

LORD AND LADY SALISBURY.

The Courtship and Marriage of the Present Premier of England.

One gray morning in the mid-spring of twenty-eight years ago there was a wedding in the little chapel at Ald-Hill, Berks. All London knew the bride. For three years the belle of Westminster, for three years the beautiful wonder of society, Georgiana Alderson was the brightest and fairest of the ladies of the court. But she was a coquette, and had drawn many lovers by the silken charm so well discovered by witohery and blue eyes and sunny hair. Many a wooer had wooed in vain, for the daughter of Sir Edward Hall Alderson was an heiress as well as a beauty, and an estate of land is the finest setting that estate of beauty can demand. Of some of the most selfish of the admirers it could have been said that they were brilliant men and worthy of the most coveted honors of royalty, but not once or twice the lady might have married well had she not had an adviser who knew man as man deserves to be known. Miss Opie, the celebrated queen of society of ten or fifteen years before, was Georgiana Alderson's aunt and chaperone, and Miss Opie knew better than most other women of the time how to distinguish between heart and pretense. She had kept the moths from her niece, but while she was seeking an ideally eligible man her charge had given her hand to Robert Cecil.

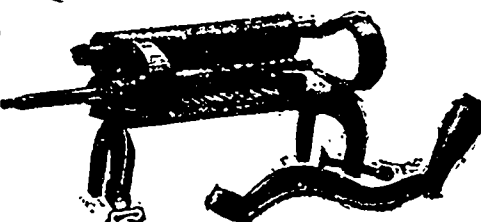
Miss Opie was dismayed. Cecil was not a man after her liking. Though the son of an earl, he was a younger son, and anything but popular with his family. There had been a quarrel and a fraternal scandal, and, to the horror of the family at Hatfield house he had to earn his own living. Beginning as a journalist he had shown marked ability till he was a regular contributor to the "Quartely." For three years he had been in Parliament for Stamford, where he continued to sit for fifteen years to come, but where he had made no consequential mark. It was no wonder that Miss Opie was displeased with the match. With but few redeeming qualities socially, the young man was at best a book-worm, and so serious and quiet that he was esteemed dull. But the niece had felt the brain of the Cecils, and though nine out of ten thought as did the aunt, the nine and the aunt came to witness the ceremony.

It was a matter-of-fact wedding, as English country-side weddings are apt to be. There was a gay company filling the chapel, and the white ribbon that kept the common herd of acquaintances from the chosen many of the family. There was at 10 the soft, low notes of the wedding march from Lohengrin, the quartet of able-bodied ushers passing up the central aisle and parting the silken barrier. There were two little girls strewing the aisle with white flowers from their aprons, and four bridesmaids behind them. There was the bride on her father's arm with the queen's bouquet in her hand. There was the groom meeting them at the chancel-rail. There was the ceremony and the blessing and the congratulations.

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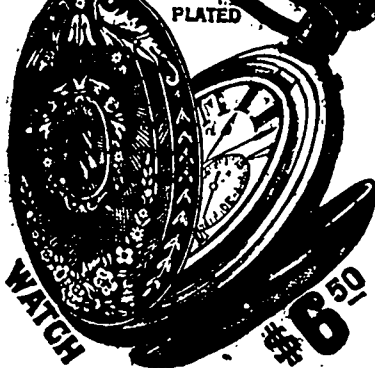
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