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The Handy Little Spout Lets The Salt Run Out.

For Love of a Woman; New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER I

BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS.

Then had come the time of her first appearance on the stage. It is the fashion nowadays for an actor to begin at the top of the ladder—and alas! how often he works downward! Jeffreys chose that the beautiful girl whom he had trained so carefully should begin at the "bottom."

"Learn to walk the stage, and deliver a simple message, that is difficult enough at first, easy as it seems," he had said.

And Doris put on cotton frocks and white caps and played servant-maids for a time. From them she rose to young-lady parts—always easy, unpretentious ones, and always in the country theatres.

"When we take London it shall be by storm," he said.

And so he went from one country town to another, and the young actress grew more familiar with her part each month, and the critics began to notice her, and to praise not only her beauty but her talent.

And all this time Doris, even in the gayest surroundings of her daily life, remained unsophisticated and natural. Jeffrey watched over her as jealously as a father could have done.

He could not prevent admiring her, but he kept the love-letter, the neat little cases of jewellery from her; and Doris—Doris Marlowe, the actress—was as ignorant and unconscious of the wickedness of the world as the daughter of a country rector.

And as ignorant and innocent of love, save the love she had for the strange, grim being who had lavished so much on her.

She had read love in books, had acted it on the stage; but it was as one who speaks a language he does not understand, and who marvels at the effect his words have upon his initiated hearers.

Once a young actress, who had played lovers' parts with her during a season, had managed to speak with her alone—it was during the "wait" between acts—and in faltering accents had tried to tell her that he had dared to fall in love with the beautiful being so jealously guarded by the dragon. Doris had listened for a moment or two, with her lovely eyes wide open, with puzzled astonishment, then she said:

"Oh, please don't go on! I thought it was a part of the play," and a smile flashed over her face.

The young fellow grew black, and as he passed her to go on the stage, muttered:

"Heartless!"

But Doris was not heartless. She had smiled because her heart lay too

deep for him to touch; because, like the Sleeping Beauty, it was waiting for the coming prince who should wake it into life and love, and the young actor was not that prince.

Doris sat thinking of the past, quite lost, until the striking of a church clock recalled her to the fact that a certain young lady was to play Juliet to-morrow, and that the aforesaid young lady had come out into the field to study it!

She took up the book with a sigh. "I wish I could see someone play it," she thought; and then there flashed into her mind the memory of one night Jeffrey had taken her to Drury Lane to see a famous actress in the part; but they did not see after all, for during the first act there had been one of those slight but unmistakable movements in the audience which announce the entrance of someone of importance.

Doris looked round, with the rest, and saw some persons come into a box on the grand tier. Among them was an old gentleman, tall and thin, with a remarkably distinguished presence. He wore a blue ribbon across his waistcoat; but Doris had been attracted more by his face even than by the ribbon.

It was a handsome face; but there was something in it—a certain cold and pitiless hauteur—that seemed to strike a chill almost to Doris's heart. As he stood in front of the box, and looked around the house with an expression of contempt that was just too indolent to be sheer hatred, she met the hard, merciless eye and shuddered.

"Who is he, Jeffrey?" she asked, in a whisper, and touching his arm with a hand that trembled a little.

Jeffrey's rapt face had been fixed on the stage, but he turned and looked at the distinguished personage, and Doris remembered now the sudden pallor of his face, from which his glittering eyes had flashed like two spots of red fire set in white ashes.

The look vanished in a moment and he made no reply, and a few moments afterwards had said:

"It is too hot. Let us go."

Doris recalled the incident now, and wished they had stopped and seen the great actress, especially as Jeffrey had always afterwards avoided "Romeo and Juliet," as if the play had some painful association.

"I shall have to draw on Shakespeare alone for inspiration," she thought, looking at the brook. "But, ah! if only someone could only teach me to say that 'Good-night, good-night!' properly."

She was repeating the words in a dozen different tones, and shrugging her shoulders discontentedly over each, when suddenly there came another sound upon her ears besides that of her voice and the brook.

It was a dull thud, thud, on the meadow in front of her, and as it came nearer a voice broke out in a kind of accompaniment, a voice singing not unmusically:

"The maids of merry England,
The merry maids of England!"

There was a hedge on the other

side of the brook, and Doris raised herself on her elbow and looked over. What she saw was a young man galloping across the meadow at a breakneck speed, which the horse seemed to enjoy as much as his rider.

Doris had never seen anyone ride like that, and she was too absorbed in the general spectacle to notice that the young man was singularly handsome, and that he made, as he sat lightly in the saddle, with the sunset rays turning the yellow of his moustache and hair to pure gold, a picture which Murillo might have painted and christened "Youth and Health."

She watched for a moment or two; then, thinking herself safe from observation behind her hedge, sank down again and took up her book.

But the thud, thud, and the "Maids of Merry England" came nearer and nearer. Then they stopped together, and a voice, speaking this time, said: "Hallo, old girl! Over with you!"

The next moment Doris saw horse and rider in the air, almost above her head, and the next the horse was on its knees, with its nose on the ground, and the rider lay stretched at her feet as if a hand from the blue sky had hurled him from his seat.

CHAPTER II
OVER THE FENCE.

It had all happened so suddenly that Doris sat for a moment staring at the motionless figure. Then the colour forsook her face, and she sprang with a cry, and looked round for help. There was not a moving thing in sight excepting the horse, who had picked himself up and was calmly, not to say contemptuously, grazing a few yards off.

Doris, trembling a little, knelt down and bent over the young man. His eyes were closed, and his face was white, and there was a thin streak of red trickling down his forehead.

A spasm ran through her heart as she looked, for the sudden dread had flashed across her mind that—he was dead.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she cried, and she sprang to her feet, aroused by the impulse to run for assistance; but the white, still face seemed to utter a voiceless appeal to her not to leave him, and she shuddered. No, she would not leave him.

She whipped out her handkerchief, and, running to the brook, dashed it into the water; then, kneeling down beside him, bathed his forehead shuddering a little as she saw that the thin streak of red came again as fast as she washed it away.

Presently she fancied that she saw a faint tremor upon the pale lips, and in her eagerness and anxiety she sank down upon the grass and drew his head upon her knee, and with faltering hands unfastened his collar. She did it in pure ignorance, but it happened to be exactly the right thing to do, and after a moment or two the young fellow shivered slightly, and, to Doris's unspeakable relief, opened his eyes. There was no sense in them for a spell, during which Doris noticed, in the way one notices trivial things in moments of deep anxiety, that they were handsome eyes, of a dark brown; and that the rest of the face was worthy of the eyes; and there flashed through her mind the half-formed thought that it would have been a pity for one so young and so good-looking to have died. Then a faint intelligence came into his upturned gaze, and he looked up into her great, pitying eyes with a strange look of bewilderment which gradually grew into a wondering admiration that brought a dash of colour to Doris's face.

"Where am I?" he said at last, and the voice that had sung "The Maids of Merry England" sounded strangely thin and feeble. "Am I—dead?"

It was a queer question. Did he think that it was an angel bending over him? A faint smile broke over Doris's anxious face, and one sprang up to his to meet it.

He tried to laugh and raise his head; but the laugh died away with suspicious abruptness and his head sank back.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he said. "I must have come an awful cropper. I—I feel as if I couldn't move!" and he made another effort.

"Oh, no, no," said Doris, anxiously: "do not try—yet. Oh, I am afraid you are very much hurt! Let me—"

She wiped his forehead again.

EE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE EE

THE DOCTOR: "Ah, yes, restless and feverish. Give him a Steedman's Powder and he will soon be all right."

EE STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS EE
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"If there were only someone else to help!" she exclaimed in a piteous voice.

"Don't don't! please don't you trouble about it," he said, pleadingly. "I shall be all right directly. It's ridiculous," he added, faintly, but endeavouring to laugh again. "I feel as if I'd got rusty hinges at the back of my neck."

His eyes closed for a moment, for, notwithstanding the laugh and his would-be light tone, he was in considerable pain; then he opened them again and let them rest upon her face.

"You're awfully good to me!" he said, slowly. "I feel ashamed—" He stopped, and a deep blush rose through the tan of his face, for he had suddenly realised that his head was in her lap—a fact of which Doris was perfectly unconscious. "Awfully good!" he repeated.

"Oh, don't talk!" she said, earnestly. "You—you are not able! Oh! if there was something I could do! Water! I will get you some to drink!" and she put his head—gently from her and rose.

He smothered a sigh.

"There's—there's a flask in my saddle-pocket, if I could only get at it," he said.

"I'll get it," she said, swiftly.

"No, no," he said, quickly. "The—the horse, I mean, might—"

But she was off like the wind, and quite regardless of danger. The horse raised his head and looking at her, and apparently seemed to take in the gravity of the situation, for it stood quite still while she searched the saddle.

"It is not here!" she said, in a voice of distress.

"No, by Jove! I recollect! I left it at home," he faltered. "I'm so sorry! Don't—Please—don't trouble!" and he raised himself on his elbow.

She flew from the horse to the brook, then stopped short for a moment as she remembered that she had nothing to hold water. He watched her and understood.

"Never mind," he said.

"But there must be some way!" she cried, distressfully.

"If—if you'll bring some in your hands," he suggested, the colour coming into his face.

She stooped and made a cup of her two palms, and turned to him carefully, fearful of spilling a drop.

The young fellow hesitated, and first glanced up at her face, unseen by her, then bent his head.

When he raised it there was a strange look in his eyes, and he drew a long breath.

Doris dropped her hands with a sudden swiftness.

Reverently, gratefully as his lips had touched her hands, their touch had sent a strange thrill through her. "I—I am afraid you did not get much," she said, and her voice faltered, though she strove to keep it firm and steady.

"Yes, yes!" he said. "Thank you very much. I am better—all right now!" and to prove it he sat up and looked around him.

But his eyes returned to her face almost instantly, as if loth to leave it.

(To be Continued.)

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TO-DAY AT LEAST.

PARIS, June 27.—Plans were completed by the staff of Four to-day for the signing of the peace treaty at three o'clock to-day afternoon. No official statement, however was issued by the Council.

ON THEIR WAY.

COBLENZ, June 27.—Foreign Secretary Mueller and Colonial Minister Bell, the two German peace delegates on their way to Versailles, passed through Cologne this morning, a telephone message from Cologne reported. A dispatch to the Coblenz newspapers says that the German delegation understood that they are to sign the treaty at three o'clock to-day afternoon.

WANT OF FOOD THE CAUSE OF DESPERATION.

HAMBURG, June 27.—A commission of twelve now in control of the city has issued a statement saying the disorders are the result of desperation on the part of "Starving" people forced to pay money for spoiled, uneatable, horrible foodstuffs.

SERVING NOTICE.

PARIS, June 27.—Paris newspapers state the staff of Four has decided to call attention of the Dutch Government to the grave consequences which might follow should the former German Crown Prince escape from Holland, and to ask that the watchfulness of the former emperor be increased.

MUNITIONS FACTS.

LONDON, June 27.—(Via Reuter's)—F. G. Kellaway, Deputy Minister of Munitions, has for approval of £185,000,000 for year ending March 31, of £39,000,000 is an aftermath of war and the balance represents supplies to other departments of the War Office, Air Ministry, a local Government Board, the Government Housing Scheme. The total expenditure of the Ministry of Munitions since its establishment was £1,334,507,941. Mr. Kellaway revealed that the British losses of materials during the German offensive in the Spring of 1918 were 2,000 guns, 70,000 tons of ammunition, 600 machine guns, 200,000 rifles, trench mortars, and 200 tanks. Within a fortnight all had been replaced and in many cases with superior weapons. On the day the Hindenburg line was broken the British fired 943,000 shells more than were fired in the whole South African war. Fifteen thousand tons of poison gas were supplied in 1918 alone. The introduction of a cost estimate saved the country £300,000,000. The Ministry of Munitions alone, 7,344 contracts involving £102,000,000 were still running and disposed of the department had realized £130,000,000 to date. It was getting such good prices for the state that it was

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