

not want to be paid for a thing like that."

"Eh! what? too proud to take it?" said the gentleman astonished. "Well, at least you'll let me give your little brother a present?"

And he delighted Willie by presenting him with what he called a "white penny."

"Excuse me, sir—may I ask one favour of you?" said Mirabel nervously.

"Certainly, my good girl. What is it?"

"Please, sir, if you should see Mr. Collier—please, will you promise me not to tell him where I am living?"

"Eh! what? You don't want him to know where you are to be found? But how is that? Are you not willing to sit for him again?"

"No, sir. I never mean to sit as a model again."

"Well, I daresay you are right. It is not a nice thing for a girl to do—as a rule—but— However, no doubt you know your own business best. You need not be afraid, my girl; I will keep your secret. Good morning, and many thanks to you for your kindness."

They parted, and Mirabel turned away to look for an omnibus that would take her and Willie to Liverpool Street.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL EVENTS IN A GIRL'S LIFE.

By LA PETITE.

PART IV.

A JUBILEE DRAWING-ROOM.

NOTHING could have been further from our thoughts than courts and ceremonies that mild April day, as we sat at breakfast in our tiny country home, looking out on the garden gay with hyacinths and spring flowers, and yet, before night, we had settled to attend a Drawing Room, and had set the ball of preparation rolling.

It happened in this way.

"There's the postman!" I exclaimed, and was ready at the front door as he came up the path with only two letters as it chanced instead of the usual bundle, but one of those was to change the aspect of the next few weeks altogether, as I very soon found out.

Mamma read bits of it aloud.

"My dear Mrs. —, the last time I saw you, you spoke of attending a Drawing-Room this year with your daughter. I have settled to present Gladys at the first one in May, and hope you will decide on the same so that we may all go together. Come to my tea and trains afterwards, to help make up a good show of tails."

I listened in breathless silence.

I was just recovering from a perfectly dreadful cold and felt as if I wanted something extra-special to brighten me up.

Here was something extra-special indeed, and I felt better on the spot, though there was an ominous pause before mamma slowly said, "Well, perhaps we might manage it if we can get the dresses done in time." Whereupon I exclaimed fervently, "Mamma, I should like to go!" so that there might be no mistake as to my wishes. Next day, reading the paper in my favourite window-seat, I saw the first Drawing-Room announced to take place in ten days' time, which, as mamma said, practically settled it, but still I did not see why it could not be done, so, the day after we left the quaint, sleepy village behind us and were whirled off to London to be swallowed up in the rush of business and pleasure which marks the season.

The next sensation was the announcement that the Queen in person would hold the second Drawing-Room a fortnight off, and then mamma looked at me solemnly and said, "It rests with you, my dear, to decide whether you will go with your friends or wait for the later one."

Is there any need to record my decision?

This year of all others any girl with a spark of patriotism in her composition would have settled it the same way, and we felt sincerely sorry for those who had fixed to be presented at the first Drawing-Room, and could not now alter it, having sent in their names and received their cards.

All the same I was, for a long time, rather torn between my desire to go with my friends and my longing to "see the Queen," like

pussy cat in the nursery rhyme, but in my heart I wanted the latter all the while, and so at last it was fixed.

Of course the first question was clothes.

It always is apparently, and it strikes me you hear a good deal on the subject from me, but in functions of this sort your dress seems somewhat more important than you, and has to be approached in a serious spirit. If one looks at both sides (as one always ought to do, of course) you must admit that the poor would suffer in the long run if no one bought the rich materials, the expensive flowers and the costly trimmings, so that it is not so wasteful as it appears to spend so much on court gowns.

I thought of this as I assisted at the serious consultation over brocades, satins, and velvets which was only one of many to follow, and, indeed, the amount of time spent over the matter one way and the other was truly alarming. From dressmaker to glover, from glover to florist, until my head swam, and it seemed to me as if the whole world, so to speak, was intent on the one event.

Then came the first trying on of elementary linings, and then a private view of the gowns themselves, with my train laid out on a long table in a whole room all to itself, to which I was solemnly conducted, that I might survey it in all its glory.

Another day we devoted to having our hair dressed to see how best it would suit us.

Mamma's was to be simply turned back over a cushion, on which plumes, lappets, and diamond stars could be firmly fixed on a black velvet bandeau.

My short curled hair had given way to a long, straight, thick mane, which proved a good foundation for the feathers and veil, but seemed more troublesome to manipulate.

However at last it was all up with a vast expenditure of hair pins and patience, and we made the appointment for the great day at ten o'clock, in consequence of the pleasing information that my hair alone "would take an hour."

On another occasion our gloves were tried on and the glover arranged to come on the morning itself to fit them on in person, for, as he feelingly remarked, "Everything depends on how a glove is put on," and I, remembering the ruthless hurry with which I had often dragged on a new pair, could but agree with him.

Then the bouquets had to be ordered of a florist who had known me when I was a tiny dot of a child in socks and pinafores, and who, therefore, took an intense interest in the whole business.

Mamma at the last minute decided not to have a bouquet as her dress was sufficiently trimmed with flowers, but mine was to be of the "shower" description of mauve lilac to match the flowers on my gown, for my favourite lilies-of-the-valley were tabooed, as I

had had them before, and my other favourites, sweet peas, did not lend themselves well to the occasion.

The coachman and footman were to have bouquets of yellow iris and mauve lilac, and, that being settled to everyone's satisfaction, another important detail was perfect. I had not carried a bouquet before, so mamma instructed me to hold it as high as I could, till I entered the "presence," citing awful examples of ladies who left home with most exquisite bouquets, and arrived in the throne room tenderly clasping a few stalks only.

I confided to her my firm intention of mislaying mine altogether if I found it was in that condition, but I hoped for the best, and determined to make a gallant struggle to preserve it intact.

After this we attended to our underlinen, for naturally one does not make a grand show outside without having everything to correspond beneath, and there is no question of "making things do" on these occasions.

Luckily I had only a few weeks before devoted some extra addition to my allowance to fitting myself out in this department with some really pretty articles of underwear, all lace and insertion and baby-ribbon, for which I have always had a great weakness, so I felt no anxiety on that score, and had nothing new to buy. A week before the great event we went to see the Gladys, already mentioned, on her return from her presentation, and I felt consumed with envy, for she certainly looked lovely, and her mother no less so; but I consoled myself with the thought that my turn was coming, and that people regard your dress more than your face.

The trying on of the gowns when finished, was second only in importance to the grand occasion itself.

Round we went to the Court dressmaker's and were ushered into the show-room which was plentifully strewn with sheets, and where our dresses were already spread out for our inspection, and then the ordeal began.

Soon after its commencement, the Court dressmaker whispered something mysteriously to mamma, who evidently promptly assented, for presently four or five pale, quiet girls in black slipped in, who had been helping with our dresses, and had asked if they might see how they looked when complete.

It seemed quite pathetic to me to think of those girls, many of them younger than myself, who toiled hard for a living in the shadow, while their more fortunate sisters in the sunshine were made elegant by their labour.

But their wistful eyes brightened a little when mamma asked them if they would send their love to their Queen, to which they most heartily consented, and we did not forget to thank them all for the care and pains they had bestowed on the work.

I did not faint this time, being stronger

than I used to be, and I was not a little proud of the fact, for one is always curiously ashamed of making a scene although, of course, in many instances one cannot help it.

When the dresses were on they did infinite credit to the taste and skill of the court dress-maker, as I think you would have said if you had seen them. Mamma's was silver-grey brocade petticoat and bodice trimmed with old Italian lace and every shade of rose from darkest crimson to palest pink, so natural you felt as if you must pick them up and bury your face in them, and her train was black velvet lined with silver-grey and trimmed in the same way.

She looked very well in it though the effect was rather marred by her bonnet, which she had retained "on this occasion only," and which had a quaint and awesome effect surmounting her robes of State!

Then my turn came, and I felt like the latest development of the "living photographs," as three people dressed me up (like a prize doll!) in a petticoat and bodice of shot white and maize silk which looked like frosted gold and was softened by chiffon to match and bunches of mauve lilac, with a train of portentous length of maize-coloured brocade lined with the palest lilac silk and flowers to correspond.

A pearl necklace on maize silk round my neck was my only ornament with the exception of some ropes and tassels of ancient pearls on my dress which had descended to me from my great-great-grandmother and might therefore be fairly regarded as heirlooms. I looked older this time, but still very small and I could not help remembering the "duster" episode, and how, every time I tried to back out of the presence of royalty, I promptly sat down on the floor.

A private rehearsal of my curtsy was the next thing left to do, and I went through it with the aid of two arm-chairs and a table who received my homage with stony indifference!

We had not to send in our names this time at all (you never do after you have once been presented) so we merely had to get plain, square white cards to write our names on, two each for ourselves to present in the Palace, one to give the coachman to present at the door.

I succeeded in getting a pair of white satin shoes embroidered with gold to match my dress, and with that our purchases were ended.

So the days marched on, each marked by some further progress such as the arrival of our dresses one morning in a cab and their holding a sort of drawing-room on their own account in the room set apart for their safe keeping.

How thoroughly I enjoyed all this, for I had had bestowed on me at my birth an immense faculty for enjoying to the utmost and making the most of every pleasure that comes my way, and I regard it as a very precious gift which I hope never to lose and which you must not misunderstand.

There are many months when we work as hard as if our daily bread depended on it, but it would not be interesting to read the record of them, only if you think me unduly frivolous, remember that these social events are but part of my life, and do not by any means continually occupy my thoughts.

Another blessing too was the utter absence of nervousness which enabled me to squeeze every drop of joy out of the occasion, for we were certainly meant to enjoy our lives and our youth as much as possible, and there cannot be anything wicked in it.

At last the day dawned, and the first thing to be thought of on opening our eyes was the weather. All fears on that score were soon set at rest by the brilliant sunshine that

flooded the room, and, although it was very cold, still the unclouded blue of the sky was inspiring.

Action began early as you may imagine, and by ten, when the hair-dresser appeared, we were ready for him.

As soon as he had finished, the court dress-maker took us in hand, and by the time that was over the plumes, veils and lappets were fixed on; last of all, the bouquet arrived, a hasty lunch was taken, and we descended to the drawing-room to be seen by a few friends quietly before starting.

Then at a quarter past twelve we drove off, but had to return for a bracelet which had been forgotten, much to the consternation of the household, who feared some mishap had occurred.

After this however we went for good, and arrived on the Mall to find it already packed with enthusiastic sight-seers, standing in serried ranks and craning their necks to catch a glimpse of the splendours within the carriages.

We were sent twice round the Park before being allowed to take up our position at the end of an immense procession, and as we did so St. James's Palace clock struck one, and we resigned ourselves to waiting and being stared at.

People are privileged on these occasions, and know it, so they have no compunction in glueing their noses to the carriage windows and loudly expressing their approval or dislike.

Their praise was almost more embarrassing than their disapprobation, but the sort of I-could-do-it-better-myself expression on some of the faces was most comical.

Many of the ladies had friends to talk to them, but there was plenty to see, so we did not mind, knowing that this was the longest bit of all, while to many it might seem too short, especially to the poor lady whose magnificent "posy" of red roses had evidently arrived at her house too late, and was now being paraded up and down the line of carriages by an anxious-faced messenger-boy on a four-wheeled cab! I hope she got it in the end, for that sort of thing is so disappointing, but I had no means of finding out, as by slow but sure degrees we crept along changing from two ranks into one, hearing strains of distant music, watching the Life Guards go by, and finally dashing through the gates, across the outer quadrangle, under the archway and on through the inner courtyard up to the entrance. It really is very solemnising that stepping from the blazing sunshine outside into the hushed gloom of the Palace, and I felt decidedly a little awed as I followed my mother, across the lofty pillared hall I so well remembered, into an immense room where our wraps were removed and we were generally shaken out and put right.

Then we all trooped past a number of people sitting along the wall in rows and so on up the grand staircase and along a corridor where two personages were waiting to receive one of our cards, a special table being appointed for presentation cards only.

To our left was a magnificent room, almost like a church, crammed with wealth, beauty, youth and high rank, and I realised the utter impossibility of trying to describe anything so gorgeous and so unlike any ordinary spectacle.

We sat a long time in that corridor, long enough for me to register a vow never to carry a bouquet again to make my arm ache, long enough for the more daring *débutantes* to look at themselves and preen their feathers like so many snow-white doves, long enough for their nervous sisters to be reduced to the last gasp of agony.

After a time the electric light was turned on and it all looked prettier than ever.

At last the Yeomen of the Guard raised their crossed halberds and we trailed into the next room, our corridor being immediately filled up by the occupants of the church-like room, and so on *ad finem*.

Here we were in a blaze of sunlight, whose rays showed up our weak points and danced from diamond to diamond as if revelling in their beauty.

We did not wait long here, but the crush at the barrier was worse and the gentleman-at-arms who raised the crimson velvet bannister to let us through remonstrated in vain; "Gently, ladies! Wait a moment! One at a time, please!" but still we all insanely tried to pass five abreast through an opening obviously intended only for two people, with what results you may imagine!

Looking back afterwards I saw the floor was strewn with flowers torn off in the struggle, and presently a lace handkerchief was posted up in a conspicuous place to be claimed if possible, but my only wonder was that there was anything left of us at all, for personally I felt as if my head was coming off, my veil had been so tugged.

After anxious inspection of ourselves and each other we pronounced it not so bad as might be expected and then woke up to the fact that we were in the last room but one.

I had an impression of blue brocade, portraits, gardens outside with fountains playing and pigeons cooing, and then I found we were at the very last barrier with whispers going on, "Have you your card, May?" "Your flowers are so cold against my arm!" "Let your veil go!" "Didn't you feel like an animal in the Zoo when you were in the Mall!" and so on.

Then a rumour went round, "Her Majesty retired ten minutes ago," and alas! it proved true.

Not a few faces fell at the news, but the knowledge that we had been within measurable distance of our sovereign consoled us somewhat.

The next news was "five curtsies to make," and then the cords dropped and we went in Indian file slowly and calmly up to the gentlemen who took our trains and spread them out.

Once more I heard my name announced in tones of thunder, again I found myself sinking mechanically and rising with what grace I could muster, and then I dexterously caught my train and backed out convinced that I had only got in four curtsies after all, but gratified that my courage enabled me to look at the face of our sweet Princess of Wales. Mamma was waiting, so we walked downstairs, giving our name in passing to a functionary who shouted it down a tube, and we heard it echo beyond the gates with sonorous emphasis.

I looked back ere leaving to try and photograph it all on my mind, but it is a difficult thing to do successfully. It won't do to say it was the proudest moment of my life, but it certainly is one never to be forgotten.

We did not return straight home, as I wanted to show myself off to the lady who had once acted "Queen" for my benefit, and who would have been sorely disappointed had she not had a glimpse of our dresses.

When at last we arrived at our own door we found friends assembled to hear and see all they could, and then after that we went out to dinner, so I think you will agree with me that we had a pretty long day.

I sent my bouquet to an invalid who had been intensely interested in the whole affair, and whose life was none too bright, and when at last we lay down in bed I murmured sleepily but fervently, "Well! it has been a most thoroughly satisfactory day!"