

A SERIOUS JOKE.

"What a capital joke it would be" exclaimed the southern belle...

"Oh, well, all like a good notice," observed the old lady...

"I must have this story, and as for good notices, I have read them in your scrap book and wondered and wondered why you are not rich and retired...

"On two conditions, first, that you do not carry out your proposed scheme, and second, that you accompany us home to dinner after this rehearsal."

"I never in all my experience saw such a number of people, and I must confess that I had more than my share of the pleasure...

"The rehearsal was a long and trying one," "Now for the story!" "This is the way it began, word for word..."

"When I was a child about your age, I was acting in a stock company and was quite as full of mischief as you are to-day..."

"I heard that on every hand. A dreadful fear came over me before I got to my own room..."

"What do you think, child? The purse was gone! Perhaps some one had stolen the purse..."

"I saw Miss Mason just before we went to bed, and she was looking at me with a very peculiar expression..."

"The thief was tried and convicted for the theft of the ring, and I was not a practical joker..."

"The theft of the ring and my foolishness had passed out of my mind, when one day a few years ago I was walking on the street by a villainous looking fellow..."

"I was ambitious and had talent. I made a great deal of money, but that blackmailing wretch got the most of it..."

"I had to give up my lover. I broke his heart—I know it. He died years ago..."

"I was living and insisting on seeing me. The convict brought with him a diamond necklace of great magnificence and enormous value..."

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finger, and she was never tired of showing it to her friends. I can see her now explaining its beauty and the curious setting...

"Oh, they said something about consumption, spoke learnedly of hereditary conditions, but they could not tell exactly the cause of her death..."

"I certainly seem a curious coincidence," I said, feeling that it was expected to say something of a sympathetic nature...

"I pulled out of my pocket the pearl ring and gave it to her to wear as payment for some trifling debt we had between us..."

"I turned the ring over and over, trying to solve the riddle to my mind's satisfaction. Did it contain some mysterious occult force unknown to us?"

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ribble lurches which would have been too rough for his boyish muscles, sturdy though they were, and then during twenty-six hours he stood like a rock at the eye of a seaman the monster waves, measuring the danger with the justness of a veteran and a thousand times saving the ship from being swamped in a moment...

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corner and object in the second cupboard, he lighted a candle, and, setting the candlestick on the table, he turned himself down and began to peer under the bed.

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