

THE PRINCE—WHO CAME TRUE

A Summer-Resort Fairy-Tale With a Substantial Ending

By LOTUS H. FRENCH

GERALDINE was lonesome. There was no denying the fact nor trying to ignore it any longer. She had been at Cedar Brae for three days and, as she expressed it to herself, there was nothing doing yet. To be sure that place was just as pretty as she had expected to find it; in fact, to be perfectly honest, it even exceeded her expectations. The water was just as blue and inviting as she could have wished, but what good was that when she had no one with whom to enjoy it? The roads were just as broad and level for motoring as the advertisement had promised, but of what avail to Geraldine who had no car?

It was warm in the grove with a scarcely perceptible warm, sweet breeze; and oh, so peacefully quiet. "I should be mighty thankful to be here and not in the hot, noisy city," thought Geraldine as she put both feet up in the hammock and nestled more comfortably among the cushions.

How comfy she was, and how sleepy! An intoxicating drowsiness stole over her, she seemed to be floating on the water, on and on to some far, rosy land where were boats and motors and companions and more delights than the heart could wish for. One dear lad in that land of dreams walked with her, rode with her, sailed with her, talked with her. His golden voice was ever in her ears, insistent—oh! so insistent. Among the cushions the dreamer stirred.

"I've made up my mind to go sailing and a-sailing I will go."

Geraldine stirred again; the hammock tipped dangerously.

"If you must go to town I'll go sailing alone," the voice continued. "I may only have a few days here, and I'm going to try to enjoy them—"

"Over the waters that sparkle and gleam, Sailing I'll go with the girl of my dream."

Geraldine sat up and rubbed her eyes. For a moment she scarcely knew where she was, and, while she was trying to separate the land of dreams from the land of reality, the dream voice broke in again very clear and very near.

"I'm sorry you have to go back to the city, Jim, but perhaps it will be only for the day. I'm crazy to get out in the dinghy, so I'll just try her out alone to-morrow while you're away."

"Your poetry wasn't very appropriate then, if you're going alone." A new voice this time.

"Dream girls aren't as a rule very substantial, so I'll have to imagine mine. Have a cigarette, Jim?"

Geraldine heard a match being struck, and being curious about the owner of her dream voice, she peered through the cedars in the direction of the sound. With a very handsome profile turned towards her, sat a dark man, puffing a newly-lighted cigarette, while he held a burning match towards his companion, a large young man with thick, unruly, fair hair. Geraldine waited for them to speak again, scarcely breathing. Which would possess the golden voice, the golden voice of her dream?

The dark man rose and brushed some grass from his white flannel trousers. "I'm going in now to change old man," he said. "I'll have to leave shortly after dinner." He had a pleasant voice, but not the dream voice.

"All right, Jim, see you later."

THE fair man stretched out with his arms under his head as his companion walked toward the house.

"They must be staying at Cedar Brae, too," Geraldine thought. "Oh! if I were only acquainted with this dream man of mine, he wouldn't have to go sailing alone to-morrow. Why should we both be here and both alone?"

Then a daring plan leaped into her head. She would accost the fair young man and pretend she had mistaken him for Mr. Carson who lived near her in the city. Geraldine was not acquainted personally with Mr. Carson, but she chose him because this stranger looked not unlike her neighbour. Thus, if by any chance the stranger knew Mr. Carson, the mistake would not seem unnatural.

To think, with Geraldine, was to act. She picked up her cushions and, starting from the opposite side of the grove, strolled casually toward the house. Coming suddenly upon the indolent young man, she stopped apparently very much surprised.

"Why, Mr. Carson!" she exclaimed. "What a surprise to meet you here." Then as the young man sprang to his feet, she held out her hand, hesitated, and drew back.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, it isn't Mr. Carson. How

stupid of me! You see, Mr. Carson is a neighbour of mine, and you really do resemble him so much, I am so sorry."

"Quite a natural mistake, I assure you," the young man answered, with a merry smile, showing strong, white teeth. "One naturally looks for one's friend at a summer resort so near town."

Geraldine allowed some of her assumed confusion to vanish as she answered his smile.

"Mr. Carson and I will have a laugh over this," she said. "He will appreciate the joke on me."

"Shall I carry the cushions up to the house or can I persuade you to sit here for a while? We can't be strangers now, you know. Won't you sit down, please?"

Geraldine glanced up at him through her long lashes. A thrill ran through her at the success of her plan. He was smiling down at her with an invitation in his eyes.

Geraldine laughed softly and happily, and threw the cushions on the grass.

It was noon and hot on the water, but cool on the beach in the shade of the cedars. Geraldine and her new friend had been sailing all morning. It had been delightful, and she had not consented to stop until her companion had assured her that his appetite was so great he must either have some lunch or turn cannibal and eat her. Realizing that her life was in danger, Geraldine had been the first to spy an ideal picnic spot.

But now she was content to just sit and watch the water. In fact, her companion's mention of home was distasteful. She didn't want to go back to the boarding house for the whole of that beautiful day. Her dream man was so jolly, so interesting, so kind and thoughtful, so good to look upon and, above all, so real. Sitting cross-legged in the sand, aimlessly making patterns with little pebbles, she watched him under lowered lashes as he lay on his back, hands under his head. He was smoking, with her permission, a crooked brown pipe. His teeth, set on the stem, gave his face a rather stern expression which was belied by the soft light in his laughing, blue eyes. He wasn't handsome, Geraldine decided, but—well, good-looking, yes decidedly good-looking.

Geraldine made a decidedly good-looking picture herself as she sat there in her white middie suit and bright tie, her brown eyes partly hid by long, straight lashes, and her bright brown hair curling round her face and escaping in little ringlets from the coloured band which strove to restrain it.

"Penny for your thoughts, Miss Marden."

"I was thinking of a poor little, lonesome girl who fell asleep in a friendless world, and awoke in fairyland. A tiny fairy perched on her shoulder and in a tiny voice asked her wishes. 'Darling fairy,' she said, 'send me a friend, some one with whom to while away the weary hours.' The fairy waved her magic wand, and lo! at the girl's side stood a fairy prince clad in shining armour. Then—let me see, what happened next? Suppose you finish it Mr. Bruce?"

"Then he said, 'Come, beloved, come with me to the land of the setting sun.' She rose as upon wings and hand in hand they flew away to dwell happily ever after in the glorious sunset land. How's that for a perfectly regular fairy tale ending?"

"Fine! But my story was true and your ending added a touch of fiction. I was the lonesome girl and you were the fairy prince."

"Well, my part is true, too. Didn't I say to you, 'Come'? And didn't my sail boat take you along as with wings? And won't we be going home into the sunset? The main trouble is with the ever after part; the day is going altogether too fast. But this isn't going to be our last sail, is it? You'll take pity on a beastly lonesome fairy prince again, won't you?"

"If you'll take pity on me too. I think I need it more than you do. But come, Dream Man, the hour has arrived when we must turn our faces to the West. We must sail towards the sunset ere the darkness steals upon us filled with all sorts of bogies. Then, the little fairy will have lost her power and perhaps my prince will disappear."

"No danger of my vanishing into thin air while you are anywhere around. But, as you say, the time has come, we may not tarry longer."

Once more the girl was seated among the cushions, and they were slipping over the water as if indeed the boat had wings. Oh, it was glorious, glorious! The water was so blue, tipped here and

there with a white cap. The wind carried away their words almost before they were spoken, so there was very little attempt at conversation. The girl was content to sit and revel in the flashing water, the stinging wind, the steady hiss of the waves as the boat cut through. The man was giving his attention to the sail.

"I'll have to change my course a little," he shouted to her. "When I do, the boat will lean considerably so I'll have to ask you to sit well up on the left side. There will be lots of spray, so you had better put on an oil-skin coat; you will find one under the seat."

The girl did as she was bid, and, as soon as she was settled, the man tightened the sail and slightly turned the handle of the rudder. The boat veered and leaned over until the deck was partly under water. Their speed increased; the water sprayed over the boat like rain. The wind nipped.

"Nervous?" the man asked. He was sitting beside her now on the upper side.

Geraldine, her face covered with spray, and looking like a pretty child with her wet curls, smiled at him reassuringly.

DOWN came the sail, while the boat retained enough headway to slide alongside the wharf. The man held the boat steady while Geraldine got out, then proceeded to fix it up for the night.

"How carefully you put your baby to bed," she commented, watching him.

"No wonder I take care of her; she has been my only companion during many a lonely hour up here. The fact is, I expected to have a tete-a-tete with her to-day."

"And I came along and burst up all your plans. Poor little boy! What a shame it was to knock over his house of blocks. But cheer up, little man, you can build another house."

"When I do there'll be room for two in it."

They strolled toward the house in silence, a constraint seemed to have fallen upon them. Their gay repartee seemed to have come to an abrupt end.

"Well, I'll see you at dinner, princess. How would you like to go for a paddle to-night? It will be moonlight I think."

"Thanks Mr. Bruce, I'd enjoy it immensely."

At the landing she turned and, seeing him still watching her from below, sent him a merry little smile.

"Nice little princess," thought the man as he turned away.

"Nice fairy prince," thought the girl as she went on up the stairs.

Geraldine had finished dinner and still no sign of her new friend. Perhaps she was content to have it so, however, as she was very much preoccupied with a disturbing little thought. Naturally honest in word and deed she had come to look on her action of the previous day in a different light. From a harmless little bit of mischief, she had come to regard it as a piece of brazenness showing a distinct lack of refinement on her part. As to what had altered her point of view, she was not quite sure, but certain it was she felt that one who was worthy of Mr. Bruce's friendship would be incapable of deceiving him.

While half-heartedly eating her ice, she formed a resolution that she would confess her action to Mr. Bruce while out in the canoe that evening. She was sure that he would understand the spirit in which the thing was done. They would have a laugh over her impulsiveness, and, perhaps, be better friends than ever. With a sigh of relief over her decision, she rose from the table and went out on the verandah.

"Oh, here you are, Miss Marden."

Mr. Bruce came out of the house dressed for town, club-bag in hand.

"Walk down to the gate with me while I explain, will you? Beastly nuisance, but I got a phone message just as I was going down to dinner, and I have to go to town for a couple of days. Leaving on the seven-ten. Awfully hard luck little princess, I hate like the d—like anything to miss that paddle."

"What about dinner?"

"Practical child. I'll get something to eat on the train. Are you sorry I'm going?"

"Awfully."

"Why didn't you say so?"

"You didn't give me a chance."

Mr. Bruce laughed. "I'll only be gone for a couple of days, back Friday night sure."

They were at the gate now. The man put down