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Poetry.

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ret, and you are all alike. You make up your minds to anything, and there is no getting the notion out of your heads.

"Now, mother dear, if we are self-willed," exclaimed Midge, roguishly, "how did we possibly become so? We couldn't inherit from you, of course.

"Why can't Amanda have her company some other evening?"

"Well," replied Midge, slanting her head with an air of being very critical over her work as she bared her arms a rough place, "because she has already sent out the invitations."

"Mrs. Mayne's temper was instantly all ablaze.

"Get away from there, Margaret," she cried, "you are pulling that bias seam the wrong way; give me the iron."

But Midge was determined not to let the main question drop.

"You needn't worry about baking," said she, mildly, "because it would be so easy to order a few things from the confectioner."

"Don't let me hear another word about it, I tell you," retorted her mother, in high dudgeon.

"And you may tell Amanda for me that whoever sets his foot inside the front door on Wednesday evening, if he was the Pope of Rome, would be insulted."

Notwithstanding this edict, and the fact that Mrs. Mayne's displeasure had not been softened meanwhile by pretenses, tears or tempers, at precisely seven o'clock on Wednesday evening the girls had all gone up stairs to dress.

They occupied two small rooms opening into each other, and were obliged to share many things in common. Just imagine four girls forced to take turns at one mirror! Their add to this the unaccountable way which ruffles, skirts and ribbons have of getting mixed up, and you will not be surprised that there was some wrangling during the interesting process of toilet making.

However, there are some things which must be viewed from a purely feminine standpoint.

Of all the sisters, Amie's temper seemed to be the most roused on that eventful evening. Everything went wrong.

"My goodness, Eessie Mayne!" said she, scrambling breathlessly around, poking under chairs, the bed, the bureau, and even looking half demented into her handbox, "do believe you have got on one of my Oxford ties by mistake."

"No such thing, Amie," replied the sister addressed, who was at that moment subjected her eye-lashes to a mysterious treatment which necessitated the making up of a horrible face, "mine were together in a shoe bag."

"Come, do get out of the way, Es," another voice, Midge's, was heard complaining, "I want the glass to do my hair; you've been long enough putting on that black stuff to make yourself into a Hotentot."

"What I want to know, girls," said Amie, who had found her shoe in the work-basket, and was now struggling with an obstinate lacing, "is whether any of you had sense enough to light the gas in the hall?"

"Nobody in this family pretends to be smart but you, Amie," responded Cecil, saucily.

"Then go down stairs this instant and see to it," exclaimed the eldest sister, peremptorily. "Here I am, only half dressed, and every time there is the least noise it gives me such a start—expecting to hear the bell. I have a sort of feeling Mr. Pickens will be here early."

Cecil, who had to be ordered about, scolded:

"O, bother you and your old Pickens!" she threw a shawl about her and went hastily down stairs.

"I suppose ma wouldn't go to the door," continued Amie, "if the bell should ring forty times before any of us are ready—here, Midge, hold these crimping-irons in the gas for me."

In spite of all these wearying annoyances, could there have been possibly a sweeter, more artless face than Amie's when she had crossed the little treads of hair low down upon her forehead, had knotted her sliken tie and turned to go down stairs?

She was in good season after all, and had full five minutes quite to herself in which to collect her thoughts.

"Yes," said she, "I've made up my mind. I'll not be so romantic and all that, but I am sure plenty of girls would jump at the chance. I will tell him beforehand that he must not expect me to give up the glide and everything—"

hera the bell pealed through the house, and as Amie ran hastily to the front door her heart seemed to flutter in her throat. Her first guest was, as she surmised, Pickens.

He stepped into the hall, and as he hung his hat and overcoat upon the rack he glanced inquiringly about. None of these rough sisters were in sight—only Amie, looking not unlike a demy rosebud.

"He was a gentlemanly person of fifty or thereabouts, with beard and hair well-grizzled; nor in his strongly marked features did one discover the least hint of a susceptibility to rounded curves and bright eyes—yet these had taken him captive.

One glimpse of his face and Amie knew intuitively that a decisive moment in her life had come. Nor was she mistaken, for Mr. Pickens took the white hand she shyly gave him, held in close to his immaculate shirt-front and whispered, "Mine, Amie!"

The ridiculous ball-sounding-ones about the first kiss.

Later in the evening, when the glow of all was alive, with vigorous conversation and music, when everybody seemed to be entertaining everybody, one after another, the four girls slipped out into the kitchen, whether Mrs. Mayne had withdrawn herself directly after dinner, Amie was the last to go.

She knew that her sisters intended making a united appeal to their mother to forego her angry resistance, and to assist them in pleasing their guests; and she thought, "I am sure ma will be melted at once, if I can whisper two or three words in her ear."

Unfortunately, when Amie got to the hall door she heard loud voices in angry discussion.

From parlor to kitchen is always a sharp transition, but was there ever so marked a contrast between the two rooms as in Mrs. Mayne's house that night?

"There's no doing anything with ma," said Cecil; "she's just as obstinate as the Sphinx."

"Yes; everybody has been asking for her," said Midge, pouting, "and wondering why she didn't come into the parlor."

"To be sure—and I would have told them she was sick, but like as not if I did, she would come popping in the next minute, saying she never felt better in her life," added Basie.

Then Mrs. Mayne broke in angrily, "Don't want another word from you, Esther. I've taught you at your tricks, miss. Didn't you think I had any eyes in my head when you were giving Oliver money in the hall to-night?"

"Well, suppose I did," retorted Eessie, indignantly; "I can't see people coming to the house and go away without a word to say."

"That's just what they will do," said the mother, rapping her knuckles furiously on the table at which she had been sitting with her sewing. "Didn't I tell you there shouldn't be any supper here to-night? And as for taboring with your brother, and making him as disobedient as you girls, that I will not permit!"

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Eessie, nearly inarticulate with anger, "that you stopped Oliver from going out?"

"That's just what I mean to say," said Mrs. Mayne, her temper had now risen to such a pitch of exasperation that, notwithstanding the fact that since her entrance Amie had not ceased to pour gentle pleadings into her mother's ear, the good lady felt she must have some more vent than mere words. Her fingers itched to box somebody's ears.

Just as she glanced about from one to the other, poor unfortunate Oliver, who had been sitting on the lounge behind his mother, in swinging his foot, accidentally kicked his mother's chair. Quack as a flash she wheeled about on him and gave him a sound slap.

"I ain't doin' nothin'," he cried, sharply, clapping to his geography to hide the "Claude Duval" he had been slyly reading. "You needn't take it out on me because you are mad at the girls."

"Things have come to such a pass," said Mrs. Mayne, bitterly, "that I never expect to take any peace or comfort in this house any more."

"I just then came a gentle rapping on the hall door. Was some one coming out to be insulted? Was her mother going to shame them forever?"

"Let me in," said a cheerful voice, at the sound of which poor Amie's breath came quicky. O, horrible! If her mother should be disagreeable to Mr. Pickens!

Neither Amie nor her sisters need have feared. Human nature is many-sided; it has its curious instincts. Angry as a mother may be with her own flesh and blood, she cannot flout their failings before other people's eyes.

"Why, Mr. Pickens! is that you?" said she, giving him her hand.

"I was afraid you were going to be invisible all the evening," replied Mr. Pickens, "and I could not but hunt you up—besides, I want ma."

A shock came through Mrs. Mayne's frame. Mr. Pickens had told the whole story bluntly in those few words, and magically as a picture spouted from a slate were Amie's shortcomings wiped from the tablet of her mother's remembrance.

"I'm sure," said she, tremulously, "I couldn't wish her a better choice, Mr. Pickens, and if she makes a good wife, as she has been a daughter, you will be a happy man."

The little disturbance was all forgotten. The girls went back into the parlor radiant, while Mrs. Mayne dropped a few salt tears as she brewed some delicious coffee for her daughter's guests, and Oliver, harboring no resentment, sped to the baker's as fast as his legs could carry him.

It was not until the guests were all gone, and the girls were alone together, that Amie received her sisters' congratulations.

The gas flared over the bureau, piled with ribbons and crimping pins; bracelets and shreds of torn curling papers; a fringe of silken frizzlets had fallen across the powder box; then there were ruffles, bur-bras, cosmetics and combs. Nobody minded the disorder in the least.

Perched on one bed, arrayed in the prettiest night gowns under the sun, were the four girls talking and talking, in spite of the lateness of the hour.

"There will be only three of us to squabble for the looking glass," said Midge, sighing.

"And I suppose we will have to go on paying for meach that reason and do nothing about it, while Amie will have none of lovely dresses and bonnets," added Basie.

"You haven't guessed the nicest thing of all that I shall have," laughed Amie.

"Oh, I know," exclaimed Cecil, triumphantly; "your own way!"

sealed and addressed twenty-five or thirty dainty letters.

"Now," said Cecil, moistening the lips like calcey, "all we have to do is to get Oliver to post them. You go and call him, Es."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, out in the back yard sawing wood, I guess," said Cecil, ensconcing herself comfortably in a chair with a book.

Great readers of romance they all were.

When there was no immediate diversion offered in the way of promenade or ball, one or the other of the sisters had been known to pass a whole day at a time, oblivious of everything except the deeds or misdeeds of some hero of the Strathmore type.

"Look here, Oly," said Amie, sweetly, when her brother had come up into her room; "I want you to do something for me, like a dear good fellow."

"What's up now?" asked Oliver, the more gruffly, because he knew his sister had a motive for pleasing him.

"I want you to post these letters for me without letting ma know."

"Why don't you post 'em yourself?" drawled he, ungraciously, turning one envelope after another to study the address.

"O, you know well enough, Oly; it does not do for young ladies to run out on the street without fixing up now, it don't matter about boys a bit."

"That's what you always say," returned her brother, remembering the many times he had been left out at elbow because in Mrs. Mayne's system of household economy the girls had always to be supplied first.

But Amie knew well how to avert any unpleasant argument when it was politic to do so.

"Never mind—see here," said she, slipping a small piece of money into his hand.

He became perceptibly better natured on the moment.

"Say, Amie," he cried, still intent on the envelope, "I'll bet my head you are doing all this on account of Mr. Pick—"

He got no further, for his sister, turning red as a rose, hustled him out of the door. How had he spied that name, when he had put Mr. Pickens' invitation in the very middle of the packet?

Unconscious of these machinations, Mrs. Mayne was drudging away in the kitchen with that intense absorption in her work which denotes the thorough manager.

Amie found her over the ironing table.

"Mother," said she, "I should like very much to have some company here next Wednesday evening."

Mrs. Mayne, who had been addressing the petticoat just finished so satisfactorily, and hung on the clothes-horse to air, turned about sharply.

"Amanda," she exclaimed, "you are a fool."

Whether luxury Mrs. Mayne denied herself, she certainly did not deny herself the luxury of plain speech.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean by that, ma."

"I tell you it is not to be thought of—not for a moment," replied her mother, punctuating her sentences with vigorous thumps of the smoothing-iron. "I've got my plans all laid out for next week."

"What is there to do on Wednesday?"

"Mrs. Nesbett is coming to cut and baste your polonaises, and I want to get a good day's work out of her; so you see, Wednesday evening of all evenings, is the worst for company."

Amie naturally wished now that she had not been so hasty about sending out the invitations. However, regrets were useless, so she said:

"But, mother, why need that interfere?"

Her mother out her short peremptorily.

"Don't argue with me, Amanda. Go along and get your worsted work, and tell Eessie I want to hear her practicing right away."

Strange to say, Amie wasn't so courageous as usual; so she did not without renewing the forbidden topic, and having looked into the small square mirror hanging by the sink more from habit than from inclination, thought, "What a hideous complexion this glass gives me, and waked out of the room."

The moment she showed her face to her sisters, they knew she was disappointed. After she had detailed her conversation with her mother, and had been rated for not being bolder, Midge cried spiritedly:

"Never mind, Amie, I'll go right out and see ma myself."

She was the most demonstrative of the family, was Midge; so she stole up behind her mother and slipped her arm around that ample waist. Mrs. Mayne was too warm and busy to be in a tender mood, so, without turning about, she said:

"That's you, Margaret, I know your tricks; go along."

"You can't do this—go along."

"O, you never think anybody can do anything but yourself!" laughed Midge.

"Because it is so much easier to do a thing than to bother showing somebody else."

Nevertheless, Midge coaxed so admirably that her mother left her work and sat down by the table. A handy stroke or two of the iron having put Mrs. Mayne into good humor, Midge, who was company on Wednesday evening, began:

"Say, ma, dear, why won't you have my company on Wednesday evening?"

"Well, mother, I thought I settled all that with Amanda."

"Yes; but ma, dear, you settled it the wrong way to suit us."

"Oh, I know your tricks, Marga-

