

THE DIARY OF A DEBUTANTE

February 26, 19—

None seems disappointed at the change of programme. How good everyone is to me! It was all only for my pleasure, and just to have me at home once more is enough for Daddy, Aunt Anne, Stanley and Dick—my "satellites," as Daddy says.

I am so happy about it. Dick and Nellie are engaged! Now I will have a sister, and just the sort that I want. Dick and Nellie will live at home with Daddy and Aunt Anne, while Stanley and I have the dearest little house just around the square. There are some changes being made in it now—the conservatory is at the top of the house—a sensible thing, I think, for the best and brightest of sunshine is there for the flowers, and my studio is to be transferred there, adjoining the conservatory. We will entertain with dances at home—daddy's house, I am now forced to call it, for Stanley says our own little house must be called "home" now.

We are to be married immediately after Lent. Stanley wanted it before, but I want to go through the Lenten season alone. Why? I just can not say—I feel that I want to kneel with my little white prayer book in my hand at service alone, just as I have always knelt—I want to be a girl just this much longer.

A lovely story, by Mary Wilkins Freeman, I think—I found it in an old copy of a magazine—tells of a girl who wanted to wait to see a certain flower at the edge of a swamp bloom just once more before she was married. On her marriage morn, she slipped away to wait for it, as the flower had delayed its blooming. So many springs she had watched for its coming. I know now just how she felt—and yet no one would understand, I could tell this to no one save you, little diary, my confessional.

We were all quite excited upon our return to learn that the long letter received by Nellie when we were abroad, the letter from the lawyer, meant that she was an "heiress." Nellie laughed over the big sound of the term when the pompous little gentleman of legal affairs announced to her that she was an "heiress," that her great-aunt had left her sole possessor of all her worldly goods, and so on. It is no inconsiderable "dot," however, and was a total surprise. Back of all lies a lot of heartache—because there was a difference of religious belief in the hearts of two loving people, the destiny of this little fortune was changed. Nellie whispered to me once that her dear mother had never been wholly happy in her married life because she had displeased her aunt, who had cared for her in childhood, by the marriage she had made. Now the little fortune comes to the great-niece, and Nellie says perhaps the stubborn old lady consoled her last days in the thought that while not seeming to relent, she was, nevertheless, doing the right thing after all. Now there will need to be less frugality in that home of exquisite refinement that has always been so dear to me, Nellie's girlhood home.

Somehow one never thinks of one's own brother being in "love." One's brother never seems quite dignified and important enough to be "in love" and marry. I suppose that is just the way it looks to Dick, too, regarding me. I did not guess that the glad note in Nellie's voice was there because she knew Dick loved her—he had just told her so the evening she came to tell me there were guests for dinner just after she had come to stay with me and help me in my charity work and all that sort of thing. But now it seems quite serious, and Dick seems so much more dignified, and I love to hear him planning for their future.

Yesterday I met Elsie at Lucy's. It did not seem to matter a bit—I am so glad the old hurt is not there any longer. On the way to Lucy's luncheon, Mrs. Selwyn-Brown suggested to me that it was not in the least necessary to mention to Lucy and Elsie that we had been entertained at the Count's shooting lodge, that if our trip abroad was discussed that it might be just in a general sort of way. Of course it was discussed, and Mrs. Selwyn-Brown explained that our change of plan, our return sooner than was expected, was due to the fact my health was not at all good, that the doctor believed that my first season had been too strenuous, that I had needed rest more than recreation.

Lucy told us the Count had written to her several times—that at Christmas time a box with the dearest gifts for all had been received, and raised her eyebrows as she looked in my direction. I wanted to tell her about the little ivory cross, and opened my mouth to do so, but something sealed my lips—I just could not. Elsie mentioned in a drawing voice that they were going over soon after Easter, and intimated that certain old acquaintances would be renewed, leaving me to conjecture that the Count was numbered among these. She prides herself upon her international acquaintances. My hands were cold as they rested on my lap, and I wondered if I had grown pale. That old world life and aristocracy, with which money has nothing to do, seems so near to me, and my understanding of it, I am sure, could have come only through a long line dating back to just that same life and assured position. I suppose it is hard for one who is so very, very wealthy to realize that money has its limitations, since money can accomplish so much. So clearly the scenes at the hunting lodge were before me. I could see its ancient walls, more like a castle than a pastime residence, its picture gallery with all the hunting scenes, and the portrait of the beautiful, stately woman with the wonderful eyes. I could not help but wonder if Elsie would see those things as I had seen them, and I somehow felt that she would not.

I am glad that I am in the whirl of planning for my wedding, my home making and all that. Now every one talks of this, and there is such a settled feeling—it is best, as Stanley said—to let every one know. Poor Stanley. He flaunts himself now with his long suppressed air of proprietorship let loose. I suppose it was really mean that I did not at once wish him to play the engaged man's part, but I did not wish it—Oh, I cannot now stop to puzzle why. That is past—no one may know, unless one reads between the lines of my little diary, and this will never be, for on my wedding day it is to go under lock and key—perhaps when I am old, when I wear a lace cap upon my silvered hair, I may peep in. Will I remem-

CONCLUDING INSTALMENT

DESIGN BY A. B. LISTER

ber then so keenly? Perhaps it will be like the old play, "Rosemary," the little sprig tucked away for remembrance forgotten by the old man as to who had given it to him fifty years before! Very ardent was that love affair, but only after long groping back in memory he recalled the sweet girl from whom he had parted. And here between the pages of my dairy I will fasten a spray of rosemary, I think I shall always remember.

The things that we purchased abroad have arrived. I had no idea there was such a store of them. Shopping is always surprising in results. A shopping tour abroad

March 3, 19—



is a sort of rolling stone affair, gathering moss, however, instead of losing it. A bit picked up here and there, and added to along the way soon fills boxes and trunks. I must, though, blame such ruthless extravagance upon Mrs. Selwyn-Brown. Daddy, it seems, told her to prepare me for the world, and not for a nunnery, that he had always thought of girls as sort of butterfly things and he was not prepared through inclination or training to cope with the serious creature his daughter had developed into. "Why," he said one morning, as he had come to my studio with Mrs. Selwyn-Brown and Nellie, "I verily believe she is up here working, believing that she has to toil in that old wet clay for a living, when all my life I have been working from morning until night that she might live like a grand duchess, if she liked!"

Dear Daddy. It is impossible to make him see that art is exacting, that art is only to be satisfied through expression. Some one told him I was really gifted, and he said he was glad of that, but it was enough to be gifted without slaving from morning to night to prove it to other people. And yet I catch Daddy every little while lugging home some beautiful piece of work that someone has taken him to see, the result of a visit to some poor artist's studio. He has just given a commission for the painting of my portrait, and sittings are to begin within a few days. Is it not this love of art, this appreciation of art that is finding expression through Daddy's daughter? But Stanley is taking me seriously, I am glad to say. Our little house is planned all for me, Stanley says it must "express" me. In the music room we have put Mumsie's harp, and I have begun my lessons under one of the most gifted teachers. I have done well with the violin, and I feel sure the harp will not be a serious task for me. The piano to me is the least sympathetic of all musical instruments, and I cannot, therefore, care so much for it. I can never tell a story through the keys of the piano. The strings of my violin sing for me, the tones are so nearly those of the human voice.

Mentioning the violin reminds me of Italy, where the violin always seems most at home, and this takes me to the little houses along the roadway leading out from Florence, where the beautiful laces are made.

I have been so delighted in looking over the lovely flounces and other pieces that Mrs. Selwyn-Brown purchased for me, and a letter came with them saying my wedding veil was well under way. The flounces will fairly cover my wedding gown, which has already been planned. Mrs. Selwyn-Brown has such wonderful taste, and she declares that I care so little for clothes that she does not dare leave things to me for fear that on my wedding day I will find that I neglected to have my

gown finished and might appear in a walking dress. But I think she is only pleased to let me shift the responsibility. Indeed, I heard her say to Daddy and Mr. Selwyn-Brown that she was having a most beautiful time, because it had always been one of her dreams to have a daughter just so she could get up a trousseau for her.

I am busy enough, though, in helping Nellie. We have done no end of shopping, and I have an idea that her trousseau, while less costly in certain details than mine, will be quite beautiful. Nellie is that thing adored of dressmakers, "stylish." She can wear a bow with such an air of elegance that the bow always seems grateful, and never seems commonplace though it may be worn to a frazzle when it is taken from her gown. I must always be ready made. I can lend nothing to my clothes. The poor things must supply it all themselves. I am not "smart." I like flowing lines when fashion says they must be straight and "narrow in effect," and I just shut my eyes to the ugliness and let them array me as they will. There is one thing that I insist upon, all sorts of things in white. I love soft white gowns and wraps and furs and scarfs. I can think better when I am wearing white than in anything else.

March 8, 19—

I think a girl gives up a good deal when she becomes engaged her first season out. Of course, I would not have things changed, but since the society columns of the papers have announced that I am to be one of the brides of Eastertime, I already feel like a retired "bud," that I have already assumed matronly dignity. My "beaus" as Daddy calls the men of our set, have fallen off, or stand aloof. Stanley marches up with an air of ownership, just delightful to see, and I trot meekly by his side. Daddy even has resigned me to him. It makes me lonesome sometimes, and I want to cry out, "Oh, Daddy, I do not want to be anything in this world but your little girl." But it is a woman's duty to marry—I suppose it is, yes, it must be. It would disarrange things greatly if I were not to marry. It is the logical order of things. I know Stanley adores me, and what more could a woman want? And yet, and yet—I must banish it. I cannot help, though, wishing to be only myself. Perhaps in after years, when I had accomplished a great deal, that I may never be able to accomplish with the burden of wifely duties, I might wish to marry. I expect, though, every woman has felt this way—just a longing to hold to the freedom that is hers. But one owes such large duties to others. One must not think only of oneself. "When I die, girlie," Daddy said soberly the other evening, "I will know that you are always sheltered and guarded from life's hardships—and money cannot keep them all away—by Stanley, who is a man, every inch of him. I am very happy in the present plans—a lovely new daughter to be added to my household, and a splendid new son. If Mumsie were only here with is now—"

And Daddy's voice trailed off into silence. "Do you know," he presently continued, "when Mumsie promised to marry me that I was too poor to buy her a diamond ring? The better times came some years later, when through inheritance, a little fortune came to me and well invested brought such returns as hard work—as you know, I never spend a day away from the office as yet, but I am going to pretty soon."

"The little ring that I gave Mumsie had just a wee bit of a pearl in it—see, it is here in this scarf pin which I always wear."

Daddy bent down for me to see the little thing, set about with a wreath of tiny leaves.

"I shall never forget how much I wanted to buy her a beautiful diamond ring, and how delighted I was when many diamonds—like you, she loved the clear white stones, but neither of us, I am sure, ever felt such a thrill of delight as we did over that little first diamond ring. We had been married some years then, but were sweethearts still."

"Our households were not of the aristocracy of wealth, but the uniting of the two families by marriage was an important thing, for it brought together once more two ancient lines, as your marriage with Stanley will do, and this is one thing which pleases me so much about it. You have cared for each other since childhood, and it has always been one of my dearest wishes that this friendship might ripen into love, as it has."

There is much, very much more about marriage than mere romance—I see that all now. Society, the home, hearts, of more than merely two people are to be considered. In my own quiet joy at taking my place in the long line of honored wives, I am glad in the thought it is all just as Daddy wishes. I could not do a thing to grieve his heart.

The week has simply been filled with things to do—practical things, and I find my little experiences in house-keeping quite put to the test, and I wonder what I would do if I had not had a bit of training in the past few months. Not long ago—and kitchen equipment to me would have been a perfect mystery. Now I find myself ordering always conservative in such matters I think, and I do not place I at once seek Mrs. Selwyn-Brown who never seems beyond reach nowadays. She is the most important of personages at present, for she takes Nellie in tow at times as well as me. Nellie has always spared her mother in every way, both because she is the more self-reliant nature and because her mother is never equal to much exertion, and most dependent upon those about her.

Nellie laughingly says that she is having by far the easier time in her wedding preparations, as she is going to step into a ready made home, and I think it most lovely of her changes, that everything about the place is so dear to her—it is all just as we have known it since we were little children. The ball room is to be ours in common. To-for dancing. Its four floors go straight up, only two rooms to the top floor, which is the conservatory and my studio. The dining room and kitchen are on the floor just below.

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