

that. My hopes may mislead me, but he comes here often."

"Yes, and he comes to see you, Victorine," I said decidedly.

"I am not quite sure," my half sister said in a low, dreamy tone. "Once or twice when I have seen him looking at you I have said: 'She is the object of his admiration. It is not I.' You have many charms, Persis. You are young, and men of mature years think more of youth than young men do. You are not interested, love?"

"In Mr. Summers? Only as a prospective brother-in-law," I said, trying not to laugh.

"I am glad you feel as you do," said Victorine. "To tell the truth, I am deeply interested." She paused and put her kerchief to her eyes.

"Thank you for your confidence," I said and kissed her.

Then Victorine got out her embroidery, and I resolved to take a run about the garden, for I had been busy all day over some sewing and needed the exercise. I said as much to Victorine, who answered:

"Very well, only, pray, do not go outside the gate without escort and do wrap up. Here, put on my cloak." She took it from the sofa, where it lay, and wrapped it about me, pulling the hood well over my head. Then away I went, walking briskly round about the garden several times, until at last I paused, and folding my arms upon the palings looked out along the road.

It was a beautiful night. The full moon was just setting over the distant hills. The whippoorwill was calling plaintively in the woods. A long eared rabbit went loping through the grass and sat on its haunches to look back at me, and then, as though convinced that I was more dangerous than he had thought at first, vanished in haste.

How sweet and peaceful everything was! I turned my gaze toward the Summers residence, and at that moment the door opened, a flood of rosy light rushed out, and I saw Harry and his father crossing the road. They paused, Mr. Summers spoke to his son, I saw Harry enter the gate, and in a moment more there was a rustling of steps at my side, not Harry's—it was Mr. Summers who stood there. The moon at this instant gave her last dip below the hills, a little golden haze remained and vanished. In the starlight, the shadow of the trees was very deep where I stood. I cannot tell what curious feelings crept over me—a sort of fright, though why the presence of that most respectable of gentlemen should have terrified me I cannot imagine. It may have been because there was something unusual in his manner. He came upon me stealthily, yet breathlessly, and in a moment more and without warning he put his arm about my waist.

"I have been seeking this opportunity for a long while," he said. "For once I catch you alone, for I saw your sister's shadow on the curtain just now. Really, I believe I am bashful. I ought to be past that by my age, ought I not? But I have no courage where you are concerned."

All this while I had been doing my best to escape from his arm, and now he took it away and folded both his own behind his back.

"Be free, struggling little bird," he said. "Certainly I am too bold, but perhaps before long—ahem—in fact, to go straight to the point, I must tell you that I love you; that I have loved you ever since I took you in my arms and bore you through the flames on that night which I can never forget while I exist. I have never met any one since those past days when I courted my excellent and lamented wife, then Miss Jones. My income is ample, though I am not rich. If you will share it, if you will be my wife, I shall be the happiest man alive. I should prefer making the offer upon my bended knees, but the grass is damp. I am not a fluent speaker, but I trust I express the emotions of my heart. My dear young lady, do not avert your face. Let me read my answer in your splendid eyes"—here he touched my shoulder delicately with the tips of his fingers—"in your eyes, my angel."

Meanwhile I had been transfixed with horror. Here was a pretty state of things! The man I had believed to be Victorine's suitor was offering himself to me!

I knew Victorine well enough to be sure that she was capable of dying of a broken heart if she knew it; that the remembrance that she had made those tender confessions to me would crush her with mortification.

Oh, this was terrible! And then there was Harry, whom I loved—who loved me, I was sure.

What could I do? What could I say? Some girls could have got out of it beautifully, no doubt, but I felt helpless.

"Look at me," he pleaded. Well, though I could not speak, I could look. I turned my head, my cloak hood falling back as I did so, and glared at him.

I shall never forget the expression of his countenance at that moment.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "Miss Persis, I—let I would not listen. I simply turned and ran away. It was the most ridiculous, childish conduct possible, but then it seemed the only thing that I could do."

"Miss Persis, stop—stop—one word—only one!" I heard him cry, but I only ran the faster, I knew not whither. I encircled the house thrice, hearing him all out of breath at my heels. My cloak dropped off. I did not stop to pick it up. Whatever happened, I was determined that he should not say another word to me. I knew I was behaving in an undignified manner, but this offer of heart and hand from the man who had given poor sister Victorine good reason to think he loved her terrified me out of my senses.

I rushed into the potato patch. I glided through the rows of corn. He kept close behind me. Among the melons I heard him stumble and fall flat, and I left him lying there. Then I searched for my cloak, found it and crept into the house by the kitchen.

door, and more dead than alive sought my own room.

I could not face poor Victorine at first, remembering her confession of affection for Mr. Summers, her belief in his love for her. Oh, she must never know of this, never!

Poor Victorine! As she had said, I was younger than she was, and I was prettier, and then I had a fortune of my own. Doubtless this had caused Mr. Summers' inconstancy. Greed is the vice of middle age. Never at her fiercest had Victorine so utterly disapproved of this man from the north as I did in that hour, and at first I wept for Victorine, and at last for myself, for now how could Harry and I hope for happiness?

After awhile I washed my face and went down to the sitting room. The lamp was put out, but the faint light of the dying embers on the hearth revealed Victorine sitting in a large arm chair, wrapped in my white shawl which she had thrown up over her comb as a Spanish lady wears her mantilla. Slowly she swayed to and fro.

"You don't mind the darkness, do you, love?" she asked.

"No, indeed," I cried. Little could she comprehend how grateful I was for veiling shadows just then.

"I put the lamp out that I might think the better," she went on. I have been indulging in the most beautiful dreams. I am sure, my dear, that married life must be far happier than a single existence. Once or twice I have had much attention paid to me, but as I contemplated the possibility of changing my peaceful condition I have sat down in silence and darkness, as I have tonight, with something over my head and asked myself, Will it be well? and the answer has never been favorable until now. In the case of Major Stibbs, I remembered that I had smelled whisky on his breath. Professor Bulworth, I concluded, would bore me at times, but in thinking of Mr. Summers

I heard him stumble and fall. I confess—I could only say, 'He is delightful,' and I have had such a dream, such a dream—it must have been a dream!"

I drew near Victorine and sat down upon a footstool and put my head upon her knee.

Oh, had I, I asked myself, by any coquettish glance or tone beguiled her elderly lover? My conscience should have been free enough, but I tortured myself by this thought.

"A dream," she repeated. "I sat just half asleep, and my eyes were shut. Then I fancied the door opened, and some one came softly into the room, crossed the floor, knelt beside me, took my hand and kissed it, then crept softly away."

"I did not even open my eyes. It was like that thrilling scene in 'Lord Charles Fitz James; or, a Heart of Oak,' where Lady Arabella falls asleep over her embroidery frame, and he, finding her so, presses a kiss upon her taper fingers. Oh, it was lovely! Do you think it was a dream?"

"A dream, darling, a dream," I answered, and unable longer to restrain my tears kissed her and bade her good night.

CHAPTER IV.

I awoke with a feeling that something dreadful had happened. It seemed to me that I must have been crying in my sleep. A moment more and my memory became active, but one can never be as tragic by dawn as by moonlight. Indeed there was a ludicrous aspect to the affair as I looked back upon it. Why in the name of goodness did I run away from so very respectable a gentleman? Why did I not thank him for the honor he intended and decline it courteously? Why did I scamper off like a wild colt, and why, when I did so, did he run after me through the corn and potatoes and other vegetables?

That crash in the melon patch went to my heart. Perhaps Mr. Summers had hurt himself. How unwisely I had acted! Still, there was Victorine to think of. However funny the race between Mr. Summers and myself may have been, he had no less been false and fickle to my beloved half sister, or even if he had not intentionally won her heart it was won, and this was a frightful state and condition of things. I was growing quite as angry as ever, when Aunt Emily stole into the room with her big, flat slippers in one hand and her other hand in her apron pocket. Shutting the door, she put her back against it and drew forth a letter which she then stepped forward and laid upon the counterpane.

"Mars Summers, he send yo' dis yah letter wid his compliments, an please, ma'am, Miss Persis, yo' kin'ly anser it right off, and lemme fetch it back soon as yo' is convenient," she said.

Upon the letter was written: "Miss Persis Carlton. In great haste and anxiety."

"Pears like Mars Summers don't feel good dis mornin'," she added. "Got a kin'er scratch onto his cheek, like de cat claw him, and a bruise jess dar, whar de ha'r don' grow onto his frow-head."

"Dear me," I said. "Well, give me an envelope and a pencil."

Emily supplied my wants, and I wrote across the letter, "Returned unopened," and inclosing it in the fresh envelope and addressing it said, "Take that to Mr. Summers."

Emily stared at me in amazement.

"Miss Persis know jess what she do in? Ain't made no mistake?" she queried.

"No," I replied. "It's all right, Emily."

"Guess Miss Persis don' know she wrop up her letter 'fore she read it," Emily remonstrated.

"Yes, I know," I said. "Now, take it to the gentleman at once, and don't tell Miss Victorine anything about it."

"Dess what Mars Summers say," said Emily. "Not menshun 'bout dat yar letter to Miss Victorine. Gib it to yo' when yo' was all alone, he say." Then she shook her head and looked at the letter. "Pears like letters was flyin' round dis mornin'," she said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"No matter. I knows my place. I've got no right to jaw," said Emily. "Only when dar is one askert in a fan'ly, dar is ap' to be two," then she departed.

When I went down to breakfast, I found sister Victorine in a very curious mood. She persisted in looking away from me.

Nothing could induce her to meet my eye. Moreover, it was one of her fancies to dress to match her feelings. Lately she had worn a variety of gay morning gowns of pretty lace ruffles, bright ribbons had set off her black hair or showy pins and combs of gold and coral. This morning she was attired in somber iron gray, and her hair was crimped flat upon her forehead and twisted low in the back of her neck. She looked sad beyond expression.

My first thought was that she had learned of my last night's adventure, but if so she was not angry with me. She spoke to me in the gentlest manner, in low tones as though I were ill. She had ordered a dish of which I was especially fond to be prepared. If she had been guilty of some terrible crime against me for which she wished to atone, though she could not hope to be pardoned, her manner could scarcely have been different. After breakfast as I passed through the kitchen, Aunt Emily sat on a low chair, with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hand, staring at nothing.

"And what is the matter with you, Emily?" I asked.

"I's dess steddin' what de matter wid my ladies," Emily replied. "Miss Victorine don' pay no 'tention to her twilite an pull down her mouff till she make a fiddle face an look like dey goin' to be a fewnel in de fam'ly, an Miss Persis, plain to see she been a-weep in an a-wailin' tell her eyes is red, an breaktiss come out mos' de same as it go in, an letters goes flyin' roun. Reckon de world mus' be comin' to an end, and Mars Gabriel gwine to blow his las' trumpet."

"Not quite so bad as that, Emily," I said.

"H'm," grunted the old woman; "even de gyarden opset. All de veggerles tromp down, an tracks like mules been drove through 'em, an de four fines' cantelopes an de riples' watermelon smash flat, an a tall hat squash flat, too, long side of um. Kiner cur'us whose dat hat, Miss Persis?"

I shook my head.

"Shore as I live," Emily muttered, pushing back her headkerchief—some-



"An a tall hat squash flat, too, long side of um."

thing she only did when much excited—"shore as I live, ef any norf folks give my ladies any sass, I don' hold my han's. I dess lynch 'em dead and frows 'em in de bresh, like dey was snakes."

"No one has offended us, Emily," I said. "Nothing is the matter."

"H'm," said Emily again; "I don' set up to be nuffin but a ches'nut colored nigger. I don' take no airs, but I has got eyes, an I kin see out of 'em good. Ef nobody ain't got no conference in me, after my nussin' 'em, an dere mas before 'em!"

I put my hand on Emily's shoulder, and she took it in her black palms and kissed it. But I could not tell her why I was sad, or what troubled Victorine. All day she remained in the same mood, and not once did I see Harry.

Another letter came to me from Mr. Summers toward evening. A boy brought it to me while I was watering some flowers in the garden. I took a pencil and wrote upon the envelope: "It will be useless to write again. I decline either correspondence or conversation."

I saw the boy hand it to Mr. Summers, who seemed to be hiding behind a tree some distance up the road. A moment more and Harry's head appeared over the slope of a hill. He carried a gamebag over his shoulder and in his hand held a gun. As he advanced I saw that his face was as long as Victorine's. He did not look toward me. As he came near the gate I saw that he purposely averted his face. He marched past me without a word or look, though his dog paused, whining and leaping at the gate to attract my notice. Offense was on his brow, sorrow in his eyes. He bore the air of one who had been deeply and outrageously insulted.

"Are we all bewitched?" I asked myself as I stared after him in a stupor of amazement.

A scratching and rustling above my head aroused me from my dazed condition. I looked up.

Victorine stood at her window, her

brow bent, her mouth grim. And from the long, black pole with its tarnished golden knob her weather stained flag once more floated.

CHAPTER V.

That Harry should pass me with frowning brows and averted eyes was such a shock that even at this date I cannot recall it calmly.

I supposed, of course, that his strange conduct and Victorine's despair were caused by their knowledge of Mr. Summers' offer of the previous evening. But why should Harry behave as he did? Of course under the circumstances we could not have expected the consent of Mr. Summers to our marriage, nor could I give myself to the son of a man who had so injured the feelings of my sister. I was prepared for sorrow, but we should not have parted thus. We could at least have said goodbye tenderly. To cut me out right was ungentlemanly, brutal, boorish. I decided that I felt nothing but contempt for him. My anger blazed high.

I sailed with firm steps and scornful air to my own room, gathered his gifts together and was about to make a par-



"Oh, my poor child, don't grieve so."

cel of them, when the sight of his photograph caused me to realize the fact that "to be wroth with one we love doth work like madness on the brain," and I fairly broke down. Casting myself upon the bed, I wept bitterly. The end of the world seemed to have come. After awhile some one stole softly into the room. I knew the form of Victorine's gown, the tap of her high heels.

She paused a moment at the table. She came to the bedside and sat down upon it. Her hand, which would stand the Virginia test of aristocracy—"floss silk would not stick to the fingers"—passed tenderly over my hair, rested gently on my cheek.

"Oh, my poor child, don't grieve so," she said. "A man is not worth grieving for. Take example by me. For an hour or so I succumbed to misery, but look at me now."

I looked as well as I could through my tear dimmed eyes. Victorine had transformed herself. She had dressed her hair high at the back and crimped it over the forehead. She had put on a very bright flowered silk with a lace fichu. She wore bracelets, earrings and her watch and chain. She had in her belt a Lady Betty rose from the greenhouse, and, whisper it low, she had brightened her color with rouge—just the tiniest dab, but enough to make her eyes blaze.

"Scorn him, despise him as I do," she said. "Say to yourself, 'He is northern.' I was shocked, horrified, sick at heart, but it is over."

"Thank heaven for that, dearest," I said. "But how did you know? I never meant that you should know." I paused.

"How you felt?" she queried. "Oh, you show it more plainly than you think. Besides, you weep, and you are packing up his presents."

"Harry Summers' presents," I explained.

"Of course," Victorine assented. "I am glad you take the initiative."

I merely hid my head again.

"I do not hesitate to admit that I have bidden adieu to happiness," said Victorine, "but I can be content. I know that I am doing my duty. Any communication between our two families becomes impossible. Of course we cannot blame one man for the deeds of another, but no matter—it is over. Sisters must stand by each other. Besides, fancy father and son quarreling for one lady! Monstrous—hideous!"

"Indeed it would be, Victorine," I said.

"Even now I feel as if I had heard the voice of a serpent," said Victorine, indicating with tragic gesture an embroidered representation of Adam and Eve, the apple tree and a boa constrictor with a simpering human countenance, which being the work of an esteemed ancestress had a place of honor over the high mantelpiece. "The disparity of years would make it hideous, even did you not suffer."

"Oh, never mind me, Victorine," I cried. "If you can get over your trials and believe me as utterly innocent of any intention to"—

"Why, what do you mean, Persis?" queried Victorine. "You make me feel afraid that you are feverish. Won't you take a hot bath and go fairly to bed and let me read you to sleep?"

"It is I who should pet you, Victorine," I said. But I yielded. I also imbibed some "yarb tea" presented in a fine china bowl by Aunt Emily, and I can still remember how I drowsed away and awakened at intervals to hear scraps of verses from a volume entitled, "Verses of Love and Sorrow," which Victorine read dramatically, with appropriate gestures. I also remember being wide awake all night and stealing down into the parlor to pace the carpet in a pair of knitted slippers and wonder if I should get over being miser-

able. Now and then I heard a soft little sob from Victorine's room, and once I heard from the garret a low groan and a murmured, "Oh, gorra mighty" as if sleep had been murdered for Emily as well as for "her ladies."

The moonlight was white upon the

land-cape when later I returned to my room. I looked through the floating lace that veiled my window panes upon the loom over the way. A light shone within an upper room. A tall, slender shadow kept passing and repassing, flinging itself darkly upon the white shade. That was surely Harry's figure. His father was larger, stouter.

Upon the footpath that ran before our gate I saw another form. Was it ghost or burglar?

It paused beside the gate and looked at our upper windows. It was Mr. Summers, in a traveling cap and ulster. As I watched him, he clasped his hands to his head, and with a tragic gesture of despair stalked away. Certainly we were all bewitched. Emily evidently held the same opinion.

"Reckon my ladies has had spells cast onto 'em," she said next day. "Use to have good manners. Don't have none now. Airly dis mawwin I an my Miss Victorine was gwine to de chicken house to fetch eggs, an long comes Mars Summers."

"Mawwin, Miss Cawton," he says, Miss Victorine jess duck her head, kin'er cool and keersless."

"May I be permitted to make a statement, madam?" he says.

"No, sar," she says. "Quite impossible."

"Madam," he says, "it are de utmost 'importance." She kin'er draw herself up stiff, like a guy pos."

"I mus' decline havin any more communication betwix our all's families," she say, mighty haughty. How she kin speak so to folks she have had to supper I can't stedly out! Then he say:

"You air unkind," and she say, "Good mornin, sah," and he go one way an she go todder, an I plum shamed. Dar, now!"

"Den what you reckon, Miss Persis; she jess got out of sight, she done—gone cry, Miss Victorine do."

CHAPTER VI.

Victorine and I were up in the great open garret, putting a quilt into the frame. It was a silk quilt, composed entirely of brides' wedding dresses. Sister had been making it ever since I could remember anything. It was much talked of in the neighborhood and was a very beautiful design. The dresses were almost all white or cream, though there were silver grays and pale buffs and lilac and blue tints where the bride was married in the morning and in her bonnet. All this was backed up by a soft neutral tint that seemed to chime in with anything, and it was lined with pink and was to be quilted in flowers with pink silk.

When any one in the county was married, some one managed to get a bit of the stuff left in cutting the dress worn at the altar for Victorine. Nothing was more common than for a bride who had no personal knowledge of us to forward the scrap herself, with her compliments. It was considered an honor to be placed in that quilt, where each bride's name was written across the center of the patch—in her own hand, if possible. The quilt had a patch which we solemnly believed to be a piece of Martha Washington's wedding gown in the very center, and about it other relics of the costumes of Revolutionary brides. Then there was a fragment of the robe of the Empress Eugenie and that of the Princess of Wales. I could make quite a catalogue of celebrated brides were I to begin, and, as to the brides of Virginia families, they at least were authentic, without a doubt. For a good while Victorine had been very mysterious about two empty spaces. When those were filled, she declared, she would call the quilt finished, not before.

As I helped her pull and pat and draw the delicate thing into shape, I saw that the corners had something written in them, and stooping read in one, "A hope that died," in the other, "A dream that vanished."

"You understand?" asked Victorine.

I shook my head.

"Those were to have been filled with pieces of our wedding gowns," said my half sister solemnly. "I meant—I meant"

She put her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed. Then she rushed to me and kissed me.

"I would do more for your sake, Persis," she said. "And I only did my duty. This is the last time that I shall refer to myself."

"For my sake?" The speech puzzled me.

"Don't think I regret it," she added. "He was the salt of the earth and true as steel. But my duty was clear, my poor wronged, ill used sister."

I began to wonder if Victorine were quite sane.

We stitched away in silence for some time. Then I said:

"Victorine, would you like to travel? Would you like to go to Europe?"



"We stitched away in silence."

"It would be good for you, darling," she answered. "Yes." Her eyes began to shine.

"I think Miss Mull can make a very pretty traveling dress," she said. "Get something showy, make yourself as handsome as possible. As likely as not there'll be a nobleman or so on board the steamer, and they always fall in love with southern young ladies."

Before you reach the shores of England, you may be affianced to a duke, and even if his mother is a duchess she cannot object to our family. Oh, dearest, I could die happy could I but see you wedded to a duke." And Victorine clasped her hands.

"A duke! How can you say such dreadful things. What have I ever done to you, Victorine?" I remonstrated. She did not laugh.

"I feel as though my soul were prophetic," she went on; "as though I were clairvoyant or had Scotch second sight. I can picture the scene. I suppose you would be married in Westminster abbey."

"At least I am sure I will not be buried there," I murmured.

"Ever so many bishops—perhaps the queen would be present. Is that court etiquette? I forget. And he would be 6 feet 3. They always are. And his mother, the dowager duchess, and his sisters, plain but aristocratic, and all eyes fixed on you. 'An American bride—is she not beautiful? I fancy I'll ar one say. 'From the south,' some one answers. 'Northern ladies never have such eyes.'"

"Oh, what triumph! I should like to see him when he hears the news—the false wretch! Why, I can hardly wait to start. I'm so sure you'll come back, Persis, duchess of—what's its name?"

"Really, Victorine," I said, "I should prefer a prince, if all the princes are not married off, and you don't mind."

"Dem Princes! Ike Prince de las 'lef' in town, an he done got put in de penitentiary yes'day," said Emily, her turban arising above the floor as she ascended the well staircase. "No count, poor white trash hull ob dat Prince family. Gambolin an goin on, an shoot in folks an kiten about, seekin who dey kin devour."

Then we both laughed—one can laugh with the heaviest sort of heart sometimes.

CHAPTER VII.

Sister and I went to work at our preparations with a will and were soon ready.

One evening I joyfully put away my needle, conscious of having taken the last necessary stitch, and went out for a walk. Lest I should see one of the Summers at their door, I avoided the road and went out by the kitchen way in a green lane that ran between our place and the next plantation—as good a place to pace up and down in as any other. As I came to the melon patch I paused and looked over the fence. There was the spot where Mr. Summers, in his pursuit of me, had fallen flat. What a strange, weird memory it was! Why did I run? Why did he run? It was so unlike him to do so. Why—before I could ask myself another question the sound of feet smote my ear. I looked up. A gentleman with a tall hat on, eyeglasses and a neat gray vandyke beard was coming up the lane at a great pace—Mr. Summers himself and no other. Again terror of an interview possessed me. Again I turned and ran. He ran after me. The race was swift and rapid.

This time I did not double, but kept straight on. Away went my hat, as did John Gilpin's in his famous ride. Had I worn a wig, it must have followed. As it was, my great shell hair-pin came out, and my hair, of which I had a quantity, streamed down my back. Still I kept on until, in ducking under a low bough, I met with Absalom's fate and was held fast by my floating locks. To free myself was impossible, and I perforce stood still. In a moment more Mr. Summers faced me. His first speech was fendish.

"I never was so glad of anything in my life," he said.

I scornfully regarded him in silence. "Miss Persis," he went on, "some time ago I made you an offer of marriage, and you, without answering, rushed away. Am I to understand that you intend to accept or reject my offer?"

"Of course I reject it," I said fiercely. He breathed a great sigh, apparently of relief.

"It was my duty to ask that," he said. "I should have held to my offer if you had accepted it, of course, but now I want to tell you that I made it under an utter misapprehension. In fact, I mistook you for your sister. You wore her red cloak, and I had left my glasses at home—you know I am near sighted. Until you turned I did not know you, and then you would not let me speak." Then he paused a moment and began to untangle my hair. "Disparity in years, great disparity," he went on, as he carefully freed my tresses, one at a time, "is an obstacle to happiness in marriage—hold that piece of hair, please. I regard you as a little girl, an obstinate little girl, but your half sister—catch that piece—lovely Miss Victorine, I simply adore. You take very little notice for your age if you never saw that for yourself. There, you are free, if you want to run away again."

"Oh, Mr. Summers!" I gasped. "I have been such an idiot! I might have known! I am so ashamed of myself!"

"You have done me a great injury. You have robbed my life of happiness," he said. "I suppose you told your story to Miss Victorine? She turns from me with scorn and evidently detests me. She has strong feelings, Miss Persis. A girl of your age and temperament cannot comprehend an attachment which could conquer, as regards each other, such strong sectional prejudices as were ours."

"Say anything, Mr. Summers. I deserve it," I said, "but I have never told Victorine anything, and I will undo the consequences of my folly. I am sure it will not be difficult."

"Ah, I am afraid it will," Mr. Summers replied, turning dejectedly away. As for me, I fairly skipped home again, feeling that after all I might hope to make Victorine happy.

I ran into the room where she sat and knelt down beside her and flung my arms about her waist.

"Vicky, darling," I gasped, all out of breath, "it was a mistake. He took

(Continued on sixth page.)