

spaces in dismay. "Haven't you been dancing? Don't you know anybody here?"

"No," returned Dollie, rather ashamed at her partnerless condition, adding hurriedly, that he might not think her quite forlorn, "I don't know any one yet; but Captain North promised to find me some partners. He knows my sister, and she introduced him to me."

"Did he? But this is the seventh dance, and he has not got any one for you yet. Suppose we dance together until some better man turns up?"—looking anxiously at her to see how this audacious proposal would be taken.

"Oh, thank you!" answered Dollie innocently. "I should like to very much, if you are sure you do not mind. But are you not engaged to any one either?"

"No; I do not dance much."

After two or three round dances, which made Dollie tingle with delight and her blue eyes sparkle like diamonds, men began to say to each other as they watched the slender white figure whirling so lightly past them, "Who is that pretty little girl with whom Bramhall seems to be so smitten?" But by this time nearly all the cards were full, so they contented themselves with admiring the bright happy little face.

The evening passed on, and Dollie grew more lovable every minute in the eyes of Sir Vivian, who was charmed with her frank innocent ways. Bell came up to them once and said to Sir Vivian—

"How kind of you to take charge of my little sister! She could not have come out under better auspices."

"The kindness is not on my side," he answered a little stiffly. "I assure you I feel deeply honored by Miss Dollie's condescension"—bowing low to her as she sat in a great arm-chair.

Dollie looked up at him, rather surprised at this ceremonious address, but smiled back confidently as she met his eyes.

Then Bell left them, saying gaily—

"Don't forget my dance, Sir Vivian!"

"Are you engaged for all the other dances?" asked Dollie eagerly.

"No. Why?"

"Do you see that lady in pink, sitting down there? She is looking at us now. Wouldn't you like to know her?"—anxiously.

He hesitated for a moment.

"Do you want to get rid of me?" he questioned reproachfully.

"You know I do not; only I thought you would like to dance with her perhaps, as she hasn't a partner."

Sir Vivian left her, rather unwilling, to do her bidding, thinking what a kind-hearted little thing she must be. Dollie sat in her great arm-chair and looked about her.

Lady Warvin was still surrounded by her court of worshippers; but she did not seem to be talking much, and her beautiful dark eyes were gazing dreamily into the distance, with rather a sad look in their liquid depths. The curly-haired officer, who had been introduced to Dollie by Sir Vivian, just then joined her.

"How hard you have been dancing, Miss Vane! This is your first ball, is it not? I hope you have enjoyed it."

"Yes, thank you; I did not know anything could be so pleasant."

"Bramhall is a good dancer, is he not?" continued the officer, whose name was Charlie Murdoch, but who was generally called "Curly" from his short curly yellow hair. "How quickly one learns to flirt, does he not?"

"I do not know," replied Dollie gravely. "I have not been 'out' long, you see, so I do not understand much about it; but I do not think I should care to learn."

Charlie Murdoch raised his eyes to the ceiling and clasped his hands with such an expression of mock dismay, that Dollie began to laugh behind her fan, in spite of feeling rather angry at his incredulity.

"Miss Vane," he remarked—"Miss

Dollie Vane, if I could disbelieve my eyes for your sake, I would; but I could not help observing that you have danced with no one but Bramhall the whole night."

"Well, what then?"

"Oh, nothing!"—his eyes twinkling with merriment.

"If I have danced with no one to-night but Sir Vivian Bramhall"—with great dignity—"it is because I did not know any one in the room; and he was good enough to say that he would dance with me."

"May I be kind to you for the rest of the evening?" he pleaded, unabashed.

Dollie looked at him in silence, thinking what nice curly hair he had, and how young he was to be in the army.

"Well, Miss Dollie, am I to have the felicity of being your benefactor or not? Please let me. I don't care a straw about the people to whom I am engaged."

"No," said Dollie gravely; "you said I flirted."

"Did I say that? I do not remember. I must have been off my head, or perhaps you made a mistake."

"No, I haven't; you know you said it, and I think it was very rude of you; and, if you do not say at once that you are very sorry, I shall not dance with you ever again."

"Miss Dollie, I retract every word I said. I humbly apologise for my unpardonable conduct; and, by yonder moon"—holding up his hand dramatically—"or, rather I should say, gas—I will never do so any more. And now, having humbled myself before you, and as a token that you really forgive me, give me just one of those violets you are wearing."

She picked out a large purple one. He kissed it and fastened it in his button-hole tenderly; the curly-headed boy was rapidly losing his head under the influence of Dollie's pretty face.

"I did not give it to you for that!" cried Dollie, half laughing and half offended.

"I could not help it," he replied penitently. "What a duffer I am! I am always offending the people I like best in the world."

An officer in uniform came up at this moment, and Dollie, looking up, became aware that Captain North was standing near her. She flushed with delight and shyness; she had an innate love of beauty, either in man, woman, or child; and it could not be denied that Captain North was the handsomest man in the room.

The handsome soldier sat down beside her, and Charlie Murdoch left him in possession of the field, an opportunity which he improved by flirting as hard as he could with the pretty girl beside him, whose face flushed so charmingly under the influence of his pretty speeches. It was the last dance on the programme; and, when that was over, he took leave of her, with a whispered hope that he might see her at the officers' concert which was to take place the next evening.

CHAPTER II.

"Come in!" cried Dollie, as she stood before the looking-glass combing out her brown curly hair, with uplifted bare white arms.

The door opened, and Bell came in, carrying two magnificent bouquets, one of mixed red and white flowers, the other of pure white wax-like stephanotis, set off by green ferns.

"Are those yours?" cried Dollie. "How lovely they are!"—surveying them with longing eyes.

"One is for you and one is for me! This is yours"—handing her the white bouquet. Dollie flushed and dimpled with delight and pleasure as she took her treasure tenderly into her hands. "Mine is from one of the officers, a Mr. Travers, whom you have not seen. Who has sent yours?"

"Sir Vivian Bramhall," answered Dollie, reading the card attached to her bouquet, a slight shade of disappointment

passing over her face. "How kind of him to send me the flowers! I suppose he knew that no one else would have sent me any if he did not. Will you wear any in your hair?"

"No!" said Bell shortly, with the same sorrowful look on her face which Dollie had seen that morning. "Do make haste; you will be late!"

Bell was already arrayed for the evening in a black satin dress covered with lace and jet. She looked dazzlingly fair; her eyes shone brightly, and a deep rose-red burned on either cheek. Dollie felt vaguely uneasy as she looked at her.

"How pretty you are, Bell! But I wish you would tell me what troubles you."

"So I would if you could do anything for me, dear; but no one can help me. Please do not talk about it any more. Let me arrange your hair. You will never be dressed in time."

Dollie seated herself obediently before the glass, which perhaps had never had a prettier picture framed in it than it had then—Bell, a vision of rose, white and blue, with golden hair; Dollie, brown-haired, tender-eyed, pink-cheeked, and innocent-looking. The toilet was soon concluded under Bell's auspices, and they descended into the hall, where their aunt was awaiting them.

"I feel so nervous," said Bell. "I have not half practised, as I ought to have done."

"What did you say, Bell?" inquired Miss Maclaren.

"I feel so frightened, auntie! I know I shall break down."

"It is of no good to feel afraid now," said Miss Maclaren decisively. "You will be all right when once you have begun. People never listen to any one playing the piano after the first few bars; they are so full of themselves and their own affairs, they will never think about you—hardly know you are there, unless you break down; and then they will laugh and enjoy it much more than if you got through without missing a note."

The carriage was now announced; and, after a good deal of wrapping up, they were driving along the hard frosty road towards their destination. Three gentlemen were waiting to receive them at the door and usher them into the concert-room, which was already nearly full. Sir Vivian took in Dollie, Mr. Travers Bell, and Miss Maclaren fell to the lot of Charlie Murdoch, Dollie's curly-headed admirer of the night before, who submitted to his fate with an inward determination to sit next to Dollie at any cost. They found some seats close together at the back of the room, and, after a good deal of confusion, they were all settled to everybody's satisfaction; first of all, Miss Maclaren, bowed in with great politeness by Charlie Murdoch, who implored Dollie in a whisper to come next to him, which she did laughingly; then Sir Vivian, equally determined to be by her side; then Bell; and, lastly, Frank Travers, the most devoted and, to all appearance, the most favored of all her admirers. Bell, in spite of her aunt's comforting assurance, still felt very nervous, and Frank Travers and Sir Vivian did their best to encourage her.

"If I should break down," she said, "how everybody will laugh!"

"I shall not, for one," whispered Frank Travers tenderly.

"It would be too bad of you if you did," she rejoined laughingly, "considering that it was all through your petition that I consented. You would make me do it."

"I do not think you will break down; but, if you do, I'll faint, and Bramhall shall carry me out, which will cause such a sensation that everybody's attention will be diverted from the music."

"Perhaps Sir Vivian will object to the role assigned him," suggested Bell, laughingly.

"Oh, no, I shall not," answered the

Baronet, "if my fair burden does not prove too much for my strength! Though I am afraid Miss Vane will not be able to resist laughing if she sees me staggering out with six feet of prostrate manhood in my arms!"

"No one asked you to throw cold water on my suggestion, Bramhall," laughed Frank Travers. "I'll have a fit if you don't look out, and that will be worse for you. Who is going to turn over your music, Miss Vane? May I?"

"Certainly not," said Bell promptly. "Do you forget that you do not know a note?"

"I can read music," remarked Sir Vivian. "Will you allow me to turn over for you?"

Bell blushed and gave him a pretty grateful look.

"Thank you. If you don't mind; I shall be very glad."

Here the military band began playing; and, under cover of the classical overture, Sir Vivian Bramhall and Charlie Murdoch, unconscious of each other's intentions, laid themselves out to be agreeable to their little sweetheart, Dollie.

"Thank you so much for wearing my flowers," whispered Sir Vivian. "I thought you would like them best all white."

"I have got that violet you gave me last night, Miss Dollie," said Charlie in a low tone. "I shall never part with it—never."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MEDICAL WOMEN FOR INDIA.

The following, though not all new to our readers, deserves admission, as the subject is important. Some few months ago a number of native merchants of Bombay organized themselves into a committee, and raised, large funds for the purpose of inviting one or more first-class medical women to come out from England to practice in Bombay among the native women and children, one gentleman giving no less than £10,000 to found a hospital and dispensary in connection with this object. In response to an invitation from this committee, Dr. Edith Peckey, who in 1870 won (and was refused) the Hope scholarship in the University of Edinburgh, has started for Bombay, and is to be followed as soon as possible by another registered medical woman, who will act as junior physician in the hospital. To both these posts a liberal salary is attached, with abundant opportunities for private practice, and an excellent residence is provided for Dr. Peckey. It is well known that the Viceroy has long felt the extreme need for medical women in India, and though no official action has been taken it is understood that Dr. Peckey carries with her most excellent introductions, and that her mission has inspired the warmest interest in many quarters. It is thought probable that the foundation-stone of the hospital may be laid by His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who will thus represent the interest expressed by Her Majesty in 1881, in response to the pathetic appeal of the Mahi Rani Punna, who besought her to send medical women to the aid of the perishing sufferers in a thousand zenanas in which no male practitioner can enter. The only help hitherto has been afforded by a few medical missionaries, but their avowed object of proselytism of course prevents the more scrupulous natives from availing themselves of their services. Now for the first time a medical woman goes out with the single object of professional usefulness, and with no idea of entering into conflict with the religious convictions of her patients. No better pioneer than Dr. Peckey could possibly have been chosen; and she must carry with her the heartiest good wishes—even of those who think medical women a superfluity in England.

Do the duty which lieth nearest.