# WHITE ROSES

By ELSIE CARMICHAEL

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Dick walked down the avenue slowly, so deeply absorbed that he looked straight at Mrs. De Peyster Jones and cut her, to that young woman's surprise.

"Why, what can the matter be with Dickie?" she said to herself, with an almost irresistible impulse to turn around and look after the melancholy figure sauntering down the street.

Mildred Jones had been a friend of Dick Eton's ever since they had played in the park and gone to dancing school together. Two years before she had married De Peyster Jones, and now one of her greatest pleasures was chaperoning Dick and his various ladyloves.

"I believe Dick's in love again," she exclaimed, half aloud, "or perhaps this is the real thing at last. I wish it were and Dickie would settle down."

At the same moment Dick was passing a florist's. A happy thought struck him.

"I'll settle it tonight," he said to himself. "I'll make Doris say whether she cares for me or not. If she won't have me I'll, I'll"— His eyes wandered up and down the crowded avenue, brilliant in the spring sunshine. I'll do something desperate," he threatened.

He went into the shop, heavy with the fragrance of roses and violets, and tried to decide what he would send her. He was going to take her to a musicale at Mrs. Schuyler's that evening, and as he had forgotten to ask her the color of her gown he chose white roses. Going to the desk, he took out a visiting card and stood hesitating, pen in hand. Should he leave it to the flowers or ask her tonight at the musicale? He remembered a particularly cozy and retired corner behind the palms in Mrs. Schuyler's conservatory.

"No, I cannot wait until then," he thought. "I'll let the flowers speak."

"SO YOU COULDN'T CARRY THEM, DORIS!" HE CRIED HOARSELY.

Hastily he wrote on the card, "If you care for me a little bit, Doris, carry this tonight."

Then he sealed it up and gave it to the man. "Send the flowers at once to 37 West —th street," he said as he paid for them. "On no account let there be any delay."

"Arrah, thin, I want some flowers, a rale illigant design, for me cousin, Mrs. O'Flannagan, who's dade," exclaimed a voice. A large, showily dressed, red faced Irish woman pushed past him to the counter.

Dick went out of the shop filled with mingled feelings of doubt, uncertainty and a great love for Doris. As he strolled over to the club he marveled at his own presumption in asking such a peerless creature to come down to earth for his sake.

That evening while he was waiting for Doris he roamed restlessly about the great drawing room. When a little rustle of silken draperies announced her comming he stood like a soldier at attention, awaiting his sentence. The portieres were pushed aside, and Doris, in a trailing white gown, stood outlined against the heavy curtain—Doris with her blue eyes flashing ominously—and with empty hands.

Everything seemed to spin around.

"So you couldn't carry them, Doris!" he cried hoarsely, while his hand clasped the back of the chair.

"I don't see how you could have asked such a thing," she said icily. She was still standing and did not make any movement to come nearer him.

"I know it was presumptuous," he admitted mournfully.

She laughed mirthlessly. "I thought at first that you meant it as a joke," she said. She walked over to the fireplace, her long, fluffy skirt trailing behind her on the polished floor. The firelight played on her hair, on her white, sculptured shoulders and her exquisite arms. Dick thought that she had never looked so beautiful, and his hands tightened on the carved oak chair back.

"I knew you were always playing jokes on people," she went on, "but I put the robbers to rout, but not before one of them had fired directly across his eyes. He was powder burned on cheeks and forehead—so much was certain.

Johnny, suppliant or angry, to be twisted around her little finger, was one person; Johnny, stern and resolved, putting her away in spite of pleading, very much another. All at once Helen awoke to the knowledge that she loved him. She had rushed to him at the first word of trouble, meaning only to sympathize and console. It was his voice, pathetically brave, still more pathetically full of renunciation, which had shown her what was in her own heart. "No; I can't let you stay, Helen," he had said, letting her hand fall. "I know you too well. You are so sorry for me you might come to love me. Why, I've seen you often and over get fond of a lame dog. Ever since this"—a sort of gulp at the word—"happened I have been so glad you didn't care for me, because I love you so well I won't let you ruin your future. I'm a common, crossroads sort—nothing like your fine gentlemen, but at least I can play you fair."

Then Helen, by turns hot and cold, had knelt and laid her head on his shoulder, sobbing out her love and penitence. She could feel Johnny swallowing hard. But he held obstinately by what he had said. It was the same the next day, the next and the next.

At the end of a week Papa Corson took a hand. "You are trying hard to tie a millstone around your neck," he said unfeelingly. "I might not object to that so very much if only the millstone was willing. Johnny Haley has got enough to keep two people out of the poorhouse. But I've a mighty strong notion he don't want you. Unless you want to make yourself a laughingstock you'll keep out of his way."

Helen had not been spoiled all her twenty years for nothing. She listened, growing angrier and angrier all the time. But she turned away without a word and ten minutes later had bundled her mother into the phaeton and was driving like mad toward the country town. The business that took her there was soon transacted, and then the horses found their heads turned toward the Haley farm. There Helen burst in upon Johnny, locked her hand in his and said tremulously over her shoulder to a man who followed in her wake with Mrs. Corson on his arm: "We are ready, Dr. Lansing. Please marry us quickly, no matter what Johnny says. He—he may not be quite right in his mind."

Johnny almost sprang up. Helen's hand shook so he knew she needed support. His eyes were still bandaged, but the curls on top of his head seemed to wink at the minister, who stood twiddling the license uncertainly.

"Let her go, parson!" Johnny called out joyously, drawing Helen a little closer. He made the responses in a suspiciously strong voice and at the end tossed his blinders to the other side of the room.

"Helen! Sweetheart! Wife!" he cried. "I'd have to see you right now, even if it cost me my eyes. But I'm not blind nor going to be, even though that cannon cracker did singe my eyebrows"—

"It is I who have been blind all these years," Helen interrupted. Then catching the twinkle in her mother's eyes: "I understand now. You two conspired to make me see."

### The Kaffirs Thought It a Joke.

I once took some Kaffirs from their desolate homes in the more desolate gorges beyond the mountain ranges to the more civilized south. Like most savages, they looked with stupid indifference at the marvels about them, and once only were they excited by an incident which opened their eyes to what they considered a most extraordinary and unnatural state of things.

They were descending a road when one of them chanced to remark that he was hungry, and the English "sahib" bought him some food at a wayside shop. The Kaffir saw the money change hands.

"How is this?" he inquired in surprise. "Do you have to pay for food in this country?"

"Certainly."

"What a country!" cried the man in amazement. Then, after pondering awhile, he continued doubtfully: "Suppose a man had no money in this country. He might starve."

"It is quite possible."

The Kaffir shook with uncontrollable laughter. It was the best joke he had ever heard. He then explained the ridiculous system to his companions, and they roared in chorus.—"Where Three Empires Meet."

### A One Volume Man.

A curious example of generous obstinacy was a stout English countryman who inquired for a nice book to read, "one with a story in." On several being placed before him, he examined them attentively and picked out the middle volume of a "three decker" with the remark: "This 'ere's my sort. What's the price?"

"Oh," was the reply, "this is only the second volume. The story goes through three. The set is half a crown."

"Hauve a crown! Well, I'll gie ye that for that one book. It's a pretty one enough."

"But won't you have the other two as well? You'd better."

"Naw. I don't like th' beginnin' of a story. I can't get forrud wi' it. An' I don't like th' endin'. I don't know as 'ow it's comed about. But in th' middle un I'm into th' thick of it right off. No, I'll only tak' th' middle un. It'll set me up for a month." And, cramming the book into his pocket he put down his half crown and disappeared with a "Good night" before the other volumes could be given to him.—Chambers' Journal.


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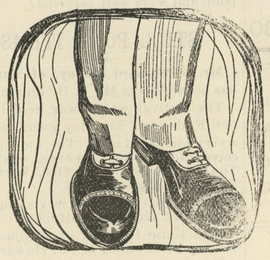

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