

And Mr. Charles De Peyster Thompkinson felt clearly enough that this choosing was not a matter for precipitation. He could no longer hope to be 'friendly' with both; it must be one or the other, henceforth, exclusively. He must make his excuses to one young lady, but he knew that he need never hope to bask in her smiles after she learned the news that he had been to the theatre the evening in question with another. She would never believe his flimsy story of excuse. What made his decision doubly difficult was this thought that it must be a permanent one.

His thought turned first to Verbena. It was true that she was the smaller and quieter of the two, but then had he not height and *esprit* enough for both? "Besides," he said to himself, "she is a blonde, and it often seems to me that the psychologists are right in inculcating the principle of contrast. If she is a blonde, so much the better for my dark face and night-black hair. If her countenance is quiet and impassive, so much the better since mine is mobile." And he recalled how many pleasant evenings he had spent in her cozy parlor reading to her or entertaining her with his conversation, she sitting in rapt silence, or with open admiration speaking from every feature.

"Decidedly," he said, "I cannot give up Verbena."

But then the Durham, that haughty patrician beauty, she had many redeeming features, brunette as she was. The thought of giving up her swell card parties for the rest of the season was of itself enough to make him hesitate. It would be as if he had become suddenly ostracized. Certainly she entertained elegantly and often. Yes, and was she not the most stylishly dressed and the most sought after of any girl in school, and her escorts the most envied? There still haunted him the memory of a drive he had one day taken with her when he had ventured to call her Nelle and she had not rebuked him. Nay, it seemed to him she had looked not unfavorably upon

him. Besides, she had a brother—a large, athletic brother.

"No, decidedly," said Mr. Charles De Peyster Thompkinson, "I cannot afford to give up Dardanelle Durham."

But this left him where he had been before. He grew desperate. "For a regular dilemma," he burst out, "my fix is about ideal." At the sound of this last word a happy light broke over his face, and unconsciously drawing himself up and looking at the corners of the room, he murmured reminiscently a well known phrase.

Rousing himself, Mr. Charles De Peyster Thompkinson rushed to the mirror, readjusted his hair and his neck-cloth, pulled his cap down over his eyes, donned his flapping ulster and rushed palpitatingly from his room. He was not equal to the decision. He would leave it to chance to lead him to the elected one.

Many blocks had been passed before Mr. Charles De Peyster Thompkinson found himself calm enough to look around. When he did he was startled to find himself in the neighborhood of the residence of Miss Watson. "Seems to me chance has settled this matter mighty blamed quick," he said half regretfully, "I ought not to be in a hurry about this choosing." And he was almost glad to be stopped by a voice speaking his name until he turned and found that that voice was the voice of Dardanelle Durham.

She was driving by in her carriage, looking haughtier and darker than ever, all the more so through her proximity in his mind to the blonde and charming Verbena; but he was fond of driving behind such horses, and the seat beside her looked invitingly and temptingly empty.

Should he simply tip his hat and pass on to the house of Miss Watson, or should he take that seat? There could be no delaying longer. He must make his decision, that decision so momentous to him, on the instant.

And once more Mr. Charles De Peyster Thompkinson cursed the thoughtlessness which had rendered any decision necessary.

PERSONNE.