

for the matter of that. Laura said she had a dress she wanted her to wear ; it was quite too lovely.

Violet said she already had a dress. Laura gave her up as hopeless. Luckily she had other things to occupy her mind. If anyone had been sufficiently interested in her they might have seen that she was labouring under a very great excitement.

The day of the ball she was out most of the afternoon. When her energy was remarked upon, she said she wanted to have a colour for the evening. Nothing gave it to her like air and exercise. There were those who suspected Laura's colour to lie not in the winds of Heaven.

As a matter of fact, she spent over an hour in the village post-office. She had suddenly discovered the village post-mistress to be a character, a most amusing person. She also wanted to look up something in the postal guide. That she allowed was her excuse ; she really wanted to make the post-mistress talk. She had no difficulty in doing that, but it was certainly not amusing.

Laura leant on the counter, with one finger in the pages of the postal guide, and listened with extraordinary patience to the very intricate family history of Mrs. Toft and all her relations. The variety of diseases from which they suffered was really remarkable. Laura hailed with relief every interruption ; they were rather numerous. They came chiefly in the form of telephone messages. It was for such a message Laura waited.

"It's for his lordship ?" said Mrs. Toft, returning from an interruption to her narrative with renewed vigour.

"Do telegrams interest you ?" said Laura.

"We're not supposed to be interested," said the