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The  
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Most of your friends use it  
and profit by it

to discuss the subject with her.

Lord Wentwell took divorce proceedings at once, which were unopposed; and in due time the union was dissolved.

In the eyes of the law, Louisa was a free woman, and Colonel Berring, in the far-off land to which they had fled, lost no time in making her his wife. Never once had he caused her to regret the equivocal and perilous position in which she had placed herself. Her faith in his honour and integrity had not been misplaced.

These trying events had made a deep and lasting impression upon Margaret Assitas, and resulted in a very stormy scene between herself and the Roman General, driving her to write the following letter to her aunt—

The Honourable Margaret Assitas  
to Miss Pragg.

Curzon Street.

Dear Aunt,

Everything seems to be going wrong at home. Papa is gloomy and miserable, mamma is more domineering than ever, and I begin to feel that life is not worth living.

Lord Wallsend has formally proposed to papa for me. Papa referred him to mamma, and she promptly accepted him, without giving me even an option in the matter.

Of course I was furious. I told mamma plainly I would never marry him in any circumstances. I think he might have waited, instead of adding to the domestic troubles on the top of all the ferment over Louisa.

Mamma stormed at me; said I had permitted his attentions and tacitly accepted him by doing so; declared I should never get such another offer after the disgrace Louisa had brought upon us, not to mention poor Madge.

Perhaps I have let things drift. When one has known a man from childhood and is continually thrown into his company, the position is difficult to avoid. A few years ago, I might have let mamma hustle me into it; but after what has happened to Madge and Louisa, I see the awful seriousness of marriage—now, more than ever. I am determined to be an old maid. If I cannot marry a man I really love, I will never marry at all.

You have asked me if I have never met any one I liked. Perhaps I have; but he has not asked me—never will ask me—and I shall never tell you or anyone who it is. But it has shown me the utter futility of marrying without love.

Mamma laughed in my face when I flatly refused to accept Lord Wallsend, and said the announcement of our engagement had already been sent to the fashionable papers! I know mamma's methods, but I will not be treated as Madge and Louisa were. I shall take refuge with you, dear Aunt Pragg, if things get too much for me.

Your loving niece,

Peggy.

P. S.—Does anyone get what they want in this world?

In a little room in the mews, Violet Vernon was also asking herself that self-same question with a heavy heart and eyes that were full of tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

An Offer of Marriage.

WHEN Archie Robinson returned from Rhodesia as Lord Wallsend, he took a suite of rooms in St. James, declaring it was central and more convenient for a bachelor than his big town house, where his aunt, old Sarah Field Robinson, had died.

He had a country house in Kent, not far from Stone Hall, and whenever the Assitas family went to Stone Hall, if Margaret went with them, he usually followed. His favourite residence, however, was a little villa at Monte Carlo, to which he always flew. If Margaret, escaping from her family, went to visit her numerous friends abroad.

Accustomed to indulge in every passion, he prided himself that he had cut a very creditable figure as the devoted lover.

Margaret, for her part, treated him

with an easy friendliness which indicated no deeper feeling; but this did not in any way discourage Lord Wallsend. He could not imagine any woman seriously ignoring his addresses, if he took the trouble to make love to her. Lady Assitas, he knew, was on his side, and she was a warm advocate and strong ally.

He did not want to hurry Margaret unduly, but he was getting bored. Things were moving too slowly for his impatient nature.

While the family were under a cloud, and smarting with bitter humiliation over the recent scandals, he thought they would welcome with gratitude an offer of marriage from himself, which would shed a fresh lustre upon them. He regarded it rather in the light of a condescension or his part to make it. He considered himself "a deuced fine fellow to stick it." He persuaded himself it was because he hadn't the heart to leave Peggy in the lurch!

Whenever his pale, enamel-blue eyes took in her points with their hard, cold scrutiny, his resolve strengthened to have her for his own, and he decided that the psychological moment had arrived to press his suit, when Society was buzzing with hushed horror at the scandal of Louisa's elopement, following on the heels of Madge's suicide, and the publicity of the latest divorce in high life.

Lady Assitas could scarcely conceal the fierce joy which possessed her, as with easy nonchalance he made his offer for Margaret's hand. A load was lifted from her spirits: she had feared he would draw back, and add another blow to the falling house.

HE accepted her effusive cordiality with very marked indifference.

Learning that Margaret was out, he left the Roman General with the delicate task of breaking the news to her, and, if necessary, bringing her to see the honour he had done her.

It could not be left in stronger or more capable hands. He felt it an unmistakable relief that he had not seen Margaret. She would have time to get over the first effect—he hated scenes—and he had an uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty as to the attitude Margaret might adopt. It would all come to the same thing in the end, of course. He meant to have her. Lady Assitas meant him to have her. It would be well, therefore, for Margaret to realize this before she committed herself to a refusal.

He sauntered to his club, reflecting upon the course of events. He did not intend to call at Curzon Street again that day.

At the club he met several other choice spirits, and suggested a little supper party and a game of roulette at his rooms afterwards, by way of passing the time.

Two accepted the invitation joyously, the third sucked at his cigar with a thoughtful air.

"Fact is—Wallsend—awfully sorry an' all that—but I'm booked to take the divine Judy to supper—demned sorry I can't oblige, old man," he apologized.

A roar of laughter greeted this announcement, for Bertie Glossheimer—whose father was reputed to be worth a million—was known to be hopelessly infatuated with the latest "French" dansuese (a lady with a pronounced Irish accent), and was a helpless victim to her charms.

"We shall have to excuse you in that case, I suppose," laughed Lord Wallsend indulgently.

"Bertie's a goner," chirped a fair-headed "Nut," as he flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his coat sleeve, after which he lifted his eyes to one of the large mirrors on the wall, and took an anxious and altogether unnecessary survey of himself.

"Weally it's surprising how dishevelled a fella' gets going along Pwiccadilly," he complained; "the cwouds have no ideah of gettin' out of the way!"

He drew off a lemon-coloured kid glove, and smoothed a faultlessly glossy head devoid of parting, the rather long hair being brushed back from his very plain face and plastered