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## Sweet Eva!

CHAPTER XI

To Eva the next two weeks flew. She was too busy to think much. She only knew that life was a wonderful happiness, with hours all too short and fleeting.

She saw Philip often now. He came and went as if he were already one of the family.

"Of course, as you're getting married in such a hurry, you young people," Mr. Dennison said once, "you'll have to wait to get your house in order (till the honeymoon's over. You can come and stay here for a time if you care to."

"My mother will be delighted to have us," Philip said quickly. He felt that too much of his father-in-law would drive him mad. He was a constant reminder, an ever-present witness to the thing he had done and of which he knew he would be everlastingly ashamed.

"Of course, we will do whatever you prefer," he said to Eva. "We can talk about that later on," she answered.

She could not really believe that her wedding day was so near. Though nothing else was ever spoken of she felt that it must be someone else's wedding for which such elaborate preparations were being made, and not her own at all.

Everything was ordered, even the wedding cake and her own bouquet. Philip had proved himself wonderfully cognisant of what a bridegroom is supposed to do. He was, perhaps, too anxious to do everything expected of him. He was desperately afraid that he might fall short of the standard of perfection set up by tradition and generations of bridegrooms. He had loaded Eva with presents. He had given her a most expensive diamond ring, and was surprised that she still wore the one he had first given her.

"It's such a shabby old thing," he protested. "I like it best—I always shall," she told him.

Mrs. Winterdick was giving her much trouble about dinner party two nights before the wedding. Philip's best man was coming, and an aunt from whom he was supposed to have prospects, and everybody whom Mrs. Winterdick considered anybody at all.

"I shall be terribly nervous," Eva told Philip. He laughed. "I want you to meet Calligan. You'll like him—besides, you must know who's to be best man before the actual day."



### A Stitch in Time

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He was getting quite interested and excited himself.

Eva had helped him considerably during the past fortnight. She was not in the least exacting.

"I hope Mr. Calligan will be as well as a wife," my boy, his father said to him once in a moment of illumination, and Philip felt a sudden warmth at his heart.

Of course he did not love her, but he was fond of her, and he respected her more than anyone he had ever met. He was quite sure that they would get along admirably together.

"Only two more days," he said to Eva one afternoon. He had driven over to bring a batch of presents that had arrived the previous night, and he and she were standing at the front door. Philip was just going—he had such a deuce of a lot to do before the evening, he said. It was the night of the dinner-party, and Eva was a little flushed with nervousness and excitement already.

"I do hope Mr. Calligan will like which he knew he would be everlastingly ashamed.

She knew that Calligan was Philip's greatest friend.

"Of course, he will," Philip assured her. "And you'll like him, too—he's a ripping good sort. I've known him all my life."

He looked at her, and a sudden thrill of pride swept through him. She was so soon to be his wife, and she looked prettier this afternoon than he had ever seen her before. Her eyes were like stars and her face radiant with happiness.

He took a step towards her impulsively. "Shall I come over and fetch you this evening?" he asked, with a curious note in his voice. "I shan't see you by myself all the evening—with all those people there. I can drive over in the car. Mr. and Mrs. Dennison won't mind." He was a little agitated and embarrassed. "Would you like me to?" he asked, rather breathlessly.

But there was no need for her to answer. Her eyes were answer enough. Philip caught her hand and held it hard for a moment; then he turned away.

"I shall come at half-past six," he said. She gave a little cry. "Half-past six—but dinner isn't till eight."

"I know—but I want to talk to you." He drove off feeling happier than he had done for weeks. Things were going to be all right, after all.

He had slowed the car a little to turn out of the gate, and as he did so a girl darted back just in time to avoid being knocked over. It was Kitty Arlington.

If the engine of young Winterdick's car had not, by some unkind freak of fortune, stopped at that moment he would just have raised his hat and driven on; but, as it was, the car came to a standstill just outside the gate, bringing the driver exactly abreast with the girl on the path.

She was looking very cool and dainty, as she always did, in a pale blue frock and a shady hat, and her little feet shod in the trimmest of high-tops.

Young Winterdick's heart gave a traitorous thump as he looked at her. It was impossible to avoid speech as he clambered out of his seat to restart the engine.

"Awfully hot, isn't it?" he said nervously. "I like the heat." The blue eyes met his rather wistfully. There was a little silence. Philip had twice given the starting handle a gigantic wrench and failed to accomplish his object. He laughed in embarrassment; he was rather red in the face. Kitty watched him silently.

In her mind she was comparing him with Peter Dennison, and Peter suffered by the contrast.

He was only a stripling still, slim and boyishly built, whereas Philip was muscular and broad-shouldered—a man every inch of him.

"I was surprised, of course," Kitty said. She waited a moment, then she added, in a low voice, "You might have given me another chance, Phil."

It was clever of her to get that genuine ring in her voice, he thought, savagely. He loathed himself because against his will he found himself wanting to look at her.

Perhaps it was as well for him that he did not realize that Kitty was as nearly genuine at that moment as she had ever been in all her life. The surprise meeting with this man had probed the little bit of heart which she kept carefully hidden somewhere beneath her frills and furbelows. She wanted to cry and she wanted—more than anything—to surprise some sign of emotion in the face of the man who had once told her he loved her.

Philip looked at her with hard eyes. "You gave me a very complete dismissal," he said steadily. "I could do no less than take it. I told you if you sent me away then that I should not come back." He gave the handle another wrench, and this time the motor began to chug encouragingly. There were tears in Kitty's blue eyes.

"I was sorry directly you had gone," she said, in a low voice. "I was so sure you would come back the next day—I hoped so—I looked for you, Phil."

He laughed bitterly. "You were so sure that you got up a flirtation with Peter Dennison," he said savagely. "If it's any satisfaction to you to know it, I did come back—like a fool! I ought to have known better. I went along to see you the next evening, and I saw you—in the ham-mock—letting that—boy—kiss you!" His voice was scornful. "That finished it for me."

Her tears were slowly fast now. Philip glanced back at the house—fortunately they were hidden from view of the windows. He climbed into his seat.

"Good-bye," he said, curtly. He felt that he would have given ten years of his life to have avoided this scene. He shut the door of the car with a little slam.

Kitty brushed her tears away. "You will never love her as you loved me," she said. Philip looked at her and his heart contracted.

"No," he said, "I sincerely hope not." He drove off without another word. But his light-heartedness had gone.

Had he any right to marry Eva while this other girl still held his heart?

He knew her to be a worthless flirt, and yet . . . yet . . . He clenched his teeth in pain.

Nobody could account for love. He wondered if he had been very rough and unkind. He hoped not. He made up his mind to keep clear of Apsley once he was married.

He knew that she was coming to the wedding. He would have given anything had it been possible to prevent it. Eva had asked her, and it had been impossible for him to object.

To stand at the altar with some one who was not Kitty, and to know that she was there behind him in the crowded church. . . . As soon as he got in he rang for a stiff brandy. Preparations were going ahead for the night's dinner party. There were stacks of flowers in the hall and a great display of silver on the table as he passed the dining-room door.

Mrs. Winterdick met him in the hall. "Well, Phil, dear?" she said anxiously. "Well, mother!" He stooped and kissed her. "This looks like business—eh?" He indicated the flowers.

"Yes, I wanted everything to be as nice as possible."

"It's sure to be top-hole," he said. He turned to go upstairs. Mrs. Winterdick called to him. "There's a wire from Tom Calligan. Phil. He'll be on the 5.45. It gets in at 6.30, I think."

"Good! I'll run the car down to meet him. I—" He stopped. He had just remembered his promise to Eva. "I forget—I can't," he added hurriedly. "See that Banks goes, mother, will you, and tell him to take the run-about? I want my own car." He went on and up the stairs slowly.

"Mother!" he called over the balusters, "who else is coming to-night—besides the relations, I mean?" She looked faintly surprised. "I thought I told you the list, Phil. There's the vicar, and Mr. Arlington and Kitty, and Mr. Spencer, and . . ."

Philip had disappeared. Somehow he had hoped that Kitty would not come. He thought it would have been kind of her to refuse, knowing what she did. He went into his room and shut the door.

In two days' time he would be a married man. This afternoon he had found the thought rather pleasant, but to-night . . . He glanced at his watch. It was time to dress if he were going to fetch Eva at half-past six. He wished now he had not made the suggestion. He washed—but what was the use of wishing? He took off his tweed coat and flung it across the room.

If only it had been Kitty! If only she had stuck to him! If only she had put their love before everything else! It only . . . He met the reflection of his harassed face in the glass. "You're a bally rotter, that's what you are!" he apostrophised himself disgustedly.

(To be continued)



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## Side Talks by Ruth Cameron

WHOM DO YOU ROB?

Here is a letter that came to me recently: "A woman came to my house looking for work, her husband being a member of the army of unemployed. I had no work and she asked if I could not at least give her some old clothes. She has a baby, her first, just going into rompers and she has no cloth to make, nor money to buy any."

"Like yourself I am a most' creditable person. I believed her. I still do. So I called up an acquaintance whose one child is about three years old to ask if she had any outgrown discarded things I could give the poor creature."

She Didn't Like This Catechism. She put me through a catechism somewhat as follows: "Are you sure she is worthy?" "What do you exactly know about her, other than what she tells you?" "Where did her husband work last?" "Do you realize that it's quite possible for her to go around with this hard luck tale to impulsive people like you, collect old clothes and sell them?"

She ended by saying, "Yes, I have quite a few old things of baby Mary's and if you will look this woman up and can assure me she is all you claim I will be glad to help her."

"Now I can't understand that attitude. Suppose the woman were an impostor (although I doubt it, else she would not come back persistently as she does), wouldn't you rather run the risk of being taken in than feel that you had missed a chance to help in this day of awful unemployment? Especially when it means only old clothes that you cannot possibly use yourself."

"I wish you would write something on this subject."

I Think the Other Woman Was Right. As I wrote to my Letter Friend (I want you to know that I got her permission before I wrote this) I would be glad to write something on the subject only I should have to say just what she didn't want me to say. I believe the woman who said "investigate before I give all these things away" was right.

Whom was she protecting by insisting on investigation? Not her-

self—the rule of the Associated charities—if a person appealing for aid claims that there is immediate and painful want, give them temporary relief. Then investigate before giving more.

But understand one thing. This is not a justification for those who do not want to give and who excuse themselves by saying that the person may not be worthy. Better give unwisely than not at all. I simply mean that the best kind of giver gives the time and pains to insure wise giving, as well as the money or the discarded garments.

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A Point for Parents.

Mrs. Flatbush: "How did you come to decide on a name for the baby?" Mrs. Bensonhurst: "Well, we began at A, and thought of all the names beginning with that letter; then we took B, and so went through the whole alphabet."

"But the child's name is Alice, I thought."

"So it is. When we got as far as Z we went back and began all over again at A."



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