

# A Dream of Affinity.

BY HILDA KEANE.

*Illustrated by W. Wright.*



ALMA CORLEGA was very much inclined to be in love. I say "inclined," because you must know that a woman can hold herself sufficiently in check whenever good sense or necessity wills it. It needs but the tiniest grain to push the balance this way or that. And if this girl had not firmly put the thought from her whenever it arose, she would have been desperately in love—and with a stranger! It was curious that her emotions should act so independently of her reasonings. For, as she had never spoken to the man, how was she to assume that he was worth the loving? But she did so assume, or something inside her did.

Whenever she was free to think, she found her thoughts wandering unconsciously to a serious-looking man whose eyes seemed to pierce her very soul.

She very seldom met the gaze of those eyes, for she dared not challenge the sternness of them by looking up. Sometimes she wondered if he looked at her when her own eyes were downcast, but she resisted the desire to see.

They simply met each other on the same public road, he passing upward, she downward. For months they had passed each other thus, and Alma Corlega had no suspicion of anything extraordinary in it until, one unlucky morning, she had chanced to find Mr. Serious looking at her with searching grey eyes. They sent a tremor through her—a tremor which seemed to make her miss her footing, and tread on empty space.

Then she awoke to the fact that she was falling in love, and for the future had better avoid that steady gaze. So now she looked anywhere but at the serious-looking stranger whom she met so often. Months passed, and Alma was as far from knowing Mr. Serious as ever.

Once she had thought that there must be such a thing as affinity. But since, if there were, it must take its own course, it was wiser to face the facts of the situation, and treat the whole affair as a creation of her imagination.

Alma Corlega was thus musing as she returned one evening from her duties as governess. She was weary and tired, for the day was hot, and her charges had been exceedingly troublesome. It was quite possible also that Mr. Serious had something to do with her dejection, for she had not met him for a whole month. She complacently told herself that she was very glad, and that she had quite forgotten the little romance she had so unconsciously woven.

Only that very day she had been thinking of the old times when, a girl in her teens, she had promised Jack Carmston to remain faithful to him. It seemed so long ago, and Jack had not written to her for two years.

Muriel, her eldest pupil, broke in on her meditations. "You know, Miss Corlega, there is no reason why I should study. I can speak as correctly as most people. I cannot write essays, but I shall only need to write a few letters, now and again. Mamma only writes home once a year, and I suppose I shall do the same. Besides, what is the use of learning a whole lot of rules, and writing French sentences, and practising