

# The Mission of the Roses.

Henry Morey.

“**E**DITH, dear, the expressman is coming for your trunk at 5 o'clock. I'm sure it won't be ready for him unless you begin at once to pack it.”

“Indeed it won't,” thought Edith in answer to her mother's beseeching voice, which came from the conservatory end of the garden.

The warning, however, seemed to have very little effect upon her and she went on musing. “Under the circumstances, how fortunate it is that I have a dear old aunt to go to, thousands of miles away. Away out West where nobody will know me except auntie. Another day here would be intolerable, and—yes, mother, I'm coming.”

It was June time, but in spite of the roses and sunshine all about her Edith Mowbray was not happy. She plucked a superb LaFrance that hung temptingly near her and buried her nostrils deep within its fragrant petals. “Tom's favorite rose,” she murmured, and there was a pathetic tone of remorse and sadness in her voice. “Dear old Tom! How cruel I was to him!”

Just a year ago that day she had given Tom Brace his conge for the chance of becoming Mrs. Phillip Hepstone, the wife of a millionaire. Hepstone had proposed, but only because he imagined Edith was almost as rich as himself. And now Mrs. Mowbray was trying to convince her daughter that she ought to enter suit for breach of promise.

While Edith was sitting in the rose garden, musing, Tom Brace was lying ill in a hospital, away out West. He was pale, weak and emaciated, but convalescent.

The nurse had just told him that he would recover and Tom wasn't quite sure whether he was glad or sorry. “Life, for

me,” he said, languidly, “seems to be all blanks and no prizes.”

The days dragged themselves slowly on, and Tom, in spite of all his efforts, found himself brooding over the events of a year ago.

“Too bad that Edith threw me over,” he reflected, sadly. “Cruel of her, too, for I loved her dearly; and, worse luck, I love her still. I wonder when they're going to be married? Gad! Hepstone's a lucky fellow. But no gentleman would have come between Edith and me as he did. It will take me a long time to forgive him, and——”

But Tom's musings were cut out short by the nurse. She came to his bedside with a cup of delicious broth and the newspapers.

“The doctor told me you might read a little to-day,” she said, “so I've brought you these.”

Tom thanked her, partook slowly of the broth and then picked up the local paper. The society column met his gaze first of all. He had no intention of reading it, however, as he was a stranger in the place. But as he glanced down the column a name stood out from amongst the others which made him start. This is what he read:

Miss Edith Mowbray, of New York, arrived in town yesterday evening. She intends making a prolonged stay in the city, and will be the guest of her aunt, Mrs. George Ventnor.”

“Mrs. George Ventnor,” muttered Tom, uneasily. “Why, if I'm not mistaken that's the very lady who pays weekly visits to this hospital! By Jove! I must get away from here as soon as possible. I never knew before that Edith had an aunt in this part of the world.”

Then Tom noticed that a New York paper was lying invitingly near him. He