

## AT LAST.

I stand prepared, I beg to state,  
To give the vain malicious fiction.  
That ladies love to be too late,  
Flat contradiction.

Weak persons of a certain sex,  
That do not need explicit mention  
Have made, with set design to vex,  
This gross contention.

They say (what will they not maintain?)  
A cousin's bad but oh! a brother's!  
That, if we ever catch the train,  
It is another.

They have a rude, provoking way  
Of standing, coat'd, idly humming;  
Then shouting at the stairs, "I say!  
When are you coming?"

So now, to crush, with foot severe,  
This spiteful fib with nothing in it,  
I have myself been waiting here—  
Well—quite a minute.

He comes at last—no blushes mount;  
He does not stammer, pained and flur-  
ried:  
'Twas not, I hope, on my account  
Your Highness hurried!

What's that?—Been waiting here since three,  
And just strolled round to seek the rover?  
Of course you throw the blame on me—  
A man all over!

## The Two Margarets.

BY CARRIE MAY ASHTON.

Margaret Burtch was far from pretty, with her thin, sallow face and dark hair drawn plainly back from her high forehead.

Only her eyes, which were large, soft and brown and very expressive, redeemed her from being very ordinary and plain looking.

At the opening of our story, in a small village on the seacoast, Margaret had just passed her nineteenth birthday.

Her mother, a quiet, sad-eyed woman, was left a widow some years before, since which time she had strained every nerve, to make the ends meet.

During the warm weather, the pretty little village is quite a summer resort, and Mrs. Burtch's only resource of livelihood for several years had been the keeping of a boarding house.

Margaret, a proud, high-spirited girl, would gladly have taught, but her mother would not be separated from her even during the day.

Their story is a sad one, but similar to many others. Mr. Burtch was the son of a wealthy merchant and fell in love with the pretty book-keeper employed in his father's store, and knowing his father's prejudice, he married her quietly, and together they left for the West on the same afternoon. The stern father never forgave him, and when he died it was found that the younger son had been entirely ignored in the will.

He never regretted his marriage, but life was a hard one—a continual struggle for a living—for he had never been brought up with a knowledge of any profession or business.

After his death the widow and daughter had removed to the small seaport town where we found them. The summer was now ended, and on the morrow the last boarder would take his departure.

Why had it been pleasanter than usual, and why did Margaret dread to have it ended?

It was dusk, and her work finished for the day, she strolled back and forth on the beach. A step sounded in the distance, and soon Ralph Hilton joined her.

"Margaret, do you know this has been a very pleasant summer to me? I shall hate to say good-bye to-morrow. This is our last evening on the beach together."

Was this the end of the happiest summer of her life? questioned Margaret to herself. Why had she given her love unsought to this handsome stranger, who perhaps to-morrow would forget that he ever knew her? He knew full well that he was handsome, and why shouldn't he? His mother and sisters idolized him, and he was a general favorite in society. He knew too well that he was considered a great catch, and that few girls would refuse him. He had thought that Margaret Burtch cared for him, and to confess to himself her eyes had made a lasting impression on him, and if she were in his own station in life, and not a penniless girl, why things might be different. He was greatly surprised that she took his departure so calmly, almost coolly. One thing Margaret Burtch resolved—the man who had won her love unconsciously should never know it or anybody else. However badly she might feel the world should never know it. She was a queer girl, with her odd, quaint ways, and Ralph Hilton had been strangely fascinated with her.

She was not beautiful, gifted or wealthy and it puzzled him to know why he should be interested in her.

They had read together, walked and studied together for the past three months for he was sick of the large and fashionable watering places and had preferred a quieter one. He was dissatisfied with himself and the world at large, and wondered why he was put on this earth. When he said good-night and good bye, for he was to leave on the early boat, he little dreamed that the girl before him was suffering bitterly.

Why must she suffer thus? Her life

had never been a bright one, and she had few friends and no confidants but the patient mother who was busy with hard work. She had never realized that her daughter's hopes, plans, or aspirations for the future were so different from her own. Poor child! She was not the first one who had suffered thus, but it was none the less hard; however, she was brave and courageous, and as time wore away it softened her grief.

Six months passed by, when her mother was stricken down with typhoid fever, which was brought on by overwork and taking care of a sick neighbor. At the end of a fortnight she was laid away to rest, and Margaret was an orphan. In packing up ready to leave, for the little house must be vacated, and she must do something as a means of livelihood, she came across some letters from her father's brother and sister that had been written after his death to her mother, and Mrs. Burtch had felt too bitter and sad to answer them.

Papers were sent them announcing the death of Mrs. Burtch, and very soon a letter came from her uncle, George Burtch containing a most cordial invitation to make his house her home for the present, and enclosing a check sufficient to defray all travelling expenses. Tired, lonely and homeless was Margaret, and most grateful was she for the kind and cordial letter. A hasty reply was written to her uncle, telling him on what boat she would reach New York.

She had few friends to say good-bye to, and after the little house was locked, she went to the cemetery for a last visit to her mother's grave.

Her uncle met her at the steamer and welcomed her most cordially.

His family were entire strangers to her, and she dreaded to meet them; but she found her aunt and cousin thoroughly congenial, and soon felt quite at home. Her cousin, a sweet, pretty girl, two years her junior, she loved at sight, and they soon grew to be fast friends. An only child, she was greatly idolized, but petting had never spoiled her, and she was a most winning and lovable girl. Her name was also Margaret, so to distinguish the two our Margaret was called Daisy.

From the day of her arrival in her uncle's family she was treated as a daughter and sister, and made to feel it was truly her home.

Her uncle had long regretted the coldness between the families, and was only too glad to be a father to the girl who had through her stern grandfather's prejudice led a very different life from that of his only darling daughter, who had been sheltered so tenderly.

Daisy loved art from a child, and it had been one of the fondest dreams of her life to earn enough money to study and perfect herself in that study and sometime go abroad. Her kind uncle secured her a scholarship at Cooper Institute, and there she studied faithfully for two years. At the end of that time she went abroad with friends of her uncle to study in Munich. Here she spent four very pleasant and profitable years.

PARIS, FRANCE,  
April 10, 1880.

"DEAR OLD CHUM:—

"Your kind and interesting letter came to-day, and I hasten to offer my congratulations, old fellow, on your approaching marriage. No one deserves a better wife than you, and I only hope you may enjoy many years of domestic happiness. Yes, I shall reach New York in time for the wedding, and shall be happy to officiate as best man. Your Margaret must be a true and lovely woman, from your description, and I shall be glad to meet her.

"I, too, knew a Margaret Burtch years ago, but she was not fair and beautiful, though she had magnificent eyes. That was six years ago, and her eyes have haunted me ever since. I loved her, though I did not realize it at the time, and I was too proud to have married her any way, for she was only the daughter of my landlady.

"She would have made a glorious woman—a woman who would grow and round into a grand, earnest womanhood. Sometimes I wish that my father had been poor and I had had to earn every dollar I spent, and I might have made a better man.

"If I could go back to that summer on the seashore, and forget the intervening years that have been so wasted, I believe I could be happy. I am tired of living, tired of society—and especially of myself. The women and girls that I meet are only butterflies of fashion or dolls that never inspire a man to any better or loftier living. My mother and sisters are no exception to the rule. They often call me dull and stupid and tiresome because I do not care for parties, balls or operas as I used to. Why, I would rather have one hour of a real, true homelife than years of this kind of living. Shall I ever be a man, Will? I sometimes think not.

"You have been the most faithful of chums, old boy, and if ever I do amount to anything, you will deserve the thanks and credit for it, for you have done your utmost for me.

"God bless you, best of friends, and may your life be fraught with many blessings. In all, sincerely believe me, always your earnest though worthless friend,

RALPH HILTON."

There was a sad smile on Will Barker's lips as he folded and put away the letter. For fifteen years they had been fast friends, and had clung together through everything. Totally unlike in disposition, temperament and looks, a stranger would have failed to see in what way they could be congenial, but their friendship had been as true as steel.

"You are capable of making a good man, Ralph Hilton. There are glorious possibilities in your nature, and I have faith in you yet."

Daisy Burtch had only returned from her four years' stay abroad in time for her cousin's wedding and to help her in the final preparations.

"Oh, Daisy, I am so anxious for you to meet Will to-night. He longs to greet you as a sister. You have been gone so long, we must make the most of you now."

"You know Will's chum, who has been abroad so many years, is to be the best man, and you are to be my maid of honor. Who would have thought you could have changed so much, Daisy? You don't look any more like you did when you came to us than I do, with your clear, olive complexion. After that fever you had the first year you were with us your hair changed so much. It is so soft and glossy and just curly enough to be pretty. Do you know you have one of the finest physiques of any girl I know. What have you done to improve so much? You don't know how much we have missed you."

Here Daisy was called away and the conversation ended.

When Will Barker (Margaret's intended), was presented to Daisy that evening, he was surprised to see the lovely girl Margaret introduced to him. Could this be the girl whose picture he had seen?

Daisy had made much progress in her art and had won several prizes while abroad for her superior work. One painting in particular, that she had designed as a wedding gift for her cousin, was especially noticeable, and had been awarded a prize of five hundred dollars for the best original moonlight scene. It was a simple thing, but so realistic that one seemed to be looking at the ocean instead of the picture. The lovely moon was beaming brightly, and the ripples of the sea were plainly visible, also the white sand and seashells. On the beach were strolling a man and maiden, and in one of the lower corners was written "Good-bye."

Daisy had always longed to paint that scene, and although years had passed since he left her early home, the picture was as fresh in her memory as it was six years ago. Had she forgotten Ralph Hilton? Oh, no! but she had learned to find happiness in her art, and won many warm friends since then. She often wondered what had become of him, but had never heard his name since they said good-bye. Margaret often wondered why Daisy cared so little for society and was so indifferent to the gentlemen, for she was a great favorite with many of them. She was always pleasant and friendly, and attended many parties and receptions, but she never showed more favor to one than to another.

It was two days before the wedding when Ralph Hilton reached New York, and that same afternoon he called on Will, who had almost given him up. The meeting was a happy one, and the two friends talked until dark, when Will begged of his chum to stay to dinner with him and go up and call on Margaret in the evening. He gladly accepted, for he had been gone so long, and his own home was closed, that he really felt like "a stranger in a strange land."

The girls were chatting in the library when Will Barker and his friend were ushered in.

Although Daisy had heard much of Will's chum, no one had ever happened to mention his name, and when she saw Ralph Hilton standing in the door she thought that she would faint.

Her courage and will-power soon came to her rescue, and she was ready to greet him when he was introduced.

She knew he could not recognize the Margaret he used to know in the Daisy of to-day, even if he hadn't already forgotten her. She was glad to know he had never married, but she soon saw that she was not the careless, free and happy young man she had known. He looked older and more serious.

The evening passed away very pleasantly, and all too quickly.

Ralph Hilton told his friend, as they walked away, that he had not spent as pleasant an evening in years.

"What a bright, sincere girl Miss Daisy is, she seems so different from the generality of girls, she is so genuinely honest and frank, and so unaffected, and what beautiful eyes she has."

The evening of the wedding came, and everything was in readiness for the joyous occasion.

The young men arrived very early, and as the girls were not quite ready they stepped into the music-room to look at the presents. The first thing that attracted Ralph's attention was Daisy's painting which was beautifully framed and in a conspicuous place. He looked at it closely, and calling Will to his side impatiently asked him who the artist was, but Will had never seen it before, and there was no card on it. How many times Ralph

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Hilton had thought of that scene and the next summer he had gone back to that little village only to learn that Mrs. Burtch was dead, and Margaret moved away they did not know where. He had come away a changed man.

It seemed like a clew to his long lost friends. The bell began to ring, and he was interrupted in his reverby a servant calling them as the girls were ready and waiting in Margaret's sitting-room. Margaret with her lovely golden hair and blue eyes made a beautiful bride, and her maid of honor looked no less fair with her raven hair and lustrous eyes. Both wore white costumes only Daisy wore and carried pink roses instead of white, and a fan of pink ostrich feathers.

The wedding, although perfect in every detail, was small, the invitations being limited to relatives and near friends of the contracting couple.

The congratulations and wedding-feast over, the train took their departure for the tour accompanied by Ralph Hilton and Daisy to the train.

Goodbys were said, and Ralph and Daisy drove slowly homeward. After a silence of some minutes Mr. Hilton said, "Miss Burtch I have a favor to ask of you. Can you tell me, or ascertain who the artist is of one of Margaret's wedding gifts, a painting called 'Goodbye?' You will have my undying gratitude if you can enlighten me, for it may bring me the greatest happiness on earth. Years ago I had a friend of whom I have since lost all track and this painting reminds me of her and the happiest summer of my life. I have tried to forget her, but I cannot, and the sight of that picture to-night has thoroughly unsettled me. Do you know at times your eyes remind me of her? But you are beautiful, and she was not, although she had lovely eyes."

"Yes, Mr. Hilton, I know the artist who painted that little scene, very well, indeed, but I cannot give you her address without permission. Any message you may care to send to her I will gladly deliver to her in person," and with this Ralph Hilton must be content. One thing he must know, "Is she married?" and when answered in the negative he drew a long breath of relief.

The following day a letter was brought to Margaret under cover to Daisy Burtch. It was a long, pleading letter asking her forgiveness for the way in which he had left her so long ago, and begging for an interview soon when he could tell her everything.

It also told her how he had tried to find her in her old home, but in vain. The second day after it was written, Ralph Hilton received a letter in reply, which read as follows:—

"MY OLD FRIEND:—Your letter was so received to-night. When you say that you love me and ask me to marry you, do you realize that over six years have gone by since that happy summer, and that those years may have made many changes in me? I am not the girl you used to know, but a woman whose life has not been all sunshine. I have never forgotten you, but I cannot answer your question in this. If, after carefully thinking it over, and you still wish to repeat your offer, call on me to-night, as I shall be with Daisy Burtch."

MARGARET."

Could it be possible that he would yet be happy? As early as he dared he presented himself at the Burtch mansion, where he found Daisy alone in the parlor. He thanked her heartily for her kindly assistance, and hoped to ask for her congratulations soon, he said.

"If you will come into the library, I am sure Margaret will be down soon," and she hastily left the room. The gas was turned down, and as he silently paced back and forth, a door opened and a figure dressed all in white said softly, "Ralph, I am here," and in the dark room and silent embrace he failed to see her face.

(Continued on Page 5)

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