

engagement, but he never doubted that it was a fact, and sometimes tried to persuade himself that she was already married and he had in some way missed seeing the announcement or hearing of it. When Richards, in the course of his usual gossip as they drove up from the station, informed Mike that Miss Norah had a young lady staying with her, he did not somehow think of Beattie, though Norah's acquaintances were certainly limited. But when the groom went on to say that "a prettier young person, he'd never set eyes on," and "she looked for all the world like one of them picturs in the illustrated papers," the heart of his master began to beat rather uncertainly.

"What's her name, Richards?" he asked.

"That I can't rightly tell you, sir, though I have heard it; but it's something like Marchsome or Marketson or that. She've been up at the Hall once with Miss Norah, and James, who've been in a good deal of society in town, say he've seen many a duchess less elegant."

Mike thought it very likely, but though he smiled at the servant's criticisms, he was more uneasy than pleased at the knowledge that Beattie was near him, and that he would be able to look at her and speak to her at last. He would have to conceal his true feeling towards her, and be only polite and distant, for he doubted his power of being frank and friendly with her under the circumstances. There must be some constraint. His only chance was to see as little as possible of her, to keep away from the Rectory, and beg his mother not to ask her to the Hall during his brief stay at home.

His first remark when he was alone with Lady Anstruther was about her, and although he tried to speak unconcernedly, she detected the ring of anxiety in his tones.

"Mother, I hear Beattie Margetson is here."

"Yes, dear," said she soothingly; "she came with Norah the other day. I don't wonder you fell in love with her, Mike."

Mike pulled the ears of the dog which was nestling against him so hard, that the creature, who had never received anything but kindness from him, gave a sharp bark of remonstrance.

"When is she going to be married!" he asked rather fiercely.

"I don't know, dear. I have only seen her once, and then we had no chance of getting confidential. I have not been told that she is engaged yet."

"They are keeping it quiet a good long time, unless—unless— But that isn't likely; I saw them together, and besides—"

He began pacing the room restlessly. "Do you think, mother—it is possible—nothing came of it after all?"

"Quite possible, dear. But I shouldn't build hopes on it. Beattie is very young, and there are often reasons for a private engagement. However, you mustn't let her spoil your last days with us, darling. Try and put her out of your thoughts. She and the Gilmans will be dining here to-morrow, and you will have an opportunity to talk to each other."

"I rather think the best thing I can do is to keep out of her way, mother. But you are right; she shan't spoil our time together."

He followed his mother about all the next day in a way that amused and yet touched her. She knew he was longing to be off to the Rectory, and only kept near her for safety against his impulses. Once he did say: "I suppose they'll be thinking I shall look in this morning." And Lady Anstruther answered, "Very likely," in a tone which he knew to mean their expectations had better not be realised.

As the time for their arrival drew

near he became more restless, but when he knew they had come, he suddenly had a strong desire to escape from the drawing-room. As it was, he kept well in the background for a minute, but directly he saw Beattie, and met her sweet and friendly glance, his uneasiness and embarrassment vanished quite away. Never mind if she was engaged to somebody else—and he must not tell her that he loved her—she was at least the same Beattie as he had known all along; the same as he had seen in dreams many a time. As he held her hand in his warm clasp it seemed to him only yesterday that he and she had been together at Crabsley, before duty on his side and relatives on hers had brought about and continued a separation. Now they were together again, and for the present that was enough.

He had wondered what he could talk to her about at dinner, and dreaded the ordeal; but there was no need. Beattie was as easily interested, as stimulating, as natural as ever. He kept saying to himself, "She is just the same; and how pretty—I have not seen any one so pretty." Only once was there any embarrassment, but that was on Beattie's part. He was speaking to her of Margaret Raven, and Beattie suddenly remembered what Margaret had told her about the picture and about her conjectures concerning Michael, and she blushed crimson and turned her eyes away from him. He wondered why, and then supposed Miss Margaret—who was capable of anything—had been telling Beattie some story about himself. In the momentary pause in their talk, he looked down rather absently; and then, for the first time, he observed that Beattie's left hand was bare of any ring. And hope, which is so very hard to kill, again stirred in his heart. If she was free after all he might win her yet!

(To be continued.)

AFTER-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN AMERICA.

BY DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

"A CLUB," says a recent American writer, "was man's first weapon. It represented nothing but physical force. To-day, 'clubs' are women's forces; and they represent ethical values, the finest side of social life, culture, intellect, the march of progress, and the highest types of the development of a womanhood, which is the very flower of our civilisation."

I have headed this article with a quotation, for I am very anxious to make my readers comprehend the place taken in America to-day by the clubs for women; that is, clubs founded by, carried on, and governed by women, for special purposes of various kinds. It is said that Boston, of all the cities in the Union, possesses the most; ranging from the exclusively society one, to the exclusively "crank." It would be difficult to mention a cult that is not represented. But everywhere they appear to rule with an ever-increasing power. In Boston, Browning clubs are in great force, but all Bostonians seem to be members of some club, for the study of

literature or art, and classes and lectures appertain to most of them for the advancement of the education of the members.

The mother of women's clubs in America is the famous Sorosis of New York, which was founded by "Jennie June," known in private life as Mrs. J. C. Croly. This is a purely literary club, and entertains and introduces all the literary and feminine lions who visit New York. It was founded in the early seventies, and still remains the leading club of the United States. Twenty years ago, nearly all the women's clubs in America were purely literary or social, or both; but to-day, after occupying every field of art, history, music, literature, archaeology, philosophy, science, ethics, religion, and aesthetics, they boldly reach out into channels of work hitherto appropriated specially to men, such as sanitary legislation, tenement-house reform, and much-needed improvement in the management of jails, penitentiaries, and asylums. Political science, charities, kindergartens, educational, manual

training-schools, free public libraries, courses of lectures, are all subjects in which the club-women of the United States are interested; and in all current topics they have a practical interest and free discussion.

The clubs of the southern states are almost all literary and social, while those in the western portion of the Union are the most progressive in practical work and in studying current events throughout the world, and the East seems to be following in the same direction. The following is a list of classes held and lectures given and discussed last year: Parliamentary law, physical culture, millinery, German, French, whist, voice-culture, library, science, current events, and first aid to the wounded, the money issues of the presidential campaign, hygiene in the home. Then there was a story-teller's month, when Authors read their stories aloud, and a literary symposium. This may be described as a club conducted on broad lines, to which musical study may be added as well.