

DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd)

Vincy spoke as they approached the station, though not to mention Annabel.

"I was mistaken just now in my estimate. My price is higher than I supposed. At the very least, two thousand."

May did not reply; it would be time enough to answer when Thursday came, and he had Glennie and Co. behind him. The sovereigns were still in his hand. "What class?" he asked, as they paused at the booking-office.

"Third will do for me; pity to waste money."

There were still some minutes before the train came in, but May was minded to wait its arrival. He passed the third-class ticket over to his companion, with the two sovereigns and the odd silver, and then he offered him his cigarette-case and a light. The two men smoked as they walked up and down, and exchanged a few commonplace remarks on the aspect of the country, the orchard blossom beginning to open, the use of the great water-way. No more was said as to the price of Vincy's absence. The time seemed interminable till the signal dropped, but at last the arm moved, and the station-bell clanged out its warning. Vincy opened the door of a third-class smoker.

"Bye-bye," he said, "but not for long. At Glennie's on Thursday."

He leaned through the open window as the train moved on, watching May as he stood looking after him, still with that white, fixed face. When the son's figure became indistinct with distance the father threw himself into a corner of the empty carriage and laughed aloud, laughing as a man may do who holds the winning cards, and at the same time is well amused.

There was some justice in his economy over the ticket, for it served him only for a few miles. He got out at the junction to abandon his journey. "Next train to London due in immediately on the other side," the porter informed him; but, instead of crossing the line, he turned to the way out, and walked down the street of the little town. He scrutinized the two lins with their hanging signs, and stopped outside a garage where was the inscription, "Motor car on hire."

"Better than back to that Ferry station, making talk for the villagers. And I'm good enough chauffeur," he muttered to himself. And then, alert and purposeful, he turned within.

The garage-master discovered he had to do with a customer who knew his business and the tricks of the trade. Vincy narrowly examined the car, and ended by hiring it. "Send it round to the 'Red Lion' at six o'clock," he directed in conclusion; "and I will drive myself."

Vincy had more sovereigns in his pocket than the two extorted from his son. He made arrangements for doing himself very well at the "Red Lion," and dined abundantly in the middle of the afternoon. Then he called for pen and paper, and proceeded to write a letter. It was a letter of a few lines only, but the composition of it appeared to be difficult. One or two drafts were tried, corrected and altered, before he produced the fair copy. It ran as follows:

"Annabel, I recognized you at Fortune's Court, and I read in your face that the recognition was mutual. What lies between us in the past you know. If you wish to avoid scandal, let me see you alone this evening, and say no word of this letter to May, or any other. Should you refuse, you will incur a danger the gravity of which you can estimate as certainly as I. I am waiting near at hand. I saw a garden-shelter in your shrubbery—I will be there from nine to ten o'clock, and shall expect you.—Walter Vincy."

He addressed the letter to the Honorable Mrs. Swayne, and put it carefully away in his pocket—it was not intended for the post. And at dusk the hired car, with its shining lamps, came round to the "Red Lion," and Vincy mounted and took the steering-wheel, turning back in the direction of the Court.

CHAPTER VI.

That day, the next before the wedding, was a stirring one for all the household at the Court. Many were the preparations which went forward; the old drawing-rooms, opening one from the other, some what low and narrow and dark

with oak panelling, were made gay with flowers and palms ready for the reception; the library looked like the show-room of a shop, set out as it was with the wedding presents. Dulcie was on the tip-toe of high spirits, looking forward to a nearer vent than that of the morrow. Margaret was expected, though not till the evening; her own Madge, her dearest sister, as she called her to herself; all this bridal triumph would be somewhat less than triumph to her, had Margaret not been by to see.

There had ever been a warm affection between these two, and Colonel Swayne's edict of complete separation pressed hardly on them both. It was perhaps Dulcie's sweetest trait, this love for her elder sister. She was a small person of many moods and aspects which contradicted one another. There might have been five or six Dulcies, underlying strata, making up that engaging personality, besides the one which was betrothed to Gower and reflected his passion. The Dulcie of every day was somewhat self-seeking and indolent, and there was another side of her, eager to play, cat-like, with Harold May's unacknowledged worship, of which, woman-like, she was completely aware. She was aware also of another affection, so serious that it alarmed her shallow nature, and her impulse had been to shrink away. And in this case also she was giving pain with full knowledge. She was to be married in John Hungerford's church on the morrow, and he, in company with a related archdeacon, was to assist in tying the irrevocable knot.

Margaret would not arrive till after the dinner hour, and Dulcie had planned an upstairs supper for the weary traveller in the small sitting-room which was especially her own. Mrs. Swayne was willing Dulcie should have her way on this last night under her father's roof; she herself was looking pale and ill; could it be Margaret's home-coming which affected her, or did she really feel the parting with the daughter who was not her own?

Dulcie went in the carriage to the station; and when the two girls entered through the hall, Colonel Swayne came out from his dinner to give Margaret a cool hand-shake. And then the bride swept her tall elder sister away upstairs, to establish her in the easiest chair and surround her with a hundred cares and caresses. If the reception below had been cool, the warmth of Dulcie's went far to atone for it.

"My dear, dear old Madge! Now that your hat is off, let me look at you. I feel I cannot look enough to make up for this long time we have been parted. I don't want to find you a bit changed, but exactly the same."

It was a beautiful face, this face of Margaret's. The sisters were alike in feature, all but the eyes, but Margaret's countenance was animated by a higher soul, and life had taught her deeper lessons. That, at least, was plain to see. She returned Dulcie's kiss with equal affection.

"My child has grown into a woman, I suppose, as there is going to be this wedding. But to me she looks like a child still. Dulcie, my darling, are you happy? Very, very happy?"

"As happy as I can be, now that you are here. And we will never be parted again as we have been these three years. George says you are to come to us at Grendon; and you two must love each other, to please me."

Margaret smiled. "It is good of your George to be hospitable to an unknown sister. If he makes you happy I shall love him for that."

"Of course he will make me happy; he will let me do exactly as I like. And I shall like to have you. Madge, it is fun to have a lover—I like it. And I suppose a husband is nearly as good. It is odd, to think I shall have a husband after to-morrow, and not be Dulcie Swayne any longer, but Mrs. Gower."

The elder girl smiled, but the smile covered a sigh. Dulcie held her with a hand on either shoulder, studying the familiar face which had grown strange.

"You are altered, somehow, and I can't think what it is. You are the same old dear, and your eyes are just as kind, but there is something about them—a shadow. It is because you have been sad and so much alone?"

"Perhaps it is, Dulcie. I don't know—"

"Of course, it must be. Poor mother! I want to hear all about her, but I will not ask to-night."

Papa told me when she died—just that, not any more. You shall not tell me now, for it will make us both sad; I should cry at once, I know. It is unlucky to have tears overnight; did you ever hear it? And I must take great care not to have red eyes, for I want to look my best. I have such a sweet dress. I will show you, but you must have supper first. You must be so very tired; and then there was the crossing."

"I am tired, but the crossing did not hurt me. The sea was smooth; and then I felt the heaven of every wave brought me nearer to you. Yes, I will have some supper, though I don't really want it. I only want to look at my little sister."

"That is what I feel, but I am going to do both together—eat and look at you. Margaret, Grendon is a lovely place; I didn't half tell you. I went over it with mamma. George was having my rooms done up, and he wanted to know about colors. There is a perfectly beautiful music-room, and a hall in oak with old armour—and deer in the park, and a herd of tiny ponies. I liked the ponies best, and George is having a pair of them broken in on purpose for me to drive. Such ducks they are—but you will see. And George is having the diamonds reset—the necklace, you know. Mamma said it would be absurd on a little thing like me, so George is getting it made into a rivière; the biggest stones in a string and the rest in sprays to brooch into the corsage. It will look sweet. I don't know where to begin with all I have to tell you, or how to leave off. And you must have a great, great deal to tell me!"

Margaret did not immediately respond. What she had to tell did not relate to diamonds.

"I want to know about your pictures. Are you intending still to be an artist? And what sort of a place is Barbizon? But, before anything else, you must have supper. Chicken cutlets—you used to like chicken cutlets—have you forgotten? And I coaxed old Harpott to make one of the very same creams we used to choose for our birthdays."

Dulcie hovered over Margaret at the supper which she shared, pouring out questions, but hardly waiting to be answered, she had so much herself to say. When the "ray was taken down she looked at the tiny watch on her wrist, a new toy, and a brighter tint warmed her cheek.

"I shouldn't wonder if George came in this evening, just for five minutes. He said he would if he could, if it was not quite too late, and his train is due about now. Will you come down to see him, Madge?"

"No, dear, for he will want to see only you. I won't go down again to-night. We will have our first meeting to-morrow. So his name is George?"

"Yes; it is a nice name, isn't it?—George Gower? He is staying at the Vicarage. Uncle Swinton is here to-night, and the Archdeacon; the other people do not come till to-morrow, by the morning train. Cousin Joan is staying with the Welters. You know her two little girls are to be bridesmaids, with Ernest dressed as a page."

"Phyllis and Lilla? I remember them—dear little tots. But haven't you any others? No older girls?"

"No; I wouldn't, Madge, dear, as I couldn't have you. I am so sorry—it is the one thing that will not be right. If papa had only changed his mind a little sooner—in time for you to get a dress—Nora Tempest would have made a pair."

(To be continued.)

THE KING OF LETTERS.

You Will Find It In the Best and in the Worst.

What letter of the alphabet outshines all the rest, and reigns king over all the others? It came first with God, and it will end all things. It is in what is most valuable to men—gold and gems that glitter—and you will find it even in the middle of a fight and in the gambler's den.

And it even stoops to conquer in the most inferior objects, in the goat, while he kicks up his heels and horns, and in the hog—in fact, in all pigs. It is in our faithful friend the dog, while at our feet we find it in the green grass. And how could we build a house except for the ground where it begins? Just see how it sticks to us in gum like glue, and in the middle of the night, he it ever so dark, it can be made to shine.

While it commences in all the great, grand, and glorious things of earth, it ends in the most gruesome of all—the grave. You will find it in the best and in the worst, even in garbage. In what is it more glorious than in our flag, that waves, then droops over the grave of the soldier? And then this wonderful letter immediately arises and perches itself in the centre of our great and glorious England. Who can dispute that the letter "Q" is the King of Letters.

A CZARINA'S ICE PALACE.

The Building and All the Furnishings Were of Ice.

The use of ice for architectural purposes is an art that has been carried to a high state of perfection in northern countries, and some almost incredible feats have been accomplished in this curious branch of industry.

Probably the most remarkable building constructed wholly of ice was the palace built on the Neva by the Czarina Anne of Russia, in 1730. The first attempt to construct this building was unsuccessful, as the slabs of ice were too thin, and the building collapsed in the first thaw.

Subsequently large blocks of ice were cut and squared with great care, and laid on one another by skillful masons, who cemented the joints with water, which immediately froze. The building, when completed, was 56 feet long, 17 1/2 broad and 21 high. It was but one story.

The facade contained a door surmounted by an ornamental pediment and six windows, the frames and panes of which were all of ice. An elaborate balustrade, adorned with statues, ran along the top of the facade and another balustrade surrounded the building at the level of the ground. The side entrances to the enclosure were flanked with pillars supporting urns, the latter containing orange trees, whose branches, leaves and flowers were all of ice.

Hollow pyramids of ice on each side of the building contained lights by night. The grounds were further adorned with a life-size figure of an elephant, with his mouth on his back. A stream of water was thrown from the elephant's trunk by day and a flame of naphtha by night.

A tent of ice contained a hot bath in which persons actually bathed. There were also several cannons and mortars of ice, which were loaded with bullets of ice and iron and discharged.

The interior of the building was completely furnished with tables, chairs, statues, looking glasses, a clock, a complete tea service, etc., all made of ice and painted to imitate the real objects. A bed-chamber contained a state bed, with curtains, a dressing table with a mirror, pillows, bed clothes, slippers, and nightcaps—all made of ice. There were ice candles burning naphtha; and most wonderful of all an ice fire place containing burning ice logs! Blocks of ice smeared with naphtha and then kindled.—Scientific American.

WHEN MARRIAGE IS LEGAL.

In France the man must be 18 and the woman 16 in order to marry. In Germany the man must be at least 18 years of age. In Portugal a boy of fourteen is considered marriageable and a girl of 12. In Greece the man must have seen at least 14 summers and the woman 12. In Spain the intended husband must have passed his fourteenth year and the woman her 12th. In Austria a man and a woman are supposed to be capable of conducting a home of their own from the age of 14. In Turkey any youth and maiden who can walk properly and understand the necessary religious services are allowed to be united for life.

LUCKY MISTAKE.

Greener Sent Pkg. of Postum and Opened the Eyes of the Family.

A lady writes from Brookline, Mass.:

"A package of Postum was sent me one day by mistake. I notified the grocer, but finding that there was no coffee for breakfast next morning, I prepared some of the Postum, following the directions very carefully.

"It was an immediate success in my family, and from that day we have used it constantly, parents and children, too—for my three rosy youngsters are allowed to drink it freely at breakfast and luncheon. They think it delicious, and I would have a mutiny on my hands should I omit the beloved beverage.

"My husband used to have a very delicate stomach while we were using coffee, but to our surprise his stomach has grown strong and entirely well since we quit coffee and have been on Postum.

"Noting the good effects in my family I wrote to my sister, who was a coffee toper, and after much persuasion got her to try Postum. "She was prejudiced against it at first, but when she presently found that all the ailments that coffee gave her left and she got well quickly she became and remains a thorough and enthusiastic Postum convert.

"Her nerves, which had become shattered by the use of coffee have grown healthy again, and to-day she is a new woman, thanks to Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich., and the "cause why" will be found in the great little book, "The Road to Wellville," which comes in pkgs. Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

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PRISONERS AND THEIR PETS

WHAT SOME CONVICTS DO IN THEIR SPARE TIME.

Brutalized Men Have Great Gifts For Taming Birds and Animals.

One of the first things you notice about a big prison like Parkhurst or Dartmoor is the tameness of the birds which haunt the place, says Pearson's Weekly. Sparrows and jackdaws hardly trouble to fly out of one's way. One reason for this is no doubt the fact that there are no boys with catapults or air guns about the premises, but the main reason is that convicts, almost without exception, are kind to animals and birds.

Even the roughest and most brutalized men, who are a terror to warders and other prison officers, will not molest the birds, but on the other hand will save crumbs from their daily allowance of bread, and spread them on the sills of their windows for the benefit of their feathered friends.

Lord William Neville speaks of a man at Parkhurst who had an extraordinary gift for taming birds. He was a lazy, good-for-nothing ruffian, idle to a degree, and always in trouble; yet he exercised a sort of weird fascination over all kinds of birds, and his cell was a regular aviary.

Sparrows and starlings were constantly fluttering in and out, and would sit on his hands without betraying the slightest fear. Prison authorities do not look with favor upon this sort of thing, but in this man's case it was found that his pets exercised so good an effect upon him that the regulations were not strictly enforced.

TEACHING MOUSE TRICKS.

Another favorite prisoner's pet is mouse. Some time ago a party of convicts just released from Parkhurst were noticed to be turning their railway carriage absolutely upside down.

It appeared that one of them had lost a mouse which had been his pet for two years in the prison, and which he was taking home, carrying it—of all extraordinary places, in his cap! Happily, master mouse was discovered behind a cushion, and order was restored.

The house mouse is much more difficult to tame than the field mouse, yet many a convict has not only managed to tame a mouse, but even to teach it tricks.

It is generally your illiterate man who cannot spend his spare time in reading who achieves these marvels of taming. The small animal is taught to sit up and beg for crumbs, to run up his master's sleeve and come out at his collar, and at the slightest sign of danger to make a bolt for the owner's pocket.

Seeing that every prisoner is searched several times during the day, and that a regular staff of warders is constantly at work searching the cells while they are vacant during the day time, it might seem utterly impossible for a prisoner to keep even so small a pet as a mouse. But the fact is that warders are much more kind to those in their charge than is generally imagined, and seeing that a mouse cannot possibly help a prisoner to escape, the searcher will usually pass over it even if he does happen to notice it.

A CONVICT'S REVENGE.

For another thing, he knows perfectly well that his kindness will be appreciated, and that the prisoner will be far more obedient to rules and give less trouble if he is left in possession of his pet.

If, on the other hand, the pet is taken away, the man will, very likely, turn dangerous. Some years ago a new governor who had freshly taken charge of a London local prison issued an order for the extermination of all prison pets.

A warder found a man in possession of a mouse, seized it, and killed it. The prisoner said nothing at the time, but next day he stole an awl from the cobbler's shop, and

with this weapon stabbed and killed the warder.

There was an elderly convict who has spent most of his life in Dartmoor prison, and will be back there shortly to serve a fresh sentence, who is the most amazing hand with sheep.

He knows every sheep on the prison farm, and they know him. He never drives the sheep like any other shepherd, but merely whistles to them, and they follow him. This poor old chap looks upon Dartmoor as his home. He hates leaving it, and always tells the Governor, at the end of a term, that he will be back again soon.

NIAGARA DISTRICT NEEDS PROTECTION.

Enough Peaches in Georgia Alone to Supply America.

The relationship between Canada and the United States as regards the fruit industry, and the manifest need of a Protective tariff for Canadian fruit growers have been clearly shown in a series of articles by Dr. George Charles Buchanan of beamsville, Ont., President of the Ontario and Western Co-operative Society. Dealing with the Niagara peninsula Dr. Buchanan says:—

There are in the Niagara Peninsula about 350 square miles of land on which fruit can be well grown, not counting such districts as Ancaster and Dundas. Between Toronto and Hamilton there is another 100 square miles; in all at least 288,000 acres.

Not all of this is peach land, not even probably 20 per cent. of it. But very little of it is of no use for any fruit. Much can be made fine peach land by drainage, or good apple, plum or grape land; some is only good for berries, but all of it is in a good fruit climate. The unplanted land is waiting to double or quadruple in value, whenever the market demands more fruit.

It may be assumed that the value of this land for general farming is not over \$100 per acre, and that for fruit purposes it is worth \$500 per acre; although much of the peach land is worth \$1,000 per acre; and that where it has to be drained, draining will average about \$20 per acre.

It can further be stated that peach land at \$1,000 per acre is known to pay a good return on the investment in the hands of practical growers. If we take the very low estimate of 10,000 acres planted at \$500 per acre we have a value of \$5,000,000 for the orchard and berry lands.

Now as our home market grows, and in our home market we have no competition, every acre of this 288,000 has potentially the same value, and fully half is unplanted. There are in Canada about 8,000,000 people, the United States claim 93,000,000. However that may be, our present soft fruit acreage is fully equal to supplying Canada. It is safe to say there is not over 12,000 acres of peaches in Eastern Canada. If this supplies 8,000,000 people it would take 150,000 acres to supply 93,000,000 people, but there are 180,000 acres of peaches in Georgia alone.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Every boy should be given a chance to be what his fancy dictates; he would seldom make a wrong choice.

Experience is the thread on which we string the beads of our knowledge.

Don't gossip and don't repeat gossip, and you will never make enemies.

A fairly healthy man can worry himself into all manner of complaints by imagining their symptoms.

Enthusiasm has only to get the bit between its teeth and bolt, and it becomes exceedingly dangerous. We have to forgive old age nearly as much as we do youth; both make terrible mistakes.

He is a wise man—or a cynic, or perhaps both—who made the statement that a fool was born every moment; and most of them lived.