

MARIQUITA'S WAY.

BY CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

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It was far too hot to think of sleep below. The women, of course, had to stay there, unfortunately, but of us men, most had dragged mattresses out on the upper deck and were sprawling on them beside the after wheelhouse.

The diplomatist was the only one among us out of complete pajamas; his nether limbs were draped in a silken Burmese lungyi, which looked like a petticoat. The rest of us were too languid for speech, but he (perhaps through some virtue acquired from his flowing garment) seemed full of sententious utterances, which he delivered confidentially to the close Red sea night.

This was one of the things he said: "You may bring a woman from the ends of the earth and rear her in London and Paris, cradling her to the pins in the hair with all their conventionalities; but if she be a woman, she will chuck all such varnish overboard if ever she be stirred by a really mighty passion, and she will show again to proud delight the naked soul that was born within her ribs."

Someone laughed, indolently, yet unbelievably, and then the diplomatist broke out into a tale in support of his assertion.

This is the tale:

I. The woman I was talking of was one of the richest spinsters in the world. She was raised some 200 miles up-country from Rio, and had had it constantly impressed on her there that every word she spoke was law. You see,

ated, for although I don't think she ever troubled herself to grind at any book-learning, she was very quick at picking matters up; and one can learn a good many things from smart conversation, if only one listens well and doesn't forget. She was remarkably independent, but she knew thoroughly how the conventionalities were marked out; and when it suited her purpose to do so—as it generally did—she kept within their bounds. For instance, she had an old stone broke, muddle-witted marquis of the ancient regime as normal head of her hotel in the Boulevard Haussmann. But if she wanted to fling her heels up they went, no matter who was looking.

Mariquita was by no means a difficult person to get to know in those days, and I had the entire to her salon almost directly after I had taken up my quarters in Paris. She danced divinely—as all women with penitential blood in them can do—she was most fascinating to look at and talk to, and I expect I must have shown pretty clearly how much I was struck, for only the third evening I came across her she coolly told me not to propose to her.

"I know you were going to," said she, "and I suppose you'll do it still. They must not think so, and then afterward they get sulky and go away. I hate that. I like friends, and I like admiration—heaps of both. But when I want a man for a husband I'll say, 'My dear, my dear, I'll do the asking myself.'"

After that—and remembering the money—I held my tongue, though I

"It is odd. I might have had any of the rest of you if only I had given in to your pestering, and here's the one man I do want says 'no' when I fling the handkerchief at his feet."

"Judging from what I saw of the gentleman, he isn't up in metaphor. Are you certain he understood you?"

"Am I in the habit of mincing matters?"

"On second thoughts, I'll withdraw the last question. You always speak your mind very bluntly, Mariquita—as I have reason to know, still, believe me, I am sorry for you."

"By all that's curious, why?"

"Because, thus far through life you have carried everything with a high hand exactly as you wished, and so this disappointment will come all the more heavily."

"Monsieur l'Attaché, are you trying to be impertinent?"

"On the contrary, sympathetic."

"Ah! I see you are jumping at conclusions. But, believe me, I do not intend to create a bad precedent here. I shall triumphantly still remain unbeaten. He left me because he had a—how do you call it? Not fiancée. Ah, sweetheart—because he had a sweetheart near his home. Tomorrow I cross to see her. By the day after I shall have drawn a check in her favor which will amply console her. Then he will be without other claims, and I shall have him to myself. Voilà tout."

II. She left Paris by the Calais train next morning, and for a week I heard nothing.



"Won't you go and see him?" I asked, as she lay back on a sofa with a sigh of utter contentment.

her father doted on her, and all the aigiers round were slaves.

There's a good deal of abuse thrown at Brazil, as being a country where people starve, and die of fevers, and get shot in the weekly revolutions, and robbed by a system of brigandage known as legal process; but out of every half million, there is one man who contrives to avoid these pestilences, and in consequence waxes enormously rich. He trends on their heads with hob-nailed boots to assist him in his climb. There are few half-and-half people in Brazil. There are shoals of abnormally poor, and there is a small, fatful, and extremely small, fatful, of the very abnormally rich. Mariquita's papa was one of these last. He had immigrated to the country from Chili in his early youth, and couldn't say certainly who his parents were, though he believed he had Anglo-Saxon blood in him. His wife was a New Orleans creole, who spoke nigger French patois as a native tongue, and emphatically asserted herself to be an Englishwoman. So what countrywoman by blood Mariquita was it is hard to say. She spoke English, French, Catalan-Spanish and mongrel Portuguese with equal fluency and inaccuracy, and when I asked her once in Paris what her nationality was, she said she mostly put herself down as French. But then she added that she wouldn't insist on that, because it really didn't matter. So long as she was alive and enjoying herself, people might say she was a Yagui Indian for anything she cared.

She was a most extraordinary woman. Her father died when she was 15, and a year afterward she came to Europe and lived entirely on her own particular hook. She apparently hadn't a relative, or guardian, or any governing connection in the world. She signed her own checks, had an unlimited balance to draw upon, and acted in all ways exactly as seemed to her best. She was rather petite in figure, gloriously handsome, and would suffer advice to be thrust upon her by no one. And yet she held her own perfectly, and laughed gleefully at the many attempts that were made to take her in.

On the whole she wasn't badly edu-

was honestly very much smitten with her at the time and would have married her out of hand if she hadn't possessed a lous.

They transferred me to St. Petersburg and I lost sight of her for a couple of years, but when I got back to Paris again, there she was, just the same as before, with most of the old courtiers around her, and many new ones besides. She hadn't chosen a Mr. Mariquita yet, but rumor pointed to the lucky man.

He was English—aggressively English—long and thin, milk and watery, profoundly ugly, and, oddest of all, a parson. To be precise, he was a curate from a small south coast village. On the principle that it was impossible to imagine a more unlikely man for Mariquita to take a fancy for, I wasn't in the least surprised at her choice; but it did not startle me to find that he wasn't an atom epris in return. He stared about at the wonderful things in her hotel like a board-school child in the British museum; he gazed on the sumptuously dressed crowds that thronged her salons, and he delighted in all he saw. But by a singular irony Mariquita didn't dazzle him in the very least degree, and as for thinking that he'd only to say "Barkis" to be master of the whole lot, I'm sure such an idea never dawned upon him. He was an awful thickhead. Good heavens! if any of the rest of us had had things put to us a millionth part as broadly as I got 'em—for, mind you, Mariquita was never the woman to mince matters—I know we should have been down on our marrow bones singing out a proposal there and then, even if it had been in the middle of the avenue de l'Opera.

However, one day it was reported he had suddenly packed up his traps and bolted back to England, and of course all Paris knew why. Mariquita didn't make the smallest secret about it. I saw her that evening and we discussed the matter quite calmly. She put it frankly: "He said he wouldn't have me, fancy that!"

"The man's off his head," I suggested.

ing. Then a cablegram came to my address, in which words were lavished profusely. Even a millionaire would not have scattered money broadcast into the telegraph department like that, except in a moment of extremity.

Condensed, it said that she had failed in her negotiations all round. The sweetheart refused; the parson would not listen to reason, and was living behind barricaded doors, and consequently she, Mariquita, was furious.

Knowing her as I did, I smiled grimly at thoughts of the scenes with which that sleepy south coast village would be thrilled. And I'm afraid it occurred to me that the pull up would do her good. To my taste she had always been far too fond of riding roughshod over any one who ventured to run counter to her wishes.

The cablegram wound up with the cool command that I should go over instantly and assist her to gain her ends. Of course, it was just the sort of thing Mariquita might be expected to ask, but I saw no particular reason for compliance, and so I cabled a refusal.

"Can't come. No use if I did. You won't get him, anyway."

As fast as the clerks could flash it through the wires a reply came thus: "See here. Help me all you know to get him. If I fail you may propose to me for the seventh time, and I'll say 'Yes, darling!' That ought to encourage you, if you believe what you wrote an hour ago. Now come."

It was a quaint offer, and coming from any other woman on earth, it would have made me rabid. But Mariquita was Mariquita, and a law unto herself. So I went there and then, without waiting to pack.

She was stopping at the Grand at Southampton, and her greeting was a nod and the question, "Well, what's your scheme?"

"My dear girl, I couldn't make any till I knew how the land lay."

"Peste! you should have mapped out 60, to suit every contingency. But if you are so dull-witted, listen! They are to be married almost directly. I do not know how you cold-blooded English work such things; but fortunately some delay seems necessary."

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Still, their 'banns' (whatever those may be) have been called out twice."

Then, by Jove, Mariquita, you've only a week's law. They evidently funk you desperately, and are going to get safely tied together out of harm's way. There's only one method of preventing it that I can see. Order round your yacht, kidnap him on board, and once safely at sea you can afford to wait for terms."

I said this more or less in irony, but to my disgust she took it us promptly. "Yes, that has good points, though it is not altogether practical, as my yacht is at Marseilles, and would take too long to get into commission and bring round. But I can improve on it."

She rang the bell and sent for the manager. The man put in an appearance very promptly.

"What large yacht is there here ready for sea?"

"Lord Raybury's schooner clears for the South Pacific tomorrow, madam."

"Owner?"

"Lord Raybury."

"Where does he live?"

"He is now staying here, madam."

"Good. Show me to his room."

"If madame will follow me."

The pair of them left me, and in about sixteen minutes' time she returned. She sank into a chair and laughed.

"Your English noblemen are very funny. I told that one, without any beating about the bush, that I wanted to buy his yacht. He asked me if I thought she was worth £10,000. He remarked, frigidly, that as she stood she represented £15,000. Whereupon I promptly offered him £30,000 and brought out my checkbook and filled him up a form. He took it like a lamb. Money's a great thing, isn't it?"

"Yes, you. My Imperial Highness is graciously pleased to depute that trifling service to your hands."

"But the thing can't be done. It's against the law. Why, it would entail penal servitude, and I don't know what South America now, Mariquita!"

"Timid! A pinto for your insular straight-lacedness. You have promised, amigo, and I hold you to your word of honor. I order! It is for you to obey."

III. How that dreadful piece of midnight man-lifting was accomplished I blush even now to recollect. When I broke, unannounced, into his room the wretched victim was writing laboriously on blue foolscap. At his elbow was an open book, which he covertly was my approach, slipping it beneath a newspaper. He was copying out his sermon for the ensuing Sunday.

I put the case to him bluntly, without throwing in a word for its defense. He was to come with me there and then. If he came peaceably, so much the better. If he resisted, I had a powerful ally in my pocket.

"No, the moment for hurrying is past, and Time shall have a chance now. I'm very happy as I am, and can quite afford to wait. The yacht is provisioned for three years, and, if necessary, she shall keep the seas for all that while."

"Good heavens! Then you can't expect to keep meandering about in train? Why, my dear girl, it would utterly blast all my professional—"

I ushered the poor devil into his state-room and went to report to Mariquita.

"Won't you go and see him at once?" I asked, as she lay back on a sofa with a sigh of utter contentment, and showed no disposition to move.

"No. The moment for hurrying is past, and Time shall have a chance now. I'm very happy as I am, and can quite afford to wait. The yacht is provisioned for three years, and, if necessary, she shall keep the seas for all that while."

"Good heavens! Then you can't expect to keep meandering about in train? Why, my dear girl, it would utterly blast all my professional—"

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She laughed coolly. "Pooh! What a hypocrite you are. Not very many months ago your dream (as you put it) was to be near me always. You said you envied my dachshund. And now that you are offered the chance—"

She completed the sentence with an eloquent shrug. "But don't fret. I'll set you free tomorrow. Perhaps we shall never see one another again."

"Unless, of course, you tire of your present game, and revert, as per agreement, to me."

"Precisely. When that interesting moment arrives I'll let you know. But, mon cher, I wouldn't wait for it, if I were you. You might tire, if you did."

IV. The schooner hove too off St. Heliers next morning, and I took a curious farewell of the captive—who was the very picture of mute resignation, and a warm one of Mariquita—who expressed herself as infinitely obliged to me, and in half an hour's time was on the St. Malo boat, getting back to Paris.

The bright city fairly hummed with the last freak of hers, but about my share in it I preserved the silence of the dumb, though happily for my peace of mind I got home leave directly afterward. Then other things filled my mind, and I studiously forgot that lawless raid till Mariquita forcibly reminded me of it. The news came in an extravagant cablegram from Shanghai, and, condensed, informed me that the person had relented (or been coerced), and made her his bride at the British consulate of that treaty port. I don't think I was surprised. She wasn't a woman who ever brooked contradiction.

What's that? What about the jilted sweetheart? Well, I didn't intend to tell you men that, but as I've rambled on so deeply already you may as well have the lot. You see, that was the matter which occupied me when I got back to England. I came across the girl there in a country house, and—well, the fact is I married her myself. I tell you, fellows, we both feel awfully indebted to Mariquita.

THE KING'S GIFTS TO FAVORED BRIDES

Some of the Fair Ones Get Cashmere Shawls But They Cost Him Nothing.

When King Edward presented a Cashmere shawl to Lady Victoria Grey upon the occasion of her recent marriage, it was an evidence that he intended to continue at least one of the economical customs of his mother, says the New York Press. In the reign of Victoria there were few young ladies high in the royal favor who escaped a Cashmere shawl when they were married. Now Cashmere shawls such as the queen used to give are of great value, and Victoria was a thrifty soul, not given to making expensive presents; but she bestowed these shawls liberally, for they cost her nothing. She received them as a part of the yearly tribute paid by the Maharajah of Cashmere—12 shawls a year—and King Edward receives the same. Cashmere shawls are not becoming to Edward's style of beauty, and besides he could not possibly wear a dozen of them a year if they were, so he will continue his mother's practice, and the Maharajah's tribute will still go to delight the hearts of English brides.

The yearly tribute of the Maharajah of Cashmere has been paid in its present form since 1842. It consists of "one horse, 12 perfect shawl goats of an approved breed, 6 male and 6 female, and 12 Cashmere shawls of the royal pattern." The horse and the goats are turned into rupees, which go toward paying the expenses of the "officer on special duty" who is sent by the British to reside at the court of the Maharajah and act as a sort of political nurse to that potentate. He keeps an eye upon the Maharajah's finances, frowns upon new zenanas, discourages the "simplin and brandy peg" temperance administration of oriental justice, and wears the prince by endless talks upon the beauty of city drains and benefits of economy and sanitation; in short, makes himself disagreeable and tries to guide the feet of the Maharajah in the paths of civilization and progress as it is understood by the English.

And as British bayonets and "screw guns" are handy over the mountains, the Maharajah walks therein, believing in his heart that "surely the British are mad." The greatest demand for Cashmere shawls is now from France, and French taste has somewhat demoralized the native art, so that all Cashmere shawls are not now of the "royal" pattern—the well-known "pine" or "shawl" pattern.

Wireless telegraphic stations are being established all along the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

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