

THE ARCHITECT

By EUNICE BLAKE

Julia Edmonds after leaving the high school was eighteen years of age and obliged to make her own living. Seeing an advertisement in a newspaper for a governess, she replied to it and was invited to a conference. A lady, Miss Ashford, who said she was the aunt of the children to be taught and cared for, received the applicant, asked a number of questions and for references, and Julia was engaged.

The lady was a woman past forty, the sister of the father of the children. Their mother was dead, and their father at the time was abroad, his little girls being left in charge of their aunt. The home was near a suburban town and a very attractive one.

Spring came on, and one of the children needed a change of air. Miss Ashford decided to take them both southward to meet the coming summer, leaving Julia where she was until their return.

One warm morning the governess went out into the grounds with a book and seated herself on a rustic bench supported on either side by a tree. While reading she heard a step on the walk leading from the gate and, looking up, saw a gentleman apparently about thirty-five years old approaching. He paused before her in his walk and said:

"You look very contented and very restful."

"I am both," was the reply.

"Will I find Miss Ashford at the house?"

"Miss Ashford is away. She took the children to the country for a change of air."

"H'm." The gentleman looked about him, then turned again to Julia.

"It's unfortunate that Miss Ashford is absent. I've been sent by the owner of this property to make plans for additions to the house. I fear I shall have to intrude myself upon you for awhile."

Julia made no reply to this. She had no authority either to prevent or permit his doing what he mentioned. He went on to the house and entered it without ringing the bell. When Julia went there herself the housekeeper told her that the gentleman was an architect and would remain while he laid his plans. He made himself at home, but as to making plans Julia could not see that he devoted much time to the work. True, he did some diagram drawing in pencil, but on this he did not spend an hour a day.

The rest of the time he divided between the library and Julia. When he tired of books, there being no one besides her to chat with, he seemed disposed to utilize her for company. He interested her in what he said, and she was of an age to appreciate the ideas of an older man. The housekeeper and the servants were deferential to him, gave him everything he desired without question and obeyed all his orders.

Every day Julia found the architect—every one in the house spoke of him as the architect—more and more engaging. A day which he spent in the city she was surprised to find a very long one to her. When he returned and they sat down together for dinner she could not conceal her pleasure.

A week passed, at the end of which building materials were brought into the place and dumped beside the house. The next day workmen came, and the architect spent some time with

the contractor over diagrams. Julia asked the former with a beating heart if he were going to superintend the construction of the additions. He said he was and they would require at least a month. The housekeeper informed her that Miss Ashford and the children would remain away until the work was finished.

An attractive man of thirty-five shut up in the same house with a girl of eighteen is not likely to have much trouble in winning her. Before the additions were finished the architect had made havoc with poor little Julia's heart. She did not think of marriage. All she desired was to live on just as she was in the companionship of this delightful man.

But the architect was thinking very much of marriage. He was a widower—so he told Julia—and very lonely without a companion. He asked her how she would like to spend her life where she was, to which she replied that she would like it very much, especially if he were to continue making additions to the house. He saw through this ingenuous reply and, taking her in his arms, told her that if she chose she might remain there always and he would remain also.

She did not press him for an explanation, which he did not seem ready to give. She was happy and contented and trusted him implicitly. A few days later Miss Ashford returned with the children and the latter jumped into the architect's arms, covering him with kisses and calling him papa.

The next day he asked them if they could bear to part with their governess, to which they replied that they could not, whereupon he told them that she was to remain with them always.

David Ashford had dreaded to come to his home from which his wife had gone forever. When he saw an attractive girl there the idea occurred to him to keep her there. So he told the housekeeper and the others to preserve his incognito, and "the architect" began to win the governess.

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