

Presently she started, and bent her head lower over her picture to hide the glowing crimson that had spread over her cheeks; for she had heard Lee and Ned enter the hall; and two minutes later they stood in the room laughing and shaking the rain off their coats and hats.

"Oh, you horrid wet fellows!" exclaimed Nellie, looking up and extending a hand to Ned, who shook it without a word. "I believe you have splashed my drawing. What have you come for?"

"Civil that!" remarked Lee. "We are going to have a game of billiards, and came to honour you with an invitation to join us."

"Lee knows I always beat him, and he wants you to help him," said Ned.

"Thanks; I can't come," said Nellie shortly. "I want to finish this picture this morning."

"Good girl; keep up your accomplishments!" returned Ned sarcastically; then, as Lee left the room, he added, "I suppose Lee has told you I am going to the Cape lion-shooting next month!"

Nellie's heart almost stood still; but she made no sign.

"No, he has not told me," she answered carelessly, "and, what's more, I don't believe you are going."

"But I am for all that," declared Ned. "Russell starts on the fifteenth, and I have promised to join him. So a fortnight more will see the last of me for a long time to come; in fact, if I find the climate suits me, I shall buy a farm out there and sell Redlands."

"And what does your mother say to it all?" asked Nellie, with difficulty commanding her voice.

"Mother! Oh, she objects, of course; but I can't help that! I've had enough of England and England's ways, and I don't mean to stay in this precious old land of humbug and avarice! Ah, here you are, Lee! Come along," and the two young men went off to the billiard-room.

Nellie dropped her brush and sat staring straight before her, seeing nothing. Could it be true? Had his wounded pride conquered his love, or had he arranged his plans under the impression that she was going to marry Mr. Beale, and perhaps gone too far to draw back? What should she do? Was she set free too late—for what would life be worth without Ned? Nellie laid her head on the drawing-board and sobbed as if her heart would break.

She dried her eyes presently, fearful of being caught weeping, and worked away mechanically at her drawing. She heard Mr. Berners cross the hall and enter the billiard-room, and was thankful that he did not come into the school-room, to catch her with red eyes once more and cross-question her till the truth came out. As this thought crossed her mind, she threw down her brush and fled up-stairs to her own room, to bathe her face and wait till all trace of emotion was gone.

Meanwhile Mr. Berners, entering the billiard room, stood in silence for several minutes, watching the young men play.

"Won't you join us, Mr. Berners?" asked Ned presently. "We might have a game of pool."

"No, thank you. Where's Nellie? I expected to find her here."

"We asked her to come," said Lee, as he chalked his cue; "but she would not leave her painting. Your play, Ned."

"She's engrossed in a water-colour for Mr. Beale," added Ned, stooping for his stroke.

"Water-colour for your grandmother!" grunted Mr. Berners. "You make a grand mistake; and, as you know so much, you had better ask Lee to explain. Tell him, Lee, in justice to your sister. You can trust him not to repeat it," and Mr. Berners, not caring to hear the recital of his own kindness, left the room.

Ned turned to Lee with a look of interrogation as the door closed.

"Has he been forbidding the banns?" he asked. "Nellie certainly intended to marry Dips the other day. Is it all off?"

"Yes, she has refused him; Mr. Berners made her," answered the other; then, colouring crimson, he added hurriedly, "The fact is Nellie behaved like a little brick. Beale had lent me a good sum of money, which there was no chance of my being able to pay during the governor's lifetime; but he had taken a fancy to Nell, and said that, if there was the slightest chance of her accepting him, I might take my own time about repaying him—if not, I must find it somehow at once. Well, I told Nell this, and she agreed to encourage him a little, so as to keep the fellow from bullying me; but it seems that he grew confident at the first word, and sent her a regular proposal, which Mr. Berners found and read. He insisted on her writing a prompt refusal, and paid off the money himself. I believe Nellie was awfully delighted at getting rid of Beale, though most girls would have jumped at such a chance; but she is romantic, and has dreams of love in a cottage, *et-cetera*. However, you had better not let this go any farther."

"Never fear," returned Ned shortly, with an odd huskiness in his voice; and then he played in silence for some time.

Lee made one or two efforts to talk carelessly; but a certain inner consciousness that Ned had cause of offence against him checked his fluency, and, as he met with but little response, his remarks were soon exhausted. The game over, Ned put on his coat, and, refusing his friend's invitation to stay to luncheon, walked to the front door. As he passed the school-room he glanced in; but it was empty, and he went on.

"The rain is over," remarked Lee, opening the door and looking up to the sky, where

glimpses of blue were showing through the fleecy gray masses.

"I am glad to hear it," answered Ned, stepping out on the moist gravel. "I'll come up this evening, and we'll make Nellie and Mr. Berners join us in a game of pool or a rubber of whist."

"All right. Come to dinner—seven sharp. The governor won't wait; though I doubt if he will come down to dinner to-night. These attacks regularly do him up."

"I'm sorry he's not well. I shall be here before seven," and Ned set off at a brisk pace down the avenue, carrying a lighter heart than he had thought to carry again for many a long year.

It was barely half-past six when Ned Vignoles left his home to start on the ten-minute walk to the Manor House; for he had a strong conviction that Nellie would be down before the rest of the party if she knew that he was coming to dinner.

It was a lovely night, the full moon riding high in a cloudless starry sky, with a clearness that threatened a return of the frost; and the bare trees threw inky black shadows across the road as Ned, whistling cheerily, strode along at a somewhat faster pace than usual. His thoughts were full of Nellie; her bright pretty face seemed dancing before him, her sweet voice was sounding in his ears; and he wondered, for the fiftieth time, if he would get a chance to say all that he had to say to-night. He quite pitied the despised Dips now that he knew he was utterly discarded; and Lee—ah, well, he could never think the same of him again now that he knew he had been willing to sell his sister to get himself out of a scrape!

"Hilloa," muttered Ned—"here he is!"

"Ned—is that you?" exclaimed Lee, as he approached him. "Have you seen anything of Nellie?"

"Seen Nellie!" repeated the other in surprise. "No, of course not! What do you mean?"

"She's missing. Went out at half-past two this afternoon, and has never come home; and they're all frightened to death about her. All the men are out looking for her; and I believe Mr. Berners thinks she has committed suicide. She seemed awfully down at luncheon, and looked as if she had been crying."

Ned remembered their conversation in the school-room, and guessed, with a sharp pang of mingled pain and pleasure, the cause of her tears. He did not believe in the suicide notion; but he did feel a little uneasy.

"She is at the Stewart's probably, or Miss Turner's, or at some of the houses. Perhaps she is at home by this time."

"Not she. There is something wrong somewhere. You know the governor has a particular dislike to women being out after dark; and Nellie is careful not to annoy him, especially when he has these nervous attacks. It has been dark for more than two hours now, and he has fretted himself into a fever. I can't make it out myself. Something must have happened to her, that's certain."

Ned's heart was sinking lower at each word. He knew well how "fussy" Mr. Raymond was about Nellie, and how careful she was not to worry him.

"Well, don't let us stand here wasting time!" he exclaimed, sharply. "You go on towards the common, and I'll strike across the marshes. She may have gone to see if the ice still bears."

"She's not such a muf as that. However, you may as well go that way as any other. I wish she'd turn up, for I want my dinner." And Lee went moodily on his way, while Ned, at the rate of five miles an hour, strode off in the direction of the ponds.

Was Fate going to be utterly unkind? Now, when the way seemed clear, had some evil happened to Nellie to keep them apart. Should he find her floating among the broken ice, with a still white face upturned to the clear moon? With an ever-increasing sickening dread he hurried on till he stood by the wide lake, over which a thin sheet of ice still glistened. He paced right round it, searching for a broken place to verify his worst fears.

"Bah!" he exclaimed presently. "She is safe at home and dressed for dinner by this time!"

Then he turned away from the lake and took the path leading through the wood, where he had kissed the dear bright face only a week before. He uttered an impatient exclamation as he stumbled over a gnarled root, and then stopped short with a cry of horror; for there at his feet was the white upturned face that he had been picturing a little while previously.

"Nellie, Nellie! My darling," he cried, kneeling down and taking the senseless form in his arms, "open your eyes—speak to me—it is Ned—tell me you are not dead!" And with wild despairing kisses he tried to recall the life-blood to her pale cheeks and lips.

But all in vain; the dark eyes remained firmly closed, the colourless lips silent; and Ned—strong, brave, manly Ned Vignoles—dropped his head on the unconscious form and sobbed aloud.

"Ned!" came a faint whisper; and, raising his head, he saw with a thrill the dear soft eyes looking at him once more with the light of life and love.

"Nellie, my own, my darling, I thought you were dead!" he cried in tones of rapture. "Why are you lying here? What has happened?"

"I slipped and fell," she whispered faintly.

"My leg—it is broken, I think. I fainted every time I tried to move. I thought no one would come—and I should die; and then—I heard you call, and tried to make you hear, and fainted again."

"My poor little darling! Can you bear me to carry you, or must I go for help? I can't bear to leave you again!" And Ned pressed his lips to the white cheek as if he could never take them away.

"I would rather you carried me," answered Nellie, with a faint smile. "I shall most likely faint—directly you take me up; but don't be frightened. Carry me home—as quickly as you can."

She was right. At the first movement a cry of agony escaped her, and she fainted; but Ned, remembering her words, bore her on as fast as he could go, until, almost exhausted, he met the gardener and groom. Making a hammock of Ned's plaid, they carried her home between them, where Ned, having placed her on her bed, left her to her mother's care and waited impatiently for the doctor's arrival.

Nellie's opinion was correct. Her leg was broken; and she was utterly exhausted. But there was little or no danger, unless from the effects of lying so long on the wet ground.

"Well, I suppose I may as well go home," said Ned, slowly rising as the clock struck eleven. "I'll come round the first thing to-morrow to see how she is."

"Don't doubt you will," replied Mr. Berners grimly. "Hilloa—here's Mary with a last report of the invalid!"—as Mrs. Raymond entered the room.

"She is in a little less pain, I think; and Doctor Chesney has left a sleeping-draught to give her a quiet night, but the naughty girl won't take it till she has seen Ned. She says she has something to ask him, and wants to thank him; so, Ned, you must come up with me for a few minutes."

Ned's handsome face flushed crimson with pleasure as he followed Mrs. Raymond from the room up-stairs to where Nellie with a flushed face and glittering eyes awaited him.

"Now only three words!" said Mrs. Raymond, as Ned advanced to the bed; and then she went into the dressing-room.

"Well, my pet, what's the important question?" asked Ned, as with a wildly beating heart he bent over the bed and took the little hot hand in his.

"About the Cape, Ned," she whispered. "Are you really going?"—and the soft eyes filled as they sought his face.

"Not unless you marry Dips, or would like to make it your honeymoon trip? No, Nellie—my Nellie—I know all now; and I don't mean to give you up to any man. Good night, my darling. Be quick and get well, for my sake."

"I think I shall now, dear Ned; I'm so happy," and she turned her head on the pillow to meet his parting kiss as her mother entered the room once more.

On a bright sunny morning in April the village bells pealed forth the announcement that the words were spoken and the page signed that made Ned Vignoles and Nellie Raymond man and wife. It was a joyous wedding altogether, for no gloom of parting hung over it. The young couple were going on a honeymoon trip to the Lakes, and perhaps on to Scotland, and then they were coming back to settle down quietly in the cosy home at Redlands.

Even Mr. Raymond, who had had such high hopes of a grand marriage for his lovely daughter, yielded with a good grace when he found that not only was that daughter heart-wholly and irrevocably "gone," but that Mr. Berners actually did mean to leave all his money to Ned if Nellie became his wife, and that that money meant twenty thousand pounds.

"Sorry I did not marry you myself now, Nell," he said, as they stood all together in the drawing-room. "Make a pretty bride. Take care of her, Ned. It was nearly a case of a 'slip twixt cup and lip'—eh, my boy?"

"Ah, Mr. Berners," answered the young man, warmly pressing the elder one's hand, "Nellie and I are not likely to forget that it is solely owing to you that somebody else has to groan over the slip, and not I!"

LITERARY AND ARTISTIC.

It is stated that Lord Beaconsfield intends writing another novel.

It is reported that M. Gérôme intends to paint a picture of the burning of Shelley's corpse on the Italian coast near Viareggio.

GUSTAVE DORE is engaged on a large picture illustrating the sacred passage, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

ACCORDING to the German papers, two important works by Vandyke and Velasquez respectively have been found at Mühlhausen in Thuringia.

THE Mayor of Athens has telegraphed to the Mayor of London the discovery of a complete *Chef d'œuvre* of Phidias, the statue of "Minerva Victorious."

A MOVEMENT has been started in Paris to establish a grand historical museum of casts after the antique. The collection now proposed will comprise six principal groups: oriental antiquity, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Phoenicia, Asia Minor; primitive Greece; Greece at the epoch of Phidias; Greece at the epoch of Praxiteles,

then during the later periods of Greek art; the Roman epoch; and lastly French sculpture.

GREAT interest has been aroused in Italy by the publication of twelve manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci, on the subjects of Cosmology, Universal Geography, Percussion, Resistance, Hydraulics, Light, Heat, and that much-discussed theme, the Conservation of Force. These manuscripts, which have long been in the possession of the French Institute, are written from right to left, and so involved with flourishes and capricious designs that editors have hitherto shrunk in dismay from the task of deciphering them.

THE second Prang competition in Christmas card designs is appointed for February 14, which is the last day for the acceptance of contributions. On or before that day all designs must be delivered (free of expense) to Mr. R.E. Moore, at the American Art Gallery, Madison Square; they will be placed on exhibition February 21; the decision of the judges will be given February 24, and the exhibition will close March 5. The competition is limited to artists residing in America, and to American artists residing abroad. The prizes amount to \$2,000.

VARIETIES.

ORIGIN OF THE POLKA.—About 1830 a peasant girl, being in service in a tradesman's family at Elbestinitz, Bohemia, beguiled herself one Sunday afternoon in her kitchen by endeavouring to invent a new step, which she tried to adapt to a village song. While thus disporting herself, she was surprised by her employer, who, quite interested, made her repeat the experiment the same evening in the parlor where Joseph Neruda, an eminent musician, happened to be present, who noted the air and step. Not long afterward the new dance was danced at a citizen ball in the town, and in 1835 came into fashion at Prague, where, in consequence of the half step that occurs in it, it was called the Polka, which means in Tcheque, half. Four years later a band of Prague musicians brought the dance to Vienna, where it had a great success, and in 1840 a dancing master of Prague, named Raab, danced it for the first time in Paris.—*Allgemeine Familien-Zeitung*.

MUCH surprise is occasionally manifested by American newspapers at the comparatively small cost of the Indians to the Canadian Government, and the general content prevailing among them. The reason is simple enough. In the first place Indian agents are honest, and they are appointed with due regard to their fitness. There is more practical interest shown in the Indian's welfare by the Canadian Government, than that which the United States exhibit to their Indians. Across the line Indians are treated as if they had some rights. The law prohibiting the gift or sale of whiskey to Indians is strictly carried out in the Canadian Northwest Territory. They are not made to periodically "move on," in order to enrich the white man at the expense of justice. In brief they are recognized as wards of the nation, and as such enjoy the rights and privileges accorded to them by law. These are the main reasons why Canadian Indians are tractable, and it is the absence of the same reasons which render those of the United States ungovernable and costly.

CURIOSITIES OF THE VOICE.—Dr. Delaunay in a paper read recently before the French Academy of Medicine, gives some details on the history and limits of the human voice, which he obtained after much patient research. According to the doctor, the primitive inhabitants of Europe were all tenors; their descendants of the present day are baritones, and their grandsons will have semi-bass voices. Looking at the negroes, &c., have higher voices than white men. The voice has also a tendency to deepen with age—the tenor of sixteen becoming the baritone at twenty-five and bass at thirty-five. Fair-complexioned people have higher voices than the dark-skinned, the former being usually sopranos or tenors, the latter contraltos or basses. Tenors, says the doctor, are slenderly built and thin; basses are stoutly made and corpulent. This may be so, as a rule, but one is inclined to think there are more exceptions to it than are necessary to prove the rule. The same remarks apply to the assertion that thoughtful, intelligent men have always a deep-toned voice; whereas triflers and frivolous persons have soft, weak voices. The tones of the voice are perceptibly higher, he points out, before than after meals, which is the reason why tenors dine early, in order that the voice may not suffer. It was almost superfluous for him to remind his learned audience that singers who were prudent eschewed strong drinks and spirituous liquors, especially tenors, for the basses can eat and drink generally with impunity. The South, says the doctor, furnishes the tenors, the North the basses; in proof of which he adds that the majority of French tenors in vogue come from the south of France, while the basses belong to the northern department.

GOOD FOR BABIES.

We are pleased to say that our baby was permanently cured of a serious protracted irregularity of the bowels by the use of *Hot Biscuits* by its mother, which at the same time restored her to perfect health and strength.—*The Family University Avenue, Rochester, N.Y.*