

## THE END OF HER WAITING.



It was a new sensation to Dolly—this perfect, beautiful happiness. It seemed to her that some wonderful new brightness must have settled down over the world.

And it was only this morning that she had dusted the old brown dress and tried to brighten it with a fresh collar and pink bow. Only this morning—scarcely twelve hours ago—she had pinned on the brown hat, with its dejected "droopy" bows, and wondered if she must walk about under it all the summer. And now it was all away back in the pitiful past.

For at noon a telegram had come for her. She was eating her lunch, so daintily put up by Aunt Harriet, when the messenger-boy came into the little back room of the millinery store and handed her a yellow envelope.

"It is all right. Coming to-morrow."

That was all; but oh, the meaning of it! It meant an end to the years of weary waiting. It meant comfort and happiness and rest and the fulfillment of countless lovely dreams.

And meant that an heir had been found at last by the puzzled lawyers, and that the fortune of the old Western miner would no longer go begging for some one to use it. For the miner's will had called for "the son of my friend Garrison Brent," and Robert was the fortunate man.

Dolly's hands were not quite steady that afternoon, when she fitted one after another of the pretty hats over her cousin Kitty's yellow bangs, and Kitty was hard to please.

"You ain't interested, Dolly; your eyes are dreamy. Do you know Robert is coming home? Amy told me; they had a telegram. He is the heir; isn't he rich? But he's had a hard time taking care of his mother and sisters and Mrs. Brown's children. That one is a little too close; try a flaring brim."

Dolly bought another hat and patiently laid the blue feathers around it.

"Maybe you'll be getting married now," Kitty said, smiling under the drooping plumes, "now that Robert is a rich man."

Dolly flushed and bent over the hats on the counter.

"It looks like it's time," Kitty went on, "if you are engaged, as people say. But long engagements rarely ever end in marriage, mother says. Yes, this one will do. Get it ready by Sunday, Dolly; and I nearly forgot—mother told me to ask if Aunt Harriet is through with her headache."

But it was not of her pretty cousin that Dolly thought now, as she lay in the hammock under the low spreading magnolia-tree down by the gate. She was resting and thinking of the blessedness of this new world that had formed itself about her—the world that held Robert all her own, and a home that she would make beautiful for him.

It was twenty years since Robert, standing by her under this very tree, all in blossom then, had told her the sweet story that every maiden must hear. Twenty years! She had been a slip of a girl then, awkwardly conscious of her first long dress; and Robert, a boy scarcely older than herself, had blushed and stammered over the story that is never easy to tell.

And then his father had died, and his mother and sisters; and later on

a family of little orphaned nephews and nieces had been left to him.

Dolly was the first to say they must wait. She could see how impossible it would be for Robert to take care of them all. He left school and worked bravely on the old farm, and the waiting had gone on.

So twenty years crept away. Dolly had remained in her aunt's home, helping with the children at first, and afterward working down town; for her aunt's daughters needed everything, now that they were grown up, and Dolly was used to looking out for herself.

And now the waiting was over at last, and she would be Robert's wife. She would rather have waited for this



"IT'S AGAINST THE RULES, MISS DOLLY," HE SAID.

than to have been a queen long ago. It seemed to her that the very leaves knew and trembled, as she did, with joy; and the stars twinkled down between them as if they, too, knew all about it.

The town clock struck ten and Patty and Ben came in from the reading club. They always lingered a little at the gate, as the manner of lovers is, you know.

Dolly smiled as the soft murmur of their voices came to her. She wondered if the poor young things would ever be as happy as she was then!

And then, as they walked slowly up the path, words began to grow out of the soft murmur.

"Bob Brent has struck it, they say," Bob remarked in his elegant way, and Patty replied mournfully:

"Ah, yes. How sorry I am for Dolly! Poor faithful, loving Dolly!"

"Sorry? Why isn't she in it? I thought they were—"

"Why, Ben," Patty broke in, with tears in her little babyish voice, "can't you see that Dolly is only a faded, middle-aged woman now, while Robert is in his prime—the handsomest man in town? And haven't you noticed how he admires Kitty? It was all well enough when he couldn't marry; but now—"

But the words were indistinct again; Dolly heard no more.

She had risen from the hammock and was standing, white and still, in the glare of the electric light. The stars were mocking her now above the lower light, and breezes were whispering of the twenty years that had rolled over her, carrying her freshness away.

Ben saw her there when he came down to the gate, and bowed with a cheery, "Good night, Miss Dolly," and went whistling his newest favorite down the street.

Then Dolly crept up to her room. "And I would have let him do it! I never would have thought of the change. Oh, the shame, the humiliation of it! To think that I, a faded middle-aged woman, would have held him to the promise made to a fair young girl twenty long years ago! He was too true and noble to let me know, too tender to hurt me. If only I had seen! It is all so different with women, but I never thought of it before. It would not

matter to me how changed Robert might be; I'd love him only the more, if he needed more. But he is grandly handsome and—and he must have a young, pretty wife. It is best, I see that—best for Robert and for her and for me; for I couldn't bear to have him sorry or—or ashamed."

She loosed her dress at the throat and pressed her hands against her temples.

"He mustn't be ashamed of his—wife, dear, faithful Robert. He must be happy, now that the world is brighter for him. I can bear it—for him."

And then she wrote a letter, and, when it was finished, she knelt by her bedside; and the stars twinkled in and the breeze fanned her pale, calm face. Faded? Oh, the beauty of it as she knelt there giving up all she held dear. What are dimples and all fresh prettiness compared to a beauty like that? You only get the soul after these are gone.

In the morning before any of the household was awake she took the letter and carried it out to the mailbox on the corner; and then she went to the hammock under the magnolia and watched the sun rise down at the end of the cross street.

Presently the gate latch clicked, and then a pair of strong arms folded themselves about her and her head was on Robert's broad shoulder, and he was telling her how he had longed for her, and what an age the last week had been.

"You would have been sorry for me, Dolly," he was saying; "for in my hurry getting off, I left your last photograph in the pocket of the coat I'd been wearing, and there was only the childish little thing taken twenty years ago. Forgive me, dear, but it's more like your little silly-faced Cousin Kitty than like you. There, don't be vexed—I know you are not very like her now; but, between us, I believe you were in those first days, though it is hard to think of my beautiful full-blown rose as anything less lovely and sweet than she is now. But you will soon be my very own, Dolly, and I shan't be missing a photograph when I have you."

Dolly drew her breath. She was in the new world again.

"Do you really want me, Robert?" she asked, a glad light in her dark-blue eyes.

"I'll show you pretty soon. Want you? Oh, Dolly!" and then he went on, laughing happily as he told her of his plan.

"I'm coming to-night with Mr. Sims, and I'm going to claim my wife and take her away with me. What a jolly tour ours shall be! Yes, I know there is always trouble about clothes and things; but we won't let that make the waiting longer. Put on the little blue frock and come away with me. I want you, and I've waited twenty years; and now I must hurry to mother and Amy and the small army of young people. I'll come for my wife at 9, Dolly. Will she be ready?"

What could she say but yes. And then how her happy eyes followed him as long as his broad shoulders were in sight!

She stood by the gate until the postman came to take up the mail, and then she flew out to him and begged for the letter she had dropped through the slot an hour ago.

"It's against the rules, Miss Dolly," he said; but she held out her hand and lifted her pleading eyes to him, and he laid the letter across her palm.

Then the breakfast bell rang, and Dolly went in to tell them that her wedding day was come.

By no one, not even by his widow, will the ill-fated Prime minister of Spain be more truly mourned than by Fracuelo, who for thirty years has been his confidential valet and who was quite as great a character at Madrid as his master. For whereas Donna Joaquina had notoriously married Canovas, who was so ill favored and cross eyed that he used to go by the name of the "Monster," solely to satisfy her inordinate ambition and craving for power and position, Fracuelo loved his master for his own sake, and served him with unparalleled devotion and fidelity. Imperious as was the Bismarck of Spain, treating all his followers, both high and low, in the most contemptuous and supercilious fashion as if they were mere slaves, and brooking contradiction from no one, not even from the Queen Regent, he submitted cheerfully and patiently to the exhortations of his old servant. Fracuelo was the only person in Spain who presumed to "talk up," to Canovas, and to give him a good scolding when he considered that his master deserved it, or needed taking down a bit. Canovas invariably ended by submitting to Fracuelo's objurgations with a kind of air of amused resignation and affected apprehension that was comical in the extreme.

Sutton & Hollowbush have invented a cough drop. They call it the S. & H. Sutton & Hollowbush, and it is a good one. Stop and get one on your way to the theatre. It will save you a spasm of coughing.

### Town and Country.

He—"Wouldn't you rather ride in the country than in the park?"

She—"No, indeed. There is nobody to look at one in the country."—Judge.

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