

A KISS IN THE DARK.

WON'T some one mark my lines for me, please. My quilting looks very much like Mrs. Partington's tar-pentine walks, and Mary Norris raised a pretty, laughing face to the assembled company, which consisted of the elite of Brownsville, with some of the lower strata. The little village boasted not of its numbers as it did of its pretty girls and Mrs. Goodwin was resolved to have her quilt finished by fair means or by foul, and, being desperate, had scraped Brownsville for her quilting bee. The usual gossip was at its height which it was interrupted by the appeal of Mary Norris to Mrs. Goodwin, whose interest it was to have every line perfect, and to keep the social machine in running order. So she bustled about and soon got Mary to work again. "I wonder," said Jennie Haskins, "if Mary Frazier is coming to-day?" "Goodness knows! She is terribly fashionable and aristocratic," returned one of the lower set. "Oh, she is coming," interrupted the hostess; "she promised me not to fail, she is such a quiet, unobtrusive little thing that she will accomplish a good deal even if she does come late." "She wouldn't be fashionable and like city people, if she came as early as the rest," put in another of the lower strata. "For my part, I wish she would stay away entirely. We can live without such stuck-up!" The sentence remained unfinished, for at that moment the lovely face of Miss Frazier looked in upon them with a pleasant smile. In her quiet manner she had glided in at a side door, removed her hat and gloves without disturbing the hostess, and then surprised them. Mrs. Goodwin greeted her warmly, and as usual, with much fuss and bustle, she was seated at the quilt, where her slight, deft fingers, as Mrs. Goodwin had predicted, soon began to trace line after line in her exquisite and neat fashion, and to outdo many who had come earlier. All the people who could be picked into places were, and Brownsville had to pass through the social feminine mangle customary upon such occasions, and yet, strange to say, survived. After tea the gathering of the rustic swains began. Among them came handsome Dr. Collins and his old bachelor friend, Dr. Peters. Of course the entire unmarried portion of the other sex were setting their caps for the handsome young physician, and were doing all they could to increase his vanity and spoil him generally. Upon the present occasion he joined right merrily in the country games, romped with Mary Norris, and paid more than one forfeit upon her red, pouting lips. Indeed, he seemed to revel in sweets, for the most of the girls, though making a show of resentment when he kissed them, evidently sought or challenged such liberties—all but quiet, little Mary Frazier. She stole into out-of-the-way corners, and more than once slipped out of the hands of those who sought to drag her into their plays. It was whispered again that she was too aristocratic to mingle with the common herd, though in truth, from having been reared in a city she was unprepared to permit such liberties. Her extremely delicate nature shrank from becoming public property.—Her lips were reserved for him who should win her love, and were not to be desecrated. But that she had cast longing eyes upon the handsome physician was not to be denied. Yet, even the most careful observer had not been able to detect the fact—a higher color or sudden bounding of the heart at the sound of his voice when he addressed her in tones always deferential and polite, as if he was just a little frozen or awed by her manner. Mirth reigned fast and furious as the evening waned. Chaires were overturned in the boisterous game of blind man's buff, while dresses and sashes suffered sadly.—The doctor, seeing Mary Norris dash out of the front door, followed her, resolved (upon the spur of the moment) to seize the time to disclose his love. Such an event had been one of the things of the future, if at all. Until now he had not given much thought to it, but her saucy black eyes, and sweet, warm kisses had completed his enthralment. Out under the vine-covered porch of the Goodwin cottage, where he could distinctly trace the soft outlines of his love in her fleecy white dress, he followed, and gaining her side, whispered: "Mary, I must leave now. I have a patient to visit to-night, but I cannot tear myself away without telling you how much I love you." One little hand was clinging to the trelis as he spoke, and dimly tracing the coveted member, he feebly possessed himself of it, while his other arm stole around her slender waist. With an air of timid surprise, all unlike the usual spontaneous demonstrativeness of Mary Norris, the young girl dropped her head and murmured: "I—I—did not think—" "You did not think I loved you! Is that it, my sweet girl? Well, I do most sincerely. But, Mary, I am no adept at love-making, and I presume I am very brusque. Yet, will you be my wife?" "Surely you cannot mean it. You have

never shown me the slightest preference," was whispered back, as her head dropped still lower. "Never shown the slightest preference! Is it possible that under my careless and light exterior you did not detect a more serious meaning? But I am awaiting my answer," and he bent down to catch the timid "Yes." The night was moonless and dark—so much that the doctor could not see, as he longed to do, the blushing face of his Mary. He kissed at random, and being determined to leave the seal of betrothal on her lips, kissed first her ear and then her cheek, and after meandering all about at last settled upon her sweet lips, which were turned temptingly upward. "God bless you!" he whispered. "Tomorrow evening I may come and see you, I suppose, and then we can adjust our happy future!" Just then the shouts of some jasses who had been chased out of the back door and around the graveled walks, by their rustic admirers, startled the lovers. Dr. Collins kissed his affianced again, and dashed away before he was discovered. Of course he "walked upon air," and it is quite likely his prescription for the invalid was a little mixed. But after he had gained the quiet of his own room he lay awake for a long time reflecting upon the stupendous step he had taken. Somehow he half regretted that he had been so hasty, as he communed with himself. "I am afraid," he thought, "that my mother and sisters will think her a bit hoydenish. But it cannot be denied that she is beautiful and shrewd, and if transplanted into a more refined soil will improve. How she seemed to melt when she found I loved her, and how changed were her manners. I confess that I expected her to accept my wooing with her old-time, half-defiant and saucy flash. But lo! she became sweetly womanly, tender and gentle. I could feel her pliant form tremble and thrill in my arms, and her timid 'yes' was given almost with a sob. By Jove! I had no idea the child loved me so much, and I shall always be good to the sweet girl. She shall be the very apple of my eye." With this resolve Dr. Collins floated into dream-land, to rehearse over again the little love passage in the rustic porch of Mrs. Goodwin's, and beneath the twining morning glory vines. The following day passed for him with leaden feet. He longed to see Mary Norris in her new character of his affianced bride. That she would be gentle and sweet with him, now that they are engaged, he did not doubt, and he felt that he should like her better when a trifle toned down. So the early shadows of evening found him at the door of the Norris mansion. Mary was at the piano. He could distinguish her voice in some peculiar strain. No doubt this was only a ruse to cover her natural confusion. A servant showed him in and he instantly discovered that Mary was not alone. A masculine friend from a neighboring village was devotedly leaning over her turning the music. The closing of the door announced him. Mary started up from the instrument, and without the slightest deepening of the roses upon her cheeks, and as simply and naturally as ever, came forward, greeted him and introduced "her friend, Mr. Cummings." The hot blood surged into the cheeks of the doctor, and he attempted to express his disappointment and ardor with one eloquent glance; but it fell entirely short of its mark. No answering expressions came back to him. As if unconscious of their new and dear relation to each other, Mary Norris ran on in merry jest and rallery, until he became thoroughly out of humor, and espoused the contrary side of everything, and at an early hour took his departure. When in the hall, where the girl accompanied him, he turned upon her with words of reproach. "How could you admit that fellow to-night, when you expected me?" "I beg your pardon, Dr. Collins," she replied, with her saucy black eyes dancing. "You are very much mistaken. I did not expect you to-night, and that fellow is one of my dearest friends." "Mary, you are trifling with me. Have you forgotten what transpired in the veranda only last night?" "What veranda?" "That of Mrs. Goodwin's to be sure." "You must be insane, doctor, or are laboring under some hallucination: I was not in Mrs. Goodwin's veranda with you for a single moment last night; and if you made any engagements with any young lady at that time and place, it was not with your humble servant!" "Not with you?" he gasped, pale to the lips. "Who the deuce was it, then, I should like to know?" "I can't say. You should not be so careless, doctor. No doubt some fair Brownsville girl is this moment looking her eyes out while you are wasting time with me. But I must go back, or Charley will be jealous. Yet stay. I have one trifling bit of confidence for you. We are engaged." "Certainly. Don't I know it," he exclaimed, seizing her hand, with a radiant face. "Knew it, and had the audacity to call my Charley a fellow, and to be angry be-

cause I did not deny myself to him on account of your stupidity in thinking that under Mrs. Goodwin's porch you had promised this visit. Oh! goodness, what a coquette you must believe me to be!" His hands fell away from her's suddenly, and his voice was husky, as he answered: "I congratulate you. Good night." Out in the silent and dull village street he ground his teeth, and used some very intricate and harsh words against himself; the worst of which perhaps was that he might be considered "an ass." He went directly to his office, and Dr. Peters noticed the change in his manner, and kindly inquired what was the matter. "Any bad news, my boy," he asked jocosely. "You look as though you had been having a case of double conjunctions, and did not know what to do with them." "I'm an unmitigated fool, that's all.—I've gone and engaged myself!" "To be married? Not that, hey?" "Yes, just that, old fellow," and he sank into the chair with a most disgusted air. Dr. Peters looked at him for a moment, and then burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Why, the deuce take it," said he, as soon as he could get his breath, "one would think you were doomed to be hung. I give you my word that if I had gone as far as you say you have, I should try and look more cheerful." "Good heavens, how can I? Listen for a few moments. As I said before, I am engaged to be married, but I swear to you I don't know to whom!" The old physician sat up, his face suddenly elongated, and he stared at his partner in pills with one-eyed astonishment.—Presently he said, as to himself: "The boy is mad as a March hare." "No, I am not—wish to thunder I was." He related minutely everything that had occurred under the porch and screening vines at Mrs. Goodwin's, and continued: "Whoever I mistake for Mary Norris evidently believes in and loves me. She solemnly yielded herself to my caresses as my betrothed wife, thinking that I worshipped her and her only." Dr. Collins groaned and ran his fingers through his hair until each particular fibre stood on end. His partner vainly attempted to control his risibles. One glance at the disconsolate visage of his friend was too much, and he let off a roar that shook the very foundations of Brownsville, and it was a good quarter hour before he could sufficiently control himself to give his friend the comfort and advice he needed. "No doubt," was the reply, "it is a laughing matter, and its ridiculous side exceedingly funny. And now, as a gentleman and a man of honor, what am I to do?" Doctor Peters wiped his eyes, settled himself to considering for a time before replying, and then said: "If I were in your place, I should first find out to whom I was engaged, and if she proved agreeable or desirable, I should marry her, unless my heart was firmly set on Mary Norris." "Fortunately that spell is broken. I see that I was merely infatuated. Besides, I find that she is already engaged. But that does not matter now. Suppose that I find the young lady the reverse of my expectations and hopes, what shall I do then?" "Make yourself so devilish disagreeable and exacting that you drive her to the extremity of jilting you." "That advice is very sound, no doubt, but how in the name of common sense am I to find the girl?" "You'd make a poor detective. Evidently her name is Mary. If I understand you correctly, you called her that alone, with a few pet epithets thrown in." "I had not thought of that." "Well, think over all the girls in town by the name of Mary, and the one most likely to be she. Then visit her at once.—There is Mary Carter." "It wasn't she," interrupted Dr. Collins, with a gesture of disgust. "How do you know? Remember, you proposed in the dark." "Don't you think I should know if I was bugging a saw-log? Didn't I tell you her form was slight, and delicately moulded?" "O, if you had ocular demonstration of the fact, I yield. Might it have been Mary Lewis?" "No. She is too tall." "Then clearly, it is an unsuspected—Mary Frazier—and I congratulate you, my dear boy, for having so stumbled upon a happy fate in the dark. She is without doubt, the dearest little woman in the world, and a perfectly lady withal." The handsome face of the young physician cleared, and he reddened visibly, as he answered: "I had not thought of her other than to admire her gentle and sweet manner, and her radiant, intellectual face. Somehow she is always so reticent and retiring that I have found it rather hard to get on with her." "If you had been better read in the ways of women, this alone would have convinced you that she was more interested in you than she was willing to acknowledge, even to herself." "A thousand thanks, Doc. I confess

that you have helped me wonderfully, and if it is indeed the lovely Mary Frazier by whom I believe myself greatly beloved, I will try not to be wholly miserable." The next evening, according to the advice he had received, Dr. Collins called on Miss Frazier. As she arose to greet him, a sudden uplifting of a pair of soft brown eyes, and the upsurging of the tell-tale blood thoroughly convincing him that he was upon the right track. "Of course," he said, taking her little hand and looking down into her timid and blushing face, "you expected me last night?" "Certainly; and I presume I ought to give you a lecture for not coming," she replied, smiling sweetly through the roses. "I most surely deserve it. But you are aware one is never certain of a physician.—His time is not always at his own command, and you must be sure that only very pressing engagements could keep me from this dearer one." He blushed as he said these words, though he found it no hard task to seek the lips of the lovely girl. Dr. Peters, Mary Norris and "her Charley" danced not many months afterward at the wedding of Mary Frazier and Dr. Collins, and who could not help drawing comparisons between the two, and most favorable to his own sweet, gentle wife. And as the years go by he never ceases to thank fate for the rare gift bestowed upon him in the dark. Determined to Sing. MR. GLOVER, who lived in the village of S. in Connecticut, was a rich man, and as profane and rough as he was rich. But if his character was rough, his voice was still rougher; and when at times he broke out suddenly in church and tried to help the singers the effect was terrible, and almost made the men swear in the midst of a hymn. It came to pass that the old-fashioned Presbyterian Church in S. needed remodeling. Mr. Glover headed the subscription list with \$500, which was a large sum for those days. The church was at length finished, and a day appointed for its rededication. When the day arrived the church was packed with people. Six white-crowned, dignified clergymen occupied the pulpit, and Mr. Glover occupied his old seat in one of the corner pews at the right of the preachers. The choir had prepared themselves by a three weeks' rehearsal for the event, and had arranged to open the exercises with a "set piece." Now, the gentle Mr. Glover never became "acquainted with a tune" in his life, and hence the strange one selected by the choir was quite as familiar as any other. The singers began, and Mr. Glover joined them with a loud voice, but instead of helping them he broke them down.—Rev. Mr. Barnhart, the pastor of the church, without looking at Mr. G., arose and remarked that he trusted the congregation would refrain from singing the opening anthem, as it was one the choir had been practicing, and they alone were acquainted with it. As he said this he was careful not to look at the source of annoyance.—In fact, he gazed solemnly and steadfastly at a fly on the ceiling, but Mr. Glover knew whom the preacher meant, and he looked defiantly toward the pulpit. The choir supposing the way clear this time commenced again, "I was glad when they said," &c. Brother Glover, with a roar like a whole herd of "bulls of Bashan," bellowed forth, "I was glad." He tried for he was mad, and again the singers stopped in rage and mortification.—This time the preacher turned and faced the disturber, and in a firm but mild voice said, "Mr. Glover, you are not familiar with this opening piece, and you only destroy the effect of it, and break down the singers by trying to help them. Will you please remain silent." All eyes were instantly aimed at Mr. Glover, who, returning the gaze of his beloved pastor, replied: "Look a here, Mr. Barnhart, I paid \$500 towards repairing this 'ere d—d old gospel box, and by thunder I will sing." A Good Likeness. A cattle dealer arrived in Paris the other day with the intention of having his portrait painted in oils. He applied to an artist near Madeleine, and in concluding the bargain dwelt strongly on his wish that the likeness should be striking and unmistakable. The painter promised that it should be so. "Indeed," he added, "I will appeal to the most disinterested judge possible—to your own bull-dog; we will show him the picture and see whether he recognizes you." Accordingly, when the picture was finished it was brought into the dealer's lodging, placed on the floor, and the dog was called in. He instantly ran up to the portrait and began to lick, wagging his tail, and showing every sign of delighted affection. The grateful dealer, convinced of the accuracy of the likeness, instantly paid down the sum demanded by the artist, quite unconscious of the fact that the "counterfeit presentment" of his manly features had been well rubbed with a bit of bacon. A Boston philosopher says that you want to look at men's boot heels to discover their energy. A slow, thoughtful man runs his boots over at the heels.

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