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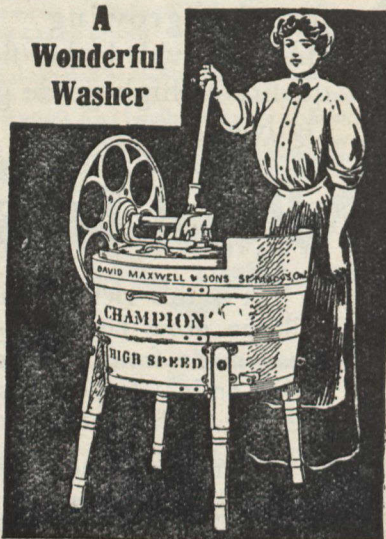
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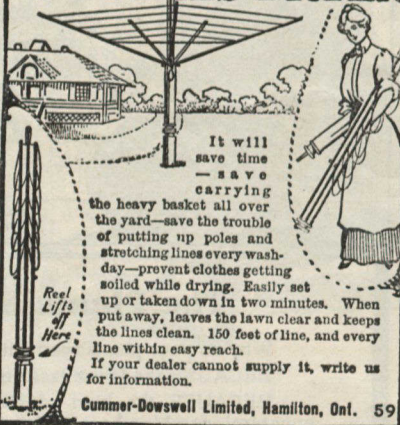
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JEANNE OF THE MARSHES

Continued from page 11

He stepped on to land and lifted her out. She hesitated for a moment and felt for her purse.

"You must let me recompense you," she said coldly, "for the time you have lost in coming to my assistance."

He looked down at her, and again she had an uncomfortable sense that notwithstanding his rude clothes and country dialect, this man was no ordinary villager. He said nothing, however, until she produced her purse, and held out a little tentatively two half-crowns.

"You are very kind," he said. "I will take one if you will allow me. That is quite sufficient. You see the Hall behind the trees there. You cannot miss your way, I think, and if you will take my advice you will not wander about in the marshes here except at high tide. The sea comes in to the most unexpected places, and very quickly, too, sometimes. Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, and thank you very much," she answered, and turned away toward the road.

Cecil de la Borne was standing at the end of the drive when she appeared, a telescope in his hand. He came hastily down the road to meet her, a very slim and elegant figure in his well-cut flannel clothes, smoothly brushed hair, and irreproachable tie.

"My dear Miss Jeanne," he exclaimed, "I have only just heard that you were out! Do you generally get up in the middle of the night?"

She smiled a little half-heartedly. It was curious that she found herself contrasting for a moment this very elegant young man with her roughly dressed companion of a few minutes ago.

"To meet with an adventure such as I have had," she answered, "I would never go to bed at all. I have been nearly drowned, and rescued by a most marvellous person. He brought me back to safety in a flat-bottomed punt, and I am quite sure from the way he stared at them that he had never seen open-work stockings before."

"Are you in earnest?" Cecil asked doubtfully.

"Absolutely," she answered. "I was walking there among the marshes, and I suddenly found myself surrounded by the sea. The tide had come up behind me without my noticing. A most mysterious person came to my rescue. He wore the clothes of a fisherman, and he accepted half a crown, but I have my doubts about him even now. He said that his name was Mr. Andrew."

Cecil opened the gate and they walked up toward the house. A slight frown had appeared upon his forehead.

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"I know who he is," he answered. "He is a queer sort of fellow, lives all alone, and is a bit cranky, they say. Come in and have some breakfast. I don't suppose that any one else will be down for ages."

She shook her head. "I will send my woman down for some coffee," she answered. "I am going upstairs to change. I am just a little wet, and I must try and find some thicker shoes."

Cecil sighed. "One sees so little of you," he murmured, "and I was looking forward for a *tete a tete* breakfast."

She shook her head as she left him in the hall.

"I couldn't think of it," she declared. "I'll appear with the others later on. Please find out all you can about Mr. Andrew, and tell me."

Cecil turned away, and his face grew darker as he crossed the hall.

"If Andrew interferes this time," he muttered, "there will be trouble."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

THE Princess appeared for luncheon and declared herself to be in a remarkably good humour.

"My dear Cecil," she said, helping herself to an "ortolan in aspic," "I like your climate and I like your *chef*. I had my window open for at least ten minutes, and the sea air has given me

quite an appetite. I have serious thoughts of embracing the simple life."

"You could scarcely," Cecil de la Borne answered, "come to a better place for your first essay. I will guarantee that life is sufficiently simple here for any one. I have no neighbours, no society to offer you, no detractions of any sort. Still, I warned you before you came."

"Don't be absurd," the Princess declared. "You have the sea almost at your front door, and I adore the sea. If you have a nice large boat I should like to go for a sail."

Cecil looked at her with upraised eyebrows.

"If you are serious," he said, "no doubt we can find the boat."

"I am absolutely serious," the Princess declared. "I feel that this is exactly what my system required. I should like to sit in a comfortable cushioned seat and sail somewhere. If possible, I should like you men to catch things from the side of the boat."

"You will get sunburnt," Lord Ronald remarked drily, "perhaps even freckled."

"Adorable!" the Princess declared. "A touch of sunburn would be quite becoming. It is such an excellent foundation to build a complexion upon. Jeanne is quite enchanted with the place. She's had adventures already, and been rescued from drowning by a marvellous person, who wore his trousers tucked into his boots and found fault with her shoes and stockings. She has promised to show me the place after luncheon, and I am going to stand there myself and see if anything happens."

"You will get your feet very wet," Cecil declared.

"And sand inside your shoes," Forrest remarked.

"These," the Princess declared, "are trifles compared with the delightful sensation of experiencing a real adventure. In any case we must sail one afternoon, Cecil. I insist upon it. We will not play bridge until after dinner. My luck last night was abominable. Oh, you needn't look at me like that," she added to Cecil. "I know I won, but that was an accident. I had bad cards all the time, and I only won because you others had worse. Please ring the bell, Mr. Host, and see about the boat."

"Really," Cecil remarked, as he called the butler and gave him some instructions, "I had no idea that I was going to entertain such enterprising guests."

"Oh, there are lots of things I mean to do!" the Princess declared. "I am seriously thinking of going shrimping. I suppose there are shrimps here, and I should love to tuck up my skirts and carry a big net, like somebody's picture."

"Perhaps," Cecil suggested, "you would like to try the golf links. I believe there are some quite decent ones not far away."

The Princess shook her head.

"No!" she answered. "Golf is too civilized a game. We will go out in a fishing boat with plenty of cushions, and we will try to catch fish. I know that Jeanne will love it, and that you others will hate it. Between the two of you it should be amusing."

"Very well," Cecil declared, with an air of resignation, "whatever happens will be upon your own shoulders. There is a boat in the village which we can have. I will have it brought up to our own quay in an hour's time. If the worst comes to the worst, and we are bored to death, we can play bridge on the way."

"There will be no cards upon the boat," the Princess declared decidedly. Cecil shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "Whatever happens, don't blame me."

The Princess had her way and behaved like a schoolgirl. She sat in the most comfortable place, surrounded with a multitude of cushions, with her tiny Japanese spaniel in her arms, and a box of French bonbons by her side. Jeanne stood in the bows, bareheaded and happy. Lord Ronald, who was feeling a little sea-sick, sat at her feet.

(To be continued)