her weekly letter as far as "It is rumored," when Miss Elbridge's sudden entrance put an end to imaginative construction for the time.

"O Henrietta!" cried the visitor, dropping into a chair; "I am so disturbed."

"What's the matter now?" inquired her friend brusquely, wiping her pen on the sleeve of a house jacket which she always wore while writing.

"Henrietta," remonstrated the visitor, "you speak as though you'd often seen me disturbed, when you know I never allow myself to be disturbed."

"Well, well, Florence, you needn't tell me unless you like."

"Why, Henrietta, of course I want to tell you. That's what I've come for. Do you know, that great, idiotic Ralph Winsted proposed to me?"

"I thought he was a very intelligent man," interrupted the penny-a-liner, drawing off her house jacket.

"Intelligent!"

"I thought he knew enough not to expose his ignorance; but of course, as he's proposed to you, I'm wrong."

"O Henrietta, you aren't sympathetic at all. The idea of his doing such a thing—to me! He irritated me so that I was rude, and drove him out of the house, and called him names—"

"Through the window?"

"No, no; before he went out. I was very rough, but he is so—so—such a ninny; and—what shall I do, Henrietta?"

"I don't know," answered Miss Jackson, as she arranged her hat before the mirror. There were gray hairs on her head, so she may have understood Miss Elbridge's mental state better than that young woman herself.

"Unless," she added, "you insert an advertisement in the papers to the effect that, if Ralph Winsted will return to his love, all will be forgiven and no questions asked. But, in the meanwhile, I am going out. You'd better walk with me; we'll look in at the shop windows, and forget our woes."

"It's so very muddy," sighed Miss Elbridge, luxuriously. "I've got my carriage here; we'll go in that."

"No; I want my exercise. Come,—come along; send the carriage away; you're growing lazy."

In spite of a beautifully enameled blue sky, the streets were very muddy, as Mr. Winsted learned to his disgust when, discarded by Miss Elbridge, he sought comfort in roaming. Although his features were placid and his hair light, yet his mind was chaotically black. Absent-mindedly he entered his club. From a dark corner a very young man, who seemed to have been sitting there to let the mold gather upon him till his freshness and reproach should be blotted out, sprang up and greeted the erring lover.

"Ah! so glad to see a human being!"

"I am not human," said Mr. Winsted, stalking away. He began to walk about the gardens, but they did not seem to deserve half the praise that had been given them. Then he lost himself in a crooked street, on whose crossings women were floundering about distractedly under the noses of rearing horses.

It was but very little later that Miss Elbridge, stepping with her friend out of a store where they had been pricing something that they did not want, and had not the least intention of buying, beheld Mr. Winsted crossing the street with an old woman, conspicuous by a very large hat, and the affectation of a very youthful manner.

"O Henrietta, look!" cried Miss Elbridge. "Who is that horrid old woman with Mr. Winsted?"

"Old!" she said, turning away. "That's a ballet-girl at the 'Diamond.'"

"A ballet-girl! The horrid man! How he has deceived me,—and I thought he was so upright! I'll never, never forgive him, Henrietta."