

The Magpie's Nest

By Isabel Paterson

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Editors' Note.—Hope Fielding found the world a great big place in which she tried to live out her own ideals and to work out her own destiny. As each instalment of this story appears we find that she is doing both—but not exactly in the way she had planned.

The final chapters become more and more fascinating. The Editor sat up until the chill, gray dawn to finish the story. We know that you will do the same with this and the concluding instalment which will appear next month.

The Editors.

"GOOD-BYE," she said, without turning. She heard the door close. She could not move, to go after him, where her heart went and recapture her happiness, and her trust.

Mary found her, lying on the couch with the room darkened and a towel bound about her forehead and eyes, quite two hours later. She was sick with weeping, her face swollen and marred with tears, but still.

"It's all over, Mary, and the dead are counted," she said, sitting up as the light came on. "Please don't tell me how beautiful I look." There was a catch in her voice, which was husky and toneless.

"You and Tony?" said Mary, shocked beyond words by the very thing she had always expected.

"Yes," said Hope. "I'll tell you—some time. Let's talk about something else. Something funny." And Mary did.

But that night Mary heard her sobbing in her sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY knew Edgerton had something on his mind; he watched her furtively over his shoulder, and pawed the papers on his desk in an aimless manner utterly foreign to him. But when he finally unburdened himself, she was utterly surprised.

"I don't know much about women," he began, "At least," his brow contracting as with pain, "my wife says I don't." There was a hidden meaning in that reference, for Edgerton's heart was sore and his pride raw from his wife's ungentle ministrations. Her parting words to him had been inexpressibly cruel.

"Oh, well, who does know anything about women?" said Mary cheerfully. "They're exactly like men—all different."

"Are they?" He did not seem certain in his mind. "It's my girl I'm thinking of. You know, I want her to be happy. I want her to have everything she wants, if it's good for her."

"What does she want?" asked Mary briskly, but touched by his turning to her in his perplexity.

"She's got a fancy for that young man—Yorke," returned Edgerton. Mary positively gasped.

"Do you mean that he has—proposed to her?"

"Well, in a way. Emily and I have always been chums, you know. She just hinted that he had hinted that she was the only girl in the world—oh, she just had to tell some one, you see, and I was the only one handy." He dissembled his pride, that she had brought her unfolding little heart to him, her father. "She always does tell me, when any young sprig begins making up. She's had a dozen. But she says she likes this one."

"But what do you want me to do?" asked Mary, absently tearing up an advertising layout she had worked over all morning.

"Tell me if he's good enough," said Edgerton. "You know him, and I'd back your judgment. I don't know anything about him, and I haven't time to find out, if I want to act."

"He's not good enough," said Mary viciously.

Edgerton looked up sharply.

"Why not?"

"Because," she spoke carefully, her dark eyes narrowing like a cat's, "he's jilted another girl within the week. And he hasn't a cent in the world. Neither has she. Put two and two together."

"All right," said Edgerton. "Thank you, awfully, Mary—I beg your pardon, I mean, Miss Dark. I've heard you called

THE STORY OF THE STORY

Dreamy, and living much in the dreams she fashioned from the old romances she read, Hope Fielding lived in a world unreal, but real to her. She was ambitious and needed money to pay her way through the Normal School. She went to the city and engaged as housemaid in a hotel. Jim Sanderson—a boarder—pursued her for months, and finding her alone one day, made himself so objectionable that she knocked him down with the butt of a revolver. Then she went home.

Hope taught school and found

life flat and unprofitable; Hope and Mary Dark took rooms together, and presently Hope became engaged to Tony, but the engagement was not announced.

Tony became jealous, without knowing exactly why; and Mary, who saw trouble coming, would have warned Hope, had it been any use.

Edgerton's daughter, Emily, comes home from New York and so captivates Tony that he goes to Hope and asks to be released from their engagement.



"Hope sprang to her feet—'The train,' she cried. 'We forgot it! It's gone.' 'Then marry me tonight,' Ned said."

by your first name so often. I wonder if you couldn't see Emily, and maybe show her the same thing? She thinks you're so clever, you know; and it takes a girl to talk to another girl."

"I'll try," said Mary, rather doubtfully, and telephoned Emily for an appointment. Emily insisted on lunching her, so it promised well. Edgerton fell to pondering again, and as the result of an hour's cogitation, scribbled a note, handed it to Mary hastily, and reached for his hat. At the door he turned.

"Who was the other girl?" he asked. "Oh, now! That wouldn't be fair," said Mary, and he nodded assent, and went out. The note was for Hope.

If Mary had thought twice, she might not have given Hope her news with the note. But she thought a desperate case required desperate remedies, and the girl was sick. Her eyes were ringed with black, her face looked pinched and ghostly, and

she walked unseeing, like a somnambulist.

She twisted the note around her fingers while she listened, and seemed at first to make no sense of what Mary said. Then her head went up stiffly, with a gesture of a sort of direful pride.

"Are they engaged, then?" she only asked, at last.

"No," said Mary, telling nothing of her own part in the matter. "Her father will not have it; and I know he will prevent it. I am certain of that."

Hope stood up, her hand pressed to her side. "Mary," she said piteously, "was he like that all the time—all the time? Was I really such a fool? Why didn't I see it?"

Mary knew she must be calm. "Schopenhauer explains that much better than I can," she said lightly. "And we're all fools, all the time. Poor Tony is what he is; he can't help it. Circumstances cornered him, that's all. But he has

all the qualities that attract; I believe I could love him myself, with my eyes wide open, if everything conspired against me. If you were ten years older, you'd have managed circumstances, and been happy. Tony needs a woman of the world, not a dear little goose like you."

"What should I have done?" Hope asked again. "What did I do? He didn't believe Jim Sanderson, he only wanted an excuse."

"Well, child, don't we always believe our own excuses?" said Mary sensibly.

Then Hope found Edgerton's note in her hand, and began to laugh. "Was Tony thinking of him?" she asked thoughtfully.

"Oh, probably," said Mary. "Don't bother about it any more now. Will you come and see Emily to-morrow with me?"

"Oh, yes," said Hope. "I'll play the game now. That's what I should have done before, isn't it?" Then her self-control gave way, and she wept again. And then she laughed, and wrote an answer to Edgerton. Mary went to bed exhausted from sheer sympathy, but Hope sat up half the night reading.

Edgerton only came to the corner with the motor, but Hope heard the muffled down engine as he stopped, and ran to meet him with a sensation of escape. Mary was away for the evening, but Mrs. Hamilton, according to custom, was at home.

When Edgerton slowed down, miles away, they seemed adrift in space, detached from the living world.

"Why are you driving?" asked Hope. "Where is Allen? I tried to find him on the telephone to-day—"

"Did you?" said Edgerton, in a tone of dry humour. "I thought so. That's why I sent him away. You'll never see him again, little girl. Unless you order me to bring him back to you. Can't I fill his place?"

"Oh, just as well," she said lightly. "You did know we used to steal your old car, then?"

"I did," said Edgerton. "And it's a brand new car."

"Were you jealous of him?" She asked it idly.

"Horribly," said Edgerton. Astounded, she detected the note of truth in his voice. He had been jealous, too! And he had done what one should do; he had calmly removed the cause. She admired him, in a queerly impersonal way. He commanded circumstances. Once she had thought Tony capable of that!

"Oh, never mind," she said. "I just wanted some one to worry. Con, I must do something. I'm going away. This town is full of emptiness."

"I'm going away too," he remarked. "Want to come along?" Now he was patently jesting, and she sent his head spinning with her answer.

"Yes. Please take me."

"My God," he said, forgetting the wheel a moment. "Don't say things like that, dear."

"Oh, well," she sighed, "of course you don't need me. You have everything, or can get it."

"You mean I'm rich," he returned.

"When I die I'd like to have all my money brought

to me, in paper, piled up—and I'll set a match to it. Half my life's gone into the making of it. I don't see why any one else should have it."

"Then," she said slowly, "after all, you're really no cleverer than I. You didn't get anything out of it all, either. And I was envying you!"

"No," he said, "I didn't—What are you talking about? You've got it all yet."

"Mine," she said, "was another kind of soap-bubble."

"You mean—?" His mind was not quick, but it had a sure reach. Slowly, now he pieced together many little things. "Were you the girl? The girl Tony Yorke threw over?" He had not meant to put it quite so brutally.

She grew hot, and visibly shrank into her cocoon-like wrappings, but the necessity for honesty overcame her also.

"How did you guess? Yes, it was I."

Edgerton muttered something indistinguishable and angry. "Why?" he asked heavily.

"Oh, why not?" she retorted, and tried to turn it into a sorry joke. "Weren't you frightened yourself, a minute ago?"

"I?" He reached around and drew her chin up clumsily. Her cheek was wet to touch. "You didn't mean it! It wouldn't be fair—and it isn't fair of you. Would you?"