

"So much the worse for you. However, here it is: Give up this folly, which must end badly, and remember that after all Oliver is a good fellow and has done a great deal for you."

"You are mistaken Morales, he has done nothing for me."

"For whom then?"

"For Don José's daughter. There is no such person as Carmen to him. True he bestowed his name and fortune on Annunziata, but Carmen owes him no gratitude."

"That is more sophistry. I can give you no reply, it would be too long. But, after all, he loves you."

"No."

"Is it possible? You were saying just now that no one who knew you could help loving you."

"Oliver is an exception. I have not the least influence over him. His icy indifference to me has always wounded my woman's *amour-propre*."

"Would your husband be jealous if he did not love you?"

"He is only jealous of his honor."

Morales made no reply. After pondering a few moments he looked up. "I suppose," he said "that you did not send for me with the sole intention of making me your confidant."

"You are right in supposing so."

"You have an idea you want to carry out?"

"Yes."

"And you need me to help you?"

"Yes."

"Say on. What are your projects? I am ready to do all in my power to help you."

"I wish to see M. de Grancey again. But first of all I want to write to him."

"There is nothing to hinder you, only it will be well to be prudent."

"What have people in love to do with prudence?"

"Just for that reason the young god should be whipped out of the world."

"It is easy to see that you never were in love, my poor Morales."

"Never for one single hour. That is the literal truth. And this is undoubtedly the reason that I get on this world. It seems to me right enough to appreciate women in general; but to adore one in particular—it is fatal! That is my opinion. I believe it to be the correct one, and it is not my intention to change it in a hurry."

"Enough wandering from the subject, Morales."

"I am silent."

"Here is the letter."

"The letter for the Marquis."

"Yes."

"Plague! you have lost no time. And who is to give it him? Who is to bring back the answer?"

"Some one in whom I have every confidence."

"Take care, sister. Confidence is not always well placed."

"I have nothing to fear from the person I mean. You know him well."

"Does he live in this house?"

"Yes."

"You surprise me. All whom I know who live in this house are arrant rogues, with the exception of old Zephyr, and he is only a fool. So who is this messenger who is so sure and trustworthy?"

"You, self, brother."

Morales drew back as his sister held out the letter to him, as he would have had her seen a rattlesnake preparing to spring at him.

"I!" he cried three times in three different tones of voice. "No! no! no!"

"Then you refuse to do me this service?" asked Carmen.

"Such a service as that. I should think so."

To be continued.

THAT MR. SMITH.

"Dear aunt, do you suppose I shall be as cross-grained as you are when I get to be forty-five?"

"Oh, Nettie! how can you talk so to me—I, who have been a mother to you?" was the smiling reply, for well Mrs. Dee knew her wayward niece.

And now the little witch turned on her with sparkling eyes, saying—

"If you were not the dearest little fairy of an aunt, I should really get angry with you for suggesting such a thing. Marry Mr. Smith, indeed!"

"Nettie, darling, I did not ask you to marry him. Seriously, would it not be prudent to wait till the gentleman himself propounded the momentous question?" was Mr. Dee's mischievous rejoinder.

"I see I shall have no peace in the house, so I will seek another refuge."

Snatching up her hat, she was gone.

Sauntering down a lovely country by-lane, so deeply immersed in thought, she ran plump into the arms of a gentleman with spectacles.

"Oh, Mr. Smith, how did you get here?"

"Walked to be sure."

"Oh, I meant what are you doing away out here? I thought you were in S—."

"No; I was drawn magnetically hither by a pair of brown eyes belonging to a certain little friend of mine."

"Pshaw! what nonsense!"

"Miss Nettie, I am in earnest; and if you will sit down here, I will tell you that which I have been trying to say for a long time."

"Dear me! Mr. Smith, I haven't time to sit down, and even if I had, I wouldn't sit down here on this grass, and stain my new muslin. I really am in a great hurry. I—but good morning. You will find aunt at the house. She will be delighted to see you."

She hurried off, leaving him standing alone, gazing after her graceful figure.

"By Jove! I never can catch her," was his despairing thought.

While Nettie indignantly pursued her way, muttering—

"The old silly! to think I would become Mrs. Smith—and he with red hair and beard! Spectacles too! Oh, Harry, Harry!"

And having turned a corner, her hurry suddenly ceased.

She threw herself down under a wide-spreading oak, and sobbed aloud.

My heroine was nineteen, slender and graceful as a swaying willow, with creamy complexion, dark brown eyes, and a wealth of golden curls.

A year ago she was the betrothed of a promising young man, named Harry Leaverton, whom she almost idolized.

He had been compelled to go abroad, and, as Nettie's aunt would not consent to give her up for another year, he was forced to go without Nettie, but taking her promise to become his wife on his return.

At first his letters had been frequent, than they ceased entirely.

One morning, on looking over the papers, she had come upon the shipwreck of the "Golden Arrow," and among the lost passengers was the name of Harry Leaverton.

"False and dead," she moaned, as the paper fell from her nerveless fingers; and for the first time in her life she fainted.

Her aunt, coming in, picked up the paper, and had no need to inquire the cause of her niece's condition.

For several months she drooped, when, summer having come, her aunt took her to N—.

But the sight of the sea made her so ill that she was whisked off to London.

Here she regained some of her old gaiety, and, for a while, appeared to enjoy the excitement.

But again languor seized her frame, and telling her aunt that "odious Mr. Smith was torturing her life out," the indulgent lady whirled her off to the country.

And now the indefatigable Mr. Smith had tracked her out again.

But if we leave her under that oak much longer, she will indeed spoil her muslin; and not only that, but her pretty eyes also.

But she has raised herself, fearing Mr. Smith will follow, and catching her crying, will flatter himself it is on account of her rudeness to him.

The thought gave her new strength, and tying on her hat, she again set forth.

Coming to a small stream, over which a tree, smoothly worn, had been thrown, she attempted to cross.

Alas for that muslin, and those dainty feet unused to such bridges.

Her high-heeled shoes refused to stand straight.

So did their owner, and she was soon struggling in the water.

But it was not deep, and she finally recovered her equilibrium.

She thought she would wade out, but, with a sharp cry of pain, sat down on the log.

She had sprained her ankle.

"Hilloa! Miss Nettie. Surely you are not trying to imagine yourself at Ramsgate, and thus sporting in the briny waters?"

It was a woefully drenched figure and pale little face which confronted the redoubtable Mr. Smith.

The sight of him aroused Nettie's dormant spirit, and she again essayed to rise.

But, with a low moan, again sank back.

"Good Heaven! My darling, what is the matter?"

And he was by her side like a flash.

"Nothing. You've no right to talk so to me. Leave me."

"I shall not do any such thing. Don't you see you can't walk?"

"Well, I believe I have hurt my foot, but I know I can walk."

But it was vain to try, and so she submitted to be carried out.

When Mr. Smith got on terra firma again, he knew by her pale face that she had swooned from pain.

He showered kisses and water upon it, but they availed nothing. He became alarmed.

But again clasping her in his arms, he hurried to the house.

Fortunately it was not far.

Mr. Dee ran out with a scared, white face.

"Oh, Har—Mr. Smith, what is the matter?"

"Our little Nettie tried to cross the stream, and fell. I fear she has sprained her foot."

The unfortunate ankle kept Nettie confined to the house a great many days.

Then who was so kind as Mr. Smith?

Daily she received a nice basket of fruit and flowers, a book, or something nice which would cause the tedious hours to hasten.

Nettie's obdurate little heart was melted.

At last she came downstairs.

Mr. Smith was the first to welcome her.

"Now, Nettie, wouldn't you like to ride?"

"Oh, yes. How kind you are! It has been so long since I rode out, and everything looks so pleasant."

"Nettie, dear, wrap up well. These October days are rather chilly," said her aunt.

"What would I do without my prudent aunt? Come, Mr. Smith, I am ready."

And, kissing her aunt, she was gone.

They rode very slowly and silently for a few moments, when Mr. Smith said—

"Dear Nettie, will you listen now to what I wish to say?"

Blushingly she acquiesced.

"Darling, I have loved you long and earnestly. Will you be my wife?"

"Oh, Mr. Smith, you do me much honour; but I do not love you as I should love my husband."

"I am willing to wait for that love to come, for come it will."

"But you do not know what I mean. I once loved a noble gentleman, and love him yet, although he is dead and proved false."

"Darling, I was not false. Do you not know me?"

And Mr. Smith's hat was off in a trice; his hair, beard, and spectacles followed suit.

"Oh, Harry, my own love!" she murmured, with a gasp.

It was indeed Harry Leaverton.

Explanations now ensued.

He had written regularly, and at first received regular replies.

But his cousin, Tom Leaverton, was also in love with Nettie Dee, and intercepted the letters, then contrived to have Harry's name in the list of lost passengers.

"So you will never marry Mr. Smith?"

"Oh, auntie, how can you? And you knew Harry all the time?"

"To be sure, when he told me at N—.

But I wished to see how Mr. Smith would succeed."

He succeeded so well that at Christmas a large bridal party was assembled at Church, where Mrs. Dee gave away the pretty bride, and Tom Leaverton was groomsmen, having sued for, and obtained forgiveness for so basely interfering with his cousin's love affairs.

HINTS FOR CHEAP FLORAL DECORATION.

The introduction of natural ornaments into our houses is of comparatively recent date. Fashion in her changing moods has willed it, and the conventional and artificial have had their day. Rustic baskets of trailing ivy, stands of gaily tinted growing flowers, mimic ponds teeming with finny life and vases of autumnal leaves and grasses have replaced the cumbersome china or queer old ornaments of buhl and marqueterie; and even in art, the graceful negligence of nature is imitated in the decoration of our modern dwellings, in showy contrast to the geometrical embellishments and prim finery of the houses of half a century ago. And this is true alike in public as well as in private edifices. One of the recently built theatres, in this city, in place of the meaningless frescoes surrounding its proscenium arch, substitutes huge palm trees with their broad leaves (of tin) drooping from their summits; another fills its lobby with vases of flowers and trailing plants, while a third arranges similar ornaments in conspicuous places in its auditorium, and rumor says a fountain is to be constructed in the centre of the parquet.

Like all fashionable articles, however, and especially in cities, the question of the expense of such decorations is by no means an unimportant one, and doubtless many of our country readers would stand aghast at the prices demanded by New York florists for baskets of the commonest wild grasses and ferns, even such as flourish in abundance on every brook side. Fifteen dollars is the usual cost of a simple rustic stand, filled, and hanging baskets range from five to ten dollars each. The more elaborate devices, which include bowls of gold fish, or cages of birds, with, perhaps, a few exotic plants, bring sums which are far beyond the reach of ordinary purses. Paying these prices is, however, not at all necessary, if one has a little mechanical ingenuity coupled with a fair share of good taste. We have made beautiful flower baskets from old wooden chopping trays that have survived their turn of usefulness in the kitchen, though perhaps clean new ones would be better. All the materials needed are some sticks of red cedar with the bark on, or, if this variety of wood cannot be obtained, almost any kind can be pressed into service, except all-anthus and kindred sorts, the bark of which peels off bodily; a few bits of rattan, some gnarled roots, a paper of brads, and a little varnish, complete the requirements. A good plan is to cut the cedar sticks into pieces, say three in-

ches long, split them, sharpen both ends, and nail these neatly around and outside the upper edge of the bowl. Then fasten bits of root or twine the rattan around beneath and finish with an irregular knob below. For handles, select three strong pieces of rattan, and secure them firmly to the bowl, letting them extend about two feet above the same and meet in a neat loop. The bowl should not be less than six inches deep, in order to give the roots of the plants plenty of room to grow downward. After the construction of the basket is finished, give it a coat of varnish and the work is done. Dried walnut skins, pine cones, acorns, split butternuts, or even chestnut burrs may be used as ornaments instead of pieces of root. We have also seen some very neat arrangements made entirely of the shells of English walnuts, which had been carefully removed. In filling the basket, first place some broken stone or bits of china at the bottom to serve for drainage, and above add loose earth made of two thirds garden soil and one third sand. As regards plants, unless the basket be large, or a stand (which, by the way, can be made of a soap box, lined with zinc and mounted on feet) be used, we do not believe in any large variety of flowers in a single receptacle. It is nonsense to mix exotics with wild ferns and grasses, because the nature of soil which suits one is generally not beneficial to the other; and very often the warm uniform temperature, necessary for delicate plants, is fatal to the more hardy varieties from the woods and pastures. Fill a basket entirely with English ivy or smilax, and a luxuriant growth can be obtained, particularly if too many shoots be not set in. City florists aim to cram as much as possible into their baskets, and are totally regardless whether the broad leaves of the begonias shade the stems and roots of the more delicate creeping vines. In first setting in the plants, however place them for a few days in a cold room until new shoots appear. Remember also that plants, and especially ivy, will not grow without light, particularly in the house. Place a pot of ivy, after it has begun growing, for a few days in the shady part of a room, and the young shoots will speedily turn white, while the older leaves will begin to drop off. There is another fact that amateur house gardeners forget, and that is that the roots of a plant need plenty of air; and hence pretty pots of painted china or majolica ware will not answer to contain the earth for their reception. If such vessels be used, the common earthenware pot must be set inside of them, with plenty of intermediate space between; while care should be taken that the higher edges of the outer pot do not shade the base of the plant. Weak vegetation may be rejuvenated with a little ammonia, but it must be used with care, as too much kills. About two drops in a teacupful of water given once a week, we have found to be plenty for a good sized plant, particularly if the earth around the roots be kept loose and not allowed to pack hard.

A very pretty adornment for picture frames is German ivy, a common trailing vine which grows with great luxuriance. All the old medicine chests which infest out of the way closets may be utilized for this purpose. These should be filled with water and placed behind the pictures, and a slip of the ivy inserted. The vine is quite hardy. We have seen a single slip, in a pint bottle, grow until it ran along the entire length of a moderate sized room. In the back volumes of our journal will be found described a host of ingenious ideas of this description. We recently noted a way to raise oak trees in hyacinth glasses, it being merely necessary to suspend the acorn inside and a little above the water. A sponge moistened and with fine seed scattered in its pores, soon becomes a mass of living verdure, though a prettier ornament we think can be made of a large pine burl, similarly prepared and hung, like the acorn, over water. Fine grass seed is the best to use. Wardian cases are very easily made. A shallow box lined with zinc, with some holes on the sides to ventilate the soil, and a large glass shade, easily obtained for a small sum, answer the purpose. The plants take care of themselves, the water which they evaporate condensing on the glass and running back to the soil, so that a species of circulation is constantly maintained. Insect fanciers can combine animal and vegetable life very nicely in one of these cases, as quite an assortment of bugs may be kept alive in them even through the winter. Of course such varieties should be selected as will not feed on the plants.

About as pretty a vine as can be selected for window dressing may be obtained from the ordinary sweet potato. The bulb need only be set in a hyacinth glass, and it will soon send out shoots. Hyacinths look very pretty on a window sill; but in raising them in glass, it should be remembered to keep them in the dark until the roots are two inches long, and also to change the water frequently, never allowing the new supply to be colder than that removed. Dried leaves and vines also make tasteful ornaments if they are properly prepared. Doubtless many have gathered fall leaves, and are waiting for a convenient rainy Saturday to arrange them. To such we may remark that the best plan is, not to use varnish, because the leaves thus treated soon lose their color. Wax is preferable, and is easily laid on with a warm sadiron. Group the leaves in bouquets with plenty of fern, fasten them at the back to a piece of cardboard, and tack them against the wall. We recently gave a description of how very pretty leaf pictures may be made, to which the reader should also refer. German ivy, dried in sprays, looks nicely over pictures in places where the plant will not grow in the bottle or where the living vine is not desired.—*Scientific American*.