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The Romance of a Marriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

Not in the best of humours, Sir Herrick follows the charming major into the landau. All the evening Sir Herrick has been counting upon getting a few words, perhaps some thing sweeter than words, from Paula before they part for the night, and as he shuts the door and sinks into the beautiful padded seat of Lord Hurstley's carriage, he murmurs something that is decidedly not a blessing on his uncle's return.

As for the major, he is in the best of humours, and as he draws his fur cloak round him, gazes up at the heavens with an approving smile, as if the spectacle of the moon and the stars had been specially arranged for his delectation.

"What a beautiful night, Rick!" he says, with a little sigh of enjoyment. "Really beautiful! And what a charming evening we have had!"

Sir Herrick emits something that may be taken either as an assent or a contradiction. "Charming!" repeats the major, ignoring the young man's tone. "I had an idea that you had formed so agreeable an acquaintance. I congratulate you, Rick!"

Sir Herrick nods carelessly. He knows his esteemed relative well enough to be aware that when he assumes this pleasant humour something unpleasant is about to occur.

"I congratulate you most heartily, my dear boy. Mr. Palmer, our host, is a very fine specimen of—of—the successful British merchant. I have always had the deepest respect for the—spirit of commerce, and my sympathies have always been with those traders who venture their all on foreign seas."

"Mr. Palmer was a sugar-baker," Herrick says, grimly, "and ventured nothing on foreign seas or any other seas."

"Pardon me, my dear Rick," says the major, suavely. "Sugar, I believe, comes from abroad. But I was about to remark that I have always had the greatest respect for the commercial genius of our time, and in Mr. Palmer one recognises a fine specimen of the class."

"Yes, he's fine," says Sir Herrick, curtly. "Too fine!"

And the Worst is Yet to Come



"Where was I?" says the major, innocently. "Oh, about the old place. My dear Rick, the Court ought to be long to us—that is, to you; it ought, indeed."

"But as it does not, and Mr. Palmer has not intimated that it is his desire to sell it, and we shouldn't be able to buy it, if he did," says Sir Herrick, calmly.

"Ah, true, true!" murmurs the major. Then he lapses into silence for a moment. "What a beautiful evening, my dear Rick. By the way, what a charming girl that daughter of your friend Mr. Palmer is!"

Sir Herrick leans back again. "Is she?" he says. "I don't know much of her, thought you scarcely exchanged a word with her."

"My dear boy, it does not need a long acquaintance to enable a man of the world to form an estimate of a girl's worth. She is most charming."

"I daresay," assents Sir Herrick. The Major smiles approvingly at the sky.

"And will be immensely rich."

"I suppose so," says Sir Herrick, quietly.

"Her father—the estimable Mr. Palmer—was pleased to be extremely confidential with me during the after-dinner chat, and gave me a heap of information that surprised me."

Sir Herrick displaying no curiosity, the major goes on:

"That girl, my dear Rick, will not only have a large sum of money, but the Court into the bargain."

"I am glad to hear it, for her sake," says Sir Herrick, calmly. "She seems a nice sort of girl."

"A nice sort of—My dear Rick, I am surprised at your want of appreciation. She is simply perfect."

"No doubt," says Sir Herrick. "If you don't mind, I will light up a cigar."

"Simply perfect!" repeats the major. "Great heavens! What a catch for some lucky young fellow!"

"No doubt," calmly and coldly.

"Once let it be known what Mr. Palmer's intentions are, and that girl will be surrounded and besieged, simply besieged."

"I daresay."

"If anything could make the major really angry and lose his self-command, this calm, cold acquiescence of his nephew would do it; but no one ever saw the major either angry or anything but blandly complacent, and he maintains his equanimity even now."

"If I were a young man," he says with a regretful sigh. "I should try my hardest to win that fortunate young lady."

"I am sure no one wishes you perpetual youth more sincerely than I do!" says Sir Herrick, sending the smoke from his lips in a spiral wreath.

"Think, my dear Rick, a large, handsome fortune, and the Court! Come; I see you won't confide in me; that I must go straight to the point. Confess that you have already laid aloe to the young lady's heart?"

"Nothing of the sort," says Sir Herrick, coldly. "I haven't addressed a dozen words to her."

"You surprise me!" ejaculates the major. "But then, of course, you didn't know it; but it wouldn't have made much difference."

"My dear Rick," and the major laughs, "have you come into a princely fortune?"

Sir Herrick smiles rather grimly. "No, sir; my worldly wealth consists of the balance of your last allowance."

"Then—then, I must confess that your indifference to the chance that lies before you—in your hand, I may say—surprise me!"

Sir Herrick smokes on in silence. "I cannot understand it," muses the major, drawing his cloak closer round him. "Of course I know why you left town."

"I left town because town was too hot to hold me," says Sir Herrick, grimly.

"Exactly, Levinino has been to me, and applied for the money you owe him; but, my dear Rick, I am not overflowing with gold."

"I have had too much already, sir," says Sir Herrick, gracefully.

"But you shall have more, my dear boy," says the major, affectionately. "Nothing shall stand in your way if—if you will but use your common sense and—"

"And what, sir?" enquires Sir Herrick, with a grim smile.

"And marry this young lady, my dear Rick," says the major, plumping over the answer effusively.

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"You would have me marry the daughter of a sugar-baker?" says Sir Herrick, after a pause.

"The daughter of the man who holds Powis Court, and who will give it to his daughter's husband!" says the major, impressively. "Come, my dear Rick, let us understand each other. Here are you, plunged to the neck in debt. Of course, my dear boy, I know all about it! Didn't I do the same thing when I was your age? Here are you, a Powis, of Hampden Powis, plunged to the neck in debt, and relying upon a by-no-means wealthy uncle for your mere pocket-money, thrown into the society of a young girl who can restore you to your own with a fortune into the bargain. Surely, you won't turn up your nose at it?"

A pause.

"I say," says the major, devoutly, "that it is a special interposition of Providence on your behalf. Such a chance as occurs to one in a thousand. Come, Rick, be sensible, be a man!"

The exhortation has a strange effect upon the calm, self-possessed youth. With an exclamation he throws his cigar into the road and sits up.

"I will," he says, and there is a sudden fire in his eyes which startles the major. "I will," he says. "You propose that I should marry this young girl for her money and Powis Court. It is impossible."

"Impossible!" murmurs the major, aghast. "Surely—great Heaven, Rick, you haven't gone and done anything rash!"

"I don't know whether you would call it rash—I suppose you would. But I have promised to marry the best and sweetest girl in the kingdom."

The major leans back and breathes a sigh of relief. He had feared that his reckless nephew had contracted a marriage.

"The best, and truest, and dearest girl in all England," says the once and impossible Sir Herrick, "and I shouldn't betray her for the daughter of the richest sugar-baker in the world."

The major waits until he regains his breath, then he says in his softest, sweetest murmur:

"My dear Rick, you astonish me. Is it really so? You have really committed yourself—I mean given your word? You surprise me. And who is the fortunate young lady?"

"Miss Paula Estcourt," says Sir Herrick, firmly.

"The young lady with the red hair," says the major, blandly.

(To be Continued.)

Fashion Plates.

A POPULAR STYLE.



3034

3034. As here illustrated, white linen was used, with brown linen for trimming. The design is good for serge, tweed, velvet and corduroy, with braid or stitching for trimmings. The blouse could be of wash material, and the trousers of cloth, corduroy, or velvet. Collar, cuffs and belt may be faced with contrasting materials as illustrated.

The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes: 2, 3, 4 and 5 years. Size 4 requires 2 1/2 yards of 44 inch material.

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A POPULAR, PRACTICAL STYLE.



3041

3041. This model is good for percale, lawn, gingham, chambray, drill, khaki, and flannelette. As here shown, blue checked gingham was used with collar and cuffs of white pique.

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