

Written for THE JURY.

IDEALS.

BY NINEPHUS, ST. JOHN, N. B.

I declare, I'm just as mad as ever I can be! It's all very well for those exceedingly prim and proper people to be so down on me for flirting; but I'm a Fredlington girl, and everybody knows that a Fredlington girl can't just stop flirting to save her life.

"Let girls exert themselves to flirt,
For 'tis their nature to."

There, that's my parody on Dr. Watts, and a very good one it is too, considering; for I'm not in the least bit intellectual, and never mean to be. I leave all that to Charley.

Speaking of Charley reminds me of my trouble, for he is the root of it all. Everybody blames me and talks about my flightiness and wilfulness; but I can tell you that if I hadn't been engaged to Charley Spence it never would have happened. He was so quiet, so dry, and so dull that I was absolutely forced to do something sensational to remind myself that I was alive. And that begins it all.

Let me see. How did it happen that I was engaged to Charley? Oh, yes; I did it to make Carrie Dean jealous, and a dreadful time I had of it too.

You see, Carrie Dean was a frightful little goose, and was altogether different from the rest of us girls. She never made eyes at the men or tried to attract masculine attention; she never talked slang, and I don't believe she would have smoked a cigarette to save her life. Oh, she was a dull, namby-pamby, goody-goody girl if ever there was one. In addition to that she pretended to be very intellectual, and I don't see how she ever expected to become a success with men when she put on airs like that. None of them ever like that kind of thing. They only like women who know nothing and who pretend to look up to them with admiration. I was always very popular with them.

We were all awfully surprised when she and Charley began to go together. I was too mad for anything, so I determined I would foil her if I could. We had all tried to smash Charley, for he was very nice looking and people said that his family was very well off. But not one of us had been able to get him on the string yet. To think of that horrid thing, who had not a bit of st- or dash about her, succeeding where we had all failed, was too much for me.

So all at once I got very much interested in Charley. I got him to read poetry to me and contrived to look interested when he did so, and I kept looking up in his eyes in an admiring kind of way, and kept uttering innocent affectionate little speeches; and one day I had my reward. He brought a diamond ring to me, and in dreadfully high flown language asked me to wear it for his sake. Gracious, I didn't understand one half he said, but you may be sure I wasn't slow in taking the ring. That diamond was just too lovely for anything.

Well, there was a big fuss made over our engagement. Even pa was pleased, and I guess that's the only time he ever approved of anything I did. Somehow pa never seemed to appreciate me.

"Now remember, Ida," he said, in an awful way that sent my poor little heart into my dear little boots, "there is to be no trifling with young Spence, mind that. I don't see what he sees in you to admire. But I respect him, and you are to behave yourself this time. Do you hear?"

Now wasn't that horrid of pa? But that's just like him. He's always making unpleasant remarks. He's a dreadful old man to put up with.

Of course Carrie Dean was wretched. She carried it off well; but I'm cute enough and could easily see through her little arts. So for a time I enjoyed myself immensely until the excitement over our engagement died down and then I began to be bored.

For, you see, Charley was so intellectual that he would read poetry and high-flown novels to me, and that almost killed me. He was kind enough, gave me lots of presents and took me everywhere; but I was wild for a little flirtation and found life too dull for anything. At last I made up my mind that I'd quarrel with Charley, if only for the excitement of it.

For a long time I couldn't find anything to quarrel about, even though I was "spilin' for a fight." There was simply no fault to be found with Charley's devotion to me.

So things went on until one day when I was returning from town feeling desperate. I had two reasons for feeling miserable, and felt just ready to cry. In the first place I had seen a girl I hated, Tilly Herbert, with a new hat on, such as I had dreamed of for myself. Oh, it had a lovely expensive look about it that fairly made my mouth water. To think of that horrid thing having it!

But that wasn't all. When I met Tilly she was walking with one of the grandest looking men I ever saw. It is not in my power to describe him, so I shall leave his dark, splendid, wicked delightfulness to your imagination. That is just the style I admire.

And to think that I didn't dare even to look sideways at him for fear that horrid Tilly would tell on me. Oh, it was just too horrid for anything.

Just as I was crossing one of the quietest and most romantic streets in the place I saw a sight which made my heart leap. Just on the shady side opposite to me I saw Charley and Carrie Dean walking up and down, so busily engaged in conversation that they didn't even see me. Now did you ever?

Well, I was mad as a hornet. The very idea of Charley Spence pretending to be the pink of perfection and then acting in this way. Oh, I determined to make him pay dearly for it all.

So when he came to see me that night the chilling hauteur of my manner, combined with the crushing satire of my remarks, fairly made him squirm. He was so surprised that he actually began to grow affectionate. Most men don't know how to do anything else but spoon, but Charley was different.

"Ida," he said, after he had endured my manner for about an hour, "what is the matter with you to-night?"

"Did I say anything was the matter?" I asked icily.

"No, but you acted it. You are not at all like my ideal now."

"Oh, indeed," I cried scornfully, "that's too bad. You are always making a fuss about me being your ideal, and I should think you'd be ashamed to after the way you've been behaving. Tell you what, Charley Spence, your not a bit like my ideal either."

"Oh," in a tone of grave amusement; "so you have an ideal?"

"Yes, indeed I have. I saw him to-day, and he's tall and dark and grand looking, like Rochester in 'Jane Eyre.' So, there."

Now this description is the exact opposite of Charley, who is quite fair, with clear-cut features and quiet, gray eyes. His style is real gentlemanly and nice, and I used to feel real proud of him sometimes.

"Ida," he said, pleasantly, after a short pause, "won't you please explain why you are so angry with me?"

"Yes," I snapped, "when you tell me what you found so interesting in Miss Dean this morning."

He changed color. Oh, the mean thing. I didn't find him out any too soon.

"So," he said, slowly, at length, "that is your trouble, is it? Well, I can tell you nothing."

"Charley Spence," I said, solemnly, "if you don't tell me at once all about it I shall flirt with my ideal."

"I shall give you no information whatever," said the obstinate creature, turning pale, "neither shall you flirt. That is something I cannot allow."

Well, we wrangled on for about an hour, and then I began to cry. Whereupon that hateful Charley, instead of trying to soothe me, left the house in a huff.

The very next day I had my revenge. I went to take tea with a friend of mine and she introduced me to a Mr. Gaylord, a gentleman who was boarding with them. He was my ideal. Of course I succeeded in mashing him the very first night, and, goodness, how I flirted for the next few days! Charley never came near me, but when we met he just looked daggers at me. I didn't care a bit. It was real exciting fun for me. All the girls were wild with jealousy, and Tilly looked mad enough to tear my eyes out. I don't care, I did enjoy myself. Of course I only meant to flirt a little with my new friend

and then make up with Charley. But Mr. Gaylord soon became hard to manage. He was wild about me, and was one of the most excitable men I ever saw. Like Charley, he was all the time raving about me and calling me his ideal. He would have given me lovely presents if I had let him, only I didn't care. Matters came to a climax one beautiful moonlight night when I had promised Mr. Gaylord to go out rowing with him. How mad I was that night, for I had just received a note from Charley saying that Tilly had informed him of the promise I had made to Mr. Gaylord. That engagement must be broken or I would have to bid farewell forever to Charley Spence.

"Well, of all the cheeky notes that takes the cake!" I said, and I crushed it in my pocket and set out for the river bank, where I had promised to meet Mr. Gaylord. He was waiting for me, standing quite near the water's edge, gazing up at the moonlight; and oh, the wild, blazing, lurid look in his eyes as he turned them towards me.

I don't think if I was to live for a century I should ever forget the next few minutes. He sprang towards me as I approached, and seizing me by the shoulders began dragging me towards the water, in spite of my screams and struggles. In a flash I realized that I was in the grasp of a lunatic who was trying to drown me.

"My little ideal!" he shrieked, wildly; "my bride, that I have dreamed of! my little affinity!" (Such names to call one.) "You have come at last. Welcome, welcome! Do you remember, darling, our pre-existent state, when we were fishes? We will return to that life and end this one! We will go together to that mystic, radiant, changeful brightness—that effulgence—that weird glory—that—"

All the rest seems like a dream. I can remember faintly seeing two men seize him and hearing one of them say:

"There, you're safe now, Miss. Lucky we was near or you'd been in kingdom come by this time. He escaped from the asylum ten days ago and this has been our first chance to nab him. Oh, his deep, and he's dangerous, he is."

There, if that is not an experience to go through, I don't know what is. The whole place is excited about it yet. But the worst of it is that Charley won't speak to me and our engagement is broken. I heard yesterday that Carrie Dean had been trying to get Charley to help her brother out of some trouble. I suppose that was the dreadful secret of their interviews. Of course they will be engaged next. Oh, dear.

Pa is hoppin' mad at me. He has shut me up in this room for two days, and, true's you live, I've had nothing but buttered bread and tea in all that time. I've cried my eyes nearly out and my nose is not fit to be seen. Isn't that dreadful?

Yes, Charley Spence is to blame for it all. I shall never have an ideal again, and I hope no one will ever make one of me.

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