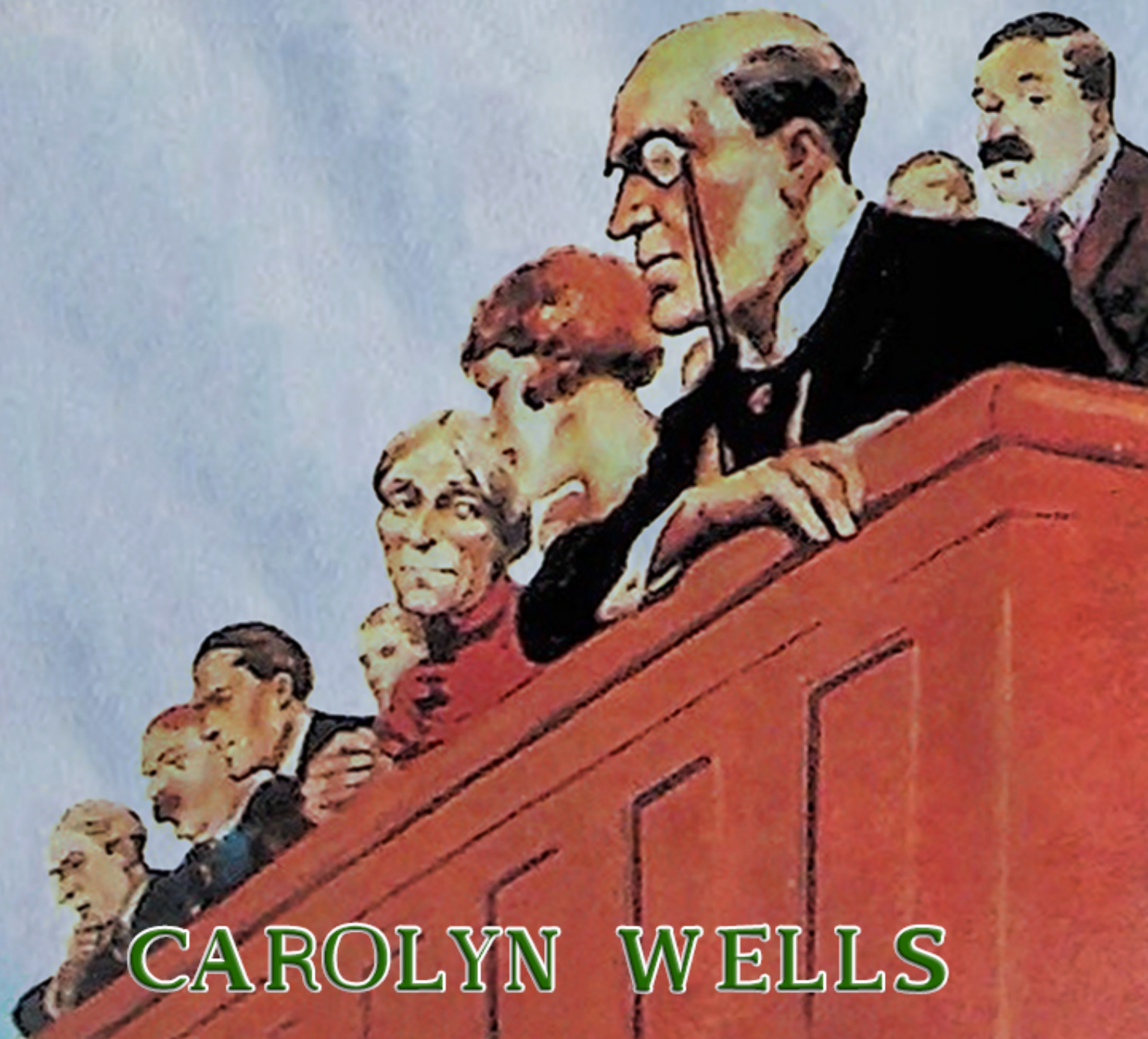


CLASSICS TO GO
IN THE
ONYX LOBBY



CAROLYN WELLS

IN THE ONYX LOBBY

CAROLYN WELLS

CHAPTER I

Such a Feud!

"Well, by the Great Catamaran! I think it's the most footle business I ever heard of! A regulation, clinker-built, angle-iron, sunk-hinge family feud, carried on by two women! Women! conducting a feud! They might as well conduct a bakery!"

"I daresay they could do even that! Women have been known to bake—with a fair degree of success!"

"Of course, of course,—but baking and conducting a bakery are not identical propositions. Women are all right, in their place,—which, by the way, is not necessarily in the home,—but a family feud, of all things, calls for masculine management and skill."

Sir Herbert Binney stood by the massive mantelpiece in the ornate living-room of the Prall apartment. The Campanile Apartment House came into being with the century, and though its type was now superseded by the plain, flat stucco of the newer buildings, yet it haughtily flaunted its elaborate façade and its deeply embrasured windows with the pride of an elder day. Its onyx lobby, lined with massive pillars, had once been the talk of the neighborhood, and the black and white tessellated floor of the wide entrance hall was as black and as white as ever.

The location, between the Circle and the Square,—which is to say, between Columbus Circle and Times Square, in the City of New York,—had ceased to be regarded as the pick of the householders, though still called the heart of the city.

People who lived there were continually explaining the reason for their stay, or moving across town.

But lots of worthwhile people yet tarried, and among them were none more so than certain dwellers in The Campanile.

Miss Letitia Prall, lessee of the mantelpiece already referred to, was a spinster, who, on dress parade, possessed dignity and poise quite commensurate with the quality of her home.

But in the shelter of her own fireside, she allowed herself latitude of speech and even loss of temper when she felt the occasion justified it. And any reference to or participation in the famous feud was such justification.

Her opponent in the deadly strife was one Mrs Everett, also an occupant of The Campanile, and equally earnest in prolonging the life and energy of the quarrel.

Sir Herbert Binney, an Englishman, knighted since the war, had come to America in the interests of its own business, no less an enterprise than the establishment of an American branch of the great and well-known "Binney's Buns."

Celebrated in England, he hoped and expected to make the admirable buns equally popular over here, and trusted to his engaging personality as well as his mercantile acumen to accomplish this purpose.

Not exactly related to Miss Prall, Sir Herbert was connected by the marriage of a relative. That is, his stepbrother's son, one Richard Bates, was also the son of Miss Prall's sister. This young gentleman, who, by the way, lived with his Aunt Letitia, was another reason for Sir Herbert's presence in New York. He had thought that if this nephew showed the right sort of efficiency he could be set to manage the American branch, or, at least, have a hand in the management.

And so, Binney of "Binney's Buns" had established himself in one of the smaller suites of The Campanile, had had his living-room repapered to his taste, had made arrangements for his proper service, and was comfortably domiciled.

The fly in his ointment was that young Bates didn't take at all kindly to the Bun proposition. For the chap was of an inventive turn, and had already secured patents for some minor accessories and improvements connected with aëroplanes. Without parents or fortune of his own, Richard Bates was dependent, so far, on the generosity of his Aunt Prall, which, though judicious, was sufficient for his bodily welfare. But Bates was ambitious, and desired large sums with which to carry on his inventions, certain that they, in turn, would repay a thousandfold.

As the only legal heir of both aunt and uncle, and with utmost faith in his own powers of success, Richard requested, almost, indeed, demanded advance on his inheritance, sufficient at least to put over his present great piece of work, which was expected to prove of decided value in aëronautic plans.

But such advances were positively refused; by Miss Prall, because Richard declined to accede to an accompanying condition, and by Uncle Binney, because he wanted his nephew for his Buns.

The recipe for the famous buns was of an age and tradition that made it a historical document in England, and, as yet unattained in this country, it was sought for by bakers and bunnery of repute. But it was not for sale. Sir Herbert Binney would establish Binney's Buns in America, and all good Americans could eat thereof, but sell the recipe to some rival bakeshop he would not. This state of things had made necessary much parley and many important meetings of Baking Powers. Among these were the great Crippen's Cake

Company, the Vail Bread Concern, the Popular Popovers and others of sufficient importance to get a hearing.

Genial and good-natured, Sir Herbert met them all, discussed their offers and reserved decision. He did not say, even to himself, that he was waiting on the will of one young man,—but, practically, that was the truth. If Bates would give up his fool inventing, and take hold of the Buns in earnest, Sir Herbert would put him through with bells on, would make him heir of the Buns and all the great English properties that the Buns possessed, and would do all in his power to make the life of young Bates a bed of choicest roses.

But Richard Bates had all the obstinacy and stubbornness of the born inventor. He knew he couldn't devote to Bun business a brain teeming with new notions for the furtherance of scientific attainment. And he was too honest and honorable to accept the Bun proposition and then turn to aëronautics on the side. Nor was a side issue of sufficient importance to satisfy his hunger for his own chosen work. He knew he could put up the goods that he had in mind, if he could only get the presently needed money for his experiments and models. If he could but make either uncle or aunt agree to his views, he could, later, select his own roses for his bed of life.

But Sir Herbert was as obstinate as his nephew and Miss Letitia Prall more so than either of them.

Her unflinching and persistent adherence to her decisions was clearly shown in the matter of the long continued feud. Not every woman could meet an opponent frequently and casually for twenty years or so, and pursue an even tenor of enmity.

In the same social circles, Miss Prall and Mrs Everett attended the same teas, luncheons and bridge parties, yet never deviated one jot or one tittle from their original inimical attitude.

Never, or at least, very rarely, were there sharp words in the presence of others, but there were scathing silences, slighting inattentions and even venomous looks that could not pass unseen.

In fact, they carried on their feud after what would doubtless be conceded by connoisseurs the most approved methods.

And, indeed, after twenty years' experience it would be strange if the two ladies had not attained proficiency in the pursuit of quarreling as a fine art. Not always had they lived under the same roof. The Feud had begun when they were denizens of a small country town, and, fostered in that nourishing atmosphere, had attained its proportions gradually but steadily.

When circumstances took them to the city to live, and, as if afraid the unsociability of town life might interfere with their hobby, the Feudists acquired homes in two of the most desirable apartments of The Campanile.

Miss Prall, tall, spare and with the unmistakable earmarks of spinsterhood, directed her menage with the efficiency and capability of a general. She was nicknamed among her friends, the Grenadier, and her strong character and aggressive manner made the description an apt one.

Her one weakness was her adored nephew. As an orphaned infant, left to Miss Letitia a bequest from the dying mother, he had been immediately adopted into the child-hungry heart of the old maid and had held and strengthened his position throughout the years until, at twenty-five, he was

the apple of one of her eyes, even as her precious feud was the apple of the other.

But hers was no doting, misguided affection. Miss Prall had brought up her nephew, as she did everything else, with wisdom and sound judgment.

To her training the young Richard owed many of his most admirable traits and much of his force of character. No man could have more successfully instilled into a boy's heart the fundamental requisites for true manliness, and only on rare occasions had his aunt's doting heart triumphed over her wise head in the matter of reproof or punishment.

And now, this upstart uncle, as Miss Prall considered him, had come over here from England, with all sorts of plans to take her boy from his chosen and desirable life work and set him to making buns!

Buns,—Binney's Buns! for her gifted inventive genius!

This impending disaster together with a new and regrettable development affecting the Feud had thrown Miss Prall into a state of nervous agitation quite foreign to her usual condition of calm superiority.

"Masculine management and skill!" she repeated, with a fine scorn; "because not every woman is fitted by nature and circumstances to conduct affairs of importance it does not follow that there are not some feminine spirits with all the force and power of the other sex!"

"By gad, madam, that is true," and Sir Herbert watched the Grenadier as she sat upright in her arm-chair, her fine head erect and her straight shoulders well back. "I apologize for my seeming slight to your quarrelsome abilities, and I concede your will and strength to fight your own battles. In fact, my sympathies are for your antagonist."

"Huh!" and Miss Prall looked at him sharply; for he had been known to express satirical sentiments under guise of suavity. "Don't waste your solicitude on her! She, too, is able to look out for herself."

"It would seem so, since she has taken part for twenty years in what is still a drawn battle."

"Let up, Oldsters," laughed young Bates, coming breezily into the room. "You know the main facts of the historic Feud, Uncle Herbert, and, take it from me, sir, no amount of argument or advice on your part will help, or in any way affect it. Aunt Letty will eat up your talk, and then floor you with——"

"Floor me! I think not! Binney, of Binney's Buns, is not of the floorable variety."

"You say that because you haven't yet really met Auntie Let in the arena. Binney's Buns would cut no better figure than, —let us say, Crippen's Cakes."

"Crippen's Cakes! Do you know Crippen?"

"Does she!" and Richard Bates grinned; "why, the Cake Crippen is one of Aunt Letitia's old beaux,—might have been my uncle, if——"

"Hush, Richard!" said the aunt.

"If he hadn't also shined up to Mrs Everett, the rival faction." Richard went on, with open relish of his aunt's discomfiture.

"Hush, Richard!" she said, again, and this time some veiled hint apparently was efficacious, for he changed the subject.

"I say, Uncle Herb, what about the Follies to-night? I've got a couple of seats,—and I know your tastes——"

"Front row?"

"No; couldn't corral those,—but good ones, in the fourth."

"Nay, nay, Pauline. I don't see well enough to sit so far back. Use those yourself, Richard,—take your aunt, here! But I'll find a seat in the front row,—in some front row, if I have to buy their bloomin' theater to get it!"

"Good for you, Sir Herbert!" exclaimed Miss Prall, who admired determination wherever she met it. "I'll go with *you*. I like the front row, too."

"Sorry, madam, but I'm not taking guests." He winked at Richard.

"Naturally not," Miss Letitia sniffed. "I know why you want to go alone,—I know why you want the front row! You're going to attract a chorus girl, and invite her to supper with you."

"Marvelous, Holmes, marvelous!" Sir Herbert exclaimed, with mock amazement. "I am surprised at your clairvoyance, ma'am, but deeply pained that you should know of and be so familiar with such goings on. Do you learn of that sort of thing from your nephew? Really, Richard, I'm amazed at you!"

"Nonsense, Uncle Bin, I passed through that stage long ago. I used to girl around in my callow days, but I got fed up with it, and now life holds more worthwhile temptations. It's an old story to auntie, too. Why she used to chaperon my giddiest parties,—bless her!"

Sir Herbert's sharp eyes looked from one of his companions to the other.

"You're a pair," he opined, "both tarred with the same brush."

"And the brush?" asked Miss Prall, belligerently.

"Modern sophistication and the present-day fad of belittling everything that is interesting or pleasurable."

"That mental phase is the inevitable result of worldly experience," said the lady, with a cynical smile. "How is it that you preserve such youthful interest?"

"Well—" and the Englishman looked a little quizzical, "you see, the girls are still young."

"Very young," assented Bates, gravely. "There's a new bunch of Squabs at the Gaynight Revue that'll do you up! Better buy that place out, Unkie!"

"Perhaps; but now, young Richard, let's discuss some more imminent, if not more important, questions. Say, Buns, for instance."

"Nothing doing. I've said my last word on the Bun subject, and if you persist in recurring to it, you'll only get that last word over again,—repeated, reiterated, recapitulated and,—if necessary,—reënforced!"

"With some good, strong epithets, I suppose," remarked his uncle, calmly. "I don't blame you, Rick, for being bored by my persistency, but you see I haven't yet given up all hope of making you see reason. Why I do——"

"Well, when you do—what?"

"Time enough to answer that question when it's time to ask it. Instead, let me recount the advantages I can offer you ——"

"Oh, Lord!—pardon my interrupting,—but that recounting is an old story, you know. Those advantages are as familiar to my wearied mind as my own name,—or at least as yours,—and your precious Buns——"

"Stop, sir! Don't you speak slightingly of Binney's Buns! They were eaten before you were born and will be eaten after you are dead and forgotten."

"Not forgotten if I put my invention over!"

"You'll never do it. Your success is problematical. The Buns are an assured fact. They were eaten before the war,—they will be eaten again now that the war is over. They are eaten in England,—they will be eaten in America. If not with the help of your interest and energy, then with that of some one else. Think well, my boy, before you throw away fame and fortune——"

"To acquire fame and fortune!"

"To strive for it and fail—for that is what you will do! You're riding for a fall, and you're going to get it!"

"Not if I can prevent it," Miss Prall interposed, in her low yet incisive tones. "I'm ready to back Ricky's prospects to the uttermost, if only——"

"If only what? What is this condition you impose on the lad? And why keep it so secret? Tell me, nephew, I'll let you in on the Buns in spite of any blot on your scutcheon. What is it that troubles your aunt?"

"What always troubles her? What has spoiled and embittered her whole life? Hardened her heart? Corroded her soul? What, but her old ridiculous, absurd, contemptible, damnable Feud!"

"There, there, my boy, remember your aunt is a lady, and such expressions are not permissible before her——"

"Pish! Tush!" snorted Miss Prall, who would not have herself objected to that descriptive verb, since it gives the very impression she wanted to convey, "If I did not permit such

expressions Richard would not use them, rest assured of that."

Bates smiled and lighted a fresh cigarette. These tilts between his elders greatly amused him, they seemed so futile and inane, yet of such desperate interest to the participants.

"Then that's all right," Sir Herbert conceded. "Now, Richard, for the last time, I offer you the chance to fall in with my wishes, to consent to my fondest desire, and attach yourself to my great, my really stupendous enterprise. I want, with my whole soul, to keep Binney's Buns in the family,—I want a worthy partner and successor, and one of my own blood kin,—but, I can't force you into this agreement,—I can only urge you, with all the powers of my persuasion, to see it rightly, and to realize that your refusal will harm you more than any one else."

"I'll take a chance on that, Uncle Bin." Bates gave him a cheery smile that irritated by its very carelessness.

"You'll lose, sir! You'll see the day that you'll wish you had taken up with my offers. You'll regret, when it's too late——"

"Why, what's your alternative plan?"

"Aha! Interested, are you? Well, young sir, my alternative plan is to find somebody with more common sense and good judgment than your rattle-pated, pig-headed self! That's my alternative plan."

"Got anybody in view?"

"And if I have?"

"Go to it! Take my blessing, and stand not on the order of your going to it,—but skittle! You can't go too fast to suit me!"

"You're an impudent and disrespectful young rascal! Your bringing-up is sadly at fault if it allows you to speak thus to your elders!"

"Oh, come off, Uncle Binney! You may be older than I in actual years, but you've got to hand it to me on the score of temperamental senescence! Why, you're a very kid in your enthusiasm for the halls of dazzling light and all that in them is! So, and, by the way, old top, I mean no real disrespect, but I consider it a compliment to your youth and beauty to recognize it in a feeling of camaraderie and good-fellowship. Are we on?"

"Yes, that's all right, son, but can't your good-fellowship extend itself to the Buns?"

"Nixy. Nevaire! Cut out all Bun talk, and I'm your friend and pardner. Bun, and you Bun alone!"

A long, steady gaze between the eyes of the young man and the old seemed to convince each of the immutability of this decision, and, with a deep sigh, the Bun promoter changed the subject.

"This Gayheart Review, now, Richard,——" he began.

"Don't consider the question settled, Sir Herbert," said Miss Letitia Prall, with a note of anxiety in her voice, quite unusual to it. "Give me a chance to talk to Ricky alone, and I feel almost certain I can influence his views."

"A little late in the day, ma'am," Binney returned, shortly. "I have an alternative plan, but if I wait much longer to make use of it, the opportunity may be lost. Unless Richard changes his mind to-day, he needn't change it at all,—so far as I am concerned."

"Going to organize a Bakery of ex-chorus girls?" asked Bates, flippantly. "Going to persuade them to throw in their

fortunes with yours?"

A merry, even affectionate smile robbed this speech of all unpleasant effect, and Sir Herbert smiled back.

"Not that," he returned; "I'd be ill fitted to attend to a bakery business with a horde of enchanting damsels cavorting around the shop! No, chorus girls are all right in their place, —which is not in the home, nor yet in a business office."

"That's true, and I take off my hat to you, Uncle, as a real live business man, with his undivided attention on his work, —in business hours,—and outside of those, his doings are nobody's business."

"With your leanings toward the fair sex, it's a wonder you never married," observed Miss Prall, inquisitively.

"My leanings toward them in no way implies their leanings toward me," returned the bachelor, his eyes twinkling. "And, moreover, a regard for one of the fair sex that would imply a thought of marriage with her, would be another matter entirely from a liking for the little stars of the chorus. To me they are not even individuals, they are merely necessary parts of an entertaining picture. I care no more for them, personally, than for the orchestra that makes music for their dancing feet, or for the stage manager who produces the setting for their engaging gracefulness."

"That's so, Uncle," Bates agreed; "you're a stage Johnny, all right, but you're no Lothario."

"Thank you, Son, such discriminating praise from Sir Hubert Stanley, makes me more than ever regret not having his association in my business affairs."

"Don't be too sure that you won't have him," Miss Prall temporized; "when does his time for decision expire?"

"To-night," said Sir Herbert, briefly, and at that, with a gesture of bored impatience, Bates got up and went out.

CHAPTER II

A Tricky Game

The Prall apartment was on the eighth floor, but Richard Bates passed by the elevator and went down the stairs. Only one flight, however, and on the seventh floor, he walked along the hall, whistling in a subdued key. The air was an old song, a one-time favorite, "Won't you come out and play wiz me?" and the faint notes grew stronger as he passed a certain door. Then he went on, but soon turned, retraced his steps, and went up again the one flight of stairs. Pausing at the elevator, he pushed the down button and was soon in the car and smiling on the demure young woman in uniform who ran it.

"This car of yours, Daisy," he remarked, "is like the church of Saint Peter at Rome, it has an atmosphere of its own. But if the church had this atmosphere there'd be mighty few worshipers! How can you stand it? Doesn't it make you ill?"

"Ill?" and the girl rolled weary eyes at him; "I'm dead! You can bring the flowers when you're ready, Gridley!"

"Poor child," and Bates looked compassionately at the white face, that even a vanity case failed to keep in blooming condition, so moisty warm was the stuffy elevator. "It's wicked to shut you up in such a cage——"

"Oh, I'm all right," she responded, hurriedly, as her bell sounded a sharp, impatient ring. "I'm not complaining. But people are so trying on a day like this. That's Mr. Binney's ring."

"How do you know. Do you know everybody's touch?"

"Not everybody's,—but lots of them. Mr. Binney, he hates elevator girls——"

"Oh, come now,—my uncle is a great admirer of all women ——"

"Not if they work. He talks a good deal, you know,—talks all the time,—and he's everlastingly knocking girls who do the work he thinks men ought to do."

"But it's none of his business,—in this house!"

"Mr. Binney is particularly and especially interested in what's none of his business!"

The girl spoke so bitterly that Bates looked at her in surprise.

But he was at the ground floor, and as he left the elevator he forgot all else in anticipation of a certain coming delight.

He strolled the length of the great onyx lobby, its sides a succession of broad mirrors between enormous onyx columns with massive gilded capitals. Tall palms were at intervals, alternating with crimson velvet sofas and on one of these, near the vestibule, Bates sat down to wait for the delight.

And in the course of time, she came, tripping along the black and white diamonds of the marble floor, her high heels tapping quickly, her lithe gracefulness hurrying to keep the tryst.

Dorcas Everett was of the type oftenest seen among the well-to-do young girls of New York, but she was one of the best examples of that type.

Wise, sparkling eyes, soft, rounded chin held alertly up, dark, curly hair arranged in a pleasant modification of the

latest fashion, her attire was of the most careful tailor-made variety, and her little feathered toque was put on at just the right angle and was most engagingly becoming.

She said no word but gave a happy smile as Bates rose and eagerly joined her and together they passed out through the imposing portal.

"It's awful," she murmured, as they walked across to Fifth Avenue. "I said I wouldn't do it again, you know, and then—when I heard your whistle,—I just couldn't help it! But don't do it any more—will you? You promised you wouldn't."

"Oh, I didn't promise, dear; I said I'd *try* not to. And I did try, but—it seems I failed."

"Bad boy! Very bad Rikki-tikki-tavi. But what are we going to do?"

"First of all, where are we going? Tea Room? Some place where I can talk to you."

"No; it's too stuffy to-day to be indoors. Let's walk up to the Park and go in."

"All right. Now, Dorrie, we trust face this thing. We can't go on meeting secretly,—neither of us likes it,—"

"I should say not! I hate it a thousand times worse'n you do. But Rick, mother is more obstinate than ever. She says if I see you again, or speak to you, she'll pack up and move out of New York. Think of that!"

"I can't think of it! It is unthinkable! Now, Dorcas, darling, there's only one thing to do. You must marry me—"

"Hush that nonsense! I don't propose—"

"Naturally not! I'm doing the proposing—"

"Don't think because you make me laugh you're going to bamboozle me into consent! I decline, refuse and renounce you, if you're going to take that tack. I shall never marry you without the consent of my mother and your aunt, and you know it!"

"I do know it, Dork, and that's what breaks me all up. Confound that old Feud! But, I say, Uncle Binney is on our side. I sounded him and he approves of my marrying at once,—doesn't care who the girl is,—and will make me his heir and all that,—"

"If you give up your inventing and go into his Bunny business."

"Yes; that's his game. Shall I do it?"

"No! A thousand times no. I don't want to marry a bakery!"

"And anyway, it wouldn't help the Feud—"

"No; nothing will help that. It would seem that we could move the hearts of those two women, but my mother is hard as adamant."

"And my aunt is hard as nails. After all these years they're not going to be moved by a pair of broken young hearts."

"No; mother says that because I'm so young, my heart will heal up in plenty of time to break over somebody else."

"Pleasant thought!"

"Oh, mother doesn't try to be pleasant about it. She makes my life a burden by harping on my undutifulness and all that,—and when she isn't bally-ragging me, Kate is."

"Kate! A servant!"

"But Kate doesn't look upon herself as a servant, exactly. She's lady's maid now,—to mother and me,—but she was my nurse, you know, and she thinks she sort of owns me. Anyway, she acts so."

"And she stands for the feud?"

"Rath-er! She believes in the feud and all its works. And she's a spy, too. If she hadn't believed my yarn that I was headed for Janet's to-day, she'd been downstairs trailing me!"

"Clever Dork, to outwit her!"

"That's nothing—I'm clever enough to hoodwink her and mother, too, but I don't want to. I hate it, Rick; I hate anything underhanded or deceitful. Only my love for you made me come out here to-day."

The big, dark eyes looked wistfully into Bates' blue ones. The troubled look on Dorcas' dear little face stirred the depths of his soul, and his heart struggled between his appreciation of her high-mindedness and his yearning love.

"I want you, Dorrie," he said, simply; "I want you terribly,—desperately,—and I—I admit it—would be willing to take you on any terms. I'd run away with you in a minute, if you'd go! To be sure, I honor your truthfulness and all that,—but, oh, little girl, can't you put me ahead of your mother?"

"I don't know,——"

"You're hesitating! You've thought about it! Oh, Dork, will you?"

"There, there, don't go so fast! No, I won't! But, tell me this: Would your uncle stand for it,—and let you go on with your own work?"

"Oh, no! It's Buns or nothing with him and me. But I'm his heir, if he should drop off suddenly, I'd have his whole fortune——"

"Dead men's shoes! Oh, Ricky, for shame?"

"Not at all. If he can make a will, I can talk about it. And he told me he has made a will in my favor,—but he's going to change it if I don't adopt his Buns."

"What nonsense,—even to think about it. Let him change it, then, for you'll never be a Bun man!"

"I wonder if it would help matters if you met Uncle Binney?"

"Let's try it. Though I'm sure I should call him Uncle Bunny! Does he like girls?"

"Adores them,—that is, some sorts. He likes nice girls properly. He likes naughty girls,—perhaps improperly. But the girls in the house,—the elevator kids and the telephone girls, he just hates."

"Hates?"

"They irritate him somehow. He thinks all such positions should be filled by men or boys. He says the war is over, and he wants all the girls taken off those jobs."

"How unjust and unreasonable."

"Uncle Herbert has both of those admirable qualities. But he'd adore you,—unless he found out you disapprove of the Buns, and then he'd turn and rend you!"

"I don't disapprove of them,—except for you."

"That's what I mean,—for me."

"Then I guess I'd better not meet Friend Bunny."

"Oh, Dorcas, I don't know what to do! There's no light from any direction. There's no hope from your mother, my aunt or Sir Herbert. If you won't cut and run with me,—and if you're in earnest about not meeting me secretly any more,—what *can* we do?"

"Nothing, Rick,—nothing at all."

Dorcas spoke very seriously,—even sadly, and Bates realized how much in earnest she was. They were in the Park now, and by tacit consent they sat down on a bench near the Mall.

Their eyes met dumbly. Though Bates was only twenty-five and Dorcas twenty-two, they were both older than their years, and were of fine temper and innate strength of character.

They had known one another as children in their little home town, and later, as the feud developed and gained strength, the young people had been sent away to schools. Later, the war took Richard from home, and only very recently had propinquity brought about the interest that soon ripened to love. And a deeper, more lasting love than is often found between two young hearts. Both took it very seriously, and each thoroughly realized the tragedy of the attitude of their respective guardians.

"Good gracious, Richard, I shall go straight home and tell your aunt!"

This speech was from the stern-faced woman who paused in front of the pair on the bench.

"Good gracious, Eliza, go straight ahead and do so!"

Bates' eyes shot fire and his face flushed with anger.

Eliza Gurney was his aunt's companion, indeed, her tame cat, her chattel, and partly from charity, partly because of need of her services, Miss Prall kept Eliza with her constantly.

Of a fawning, parasitic nature, the companion made the best of her opportunities, and, without being an avowed spy, she kept watch on Richard's movements as far as she conveniently could. And in this instance, suspecting his intent, she had followed the young couple at a discreet distance, and now faced them with an accusing eye.

"No, don't," pleaded Dorcas, as Miss Gurney turned to follow up Richard's suggestion. "Oh, dear Miss Gurney, help us, won't you? We're in such a hopeless tangle. You were young once, and——"

Dorrie could scarcely have chosen a worse argument,—for that her youth had slipped away from her, was Miss Gurney's worst fear.

"I am forbidden to speak to this girl, Richard," Miss Gurney said, with pursed lips and heightened color. She addressed herself carefully to Bates and ignored the presence of Dorcas. "You are, too, as you well know, and though you have so far forgotten yourself as to disobey your aunt, I've no intention of committing a like sin."

"Fudge, Eliza, don't go back on me like that. You used to be my friend,—have you forsaken me entirely?"

"If you've forsaken your aunt,—not unless. Leave this girl instantly and go home with me, and there'll be no question of 'forsaking.'"

"Forsake Miss Everett! Not while this machine is to me! Go home yourself, Eliza; be a tattletale, if you want to, but get out of here!"

Bates became furious because of a malevolent gleam in Miss Gurney's eye as she looked at Dorcas.

"I'll go, Richard,—and I shall not only tell your aunt what I have seen, but I shall feel it my duty to acquaint Mrs Everett with the facts."

"Don't you dare!" cried Dorcas, springing up, and facing the unpleasant faced one with uncontrollable indignation. "What I do, I tell my mother myself,—I don't have the news carried to her by her enemy's spy!"

"Hoity-toity, miss, you're a chip off the old block, I see!"

"And you're a trustworthy soul, to be talking to me when you're forbidden to do so!"

The triumph in Dorcas' tone was quite as galling to Eliza Gurney as her own chagrin at having broken her word. But, once in the moil, she saw no reason for backing out, and proceeded to pick an open quarrel.

"I can explain my speech with you to Miss Prall's satisfaction," she went on, acidly, "and I'll inform you, Miss Everett, that you've spoiled Mr. Bates' life by this clandestine affair of yours. I happen to know that his uncle, Sir Herbert Binney, was just about to make him his heir, but he will change his mind when he hears of this escapade."

"Oh, clear out, Eliza," stormed Bates; "you've given us enough of that drivel, now hook it! Hear me?"

Miss Gurney stared at him. "Your companionship with this young woman has corrupted your good manners," she began, quite undeterred by his wrath.

Whereupon Bates took her firmly by the shoulder, spun her round, and said, "Go!" in such a tone that she fairly scurried away.