

DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

CHAPTER XIV

Dulcie was quite silent as Lord Swinton led her back to the house; she did not even sob. She had begun to think, and thought moves rapidly once upon the train. Arrived in the hall, the uncle was puzzled to know what to do with his charge. "Shall I call your maid?" he suggested. "I daresay you will like to lie down."

But Dulcie shook her head. "I will wait in the morning-room," she answered, and they turned in there together. And then it appeared she had something more to say.

"Uncle Swinton, I cannot bear the suspense. You must go and find papa, and then come back and tell me the worst, whatever it is. I know Margaret was married secretly in France; she told me so last night."

Dulcie looked more of a woman than he had ever seen her. Those dark eyes of hers were open now and blazing, and they seemed to fill her face with decision and meaning. "Go!" she said again. "I want nothing but to know the worst."

So the uncle went in search of Colonel Swayne, and found him with Gower and Margaret, husband and wife. Margaret had her certificates spread out, brought from Barbizon to show her father. Her story was told, and the other story was then in course of telling—Gower's story of the void. There could be no reasonable doubt, in face of the wife's recognition, that he was the same George Cullen; yet while that blank stretched between them it could seem no real marriage.

But in whatever sense he was Margaret's husband, certain it was he could not be Dulcie's. "She sent me," Lord Swinton said, explaining his errand. "Shall I tell her?"

"Tell her—poor child—yes," assented the father. "She expects it from you, and so it may come more easily, if you do not mind the office. She has been hardly used, by fate, at any rate. It is impossible not to blame the others; and yet it is difficult to blame justly. A little more openness, it seems to me, and this would have been prevented. Margaret should have told me of her marriage. It is by a pure accident that Dulcie has been saved."

So commissioned, Lord Swinton went back to the morning-room. It seemed to him that Dulcie had not moved during his absence. She stood on the same square of carpet, watching the door with those black, tragic eyes.

"My dear," he began, "you must be brave. I am sure you are a girl of pluck, and you will need it now. The marriage is broken off."

"Yes," she said, "I know that. But why—why—"

"Because Gower has a wife already, a wife he had forgotten. You know of his loss of memory. I understand he told you."

"Is it Margaret?" And then, as he hesitated she herself supplied the answer. "Of course it is Margaret."

"Yes; he was married to her in France, and he left her because the blank came to an end—or began. I don't know which. He did not know; he has no recollection of her, even now."

Dulcie turned half from him, clenching her hands.

"Then I have done it, fool that I was. If I had never wanted Margaret, never urged papa to let her come, I should have been his wife to-day!"

"My dear girl, listen to reason. You don't see. We are all thanking God on our knees that this came out when it did. Think what your position would have been. It would have meant ruin, utter and complete. You are saved that ruin now, and there is not a soul in the world who will not pity you, for your case is a hard one, if ever there was a hard case yet!"

She looked at him again with that indescribable alteration in her face—something which had slept unsuspected under the kitten softness of her nature had come to the surface now.

"I don't want to see anybody. I wish to be alone. I am going upstairs, by myself. Promise me no one shall come. Promise."

"I will tell them."

She turned to the door, and Lord Swinton opened it. Through the hall and up the staircase he watched her go, her train dragging after her, but the slow step was firm. There was no sign, as he had feared, that she might faint or fall. She might be hysterical over a scratch, a damage to her gown, a fit of temper, but she was not hysterical now under a real calamity. That trail of silver brocade had hardly disappeared on the staircase when he heard voices and steps approaching. The guests were already thronging the path on their way to the

trade her way up to the

rooms which were her own. Long ago they had been hers and Margaret's, with a white bed in each; but in these last years of Margaret's absence and Dulcie's growing up, a sitting-room had been contrived out of the smaller one. Here the sisters supped the night before, here Margaret told her story. Dulcie went through into the inner apartment, which was her bedroom.

Stephens had done her duty in leaving everything in order. The trunks had been taken down, ready for departure on the wedding journey; only her travelling-bag, a gift from Gower, stood open on a chair. The pretty gown to which she was to have changed was laid out ready, together with the light covering coat, itself a "creation," which was to wrap her about for the train. They would not be wanted now. No passion stirred her as she looked at them, no wild grief or tears; she felt only dull and cold. She unpinned the veil from her hair, tore open the fastenings of her dress and dropped it on the floor, and then crept into bed, drawing the coverlet over her shoulders.

She was alone as she wished, with no spying eyes to watch as she turned her face to the pillow. Thought was free now and could have its way, but she did not weep. She felt herself growing cold and colder, the pulse of life in her beat slowly, she seemed to herself hardly to breathe. Did death come in this way? she wondered. But she did not want to die.

A great change had befallen her. She hardly thought of Gower at all; what she had loved was probably love, not him, and love might be offered to her elsewhere. There had been a revolution in her life three months ago, when the prospect of this marriage opened, and now she would change back again—this was the thought between her and the pillow. She had been a little girl of small account, just grown up out of the schoolroom, in a house ruled by a stepmother, where the chief interest was the nursery and the heir. Now she must go back to be that girl of small account again. For these last weeks and months she had been the prospective lady of Grendon, full of thoughts of the great house which would be hers, the ample spendings—wide matters which her taste should rule, her influence direct. It was not of Gower and his kisses on her lips, this loss and lack for the sake of which she lay half dead, but of the pretty rooms which had been tinted to her fancy; the ponies trained for her, and the white reins with which she was to drive them; last, and most poignant of all, of the diamonds.

And instead, the reverse of the shield! This she knew well, too well, in all its detail. Week after week at the Court in grey mourning, with here and there a rare entertainment, such as might be prudently afforded, and would not overmuch disturb her father. Dull going out with Annabel, and dreary comings home again; a quarterly dole of pocket-money, spent always before it came to hand.

Then the barbed shaft went home. She would lose, but another would gain—all these good things which were her heart's desire. Another would gain, and that other would be—Margaret!

She hid her eyes again, and lay hardly breathing. She had been sorry overnight for Margaret, had welcomed her with open arms of love, planning how they, Gower and she, would take this lonely one under the spreading shelter of their abundance, and comfort her in her loss. And now the abundance was Margaret's and the cup of bitterness her own!

It was Margaret who would reign at Grendon, Margaret who would enjoy all those results of wealth which would belong to Gower's wife, whether she were his chosen love or no. Those diamonds round her neck last night would shine on Margaret's to-morrow. Margaret could hardly propose to take her in at Grendon, and comfort her there after all that had come and gone, but the power would be hers if not the deed. And then another thought struck her through and through. Lord Swinton had said there was not a soul in the world who would not pity her; had said it, meaning only kindness, but it was a drop of poison in her wound. She would not be benefited, she would not be pitied—was there no way in which she could escape? Her old life was intolerable to think of. Was there not one of her lovers manly enough to hold his hand out now? If she could be taken away, it mattered little how or by whom.

The slow hours went by; she heard them strike, heard the quarters chime on that same clock to which Annabel had listened the night before. There were sounds below, voices of the guests, movement to and fro. Carriages rolled down to the door, carriages rolled away; the company were departing.

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No one had a thought of her, and she was ready with complaint, forgetting the stipulation for this solitude had been her own. She was growing colder and colder, and putting out her hand to draw up some added covering, she felt a sudden weakness as if her limbs had turned to lead. A few tears came now to wet the pillow. People before now had died of shock, of the grief of a broken heart. Perhaps she, Dulcie, was going to die too. Then at last the door opened, and somebody came in. She would not look at first, not until the intruder had come close to the bedside; and then she saw it was Margaret. Margaret, her rival, but changed back again into the dark dress of yesterday, and with a tray in her hand. There was a cup of tea on it, steaming fragrantly, and a plate of bread and butter; and, in spite of all the tragedy, Dulcie was hungry.

CHAPTER XV

On the previous evening Vincy left Annabel far from satisfied with the result of his interview. She appeared far too much inclined to defy him and reveal everything to her husband, and he determined to make another effort to see her on the Tuesday, if he might do so without encountering May. As a result of his cogitations he motored over again to the Ferry, and made his mid-day meal at the small public-house in the village, which was used by such comers and goers, for on that road wheels were frequent.

He sent up by a child messenger another shabby note to Annabel, summoning her to the garden shelter; but at the inn, and over his cold beef and ale, he heard much gossip concerning the family, and the doings at the great house on that day. Colonel Swayne's daughter, his younger daughter, was making a grand marriage. The gentleman had no title, but he was rich enough to pave everything with gold, so it was a fine thing for Miss Dulcie. And the other daughter, the one who was sent away, had come back to the Court, so the quarrel was like to be made up after all. The Colonel was a hard man, but maybe having married off one of his girls so well had softened him. But it wasn't his daughters he was set on; it was the boy Ernest, second marriage, Master Ernest Swayne, who was going to be the heir.

Vincy listened, and reflected that this must be Annabel's son. A fine little fellow, said the hostess, going on with her gossip—for she loved to find a listener—high on seven years old, and thought all the world of at the Court. And sweet he would look that day, dressed up as a page to carry the bride's train: in a suit of white satin, they did say, and a cap and feather. She would have liked well to go to the church herself, and see the show of it all; but, with custom coming in with the fine weather and so many taking the road, she was bound to mind the inn. But her Patty was bent on seeing Miss Dulcie married, so Patty was away up to the church, and would bring word of everything when she came home.

But before Patty returned to the maternal roof with tidings of the interrupted wedding, and the scandal of it ran like wildfire through the place. Vincy had finished his meal, and motored away up the road. There was a convenient turning under a wood, a palpably disused byway, where he could safely leave the car, and this wood was a sunney bordering the park, close to the shrubbery and the shelter. He had happened on an unlucky day, that was clear; but having sent his

note of summons he stood bound to follow it, though Annabel would have her guests and was not likely to be early.

He lit a cigar under the trees and listened to the roll of the carriages, the same sounds which saluted Dulcie's ear, lying comfortably in her chamber. There was no bell-ringing from the church tower, which stood out as a feature in the landscape, and at this he wondered. The inn woman had mentioned that the Ferry church carried a fine peal, and that the bell-ringers were in attendance to give Colonel Swayne's daughter their salute. There was no joy-peal from the church tower, but presently he heard children's voices in the garden. They appeared to be playing hide-and-seek, and this indeed was the case, for after that painful return from the church, in the general constraint and burden, Cousin Joan Winthrop dismissed her little girls with Ernest into the garden. The children's questions were intolerable, in addition to those other questions they had to endure and answer; and what harm could the children take in the Court garden, except the possible damage of a soiled frock?

(To be continued.)

SIGNS OF EYE STRAIN.

Symptoms by Which Abuse of Sight Can Be Detected.

Chief among the symptoms of eye strain are watering of the eye, a gluing together of the eyelids on awakening in the morning, headache, the position and character of which vary with each individual. It may be neuralgic or it may be deeply seated, as was the case with Wagner, the musician, who was complaining constantly of "the nerves of his eyes."

The headache is often replaced by an inflammation of the eyelids, especially in young and healthy persons who also have a little conjunctivitis with a feeling of tension or fulness in the eyes which may become real pain of a dull aching character, the eyeballs being very tender on pressure.

Sometimes there are vertigo and sickness, with dyspepsia, palpitation, and even difficulty in breathing. Sleeplessness is a very frequent symptom, due in part to the excessive flow of blood to the brain and in part to the low tone of the whole nervous system.

The symptoms of eye strain appear sooner in those who lead a confined and sedentary life, who follow occupations which need a constant use of the eyes in bad or unsuitable light, and in those who are debilitated from any cause. The symptoms appear later in those of coarser fibre, who pass much of their time in the open air or who follow occupations which do not need a prolonged use of the eyes for close work.

FOOD AGAIN.

A Mighty Important Subject to Everyone.

A Boston lady talks entertainingly of food and the changes that can be made in health by some knowledge on that line. She says:

"An injury to my spine in early womanhood left me subject to severe sick headaches which would last three or four days at a time, and a violent course of drugging brought on constipation with all the ills that follow."

"My appetite was always light and uncertain and many kinds of food distressed me."

"I began to eat Grape-Nuts food two or three years ago, because I liked the taste of it, and I kept on because I soon found it was doing me good."

"I eat it regularly at breakfast, frequently at luncheon, and again before going to bed—and have no trouble in 'sleeping on it.' It has relieved my constipation, my headaches have practically ceased, and I am in better physical condition at the age of 63 than I was at 40."

"I give Grape-Nuts credit for restoring my health, if not saving my life, and you can make no claim for it too strong for me to endorse."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

WIVES OF GREAT MEN.

Bill Jones' wife takes in washin' and Jim Smith's wife teaches school.

Hed Brown's wife takes in sewing, and supports him, as a rule. Hank Frisby's wife paints china, and makes much coin that way.

Lem Bink's wife teaches music, has a big class, so they say.

Their husbands! Goodness gracious! 'Taint no use to ask of them. They sit around the groovy, Bill and Hed and Hank and Lem.

They settle all the problems of the world as they arise.

The cracker bar! statesmen don't do nothin' but look wise.

Wives of these men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime. If we keep our wives a-workin' to support us all the time

BONDS

For a trustee investment in Ontario a most satisfactory selection could be made from these high-grade offerings:

City of Toronto 4's, due 1944.

City of London 4½'s, due 1913.

Township of York 5's, due 1912-31.

County of Simcoe (guaranteeing Town of Midland) 5's, due 1911-40.

City of Fort William 4½'s, due 1927.

City of St. Thomas, Ont., 4½'s, due 1912-41.

City of Niagara Falls 5's, due 1911-30.

Town of Port Hope 4½'s, due 1913-50.

Town of Petrolia 4½'s, due 1911-34.

Town of Walkerville 4½'s, due 1911-30.

Town of Welland 4½'s, due 1940.

The income yield ranges from 4 per cent. to 4¾ per cent.

A wider range of debentures of this character furnished on request.

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ANTS DISTINGUISH FRIENDS.

Will Not Tolerate Strangers in Their Nests.

Students of the behavior of ants are well aware of the fact that they will not tolerate strange ants in their nests. If a foreigner, even though of the same species and indistinguishable to human eyes from the lawful inhabitants of the nest, strays in from another nest, she is apt to emerge hastily, pursued and attacked by the ants which belong there. How do they know that she is a foreigner? It does not seem likely that among the thousands of ants belonging to the nest, another ant exactly the same species should be recognized as a stranger by her appearance. The English naturalist, Lord Avebury, in his book on "Ants, Bees and Wasps," published nearly thirty years ago, records some experiments to test the possibility that ants may recognize their nestmates through some movement of the feelers or antennae, with which they sometimes seem to greet each other when they meet.

He stupefied with alcohol ants from different nests, and placed them near one of the nests. The ants from that nest came out and carried their helpless nestmates home, but threw the bodies of their enemies away. Evidently friend and foe were distinguished by something other than their behavior.

A German physiologist, Bethe, has solved the problem in the following ways. He suspected that ants from a foreign nest might have an odor that excited the warlike instincts of ants in the home nest.

Accordingly, he took a number of ants from one nest, killed them, and crushed their bodies so that the body fluids were pressed out. Taking some live ants from a second nest, he first dipped them in water and alcohol, and then into the body fluids of the other ants. He then returned them to their own nest. Their nestmates fell upon them as if they had been total strangers, and they were driven out, and in some instances killed.

On the other hand, Bethe found that the foreign nest, the odor of which they now presumably bore, would receive peaceably the ants which had undergone the transforming treatment.

Other observers have confirmed these results of Bethe's for many species of ants. The truth then seems to be that any ant odor differing from their own puts the ants into a warlike attitude.

It is true that this explanation requires one to suppose that a different odor belongs to every ant nest, and this seems hard to believe, yet nothing else appears to account for the facts.

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There are many other remarkable things about the sense of smell in insects, and it must be remembered that the sense of smell in human beings is far inferior to that of some animals, for example, the dog. Man cannot judge the capacities of other animals in the matter of smell by his own poor performances.

TWO SURGICAL CASES.

Remarkable Cure of an Injured Goose.

There once flourished in the north of Italy a woman by the name of Regina Del Cin, who was celebrated as a bone-setter. Cripples came to her from all over Europe. Mr. Elihu Vedder, in "The Digressions of V," recalling the sprains and bruises of his boyhood days, is quite sure that his mother also had the gift of curing all the ills which fall to the lot of childhood, and tells of an unfortunate goose which was one of her patients.

Grandpa had, with his solid Dutch foot, stepped on the head of a little goose, and being a man hard to move, he did not move, but stood for some time. When he did move, the little goose was found perfectly scalped. Grandpa had been gluing something, so my mother cut a patch just the size of the bare spot and glued it on; then, putting the patient in a basket, and in a quiet corner, and thrusting pellets of food down its throat and pouring in spoonfuls of water, nature was allowed to take its course.

After days of piteous whimperings, the little goose came forth with such wits as he had about him, and as his health improved, the patch curled up, and was clipped off at the edges till nothing of it remained, and he was cured and grew up to be the bigger goose of them all, and then the usual end.

Now comes my turn: this time a chicken, a big one. His leg had been broken, the shin part about two inches below the joint. It was a hopeless case, and he was about to fall under the ax, when I begged them to turn him over to my tender mercies, for I had an idea.

I at once proceeded to cut off the injured part; then taking a piece of bamboo, and also accurate measurements, I made a substitute for the lost foot, then wrapped up the stump, stuffed cotton inside the bamboo, and slipped it on. It was the right length, and fitted perfectly, and off he went, dot and carry, one, to the admiration of the family assembled. He became a fine fowl, and then the usual apotheosis.

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