



"MY OWN JACK—I WAS—SO—AFRAID——"

of these miserable dogs? They've ruined my parasol?"

The eagerness went out of his welcome as she gave him the tips of her fingers. His eyes said, "Is this the way you come home to me, Airlie?" But Airlie gathered up her shimmering train. "That little girl over there has been entertaining me. To think I was once——"

"Madge is my little playmate," he interrupted gravely. "I call her Airlie, though."

"What a fancy! Well, I hope she doesn't inherit any of my traits along with my name. Jack—for old times' sake——"

She could not remember what she had meant to say, for his eyes looked into hers with the old sweet look and hers replied, gazing for a moment from her heart to his.

"She loves you, Jack."

He glanced where her eyes wandered and his face was very tender. "I know," he said.

"Better——" she began, fixing her eyes with an effort on the child's figure, standing so slight, so lonely, against the sea.

"No, Airlie—not that——"

"And you will be happy. Jack dear, my old playmate—I haven't told even Aunt

Eunice. I'm going to marry Stapleton. You know he is coming tomorrow, with the yacht, to pick us up. We left the party to—to look at—the old landmarks."

They had walked slowly and they turned back, and the child saw them stop and hold hands a moment.

Jack brought a smile to his lips. "You always wanted to be Lady Airlie."

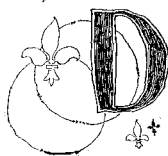
She smiled back at him. "I always—I'll go on, Jack, and you and Airlie can overtake me. I want you to meet Aunt Eunice and Lady Stapleton."

And she walked on along the beach, alone, and she did not see the child as she looked into Jack's grave sweet face.

"Jack," the child whispered, clinging to him as he put his arms around her and kissed her gently, "my own Jack—I was—so—afraid——"

Marguerite Tracy.

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR.



DICK SOLLITT was struggling with the proper adjustment of his cravat. His wife stood before her dressing table, where she had just laid down a bit of chamois skin tinged with red.

"Well, Dick, a few hours more and we shall *know*," she said

He turned away from the mirror as he replied:

"This is a queer dinner we are giving. My last tenner went for the wine. It's like a game of *rouge et noir*—all chance, and we have no system; only a bit of wit, and luck perhaps; but it's worth the try."

She still stood at her table, looking at herself critically with brows drawn together. Her agitation was not becoming. It would not do.

"Can you help me with this hook?"

income, the check, or the "flier"; he had had an idea, and he clung to it, but he had not waited for the idea to materialize to marry. They began with an establishment which only a brilliant realization of the idea would justify, if anything could justify such a beginning. And when, as soon happened, things began to go wrong with them, they did not know the way to stop, to haul in. Mrs. Sollitt's



"IT'S LIKE A GAME OF ROUGE ET NOIR—ALL CHANCE, AND WE HAVE NO SYSTEM."

Her voice was calm and steady. He came at her call and stood with his arm about her, but avoided looking at her—they both had something to conceal.

"There, is that right? Did I fix it?"

"Ah, thanks," she returned. "I must take a last peep at the diningroom, so I will hurry down."

Richard Sollitt and his wife belonged to that rapidly growing number of young people who cannot commence with a simple beginning. A meager income with perhaps a check from dad or a successful "flier" in wheat, and they are fairly launched on a high rolling sea. That more of these light craft are not dashed on the rocks proves that Providence still has a hand.

Sollitt had had more than the meager

gowns continued to be made at Mme. Therèse's. Sollitt still had his horse and cart, which Madge sometimes drove; and she spent an hour a day with a French teacher. Still, they were anxious. The idea was constantly with Sollitt now, he could not sleep for the thinking. So far his efforts to put the idea into tangible shape had been futile, and things were about as bad as could be. Tonight to win, or the morrow would bring—well, the inevitable.

There were but two guests, a man and his wife. The man held things "in the hollow of his hand," as the saying is, things that most of us struggle all our lives for and fail to obtain. The woman had always held things firmly in her own tight little fists, and she watched with sharp

impatience the man's occasional juggling. What if some of the baubles should fall and that other woman get them? What was the new game—why were they there—what was up?

The diningroom was pretty and quaint. Madge herself was distinctly modern, with a becoming dress of the latest mode, the latest coiffure, and now a charming smile on the slightly rouged lips; they had been too white.

She presided that night with unusual grace at her husband's table—the table where they played *rouge et noir* under the pink shaded candles, amid the odors of La France roses. She was alive to everything—the man, the woman, her husband. He was leaving the game in her hands. Could she play the cards? She glanced at the woman and drew a sharp breath. They were eating the deliciously prepared viands—their last meal, or was there to be plenty?

The other woman knew it was a game, but what? They had gotten as far as the dessert, and she had not yet found out.

What was it they wanted? A word, without which their puzzle was a failure—a miserable blank. The man could say it, and perhaps would, if the woman did not prevent. How can women be so nasty? Did they want everything? Was there not enough, at least, for Richard and for her? If the man had not been so attractive, his wife might not care.

Ah, how afraid the women are; how stupid, how dull! That was not the way to make a man care, to be greedy and hard. Madge smiled suddenly at this undercurrent of thought. The undercurrents were so strong; were they sweeping her away? What nonsense! This intensity would swamp them.

"Have you been to the flower show, Mrs. Marchand? It seems to me the chrysanthemums were never more beautiful, and the show is one of the prettiest settings New York gives society."

Mrs. Marchand relaxed. This sounded innocent enough.

"I prefer the horse show myself," she returned; "but the flowers *are* pretty, this year especially."

"Sometimes one sees queer people there," Madge went on. "One day an old man and his wife came in. They seemed just carried away. I heard him



MADGE SOMETIMES DROVE.

say to her, 'Them new fangled asters is mighty pretty, but Lor', these people must change everything, even the Lord's own flowers!'" They all laughed. "I suppose they will never have a flower trust, Mr. Marchand? A corner in chrysanthemums sounds well."

He turned his bright, quick eyes on her. He thought her very attractive, and he really liked that impracticable young dog, her husband. Now, this idea of his that he wanted him to look into—He sighed a little; they were all after him; it crept in everywhere; it gave things a bitter taste. The luxury he looked forward to was the companionship of people who cared for him, for himself only. It was his one idea, the one thing denied him. He saw that Madge was pale, and suddenly he realized that she was afraid of his wife. He was himself a little afraid of her. She was a good, wholly unimaginative woman, with a tendency towards closeness and jealousy which had more than once come between them.

Madge was afraid of that *mauvais quart d'heure* which she had to spend alone with her guest while the gentlemen were left to their cigars.

Later, in the drawingroom, Mrs. Marchand went up to a little table littered with photographs and books. She picked up

one of the photographs and asked, "Who is this, Mrs. Sollitt?"

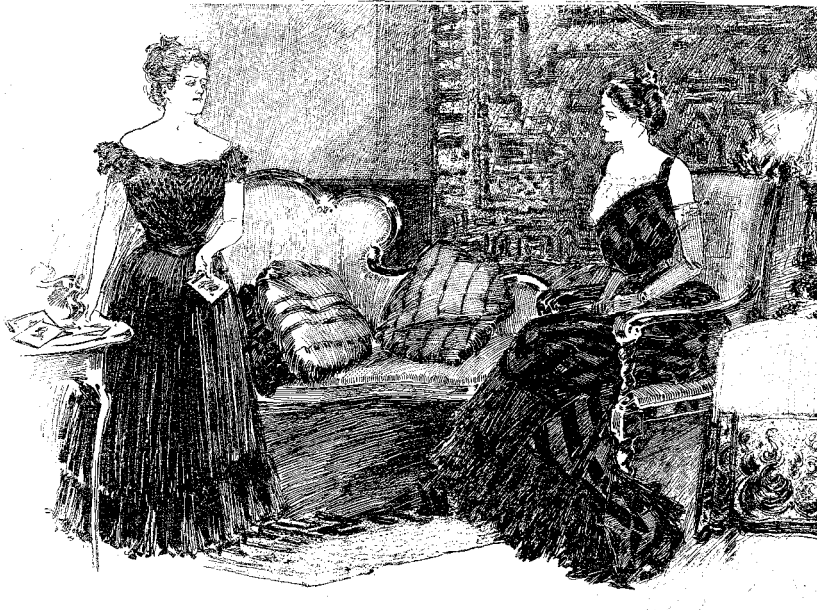
"Ah, you have that absurd picture of me! Isn't it ridiculous?"

It was a photograph of Madge taken at the happiest moment. She had told her husband that she kept the picture there to test her friends; if they liked her, they said, "How lovely, how like!" If they did not, they failed to recognize it, as had Mrs. Marchand.

write stories for children, with illustrations on every page. Fortunately, these ambitions often change, but Richard has always clung to his."

Mrs. Marchand bent over the little picture again. The sturdy child in his little "roundabout," his look of confidence and pride in his precious toy—was *this* what he was after in there with her husband?

The men came in, and in an instant Madge divined that the word had been



"AH, YOU HAVE THAT ABSURD PICTURE OF ME! ISN'T IT RIDICULOUS?"

"Don't apologize, I beg; scarcely any one recognizes it. I am perfectly safe in leaving it there."

"What a quaint, pretty child!" said Mrs. Marchand, taking up a small, faded photograph in a quaint, old fashioned frame. "What is it the little boy has by his side?"

"It is a picture of Richard when he was a little chap, and that is his little train of cars. He would not have his picture taken without, his mother told me. At first she wouldn't give it me, but I coaxed, and finally she gave in. Railroading has always been a passion with Richard, and I tell him he looks there as if he expected to be president of a road some day." Mrs. Marchand smiled, and Madge continued: "The ambitions of childhood are strange. I wavered between a desire to ride a horse in a circus, or to

spoken and that it had been *no*. She also divined what it would mean to them. Richard's work all gone for nothing, a tumbling of great and long cherished hopes, a fresh start!

Mrs. Marchand eyed them keenly. The look of the young man was so different from that of the boy in the picture. She did not look at Madge, but, turning to her husband, "I want you to see these pictures," she said. "Isn't this a charming picture of Mrs. Sollitt? And this is a picture of Mr. Sollitt when he was a boy."

The railway magnate at once caught sight of the little train of cars, and he caught what many other railway magnates would not have caught—the expression of the boy. It held him—one couldn't be hard with a boy like that; and his wife—actually, he believed she wanted him to be easy. He merely glanced at

the picture of the beautiful woman; he laid down both the photographs, then took them up again, and he thought that if he had a son he would like to have him look like that. Sollitt laughed uneasily.

"I was always such a little fool, it's a wonder they ever taught me to read and write. I was forever playing with things, and my only wish was that Santa Claus should bring me a train of cars—innumerable trains of cars. I had little tracks laid out—but how silly children are! I don't see where you got the picture, Madge."

"Well," laughed the railway magnate, "when I was a child I was passionately fond of flowers. I even stole them. We don't often stick to our first loves. I might have if I'd had Mrs. Sollitt's bright idea of a flower trust. But you *have* stuck to yours. We must look into that proposition of yours further."

They left not long after, and Madge and her husband were alone. For a moment she stood white and silent, and then, throwing out her arms, as if freed from a weight, she cried:

"Oh, you blessed, blessed boy, and that dear good woman saw it! I shall love her always; she can stick all the pins into me she likes, for she was good to you!"

Finally she got Richard to understand what had happened. "Do you remember what you said, Richard, about it's being like a game of *rouge et noir*? I believe it was that frightened me, and lo! it has been more like a game of 'ring around a rosy,' with a little old fashioned boy standing wondering in the center."

Rose Mueller Sprague.

HER EDITORIAL CAPACITY.

"I HAVE thought of marriage," she said pensively, turning her blue pencil between her fingers. "I've written about it—often."

His eyes fell on a long galley proof bearing her signature, and he smiled as the title looked up at him. "The Engaged Girl," it read; "Miss Alston Fern Gives Suggestions About the Engaged Girl in Society." He wondered if Dolly had written it from his engagement and hers.

"You may read it," she laughed. "It's entirely impersonal. Don't you see, Ned, we're different!"

They laughed together. It was all per-

fectly absurd—his coming into the office just when she was sending the magazine to press, with Chamberlin at the next desk dictating letters to Miss Mapleton, and Miss Hollowell entering manuscripts



A BOY FROM THE
PRINTERS' CAME IN.

in the big book at the table in the corner.

Dolly had looked up with a preoccupied stare when he stood beside her, and then laid down her pen and held out her hand with a girlish exclamation. He had never come to the office before. "Nothing wrong?" she had cried, when she really saw his face.

"Everything's wrong," he said. "We are to sail for Manila at two this afternoon. I want you to drop this and come along. Three of the officers are taking their wives."

Chamberlin's voice rose and fell evenly, dictating letters to the stenographer. Dolly's desk was beside the window. The streets were unusually noiseless. Dolly looked out. It was a clear day. The end of the city lay far below to the south. She could see the white arch at Washington Square against the trees, the Brooklyn Bridge beyond ragged quarries of high buildings, the silver snowiness of the harbor, with the great