

"Teddy, by the way, according to Plato, our friendship has been a decided success?"

"Ripping," I answered. "And I've educated you, tamed you," she said. "You have quite a different idea in regard to girls now."

"Quite," I answered. "Now, you know," she went on, "I believe you had an idea that girls look on every male creature in—in the light of a possible husband—"

I held up a hand in protest. "And let me tell you that's an exploded idea. I have proved that an ideal friendship can exist between a man and a girl, haven't I?"

"Ye-es," I said, though I could not help a faltering not appearing in my voice.

Just at that moment a wasp stung me on the hand. I pulled out my handkerchief and wrapped it round the injured part. It was very painful. She jumped up.

"I don't think I quite understand," she murmured.

I caught the hand again, and touched the ring.

"If that," I said slowly, "were on another finger, I might explain what I mean."

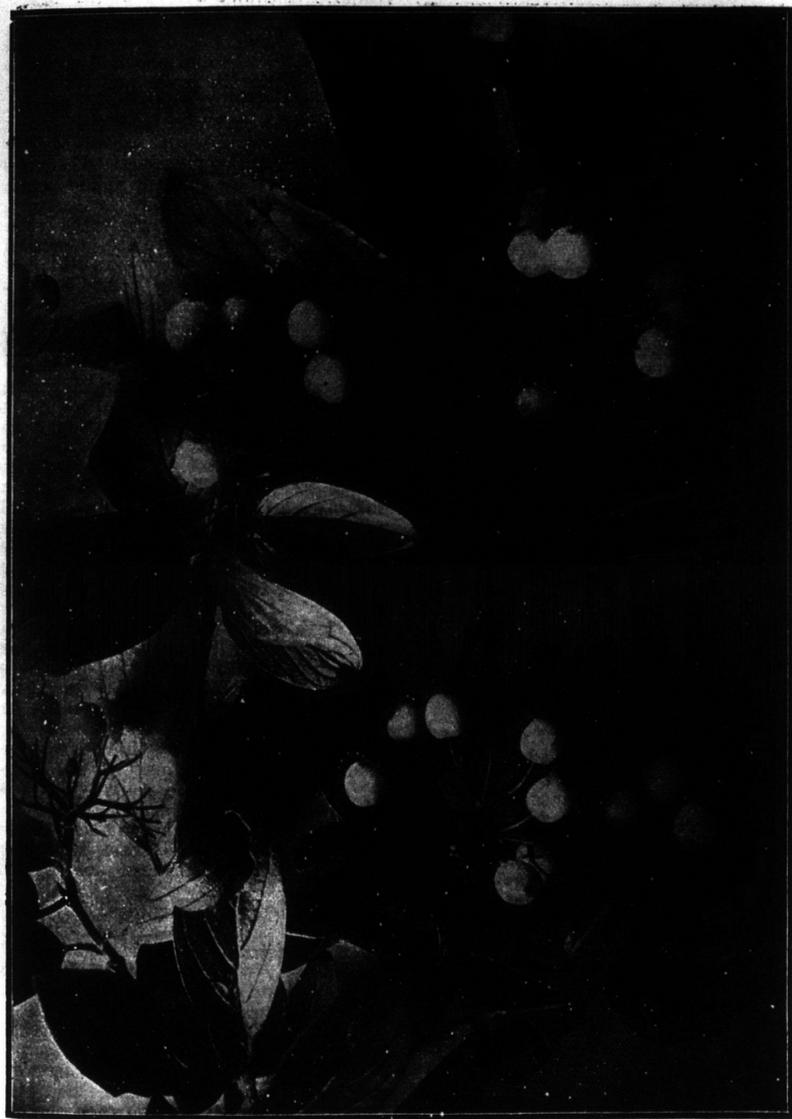
Promptly she took off the ring and put it on the second finger.

"There you are," she said, "I'm listening."

"No," I said, "No—I mean I would if you weren't engaged. One can't poach, you know on the other chaps' preserves."

"But—there is no 'other chap.'" Her face was hidden.

"Explain!" My voice was cold. "Oh, Teddy, you are a dense boy. I happened to put the ring—a birthday gift from dad—on that finger by mistake. You jumped to the conclusion I was engaged. I let you think so, as I wanted to prove to you we could be just friends and—nothing more. Now, well—I'm not



Red Osier Dog Wood

"Let me see it," her voice was anxious, which somehow pleased me.

"Mind!" I warned her, "you'll upset the boat!"

I caught her by the hand, and pulled her down beside me.

"Never mind the sting. To-morrow," I said gloomily, "you'll be gone, and I shall be alone."

"Correct," she said dimpling up at me. "Only you needn't be alone, you've heaps of other friends."

I chose to ignore this remark. I was twisting the ring round and round on that third finger of hers.

"Some fellows have all the luck," I said savagely. "What's he like?" I asked suddenly.

"He's rather a dear!" she said quietly, and I dropped her hand. "What's the matter?"

"Everything," I said slowly. "What a fool I've been. Playing a silly game of 'make believe' after all!" "Do you know," and turned round and faced her, "do you know that I've come to the conclusion that this platonic friendship is silly rot. They say it always ends disastrously for the girl or the man. And—"

engaged—never have been, and never shall—"

"Oh, yes," I said with great decision. "Oh, dear, yes, you will. You're a flirt, a little heartless minx. But, let's throw the Platonic business overboard—it's a farce—"

She lifted up her face suddenly.

"Oh!" she cried. "What a time you've been finding it out! I've known for more than two weeks!"

"Hobbs is a pessimist isn't he?" "Not exactly. I should call him an optimist."

"What do you mean?" "He acknowledges that every cloud has a silver lining, but grumbles because it is on the farther side."—*Boston Transcript*.

The city girl boarding in the country spoke to the farmer about the savage way in which the cow regarded her.

"Well," said the farmer, "it must be on account of that red waist you're wearing."

"Dear me," said the girl; "of course I know it's awfully out of fashion, but I had no idea a country cow would notice it."

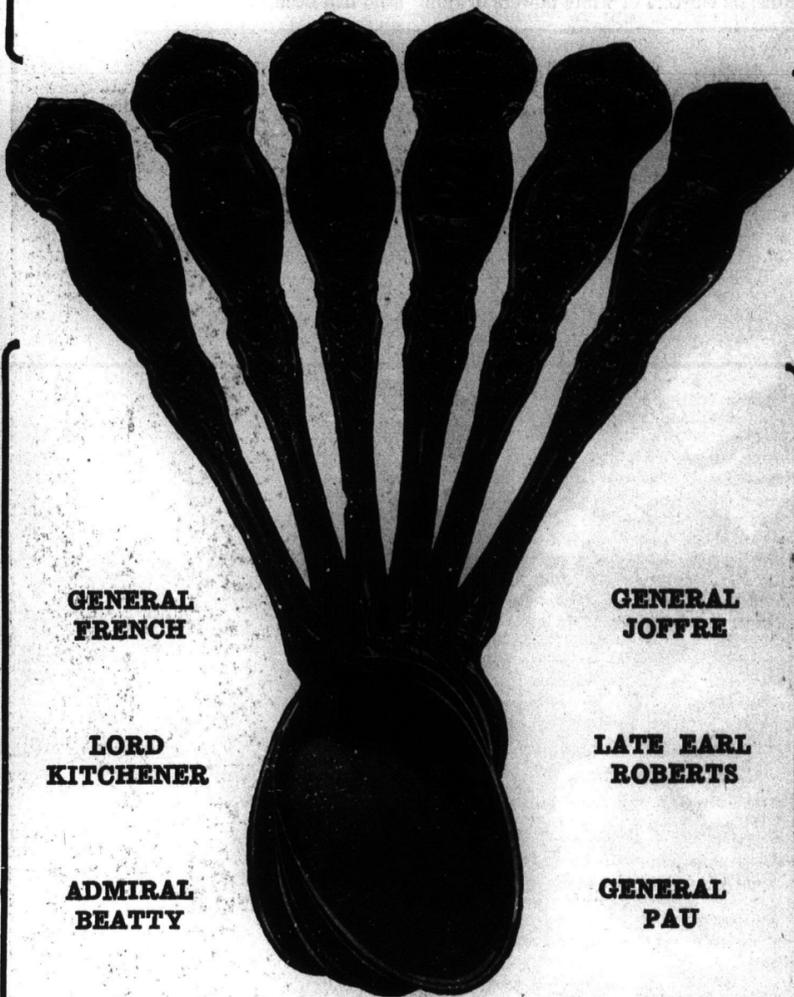
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