POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2034

MISS NAMESAKE

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'Abigail," said Miss Abigail Kimball, addressing her little niece, "I trust that while I am in the city today, you will not forget in everything that you are my namesake."

"No—m," replied the child whispering a good-bye, for she had never kissed her Aunt Abigail not even a good night kiss.

Little Abigail left alone for the first time all day lone in the care of the servants, took her doll, Polly Jane, and sat down in the library to think. By and by, Mary, the maid, came into the room, with an apron full of pine cones for the merry fire that danced and crackled in the wide open fireplace. The servant's good-natured face wreathed itself in smiles, for there sat Abigail stiffy erect in a high arm chair making a very droll picture indeed.

"Mary," whispered Abigail, "today, I've an awful respectability. I'm a namesake, the Aunt Abigail kind, you know. Not just pretend either."

"Land sakes! you don't say so. A Miss Namesake!" exclaimed the maid dramatically dropping her pine cones in surprise. Abigail smiled. Somehow always Mary understood.

"Yes," continued the little girl, "I'm one. I'd like to have a missionary meeting teaparty, really truly. Aunt Abigail was going to have one this very afternoon if Mr. Lawyer hadn't made her go to the city. I'd like real little girls at mine, too."

"But Miss Namesake, even if you was to have a really one, the children near here be all poor."

"Why, Mary, didn't you know missionary meeting teaparties are always for poor people? I don't think I'd feel so aloney if I could only have 'em once in awhile, my kind," murmured Abigail, a pathetic little catch in her sweet voice. Then tender hearted Mary was suddenly recalled to the kitchen.

"Oh, well, I'll just play missionary after lunch," whispered the wee girl. She looked wistfully out the window. It was snowing. The nodding plumes of the great fir trees were heavy with glistening snowdrops.

"Dear me, I'd rather be a tree than a namesake," she sighed.

Abigail was an old, sensitive girl of five years. Her father and mother both dead she had lived ever since her third birthday with her aunt, Miss Kimball. As Miss Namesake was odd, she was often very lonely. She called herself "little All Aloney."

Mary was the only one who seemed to understand her whimsical, imaginative ways, while her Aunt Abigail did not at all. Maybe her aunt did not understand because she had always lived such a sheltered life behind these great fir trees. Then, too, it was a long time since a wee girl had played in the great silent house. And the lonely woman—for her. Aunlt Abigail was lonely too—seemed to have forgotten her own childhood days so barren of childish things. She had known few children. Taught by a governess, brought up according to rule, she knew of only this one way for her niece. Poor little Namesake.

"Oh, I feel so grown up," sighed Abigail. She was taking her Aunt Abigail's place for the day so she understood. Though the importance of her "respectability" had a peculiar charm, she was still little All Aloney. There were shadows across her just-pretend land, and naughty elves called tears tangled themselves in Polly Jane's curls. It was Lonesome Land everywhere today, even if she were a namesake.

Then luncheon time came.

"Mary," remonstrated Miss Namesake, imitating her aunt's manner and tone of voice, "I do not wish any more jam—I'm a namesake, you know."

The little girl had suddenly remembered she had never seen her aunt take more than one spoonful of jam. Good natured Mary had taken advantage of her mistress's absence and was incidentally heaping Abigail's plate with delicious jam.

"Very well, ma'm," sighed Mary, smiling, though her kind heart ached to comfort little All Aloney in her brave attempts to be a good namesake.

"Polly Jane," whispered Abigail, when she once more sat in the library, "I can't kiss you today, 'cause I'm a namesake; the aunt Abigail kind, you know. So you sit quietly and think, for I wish to read."

She smiled with a little grown-up air at her doll. Then Miss Namesake took a heavy book from the table and began to read; that is, just pretend read, for the book was upside down. There were lonely tears in a little girl's eyes. Besides she wasn't very comfortable, for the tips of her small boots did not touch the floor, and, of course, she wouldn't rest her feet on the rounds of Aunt Abigail's mahogany chairs.

From her high seat she could see the dark green fir trees boldly silhouetted against a grey sky. The wind was singing through their fragrant depths. On the wide window ledge, four little birds were eating crumbs she had so generously given them earlier in the day. "I guess they're having a missionary meeting tea party."

"What?" sighed the fir trees. Abigail listened. She had nearly forgotten something and now she had thought of a plan.

"If Aunt Abigail couldn't have her missionary meeting tea party, I'll just have one, the really truly kind, in her place, 'cause I'm her namesake. But who'll I have to it?"

"Who?" whispered the fir trees.

"Oh, goody, I know. The happy children nextest to my house." Miss Kimball lived a mile beyond the small suburban village. "Oh, they'd be glad to come. I'll just run and tell 'em and get back real soon."

Abigail ran swiftly down the walk, her aunt's white shawl wrapped closely about her little shoulders. She had forgotten she was a namesake. This was really truly fun. The boisterous north wind tossed her curls. She smiled gratefully at the nodding fir trees, who always told her such pretty stories.

Well, the poor children were delighted with an invitation to a misionary meeting tea party at the "big house," as they admiringly called Miss Kimball's home. Their names were Macks, and there were four in all. Just what the party was to be like they didn't know. But their hostess was so confident and happy that the uncertainty was more alluring, while Miss Namesake, who had attended only one missionary meeting tea party, and that the Aunt Abigail kind, was tremendously happy.

Mary never suspected a thing of it. Imagine her surprise, then, when she walked into the library later in the afternoon to see if Miss Abigail was still namesaking, and found three ragged little girls, one small boy and Miss Namsake, gathered cozily around the great open fireplace.

"Bless my eyes!" exclaimed Mary, pausing in the open doorway.

"Oh, come in, Mary," gradiously called Abigail, her blue eyes dancing with merriment at the expression on the servant's face. "I'm having a missionary meeting tea party in Aunt Abigail's place. My missionaries are the Misses Brewsters, Miss Ruggles and—Mr. Randolph Prince. Just play, you know, Mary." The little hostess had named each of her odd guests after friends of her aunt.

The children grinned. The dancing flames intensified the happiness on the just-pretend missionaries' faces, while Abigail smiled through tears of true delight.

"Tea served in the dining room, ma'am?" finally questioned Mary, assuming an heir of hauteur that would have pleased a Princess.

"You may serve it in here, please," replied Miss Namesake, smiling approval at the maid's grandeur. She was, indeed, Mary's Princess. The servant left the room.

"I'd like to be a real missionary, wouldn't you, Miss Ruggles?" asked Abigail of the oldest Mack girl, who was caressing Polly Jane's curls.

"My, yes, if they're ike you!"

"So would I."

"And so would I."

"Me, too," piped in Billy Mack, alias Mr. Prince.

After a most delicious lunch, which Mary served with Aunt Abigail's "bestest things," thec hildren suddenly forgot they were "just pretends" and became little people. They romped and played. Poor Mary had to cry when she heard the echo of their happy voices in the lonely house. Then it grew dark and the children went home.

"It was the beautifulest time I ever had!" exclaimed Miss Namesake when later Mary tucked the tired but strangely happy little girl in her great feather bed. If they both thought of what Aunt Abigail might say, they ignored the fact and enjoyed to their hearts' content the rehearsal of the afternoon's odd pleasure. "I'd never be aloney, Mary, if I could have my kind of missionary meeting tea parties."

It was long after ten before Aunt Abigail reached home. Mafy said not a word concerning the afternoon's festivities. She knew the honor of a certain little girl's heart.

"Aunt Abigail!" called Miss Namesake in a very sweet bedtime voice.

"Yes," answered Miss Kimball, pausing at the threshold of her niece's room.

"I didn't 'member all the day long I was your namesake and had an awful respectability.'

"Why, Abigail Kimball! What have you been doing?"

"I had a missionary meeting tea party," repied the little girl, sitting upright in bed. "I had one my kind. I had the little Macks to it."

"The Macks!" exclaimed Miss Kimball, very much horrified

"They're poor. Aunt Abigail—and missionary meeting tea parties are for poor people. I'm awful sorry I played after meeting, though it was a lot of fun—" The chid's voice sank to a lonely little whisper.

Miss Kimball, drawn by some strange feeing, walked to her little niece's bedside. She bent over her and asked her in a low, faltering voice:

"Abigail, why did you do it?"

Miss Namesake paused. Her eyes opened wider and wider and in their starry depths were all the stories of little All Aone in Lonesome Land. "'Cause I was just loncly; I just had to be a missionary."

"I am sorry dear."

"Oh, Aunt Abigail, let's both be missionaries."

"We will, and will have your kind of parties," replied Aunt Abigail, and she gave the wee girlie, a long-drawn-out bedtime kiss.

PERIPATHETIC WOOING.

By Rita Kelley.

(Copyright, 1907, by Homer Sprague.)

Eloise was having thoughts. That they were not pleasant thoughts was proved by the hurry with which she donned her tan ulster and close brown walking hat and slipped out of the house. She hurried down brilliantly lighted Broadway hoping that the new experience of being alone, unchaperoned, unprotected, amid the rush of life on all sides, might divert her mind. She was halted at last by a man with a megaphone. He was shouting "All aboard for Chinatown. Right this way. Tickets two dollars. All aboard for Chinatown!"

She looked up at the huge, ugly "Rubberneck Wagon," now fairly transformed into a bower of beauty by red, white and blue electric lights and Chinese lanterns bobbing in the chill breeze. It seemed to offer surcease from the insistent, uncomfortable thoughts at the back of her brain. The old wagon in its brave array held some of the allurements of fairyland, and its happy irresponsibility—and on the spur of the moment she whipped out her purse from her ulster pocket, bought her ticket and climbed in among the lanterns well toward the front.

George had dared to insinuate that she could not get along without him. He had acted as if he were as much a part of her life as her daily ride in the park, her nights at the opera, her cotillon favors. Worse still, there had been, too, the suggestion that he was so much a part of her existence that she could not get along without him. Other girls were wooed and hard won. She was taken for granted. And she wanted romance, "heart interest" she had heard it called when the drama was under consideration. All her life had the conventional been wrapped around her like a dun-colored cloak. She would have freedom from conventionality—and George.

A thrill of anticipation ran through her as the big clumsy vehicle wheeled cautiously and threaded its way down the crowded street. Through the Tenderloin, the Ghetto, the Bowery—all those localities of which she had heard but never seen—it went. When it halted at last she was in the front of the party, still determinedly eager to get outside of herself. The conductor had taken her under his wing and she felt very safe and sure.

They had climbed up and up and up many winding, creaking, unsafe stairs to the Jess house—a heathenish, garish place filled with a mixture of rare carvings, embroideries, ivories and apparently worthless junk. The conductor of the party waited to give his explanation until the loiterers had gone.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "wait a few minutes and I will explain this interesting place. There are some people present who did not come with the party and who are waiting in the hope that they will get the benefit of what I am about to tell you."

A little woman in a blue tailored suit edged her way with asperity into the crowd.

"Do you mean me?" she demanded. I guess we have have as good a right to be here as anyone. And we'll stay here till we are ready to go."

The conductor turned to Eloise for approbation.

"The members of this party have each paid two dollars for this valuable information and it is not fair to them to allow you to hear this for nothing. I know your kind. You have been following us around just to get this information free. Not a night passes but I have trouble of this kind and it's got to stop."

The little woman fought off her friends who strove to lead her away.

"And who are you that you should talk to me that way?" she cried. "Do you know who I am? I'll have you arrested for insulting a lady. My brother is down now looking for a policeman. Do you hear?" she shrieked, maddened by her inability to impress the cool conductor.

There was a commotion in the doorway and two men pushed through and thrust their fists under the conductor's nose.

"I'll report you!" they yelled, "for insulting a lady."

Eloise turned sick. She pushed out of the excited crowd, past the two emaciated, imperturbable old Chinamen behind their little trinket counter and fled to the balcony overlooking the main street of the Chinese quarter.

It was horribly low. She shuddered at the thought of where she was and under what protection as he gazed down from the lantern-hung balcony into the street crowded with Chinese in native dress—their pig faces, long cues and long-nailed fingers holding apper bags filled with vegetables.

"Eloise!"

She jumped at the sound of her name and a man's step on the balcony, and pressed back against the wall of the house staring with wild eyes at the man before her.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Why, you have never been out like this! What does it mean?"

She gathered her forces suddenly for retaliation.

"What if I haven't?" she said, somewhat breathlessly. 'I am old enough to do as I choose—and—it is not in the least your affair what I do."

She pushed past him into the incense-laden interior to have the conductor present her with a package of joss sticks and a slip of paper covered with Chinese characters.

"A fortune," he said, gallantly. "Ask your Chinese laundryman to read it to you."

"I haven't a Chinese laundryman," she exclaimed passionately. "And I never will have one!"

She ran almost blindly down the stairs and into the street trusting to her instinct for locality to guide her to the nearest Subway station. The Orientals fell back in astonishment at sight of her fleeing figure, and a few fat old fellows said unintelligible things to her which caused a roar of laughter.

Her cheeks were burning, her breath was coming in gasps as she came into the little square marking the one-time wickedest place in New York. All at once she felt that she was being followed. Quick, light footfalls were coming behind her, were keeping pace with her's and terror clutched her heart. A few drunken men sprawled on the park benches. To return was impossible. She could never find the "rubberneck" party. There was nothing to do but keep on as best she could.

She emerged from the park ready to drop with exhaustion and was obliged to slow down to get her breath. To he relief she found the steps had stopped and no one was in sight. She went on and on through the better streets of the wholesale district and at last saw the twinkling lights of surface cars ahead. She reached for her purse. It was gone!

She stopped stock still on a corner, frozen with horror. Alone at eleven o'clock at night on a deserted street with no money and home miles away! The ills of her guarded, pampered life showed uppermost in this dilemma. A less favored girl would have known what to do. She stood there dazed, helpless, till the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps startled her into action. She sprang forward.

"Eloise!" A man's voice echoed her name commandingly among the skyscrapers.

She collapsed all in a heap on the curbstone.

"You—you—lovable girl," he said, looking down at her limp person struggling for breath.

"Oh, George," she panted, "I didn't know it was you."

He sat down on the curb beside her.

"I thought you did," he said.

"And there wasn't any real danger?" she asked, wide-eyed. "Oh, what a simpleton."

"None at all except from the ogre me." He laughed shortly.

"Oh, George, you are simply fine!"

"You didn't think so last week this time," he said relentlessly.

"But you didn't insist," she pouted. "A girl likes to be coivinced."

"Oh, you—you—I will say it—foolish girl! he said, with adoring eyes.

The secret of my fortune lies
In one small fact, which I may state,
Too many tradesmen learn too late—
If I have goods, I advertise!
Then people come
And people go
In constant streams,
For people know
That he who has good wares to sell
Will surely advertise them well;
And proudly I reiterate
I am an advertiser great!
—Eugene Field.

Citizen—There's plenty of work for an able bodied man to do. Why don't you become a sandwich man?

Tramp—It's agin me convictions. De newspaper is de only advertisin' medium.

CUPID AND THE COMMITTIEE

By Caroll Gordon.

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"Do you draw up resolutions and things?" asked Kate Masters eagerly.

"No," scorned Matie. "You send a committee to the boss and tell him we won't work any more."

"I'd rather write," declared Kate Kelso. "I'd be scared to death to go in there and talk to him."

"Writing isn't half as good," declared Matie. "You just tell him what the matter is and that we'll go on strike if Bromley isn't dismissed, and that's all there is to it."

"All," repeated Kate. "I should think it would be enough. The idea of going right in to Mr. Temple and teling him that we're not going to work any more unless Bromley is sacked. I'd be so scared I couldn't speak."

"I'm not afraid," said Matie disdainfully.

"I vote that we make Matie Lester a committee all by herself," suggested Grace and the motion was unanimously carried without the formation of a seconding.

"No you don't," cried Matie. "I'll do the talking but we want a lot of girls for the comittee. It has a good effect."

In the end a committee of five was appointed and it was agreed that the noon hour the next day would be the proper time for making the demand. Matie lay awake half the night thinking what she should say and her argument was continued in her dreams.

The room was all excitement the next morning and as the noon hour approached the excitement grew more intense. Every girl in the room left her lunch untouched to accompany the committee on its errand or protest and left them only at the beginning of the short hall at the end of which was Edward Temple's office.

The departure of the escort seemed to have a bad effect on the others for, as Matie rapped on the door and a deep voice responded, the other four girls right about faced as by common impulse and fled down the passage way.

For a moment Matie watched them, dismayed. Then with a firm hand she turned the knob and entered the room. In place of the gray-haired man she expected to find the room was tenanted only by an alert young fellow who looked up expectantly as she approached.

"I beg your pardon," she stammered. "I thought that this was Mr. Temple's room."

"So it is," he responded briskly, "and this is Mr. Temple. Only it happens that my father did not come down this morning. Anything I can do for you? I am Frank Temple."

"I don't know that you'll do," she said dubiously. "You see, I'm a strike—I mean a strike committee," she corrected.

"A single committee is rather unusual," he smiled. "Do I understand that you represent the factory?"

"The finishing room," she explained. "There were five of us but the rest ran away."

"I see," he said gravely, though his eyes twinkled. "And may I ask the nature of the demands to be made?"

"It's that horrid Jim Bromley," she exclaimed. "We don't want any money or anything, but we want a new foreman. He's just as mean as can be. He wouldn't have Bess Bradley's machine fixed the other day and when it broke down and hurt her hand, he docked her for the time she was away. He's always fining us for every little thing and he's that mean——"

Matie's pause spoke volumes and her eyes added to the story. Temple grinned.

"I shall have to look into this," he said. "Take a chair, please. He left her to herself, but presently he came back with another young man as clean cut as himself.

"Mr. Everett will look into the matter," said Temple. "Just tell him about the mean Mr. Bromley."

"Now you're laughing at me," said Matie indignantly.

"Far from it," he denied. "Grievance committees should be treated most seriously."

"And this is serious," she declared, turning to Everett. Her sense of wrong sustained gave her eloquence and her eyes snapped as she recited a long tale of Bromley's wrongs. Everett listened attentively, though at times he and Temple exchanged sympathetic glances as some quaint turn of speech caught their sense of humor.

"This is a matter that most certainly should be looked into," he said. "I do not believe in fines except as a last resort. Suppose you help us get at the bottom of the trouble?"

"I'm telling you all about it now," she cried.

"I know," he agreed. "But to get Bromley right we shall have to wait. Now if you will explain to the others that the matter will be properly settled if they will go as they have been doing for a week, I think we can hand a verp unpleasant surprise to the enterprising Mr. Bromley. It appears from the boks that few fines have been turned in. On account of the number of employees the envelopes are made up several days ahead and the foreman of each department take out the fines. Now on Saturday make a note of all the fines, bring the envelopes to me and we will have the matter straightened out."

Matie looked him squarely in the eye. "Do you really mean that?" she demanded.

"Most certainly," he assured.

"Shake hands on it," she demanded. Everett blushed as his fingers closed over the smaller hand—and lingered there.

Matie went back to the room with a sense of importance. Word was passed along that it was all right and to meet on the corner after the factory closed. There was a babel of voices as the plot was unfolded and when, at last, the impromptu meeting adjourned Everett was lingering there.

"I saw the crowd forming," he laughed, as he fell into step beside Matie, "and I waited to hear the outcome."

She tucked her hand through the proffered arm and together they went down the street.

The next night Everett was waiting again and so on until Saturday when at the noon hour the girls were paid off. There was the usual heavy fines marked on the envelopes and Matie formed a line and marched off to the office. Bromley had alread turned back to the cashier the fines he had collected, but a rapid computation showed that the envelopes and the statement to the cashier developed a discrepancy of more than ten dollars. The foreman had been detained in the office on a pretext and when he left the building it was in company with a blue-coated official, and the girls lingered on the corner to hold a jubilee over the downfall of their enemy.

"Who's going to be cashier now?" demanded one of the celebrants. Matie grew red.

"I'm to be in charge for a little while," she said. "Mr. Everett arranged that last night."

"That's too bad," said one of the girls.

"Why, please?" demanded Matie hotly.

"We won't have anyone to speak for us when we want to go on strike against you."

"That's so," laughed one of the others. "All the other girls on the committee ran away."

"I guess I shall not be in charge long enough for you to get sore on me," said Matie importantly. "I'm to be married after Easter."

"This was news inded and the girls crowded eagerly about her. For a moment she fought off their questioning but at last she faced them defiantly.

"I'm going to be married to Mr. Everett, if you have to know," she said.

"That's what you get for being the committee," said one of them enviously.

"Well," reminded Matie," there's four of you that can't say you didn't have a chance, "and I don't mind telling you that I'm glad you didn't take it. Jim Everett is worth interviewing the president himself for."

BELOW STAIRS.

By Will A. Page.

(Copyright, 1907, by C. H. Sutcliffe.)

Evans, the butler, was industriously reading the newspaper out loud. On the other side of the kitchen table, Mortimer, the coachman, was mending his whip.

"The daring robbers then bundled up their booty and decamped," the pompous butler read very loudly, "leaving the detective officers baffled without a clue. As there was no evidence that the doors had been forced or locks tampered with, the detectives were at first inclined to suspect the servants; but, as Mr. Walcott declared he had the utmost faith in them, the police were not allowed to search their rooms."

Mortimer, oblivious of the newspaper item, did not reply when Evans stopped reading, as though expecting some comment.

"I say, Mortimer, old chap, that isn't such a bad haul, is it? The paper says they got away with $2,000 worth of silver."

"Bad haul?" queried Mortimer. "What are you talking about?"

"Talking about?" repeated Evans, disgusted. "Why, what else should I be talking about but the big robbery down the street at old man Walcott's house?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were reading anything of importance."

"I should say it was of importance. As the servants there are suspected, that naturally places us in an awkward position."

"What do you mean?"

"Aren't we all servants? And if one of the fashionable families takes up a fad, don't all the other fashionable families follow suit?"

"Nonsense, Evans. You're an old fool."

"I tell you," persisted Evans, "that if the Walcott servants are suspected of dishonesty, the servants of every fashionable family in the city will have to clear their characters."

"Why, we are well known to the missus. I have been with her six years, yet you dare—" and Mortimer rose flourishing his whip.

"I don't mean you," sneered Evans. "It's Miss Charlotte who is more likely to be suspected."

Mortimer resisted the inclination to strike the fellow, though he was strongly tempted. The door bell sounding then, Evans, with a muttered imprecation, rushed to a small mirror hanging on the kitchen wall, primped himself, and disappeared, bowing elaborately to Charlotte, the maid newly come to service, who happened to be entering the kitchen at that particular moment.

"Now, then, you stupid," broke in Charlotte, "you almost made me drop the chinaware."

Charlotte bowed, without speaking, to Mortimer, who commenced to mend the whip with redoubled anxiety. She busied herself at the gas stove making chocolate, and neither spoke a word for several moments. Then Evans broke in hurriedly upon them.

"It's a detective," he cried, rushing across the room toward the door which led into the front basement, "I seen it on the card he sent up to the missus. 'A. L. Walker, Detective Headquarters,' that's what the card said." He opened the door into the basement.

"But what does he want?" inquired Charlotte.

"That's just what I'm going to find out. There's a furnace pipe in there that is loose, and it opens right under where the detective is sitting. I can hear every word." And he disappeared into the cellar.

"I'm afraid Mr. Evans is not troubled by scruples, Mr. Mortimer," said Charlotte, turning to the gas stove again. "I always thought butlers a bad lot."

"I'm glad you think so—" began Mortimer.

"Why, Mr. Mortimer, what do you mean?"

"Of course, one can't be jealous of a butler," broke in Mortimer, dropping the whip.

"Jealous? Well, I like that." With a toss of the head.

"Perhaps I shouldn't say jealous," continued Mortimer, abashed. "But you see, I wanted to ask you—"

"Well?"

"If you'd spend your next evening out with me, unless you have some other engagement."

"Next week, on Thursday?" said Charlotte, coquettishly. "No, I don't think I have anything on my card."

"Then I'll put you down for next Thursday, Miss Charlotte. Thanks!"

"Did you say it was for the grand opera, Mr. Mortimer?"

"No Miss Charlotte. For the coachmen's ball."

"The coachmen's ball?" repeated Charlotte, enthusiastically. "Oh, how jolly. I've always wanted to go to a coachman's ball. It's—It's rather exclusive, isn't it?"

"I should say so," answered Mortimer, proudly. "Only those who drive for the west end families are eligible."

The sudden boiling over of the milk interrupted these pleasant anticipations of future happiness, and Mortimer was dispatched post haste to the dining room to secure some chocolate. Charlotte, left alone, reached for her handkerchief and found a letter in the pocket of her apron. Evidently she was deeply interested, for she read and re-read the letter several times. Then she untied the handkerchief, disclosed a large diamond ring and tried it on several fingers.

"Cracky! A diamond," cried Evans, entering suddenly from the cellar. Charlotte hastily returned the ring to her pocket.

"It's my own," she declared, "it was given to me by a dear old lady who has just died."

"Stuff and nonsense," broke in the man roughly. "It's the diamond some one stole from the missus—I heard all about it through the stove pipe. The detective is looking for it now — he's going to search the house."

"But it's mine," I say—"

"Ah, your game is up, my girl. Give me the ring and I won't tell. Say you'll marry me—I can sell the diamond—"

"Let me go—you hurt me. Help. Let me go."

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to oblige the lady," said Mortimer, striding down to Evans and giving him a twist on the collar. "Be off with you."

Evans withdrew to one side, angrily. "I'm going to tell the detective," he cried roughly. "Then we'll see whose turn it will be."

The man rushed out of the room, angrily. Charlotte flushed red. "What is he going to tell the detective?" asked Mortimer.

"He—he—thinks I have stolen this diamond," she answered, showing the ring

"My God, where did you get that ring?" cried Mortimer, "and he says you stole it? Quick—give it to me before the detective comes. I'll say I took it."

"But it's mine—really—"

"Then, what does he mean? Ah, I know you wouldn't steal a ring, Miss Charlotte—you wouldn't steal anything more than you've already stolen—my heart—but if I can help you only say the word."

Evans entered a few minutes later at an unfortunate moment. He was decidedly gloomy.

"Fine joke, you people may call this, making game of a man," he muttered, crossing to the cellar door.

"The detective—you told him?" eagerly asked Mortimer.

"Yes, I told him. I goes upstairs and tells the missus and the detective, just as he is about to leave, that her maid says as how she stole the diamond ring and is waiting in the kitchen to be arrested. At that the detective and the missus commence to laugh, and the deteck he says: "Guilty conscience, my lady. Watch that maid. Some day she'll steal preserves.' And he goes out laughing. And then the missus turns to me and says: 'Evans, the detective found my ring under the hall rug, where it had fallen.' 'All right, ma'am,' says I, backing out, for I saw something was wrong.

"'While on the subject, Evans,' continued the missus, 'perhaps you will explain just how you learned I had lost a diamond ring. I never told you.' And so I was caught, and the best I could do was to say that one of the furnace pipes was loose, and that I happened to be in the cellar by accident. Now the missus has given me orders to fix that furnace pipe."

And he gloomily plunged into the cellar.

"So you really believed I had stolen the ring?" said Charlotte.

'Not once. I was prepared to swear I had stolen it, because I love you."

A terrific crash from the cellar interrupted them again at a critical moment.

"What's that?" cried Charlotte.

"I think the furnace pipe must have fallen on Evans," answered Mortimer, cheerily, taking her in his arms.

"Poor Evans," murmured Charlotte. "And we'll use my diamond ring as an engagement ring. We must save money, you know."

BETTY'S ENGAGEMENT

(Copyrighted 1907 by Leslie Holmes.)

Betty rode in the elevator nearly every day. Allen Johnson ran the elevator every day and knew all about Betty.

In fact, he was pretty sure that any girl who got off regularly at the sixth floor and turned to the right was bound for the room whose door carried this legend:

JAMES CONVERSE,
Theatrical Agent and Producer, General Provider of Stage Talent. Mobs a Specialty.

Mr. Converse's office was the sort of A B C class in stage craft, where ambitious young men and women were given a chance to participate in mob scenes, court balls, hunting parties, etc., at a salary ranging from 50 cents to $1.00 a performance.

Converse had been in the business many years, had amassed a comfortable fortune and could point with pride to the fact that many a girl or lad who had started with him in the mob scene of a big production was now drawing a good salary as leading man or woman, or was even starring.

Someone had told Betty Vincent of this fact, and so she hung onto the hope of an opening at the Converse office with the despair of a girl who finds herself compelled to earn her living without any particular preparation and who thinks the stage offers the one field where experience is not necessary.

Day after day Betty smiled and said "Good morning" to Allen, and day after day Allen watched the roses fade in her cheeks and the circles deepen around her pretty, violet eyes. He saw, too, her brave struggle to keep up appearances. One day the little fur toque she wore would be covered with ribbons, again it would blossom forth in somewhat faded violets, and another day a home-curled to
sen
very
"Yes,
the big
of a Prin
it will be a
my grandmo
a lovely broca
The car cam
sengers crowded
in the crush.
"Triumph!" mutter
self, giving the lever
onable jerk. "Have t
own costumes. That d
the management was roll
Guess I'll look it up."

By night Allen knew all a
company and the manage
"The Love of a Princess. He
to hunt up Betty, who he knew
come no more to the Empire build
Then he changed his mind and inste
glared at the manager of the compan
who rode at times in his car.

"Let her have her fling," he said to himself. "She's got to have it and no talking of mine will convince her."

Nevertheless that night when Betty came out of the big hall where the rehearsals were being held. Allen was waiting for her.

She loked surprised, but he tucked her arm through his in brotherly protecting fashion.

"You must as well get used to stage door admirers," he said, with a laugh. "Got to have 'em, you know. Anyhow, I live up your way and it's no time of night for a girl to be out alone."

That was the beginning of his curious guardianship. When the rehearsals were transferred from the hall to the theatre, he was more vilgant than ever, and somehow he so ingratiated himself with the old doorkeeper that he was permitted to sit back on a pile of stage "props" and watch the rehearsals. Some times Betty wondered why he was so grave when they started homeward. She did not know that the world-wise Allen had ushered in this same theatre for many months and knew a "frost" when he saw it, even in rehearsal. But he did not contradict her when she rattled on about the wonderful things she intended to do for her half-invalid mother on that nine dollars a week, for "The Love of a Princess" was to have two matinees a week.

The night of the dress rehearsal Allen sat watching her with hungry eyes. Almost he wished that he had tried for the position of "walking gentleman" just to promenade the stage with that vision of soft lavender brocade on his arm. Then his eyes snapped and when Betty came off he whispered:

"Take off that lace thingumbob and carry it home with you."

Betty looked surprised, but she had learned to defer to his suggestions, and, so when she came out in her long, rough coat and fur toque she carried the lace better under her arm.

"That is what makes the dress look so pretty" she urged. "It's real lace."

"Yes; I saw that," answered Allen, 'but some five-cent-a-yard stuff will do for stage wear, and if some of them got wise to the fact you had real lace they'd cop it and pawn it. Say, you don't know anything yet about life behind the scenes."

At first Betty had felt inclined to resent Allen's espionage, but he was a good looking chap, and she soon found, especially after the first night when she was the only one of the "extra ladies" to receive flowers, violets that must have cost several dollars, that his regular attendance upon her made her the envy of many fellow players.

The papers gave the new production bad notices but the audiences continued large, especially in the orchestra, and Betty remained hopeful.

"Paper," said Allen, in disgust, as he watched the audience gather on Thursday night. And he was right. The house was being filled on passes. "The Love of a Princess" was a failure.

But Betty, watching the big audiences, could not be persuaded—not until Saturday night came when the company was called together and dismissed without salaries.

Betty was very quiet and white when she came out, her grandmother's frock under her arm.

"It's all over," she said sadly. "You were right. And—and we didn't even get one week's salary. There's all my car fare—and my new slippers—and a bill at the druggist, mother's cough has been so much worse—"

Allen's firm clasp closed over her trembling hand.

"There, there, don't you worry, I saw it coming before the first night, even, and my brother who's got a good thing in the Daniels Realty Company is going to put you in there to mind the switchboard. Tomorrow's Sunday, and he'll take time to show you how to run it, so when you start in Monday you won't seem green. It's eight a week to start and something better ahead, 'cause you've got a pull, see?"

"Oh, you are so kind to me. I don't see why—"

Betty was half sobbing.

Allen looked down upon her drooping head in speechless amazement. Girls certainly were queer things, he argued. Hadn't he shown her plainly enough? He cleared his throat, but his voice remained husky.

"Don't you know—ain't you seen—that I loved you—loved you from the first day you came into my car? But I wasn't going to tell you just yet—not until I got a better job. The first of the year I'm going into the advertising line with that firm on the tenth floor and then——say have you seen those model flats upon West Eighty-seventh street? I think that sunlight from the south court would be grand for your mother, and if you get an advance, and the advertising business pans out, we might—"

Goodness, was she never going to stop crying? Was this the way girls always behaved when men proposed to them.

Suddenly the brocaded dress fell at his very feet, and before he could pick it up, Betty's two hands clasped on his arm and her eyes, raised to his, shone like two violets bathed with dew.

"Oh, Allen, you are perfectly grand. If the Princess had had a love like yours—the show never would have closed—"

And then—but never mind. Some policemen are very tactful, and the one who was strolling their way, turned his back and picked up the brocade dress that was rolling straight for the gutter.