

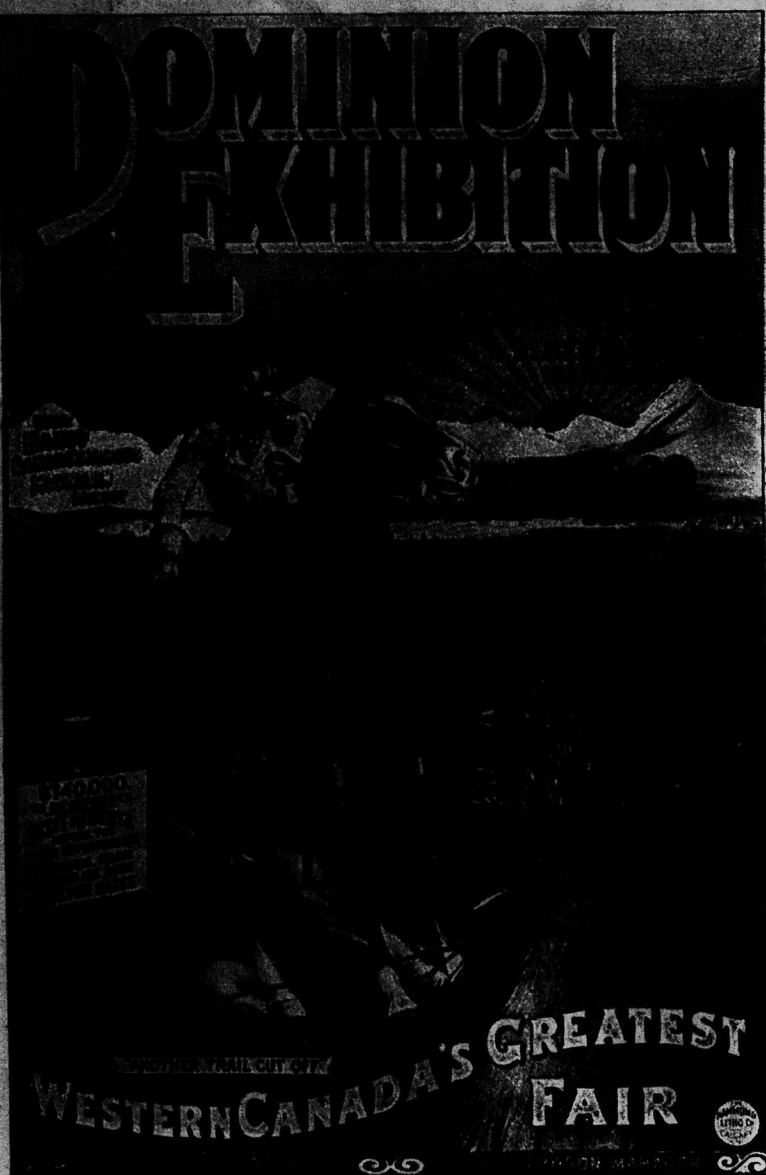
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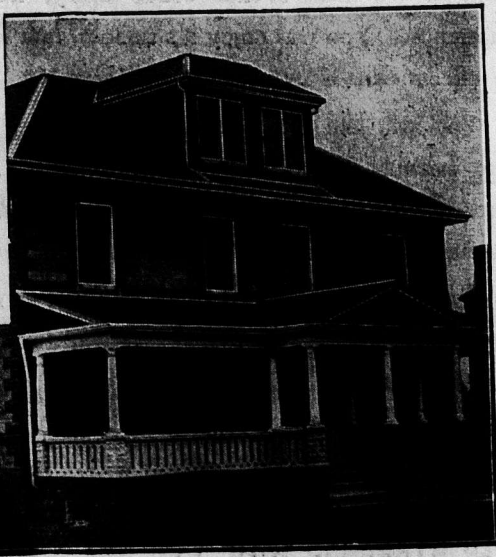
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Edna's Folly.

By J. L. Harbour.

NOW, Miss Edna, what are you laughing about all to yourself in that corner? I never knew you to get to laughing and giggling to yourself only when there was mischief brewing, and as I am your senior by five years, and papa has charged me to make you walk straight, I demand that you tell me what mischief you are about to get into, that I may check you in your wild career if I think proper. What is it?"

And here Miss Sue Marshall, with a mild show of authority, walked across the room to where her sister Edna was sitting, laughing over something she had been reading in the morning paper; but Miss Edna hid the paper under her apron, and said: "I won't tell you, Sue, what amused me. I am just going to have a little innocent fun, and I just know how you would oppose me if you knew about it, and so you will please to go off and let me alone."

"Oh, ho! Miss Wilfulness, now I know you are getting into mischief, and if that paper in your lap will throw any light upon the affair I'll soon know all about it," and here ensued a struggle for the paper, which resulted in a victory for Sue, and in a moment she cried out:

"I've found the clue to the mystery already, Edna. I know I have. Isn't this it?" And Sue read aloud the following advertisement:

"A young man of wealth, cultivation and refinement wishes to occupy his leisure time in corresponding with a limited number of young ladies between the ages of sixteen and twenty. Object, mutual improvement, and perhaps matrimony. Address, Clarence St. Ayr, Box 4582, Buffalo, New York."

"A young man of cultivation and refinement," indeed," laughed Sue. "He must certainly be possessed of great culture and refinement to parade himself before the public in this kind of style. It is my humble opinion he would derive far more improvement from reading good books and papers than in corresponding with a lot of silly, romantic girls like you, Edna."

"Thank you," replied Edna, with a mock courtesy, "but I shall write to Mr. Clarence, nevertheless. It will be such fun."

"Fun?" echoed Sue. "I think, Edna, that there is always more folly than fun connected with such affairs, and I—"

"Now, Sue," interrupted Edna, "I see that you are determined to read me one of your prosy lectures, and I won't hear it. What possible harm can come of my writing to Mr. St. Ayr?"

Of course, I won't give my real name, and I am just dying of ennui in this stupid town, 'th nothing to do from morning till night; so don't say a word, and when I am Mrs. Clarence St. Ayr I'll bring my carriage around every evening and take you out for a drive," and, with a gay little laugh, Edna ran from the room.

"The wilful girl," sorrowfully exclaimed Sue, "what shall I do with her? Papa won't be home for six weeks, and Edna cares no more for Tom and I than she does for Granny Hague, our washerwoman. I'll just let her have her own way, and will trust that the result will be a lesson to her that she won't soon forget. However, Tom and I must see to it that no positive evil comes of it."

Tom was their only brother, a jolly boy of sixteen, whose chief delight seemed to be in teasing Edna about her romantic ideas, for Miss Edna, having lost her mother at an early age, and having an over-indulgent father, had been allowed to do about as she pleased; consequently, at the age of eighteen she was, in all senses of the word, a spoiled girl, as wilful and romantic as the reading of an un-

told number of trashy novels could make her; and yet she was a very affectionate, warm-hearted girl whom everybody liked.

At the time our story opens, Mr. Marshall was in a distant city on business, and would not return home for some time, and Sue could not go to him for advice, as she usually did when Edna became unmanageable; therefore Edna sent a name and address to Mr. St. Ayr, purporting to be her own, and was in a fever of excitement until a reply should come.

When Tom heard of the affair he gave it as his private opinion that Mr. Clarence St. Ayr's real name was probably Bob Jones or Tom Smith, and he insisted on addressing Edna as "Mrs. Bob," and anxiously inquired if "Mr. Bob" got much to do with his dray, which raillery Edna took very good-naturedly, vowing that "nobody cared for such a goose as Tom," and one day she came rushing into her sister's presence, her cheeks all aglow with excitement, and an open letter in her hand.

"Oh, Sue," she exclaimed, "I've got an answer from Clar—Mr. St. Ayr, and such a beautiful letter as he writes, and he sent his picture, and he is so handsome, and you can tell by the letter that he is smart. Look there."

And with an air of triumph, Edna threw the letter and picture into Sue's lap, and began to fan herself vigorously with her broad-brimmed hat, while Sue read the letter and then turned her attention to the picture, which was the picture of a really fine-looking young fellow, and the letter showed plainly that its writer was a person of more than ordinary intelligence.

Of course, Edna was delighted, and vowed that she had found her "affinity," and many more silly things, and Mr. Clarence received a reply to his letter, which, if he really was a young man of good sense, must have caused him to think that Miss Edna was a very silly girl.

Of course, there was no breaking off the affair now, and the pink-tinted and highly-perfumed letters flew back and forth so frequently that, after a dozen or more had been exchanged, Sue thought it her duty to remonstrate seriously with Edna for her folly; but Edna, after listening very quietly to all of Sue's remonstrances and good advice, horrified her sister beyond measure by informing her that she was a little too late, since she was "engaged" to Clarence, and it was her intention to be "true till death" to the "object of her affection," who was coming soon to visit her.

Then did Miss Sue feel it to be her imperative duty to be firm and unyielding with her reckless, impulsive sister; hence she said:

"Edna, it is time for all this nonsense to come to an end, and I tell you firmly that you shall not see this Mr. St. Ayr until I have first seen and conversed with him. I am sorry things have gone so far, but they shall go no farther. It is useless for you to remonstrate with me, and if you do not consent to my wishes I will telegraph father to come home. When do you expect Mr. St. Ayr to arrive?"

"Day after tomorrow," said Edna, with a burst of tears.

But she did not try to induce Sue to relent, for she knew that would be useless, and then it rather pleased the romantic young lady to appear in the role of a persecuted damsel, and she returned to her room to make vows and weep over Clarence's picture.

The young ladies were sitting alone in their room on the afternoon of the day on which Mr. St. Ayr was expected to arrive, when the door-bell rang loudly, causing both to rise to their feet.

"Remain where you are, Edna," said Sue. "I will go down, and will come