

Her Lover's Prowess;

Or, A Little Matrimonial Dream

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd)

"You have no business to say that Maude," exclaimed Charlie, who was wandering about the room in that state of not knowing what to do with himself, which there being neither anything to kill nor to pursue always produced in him. "I say what I think, and I say it the other day," retorted Maude, turning round from her seat, "that you are hardly so ill to us as you might be."

"Excuse me," he replied pettishly and pausing in his walk, "I am always most deferential to ladies. You don't expect me to copy old Sir Phillip's by-gone manners—his priggish bows and courtly attitudinizing?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Charlie. Sir Phillip is no prig. A man who led the field as he did the other day scarce merits that appellation. If as you assert his manner is a little by-gone, I can only say, pity it is such manners should have gone by."

"You may say what you like," retorted her cousin, as he perched himself on the arm of an easy-chair. "but the Grandisonian era has departed—died with the minut, I suppose."

"And genuine courtesy to our sex is a thing of the past," said Maude, as her fingers wandered idly over the keys of the instrument.

"Libel rank libel!" cried Charlie, "but we haven't time now—days for all the bowing and scraping of the Grandison era. We live too fast. Only look at the posts. Why, we've two here. In London they have them all day long, and before a fellow has finished the morning papers the evening ones begin. Those Grandison men saw about a paper a week and only got letters occasionally."

"I like getting letters, don't you?" said Maude, as she rose and crossed over to the fireplace.

"Hum! I'm not quite sure," replied Mr. Williamson meditatively. "People who write to you, or at all events to me, generally want money or something I haven't got. Even when they don't they expect answers. Letter writing's an awful bore."

"What! answering letters from someone you care about?" exclaimed Maude with some slight elevation of her eyebrows.

"But I never get letters from anyone I care about; that is to say, very much. Of course I like to hear how Charlie Tottenham is getting on in Leicestershire, and what old Jack Boulton is doing amongst the pheasants in Norfolk; but—"

"Suppose you went away from here," interrupted Maude, "shouldn't you like to hear from me?"

"Of course I should."

"And you would not find those letters difficult to answer, would you?" and as she asked the question the girl looked steadfastly into her cousin's face.

"Oh, no!" he replied hesitatingly. "I should think not."

"What should you say, pray?" and a malicious sparkle flashed into Maude's eyes as she paused for an answer.

"What nonsense!" retorted Charlie, as he rose and commenced pacing the room. "How can I tell? Answer all the questions you asked, I suppose."

"And if I didn't ask any?"

"Oh! if you didn't want to know something you wouldn't write," said Charlie, with the air of a man who really had at last got to the bottom of a difficult problem.

"You'd want to know how I was getting on at all events."

"Can you not fancy a girl wanting to hear something more than that from the man who professes to love her?" replied his cousin in a low voice.

"By Jove, of course! I beg your pardon, my dear Maude, I didn't understand you," exclaimed the young man earnestly. "Naturally I should write you love-letters like—like—like—other fellows do, I suppose."

"And how dare you suppose anything of the kind, sir?" cried Maude, with affected indignation, sore put to it though she was to contain her laughter.

"No! I beg your pardon. By Jove! of course you know I don't mean that," stammered the luckless delinquent. "I mean I should write you love-letters like other fellows do to their wives and sweethearts."

"Sir Phillip wrote to me, child. I was to begin with, all those years he was in India. He seemed to comprehend thoroughly how I was growing up. His letters changed as I grew older; he seemed to gather my progress from childhood to

girlhood by my foolish scribbings." And as she concluded, Maude leant upon the mantelpiece and looked musingly into the fire.

"Of course!" retorted Charlie. "Parents and guardians always do that sort of thing. He's a capital old fellow. But you and I have always seen so much of each other, we've never had occasion to write. If you remember," continued Charlie, as he settled himself comfortably in an arm-chair. "I was most properly sympathetic when you wrote to me at Eton to announce the death of that bullfinch which afforded such an example to all Scotland—he never piped."

"Don't be absurd."

"Come! I like that. It was a specimen of English composition, that letter. I recollect it now. 'Dear Maude, I'm awfully sorry to hear of Bullie's death, and I got twenty-five runs at cricket yesterday, and Harris Senior says I shall be in the eleven some day if I look sharp.'—I was, you know, later on, and," added Charlie musingly, "what a licking Harrow gave us that year at Lord's!"

"Yes; you made no twenty-five runs on that occasion, I remember," rejoined Maude mockingly.

"No; run out for nothing the first innings, and bowled for precisely the same score the second—a shooter off my pad."

"A shooter off your pad?" cried Maude with a peal of laughter. "Incidents repeat themselves in your life—just what happened to you the other day, my poor Charlie."

"Don't be personal. It's not good taste," retorted her cousin.

"Ha, Sir Phillip!" he continued, as the baronet made his appearance, "a non-hunting day takes a deal of getting through, does it not?"

"Upon my word, Charlie," exclaimed Maude, "your gaucherie is getting past all bearing."

"I came to see if anyone felt inclined to walk to Hinchester," remarked Sir Phillip quietly. "I have got one or two little things I want to do there, and it is really not at all a bad day when you're out."

"I shall be charmed," cried Maude. "Give me five minutes to get my hat—I promise not to exceed that. It will do you good, Charlie; a little fresh air, I'm sure, will benefit your manners," and so saying, Maude tripped out of the room.

"All right, Sir Phillip," said Charlie, as he leisurely emerged from his easy-chair. "It will do us sparring for the last hour. That's the worst of a fellow finding himself at home all day—he's safe to come to grief with the women. If I hadn't squabbled with Maude, I suppose I should have had a tiff with Aunt Margaret. The male creature requires strong exercise to keep him amiable, don't you think so?"

"I think he requires something to do; some work obligatory to him in this world, to prevent his becoming a curse to himself and those about him," rejoined Sir Phillip tartly.

"What an old prig it is!" mused Charlie. "How frightfully conceited and supercilious these men who have succeeded are to us young ones who haven't started! I wonder whether he got well snubbed in his youth. I should like uncommonly to see him undergo that operation now."

But now Maude entered the room in her hat and furs, and her presence was the signal for a start, or else cousin Charlie bade fair to show that it was not only the women he could not get on with on these non-hunting days.

CHAPTER VI.

Sir Phillip and Maude would doubtless have enjoyed their tramp into Hinchester very much had they been by themselves, but then, unfortunately, they were accompanied by Cousin Charlie, who was in a most irritable and captious frame of mind. He was a little angry at Maude's concluding remarks, but he was literally simmering with wrath against Sir Phillip's insolence, as he now termed it in his own mind. The baronet had spoken with intention; he thought it was getting time that it was sharply hinted to the young man that the destiny of man in this world was not altogether comprised in hunting three days a week, that fox-hunting prosecuted with ever so much energy and assiduity was not altogether a career, and he had arrived at the conclusion, moreover, that there never was a young gentleman who would be more improved by a little wholesome snub-

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bing than Mr. Charles Williamson. Charlie, wrapped in his theory that Sir Phillip was only a pleasant elderly gentleman, had yet to discover that he had a cutting tongue at need, and all that cool resolute determination which usually is part and parcel of a man's character who has made a name in active life. Mr. Williamson was at no pains to conceal his ill-humor, and indulged in a tirade against the road, the country, the neighborhood, and all topics conceivable till they reached Hinchester. The pained look on his cousin did not tend to improve matters, as it only mutely reminded him that he was making himself disagreeable, while one or two caustic remarks of Sir Phillip's, which, but for Maude's appealing glances, would have been considerably sharper, still further inflamed his wrath against the baronet. Arrived at Hinchester, Charlie announced his intention of looking into the clubrooms there; for the town, though it could hardly claim to possess a regular establishment of that sort, had a reading-room and billiard-room to which most of the gentlemen in the neighborhood belonged.

Sir Phillip and Maude made no opposition to this proposal. It is scarcely likely, when a man is making himself disagreeable to the best of his ability, that the company will contest his going; and it was arranged they should call for him on their way out.

"I'm sorry to see Charlie so peevish," remarked the baronet, as he and Maude wended their way down the High Street. "It's rather a contemptible infirmity that visiting your own ill-humor on your associates."

"You mustn't be hard on Charlie, Sir Phillip," replied the girl pleadingly. "He never does bear scolding patiently from anyone but me. You rather hurt him when you alluded to his having nothing to do; it's a sore point with Charlie that he cannot see his way in that respect."

"Don't think, Maude, he is quite so anxious on that question as he ought to be."

"Yes, indeed, he is," said the girl earnestly. "He can't quite make up his mind because he cannot see an opening of any sort. Once let him get an opportunity, and you will see him eager to avail himself of it."

"Well, I've my doubts, Maude," returned the baronet good humorously.

"But you will interest yourself in his behalf?"

"I have. I have written in two or three quarters to see what I could do for him, but, mind me, we all begin at the bottom of the ladder, and have to trust to ourselves for the rest. I can only secure his foot being placed upon the first step. Now come in here a moment; I want some stationery."

(To be continued.)

SCHOOLBOY'S SMART RETORT.

The children in a Scottish school were being examined in Scripture knowledge. "Can any boy or girl here tell me," asked the inspector, "how Noah would be likely to use his time while on the Ark?"

"Please, sir, he wad fish," said one boy.

"Well, yes, he might," admitted the inspector.

Presently another little fellow was seen to wave his hand excitedly, and on being asked to speak said: "Please, he couldna fish vera lang."

"What makes you think so?" asked the inspector.

"Because there were only two worms in the Ark."

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IT IS A LAND OF ROMANCE

MANY STRANGE TALES OF THE CANADIAN WEST.

One Member of Prospecting Party Predicted His Own Death by Drowning.

Many a curious tale has been told by adventurous travelers when in pre-settlement days they penetrated the vast solitudes of prairie, forest or mountain valley, writes W. J. Barclay, in Chambers' Journal. In the Summer of 1862 there was a great rush in the newly discovered gold mines of Cariboo. A party of over a hundred gold-seekers from Ontario and Quebec made the journey overland via St. Paul, Fort Garry, the prairies, and across the Rockies by the Leatherhead Pass. Descending the Fraser on rafts and in canoes, they found their greatest trials in its tumultuous waters, more than one life being lost in the rapids of the Grand Canon. The circumstances attending the death of a Torontonian named Carpenter were singular. His party consisted of three other men from the same city—Messrs. Fletcher, Handcock and Alexander. When they arrived at the rapids they explored the canon, it being agreed by lot that Fletcher and Handcock should portage the outfit while Carpenter and Alexander ran the rapids in the canoe. In midstream, the canoe struck a rock and upset. Alexander was a strong swimmer, and managed to reach the shore in safety, but Carpenter appeared stunned, and

SANK IMMEDIATELY.

While exploring the canon his companions had noticed Carpenter making some memoranda in his note-book, which he replaced in an inner pocket of his coat and left on the bank before entering the canoe. His sorrowing companions found the entry to be:—"Arrived at Grand Canon, ran the canon, and was drowned."

The phenomena of Nature sometimes took a tragical, sometimes a puzzling form. During a storm on the prairies near the south branch of the Saskatchewan a rain of fire suddenly descended upon a camp of Cree Indians and burned everything around them. Thirty-two Crees perished in the flames. The ground was burned deeply for a considerable distance, and only one or two sloughs were able to save themselves by jumping into the water. It was not a flash of lightning but a rain of fire that lasted for some moments.

There once lay on the lonely summit of a hill far out on the prairie between the North and South Saskatchewan, a huge block of metal. It was a medicine-stone of surpassing virtue among the Indians over a vast territory. No band of Crees, Blackfeet or Sarcees would pass in the vicinity without paying a visit to this great medicine stone to lay their offerings upon it to propitiate the mysterious powers dwelling therein. Strange stories were told in the lodges concerning this stone. Old men remembered having heard men say that they were only able to lift it, but yearly it had grown

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A METEORITE.

In the year 1869 the missionary of Victoria, a small settlement north-east of Edmonton, caused the stone to be brought in to the mission. When the Indians heard of the description they were loud in expression of their regret, while the old medicine men declared its removal would be followed by war, disease and the disappearance of the buffalo. It is curious as a coincidence that in the following year the plague of smallpox swept over the Saskatchewan country with fearful violence, leaving whole camps of victims to rot unburied on the plains. The plague was accompanied by the afflictions of tribal war, carried on, in spite of the disease, with unparalleled ferocity; while a few short years sufficed for the extermination of the countless buffalo-herds. The stone was afterwards shipped to Toronto, where the curious can now see it in the museum of Victoria University. It is also of interest to note that Iron Creek, Alberta, derives its name from this historic stone, for it was near its banks that it reposed so long as a manito of the red man.

A RUBBER BOAT.

A strange adventure befell Capt. Denny, of the North-West Mounted Police, in the Summer of 1875. From the fort on Old Man River he took a trip to the foot-hills of the mountains, about 40 miles distant, for the purpose of fishing and deer-hunting. He was accompanied by an Indian guide. The hunt was successful, both the captain and his guide killing a deer. He sent the Indians back to the fort with the horses loaded with the venison while he inflated

brought for the purpose, in which he purposed returning to the fort on the way. During the morning he made good headway down the river, only once having trouble at a rather nasty rapid, in the middle of which he stuck on a flat stone, and was upset in getting off. He got a thorough wetting before he caught his boat again. About noon the weather began to look threatening, heavy banks of clouds gathering in the north. The thunder storms along the mountains are usually of short duration, but very severe while they last. When the storm broke the captain sought shelter in a clump of timber on the south bank, and during a lull in his fury he plainly heard the drums beating in an Indian camp, and the accompanying "Hi-ya" mingling with the sound. Leaving his boat drawn up on the shore and safely tied, he made his way towards the sound. The storm came down worse than ever, and the lightning was blinding as he made his way through the timber. In an open glade the Indian camp of about 20 lodges lay before him plainly

visible, 20 yards away, with a band of horses grazing on the farther side, the gleam of fires shining through the open entrances of the lodges. This was surprising, as the Indians do not move about in the wet if they can help it, and their lodges are kept closed through superstitious fear of the thunder.

A BLAZE OF LIGHTNING.

and the crash of thunder struck him and caused him to fall from the shock. A large tree was struck not far off; he could hear the rending of wood. It was several minutes before he was able to look around. But, to his utterable astonishment and terror, the camp had disappeared. Where a large Indian camp had stood in full view, the voices of its inhabitants distinctly audible, nothing remained in sight but an empty glade surrounded by storm-tossed trees. Little wonder that the captain, before he could gather his wits together, turned and ran, dropping his gun in his course. When lack of breath caused him to sit down on the bank of the river, a quarter of a mile away, he determined to leave his boat and walk to the fort rather than approach the spot again. The fifteen miles made a hard journey, but he arrived about midnight, dragged and worn out. The story told to his brother officers next morning at the breakfast table caused only laughter and chaff as a freak of the imagination. But the captain was firmly convinced of the reality of the experience. He was determined to proceed to the spot again and bring back his boat and gun. With an Indian and Blackfoot interpreter he returned that day, finding no difficulty in locating the place; but it was vacant, without sign of any recent camp. A few signs of stones overgrown with grass showed where an old camp had been many years before. The Indian related how the Blackfeet had surprised and slaughtered a camp of Crees at this spot, and two bleached skulls found among the grass were evident proof of the story.

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