

DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd)

The little fellow was accustomed to keep early hours in the nursery, but when Lord Swinton came to the Court he was kept out of bed to appear at dessert in his evening suit of velvet, daintily dressed, but with a boyish, cropped head; no such girl's style could be permitted here as long hair in the Fauntleroy fashion. Ernest liked his uncle, and the uncle made evidence of his pride and affection by the offering of indigestible dainties which were usually forbidden, and insisting that the child should pledge a toast by sipping his own glass of wine. It might pass for once in a way without harm, but it was well for the Swinton heir that nursery rules were stricter, and these occasions of licence happened to be rare. Lord Swinton was very polite to Mrs. Swayne, regarding her as a woman who had seen her duty and fulfilled it, by bringing into the world the wished-for heir and not any more useless daughters.

It made an attractive picture—the two old soldiers, grey-moustached, with the beautiful boy who was the hope of their house—a picture any mother's eye might have lingered over with delight. Annabel could hardly bear to look at it to-night. She loved the child, but yet, strange as it may seem, towards him who was her pride there had never been a complete opening of the mother's heart. The first and best of her affection had been drained away, like blood from a wound, towards that other child whose existence was a shame to her, who had been taken as an infant from her arms, who, through-out these years in which he had grown to manhood, she had seen only seldom and by stealth.

The time was advancing. There was a bracket clock in the hall which chimed the quarters. Nine struck as if beaten on her heart, and then the quarter after. It must be drawing on to the half-hour.

"I really must take Ernest to bed now," she said, smiling. "He has an important part to play to-morrow, and it will not do to have him half asleep." And then the men stood up, the door was opened for her, and she swept away with the child.

The nurse was in waiting, and as the little heir mounted the staircase, chattering to the last, Annabel sought a certain silken wrap which covered her head and shoulders. There was about it a faint scent of sandal-wood, and in its soft daintiness it seemed the emblem of all she had gained by her marriage, all that this other man's presence endangered. She crossed it over her bosom, and, with the thought, her fingers clenched upon it. The position was worth a struggle, worth defending with all her woman's wit—worth that other risk she meditated, which would cover sin by sin.

There was still a murmur of voices in the dining-room. Dulcie was closeted upstairs with Margaret, newly arrived. The morning-room had a window to the ground, which was in use as a passage-way. She lowered the lamp, and set it aside out of the draught, and then went softly and quickly out.

It was dark outside, for there was a cloud over the lately-risen moon, but the darker the better for her purpose. She would not pass the windows of the front, but go by way of the servants' quarter, walking on a turf border, that her steps should not sound upon the gravel.

There must have been something in her nature which responded to the need for stealth, though for many years of fair living her ways had been plain and open as the palm of an honest hand. There was chatter and clatter of dishes audible from one window of the kitchen which was set gardenwards, the other looked upon the high up in the wall and not to be feared; but the window of Mrs. Hartopp's parlor was low and uncurtained, and a broad stream of lamplight shone out through it upon the dark shrubs and on the walk.

Annabel would have done better to take the other way, and yet why should not she, the mistress of all, stroll in her own garden this spring night? She had walked there many a time without thought of attracting notice—was the secret errand written so palpably upon her that these must be notice now?

She passed quickly, treading on the bordering grass, and so gained the cover of the shrubbery. Now the lights from the house were hidden, this path was dark indeed, but every turn of it was familiar. And before she reached the open ground below the moon grew thin in passing. The queen of the night looked through a veil behind a veil,

then with unshrouded face. In that white radiance suddenly made clear the garden shelter was plain to see. Annabel paused before it, hesitating whether to enter. The cross-bars of the wide, low windows to right and left were flung in shadow on the floor, the place was half-filled with garden seats piled away into the corner, but of human occupation it was empty.

Had Vinny failed to keep the trust he offered? Annabel's feeling was half relief, half disappointment for certain words burned within her, ready for utterance. During the passage of a slow minute she stood irresolute, doubting whether to stay or go.

The man she expected to meet was not far off. He came forward, noiseless on the turf. Then his foot crushed the nearer gravel, and she turned.

It was the same face which in her girlhood had seemed fair, manly; now the brand of evil was set upon it; nothing to which she could appeal. She would win nothing in this encounter that she had not power to buy.

He came towards her with hands outstretched. "Annabel," he said, "at last!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The clock pointed to that time of day, or rather evening, when Mrs. Hartopp was used to change her attire to silk apron and lace cap and withdraw into the privacy of the housekeeper's room, such kitchen work as remained being in the hands of her subordinates. Woe befell the undermaid who did not present that parlor in speckless order, the lamp lit, the newspaper—a reversion from the day before—ready folded at her elbow. In an ordinary way the blind was lowered and curtains drawn over the shut window; but the lamp had smoked on lighting, and so the sash had been thrown up to rid the room of the unpleasant odor. Mrs. Hartopp sniffed disapprovingly, and mentally rehearsed a lecture to be administered to Betty. She peeped at the wick, which was turned low, sniffed again, and decided that the window might now be closed. The room was positively chilly; and Betty was aware it never suited her to have a draught. Her hand was on the sash, when she caught sight of that passing figure; a glimpse only, before it was swallowed up in darkness, but distinct enough for certainty.

The mistress! And here, after surprise, came speculation. If she wanted to walk out at this chilly time of the evening why was she not on the front terrace, where the dining-room windows were unshuttered, shining out for company? And if she was going down the shrubberies, this was by far the longer way round.

Thought travels quickly, and close on interrogation came the answer. Mrs. Hartopp had not forgotten the scene of the morning, glimpsed from the doorway of the business room—May's head drawn against Mrs. Swayne's breast and her lips upon his brow. She was stealing out now to meet him under cover of the darkness, the housekeeper had not a doubt of it. Mrs. Swayne! when it was conduct that would disgrace a kitchenmaid. "The poor Colonel," she said to herself again, and the indignation which consumed her was fed with the loyalty of a lifetime, for ever since her girlhood the Swayne family had owned her service. The first wife had done wickedly wrong; but Madeline Swayne would never have descended to secret ways like these, and with a man (as Hartopp phrased it to herself) "who, after all, was no better than a servant."

For the housekeeper had all the contempt of her class for all orders of employed gentility. She peered into the darkness after the vanished figure, and then drew down the window and fastened it, lowering the screen of the blind. But that did not shut out the idea. She was turning over in her mind what it behoved her to do. If it had been Betty, the duty of following her would have been undoubted, and very probably she would have boxed her ears, or those of the intruding lover. Mrs. Swayne's ears could not be subjected to such chastisement, but was she not equally bound in her master's interests to plumb the depth of this greater wrong-doing, and of her own witness make him aware? Duty and curiosity pointed in the same direction, and it is ever convenient when the one can hide itself under the cloak of the other. Mrs. Hartopp's slippers were sufficiently stout for the adventure; but she, like her mistress, sought a covering shawl, though in the housekeeper's case it was a grey knitted web which her own fingers had woven.

"I am going out to see to something which is wrong," she said severely to Betty, whom she met at the door with her supper tray. "You can leave that ready on the table, for I shall not be long." The admonition about the smoky lamp

was postponed; there would be time for that in the morning; but it was just as well Betty's conscience should be stirred over something that was indefinitely amiss. And then the old woman in her turn passed out into the soft darkness, which was about to lighten with the thinning of that veil before the moon.

The veil dissolved from serge to crape, from crape to gauze, and then the white light shone out broadly, illuminating where it fell, but deepening all the shadows. And it was needful for a spy to lurk in the shadow, however righteous her intent. Mrs. Hartopp shook her head and groaned over her errand, but there was a species of enjoyment about it, despite that grief for the poor colonel. Annabel had instituted a strict rule of careful economy when she came to the Court as its mistress, and it galled the old servant, who hitherto had had her way. Hartopp had been loyal to her employer; the sole speculations were in directions thought legitimate; but she was better pleased for the economies to be her own. And when, after eight years of inward chafing, she had Annabel on the hip, was it to be expected of human nature that she should forbear to strike?

(To be continued.)

YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER.

Weather Eccentricities Recorded in 1816—Frost in June.

The year 1816 was called the year without a summer, says the Magazine of American History.

As the springtime approached nothing in the weather indicated the return of seed time, much less of harvest. Snows, heavy rains and cold winds prevailed incessantly, and during the entire season the sun arose each morning as though in a cloud of smoke, red and rayless, shedding little light or warmth and setting at night as behind a thick cloud of vapor, leaving hardly a trace of its having passed over the face of the earth. The frost never went out of the ground until about the last of May. The farmers planted their crops, but the seed would hardly sprout, and when at last it came to the surface there was not warmth enough to cause anything to grow. During the month of June young birds were frozen to death in their nests, and so great was their destruction that at least for three years after very few birds visited the colder parts of the northern States. The woods and forests seemed deserted by them. Small fruit such as the juneberry ripened and rotted on the trees in the forests because of no birds to eat them.

Crops that required warmth, like corn, generally failed to mature, and only here and there in a few places that seemed especially protected did an ear ripen. The people after repeated hopes of a change in the weather settled down in almost despair. Large spots appeared on the face of the sun, as seen through the smoky atmosphere, distinctly visible with the naked eye; frosts prevailed every month the whole year and almost daily, and in a few places where corn ripened was the only supply of seed for the next year, and it was held at an exceedingly high figure with now and then an exception.

AT THE PARSONAGE

Coffee Runs Riot No Longer.

"Wife and I had a serious time of it while we were coffee drinkers."

"She had gastritis, headaches, belching and would have periods of sickness, while I secured a daily headache that became chronic."

"We naturally sought relief by drugs without avail, for it is now plain enough that no drug will cure the diseases another drug (coffee) sets up, particularly, so long as the drug which causes the trouble is continued."

"Finally we thought we would try leaving off coffee and using Postum. I noticed that my headaches disappeared like magic and my old 'trembly' nervousness left. One day wife said, 'Do you know my gastritis has gone?'"

"One can hardly realize what Postum has done for us."

"Then we began to talk to others. Wife's father and mother were both coffee drinkers and sufferers. Their headaches left entirely a short time after they changed from coffee to Postum."

"I began to enquire among my parishioners and found to my astonishment that numbers of them use Postum in place of coffee. Many of the ministers who have visited our parsonage have become enthusiastic champions of Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

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

Coffee Runs Riot No Longer. Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Lots of people are good to-day because they are afraid their actions of yesterday may get in the snottlight.

Don't go out in a rowboat with a man who says he is feeling rocky.

HIS MAJESTY'S REPORTER

BRITISH PREMIER'S SECRET LETTERS TO THE KING.

Leaders Describe Everything of Interest That Happens in the Commons.

In the King's private library at Buckingham Palace are rows on rows of sumptuously-bound, gilt-lettered volumes, which form one of the most remarkable and valuable collections of autograph letters in the world.

Probably not more than half-a-dozen pairs of eyes have ever explored the contents of these mysterious volumes; and certainly no money could purchase the right to examine them. Briefly, they contain the tens of thousands of letters written daily, during the last seventy-three years, by successive leaders of the House of Commons to Queen Victoria and King Edward, describing the day's doings at Westminster.

CHATTY AND HUMOROUS.

From Lord Melbourne and Sir Robert Peel to Mr. A. J. Balfour and Mr. Asquith, the successive leaders describe, each in his own individual way, everything of interest that has happened in the Commons during his leadership. The letters are formal and ceremonious, chatty, anecdotal, or humorous, just as the mood and character of the writer prompted; and altogether they constitute a Parliamentary history of unrivalled interest and value.

Each letter begins in almost identical words: "Mr. — presents his humble duty to His Majesty, and begs to inform him that at the sitting of the House of Commons to-day—" and proceeds, according to the manner of the writer, to tell the story of the sitting, usually as one friend in the House might write it to another.

The late Sir Theodore Martin was one of the very few people privileged to read these letters, and, in his "Life of the Prince Consort," he gives extracts from two of them. In one, written in 1860, Lord Palmerston writes, "The Speaker grows as impatient as any official who has hired a grousing moor and cannot get to it; and a few nights ago, when a tiresome orator got up to speak just at the end of the debate was expected, the Speaker cried out, 'Oh! oh!' in chorus with the rest of the House."

HOW THEY WERE WRITTEN. In another letter, Disraeli, describing two memorable speeches by Lytton and Sir Hugh Cairns, writes, "Never was a greater contrast between two orators, resembling each other in nothing but their excellence. Deaf, fantastic, modulating his voice with difficulty—at first almost an object of ridicule to the superficial—Lytton occasionally reached even the sublime and perfectly enchanted his audience."

The first leader of the House to write a nightly letter to his Sovereign was Mr. George Grenville, who, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, kept King George III. informed of the storm which raged around John Wilkes; and from that far-off day to this the daily letters have flowed in unbroken sequence, through Pitt, Fox, and Canning, down to the leader of our time.

Each leader has his own different method of writing this royal diary. Many, including Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. W. H. Smith, and Sir William Harcourt, always retired to the privacy of their own room for the undisturbed discharge of the duty. Others have written the letters in the House itself, amid all the distractions of debate and the answering of questions.

Mr. Gladstone used invariably to write his letter while seated on the Treasury Bench. Taking a sheet of the House notepaper (quarto size), he would spread it on a blotting-pad placed on his knees, and scribble away with a squeaky quill pen as any matter of interest arose. So tenaciously did he stick to his letter that he would even carry it into the Lobby in case of a division, and he never lost touch of it until it was ready for dispatch.

WITH A GOLDEN "SWAN."

Mr. Balfour's method was very similar. Blotting-pad on knee, he wrote his report with the small gold fountain pen attached to his watch chain; usually during the last few minutes of the sitting, and literally racing against time.

The late Mr. W. H. Smith found time amid all his duties to write many a letter to his wife as well as to his Queen. In one he writes, "I have just finished my letter to Her Majesty and I must write a few lines to my own particular queen. Harcourt is mouthing, declaiming, and denouncing us in violent language, and the Attorney-General in particular. God bless and keep you and my dear children! And pray for me every day that I may have wisdom and strength to do what is right. It is a hard and difficult task."—London Tit-Bits.

Don't go out in a rowboat with a man who says he is feeling rocky.

Children Often Need a laxative—but you cannot be too careful what you give them. Harb's purgatives injure the bowels and pave the way for life-long troubles. The new evacuant in

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do the work most effectively without irritating the bowels or causing any discomfort. The children like them for they taste like candy. One of the most popular of the NA-DRU-CO preparations. 25c. a box. If your druggist has not yet stocked them, send 25c. and we will mail them. 20 National Drug and Chemical Company of Canada, Limited. Montreal.

FACTS ABOUT OUR HOME MARKETS.

No Need to Turn Elsewhere for Trade in Farm Products.

The old fable about the dog with the piece of meat in his mouth, jumping into the water after a shadow, and in the end losing the good morsel he had at first, may be applied very aptly to the country, which has splendid markets at home, but becomes discontented, and although not half realizing the importance of its natural heritage, looks abroad for trade it knows not of. Such is the position in which in her present relations with the United States. But the facts do not warrant Canada looking away from her home market.

The home market is taking eighty per cent. of the produce of the Canadian farms at good prices.

The demand of this market is increasing and it will continue to increase as the country grows. It has the advantage of nearness, stability, cheapness of transportation and quickness of returns.

The Canadian farmer is familiar with its conditions and requirements.

And yet, withal, the Canadian farmer is inclined to look beyond this market with longing eyes to the market of the United States, forgetting, perhaps, that the United States farmer is looking with just as longing eyes at the Canadian market.

There are at least twelve farmers in the United States looking longingly at the Canadian market to one farmer in Canada looking at the United States market.

Let us remember that there are at least twelve times as many farmers in the United States as there are in Canada, and so, while one Canadian farmer will get entrance into the markets of the United States, twelve American farmers will get entrance into our home markets. They have already succeeded in selling immense quantities of farm products in Canada, in spite of the duty. They have sold twice as much in Canada as Canadian farmers have sold in the United States.

With reciprocity in farm products the twelve American farmers will

crowd the one Canadian farmer pretty closely in his own home market.

The surplus production of the United States farmer would be liable any time to demoralize the home market of the Canadian farmer.

It will cost the American farmer no more to bring his farm products to Canadian towns and cities than it will cost the Canadian farmer to carry his to the United States.

These American products are pretty well kept out now by the tariff wall. With this removed they will enter twelve to one.

We must remember, too, that the Americans have the earlier season, and that their products will therefore be upon our markets before our products are salable and get the early price.

OF COURSE NOT.

The little boy was carrying home the empty bowl that had contained his father's dinner, when the big bully appeared.

"Do you mind if I kick that bowl?" inquired the bully.

"Not a bit," said the small boy. "You mean that? Do you mind if I kick that bowl?"

"Not a bit."

"For the last time. Do you mind if I kick that bowl?"

"No, I should like you to."

"Oh, would you! Then watch me!" exclaimed the bully, as he shattered the bowl to atoms. "Do you mind now?"

"Not a bit!" retorted the small boy, edging away. "My mother borrowed the bowl from your mother this morning. You'll hear all about it when you get home!"

COURTING IN BURMA.

Proprietary is the god most worshipped by the Burmese lassies. The young lady may exchange a few glances and sentences with her lover at the entrance to the pagoda, but, as a rule, all courting is done at her home. The young man comes to see his lady love in the evening about nine o'clock. By this time the family has retired, and the verandah is given over to the lovers. The courtship is an eminent-ly proper affair; for the Burman mother, while not a tyrannical chaperon, reserves to herself the right of sly peeping at the sweet-hearts as they bill and coo.

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