

Family Circle.

(From the Christian World.)
MARGARET TORRINGTON;
OR, THE VOYAGE OF LIFE.
By the Author of "Viola Vaughan," "Sir Julian's Wife," "St. Beatha," &c.

Sibyl was as good as her word: she went out shopping next morning, and, when she returned, she came straight to the school-room, where I was sitting still perplexing myself about the very unexpected course things seemed taking, and graciously enough informed me that the purchase of my new dress was an fait accompli. I thanked her, and very naturally asked her what sort of dress it was. "A lama," was her reply; "the very finest texture, and the most delicate shade I ever saw. There were two embroidered muslins the young man wanted me to take; but I decided for the lama the moment I beheld them. They are in the dressmaker's hands already, and I went round to Madame's at once; and one of her people will come up to-night to try on."

"Blue," she answered complacently, "the loveliest blue. A perfect azure with a sort of bloom upon it. I have plenty of lace for trimming both the dresses."
Now, blue suited Sibyl exactly; it harmonised with her fair complexion, and golden locks, and her violet coloured eyes; such a dress would set her off to the very best advantage; for white now made her look old and haggard, and pink and neutral tints for her were out of the question. Decidedly blue was Sibyl's colour; but not mine; it made me look hideous. I, with my dark skin and hair, wanted white or black only, relieved with pink or amber; and yet, what could I say? Was she doing this of malice prepense, or was she merely thoughtless, selfishly-absorbed in her own appearance, and altogether careless about mine? However, I did not like to seem ungrateful, so I thanked Sibyl again; but I suppose there was something hesitating in my tone, for she inquired, "Are you not contented?"

"I replied, 'I am thinking whether pale blue will not make my swarthy skin look darker even than it is.'
"Non-sense. Your skin is not swarthy. Gussie is swarthy if you like; but your complexion is a clear olive. Anything suits dark women; it is we fair girls who are obliged to be particular, if we would not frighten people. And I will need my turquoise brooch and bracelet. I shall wear my pearl set."

I said no more, and resigned myself to my fate; but the next morning Madame herself made her appearance, and we had to undergo the operation of "trying on." Madame was a little clever Frenchwoman, with wonderfully keen perceptions, with a perfect taste as modiste, and endowed with a sort of tact that was near akin to cunning. She fitted on Sibyl's bodice; and certainly it was exquisite, both in shape and in hue; and Sibyl herself, with the flush of gratified vanity on her cheek, and the light of excitement in her eye, looked once more very charming.

But when it came to my turn, Madame no longer flattered, but began to criticise. "Madame, mademoiselle, this dress of blue is not conformable for you. You have very beau yeux, but they are dark like the night, and your tint is brun, - vary brun. It is a tint I much approve, but not with a bleu si delicate for the robe; it will make you look not at all pretty, mademoiselle. Bah! it will spoil you! You could wear now the couleur vray rich, - par exemple, rose, or coquelicot, or abricot, or black lace, with those fall coulours, chere Mademoiselle Marguerite, or white muslin worked with gold, &c."

"That will do," cried Sibyl haughtily. "Madame, my cousin and I have not time this morning to listen to one of your elaborate lectures on dress. Try on Miss Torrington's bodice, and you can write down your little remarks when you go home, and send them to Le Follet. Let it be enough that on this occasion I wish my cousin and myself to be dressed alike."

Madame darted a curious look at Sibyl and another at me, but she made a profound courtesy, and held her peace. Her little black eyes twinkled with something very like amusement; but she could not refrain herself when, having "fitted me on," she surveyed her handiwork, and beheld what she called "such a very hideous combination."
"I will have no pleasure at all in this dress," she burst out. "It can never be to me a work of art; for in the very commencement it is in vainly beasty taste!"

Whereas we both laughed. Madame always translated her own *belles* into "beastly;" her melody of good French and most inefficent English was often very entertaining.

In process of time, however, our dresses came home, both elegantly trimmed, and fitting perfectly; but when on the Thursday evening I came to put mine on, I wished with all my heart I could find some adequate excuse for not wearing it. It made me look ill and sallow, and the turquoise ornaments only increased the bad effect. In addition to the brooch and bracelet, Sibyl had produced a wreath of turquoise forget-me-nots, which I was to wear in my hair; but I cast them aside after a single glance, and decided that I would not disgrace myself any more than I could help. Gussie came in as I was finishing my toilet, and she exclaimed, "You don't look nice at all, Margaret! What is the matter with you? Your dress is just like queen I! I have just been to her room."

"What suits Sibyl does not suit me, Gussie."
"Be sure not; I see now. And Margaret, I shouldn't wonder if she knew it all the time, and meant to spite you. I think she wished to make you look badly. Don't wear the thing."
"I must, Gussie; she has taken so much trouble about it. It is the first kindness she has ever shown me, and if I reject it, what will be the consequences?"

"Never mind the consequences; she cannot drown you, as she drowned the cat! And she does not mean it for a kindness; I am sure she does not. I am only a little girl, but I know things. Margaret, dear, don't wear it; put on your white spotted muslin, and wear your rose-coloured ribbons, and I will get you some real flowers for your hair."

"But my white muslin is high, and it has long sleeves."
"So much the better. I hate Sibyl's bare arms and skiny neck; your arms are round enough, and your neck bones do not all show, like hers. But you will look a great deal nicer with sleeves down to your wrists, and a little lace quilling round your throat. Margaret, you shall not go down in that blue thing!"

I am not sure now, whether Gussie, in her vehemence, tripped accidentally on the skirt of my troublesome new robe, or whether she resorted to one of her old mischievous expedients; but she set her foot firmly on the bottom of the dress, and, as I drew back at that moment, very quickly a terrific robe was the result.

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