A Fair Exchange.

It was at a summer resort, which had as its attractions a hotel and a lake. It was a very slow place, as a rule, but this summer the gossips had plenty to talk about. I said this summer, but I should have said this month, for the vacation of the young men that were the partial cause of the gossip, lasted only during the month of August. They were business men and college graduates, spending their vacation at this ordinarily quiet place, mainly, I suppose, because board, lodging, and horsehire were alike cheap. To the place came also two young ladies, cousins, visiting an old aunt who was staying at the hotel,—an old aunt, with perceptions not so quick as they once were, who never noticed anything of the flirtation that sprang up between her nieces and the young men.

The flirtation became soon a desperate one. The young people, delighted at a chance of excitement in a place usually so slow, plunged into it with great readiness, to the inward delight, but outward scandalization, of the old ladies and gossips, of whom the little hotel had its full share. All hands were satisfied with the arrangement: the young people, of course; the old aunt, because the cousins conspired in blinding her eyes; the gossips, because they had something to talk about; and so pleased were these last, indeed, that they became amiable, and talked so little harm that it was subject for remark. They busied themselves in watching, and reporting the doings of the young people, and in conjecturing the possible outcome of the affair. This last did not seem a hard matter, for the flirtation, general the first few days, speedily became particular, and the young people paired off, George Rand devoting himself to Miss Mead, while Will Storer paid especial attention to Miss Eliot.

Intimacy developed rapidly. From going always together the young couples separated; from a double carriage they went to single ones, and generally took different roads; when they walked they usually went in opposite directions. They agreed in one thing, however; they were always on the move. They drove, they rode, they walked, perpetually, and were seldom at the hotel for any length of time. This lessened somewhat the chances of observation, but the gossips were rather pleased than otherwise, for it pointed very strongly to a favorable conclusion to the two affairs.

Along in the third week of the vacation amusements began to drag. All the points of interest had been visited a score of times. The walks and drives had been thoroughly explored and exhausted. It was really quite a serious state of affairs, when canoeing finally presented itself to fill the gap. The discovery was made that the village possessed a couple of canoes. These were at once hired and put upon the lake, and the new sport was plunged into with great ardor, in the endeavor to get the most out of this amusement in the short time that was left of the month. The gossips were immensely pleased, and augured great things. Matrimonial stock rose to starvation price.

It was the last day of the month that a final spree was planned. The little wooded island in the center of the lake was to be made the scene of a picnic. "Very select, and strictly limited in numbers," as Rand put it. The two couples went to the island in the forenoon, but, true to their custom, at different times and by different routes. They saw little of each other during the morning. Mr. Rand and Miss Mead—George and Eleanor, if you please—buried themselves in the woods at one end of the island; Mr. Storer and Miss Eliot, or, rather, Will and Grace, found a cozy spot, unobserved by all, at the other end. The four met, by