just thought I'd make it easy for you. You ain't a-going to tell me that you don't want to marry me, after all the attentions you've paid to me, do you?"

He shook his head soberly. "Why," he said, "I don't see how you could ever have thought I was! I only thought you was a good, sensible woman with no foolish ideas in your head, and I could come and go as I pleased and nothing would be thought of it. I never made any love to you, did I?"

"Not exactly," Sarah had to admit; "but you did appear to be fond of me, and I expected of course you intended something or other, or else you wouldn't have come so often. I'm awfully sorry if I've made a mistake, but—"

"Mistake? I should say you had!" he declared, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"Well," she said calmly, folding her hands, "I don't see how it can be helped, now; the invitations are all out. I expect you'll like me better, perhaps, after we're married. I ain't showed you all my best side yet. Of course, I'm sorry if I've hurried you too much. Perhaps I should have given you more time."

He stared at her in amazement. "Oh, time won't do no good. It ain't that, at all. I like you well enough; but—"

"I'll make you a first-rate wife, Uly," she interrupted anxiously. "Don't you think I would?"

"Wife!" he broke out. "Why, I got a wife and two children already in Nova Scotia. We've been separated, though, for two years."

It fell upon her, now, like a thunderclap. She looked at him with a white face. Visions of a jeering congregation appeared before her—she pointed out as jilted, she the perpetual old maid.

"What am I a-going to do?" she cried. "Everybody in our church, almost, has got invitations, and it's likely some of 'em are having dresses made this very day, on purpose to go to the wedding in. I can't bear to disappoint 'em. And I can't stand being laughed at for sending out a false alarm."

"I'm sorry, but I don't see how I can help you, Sally."

"Oh, you've just got to! I depend upon you, Uly. I've got to marry some one, if it's only old Jim the sexton, and he's eighty if he's a day. There's going to be a wedding on the sixteenth of July, Uly Gliddens, and you've got to provide a groom!"

"Oh, don't take on so, Sally," he said soothingly. "Perhaps we can find a way out of it. Let me think a minute. It is a kind of a puzzler, though, ain't it? I don't know as ever I had a harder one. But where there's a will there's a way, they say."

"I'll take any man, black, white, or yellow, who'll consent to marry me on the sixteenth," said Sarah decidedly. "I got my back up, now, and I expect you to put it through, Uly. You got to work pretty sharp, though. Folks will begin to talk, and I don't see how I can dodge 'em forever."

Suddenly Ulysses pounded his knee with a resounding thwack. "I got him!" he cried. "The very man!"

"Who is it?" she asked, brightening with a mild curiosity.

"Joe Cole, my room mate. He's a printer, and a mighty nice chap he is, too!"

"What's he like? Seems to me as if I ought to have a look at him before I decide," Sarah suggested.

"Oh, you'll like him, fast enough. He ain't got any outs at all, that I know of. Quiet, steady, temperate, and everything. I guaranty he'll do. Wants to get married, too! Funny I didn't think of him before! Why, he's talked to me lots of times about how he'd love to get married and settle down. But it seems he don't know any women at all. 'Fraid of 'em. Don't know how to talk to 'em, he says."

"Do you think he'd have me?" Sarah asked fearfully.

"Sure he would! You're as good as anyone, if he wants to get married, ain't you? He ain't one of the particular kind, anyway. He's always easy satisfied with his food and drink and contented anywheres as long as he don't have to talk. He wants to buy into his business, too—told me only just the other day that if he could raise five hundred dollars he could be took in as a partner. I'll tell him that you're well fixed."

"Oh, please don't!" said Sarah. "I wouldn't want a man to marry me except for love. It don't seem right to make a bargain of a thing like that."

"Well," said Ulysses, rising to go, "you let me manage it, and I think I can make a go of it. It may take some little persuading; but I'll get him. You see! But I advise you not to talk to anybody till I have a chance to fix it up. It'll save you some trouble with the church folks, and it won't do for my wife to hear that you and me were thinking of getting married. It would make people think it was funny. You see how it is, don't you? I hope she won't get wind of these invitations of yours. Well, good-night, Sarah. I guess you'll come out all right. I'll let you know how Joe stands on the proposition by to-morrow."

The next forenoon was a torment of suspense to Miss Abthorp. She tried to busy herself in cutting and basting her near-silk gown, but she could not put her mind to it. She lay down on the bed and tried to sleep, but it was impossible. Then she undertook to clean up the cellar, and spent three hours working fiercely among the boxes and barrels and bottles and coal and ashes.

As she was picking at her luncheon, the door bell rang. She tiptoed to the bare front parlor window and peeped slyly through the blinds, expecting to see the minister's wife in a green hat, ready to felicitate her upon the engagement. To her relief, it was only a small boy, smeared with printer's ink from his head to his boots. She opened the front door a crack and took in the smutted envelop he produced for her. As he went away whistling, she tore open the letter.

It was printed upon a damp sheet of paper, freshly pulled from a proof press, and so folded that a reverse copy—upside down and backwards—appeared upon the lower half of the paper. She read, with considerable surprise, the following communication, set in Roman Old Style ten-point type:

Miss Sarah Abthorp:

Dear Madam,—I shall be pleased to call upon you, respecting the proposition communicated to me to-day by Mr. U. S. Gliddens, at eight-thirty (8:30) this evening. Trusting to find you at home and agreeable, I am,

Yours truly,

Joseph Cole.

His Pose Was Picturesque, But Timid.

Miss Abthorp's relief was tremendous—she permitted herself to hope. As soon as the evening meal was over she dismissed the wondering Ezra from the house, with strict injunctions not to return till ten o'clock. Finally she dressed herself in her best alpaca gown, took out her mother's jet jewelry, and waited. Promptly at eight-thirty there came a ring at the bell, and Miss Abthorp found upon the doorstep, hat in hand, a slim, poetic looking man, perhaps ten years her junior. His hair was softly curling, his dark brown eyes were soulful; his pose was picturesque, but timid. He wore glasses, tied on with a string.

Sarah welcomed him effusively, and ushered him into the dining room, with apologies for the state of her front parlor. "I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Cole!" she said, taking a seat beside him. "I've heard a great deal about you from Mr. Gliddens. He seems to admire you very much."

"I suppose you were expecting me to-day, weren't you?" said the young man.

"I rather hoped you'd show up, yes. It was real considerate of you to send me that note. It ain't often I get a printed letter, and I shall treasure it."

"Fine night, ain't it? It's elegant out," was Cole's next essay.

Sarah firmly drew the conversation back to more important subjects. "It was real good of you to come," she began graciously.

"No trouble at all; I wanted to," Cole asserted.

"It seems you're a printer," she went on.

"Yes, ma'am. Do you know anything about the printing business?" he asked, eagerly.

"Well, I have had some printing done, as I suppose you've heard tell of, and a sorry enough piece of work it turned out, too."

"You ought to have brought it to our shop. We do first-class job and book work."

"I didn't mean that, exactly," Sarah explained. "I suppose Mr. Gliddens told you what a mess I made of it, didn't he?"

"Yes, ma'am. That's what I come to talk about. Mr. Gliddens has been real kind to me. He's a true friend. I don't know what I'd have done without his help."

"Well, never mind Uly. I consider that he's dropped out of the affair, now, and we can run it alone. Do let's have it out. I'm sure you needn't be afraid of me at all. I think plain speaking is the safest way in the end. You needn't think I expect any great amount of love making the first time, you know. There'll be chances enough after we're better acquainted."

Cole gazed at her admiringly. "Oh, it's terribly good of you, Miss Abthorp. I don't know much about women, and I'm afraid I'm always putting my foot in it when I try to talk to 'em. But you're so sensible and easy to get along with that I'm no more afraid of you than I would be of my own mother."

Miss Abthorp waited a moment to see if he intended to broach the subject of the evening. Instead, he gazed about the room slowly, taking in every detail. Then he said, "Nice place you got here, Miss Abthorp."

"Oh, so-so," she replied. "I expect we'd have to live here awhile, anyway. That is, if you saw fit to decide to take up with Mr. Gliddens's offer," she added.

Cole gulped down something in his throat, turned white, and sat bolt upright, staring at her, summoning up his courage. He brought it out in broken accents, in a flurry of resolve: "Do you mean to say, Miss Abthorp, that you'd consent to have me?"

She could have screamed aloud. She could have danced a tandango upon the mahogany table. She resisted a temptation to throw herself into his arms. It didn't seem quite time yet. So she cast down her eyes and said: "Well, I ain't said that quite yet, but I wouldn't be surprised if I would, Mr. Cole, in case you should ask me." Then, the victim of a sudden attack of coyness, she looked away and blushed.

Emboldened by this sign of weakness, Cole's courage increased. "Oh, Miss Abthorp!" he exclaimed. "When Mr. Gliddens suggested it to me, I could only say, 'Why, the idea!' It did seem so impossible. Many's the time I've seen you go by my boarding house on your way to church, and thought to myself, what a fine figure of a woman you was! So active, so business-like, so energetic! And it never entered my head that the time would come when I would be a-lugging pie and cake for you to the socials and have the right to! I've seen prettier women, Miss Abthorp; but I never see a better one, and if you'll only say 'Yes,' I'll be the happiest and proudest man on earth!"

He paused, exhausted by this tremendous effort. Sarah drew him silently nearer, weeping with happiness. His arm curved about her waist—it was a slighter arm than that of Ulysses S. Gliddens, but it was impelled by a temperament ten thousand times as strong as the iceman's. She allowed herself to relax with superabandon into his embrace.

"Well," said Sarah, at length, freeing herself, "I must say I'm glad it's settled. I confess it had begun to wear on me some. But now the grand question is, What am I to do about them invitations? Of course there'll be a wedding on the sixteenth, but not *the* wedding. It would be only fair to let folks know I've changed my plans about the groom."

"The sixteenth!" Cole exclaimed, with a troubled look. "Why, I couldn't possibly be married that day. It's my mother's birthday."

"What if it is?" Sarah demanded. "I've got to be married then, for the invitations are all sent out."

"But it's her birthday!" he repeated. "I always take a day off and go to make her a visit. She expects it of me. I got to."

"Couldn't you postpone it, possibly?" Sarah inquired tearfully. "Not even for my sake? I've set my mind on the sixteenth, and a wedding is a wedding, you know."

"So's a birthday. I don't see how I could, Miss Ab—Sarah. You see, I've always done it, and I'd hate to miss a time. Couldn't you put the wedding the seventeenth just as well as the sixteenth?"

"I don't know what I'm to do about the invitations," she said hopelessly. "They read the sixteenth, and I hate to waste 'em, and the addressing of all them envelops, too."

"Oh, I'll fix that," said Joe. "We have lots of just such mistakes as that in our office. I know exactly what to do. You just give me the list of names and leave it to me, and it'll be all right."

The next day she received by post an envelop containing a small pink card. On it were printed the following words:

Errata.

For "Ulysses S. Gliddens" read "Joseph Cole."
For "July 16th" read "July 17th."

And from that time onward the course of Sarah Abthorp's true love ran as smooth as treacle.