

The Lorsson Elopement

(Continued from page 15)

accompanied him. I didn't think she'd be so strong. It won't do for him to miss this message, poor chap! Here read it":

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. (Ps. 27:12.)"

"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. (Ps. 26:4.)"

"But as for me I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me and be merciful unto me. (Ps. 26:11.)"

"I'll tell you what'll do: we'll send this down to his house by a messenger boy. He won't know what to make of it; but he won't be able to ask her how it was delivered till it's all over."

The message was sent at once; then, as Astro walked with Valeska to her home, he said:

"We can't do this again; it will make too much trouble. You'll have to see if you can't get into his studio somehow and find out what messages he is receiving. You can go and offer yourself as a model."

Valeska consented to attempt the adventure, and accordingly set out the next morning after entering on her list the following message deciphered from Chester's advertisement in "The Star."

"Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. (Ps. 31:18.)"

"For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee. (Ps. 31:22.)"

"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. (Ps. 138:3.)"

"So foolish was I, and ignorant. I was as a beast before thee. (Ps. 73:22.)"

Astro worked all day in his studio alone reading palms and casting horoscopes for his fashionable clients, and, during the leisure times between their calls, casting many a glance across to the desk where his pretty blond assistant was wont to look up at him with such animation whenever he spoke. The velvet hangings were dull and shadowy, and the high lights on armorial trophies and tinsel costumes on the wall twinkled through the dusk, when the portieres parted and Valeska smartly attired gloved and feathered, appeared. Astro smiled for almost the first time that day. She sank into a deep divan to get her breath. He turned on a light above her head.

"He's a perfect dear!" she said as soon as she could speak. "He isn't at all handsome in fact he's ugly; but he's the most romantic and kind hearted chap in the world. I'd trust him anywhere."

"How did he treat you?"

Valeska laughed. "Well, not in a way to make me conceited. Oh, he's in love all right. He looked at me exactly as if he was purchasing a horse. I almost expected him to open my mouth and examine my teeth to see how old I was. But he was nice, all the same, and delighted to find a model that had brains and could take and hold a pose."

"Of course he didn't say anything significant?"

"Does he want you to-morrow?"

"Yes, all this week."

Valeska posed for Chester the six days, returning each evening to the studio to report to Astro, each time more interested in the love affair. Each day she wrote down the cipher

message printed in "The Star," and the text she found in the studio written on Ruth's candy box. At the end of the week the courtship began to approach a crisis, as the correspondence showed:

RUTH

"He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. (Ps. 101:7.)"

"But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. (Ps. 102:27.)"

CHESTER

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Ps. 32:8.)"

RUTH

"And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. (Ps. 119:47.)"

"But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong, and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. (Ps. 38:19.)"

"All that hate me whisper together against me do they devise my hurt. (Ps. 41:7.)"

CHESTER

"Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. (Ps. 35:19.)"

"Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. (Ps. 70:3.)"

RUTH

"Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. (Ps. 31:4.)"

"Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me. (Job 13:22.)"

CHESTER

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. (2 John:12.)"

RUTH

"They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. (Ps. 56:6.)"

"And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. (Ps. 55:6.)"

"I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. (Ps. 55:8.)"

"That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me. (Ps. 60:5.)"

CHESTER

"And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee. (Num. 10:32.)"

RUTH

"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. (Ps. 40:7.)"

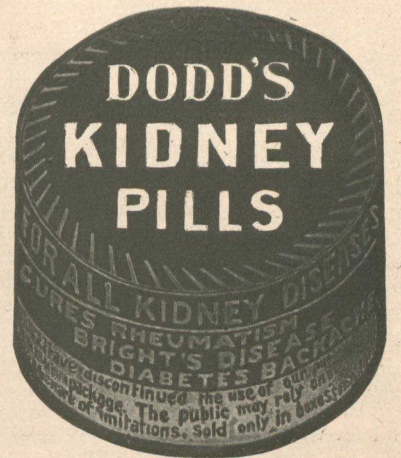
"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge thy people shall be my people, shall be my people, and thy God my God. (Ruth 1:16)"

"It is getting serious, isn't it?" said Valeska, when she brought the last message of Ruth's "Poor Chester is half crazy. He's been working like mad to get some illustrations for 'The Universal Magazine' done, so as to get money enough to get married on, I suppose. But how in the world they are going to elope, I don't see."

"Love laughs at locksmiths," said Astro.

"But not at stepmothers. All the same they're going to do it somehow, and I want to see the fun. It's bound to come off in a day or so now."

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