

ACT IV THE BLUE AND WHITE ROOM

If we could shut our eyes to the two sisters sitting here in woe, this would be, to the male eye at least, the identical blue and white room of ten years ago; the same sun shining into it and playing familiarly with Miss Susan's treasures. But the ladies are changed. It is not merely that Miss Phoebe has again donned her schoolmistress's gown and hidden her curls under the cap. To see her thus once more, her real self, after the escapade of the ball, is not unpleasant, and the cap and gown do not ill become the quiet room. But she now turns guiltily from the sun that used to be her intimate, her face is drawn, her form condensed into the smallest space, and her hands lie trembling in her lap. It is disquieting to note that any life there is in the room comes not from her but from Miss Susan. If the house were to go on fire now it would be she who would have to carry out Miss Phoebe.

Whatever of import has happened since the ball, Patty knows it, and is enjoying it. We see this as she ushers in Miss Willoughby. Note also, with concern, that at mention of the visitor's name the eyes of the sisters turn affrightedly, not to the door by which their old friend enters, but to the closed door of the spare bed-chamber. Patty also gives it a meaning glance; then the three look at each other, and two of them blanch.

MISS WILLOUGHBY (the fourth to look at the door). I am just run across, Susan, to inquire how Miss Livvy does now.

MISS SUSAN. She is still very poorly, Mary.

MISS WILLOUGHBY. I am so unhappy of that. I conceive it to be a nervous disorder?

MISS SUSAN (almost too glibly). Accompanied by trembling, flutterings, and spasms.

MISS WILLOUGHBY. The excitements of the ball. You have summoned the apothecary at last, I trust, Phoebe?

(MISS PHOEBE, once so ready of defence, can say nothing.)

MISS SUSAN (to the rescue). It is Livvy's own wish that he should not be consulted.

Miss WILLOUGHBY (looking longingly at the door). May I go in to see her?

MISS SUSAN. I fear not, Mary. She is almost asleep, and it is best not to disturb her. (Peeping into the bedroom.) Lie quite still, Livvy, my love, quite still.

(Somehow this makes PATTY smile so broadly that she finds it advisable to retire . MISS WILLOUGHBY sighs, and produces a small bowl from the folds of her cloak.)

Miss WILLOUGHBY. This is a little arrowroot, of which I hope Miss Livvy will be so obliging as to partake.

MISS SUSAN (taking the bowl). I thank you, Mary.

PHOEBE (ashamed). Susan, we ought not----

MISS SUSAN (shameless). I will take it to her while it is still warm.

(She goes into the bedroom . MISS WILLOUGHBY gazes at MISS PHOEBE, who certainly shrinks. It has not escaped the notice of the visitor that MISS PHOEBE has become the more timid of the sisters, and she has evolved an explanation.)

MISS WILLOUGHBY. Phoebe, has Captain Brown been apprised of Miss Livvy's illness?

PHOEBE (uncomfortably). I think not, Miss Willoughby.

MISS WILLOUGHBY (sorry for PHOEBE, and speaking very kindly). Is this right, Phoebe? You informed Fanny and Henrietta at the ball of his partiality for Livvy. My dear, it is hard for you, but have you any right to keep them apart?

PHOEBE (discovering only now what are the suspicions of her friends). Is that what you think I am doing, Miss Willoughby?

MISS WILLOUGHBY. Such a mysterious illness. (Sweetly) Long ago, Phoebe, I once caused much unhappiness through foolish jealousy. That is why I venture to hope that you will not be as I was, my dear.

PHOEBE. I jealous of Livvy!

MISS WILLOUGHBY (with a sigh). I thought as little of the lady I refer to, but he thought otherwise.

PHOEBE. Indeed, Miss Willoughby, you wrong me.

(But MISS WILLOUGHBY does not entirely believe her, and there is a pause, so long a pause that unfortunately MISS SUSAN thinks she has left the house.)

MISS SUSAN (peeping in). Is she gone?

MISS WILLOUGHBY (hurt). No, Susan, but I am going.

MISS SUSAN (distressed). Mary!

(She follows her out, but MISS WILLOUGHBY will not be comforted, and there is a coldness between them for the rest of the day . MISS SUSAN is not so abashed as she ought to be. She returns, and partakes with avidity of the arrowroot.)

MISS SUSAN. Phoebe, I am well aware that this is wrong of me, but Mary's arrowroot is so delicious. The ladies'-fingers and petticoat-tails those officers sent to Livvy, I ate them also! (Once on a time this would have amused MISS PHOEBE, but her sense of humour has gone. She is crying.) Phoebe, if you have such remorse you will weep yourself to death.

PHOEBE. Oh, sister, were it not for you, how gladly would I go into a decline.

MISS SUSAN (after she has soothed PHOEBE a little). My dear, what is to be done about her? We cannot have her supposed to be here for ever.

PHOEBE. We had to pretend that she was ill to keep her out of sight; and now we cannot say she has gone away, for the Miss Willoughby's windows command our door, and they are always watching.

MISS SUSAN (peeping from the window). I see Fanny watching now. I feel, Phoebe, as if Livvy really existed.

PHOEBE (mournfully). We shall never be able to esteem ourselves again.

MISS SUSAN (who has in her the makings of a desperate criminal). Phoebe, why not marry him? If only we could make him think that Livvy had gone home. Then he need never know.

PHOEBE. Susan, you pain me. She who marries without telling all--hers must ever be a false face. They are his own words.

(PATTY enters importantly.)

PATTY. Captain Brown.

PHOEBE (starting up). I wrote to him, begging him not to come.

MISS SUSAN (quickly). Patty, I am sorry we are out.

(But VALENTINE has entered in time to hear her words.)

VALENTINE (not unmindful that this is the room in which he is esteemed a wit). I regret that they are out, Patty, but I will await their return. (The astonishing man sits on the ottoman beside MISS SUSAN, but politely ignores her presence.) It is not my wish to detain you, Patty.

(PATTY goes reluctantly, and the sisters think how like him, and how delightful it would be if they were still the patterns of propriety he considers them.)

PHOEBE (bravely). Captain Brown.

VALENTINE (rising). You, Miss Phoebe. I hear Miss Livvy is indisposed?

PHOEBE. She is--very poorly.

VALENTINE. But it is not that unpleasant girl I have come to see, it is you.

MISS SUSAN (meekly). How do you do?

VALENTINE (ignoring her). And I am happy, Miss Phoebe, to find you alone.

MISS SUSAN (appealingly). How do you do, sir?

PHOEBE. You know quite well, sir, that Susan is here.

VALENTINE. Nay, ma'am, excuse me. I heard Miss Susan say she was gone out. Miss Susan is incapable of prevarication.

MISS SUSAN (rising--helpless). What am I to do?

PHOEBE. Don't go, Susan--'tis what he wants.

VALENTINE. I have her word that she is not present.

MISS SUSAN. Oh dear.

VALENTINE. My faith in Miss Susan is absolute. (At this she retires into the bedroom, and immediately his manner changes. He takes MISS PHOEBE'S hands into his own kind ones.) You coward, Miss Phoebe, to be afraid of Valentine Brown.

PHOEBE. I wrote and begged you not to come.

VALENTINE. You implied as a lover, Miss Phoebe, but surely always as a friend.

PHOEBE. Oh yes, yes.

VALENTINE. You told Miss Livvy that you loved me once. How carefully you hid it from me!

PHOEBE (more firmly). A woman must never tell. You went away to the great battles. I was left to fight in a little one. Women have a flag to fly, Mr. Brown, as well as men, and old maids have a flag as well as women. I tried to keep mine flying.

VALENTINE. But you ceased to care for me. (Tenderly.) I dare ask your love no more, but I still ask you to put yourself into my keeping. Miss Phoebe, let me take care of you.

PHOEBE. It cannot be.

VALENTINE. This weary teaching! Let me close your school.

PHOEBE. Please, sir.

VALENTINE. If not for your own sake, I ask you, Miss Phoebe, to do it for mine. In memory of the thoughtless recruit who went off laughing to the wars. They say ladies cannot quite forget the man who has used them ill; Miss Phoebe, do it for me because I used you ill.

PHOEBE. I beg you--no more.

VALENTINE (manfully). There, it is all ended. Miss Phoebe, here is my hand on it.

PHOEBE. What will you do now?

VALENTINE. I also must work. I will become a physician again, with some drab old housekeeper to neglect me and the house. Do you foresee the cobwebs gathering and gathering, Miss Phoebe?

PHOEBE. Oh, sir!

VALENTINE. You shall yet see me in Quality Street, wearing my stock all awry.

PHOEBE. Oh, oh!

VALENTINE. And with snuff upon my sleeve.

PHOEBE. Sir, sir!

VALENTINE. No skulker, ma'am, I hope, but gradually turning into a grumpy, crusty, bottle-nosed old bachelor.

PHOEBE. Oh, Mr. Brown!

VALENTINE. And all because you will not walk across the street with me.

PHOEBE. Indeed, sir, you must marry--and I hope it may be some one who is really like a garden.

VALENTINE. I know but one. That reminds me, Miss Phoebe, of something I had forgot. (He produces a paper from his pocket.) 'Tis a trifle I have wrote about you. But I fear to trouble you.

(PHOEBE'S hands go out longingly for it.)

PHOEBE (reading). 'Lines to a Certain Lady, who is Modestly unaware of her Resemblance to a Garden. Wrote by her servant, V. B.'

(The beauty of this makes her falter. She looks up.)

VALENTINE (with a poet's pride). There is more of it, ma'am.

PHOEBE (reading)

The lilies are her pretty thoughts, Her shoulders are the may, Her smiles are all forget-me-nots, The path 's her gracious way,

The roses that do line it are Her fancies walking round, 'Tis sweetly smelling lavender In which my lady's gowned.

(MISS PHOEBE has thought herself strong, but she is not able to read such exquisite lines without betraying herself to a lover's gaze.)

VALENTINE (excitedly). Miss Phoebe, when did you cease to care for me?

PHOEBE (retreating from him but clinging to her poem). You promised not to ask.

VALENTINE. I know not why you should, Miss Phoebe, but I believe you love me still!

(MISS PHOEBE has the terrified appearance of a detected felon.)

(MISS SUSAN returns.)

MISS SUSAN. You are talking so loudly.

VALENTINE. Miss Susan, does she care for me still?

MISS SUSAN (forgetting her pride of sex). Oh, sir, how could she help it.

VALENTINE. Then by Gad, Miss Phoebe, you shall marry me though I have to carry you in my arms to the church.

PHOEBE. Sir, how can you!

(But MISS SUSAN gives her a look which means that it must be done if only to avoid such a scandal. It is at this inopportune moment that MISS HENRIETTA and MISS FANNY are announced.)

MISS HENRIETTA. I think Miss Willoughby has already popped in.

PHOEBE (with a little spirit). Yes, indeed.

MISS SUSAN (a mistress of sarcasm). How is Mary, Fanny? She has not been to see us for several minutes.

MISS FANNY (somewhat daunted). Mary is so partial to you, Susan.

VALENTINE. Your servant, Miss Henrietta, Miss Fanny.

MISS FANNY. How do you do, sir?

MISS HENRIETTA (wistfully). And how do you find Miss Livvy, sir?

VALENTINE. I have not seen her, Miss Henrietta.

MISS HENRIETTA. Indeed!

MISS FANNY. Not even you?

VALENTINE. You seem surprised?

MISS FANNY. Nay, sir, you must not say so; but really, Phoebe!

PHOEBE. Fanny, you presume!

VALENTINE (puzzled). If one of you ladies would deign to enlighten me. To begin with, what is Miss Livvy's malady?

MISS HENRIETTA. He does not know? Oh, Phoebe.

VALENTINE. Ladies, have pity on a dull man, and explain.

MISS FANNY (timidly). Please not to ask us to explain. I fear we have already said more than was proper. Phoebe, forgive.

(To CAPTAIN BROWN this but adds to the mystery, and he looks to PHOEBE for enlightenment.)

PHOEBE (desperate). I understand, sir, there is a belief that I keep Livvy in confinement because of your passion for her.

VALENTINE. My passion for Miss Livvy? Why, Miss Fanny, I cannot abide her--nor she me. (Looking manfully at MISS PHOEBE.) Furthermore, I am proud to tell you that this is the lady whom I adore.

MISS FANNY. Phoebe?

VALENTINE. Yes, ma'am.

(The ladies are for a moment bereft of speech, and the uplifted PHOEBE cannot refrain from a movement which, if completed, would be a curtsy. Her punishment follows promptly.)

MISS HENRIETTA (from her heart). Phoebe, I am so happy 'tis you.

MISS FANNY. Dear Phoebe, I give you joy. And you also, sir. (MISS PHOEBE sends her sister a glance of unutterable woe, and escapes from the room. It is most ill-bred of her.) Miss Susan, I do not understand!

MISS HENRIETTA. Is it that Miss Livvy is an obstacle?

MISS SUSAN (who knows that there is no hope for her but in flight). I think I hear Phoebe calling me--a sudden indisposition. Pray excuse me, Henrietta. (She goes.)

MISS HENRIETTA. We know not, sir, whether to offer you our felicitations?

VALENTINE (cogitating). May I ask, ma'am, what you mean by an obstacle? Is there some mystery about Miss Livvy?

MISS HENRIETTA. So much so, sir, that we at one time thought she and Miss Phoebe were the same person.

VALENTINE. Pshaw!

MISS FANNY. Why will they admit no physician into her presence?

MISS HENRIETTA. The blinds of her room are kept most artfully drawn.

MISS FANNY (plaintively). We have never seen her, sir. Neither Miss Susan nor Miss Phoebe will present her to us.

VALENTINE (impressed). Indeed.

(MISS HENRIETTA and MISS FANNY, encouraged by his sympathy, draw nearer the door of the interesting bedchamber. They falter. Any one who thinks, however, that they would so far forget themselves as to open the door and peep in, has no understanding of the ladies of Quality Street. They are, nevertheless, not perfect, for MISS HENRIETTA knocks on the door.)

MISS HENRIETTA. How do you find yourself, dear Miss Livvy?

(There is no answer. It is our pride to record that they come away without even touching the handle. They look appealing at CAPTAIN BROWN, whose face has grown grave.)

VALENTINE. I think, ladies, as a physician--

(He walks into the bedroom. They feel an ignoble drawing to follow him, but do not yield to it. When he returns his face is inscrutable.)

MISS HENRIETTA. Is she very poorly, sir?

VALENTINE. Ha.

MISS FANNY. We did not hear you address her.

VALENTINE. She is not awake, ma'am.

MISS HENRIETTA. It is provoking.

MISS FANNY (sternly just). They informed Mary that she was nigh asleep.

VALENTINE. It is not a serious illness I think, ma'am. With the permission of Miss Phoebe and Miss Susan I will make myself more acquaint with her disorder presently. (He is desirous to be alone.) But we must not talk lest we disturb her.

MISS FANNY. You suggest our retiring, sir?

VALENTINE. Nay, Miss Fanny----

MISS FANNY. You are very obliging; but I think, Henrietta----

MISS HENRIETTA (rising). Yes, Fanny.

(No doubt they are the more ready to depart that they wish to inform MISS WILLOUGHBY at once of these strange doings. As they go , MISS SUSAN and MISS PHOEBE return, and the adieux are less elaborate than usual. Neither visitors nor hostesses quite know what to say . MISS SUSAN is merely relieved to see them leave, but MISS PHOEBE has read something in their manner that makes her uneasy.)

PHOEBE. Why have they departed so hurriedly, sir? They--they did not go in to see Livvy?

VALENTINE. No.

(She reads danger in his face.)

PHOEBE. Why do you look at me so strangely?

VALENTINE (somewhat stern). Miss Phoebe, I desire to see Miss Livvy.

PHOEBE. Impossible.

VALENTINE. Why impossible? They tell me strange stories about no one's seeing her. Miss Phoebe, I will not leave this house until I have seen her.

PHOEBE. You cannot. (But he is very determined, and she is afraid of him.) Will you excuse me, sir, while I talk with Susan behind the door?

(The sisters go guiltily into the bedroom, and CAPTAIN BROWN after some hesitation rings for PATTY.)

VALENTINE. Patty, come here. Why is this trick being played upon me?

PATTY (with all her wits about her). Trick, sir! Who would dare?

VALENTINE. I know, Patty, that Miss Phoebe has been Miss Livvy all the time.

PATTY. I give in!

VALENTINE. Why has she done this?

PATTY (beseechingly). Are you laughing, sir?

VALENTINE. I am very far from laughing.

PATTY (turning on him). 'Twas you that began it, all by not knowing her in the whitegown.

VALENTINE. Why has this deception been kept up so long?

PATTY. Because you would not see through it. Oh, the wicked denseness. She thought you were infatuate with Miss Livvy because she was young and silly.

VALENTINE. It is infamous.

PATTY. I will not have you call her names. 'Twas all playful innocence at first, and now she is so feared of you she is weeping her soul to death, and all I do I cannot rouse her. 'I ha' a follower in the kitchen, ma'am,' says I, to infuriate her. 'Give him a glass of cowslip wine,' says she, like a gentle lamb. And ill she can afford it, you having lost their money for them.

VALENTINE. What is that? On the contrary, all the money they have, Patty, they owe to my having invested it for them.

PATTY. That is the money they lost.

VALENTINE. You are sure of that?

PATTY. I can swear to it.

VALENTINE. Deceived me about that also. Good God; but why?

PATTY. I think she was feared you would offer to her out of pity. She said something to Miss Susan about keeping a flag flying. What she meant I know not. (But he knows, and he turns away his face.) Are you laughing, sir?

VALENTINE. No, Patty, I am not laughing. Why do they not say Miss Livvy has gone home? It would save them a world of trouble.

PATTY. The Misses Willoughby and Miss Henrietta--they watch the house all day. They would say she cannot be gone, for we did not see her go.

VALENTINE (enlightened at last). I see!

PATTY. And Miss Phoebe and Miss Susan wring their hands, for they are feared Miss Livvy is bedridden here for all time. (Now his sense of humour asserts itself). Thank the Lord, you 're laughing!

(At this he laughs the more, and it is a gay CAPTAIN BROWN on whom MISS SUSAN opens the bedroom door. This desperate woman is too full of plot to note the change in him.)

MISS SUSAN. I am happy to inform you, sir, that Livvy finds herself much improved.

VALENTINE (bolting). It is joy to me to hear it.

MISS SUSAN. She is coming in to see you.

PATTY (aghast). Oh, ma'am!

VALENTINE (frowning on PATTY). I shall be happy to see the poor invalid.

PATTY. Ma'am----!

(But MISS SUSAN, believing that so far all is well, has returned to the bedchamber . CAPTAIN BROWN bestows a quizzical glance upon the maid.)

VALENTINE. Go away, Patty. Anon I may claim a service of you, but for the present, go.

PATTY. But--but----

VALENTINE. Retire, woman.

(She has to go, and he prepares his face for the reception of the invalid . PHOEBE comes in without her cap, the ringlets showing again. She wears a dressing jacket and is supported by MISS SUSAN.)

VALENTINE (gravely). Your servant, Miss Livvy.

PHOEBE (weakly). How do you do?

VALENTINE. Allow me, Miss Susan.

(He takes MISS SUSAN'S place; but after an exquisite moment MISS PHOEBE breaks away from him, feeling that she is not worthy of such bliss.)

PHOEBE. No, no, I--I can walk alone--see.

(She reclines upon the couch.)

MISS SUSAN. How do you think she is looking?

(He makes a professional examination of the patient, and they are very ashamed to deceive him, but not so ashamed that they must confess.)

What do you think?

VALENTINE (solemnly). She will recover. May I say, ma'am, it surprises me that any one should see much resemblance between you and your Aunt Phoebe. Miss Phoebe is decidedly shorter and more thick-set.

PHOEBE (sitting up). No, I am not.

VALENTINE. I said Miss Phoebe, ma'am. (She reclines.) But tell me, is not Miss Phoebe to join us?

PHOEBE. She hopes you will excuse her, sir.

MISS SUSAN (vaguely). Taking the opportunity of airing the room.

VALENTINE. Ah, of course.

MISS SUSAN (opening bedroom door and catting mendaciously). Captain Brown will excuse you, Phoebe.

VALENTINE. Certainly, Miss Susan. Well, ma'am, I think I could cure Miss Livvy if she is put unreservedly into my hands.

MISS SUSAN (with a sigh). I am sure you could.

VALENTINE. Then you are my patient, Miss Livvy.

PHOEBE (nervously). 'Twas but a passing indisposition, I am almost quite recovered.

VALENTINE. Nay, you still require attention. Do you propose making a long stay in Quality Street, ma'am?

PHOEBE. I--I--I hope not. It--it depends.

MISS SUSAN (forgetting herself). Mary is the worst.

VALENTINE. I ask your pardon?

PHOEBE. Aunt Susan, you are excited.

VALENTINE. But you are quite right, Miss Livvy; home is the place for you.

PHOEBE. Would that I could go!

VALENTINE. You are going.

PHOEBE. Yes--soon.

VALENTINE. Indeed, I have a delightful surprise for you, Miss Livvy, you are going to-day.

PHOEBE. To-day?

VALENTINE. Not merely to-day, but now. As it happens, my carriage is standing idle at your door, and I am to take you in it to your home--some twenty miles if I remember.

PHOEBE. You are to take me?

VALENTINE. Nay, 'tis no trouble at all, and as your physician my mind is made up. Some wraps for her, Miss Susan.

MISS SUSAN. But--but----

PHOEBE (in a panic). Sir, I decline to go.

VALENTINE. Come, Miss Livvy, you are in my hands.

PHOEBE. I decline. I am most determined.

VALENTINE. You admit yourself that you are recovered.

PHOEBE. I do not feel so well now. Aunt Susan!

MISS SUSAN. Sir----

VALENTINE. If you wish to consult Miss Phoebe----

MISS SUSAN. Oh, no.

VALENTINE. Then the wraps, Miss Susan.

PHOEBE. Auntie, don't leave me.

VALENTINE. What a refractory patient it is. But reason with her, Miss Susan, and I shall ask Miss Phoebe for some wraps.

PHOEBE. Sir!

(To their consternation he goes cheerily into the bedroom . MISS PHOEBE saves herself by instant flight, and nothing but mesmeric influence keeps MISS SUSAN rooted to the blue and white room. When he returns he is loaded with wraps, and still cheerfully animated, as if he had found nothing untoward in LIVVY'S bedchamber.)

VALENTINE. I think these will do admirably, Miss Susan.

MISS SUSAN. But Phoebe----

VALENTINE. If I swathe Miss Livvy in these----

MISS SUSAN. Phoebe----

VALENTINE. She is still busy airing the room. (The extraordinary man goes to the couch as if unable to perceive that its late occupant has gone, and MISS SUSAN watches him, fascinated.) Come, Miss Livvy, put these over you. Allow me--this one over your shoulders, so. Be so obliging as to lean on me. Be brave, ma'am, you cannot fall--my arm is round you; gently, gently, Miss Livvy; ah, that is better; we are doing famously; come, come. Good-bye, Miss Susan, I will take every care of her.

(He has gone, with the bundle on his arm, but MISS SUSAN does not wake up. Even the banging of the outer door is unable to rouse her. It is heard, however, by MISS PHOEBE, who steals back into the room, her cap upon her head to give her courage.)

PHOEBE. He is gone! (MISS SUSAN'S rapt face alarms her.) Oh, Susan, was he as dreadful as that?

MISS SUSAN (in tones unnatural to her). Phoebe, he knows all.

PHOEBE. Yes, of course he knows all now. Sister, did his face change? Oh, Susan, what did he say?

MISS SUSAN. He said 'Good-bye, Miss Susan.' That was almost all he said.

PHOEBE. Did his eyes flash fire?

MISS SUSAN. Phoebe, it was what he did. He--he took Livvy with him.

PHOEBE. Susan, dear, don't say that. You are not distraught, are you?

MISS SUSAN (clinging to facts). He did; he wrapped her up in a shawl.

PHOEBE. Susan! You are Susan Throssel, my love. You remember me, don't you? Phoebe, your sister. I was Livvy also, you know, Livvy.

MISS SUSAN. He took Livvy with him.

PHOEBE (in woe). Oh, oh! sister, who am I?

MISS SUSAN. You are Phoebe.

PHOEBE. And who was Livvy?

MISS SUSAN. You were.

PHOEBE. Thank heaven.

MISS SUSAN. But he took her away in the carriage.

PHOEBE. Oh, dear! (She has quite forgotten her own troubles now.)
Susan, you will soon be well again. Dear, let us occupy our minds. Shall
we draw up the advertisement for the reopening of the school?

MISS SUSAN. I do so hate the school.

PHOEBE. Come, dear, come, sit down. Write, Susan. (Dictating.) 'The
Misses Throssel have the pleasure to announce----'

MISS SUSAN. Pleasure! Oh, Phoebe.

PHOEBE. 'That they will resume school on the 5th of next month. Music,
embroidery, the backboard, and all the elegancies of the mind. Latin--shall
we say algebra?'

MISS SUSAN. I refuse to write algebra.

PHOEBE. --for beginners.

MISS SUSAN. I refuse. There is only one thing I can write; it writes itself in
my head all day. 'Miss Susan Throssel presents her compliments to the
Misses Willoughby and Miss Henrietta Turnbull, and requests the honour
of their presence at the nuptials of her sister Phoebe and Captain Valentine
Brown.'

PHOEBE. Susan!

MISS SUSAN. Phoebe! (A door is heard banging.) He has returned!

PHOEBE. Oh cruel, cruel. Susan, I am so alarmed.

MISS SUSAN. I will face him.

PHOEBE. Nay, if it must be, I will.

(But when he enters he is not very terrible.)

VALENTINE. Miss Phoebe, it is not raining, but your face is wet. I wish
always to kiss you when your face is wet.

PHOEBE. Susan!

VALENTINE. Miss Livvy will never trouble you any more, Miss Susan. I
have sent her home.

MISS SUSAN. Oh, sir, how can you invent such a story for us.

VALENTINE. I did not. I invented it for the Misses Willoughby and Miss Henrietta, who from their windows watched me put her into my carriage. Patty accompanies her, and in a few hours Patty will return alone.

MISS SUSAN. Phoebe, he has got rid of Livvy!

PHOEBE. Susan, his face hasn't changed!

VALENTINE. Dear Phoebe Throssel, will you be Phoebe Brown?

PHOEBE (quivering). You know everything? And that I am not a garden?

VALENTINE. I know everything, ma'am--except that.

PHOEBE (so very glad to be prim at the end). Sir, the dictates of my heart enjoin me to accept your too flattering offer. (He puts her cap in his pocket. He kisses her . MISS SUSAN is about to steal away.) Oh, sir, Susan also. (He kisses MISS SUSAN also; and here we bid them good-bye.)

The End.