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Peggy's Jockey

If there is any individual person in this world who calls for particular sympathy, I hold that person to be a widowed mother who has three pretty and portionless daughters to establish comfortably in households of their own. I am thankful to say that my two elder girls were never the slightest trouble to me.

Evelyn married at the end of her first season, and her husband, a middle aged, wealthy stock broker, has turned out to be all that the heart of a mother-in-law could desire. Constantia found her partner for life in the person of a most worthy Churchman who is possessed of a snug living in Berkshire, and who makes her a most exemplary mate.

From the first moment of her return I knew I should experience difficulty with Peggy. Nor did my forebodings prove to be unfounded. She refused a couple of most eligible offers, on the ridiculous ground that she did not care for either of the gentlemen.

I took her that winter to Davos, and we established ourselves in a quiet pension which was well within the means of my slender purse. Nobody of interest was among our fellow-boarders, I discovered—indeed, there were very few English people in the place at all—and I began to fear I had wasted both time and money, and realized with a sense of injury, that I should have been far more comfortable at home in my cosy flat in Chelsea-gardens.

Peggy, however, seemed to be enjoying herself tremendously. She went for long, brisk tramps (I am a wretched walker), returning invariably with a lovely rosy color in her cheeks—due no doubt, to the invigorating mountain air—and an appetite which would have shamed a dairymaid.

It happened one day that I was coming back to our little hotel for dejeuner when I suddenly lit upon a sight which nearly took my breath away. Advancing slowly towards me, and accompanied by a most disagreeably handsome young man, was my youngest daughter, who had parted from me earlier in the morning, with the avowed intention of taking a prolonged and, as I had fondly imagined, solitary walk. They were engrossed in conversation as I approached them, and there was something in the stranger's bearing as he bent down to catch what Peggy was saying which made me grow cold all over.

Who was this man, and what was he? He looked a gentleman, certainly, but all sorts of adventures were to be met with abroad.

"Why, darling, I had no idea we should meet you!" (She evidently had not, I thought grimly.) "Let me introduce—"

I waived the intended introduction aside with a gesture, and bestowed a frigid bow upon the tweed-clad individual, whose eyes were actually twinkling with suppressed mirth.

"Margaret, it is time for dejeuner," said idly. "You will be good enough to return with me to the pension at once."

I walked on without voicing another glance at the audacious stranger; but I could feel that he was absolutely bubbling over with stifled merriment; and the fact added fuel to the fire of my just indignation.

"How long has this been going on?" demanded, when rage would let me speak, and Peggy and I were once more alone. "How long has what been going on, dear, returned my daughter, innocently, but with a look in her dark blue eyes which somehow I did not quite like.

"This—this disgraceful acquaintance! I replied haughtily. "It is obvious that you and—that person—are on intimate. Why have you not mentioned him to me? Do you think it was quite fair of you Margaret?"

"Oh, mother, dear, I have been meaning to tell you every day," she said, quickly; "but somehow no opportunity to do so has arisen. I met him for the first time almost a week ago. You remember that afternoon when I got lost? Well, he was eyeing along, and I stopped him to ask if he could put me in the right direction. He was awfully kind, and I was so tired and hungry. Since then we have met a few times, and it has seemed only natural we should have a little chat together!"

which confirmed my worse fears and made my heart throb with painful expectancy.

"And this acquaintance, so romantically begun, is quite to develop, I suppose?" I said, striving desperately to speak naturally.

Peggy smiled tremulously. "I—I think he is very nice, Mumsie," she returned simply. "You would like him, too, I believe. Won't you give me permission to tell him that he may call upon you?"

I dismissed the suggestion with a shrug of the shoulders.

"What is the man's name?" I asked, shortly. "Smith, Brown or Jones? And at what shop does he serve when he is not holiday-making?" I distinctly heard my daughter choke down a laugh.

"His name is Arthur Chartress," she answered in smothered accents, and he lives in London."

My brows met in a frown as I mentally ran over the list of any Chartresses I had ever heard of. It wasn't a bad cognomen, certainly; but that meant nothing now-a-days.

You seem to have found out a good deal concerning this young man," I remarked crucially, after a long silence. "Perhaps you have also discovered what he does for a living?"

Peggy looked up at me with dancing eyes. "He is a jockey," she replied quite calmly.

My heart almost stopped beating with horror and dismay. My precious child spent the last few days all unbeknownst to her unsuspecting mother! In an instance my resolve was taken. We would leave for London that very night, and Peggy once for all should be put beyond the reach of this impertinent fellow's misplaced attentions. Before we went, however, I would see him and tell him what I thought of his audacity. That at least would be some small satisfaction to my outraged feelings.

I had myself well in hand, however, when I sailed into the sitting room, where the man Chartress awaited me, a few hours later, having strictly forbidden Peggy to put in an appearance. I did not invite my visitor to be seated, and remained standing myself, with my hand lightly resting upon the table. For a moment I regarded him in absolute silence. He was certainly extraordinarily good looking. I mentally conceded, and might have been mistaken anywhere for a gentleman. Then the memory of his horrible calling recurred to me, and it was with difficulty that I concealed a shiver of repulsion.

Don Make Character

Classification formulates rules from works that have come to be recognized as beautiful, and it requires of the artist conformity to these rules. By this standard, writes Carleton Noyes in his "Gate of Appreciation," which it regards as absolute, it tries a new work, and it pretends to adjudge the work good or bad according as it meets the requirements. Then a Titan emerges who emerges who defies the canons, wrecks the old order, and in his own way, to the despair or scorn of his contemporaries, creates a work which the generation that follows comes to see is beautiful.

"Every author," says Woolworth, "as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed. The original, in his own generation was ridiculed, Miller, when he ceased painting nudes for art dealers' windows and ventured to express himself, faced starvation. Every artist is in some measure an innovator; for his own age he is a romanticist. But the romanticist of one age becomes a classic for the next; and his performance in its turn gives laws to his successors. Richard Strauss, deriving in some sense from Wagner, makes the older man seem a classic and conservative. Then a new mind is again raised up, a new temperament, with new needs; and these shape their own adequate new expression. "The cleanest expression," says Whitman, "is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one."

As all life is growth, as there are no possibilities of human experience, so the workings of the art impulse cannot be compressed within the terms of a hard and narrow definition, and any abstract formula for beauty is in the very nature of things foredoomed to failure. No limit can be set to the forms in which beauty may be made manifest.

"I gapped! Could I have heard aright? "My girl is very young and very inexperienced," I retorted, contemptuously.

"Otherwise I doubt if you would have found her such an easy victim. You must give her mother credit, however, with a superior knowledge of her world. I understand that you did not seek to hide your—your profession from Miss Driscoll?"

"I beg your pardon!" He was looking

at me blankly, and once again hot anger surged up within me.

"Do you think it a common occurrence my good sir, that women of our class mate with yours?" I asked haughtily. "You must either be very guileless or very conceited if such is your belief. I tell you that I would rather see my daughter dead at my feet this instant than that she could make so terrible a mesalliance!"

"Again he started at me as if he thought I had suddenly gone mad, and then, with a grave smile, he took out his card case. "I fear we are both laboring under a misapprehension, he said quietly. Perhaps you will permit me to introduce myself to you. You refused to allow Peggy to present me this morning, you know."

"Peggy, indeed! Were there no limits to the man's audacity, I wondered, as I took the card with fingers which trembled with anger. My eyes lit upon the diminutive bit of pasteboard carelessly, but the name I saw engraved thereon caused my heart to commence beating nineteen to a dozen, while the blood raced through my veins furiously.

"Lord Arthur Chartress," I read out slowly in a voice which sounded curiously unlike my own, "100 Grosvenor sq., W. The Glen, N. B. Sports club, London!"

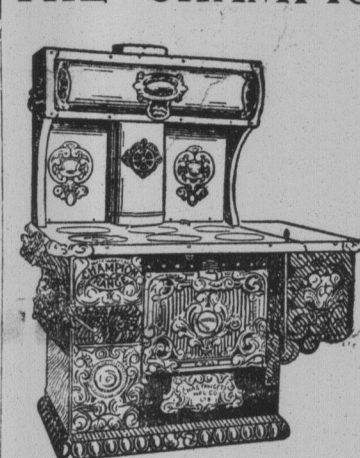
"What—in heaven's name does this mean? My daughter—Peggy—told me that you were—oh, how can I say it told me you were—a jockey!"

He laughed with infinite enjoyment. "Well and so I am, he replied, good-temperedly. "You see, Mrs Driscoll, riding is my especial hobby, and sometimes I take part in steeplechases—like a good many other men I know—just for the fun of the thing! I can understand your natural indignation; but won't you be kind and forgive us and—send for Peggy?"

I murmured something, and got out of the room—how I don't know and never shall—but I heard Lord Arthur laugh softly to himself as I closed the door. Philadelphia Telegraph.

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