

way, always seem dreadfully sober, and oh! I can't tell you all the differences."

By this time both gentlemen were laughing heartily, and Richie said mischievously:

"The best way to end such a description, Elsie, would be to tell us which is the nicest of two such nice fellows."

Elsie crimsoned, but Carry promptly came to her rescue:

"You need not fish, Richie; I'll tell you; you know, though, it is yourself. I could write a book full of the nice things she says about you; and now seeing that it is four o'clock, I vote we go into the house for some tea."

Elsie was off instantly, anxious to cool her face, after Carry's last speech. Arthur hurried after her, leaving Richie and Carry to follow.

There was an awkward pause; then Richie exclaimed:

"Four o'clock, by Jove! I promised to meet a fellow down town; you will excuse me, Carry?"

For a moment she forgot the role she was playing:

"Oh, Richie, must you go?"

"I am sorry, Carry; I wish I could stay," he answered, looking longingly at the fair face by his side, "but I promised, and 'where duty calls,' you know."

"Oh! it does not really matter, only I thought you and Elsie would like to

no hope; surely it is not Arthur who is to claim my prize, my best jewel? If so, life will be blank indeed."

His emotion was terrible and for a moment Elsie was unable to reply.

"Hush, Richie! I cannot think; give me time."

He dropped into a seat by her side, and his eyes never left her face as she tried to collect her thoughts and think in what way she could bring about the reconciliation of her two dearest friends. Five minutes passed, then suddenly the trees parted and Carry's white face appeared; she started, and a ripple of laughter broke from her lips.

"Excuse me; I did not mean to interrupt you. What a charming tete-a-tete! I must go and find Arthur, and we'll have one, too."

She was gone like a flash, as suddenly as she had come. Richie turned to the silent figure beside him:

"What does she mean? why was she so white? Ah! Elsie, you are a woman and her dearest friend, surely you can divine her feelings?"

Then she rose and laughed, though somewhat tremulously. Her voice shook slightly as she spoke:

"Why, Richie, dear old stupid, I can see it all as plain as daylight! She thinks I am the lucky one; and I believe she actually thought—thought—why, she thought that you were 'pop-

it ached for half an hour after. "God bless you, Elsie," he said huskily, "you are a brick!"

His face was radiant with hope and joy as he turned and left her, looking back to say, "We'll come back and report in half an hour."

Elsie leaned back and let the breeze fan her burning cheeks. "I am glad it is all right now," she murmured. "It is a dangerous game to play at," and she sighed. Just then a bird broke forth into a merry song, and she smiled as she thought, "Dickie is singing because he is so happy, and so am I!"

Just then the trees parted again, this time disclosing Arthur Morton to view.

"I thought you were away fishing. Richie said you were," she exclaimed.

"Oh! it is too slow for anything today—but, Miss Elsie, you look as happy as if you had found a gold mine. What has happened?"

"Well, I have not, but I think Richie and Carry probably have by now. He went to look for her a few minutes ago, and I expect it is a match now. Why, Mr. Morton, I believe you are as glad as I am."

"I am awfully glad, but I am afraid my joy has a selfish vein in it."

"Selfish!" echoed Elsie; "how can that be?"

"Can't you guess? Don't you know what I was afraid of—why I have been so sober lately? Oh, Elsie, let me tell you: I love the dearest girl that ever was, and I was afraid that Dick was wanting her, but now, speak, darling; tell me I may claim you now."

But Elsie could not; she felt as if she would fall, and grasped the arm of the seat for support; the suddenness of it almost took away her breath.

"Can't you love me a little, dear?" he pleaded. "Perhaps I have surprised you, but I will wait for any time for you, darling; only give me a little hope."

Elsie turned her blushing face to him.

"Perhaps," she said softly, "I was a little selfish, too. I believe now that I was a bit afraid that you wanted Carry, and I did not want that, though I hardly knew why at the time."

The last words were almost in a whisper, but Arthur heard and understood, and Elsie found herself in his strong arms.

"Tell me," he said, after a long pause, spent in the usual manner, "did you never want Richie for yourself?"

"I always was fond of him, and always shall be," she answered. "Don't you dare to be jealous; but now—"

"Now," said Arthur, drawing her closer to him.


And she whispered softly: "God bless thee, my beloved—God bless thee!"

So Richie and Carry found them when they came back to "report" half an hour after, both blushing, but the picture of happiness.

"Why, why, Elsie," exclaimed Carry, after standing a minute unperceived; then Elsie broke away from Arthur.

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try and beat Arthur and me at tennis after tea. Well, so long!"

She danced away, leaving him plunged in despair once more, and her own heart heavier still.

The next afternoon she spent in her room, lying down with a headache, and Elsie, having sat for two hours with a book, without taking in one word of its meaning, wandered about disconsolately on the lawn. At last she betook herself to the old place where they had spent so many happy hours, as they had done the day before; to her surprise she discovered Dick there, pacing up and down.

"Why, I thought you and Arthur had gone fishing! Why are you here?"

"I left him there—I could not stay. What do I care about fishing?" he answered moodily.

"Poor boy!" The pity in her eyes was evident and sincere. She knew what was the trouble; she had watched the by-play with anxious interest, for she knew, after all, each cared for the other and could not understand the cause for the present clouds.

"Poor dear old Dick; do tell me—perhaps I can help. I think we understand each other," and she laid her hand sympathetically on his arm.

For a full minute he looked intently into her beseeching brown eyes, then he exclaimed:

"I will, Elsie, for I know you are as true as steel. You know it, though, without my telling you. I love her dearly—so dearly; but somehow lately I don't believe she cares a bit for me. Oh, Elsie!"—his voice rising with the depths of his feelings—"tell me, is there

ping the question. I expect we both looked quite serious. Run after her, quick, Richie! How could she go and find Arthur? He is not on hand to find: that was merely to throw dust in our eyes. Go, dear, and success be with you!" for he stood as in a dream, gazing at her. Then suddenly he caught her hand and grasped it so that



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