

Elspeth

By ONOTO WATANNA

The "flapper" may be passing, but girls like sixteen-year-old Elspeth are peculiar to no particular period. This is a good story and a delightful character study by a famous Canadian Author.



ELSPETH was sixteen years old. She was pretty and temperamental, or, as an unkind friend once described her, "temperish". Her mother was exactly eighteen years older than Elspeth, and that fact the girl seized upon to "rub in" when the other woman attempted to prohibit the early association with youthful members of the opposite sex.

"You're a nice one to preach," cried Elspeth, her eyes dancing. "You must have had beaux when you were in short skirts. How old was father when you married him?"

"Your father was twenty-one", replied Mrs. Maitland, very rosy and flustered.

"Ah—ha! Well, one of you was of age anyway. That's enough, isn't it?" She added the last question with a certain artlessness that nevertheless perturbed her mother.

"But Ellie, dear, I wouldn't want you to make the mistake I did."

"Mistake!" Instantly Elspeth was on the warm defensive.

"Are you trying to say that your marriage to my father was a mistake then?" she demanded indignantly.

"Yes, it was a mistake, Ellie," affirmed her mother quietly, "for we were nothing but children, and I believe things might have been very different for your father. . . . And then his people might not. . . ."

"His people, uh?"

Elspeth seized the opportunity to demand information concerning "my father's people."

"Who were they, anyway? And why don't I know them? And where do they live? And why don't they like you mother? How is it you never talk about them?"

"Why, they are just ordinary people, Ellie. You don't know them because they live a great distance from here—in the east, and as for their liking or not liking me. . . ."

She hesitated, bit her lip and turned from her daughter. Instantly Elspeth sprang to her, excited, thrilled, and convinced that her "hunch" about her father and his people was correct. He had married beneath him! That

was it. No doubt, he came of an illustrious and very wealthy family, while her mother. . . well, Elspeth's mother, as she once herself quaintly expressed it, had always been "Saturday's Child", who must work for her living.

"Mother, tell me the truth at once. You've kept it so long from me. *Isn't* there a great romance in your life about you and my dear dead father? Weren't his people multi-millionaires, or swells of some kind? Did they object to his marrying beneath him? Don't be hurt, muzzie. For my part I admire working girls, and if it was't for other plans already made, I might be one myself some day. But do tell me. . . ."

"Ellie, you foolish child, if you must know, your father's father was a plumber. My father was a college professor". . .

"Oh-h-h!"

Ellie had turned pale. She was hard hit. Her eyes looked luminous and very large, as she took in this intensely humiliating information concerning her antecedents. Her pride was in the dust, and all of her fine castles tumbling about her. She felt that she never could adjust herself to the thought of being a plumber's grandchild. After a long and painful silence, she said resentfully:

"Then I don't see why they objected to his marrying you."

"I never said that they did. You've been imagining things."

"Well, but they never speak to you."

"Yes, they do, when we see each other, but the years and distance are great separators, Ellie."

"And didn't you even elope then?"

"Now, Ellie, that's a foolish question. We came out here like a couple of foolish children to avoid the objections which our parents naturally were raising to our marriage on account of our extreme youth."

"Anyway", said Ellie triumphantly, "you did elope. You can't get away from that."

Mrs. Maitland sighed, and Elspeth, her attention already diverted by a group of

