

"Is he very ugly?"

"Oh, no! I daresay you would think him handsome. He is a fine tall man, dark, with a black moustache; but, oh, he has those long sleepy, treacherous eyes, and those lines down here by the mouth, don't you know? That people get who are always trying to conceal a wicked thought with a smile."

"Oh, I hate those people who are always smiling. They get a shiny look on their faces, don't they? Go on, dear."

"I have only seen him four or five times, when I have been moved from one school to another; but that is often enough for me, and for him too. He knows what I think of him and hates me; and fears me too, I'm certain. That is why he has kept me all this time at school—why he would keep me here until he has no longer any legal control over me. He thinks he is safe while I am here—that in this artificial life I can learn no thing about the real world. But he is mis taken, as he shall find. Wait a moment."

Nessa went to one of the boxes, and re turned with an imposing document tied with pink tape.

"Look at this," she said. The girls gathered closely round her, and looked at the blue foolscap in breathless awe. "This is a copy of mamma's will. I sent to London for it. It's very short. See, mamma leaves all her estate, real and personal, to me, her only child, Vanessa Grahame. You see, she says nothing about any one else, but here," turning the page with evident sat isfaction in the curl of it made, "here is the codicil. Mamma has evidently been told that she must provide a guardian for me during my minority, and make some dis position of her property in case I should die before coming of age. And here she makes James Redmond my sole guardian, with power to draw eight hundred pounds a year from the invested capital, to provide for my education and personal requirements. And further, in the event of the said Vanessa Grahame dying before the age of twenty one—"I'm only eighteen now, you know—all the property goes to that horrid step father, the infamous James Redmond. Now, what do you think of that?"

"Your poor mamma could not have loved him, or she would have left him some money, wouldn't she, dear?" said Dolly.

"Of course she would; but how is it that leaving nothing to him in the will, she leaves me to his tender mercies in the codicil? Can you explain that, any of you?"

None of them could.

"For a explain it," said Nessa, raising her voice in excitement above the low whisper ing tone in which it had previously been pitched; "this codicil is a forgery!" (Sen sation.)

"Oh, Nessa!"

"It is, and it's just the sort of forgery a cunning coward would make. He had not the courage to forge a will making the whole estate his; but he had just enough to sub stitute his own name for one that mamma had written, and so get a nice little income for ever so many years out of the money for my schooling and clothes. He could do that without raising suspicion. What have I cost? Not two hundred a year; that puts him in possession of six hundred pounds, be sides the use of my house, Grahame Tower."

The girls were lost in admiration of the heiress and her wonderful romance. It was quite like a story, and the part of heroine became her so well, with her pale face, her dark, fearless eyes, the soft hair flowing loosely over her well-shaped head, her beau tiful young figure, and noble carriage. Their young eyes were not learned enough to see her weakness and vanity, or the faults which are inseparable from every character. She was not unconscious of their admiration or her own importance.

"When I received this," said Nessa, folding up the paper with caution, "I wrote to Mr. Redmond, saying that I desired to leave school, and asked what arrangement would be convenient to him to make for my accommodation during the three years that I was still nominally to be under his authority—for I am eighteen, you know. This was his reply."

ment. Yours, etc., etc., James Redmond. The letter is dated from my own house, Grahame Towers. It came this morning, just before we were going to the rehearsal. You can imagine my indignation!"

"You did seem rather worried, dear."

"Oh, I was. To begin with, I didn't like the part I had to play, as you know. As Mrs. Vic had written it out it was simply ridiculous. Now when the dresser told me how she had seen it played, I saw what a capital part it might be made; and when I thought of this letter, I resolved to play it. So I sent to the station for a copy of Gold smith, and studied it with the dresser, who promised to make me up exactly like the actor she had seen. Ha, ha! thought I, we will see if you are going to keep me! Eagle House, or some similar establishment, Mr. James Redmond. If I am expelled from one school, it's pretty certain that another won't take me when they hear what they are exposing themselves to!"

"But isn't it rather dreadful to be expelled, Nessa?"

"I shall not be expelled. I shall resign," said Nessa, loftily. "I have not studied the political history of the British constitution for nothing," she added, with a flash of humour in her eyes.

"When are you going to resign, dear?"

"The very first thing to-morrow morning. I made Tinkleton promise she would say nothing about the performance to Mrs. Vic to night, in order that I myself might tell her in the morning. You may be sure she was glad to get out of it. There's another reason why I prefer to resign. If I were expelled, Mrs. Vic would get nothing out of Mr. Redmond; but if I resign, he must send her the payment for a term, and that will help to compensate the poor old soul for the injury I have done the school."

"And where shall you go when you leave here?"

"To Grahame Towers, of course."

"But aren't you afraid, Nessa?"

"Afraid of what—that coward? Not I. If I were a man, I'd be a soldier like my father. There's nothing I should like better than a good fight with that villain, Redmond."

"But are you sure he's a coward, dear?" asked one of the girls naively.

"I am certain that he is. I am anxious for to-morrow to come; but, oh!" she added, with a sudden drop in her voice as the tears sprang into her eyes, "I shall never have the heart to say good-bye to you, dears."

There were hugging and kissing all round, and then Nessa, bursting away, said "Come, let us get it over now. There, take these, Dolly; and now little witch, you're next. Choose what you would like."

But the "little witch," sitting on the bed with her face buried in her hands, shook her head and whimpered. She was a strangely small girl for her age, with long thin fingers, a dark complexion, and black hair, long and sleek as an Indian's. Her ways were odd and exclusive. Sometimes the girls found her seated in the dark, huddled up with her chin resting on her knees, and her weird, vacant eyes half closed, as if her spirit was wandering in some other world. She could interpret dreams, and make sense out of the greatest rubbish. She was an authority on all that concerned signs and tokens and palmistry, and had worn a smuggled pack of cards long in telling the girls' fortunes. Her title was not numerical.

The girls gathered about her prepared for some new sensation in the romance of this night. Nessa alone seemed to be unmoved.

"What's the matter, you little goose? Is there anything dreadful in giving presents?"

"Don't do it!" pleaded the little witch, without removing her hands. "It's like Naomi, my sister. When she was going to die she made me take things."

"But I am not going to die. Look at me—do I look like it?"

"You don't know all," said the girl shir ring, and whispering so low that her words were scarcely audible. "Not all that I know. I would not tell you, while I might do you harm to know, but I must say that it may save you. Oh, you must not go!" She raised herself suddenly, and threw her arms about Nessa's neck. "You, so beauti ful and kind," she added, nestling herself in Nessa's ready embrace.

"Why dear, why?" whispered Nessa, coaxingly.

"You are in danger. Your life is not safe. There is going to be a great change, and there is a peril in your path. I have seen it whenever I have looked—in the

cards, in your hand. Your line of life is broken in the nineteenth year."

Nessa was the only one of all the little group who was not terrified into silence by the little witch's prophecy.

"Oh, come, this is too bad, after promising me last week that I should have riches and long life," she murmured, playfully, as she smoothed her cheeks upon the girl's sleek hair. "Two things can't be true, you know, and of the two I would prefer to be here your first promise."

"They are both true," said the girl with feverish eagerness; "you will be happy if you live; but there are three years of terrible danger before you. It was that I dared not tell you. Oh, do, do stay with us till the peril is past."

Nessa herself stood now in silence, sub dued with grave perplexity by the earnestness of her little friend. But suddenly a ray of intelligence gleamed in her face, and unclasping the girl's clinging arms from her neck, she put her away, holding her at arm's length.

"You little trickster!" she exclaimed, with mock disdain; "I have found you out. I see through your conjuring. You have been thinking about that clause in the codicil that puts Mr. Redmond in possession of my fortune if I die before twenty-one, and it struck you that he might murder me for my money if he got me under his hand in Grahame Towers. I forgive you, dear," she added, taking the child back to her bosom, and kissing her, "for your sweet love of me, but, oh, you are awfully mistaken if you think that fear would keep me from getting into difficulties."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

### Tea Culture in Natal.

Natal, South Africa, is now looked upon as the great tea producing country of the future. None of the tea has yet appeared in this country. The first plants were brought from Ceylon in 1877. J. L. Hulett, the pioneer, now has nearly three hundred acres under cultivation, and his crop is from eighty thousand to ninety thousand pounds annually. His plant cost but \$5,000. The land lies about one thousand feet above the sea level, the soil containing a fair propor tion of sand and decomposed granite, vege table and other organic matter. The tea farm is now open, level and is well ploughed. The rows are laid out five feet apart, and the plants are set four or five inches apart. A crop is obtained after the first year, and increases up to the sixth year, when the plant matures, after which it bears for an indefinite period. Great care has been taken to keep the ground loose and clear of grass and weeds. The picking begins in Sep tem ber and continues every ten days until Jan uary. Twenty or twenty-two pickings in a year. Nothing could be done with the native help, but coolies are plentiful, and are exclusively employed. They are able to pick from thirty to forty pounds of green leaves daily. The crop is sold in Durban at from eighteen to thirty-eight cents per pound, fully twenty-five per cent cheaper than the foreign product can be had down for in that market. The withering is done on large floors, the leaves being laid thin and con stantly stirred by boys and girls. A hot and dry temperature is needed. The roll ing is done by machinery, and has the effect of breaking up the juice cells. The ferment ing process is the most particular of all, and upon it depends the quality of the pro duct. The drying is done by hot revolving cylinders. The sorting is accomplished by the use of sieves, the top one containing the lowest grade of tea.

### The Good Effects of Laughter.

That laughter aids digestion, and is a very good counterpoise to the spleen, is a well known discovery. Science himself, in his own way, would suppose. A man who has lost his last farewell of Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in Diet and in Quick, but in fact, it is a successful than either cure all diseases. The highest average of blood, compared with the blood of a man who is not laughing, is a very interesting discovery. The blood of a man who is laughing is a very interesting discovery. The blood of a man who is laughing is a very interesting discovery.

### PLENTY OF ICE AT SEA.

The Open Winter Makes the Icebergs Come Early and Thick.

While a deficiency of ice exists on shore more than usual is reported at sea. The Captain of nearly every vessel which arrives reports having fallen in with a larger or smaller number of icebergs. The log of one ves sel records 130, while those of others sever ally record 59, 50, and 49. Many of these icebergs are recorded as being 250 feet high and 1,000 feet long, while 100 feet high and a half a mile long are also favorite dimen sions. These figures do not convey a true idea of the size of the icebergs to which they are applied, unless it is remembered that the portion of an iceberg seen above the water is only about an eighth part of its entire bulk.

The unusual multiplicity of icebergs has al ready caused much harm, and is liable to do more, unless the lookouts on ships, having been warned by this time what to expect, are particularly watchful. The loss of two vessels has been caused by collision with gi gantic bergs, and twenty others have been more or less injured and narrowly escaped destruction. According to the most popular theory, both the small land crop and the large sea are due to the same cause—the open winter. It has been followed by an early spring, which has caused icebergs to break away from their moorings in the polar regions earlier and in larger quantities than usual. There are also secondary causes to which the existence of so much ice is attrib uted. These must have been heavy north erly gales following high tides which had broken the connection of the ice with the shore, or with the glaciers of which it formed a part. In addition to there being more of it, the ice this year is further east than has al most ever been known. The easterly ex tension of the ice is believed to be a result of its unusual quantity. This has been so great as to cool the water to such an extent that the ice melted more slowly, and consequen tly there was more of it to be borne east by the Gulf stream and other ocean currents.

There was a large influx of ice from the north four or five years ago, but it was not so early in the season, and there was not nearly so much of it. The present influx is far in excess of any other on the records of the Hydrographic Department, which, how ever, do not extend very far back.

### The Austrian Emperor Wants No Amazons.

Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria has just narrowly escaped having an Amazon corps shoved into his army in spite of all the ob jections of his general staff and the Minister of War. Three Polish widows from Lemberg applied at the Ministry of War in Vienna about four weeks ago for permission to organize a volunteer Amazon corps for the imperial Austrian and Hungarian army. The petition, containing the arguments of the three Polish women, urged that they should be allowed to enlist all young girls and married women whose stature and general health insured to them the muscle and en durance of the average male soldier. It was a right, the petition said, of every female subject of the Austrian throne to do as much for the fatherland as her brother or father. The three Polish women gave proofs of their ability to handle the new Mauser rifle with the proper skill and to "through military evolutions. They offered a "military uniform, and arm the same as the army. The Emperor, I think, was very much interested in the petition, and he was very much interested in the petition, and he was very much interested in the petition.