

hood. Many and various are the congratulations we receive from our humble friends, whose good wishes for our happiness are mingled with regretful lamentations at our departure from among them.

It is Christmas Eve; in two days more my sister and I are to leave home, and go forth upon the new life which lies behind the—as yet—unlifted veil of the future. We are to be married on the same day in the church where we have knelt Sunday after Sunday, since the day when, with awestruck countenances and wondering eyes, we first beheld our father in his white surplice take his place at the reading-desk, and Lily in her shrill childish treble called out—

"Sing, father, sing! We want to hear the music!"

It is late in the afternoon; outside the snow is coming down in large white flakes that lie, where they touch the bare cold earth, in all their spotless purity. Twilight is falling, and overhead the sky looks dark and gloomy. I stand at the window of the front drawing-room and gaze upon the scene without. Far over the fields I can see the dim outline of the church, its windows gleaming brightly from the light within; they are having a last choir-practice for to-morrow, at which I, having a slight cold, have been forbidden to assist, and, after that is over, they will put the finishing touches to the decorations.

I begin to experience a decided feeling of disappointment as I think of all I am missing. Geoffrey might as well have let me go; I should have taken no harm; and now I shall not see the church till to-morrow. Besides, Geoffrey is to take the tenor solo in *Nazareth* and I particularly wanted to hear him. If it had been Lily, she would have insisted upon going. Why could not I have been more determined in resisting my lover's gently authoritative commands not to stir out of the house all day? I wish I had!

My fingers beat a dispiriting tattoo upon the window-pane, and I begin to wonder how long it will be before the rest of the household return home. Father and mother have driven into the neighbouring town to lay in a store of good things for the coming festivities. Basil has gone to meet his "best man," who is to arrive from the North this evening, while Lily and Geoffrey and the rest of our home party, consisting of the Ingramms, one or two of the bridesmaids, together with Bob and some of his brother-officers, are assisting with the decorations at the church. They must be home very soon, for it is nearly five o'clock, and I can scarcely see anything now but the distant light from the windows of the church, and here and there a faint ray proceeding from some far off cottage.

By-and-by I tire of my efforts to give due effect to the refrain of "Dream-faces," which my fingers are performing upon the window-pane, and am just beginning to bethink myself of another kind of amusement, when the door is opened and Burton's voice announces "Miss Grimshaw!"

Now, if there is one person in the whole village whom I dislike more than another, that person is Miss Grimshaw. To begin with, she is very short-sighted, and invariably mistakes me for Lily, and *vice versa*; then she is the most arrant scandal-monger that ever existed, and, being deaf and consequently only comprehending half of what is said to her, her rendering of the stories confided to her by her gossiping neighbors becomes in most cases so twisted and contorted as to contain very little of the original matter, if indeed any at all.

"I wonder what she has come for to-day?" I think within myself, as, like a soldier about to face the foe, I gather together all my dormant energies and go forward to meet my visitor.

"Ah, my dear Miss Lily, how d'ye do? I thought I would just come and wish you a merry Christmas—not but that it is a dreadful afternoon—snowing so hard, and the wind enough to cut you in two. No, I'll not come near the fire, thank you, my dear; I've got warm with walking so fast."

Miss Grimshaw seats herself upon the corner of the easy-chair I have pushed forward for her acceptance, opens her black leather reticule, and, taking therefrom a huge pocket-handkerchief, blows her nose with trumpet-like sound which strikes terror into my heart as heralding her coming victory over me; then, replacing her handkerchief, she closes the bag with a snap, and, crossing her hands on the top of it,

gives me a long and comprehensive stare.

She is a tall gaunt-looking woman, with iron-gray hair arranged in sausage-shaped curls on each side of her face. Her eyes are a pale watery blue, which—as she disdains glasses, except for the purpose of reading or working—she is in the habit of perpetually screwing up to assist her vision. But it is Miss Grimshaw's bonnet which irritates me most. It is a large structure, peaked down *à la Marie Stuart* on to her forehead, and in each of the vacancies thus left at the side is inserted a huge yellow poppy, whose black middle gives it the appearance of a gigantic eye. These two eyes are glaring at me owl-like at the present moment, fascinating me with their steady unwavering scrutiny.

"And so, my dear, you and your sister are going to leave us—and so soon too! What will your mother do without you?"

"I don't know," I answer.

"Then you ought to know"—sharply. "I saw your sister and her lover just now in the church; I looked in as I passed to leave a few late chrysanthemums out of my little garden—flowers are scarce at this time of the year, and therefore acceptable. Miss Mabel's young man seems a most devoted swain. He and she had a nice little quiet corner all to themselves—hee, hee, hee!"

Miss Grimshaw's laugh, when it takes the "hee-hee!" rattle in her throat, always means mischief.

"I am glad to think he is so attentive, for it has been whispered to me by a little bird that, if a certain gentleman with a handle to his name hadn't come first, a certain young lady might not have got him—hee—hee!"

I rise from my seat, my cheeks crimson. "What do you mean?" I cry indignantly. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

PRETTY TRIFLES IN FANCY WORK.

Something new in the way of fancy work is the use of very narrow ribbon—No. 2, in variegated or Roman stripes. For tidies this is particularly effective. But one yard of cream white Japanese cotton crape or oriental cloth, which, when cut in two, will be found enough for two tidies. Draw the threads a finger from each end, and run in eight or nine rows of narrow ribbon in red blue, yellow, black, green, etc., taking care to have all the colors contrast well. Take up the threads evenly on both sides, like basket work. Allow the ends of the ribbons to extend an inch over the sides, and fasten them in place with Kensington stitch, done in silk on the side hema. Fringe the ends of the tidy, finishing the top with buttonhole stitch, and tie with a bunch of ribbons in the center. Dainty work, or tea aprons, of silk bolting cloth, or linen batiste, are trimmed in somewhat the same manner. Above a deep hem, the threads are drawn for about a quarter of an inch wide, leaving the same space between each drawing, until there are five or seven open places. Through these run ribbons in harmonious colors. Tiny pockets are added and adorned with rosettes of the ribbons. A broad hem is made at the top, through which a wide ribbon runs to tie about the waist.

A touch of color adds much to a prettily arranged dinner table, and it is not only the doilies that are now embroidered, but bread and corn napkins, and a cloth to lay under the meat platter, are worked with appropriate mottoes as "Eat, Drink, and be Merry," and "May good Digestion wait on Appetite." The most elaborate, however, are the center cloths, beneath the fruit or flowers. These are sometimes of plush or velvet, in dull red or golden olive shades, and are most exquisitely embroidered with silk, in designs of fruit and flowers. It seems more appropriate, however, to have them of plain white linen, and we have seen a beauty hemstitched and ornamented with a running vine and clusters of scarlet barberries. The filo floss is the best embroidery silk for all outline work or anything that will require to be laundered. A damask doily with a fringed edge makes a nice wash cloth and is pretty with a bowl and pitcher or a monogram outlined upon it in Turkey red cotton. Little things determine appearances.

MUSIC AT HOME.

Von Bulow, the pianist, is reported to have said: "If I stop practice for one day, I notice it in my playing; if I stop two days, my friends notice it; if I stop three days, the public notice it." How little the average piano pupil thinks of the value of continual practice. Frequently girls who have learned to play extremely well under a master's direction, allow themselves to grow lax in observing the maxims he took so much pains to press home. Then practice degenerates into the mere playing over of old pieces and occasional futile attempts to learn a new one. The time and money expended in past days seem to be lost so far as present circumstances are concerned. Fingers grow unmanageable; the touch becomes heavier, less sure; passages are slurred, chords are played as arpeggios, octaves are cheated of one-half of their value, and become single notes. Instead of thoroughness we have superficiality; for correctness, hesitation and uncertainty. Isabel comes home from school, where she has had excellent lessons from a first class master. After dinner papa comes into the drawing room, and asks for some music. His daughter plays one or two movements from a sonata of Beethoven, and perhaps a little Chopin and Schumann. Papa listens gravely, but gets rather sleepy, and says, by-and-by,—

"Very nice indeed, my dear; but can't you give us something livelier?"

He does not understand good music, and enjoys far more twelve-year old Mabel's simple tunes and waltzes. As Isabel is sincerely desirous of contributing to her father's evening amusement, she begins to learn lighter pieces, which cost her no pains, and finds that she gives satisfaction at home. For a time she keeps up her classical music, but gradually loses her interest in it, and with the abandonment of all that is difficult of accomplishment, the necessity for regular practice ceases to be acknowledged.

Music, as arranged for the piano, combines as far as possible the parts taken by various instruments in an orchestra. True, the piano is in itself imperfect, unsatisfactory, with very limited powers of expression. Its notes cannot be pathetic as those of the violin, nor sublime as the tone of an organ. But skilful fingers and a sympathetic touch can make even the piano minister to the musical cravings of many a player and listener, and with all its imperfections we are glad to keep our pianos, and to see our girls learning to play them.

AGE DOTH NOT WEARY.

A charming woman has no age. History is filled with the adventures of women whose age, if not their conduct, was respectable. Helen of Troy was over forty when that famous elopement took place. Ten years after, when the fortunes of war restored her to Menelaus, he received her with love and gratitude. Cleopatra was past thirty when she made the conquest of Antony and Diane de Poitiers at thirty six, and for many years after was considered the most beautiful woman at the court of Henry II. of France. Mme. de Maintenon was forty-three when she married Louis XIV., and Ninon de l'Enclos received a declaration of love on her eightieth birthday. The names of many other ancient society ladies might be added to this list.

WIT AND HUMOR.

I have a friend—he is an editor—who declares that the difference between wit and humor, and again between talent and genius, is only the difference between the raspberry and the strawberry. Doubtless God might have made a better berry than the strawberry, and doubtless God might have given man a better gift than humor—but He never did. Woman has not the full gift; she has wit and some humor it is true, but she only a slighter sense of humor, whence comes much marital unhappiness. As George Eliot tells us, "a difference of taste in jests is a great strain of the affections."

FASHION NOTES.

Irish poplins are again in fashion. Yellow flowers are very fashionable. Color plays an important part in fancy dress bonnets.

The new evening gloves are as long or longer than ever.

Flowers will be more worn than feathers on spring bonnets.

The new spring hats are very high in the crown and narrow in the brim.

Yellow plays an important part in millinery and toilet accessories this spring.

Ribbons striped in canvas gauze and watered silk come for bonnet trimmings.

Lace bonnets will be much worn as soon as the weather will permit their use.

The new capote bonnets are of medium size, and are very quiet and modest in effect.

Great bunches of flowers, all of one kind, are favorite hat and bonnet decorations this spring.

It takes but a small quantity of tinsel-shot camel's hair etamine to brighten a costume of plain stuff.

Braid and embroidery in the greatest imaginable variety of patterns adorn the new Jersey jackets.

Soft Surah satin and taffeta scarfs for trimming bonnets come in broad stripes of soft shaded color.

The peak-brimmed poke bonnet reappears among spring millinery importations and productions.

Fancy bonnets are made of tinsel and novelty fabrics of various kinds over frames of wire and lace net.

Wide tinsel braids put on in bands and long looped cabbage bows are the favorite trimmings of spring hats.

Small sunflowers on flexible stems nod over the crowns of many of the new imported hats and bonnets.

Canvas woven lines etamine ribbons shot with bars of gold thread trim some of the new Paris bonnets and hats.

The wild bushiness of the frizzled bang is abated until now it is reduced to a modest waved fringe on the forehead.

Spring velvets come in all the new shades of mastic, tan, brick red, Russian green, and gray and brown shades.

New silk Jerseys are beautifully beaded with jet in various designs, and sometimes in patterns covering the whole garment.

Some of the new cashmere gloves have the long wrists embroidered in chain stitch on the closed tops, with silk of a paler shade.

Upright jabot bows, in front of a bunch of nodding flowers, which tower above the high crown of the hats, are the feature in spring millinery.

All the trimmings of hats and bonnets are placed directly in front over the forehead, on the forepart of the crown, and tower high above the same.

Some of the new spring hats have high Tyrolean crowns and narrow brims, looped very high on one side with a space in the loop for the trimmings.

New spring wraps for dressy toilets are covered with embroidery and jet beading, trimmed with ruffles of lace, and are in modified dolman, mantle forms.

White hair is so fashionable that ladies are ordering white wigs to wear at evening entertainments, or they use powder to excess on the puffs and loops of their ever growing higher and higher and higher coiffures.

The colors in new silk gloves range from dark to pale shades of modes, tan, russet, and nut brown from filbert and hazel to chestnut, golden brown, grays from slate to pale Russian, and many intermediate tints of gray, blue, amber, and mastic.

STEWED CUCUMBERS.—Pare them and cut into thick slices, flour each slice well, and put them into a stewpan with butter, pepper, and salt to taste. Stew very slowly; add half a pint of clear vegetable broth, flavored with mushroom catsup and a tablespoonful of good claret. Stew until quite tender.