

# DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

## CHAPTER II.—(Cont'd)

Now here must come the promised word of retrospect. Margaret was Dulcie's sister, the elder daughter of that unfortunate first marriage of Colonel Swayne's. At the time of the mother's desertion she was old enough bitterly to feel the separation, and perhaps to understand something of the domestic dissensions which drove that mother forth. But, alas, Madeline Swayne did not go forth guiltless. No defence was set up when Colonel Swayne petitioned for a divorce, but the lover to whom she fled did not live to marry her; he died by an accident not many days after the elopement. The erring wife took back her maiden name of Fielding, and on her own small income lived a life of absolute retirement at Barbizon. Here, in course of time, she fell ill of a wasting disease, and in her solitude yearned for her daughters, and especially for Margaret.

As soon as the completion of her one-and-twentieth year gave her freedom, Margaret went to her mother, and by this act so angered Colonel Swayne that he forbade her his house, and cut off all communication between her and Dulcie. Nor did he alter the prohibition when, twelve months after, Mrs. Fielding died. Margaret was independent of him, though her means were small; she remained at Barbizon as Miss Fielding, working at her profession as an artist. A picture of hers had been hung at the French Salon of the previous year.

"Isn't it splendid that papa has consented?" went on Dulcie. "The other day, when something was said about—Tuesday, you know, he asked me if I was happy, and if I had everything I wanted for the wedding. I said yes about being happy, of course; but when it came to the other question, I plucked up courage and answered 'No.' How could I have all I wanted when my only sister was not to be here, was not allowed to be my bridesmaid? I cried: I could not help it, and papa began by being cross; but, I don't know how it was, all at once he seemed to change his mind. I might write to Margaret if I liked, he said, and tell her he would receive her here for two days. There would be just time for her to get to the Court on Monday if I sent the letter immediately, and I might have her for a bridesmaid if I wished."

"And you wrote?"

"Of course—of course I wrote. I had to ask papa for the address; he would never let me know where she lived or anything about her, except that she was alive and well. I wrote at once, and asked her to telegraph—I shall get the wire tomorrow. But I am sure she will come. Dear old Madge; it will be just wonderful to see her again. And then, you know, George—fingering a button and punctuating her appeal with pauses—"you can ask her to come and see us—at Grendon."

"Certainly I will," said Gower heartily. "Well, little woman, I am glad you will have your wish on your wedding-day, and that Margaret will be your bridesmaid after all."

Dulcie's face grew long again for the moment, and she shook her head. "She can't be my bridesmaid now; it is such a pity. If papa had only changed his mind last month, or even a week ago! Why not? Oh, George, that is stupid; how could she be a bridesmaid when she hasn't got a proper dress? And you know quite well I am having only one child. I couldn't ask any other grown-up girl with my own sister away."

"I should have thought the dress didn't matter; but you women know best about these things. And so she comes on Monday?"

"On Monday, but not till evening. I have been looking up trains, and the most likely crossing."

"She is abroad, then?"

"Yes; she has been living at Barbizon. That, you know, was where my mother died. It was like Madge to stay on after, with only a grave. I know I shall find her just the same as she was three years ago, when she went away to mother, and papa sent me to school. I didn't mind going to school, for the house here was an altered place with Madge out of it, and everything belonging to the nursery—or to mamma—! Now you had better come in, or perhaps mamma will be wondering."

"Give me another five minutes if you are not cold, for I too have something to tell you, something I ought perhaps to have told you before."

"I know what it is," said Dulcie. "You could not guess my news, but I can guess yours. It takes too long to alter the necklace, and it will not come in time."

"No, Dulcie, it isn't that calamity. The fact is—I got a bit

anxious about myself, and I went to see a doctor to-day in town."

"Why, have you been ill, and have not told me?"

"I am not at all ill. Do I look it? No; it is only that something has gone wrong with my memory. I have forgotten—part of last year. I haven't the least recollection where I was or what I did."

"But I have forgotten a great deal of last year, too. I cannot remember each particular day. Nobody can."

"That is not what I mean. I can remember in the ordinary way, up to this period of five months, and then again beyond it. It is like a slice cut out of my life. And I was on my way abroad, travelling, when it began. There is nobody of whom I can ask. Where was I? What did I do? Dear, I wished you to know of this. It does not make you afraid?"

Dulcie put her head on one side reflectively. It was a pretty head, even if not a very wise one. "Afraid?" she said, raising her eyebrows, "why should I be afraid? I understand you are vexed that it has happened, but I don't see why you should mind. I shouldn't care a bit if I had forgotten five months of one of the years I was at school, or even the whole of it. It might be different if it was just lately, since New Year, could the doctor do anything for you?"

"He advised me to go on as usual, and not dwell on it. He thinks after a while some chance circumstance will supply the link, perhaps quite suddenly, and my memory will come back."

Dulcie clasped her small hands, which were so pretty and looked so unfitted for the world's work. It was a childish action, but these baby ways were part of her charm. "Of course it will. So you need not worry about it any more."

"I don't say that, but I shall keep in mind his counsel. He thought there was no reason why I should not marry."

"Not marry?" Dulcie looked serious for the moment, and a pucker ruffled her brow. "Why, that would have been ridiculous, when I have got my things, and Stephens is even beginning to pack up. You are joking, of course." And, confident it was a jest, she smiled to belie the involuntary shiver, the first touch of approaching fate. "Do you know," she said, "I believe you are right. It is cold here, after all. You shall take me back to the house."

## CHAPTER III.

So the subject was put aside by Dulcie. She did not want to hear more of it; she never did wish to hear of things that were unpleasant; and, perhaps, so lightly stated, it was not wonderful she failed to understand. It was no part of Gower's purpose to dwell with her on the black void and the spectres; but Dulcie's way of meeting his confidence renewed a former impression. It was not easy to make his bride comprehend things that were out of the common; she had a bright little wit of her own, but it ran upon the shallows; take her beyond her depth, and she was at once disconcerted and impatient. He had done his duty, he had told her; and in the course of that evening he would find occasion also to acquaint her father.

A party of five gathered round the dinner-table at Fortune's Court—Colonel and Mrs. Swayne, the engaged couple, and the secretary May. The second Mrs. Swayne was still a young woman, but there was no effort after vanishing youth in her sober, rich dress and subdued manner. She played excellently well her part of wife to a much older husband, so well that the beholder was sometimes provoked into suspecting it was studied, and not prompted by nature. She was praiseworthy as a wife, praiseworthy also in her care of Dulcie, and of her own child, the little son and heir. She had been careful to inform herself about the latest methods of education and hygiene, but perhaps was not so well versed in that other mother lore which is written in the heart. In all that appeared on the surface she had won the approval of the world, and it had nothing but condemnation for the revolt of Margaret.

At the head of her husband's table Annabel Swayne was suave and admirable, a perfect hostess. Gower was immersed in his own concerns; he got on well enough with his future stepmother-in-law, and took her altogether for granted—that unruffled smoothness for nature and not art. But a critical observer, which he was not, might have detected artificiality, and would have noticed how attentively she watched her husband, and also, in a degree, the secretary, Harold May.

They were the two persons at table proposed to be silent. Colonel

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Swayne was seldom talkative; he was reserved in manner to his prospective son-in-law, though genial in intention. Whatever might be the topic touched upon, his wife's ear was ever open to his few remarks, her ready wit echoed and amplified them to the best advantage, and always in agreement. That might be the prompting of wifely duty; but towards the stranger May she appeared equally anxious, striving to draw him out, for he sat for the most part in silence and with a clouded brow.

He was a good-looking young fellow of three or four and twenty, and his face was an attractive one when there happened to be a smile upon it. Plainly there was something the matter with him to-night beyond his skill to conceal, and it was not difficult to divine that Dulcie was the matter—Dulcie sitting opposite with her betrothed husband, so near to wifehood, yet with a gleam of coquetry to flash across at her unlucky lover out of those wonderful downcast eyes.

When Mrs. Swayne and her stepdaughter left the table, he rose also on the pretext of unfinished work. Colonel Swayne and his guest were left alone with the decanters and the olives, and now came Gower's opportunity. He opened the subject, so far as words went, much as he had done to Dulcie—the bare statement and Sir Luke Morden's opinion—opened it with a certain abruptness which might seem to indicate discomfort.

His hearer this time was a keener one, better able to judge of the position and plumb the depth of its danger. Had Gower been merely George Cullen, and not Gower of Grendon, the chances are he would have encountered some plain speaking. The lover should have told his story at the beginning of the courtship, not now on the eve of marriage; but with Gower of Grendon Colonel Swayne was not inclined to make difficulty. He was glad to dispose of Dulcie so early and so advantageously, without the expense of a London season which he could ill afford; this suit was too welcome to put off with a rough word. Still the man of the world did look grave over the revelation; his hawk-like profile ac-

## WRONG SORT.

Perhaps Plain Old Meat, Potatoes and Bread may Be Against You for a Time.

A change to the right kind of food can lift one from a sick bed. A lady in Welden, Ill., says:

"Last spring I became bed-fast with severe stomach trouble accompanied by sick headache. I got worse and worse until I became so low I could scarcely retain any food at all, although I tried about every kind."

"I had become completely discouraged, and given up all hope and thought I was doomed to starve to death, until one day my husband, trying to find something I could retain, brought home some Grape-Nuts."

"To my surprise the food agreed with me, digested perfectly and without distress. I began to gain strength at once. My flesh (which had been flabby) grew firmer, my health improved in every way and every day, and in a very few weeks I gained 20 pounds in weight."

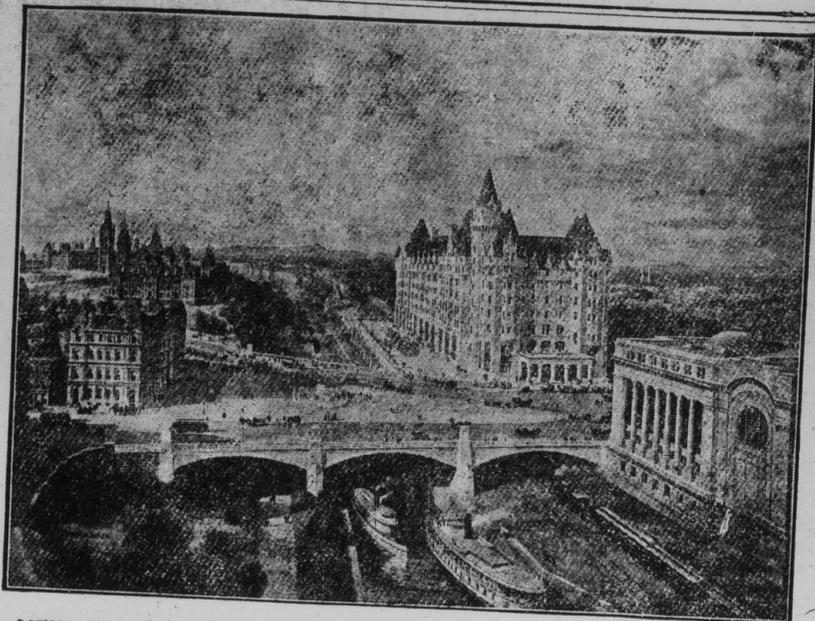
"I liked Grape-Nuts so well that for four months I ate no other food, and always felt as well satisfied after eating as if I had sat down to a fine banquet."

"I had no return of the miserable sick stomach nor of the headaches, that I used to have when I ate other food. I am now a well woman, doing all my own work again, and feel that life is worth living."

"Grape-Nuts food has been a God-send to my family; it surely saved my life; and my two little boys have thriven on it wonderfully." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read this above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.



NEW GRAND TRUNK HOTEL AT OTTAWA—"CHATEAU LAURIER." WILL BE OPENED FOR BUSINESS IN THE FALL OF 1911.

quired a more pronounced curve, and his dark eyes regarded Gower attentively—those eyes which seemed all glittering surface, and were so piquantly repeated in his daughter's flower-like face, her sole inherited resemblance. He wondered if the young fellow sitting opposite had made a clean breast of the whole truth, or had in his tardy confession revealed only a part. It was an awkward affair. Evidently discomfort had arisen in Gower's mind since February, when he proposed for Dulcie, and laid his position before Dulcie's father.

"It is six months, you say, since the accident in Paris?"

"Within a few days, yes."

"And has no echo ever reached you from the previous time? No letter that referred to it—no tradesman's account?"

"Nothing whatever. An American lady, a stranger, fancied she had met me at Luca last September. But I am convinced it was not I. I had no intention of going into Italy."

"Still, you may have done so," said Colonel Swayne, who was lighting a cigarette—awkwardly with his left hand, as he carried the right in a sling. "In the absence of any other clue, this might be worth following up."

(To be continued.)

## WELDING TORTOISE SHELL.

### Two or More Layers Made Into a Solid Piece.

Tortoiseshell is the carapace or horny armor which protects the back of the hawksbill turtle. This armor is composed of thirteen segments or plates which are not fast at the outer edges but overlap one another like tiles on a roof.

The turtles are captured when they come on shore to lay their eggs, and after being killed are immersed in boiling water until the plates can be removed without injury. Formerly, in some places, live turtles were roasted until the plates loosened and could be taken away, when the turtle was put back in the sea to grow a new shell. It is doubtful if shells grow again, or if they would be of much value.

Hawksbill turtles are found in most of the tropical seas, and the shells are commercially rated as East Indian and West Indian. The East Indian shell is much darker than the other and has fewer of the transparent markings that go to make tortoiseshell desirable, and is not so valuable as the West Indian shell on that account.

The plates vary in size and thickness according to location, but in all cases taper to a thin edge where they overlap. In those cases in which a large piece is required to be of uniform thickness two or more plates are laid together and welded until they become a solid piece of necessary thickness.

In welding plates they are first boiled in a salt solution until they become comparatively soft and pliable, when they are carefully cleaned to remove all foreign matter from the surfaces to be welded. The slightest impurity will prevent the shells from forming a perfect joint.

After the parts have been laid together they are wrapped with several thicknesses of wet cloth and an iron plate put on each side. These plates must be parallel so the pressure on the shell shall be equally distributed and bits of folded cloth are laid wherever required to make the pressure uniform.

In the meantime heavy iron tongs have been heating and when hot enough to brown a bit of paper are made to hold the package of shell and cloth and the whole is put in a heavy press. Pressure is increased gradually to a certain point and maintained until the tongs become cold, when the parts will be found

to have united to form one piece. Unless carefully done the shells separate on being put in hot water. Small objects cannot be repaired by welding as a rule, because the surfaces are too small to knit properly and because pressure sufficient to unite the parts might destroy the patterns or shape.

## TRIAL WEDDINGS.

### Custom Still Exists in Some Villages in Germany.

The ancient custom of holding fairs for selecting brides and bridegrooms on trial still exists in some villages of the Eifel district of Germany.

On the day of the fair the young men and women who have been notified stand in groups on adjacent hillocks, their names being inscribed on a roll in the possession of the fair officials, who sit round a table between the groups. The ages of the young men are stated on the roll, but not those of the girls.

Males are then called forward by name in the order of their age, the oldest coming first, and one of the girls is called to meet him; if neither objects the young woman is presented with a wedding ring, and the couple are declared duly wedded for a year on approval.

At the end of the year they may separate, and each is free to marry again; or, if they are not quite sure whether they will be happy, they can arrange to separate for a day or two before the next fair, and then be wedded again for another year. If a couple remain together over the year the marriage becomes binding for life, or if any family is born the union is also valid for life.

If a maiden refuses the first man she is supposed to marry the next offered to her; but this rule is not rigidly enforced now, though formerly the names of candidates were taken haphazard by the head-man of the community, who did not put up with nonsense about maidenly coyness.

Now-a-days it is generally arranged beforehand to call together only those couples who have been courting. The system has worked with good results for centuries, and will probably last some while yet, until the farming districts become crowded with factories and towns.

A prisoner was brought before a Police Magistrate in a country town down south. The court's knowledge of law was rudimentary, and of English still less. The Judge looked around and found that his clerk was not present. "Here, officer," said he, "what's the charge against this man?" "Bigot."

## ROOM NUMBER THIRTEEN.

### Hotels Cannot Rent Rooms Numbered Thirteen.

"I see that a landlord at Hornsey applied for permission to change the number of a house from 13 to 11a," remarked an hotel superintendent. "Strange how superstitious many people are about numbers! Now, if you went to many of the big hotels in London, you could not engage a room numbered 13. Why? Because it does not exist. In some cases the room which is actually No. 13 is chock full of lumber; in others a jump is made from 12 to 14, and in others the numbers begin not at 1, but at 50, or even 100. There is one house, I believe, in which all the numbers are even."

The fact is, many hotel managers have discovered that a room numbered 13 won't let, and sometimes there is difficulty in allotting No. 113 or No. 213. Several times I have known people leave an hotel rather than have a number containing the dreaded figures 13.

"But 13 is not the only number considered unlucky. A gentleman well known at a certain hotel—here often stopped at it—was shown into No. 4. As soon as he caught sight of the number on the door he stepped back and asked for another room, explaining that 4 and multiples of it were his unlucky numbers. There was not another room to offer him, so he went to a neighboring hotel. In the morning he returned for a picture he had left."

"Just as well you didn't have that room, sir," said the clerk, handing it over. "No. 4 was burnt out in the night; a wire fused."

"After that the gentleman was more than ever convinced that 4 was a number to be avoided at all costs."

"There are 'unlucky' rooms in some hotels, though. I know a case where there were two suicides in the same room during a period of about six weeks and shortly afterwards a sudden death—after natural causes this time—took place in the same room. In fact, it is not uncommon for a series of mishaps or tragedies to occur or be connected with a particular room."

## MILK FED SAUSAGES.

A man who recently invested in some sausages says that when he got home he cut them apart and left them. In the morning, when he visited them, he found three of them twined up together and sleeping sweetly. Two had crawled to the milk-bowl and were lapping the milk, and one, a black-and-white one, was on the garden wall, trying to catch a sparrow. Then he drowned the lot, and declared he would buy no more bags of mystery.

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