

forgiving Sylvia's father for wishing her to marry a man who had such good taste in flowers. At last I looked up, and held the box out for my host's admiration.

"Aren't they exquisite?"

"Yes, beautiful." He still held the card in his hand. "It was you, then, not Sylvia?"

"It was I, so far as it was anybody." His badly concealed surprise was amusing, though not complimentary. It seemed to me I could see his opinion of Mr. Martin going down like the mercury when one puts the thermometer outdoors on a cold morning. I could see also a slight modification of his view of Sylvia's conduct, and when I returned to the drawing-room with the flower-vase, I found that there was less tragedy and more expediency in the air than there had been since breakfast.

Scientific selfishness is strangely illogical in its working. Since Mr. Harcourt found that the brilliant marriage had never been within Sylvia's reach, and his own plan, undoubtedly the wisest for all concerned, had always been impossible of fulfilment, he was—well, in plain language, was in a much better temper. It was also open to him now to believe, if he chose to ignore a fact or two, that it was not his daughter who had defeated him, but circumstance.

"I did not tell you, I think," he said, as I sat my flower-vase down,

"that Sylvia is coming here this afternoon?"

"No," I said surprised. "I supposed she had gone out of town."

"No, they are going at nine o'clock this evening. Sylvia's note said she would come this afternoon, if I would see her."

After luncheon, Mr. Harcourt went out into his garden—a love of flowers was one of his redeeming qualities—and he wandered about, contemplating the muddy spots where these would be in a few weeks, and finally he called me out to look at one particularly interesting spot. I was contemplating it with a polite show of interest when I heard the gate-hinge creak. Mr. Harcourt turned quickly. Mr. Ernbridge had pushed the gate open for Sylvia, but she stood just outside it, looking at her father. I believe he hesitated, but it was only for a second. Then he walked over several potential flower-beds, and took his daughter affectionately in his arms, and afterwards shook hands cordially with Mr. Ernbridge.

"You will stay to dinner, will you not?" he asked. "Gertrude, here, has been looking after your work, Madam Runaway, so I suppose there will be something to eat."

The old gentleman was very gracious to both all through that wedding-dinner, but I remembered the arrival of the flowers, and I gave him but small credit.

*Katharine L. Johnston.*

