

"My dear child, you know very well I don't mean to be cruel. I am too anxious for your happiness. Lettice, Mr. Newcome is very much in love just now, excited and moved out of himself; but though he may not be less devoted to you, in the course of time he will naturally fall back into his old quiet ways. When you think of a life with him you must not imagine him as he was yesterday, but as you have seen him at home any time for the last three years. You have mimicked him to me many times over, my dear. Can you now feel content to spend your life in his company?"

It was of no use. Lettice would do nothing but sob and cry, reiterate that everyone was unkind, that she was miserable, that it was a shame that she could not be happy like other girls, until, at last Miss Carr, in despair, sent her upstairs to her bedroom, and went to rejoin Mr. Bertrand.

"Well?" he said, stopping short in his pacing up and down, and regarding her with an anxious gaze, "what luck?"

Miss Carr gave a gesture of impatience.

"Oh, none—none at all! She will do nothing but cry and make a martyr of herself. She will not acknowledge that she has made a mistake, and yet I know, I feel it is not the right thing! You must speak to Arthur Newcome yourself to-morrow, and try to make him consent to a few months' delay."

"I was thinking of that myself. I'll try for six, but he won't consent. I can't say I should myself under the circumstances. When Lettice has accepted him and cries her eyes out at the idea of giving him up, you can hardly expect the young fellow to be patient. Heigho, these daughters! A nice time of it I have before me, with four of them on my hands."

Punctually at eleven o'clock next morning Arthur Newcome arrived for his interview with Mr. Bertrand. They were shut up together for over half-an-hour, then Mr. Bertrand burst open the door of the room where Miss Carr and his daughter were seated, and addressed the latter in tones of irritation such as she had seldom heard before from those kindly lips.

"Lettice, go to the drawing-room and see Mr. Newcome. He will tell you what we have arranged. In ten minutes from now, come back to me here."

Lettice dropped her work and glided out of the room, white and noiseless as a ghost, and her father clapped his hands together in impatience.

"Bah, what a man! He drives me distracted! To think that fate should have been so perverse as to saddle me with a fellow like that for a son-in-law! Oh dear, yes, perfectly polite, and all that was proper and well-conducted, but I have no chance against him—none! I lose my head and get excited, and he is so abominably cool. He will wait a month as a concession to my wishes before making the engagement public, and during that time she is to be left alone. He is neither to come here

nor to write to her, and we will say nothing about it at home, so that there may be as little unpleasantness as possible if it ends as we hope it may. I had really no decent objection to make when he questioned me on the subject. He is in a good position; his people are all we could wish, his character irreproachable. He wishes to be married in the autumn, and if he persists I shall have to give in, I know I shall—you

might as well try to fight with a stone wall."

"Autumn!" echoed Miss Carr in dismay. "Autumn! Oh, my poor Lettice, my poor, dear child! But we have a month, you say; a great deal may be done in a month. Ah, well, Austin, we must just hope for the best, and do everything in our power to prevent an engagement."

(To be continued.)

OUR NEW PUZZLE POEM.

Saint Valentine.



* * PRIZES to the amount of six guineas (one of which will be reserved for competitors living abroad) are offered for the best solutions of the above Puzzle Poem. The following conditions must be observed :—

1. Solutions to be written on one side of the paper only.
2. Each paper to be headed with the name and address of the competitor.
3. Attention must be paid to spelling, punctuation, and neatness.
4. Send by post to Editor, GIRL'S OWN PAPER, 56, Paternoster Row, London. "Puzzle Poem" to be written on the top left-hand corner of the envelope.
5. The last day for receiving solutions from Great Britain and Ireland will be March 15, 1898; from Abroad, May 18, 1898.

The competition is open to all without any restrictions as to sex or age. No competitor will be awarded more than one First Prize during the year (November 1897 to October 1898), but the winner of a Second Prize may still compete for a first. Not more than one First and one Second Prize will be sent to any one address during the year.

A CONSOLATION PRIZE of one guinea will be awarded to the competitor, not a prize-winner, who shall receive the highest number of marks during the year for Mention. Very Highly Commended to count 10 marks; Highly Commended to count 7 marks; Honourable Mention to count 5 marks.

This will be an encouragement to all who take an interest in the puzzles and who cannot quite find their way into the front rank of solvers.