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## The Sound of Wedding Bells

### — OR — Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER IX.

"Tell me!" she said, eagerly. "Was he wounded?"

He nods.  
"Yes; it was just at the finish. We were charging the enemy's guns, and somehow I got unhorsed; 'somehow' was by a slashing cut from a sabre.

"Nigger ought to have bolted and got scot-free back to the lines, but the dear old fellow wouldn't leave me, and when I came to, I found him standing there trembling and panting, with a shot wound in his neck. Do you see the furrow?" and he lifts the mane.

Dulcie looks.  
"I—I can't see," she says, and very naturally he takes the hand that is so near his, and gently passes the white fingers over the little rough line on the smooth neck.

Dulcie bends her head, so that the horse hides her face—for some reason it has grown suddenly crimson.  
"I can feel it," she says, softly.  
He loosens her hand.

"Fortunately it was only a mere scratch; an inch nearer!— But it is always just an inch on the right side," and he smiles.

Dulcie looks up at him.  
"And you?" she says. "You were wounded?"

"Yes," he says, carelessly, as he puts the cloth on. "A mere nothing. A sabre cut."

"A mere nothing, and it knocked you off your horse and made you insensible," she says with a smile.  
"Where was it?" in a low voice.

"On the arm," he says. "I must have got it early in the day, and not noticed it. Loss of blood, you know."

She stares at him open-eyed, her lips apart with eager awe.

"I have never heard anything like it," she says, meditatively. "Show me the scar."

He stares at her, then naturally, as if it were a matter of course to obey, and make little of it, he slips up his sleeve, unfastens his gold sleeve-links and shows a long red scar across his arm.

Dulcie leans on the horse's back and looks at it, and shudders.  
"How dreadful!" she says. "And that will never go away?"

"No. What does it matter?"

"N—o." Then her bright laugh rings out. "How fortunate for you that you don't have to wear dresses with short sleeves! If you did, you would have to wear thirty-two buttoned gloves."

He laughs.  
"That would be an awful fate," he says.

They saunter out into the yard again, followed by the dogs jumping and yapping round them, and Sir Hugh glances at Dulcie's fair head, upon which the spring sun is shining, turning it into lustrous silk.

"Won't you catch cold?" he asks.  
She laughs.  
"I never catch cold, as I think I told you. What a lovely morning! What is that—pigs?"

As she goes across to the long line of styes, all as clean in their way as the stables, Sir Hugh follows her, and stands looking at her more than at the pigs.  
"You are fond of animals?" he says.  
"All animals," she replies. "It has been the dream of my life to have a farm with plenty of horses and dogs and pigs and poultry running about. Animals are so much more interesting than human beings."

"On behalf of the human race in general, allow me to thank you," he says.  
She laughs.  
"Don't you agree with me? Now, what could be more amiable than a pig? As long as he gets plenty to eat and has a snug bed, he is quite happy and contented. I should think, meditatively, 'that it would be rather nice to be a pig.'"

Sir Hugh is not proof against this; he leans against the sty and laughs quietly.  
"All very well until the butcher appears on the scene," he says.  
"Well," she rejoins, argumentatively, "what then? He dies after living a most comfortable, enjoyable sort of life. He dies for the good of mankind. And we—what good are we, either in life or when we're dead? Yes, it must be nice to be a pig, even though one has to be killed."

"It occurs to me," said Sir Hugh, "that we shall be killed if we don't take care. It is a capital offense to be late for meals at Holme Castle."

And he glances at the clock in the stable tower.  
Dulcie stares.  
"Can it be possible?" she exclaims.  
"It is half-past nine! What will aunt say? The first morning, too! Sir Hugh, it is your fault."

"Exactly," he says. "Put it on my shoulders, they'll bear it. Come along. Let us face them together," and he holds out his hand, like a boy who has been playing truant, to encourage his

companion; but Dulcie takes no notice of the hand, and hurries along at his side, a little apprehensive, notwithstanding her courage, of the reception they will meet at the hands of Lady Falconer.

"You needn't hurry," says Sir Hugh. "They will have begun and have eaten all the warm bacon and most of the eggs."

"I hope not," she retorts, "for I am fearfully hungry. It is the morning or—the pigs, I suppose."

They enter the hall, and Sir Hugh flings his soft cap on to a table, and they go into the breakfast room, if not hand in hand, at any rate very close together, and as far as Dulcie is concerned looking rather guilty.

It is rather a formidable sight; the tall, stately old lady at the head of the table, and Maud, more stately and prim than her mother, at the bottom. In the middle is seated Aunt Fernor looking very small and helpless, and with the usual look of anxiety in her face.

"My dear," she says, reproachfully, "how late you are!"

"Yes, aunt," says Dulcie, with novel weakness. Then she exchanges "good-morning" with the rest, and sinks into the seat beside Sir Hugh, who has shaken hands with Mrs. Fernor, chucked Edie under the chin, and nodded comprehensively to the rest.

"Where have you been, my dear?" asks Aunt Fernor, to give her an opportunity to apologize.

"I've been to see the pigs, aunt," is Dulcie's prompt response.  
Lady Falconer stared.

"The—the what, Miss Dorrimore?"

"The pigs," says Dulcie, "and the horses. It is such a lovely morning."

"But—but—surely you have not been outside!" ejaculates Lady Falconer, with stately astonishment, "and without your hat!" As if pigs and horses were kept in one of the inner rooms.

"Oh, yes," says Dulcie, cheerfully; "I am used to running about without my hat; it doesn't hurt me."

"You never suffer from neuralgia?" says Maud, who is a martyr to influenza and similar complaints, and would no more think of going out without her hat than without her shoes and stockings.

"Never," replies Dulcie, emphatically. "What is it like?"

At this question there is a profound silence, Maud contenting herself with a long-suffering smile and sigh; and Sir Hugh strikes in to restore harmony.

"It's a very fine morning, mother," he says; "what shall we do? The girls would like a ride, perhaps."

Edie looks up with a bright eagerness, but Lady Falconer turns to Dulcie.

"Can you ride, Miss Dorrimore?" Dulcie shakes her head woefully.

"I can't; I'm sorry to say I never rode anything except a donkey," at Hampstead," she is going to add, but pulls up in time, "and that only once."

"Never mind," says Sir Hugh, cheerfully, "it is not too late to learn. Perhaps you'll let me give you some lessons some day."

"Will you?" she says, turning her beautiful eyes on him. "Really?"

"Really," he says, with a smile. "It will be an awful bore," she says. "I shall probably break my neck."

At this there is a murmur, though in her heart of hearts Lady Falconer doubtless thinks that the calamity would not be very deplorable. "But I'll chance that," says Dulcie, blandly.

"I think," says Lady Falconer, "that we had better go for a drive. Mrs. Fernor would like to see the country; the scenery is very beautiful. It is rather a cool morning, and we had better have the chariot."

Sir Hugh's face looks rather blank, Edie's grows long, but Maud smiles complacently. Dulcie stares with a wild attempt to look pleased. To be shut up with three or four persons in a close carriage on a day like this! The prospect was appalling.

Sir Hugh coughs and chinks his tea-spoon against his cup.

"Perhaps," he says, with an air of merely suggesting the idea, "some of the young ladies would like to have an open trap. If so," he says, "I'd drive the dog-cart—or the mail phaeton."

Edie's face broadens with a smile. "I shouldn't mind the air at all,"

she says, "but perhaps Dulcie—"

Dulcie is about to remark that she would infinitely prefer it, when Lady Falconer cuts in, primly:

"I am sure it would be dangerous for Miss Dorrimore. You forget, Edie, that she has just come from a warm climate. The air is very keen and treacherous this morning."

Dulcie glances at the window, through which the bland sun is streaming, and is silent.

"Well," says Sir Hugh, rather impatiently, "at any rate, there won't be room for all of us in the chariot, unless we sit on the top of each other. I will take the dog-cart, and Edie can start with me, if Maud—"

looking, however, at Dulcie—"or anyone else would like to change, why—they can."

Edie claps her hands under the table and feels for Dulcie's feet, Lady Falconer murmurs something about not troubling Hugh if he wishes to see to anything at home, but Hugh apparently does not hear, for he finishes his breakfast and rises, remarking that he'll go and see to the nags being put in.

In about two hours' time they are ready to start and make their appearance in the hall, Maud attired as if about to start on an arctic expedition, with a sealskin jacket, and a fur cape, with a huge muff, and sealskin gloves.

"Mamma says," she says, addressing Mrs. Fernor and Dulcie, the latter wearing her tight-fitting jacket, and looking particularly slim and graceful beside the fur-expanded Maud, "mamma says will you excuse her, dear Mrs. Fernor; she has rather a headache, and thinks she had better stay at home."

Which decision Dulcie, in silence, quite agrees with; a close carriage, shared with four other persons, is scarcely to be regarded in the light of a restorative.

"And mamma says if you or Miss Dorrimore would like any fur wraps—"

But Lady Falconer hastens to nip the suggestion in the bud.

"Oh, no, no," she says; "we shall be only too—I mean quite warm enough."

"Then," says Maud, with the air and tone of one about to start on a formidable journey, "perhaps we had better start."

As the horses have been tearing up the smooth gravel path for the last twenty minutes, Dulcie certainly thinks they had better start.

"Really," he says, with a smile. "They go down the steps to find Sir Hugh and Edie perched up in a particularly high dog-cart; Sir Hugh, with a not very amiable look on his handsome face, occupied in attempting to keep the tandem horses from climbing up the front of the Castle, Edie beaming, and sparkling, and happy.

"What a time you have been, Maud," he says, rather impatiently; "I thought you had given it up. Where would you like to go, Mrs. Fernor?"

This rather-useless question, seeing that poor Aunt Fernor has only passed through the Holme country in a close carriage on the preceding night, she refers to Maud.

"Oh!" says that young lady, "if we should go to the Abbey—"

"All right," he says. "Pray get in and tell Jobson to hurry those snails along, or Edie and I shall be there an hour and a half before you. Here, hold on!" he says to the groom, and jumping down, he assists them into the old-fashioned Noah's ark, harnessed to a pair of fat, tub-like horses.

As he puts Dulcie in, he holds her hand a minute.

(To be Continued.)



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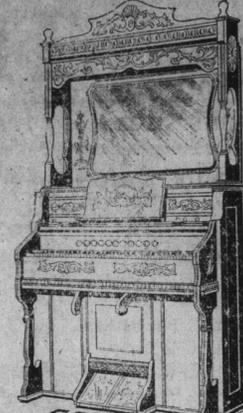
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## How They Control Food Prices in England

The Beginnings of Food Control—Lord Rhondda Means Business.

Lord Rhondda has proceeded rapidly and with decision against the over-manning of the local Food Committees by food traders. He has written to at least one local authority pointing out that "the presence of an excessive number of traders on any committee may in itself cause a lack of confidence among the consumers whose interests they are to protect, and he has asked that committees so constituted shall be reorganized. We take it that such a request is not one that can be disregarded and that the public will take care to see that it is carried out. In this imperfect world the disinterestedness of the small trader in his dealings with his customers has yet to be recognized; and it is all to the interests of the traders themselves that it should not be exposed to too great a strain.

Lord Rhondda has now taken under his control most of the principal markets in foodstuffs. Fixed and official prices now obtain for wheat and cereals, for meat, sugar, bacon and ham, lard, butter and cheese, dried beans and peas, chocolates and other sweets, jam, milk, and plums for jam. The price of tea and of Norwegian herring is regulated by arrangement with the trades. Fish, poultry and game, eggs, fruit and vegetables are still uncontrolled. Margarine and the food in cold storage are still outside, but are likely soon to be inside, the official net.

Besides this the Food Controller is setting up a single agency in the United States for the purchase of hams and lard, and the importation of these commodities into the United Kingdom except under a Board of Trade license is forbidden. This step will necessarily be followed by the issue of licenses for retail traders in all the controlled goods; and as the licenses will be held subject to the observance of the Food Ministry's regulations, and can be withdrawn if those regulations are ignored or departed from, an effective check ought thus to be provided on exorbitant charges. In the butchers' shops the official price-list is to be publicly displayed and aggrieved customers can appeal either to the Local Committee

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