

KITTY'S STRATAHEM.

Such a little witch as she was, this Katy Day, of whom I write. She couldn't help flirting if she tried, and it wasn't her fault, of course, if men were taken in by the round, childish face and great, innocent, blue eyes.

For they were, scores of them, and Kitty went on her way rejoicing—completing their bewilderment by the shy looks and smiles, and blushes, that really meant nothing, but were very effective, nevertheless.

But in an unlucky hour for Kitty, she said "Yes" to a dark, melancholy, young man, who had been her shadow for months. She wasn't in earnest, but did it for the "fun of the thing," and because she wanted to know how it felt to be "engaged."

It resulted seriously, however, for, in spite of express commands to the contrary, the accepted suitor went directly to her father and told him all about it. Mr. Day looked at his daughter mischievously that night, as she sat behind the tea urn with such a conical assumption of dignity.

"So I'm to lose my little housekeeper before long, am I?" questioned he significantly.

"Why, papa, what do you mean?" and Kitty blushed scarlet.

"Mr. Gilbert called on me to day. He is an excellent young man, and the son of one of my oldest friends. I heartily approve your choice, my dear."

"He promised to keep the engagement a secret," said Kitty in a vexed tone.

"So he told me, but concluded afterwards to break his promise rather than act dishonestly. For it wouldn't have been quite fair to have concealed the engagement from me."

"I don't know why, I'm sure. It's only a bit of my fun, anyway. I never meant to marry him."

Mr. Day looked at her sternly. "I'm not jesting," she added, pettishly.

He threw himself into such a passion that I was fairly frightened into saying "Yes," and sorry enough I've been for it since."

"Are you in earnest, Kitty?" "Yes, I am," and the blue eyes flashed defiantly.

"Is it possible that a daughter of mine has so little feeling and principle?" "Now, papa, what is the use of lecturing. You know me of old. I'm in trouble and want you to help me out of it."

"But you've given your word Kitty, and must abide by it."

"Didn't he break his?" "Yes, and was justified in doing so. But you are not. Still, I'll give you a choice of two evils, if you think marrying young Gilbert one. Few girls would. Either keep your promise and make the best of circumstances, or break it and pass the winter in the country with your Aunt Dorothy. For I'm not going to have you play fast and loose with men's hearts after this fashion."

Kitty looked up in her father's face disbelievingly, but determination was written there; and, filled with sudden disunity, she began to plead for a reprieve of the sentence. But Mr. Day wouldn't listen. "You can stay in the city and participate in its gaieties on one condition only, and that I've mentioned," said he.

"Was ever anything so provoking?" muttered Kitty, after her father had gone down town. "Aunt Dorothy lives in a forlorn-looking old place, and it's a perfect wilderness around her, and papa knows that she is the crossdest old maid in existence. But I'll be even with him yet."

The next morning Kitty announced her intention of remaining in the city. "But, papa, if Mr. Gilbert himself should grow tired of the engagement, after knowing me better, you'll not punish me for that, will you?" and her eyes trembled mischievously.

"Certainly not, child. What a question to ask?"

But Kitty had a motive in it. A plan had suggested itself to her mind for outwitting both father and lover. But she didn't mean to hurry, and began to pave the way for its success cautiously. As good luck would have it, who should call on her that morning but Cousin Joe, the firm ally and abettor of all her childish mischief, and as ready to help her now as then.

"Oh! Joe, such trouble as I'm in," and she clasped her hands with a pretty little gesture of appeal.

"What! you, Kitty? Is your canary bird fractions, or is it something about a new dress or bonnet that don't equal your expectations?"

Kitty looked at him so reproachfully that he was sobered in a minute. "Tell me all about it," whispered he.

"I'm engaged," and if she'd been announcing her own funeral, she couldn't have done it to a more solemn voice.

Joe flushed up to the roots of his hair, and clasped and unclasped his hands in a nervous sort of way, but didn't say anything. Kitty watched him maliciously. "It's to that young Gilbert. He's a splendid fellow, and has great dark eyes and the dearest little mou-tache. You know him, don't you?"

"No—yes—a little," stammered Joe, to the delight of his listener. "But what's the trouble about? Won't your father consent?" and he looked so utterly wretched that Kitty, with a faint twinge of remorse, hastened to tell him the true state of the case. He brightened up wonderfully. "Then you don't love the man after all?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know," she answered meditatively. "I never looked into the matter much. I suppose he's as good as any one, but I'm not in a marrying mood at present."

Joe's countenance fell again. "Will you tell me just what you want?" said he a little sternly.

"Now don't be cross, Joe; you're the only friend I've got in the world," and Kitty raised her soft eyes imploringly.

He was mollified at once. "Why not break with Gilbert and accept the

alternative?" suggested he. "Won't be so very dull as Aunt Dorothy's. I've a college friend in the neighborhood, and can visit you occasionally."

Poor Joe! The idea of having her all to himself was delightful, and he waited for her answer with subdued eagerness.

"Is that the only plan that has occurred to you?" answered Kitty sarcastically; "you haven't much ingenuity if you can't devise some other way of getting me out of this dilemma. I've no intention of becoming an animated fossil. Now listen to what I propose?"

Then Kitty disclosed her plot, and Joe listened approvingly, and the two heads were still bent close together when young Gilbert called an hour later. He entered unannounced, and Kitty gave such a start and blush at him, that Joe's hopes again sank to zero. But if he'd been sensible he'd known that her embarrassment was the result of surprise rather than emotion. She was very arch and winning that morning until after Joe left (the little witch knew he was on nettles all the time), then she changed her tactics and grew cold and distant. "So you had to tell papa, after all," she sneered. "men can't keep a secret."

Her lover tried to explain, but she wouldn't listen, and gave him such a rating as would have done credit to the shrillest and noisiest of viragoes. "Is this a specimen of her temper?" thought he, escaping into the street as soon as possible.

"Who'd have thought her soft eyes could flash so, or the lines of her face sharpen in such a curious way? She really looked dangerous."

Had he seen Kitty laugh and clap her hands as she vanished from the scene, he'd have been more puzzled than ever.

The next time they met she greeted him with such a charming smile, and looked so naive and unconscious that this little episode would have passed from his memory if it hadn't been for one circumstance. He accidentally overheard a conversation between her cousin and another gentleman. Kitty was the theme of the discourse.

She's a dear little girl, but a regular virago," said Joe. "Everybody's afraid of her when she gets into one of her tantrums. She just raves and gets on in a way that's perfectly frightful. There's a taint of insanity in the blood, you know; her aunt and grandmother died in an insane asylum."

Young Gilbert listened shuddering. These words explained a scene that had puzzled him before and awakened forebodings for the future. "You saw her father come down town last week with his head all bandaged up, and heard him tell, perhaps, how terribly he's afflicted with neuralgia," continued Joe. "Poor old gentleman! 'twas Kitty did the mischief, for in one of her angry fits she threw the flat-iron across the table, and it hit him in the temple. He's anxious to marry her off, and I hear Gilbert's to be the happy man."

That individual turned pale. He remembered Mr. Day's eagerness in forwarding his suit, and the wish he had expressed that his daughter's marriage should take place at an early date. Though his love for Kitty was strong as his shallow nature was capable of feeling, a viragoish wife would be unendurable. But wasn't it possible that her cousin was mistaken, or had colored the picture a little too highly? He resolved to wait for further developments.

They came speedily. A week later he called on Kitty—just at dusk—and was ushered by mistake into the library. The door between that and the dining-room stood slightly ajar; a woman's shrill voice reached him from thence. Was it Kitty's?

Yes, he recognized it; he had heard it once before, pitched in the same high key.

"Don't tell me you didn't mean to," she screeched, more like a mad woman than anything else. "You did, you did, you wretched little imp!" Then there was the sound of a heavy blow and the shriek of a child.

"O! don't Miss Kitty?" wailed a pitiful voice. "It was so dark I couldn't see when you ran against me, and then I stumbled and fell and the pitcher got broken, and I tried to keep the milk off your pretty dress, but couldn't."

"You stumbled and fell," mimicked Kitty. "Well, I'll teach you not to another time. Take that, and that, and that," giving the child blow after blow that resounded through the room. Stop your sniveling, too. Do you hear? I'll make you if you don't."

The sobs were hushed, and Kitty went on: " 'Twas the prettiest dress I had, and it's spoilt completely? and all through your carelessness, you little imp! Oh! if I'd only a cowhide! 'twould do me good to give you such a whipping as you deserve."

"Kitty, let that child alone," said a new voice; and Gilbert recognized it as her cousin's.

"I shall do no such thing! Get out of the way, and mind your own business!" She shrieked, and there was something that sounded like a bottle whizzing through the room and crashing up against the wall. Then a man's groan was heard distinctly.

"Oh! Kitty, how could you?" said her cousin, reproachfully. "You cut my cheek terribly; see how the blood runs!"

Gilbert didn't want to hear any more, but fled from the house, resolved that he wouldn't marry such a vicious, though she had the face and form of a Hebe.

The front door had no sooner closed on him, than the actors in the above drama went off into spasms of merriment. Kitty stood revealed in the gas-light with dress uninjured; there was not a cut to be seen on Joe's face; the child was nowhere visible.

"Oh! Oh! 'twas to funny!" gasped Kitty; "that whine would have deceived anybody, 'twas so natural, I half started myself, thinking 'twas really a child's voice instead of yours. You deserve a reward of merit for such splendid acting."

"Give me one, then, and let me choose it myself," whispered Joe.

"Well, what will you have?" and she looked up archly.

"Yourself."

"What a modest demand!" There

was a mocking smile on her lips, but her eyes fell beneath his.

"Do you think so?" and, taking the mischievous little face between his hands, he scanned it closely. What he saw there was evidently satisfactory, for he kissed it over and over, and Kitty, though she resisted a little at first, finally submitted with a very good grace.

"It's well to be off the old love before you are on with the new," whispered he, slyly. "Gilbert's done for, and I've stepped into his place."

"But he didn't treat me in this way," pouted she.

"I hope not. 'Twould be worse for him if he had. I'd shoot him in a minute;" and Joe tried to look belligerent, but failed woefully.

Mr. Day was surprised the next morning by a call from Kitty's late suitor. The young man seemed ill at ease, and stammered a good deal in making his errand known.

"I understand, sir, that insanity is hereditary in your family," he began awkwardly, "and—and—" he paused and tried to collect his ideas—"that Kitty's aunt and grandmother died in a lunatic asylum."

"All a mistake," responded Mr. Day pompously. "There never was a case of insanity, either among my own kindred, or that of my late wife."

"But your daughter, sir, has a peculiar disposition, and I find it ill-suited to mine at all. I desire, therefore, to withdraw from the engagement."

"And have you told her this?" thundered his listener, white with rage. For Mr. Day really had a violent temper, and didn't need to feign its possession, like Kitty.

"Dear me! the father is worse than the daughter," thought the young man. Aloud he answered, "Oh, no; I came to you first." (The fact was he didn't dare face Kitty with any such proposition.)

"Well, sir, all I have to say is that you are a mean contemptible villain, and if you don't get out of my office this minute, I'll kick you down stairs," and before the words were fairly out of Mr. Day's mouth he started to make his threat good.

Young Gilbert made a hasty retreat, convinced that not only Kitty, but Mr. Day, also, was partially insane.

Kitty listened demurely to her father's version of the affair, and the anathemas he hurled against her recent lover. Once though, during that narration she shook so with laughter that he looked at her suspiciously. But she put on at once such an air of wretchedness that he ascribed it to wounded pride. It was not till two years afterward that he learned the truth, and Kitty was married to Joe, who, I forgot to say, was not her own cousin, though she called him so, but a sort of distant relation. Mr. Day received his revelation good-humoredly (Joe had always been his special favorite), and was ready enough to laugh with the rest over the way in which he had been outwitted.

A Masonic Story.

Two men had been fast friends. In an evil hour they quarreled. They did not speak, and had not spoken for years. Mutual friends tried the art of reconciliation in vain. They were avowed enemies for life. One of them became a Mason after the estrangement, and it happened that the other remained ignorant of the fact. One evening he too was admitted to a lodge. Almost the first face he saw, and certainly the first face he saw, was that of his enemy, who presided over the ceremonies of initiation, and was obliged, according to custom, to address him by the title of "brother." This was a peculiar situation and a severe ordeal for both. After the lodge was closed, the apprentice sought the master, and without any preliminaries, the following colloquy ensued, commenced by the newly made Mason: "Are you a member of this lodge?"

The answer was, "I am."

"Were you present when I was elected?"

"I was."

"May I ask if you voted?"

"I did."

"Now will you tell me how many votes it requires to reject a candidate on ballot for admission?"

The worshipful master answered, "one."

There was nothing more to say. The initiate extended his hand, which was warmly grasped by the other, and uttered with thrilling accents, deep emotion mellowing his voice, "Friend! Brother! you have taught me a lesson I shall never forget." This is a little ray of Masonic light. No language is so eloquent as the silent throbbing of a heart full of joyful tears. While this kind of cement is used in our moral edifice, should it not be enduring?—Masonic Trowel.

OTHER PEOPLE'S TIME.—A committee of eight gentlemen had an appointment to meet at twelve o'clock. Seven of them were punctual, but the eighth came bustling in with apologies for being a quarter of an hour behind time. "The time," said he, passed away without my being aware of it. I had no idea of its being so late," etc.

"I am not sure that we should admit his excuse. It was a matter of regret that thou shouldst have wasted this own quarter of an hour; but there are seven beside thyself whose time thou hast also consumed, amounting in the whole to two hours, and one-eighth of it only was thine own property."

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