A LETTER OF REFUSAL.

"MAY I come in?"

The curtains from behind which the musical voice issued shook a little, but no one appeared.

The man at the easel painted away industriously, putting in a sunset sky with strong, even strokes.

"When our forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence 120 years ago——," he began.

"Please——"

A face made its appearance at the parting of the curtains, a face framed in dark, wavy hair, with big, shining eyes, made soft by long curling lashes, and a red, red mouth, just now drooping pitifully at the corners.

"They made all men free and equal," proceeded the man, never once looking up, "and since then a lot of ladies with abbreviated hair and petticoats have been struggling to make their sex also independent—and with considerable success."

"Don't be horrid," pleaded the red mouth, seconded by the shining eyes.

"Therefore, I was about to say," he went on, calmly, "I don't see how I can hope to prevent you from coming in, if you choose to do so."

She stepped inside, but did not advance into the room.

"I know you're going to be horrid," she said, plaintively.

He laid down his brush, and, turning at last, surveyed her deliberately as she stood, her slender shape outlined against the curtains. They were burlap curtains, which she had painted a dull brick red ("Pompeian red," she called it), and which she had ornamented with a Greek border in yellow floss and hung in the doorway, herself, in spite of his scoffing and ribald protests.

They were pretty bad, those curtains but whatever their limitations from an esthetic point of view, they certainly made an effective background for the white-robed figure, and his eye lingered approvingly on the picture a moment before he said, severely:

"What have you been doing?"

"Why, the idea!" she exclaimed, indignantly drawing her figure up to its full height and flashing a protesting glance at him from under her long lashes.

"I notice that you generally take it for granted that I'm going to be horrid when you've been particularly horrid yourself," he observed blandly.

She did not reply to this daring remark, but, crossing the room to the mantel, carefully selected an especially ugly bulldog pipe from the collection it contained. This she filled, with practiced fingers, from a battered tobacco jar that stood near, and then, crossing to the easel, offered it to the man with a most bewitching little air of coaxing humility.

"My dear young woman," he cried, waving the offering away sternly, "do I look like a man who would accept a bribe? Do my features bear the imprint of vulnerable virtue, that you should thus seek to gain my favorable judgment for your nefarious goings-on by such a palpable——"

He said no more, for just then the stem of the pipe was dexterously inserted between his teeth, and, deftly striking a match on the broad sole of his shoe, conveniently presented to her by the careless attitude of its owner, the girl applied it to the tobacco in the pipe bowl.

In spite of himself, he closed his teeth on the stem and drew a long breath, and as the first cloud of aromatic vapor rose to his nostrils his features relaxed.

"Well, who is it?" he asked, as the girl seated herself on a hassock and fixed her eyes on him appealingly.

"It's—it's—Hinsdale," she replied, dolefully.

"Hinsdale. Why I thought we disposed of Hinsdale three weeks ago, and since then—let me see—there was Smith and Devereux and how many others?"

"Oh, never mind the others," she cried, petulantly. "It's Hinsdale now. We did dispose of him—or at least, I thought we had—and I'm sure that letter I wrote——"

"Ah, did you write to him, too?" he asked, puffing a big cloud of smoke over his sunset and watching the effect of its vivid hues shining through the clouds of grayish vapor with an artist's delighted appreciation of color.

"Oh, well—the letter you wrote, then," she said. "Though I'm sure you didn't do it all; you only helped me."

"Oh, yes," he answered indolently. "But Hinsdale—he's broken out again?"

"Yes, worse than ever," and she sighed dismally, "and I want you to help me write him another letter—one that will fix it so he'll understand there's no hope—no possibility—I mean—of my ever being anything more to him——" here she floundered and broke quite down.

"Can't do it to-day," he said, decidedly. "I've got to get this picture done to-morrow—order, you know—and it'll be a scratch if I manage to do it. It means painting all night as it is."

"Oh, John, you must," she cried, eagerly. "I've just got to send it to him this afternoon by a messenger boy or he'll be sure to come up to-night and make a scene or something, besides——"

"No, it's no go," he said, cruelly, taking up his brush. "You'll have to get rid of him somehow and come to-morrow——"

"But, oh, John," she burst out, tears coming to her eyes, "I—I can't come to-morrow. Aunt Maria has issued her commands—the fiat has gone forth—I'm forbidden to come here any more."

"The deuce you are!" And he laid down his brush and faced quite around in his astonishment.

"Yes," she replied, furtively drying a tear on one of the ends of her muslin sash. (Jean never could find her handkerchief, being always without pockets.) "She says it's all well enough for me to take painting lessons of you, though everybody knows I never could learn to paint. Aunt Maria is so ignorant about such things, you know."

"Yes, I know." Blowing a ring of smoke ceilingward to hide a little smile.

"And she doesn't mind my having a studio, if I'll fix one up at home, but she doesn't think it looks well for me to have one in this building and run in and out of here all the time—and so I've got to move to-morrow."

This time she forgot to dry the tear, and it ran forlornly down her cheek and fell with a splash on a study of the head of John the Baptist that lay on the floor.

For a moment there was silence, then John suddenly pushed back his easel and pull a writing table toward him.

"Well, if you can't come to-morrow, I suppose I'll have to help you write your letter to-day," he said, but there was an unnatural sound in his voice and Jean looked up hastily through her tears.

John's face was grimly set, however, and told her nothing.

"Let me see—it was Hinsdale, I think you said"—he went on, still with that grating sound in his voice.

"Yes," she replied, miserably, again having recourse to the crumpled sash. "And I think we told him, in our last, that we'd be a sister to him," he proceeded, nibbling the end of his pen.

"Something of that sort." And she flushed warmly, clear up to the curly waves of dark hair on her temples.

"Evidently the 'sister' racket won't go down with Hinsdale," he said, reflectively. "You might offer to be his maiden aunt, you know——"

"There! I knew you'd be horrid!" she exclaimed, indignantly.

"It's a delicate job," he went on, reflectively. "Are you quite sure you mean to refuse him this time?"

"Of course I am," she burst out indignantly. "You don't suppose I could care for a boy like him, do you?"

"He has a nice eye for color," proceeded John, drawing faces on the margin of the paper—faces that had big, soft eyes and pouting lips, strangely like the girl on the hassock, "and his drawings are wonderfully strong. He's a gifted fellow, is Hinsdale—the best pupil I have."

"Yes, he's gifted enough," she assented.

"I've often wondered why he fancied you," said John.

"Oh, indeed!" she exclaimed, flushing once more.

"Yes. He's a dreamer, you know—an idealist—and it seems to me some angelic creature a little too pure and good for human nature's daily food, and that sort of thing, would be more in his line than a little human bundle of naughtiness like you," went on John, cheerfully. "You'd make a fellow like Hinsdale unutterably miserable, you know."

"You're very kind," exclaimed Jean, crimson with vexation. "But I shall not make Mr. Hinsdale miserable. I have not the slightest intention of ever doing so."

"Ah," replied John, coolly. "Then the sooner we write this letter the better. Now—what do you want to say to him?"

"Oh!" she cried, struggling with her anger. "You are so disagreeable, I hate you—but I've got to have somebody to help me with that letter."

"Of course. And you really want to refuse him—for good and all?"

"Certainly I do. I want him to understand definitely that there is absolutely no hope of my ever caring for him in—in the way he means"—and once more she broke down, blushing but defiant.

"There's only one way to make a man understand that," said John meditatively.

"Anything—so long as he understands and leaves off being—being silly," she cried impatiently.

John made no reply to this, but after a moment's deep thought commenced to write rapidly.

Five minutes passed, during which John's pen scratched industriously over the paper and Jean sat bolt upright on her hassock, staring at the picture on the canvas. It was a pale watery sunset that shed green gleams of light on a wide, lonesome landscape, in the center of which a woman stood alone, gazing with desolate, hopeless eyes at the retreating figure of a man on horseback. It was painted with inimitable skill and a strange wild power that had made John Steele the most famous of the younger school of painters. What an artist he was and what a friend he had been to her! And now she must go away and perhaps never see him again, except in the class with the others. All those hours of merry comradeship were over—never to come again; all the sweet work and play together. A great sob came up in her throat, but just then John threw down his pen and she choked down the sob and rising, reached out her hand for the letter.

But he did not give it to her as she expected.

"It is a difficult thing to do," he said. "To make a man understand that no matter how much he cares for you, you can never care for him."

"Yes, I suppose it is," she assented. "But you have done it, I'm sure."

"Indeed, I may say there's only one way to convince a fellow of such an unpleasant fact," he went on.

"But you employed it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes. You may think it an extreme measure, though. I'll read it to you." And he read aloud:

"Dear Mr. Hinsdale: I thought I had made it quite plain to you when, several weeks ago, you asked me to be your wife, that such a thing was quite impossible. I certainly tried to have you understand it, and I deeply regret that I did not succeed, because this renewal of your offer can only result in added pain to both of us. Believe me, I am deeply grateful for your preference, but you will realize, I am sure, how hopeless it is for you to ask for more than my esteem when I tell you that I am engaged to be married to Mr. John Steele. Hoping that you will believe in the sincerity of my friendship, I am very sincerely yours,

"JEAM CHESTER."

The silence in the room could have been cut with a knife when John concluded his reading and laid the epistle back on the table.

Jean stood rigid, gazing with a fixed and haughty stare at some point on the wall above John's head, when he turned and confronted her with as little embarrassment as he would have shown in facing a new pupil.

"Well—what do you think of it?" he asked coolly.

"I think," she flashed out, "that you're the most conceited beast I ever saw."

"My dear girl," he protested. "I told you that extreme measures were necessary. It's the only way to get rid of him, and I'm willing to sacrifice myself in a good cause."

With great dignity Jean turned to leave the room, but somehow he was at the door before her, with his arms outstretched.

"You're not going to leave me, little Jean!" he cried. "I can never get along without you any more, for, oh, I love you—love you—love you!"

A second she stood hesitating—then, with a little sigh, she went to him and burst out crying comfortably on his shoulder.

"Jean!" came a voice suddenly from behind the burlap curtain. It sounded like the clinking of ice in a pitcher.

"Aunt Maria!" gasped Jean, in horror.

"Oh, come in, Miss Chester," said John, drawing aside the Pompeian red draperies. "We were just going to find you and ask you to come to our wedding to-morrow, at 12."

"Jean—what does this mean? Why didn't you tell me this before?" exclaimed Aunt Maria, aghast.

"I thought I ought to consult John before I told you," said naughty Jean. —Chicago Times-Herald.

FUNNY?

The Over-Critical Grammarian Spoils a Comic Story.

Under the title of "His Funny Stories" Harper's Bazar makes fun of the too critical person who is always on the watch for small errors of speech. Not content with being grammatical himself, he must teach every one else to be so.

"I want to tell you something funny that happened to me this morning," said Spatts, cheerfully.

"All right," said Hunker. "Go on."

"I started down the street after my laundry, and——"

"You mean you went down after your washing, I suppose," Hunker interrupted. "I imagine you do not really own a laundry."

"Of course that's what I mean," said Spatts, a trifle less cheerily. "Well, I had went—"

Hunker interrupted him again. "Perhaps you mean you 'had gone.'"

"Certainly. I had gone but a little ways when I——"

"I presume you mean a little way, not a little ways," said Hunker.

"I presume so," said Spatts, but the cheerfulness had all gone out of his manner. "As I was going to say, I had gone but a little way when it happened. It tickled me so I thought I'd just have to lay down and die."

"Lie down and die, not lay down, is the correct form of the verb."

"Oh, yes, I know; but those kind of errors seem to come natural——"

"Not those kind of errors, my dear boy. Say that kind of errors. But go on with your funny story. I'm getting interested."

"Are you? Well, I've lost my interest in it. I don't believe there was anything funny, after all. Good day."

"Now, I wonder if I offended him?" Hunker thought, as Spatts strode off.

Ouida's Writing Desk.

Ouida does not use a table for writing her stories. She sits on a low stool, with an ink pot on the carpet, and writes on her knee.

Many Hands.

A pair of gloves passes through nearly two hundred hands, from the moment that the skin leaves the dresser's till the time when the gloves are purchased.

Common sense is easier than nonsense. It is common sense to believe what you know; it is nonsense to believe a lot of unreasonable stuff that other people tell you.

The poet probably sings of the silvery moon because it comes in halves and quarters.

Some people seem to know everything except the fact that they don't know how much they don't know.

Although the gas meter never fails to register, it isn't allowed to vote.

DUCKS AND MUSLINS.

ELABORATELY MADE UP IN SUMMER GOWNS.

The Fashion of Former Days, Which Indorsed Simplicity, Ease and Looseness in Hot Weather, Has Been Upset and Completely Reversed.

New York correspondence:

SUMMER once upon a time was a season when the pretty girl could tuck herself loosely into a dainty muslin gown, tie a muslin sash about her waist, let a picture hat weighted with a rose or so curve over her brows, and there! To be simple and fresh, and either unadorned or adorned in a wild rose way—that was the trick, and a girl could save money toward a tailor gown for the winter. But the simple muslin cannot be worked any more. There must be a foundation bodice under the loosest and most careless looking blouse, and that foundation must fit with a precision as absolute as does the winter cloth shrunk to the figure. Then as to other details there must be a degree of elaboration that has seldom been excelled in gowns for any purpose—that is, if the muslin dress is to count as a stylish success.

If these points applied only to muslin dresses, the situation would not bring so general despair, but they don't. The same standards apply in general to other summer costumes, with modifications guided by the nature of the materials and the purpose for which the dress is intended. Take the white duck sailor rig that in past seasons was so useful. It was easily made, allowed a wearer to let out her belt several inches and still made her trim about the waist. It may now pass muster fairly well for an occasion, but it does not cover the duck requirements of the season's wardrobe by any means. This first sketch conveys an idea of what duck is supposed to do. It fitted as trigly as cloth, and the shield flat front of the jacket especially suited the material used, which was dazzling white linen duck. Beyond the applique scroll of embroidered muslin that finished the edge of the duck, there was a border of silk-dotted muslin, and the yoke of muslin was covered with applique scrolls. Muslin for such use may show colored dots or be all white. The skirt of this rig was of duck to the knees, there was finished with muslin scrolls, and below the duck a flared and full skirt of dotted muslin escaped.

The same change toward elaborateness is apparent, in lesser degree, in this year's linen gowns. For the linen gown to be shown here a rather simple model was selected. It is at the left in the next picture, and was sketched in a beautiful rose colored weave. Its skirt was flared by a foot flounce headed by and edged with rows of white wash braid. A jacket of white wash all-over lace elaborated the bodice charmingly and was new in design, giving the yoke outline a novelty. Such a jacket cut out in front below the yoke line to show a loose front of the under material may be made separate from the gown, though there is a fancy for closeness of fit that implies permanent position.

While the use of lace in summer gowns is a custom of centuries standing, the application of the idea this year follows the methods women adopted for cloth in the early spring. Lace is of the all-over variety, and drapery and curtain lace has been applied to dress designs. In wash goods open work embroidery runs closely after the effects of lace, and lawn scrolling on open work wash net or sheer muslin suggests the Renaissance patterns so highly in favor in other than wash departments of the wardrobe. This wash Renaissance is much used on wash silk gowns, and with good effect. The next gown shown is an example of this treatment. It was soft grayish blue India silk dashed with flecks of a soft dull green, a most artistic combination of color. The bodice was overlaid with a lovely wash lawn in soft yellow "Renaissanced" with scroll work in white lawn and perforations through which the silk showed. A valance of tinted lace falling towards the right side from the throat and a triangle yoke of tucked lawn completed an essentially up-to-date rig.

Black dotted white muslin is a new notion and very pretty. The dots are raised and often are of silk. Such a dress made princess and trimmed with bands of narrow black ribbon velvet is distinctly fashionable, and an insertion of a band of white lawn machine stitched in scroll design with black is pretty. The yoke may be tucked lawn, the tucks sewed with black. All these features were embodied in the next of these pictured models. Besides it is an expression of a recent fancy for an insertion of a material contrasting with that of the gown and flanked on each side with rows of black ribbon velvet. This idea appears in many different styles of gowns. This one was a tailored gray linen, its inserted bands of white duck on the skirt corresponding with the white duck waistcoat front. The little shoulder cape effect with its lawn faced collar and tabs took away severity from the gown, though it was simply outlined.

So long as hot weather lasts there is no danger that the overdress will increase greatly in weight. Just now in the heavier materials it is more suggestion than real, but the former appears on almost all skirts. She who fears to lose height from an overdress may modify the double skirt idea to suit herself. In the next model, for instance, the upper skirt of blue pique came almost to the foot. The edge of blue striped pique that showed below would add to a wearer's apparent height, as would the side panel of the same that showed to above the knee. Fashionables do not seem to tire of the yoke, and now that they may not widen the shoulders by elaboration at the sleeve top, they realize the value of the yoke that appears to be one with the upper sleeve. This is because the tight fitted hips displayed at the same time with the close shoulders show the average woman out of proportion, and make her seem narrow across the bust and shoulders as compared with her hip girth.

This difficulty, which ruins the appearance of many a fine gown and pretty woman, was nicely met in the gown worn by the seated woman of this picture. Its yoke was black tucked muslin unlined. The gown itself was black India silk. The scrolled edges and finish of fluted black muslin were simple and pretty, and the arrangement of the cuffs was new and tasteful. This model could be carried out prettily in any other color. For the yoke there was an under facing from the edge of the dress to a proper cut-out line, but this facing is sometimes a salmon pink, though the general rule is slightly to emphasize the top of the lining.

A skirt that is especially graceful for a house dress appears in the last of these costumes. It was lilac albatross cloth combined with silk muslin in white with a dot of faint blue. This combining of delicate shades is a pretty feature of the season. The sleeves were unlined, and the open front eton jacket was brought up to date by scalloped tab corners and braiding with black velvet ribbon. The belt was green velvet and muslin flounce front and blouse were lined with green. By choosing a faint rose lining the muslin over the bare arm would be in harmony, but many women would prefer it otherwise.

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FOUR NEW AND TYPICAL SUMMER GOWNS.

NOVELTY AND TASTEFULNESS IN EACH.

Street refuse in Italy is sold by public auction.

TRICK OF THE TICKET SELLERS.

How Circus Patrons Sometimes Are Cheated Out of Their Money.

"'Short-changing' or 'flim-flamming,' is practiced by an unscrupulous class of ticket sellers," said an old-time circus ticket seller, "the opportunities that the business offers being greater than that of any other that I know of. Everything is bustle and confusion, a man loses his head, doesn't think to count his change, and becomes an easy victim, when under ordinary circumstances he'd detect the fraud. I'll attempt to describe to you one of the commonest tricks of 'flim-flamming' on an extensive scale: A man approaches the booth, hunts in his pocket for change, and finally pulls out a $10 bill. The ticket seller takes the preliminary performance in at a glance and knows to a dead moral certainty that the man hasn't anything smaller. He looks at the bill a moment, then sizes up his cash, as if in doubt, then suddenly he turns to his victim and says:

"'Is this the smallest you've got?'

"The man tells him that it is. All of this has consumed but a fraction of a minute, you'd say, but in point of fact it has given the sharper a chance to fold the bill in such a way that none of the figures are visible, and there is nothing to indicate what its denomination is. The bill is passed deftly from the right to the left hand, in the palm of which is concealed a $1 bill folded in precisely the same manner. It is the work of only a second to substitute one for the other, the ticket seller apologizing all the while for his inability to make change, and the victim walks off unsuspectingly with $1 where he had $10, and the chances are that he doesn't discover his mistake until some moments later. And then he fails to get satisfaction, for, of course, the short-change artist denies the fraud emphatically.

"The ordinary way of handing a man short change in silver is beautifully simple. Say, for instance, a man buys two 50-cent tickets and tenders a $5 bill. Three dollars and a half in small change is placed in his hand hurriedly and he walks off without counting it. Eventually he finds out that he's 50 cents 'shy,' but it is too late to make a kick. The short-change man knows who to 'flim-flam' and who to treat squarely. He sizes up his man at a glance and can come pretty near telling whether he'll count his money or not before leaving. That's where his knowledge of human nature comes into play.

"Ticket selling is a profitable employment outside of any illegitimate gains. A man can always count on finding his cash $5 to $6 'over' at the end of the day. The per cent of people who get excited in the confusion of the moment and leave their change on the counter is always great. This overplus goes to the seller, and an economically inclined showman doesn't have to touch his salary during the month."—Atlanta Constitution.

LAW AS INTERPRETED.

A provision that none but union labor shall be employed is held, in Adams vs. Brenan (Ill.), 42 L. R. A. 718, to be beyond the power of a public corporation, such as a board of education, to make in a contract, as it constitutes a discrimination between different classes of citizens, and is of such a nature as to restrict competition and increase the cost of the work.

An act changing election districts after they have once been established by a statute based upon the last census and before a new census has been taken is held, in Harmison vs. Ballot Commissioners (W. Va.), 42 L. R. A. 591, to be in violation of West Virginia constitution, art. 6, sec. 10, which permits but one apportionment, after a census until the next census is taken.

A statute making a fire department association the recipient of privilege or occupation taxes collected from insurance companies and imposing on it the duty of disbursing or administering the fund is held, in Phoenix Assurance Company vs. Fire Department (Ala.), 42 L. R. A. 468, to be not unconstitutional on that ground, where the money is applied to a public use.

An attempt to commence an action in a court of record by delivering a summons to the sheriff with intent that it be served, which is made equivalent to the commencement of an action in New York, is held, in Hamilton vs. Royal Insurance Company (N. Y.), 42 L. R. A. 485, to be sufficient commencement of an action on a fire insurance policy under a statute requiring the action to be brought within twelve months after the fire.

Famous Divorces.

The Sloane-Belmont wedding in New York and the recent case in Washington where a man sent a check for $100,000 as a wedding present to his divorced wife are reminiscent of the most famous divorce case of modern times—that of Mrs. John Ruskin from her husband, the famous author and art critic. When they were married John Ruskin was threatened with consumption. His wife was a young and lively woman. Sir John Millais, afterward president of the Royal Academy, came to paint Ruskin's picture. He fell in love with Mrs. Ruskin and she with him. Mr. Ruskin saw how things were going, but instead of objecting he assisted his wife in getting a divorce. Then, a little later, he went to the church with his former wife and actually gave her away in marriage to Millais.

A household journal says that kerosene will remove rust from stoves. The objectionable feature about it is that in removing rust it incidentally removes the stove and the domestic sometimes.