

Diplomas and Diplomacy

By Myra Kelly

"My dears!" cried Mrs. Pearson as she responded to the bell. "This is a pleasant surprise."

It was a surprise to which she must have been growing accustomed, for Elizabeth and I—bachelor maidens and fiercely independent as became our state—still craved the companionship of an older, wiser woman and the magic of a home. We found them all at the Pearson's, and we spent our disengaged Sundays and generally an evening or so a week in the haven of serenity which they had contrived by filling the drawing-room and the dining room of their flat with low chairs, deep and soft; a flood of pillows; a few divans; a passe piano; some prints; some lamps, and the warmest, kindest, most genuine hospitality to be found within a ten-mile radius of the campus.

There was no surer help in times of trouble; no heartier congratulations in times of joy; no steadier friendship than the Pearsons gave to such of us as were so fortunate as to know them. Trouble and responsibility seemed to touch them only through their friends, yet I knew, and so did Elizabeth, that it was a hazardous

and spirit-wearing task to maintain two small children and an open house upon the salary attached to an assistant professorship.

"I think," she went on, as she closed the door and led us into the tobacco-clouded living room, "that you ought to know everybody here. They're all college people. I'm not speaking of Billy Blight," she amended, as the tall figure of that young man, with a twin Pearson clinging to each leg, arose to salute us, "you ought not to know him, of course, but I'm afraid you do."

"What's he been doing?" asked Elizabeth when we had greeted the other members of the party and taken our places upon a big divan.

"He's abused our hospitality," Mrs. Pearson answered. "You know how we've given him the freedom of our new house, the 'Castle in Spain.' How we've let him wander about from room to room and look out of all the windows. You know how I even promised to let him paint frescoes on the nursery walls."

"Good, safe place that," laughed Marthana Carruth. "The babies are too young to say what they think."

"But I must protest," said Professor Berger, a dear old chap from Jena who had come to study American institutions, and whom "Prexy" had shifted to Pearson's care for the afternoon. "It is important to the vitals that the young eye of the child shall not be distorted."

"Of course, of course," agreed all of us who retained the power of speech.

Pearson did his young guest the justice and the honor to say: "Young Blight has won more medals and created more beauty than many an artist twice his age."

"But that does not excuse him," Mrs. Pearson interrupted. "His art may be good, but his manners are atrocious. You know, dears," she went on, "how I've let him play billiards in the billiard room and read in the library."

We assured her that we did know. Billy had enjoyed, even as Elizabeth and I had, free range of the blue prints from the architect's plans for the Pearson's proposed house at West Farms. Mrs. Pearson got the plans and spread them for our inspection.

"See what he's done!" she cried, dramatically.

"Oh! that is too bad of him," cried Elizabeth. "Marthana, Mr. Rollins, do come and see what Billy Blight's done to the very best bedroom in the house."

We gathered round her and there we read across the fair space of the room over the library: "Reserved for the exclusive use of William Blight, Esquire."

news. You know how long we've had those plans and yet how far we seemed from laying the corner-stone, so to speak."

"Of course they do, dear," Pearson interrupted. "Don't they know we've always spoken of it as the 'Castle in Spain'?"

"Bless it," cried the future chatelaine.

"Well," continued Pearson, and his earnest face and a little break in his voice made the words beautiful to us who were so fond of him, "I see my way clear at last and I've signed the contract. I'm to pay for the castle in two years. If we're careful—"

"Oh! we shall be careful," cried his wife. "We may own it all in eighteen months."

Of course we congratulated them jubilantly and Pearson went on:

"It's all on account of that course of zoology which the president is listed to conduct. I'm to have that next year. He spoke of it last week. That will raise me to a full professorship. My salary will increase by \$2,000. I shall be the head of the science department and just about the proudest and happiest fellow between here and Timbuctoo."

Again we tumultuously congratulated him.

"And it isn't only that," he went on, "not only the money, though God knows that will be welcome enough; not the house, though that will be precious enough; not the position, though that will be fine enough. But it's the work. The chance. A great big chance to do great



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"Oh! really Billy, that is too bad of you," I cried. "That's the room I fixed on for myself."

"And I," said Elizabeth.

"And I," echoed Marthana.

"And we," said Mrs. Pearson.

"That's right; butting in, all of you," growled Billy. "No privacy even in a chap's own room. I'll not visit you at all. The inhospitality and the selfishness with which I have been treated this day are the last two straws—"

At that John came in. John is John Wentworth, Professor of Philosophy at our college and my promised husband. He is younger than Mr. Pearson, but the two are great friends and I think that it is partly on this account that Mrs. Pearson is so good to me. She knows that I shall some day be a faculty wife and she already treats me with the confidence and friendship which characterize most of the men and women who supply the mental grist to our mill. They are nearly all young; they are all ambitious; and they are more independent than such a body generally is because "Prexy" is so much away from the college. He is our publicity man—every institution in these days must have one—and he is always off lecturing, attending conferences, serving on commissions, getting us new trustees or endowments. This leaves the ordinary, day-by-day, administration of affairs in the hands of the other professors and brings them into frequent and intimate association with one another.

So when John had smoked a quiet pipe and entertained our Germanic friend for half an hour it seemed quite natural that Mr. Pearson and he should retreat to a tiny room, called by courtesy the study, in which our host kept a few books and bones. Pearson's specialty was zoology. Presently Mrs. Pearson and I were summoned to join them and Professor Berger was left to be amused and mystified by the youngsters.

"Dear friends," said Mrs. Pearson, when the door was closed, "we have such

big work. I'll make the department a wonder. I'll make the chaps in other universities—aye and in other countries, like that Berger there—I'll make 'em sit up and take notice. And the students I'll turn out!"

"No, Robert," cried his wife, taking his hand in hers, "you'll never turn out any students at all. You'll get so attached to them and so interested in them and they'll get so devoted to you that you'll all stay there together, one great happy family dabbling in the internal workings of the animal kingdom. What makes you look so serious, Marian?" she asked suddenly, turning to me. "What's the matter, child?"

"I'm thinking how I should love to be there," I answered. "But I was born too soon. I'm a senior you know, and all these plans are for next year when I shan't be there. And we're having such an awful time. 'Prexy' away and the most horrible substitute doing the work."

They all knew that we suffered under Dr. Archibald. He was unquestionably learned, but he was no less unquestionably incapable of imparting his learning. His lectures came late in the afternoon of Monday, Thursday, and Friday, a bad time for even a proficient instructor, but fatal to a bad one. Everyone was always tired, and weariness, acting on our natures in different ways, reduced the senior class to a mixture of irritability, frivolity, physical exhaustion, indifference and animosity. Dr. Archibald's platitudinous statements fell upon this remarkably bad ground and bore fruit sometimes in an inattentive lassitude, contagious, overwhelming, and impenetrable, and sometimes in acrimonious criticism or retort leading to general uproar.

Now, neither Elizabeth nor I cared very much whether we made our debut in the world learned or unlearned in zoology. We were students in the art department, and the course was prescribed for us as a sort of groundwork in general structure and anatomy. We never ex-