So it happened that from that day Miss Elbridge refused to recognize Mr. Winsted when she saw him.

But, far from accepting his defeat, Mr. Winsted, with a determination seemingly foreign to him, resolved to continue the chase while there was a chase to continue; and as a preliminary he called for advice upon Mrs. Richards, a motherly woman, much interested in the concerns of young men, and ready of counsel. Mrs. Richards was at home to Mr. Winsted, and received him with a gracious, indulgent smile. He explained matters, perhaps a little abruptly,—but then he was no diplomatist,—by saying:

“Mrs. Richards, I've come to ask your advice, you know.”

“You've been long away, but you come now that you need me,” replied the matron, playfully and sententiously chiding.

“Ah—I know—yes; I've been so worried. You see, Miss Elbridge—no, I proposed to Miss Elbridge, you know, and I called her—no, she called me a ninny, and I won't speak to her any more,—I mean she won't speak to me any more.”

Now there could be no love affair in her set and Mrs. Richards in ignorance of it—such was her observation. Therefore, what Mr. Winsted left vague she was able to supply for herself in a great measure.

“But I don't quite understand why she should cut you for such a thing. Isn't there something else, something you're not telling me?” she urged, curiously.

“No, no indeed. It does seem absurd—I mean odd, you know. I'd ask her, but I can't; she won't let me come near her.”

Mrs. Richards' eyes were lighted with joy in the anticipation of using for another that finesse which she was too old to employ for herself, as she replied: “Don't worry. Come tomorrow afternoon, and you shall see her alone.”

Mr. Winsted looked incredulous. “No, not another word,” she went on. “You come tomorrow,—now go.”

When on the next day Mr. Winsted rang the bell at Mrs. Richards' door, he was ushered mysteriously into a narrow, closet-like room of whose existence he had theretofore been ignorant. Mrs. Richards appeared to him after an intolerably long interval, as he reckoned it. She did not wait to greet him, but fluttering into the room pushed him towards a curtain, and whispered, “Now go right in, and be bold.”

Mr. Winsted entered precipitately, but although he had determined to be bold, he found such a course impossible when he stood before Miss Elbridge, over whose face passed a subtle change as she turned and saw him.

“Mr. Winsted!” she exclaimed in a voice that chilled him. He shifted his position uneasily, and unwittingly brought himself between her and the door.

“Mr. Winsted,” she began again, “how dare you intrude upon me like this? But I might have expected it of you. Now let me go;” and, springing to her feet, she walked towards him. As she advanced he retreated, until he stood with his back set firmly against the door.

“Mr. Winsted, will you let me go out?” she asked, tremulously; but Mr. Winsted continued to stand against the door without replying. She turned her back upon him. “This is rude—worse than rude; it is abominable; it is”—and she sank helplessly upon the sofa.

“Now,” thought Mr. Winsted at the door, “my time is come; she must needs hear me now. I'll speak to her.” But, try as he would, no sound came from his lips.

“Mrs. Richards planned this,” declared Miss Elbridge, on the sofa. “It was cruel to allure me here for this. I shall never forgive her and you—you, too; and I used to like you so much.”

“I must speak,” thought Mr. Winsted at the door, but he could form no syllable.

“Oh! please, please Mr. Winsted, let me go;” and Miss Elbridge, from conflicting emotions, began at last to weep softly.