

In the Mohawk Club.

BY THEODORE ROBERTS.



THE Mohawk Club house stands on the bank of a famous river, and at the edge of a famous though sleepy old town. The town is known in other lands as a place of culture and literary prestige, but The Onlooker, that mortal who seems to do nothing but brood over the world with smiling mouth and dreamy eyes, says that for its own part it appreciates the maker of a horseshoe more than the maker of a ballad. Why this is he doesn't attempt to say. But to return to the club house.

Most of the interior is taken up by one large room with a good floor, a fireplace, and a billiard table. There are many easy-chairs, also, and card tables in convenient places.

When the winds churn the river into white caps and rain pelts the roof, The Onlooker finds a strange fascination in sitting by the fire and studying the men around him. But he does it with a careless air, as if sitting out in the rain would amuse him fully as much, and the men, who are all his friends, sometimes forget that he is there.

A month ago The Onlooker's attention was drawn from the general crowd who played cribbage, clicked the ivory balls, and told stories, to the most active members of the club, Bertram Smith and Dick Nevers. At first, like a philosopher, he accounted for the slight change in their manners by the choice of Nevers as Master of Ceremonies for Ladies' Night, but the rumor that both were in love with the same girl caused him to think it over. He watched them closely when they met, making a note of the faint flush on Nevers's cheek, and the sullen light in Smith's black eye. Sometimes their greeting was too warm for his taste — at other times they failed to see each other.

"I wish they would fight it out like men," he said to the and-

irons; but he took that back, for Nevers was big enough to eat his rival without inconvenience.

Smith, who was the son of a wealthy merchant, was in a fair way of running a large medical practise before many years. Dick Nevers, the cadet of a broken family once renowned for its horses and style in entertaining, was a writer of poems and stories, sometimes even descending to newspaper work, at three cents a line. The Onlooker thought from the first that Nevers had the Fates against him.

As they all revolved in the same social circle, The Onlooker made it his duty to follow their little romance beyond the fireside of the Mohawk Club. So, after a week's consideration as to whether or no it were worth while, he obtained an introduction to the lady of their hearts' desire. We will call her Miss Marjorie, which may or may not be her name. From the corner to which he had fled after the introduction he looked at her carefully, as she was the chief character in the little story he was following. Her eyes were the first things he noticed; then her mouth, which was large, but fatally attractive; then her hair. He did not altogether blame his friends, but it puzzled him to think that Nevers, wrapped up in his books and dreams, should allow a pair of eyes and a moderately charming smile to spoil his peace.

The Onlooker flatters himself with the belief that he has a keen insight into character and human nature, and on the strength of this he was not long in deciding that Miss Marjorie was a flirt. He enjoyed flirts to a certain extent (no one would think so), therefore this discovery did not lower her far in his philosophical eyes. He farther noticed that when her eyes were gray, Smith was in favor, but when they softened to a wonderful blue, Dick Nevers, with his maiden rhymes, had the inside track. They both came in for rebuffs and hours of indifference at the lady's hands. Nevers swallowed these repulses and tried to look delighted, while Smith scowled.

For awhile The Onlooker seemed to find developments slow, for he kept away from his usual seat by the fire, and people wondered what he was doing. If it had been Nevers who lay low they would have said, "He is writing poetry."

About this time Smith and Nevers began to criticize one an-

other's breeding and attire, and Smith developed a perpetual sneer.

One morning The Onlooker entered the club with his old-time stride and found six fellows standing around the billiard table. The rivals were having a game. Smith was playing spot ball. Nevers chalked his cue hurriedly, and glanced at the balls. His was close against the cushion and called for a strong draw. His face was flushed when he shot, and his eyes expressed more joy than one would have thought the occasion demanded when he scored. His next three were easy ones, then his cue scratched and twisted and the ball rolled harmlessly a few inches.

He marked up his four and then watched with a wan smile while Smith made a run of ten.

The Onlooker asked if they had anything up on the game. Nevers nodded. The other fellows exchanged glances. Smith swore easily to himself as Dick made a run of difficult shots. The Onlooker, feigning a great indifference, stood back, while the others closed in around the table. It was close now, with three on one string and five on the other. But The Onlooker sat in his chair and picked up a paper.

Presently Dick put his cue in the rack and went out, keeping his back to the crowd.

Smith smiled softly when the door closed, then, producing his cigar-case, he passed it around. With a condescending smile he went over to The Onlooker; but that harmless individual was thoughtfully pulling at his pipe, and would not take a cigar.

Early next morning Dick Nevers, accompanied by an Indian guide, started for the woods after big game.

When The Onlooker heard of it he swore, and Smith, who was near by, cringed. He did not like the way The Onlooker's eye blazed wide and scrutinized him.

Once young Peeble entered the club room noiselessly and, going over to the fire, glanced over The Onlooker's shoulder. The other had a little pile of proof sheets on his knee and was marking them with a blue pencil.

"Are you doing some work for Nevers?" asked Peeble.

The Onlooker thrust the papers into his pocket and turned slowly from the fire.

"Perhaps I am doing it for Nevers, and perhaps for some other man," he said; and that is all Peeble could discover.

Miss Marjorie played poor Smith so fast and loose that he almost wished Nevers had not gone away, for it had always been a comfort to him to see a companion in woe.

On the evening of the first dance of the season The Onlooker, with a new fire in his eyes, sat with Miss Marjorie in a quiet corner. He was telling her of the billiard game, and she was giving listless ear.

"What stakes were they playing for?" she asked, pretending not to see Smith, who glared from the other side of the room.

"The right of the field," he answered — "the practical man against the visionary! Are you sorry that the man of rhymes was three points short?"

The Onlooker asked this with a boldness formerly unknown to him.

She looked at him merrily. Her eyes were neither blue nor gray, but of a shade he had never seen before.

"I am quite indifferent as to who got the game," she answered, "but my preference is for poets rather than other men."

The Onlooker cast a quizzical glance, but her face was averted. And of a sudden, he remembered that he too was a maker of ballads.

Then this harmless, dreaming Mohawk watched the red tinge the clear cheek of La Belle Dame Sans Merci. A great glow pervaded his heart and soul. Poor Nevers — poor Smith!

