

and know her thoroughly? Of course she was nothing to him personally; a mere child, albeit a most charming one. She had not the sweet gentleness of that other woman who was the love of his life, and who was dead; but after all that did not matter to him, for of course she was nothing, never could be anything to him of that kind: all that sort of thing was over and done with for him for ever. He was her guardian; simply and solely her guardian, and she his ward, his child almost. And surely it was most proper and most right that he should try and win her affection and confidence, in order that he might obtain that influence over her which her poor father would certainly have wished him to exercise.

Just at this point of his reflections there came shambling across the lawn towards Miss Blair a tall, loosely built young fellow about three-and-twenty. He had fair, straight hair, and blue eyes, in one of which was stuck an eye-glass, and a pale but not bad-looking face, with fairly good features set in a little straw-coloured frame of young whiskers.

He came and stood behind Juliet as she bent over her rose bushes, looking very nervous and shy, and didn't seem to know quite what to do with his arms and legs.

"Hallo, Cis!" she said, turning round suddenly upon him; "I didn't see you. How are you?" And she put out two fingers to him.

Cecil Travers took the fingers, pressed them adoringly between both his hands, and bent over them in speechless worship.

"Home for your holidays, Cis?" said Juliet, unconcernedly snipping off a rose with her disengaged hand, and not looking at him as she spoke.

"Holidays! You mean vacation!" answered the youth rather indignantly; "why, what are you thinking of, Juliet? Don't you know that I have left Oxford for good now? I have been in Scotland shooting lately," he added rather grandly.

"Oh, ah! yes, I forgot," said Juliet, coolly going on with her snipping and clipping.

He stood by her for a minute or two in silence, watching her.

"Have you nothing to say to me at all, Juliet? Here have I been away two months, and I thought you would be glad to see me back, and you don't speak to me—you don't even look at me!"

"I am very sorry, Cis; I am sure I don't mean to be unkind to you; what shall I say to you? I hope you have enjoyed yourself. How is your father? and have you brought any message from Georgie? and—why, Cis!" turning upon him and looking at him for the first time full in the face, "why, *how* your whiskers have grown!"

Now, if there is anything a young man of three-and-twenty, who has left college and considers himself in every way a man, hates, loathes, and detests, it is to have remarks made upon his improved looks, height, or hirsute adornments, especially when, as in this case, the remark is made laughingly by the object of his affections, whom he worships and adores, and to whom he has been in the habit of writing the most passionate and despairing love sonnets, sitting up late every night composing them for the last two years, and then burning them in the candle before getting into bed.

Juliet, fair object of all my hopes and fears,
For whom I nightly shed these bitter tears,
Low bowed beneath thy feet I lie,
Smile once upon me, or I die—

ran the last of these productions. Luckily, Juliet had never seen any of them, or how she would have laughed!

And now this divinity for whom he said he shed tears nightly, and under whose feet he was supposed to be stretched at full length occasionally, looked at him with those great deep eyes of hers, which in another epic poem he had compared to the stars of heaven, and told him deliberately that his whiskers had grown!

"If you can't find anything better than that to say, I'd better go," he said, turning away with a very red face.

"My dear Cis, don't be so silly;" and she held out her hand to him, which, of course, he seized upon, and came back close to her at once.

"If you won't stare at me in that lackadaisical way, I shall have plenty to say to you, and of course I am delighted to see you back. Here! hold my basket for me, and then I can go on with my roses and talk at the same time. Now, let me see; what news have I? Oh, you know my guardian is here?"

"So I heard. What a nuisance!" said Cis, quite restored to felicity, and following her about with the basket in both hands.