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Fredericton, Sept. 15th, 1885. s8 2m

"MONA;

OR

The Irish Bride of an English Gentleman."

[Conclusion.]

Mona, rising, pushes Violet gently into her own chair, a little black-and-gold wicker thing, gaudily cushioned.

"Yes, sit there," she says, a new note of tender sympathy in her tone, keeping her hand on Violet's shoulder as the latter makes some faint polite effort to rise again. "You must indeed. It is such a dear, cozy, comfortable little chair."

Why it has become suddenly necessary that Violet should be made cozy and comfortable she omits to explain.

Then Dorothy, going up to the newcomer, removes her hat from her head and pats her cheeks, and tells her with one of her loveliest smiles that she has "such a delicious color, dearest! just like a wee bit of fresh apple-blossom!"

Apple blossoms suggest the orchard, whereon Violet reddens perceptibly, and Nolly grows cold with fright, and feels a little more will make him faint.

Lastly, Lady Rodney comes to the front with—

"You have not tired yourself, dear, I hope. The day has been so oppressively warm, more like July than May. Would you like your tea now, Violet? We can have it half an hour earlier if you wish."

All these evidences of affection Violet notices in a dreamy, far-off fashion: she is the happier because of them; yet she only appreciates them languidly, being filled with one absorbing thought, that dulls all others. She accepts the chair, the compliment, and the tea with grace, but with somewhat vague gratitude.

To Jack his brothers are behaving with the utmost *bonhomie*. They have called him "old fellow" twice and once Geoffrey has slapped him on the back with a heartiness well meant, and no doubt encouraging, but trying.

And Jack is greatly pleased with them, and, seeing everything just now through a rose colored veil, tells himself he is specially blessed in his own people, and that Geoffrey and old Nick are two of the decentest old men alive. Yet he too is a little *distrait*, being lost in an endeavor to catch Violet's eyes,—which eyes refuse persistently to be so caught.

Nolly alone of all the group stands aloof, joining not all in the unspoken congratulations, and feeling indeed like nothing but the guilty culprit that he is.

"How you were all laughing when we came in!" says Violet, presently: "we could hear you all along the corridor. What was it about?"

Everybody at this smiles involuntarily,—everybody, that is, except Nolly, who feels faint again, and turns a rich and lively crimson.

"It was some joke, of course?" goes on Violet, not having received any answer to her first question.

"It was," says Nicholas, feeling a reply can no longer be shirked. Then he says, "Ahem!" and turns his glance confidingly upon the carpet.

But Geoffrey, to whom the situation has its charm, takes up the broken thread.

"It was one of Nolly's good things," he says, genially. "And you know what he is capable of when he likes! It was funny to the last degree,—calculated to set any table in a roar,—give it to us again, Nolly. It bears repeating. Ask him to tell it to you, Violet."

"Yes, do, Nolly," says Violet.

"Go on, Nolly," exclaims Dorothy, in her most encouraging tone. "Let Violet here it. She will understand it."

"I would, of course, with pleasure," stammers the unfortunate Nolly,—"only perhaps Violet heard it before!"

"Well, really, do you know, I think she did!" says Mona, so demurely that they all smile again.

"I call this beastly mean," says Mr. Darling to Geoffrey in an indignant tone aside. "You all gave your oaths to secrecy before I began, and now you are determined to betray me. I call it right-down shabby. And I shan't forget it to any of you, let me tell you that."

"My dear fellow you can't have forgotten it so soon," says Geoffrey, pretending to misunderstand this vehement whisper. "Don't be shy! or shall I refresh your memory? It was, you remember, about——"

"Oh, yes—yes—I know; it doesn't matter; I'll pay you out for this," says Nolly, savagely, in an aside.

"Well, I do like a good story," says Violet, carelessly.

"Then Nolly's last will suit you down to the ground," says Nicholas. "Besides its wit, it possesses the rare quality of being strictly true. It really occurred. It is founded on fact. He himself vouches for the truth of it."

"Oh, go on; do," says Mr. Darling, in a second aside, who is by this time a brilliant purple from fear and indignation.

"Let's have it," says Jack, waking up from his reverie, having found it impossible to compel Violet's eyes to meet his.

"It is really nothing," says Nolly, feverishly. "You have all heard it before."

"I said so," murmurs Mona, meekly.

"It is quite an old story," goes on Nolly.

"It is, in fact, the real and original 'old, old story,' says Geoffrey, innocently, smiling mildly at the leg of a distant table.

"If you are bent on telling 'em, do it all at once," whispers Nolly, casting a withering glance at the smiling Geoffrey. "It will save time and trouble."

"I never saw any one feel the heat so much as Oliver," says Geoffrey, pleasantly. "His complexion waxeth warm."

"Would you like a fan, Nolly?" says Mona, with a laugh, yet really with a kindly view to rescuing him from his present dilemma. "Do you think you could find me mine? I fancy I left it in the morning room."

"I am sure I could," says Nolly, bestowing upon her a grateful glance, after which he starts upon his errand with suspicious alacrity.

"How odd Nolly is at times!" says Violet, yet without any very great show of surprise. She is still wrapped in her own dream of delight, and is rather indifferent to objects in which but yesterday she would have felt an immediate interest. "But, Nicholas, what was his story about? He seems quite determined not to impart it to me."

"A mere nothing," says Nicholas, airily; "we were merely chaffing him a little, because you know what a mess he makes of anything of that sort he takes in hand."

"But what was the subject of it?"

"Oh—well—those thirty-five charming compatriots of Mona's who are now in the House of Commons, or, rather, out of it. It was a little tale that related to their expulsion the other night by the Speaker—and—er—other things."

"If it was a political quip," says Violet, "I shouldn't care about it."

This is fortunate. Every one feels that Nicholas is not only clever, but singularly lucky.

"It wasn't *all* politics, of course," he says, carefully.

Whereupon every one thinks he is a bold and daring man thus to risk fortune again.

It is at this particular moment that Violet, inadvertently raising her head, lets her eyes meet Jack Rodney's. On which that young man—being prompt in action—goes quickly up to her, and in sight of the assembled multitude takes her hand in his.

"Violet, you may as well tell them all now as at any other time," he says persuasively.

"Oh, no, not now," pleads Violet, hastily. She rises hurriedly from her seat, and lays her disengaged hand on his lips. For once in her life she loses sight of her self possession, and a blush, warm and rich as carmine, mantles on her cheek.

This fond coloring, suiting the exigencies of the moment, suits her likewise. Never before has she looked so entirely pretty. Her lips tremble, her eyes grow pathetic. And Captain Rodney, already deeply in love, grows one degree more impressed with the fact of his own good fortune in having secured so enviable a bride.

Passing his arm round her, he draws her closer to him.

"Mother, Violet has promised to marry me," he says, abruptly. "Haven't you, Violet?"

And Violet says, "Yes," obediently; and then the tears come into her eyes, and a smile is born upon her lips, so sweet, so new, as compels Doatie to whisper to Mona, a little later on, that she "didn't think it was in Violet to look like that."

Here of course everybody says the most charming thing he or she can think of at a moment's notice; and then they all kiss Violet, and Nolly, coming back at this auspicious instant with the fan and recovered temper, joins in the general congratulations, and actually kisses her too, though Geoffrey whispers "traitor" to him in an awful tone, as he goes forward to do it.

"It is the sweetest thing that could have happened," says Dorothy, enthusiastically.

"Now Mona and you and I will be real sisters."

"What a surprise it all is!" says Geoffrey, hypocritically.

"Yes, isn't it?" says Dorothy, quite in good faith; "though I don't know after all why it should be; we could see for ourselves; we knew all about it long ago!"

"Yes, *long* ago," says Geoffrey, with animation. "Quite an hour ago."

"Oh! hardly!" says Violet, with a soft laugh and another blush. "How could you?"

"A little bird whispered it to us," explains Geoffrey, lightly. Then, taking pity on Nolly's evident agony, he goes on, "that is, you know, we guessed it, you were so long absent, and—and that."

There is something deplorably lame about this exposition, when you take into consideration the fact that the new lovers have been, during the past two months, *always* absent from the rest of the family, as a rule.

But Violet is content.

"It is like a fairy tale, and quite as pretty," says little Dorothy, who is quite safe to turn out an inveterate matchmaker when a few more years have rolled over her sunny head.

"Or like Nolly's story that he declines telling me," says Violet, with a laugh.

"Well, really, now you say it," says Geoffrey, as though suddenly struck with a satisfactory idea, "it is uncommonly like Nolly's tale: when you come to compare one with the other they sound almost similar.

"What! How could Jack or I resemble an Irish member?" asks she, with a little grimace.

"Everything has its romantic side," says Geoffrey; "even an Irish member, I dare say. And when you do induce Nolly to favor you with his last joke you will see that it is positively bristling with romance."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

And now what remains to be told? But little I think! For my gentle Mona has reached that haven where she would be!

Violet and Dorothy are to be married next month, both on the same day, at the same hour, in the same church,—St. George's, Hanover Square, without telling. From old Lord Steyne's house in Mayfair, by Dorothy's special desire, both marriages are to take place, Violet's father being somewhat erratic in his tastes, and in fact at this moment wandering aimlessly among the Himalayas.

Mona is happier than words can say. She is up to her eyes in the business, that business sweetest to a woman's soul, the ordering and directing and general management of a trousseau. In her case she is doubly blessed, because she has the supervising of two!

Her sympathy is unbounded, her temper is equal to the most trying occasions, her heart open to the most petty grievances; she is to the two girls an unfailing source of comfort,—a refuge where they may unrebuked pour out the indignation against their dressmakers that seems to rage unceasingly within their breasts.

Indeed, as Dorothy says one day, out of the plenitude of her heart, "How we should possibly got on without you, Mona, I shudder to contemplate."

Geoffrey happening to be present when this flattering remark is made, Violet turns to him, and says, impulsively,—

"Oh, Geoffrey, wasn't it well you went to Ireland and met Mona? Because if you had staid on here last autumn we might have been induced to marry each other, and then what would have become of poor Mona?"

"What is it you would say?" exclaims Mona, threateningly, turning towards him a lovely face she vainly tries to clothe with anger.

"It is insupportable, such an insinuation," says the lively Doatie. "Violet, Mona's cause is ours: what shall we do to him?"

"Brain him with his lady's fan," quotes Violet, gayly, snatching up Mona's fan that lies on a *prie dieu* near, and going up to Geoffrey.

So determined is her aspect that Geoffrey shows the white feather, and crying "*mea culpa*," beats a hasty retreat.

From morn to dewy eve, nothing is discussed in bower or boudoir but flounces, frills, and furbelows,—three f's that are considered at the Towers of far more vital importance than those other three of Mr. Parnell's forming. And Mona, having proved herself quite in good taste in the matter of her own gowns, and almost an artist where coloring is concerned, is appealed to by both girls on all occasions about such things as must be had in readiness "Against their brydale day, which is not long."—As for instance:

"Mona, do you think Elsie is right? she is so very positive; are you sure heliotrope is the correct shade to go with this?'

"Dearest Mona, I must interrupt you again. Are you very busy? No? Oh, then do come and look at the last bonnet Madame Verote has just sent. She says there will be nothing to equal it this season. But, in a heart-broken voice, "I cannot bring myself to think it becoming."

Lady Rodney, too, is quite happy. Everything has come right; all is smooth again; there is no longer cause for chagrin and never-ending fear. With Paul Rodney's death the latter feeling ceased, and Mona's greatness of heart has subdued the former. She has conquered and laid her enemy low; without the use of any murderous force the walls have fallen down before her, and she has marched into the citadel with colors flying.

Yet does she not triumph over her beaten foe: nay, so different is it with her than she reaches forth her hand to raise her again, and strives by every tender means in her power to obliterate all memory of the unpleasant past.

And Lady Rodney is very willing that it should be obliterated. Just now, indeed, it is a favorite theory of hers that she could never have been uncivil to dear Mona (she is always "dear Mona" of late days) but for the terrible anxiety that lay upon her, caused by the Australian and the missing will, and the cruel belief that soon Nicholas would be banished from the home where he had reigned so long as master. Had things gone happily with her, her mind would not have been so warped, and she would have learned at once to understand and appreciate the sweetness of the dear girl's character! And so on.

Mona accepts this excuse for by-gone injustice, and even encourages her mother-in-law to enlarge upon the subject, dwelling how comfortable it is to [illegible], —and furthermore [illegible] kind heart to believe in it also.

She is perhaps as near [illegible] angry with Geoffrey as she can be when one day he pooh-poohs this charitable thought and gives it as his opinion that worry had nothing to do with it, and that his mother behaved to him throughout badly all through, and that his obstinacy and bad temper were the cause of the whole matter.

"She had made up her mind that you would be insupportable, and so couldn't forgive you because you were so," says that astute young man, with a conviction. "Don't you be taken in, Mona."

But Mona in such a case as this prefers being "taken in" (though she may object to the phrase), and in process of time grows positively fond of Lady Rodney.

"In company with so divine a face, no rancorous thoughts could live," said the duke on one memorable occasion alluding to Mona, which speech was rather a lofty soar for His Grace, being for the most part of the earth, earthy.

Yet in this he spoke the truth, echoing Spencer (though unconsciously), where he says,—

"So every spirit, as it is most pure
And hath in it the more of heave'ly light,
So it the fairer bodie procure
To habit in,
For the soule the bodie forme doth take,
For soule is forme and doth the bodie make."

With Lady Rodney she will, I think, be always the favorite daughter. She is quite her right hand now. She can hardly get on without her, and tells herself her blankest days are those when Mona and Geoffrey return to their own home, and the Tower no longer echoes to the musical laugh of old Brian Scully's neice, or to the light footfall of her pretty feet. Violet and Dorothy will no doubt be dear; but Mona, having won it against much odds, will ever hold first place in her affections.

After all she has proved great a success. She has fought her fight, and gained her victory; but the conquered has deep reason to be grateful to her victor.

Where would they all be now but for her timely entry into the library on that night never to be forgotten, and her influence over the poor dead-and-gone cousin? Even in the matter of fortune she has not been behind hand, Paul Rodney's death having enriched her beyond all expectation. Without doubt, therefore, there is good reason to rejoice over Mrs. Geoffrey.

To this name, given to her in such an unkindly spirit, Mona clings with singular pertinacity. Once, when Nolly has called her by it in Lady Rodney's hearing the latter raises her head, and remorseful light kindles in her eyes; and when Mr. Darling has taken himself away she turns entreatingly to Mona, and, with a warm accession of coloring, says, earnestly,—

"My dear, I behaved badly to you in that matter. Let me tell Oliver to call you Mrs. Rodney for the future. It is your proper name."

But Mona will not be entreated; sweetly, but firmly, she declines to alter the *sobriquet* given her so long ago now. With much gentleness she tells Lady Rodney that she loves the name; that it is dearer to her than any other could ever be; that to be Mrs. Geoffrey is the utmost height of her very highest ambition; and to change it now would only cause her pain and a vague sense of loss.

So after this earnest protest no more is ever said to her upon the subject, and Mrs. Geoffrey she is now to her friends, and Mrs. Geoffrey, I think she will remain to the end of the chapter.

THE END.

SHE WEDDED THE MAN OF HER CHOICE,

Rather than the Rich Merchant whom her Father had Selected for Her.

MOUNT CARMEL, Pa., Jan. 18.—For some years John Sobieski, said to be a distant relative of his famous countryman, has lived in a pretty little cottage a mile or more from Mount Carmel. His daughter Paulina is a charming blonde and highly educated, speaking all the European languages fluently. Mr. Sobieski welcomed all his countrymen living in this district to his home, and from time to time gallant Poles sought to obtain the hand of Paulina in marriage. It was an unwritten law in Mr. Sobieski's household, however, that none but a wealthy Pole should ever wed his daughter. This became known to a Polish merchant of Shenandoah, who had acquired a large fortune by trading with his countrymen. The father favored the suitor, and to all appearances the young lady did likewise. Yesterday was the time fixed for the wedding, but at the appointed hour the Shenandoah merchant learned that Paulina, under the pretence of visiting Philadelphia friends, had met her real lover, John McKeown, in a Jersey town, where the two had been married.

For a time a furious storm raged in the Sobieski cottage, and the father consulted counsel to have the marriage annulled. He was informed by his lawyer that, since both were of age, and had satisfied Jersey justice, the marriage was legal. A few hours later he forgave his daughter and invited her back to his house. The Shenandoah merchant returned to his home almost broken hearted.