

THE TEST

The day's work at the Pagoda Cafe was ended. Soon the lights were extinguished, and the girls sought their homes. One of them, however, a tall, pretty girl, with a flower-like face, lingered near the building. It was obvious that she was expecting somebody, and the somebody in question presently approached, lifting his hat and murmuring words of apology.

"Darling, I'm sorry to be late," he said, "but I was detained at the courts over a tiresome Chancery action. Hope you haven't been waiting long?"

"No, dear. The cafe has only just closed. Where are we going?"

"Well, to have some dinner, first of all, and then I have seats for the Lyceum."

"You're awfully good to me," she murmured, as they walked westwards; "but I do wish you wouldn't spend so much money on theatre seats."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed the young barrister. "I got a couple of unexpected bits of deviling to-day, and if I go on like this I shall be quite painfully rich before long. By the way, dear, do you know what to-day is?"

"As if I could forget!" she replied. "It is the anniversary of the day when you first came into the cafe and met—"

"And met the sweetest, prettiest girl that ever walked. By Jove, darling, how the time has flown! Isn't it enough to make any fellow proud to think that such a girl as you has consented to be his wife?"

"Geoff, dear," she said, abruptly, "I've been thinking over my promise a great deal lately, and I've been wondering what your mother will say when you tell her that you are going to marry a girl from a cafe."

"Don't worry about that, little girl," he cried. "I'm going down to Bournemouth to-morrow, and I'll break the news to her without further delay. I know, of course, that she has what she calls other 'views' for me, but I'm sure when she hears what an angel you are she'll change her mind. And if she doesn't—well, much as I love her, I can't forget that I love you too."

On the following day he journeyed down to Bournemouth, and found Lady Honoria, his mother, seated in her own little den reading a letter.

"Ah! this is fortunate, Geoff," she said, as he stooped and kissed her. "Here is a letter from your cousin Clara, saying that she will come and spend Easter with us. Now you are in Bournemouth you must remain over the holidays, and I hope you will take the opportunity of speaking to your cousin about you know what."

"My dear mother," he said, "I have come all the way from London to tell you that that affair is completely off. It was never 'on' as far as I was concerned; but you seemed to take it for granted that I should marry my cousin simply because you married yours."

"Well, there are plenty of other nice girls," replied her ladyship, calmly. "I am sure I don't want to pin you down to Clara. I suppose the fact is, my dear boy, you have someone else in your mind?"

"I have," he replied nervously. "Anybody I know?"

"I'm afraid not. You don't go to the Pagoda Cafe, in Fleet Street, often, do you, mother? Well, I am engaged to be married to one of the girls employed there."

Lady Honoria did not faint, nor did she do any of the melodramatic things which ladies of her rank invariably do in the pages of cheap fiction. She merely sat motionless and smiled.

"You cannot mean that, Geoffrey," she said at length.

"Why not? The girl is a lady, in spite of her surroundings, and she is the sweetest creature on earth."

"The sweetness will take for granted. Have you any idea what her parents are?"

"They are both dead, but I believe her father was a clerk in the City. Look! Here is a portrait of her. Isn't she beautiful?"

His mother took the photograph and examined it with keen gaze.

"Yes, you are right," she said, in a gentle tone; "it is a very beautiful face."

"And she is as good as she is beautiful," cried Geoffrey; and so impetuous was his tone that it almost seemed to the white-haired woman that the years had rolled back, and that he was a tiny boy once more—the boy whom she had loved with such unutterable strength, for whose future she had formed so many rose-tinted hopes.

And now it seemed to her that, unless her influence could draw him back, he would be beguiled into a marriage with this girl—this waitress, who most surely was attracted by his social position and his chances of future wealth. For Lady Honoria, with the ignorance born of prejudice, believed that when a woman in a certain lowly station of life desired to marry a man in

a far higher station, the motives could only be base and sordid. Lady Honoria decided that the marriage must be prevented at any cost.

"My boy," she said at length, "you have never refused me anything in all your life. You have never given me an hour's anxiety or sorrow. Will you, now that the great test has come, show that you can make just one more sacrifice for your poor old mother? Will you give up this girl and put her out of your mind?"

"I can't do it, mother," he said, firmly. "I can't. It's not fair to ask me. I know you've been a brick to me, and all that, but even gratitude to one's mother cannot influence a man in a case of this kind."

For close on an hour Lady Honoria pleaded with her son. But, for the first time in his life, Geoffrey showed himself obstinate and immovable.

At length he rose and looked at the clock.

"There's a train back to town in half an hour," he said, miserably. "I—I think I'll catch it. It's no use prolonging this conversation, mother, for no power on earth can make me change my mind."

She nodded sadly.

"I never could have believed that you would have been so obstinate, dear," she said, softly, and so subdued was her voice—so unlike her natural tone—that for one moment a great wave of pity swept the young fellow's heart.

He stooped and kissed her.

"There, don't worry, mater," he said, kindly.

She did not answer. He went swiftly from the room, and the 3.30 train carried him back to London and to the girl he loved.

On the following morning Lady Honoria received a short note from her son, saying that he was leaving London for Edinburgh for a week, important legal business having summoned him to the North. He made no reference to the interview of the previous day, and his silence seemed ominous.

"He will never give her up," reflected Lady Honoria, bitterly. "Never. I—I wonder if the girl herself could be influenced?"

She sat pondering the question for some time, and then rang the bell and asked for a time-table. Scanning its pages, she found that there was a train to London at 11.30.

She ordered the carriage, and half an hour later was being whirled towards London as fast as steam and iron could convey her.

When she arrived at Waterloo she drove to the hotel in Bond Street where she usually stayed when in town, ate a hasty lunch, and then took a hansom to Fleet Street.

She did not know the name of the girl whom she had resolved to interview, but she told herself that she would be able to identify her by means of the portrait which Geoffrey had shown her.

The cafe was almost deserted when she entered. She sat down at a table near the door, and ordered some tea as an excuse for being there, whilst she carefully examined the faces of the girls in order that she might ascertain the desired person. Of a sudden a tall, slim girl came up the stairs that led from the smoke-room, and she immediately recognized the original of the portrait.

Women of Lady Honoria's stamp were somewhat unusual visitors at the cafe, and perhaps that is why Maisie cast a swift glance in her direction. Without an instant's hesitation her ladyship beckoned to the girl.

"Yes, madam?"

"You will forgive the abruptness of the question," murmured Lady Honoria, "but are you the young lady to whom my son, Mr. Clive, is engaged?"

Maisie crimsoned. "You—you are his mother?" she whispered.

"Yes. Am I right in believing that you are the young lady?"

"Yes."

"Then will you do me a great favor? Will you call and see me this evening at Dixon's Hotel, Bond Street? I—I want to speak to you about Geoffrey."

"Yes, I'll come," faltered Maisie, scarcely knowing what she said, so great were her astonishment and confusion.

"Any time this evening will do. You will suit your own convenience, of course," went on her ladyship, considerably impressed by the girl's refinement and beauty.

Nothing more was said. A customer entered at that moment, and Maisie hurried away to serve him, glad that the awkward little interview was ended. Throughout the remainder of the day she went through her duties mechanically, whilst her brain worked with feverish pain. For only too well did she guess what Lady Honoria had to say to her, and she was asking herself what she should say in reply.

When the cafe closed, she climbed on a bus going westward, and descended at Bond Street. She was shown straight into her ladyship's sitting-room. The latter rose to greet her, holding out her hand.

"Thank you very much for coming, my dear," she said, kindly. "I am sure you are a wonderfully sweet girl, and that fact makes my position all the harder. First of all, let me tell you that my son knows

nothing of my visit to you. He did not even tell me your name, and I had to identify you by your portrait. Unless you reveal to him the truth, he will never know that we have met."

"Well?" murmured Maisie.

"I have asked you to come here because I believe you to be a very good and unselfish girl, and one who could make a sacrifice if that sacrifice seemed right and necessary."

"You—you mean that I should give him up?" said Maisie, in a low voice.

"Yes. You see, I am going straight to the heart of things, for I cannot beat about the bush. I want you to give him up—to send him away."

"I love him," said Maisie, brokenly.

"Yes, my dear child, and I love him too. You have known him a few months, but I—I have loved him all his life, and I want him to have a happy and successful life."

"Do you think I should make him unhappy?" asked the girl.

"No, no, of course not. But don't you see that marriage is a very serious matter for a man in Geoffrey's position? He has his career to build up, and, although it sounds vulgar to say so, it is necessary that he should marry someone who could help him from the worldly point of view. Don't you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Some day," went on Lady Honoria, "he will be richer than he is now, for when I die I shall leave him all I have. Whether he marry against my wishes or not will make no difference in that respect, but it is my great hope that he will do what I desire. But my influence just now means nothing. You, and you alone, can influence him. Will you do it?"

There was a pause. Then Maisie said, huskily:—

"You—you may be right. Often and often I have told him he ought to marry someone else, and not me. But—but even if I were to do what you ask, and give him up, do you think he would let me go? I'm sure he wouldn't. He'd guess at once that you had managed to see me, and that your voice, not mine, was the real voice."

"Yes, yes, that's true; but if you told him there was someone else—"

"Someone else?" echoed Maisie, in a stricken tone.

"Yes. It would be a falsehood, of course, but sometimes even falsehoods are justified. If you wrote and told him that someone whom you formerly cared for had come back to you, and that you did not wish to see Geoffrey again, I am sure that he would be too proud to force himself upon—"

Maisie bowed her head.

"Yes, he would be too proud," she murmured. "I should never, never see him again."

Lady Honoria rose and put her hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Can you bring yourself to do it?" she asked, softly. "Can you—you are noble enough to make this great sacrifice?"

Maisie did not answer for a moment. Then she raised her head and said in a voice which sent a thrill of pain through Lady Honoria's heart:—

"Will you—will you answer me one question? Will you tell me if you really believe that my marrying Geoffrey would keep him back in his career?"

For the space of a minute the girl's face, hearing her sweet voice, she could scarcely bring herself to say "Yes" to that pathetic question. And yet—and yet, she had come to London expressly to say it, and she told herself she must not waver.

"I believe it would," she replied, and hated herself for the answer.

Another pause followed. Maisie sat rigid, looking straight before her, her eyes travelling along the dreary road of the future—the future unlighted by the everlasting lamps of love.

Well she would tread that road henceforth.

"You have decided?" asked the mother at length.

"Yes." The monosyllable had the ring of a sob. "Yes, I have decided. I will give him up."

"My brave, good girl!"

"Please, please, not that. I am only doing what is right; at least, I—I hope it is right. And now I—I'll go."

"You will write to him?" asked Lady Honoria, as the girl rose wearily and turned towards the door.

"Yes. He shall believe that I don't want him any more; that—that there's somebody else."

She went slowly from the room, and as she went a question agitated the mother's brain.

"Will she have the courage to do it?" she asked herself; "or will she fail when the time comes?"

One week later, as Lady Honoria was sitting alone in the little library at Bournemouth after her solitary dinner, her son entered the room. He was white and haggard, and one glance at his face revealed to his mother what had occurred.

"I've come straight from the North," he said, brokenly, "because here I've got the one friend on earth who'll never fail me."

His grief was terrible, and it

touched Lady Honoria to the soul. Controlling her voice with a supreme effort, she said:—

"My boy, you know that I am always your friend, and always shall be, whatever happens. You have had bad news?"

"You might call it good news," he cried. "And perhaps, if I weren't a fool, I should think the same; for perhaps it's just as well that I know the truth in time—that I know how false, how fiendishly false, the woman one loves can be."

With a passionate movement he tore from his pocket a letter, and said, almost roughly:—

"Read that letter. Then you'll see, mother, that you were right—quite right. She never cared for me, and she has been thinking about some other man all the time."

With hands that trembled her ladyship took the note and read it. This is what it said:—

"My Dear Geoffrey,—I am sorry to tell you that something has happened which will part us, and it is best that you should know at once. A friend whom I used to be very fond of has returned from abroad and has asked me to marry him. It was wicked for me to become engaged to you as I did, and I cannot ask you to forgive me, but only to forget me as soon as you can, and please do not try to see me again. Good-bye.—Maisie."

A tear dropped from the eyes of the woman who held that little piece of paper, bearing on it the noble falsehood which covered a supreme sacrifice. For Lady Honoria was a woman herself, and well did she know the agonized heart-beats which had accompanied the writing of those simple words.

What sort of woman was this, she asked herself, that could not only perform this noble deed of self-abnegation, but could go through it with such consistent courage? Surely, no common type of woman; surely, an ordinary hunter, after social position. Of such stuff were heroines made; of such stuff the worthy wives of men; of such stuff the splendid mothers of the children of those men!

Had she been wrong after all? Had she, blinded by prejudice and made ignorant by impetuous conclusions, taken a false step after all?

Then she turned her eyes towards her son, and she saw him sitting with his head in his hands. This was her work, she reflected. This week ago he had sat in that room, happy and content; to-night he was bowed and broken. Her work—her work!

In that instant the revulsion came. No ordinary hunter, after social position! Lady Honoria saw deeper into the truth of things than she had ever seen before in her fashion-hampered life. In that instant she realized that love, sacrifice, and nobility were the only things which mattered after all, and that these things lay enshrined in the soul of her who carried her bread in the London cafe.

She rose and put her hand on Geoffrey's shoulder.

"My boy," she said, softly, "look up. I have done you a very great wrong, but thank Heaven, there is still time to make amends."

He looked up eagerly.

"Great wrong—amends?" he echoed. "Mother, what are you saying?"

"The truth. Listen, Geoffrey. You have me to thank for that letter. The girl has never loved any man but you. She wrote that letter to my instigation."

"Mother?" he murmured, "you?"

"Yes, it was I who brought this all about, and I hate myself for what I have done. I thought the girl was marrying you for a position—for the sake of the money which might one day be yours. But now—now, all is changed. I know now that her love is as pure as my own—and better, yes, dear, better. For I—I could never have given you up, but she—well, you know. You know, and I know, too, that she has stood the great test as only a noble woman could have stood it, and I honor her, and I love her. Go to her, my boy; go to her and say that I am waiting to receive my daughter whenever she is ready to come to me."

And Geoffrey went.—London Titts.

ELECTRICITY IN STORMS.

Dr. G. C. Simpson proposes a new theory of the origin of the electricity of rain in thunderstorms. In such storms ascending air-currents carry up large amounts of moisture which accumulates at the top of the currents. There it grows into drops, which gradually become large enough to break. Every breakage causes a separation of electricity, the water receiving a positive and the air a negative charge. A given amount of water may be broken many times before it falls, and thus may obtain a high positive charge, and when it reaches the ground as rain it retains this charge.

In the meantime the negative ions left in the air are absorbed by the clouds, which become highly charged negatively. The rain falling from these clouds will be positively charged. A quantitative analysis shows, Doctor Simpson says, that the electrical separation accompanying the breaking of the drops is sufficient to account for the electrical effects of the most violent thunderstorms.

KITCHEN TIME SAVERS.

To Remove Cork in Bottle.—One of the most provoking occurrences when opening a bottle is to have

ABOUT THE HOUSE

WITH STRAWBERRIES.

Strawberry Roll.—Make a rich puff paste, roll thin, and cover with strawberries. Roll up and lay in a pan. Spread little bits of butter over the top and sprinkle with sugar. Bake in a quick oven and serve with cream and sugar.

Strawberry Ice Cream.—Sprinkle one cup of sugar over one quart of hulled strawberries, and let stand for one hour. Scald one quart of thin cream, sweeten to taste, and let get cool. Press the berry pulp through a fine sieve, and add it to the cold cream. Freeze, and pack in ice and salt to ripen.

Compote of Strawberries.—Boil together until a thick syrup three-quarters of a pound of sugar and just enough water to dissolve it. Then drop in gently one quart of fine, ripe hulled berries, and let cook very gently for three minutes. Lift the berries out carefully, with a perforated spoon, and lay them in a glass dish. Skim the syrup, and boil it until thick, then pour it over the fruit and set aside to cool.

Strawberries in Rice Cups.—Soak one cup of well washed rice in one and one-half cups of warm water for an hour. Then pour it in a double boiler with two tablespoons of sugar and one and one-half cups of new milk. Let it cook very gently until the rice is dry, stirring it occasionally. Butter some small cups well, and line them with the sweetened berries, squeeze over a little orange juice, cover with a layer of rice, and set away to get cold. When ready to serve, turn out carefully on saucers, heap whipped cream around them, and garnish with a few ripe berries.

Oranged Strawberries.—Place a layer of strawberries in a deep dish, cover thickly with pulverized sugar; lay in alternately berries and sugar till all berries are used. Pour over them orange juice, in the proportion of 3 oranges to a quart of berries. Let stand for an hour, and just before serving sprinkle with pounded ice.

Canned Strawberries.—Place berries in pan with 1 cup sugar for every quart of berries. Let stand overnight, then drain off the juice, put on stove and let boil until it is as thick as syrup. Fill jars with berries, pour the syrup over them, boiling hot and seal at once.

Sun-Cooked Berries.—For 1 quart of fresh, firm strawberries take 1 pint granulated sugar and ½ pint water, or just enough to start the sugar melting. Boil the sugar and water gently till it threads when dropped from the spoon, then add the berries and cook 5 minutes. Pour the berries out on large platters or plates and set in the bright sun. Leave in the sun two days until the syrup is like jelly. Do not reheat them, but put in jelly glasses cold. Seal tops with paraffine. The berries will keep their shape and will be delicious in flavor. Don't try to do more than a quart at a time.

Strawberry Jam.—Take 1 part berries and 2 parts sugar and let stand overnight. If you are pushed for time simply stir the sugar and berries well together and set back of range so the sugar will dissolve slowly. Stir often to prevent burning. When all the sugar is dissolved boil briskly for exactly 6 minutes from the time it begins to boil. Seal at once in glass jars and you will have a dish fit for a king. Some may think this altogether too much sugar. But just shut your eyes and put it in. You will never regret it when once the jam has been tried.

SOME FOREIGN RECIPES.

Stuffed Leg of Mutton.—Boil two large onions until tender, chop. Add breadcrumbs, sage, salt and pepper, then slit the sinewy part of the leg and insert the stuffing, and roast.

Russian Sweets.—A rich puff paste is divided in four parts, each rolled as thin as possible. On one sheet is placed an almond paste, on another pounded peanuts or pistachio nuts, on a third currant jelly or orange marmalade. The layers are placed on each other, honey or maple syrup is poured over, and the whole baked in a moderate oven until a delicate brown. When cold cut in squares or diamonds.

Italian Tutti Frutti.—Take a large form for ice cream, have ready as great a variety of ripe fruit as possible, watermelon included; seed the watermelon, cut it into lozenges or squares, put a layer of fruit and then a layer of granulated sugar; put in abundantly of sugar and proceed in this way until the form is well packed with fruit and sugar; cover, set in double boiler just long enough for to be started, then let it cool and when cool freeze. This is the genuine tutti frutti and it is delicious.

WOMAN THE WAITRESS.

"A woman," remarked the wise widow, "is always waiting for a husband."

"How do you figure that out?" queried the interested spinster.

"If she isn't married," answered the widow, "she is waiting to get one, and if she is, she's always waiting for him to come home."

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the cork slip through the neck. I have found that the cork may be removed easily by pushing a buttonhook down into the bottle, seizing the cork on the hooked part, and then giving the buttonhook a quick jerk.

To Prepare Egg Plant.—Peel and cut into slices a quarter inch thick. Lay one on top of the other until all are on a plate. Sprinkle salt on each slice as it is laid on the plate. Put a plate on top of the egg plant and a heavy iron on the plate. Let stand an hour. Pour off water. Dip into egg and fine bread crumbs, and fry in deep hot lard until brown on both sides.

When Ordering Groceries.—Take a pad of note paper and tack it above your kitchen table. Attach a string to a lead pencil and fasten it to the same tack. If, while preparing meals or baking you find some article of food running short, make a memorandum of it. It takes only a moment and when you are ready to order groceries you find your list complete.

IN CANNING TIME.

Canning Hint.—After placing fruit in the cans seal quickly and turn upside down and let it remain for ten or twelve hours. This forms a sticky surface around the rubber which protects the contents of the can.

Canned Strawberries.—Have a nice granite or porcelain pan in which place four quarts of berries, well washed. Sprinkle over berries one full quart of sugar, but do not stir. Add two tablespoons water. Place in a hot oven and bake for twenty minutes. The berries will be firm, retain shape and color, and the syrup rich, as it is the pure fruit juice. This cannot be obtained by boiling. Can while hot.

SHOOTING IN CHINA.

Variety of Game Found Among the Royal Tombs.

Four hours by train southwest of Peking lie the Hsi Ling, or Western Tombs, the mausolea of the reigning dynasty. The tombs lie in a large parklike enclosure containing some sixty square miles of broken hilly country in which the Chinese are not allowed to settle and which may not be ploughed up. In consequence of this it is a refuge for all kinds of game and about the only sure find for pheasants within easy reach of Peking, says the Field.

A kind of Chamois (the Indian goral) and spotted deer are found on the higher hills and are preyed on by the panther and the wolf. As soon as the frost sets in for the winter the Chinese begin shooting the pheasants, and although they seem to do their best to exterminate them a good many apparently escape and provide the stock for the following year.

The birds are shot over dogs, some of which have really good noses, though in appearance they differ in no way from the scavengers of the village streets. If possible a tame hawk is also taken out to mark down birds that are missed or not fired at. The man with the hawk takes his stand on a commanding hill and the hunter with his dog proceeds to draw round him. If the dog puts up a pheasant which is missed by the Chinaman, or a brace, only one of which can be fired at, the hawk is at once loosed and pheasant and hawk disappear together. The hunter reloads and follows and finds the hawk by means of a small bell attached to its back probably sitting on a rock or tree stump.

He then sends his dog in to put up the pheasant, which is invariably hiding in a thick bit of cover within a few yards of the hawk. As long as the hawk is sitting there the poor bird will neither run nor fly, and thus falls an easy victim to the hunter. In this way a couple of Chinamen with a gun, a dog and a hawk make comparatively large bags in places where the foreigner vainly attempting to walk up his game with a stragling line of useless Chinese beaters will probably only get a few shots in a day, and certainly never find a pheasant again which he has once missed.

On the stonier hills, where there is less cover, chikor are found in considerable quantities and give very fair sport, except for their indefatigable powers of running uphill; but the Chinese keep them still by using a hawk, much as a kite is flown at home, and of course would not hesitate to slay them on the run. Along the streams, fighting hard to keep open in spite of the severe frost, a few duck and snipe may be picked up, the latter heavier and plumper birds than regular spring and autumn visitors.

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