

A Belle's Bad History.

A roly-poly little girl
Was when I was 8,
Nobby and round, with curling hair
I never could get straight;
And everybody used to say
When I passed by the street,
"Just see the dumpling! Doesn't she
Look good enough to eat?"

THE CHOICE OF THREE.

A NOVEL.

"If you mean me," answered Dorothy
blantly, with a slightly heightened color, "I
am not so vain as to think that anybody
would care for an undersized creature
whose only social distinction is housekeep-
ing, and I am sure it is not for anybody
that I should care, either."

"Ah, my dear, there are still a few men
of sense in the world, who would rather get
a good woman as companion than a pretty
face. Good bye, my dear."

Though Jeremy was on this occasion dis-
appointed of seeing Eva, on the following
morning he was so fortunate as to meet her
and her sister walking on the beach. But
when he got into her gracious presence, he
found, somehow, that his sister's lumbers
and the talk which, to tell the truth,
had been rather stiff, if it had not occasion-
ally been enlivened by flashes of Florence's
caustic wit.

On the next day, however, he returned to
the charge with several hundred weight of
the roots of a certain herb which Eva had
expressed a desire to possess. And so it
went on till, at last, his shyness wore off a
little, and they grew very good friends.

Of course, all this did not escape Flo-
rence's sharp eyes, and one day, just after
Jeremy had paid his sister a lumbering
compliment and departed, she summarized
her observations thus:

"That moon-calf is falling in love with
you, Eva."

"Nonsense, Florence! And why should
you call him a moon-calf? It is not nice to
talk of people so."

"Well, if you can find a better definition
I am willing to adopt it."

"I think that is an honest, gentleman-
like boy; and even if he were falling in love
with me, I do not think there would be
anything to be ashamed of—there!"

"Dear me, what a fuss we begin in! Do
you know, I shall soon get to think that
you are falling in love with the 'honest,
gentleman-like boy'? Yes, that is a better
title than moon-calf, though not so ner-
vous."

Here Eva marched off in a huff.

"Well, Jeremy, and how are you getting
on with the beautiful Eva?" asked Dorothy
that same day.

"As you say," replied Jeremy, whose
general appearance was that of a man
plunged into the depths of misery, "don't
laugh at a fellow. If you only knew what I
feel, indeed, you know, you wouldn't—"

"What! Are you not well? Have some
bread, it will do you good, it is genuine
alarm."

"Don't be an idiot, Doll; it isn't my
stomach, it's here," and he knocked his
right lung with his great fist under the im-
pression that he was indicating the position
of his heart.

"What do you feel, Jeremy?"

"Feel!" he answered with a groan,
"what don't I feel? When I am away from
her, I feel a sort of sickening, just like one
does when one has to go without one's din-
ner, only it's always there. When she looks
at me, she has a cold, and when she smiles
it's just as though one had killed a
couple of woodcocks right and left."

"Good gracious, Jeremy!" interposed his
sister, who was beginning to think he had
gone off his head, "and what happens if
she doesn't smile at you?"

"Ah, then," he replied sadly, "it's as
though one had missed them both."

"Though his smiles were peculiar, it was
clear to his sister that the feeling he meant
to convey was genuine enough."

"Are you really fond of this girl, Jeremy
dear?" she said gently.

"Well, Doll, you know, I suppose I am."

"Then why don't you ask her to marry
you?"

"To marry me! Why, I am not fit to
own a shoe."

"An honest, gentleman is fit for any
woman, Jeremy."

"And I haven't got anything to support
her on, even if she said yes—which she
wouldn't."

"You may get that in time. Remember,
Jeremy, she is a lovely woman, and
soon she is sure to find other lovers."

Jeremy groaned.

"But if once you had secured her affec-
tion and she is a good woman, as I think
she is, that would not matter, though you
might not be able to marry for some years."

"Then what am I to do?"

"I should tell her that you loved her, and
ask her—if she could care for you—to wait
for you awhile."

Jeremy whistled meditatively.

"I'll ask Ernest what it is when he comes
back on Monday."

"If I were you, I should set myself in
the matter," she said quickly.

"No good being in a hurry; I haven't
known her a fortnight—I'll ask Ernest."

"Then you must wait," Dorothy
answered almost passionately, and rising,
left the room.

"Now, what did she mean by that?" re-
flected her brother aloud, "she always is so
deuced queer when Ernest is concerned."

But his inner consciousness returned no
satisfactory answer, so, with a sigh, the
love-lorn Jeremy took up his hat and
walked.

On Sunday, that was the day following
his talk with Dorothy, he saw Eva again in
church, where she looked, he thought, more
like an angel than ever, and was quite as
inaccessible. In the churchyard he did, it
is true, manage to get a word or two with
her, but nothing more, for the sermon had
been long and Florence was hungry, and
hurried her sister home to lunch.

And then, at last, came Monday, the long-
expected day of Ernest's arrival.

CHAPTER VII.

ERNEST IS INDISCREET.

Kesterwick was a primitive place and had
no railway-station near than Raffham,
four miles off. Ernest was expected by the
midday train, and Dorothy and her brother
went to meet him.

When they reached the station the train
was just in sight, and Dorothy got down to
go and await its arrival. Presently it
sorted composedly up—trains do not hurry
themselves on the single lines in the east-
ern counties—and in due course deposited
Ernest and his portmanteau.

"Hallo, Doll, what a nice fellow to meet
me! How are you, old girl?" and he pro-
ceeded to embrace her on the platform.

"You shouldn't, Ernest; I am too big to
be kissed like a little girl, and in public,
too."

"Big, h'm! Miss five feet nothing, and so
for the public, I don't see any."

had gone on and the solitary porter had
vanished with the portmanteau.

"Well, I wish I was a man for you to laugh
at and being small; it is not everybody
who can be a May-pole like you, or as broad
as he is long, like Jeremy."

An unearthly halloo from this last-named
personage, who had caught sight of Ernest
through the door of the station office, put a
stop to further conversation, and presently
all three were driving back, each talking as
to the top of his or her voice.

At the door of Dam's Ness they found
Mr. Cardus apparently gazing abstractedly
at the ocean, but in reality waiting to greet
Ernest, to whom of late years he had grown
greatly attached, though his reserve seldom
allowed him to show it.

"Hallo, uncles, how are you? You look
pretty fresh," cried out that young gentle-
man before the cart had fairly come to a
standstill.

"Very well, thank you, Ernest. I need
not ask how you are. I am glad to see you
back. You have come as a lucky moment,
too, for the 'Batematahi Wallisi' is in
flower, and the 'Grammatophylla Speciosa-
rum' has just bloomed. I dream of her, even
if I had seen her."

"For the reason that men do dream of
woman—be cause she is handsome."

"Is the letter looking than you, then,
Florence?"

"Is she looking, indeed! I am not good-
looking."

"Nonsense, Florence! you are very good-
looking."

She stopped, for he had turned and was
walking with her, and laid her hand lightly
on his arm.

"Do you really think so?" she said,
going full into his dark eyes. "I am glad
you think so."

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twilight; there was not a single soul to be
seen on the beach, or on the cliff above it.
Her hand was on his arm, and she was
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declined to go to the lawn tennis, preferring
to stay in the house.

"When he entered the ball-room at the
Synthes, the first quadrille was in pro-
gress. Making his way up the room, Ernest
soon came upon Florence Oswald, who was
sitting with Dorothy, while in the back-
ground, the girls' giggle and the boys' talk
were heard. Both the girls appeared to be
glad to see him, for on his approach Flo-
rence, by a movement of her dress and an almost im-
perceptible motion of her hand, at once
made room for him on the bench beside
her and invited him to sit down. He did so.
"You are late," she said, "why did you not
come to the lawn tennis?"

"I thought that our party was suffi-
ciently large," he answered lamely,
nodding toward Jeremy and his sister.
"Why are you not dancing?"

"Broaden nobody asked me," she said
sharply, "and besides I was waiting for
you."

"Jeremy," said Ernest, "here is Florence
says that you didn't ask her to dance."

"Don't talk humbug, Dorothy; you know
I don't dance."

"No, indeed," put in Ernest, "it is
easy to see that. I never saw anybody look
so miserable as you do."

"Or so big," said Florence consolingly.
Jeremy shrank back into his corner and
tried to look smaller. His sister was right,
a dance was unwise to him. The
quadrille had ceased by now, and presently
well and Ernest kept going as much as pos-
sible, perhaps in order to give an oppor-
tunity for conversation. At last, as the
allusion was made to the events of the pre-
vious evening.

"Where are your aunt and sister, Flo-
rence?" he asked as he led her back to her
seat.

"They are coming presently," she
answered shortly.

The next dance was a galop, and this he
danced with Dorothy, whose slim figure
looked in the white muslin dress she wore,
more like that of a child than a grown
woman. But, child or woman, her general
appearance was so pleasing and so
attractive. Ernest thought that he had
never seen the quaint, puckered little face
with the two steady blue eyes in it look so
attractive. Not that it was pretty—it was
not—but it was a face with a great deal of
character. It was a face that would be
remembered. It was a face that would be
remembered. It was a face that would be
remembered.

"You look to me to-night, Doll," said
Ernest, "flushed with pleasure and answered
simply, 'I am glad you think so.'"

"Yes, I do think so. You are really
pretty."

"Nonsense, Ernest! Can't you find
some other bits to practice your compli-
ment on? What is the use of praising
them on me? I am going to