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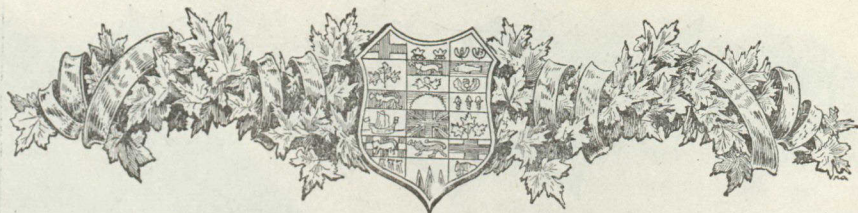
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Miss Johnson's Ellen

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43)

"I wonder," she mused. "Well, then, will you answer me one question?"

"A dozen."

"Granville Pearce, are you in love with Ellen?"

A HEAVY curtain of silence dropped between them for an instant, then he answered clearly.

"Yes, I believe I am."

"I thought so," muttered Evelyn growing rather white. "Shall we turn back?"

"If you like," Toby assented, "but why this heavy disapproval?"

"One need hardly point out the incongruity of a Granville, a Pearce marrying 'Miss Johnson's Ellen,' I should think."

"Rubbish," answered Toby. "For all we know she may be as good as I am—and better. Evidence seems to point to such, anyhow."

"The trouble is that you don't know," Evelyn reminded him. "For my own part, I should like to know my wife's name."

"I don't care a cuss," replied the other. "She will have mine; that's good enough for two. . . . if she will accept it," he added.

"And have you thought what Aunt Frances will say to your forming an alliance with a Foundling Institution?"

"I don't care what she says. I'd infinitely rather have an Institution for a mother-in-law than lots of women I know," he laughed. "Evelyn, old pal, don't quarrel with me. Shut your eyes tight and wish as hard as you can that she won't turn me down."

Evelyn's lip curled. "There's no danger," she said. "I am wise enough to realize that there is no use trying to change the viewpoint of a man in love, but—you asked me, and that's my worry . . . seeing you throwing yourself away."

She dropped him at the gate and said she was going to drive alone for a while. As a matter of fact she motored back to town without saying good-bye to anybody.

Toby went directly in search of Ellen. He found her making splints out of match sticks to set the broken leg of a baby chicken.

"Ellen," he said, solemnly, "will you marry me?"

Very gently, she refused him. "She was not a suitable wife for him, she would be out of place in the city. 'The noise, the dirt, the smells . . . artificial palms, the thunder of traffic, squalor, and air which reeks of gasoline and worse. You would find me ridiculously out of place, Toby, among your friends.'"

"They are artificial, too," he muttered bitterly.

"The city," whispered Ellen looking back over a long vista of years, "is cruel. It makes people—like me."

"Not many," Toby remonstrated.

"They all don't have Miss Johnsons and Canada to give them a chance," said Ellen. "Poor children."

He could not conquer her quiet determination, and yet he felt instinctively that it cost her something to stand firm. The eyes which were raised to his were full of love and this almost shrouded the pain behind them—in their very depths. He knew she looked upon him as a good comrade, but he had sought in vain for a sign that she loved him. Yet, something told him that Ellen was sacrificing herself by refusing happiness to him.

"Is it Aunt Frances you're afraid of?" he asked with a desperation born of defeat.

"In a way, yes. I am afraid of her opinion of me if I allowed you to do this thing. But thank you all the same, dear Toby, I shall treasure this remembrance all my life."

She moved slowly away from him. He felt as though an immeasurable distance fell between them and his helplessness maddened him. Ellen was so sure, so strong.

Then Miss Johnson came in jerky steps down the path. Seeing them, she stopped and looked grimly over her glasses.

"Aunt Frances, help me," cried Toby impetuously. "Help me persuade Ellen to be my wife. She thinks you won't approve."

"Have you asked her?" demanded the spinster harshly.

"Of course. I have been asking her for the last hour."

"Idiot!" she half sneered. "Why didn't you begin four years ago?"

The Making of a Duchess

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30)

I decided to go in order that I might punish him in his own coin by discussing chicken runs and nothing but chicken runs. We had driven twenty miles before I let go on chicken runs through pure exhaustion of the subject.

When I had finally done, the Duke turned toward me.

"MISS MALLO," he began in his quiet, even tones, "you have, indeed, acquainted me with the facts I was after. Now, if you will grant me a few minutes, I should like in turn to acquaint you with a few facts. Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes, thank you," I lied—we were resting on a fallen tree.

He faced me—his lips grim and a pallor under his tan. Involuntarily, I shivered.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"Yes," I stuttered. "Don't you think it's time I was getting back?"

He did not answer, but going to the motor, he took from it a lap robe, and throwing it about my shoulders, re-seated himself, determinedly.

"When I first met you, Miss Mallo," he began, "at the Marquis Castlemont's, I thought your interest in poultry architecture purely affectation. When next I met you down at Turrets, I thought I detected in you a love of simple things as well as . . . poultry architecture. Today, after our discussion, I feel that your interest in poultry architecture, if in nothing else, comes, indeed from your heart."

He paused with an intentional dramatic uplift of his voice.

"Are you presuming on my interest in your successive impressions of me?" I asked rather foolishly.

"That I am, Miss Mallo. Moreover, there is one more impression to which I must ask you to listen. This last impression, I did not get first hand, but through my mother. It is the picture, not of a footlight favorite, a sportswoman, or a fancier, but of a woman, at heart a

woman, yearning for the simple elemental things of life."

I sprang up with hot cheeks.

"Your mother is an incorrigible old meddler, Duke."

He stood opposite to me, and for the first time since I had known him, there was pride in his bearing.

"Miss Mallo," said he, "I do not wish to disclaim my mother's material reasons for desiring," he hesitated, then went on painfully, "a marriage between you and me. She and I love our ancestral lands in a way—you must pardon my saying it—which it is difficult for you Americans to understand. It is true that within a few years, we shall, undoubtedly, have to give them up. My mother's earnest desire to keep them for me has made of her 'an incorrigible old meddler,' as you put it. Yet, whether you believe it or not, even above my lands, she has placed my personal happiness. She thought, poor woman, to secure both in arranging a marriage between you and me. I hope that you will forgive her, and me, as her accessory. And now, shall we return?"

I had never felt so small and mean and horrid and so lonely in all my life.

Meanwhile the Duke had gone to his motor and was cranking the engine.

I went over to him.

"Please, stop that engine," I begged.

He complied quickly with my request.

"What is it that you wish to say to me?" he asked gently.

"No-thing," I answered. "That is," I went on, "only that I have a show place over in Surrey, a farm on Long Island, a house in New York, an apartment in Paris and a villa in Nice, but nowhere is there a place that I can call home."

He extended his hand to me. I dared not look up at his face.

"It has twenty-five turrets and five hundred and fifty rooms," he said, "but I think that together we may be able to make it home."

Of course, the Duchess maintains that she made the match.