

OPERATIC PRELUDE.



IT WAS 8 O'CLOCK and the drug store next to the opera house was as radiant with the costumes whose richness was of the parquet-circle type as was the foyer of the great hall near by. It was the usual before-the-opera crowd, composed of representatives of a class of people who are well-to-do yet not such strict adherents to the canons of society as to be prohibited from attending to a few trifling matters that had been put off till the last minute.

Ladies under the protection of their escorts braced themselves for the coming performance with various soft drinks that were served rapidly by the skillful attendants; ladies who had tucked their safety under the shadow of their own wing and had discarded masculine supervision altogether, haggled over the price of boxes of bonbons and scowled at the clerk, who insisted upon receiving the regulation price for all such dalliances, and ladies whose escorts were yet to appear leaned wearily against the heavy show-cases and impatiently watched the avenue entrance through which they were every moment expecting the other half of the combine to put in an appearance.

The latter class was not without a plentiful sprinkling of men. The one who of all the waiting, pushing, passing crowd was first to arrive was a gentleman. He came in at 7:30 and took up his station at the corner of the cigar stand near the door, a position from which he could get a fair view of every newcomer, and there he stood, a good-looking, dark-mustached, fashionably-attired monument of patience, till the minute-hand on the clock opposite, pointed to 8 o'clock. Then he shifted his position a little. At five minutes past 8 he shifted again. At ten minutes past 8 he got desperate, and leaving the counter, which for the last forty minutes had served for a pedestal for his weariness, he cut a wide swath through the then decreasing crowd and made his way toward the far end of the store.

There were but five ladies left in the public trusting place at that time. One was middle-aged and had two little girls with her; three of them were accompanied by gentlemen; the only one for whom he could possibly be looking was the tall blonde in the rear of the room. He stopped and studied her furtively again before addressing her. She was very pretty. Her hair was that rich, beautiful brown that shines in the light; her eyes were large, long-lashed and white-lidded, and her complexion was touched with that exquisite tint that reaches its rarest perfection when brought in contrast with somber colors. The lady undoubtedly realized the possibilities of her face and the rich black of her costume was relieved only by the ermine lining of her wrap.

The gentleman hesitated a moment. "She doesn't tally exactly with the description given," he decided, comparing the pretty picture before him with a photograph which he evidently carried in a convenient pocket in his mind. "The fact is, she is decidedly prettier, but perhaps a desire to avoid all show of egotism prompted her to go a little slow on the enumeration of her many charms. A woman as good looking as she is can afford to speak faintly in her own praise. It must be she. I'll risk it, anyway."

A relieved look passed over the lady's face and she arose as he came nearer. "Pardon me," he said, "but I am looking for a lady I have never seen. Have I made a mistake, or is this Miss Gilbert?"

A perceptible shade of disappointment flashed in her blue eyes and she



IS THIS MISS GILBERT?

hesitated an instant. She glanced at the clock. It was 8:15, and the opera had already commenced.

"Yes," she replied, quickly, "and you?"

He put his own construction on her hesitancy, and smiled in his own conceit. "Robert Lang, of course," he returned. "What a fool I was to let you wait here from 7:25, the time when you came in, until now. But I was fearful of making a mistake. You are so much prettier than you gave me any idea of."

"You are very kind," she laughed, "but let's hurry. The music is now well under way."

That the late arrival was on the lookout for none of these, for he sat down gingerly on a seat near the door and glared around with unconcealed disgust. He waited five minutes, then as no one else came who appeared to be more pleasing to his fancy he pulled his collar tightly around his ears and started out. He had stepped one foot on the sidewalk and was still holding the knob of the half-open door, when he noticed a woman who turned the nearest corner and came rapidly toward him. She brushed past him and went into the drug store. Involuntarily he turned and went in after her. She had brown hair, blue eyes and a good complexion; moreover, she was dressed in black and wore a wrap with ermine lining.

The anxious, searching glance with which she regarded the occupants of the room finally rested on him and she started back with a little cry of alarm. He laid his hand on her arm and led her to a seat near the side entrance. "Now," he said, sitting down beside her, "what are you doing here?"

"I came to meet some one," she faltered, meekly, "and he isn't here. What are you doing?"

"I came here to meet some one, too," he retorted, sharply, "and she isn't here, either."

"I'm late," she hazarded, for want of something better to say.

"Yes," he returned, "so am I."

They sat there for a few moments, each maintaining an obdurate silence. Presently one neatly gloved hand stole out from under her ermine-lined wrap and rested lightly against his sleeve.

"Frank," she said, twisting herself around so he could get a half-view of her pretty face, "I've been awfully foolish, and I want to confess." There were tears in her eyes, but they did not lead him to the stool of repentance. "After we had our quarrel last week and decided to separate, I was so miserable—I can't tell you how miserable. You will have to try to imagine. I have tried to bear it as though it were really a matter of small import, and to keep people from learning just how much I have grieved I have avoided them as much as possible. It sets me wild to hear them jest and make merry when my heart is literally breaking. In Sunday's paper I read the advertisement of a young man, a stranger in the city, who wanted some one to accompany him to the opera two evenings this week. I answered and we made an engagement to meet here to-night at 7:30. I couldn't get away from home on time and I suppose he has left long ago. I should not have come at all, Frank, but, judging by the description he gave of himself, I concluded he must look like you. His name is Robert Lang. Oh, Frank, I was so foolish and reckless. Pray forgive me."

The tears brimmed over then and formed a little rivulet down either cheek. The fingers on his coat sleeves perceptibly tightened their grip and he laid his own right hand protectively over them.

"I thought there must be something like that in the wind," he said. "The fact of the matter is, Nellie, I was on just such a chase myself. A lady, also a stranger in the city, advertised in Sunday's paper for an escort for one evening this week, and I offered to lend her my services. We agreed upon to-night at 7:30 as the time and place of meeting. I couldn't get here any earlier. Upon my word, I don't think I should have come at all, only I was convinced she must look like you, and if I couldn't have the original I thought I would try to content myself with a passable substitute. Her name is Katherine Sutton. I wonder what became of her?"

"Why should you care?" was the pointing comment, "when you have me?"

"That's so," he replied, "why should I?"

Six months later Mrs. Frank Kenan looked up from the morning paper, choice paragraphs from which she was sandwiching into her nimble mind between the bites of buttered toast, and looked at her husband curiously.

"Frank," she asked, "what was the name of the lady you were to meet at the drug store that night?"

FLIRTING AT VASSAR.

GIRLS OFTEN GROW WEARY OF BOOKS AND TEACHERS.

West Point Military Academy is Near by and the Students Engage to Take Occasional Strolls Thitherward—The Brother a Hoop.

Vassar Letter.

HE happy leap year privileges which 1896 brings may be great novelties to some girls, but it is leap year all the year round and every year with the Vassar girl. The "strict" rules of the college on the hill back of Poughkeepsie prevent many visits from young men; and the still stricter rules of the nearest man's college, at West Point, keep the men from attempts at breaking Vassar's laws. So Mahomet goes to the mountain. Like the Arabs, the Vassar maiden folds her tent and silently steals away. To thoughtful observers at the Point it is often a matter for wonder how the girls spend so many delightful stolen hours away from their Alma Mater without being discovered and incurring the penalty for disobedience.

The rules are there, the men are there, and the girls must get there somehow, so perforce the clever damsels from the halls of learning must bend their superior brains to the work of circumventing these laws. And they succeed. How they do it history says not, but the fact remains that they do. "Many a time and oft," in the words of the immortal bard of Avon, are they seen on the "Rialto" of West Point, to the amazement of the aforementioned thoughtful observer. Two

visits a term is supposed to be the rule. Perhaps it holds good with some of the Vassar girls. But there are many more from whose minds the ways of the free and independent West have not yet faded, who scorn the trammels of eastern rules and "effete conventionality," and take the law in their own hands. When fancy dictates and there is a hop or concert on at the Point, "then's the time for disappearing," and they "bob up serenely" at the government dock with gripsack or brown paper parcel containing festive raiment; also a box of candy for the loved cadet. When accommodations are scanty sometimes a dozen or so of girls club together and take one room, and also one trunk, much to the detriment of their voluminous skirts.

At any rate, or any how, and on any train they come, and the stage which runs up from the landing on such occasions is temporarily their own. They take entire possession of the "bus and quite fill it up with themselves and their impediments. Vassar songs and class calls, stock jokes and personal remarks about the "sweet creatures" they are going to see enliven the progress up the hill, and woe to the outsider who creeps into this truant company.

No false ideas of conventions and prierly damp their ardent spirits if they have to come without a chaperon. They come just the same, and matronize one another by numbers. Ten of these fair undergraduates were claimed by one elderly man as his daughters, his good nature not being proof against their appeals for so-called protection. Not having a chaperon does not trouble them much at the hotel, for they are not there except to sleep and eat. It is no place for fun—that quiet and respectable parlor. There are much better chances at other places. The hop or concert which alternate on Saturday nights, with inspection Saturday after-

and he takes "the goods the gods provide" and is thankful. He considers the Vassar girl fair sport and a splendid field for "practice spins" in flirtation and the two-step. He has small regard for her feelings, physical or mental; he tramples on her toes and her feelings indiscriminately, for is she not there for the purpose, and he knows that his el-

ter they had attracted the attention of horticulturists, says Garden and Forest. It is interesting to note the struggles of our great-grandfathers to discover the conditions most suitable for them. We who know all about it are surprised that any intelligent cultivator should have tried to grow epiphytic plants "in common soil in pots plunged to the rim in a tan bed." Teak baskets, sphagnum moss, peat fiber and charcoal appear to us to be exactly what any intelligent schoolboy would have recommended as supplying the right material for an epiphyte. But, like all useful discoveries and inventions, simple as they appear to us they were not worked out without much thought, experiment and the sacrifice of many plants. One of the shrewdest of botanists working in the van of the horticultural art of his time, Dr. Lindley, stated in a paper read to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1830, that "high temperature, deep shade and excessive humidity are the conditions essential to the well being of orchids." Thirteen years later another orchid authority, Mr. Bateman, recommended the same treatment, adding that a resting season was necessary. This treatment became the only orthodox one and was persisted in for up ward of thirty years. We now recognize that fresh air at all times is essential, that many orchids enjoy bright sunshine, that while some require plenty of moisture all the year round, others require it only for a portion of the year, and that some even thrive only when treated as if they were cacti. The temperature for exotic orchids varies from a purely tropical to that of a few degrees above freezing point, and while some species during growth are kept in a hot, steamy atmosphere and after growth is completed are removed to comparatively cool and dry conditions to afford them a rest, others suffer if the conditions are not fairly uniform all the year round.

May Abbott in Japan. Annie May Abbott, the Georgia "electric magnet," whose feats of strength created a sensation in this country some years ago, is amusing herself now with the strong men of China and Japan. The Japanese wrestler, whose physical strength is celebrated the world over, were unable to raise Miss Abbott from the floor, while with the tips of her fingers she neutralized their most strenuous efforts to lift even light objects, such as a cane from a table. The Japanese papers say this is hypnotism, while the Chinese journals accuse her of being in league with the power of evil.—Exchange.

Religious Women. Are not women more religious than men? Even at the time of Christ women displayed more religious fervor than men; they were the last in attendance at the crucifixion.—Rev. D. M. Kirkpatrick.

Sentry boxes serve in winter for a slight shelter from cold—and observation. The gymnasium does duty when "flirtation" is too bleak and exposed for comfort.

Sometimes, though, it is not safe to risk staying over Sunday, and the college girls must hie them back to Alma Mater after the hop. There is a convenient up-shore train to Poughkeepsie at 10:30, and so one eye is kept on the clock, while the other tries to gaze soulfully at the gray-clad youth who is murmuring sweet nothings. And then the scramble to catch the train, and the excuses if one fails to get there! "A valuable ring was lost and must be searched for"—dress was torn and had to be mended—watch was too slow—so sorry. And one girl actually went to the length of falling down hill with the idea of straining her ankle. She did more than that, and had to be taken back to the hospital; but there were compensations. She still breathed the same air with the "beloved object."

It would puzzle the average man to invent the stories which used to do duty to account for colds caught "cooling off" in low-cut gowns when the hops were held in Grant Hall. Now they are in Academic and conditions are improved, plenty of unlighted, well heated rooms being available for the "cooling-off" process.

And what a boon all this is to the "under-grad"—these raw youths who must learn, as well as "tactics and sitch" the ways of the great world, the proper manner of paying daintily veiled compliments and managing a partner in the dance! Society manners are a very important part of the equipment of Uncle Sam's soldier boys when they leave after the four years' course, and how are they to learn them unless they have practice? The summer months when more liberty is allowed, are all too short for the exercise of their required knowledge and the development of their social talents.

So these visits "under the rose" are indeed a real boon to the west pointer.

which brings the observer nearer he sees the same gray-coated sentimental standing sedately apart.

A little poem in the "Howitzer" some months ago showed how a maiden made the "retort discourteous" to the advances of the overbold young soldier:—

She was a merry Vassar girl,
A West Point spoonhead he;
They sat and watched the waters swirl,
About the Point of Gee.

He to his heart would press the maid,
Alas! she held aloof;
And when his arm around her strayed,
Thus harshly gave reproof:—

"Young soldier, you cannot, I'm sure,
Protect 'galant war's alarms
Your nation and its flag if you're
So careless of your arms!"

Was she really and truly a Vassar maiden? Echo answers not.

When the "Hundred Nights" play comes off many are the devices of the Poughkeepsie students to get an invitation, and sad and devious are the ways to which some of them have to resort.

"The play is going to be fine this year; you ought to see me in girl's clothes," wrote an unwary "yearling," and his inamorata wrote back by next mail, "Thanks awfully, old boy. I'll be there for the play. I hoped you were going to ask me." Whereat the trapped one tore his hair and thought longingly of the "fem" for whom he had really meant to use that invitation.

"If you will promise to refuse, I'll ask you to the Hundredth Night play," a wiser man, who had been "bitten," wrote frankly to his second best girl. "Then you'll have the fun of saying you were invited, and I can ask some one else."

TREATMENT OF ORCHIDS.

How Our Grandfathers Slowly Discovered Their Disposition.

The essential cultural requirements of orchids were not known till long af-



WHERE VASSAR GIRLS RESORT.

visits a term is supposed to be the rule. Perhaps it holds good with some of the Vassar girls. But there are many more from whose minds the ways of the free and independent West have not yet faded, who scorn the trammels of eastern rules and "effete conventionality," and take the law in their own hands. When fancy dictates and there is a hop or concert on at the Point, "then's the time for disappearing," and they "bob up serenely" at the government dock with gripsack or brown paper parcel containing festive raiment; also a box of candy for the loved cadet. When accommodations are scanty sometimes a dozen or so of girls club together and take one room, and also one trunk, much to the detriment of their voluminous skirts.

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ANOTHER TYPE.

vating society is a sufficient "quid pro quo." He lends her his cast-off buttons, waist plate, chevrons and class ring—in fact, all the decorations on which he can lay hands. And the moth of a "plebe" who scents coming joys afar decorates her hop card with sketches "in kind"—hits on the older men and general "post jokes."

So the Vassar girl who has a brother or a "brother" at West Point is a popular maiden, and her sitting-room is a gathering place for the clans, and her "teas" are much frequented. Her scrap book would furnish interesting chapters of history, with imagination to fill in the spaces.

"Affaires de coeur" move rapidly at the "post." Introductions are easy, and "facile decensus Avern!" One evening on the stairs or in an unlighted ante-room; a walk on "flirtation"; a note asking her to come again next week; an answer, an answer to that, with an added touch of sentiment and aspiration after "the love of a true woman," with verses and so forth "ad infinitum" and "ad nauseam"—graduation, oblivion, and two sets of wedding cards—which perhaps cross in the mails and recall an "affaire" of two years ago.

Sometimes the cadets, a stray one here and there, in furlough time, get off to Vassar and are feted and made much of. But opportunities are more numerous down the river, and the leap year methods hold. Beautiful and enlightening sights are seen on "flirtation." In the twists and winds of that historic "Academy of Social Science" the callow youth learns the use of his arms, and also the use of his feet and jumping muscles for emergencies when the sound of an advancing step is heard. At one turn of the walk, when the leaves are few, and the wanderers, after a blessed "solitude-a-deux," forget the fact, one may see wondrous vistas of a kneeling sentimental youth and a "maiden fair to see," while in the turn

That

Extreme tired feeling afflicts nearly everybody at this season. The hustlers cease to push, the tireless grow weary, the energetic become enervated. You know just what we mean. Some men and women endeavor temporarily to overcome that

Tired

Feeling by great force of will. But this is unsafe, as it pulls powerfully upon the nervous system, which will not long stand such strain. Too many people "work on their nerves," and the result is seen in unfortunate wrecks marked "nervous prostration," in every direction. That tired

Feel-

ing is a positive proof of thin, weak, impure blood; for, if the blood is rich, red, vitalized and vigorous, it imparts life and energy to every nerve, organ and tissue of the body. The necessity of taking Hood's Sarsaparilla for that tired feeling is, therefore, apparent to every one, and the good it will do you is equally beyond question. Remember that

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