

"Well, its going on just the same, and I don't see why you need to rub it in. It isn't my fault I'm only sixteen. I loathe being so young!"

"Don't be foolish, Ellie. You'll be old soon enough and. . ."

"I wish you wouldn't nag me all the time. Can't you let a fellow alone a minute?"

"That's not a nice way to talk to your mother, Elspeth."

"I don't care. You started it. I wish you'd leave me alone and not ask questions about things that—that arn't any one's business but mine. I guess I know how to take care of myself."

"You don't," said her mother quickly, "or you wouldn't sit in a darkened room with a young man, and you wouldn't let a stranger hold your hand. It was all I could do to keep from walking in and ordering him out of my house."

Elspeth had leaped up in bed, pulling the covers half off her mother.

"You wouldn't dare do such a thing."

"Yes, I would dare, Elspeth. I'd dare anything for your good."

"It wouldn't be for my good. It would kill me. I'd be so—so mortified I'd want to crawl into the smallest hole in the earth. I could never never look him or anyone else in the face after a thing like that."

"Lie down, Elspeth."

Even mothers are only human, and subject to irritation when exasperated beyond measure.

Elspeth subsided to the bed, but she still flung forth her defiance to her mother.

"Well, if you talk like that, I won't listen to you."

"You *must* listen to me, Elspeth. Now that we've started upon this subject, I have something to say to you, and questions I must ask you."

"I've got my two hands over my ears and I can't hear a word you say," cried the young rebel, while the older woman's hands itched to box those allegedly hidden ears. If her daughter lacked self control, she at least prayed for patience to endure this unwarranted defiance and gratuitous impudence. The long silence that followed was broken by a loud sob from the now secretly remorseful Elspeth, convinced that she had alienated her mother forever more. That sob however was sternly ignored by the indignant Mrs. Maitland, and the girl too proud to make the desired overtures, added fuel to the flame by bursting out with passionate abandon:

"All right, then, I will tell you, since you want to know so much about us. I'm head over hands and heels in love with Hal Holloway, and so is he with me, and we adore the very ground he—I mean we—stand upon, and its all on account of *you* that we quarrelled to-night; but I'm going to make up with him the first thing to-morrow, and you'll see what we'll do. We're going to get married, that's what we are. You just wait and see if we don't."

"Don't be foolish, Ellie. You can't get married at your age. It's against the law. It can't be done, without my consent."

"We can too. He's of age already and I could easily pass for nineteen, and he knows a man that. . . So you see."

"All I see is that you are a very silly girl. I see too that I've been far too lenient with you, and it's just about time that I took some steps to restrain you. You've two more years to finish at High school. The reason you didn't pass last year is because you were fooling around with boys. If you had any sense you'd soon see that you cannot take anything they say seriously. They don't mean half the foolish stuff they talk about."

"I know the average boy doesn't, but Hal's different. He means every last word he says. He doesn't even know what it *means* to pretend that he cares for a girl when he doesn't. He told me that I was the only girl he'd ever known that he cared a button about. Those are his very words."

"All the same, I think I'll have to curtail his visits if it is going to upset you like this."

"Who's upset? What are you talking about now?"

"You are, and so am I. You will never make your grade at school if you don't get this boy nonsense out of your head."

Again Ellie jerked up in bed, wild and furious again.

"Thousands—*millions* of girls don't go through High school, and why should I, who hate it? I see myself going through."

"That's enough of that sort of talk. I'll send you to boarding school."

"Me? Boarding school?" Her voice rose shrilly. "I see myself going to prison. Oh yes, I'll go like a tame lamb, won't I though? Don't you see me?"

Her impudence was intolerable. Her mother had the impulse to whip her as she had done when Elspeth was a little girl, and in a tantrum would throw herself upon the floor and kick and scream with rage.

"Lie down. I've had enough of this."

"I want to know what. . ."

"Never mind that. The important thing is that we must have our sleep. I, because I must go to work in the morning, and you be-

