

# A BUTTERFLY LOVER.

BY JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS.

The series of awkward predicaments into which Jerome Latimer was precipitated by his amatory recklessness—A story of man's weakness and woman's wit.

IT was long past midnight when the laboratory door opened, and some one entered, dragging his feet wearily. Dr. Perry did not look up from his work. There was only one person in the world who opened that door without knocking, and for him no greeting was necessary. The newcomer leaned back with a pipe between his teeth, and stared moodily at the test tube that was being revolved in the flame of a burner. There were a few quick movements and a vile odor; then the doctor's forehead relaxed.

"Say, Will, I wish you'd look at me for a minute," began the other.

Will held the test tube up to the light and squinted through it before he turned around.

"Well, Jerome, what about you?" he said.

"Just give me a good look and see if you notice anything."

"Well, you have on your dress suit, and your shirt bulges abominably, and your face is about as cheerful as a weeping willow. The cars have stopped running, so you're evidently going to stay all night with me, and—yes, I might have known it—your shoes are soaking. Take them off this minute." The other shook his head impatiently. "If you get rheumatism again, I'll try my new liniment on you, and it won't do a thing to you. Oh, no! You thought that last burned—"

For the sake of peace, Jerome pulled off the soaked shoes, which had been brilliant patent leathers a short hour before.

"Now look again," he said. "Do you notice anything unusual about me? For instance, would you take me for a man who was engaged to be married?"

"You don't mean to tell me——"

"I haven't told you a thing," said

Jerome irritably. "I wish you'd answer a straight question. Do you think I seem engaged?"

Will looked relieved.

"No, you ass," he said.

Jerome's face lighted up.

"Then maybe I'm not," he said triumphantly; but his face clouded over again. "You may be wrong. Perhaps you don't understand the symptoms. If an awful goneness under your shirt front, a weakness in your jaw, and an insane desire to get out of town mean anything, I've got it."

Will stared at him in perplexed silence.

"Have you been asking some one to marry you?" he asked at last, with some sternness.

"I don't know," was the unhappy answer. "There's just one person in the world that does know, and that's the girl."

An anxious gravity had settled over both faces. They spoke in lowered tones, with long pauses.

"It's Poppy, I suppose," Will ventured.

Jerome shook his head.

"Not she! Poppy would never do anything so foolish. She looks on me as a sort of an entrée."

"Pleasant, but not exactly supporting," added Will. "Daffodil, then?"

"No, no. That is merely a high art flirtation. We do it all by letter, any way."

"I should say you did. One can't call there with any comfort, one is so interrupted by messenger boys and special deliveries laden with blue envelopes."

"Poor little Daffodil! I'm afraid that is all over now," said Jerome with a sigh.

"For heaven's sake, who is it?" exclaimed the doctor. "I can't go through

your whole flower garden. Is it Hyacinth?"

"I wish it were. I could get out of that all right. No, it's—Mignonette."

"Mignonette!"

There was an uncomfortable silence, during which Jerome studied his pipe with conscious intentness.

"You haven't been trying any of your monkey business on her?" the doctor broke out. "She isn't——"

"I tell you I don't know what I've done, and I recognize just what she isn't without your telling me. If she weren't such a thoroughbred, and so much my superior in every way, I'd be wiggling out of it by myself. But she is different. I swear I'd marry that girl rather than hurt her feelings."

"Tell me the whole thing," commanded the other.

"Well, you know we have been playing for some time."

The doctor nodded grimly.

"Honestly, Will, I've done that girl a lot of good," Jerome said earnestly. "She was just a little too serious, too proper, before, and I made up my mind I'd educate her out of it. That was the real reason I went into the affair. I really don't see why I'm not in love with her."

"Get to the point."

"Well, then, tonight we were at the Greers' dinner, and some way we both got fearfully intense. It has happened several times before, but this——! I talked a lot of rot to the effect that a man didn't formally propose to a girl any more; he just went on deeper and deeper till they both sort of understood each other without needing to speak, though some day he would drop an offhand remark about announcing it, or something, that changed it from a tacit to a formal engagement. You know how you go on when you're half in love for the moment, and she looks awfully pretty and——"

"I know the way you do," said the doctor shortly. "Go ahead."

"Well, we went on from bad to worse, and I grew pretty reckless. Poppy was at the other end of the table, and I—well, any way, something came up about last names, and, like a big fool, I said, 'When we are married, are you going to refer to me as Jerome or Mr. Latimer?'

Imagine that, right on top of my proposing theory!"

"What did she do?"

"Gave me a queer little look, a sort of a flash, that struck me all of a heap. If that was fooling, then she has gone 'way ahead of her teacher. At that minute the girls all got up to leave the table, and thank the Lord, I didn't have another chance to see her alone. But when she shook hands and said good night, she——"

"Well?"

"Oh, I don't know—only it didn't seem like a refusal. What do you think? Don't you suppose she was just playing, as I was? Most girls understand that sort of thing."

The doctor smoked in silence till roused by an impatient

"Well?"

"Why don't you go to see her and find out?" he suggested.

"But, for heaven's sake, Will, don't you know that the first thing a man does on seeing his fiancée is to—well, commit himself? She would think it funny if I didn't, if we are engaged, and if we aren't, she'd think it funny if I did. So you see——"

"Can't you see her in public, where there would be no chance to commit yourself?"

"But I can't wait for a crowd to assemble. If I'm engaged, I've got to send some flowers first thing in the morning, and a note or two during the day, and chase up there myself in the afternoon, be persuaded to stay to dinner, and hang around till midnight or so. You don't seem to understand."

"I'm afraid I don't," said Will, turning out the light. "Open the hall door and we can see our way. Here, take your shoes."

Jerome dragged on the wet shoes and began to struggle into his overcoat.

"What's that for?" asked the doctor.

"There's no use staying," was the savage answer. "I came to you for advice—the one person I'd go to in the world—and I can't get the least word out of you. If you are not interested enough——"

The doctor was leaning in the doorway, looking strangely big and dark in the dim light.

"Jerome, if you have led a girl on to

care for you and to give herself away, a girl like Mignonette," he said slowly, "I think you are in honor bound to stand by her. If there is any throwing over to be done, leave it to her. That is what I honestly think, and I wish to heaven I didn't. Now come to bed."

The next morning Jerome woke up with a yawn and a sigh, and put out his hand for his watch.

"Eight o'clock; time those flowers were starting," he said, but Will refused to be flippant. "I'll tell you what we'll do," he went on, after a few minutes. "I've planned it all out. I have a touch of grip or something—this cold really is bad—and am strictly forbidden to leave the house; that will account for the lack of flowers and notes. Meanwhile you—by the way, how well do you know Mignonette? Well enough to run in on her at odd times?"

"Um h'm."

"I thought so. You used to go up there more than I did before I began on her education. Suppose, then, that you drop in on her this morning, incidentally let fall that I am confined to the house, and see how the land lies. Pump her, you know."

"I'll be hanged if I will."

"I would do that for you. You might help me just that much, Will. You couldn't go in and cut me out, could you? I give you leave to say anything you want about me; run me down all you like. Tell her you pity the girl that marries me, and all that. Go on."

"Well, I will go and see her," Will finally agreed, after much arguing, "and I'll say that you are laid up. I won't promise another thing."

"That's great. Perhaps you'd better telephone to the office. Father has a way of expecting me down," Jerome added.

Dr. Perry nodded and hurried off, half angry at himself and wholly angry at Jerome.

It was only through the maid's stupidity that he accomplished his errand that morning; and yet it was a very natural blunder on Katy's part. Mignonette had complained of neuralgia at breakfast, and had declared her intention of spending the day on the divan in the little morning room.

"My head aches dreadfully. I don't want to see a soul today," she said emphatically as she went off, looking pale and forlorn.

There had followed a parental discussion as to whether it could be anything serious—for grip was holding high carnival that winter—and about the advisability of sending for a doctor, all of which Katy heard as she waited on the table. Certain details of etiquette had never come under her notice, so when Dr. Perry rang at about eleven o'clock, she ushered him promptly into the morning room with a serene "The doctor, ma'am," and shut the door behind him.

Mignonette half started up, with a dismayed consciousness of her ugly little flannel wrapper; but sank back again as she remembered her slipperless feet. Dr. Perry was not in the least embarrassed, but propriety evidently demanded that he should appear so.

"I am afraid Katy thought that I came professionally," he said with one hand on the knob and a preternaturally serious expression. "I hope you will excuse——"

Mignonette had found herself again, and faced the situation with a cordial little smile, scorning vanity's shocked whispers.

"But I'm very glad to see you," she said. "You haven't been near me for ages. Do come over and shake hands. I'm not contagious, truly."

Will dropped his pose with a laugh.

"Can't I catch you, no matter how hard I try?" he said. "You don't look alarmingly ill."

"Well, I am," with some resentment. "If you were any kind of a doctor, you'd know at a glance that I had a bad headache and six inches of neuralgia in my shoulder."

"I see three symptoms, but they give me a pretty clear idea of your case," Will said. "One is this pile of novels. What's that—'Little Women'? Is that your taste in literature?"

"I always go back to my childhood when I'm laid up," said Mignonette. "Books like that sort of stroke your hair and warm your feet and tuck you up. They are so comfortable. If you were a girl, you would understand just what they do for one. What is the next symptom?"

"Oh, I suppose it's that funny little striped business you're wearing. Don't cover it up; I like it. It makes you look about sixteen."

"I believe I was when it was first made. And the third symptom?"

"I don't think I'll tell you. You might not like it."

"Yes, I shall. You must, or I will take the case out of your hands."

"Well, then, there is a little look about your eyes that would suggest—oh, but the thing is impossible. You never cry, do you?"

Mignonette flushed a little under his teasing scrutiny, but her eyes defied him gallantly.

"How odd!" she said, cocking her eyebrows in brazen surprise. "It must be my headache. Are they so very red?"

"Not red at all; just a little shadowy and interesting at the corners. Probably it is the headache," said Will, outwardly routed. He might not have retreated so easily if the remembrance of his errand had not intruded itself with annoying distinctness. "By the way, I left a friend of yours more or less laid up this morning," he went on with an effort. "Jerome has as little idea of taking care of himself——" He shook his head abstractedly, though he knew well enough that the color had rushed up into Mignonette's face, and her eyes had beaten a hasty retreat.

"Is he—is it serious?" she asked after a pause, self consciousness in every syllable.

"Oh, no. I shall keep him locked in today, if I can; but it is not much more than a cold," he said, inwardly hating his errand when he saw her look of bright relief. "Jerome has no prudence," he went on, resolved to get it over with as soon as possible. "He is a good deal of an infant in some ways. He is one of those people who never know their own minds two days running. He simply follows his impulses without the slightest thought of consequences. You never can depend on him."

"I thought he was your best friend," said Mignonette coldly. "He always speaks as if you were. I always believed that the friendship between you was rather an ideal one. He is very loyal to you."

Will, having slandered his friend entirely from a sense of duty, felt injured at her tone. Explanation was impossible, and so, a few minutes later, they parted somewhat stiffly. Mignonette lay staring into space for half an hour after he had gone, then jumped up and dressed to go out. Her headache was better, she said, and she wanted some air.

Late that afternoon the most miserable young man in all the city dragged himself up Mignonette's front steps. Will had come back unaccountably short and disagreeable, with a dry account of what he had noticed—namely, one violent blush and a tendency to partisanship. He added that if Jerome were any kind of a man, he would go up there himself that very afternoon and settle the affair one way or the other. Whatever happened, Dr. Perry would have nothing more to do with it, and didn't want to hear another word on the subject.

Jerome hung around, aggrieved and nervous, until after four o'clock, when conscience from within and coolness from without started his feet in the right direction.

As he entered the hall, Mignonette came impulsively to meet him, holding out to him both hands and the most radiant little smile that ever greeted a reluctant lover. He took the hands, and then, feeling as though he were breaking all the commandments as well as settling the noose around his own neck, he stooped slowly down. Mignonette drew back with shining eyes and a laughing whisper, "Oh, my dear, the girls!"

Jerome straightened up in alarm. In direct line of vision through the door, which Mignonette had left open behind her, were two of the most inopportune guests a diabolical fate could have summoned. By the table sat Daffodil, in whose pocket even now might be concealed the impetuous letter in which, twenty four short hours ago, he had told her all that this correspondence meant to him, and what his days would be if there came a drought when the precious little white envelopes ceased to fall on his path. It was a beautiful, artistic letter, somewhat in the style of a "prose fancy," and he had secretly regretted that there were special passages in it that might un-

fit it for future use in his biography. If his sense of humor had been less keen, he might have kept a copy of it.

On the piano stool perched, of all the girls in the world, Poppy—Poppy, on whose desk at home stood a frame containing fourteen different views of himself, ranging through long dresses and bibs, Scotch kilts and billow curls, braided jackets and shapeless knickerbockers, and all the stages of masculine adornment that lie between staring infancy and complacent manhood; Poppy, for whose amusement he had offered marriage in a new and original form once a week for the last three months, on the comfortable understanding that she would always decline. She liked the little attention, she said, and it kept her hand in. What perverse chance had brought them all together?

Daffodil greeted him smilingly, having evidently missed the significance of that tableau in the hall, but Poppy, on the piano stool, merely gave him a curt nod, and devoted all her attention to the gaudy cover of a new song.

"And she hasn't missed a trick," he thought miserably, as he did his best to smile adoringly at Mignonette, talk fervently to Daffodil, and propitiate the unsmiling Poppy with glances of humorous understanding. Of course he became confused—few men are clever enough to keep three love affairs going at once—and sent the right glance to the wrong girl; but Mignonette, sunny, talkative, full of eager little laughs and exclamations, apparently noticed nothing. Her little air of proprietorship was charming, but it exasperated Jerome to the swearing point under Daffodil's unsuspecting smiles and Poppy's hostile glances. Once, in passing him, Mignonette laid her hand for an instant on his shoulder. The piano stool gave a vicious twirl, and a moment later Poppy took her departure. The other caller seemed in no hurry to go. It was nearly dinner time when she reluctantly rose.

"I've stayed disgracefully long," she said, "but the truth is, I dread going home tonight, for I'm all soul alone, and it's so dismal."

Mignonette sent Jerome an appealing "What else can I do?" glance, as she said readily,

"Stay here and take dinner with us. And, Jerome, you must stay too, so that you can take her home."

"You're a dear," said Daffodil, pulling off her gloves. "I know I hinted, but I did want to be asked. I suppose I really ought to be at home writing letters," she added, pushing back a blue envelope that was escaping from her pocket, with a significant glance at Jerome. Mignonette looked from one to the other with a puzzled expression, and for several minutes was rather silent. Jerome squirmed on the hook and prayed for death.

Dinner was a long misery. Daffodil evidently thought that he had stayed entirely on her account—not an unnatural mistake, considering his last letter—and did her best to give him a good time. She was daring, confidential, brimming over with the secret of their picturesque correspondence. Some of her allusions hovered so close to the blue envelope in her pocket that Jerome grew cold and faint. He cursed his trick of butterfly loving as he saw Mignonette becoming quieter and graver every moment. Her eyes no longer flashed signals across to him, and, as they left the dining room, he noticed that she drew away from the arm Daffodil tried to slip over her shoulder. After he had taken the guest home, a couple of weary hours later, he hurried back to see what he could do with his haughty fiancée and the tangled web by which he was surrounded, but the house was dark and he dared not ring.

Dr. Perry looked up with a frown as Jerome came wearily into the laboratory half an hour later.

"Well, are we to congratulate you?" he asked in an unfriendly tone.

"Does carboic acid hurt?" was all Jerome said.

"Oh, no. It refreshes and invigorates."

"Blow out the gas, then, and I'll try that. Ass, ass, ass!" Jerome added, beating his head softly against the wall. "Yes, I'm engaged all right. I've had a very happy evening;" and he plunged into a dismal tale of his sufferings.

"I don't see but what it turned out rather well," said Will, without a trace of sympathy. "You want Mignonette to throw you over, and it looks very much



as if she would. I think you were in luck."

"But I tell you, she cares," burst out Jerome. "I don't want to get out of it that way. I feel as if I'd—I'd stepped on a kitten. If you had seen her face when I came—and then when I left! I hate myself from head to foot. If ever I try to educate a girl again! And that isn't all."

Will gave an impatient shrug.

"Oh, there's more, is there?"

"You know I took Daffodil home," said Jerome slowly. "I had been wondering all the evening just what was the matter with her, and then I found out. It was the letter I wrote her yesterday."

"In which you accidentally asked her to marry you," added Will, relaxing into an unwilling smile.

"Why, I didn't suppose I had," said the other earnestly. "All my letters have been more or less impetuous, and I didn't know this was such a big advance. I believe I did say something about what she meant to my life, but, good heavens, she's old enough to know better!"

"You ought to wear a button with 'I'm only fooling' printed on it," suggested the doctor.

"'I'm a darned fool' would be more appropriate," said Jerome, scowling. "Well, on the way home Daffodil grew sort of quiet, and she said she hadn't answered my sweet little letter because she hadn't quite known what to say; but I'm to go up there tomorrow at five and we'll talk it all over—and oh, Lord, I'm afraid I'm engaged to her too."

Will laughed in spite of himself.

"All aboard for Salt Lake," he said.

"Yes, it's funny," said Jerome impatiently. "It's a great joke when you aren't in it. I wonder how many more of my little friends are getting their trousseaus ready. Poppy isn't, I'll bet, but she's the only one I'm sure of. I have always wondered why men didn't give girls a better time, and make life more interesting for them. Now I know. And to tell you the honest truth," he added, getting up to go, "being out with Poppy feels worse than being in with all the rest."

Jerome lay awake most of the night, re-

hearsing an adroit interview with Daffodil which would lead her gently back into the realm of toy love making, without arousing her suspicions, but in the morning it seemed less feasible.

"What does a girl always think you want to marry her for?" he exclaimed impatiently.

A note from Mignonette added to his troubles.

"I want to talk with you very seriously," she wrote. "Come at five, and I will see that we are not interrupted." Five—that was the very hour to which Daffodil had pinned him down.

"That's right. Pile it on," said Jerome. "If I were twins, I might manage it. Oh, hang it all! I wish I were married and out of harm's way."

Jerome could have slipped out of both appointments, but he was no coward, and there was in him a certain joy in an exciting situation, a game with edged tools, which tempted him irresistibly to try his skill. Moreover, an unacknowledged passion to have all his world in sympathy with him—or, if you will, a little in love with him—made him hesitate to appear in the sorry guise of a man running away. So he decided to try the dangerous experiment of keeping both appointments by going to Mignonette's house half an hour early. Daffodil would be more likely to forgive tardiness; and if she were a little angry, the interview would be less difficult, for Jerome had determined to act as if the fatal letter and last night's talk had merely been clever moves in the game of hearts with which they had been trifling.

As he stood in Mignonette's parlor, nervously wondering what the upshot of it all would be, he heard voices on the stairs, one of which sent a chill through him, for it was indubitably Daffodil's. Both girls were laughing.

"I think we've punished him enough," Mignonette was saying. "Did you ever see any one suffer as he did last night?"

"I hope it did him good," said Daffodil. "Jerome is altogether too promiscuous. He needed a lesson. He carries that butterfly loving altogether too far. Why, his simplest note would amount to an offer of marriage from any one else."

"Dear me, it was fortunate I went to you that morning," Mignonette ex-

claimed. "I never was so worried in my life. Somehow, the more I thought of it, and the way he looked when he said good night, the more certain I was that he had been in earnest after all, and had misunderstood my fooling. If you could have seen that anxious, tragic expression! I don't see how he did it so well!"

"He meant it at the moment," said Daffodil. "He means all those letters I showed you—while he's writing them. It is his power of being in earnest that makes him such a dangerous trifier. It was too bad that girl had to call at the same time he did. We could have carried it much farther if she hadn't. Do you think she noticed?"

"I don't believe so. I was very discreet," said Mignonette, whose knowledge of Poppy was slight. "I wish I hadn't quarreled with Dr. Perry over the affair. He was running Jerome down, and I snubbed him for his disloyalty, while probably, all the time, Jerome had put him up to it."

"Well, it all went off beautifully," said Daffodil, opening the front door. "I wonder which of us he will honor this afternoon!"

"I am going to put him out of his misery," laughed Mignonette. "I shall simply say, 'My dear boy, it was all a parable acted out for your benefit. Take it well to heart.' He has had discipline enough."

Jerome listened in a trance of bewilderment. At first he felt foolish, then angry, then his love of a good joke swept everything away in a silent wave of laughter. He heard Katy's voice in the hall, and a gasp of dismay from Mignonette, and had just time to slip into the little library beyond and assume a "waiting here for hours" expression when Mignonette's flushed face appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, you're in here," she began uncertainly.

"Yes. Katy suggested that I should come in by the fire," was the guileless answer. Jerome's brain had been working rapidly. "I thought you were never coming. I am so happy today," he added, taking both her hands and squeezing them. "This is the first time I've seen you alone since the Greers' dinner, and

there is so much to say. I couldn't wait till five."

Mignonette was plainly disconcerted.

"So happy?" she stammered. The parable speech was quite forgotten.

"Hasn't a man a right to be happy when he is engaged to marry the sweetest girl in the whole world?" He smiled at her affectionately, but she sprang up in dismay.

"But you aren't engaged," she exclaimed. "It's all—I mean——"

"Yes, it's all a secret yet," said Jerome. "You are one of the first persons I've told, but you have been so good to me, I wanted you to know it right away. Her letter only came this morning."

Mignonette dropped into a chair, and stared at him in such frank amazement that the happy, childlike expression nearly failed him.

"Her letter?" she said.

Jerome's mind had rushed ahead of his words, rapidly improvising.

"Yes. I expected to go East again this month, but I couldn't get away, so I wrote instead. I simply couldn't wait any longer. Have I been very queer and absent these last few days? I really haven't known what I was saying or doing, I was in such suspense. You have been awfully good to me. I fancied you guessed a little, you were so sympathetic. Did you?"

"No—oh, no, I didn't guess," said Mignonette.

"I don't know what I should have done without you," he went on. "I feel as fond of you as if you were my dear little sister. I hope you and she are going to be great friends."

Mignonette's thoughts were racing back and forth over the past in hopeless confusion, like hounds after a lost trail, but she began to think of appearances.

"Do tell me about it," she said, with a weak show of enthusiasm. "I suppose it happened when you were East last summer. What is her name?"

"It's Violet White," said Jerome, inwardly hoping that he had not hit on a brand of cold cream or a new soap. "Yes, it began last summer, and of course we've been corresponding ever since. I wish you could know her. She isn't like most girls. But I've done nothing but talk of

my affairs, and you wanted to see me about something serious. What was it?"

But Jerome had enjoyed all the revenge he was to be allowed. Mignonette had collected her wits and clothed herself in a defensive armor of smiling composure.

"Never mind my affairs today. Yours are vastly more interesting," she said easily. "I want to know all about your fiancée. Is she pretty?" And she plunged into a lively cross questioning, which kept Jerome's imagination hard at work. Indeed, if Mignonette had paid the slightest attention to his answers, she might have noticed some strange inconsistencies about Miss White, whose home appeared to be in three different States, and whose eyes changed recklessly from blue to brown as the question was absently repeated. When he caught himself shifting her from an only child into the eldest of a large family, Jerome got up to go.

There was triumph in his eyes as he walked away, leaving Mignonette still bewildered with the task of putting two and two together and getting any plausible results. At the corner a new thought sobered him. What if this absurd tale should come to Poppy's ears? Mignonette was to receive a full and penitent confession by the first mail in the morning, but meanwhile, chance could do anything, and Poppy was quite angry enough as it was, thanks to the accidental part she had played in the farce comedy. With a sudden resolve to tell it all from beginning to end, and throw himself on her mercy, Jerome jumped on the nearest car that could carry him Poppyward.

It was still early, so Mignonette, after a dazed interval, put on her things and went out, intending to carry the news to Daffodil. She felt bewildered, and just a little mortified, for, though she recognized the joke, she was not quite ready to laugh at it. When a turn brought her face to face with Dr. William Perry, she stopped and spoke to him, with a sudden impulse to make up and be friends. Will met her more than half way.

"I was just going down town to buy a wedding present," he said. "This is the first spare minute I've had all day. Do come and help me. I'm so stupid at such

things. I never can think of anything but butter knives and gravy ladles."

"Is it for Jerome?" asked Mignonette, glancing up at him with a little laugh. She was curious to see how much he knew.

Will looked a trifle blank, and some of the animation died out of his face.

"No, not this one," he said gravely, as they walked down the long slope that led to the region of shops. "Is it settled—how soon he is to need his?"

"Oh, it is too early for that, isn't it?" said Mignonette. "We were talking about it this afternoon, but nothing was said about dates."

"I want to tell you," Will said with an effort, "how much I think Jerome is to be congratulated."

Something in his tone puzzled Mignonette.

"You like it, then?" she said absently.

"When the girl you admire most in the whole world marries your best friend, I suppose you ought to be pleased," said Will, with an odd smile.

Mignonette was conscious of a strange pang, but she laughed bravely, to show that she was heart whole, and did not give a button who was first with this towering young man beside her.

"How well did you know her?" she asked.

"As well as she would let me, didn't I?" answered Will, somewhat to her surprise. Did he suppose she kept track of his affairs? "I might have known her much better," he went on, "but Jerome appeared on the scene, and I didn't care to be number two, so I drew back. There's the history of a broken heart in a nutshell."

He laughed and struck the pavement a ringing blow with his stick. Mignonette eyed him gravely.

"And you cared?" she asked.

It seemed an eternity before he answered.

"Yes, I cared," he said, meeting her eyes, which suddenly filled and drooped.

"Violet White must be a very fascinating girl," she said after a long silence.

"Who is she?" asked Will.

"Why, Miss White, Jerome's fiancée. We were just talking about her."



"I don't know what you mean," said Will helplessly.

"Have I got the name wrong?" with a puzzled frown. "I mean the girl Jerome is going to marry. Isn't it Violet White?"

They had both stopped, careless of the hurrying crowd on either side, and were staring at each other in bewilderment.

"At eleven o'clock last night he was engaged to you," said Will slowly. "The Lord knows who it is by this time."

A sudden light irradiated Mignonette's face.

"Then you weren't talking about Miss White?" she began, turning to walk on.

"I was talking about you. I thought you knew."

"I didn't dream it."

"You thought I meant——"

"That horrid Violet White," said Mignonette.

They turned into a quieter street, for they had things to say that could not be shouted. When they had placed together their parts of the mystery, they came to a fairly clear understanding of the whole.

"Jerome found us out, and that is the way he got even," laughed Mignonette. "You don't know how I blessed you that dreadful morning when you told me he was ill. I had played invalid so that I needn't see him if he came. I didn't dare go out, for fear I'd meet him. When I found he was laid up, I resolved to tell the whole thing to a girl I knew and get her advice, without giving his name. When I finished she just said, 'If the man is Jerome Latimer, you needn't worry.' And then she showed me some of his letters to her. I was tremendously

relieved, but all the same I didn't like having been fooled, and so we made up our minds to punish him."

"And incidentally punished me," said Will.

"Oh, dear me, we forgot the wedding present," exclaimed Mignonette. "It's too late to go back now."

"Yes, it's too late to go back now," said Will with meaning.

The laboratory was deserted that evening, but towards midnight two cheerful faces came together at the door and went in for a smoke. After half a pipe of silence, Jerome looked up.

"Poppy says she won't marry me," he began, and there was another pause before he added, "but she says she'll be engaged to me, just to keep the other girls away."

The two men laughed, and hunched themselves down in ungainly comfort.

"What will Violet White say?" asked Will.

Jerome laughed.

"What a guy they made of me!" he said. "They showed splendid team work. I suppose you know all about everything?"

"Yes, pretty much. She told me her side tonight."

"Oh, that's where you were. I must get another name for that girl. 'Mignonette' is altogether too artless and innocent. How would 'Foxglove' do?"

"Leave it to me. I'll find you one," said Will.

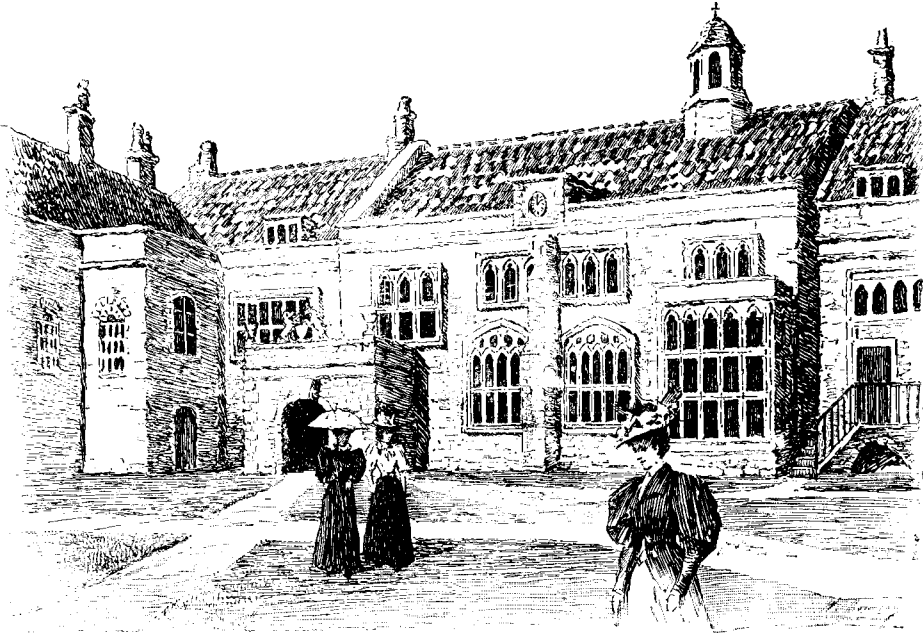
Jerome stared.

"Perhaps you would prefer Mrs. William Perry," he suggested.

Will only laughed.

*Juliet Wilbor Tompkins.*





THE HALL OF THE OLD CHARTERHOUSE.

*Drawn by William Thomson.*

## GLIMPSES OF THACKERAY.

The old time London scenes in which the author of "Vanity Fair" lived and worked, and amid which he set the characters of his famous novels.

He was a cynic! By his life all wrought  
Of generous acts, mild words, and gentle  
ways;  
His heart wide open to all kindly thought,  
His hand so swift to give, his tongue to praise!

He was a cynic! You might read it writ  
In that broad brow, crowned with its silver  
hair;

In those blue eyes, with childish candor lit,  
In that sweet smile his lips were wont to wear.

He was a cynic! By the love that clung  
About him from his children, friends, and kin;  
By the sharp pain light pen and gossip tongue  
Wrought in him, chafing the soft heart within!

**S**HIRLEY BROOKS wrote this poem in memory of Thackeray, just after the great novelist's death, and he caught the spirit of the man he and so many others had loved. That the author of "Vanity Fair" was cynical in some of his work can hardly be denied. He took a positive delight in crushing a foible wherever he found it, and he had such a horror of snobs and snobbishness that sometimes, when he saw a grain of this failing, he could not resist the temptation

to make the whole lump which it contaminated ridiculous. But after all, he himself believed in human nature. Where in his books has any one been taught that happiness in this world ever comes from anything save honor and frank virtue? That is not the teaching of a cynic.

Thackeray's life has been so little known generally that the world might have believed almost anything of him. The one person who could write it fully, who could give the perfect character sketch that would put the living man before us, would be his daughter, Anne Thackeray Ritchie; but he made her promise, before his death, that she would write no biography of him.

We know that for two hundred years the Thackerays had belonged to the best professional class in England, and had had in their veins some of its best blood. For two centuries they had won their way to fame and fortune through their pens, or tongues, or swords.