

HER CHOICE

By Belle Trimble Mattson

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Her eyes brightened as she sat alone in the flickering firelight. The cool greens and grays of the room took on a little flush, and her face shared it.

The next hour would decide her life; she was gambling with Fate, and there was a pleasurable excitement about it.

It mattered little to her which came first; the colonel could give her devotion, not to speak of his wealth and position.

The doctor could give her an equal devotion, and the companionship of a keen and vigorous intellect.

Jack did not count. She had given him the rendezvous only that she might complete her revenge. He was not really in the running.

Why should she marry again at all? But then, why not? She was



The Next Hour Would Decide Her Life.

young, and widowhood had begun to pall. It was a life-habit with her to rid herself of things when they palled.

A servant brought a card. So! It was to be the colonel.

Picking from a tall vase one of the long-stemmed lilies the colonel had sent that morning, she went slowly down, her soft white gown floating about her and deepening the dusky shadows in her hair.

A great tenderness filled the heart of the old man as she entered the bright room, with his lily in her hand. He came toward her eagerly; with old-fashioned courtesy he took her hand and led her to a chair.

He spoke of the weather and other trivial things. She watched him and listened. His step had no elasticity, his figure was no longer vigorous, the ring was gone from his voice, and his lips—

"It pleases me to see you with my lily. They reminded me of your fair sweetness when I saw them this morning. May I hope?"

He stopped abruptly, and she turned her face to his. She noted the flabby lids of his eyes. Still—

She opened her lips to say "yes," and in a moment was surprised to find she had said "no."

When he had gone, she went to her own room again. The lilies oppressed her; their perfume seemed heavy and weak. She buried her face gratefully in a huge bowl of vivid red roses, with cool soft petals and a spicy breath. The doctor had thought them so like her marked personality and abundant vitality when he selected them.

She rang.

"Send Mary with these lilies to old Mrs. Barnard, and take this bowl of roses to the library."

So, it was to be the doctor. Would he come next, or should she give Jack Farnham his chance first?

A nervous ring was followed by the doctor's card on the tray of the immaculate maid. She was rather glad he had come first. It would add a sharp little point to her remarks to Jack Farnham, if she had already promised herself to another man.

She ran lightly down the stairs. He was standing by a table turning the leaves of a magazine.

"Fine article that, on the chemistry of foods," he remarked, when the greetings were over.

She felt chilled. The chemistry of foods! Probably that was his daily diet. How professional he was! Those keen eyes behind the spectacles were likely at this moment taking her in as a "subject." She knew this was an injustice, but the thought came to her all the same.

Was he considering capillary action, when her cheeks flushed and her eyes brightened? She moved, impatient of her own thoughts.

She felt like an insect under a microscope. His presence had never impressed her like this before. Assuring herself of her own absurdity, she smiled back at him, and he, pleased that he had gracefully prevented the formation of ice in the atmosphere, went on deepening her impression.

Oh, it would never do. She could not sit opposite those professional eyes three times a day for the rest of her life. She would just be a widow.

She broke on him almost abruptly,

not answering the sentence he had barely finished.

"Dear doctor, I am sorry to pain you. You came for an answer to-day, and I must say 'no.'"

"There is nothing I can say? Nothing could change your decision? It will be a deep sorrow to me else." He spoke in a measured tone, keeping a firm hold on himself.

"No," she said. "No. But, believe me, I am sorry."

He stood up, very grave and white. "You will pardon me, if I go at once?"

Bowing over her hand, but not venturing to look in her face, he went out of her life.

She felt ashamed at the relief that came to her, when she knew she was not, after all, to be the doctor's wife. She sat, thinking still of him, when "Mr. John Fabian Farnham's" card was brought her.

"Show him into the back parlor, and say that I will see him presently."

When the servant had gone to do this bidding, she rose and stood before a tall glass. Was her hair right? This man must be made to feel her desirability. It must be crowded on him, and he must then be made to feel, what he had seemed a little blind to heretofore, that this desirability was beyond his reach.

Should she wear some of his violets? How nice Jack always was about remembering what flowers one loved, and all those little things that flatter women.

No, she would wear none of his flowers. They were filling with perfume at this minute that back parlor, where this masterful person was likely tramping about.

He was not tramping about; he was standing very still as she came into the room.

Tall, very dark, with a thin, keen face, his one beauty was his eyes. He had several years the advantage of her 30, and he bore heavier traces of those that had passed over him.

He did not seat himself, and his attitude seemed to forbid her doing so. Breaking resentfully through this impression, she sat down, forcing herself to say, as she tucked a cushion into just the right spot: "Sit down, won't you? It seems more friendly. And don't glower at me, I beg. It intimidates me."

Laughing a little at the idea of intimidation, he hesitated a moment, then came quickly to her.

"Thank you, yes. I will sit down, but I can't, I really can't, rise to frivolities in conversation. It takes a woman," he went on, a little bitterly, "to absolutely disguise every feeling."

He sat down before her, he took her hands, he almost crushed them, indeed. "Nell, you will come to me? You do love me? Is the love of a life not worth the taking? I have loved you always, dear—I think from the foundation of the world. Can you get along without a love that needs you so?"

Alas! for Jack. There it was—the old masterfulness. She would none of it. Could she "get along," indeed!

She drew back from him. "Thank you; yes, I am getting along very well."

He only stared at her, still leaning toward her.

"The love of a good man is an honor to any woman—"

"Bosh!"

"But I cannot accept yours, and give none in return," she went on, unheeding his scornful interruption. "My heart is in the grave with Herbert."

"Really, and truly?" he spoke slowly, as if trying to grasp it. "Do you mean that? You—will—not—marry—me?"

"No."

"I will say good-night," he spoke briskly, as he arose. His shoulders looked very square; his brown eyes had lost all the softness of a moment ago.

Hewing stiffly, he left her. She listened. The servant had left the hall, and she heard him pass. She knew he was getting himself into his overcoat.

Now he was going to the door. She leaped from her cushions. She ran. Oh, suppose he should get out before she reached him!

"Oh, wait," she gasped. He stopped. "Jack, Jack," she panted. "Come back. My heart isn't in the grave with Herbert at all. It is going out of the door with you this minute, and I've just found it out."

Why Glasses Are Clicked.

In answer to a correspondent who asks, "Will you finally settle the question why glasses are clicked when people drink a toast in wine?" a Berlin paper says: "Your question should have included beer. The ancient form is observed with that beverage as well as with wine. There are many versions, but the most logical is the one which is based on the supposition that a good drink is so worthy of respect that in taking it all one's senses should be employed. One sees the liquid, tastes it, smells its fragrance, feels its effect, and the glasses are clicked so that the sense of hearing may also have a share in the pleasure."



"LORDS AND LADIES."

A Pretty Flower That Is Common in the Fields of England.

I wonder how many times my little friends have read these words: "Consider the lilies," and then have done as the great Teacher desired: they should do. Over 1,800 years have passed since He bade His listeners to consider the lowly things made by His Father, and all through that long space of time how few have been they who have really studied and loved the wayside flowers.

Look at those broad spear-shaped leaves of deep glossy green, from which queer-shaped hoods of yellowish-green stand up. Within these hoods lies hidden one of the most marvelous of our wild flowers, the Cuckoo-Pint, or "Lords and Ladies" of the village boys and girls of England. The botanist speaks of it as the Arisa.

In the center of the hood stands a tall, purple finger which beckons to a small fly, a little creature whose tiny wings are thickly covered with hairs. It may not see the beckoning finger, and therefore in addition the flower sends out a smell like that of bad meat, by which the fly is attracted as fast as wings can beat to the open hood. Entering, he passes down a narrow passage, soon coming to a barrier of sharp bristles, the points of which bend downwards. Through these he goes, and finds himself at once in a spacious room along the floor of which is spread a fine feast of honey. He has an excellent meal, and thinking he will pay a visit to his ladylove living a short way down the lane, he climbs the walls of the room, and enters the narrow passage, but lo! he cannot pass out, for the way is barred by the sharp ends of the bristles he passed so easily when he came in.

He tries again and again to make his way out, but without success, and at last goes down again into the room below, where he indulges in another feast. Night comes on, and, snug and warm, he dreams perhaps of the glorious sunshine. Soon he is awakened by feeling something like dry rain falling on him; after a little time it ceases, and then to sleep again he goes. Once more he is awakened,



"Lords and Ladies."

this time by the sun shining through the green windows of his room. He climbs again to the narrow passage, and, strange to say, the sharp bristles are no longer there, the way is clear, and out into the bright fresh May morning he flies.

Resting on a grass blade overhanging a little pool he catches sight of his reflection in the water, and nearly tumbles in, so changed is he. From wingtip to wingtip he is covered with yellow dust. Soon he becomes hungry again, and remembering whence he obtained his last meal he flies straight to the beckoning finger of another plant. Passing into the warm room, he brushes off the yellow dust against the hairs which cover a lot of little boxes that will one day become first green, then red, and in which will lie the bright yellow seeds.

In the picture is shown how the flowers look as they grow at the bottom of the hedge. I have taken one of the flowers and removed a portion of it to show you the little passage and the room in which our tiny friend dined. Below the sharp bristles are arranged a number of small boxes with close-fitting lids. These are filled with the golden dust. Below these boxes there is a ring of hairs which protect another and larger ring of boxes lower down, containing what will some day be the seed. The little plant desires that the yellow dust from another Cuckoo-Pint shall fall upon the tiny hairs that cover their lids.

The flower provides a room several degrees warmer than the air outside, also a good meal, and it keeps the little fly a prisoner until the yellow boxes have emptied themselves of their golden dust, then opens the door by causing the bristles to shrivel up, and all this trouble and contrivance in order to obtain the golden dust from the boxes of another plant.

Does not the lesson of the dear Master come home with greater force? "They tell not, neither do they spin." "They think of the wonderful manner in which they so provide that their seeds shall be strong and good."

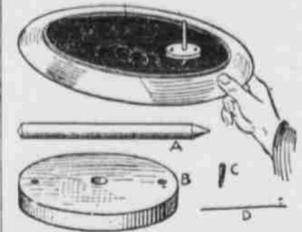
AN ARTISTIC TOP.

Easily Made and Will Furnish Much Entertainment.

This is such a simple and yet interesting little plaything that it deserves to be much more widely known than it is.

You know the little tops or "teetotums" that you make by putting match sticks in button molds, and spin with your finger and thumb. This is pretty much the same thing, only it is made of lead. One of the little leaden disks that dressmakers put in the edges of ladies' jackets to keep them down is very suitable for your purpose. Make a hole in the center of it and put in a pointed stick for it to spin on. Then make two holes near the edge, opposite each other. The holes can be drilled easily with the point of a pair of scissors. Through one of these holes put a stiff bristle from a paint brush, or a hat brush, and wedge it tight with a bit of match stick.

The object of the other hole is simply to balance the top, for in boring a hole you scrape away some of the lead, and if you did this on one side



Showing Construction of Top and Its Use.

and not on the other one side would be heavier than the other and the top would not spin well.

The bristle should be a little longer than the peg, so that it will press hard on the plate on which the top is to spin. This plate is smoked over a candle flame until it is black, and the top is spun on it. If the top stood in one spot the bristle would trace a perfect circle on the blackened plate and would go on tracing the same circle over and over. But it is not the habit of tops to stay in the same place, and by tilting the plate you can make the little top travel in any direction, fast or slow, as you please. As it moves, the peg on which it spins marks out its path as a white line and at the same time the bristle traces a beautiful series of scrolls crossing and recrossing this path.

The general result, explains Good Literature, is like the cornucopia scroll work on bank notes. Indeed, it is made in a somewhat millar way, though, of course, by machines that can be guided more accurately than our self-willed little top. You can obtain a great variety of beautiful patterns by tilting the plate this way and that. If you keep the top moving along at a moderate rate so that the scrolls do not blend together you can tell how many times the top has turned round by counting the scrolls, for each scroll corresponds to one rotation.

If you are of an inquiring turn of mind you have often wondered, no doubt, how fast a top of this or any other sort really spins. Of course, there are great variations. At the beginning it spins as fast as you can make it go, and it topples over when it is spinning too slowly to stand up.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT.

It Will Demonstrate How the Earth Was Formed from Molten Mass.

Here is an interesting little experiment showing how the earth, once a great molten mass, attained its present shape.

Pour water into a glass until it is one-third full.

Upon this pour slowly some thick oil, to the depth of not quite one-half inch.

Lastly, pour in, very gently, a small quantity of water.

You now have a layer of oil between



The Ball of Oil.

two blankets of water. Insert a rod in the glass, and stir rapidly in small circles.

Soon you will find that the oil has gathered around the rod in the form of a ball, and if you stir fast enough the ball will flatten at the top and bottom and bulge at the sides, taking the shape of our globe.

Fact, Not Fancy.

"If you please, ma'am," said the servant from Finland, "the cat's had chickens."

"Nonsense, Gertrude!" returned the mistress of the house. "You mean kittens. Cats don't have chickens."

"Was them chickens or kittens that master brought home last night?"

"Chickens, of course."

"Well, ma'am, that's what the cat has had."—Youth's Companion.

VIRGINIA'S LESSON

By Hilda Richmond

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"It isn't that Herbert is a bad boy," Mrs. Castle was saying, with a worried look on her motherly face, "or that Virginia is disobedient. They are simply too silly for anything. 'Mushy,' the boys call them, and the word fits very well. Instead of having a good time with the crowd as they always did, they prefer to sit around by themselves at parties and Virginia is getting so dreamy that you have to speak two or three times before she realizes she is on earth."

"Oh, well," said her sister, consolingly, "all girls have those spells. I remember how Bob Lane and I used to think our folks cruel and unsympathetic because they ruthlessly spoiled our cherished plans by sending us away to school. Virginia will get over her foolishness in good time and be able to laugh at herself. Don't take it to heart so."

"It's all very well for you to take that view, for your girls are too small to give you any trouble yet; but just wait a few years. Virginia's health and lessons suffer while she is moping around, and I really have to force her to eat when she and Herbert have had a little tiff. I wish they would fall out and scratch each other's faces as they did years ago. Then maybe this nonsense would come to an end. I always think of Editha when I see her, for she moped just like that when she was Virginia's age."

"Editha! The very person! Send for her to come and spend a month with you, and if that doesn't bring Virginia to her senses nothing will. It will mean a lot of hard work, but you will be repaid for that, I am sure."

In less than a week Mrs. Castle was able to announce carelessly at the dinner table that Cousin Editha and her family would visit them next week. Mrs. Randolph narrowly watched Virginia without seeming to do so, and saw just what she expected in the pretty face of her niece.

"Cousin Editha!" said Virginia, with a pleased look. "I haven't seen her since the day I was flower girl at her wedding. She was just 17 then—as old as I am now—and I was ten. Do you remember, mamma, how perfectly beautiful she looked?"

"Yes, she was a lovely bride," said Mrs. Castle. "Unless you eat more supper, Virginia I cannot allow you to go to the lecture this evening."

"How many children has she?" asked Mr. Castle. "Three or four?"

"Three," answered his wife. "Two boys and a baby girl."

The whole family had been instructed as to behavior and these plotters against Virginia determined to do or die during the weeks to follow. Even Rob promised to tear himself from the delights of baseball, if by so doing "Virginia could be made to act with a little common sense," as he expressed it.

A few days later Cousin Editha and her family made their appearance.

"Give me the baby, Edie," said a young man who had conducted two small boys in dirty blue suits down the car steps. "The brakeman will carry your luggage."

"Edie!" Virginia looked in disgust at the innocent young man, but her disgust changed to astonishment a minute later when her mother kissed the pale young woman with her hat on one side of her head and told her how delighted they were to see them all. Was it possible that this was the beautiful bride of seven years ago?

The long train, exquisite veil and white flowers with which Cousin Editha had always been invested in Virginia's memory faded away before this tired, thin woman and her little family.

"And this is Virginia!" said Cousin Editha, as soon as the boys had been packed in the surrey and the baby on Mrs. Castle's lap. "You're quite a young lady, Virginia, and a pretty one, too. No, Carlos, mustn't whip the horse! Jack, stop pulling at the lines! Those children were clean when we started, auntie, but only for a few minutes. I suppose I'll have to take the baby. She's cutting teeth and fearfully cross. Yes, mamma is well as usual, but she always seems tired. She helps me a little with the children and—Jack! I have spoken to you for the last time! If you touch those lines again I'll spank you as soon as we get to auntie's."

Virginia sat silent during the short ride. Cousin Editha's husband had walked with Rob, leaving the surrey for the ladies and children, so Mrs. Castle had the whole care of the lively infants. Mrs. Castle sat with her in the back seat and Virginia had the two boys with her in front, so there was little chance for her joining in the conversation if she had wished to. Her cousin's sharp, tired voice grated unpleasant on her ears as she remembered the soft, low tones that had responded so musically to the momentous questions the day she had been the flower girl.

"Edie hasn't been very well lately, but I think the rest will do her good," Mr. Race was saying to Mrs. Randolph when they drove up to the porch. "I've got to hurry back to the city to attend to some business, but I'm glad to leave the babies in such good hands."

Virginia hastened to her room to examine the extent of the damage two pairs of dusty shoes had done to

her dainty white dress, but her mother soon called her down to wheel the baby "while Cousin Editha rests a few minutes." The few minutes proved to be two hours, for the tired mother was not well, and the long car ride had made her worse than usual. She came down to dinner in a white wrapper that made her paler than ever, so Virginia devoted herself to the noisy boys till bedtime.

"A picnic for me? It's very nice of you, dear, but I couldn't go," said Cousin Editha when Virginia spoke of the plan she and her mother had made. "I couldn't be easy a minute away from Baby, and taking her along is out of the question. You go and have a good time Virginia, and don't worry about me. If I can wear a pair of slippers and an old wrapper, that is all I care for these days. When the children grow up I'll go to picnics again, but I'm afraid, not before."

"But we want to do something pleasant for you," said Virginia. "How about a party? That wouldn't be taking you far from the baby?"

"Edie always says parties begin too late for her," laughed Mr. Race. "She has acquired the habit of going to bed at eight every evening."

"It always shocks Virginia to have you say 'Edie,' but I tell her we haven't time for long names," said Mrs. Race. "If she had three children



Wheeled the Baby.

crying at once she would soon learn to save time every way she could. Yes, I do go to bed at eight when I'm home, for I'm always tired out. You'll find out what good times you're having now, my child, when they are all past. I feel old enough to be a grandmother sometimes, and I'm only 24."

"That's true," said Mr. Race, with a little laugh. "Whenever I see Virginia and Herbert reading Tennyson together I think how I used to sit by the hammock and recite 'Lucille' by the hour for you, Editha. I'll try to remember the old name for Virginia's benefit. I don't believe I could call to mind three lines now to save my life."

"I heard you quoting this the other day when we had to wait so long at the hotel for dinner," said Mrs. Race. "But that was only two lines:

"He may live without love—what is passion but pling?"
But where is the man that can live without dining?"

"We never paid attention to those lines in the old days, did we?" asked Mr. Race, who had reached the perfect good comradeship with his young wife which few early marriages ever show, but which Virginia thought horrible. "I remember we used to weep copiously—that is, you did—over certain fictitious heroines, and the same passages now would only cause you to smile."

Virginia had slipped away from the young couple sitting in the midst of playthings, little garments and crumbs, for a good hard think in her own room. Cousin Editha's visit came to an end before the lively children wore every one out, and when at last they went home Virginia gave an impromptu little party to celebrate the event.

The young people who had shunned the Castles since the house had to be perfectly quiet after seven o'clock every evening, came trooping back, and once more the big house rang with laughter and fun. Virginia was the guest of the gay, and once when Herbert pressed her hand under cover of the portiere, she only laughed joyously and said, "Don't be a goose, Bert."

Where Periods Are Dropped.

"The one thing in American print that puzzled me most when I first began to read New York papers was the punctuation," said a man from Hull. "I was especially confused by the multitude of periods used in abbreviating titles. In our papers at home most of those dots are omitted in that connection. Here such abbreviations as Dr., Mr., Mrs. and Rev., for example, are finished off with a dot; over there we simply write Dr Smith, Mr Jones, Mrs Brown and Rev Mr Green. Naturally, the difference in the appearance of a whole page of printed matter in which these words frequently recur is striking."