

CONVERTING A GUARDIAN

By CYRUS DERICKSON

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There was nothing giddy about Miss Nancy Messmore, aged thirty-two, an old maid and the aunt and legal guardian of Miss Bessie Haplin, aged nineteen. Bessie had never fallen in love with a penniless count, consented to elope with the family coachman or given her heart to a college student acting as waiter at a summer hotel, but for all this she was supposed to be giddy. Strict discipline was needed at all times, but more particularly when the couple had settled down at a Catskill hotel to spend the month of July.

The girl was attractive and ingenious, and she couldn't help meeting young men, who soon became smitten. But it was Miss Messmore's duty in public and Aunt Nancy's duty in private to set a dead line beyond which the most ardent captive should pass at his peril. If there was a little excursion to a cave or a gorge, she was on hand; if there was music in the parlor, she sat where she could gaze into the face of the young man turning over the music at the piano; if there was a tete-a-tete on the veranda, she crowded in and changed the conversation from



"MITH MESSMORE, I WANT YOUR DIAMONDS!"

love to thunderstorms. It was her duty as a relative, as a guardian and as a woman to take care of the giddy young thing.

When Miss Bessie rebelled, she was answered:

"I must do my duty. Every girl of your age is foolish and needs to be carefully watched."

Bessie flung herself down on the bed to weep rebellious tears and wish she hadn't come. There was an unusually large number of young men at the resort, but, with the Argus eyes of her guardian following her about, she couldn't even drop her handkerchief on the veranda without coming in for a lecture.

She had her revenge, for the unexpected happened. Before the week was up Miss Nancy herself had an admirer. During former seasons she had made the acquaintance of ministers, college professors and lecturers, but it was acquaintance only. Now she was sought out by a man of thirty-five.

A woman is never too old to be flattered. At home in her own parlor Aunt Nancy would have turned up her nose at Claude Bertrand. She certainly would have declared that a poet was a wishy washy specimen of humanity and a man who lisped worse than a schoolboy in love.

It was different here at the resort, however. Within an hour he had not only made her forget that Bessie was off with a party of young folks for a long tramp, but had brought about a radical change of her opinions toward mankind. Mr. Bertrand was entertaining; he was deferential; he was suave and sentimental. The guardian of the giddy rose up after a three hours' "sance" with a heart quite subdued by his charms. Yet she declared to her wondering niece:

"This is an altogether different case. While you are only a foolish girl, I am a settled woman."

"But he writes poetry and lispes," protested the girl.

"What of that? A man with the soul of a poet must necessarily be a good man, and a lisp in one's speech may even be an attraction. Don't you worry about me."

Miss Bessie didn't worry. She was too delighted to be free from the Argus eyes of her chaperon. But she wondered what the outcome of so many tete-a-tetes would be.

Things move swiftly at summer resorts. You either fall in love and want to know your fate within a couple of weeks or you are out of it altogether. A girl with any pretensions to good looks expects to turn down at least two offers per week. Aunt Nancy was not a girl, but the time came when she knew that she was loved. She had to realize it because, sitting in a shadowy corner of the veranda in their red rock-

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CURE SICK HEADACHE.

ing chairs, with the moon shining and Bessie in the parlor breaking the hearts of half a dozen young men. Claude Bertrand lisped out the words. Aunt Nancy was not surprised. She had felt it coming, yet simply didn't know what to say in reply. Years before she had made up her mind never to wed, but when the words of love were lisped out softly she was torn with conflicting emotions. She got out of it by reserving her answer for a week, and though the poet didn't see how he was to exist for seven long days, he finally agreed.

On the next evening a hop was given at the hotel. Aunt Nancy was no hand to show off, but she had some fine diamonds in the hotel safe, and she got them out for the occasion. She didn't care to dance, and the poet complained of a lame leg, and so it happened that they paraded the veranda arm in arm and lisped sentiment.

After awhile they wandered out on the lawn to observe the moon, and he suggested a walk up the path to observe the shadows. She sighed, and he sighed, and by and by they were a quarter of a mile from the scene of gaiety and all alone on the path.

They had been silent for a moment when he turned to her and lisped:

"Mith Messmore, I want your diamonds!"

"W-what do you mean?" she asked.

"I want your diamonds. If you don't take them off and give them to me, I'll choke the life out of you!"

"Claude—Mr. Bertrand!"

"Take them off, and do it mighty quick!"

Aunt Nancy removed her necklace, her earring, her earrings and finger rings and passed them over in a dazed way. The poet crammed the plunder in his pocket and said:

"Now git for the hotel and don't look back!"

Aunt Nancy "got" to the hotel and up to her room.

Two hours later Bessie found her there looking pale faced and dazed.

"Oh, aunt, would you think it giddy of me if I encouraged my fourteenth victim to propose?" she exclaimed.

"No, dear," slowly and solemnly answered the guardian. "Even if it was your twenty-eighth it wouldn't be giddy of you!"

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BIRD ARCHITECTURE.

Titmouse Earliest Builder in England—
Everything Goes Into Their Nests.

With the exception perhaps of the mistle thrush, the raven, and an owl or two, the long-tailed titmouse, or bottle-tit, is, I believe, about the earliest of English nesting birds.

I watched two pairs of long-tailed titmouse building on March 15 and 16. Once you know the ways of these little creatures and their haunts, it is easy to find a nest, or two before the hen is out. A sure sign that there is a nest at hand is vociferousness. Such fuss and chatter even among the fussy family of titmice are rare.

Of the two nests I found, one is in a whitethorn, about three feet from the ground; the other in a spruce fir, at about the same height—rather low for the species.

The nest in the spruce fir is practically pendant, like a gold crest's, it rests on no stable basis, and is simply kept in place when the wind roughly rocks the bough to and fro by the perfectly skillful way in which the birds have attached it to the drooping fir twigs. It is glued, as it were, to these twigs here and there all round, at the top, the bottom, and the sides.

Unfortunately I was not able to get near enough to watch the birds attaching this nest to the twigs. But I was lucky in seeing a good deal of the way in which the nest in the whitethorn bush at the edge of the copse was built.

And Mr. B. M. says that the nests of all the long-tailed titmice I can recollect at this moment have always had entrances facing south or south-west or west—but I think a southerly aspect is much more common than a westerly. I cannot recall finding a nest facing north or east, though I do not want for a moment to lay down a general rule and say that these birds never build nests facing either of those quarters.

Bird Sharers of Labor.

The whitethorn nest, when first I noticed it, was about a quarter built, and it closely resembled a chaffinch's in position, material, and shape. A bird-nesting boy with me said "Chaffinch." But I felt sure it was a titmouse's, and lying flat down, about three yards off, I watched and waited.

Presently the tits arrived, sure enough. One had its beak full of lichen. It chattered all the while, saw me, and flew a little way off. The other did likewise. I waited quite still, and presently was rewarded. One of the birds, the hen, I believe, flew into the bush and entered the nest.

At first its movements within the nest seemed to me delicate and gingerly, as if much action would do harm to the structure. But upon the next visit of the bird I noticed a display of considerable vigor. The little creature rummaged about in the nest, tail (which was pushed up ward of course), body and head all going hard.

While the beak built up the sides, the body, unless I am very much mistaken, was all the while molding and pressing the inside of the nest. It was curious to notice the way in which the builder worked its way round and round the nest, touching up now one side, now another.

Once, to my joy, I saw it drag a scrap of material off the edge of one side of the nest and place this elsewhere. As a result of this method of building, the sides grow up quite level. I was so delightfully near that I could see the tiny beak pushing and weaving and pressing the building materials together with intense energy.

Both birds built. The cock long-tailed titmouse does not merely attend the hen and encourage her, as the cock linnet or the cock tree-creeper does. He works with her himself. In it because the nest is such a long and difficult undertaking that he shares the labors, or is the long and difficult nest the result merely of this energy on the part of both hen and cock?

A minute inventory of the nest, so far as it had gone, showed that the following materials were in use: Moist moss, small tree lichens, flat-tish, green-gray on the upper, and dark, boot-leather brown on the under side; silk from the cocoons of some insects, cobwebs, one feather (worked into the side; the great mass of feathers used for lining are not laid in till the nest has been domed over), some tiny strips of thinnest birch bark; some very fine dried grasses.

As the birds flew about their home they looked like scraps of wind-borne fluff. "Exquisite" is a poor word with which to describe them. It makes one tingle with pleasure to watch—Correspondence of London Express.

Origin of "Budget."

It is difficult to realize that the term "budget," now so often in every one's mouth, is a term less than 200 years old, the earliest mention of the word dating no further back than 1733. We borrowed it from the old French language—bougette, meaning a small bag, in which in former times it was the custom to put the estimates of receipts and expenditures when presented to Parliament. Hence the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in making his annual statement, was formerly said to open his budget. In time the term passed from the receptacle to the contents, and, curiously, this new significance was returned from this country to France, where it was first used in an official manner in the early part of the nineteenth century—London Chronicle.

Against the Law.

Missis—Bridget, why did you kiss that policeman I saw in the kitchen last night? Bridget—Well, mum, it's against the law to resist the police.—World's Comic.

Clubbard Love.

"Dolly, you seem to love papa better than you do me!" "Oh, mamma, I don't mean to, but papa, you know, always has his pockets full of pennies!"—Sketchy Bits.



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