

ched habits, loose connections and doubtful future, as though it were understood that he (Johnny) was a thing apart—a negligible item—when applied to their two selves. Mabel just tolerated Johnny, that was all, owing to social connection.

But sister had things sized up differently.

"You crazy fool, Johnny's got it all over you," remarked that Irritation to him one day.

"Oh, shut up! that is all you know about it!" he replied, going off with the air of one who knew better and whose security was beyond question.

Sister laughed.

"You'll see," she threw back at him.

"Yes, I'll see. 'Taint gonny rain no more, is it?"

"When it does you'll get the soaking of your life, though, I'll say," she warned.

Mabel was the one who did all the worrying. She had both their shares, for there was a soft spot in her heart for each of the young men who had honored her with their love, that must, sooner or later, dash off decisively in one or the other direction.

In the light of her own understanding Mabel viewed the situation from both hemispheres. She saw a tame, circumspect, quiet, conventional but assured future with John, and a somewhat slovenly, lean and uncertain future with Johnny. She knew that John saved every cent that he ever made in the world, and that Johnny blew in every cent he ever made. She knew this by hearsay as well as by experience, for their offerings to her as a sweetheart gave them away. She knew that John lived more in the future than he did in the present, and that Johnny's thoughts were all centred in the here and now with no provision for the morrow. Mabel knew that, as the wife of John, her days would be flat and unspiced with the thrills of being alive; and that, as the matrimonial partner of Johnny, they would be a species of food without the seasoning. There did not appear to be much choice. But love does not discriminate between persons, nor does it examine candidates through the lenses of a microscope.

Mabel was in bad way. She could not ask council, because it was no one's business; and then, they might choose wrong for her. She knew all the time she wanted Johnny, and was just as sure that council would select John. Thus the poor girl discovered that she had two personalities. Discretion pointed to John while her heart clung to Johnny.

What was to be done? What could be done? Was any girl ever in such a sweat-bath of perplexity? The boys were both so kind to her and so deeply mired in the quicksands of Mabel's feminine charms.

Mabel was simply entangled in those wiry webs which have thrown their unraveled meshes over and around all daughters of Eve from the days of the serpent up to the present time. It was the tanglefoot of young girlhood into which they all hop blindly, and from which it requires a great deal of heart-breaking study and strategy in order to get both feet out at the same time.

One evening Johnny dragged his hind legs up the steps leading to Mabel's home, knocked at the door and stood waiting. He had in his hand a large box of chocolates which he had purchased at the set-back price of two and a half.

The most ordinary applied science of

deduction told that Johnny had been drinking. His knees seemed to lack that rigid firmness that sober knees usually boast of in healthy young men. His features were more or less relaxed, and the arms hung down like pendulums.

The opening of the door seemed to startle Johnny as though he had not expected such prompt response, although the normal time had elapsed between the knock and the opening of the door. Mabel stood before him in person in all the glory of her young womanhood, which was no doubt magnified by Johnny's great love and the optimistic backing of the whisky.

Through the doorway and into the parlor Johnny caught a glimpse of John lolling on a lounge in all his exaggerated, over-confident assurance of himself.

Now, it was part of Johnny's diplomacy never to intrude on Mabel when she was otherwise engaged, even with the right-of-way John. So he withdrew the foot that was about to step inside:

"No," he said, unsteadily, "I just brought this." And he handed Mabel the confectionery.

"Oh, thanks. Won't you come in though?" said Mabel, accepting the gift.

"Rather not. You have company, I'll call again—sometime."

"Oh, don't be silly; come on in; it's only John," urged Mabel.

But Johnny was obstinate. He turned and was about to descend the steps, when, by some mean trick of misfortune, his feet got tangled on the top step; and, to save himself the humiliation of falling headlong down, he sank in a heap at the top and slid to the bottom.

Mabel dashed down the steps with her first aid:

"Johnny!" she called out. "Whatever is the matter with you?"

"Slipped, that's all," explained Johnny, rising and beating a retreat.

"What a beastly fellow Johnny is getting to be," commented John when Mabel re-entered the parlor.

Mabel remained diplomatically silent.

"Drunk as usual."

"Too bad;" was all Mabel deigned to reply.

"Fancy the fool being so extravagant. That box of chocolates must have cost him at least three and a half," continued the moralist, while he watched Mabel undo the package.

"Yes, he always brings me good ones," observed Mabel. "Have one?" And she reached out the open box to him.

"Thanks, no; I never eat chocolates."

"You're jealous, that's all," teased Mabel.

"No, not that; but then, you see, it teaches one nasty, extravagant habits."

"I dare say." And the girl sampled a chocolate-coated cherry.

Although Mabel had contributed an even share of the evening's enjoyment before the brief visit of Johnny, after his departure her strings appeared to be out of tune.

John was peeved at Mabel's drop in temperature and change of flavor, and it required a great deal of patching up to restore the balance of power and to renew the old warmth. Before departing, however, much of the former harmony had reappeared.

Johnny's diplomacy told him that it wasn't wise to tire a girl with one's society. He had perhaps a greater brain power than John. John's brain had been artificially trained to think, while John-

ny's thought naturally. Johnny had a brain that acted more on impulses. Instinct taught him many things that a college education does not teach. He knew, for example, that the less you chase after a girl, the more she will chase after you. All John's university education had not put him wise to this hard fact. He never knew that you catch a girl, not by running after her, but by the girl running after you.

Now it happened that Mabel's parents had been witness to the disgraceful cutting-up of Johnny on his visit to their daughter. This was not the first offense, and Johnny was in disfavor on previous records. The following day Mabel fell a victim to the parental wrath.

Mabel began to weep, the usual feminine refuge:

"He's no good," condemned the father. "I've told you so a dozen times before. What makes you hang on to him? Give him the G. B. before it's too late. I never knew of him keeping a job more than a few days at a time in his life. He would drown in ten minutes if cut off from the home anchorage. He's a loafer, that's all; never will be good for anything. It's a wonder to me what you see in him. He has no more future than a dog, and I would like to tell him so. He couldn't keep a squirrel in peanuts. What do you suppose he would do with a wife?"

Behind her tears, Mabel was dumb. It was the old story of expecting a girl to arrange her courtships and marriage according to plan and not according to love.

"Quit him, I say, before it's too late. John is worth a million of him. He has brains, sense, standing, respect of the community, a future that is an asset and not a liability."

This only added force to the draft of Mabel's flame. Johnny, to her, seemed to be the last word in man. He was more gallant than most, more masculine—more what a woman, in her worshipping heart, had pictured that he should be. Johnny was always on the spot just at the logical moment when he was most needed. He had initiative, and John seemed to lack this virtue. If Mabel were drowning or in a burning building, it would be Johnny who would be there to rescue her. He was a true knight of the twentieth century.

Thus, at the village sports on the first of July, when Mabel fell to the ground during a foot race, it was Johnny who seemed to emerge from the earth and assist her to rise. It was Johnny who brushed off the spots from her clothing, asked her if she were injured and had received a reply that smiled through pained features:

"Thanks, Johnny. I think I have hurt my knee. 'Oh!' And she limped, leaning on his shoulder.

But it was John who came forward afterwards with an air of authority and assumed the responsibility as though by virtue of prerogative:

"Pardon me," he said to Johnny, as though the lady were his private property.

"Certainly," courtesied the too diplomatic Johnny, assigning his rights and backing away with a smile such as only ones of his kind could offer under similar circumstances.

Mabel smiled at Johnny as he turned away, and the smile most clearly spoke disapproval at the ill manners of John. She permitted the indiscretion, however, and accompanied the escort to a group