

## A WOMAN'S DESIRES.

By Frank H. Irons.

The electric lights were shining on the margin of a lake and throwing brilliancy through many colored globes, far out into the water. From a pavilion, built out into the lake a little ways, sounds of music were floating. A band was playing there. A hundred boats were floating around. Crowds of people were strolling around the margin. The electric cars were bringing more people and taking some away. There were devices to catch stray nickels. A popcorn man, a lemonade fakir, a "merry-go-round," and other schemes known to those caterers to the small wants of people who are enjoying themselves. Phonographs for the people in the pavilion, each with a slot to receive the price of its services.

Outside benches close down upon the water where many were sitting. There were lovers there. Girls just beginning to see what they called "Life." Young men spending a large portion of their week's salary to please themselves and the girls. Maids and serving people mechanics and laborers, business men, bankers, and a millionaire or two. All sorts and conditions of men and women. Good women, who see the bad in everybody, and who suspicion everybody, bad women who are as ignorant as the good ones; but whose ignorance has taken a different form. The same thing applied differently; the same songs set to different music.

In the further corner of the last bench a man and a woman were sitting, engaged in close conversation. They had not the air of man and wife; they were not lovers. They were young, about 30, each one and well dressed; not gaudily nor loud, but in most excellent taste. "A lady and gentleman" anybody would have said, looking at them. Let them be introduced:

The lady first: Laura Estelle Chapman she wrote her name. Laura Morris she had been called by her friends before she had married Phillip Chapman. She had been a "bright girl," meaning that she had learned her lessons in school; had written somewhat original essays had talked well, and graduated from the high school with honor; had been vivacious, fond of company, and a beautiful, cheerful person generally. Her parents were poor and commonplace. There was not much to them, you would say. They worked, ate, slept and worked again. Father sat and read a newspaper, mother mended and contrived. The problem constantly before them was how to provide for and do their duty by their children. They were not religious people—that is, they were not members of any church; the children went to Sunday school or church, or not, as they pleased. They did not approve of many things that church people did approve of. They had definite ideas of respectability and they wanted to be respectable. They sacrificed some comfort to these ideas. On Sunday Mr. Morris changed his comfortable working clothes for a stiff Sunday suit, not so comfortable. There was a parlor in the house used only for "company," and occasions. It smelled of varnish and newness and was mostly closed up and inaccessible to the family. These were some of the sacrifices laid on the altar of respectability.

Mrs. Morris thought that she ought to go to church; that they ought to make Dan go; but Dan was so hard to get started, and there were so many family cares that the attempt at church-going

was finally given up.

When Laura was of age, she went to work in a down-town store. She was pretty and attractive. Ladies liked to "shop" with her. She did not flirt with the gentleman; but they always looked at her, and decided that she was a lady-like, modest girl. At a "sociable" of some sort, she became acquainted with Mr. Chapman, a traveling man, and, after a short acquaintance, they were married. Mr. Chapman was away from home a great deal of the time. His wife had books of various kinds during his absence. Improved her mind. Her hands were mostly idle, but her brain was being trained. The training was without any particular system. Her reading was whatever chance threw in her way.

Chance? Well, what is it? Life is many times a purposeless voyage. Adrift on a sea, bound to no port. Bored with the silence, or amused with the chatter of chance companions in other boats. Sometimes lashing fast to other crafts for a day, or an hour, meaning always to continue in their company; but torn assunder by a storm or dividing because of other skiffs that come along. One day there is a sail of unusual whiteness, a boat gaily decked and painted; there is hilarity aboard, and music and dancing. A multitude of craft are in the wake of this gorgeous one; they are crowding around it and following it wherever it goes. Then some stop astern; or, with sudden impulse, forge ahead; they separate and reunite and drift apart again. And there are boats floating bottom upwards, with a tragic story under them. These we do not care about. Let us pass them quickly.

And there are boats being rowed furiously in a circles lashing and splashing the water, and making it foam with their oars. At these we smile. And there are dismal boats, painted black with men and women chained to the oars and rowing mechanically.

Sometimes a man and a woman, alone in a boat; fastened to each other, each hating his mate, row along resolutely; one is pulling a stronger oar than the other, and they make little progress. They are well-trimmed sailboats that seem bound to a port, and these go by, sailing out of sight, and the objectless, pilotless boats rock a little in the ripple left behind; the occupants strain their eyes a little in dumb wistfulness, and their boats go floating, idly as ever, on the sea of chance.



Deacon Fowler—Lod, Brudder Snodgrass, what makes dat child's legs dat shape? Hu?  
Mr. Snodgrass—He waz born, Parson, while a "Rainbow" was in de sky.

Mrs. Chapman was young. She was more or less ambitious. She boarded in a hotel with other women who were not sure of themselves. They compared notes, envied each other, became intimate formed circles and cliques which were constantly undergoing disintegration and rehabilitation; and, being thrown much upon their own resources, because, as they would have said, "self reliant"; as the truth was, "selfish."

One day, as the young wife had just laid down a book, which her husband had brought home from one of his trips, a book which told of various sorts of escapades, a clever book, depicting "Real Life;" a vile book, with a painted cover, she was suddenly introduced to Mr. Hyde. Let Mr. Hyde, sitting on the margin of the lake, be introduced to polite society.

Mr. Hyde was in employment. He was a single man. Had never intended to be anything but a single man. Love, or love episodes; as the good and pure understand them, were entirely unknown to, and despised by Mr. Hyde. He was good looking, insidious, clever, and where women were concerned, unprincipled. This is a combin-