

DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

CHAPTER X.—(Cont'd)

It would be impossible to open such a subject with his wife, and after it to face, and expect her to face, the burden of entertainment on the morrow. He must wait till Dulcie was safe married and away, till Margaret also had taken her departure; wait with a burning heart from this midnight on the eve of Tuesday, till the day but one after, when they two would be alone. Alone except for May's intrusion; with no witnesses of division but the watchful, inevitable household, and the innocent presence of their child.

The child Ernest! Again he covered his face, and alone as he was, his shoulders heaved with the dry rind of a sob. How wisely, how perfectly Annabel was training the child, and how sweet and sacred she had seemed to him in her motherhood. How fair had been the outward show, while this canker was growing at the root! If only he might be in time to snatch this brand from the burning, he would endeavor to put up with that odor of singe under his nostrils for all that remained to him of life.

For his own comfort, for his child's sake, lastly for Annabel's salvation; always there will be mixed motives behind our actions. Scoldom does a good deed, a noble resolve, grow from a root that is, as it were, all in air, and does not somewhere and somehow plunge itself in soil. His life in any case would be a thing of shreds and patches after the agony of this night; and here was the highest point his aspiration touched. If only he might yet be in time; if only his world should not know and were might be no re-peating of the finger of scorn.

CHAPTER XI.

The church of Fortune's Ferry stood at some distance from the village, but closely adjacent to the Court; as if in building the convenience of the great house had been chiefly thought of, not that of the cluster of cottages which formed the parish nucleus. The church was small, and not remarkable for architectural beauty, but the living was a full one as livings go, and it was in the gift of the Swayne family. When it fell vacant on the death of the old incumbent, Colonel Swayne, having no related claimant, presented it to the second son of his old friend Sir Basil Hungerford. John Hungerford was at this time about thirty years of age, and had been knocked up in his East-End curacy with fever and overwork. He had borne some share of the heat and burden of the day, so it was not unbecoming that he should rest in green pastures and beside still waters—at any rate, for a time.

It is strange how accidents appear to shape our life for us. If old Mr. Bidelow, who had kept one foot in the grave and one out of it for some half-dozen years, had put in the second foot some twelve months earlier than he did, it is very possible that John Hungerford would have had a different history. For then Margaret was a daughter living at the Court, and probably the young vicar would have been attracted to her, and she in her turn might have been impressed by his somewhat striking personality. But it is no use speculating on might-have-beens. When Hungerford read himself in to his cure of souls, that breach of defiance between Margaret and her father was already made. The doors of the paternal home had been closed on her in anger, and she was a watcher at the bedside of the dying mother in France.

There was no Margaret, stately in her early womanhood, to fall in love with at the Court, but there was a very pretty and piquante little schoolgirl, who came home three times a year for the holidays, with whom the Reverend John was soon on terms of intimate friendship. It was not long before he came to the conclusion that Dulcie only could make him happy. Dulcie at some time in the future, when she emerged into womanhood and left off being a child. He was in no hurry matrimonially; he could very well wait, he thought, for that expected development; the friendship between them, which an unkind looker-on might have characterized, on Dulcie's side at least, as a flirtation, satisfied him for the present. In the future he hoped to teach her to regard him as a husband, and he did not think Colonel Swayne would be likely to reject his suit.

It was before the days of Gower of Grendon, and had he been asked for Dulcie, it is probable Colonel Swayne would willingly have consented. If not a brilliant marriage for his young daughter, there would at least have been a sufficient means. What Sir Basil had to leave would go

with the baronetcy, but John, the second son, would inherit his mother's fortune, which was settled on the younger children. Dulcie was perhaps the last girl in the world fitted to be a clergyman's helpmate, but John Hungerford trusted implicitly, as Gower did after him, to the ripening of intellect and heart which would presumably follow as she grew out of childhood.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft' a-gley." So runs the old rhyme, and the ganging a-gley of John Hungerford's came with that New Year visit when Dulcie and Gower first met, and in the course of which they fell in love. John the parson, in his leisurely wooing, had never reckoned with the evil chance that the bride would be won before he spoke. That is a disaster which is apt to befall dilatory wooers. Secure in his own conviction that Dulcie was too young for marriage, it did not occur to him other men might not see the same disability in her childishness. It was bitter to him that she had never known the heart of love he had for her—a love out of his fuller knowledge so much deeper and more serious (he told himself) than could be Gower's passion, which had flamed up like a blaze in straw for one who was all but a stranger. She had not known! There was a first mistake, complete and significant. Dulcie was perfectly well aware, even in the schoolgirl stage, of the Reverend John's sentiments; it had been a delight to her to play with him, like a kitten with a mouse, all the while he thought her unconscious. Her vanity was flattered, but she did not want him to "break." She was aware that his affection, once avowed, would not be easy to deal with unless her own heart responded. And as the event proved, her heart and her ambition were soon to set elsewhere.

Not easy to restrain! It was a right estimate, and in the last three months Hungerford had put it to the proof. That denial of Fate was like rain in the mountains, swelling to a torrent what in fair weather had been a placid stream. Hungerford had striven with all the force of his will, with prayer to help him and the austerity of Lenten fasts, striven to cast out that passion which once had folded its wings in his breast as a welcome angel. Three months had gone by, the first dark hours of the bridal day had struck upon the dial, and despite of Lenten fast, of prayerful desire, the passion in his breast was still alive, the stream still thundered in flood. Perhaps the solemn service of that day, part of which his own lips would pronounce, might avail as a final exorcism, to chasten and transmute his affection if it could not altogether die. There was something akin to horror in the thought that he, a priest, might still love another man's wife, and so violate the gospel law.

It was only a brief snatch of sleep which visited his eyes that night; for hours he knelt in prayer in the small recess which was fitted as an oratory, the lattice over the porch open and uncurtained, and the agonized figure on the Cross white in the moonlight on the wall. There was a strange prepossession which from the beginning whispered in the midst of his despair, an emissary, doubtless, of the Evil One; and against all reason and probability it was whispering even now. Perhaps it was this which "turned his prayers round in the air" and nullified fast and vigil. It whispered that something would happen to break the tie between Gower and Dulcie; suggesting even now, at the eleventh hour, hard on the noon of accomplishment, that the wedding might never be.

Fiend, avant thee! he was saying in effect, though in other words, during that vigil on his knees. What could prevent the marriage but the bridegroom's death, and was the thought and wish rendering him a murderer in his heart? Oh, priest of the Most High, consecrated and vowed, for shame, eternally for shame!

This night, so troubled and so wakeful to his host, was disturbed also for Gower. Stretched on the unaccustomed bed, he slept readily, but he slept only to dream. Was the devilish fancy which beset the priest in his oratory whispering at his ear as well, or was it a distorted presentation of the fear which, during these last weeks, had haunted his waking hours? He was wandering in the leafy aisles of a forest, all about him was the gloom of shadowing boughs, the perspective of straight stems; he had lost his way to the church where Dulcie, as he thought, was waiting. Then out of the gloom he broke through into a glade full of moonlight, and there, unaccountably, was a girl sitting at her easel. She wore a white dress and a bridal veil, and her occupation might have seemed

incongruous, but incongruity seldom disturbs us in a dream. "I am going to be married," he said to her; "tell me where I shall find the church, the church at Fortune's Ferry!" But the lady in the veil shook her head, and went on mixing colors on her palette. "That was last year," she replied; "it is too late." He woke with a start, the words sounding in his ear as if directly spoken. After a while he slept and dreamed again, and difficulty was again the theme, though with a difference.

In his dream he had arrived at the expected place, but the church was strangely altered. There was no chancel, no surprised priest, no chanting choir, but a space in the aisle filled with a shabby office furniture, a table with pen and ink, a book of forms, and beside it an old man who looked like a notary. But it must be right, he thought, for there was Colonel Swayne and his bride in her veil. A ring lay on the table, the ring he had bought for Dulcie, so small in size that it would not pass on to his least finger. He took it up to put on the bride's hand, but the measure proved to be a mistake, the destined finger was too large, and it stopped at the middle joint. "Never mind," the bride said, "I have a ring already, and I do not want another." Then he was required to sign his name in the register, the bride signing after him, when hers again was an error. He looked at the page of the register, and instead of her name of Dulcie she had written Margaret.

There was a third dream before morning, and again he dreamt of marriage. This time there was a church and priest, though not the church at Fortune's Ferry, and the bride and he were alone. He heard the very words of the service, the words he had scanned over the day before, that his part in them might be familiar. "Those whom God hath joined together," read the parson from his book, "let no man put asunder." There was his bride with the veil over her face, waiting for him to lift it and take the first kiss from her lips, and lo! the conviction smote him that this was not Dulcie. It was a taller woman, the face was nearer on a level with his own; Dulcie was only the height of his heart. He lifted the veil in haste and apprehension, and the dream at that instant broke, for the face was the face of a stranger!

He got up and looked out of the window, and the first beginning of dawn was pale already in the east. His couch was distasteful; sleep, if he slept again, might bring a repetition of these visions. He threw on his clothes, found his way down the strange stairs, and to a door he could unbar and open. Outside was the fresh morning, chill as yet, and grew with dew. He turned to the higher ground above the river, and there saw the sun of his wedding morning come up above the horizon, a shield of gold over the white mists of the valley, sending down a ray where Dulcie Swayne still slept behind the lattices of Fortune's Court.

He came back to the open door, and re-ascended the stairs in time to make a more careful toilet before the breakfast hour. The church bell was sounding for matins, which Hungerford was well used to reading to empty benches. Sometimes Mrs. Swayne would be there, but this eventful morning did not find her at her prayers.

Hungerford's face looked white and drawn when he came in to breakfast. "Ah, poor fellow," thought Gower, "fasts and vigils don't agree with him," but the guest was far from guessing to what purpose the vigils had been directed. He was a careful host, pouring out the coffee as deftly as a woman, and pressing on the bridegroom such good things as his housekeeper had sent in under shining covers. The Vicarage did not starve its guests, though the master's fare might be ascetic, and to-day the board was spread for feast rather than fast.

(To be continued.)

A VOTIVE HONEYMOON.

A well known Spanish barrister and a young lady belonging to the best society became engaged to each other some time ago, but owing to a succession of unfortunate circumstances it seemed at one time as if they would have very little chance of ever getting married, says the London Globe. At that time, depressed by despair, they both made a vow that if ever fortune favored them and they attained happiness they would walk together from Madrid to the shrine of the patron saint of Saragossa. Recently it came to pass that after many tribulations they succeeded in being joined at the altar, and as a honeymoon the newly wed couple set off on foot from Madrid and covered the distance to Saragossa of over 210 miles in ten days, thus maintaining the creditable average of twenty-one miles a day. The return journey, however, was made in the saloon of an express train.

"When a man is angry he tells you what he thinks of you." "Yes; and when a woman is angry she tells you what she thinks of you and what everybody else thinks of you."

REBELLIONS IN CHINA.

Trivial Circumstances From Which They Sometimes Start.

We have just recently come very near having another rebellion in Kansu, writes a Titacchow correspondent of the Shanghai Mercury. And it is a wonder that rebellions are so few, when one considers the many causes for friction between religious Moslems and pork eating of sixteen years ago started from a very insignificant cause.

The writer happened to be down at the Tao River some time ago and was surprised to see so many people with mules and carts loaded with grain, furniture and merchandise hurrying across the bridge. Upon inquiring for the cause I was informed that trouble had broken out among the Moslems and other Chinese in Makiaki, a market town sixty li west of the city. This district is about equally divided between pork and non-pork eaters, but the most flourishing business is in the hands of the more enterprising Moslems.

A Chinese who had received official permission to open a restaurant in the centre of the town was the immediate cause of the present trouble. This right was hotly contested by the Mohammedans, who would on no condition allow a pork using Chinese to open a restaurant in the centre of town. They refused on the plea that the water of the stream, which flows right through the town, and hence is the common property of all, would be defiled by the vessels of the Chinese restaurant keeper.

The Moslems openly affirmed that they would rather rebel than allow this, and it looked serious enough for a while, for neither would give in. Many of the well to do merchants, began to move away, and many took refuge in the city. All sorts of rumors were abroad.

Local officials had tried their best to reconcile the parties but without success. The Viceroy finally despatched a deputy, who visited the place several times and conferred with the elders, but nothing could be done to establish quiet and peace until the permission to the Chinese restaurant keeper to open had been cancelled.

So the Moslems scored a victory this time and rebellion was averted. A couple of the leading Moslems were brought before the civil mandarin and bamboozled and thus ended an affair which had stirred up a good part of the province for a month or two. It was like living near a volcano for the time being. And many of the poor people, who have already passed through two destructive rebellions, were fearfully frightened.

FOUND RIGHT PATH.

After a False Start.

"In 1890 I began to drink coffee. At that time I was healthy and enjoyed life. At first I noticed no bad effects from the indulgence, but in course of time found that various troubles were coming upon me.

"Palpitation of the heart took unto itself sick and nervous headaches, kidney troubles followed and eventually my stomach became so deranged that even a light meal caused me serious distress.

"Our physician's prescriptions failed to help me and then I dosed myself with patent medicines till I was thoroughly disgusted and hopeless.

"Finally I began to suspect that coffee was the cause of my troubles. I experimented by leaving it off, except for one small cup at breakfast. This helped some, but did not altogether relieve my distress. It satisfied me, however, that I was on the right track.

"So I gave up coffee altogether and began to use Postum. In ten days I found myself greatly improved, my nerves steady, my head clear, my kidneys working better and better, my heart's action rapidly improving, my appetite improved and the ability to eat a hearty meal without subsequent suffering restored to me. And this condition remains.

"Leaving off coffee and using Postum did this, with no help from drugs, as I abandoned the use of medicines when I began to use the food drink." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"There's a reason," and it is explained in the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

A PERSIAN WEDDING.

A smart Persian wedding is quite a serious affair. It may extend over a week. On the last day of the wedding the bride, who has been treated as a sort of outcast, is conducted by a near relative to a room, where she undergoes further and more elaborate decoration. She then returns to the guest room and her dowry is laid before her in trays. The dowry often comprises such queer things as cheap and highly colored eceographs, gaudy vases, bird cages and household articles. Having kissed the hearthstone of her home, she is given bread, salt and a piece of gold and thus equipped and closely veiled she is hoisted onto a gaily adorned donkey, and accompanied by a circuslike procession of friends, goes to her future home, where her husband awaits her.



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LETTERS OF A SON IN THE MAKING TO HIS DAD.

—By REX McEVoy

[Mr. McEvoy will write for this paper a series of letters from the west. They will appear from time to time under the above heading, and will give a picture of the great Canadian west from the standpoint of a young Ontario man going out there to make his way. These letters should be full of interest for every Ontario father.]

Calgary, Aug. 27th, 1911

My Dear Dad:—
Since I wrote you from Winnipeg I have left the prairies behind me. Today, about forty-five miles before reaching Calgary, I had my first sight of the Rocky Mountains. They lay low along the Western horizon, like clouds. The only way you could tell they were not clouds was because they did not change their shape. On the prairies I saw Indians, looking very civilized with their Bain wagons, cowboys, and mounted policemen, but I must tell everything in its turn. Before I go any further, I want to ask you to be sure to send me the newspaper from home. I feel just like Bill Dodson, whom I met in Winnipeg. He was telling me that whenever he got a paper from home, it was just like meeting an old friend, because it told him all about the folks he knew. His father gave him a subscription for a year as a Christmas present, and he said he couldn't have had anything that would have pleased him more. If I decide to stay out here, and anybody at home should want to give me something for Christmas, they might think about this. Don't wait till Christmas to send me the paper, though, please.

Say, Dad, if you saw the threshing machines that were round the railroad sidings at Winnipeg waiting to be shipped to the prairies you wouldn't wonder that people in the west boom their country. These machines, loaded on flat cars, or standing like batteries of guns waiting to be shipped, reminded me of the South African war pictures of shipping guns and ammunition to the front. There is just as much hustle here. At the station, all along the line, are more machines waiting to be unloaded, and empty box cars are being collected on the sidings to move the crop out. Everybody says that it is to be a bumper crop this year, and bigger than ever before. What you can see from the train certainly looks good. They have got cutting well under way now.

It's funny the way the towns out west advertise. You frequently come to towns where sign boards have been erected at the stations telling of the advantages the towns have to offer settlers. Back at Port Arthur they had an attractive little one-story brick building, what is called a kiosk, which is a bureau of information. At Fort William there was a big sign: "Fort William the Pulse of the Dominion; the bulk of East and West traffic passes through this town." There is another big sign there, but there is so much crowded on it, and the print was so small that I could not read it from the train. Indian Head is another place that advertises in this way. On one side of the track is the sign: "Indian Head, Saskatchewan's Beauty Spot. Good land \$20 to \$30 per acre." Across the track on the other side is a sign which reads: "Dominion Government forest nursery, 480 acres, one mile from town; Distributed annually, 3,000,000 trees free to settlers. Visitors can inspect at any time." You would think that if these towns wanted to advertise they would do it in Ontario papers. Of course, thousands of people read the signs by the railroad track, but by the time they see them they have tickets to their destination and are not likely to stop off.

Unless a man is alive to his opportunities he is a dead one.

"I wonder why bees make honey" queried the inquisitive youth. "I suppose," replied his friend, "they make it to sell!"

Out from Winnipeg the country is as flat as a table, and the horizon is as straight as the edge of a ruler. It surprised me to find out that between Winnipeg and Portage La Prairie, which is fifty-six miles west, there is a rise of 100 feet. Portage has a population of 7,000, and is quite a town, and one of Manitoba's principal grain markets. There are elevators there, of course, and from there west for a long way there are elevators at all the stations. Each station, belonging to different companies. To a new-comer from Ontario, these elevators, so many of them, are strange, and they are all the more noticeable because the country is so flat and there are no big trees. The elevators can be seen for miles.

At Brandon I laid eyes on the first Northwest Mounted policeman I ever saw. They wear red coats, just like those of the dragoons we saw in Toronto, and cow-boy hats. It is said that the red coats were made part of the uniform of the police by Sir John Macdonald because their most difficult work always looked on the soldiers of the Queen as their friends. A red-coat would be trusted where anyone else would meet only distrust and suspicion. The most prominent building, from the Brandon station, is a seed warehouse, and this is another indication of the character of the West. And the fact that they go in for agriculture, wholesale is shown by the advertisements to be seen offering "plowing engines" for sale. The plowing is done by engines on the big farms. Out on the prairies I saw great big galvanized iron tanks, which I thought must be for holding gasoline for running the plowing engines, but a man on the train said that these were portable granaries into which the grain is put as it is threshed, until it can be taken in to the elevators.

My, the prairies are lonely. You can look from the train window and get a wide sweep for miles and miles, and perhaps there will only be one house in the whole landscape. And there are no fences to show that anybody has made their home there. The rail fences, such as we have about the old place, you never see out here; wood is too scarce. Why, the only place about which there was a fence in some of the towns was the lumberyard, and this was sure to be protected with a high fence. Wood is so valuable that they say people look their kindling in safety before going to bed.

Bye-bye for the present.
Your loving son,
JIM.

LADIES, HOW ABOUT THIS?

Scientist Propheesies Moustaches and Beards for Women.

A Danish scientist has just published a work containing a prophecy which the world of to-day may consider as rather uncomfortable.

Taking whiskers as his theme, the scientist shows that the human beard is the result of an effort on the part of human life to decorate and arm itself. He contends that women ought to be regarded as the precursors of future types, and that the time will come when, possessing moustaches and beards of their own, they will not have to envy men, of whom they are almost the equal in politics.

This savant argues that even now ten per cent. of the young women have sprouting moustaches. He makes the bold assertion that the colored hairs of these moustaches are plucked out.

By way of softening the shock which the prospect of bearded women may well cause, he believes that the number will only increase slowly. According to his prophecy, women will grow beards quicker than moustaches. Women with moustaches may not be expected before two centuries.

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