

# Melrose's Temptation

I.

"Is your father in, Lucy?"

"Yes, dear—in his study."

"I phoned him to-day, asking for an appointment, as we arranged. He suggested seven, which gives me five minutes yet. Heigh-ho! I wish it were over. I feel as nervous as a kitten."

"Why, Arthur," said Lucy Staines, smiling gaily, "there's really nothing to be nervous about. Of course papa will consent. He has said often that my happiness is more to him than anything else in the world—dear papa! And when you tell him how we love each other he'll be ever so pleased. I assure you, dear, there's nothing to be afraid of."

"You make me think it isn't such a forlorn hope after all, darling. There goes the hour. Just one kiss for luck, my sweet one."

With the warm pressure of his sweetheart's lips on his last of Arthur Melrose's doubts regarding the issue of the imminent and fateful interview were swept away, and leaving Lucy in the drawing-room to await events he crossed the hall and tapped upon the study door.

"Come in,"

Arthur entered, and the next moment was shaking hands with Mr. Staines, a little, grey-haired, short-sighted man in a shabby coat, whom few, at a first glance, would have credited with being, as indeed he was, one of the most astute and successful financiers in England.

"Glad to see you are prompt to time, Mr. Melrose," he said; "then added, in an apologetic tone, 'Take a seat and let us get to business. I regret I can't spare more than fifteen minutes to-night. Something important, you said?'"

"To me—yes," said Arthur, seating himself, and conscious all at once that his brow had grown clammy and that he was trembling. With a powerful effort of will he conquered his terrors and made the plunge in simple, manly terms.

"The financier was clearly surprised, but after the first startled peep through his spectacles at Arthur he listened with grave attention. When the suitor reached the end of his tale there was silence, broken only by Mr. Staines's fingers beating a swift rattle on his desk. But the impassive face betrayed nothing to Arthur's eager, questioning gaze. At length Mr. Staines cleared his throat sharply.

"You love each other, eh? Well, it's a pity, for a man may fall in love a few times (most men do) and get out again scathless. But it's no fun to such a girl as Lucy. I ought to have foreseen this. I suppose, but I've been so immersed in business that—Humph! have a cigar before you go."

He shoved the cigar-box towards Arthur, but the latter shook his head, while a numbing pain gripped his heart.

"Excuse me, Mr. Staines; I should like to hear your answer first, if you please."

"You've heard it."

"And—and I'm rejected?"

"That's a hard word, Mr. Melrose. Let us say declined."

"May I ask on what grounds?"

"Certainly; but that necessitates my prying a little more closely into your financial position and prospects than I care to under the circumstances."

"My business as a chartered accountant, Mr. Staines, brings me an average three hundred a year, and it is growing steadily."

"Quite so," said Mr. Staines, bowing politely. "Now, what does rumor say of mine?"

"I'm too well occupied dealing with hard facts, Mr. Staines, to waste time hearkening to rumor," said Arthur, a little stiffly.

An approving smile flashed across the financier's face at this. "Well, then, Mr. Melrose, here's a little sum for you. Multiply your income by ten, then triple the answer, and you'll still be short of my past year's income. Now I think you will understand why you are declined. The man who weds Lucy must be above the slightest suspicion of—merenary motive."

"Mr. Staines," said Arthur, flushing, "if you suspect me of being an mere fortune-hunter, I swear—"

"Tut, tut; I suspect nothing. I know too little of you to form conclusions one way or another; though I'll admit that what I do know of you I rather like. Still, you, as a man of the world, must acknowledge that the reason stated is amply sufficient to justify my attitude in this matter." He pulled out his watch. "Ha, twenty-two minutes! This won't do. Allow me to escort you to the door. No; I can't allow you to see her now. I do all the explaining that's necessary. And I must insist that you hold no further communication with her whatever."

"But I must—"

"Not a word, I beg of you, Mr. Melrose. It would only make it more painful for all of us."

And, feeling, supremely foolish and angry, Arthur found himself hurried past the door of the draw-

ing-room, which was, perhaps fortunately, closed, and out to the front doorstep, where the financier bade him a cold, but courteous, good-night.

## II.

Naturally Arthur felt sore at the summary treatment he had received at Mr. Staines's hands. In his heart he knew that his love for Lucy Staines was pure and holy as love could be, and that, given the choice between a nation's wealth and her sweet self penniless, he would open his arms to her, thanking Heaven for a blessing beyond price. Meanwhile no choice was offered him. The Staines mansion was bolted and barred upon him and his vain pretensions; but the love-hunger grew fiercer as the miserable days passed, and he resolved to see Lucy again at any cost. But how? Could he in honor write to her in face of her father's prohibition? He was mentally discussing the point in his office when he was rung up.

"Halloa!" he called.

"Is that Mr. Melrose?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Staines. Can you come round to my office at once? I have something very important to put before you."

Arthur's heart leapt for joy. Something very important could have only one interpretation to a hungry lover, and that was that Mr. Staines had relented. "I'll be with you immediately, sir," he answered; and, seizing his hat, darted downstairs.

A bare half-mile separated the offices, and Arthur covered the distance at a pace that caused many a pedestrian to step hurriedly aside and stare after him. When he was ushered panting into Mr. Staines's presence, the financier smiled dryly as he noted the flushed, expectant look on his face.

"Be seated, and get cooled down a bit while I polish my spectacles, Mr. Melrose," he said. "Now, he proceeded, after that operation had been accomplished to his satisfaction, "I require the services of a smart accountant, and I have decided to give you the first refusal of the offer. You will find it a very remunerative commission. Do you accept?"

"I—I thought," stammered Arthur, with falling countenance, and checked himself with a gulp—"I mean that I shall be delighted to be of any service to you."

"Then that's settled. And now, I suppose you've heard of Lambson Brothers?"

"The tea merchants? Yes."

"Well, I have the option of acquiring their business as a going concern, and I want you to make a careful audit of their books and accounts before closing with it. I may say—in confidence, of course—that the price is to be £150,000 in cash, and that I propose—supposing we can make the thing sufficiently attractive—offering the concern to the public at, say, £200,000, which I have reckoned will pay all expenses and leave me with a fairly plump credit balance."

Mr. Staines paused and rubbed his hands, while his shrewd eyes sparkled eagerly through his glasses upon Arthur, who was not a little startled by the magnitude of the figures. And he had thought in his love-blindness to have impressed this man with his paltry three hundred a year. Mr. Staines resumed with slow emphasis: "Providing, as I have hinted, that we make the bait sufficiently attractive to the investing public, as I'm satisfied we can. In that event I propose to pay you a fee of five hundred pounds, and will recommend you for the permanent accountancy in the company. If the thing falls flat you must, of course, be satisfied with a merely nominal fee. Is that clear?"

Arthur bowed. What between disappointment on one hand and joy at being presented with such a golden opportunity on the other his thoughts were in a turmoil. "I hardly know how to thank you, Mr. Staines," he stammered.

"The sort of thanks I want," smiled the financier, "is a report that will bring the fish into our net—er—I should rather say, give the public an opportunity of participating in our good fortune. Can you begin your audit to-day?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll give you a letter to Lambson's now."

He rapidly scribbled out a note, which he handed over with the remark: "I rely on you, Mr. Melrose, to make this show up well."

"I'll do my best, sir," replied Arthur, quietly, but with a curious sense of discomfort at the financier's tone. "But what if it shouldn't?" he added.

Mr. Staines smiled a dry, peculiar smile. "Don't let us consider such an improbable contingency, my dear sir," he said. "I am most anxious that it should show well; indeed, it must. But, of course, it's entirely in your hands now. Let me have your report as soon as possible. Now, that's all. I think." He held out his hand, which Arthur grasped and retained while the tried to form a question.

"Well, what is it?"

"I wish to ask two questions, Mr. Staines."

"H'm—be brief then, pray."

"I shall, sir. The first is: is Miss Staines quite well and happy?"

Mr. Staines frowned. "She's in sound bodily health, so far as I can judge," he said, slowly. "Then, with a touch of petulance, 'But I find her as little amenable to reason as an unbroken filly.'"

Arthur's eyes glowed with pride. "My brave darling!" he murmured. "Oh, yes—oh, yes; you gloat over my discomfort, do you?" snorted Mr. Staines. The next moment the irritation in his face gave way to a sly smile. "As a matter of fact, my dear sir, she has shown such a pretty spirit in your defence that, if you do your duty to me in this investigation and so prove your shrewdness in finance, I may be disposed to change my attitude."

Arthur wrung Mr. Staines's hand with a vigor that made him wince. "That answers my second question," he said, joyfully. "I'm off now, sir, and you may rest assured I shan't fail you."

## III.

With Mr. Staines's last words ringing a pleasant chime in his ears and Lucy's sweet face filling his mental vision, Arthur enthusiastically attacked Lambson's books. Verily the cup of joy was approaching his lips, and he was resolved that if energy and thoroughness would prevent the coveted thing eluding his grasp a second time, he would surely drink of it. All day he and his clerks examined, checked, verified; and when evening arrived, and his assistants had gone home, he was still working on.

But to let matters rest there till the morrow was not to be thought of; so he engaged a cab and bore the books home to his room. Scarcely halting to appease the call of out-raged appetite (he had eaten no lunch that day, and curiously enough, had never missed it), he continued his labors far into the night. For several days he worked unceasingly. Only when he had reduced the chaos of figures to a simple statement of assets and liabilities, and had arrived at the exact profits of the business for the five preceding years, did he realize that he was completely worn out, but with the pleasant fatigue that comes to the man who has fought hard and won. Lambson's had come well, if not precisely brilliantly, out of the ordeal, and Lucy's radiant face seemed very near and real at that moment. Arthur bent his aching eyes once more upon the figures to reassure himself that he was not merely dreaming; but no, there, in truth, they were. He gave a sigh of profound relief, and then, for the first time since his investigation began, he found leisure to reflect on the price Mr. Staines proposed, inquiring the public to pay for the business, and to make a swift calculation thereon.

The next moment he gasped, and his pleased survey of the figures was changed into a glare of blank dismay, while his sweetheart's vision grew strangely sweet and remote. For a brief space he sat stricken into immobility, staring at the tall-figures that said, oh, so brutally! that after all Lambson's was not the key that was to unlock the door of happiness to him, unless—as it was possible he had blundered somewhere! The mere suspicion acted like a tonic. With the energy of despair he proceeded to revise every item.

A few days afterwards Mr. Staines was dictating letters in his private room, and wondering where while he had not heard from Arthur, when the latter was shown in, looking listless and haggard. With a nod Mr. Staines dismissed the clerk and held out his hand to his visitor.

"Why, Mr. Melrose," he said, anxiously, "you look quite ill. I hope I didn't ask too much of you when I said I'd like to have your report as soon as possible?"

"Oh, not at all," said Arthur, with an effort at cheerfulness. "It is all ready, and correct to a penny. Here it is."

The financier laid the statement on the desk, carefully adjusted his glasses, and glanced over it; and a look of—was it relief that flashed a look of—was it relief that flashed.

"This," he said, looking up, "is even better than I had hoped, my dear sir. The average profits for the past five years are £17,502 8s. 4d. Capital—really capital!"

Arthur could hardly believe his ears. "I think you are making a mistake, sir," he said. "Seven—not seventeen—is the correct figure."

"Eh?" cried Mr. Staines, peering close. "So it is. What a ridiculous error! I'll have to see my optician about this."

"And the worst feature of it," pursued Arthur, "is that the average, such as it is, is distinctly misleading. The profits have declined steadily during that period. The business looks dear and risky at the price you mentioned. Don't meddle with it, sir."

"You forget," said the financier, slowly, "that I intend to act merely as an intermediary between Lambson's and the public, and, if we pull the strings in a tactful way, the public won't fail us."

"But you spoke of £200,000," gasped Arthur. "None but madmen would subscribe for shares at such a capital."

Mr. Staines peered hard at Arthur, smiling peculiarly. Then suddenly he bent forward and said, in a low, tense voice:—

"Supposing—only supposing—that the average had been seventeen; what then?"

The dark suspicions as to Mr. Staines which had been steadily growing in Arthur's mind now materialized in a flash, and he stared at the other in speechless horror. Mr. Staines seemed disconcerted. He averted his eyes and said, carelessly:—

"By the way, I told Lucy this morning I'd probably bring you to dinner this evening. Will you come?"

All the forces of good and evil in Arthur's nature were at war then as the tempting bait dangled before his eyes, and for a brief space his destiny hung by a hair. Mr. Staines, calmly nursing his chin, darted a swift sideways glance at him that plainly invited speech, and all at once Arthur's troubled face grew set and stern.

"No," he said, curtly.

"Ah, a prior engagement, perhaps, Lucy will be vexed," said Arthur. "No more than I, sir," said Arthur, in a voice he vainly tried to keep calm. "But since seven isn't seventeen, and never can be, I have no option in the matter. I have simply to say—here his tone hardened into fierceness—"that if Lambson's is ever offered to the public I'll see to it that they don't go into the thing blindfold. I wish you good afternoon, sir."

He turned to go, but ere he reached the door Mr. Staines had rushed in front and seized his hand in an impetuous grip.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, my dear fellow," he cried, very red in the face. "I'm ashamed of myself—I really am; but you came through it nobly. Oh, no, you mustn't go! I tell you it was all a farce—upon my soul it was."

"A farce?" repeated Arthur, numbly. "It is no farce to me, sir. But do you mean that?"

"I do. And I see now that it was a cruel thing to do, but it was wholly for dear Lucy's sake that I tested you. Forgive me, Melrose."

Arthur laughed unsteadily. "It was a near thing with me," he said.

"I know; I saw it all, and I'm proud of you, Arthur. I must make you some sort of reparation, though. What do you say to a partnership on the day you wed Lucy? Come home with me, and we'll discuss it over a glass of wine after dinner. Say you will, my dear boy."

Arthur's heart was too full for speech, but the vigor of his hand-clasp was eloquent itself, and in the midst of pain Mr. Staines gave vent to a distinct chuckle—Lambson Tit-Bits.

INVENTING A REAPER.

Young McCormick's Machine Was the First to Cut Grain.

Cyrus Hall McCormick, a Scotch-Irishman, ranks in history as the man who showed how to conquer the vast prairies of the American West. It is interesting to know that his father, Robert, was an inventor of no mean capacity. In his farm workshops he fashioned an ingenious hemp-brake and cleaner to be operated by horse-power. A clover-sheller and a hillside plow were also among his contributions to rural mechanics. Mr. R. G. Thwaites, the author of "Cyrus Hall McCormick and the Reaper," says that the son when but fifteen years old surpassed the father in his work upon farming implements.

The father's reaping-machine, standing outside the blacksmith shop on the home farm, had been a familiar and alluring spectacle to the boy. His imagination was early fired with a desire to conquer the great practical difficulties of mechanical reaping. When the father acknowledged himself defeated, Cyrus took up the problem on his own account. Later in that same summer of 1831, when but twenty-two years of age, young McCormick constructed a machine, essentially unlike any mechanism proposed by his father or any others who had before undertaken the task. He immediately demonstrated by practical tests that the successful type had thus been created; and he never departed from that type, in conformity wherewith all success in this art has since proceeded.

The grain supply of the world was then being gathered by hand, with no better implement than the sickle and the cradle, when, in the harvest of 1831, young Cyrus Hall McCormick entered a field of rye on Walnut Grove Farm, and demonstrated to his delighted father that he had at last established the correct principle of cutting. His experimental mechanism was of the rudest sort; but finding that the plan was satisfactory, to use his own words, "I had my machine more completely made, with the addition of a gathering reel, and with a better arranged divider, ready for trial in a neighboring field of late oats, during the same harvest, in which I then cut very successfully six or seven acres of crop."

It is recorded that Robert McCormick declared to a neighbor, "The reaper is a success, and I believe that I could not have made it so; but it makes me feel proud to have a son do what I cannot."

## ABOUT THE HOUSE

### SEASONABLE RECIPES.

**Cabbage and Pepper Salad.**—Ordinary cabbage salad is just twice as good if green pepper, finely chopped, is mixed with it. It also makes it a prettier salad.

**Potato Salad.**—Using diced potatoes, one small cucumber, chopped, and a half of a green pepper minced makes a fine potato salad.

**Apple Sauce Cake.**—One cupful of apple sauce sweetened as for table add one teaspoonful of soda in sauce, one-half cupful of butter and lard mixed, one teaspoonful each of nutmeg, cinnamon, and vanilla, two cupfuls of flour, one cupful of raisins, and one cupful of walnut meats. Bake in a loaf.

**Stuffed Green Peppers.**—Remove seeds and drop the peppers into boiling water for five minutes. Fill them with hash or creamed meats of any kind; sprinkle cracker crumbs on top. Bake twenty-five minutes. Keep baking pan moist with hot water and a little seasoning to keep peppers from sticking.

**Fried Green Peppers.**—Make a batter of two eggs, well beaten, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, a scant half cupful of milk, and one cupful of sifted flour. Remove the stem end of the peppers and take out the seeds carefully. Scald the peppers for five minutes, then fill two-thirds full with cooked chicken or minced veal and press the top in place. Dip into the stiff batter, coating completely, and then fry in melted butter.

**Imitation Brick Ice Cream.**—For the hostess who desires something delicate and inexpensive in the way of desserts, the following is recommended: Moisten four tablespoonfuls of gelatin with a little water. When dissolved add two cupfuls of boiling water and six tablespoonfuls of sugar; let the mixture come to a boil, then beat in the whites of six eggs beaten to a froth; beat until partially cool and stiff and divide into three sections. Flavor section one with vanilla and spread in a layer mold, sprinkling the top with chopped nuts; color the second portion with fruit or vegetable coloring and flavor with strawberry or lemons, and spread over section one, sprinkling with nuts. Flavor section three with vanilla and spread over section two. Set on ice till firm and serve with whipped cream.

**BEST SUMMER DESSERTS.**

Rice is nice either as a separate dish or in combination with fresh fruit or jelly in pudding and croquettes. Nature intends us to eat fresh fruits and vegetables in summer, so do not bother about made desserts.

For variety there are baked peaches, baked just as you bake apples, taking out the peach stone and filling the cavity with sugar, chopped nuts, and raisins. Set the peaches in a pan with a little water and bake. Serve each in an individual glass with whipped cream. Bananas that are not quite ripe may be baked in their skins, first loosening the skins, for twenty to thirty minutes, then arranged on a hot dish with melted currant jelly poured over them.

Quinces may be baked by cutting them in halves and putting them in a pan with little water. When cooked cover with butter and sugar. The plain, every-day baked apple may be varied by filling the piece where the core was with sugar, cinnamon, almonds, and lemon peel chopped fine. When baked let cool, then serve with whipped cream, flavored to taste. A popular hot weather dessert is to take a half of a cantaloupe and fill it with ice cream. Puffed pineapple is always acceptable for a first course or for dessert.

Paré the pineapple, take out the eyes with a sharp knife, then pull the pulp apart, using two forks. Only ripe, sweet pineapples should be used. The pineapple shell, when left intact, makes a pretty receptacle for fruit salad.

**HUCKLEBERRY PUDDING.**

The delicious huckleberry pudding of grandmother's days has come down to us and is still popular. The earliest way to make huckleberry pudding is to make a good paste of butter well mixed with flour, roll it out, fill it with berries, tie it up in a pudding bag or place in pudding mold, and boil.

A more modern recipe calls for two cupfuls of flour, one-half cupful of granulated sugar, two cupfuls of berries, one heaping teaspoonful of baking powder, one-half salt-spoonful of salt, one teaspoonful of butter. Mix the dry ingredients, then rub in the butter, add enough milk to make a batter which will drop from the spoon. Add the berries, well floured, and turn the mixture into a greased pudding mold. Steam or boil one-half hour.

Few would be willing to forego the fresh fruit pies of which we are so fond. One housewife makes her pie shells by turning the pie tins bottom side up and covering them with the sheet of dough. This she thinks easier and makes a better

shell than to line the tin. She stews the fruit or adds it fresh just before serving.

Another makes individual pie shells in her muffin tins, uses only as many as she needs for the meal, and sets the others away. Both of these declare that soggy, juice-soaked pies are unknown on their tables. One always serves individual lemon meringue pies at her company luncheons and dinners. No one fully outgrows his liking for "patty pan" pies and tarts.

### MAKING WORK EASIER.

In passing, one vital secret of making one's work easier in hot weather is to buy food in small quantities. Let the grocer and butcher keep foods fresh in their big ice boxes. Even if you have to make more trips to them you will save dollars by not having to throw out spoiled meats, vegetables and fruits.

Vegetable salad can be made from a small quantity of vegetables. A combination salad for six persons can be made from two tiny heads of lettuce, two or three tomatoes, one cucumber, one green pepper, and one small bunch of radishes. When the ingredients are sliced thinly or chopped they go much farther than one would imagine. The odds and ends of fruit left in berry boxes and baskets will combine into a delicious fruit salad.

Shun big roasts and boiling pieces unless you have a good neighbor who will help you buy on shares. Small steaks, chops, cutlets, chicken croquettes, veal and beef loaf, sweetbreads, heart, kidney, tenderloins—these offer a great variety in the way of preparation and are just as wholesome and much cheaper than big roasts.

The less meat we eat in hot weather the better for us. Many housewives only serve meat once a week during July and August. Eggs are the most popular substitute. Foreigners have learned the art of serving vegetables cold with oil, vinegar, and chopped parsley and a hint of onion. Asparagus, tomato, cauliflower, string beans, beets, and spinach are the most popular for cold service.

### WORTH KNOWING.

Oxalic acid diluted will remove ink stains.

Clean linoleum with warm water and polish it with milk.

Use tissue papers to clear mirrors, plate glass and table glassware.

A cracked egg may be boiled if you first wet the crack and sprinkle salt on it.

The most convenient and cheapest of all disinfectants to use in the cellar is quicklime.

Fill rat holes with laundry soap moistened and sprinkled with cayenne pepper.

Decorated china plates should be put away with round pieces of cotton flannel between them.

No soap on window panes! Rub them with either alcohol or ammonia to make them shine.

To keep pie dough, make into compact ball and cover with melted lard. Keep in cool place.

Never use silk to mend kid gloves, as it cuts the kid, always cotton and sew on the wrong side.

In laundering black dress goods use a small portion of black diamond dye, mixing it with the starch.

Butter brushed over the nose of a pitcher will prevent milk or cream dripping on the tablecloth.

When burned with hot grease, apply flour (not water) to the wound and it will not leave a scar.

Ammonia should not be used near a fire, nor should the bottle be left uncorked, as it is inflammable.

Apply the white of an egg with a camel's hair brush to fly specks on gilt frames and they will disappear.

If a shirtwaist has to be raised at the shoulders lay a small tuck in the pattern across back and front at centre armhole.

When paring fruit, grease the first finger and thumb before paring fruit or vegetables, and there will be no stain on them.

When salad is to be included in the picnic lunch, pack it in a pail, and in the centre put a bottle filled with ice and corked tightly.

Soft soap made from half a pound of shaved hard soap and two quarts of water will save the soap bill at cleansing time.

To prevent shoes from blistering the heel, paste a small piece of oil or velvet in the heel; then they will not slip up and down.

A little tin ruler is much easier to use than the tape measure for the measuring of little things, such as bands, hems and tucks.

To stop hiccough, close the nostrils by grasping the nose with forefinger and thumb, then take one or two swallows of water.

Butter the upper inside edge of a steppan to prevent the contents of the pan boiling over, whether milk, chocolate, syrup or cereals.

A wall pocket of pretty cretonne to hang by two rings and with wide pockets to hold shoes and toilet articles is a comfort in the boudoir.

Cover plaster of Paris figures with a thick coating of starch and water, let it dry on the surface; the dirt will brush off with the powder.

A neat way to mend a hole in table linen is to darn it with linen threads of an old tablecloth. It will look much neater than a patch sewed on.