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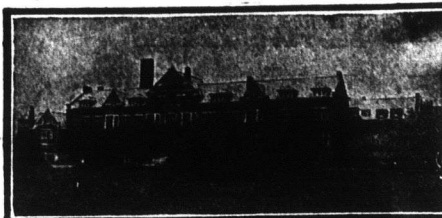


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would enjoy—the kind you always admire.”

“So he is, but somehow I never get along with the kind of men I admire. And they never admire me.”

“Well, Winifred, I am disappointed. I had set my heart on your marrying him.”

“I’m afraid I could never do that in any case,” she said with a little blush. “But whatever shall we talk about on the way home?” she added hastily.

“Winifred, you don’t mean—” began the elder lady, but she only laughed and slipped away.

Mrs. Carleton felt puzzled and uneasy, as she turned to bid Devenish good-night.

“We shall see you again when you come back,” she said, “you have just nice time to catch your train.”

“Oh, ah, yes, I’ve—I’ve changed my mind about leaving to-night. Miss Mirabel is going to teach me how to ski tomorrow.”

After all, Devenish required very little assistance in the search for a wife, and Mirabel did not need much persuasion. If Mrs. Carleton was disappointed in the miscarriage of her plans, she was certainly not displeased at the arrangement, and entered immediately into elaborate preparations for her niece’s wedding. But when Winifred’s marriage to “that impossible Binks” took place a few weeks later, she came to the conclusion that she had been quite mistaken in thinking that match-making was her special forte.

Equal Rights

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Sara Gant

Ma came in all a tremble one day last January.

“What is it?” I cried, running toward her with the smelling salts and aromatic spirits of ammonia, “have women got the vote?”

“Vote!” Ma snapped, “is that all that’s in that rattle-de-trap brain of yours?”

“What—?” I began.

“Margaret Lawlor’s will was read this morning—Mrs. Davis Huntley was there and gave it to me word for word at the meeting—”

“Oh,” I broke in, “and did she leave Tom all her money?”

“Three million,” Ma began hushing my glad cries with, “but if he marries, one-half—think of it!—one-half of it is lost to him. The distribution of this million and a half is to be made known immediately after the wedding ceremony—”

“What— isn’t—?”

“— and,” Ma continued brushing me aside, “in case Tom dies without children his million and a half is to go to the orphanage. A specific clause states that not a cent of it is to go to his wife.”

I sat down on Ma’s new hat and tried to think.

“I had intended sending Tom around a quiet invitation to dinner to-night, but now—” Ma wrinkled her brow and began on another fresh sheet, “I’ll have Ed Biddle. Wait till I finish this and I’ll tell you what to do.”

I did some hard thinking while Ma wrote about what Betty Longmire would do. Betty was the daughter of my father’s dead sister, who—I mean Betty’s mother—had made a very poor marriage. Betty was what the girls call “daffy” over Tom and she didn’t care who knew it, either. Ma, though, had kept Tom and me in the matrimonial spotlight, coaching me at the same time to keep him at bay, yet with plenty of loose ends hanging, until his aunt should die. And this was the outcome of all my efforts! Life certainly is full of disappointments.

As Ma began again on another sheet I taxed my brain as to why in time Margaret Lawlor had made such a crazy will. Mrs. Lawlor was short and fat with small black sharp eyes that matched her tongue. People said that her married life was not of the happiest, she and her husband disagreed over money or something like that, but try as best I could I could not fathom why she made such a will, for everybody knew that she thought the world and all of Tom and was very much in favor of him marrying either Betty or me. “But,” I exclaimed, “if this is what she gives as her example of her ‘equal rights’ that she has been harping about for the past ten years. I know where the rest of us workers will be and that is the men’s laughing stock,” for until now we had quoted Margaret Lawlor at every turn of the road!

“Now,” Ma began when Hampton had left the room with the note, “put Tom Evans out of your head for good and all. I might have known that there would be some Jacob’s-ladder hitch in Margaret Lawlor’s manoeuvrings. Your next move is to get Ed Biddle. He’s in love with you I know for at Jane Adams’ ball he in a round-about way said as much to your aunt Belle. Now this is the way we’ll work it: You tell Ed to-night that Betty is engaged to Tom—he’ll never guess that we’ve heard about the will so soon—only that on account of his aunt’s death it is a dead secret. Make him promise not to give you away. Then, your aunt Belle and I were talking it over on the way home, there is to be a ball on Saint Valentine’s night, in aid of the war, at your aunt Sally’s, in which there is to be an amateur play as a sort of diversion. It’s a love affair and you and Ed are to be the principal characters—”

“Two gentlemen—” Hampton began.

“Ed and Tom!” I exclaimed glancing at the cards.

“Well, I never!” Ma burst forth then she went across to Betty’s room, which is just across the hall, and I heard her say, “Betty dear, go down and take Tom off to the back parlor and ask Ed to come up to my private sitting room as I have something special to tell him. That’s a dear,” she added as Betty went down stairs.

“A secret?” I heard Ed boom forth, “Come on here you old carrot-top, you’re my daddy confessor so you’ve got to come, too,” and before Ma or I could gasp out a protest Ed was in the room with Tom on his back. “Had to cheer the old top up a bit,” Ed apologized as I gave Tom the coolest possible, “Good afternoon, Mr. Evans,” for Ma’s look made it necessary and Tom almost immediately went off with Betty.

Shortly after this Tom and Betty’s engagement was announced and six months later they were married.

Immediately after the ceremony as Margaret Lawlor’s will stated, the disposal of the million and a half which Tom had just forfeited was made known by Lawyer King, who read, “The million and a half which Thomas Evans, my nephew, has relinquished by his marriage is to go to his wife, whoever she may be. May God bless you both. Signed, Margaret Lawlor.”



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