

Phil, as he joined his friend two hours later. "Have you caught anything? I think the evil one must have tempted me to try my luck around the bend, for I have not had as much as a solitary nibble since I left you. Perhaps the fishes were scared at the reflection of my lovely face in the water; but *importe*, here I am, as well off as I started. Why, what under the sun, or rather up the river, are you staring at?" he cried, in amazement.

His friend neither turned his head nor gave the slightest indication of having heard him, but remained fixedly gazing towards a small picturesque island above them.

Recalling no reply, Phil also glanced in that direction, then stood petrified. It seemed, watching as eagerly as did his companion the slight before them.

A small green island lay out in the river some distance above them, and perhaps twenty yards from the shore, but it was at the river's shallowest point, and a slight bridge spanned it from shore to island.

About midway upon this frail bridge a young girl stood, irresolute whether to advance or retreat, while the bridge bent and awayed dangerously even beneath her light weight.

That the bridge would part was but too evident to the two horrified watchers, who held their breath as they gazed, as if that act would help to sustain the bending timbers.

"Phil," exclaimed Paul at last, with almost a gasp, "do you know who that lady is?"

"I feel, no," replied Phil, not removing his eyes from the imperilled girl; "how should I?"

"It's too far off for me to recognize her, even if she were my own sister; but I tell you what, old fellow, she's in a mighty ticklish position."

"I expect every moment that the bridge will break, and then she is lost. Heavens! how it leans! Why don't she go back? Ah! she cannot; it is too late."

"My God!" burst from the ashon lips of Paul Winsted.

The bridge had parted, precipitating its fair burden into the water.

Simultaneously with Paul's horrified ejaculation a faint scream reached their ears, as the lady was swept along by the resistless tide.

She was now lost to the sight of the young men, but they know all too well that the river was sweeping her swiftly down, and Paul screamed and wrung his hands in despair.

But only for a moment.

Then his dark eyes flashed, and he began hastily to doff fishing basket, coat, hat, and all other incumbrances.

His companion gazed at him in dumb amazement, but as he started as if to rush from the spot, Phil caught and held him back, exclaiming—

"For Heaven's sake, Paul, what wild idea has entered your head? Surely you would not be so mad?"

"Hands off!" shouted Paul, excitedly, attempting to fling off the detaining grasp.

"That lady is Belle Edgcomb. I recognize her bright scarf. I love her, and will save her, or die with her. Even death were sweet, if shared by her. Hands off, I say!"

"You cannot save her; it is impossible. Would it were otherwise. But this is madness, Paul. I cannot let you rush to certain death," pleaded Phil, still holding him back.

"I will go. Even if it were death, I would go at the same. Let me go, I say."

And with the strength of madness, he flung his friend violently from him, and darted away.

With what anxiety did Phil watch the desperate man!

Each moment seemed an age.

"Ha!" cried he, at length. "Yes, Paul has reached her side."

How he got there Phil did not pause to wonder; enough for him that he was there, and, so far, safe.

Phil's eyes were riveted upon his friend.

Paul saw a white hand raised above the water.

"God grant she may not be swept beyond his reach."

But no.

Even as he spoke, Paul, stretching out his arm to its utmost length, grasped the almost lifeless form of Belle Edgcomb, and drew her safely to the shore, murmuring thankfully—

"Saved! Thank God! my darling is saved."

And below, Phil Donham was unconsciously echoing his friend's words.

"Saved! Thank God! I saved on the very verge of an awful death!"

Then joyfully gathering up the fishing tackle, he started to the assistance of his friend, who, after having with much difficulty landed his senseless burden safely on the river's bank, was well-nigh exhausted, and was glad to avail himself of Phil's proffered assistance to convey his rescued treasure home.

"I sent for you, Mr. Winsted, to express my thanks for the inestimable service you rendered me yesterday," said Belle Edgcomb to Paul, whom she had summoned to her presence.

"Do not mention my slight service, Miss Belle. I assure you it was nothing."

"Nothing! And is the saving of a life nothing? My life, too, Mr. Winsted?" asked Belle, poutingly.

"You know I did not mean that; you know that, above all things, I prize as most precious your life and happiness, Miss Belle, although it is true I have no right to speak thus, for some luckier man than I will wear the flower I once so dutifully hoped to win. But enough of this.

I meant, Miss Belle, that the deed was no more than any man would have done, especially one who loves."

And he looked at her meaningly.

She blushed consciously, but replied bravely—"Pray don't make light of it, Mr. Winsted, for it was a most heroic deed, one not often paralleled. I know all about it. There, don't start. Your friend Phil Donham has told me the whole story."

"How dare he?" burst from Paul in his indignation.

"Dare! Why, it strikes me I was one of the principal persons interested, Mr. Winsted, and surely I had a right to make a few inquiries."

And she arched her eyebrows prettily as she spoke.

"Oh, certainly, if you desired," stammered Paul, somewhat confusedly. "But I had almost neglected to state that I leave here to-night. Miss Belle, will you bid me farewell?"

And he extended his hand.

She started when he announced his intended departure, and flushed deeply, but said softly—"No."

"As you like," replied Paul, hurt at her apparent indifference. "Farewell."

And he turned to leave her presence.

But she sprang after him, and catching his sleeve, whispered—

"What if I don't want you to go, Paul?"

"Belle," he cried, his face paling with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "Belle, what do you mean?"

"I mean," and she smiled amid her blushes, "I mean that I want you to stay with me, Paul."

The last words were uttered coaxingly.

"My darling," he murmured, as he clasped her to his heart; "then you do love me, even if I am not a hero?"

"Ah, I was only teasing you, dear Paul. I did not mean what I said, for you are my hero, and—and—I think I have loved you all the time."

And she buried her blushing face on his breast.

"My darling!"

And he raised her head and pressed a warm kiss on her red lips.

"How I bless that treacherous bridge that has given you to my arms at last, my beautiful, my own."

THE TWO FLIRTS.

BY M. E. C.

"So, Laura, you think your cousin George is irresistible?"

"Indeed I do," replied Laura. "And Fanny, in spite of your boasted impenetrability, I fear that Cupid will send an arrow from George's large, black eyes straight through your heart. His reputation as a flirt is as great as your own, and his conquests are innumerable. He boasts, however, that his own heart is still untouched. The best! I must go! Finish your toilet soon, Fanny, and join me in the drawing-room."

Fanny turned to the glass to arrange some flowers in her hair, murmuring, "Perhaps his heart will not remain always untouched. Cousin Laura seems to fancy that I shall rank among his unloved victims. I am much flattered by the implied compliment, and a scornful smile played around the small mouth."

Fanny was tall and graceful, with a symmetrical figure, and a profusion of dark chestnut hair, whose rich curls shaded a face of rare beauty. The perfect features, white even teeth, and glorious dark eyes, with a clear complexion and bright color, were each and all enhanced by exquisite taste in dress, and many accomplishments. The dress she now wore of black lace was cut so as to display the snowy neck and arms, while a bracelet and necklace of pearls were her only jewels. A wreath of brilliant scarlet cypress and geranium was mingled with her curls, making a most dazzling tiara.

We will follow Laura down-stairs. Stretched lazily upon a sofa, she found a gentleman of some twenty-six or seven years of age, handsome as an Apollo, and at present fast asleep. Her exclamation of "George!" awoke him, and he started to his feet.

"My fair cousin," he said, kissing her cheek, "I have come, you see, according to promise, but I heard you were dressing, and waited here for you. Where can I Adonisize before your guests arrive? Your father kindly insisted upon a visit of a month, so I have brought my baggage. You write that Miss Fanny Gardiner is to be here. Has she arrived?"

"Two days ago. She is lovelier than ever. Do you know her?"

"No, but her propensity for breaking hearts has made her the subject of many a conversation, so I have heard of her. Candidly, Laura, is she so very beautiful?"

"She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw, plays on the harp and piano to perfection, sings like an angel, and—hush! she is coming! Take care of your heart, George, she is dangerous. Come this way, and I will introduce you by and bye."

Fanny entered the parlor at one door, as the cousins left it by another. She looked after them, and her thoughts ran something in this wise:—"H-m. Dusty coat, heavy boots, and, no doubt, dirty face. A traveller! Tall, finely formed, and what an erect, manly carriage. I

like to see a man walk as if he spurned the very ground. So, the exquisite made his escape to add the charms of an elaborate toilet to his handsome face, before he attacks my poor heart, and reduces me to the necessity of wearing the willow for him."

Laura returned just in time to greet the first of her guests for the evening. It was her birthday, and a large circle of friends and neighbors had assembled to do her homage. The house stood in the midst of its own park-like grounds which stretched down to the Trent, and had been built by her father, whose place of business was in the neighboring town of Nottingham. She was his only child, and, since the death of her mother, his housekeeper and companion, and no expense or pains were spared to make her life a happy one.

Fanny Gardiner was standing in the conservatory, surrounded by a group of gentlemen, when Laura asked her to play for them on the harp. Two of the gentlemen went to get the instrument, while Fanny selected a seat surrounded by green leaves and flowers. She made the centre of a very pretty tableau, as she sat there, with the bright light striking upon her and the delicate hanging flowers falling in profusion around her. George came to the door of the conservatory just as the harp was placed before her.

"She understands the study of effect," he thought, "and really Laura has not exaggerated her charms. She is beautiful."

The first notes of her clear, rich voice held him spell-bound. They were low, but very sweet and pure; as the song proceeded they rose, full and strong, till the air seemed flooded with melody. The small, white hands drew notes of great power from the harp, but that young, fresh voice rose clear above them. Fanny sang, as she did nothing else, with her whole heart. Once interested in the music, she forgot all her coquettish ways, and revelled in melody. The last notes were still quivering on the air, as she rose and pushed the instrument from her. At that moment her eye met George's. His look made her heart give one quick bound; it was full of admiration, and she felt a thrill of triumph.

"Fanny, allow me to introduce my cousin George," Mr. Lewis, Miss Gardiner, said Laura. The others of the group drew back. Both parties were known in that circle as consummate flirts, and they were left to entertain each other.

"Miss Gardiner," said George, bowing low, "my heart has not thrilled for years as it has to-night, to the glorious music you favored us with."

"Going to begin with flattery," thought Fanny. "He shall be paid in his own coin."

"Such an attentive listener as you are," said she, "is an inspiration to any performer. But I will not take too much credit to myself. Who could not sing, and who not listen in such a scene as this? The flowers, the fountain, the lovely view, all make it a place for music. Truly, it seems to-night like a vision of fairy land."

"And the queen of that bright realm is not wanting," said George, with a meaning glance. "Oh! my favorite dance! Do not say you are engaged, Miss Gardiner, unless you would see me rush upon your unfortunate partner and annihilate him."

Fanny replied by placing her arm within his, and in another moment they had joined the dancers. Laura smiled as she watched them, and as their eyes met once or twice in a decidedly dangerous manner, she nodded her head as if very well pleased.

"Wonder how last night's belle will look by daylight," thought George, as he came down to breakfast: "these brilliant beauties are generally faded in the morning."

Fanny was in the breakfast-room. His uncle was seated on the sofa, with Fanny on a low stool at his feet. The white, flowing morning dress, and loose, floating curls, were fully as fascinating as a more elaborate costume, and the tiny hand in its setting of soft lace was as fair as when diamonds adorned it.

"So, Miss Gardiner," said George, "you have granted Laura's prayer, and will stay here some weeks. Why did you keep her in suspense so long?"

"I was waiting to hear from Harry," said Fanny. "He spoke of coming home this summer, and I wished to be at home if he came. Yesterday my letters said he would not return for some time, so I can stay here."

George felt savagely jealous of this unknown Harry. He did not love Miss Gardiner—not he, indeed; but he had no objection to her falling in love with him.

After breakfast was over, Laura, her cousin, and her friend, went into the music room. Fanny soon found that George's voice and musical talents were not one whit inferior to her own; and Laura stole away "on household cares intent," leaving the two in the middle of a duet. One after another was tried. Their voices harmonised perfectly, and the store of music was inexhaustible. With discussion on the merits of various operas, trying over favorite airs, sometimes with the opera before them, singing whole scenes from it, time flew by, and the luncheon bell found them still at the piano. Laura affected profound surprise when she opened the door and saw Fanny playing a brilliant accompaniment, and George leaning over her joining his rich tenor voice to her piano.

"Why, you must have sung yourselves hoarse," she said gaily. "Have you been here all the morning?"

Fanny blushed guiltily, and then, stealing a glance at George from under her long, dark

lashes, said, "Mornings are fearfully long in the country, are they not, Mr. Lewis? Laura, where have you been?"

George bit his lip. He thought he had been particularly fascinating, and having found her so, he had thought the time very short. But in revenge he said, "Is luncheon ready, Laura? Singing makes one so hungry."

The tables were turned with a vengeance, and Fanny took his offered arm to go to luncheon.

A few days later we find George and Fanny in Charnwood Forest by the side of a pretty little spring. Fanny, lovely in a dark-blue riding habit, with a most fascinating straw hat and white feathers, and George, manly and handsome in his volunteer suit of rifle green.

"Why," said Fanny, looking round, "where are the others? I am very tired," and she sank down in a graceful attitude upon a low seat, which some benevolent person had placed near the spring. "Pic-nics are a dreadful bore, are they not, Mr. Lewis?"

"Shocking," said he, lazily seating himself at her feet. "Miss Gardiner shall I give you some water? Here is a leaf for a drinking cup. How exquisitely rural!"

"Do you like the rural?" said Fanny, taking the leaf of water. "Country pleasures, I mean, and fine scenes. Climbing high hills, scratching your hands with briars, and burning your complexion to a tint like old mahogany, to see fine prospects! Now if anybody wished to annoy me they have only to propose a walk to see a fine view. I admire what comes before me, but seeking them——" and she finished the speech with a shudder.

George raised his eyes languidly, saying, "I detest simple pleasure and natural amusements. It is delightfully cool here after our long walk, Miss Gardiner."

"Yes," and the young girl took off her hat to enjoy the air; as she did so she loosened the comb which confined her curls, and the whole mass fell around her in a profusion of ringlets. George took this as a matter of course, and taking one of the curls between his fingers, examined its color and texture with an artist's eye.

"See," said he, "how it curls around my finger; just so can your chains bind and confine your victim's heart. It is remorseless. Ah! I cannot disengage it without breaking the hair. Are you chains as firm?"

"You do not understand it," said Fanny, taking his hand in both of hers. "See, by taking it so it unwinds of itself. A little art only is necessary to disengage it."

Their eyes met. Fanny bore his look for an instant, then let her hand stray among the masses of her curls for a moment, and dropped them, saying despairingly, "I cannot get them in order again, I am certain."

"You need not wish to," said George. "No arrangement can be more effective than the one you have chosen."

Fanny looked at him keenly. He seemed innocent for a moment, and then a twinkle in his eyes betrayed him.

"A truce," said she, holding out her hand. "Suppose we try to be natural for an hour or two?"

"Suppose we do," he answered, "just to see how it would seem, you know?"

The day came at last for George to return home. Fanny was to remain longer, as her brother Harry had not yet arrived. The two, George and Fanny, were standing in the conservatory. It was time he was on his way to the station, yet he lingered; he had said goodbye, and received a low farewell from her.

Suddenly he approached her, and said in a low, thrilling voice, "Fanny!"

She drew herself erect, and her cheeks flushed at the unwonted familiarity. He did not move, but cast down his eyes.

"Oh," said she, laughing, "you want to rehearse a tragic parting. Excuse my dullness, I did not understand you. Farewell," she continued, in a tone of mock grief, "farewell!"

He bit his lip, and turning on his heel left the room. Alas for George! he was caught in his own net. Desperately in love with a flirt, who apparently scorned his passion.

Apparently! How was it with Fanny? For a moment she stood where he had left her, and then stooped and took up something from the floor. It was George's glove, which he had dropped as he went out. Fanny held it in her hand, and she thought, "He wanted to make a scene, and leave me fainting, or inconsolable at his departure. Thank you, Mr. Lewis, I have no ambition to figure on your list of conquests. His voice is very sweet, and how pretty 'Fanny' sounded when he said it so tenderly. He goes abroad next month. I shall never see him again, perhaps. Well, I don't care. What's this? Tears, as I live! Crying! You idiot, you deserve a shaking for your folly. To care for a man who would make a jest of your love."

But the tears fell one after another upon the glove, and more than once said glove was pressed to the ripe, rosy lips. She was standing there still, the glove laid carelessly against her cheek, when an arm stole round her waist, and a low voice said, "Fanny, I love you. Will you not say farewell, George?"

He had mislaid his glove, returned for it, and found it.

Fanny only made a faint resistance, and then letting her head lie upon his breast, she said, "No, I will not say farewell; you will stay with me, George."

Now we say any more? Laura was delighted with the result of putting two flirts in a country-house for a month, and George and Fanny did not quarrel with her for trying the experiment.