

"Oh, Count!" she said, "I did so want you two to meet. You are both good actors ("too good," groaned Dick to himself,) and both college men. I am sure you will like each other."

Thus brought to bay, Dick nerved himself, and, turning round, said steadily:

"I must congratulate you, sir, on your happy marriage."

"Thank you," said the other, cordially, his constraint vanishing. "But I did not think you had time to form so just an opinion of my wife as you hold."

Dick was taken aback, but only for a moment. "One does not need to be long with—Mrs. Burton—to appreciate her nobleness," he said, voicing the name with an effort, and turning his face from Gladys as he did so.

She broke into a laugh. "Come along, Count," she said, "I want to show you the conservatory."

As Dick, with Gladys clinging to his arm, walked in and out among the plants and flowers in the hot-house, he paid little attention to her chatter. His mind was full of bitter thoughts, and he was determining his future career. He would return to Germany, and accept the position as "professor" that had been offered him. He could not breathe, unstified, the air that surrounded his companion. He almost gasped for breath at the moment. Gladys seemed, like him, to feel the heat also, for she drew him to the far end of the conservatory, and sank down upon a seat, pointing him to another. They were alone.

"Now, Count," she said, "you men like to talk of yourselves and your doings. Tell me about your life in Germany. It will interest me, and I am tired."

So Dick began to tell her about the lectures at college; how every student may map out his own course of study; of the bierkeippes, the rambles into Switzerland, the balls at the embassies, and the thousand and one things that take place in student life and fashionable circles. He made no effort to mention his own name, but Gladys adroitly, or accidentally, set him talking about his chum, Dick Benton.

"You told us," she said, "that you thought he had left a sweetheart behind him in Canada. What put that idea into your head?"

Dick looked at her before replying. She was plucking the feathers in her fan, and he could not see her eyes.

"Because," he said, "he had no sweetheart there, though all the others had. Because he always looked for the Canadian mail, and sometimes flushed up and ran to his room when he got a letter. But that was seldom."

"You men always defend one another," said Gladys, scornfully. "I heard a different tale than that."

"Then you heard a lie," he said, fiercely.

"Count," she said, coldly, "you forget yourself."

Dick sprang to his feet. "Forget myself!" he cried.

"Can I calmly choose my words when I hear myself maligned? Can I—?" Here he stopped, and Gladys also rose and looked him in the face.

"Have I understood you aright?" she asked. "Did you say yourself?"

Dick was silent, and looked down. Had his eyes

been where they should have been, they would have read merriment and not anger in her own. Indeed, she was so nearly convulsed with laughter that she had to pause to regain control of her voice.

At this important moment there came, what was to Dick a welcome diversion. A little blue-eyed, fair-haired girl of about fourteen, came running up to them. She was the child of Gladys' eldest sister.

"Count Engel," she said, "I have been hunting for you just all over. You promised to write in my autograph album. Here are pen and ink. Now write just here, or you will forget all about me."

Dick took the materials, and sat down again. "Your name is Edith, is it not?" he said.

"Yes," said the girl.

"Then I'll write you an acrostic. It will read—

'To Edith, my Queen.'

While the child held the ink-bottle he wrote:—

This great world is a casket, richly chased,
Ornate with gems, within whose satiny nest
Enshrined, a jewel, fairer than the rest,
Darting bright rays of kindness, and graced
In its pure heart with virtues interlaced,
Transparent lies, by perfumed walls caressed.
He who shall win this jewel shall be blessed
More than man's due and heaven on earth shall taste.
Yet also is this world a realm, where reigns
Queen of all hearts, with virtue's diadem,
Upon the throne, a stately, blue-eyed maid,
Evil's destroyer, soother of all pains.
Edith, thou art this Queen, this lustrous gem,
Nor is there gem more rare, nor queen more bright
arrayed.

"Oh! thank you," cried the child, as she read the initials. "How nice that is. But," she added "you haven't put your name to it."

So he wrote under the sonnet "Von Engel."

"One moment," said Gladys. "Had you not better make an addition to that?"

"What shall I write?" asked Dick.

"Do me the favor to write the name of your friend, Richard Benton."

"But—" began Dick.

"Write!" she said, imperiously; and he wrote.

"What does it matter," he thought; "she is lost, anyway. There is no further need for the Count."

Little Edith had been eyeing the names. Then she suddenly broke out with—

"Richard Benton? Why, that's just the name on the letter I found under Aunt Gladys' pillow this morning. And it's just the same writing, too. How funny!"

"Edith," said her aunt hastily. "It's bed-time, you had better go to your room."

After the child had departed, Gladys turned to Dick, who was standing moodily beside a rose bush.

"Well, Dick," she said, extending her hand, "it's time for us to make up. You deserved some return for coming into the house in disguise, and I think you have got it."

But Dick took no notice of her proffered hand. He turned towards her with a most woe-begone expression. "You have had your amusement, Miss Psamticon," he said, "and now you will let me go. I was a fool to think a woman would be glad to see a man who had been absent four years. I was mistaken in