

Libbey Laura Jean

Pretty Madcap Dorothy: or, How She Won a Lover



Laura Libbey

**Pretty Madcap Dorothy:
or, How She Won a Lover**

«Public Domain»

Libbey L.

Pretty Madcap Dorothy: or, How She Won a Lover / L. Libbey —
«Public Domain»,

Содержание

Chapter I	5
Chapter II	8
Chapter III	12
Chapter IV	17
Chapter V	20
Chapter VI	23
Chapter VII	27
Chapter VIII	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	32

Libbey Laura Jean

Pretty Madcap Dorothy

Or How She Won a Lover

Chapter I

"It's so hard for working-girls to get acquainted. They never meet a rich young man, and they don't want a poor one. It seems to me that a girl who has to commence early to work for her living might just as well give up forever all hopes of a lover and of marrying," declared Nadine Holt, one of the prettiest girls in the immense book-bindery, to the group of companions who were gathered about her. "It's get up at daylight, swallow your breakfast, and hurry to work; and it's dark before you are out on the street again. How can we ever expect to meet a marriageable fellow?"

"Do you know what *I* think, girls?" cried a shrill but very sweet young voice, from the direction of the window-ledge, adding breathlessly: "I believe if fate has any lover in store for a girl, that he will be sure to just happen to come where she is, on one mission or another. That's the way that it all happens in novels, I took particular pains to notice. These people who write must know just how it is, I reckon."

"Well, now, who would ever have imagined that a chit of a thing like *you*, Dorothy Glenn, would have the impudence to put in your oar, or that you ever thought of lovers, or marrying, and you only sixteen a day or so ago?" cried one. "It's absurd!"

"I wasn't saying anything about *my* ever marrying, I was just telling you what I thought about ever meeting the fellow who is intended for you – *the right one* – as you call it."

"What if you were in a desert?" suggested Nadine, with a curl of her red lip. "Surely you couldn't expect a young man would ever find a business that would bring him out there to you, could you?"

"Why not?" cried pretty little Dorothy. "Of course fate would send my Prince Charming even into a desert to find me," cooed Dorothy. "And as to the business that would bring him – why, he could come there to capture the ostriches which are to be found only in the heart of the desert – so there! You know the old adage: 'People meet where hills and mountains don't.' I tell you there's some truth in that."

"It's a good thing to have so much assurance and hope," said Nadine, with a curl of her lip. "I trust that you may find plenty of lovers in the future, though I doubt it."

"I have plenty now," declared Dorothy, waltzing nimbly about the floor, as only a bright, happy, thoughtless young girl can who is free from care. "I couldn't count all who make eyes at me now, so what will it be when I get as old as the rest of you girls?" – this a trifle maliciously, for every one of them was at least twenty, and that seemed rather *passée* to this bit of femininity of sweet sixteen.

Some one noticed that the huge clock on the mantel wanted just three minutes to one, so the fragments of luncheon were crammed back into their baskets, and the girls, chatting and laughing, went back to their work, for they had a very particular foreman. But one of their number, Jessie Staples, hung back to have a word with Dorothy.

"I hope that you will not grow into a flirt," she said, slipping her arm about Dorothy's waist and looking into the young girl's flushed face with serious eyes, adding: "This brings me to the question that I intended asking you this noon. Where did you meet that young car conductor who walked up as far as your home with you last night? Do tell me, little Dorothy."

"Were you spying upon me, you mean thing?" cried Dorothy Glenn, blushing as fiery red as the crimson heart of a peony, and stamping angrily the tiniest of little feet; and she flung her companion's arm from her as though it had stung her.

"Can't you tell me?" pleaded Jessie, earnestly. "Remember, you have no one to warn you. You are an orphan in this great, cold world, and – and you are so young that you don't know life, and can not realize that every young man who smiles into your eyes and says flattering things is *not* in love. When you have no relative to confide in, you ought to have a girl friend older and wiser than yourself. Let me be that friend to you, Dorothy."

As she listened, the momentary anger died out of the girl's face. She couldn't keep angry with anybody very long, and quite before Jessie had finished her sentence a pair of plump white arms were thrown round her neck and Dorothy's soft, peachy pink cheek was nestling against her own, while the sweet young voice whispered:

"Won't you breathe it, Jess, if I tell you the greatest secret in the whole wide world? Promise on your word and honor that you won't and I'll tell you, and it will fairly make you hold your breath. It's just like those grand love stories all of us girls like to crowd around together at lunch hour and read in the Fireside Companion, when we pick up the special copies they throw around; only this is in real life, you know."

"I promise," returned Jessie Staples, gravely; "only I hope this isn't a ruse to turn off the question about the young car conductor whom I saw you with."

"Oh, no! the secret is about him," laughed Dorothy, gleefully, "and it will make you open your eyes wider than they are now when you hear it; and it's so dreadfully romantic, too. You know how Nadine Holt has been boasting of late about the handsome new conductor on the Broadway car, on whom she has 'made a mash,' as she phrases it. Well, the young man you saw me talking to – is he."

"What?" gasped Jessie. "Do you mean it was Nadine's beau to whom you were talking?"

"He's *not* her beau!" declared Dorothy, flushing up redly and angrily. "He doesn't care a snap of his finger for Nadine. He told me so."

"He – told – you – so?" repeated Jessie Staples, too amazed at the instant to frame any other remark, while the thought flashed through her brain how deeply Nadine Holt loved this handsome young man, and that she was confident of a proposal of marriage from him sooner or later. She had often told Jessie as much as that of late.

"It was only last week that I first met him," Dorothy went on, "and it happened in this way: I came down, just by chance, on his car, and – and I noticed that he looked at me rather admiringly, as he changed my fifty-cent piece, while standing beside me; and – and I noticed, too, that he leaned against me a little more than the occasion demanded, or at least I fancied so; but perhaps it was the jolting of the car. I took little shy peeps at him. I wanted to see what he looked like, Nadine had been sounding his praises so. I found he was dreadfully nice, quite the handsomest young fellow I had ever seen – elegantly formed, straight as an arrow, with such a beautiful dark mustache, dark hair, and laughing black eyes, and the whitest of white hands. When he helped me off the car he held my hand so tightly and so long that I felt terribly embarrassed and did not know what to do or say. But, oh! he was *so* polite! I dropped my eyes and never looked at him as I stepped off. How I ever got into the other car I never knew. A moment later the other conductor came around for my fare, and then – oh, horrors! I could not find my pocket-book. I searched frantically in every pocket. 'I – I must have *lost* my purse,' I faltered, beginning to cry, for I saw he did not believe me, and thought that I meant to beat my way, as they call it, when just at that instant puffing and panting, up came the other conductor – the handsome fellow whom I had just left.

"'You dropped your purse on the seat of my car,' he said, raising his hat from his dark curls. 'Permit me to return it to you.'"

"I was so overjoyed to get it that I forgot to thank him. I remembered later that I had not done so. And what do you think? that very evening he called with a book I had also left on the seat, and which I had entirely forgotten. My name and address were written on the fly-leaf. Just at that moment one of the young men from the book-bindery happened along who knew him, and he introduced us. I did not invite him in, but we stood and talked for an hour or more on the steps, and he asked at

length for the pleasure of my company to go with him to the theater the following evening, if my folks were willing.

"I told him I had no relatives to consult, and that I'd like ever so much to go, but – but I had heard that he was Nadine Holt's regular company. Oh, Jess, how angry he got when I said that! He flushed to the very roots of his dark hair. You ought to have seen him.

"Pardon me, but I am *not*!" he replied, 'though I hear that she is circulating such a story; but there is no better authority on the subject than myself. I have spoken to her a few times; but it is ridiculous for a girl to presume, if a man is pleasant to her, that he wants to marry her. I cannot even say that I admire Miss Nadine Holt. As a rule a man like myself does not admire a girl whose acquaintance he can form through a handkerchief flirtation.

"I thought of telling Nadine that, but you know what a fury she is. Why, she would almost kill me, I believe, if she once got an inkling that I knew about it.

"Well, to make a long story short, it so chanced that he happened along our street every night after that, and always found me, quite by chance, sitting out on the steps, and so he stopped for a chat. And now comes the most wonderful part of the affair. He is no *real* street-car conductor at all. I don't mean just that, but – oh, Jess! this is what I mean: he – he bet with a number of young gentlemen the last election and lost the wager. If he lost he was to come to New York and be a street-car conductor for three months, and that is what he did. He is a young lawyer in a small town near here, and has great expectations, he says.

"His time will be up to-morrow, Jessie, and then he is going back to his home, and – and I shall never see him again. He is like a prince in disguise – such as we read about. I always thought him too grand and polite to be only a street-car conductor."

Jessie Staples felt greatly relieved in her heart that he was going away so soon, but she was too wise to say so to Dorothy, knowing that if one attempts to break up an infatuation on the part of a girl of that age, ten to one it makes matters only worse.

"Life will never be the same to me after Harry Langdon goes, for, Jessie, I – I have learned to care for him. I couldn't help myself though I tried hard not to, and to be gay and jolly before all the girls. But, oh, Jessie, pity me! My heart is breaking! I wish I could die!"

They did not notice, as they moved on, that the door near where they had stood talking was partly ajar, nor did they see the girl who had paused in the entry outside almost at the very beginning of their conversation. It was Nadine Holt, and she had heard every word, from beginning to end, that Dorothy had uttered; and even after they had passed on she stood there, cold and motionless as a statue cut in marble.

"Great God in heaven! this explains Harry Langdon's sudden coolness," she muttered, with a great, choking sob; "but if Dorothy Glenn attempts to take my lover from me – let her beware! this earth will not be broad enough to hold the two of us. It will be war to the very death between us, and we shall see which one of us shall win him!"

By a violent effort Nadine controlled her wild grief and passed into the work-room. It was only her indomitable pride that kept her from taking her hat and sacque and going straight home and to her bed, there to weep her very heart out – aye, weep her very life out, if she could. If her lover was fickle, Nadine told herself that she did not care to live and face the dull, cold world, for what is life and the world to a young girl if the lover on whom she has set her heart and her hopes proves false to her?

Chapter II

From the moment that Nadine Holt heard the story of the perfidy of her lover she was a changed being.

She went wearily enough to the lodging-house she called home, and paced the floor up and down the live-long night.

"He was pleased enough with me before Dorothy Glenn's pink-and-white baby face came between us," she moaned, clinching her hands tightly together and bursting ever and anon into a flood of tears.

She looked around at the little, stuffy room, and thought of all her girlish day-dreams – of the sweet hopes she had had of soon leaving those dingy four walls, and of having a little bower of a cottage to call "home," with a handsome young husband all her own to love her.

She had pictured every scene to herself – just how each cozy room should be furnished, and what vines and flowers should grow in the garden, and the pretty dresses she would wear, and how she would stand at the window and watch for handsome Harry to come home each night, and what a dear, cozy life they would lead, loving each other so dearly.

And now what of those vanished day-dreams? Ah! God in heaven pity her! they lay in ruins around her, and heart-wrecked, heart-broken, she was facing the cold, bleak world again.

It had been by the greatest effort that she had looked in Dorothy's face during the day that followed without betraying her bitter hatred of her; but as the hours crept on, and she saw Dorothy's glance wander uneasily now and then toward the clock, her intense rage grew almost uncontrollable.

"She is longing for the hours to pass, so that she may join *him*," thought Nadine, and her black eyes fairly scintillated at the thought.

Suddenly Dorothy raised her curly head from her work.

"Girls!" she exclaimed, shrilly and eagerly, "have you all forgotten that Monday is Labor Day? What are you going to do with yourselves?"

A score or more of voices answered at random that they thought it had been decided long since that they were all going up the Hudson on an excursion.

"I can't go on the excursion with you, girls," returned Dorothy, "for I've got another engagement."

"Bring your company with you," chorused a dozen or more of the girls.

Dorothy glanced up hastily and met Nadine's burning eyes fixed intently upon her.

She started, turned deathly pale, and then turned defiantly away, wondering if Nadine could by any means suspect that the engagement she had was to accompany handsome Harry Langdon to the *matinée*.

She wondered vaguely if Jessie, to whom she had confided this, had betrayed her.

The look in Nadine Holt's eyes as they met her own startled her.

The bell which released the girls from the work-room that night had scarcely rung ere Dorothy had on her *sacque* and sailor hat and was fairly flying down the steps and out into the street.

"I hope to goodness that I shall escape Jack to-night!" she muttered. "He can not get out as soon as I do, and I will be almost home while he is waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs;" and a little, light, airy laugh bubbled from her red lips.

Jack, as she called him, was one of the gilders in the book-bindery – a tall, handsome, manly young fellow of four-and-twenty, whose only failing was that he loved little Dorothy Glenn to distraction.

"Yes, I shall escape Jack, sure, to-night!" laughed Dorothy again.

But the laugh died from her lips, for at that instant there was the sound of hurried footsteps behind her – footsteps she knew but too well – and the next instant Jack Garner stood beside her.

"Dorothy!" he panted, "Why didn't you wait for me, little girl?"

Dorothy started guiltily.

"Why, gracious! is it you, Jack?" she cried. "I certainly thought you had gone home long ago, and so I hurried away."

His handsome face brightened; the dark shadow was quickly dispelled from his earnest, brown eyes.

"Do you know, Dorothy," he said, "I was half afraid that you had run away from me intentionally; and yet I could hardly bring myself to believe it, the thought gave me such a sharp pang of pain at the heart." The girl laughed a little nervously.

"I wanted to talk to you about Labor Day," he said earnestly; "but I fear what I have to say will grieve you, dear." ("Oh, gracious goodness, that's just what I expected!" was the thought that flashed through her guilty little brain.) "Dorothy," he said, huskily, "I'm afraid that I will not be able to get off Labor Day, although it is a legal holiday and I had set my heart upon taking you somewhere. We have found that there is some work which must be got out, or it will mean a heavy loss to our employers. I was the only one whom they felt they could call upon to help them in their dilemma, and I could not refuse them, even though a vision of your pretty, disappointed face rose up before my mind's eye. I knew you would be expecting me to take you somewhere on Labor Day. Oh! Dorothy, how can I make amends for it?"

To his great surprise, she laughed gayly.

"Don't trouble yourself about me, Jack," she exclaimed. "I won't mind it one bit;" and her pink-and-white face fairly dimpled over with smiles.

He opened his brown eyes wide and looked at her in surprise, remembering quite well that for many a week past Dorothy had been looking forward to this holiday and calculating how she should spend it.

"But you will be so disappointed, little one," he reiterated, earnestly, and not a little puzzled by the way she took it.

Again she laughed – a little, light, airy laugh that somehow grated on his nerves.

"I was thinking," he continued, "that perhaps you would like to go somewhere with my cousin Barbara – go up the river, or to a *matinée*, or some place like that. I would pay all the bills, of course, and –"

"Go with your cousin Barbara?" she cut in. "No, I guess not. It's just like you not to want me to have a good time. If *you* can't be there, Jack Garner, pray excuse me from going with *her*!"

He looked down at her with grieved eyes.

"Barbara is not as young and gay as you are, I know, dear," he said, huskily; "but, oh! if you only knew what a good, gentle soul she is, and how kind her heart is! She would go out of her way – do anything she could to give you a few hours' pleasure, because – because she knows how dear you are to me."

Dorothy shrugged her shoulders and curled her pretty red lips scornfully. Barbara Hallenbeck, his quiet, sedate cousin, was four-and-twenty. No wonder that gay little Dorothy did not consider her quite companionable for a day's outing.

"She would be very glad to take you to the *matinée*, Dorothy," he persisted. "*Do* consent to go with her, and then I will feel quite happy, for I shall feel sure that you are having a pleasant day, even if I am not with you. Otherwise, I should be so troubled, thinking of you sitting all alone in the house."

She looked up innocently into his face.

"I need not stay in the house if I do not like," she retorted. "There's a number of girls from the bindery going on an excursion up the river, and they have invited me."

Poor, innocent Jack! it did not occur to him then that, although she had remarked she was invited, she had not said she was going. He jumped at conclusions readily enough.

"I am so glad, Dorothy!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "I know if you are with a crowd of the girls the day will pass pleasantly for you. But you will not forget in the midst of all your happiness to give a thought to me, will you?" he whispered, with a world of tenderness in his voice.

"Of course not," she said, promptly.

"Especially when your eye rests upon our betrothal-ring," he added, wistfully.

Dorothy blushed alarmingly red, then paled as quickly, at the mention of the ring.

The truth may as well be told here and now: Dorothy, like many another silly, thoughtless young girl, had drifted into an engagement with Jack just to get the ring which he wore on his finger, which she had admired with all her heart and longed to possess.

But with Dorothy, possession had dimmed her appreciation for the little turquois and pearl affair which adorned her finger, and at which handsome Harry Langdon had glanced so contemptuously only the evening before, and then down at the elegant monogrammed diamond ring which glistened on his own white, shapely hand.

Only that very day Dorothy had wished with all her heart that she could get up some excuse to break what Jack considered an engagement, and give him back his little cheap pearl and turquois ring; but the occasion did not seem to be quite ripe, and Jack, poor fellow! had been kinder to her than ever that day.

At the corner she hesitated. It would never do to walk much farther with Jack and stand a chance of meeting handsome Harry Langdon, she told herself.

"I have a little shopping to do, and I shall have to leave you here," she said, hastily; and she made her parting very brief with Jack.

He noticed it, and a sudden fear stirred his heart. He looked after the slender figure flitting away through the slanting sunshine, with his soul in his eyes.

"She is so dear to me," he murmured. "I – I often think I would go mad if I were to lose her."

He walked slowly down the street, but, contrary to his usual custom, he did not turn his footsteps homeward, but proceeded aimlessly along the crowded thoroughfare.

How far he went Jack Garner never knew. Suddenly in turning a corner the first object his eyes fell upon was Dorothy, and by her side a tall, handsome dark-eyed young man whose arm was linked with hers, and they were walking along, deeply engaged in conversation, oblivious to the whole world.

He stood quite still; the heart in his bosom seemed to almost tear itself asunder with one mighty throb. Was it Dorothy, or did his eyes deceive him? He quickened his pace until he stood beside them. The impulse was strong within him to seize the girl's hand and tear her from her companion. The blood surged like fire through his veins.

But before he could put his mad thought into execution the crowd on the thronged thoroughfare swept between them.

In that instant Dorothy's companion called a cab and placed the girl in it. The door closed with a bang, and the next instant the vehicle was whirling down the avenue, and turning around the first corner was instantly lost to sight.

Quick as the lightning's flash Jack leaped upon a passing car. He felt intuitively that the stranger was taking Dorothy to her home. This car would pass the door. He would confront them there, even though they had gone by another street.

By a strange fatality he had in his breast pocket a small revolver which a friend had asked him to call for that day at a store where it was being repaired, and bring to him, as Jack would be passing that way. It was an unlucky moment for Jack, Heaven knows, when he consented to call for the fatal revolver for his friend.

As his hand touched it in his breast pocket a terrible thought flashed across his excited brain.

Ten minutes later he reached the cottage where Dorothy boarded. One of the bindery girls was sitting on the porch as he came up.

"Why, hello, Jack!" she cried. "What are you doing here?"

"Where's Dorothy?" he interrupted, quickly. "Is she in the house yet? I want the truth. You must tell me!"

The girl looked in Jack's face, and dared not tell him all.

Chapter III

Jessie Staples – for it was she – looked at Jack Garner with troubled eyes. She knew how much he cared for Dorothy, and she realized that it would never do to tell him that his fickle sweetheart had gone riding with another man. He was hot-tempered, and in jealousy there is little reason. Like the wise girl that she was, Jessie made excuses for her friend.

"No, Dorothy is not here, Jack," she said, presently; "but I feel sure she would have been had she known you were coming. She has gone to spend the evening with one of the girls, who sent her lover specially to bring Dorothy over, with the request that he was not to come back without her; and no doubt Dorothy will pass Sunday with her."

"Which one of the girls is it?" he inquired.

"I don't really know that," said Jessie, a little faintly.

Jack Garner drew a great, long breath of relief, and the old happy smile lighted up his face in an instant.

What a foolish fellow he had been to mistrust Dorothy! he told himself. But, after all, he was glad he had come and seen Jessie and thus had the horrible doubt removed from his mind.

"Well, it does not matter so much, Jess, that I did not see her. I did not want anything in particular. I am glad she will have a pleasant time this evening and to-morrow. And about your holiday. I suppose you will be going on the excursion with the rest of the girls on Monday?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Jessie lightly but constrainedly.

He drew nearer and looked wistfully into her face.

"I can not go, unfortunately," he said, "but I hope, Jess, that you will see that Dorothy has as good a time as the rest of the girls." He stopped a moment, and looked down confusedly, as if at a loss to know how to proceed with the rest of his sentence, but concluded at length to break right into it boldly. "If I were there I would treat all you girls to as much ice-cream as you could eat," he went on with a laugh. "But, seeing that I am *not* to be one of the party, I want you to do the honors for me, Jess, and here's the money to pay for it, with my compliments to the crowd."

And as he spoke he drew a crisp bill from his vest pocket and thrust it into Jessie's hand.

"Oh, Jack," cried the girl, "you are too good and too kind!" and she felt rather guilty as she took it, for she knew that he was giving it solely that they would make it pleasant for pretty little Dorothy, and she knew that Dorothy was not to be there.

Only that day she had confessed to her that she had made an engagement to go to the matinée with the handsome car conductor.

But there would be a tragedy if Jack got an inkling of this, she well knew. She had deceived him, poor fellow; but was it not for the best, under the circumstances?

Jack went to his home with a light heart, and much relieved in feelings. It was well for him that he did not know just how Dorothy was passing those very moments.

When Harry Langdon had met Dorothy on the street that afternoon he had quite hoped to slip by her unnoticed. Not that he was displeased to see her; but the girl was dressed so cheaply, and, to make matters worse, she carried her little dinner-basket on her arm, and he knew that if any of his friends were to see him they would smile in derision, for they could not help knowing by the dinner-basket that his companion was a working-girl.

His pride was the one fault of his life. He felt that he was quite handsome enough to woo and win an heiress, if one chanced in his way. In fact, that was what he was looking for.

It would never do to be seen walking along the streets with this pretty little working-girl, and it was for this very reason that Langdon had called a cab to take her home.

"The ride is too short," he said, as they reached the cottage where Dorothy lived, and where Jessie Staples was awaiting her on the porch. "Let us go around a few blocks; I want to talk to you about the arrangements for the outing."

Nothing loath, Dorothy consented, and away they whirled down the street; and it was very fortunate too, for in less than three minutes later Jack had appeared at the cottage.

"I have been wondering if you really cared to go to the *matinée* on Labor Day," said Langdon, in his low, sweet, smooth voice, which had never yet failed to capture the hearts of susceptible young girls. "I was wondering if you would not prefer a sail up the river. I understand that there is to be quite an excursion to West Point."

The truth is Langdon had just discovered that several of his acquaintances were to be at the *matinée* on that day, and he regretted that he had invited Dorothy to go, realizing how terribly ashamed he would be of the shabby clothes of the girl whose only recommendation was her pretty young face, and he had determined that he should not take Dorothy to that *matinée*, at any cost.

"Why, I would just as soon go to the excursion as to the *matinée*," declared Dorothy; "but there's one objection – all the rest of the girls in the book-bindery are going up on the boat to West Point, and among them Nadine Holt."

Langdon smothered back a fierce imprecation behind his silky curled mustache.

"Then we will abandon the West Point trip," he said, laughingly. "But we can go to Staten Island, besides, I think it will be quite as enjoyable, for, now that I think of it, there will be an immense crowd there. The picnic grounds are to be thrown open to the public, and they are to have a grand garden *fete*, with dancing and so forth."

"Oh, I should enjoy that more than I could tell you!" cried Dorothy, clapping her hands, her blue eyes expanding wide with expectancy. "I adore dancing, and I was never at a garden-party in all my life, and I have read so much about them."

"We can remain all the afternoon and evening, have refreshments, and then come home on the steamer. It will be a beautiful moonlight night, and when the band plays on the deck you will enjoy it hugely, Dorothy."

The girl's eyes sparkled and her cheeks glowed.

Soon afterward the cab stopped before Dorothy's cottage again, and, with a shy, sweet smile, she bade her admirer "good-night," and flitted up the steps and into the hall, and directly into the arms of Jessie Staples, who was awaiting her there.

"Oh, Dorothy!" she began, reproachfully, "how *could* you do it?"

"Do what?" cried Dorothy, with a very innocent air.

"Come riding home from work with that stranger!" cried Jessie, reproachfully.

The gayest laugh that ever was heard broke from Dorothy's ripe red lips, and her blue eyes fairly danced.

"I did not think that *you*, of all other girls, would be jealous, Jessie Staples!" she declared.

"I am not jealous," responded the girl, quietly – "only I pity you for your want of sense in being fascinated by a handsome stranger, when you have such a lover as honest, warm-hearted Jack Garner, who fairly worships the ground you walk on. Every one knows that – and – and pities him."

Dorothy's red lips curled scornfully, and she turned away on her heel.

"He is only a gilder in the bindery," she declared, "while the one I came home with is a grand high-toned, wealthy young fellow, and so aristocratic. He thought nothing of bringing me home in a cab, while Jack Garner would have fainted at the idea. He is so frightened if he spends a dollar of his hard-earned wages. It's no fun going around with a *poor* fellow. I hate them! So there!"

With that Jessie took the bill from her pocket, and told all that poor Jack had said about treating to the ice-cream.

Dorothy looked astounded, but turned the matter off by saying:

"It is a good thing to have him stand treat once in his life-time, I declare!"

But, nevertheless, she felt ashamed deep down in her own heart for the way she had spoken of poor Jack. Still she would not listen to Jessie's admonition, declaring, too, that she meant to go on an excursion on Labor Day with Harry Langdon, even though it made an enemy of Jack for life. She was tired of Jack, anyhow.

"You will rue it if you go with that stranger. Trouble will come of it as sure as you live." Those were Jessie's last words to Dorothy as they parted an hour later, and they rang in Dorothy's brain for many and many a long day afterward; and these two girls, who had been such steadfast friends parted from each other in coldness and in anger for the first time in their lives.

The sun rose bright and golden on the eventful morning, and Dorothy was in high glee as she looked out from her curtained window, and the visions of a joyous day flitted before her.

At two o'clock Langdon put in a prompt appearance, and Dorothy was quite ready, and he could not help but own to himself that she looked as fair and pretty and quite as stylish as any young girl you would meet in a day's travel in her neat navy-blue merino dress, with its white duck vest and broad, white cuffs and sailor collar, and the white sailor hat, with the white silk band about it to match. And nothing could have been more dainty than her neat kid boots and gloves.

Langdon raised his hat to this fair young vision of loveliness with all the gallantry he was capable of, and away they went in high spirits and high glee, and with never a thought in Dorothy's heart of poor Jack toiling at that moment in the book-bindery.

It was a delightful sail down the bay, and when they arrived at their destination they found the island thronged with a merry group of pleasure seekers.

The hours flew by on golden wings. Dusk gathered. Night soon drew her sable curtains, and pinned them with a star.

They dined sumptuously at the Hotel Castleton, and then went back to the picnic grounds, which were ablaze with light and color, resounding to the merry strains of music, the babble of gay voices and joyous laughter, and the sound of feet keeping step in the dance.

Never had Dorothy enjoyed herself so well. Harry Langdon was the prince of escorts. He knew how to make himself agreeable and entertaining. He whispered tender words into his companion's ears, held her little hand, and conveyed to her in a thousand different ways that this was the happiest day of his life, because she was by his side.

At length the hour drew near for the picknickers to leave the grounds, for the boat had already steamed into the dock. In twenty minutes' time she was to start back to the city.

"Have you had a pleasant time, Dorothy?" asked her companion, smiling down into her pleased, flushed face.

"I have had the most pleasant hours of my life!" declared Dorothy. "It has been like heaven here; I am sorry to go. And oh! how dark and drear to-morrow will be in the bindery, after such a pleasant outing here."

"You need not return to the bindery to-morrow unless you wish," whispered Langdon, still holding the girl's little hand in his.

Dorothy's heart beat high. Was handsome Harry Langdon about to propose to her? she wondered.

But no! the words she was waiting for did not fall from his lips, although he had plenty of opportunity as they walked down the gayly festooned path that led to the wharf.

"Perhaps he means to wait until he gets on the boat," she thought, with a fluttering heart.

Poor little Dorothy! there was no one to warn her against him. How was she to realize that the thought of marriage had never entered his head, and that he was of the kind who smile on and flatter women and then ride away, little caring how many broken hearts are left behind?

Dorothy's pretty, innocent face had captivated his fancy, but he would never have dreamed of making her his wife.

As they neared the boat, so great was the crowd clambering on board that Dorothy would have been separated from her companion had she not clung to his arm.

"You need never go back to the book-bindery, Dorothy," he managed to whisper again.

At that moment they stepped aboard the steamer and started toward the upper deck.

It had been a happy day for Dorothy, but a most miserable one for poor Jack. Contrary to his expectations, he finished the task allotted to him much sooner than he had anticipated, and by two o'clock he was ready to quit the book-bindery for the day.

Hurrying home, he quickly changed his clothing, smiling the while as he thought of putting the wish into execution that had been in his heart all day, of joining the crowd up at West Point; and how delighted Dorothy would be to see him – what a surprise it would be to her!

His mother and his cousin watched him out of sight from their humble cottage door, and then turned back to their duties with a sigh. They had hoped that he would spend the day with them.

With a joyful heart Jack boarded the boat for West Point, but when he reached there and found that Dorothy was not among the group, his disappointment knew no bounds.

"My tender-hearted little darling!" he thought. "She would not join them for a day's pleasure because she thought I could not go, and she is having a lonely time of it at home."

Back to the city Jack posted in all haste, and although the hour was late when he reached there – the clocks in the belfries sounding the hour of nine – still he could not refrain from stopping a moment at the cottage, just to let Dorothy know how cruelly fate had tricked him.

To his great consternation, he learned there, from the lady who kept the boarding-house, that Dorothy – his Dorothy – had left the house at two o'clock that afternoon with handsome Mr. Langdon, and that they had started for Staten Island for a day's outing.

He stood quite still, stupefied with amazement too great for words, and a white, awful horror broke over his face and shone in his eyes.

"Tell me about him again!" he cried, hoarsely. "What was he like – this man who took Dorothy away?" And as he listened to the description his face grew stormy with terrible wrath, for it tallied exactly with that of the man who had put Dorothy in the cab and rode away with her.

Like a lightning's flash Jack tore down to the Staten Island wharf, and was just in time to catch the out-going boat. He would surprise them, he told himself, and tear little Dorothy, his promised bride, from his rival's arms, or die in the attempt.

All the way down the bay Jack paced the deck in a tumult of fury that increased with every breath he drew.

The half hour that it took to reach his destination seemed as endless as the pangs of purgatory to lost souls. He never knew how the journey was made, or how he reached the island – flaming with lights on this gala night, and gorgeous with flags and gilded banners.

There were few passengers going down to Staten Island. The steamer had come to take the revellers back to the city, and the gang-plank was no sooner lowered than the crowd rushed aboard with happy laughter and gay repartee. Among the first to gain a foothold on the stairway that led to the upper deck were Harry Langdon and Dorothy; and here, face to face, they met – Jack!

"Unhand that young girl!" he cried, sternly, facing Langdon. "You have no right to be here with her."

Langdon started back, and glanced in haughty amazement at the broad-shouldered, fair-haired young man confronting him.

But without waiting for him to answer, Jack turned to Dorothy, holding out his hands to her, saying huskily:

"Leave him, little one, and come with me."

But Dorothy threw back her head with rising anger.

"How *dare* you, Jack Garner!" she cried, stamping her tiny foot, her blue eyes flashing. "I shall never speak to you again for this —*never!*"

"Step out of our way," cried Dorothy's companion, "and allow this young lady and myself to pass!"

"You shall never pass me with her!" cried Jack, furiously, his hand stealing involuntarily to his breast pocket.

"Step aside; we wish to go on deck!" returned Langdon, haughtily, "and we intend to do so!"

"You will never go on deck with her, unless it be over my dead body!" cried Garner, his face white as death, his voice trembling with excitement, and his brown eyes flashing like living coals of fire.

"*You* can not prevent me," retorted Langdon, in a sneering, contemptuous voice. Then, turning to Dorothy, he added: "I am glad that I am here to stand between you and this intrusive fellow. Come; I will thrust him aside, and we will go on deck, my dear."

The familiarity with which he addressed his companion stung Jack to madness.

"You can pass on deck alone, but not one step shall you proceed with that young girl! Try it at your peril!" shouted Jack, hoarsely.

Langdon did not heed the terrible warning, but attempted to push past with his companion; and in that instant the passengers crowding up from below heard the wild, piercing, terrified cry of the young girl ring out on the night air, and mingled with it the report of a revolver – three shots in quick succession – and the voice of a man crying out in mortal agony: "My God! I am shot!" and the next instant a beautiful, fair-haired girl plunged from the deck down, down into the dark, mad waves, and the seething waters closed quickly over her golden head and white, lovely, childish face.

In an instant there was the most intense excitement and confusion on board the steamer. Young girls fainted, women cried aloud, and strong men stood fairly paralyzed with horror. Great God! the steamer was backing slowly over the spot where the girl had gone down, and where she would reappear. Nothing could save her now.

Chapter IV

All in an instant the cry rang from lip to lip: "There's a man overboard!" Will he save her? Oh, heavens, is he too late to save the life of the beautiful, rash girl who had plunged into the mad waters scarcely a moment before, or will it mean death for both of them?

He had disappeared beneath the steamer. The next moment that passed seemed the length of eternity to the horrified spectators who lined the dock and the decks, straining their eyes looking down into the dark waters lighted up so fitfully by the pallid moonlight.

He rose, and a great cry broke from every lip. He was alone, and almost instantly he disappeared again. And again he rose, still alone. Every heart sank. People held their breath. Useless, useless to hope. The poor girl's fate was sealed.

Then a mighty cheer broke forth. The waters parted, and they saw him again. This time he was making for the shore, holding in one arm the body of the luckless young girl whom he had risked his own life to save.

Suddenly they heard him utter a sharp cry.

"A rope! A rope! I am sinking!"

In less time than it takes to tell it, a score or more of strong arms hurled one out to him, and he caught it in the nick of time.

Then amidst the greatest excitement he was drawn to the deck with his inanimate burden.

So intense had been the excitement that the passengers who had stood nearest the principals in the bitter quarrel which had taken place had lost track entirely of the fact that a tragedy had almost been enacted in their midst.

And when they began to inquire into the matter no one could tell what had become of the man who had cried out that he had been shot, and they considered it a false alarm.

Had this lovely young girl anything to do with this matter, or was it a coincidence that at the self-same moment she had flung herself into the water?

Meanwhile, kindly hands took the burden from the young man's arms. As he was drawn on deck some one in the crowd cried out in consternation:

"Great Heavens! It's Jack Garner! And the girl whom he has saved is little Dorothy Glenn!"

There was much speculation as to why the girl had attempted to commit suicide; but Jack's friend, a fellow-workman in the book-bindery, declared quickly that it never could have been a case of attempted suicide – the girl must have fallen overboard, and Jack had of course sprung to the rescue.

This looked plausible enough; and what they had all expected to be a great sensation seemed to turn out but an accident pure and simple.

As for Langdon, he had suddenly disappeared in the crowd after striking at the revolver which Jack had drawn upon him and crying out mockingly that he was shot when it was discharged, simply to get Jack into trouble and to get sympathy for himself.

They found it no easy matter to restore the girl to consciousness, and at this juncture an old gentleman, a retired doctor who had been in the cabin when the accident had happened, came hurriedly to her assistance when he heard that she was beyond the skill of those attending her in the ladies' cabin.

"Stand back!" he cried, forcing his way through the crowd of women. "How do you suppose you can bring her to while you stand round her and exclude the air? And by all that's wonderful, although you poured brandy down her throat, no one seemed to know enough to open her dress!"

And forthwith he began hurriedly to open the dress at the throat. But as he did so a low cry broke from his lips, and his florid old face turned deathly white.

"My God, it is she!" he cried, hoarsely; and despite the curious throng about him, the old doctor burst into tears and wept like a child.

He felt that some explanation was due, and in a broken, husky voice he said, pointing to a small, irregular mark over the girl's chest:

"I have been searching for her for sixteen years by night and by day, and finally abandoned all hope of finding her. She – she is not a relative, as you may suppose. A few words will explain:

"Some sixteen years ago I had a beautiful ward, as fair a young girl as ever the sun shone on, and I, a lonely old man who had outlived all his kinsfolk, loved her with all the devotion of my heart.

"She was happy enough in my home – aye, as happy as the day was long, but, like many another young girl, the bitter trial of life came with her first dream of love. She fell in love with a scoundrel. I knew the man better than she, and refused my consent. But young girls are willful, and the upshot of the whole matter was – she eloped with him. It was the most terrible blow of my life. Two years went by, in which I neither saw nor heard of her. Then unexpectedly I received a short, hastily written letter from my heart-broken Alice.

"'When you read this I shall be no more,' she wrote. 'Oh, Doctor Bryan, I have paid the penalty of my folly with my life. I am slowly dying of starvation. For myself, I bow to the fate I have brought upon my own head. But the result of my folly does not rest here. It falls upon the head of an innocent little babe whom I must leave behind me. Oh, Doctor Bryan, this is the prayer that in the last moments of my life I make to you:

"'Plead with the little one's father to let her come to you. If he keeps her, may God in heaven pity her future. He will blast her life as he did mine, or – if it suits his pleasure, he will abandon her on the streets to starve, as I am doing now. If I could think that she would be with you, I would die without this heavy load on my heart. She is so fair and beautiful – my poor little baby! She has only one blemish – the same scar is upon her bosom that is upon mine, and which I have heard you say was upon the bosom of my mother – the birthmark of the three spears.

"'I can not write any more. My hand trembles so that I can scarcely hold the pen.

"'Good-bye, Doctor Bryan. Never forget your poor, heart-broken
Alice.'

"I searched for her night and day," repeated the old man, with a sob in his voice. "Alice died at sea, and the fate of the little one could not be learned, nor that of the father. I never ceased searching until the last year. Then I said to myself, 'It is useless – useless. Alice's baby is dead.' But I have found her most miraculously at last, thank God!"

This revelation created the most intense excitement among the women, who had listened breathlessly to the *dénouement*.

He had scarcely ceased speaking ere Dorothy opened her eyes. She found to her great consternation a crowd surrounding her.

But in an instant memory returned to her, and with a startled cry she struggled up to a sitting posture, gazing in blank bewilderment upon the crowd that had gathered about her.

"I – I fainted and fell backward," she began; but the old gentleman bent quickly over her, interrupting, hastily:

"Yes, you fell backward and down into the water, my child, and came near drowning. Where is the young man who saved her?" he cried. "Will some one fetch him here at once to me, so that I may thank him? Oh, child, child!" he cried, again bending over Dorothy, "I would have recognized you among ten thousand! You look at me with your mother's eyes!"

"My mother?" cried Dorothy, in awe, thinking that she had not heard aright, or that the gentleman had mistaken her for some one else. "I – I am an orphan; my name is Dorothy Glenn."

The old gentleman did not utter the words that sprang to his lips when she mentioned the name Glenn, though his face darkened for an instant with bitter memory.

"But will you tell me," cried Dorothy, with a piteous sob, "what has become of my escort, Mr. Langdon?"

Nobody seemed to know, and it soon became apparent to everyone – even to the girl herself – that in her peril he had miserably deserted her rather than risk his life to save hers.

"Another young man periled his life for you," some one answered; but who it was Dorothy could not learn, and in that moment she was glad enough to call for Jack – poor, faithful Jack Garner.

But he did not come this time at her bidding. No one told her that he was suffering from a severe contusion on the side of the head, and was scarcely conscious of the message that was sent him at that time.

"You have no need of their protection. From this time henceforth you shall be under my watchful care, little Dorothy;" and very briefly, and to her intense amazement, Mr. Bryan told her the story that he had already related to those about her. "I shall take you home with me," he said, "and you shall never again know want."

To the girl it seemed as though what she had heard was but the wild vagaries of a dream, from which she should awaken presently and find herself back in the old book-bindery with the other girls. But the exclamations of the people who pressed around her congratulating her upon her good fortune, which read so much like a romance, were real enough, for they all knew Doctor Bryan, the wealthy old retired physician, whose elegant country place was just outside of New York.

The loss of Dorothy's handsome lover, who had forsaken her in so shameful a manner, would have been a terrible blow to her had she had time to think and brood over the matter. But this new excitement that had come so suddenly upon her, making part and parcel of her life, threw her thoughts in quite a different channel. How surprised Harry Langdon would be when he heard the wonderful news, and how all the book-bindery girls would hold their breath in astonishment too great for words when she did not come to work on the following day, but got a letter from her instead, explaining the wonderful change in her fortunes! Nadine Holt would be green with envy, and so would the rest of the girls, down in the secret depths of their hearts. There was only one among them who would rejoice because her working-days among them were over, and that was Jessie Staples, who had always declared Dorothy was born to be a real lady.

Chapter V

Great was the consternation at Gray Gables, as the Bryan mansion was called, when the doctor drove up to the door in the old family carriage, and the housekeeper, looking from the window, saw a young girl seated by his side.

For many years past he had had the strongest aversion to young girls, and it was over sixteen years since one had crossed that threshold. No wonder that the housekeeper was amazed to see him assist her from the carriage and lead her by the hand up the broad walk toward the porch.

"Great Heaven!" cried Mrs. Kemp, as they drew nearer, "it looks like Miss Alice; but it couldn't be her; for long years have passed since – since the night she ran away. It must be her daughter – yes, that is it!"

All of a tremble, she hastened to the door, and flung it open wide. She could see by Mr. Bryan's face that something unusual had occurred, even before her eyes rested on the fair young creature beside him.

"Mrs. Kemp," he said, huskily, "I have here with me one who will surprise you greatly when you hear her name – nay, astound you."

"I can see for myself that she bears a striking resemblance to – to –" and the rest of the sentence was lost in a choking sob.

"I am sorry that I make you feel so bad," said the fresh young voice; and the next instant a pair of plump arms were about the old lady's neck and a soft, velvety cheek was pressed close to hers. "Doctor Bryan has told me all my history," the girl cried in the same breath – "how he has been searching for me all these years, finding me at last; and that I am hereafter to live in this grand old place. And I have been fairly crying with joy all the way up from New York to-day. I could not help but scream with delight, though I know it quite horrified Doctor Bryan, when I saw the house and the magnificent grounds around it. As soon as I take off my hat I want to run into the garden and see the rose-bushes with real roses growing on them, and see what a house is like. I've always lived in a tenement flat or boarding-house."

It made Mrs. Kemp laugh, even through her tears, at the girl's wild enthusiasm. She was like an untrained, untutored child, despite her years, she thought.

The doctor's eyes grew moist as he listened, and during the few days that followed he watched her from his study window with unfeigned delight. She appeared to him more like a child of seven than a young lady of seventeen.

She was too busy in looking over the place, for the next fortnight, to carry out her intention of writing to the girls.

She seemed to have been lifted into a different world, where the dark past lay far behind her.

At this juncture an event happened which cast a dark shadow over all poor Dorothy's after life.

She was out in the garden one day with Mrs. Kemp, when the doctor joined them, holding a telegram in his hand.

"I have just received word from Harry that he will be here to-morrow," he said, with a pleased expression on his face. "I hope that you will see that a room is put in readiness for him."

"To be sure, sir," responded the housekeeper, with a little courtesy.

His footsteps had scarcely died away ere Dorothy turned eagerly to her companion.

"Who is Harry?" she asked, with all a young girl's curiosity.

"He is a young gentleman who has been studying medicine with Dr. Bryan for the last year," returned the housekeeper, adding, with a slight frown on her comely face: "The doctor is quite fond of him. He has been away for the last three months, and the house has been so nice and quiet without him."

"By the way you speak one wouldn't fancy that you liked this Mr. Harry," laughed Dorothy.

The housekeeper turned grimly away.

"But what is he like?" persisted Dorothy, pursuing the subject.

"Is he young – is he handsome?"

"Handsome is as handsome does," replied Mrs. Kemp, ominously.

"Doesn't he do handsome?" retorted Dorothy, throwing back her curly head with a rich mellow laugh, adding: "But what is he like, anyhow? Is he dark or fair, young or old?"

"No doubt he will strike you as being quite handsome," returned Mrs. Kemp, thoughtfully. "He has very dark eyes and dark waving hair. Young girls would consider him quite good looking."

"And will he, too, live in the house with us?" asked Dorothy, curiously.

"You had better ask Doctor Bryan," responded Mrs. Kemp, evasively.

The next morning, as Dorothy stepped out into the garden to gather flowers for the breakfast-table, she came suddenly upon a young man pacing up and down under the trees with his hands in his pockets, smoking a cigar.

When he heard the light, pattering footsteps he wheeled round, and was just about to raise his hat to the vision of girlish loveliness before him when a low cry of intense astonishment broke from his lips.

"Dorothy Glenn, by all that is wonderful!" he exclaimed.

The amazement was mutual.

"Harry Langdon!" the girl shrieked, turning pale as death.

"What in the name of Heaven brings you to this house?" he cried, hoarsely, catching her wrist and holding it in a tight grip.

"You have no right to know, after the way you deserted me in my peril," flashed Dorothy.

"But how came you here," he repeated, "of all places in the world? I must know!"

The girl briefly outlined how it happened, her anger rising against her questioner with every word; and as he listened his face was a study.

"Dorothy," he said, in his low, smooth voice, "you accuse me of not trying to save you when you fell overboard. But let me speak just one word in my own defense: You remember just what was taking place as we reached the deck. You heard the shot, but you fainted and did not know what happened. The bullet whizzed by me, and I fell back on the deck stunned – unconscious. I did not recover until long after the steamer reached New York. All the people had dispersed long before I returned to consciousness. I made diligent search for you, and to my great horror it soon dawned upon me that not one whom you knew could tell me whither you had gone."

Dorothy was young and guileless, or he could never have fooled her so easily. But the story seemed very plausible to her ears, and her face brightened.

It was a great load lifted from her heart – her trustful belief that handsome Mr. Langdon had not been false to her after all.

"Now, Dorothy, I have something to say to you," he began. "Walk down this path with me, for you must listen intently to what I have to say to you. I have a little confession to make to you, and a favor to ask, and surely you are too kind of heart and too good a friend to me to refuse. I had intended telling you this upon our return on the boat. My name is not Harry Langdon, as you have believed, but Harry Langdon Kendal.

"I am studying medicine with Doctor Bryan, instead of law, as I once led you to believe. And as to the great expectations I told you about, I confess that they exist only in my mad hopes that Doctor Bryan, who is alone in the world, without kith or kin, might take a fancy to leave me something some day. He does not know of my rash wager, and that by losing it I was forced to go to New York and place myself on a street car as conductor for a while. He would disapprove of it if he knew, and, Dorothy, you must never tell him – promise me that here and now – he must never know that we have ever met before!"

Dorothy did not hesitate to give him the required assurance, for which he thanked her so profusely that it brought the warm blushes in a flood-tide to the girl's dimpled cheeks; and Mrs. Kemp wondered why Dorothy looked so happy as she entered the house.

Left to himself, Kendal paced excitedly under the trees, puffing away vigorously at his cigar.

"A devil of a fix this," he muttered, setting his white teeth hard together. "Great Heaven! this is a romance in real life more strangely weird than any fiction. Who would have thought of finding this girl here, of all persons in the world, and under such circumstances! And then, to make matters worse, I have been making violent love to the girl. It was all very well to make desperate love to the little New York working-girl, but to make love to Miss Glenn, the doctor's *protégée*, is quite another matter. I shall be expected to ask for her hand in marriage, of course, and she without a dollar. No, thanks! I'd rather that some other fellow would woo and win the little blue-eyed fairy. When it comes to marrying I must have a girl with money, who can put up the needful for both if necessary. If she will only keep my secret I will be but too grateful!"

Meanwhile, Dorothy had stolen up to her own room, and at that moment was standing before the mantel, resting her elbows on it, her dimpled chin upon her hands, gazing wistfully into the mirror's depths at the lovely young face it reflected.

"Oh, how my cheeks burn!" she cried, excitedly, "and how my heart thumps even yet. I was sure he would hear it. I thought I should never see him again, but it is fate that brings us together here. I shall always believe in it firmly and truly after this. He cares for me. He as much as told me so on the night that we went to the moonlight picnic on Staten Island, and the fortune-teller who told my fortune said – when all of us bindery girls visited her one day – 'I see a short journey for you, miss – a dark young man and a marriage-ring;' and for the next ten minutes Dorothy capered around the room, dancing in such hoidenish, girlish glee that she would fairly have shocked the old housekeeper could she have seen her. "It's all coming true!" cried Dorothy, breathlessly, to herself. But not one thought did she give to poor Jack, whose betrothal-ring she carried pinned to her pocket.

Chapter VI

How the hours passed up to luncheon time Dorothy never afterward realized, her foolish little heart was in such a flutter of excitement.

She knew she should meet Harry at the table, and oh! it would be so hard to pretend before Doctor Bryan and the stern, keen-eyed old housekeeper that they were strangers.

She had but two dresses as yet, which the housekeeper had provided her with, and she tried on each of them in succession to see which looked best on her.

Which should it be? The pale-blue merino or the rose-pink cashmere?

After much studying and slipping on and off, Dorothy decided upon wearing the rose-pink.

She was scarcely dressed ere the luncheon bell rang.

Taking up her handkerchief, Dorothy flew down the stairway, pausing before the doorway to catch her breath and to summon courage to enter.

But the longer she stood there the more difficult it seemed to get courage enough to open the door and face the music. At length she heard Doctor Bryan inquire surprisedly of Mrs. Kent:

"Where can Dorothy be, I wonder?"

And the next instant they heard a faint voice exclaim:

"Here I am, please."

And, turning to see from whence the sound proceeded, they all saw distinctly that the door was open the space of an inch, and that a human eye was applied to the crack, while four little fingers clutched it frantically to keep it open.

"Come in, Dorothy," commanded Mr. Bryan, inwardly highly amused at the girl's bashfulness in venturing in when she saw a stranger seated at the board.

Dorothy opened the door, stumbled over the mat, and, with a face red as a beet, walked awkwardly to the table and took her seat, which happened to be directly opposite Harry's.

She did not dare for the life of her to look at him, for she knew that his black eyes were bent upon her. She felt them scorching down into her soul.

"Dorothy," said Mr. Bryan, pompously, "allow me to present to you my young friend, Mr. Kendal."

"I am right glad to see him, sir," said Dorothy, faintly, without raising her eyes.

Noticing her embarrassment, Doctor Bryan quickly turned the conversation into another channel; but he soon observed that his young friend was looking at the girl across the table, almost convulsed with laughter.

It took but one glance that way to see the cause.

In her great confusion Dorothy was making dire efforts to eat her soup with a fork, catching occasionally a stray bean.

"Remove the soup plates!" roared the doctor to the servant who stood in waiting, and who was also grinning at the girl's discomfiture.

It was the most confusing meal that Dorothy had ever sat down to.

And when she arose from the table she was far hungrier than when she sat down.

She had scarcely eaten a good solid mouthful.

Oh, it was so hard to act out such a falsehood as handsome Harry had prevailed upon her to do.

During the fortnight that followed, she became more used to the situation, but it was no little wonder, both to the housekeeper and Doctor Bryan, what excellent friends they were getting to be in so short a time.

It could not be that they were falling in love with each other; and the doctor looked rather serious at the last thought.

As for Dorothy, it was quite a clear case; she was deeply in love with Harry Kendal. Like all girls, her day-dreams were rosy. It was so sweet to wander with him through the grand grounds surrounding Gray Gables, or sit in the sunshine in the clover meadow beyond, with the babbling brook at their feet, and the great branches of the oak trees over their heads, and listen to him while he read such sweet poems to her – poems of how some lover loved a lassie, and how bright was their future.

But still there was a change in him; he wasn't just like he used to be when she was only Dorothy Glenn, working for her living in the book-bindery. And just to show him that she did not notice the change, and did not care, she was so gay and hoidenish, so full of repartee and laughter, that she saw him open his eyes in wonder more than once; and Doctor Bryan gave her the *soubriquet* of "Madcap Dorothy," which seemed to suit her exactly.

There was no prank that could ever have entered a roguish girl's brain which she did not play upon Kendal.

This phase of her character rather annoyed Kendal than pleased him; and it seemed to him that she took a special delight in teasing him. She hid his slippers, slipped briars into his couch, turned tack-points upward in his lounging chairs, and substituted periodicals a month old for his morning journals and magazines, until he almost grew to detest her for becoming the torment of his life. Shrewd as he was in the ways of young girls, he did not know that this is the course which many a young girl pursues toward a young man with whom she has fallen in love, and would not have him know it for the whole world.

If there was anything which Kendal detested, it was a girl who was always on the lookout to turn every word and action into a joke. He preferred them modest and flower-like; still, he was in duty bound to treat her as well as he could because she was under that roof.

And there was another reason why he began to abhor Dorothy. Before her appearance on the scene, there had been a wild hope in his heart that some day he might possibly inherit a good portion of Doctor Bryan's money. For two years or more he had left no stone unturned to get into the old gentleman's good graces.

True, Dorothy was as much of a stranger to Doctor Bryan as he himself was, but who knew but that, by some freak of unlucky fate, he might take a notion to leave the girl all of his fortune? He wished to Heaven she had never crossed the threshold of Gray Gables.

At this turn of affairs it occurred to him that it would not be a bad idea to test the old gentleman's friendship for himself; and the greatest of all tests, he believed, was to borrow money from him. If Doctor Bryan refused this little favor, he reasoned to himself, all his hopes in regard to inheriting the old gentleman's money, in time to come, would be dashed. He would ask him for a small loan; and on the very day this occurred to him he proceeded to put it into execution, saying to himself:

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to, the touch
To win or lose it all."

He knew that he should find the doctor in his study directly after luncheon, and here he presented himself with some trepidation.

"Come in," called the doctor, in answer to his knock.

"Oh, it's *you*, is it, Harry?" he exclaimed, placing a chair for him, which the young man took rather awkwardly.

"It is not often I trouble you in your study, sir," began Harry, "but I have something of importance to say to you, and I beg that you will pardon the intrusion. I chose a time when we will be least apt to be interrupted."

"I wouldn't advise you to begin it if it will take long to tell," said Mr. Bryan, "for we might be interrupted at any moment. I am expecting an old friend, who is to accompany me on a horse-back ride. He ought to have been here by this time."

Harry fidgeted nervously about in his chair. It required something of an effort to make his request carelessly.

"You are the only one," he began, a little disconcertedly, "I feel sure, who can help me in my present dilemma."

The old doctor wheeled suddenly around in his chair, and all in an instant the object of the young man's visit flashed over his mind.

"To my mind he is come to tell me that he has fallen head over heels in love with little Dorothy, and wants to marry her;" and with the thought a broad smile crept up to the lips the white beard covered.

He had never been in love himself – but, for all that, he always sympathized with young folks in their tender affairs of the heart, and many a secret sigh escaped his lips for the lost opportunities of the past.

"Well," he began, brusquely, "why don't you proceed, my boy?"

"It is such a delicate matter," began Kendal, "that I scarcely know how to frame the words. You have always been so kind to me in the past, that the remembrance of it has led me to dare hope that your goodness will not desert me in the present emergency."

"Well," said the old gentleman, rather enjoying the young man's evident discomfiture, "pray go on."

"The boon I have to ask," began Kendal, "will either make or mar my future."

"Is it so bad as that?" returned the old gentleman with assumed innocence.

"You could never imagine what it is that I wish to ask," continued the young man.

"I might guess, perhaps," laughed the doctor, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"Surely you – you couldn't have noticed the one great wish of my heart," gasped Kendal. "I – " At that moment the expected visitor was announced.

"Come and see me in my library this evening," said Doctor Bryan, grasping the young man's hand, "and we will talk over the matter you have so much at heart, and I will give you my answer in regard to it."

"You are too good, sir," cried Kendal, in bewilderment.

At that moment the entrance of the visitor put a stop to all further conversation, and Kendal arose and took his leave after an exchange of greetings.

"How could he possibly have divined that I was thinking of asking him for money?" he pondered.

He heard Dorothy singing at the top of her voice in the drawing-room, and he turned on his heel in the hallway, and walked in an opposite direction with a frown of impatience on his face.

Dorothy saw him pass the door, and she bit her lip with vexation.

"Of course he heard me playing on the piano, for I thumped as loud as ever I could; but he did not come in. It seems to me he is trying 'to cool off,' as we girls in the bindery used to say."

Dorothy tiptoed over to the window as she heard the front door slam after him, and if he had looked back he would have seen a very defiant though tear-stained face peering earnestly after him from behind the lace curtains.

Kendal walked disconsolately enough through the spacious grounds and out into the main road, little dreaming that a strange fate was drawing him onward with each step he took.

He had traveled a mile or more over the country road, when suddenly he was startled by the sound of horses' hoofs.

The next instant, from around the bend in the road, a horse dashed riderless, covered with foam, and so near him that he had to spring aside or its hoofs would have been buried in his brain. One glance, and a cry of horror broke from his lips. It was Doctor Bryan's horse.

Great God! where was he? Kendal realized that there had been a terrible accident, and that at that moment the doctor lay dying – perhaps dead – by the road-side.

In all haste he rushed down the road in the direction whence the horse had come, and around the first bend he beheld the prostrate figure of Doctor Bryan lying covered with dust, his friend bending over him.

In an instant he was by his side. One glance, and his worst fears were realized – the old gentleman had been mortally injured – he was dying. He held out his hand when he saw Kendal bending over him, and nodded assent as his companion briefly and hurriedly related how the terrible accident had come about.

"I was just about to go for you," said the friend. "The doctor has something to say to you. Surely it was the work of Providence that you happened along just now."

Kendal bent over the prostrate form.

"I – I am dying, Harry!" gasped the doctor; "but that – of which we were – talking – this – afternoon – is – uppermost – in – my – mind. You – you – wished – me – to – give my – consent – to – to – your – wooing – and wedding little – Dorothy. I – give – it – to you – here – and – now – with – my – blessing – for – I – know – she – cares – for you. Six months – from – to-day – at – noon – my – will – must be read; and on that day you – must marry her – if ever – aye – you must – be wedded – ere that noon-hour – shall have waned. Then – then – within that hour – you shall know – the contents of – my will; and – remember, too, that – it – is – irrevocable!"

Harry Kendal reeled back, like one dazed by an awful blow.

The suddenness of this affair had taken his breath away. But before he could raise his voice in protest, or utter one word of the terrible mistake which the old gentleman was laboring under, Doctor Bryan breathed his last, and he found himself betrothed, as it were, to Dorothy, and by the most terrible mistake that ever a man labored under.

Chapter VII

A fortnight had passed since the fatal accident in Brighton Woods, and life at Gray Gables had once more resumed the even tenor of its regular routine.

The first words that Doctor Bryan had gasped out to his friend, when he regained consciousness and found himself fatally injured, were:

"Tell – tell – them at home – that – everything – must go – on – the same – until – after – my will – has – been read – and that – must not be – until – six – months – after – my – decease."

The sudden loss of Doctor Bryan, the kind-hearted old gentleman who had raised her from poverty to great wealth, was a severe blow to Dorothy. For in that short length of time she had learned to love him, as a daughter might have done, with all the strength of her passionate, girlish heart.

The old housekeeper and the servants, who had been in his employ a quarter of a century or more, mourned for him and refused to be comforted.

Great was the excitement in the household when the friend who had accompanied Doctor Bryan on that fatal ride broke to them the strange compact between the doctor and Kendal, to which he had been a witness.

He readily decided that it was best not to tell Dorothy the exact situation of affairs, and that it would probably be more in accordance with a young girl's romantic idea of marriage for Kendal to woo her on his own account, and gain her consent, ere he breathed to her that this was Doctor Bryan's wish.

And this was the course that Kendal followed. He allowed fully a month to transpire ere he made the slightest advances to her. Long and carefully he had thought the matter over in his own mind, and had concluded that there was no way out of the strange betrothal into which he had been forced, as it were, against his will.

He made up his mind to accept the situation gracefully and become engaged to Dorothy, and if he found out that she had not been remembered in the old gentleman's will, he could break it without one word of warning or the least compunction. He noticed, too, that Dorothy was growing quite shy of him of late. She had been quite fond of him in the past; it would never do to allow her to grow indifferent to him. He made up his mind to settle the matter – as far as the engagement was concerned – at the first opportunity; and one presented itself on the very day he made this resolve.

Dorothy was in the conservatory that afternoon, when he suddenly surprised her, stealing up on tip-toe behind her, clasped her in his arms, holding his hands over her eyes, whispering:

"Guess who it is, Dorothy."

The struggle to escape those firm arms suddenly ceased. The girl was dumbfounded with amazement.

"Is it – can it be you, Harry – Mr. Kendal?" she gasped, breathlessly.

"Do you wish it were some one else, Dorothy?" he whispered, releasing her from his arms, but catching her hands in a tight clasp and looking eagerly down into her eyes.

The girl's face flushed burning red, and her gaze fell beneath a pair of dark eyes that seemed to search into her very soul. But in an instant she recovered something of her old maidenish composure; and in that moment she remembered, too, how he had seemed to slight her of late, and her pride rebelled hotly.

"How dare you frighten me so, Harry Kendal?" she cried, drawing back and stamping her little foot, her blue eyes blazing angrily.

"Are you so very displeased?" he inquired, reproachfully, adding quietly: "If that is the case, I beg your pardon. I shall never so trespass again;" and he dropped her hand and turned away, walking moodily to the window.

"Gracious! I have done it now!" thought Dorothy, repenting on the instant; and, as he made no effort to turn around or speak to her again, she advanced slowly to where he stood idly drumming upon the window-sill.

"I wasn't so very angry," she began, hesitatingly, picking nervously at the blue ribbons which tied her long, curling hair. "I said I wasn't so very angry!" repeated Dorothy, nervously. He heard her, but never turned his head, and Dorothy was at a loss what to say next to mend matters. "Would you like a rose?" she stammered.

"Thanks – no!" replied Kendal, shortly, still without turning his head. Then, after a brief pause:

"Or would you like me to show you a new book of poems I just bought?"

"You needn't mind. Pray don't trouble yourself," he responded.

Dorothy looked at him an instant, quite as though she was ready to cry; then the best thing that could have happened, under the circumstances, came to her relief.

She grew angry.

"I wouldn't show you the book now, to save your life!" she cried, her breath coming and going in panting gasps, and her cheeks flaming as scarlet as the deep-red rose she had brought him as a peace-offering; "nor would I give you this flower. I'd tear it up and stamp it beneath my feet first – you are so mean!"

He turned with a very tantalizing smile, and looked at her out of the corners of his eyes.

She had hidden her face in her hands, but by the panting of her breast he saw that she was weeping, that a storm of sobs was shaking her childish frame.

He stooped and passed his arm lightly around the slim waist, his hand holding hers.

Dorothy trembled.

"Won't you let me comfort you?" he asked, in that low, winning voice of his.

The thought flashed across Dorothy's brain that, if she pushed him from her, he would never again put his arms about her, and she meekly endured the caress for an instant; and not being repulsed, he grew bold enough to kiss the rosy cheek that peeped out from between the white fingers.

"I have something to say to you, Dorothy," he whispered. "It is this: I love you! Will you be my wife?"

Dorothy had always imagined just how a lover should propose, but she had never imagined anything so commonplace as this.

He stooped to caress her again, but she drew back.

"You frighten me!" she cried; and at these words he instantly released her.

"It is alarming – being kissed – and especially when you're not used to it. But that does not answer my question. Will you marry me, or will you not?"

"I don't know!" cried Dorothy, faintly. "You mustn't ask me; you must talk to Mrs. Kemp about it."

"I might talk to Mrs. Kemp about changing my room in the house, or ask her concerning anything belonging to the household, but I couldn't think of asking her to find me a wife and to seal the bargain for me. The 'Yes' or 'No' must be said by the girl herself, as she is the one who is to live with me and to make the best or the worst of the bargain through life. Now, Dorothy, I want a plain, straightforward answer. Tell me, will you be my bride?"

She colored and smiled, and the sort of shy half fear which always assailed her at his approach came over her now more strongly than ever, and the quick blood came rushing to her finger-ends.

"I – don't know what to say!" gasped Dorothy. "I couldn't marry anybody, I think."

His arms dropped from about her.

"Am I to understand, then," he asked, in a constrained voice, "that you refuse me?"

"Oh, I don't know!" cried Dorothy, melting into fresh, quick tears. "I – I – should want to ask somebody about it first before I said 'Yes.'"

He had quite believed that she would accept him on the spot the moment he proposed, and her failure to do this made him almost catch his breath in astonishment.

This uncertainty in the matter gave more zest to his ardor.

"You dislike me?" he questioned, wondering if that could possibly be.

"Oh, no, no! I like you. Won't you believe me?"

He stepped back and looked at her with a sarcastic smile – looked at the little figure leaning against the fountain, with one hand resting on the rim of it, the other held out imploringly toward him.

"Believe you? Why do you insist upon making me uncivil?" he replied. "I do *not* believe you! I dare say you fancy that you are telling the truth; but if another man were to come on the scene with a few thousands a year more, and a higher position in the social scale, you would have a very different answer for him at your tongue's end."

He looks at her – looks at the innocently wooing arms – at the tear-stained, dimpled, tremulous face, and, now that he thinks that he can not win her, all in an instant he falls madly in love with her.

"You must answer me, here and now!" he cried; but Dorothy turned from him, and, like a startled fawn, slipped through his outstretched hands, through the conservatory, and out of the corridor beyond, leaving him staring after her, his handsome face pale with emotion.

Dorothy never paused until she reached her own room.

She closed and locked the door with trembling hands and beating heart; then, after the fashion of young girls, she laughed and cried hysterically all in a breath, dancing around the room in a mad fashion, clapping her hands and sobbing out:

"Oh, at last – at last, my hero, my ideal has turned from a block of marble to human clay, and tells me that he loves me and wants me to be his wife – me – a silly little thing like me!" and she paused before the glass, wondering what he saw in the pink-and-white face reflected there to love forever and ever. She wished she knew.

Chapter VIII

Dorothy's merriment was soon interrupted by a loud knock at the door, and when she opened it, panting with her exertion of dancing around the room, she found Mrs. Kemp standing there, with a white, frightened face.

"What in the world is the matter here, child?" she cried, in alarm. "I was afraid there were burglars, or Heaven knows what, up here in this room."

Dorothy burst into a peal of laughter that amazed the old lady and made the very walls echo with her bright young voice.

"Oh, something so funny has just happened!" she gasped. "You will be as much surprised as I was, Mrs. Kemp, when you hear it."

The housekeeper knew just what had happened, for, although unknown to Dorothy, she was in the conservatory when she had entered; but before she could make her presence known Kendal had appeared upon the scene, and the proposal of marriage had followed so quickly upon the heels of it that she felt she could not leave without embarrassing both, so she waited there until they had quitted the conservatory.

As soon as she thought it practicable she followed Dorothy to her room to congratulate her, and the sight that met her view surprised her – the girl's face, instead of being flushed with tell-tale blushes and covered with confusion, as she had expected, was convulsed with laughter.

"Oh, do come in!" cried Dorothy, excitedly. "I have something that I want to tell you – I want you to decide for me what is best to do."

"I will give you the best advice I can," said the old housekeeper, drawing the girl down beside her on the sofa, and putting her arm about her.

"I've just had a – a proposal of – of marriage. There! the whole secret is out!" cried Dorothy, breathlessly.

But the good old lady did not look a particle amazed, much to Dorothy's surprise.

"You do not ask me who it is that wants me," cried the girl, in bitter disappointment.

Mrs. Kemp smiled.

"It was very easy to see that for myself," she responded. "Every one could tell that Harry Kendal was very fond of you, my dear, and that sooner or later he would ask you to marry him. But tell me, what answer did you make him?"

"I – I ran away without making any answer at all," confessed Dorothy, shamefacedly. "I thought I could write him a note and put my answer in it – ever so much better than to look up into his face and tell him," she faltered. "I wonder that girls can ever say 'Yes' right up and down, then and there; it seems so bold a thing to do. Why, I never felt so embarrassed in my life. When I tried to say something my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth. I trembled from head to foot, and – oh, gracious! – he must have heard how my heart thumped. I know I must have acted like the greatest simpleton the world ever held. Wasn't it wonderful to think that he wanted to marry me? I can't understand it."

"It is not so very wonderful, but very natural," responded Mrs. Kemp, warmly. "I do not know whether it is wise to tell you so or not, but you are really beautiful. Every one thinks so hereabouts. And then you are not too young to marry – you are seventeen."

"But I'm not a bit wise," persisted Dorothy.

"You are quite wise enough to suit the exacting eyes of love," declared the housekeeper, reassuringly, "and that is all that is needed. The greatest of all questions, however, is: Do you think you care for Mr. Kendal? Let me tell you two things, my dear – never marry a man whom you do not love; and if the one whom you do love asks you, do not coquet with him."

"Will you help me to write the note to him?" cried Dorothy, drawing up a hassock, and slipping down upon it at her companion's feet. "I want to write it stiff and proud, as though I didn't care much, and I want to get all the big words in it that I can."

"Of course I will help you," replied Mrs. Kemp. "But it's many a year since I wrote a love letter, and I'm a little awkward at it now. But as long as it conveys the idea of 'Yes' to him, your ardent lover will think it the grandest epistle that ever a young girl wrote."

Such a time as there was over that letter!

Over and over again it was copied, this word erased, and that word inserted, until at the very best it looked more like the map of Scotland than anything else.

Dorothy was terribly in earnest over it.

One would almost have thought, to have seen her, that her life was at stake over the result of it; but at last it was finished, and one of the servants was called to take it to Mr. Kendal's room.

Harry was pacing restlessly up and down when it was delivered to him. He took it eagerly and broke the seal, for he had recognized Dorothy's cramped, school-girl chirography at once.

"She is mine!" he cried, triumphantly; and with the knowledge that he had won her without a doubt, his ardor suddenly cooled; he did not know whether he was pleased or sorry over the result of his wooing.

After he had read the letter over carefully, he fell to scrutinizing the chirography.

"The first thing I shall have to do will be to teach the girl how to write a legible letter," he thought.

Only the day before she had written a letter to Jack, which contained but the few words that she was well and happy, and that a great change of fortune had come into her life. But the letter bore neither date, postmark, nor signature, and he could not tell where it had been posted.

But it was the first intimation which Jack had had that she was in the land of the living, and to have seen his face as he read it would have touched a heart of stone.

Tears sprang to his eyes, strong young man though he was, and he covered the half-written page with burning kisses. To him those irregular, girlish strokes were dearer than anything else this wide world held, because they were Dorothy's.

Although she had suddenly disappeared, and all her friends had turned against her in the bindery, declaring that she had eloped with the handsome, dark-eyed stranger, he still believed her true. He had been searching for her ever since, without rest – almost without food – day and night, until he had almost worn himself out.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.