

ONLY A BOY.

BY C. L. VAN LINDON.

"Has your fair-haired Saxon been with you to-day? I have been watching for his appearance as the signal for my departure, and it is the first time I have ever so agreeably disappointed in him. Perhaps he has come and gone. Was a persistent little wretch he is! But then, who wouldn't be with the encouragement you give him? Leola, why will you?"

rooms were vacant. She and Martha had gathered up their appurtenances in haste and started the day before for Havre. It was not a retreat on the part of Leola. She had grown tired of everything else—but she was not running away from him. While talking with Cleo Lynne she had decided to take the European trip; but not at all on account of her solemn warning. Dropping Eugene Estey was an incidental matter in which she had not the least hesitancy in acting. Estey gave no outward sign, and his semi-friends who knew of his intimacy with the beautiful actress got no farther than that it had ceased. They said among themselves that he was a queer fish, and it was doubtful if he cared. If he did he would have made no end of a howl. Colonel Creston was the only man that fancied the task of gaining further information. Perhaps, even, it was all chance on his part. He met Estey one evening, not long after. Apparently without any thought of its being a personal matter, he remarked: "A queer sort of the Divine's. Picked up her bag and baggage and left for good. Don't think she means to come back, either. Parker of the Vandeville is in no end of a funk about it. Carried off a couple of his plays with her, and he's afraid she'll sell them to the Strand and start up on his capital, abroad. Don't believe a bit of it. Think she has cut out the stage for good. It's the way she always does."

Colonel Creston being interviewed on the subject of Eugene Estey, stroked his mustache, and declined to make any statement. Probably he had his opinion, and so had Mrs. Lynne. There was no doubt about the wealth of Edgar South, though he was known about as well on the English turf as on the Pacific coast. He was a plunger, after the most approved style, and had troops of admirers wherever he went. There may have been some mystery, and suspicion about his mode of life, but it made no difference. He and his beautiful wife could have troops of friends, anyhow. He was handsome, tall, broad shouldered, powerful in frame and face. The Hesperian Club took him right up when a couple of members, old friends of his, introduced him there. For a while—some weeks—he was quite the fashion, being received wherever he made his appearance there. He was an authority on turf, sporting and historical matters, and played a wonderful game of cards. In the shooting gallery he shot the leading string, and with the foil ranked equal to the professionals. It was just the man who could win Leola Divine. One evening Captain Chester brought in a friend, a young American. He was slender looking, and of a pale, rather an effeminate face, yet there was something in his blue eyes that redeemed his countenance from lack of strength. "My friend Estey," said Chester, in his off-hand way, to two or three. "What we call 'an old pard' on the other side. I caught him hanging around in an awful lonesome condition, and I said I'd bring him here, where he could see some of his fellow countrymen, and, if he wanted, partake a little of our national game of draw. Shake hands with him, and make him feel at home." The greater part of the "old pard" were Americans. It was an informal sort of affair, its members coming and going. Estey was welcome enough, and not through any sinister intentions. They played cards there, and sometimes for high stakes, but that was only part of the machinery by which they kept together, and it was kept quiet outside. It is more than likely that Chester had no idea of seeing his young friend at the card table when he spoke, though they got there before long. It was a pleasant, informal sort of a game, with a tacit limit of about ten dollars in American money. Fortune appeared to look about evenly balanced, except for Captain Chester, who won francs at a time, he managed to lose thirty dollars or so, to the amusement of the rest of the players, and the half-dozen spectators. "You're full of good, Brother Estey, very good. I am just in the vein to be a victim, and I shall draw out of you a little more than I get wild. Here, South, take my place, and see if you can change the luck of this confounded chair. I never sat in it yet that I held anything better than ten spot high before the draw. You know Estey? He's from the States, lately. Guess you met him in New York." The odds were half a million to one that he had not, but Captain Chester never thought of that. "I don't know that I ever met the gentleman," began South, in a hesitating tone. "But I have met you," interposed Estey, broadly. "If you come into this game I must retire."

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