

## The Sound of Wedding Bells

### Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER XVI.

But Dulcie stands cold and reluctant. A vague, nameless fear possesses her. If it were possible she would back out of it now; but it is not possible. Sir Archie, all ardor and eagerness, has given the signal, the curtain goes up, and the third act commences.

She waits, silent and absorbed, struggling against her presentiment of evil which possesses her, until it is her time to go, then she steps upon the stage. There is a buzz of interrogation and excitement; but some one of the servants perhaps, explains how the change has come about, and the audience clap and applaud.

"Something wrong, eh?" says the duke. "Miss Dorrinmore takes the part of Julia in this act! By Jove, my dear madame, she looks more beautiful than ever!" and his opinion expressed almost aloud, finds an echo in every breast.

The scene begins, and at first Dulcie, possessed by the nameless foreboding, plays coldly and without heart, but gradually and insensibly she melts. Sir Archie is playing with her, a part he has played before—real life—and often; the ardent, passionate lover pressing his suit, and he plays it with such earnestness that Dulcie is overcome, and waxes out of herself. She forgets the audience, forgets her good resolutions, forgets everything but the scene, and, to the delight of the audience, she plays—well, as admirably as Sir Archie himself. With the usual extravagance of comedy, he makes love with fiery impetuosity; Julia is supposed to be difficult to woo, and he has to go down on his knees before he can melt her.

With something that is more than acting he plays his part, and in ardent, passionate, pleading language he presses his suit.

"I love you!" he declares, in the words of the play, which Dulcie has denounced absurd and strained; "I have loved you in quiet earnest, while another has loved you in cold half-heartedness. Julia, you cannot turn from me! I am yours utterly and entirely. Not with a half-hearted affection, but with an intense adoration, I implore you to be mine!" And he kneels at her feet and grasps her hand. It is at this moment—the moment the moment of the play—that Julia is supposed to yield, and, stooping raises him with one timid hand.

As Dulcie, following the direction, bends and extends her hand, she is conscious of a slight stir amongst the audience. Some one has entered. She cannot see beyond the glare of the footlights; but at that moment the dim foreboding seizes her, and as Sir Archie springs to his feet and embraces her, she shivers, turns cold, and actually forgets the words.

"I am yours," he whispers, promptly. "I am yours," she repeats; as he bends over her and gives her the stage kiss, she looks up and sees there amongst the audience, the face of Hugh—stern, cold, pitiless.

It is he who has entered, and he has come just in time to witness the most ardent, passionate piece of tomfoolery in this most absurd and ridiculous of plays.

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SOLD BY T. McMurdo & Co.

## WONDERFUL TALE OF AN ACTRESS

Struggled with Sickness and Discouragement; How Relieved.

Dayville, Killisly, Conn.—"I shall be glad to have every woman know what I know now, after using Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."

Although I am only 24 years old, I have suffered for the past eight years. I hated the doctors, for a doctor told me to give up the stage where I was playing with my husband.

I had bearing down pains, my health failed me, and I could not work on the stage, and wasn't able to tend my baby or even get around myself. I was always downhearted and discontented with the world, and only lived for the sake of my little girl. The doctor said to move to some quiet little town away from the noisy city, and I might be able to live and feel well, so I went to Dayville in November. At that time I was so sick I could not walk around, and my husband kept house and I stayed in bed. One day in January I read your advertisement in a newspaper, and I sent for Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and started taking it. Within two weeks time I was a different woman, could get around, and felt so good that it was a pleasure to do my house work. I felt contented and happy, and now am the picture of health, and am ready to return to the stage. We appreciate my health as the most precious thing on earth. Mrs. E. L. S. BERRY, Box 88, Killisly, Conn.

She starts, and endeavors to draw back; but the play is over, the curtain drops, and the thunders of applause break out.

But she sees—hears nothing; before her, through the thick curtains she seems to see that white, stern face, with its dark, upbraiding eyes.

"Let me go!" she pants, for Sir Archie still holds her in his embrace. "Let me go! I—I—am stifling!"

But Archie's passion has reached its height when prudence is cast to the winds. She has been acting, but he has been making love in real earnest, to the delight of the audience.

"Dulcie," he murmurs, fast and furious, like the lover in the play. "I—I love you!"

"Let me go!" she pants. "Oh, what have I done. What have I done?"

CHAPTER XVII. With that half wild cry of apprehension Dulcie breaks from Sir Archie and, leaving him motionless and dumb with dismay, hurries from the stage, and making her way—almost pushing it, in fact—through the crowd of performers, reaches her own room.

There, panting and trembling, she tears off the finery, the very sight of which is hateful to her, and flings herself into a chair.

That sad, stern face, those dark, upbraiding, almost scornful eyes, follow her even there, and she cannot shut them out, though she covers her face with her hands.

"What have I done?" she groans, with a little shudder. "Why did he look at me like that? Why has he stolen back like a thief in the night?"

It never occurred to her that he has not stolen back, that some one in the house was fully aware of his expected return, and that she has been the victim of a plot, a miserable little feminine plot that most girls would have seen through at a glance. But Dulcie, clever and bright as she is, is so incapable of such deceit and treachery as have been played upon her, that she cannot even conceive it.

She cannot picture Lucy Fairfax lying back comfortably in her easy chair, in perfect health, waiting for the working out and success of her little scheme. Dulcie would not believe any one who told her that the illness, the deathly pallor and prostration, were but pieces of acting which eclipsed all other acting of the evening.

She does not recall Maud's em-

barrassment when Edie asked her point-blank last night whether she had heard from Hugh. She is as unsuspecting as a child, and simply sits overwhelmed and fearful.

"I must explain to him how it all happened," she says. "It was all quite an accident; I could not help Miss Fairfax falling ill; I could not refuse when they asked me. Oh, if I had but said, 'No,' and stuck to it, and let them bring the whole stupid thing to an end!"

There she sits and recalls the scene, and the blush of shame arises to her cheeks. It did not seem so awful, so shameful, so—so outrageous in rehearsal; but now, as she puts herself in Hugh's place, and thinks of how it must have appeared to him; to him who had begged her not to flirt with Sir Archie, she shudders.

Every word of the absurd, high-flown scene, every caress, comes back to her and tortures her. And he had been looking on the whole while—had stood there listening to Sir Archie's passionate protestations and ardent pleadings—watching silently with that stern, grim face, while another man held her in his arms and kissed her! Another man! It would not have mattered so much if it had been any other man than this one; if it had been the foolish young lord or the beating curate, Hugh might have smiled and overlooked it, but Sir Archie, whom he distrusted; Sir Archie, whom she knew before the hot words had left his lips loved her; after his fashion, even before Hugh came.

She sits, while these thoughts and reveries run through her brain and heart, for half an hour. Time speeds by unheeded. Below they are asking for her impatiently, anxiously. She has been the heroine of the night. It is the last scene which has made the play a decided success, and it is she who made the last scene.

The duke is going about with a pleasant smile, rubbing his hands together with hearty approbation, and demanding where Miss Dorrinmore has been spirited to.

There is an impatient curiosity amongst those who had not yet met her to see and speak to her off the stage; and at last, reluctantly, grudgingly, Lady Falconer calls Edie to her side.

"You had better go up to Miss Dorrinmore, and ask her to come down as soon as she can," she says, coldly.

And Edie runs up the stairs, flushed and excited.

"May I come in?" she calls outside the door.

Dulcie springs to her feet, and runs to the glass. Her face is pale and furrowed, her eyes heavy.

She waits a moment to regain composure, then she opens the door.

"Well?" she says, forcing a smile. Edie stares at her.

"Oh, Dulcie, are you ill, too?" she asks, with sudden dismay.

"Ill? No!" says Dulcie, with suppressed impatience. "But I am a little tired. It—it is hot—"

"Oh, I am so sorry!" says Edie, dismally. "Of course you are tired, and are resting! Tired! I wonder you are not worn out with that scene; Oh, Dulcie, it was delicious!" clapping her hands.

"Was it?" says Dulcie, concisely, and with something like a frown.

"Delicious! It was simply magnificent! I never saw such acting! Why, Dulcie, they are all mad about it!"

"Bathe your face with that, dear," she says, soothingly. "It will refresh you. Can I fetch you a cup of tea—coffee—ice—anything?"

Dulcie shakes her head.

"No, thanks," she says. "Give me ten minutes and I will come down; though it is all nonsense!"

"Nonsense!" retorts Edie, indignantly. "You have no idea how beautiful you looked, and how splendidly you played. I declare it seemed real—absolutely real!"

Dulcie groans, and turns her face away from the ardent, enthusiastic gaze.

"And Sir Archie! I am sure any one would have thought that he was in sober earnest! Doesn't he make love beautifully?"

"I don't know! I don't care!" retorts Dulcie, desperately. "The whole thing is a nuisance and a—mistake! It was absurd, ridiculous, and it was not real, or anything like real! And—there, you see, Edie dear, I am upset, and I will follow you now—in ten minutes," and with a kiss she gently pushes her out of the room.

Then she bathes her face, and changes her dress, and goes down.

She feels a little brighter and more courageous now. The desire takes possession of her to get Hugh into a quiet corner and tell him all, to dispel that awful look from his face and earn his forgiveness. After all, it was an accident; he, so just and clear-seeing, will admit that at once, and—well, all will be well.

Steadying herself for a moment, she enters the room. A murmur goes round, and the duke ambles up to her with a gratified smile and takes both her hands.

"My dear Miss Dorrinmore, we were almost in despair! We feared that you had overtired yourself, and that we should not be permitted a chance of thanking you—of thanking you for a wonderful evening—a really wonderful!"

Dulcie stares and smiles. Dukes are nothing to her, in her present mental anxiety.

"But I didn't write the stupid play, and was only one of the players," she says, honestly, and with no intention to fish for compliments.

He nods and smiles.

"True," he says, in a lower voice. "Only one; but the player! It was a thing to be remembered! I am not an envious man generally, but tonight I do envy lucky Sir Archie!"

She crimsones from neck to brow, and the duke, half alarmed, hastens to change the subject.

"Now, you must let me get you some refreshment," he says.

Dulcie shakes her head decisively, but he will not be refused, and ambles off, returning with a cup of tea; other men—and women, too, elderly ones—are pressing about her, but for reasons of etiquette stand aloof until the duke has finished.

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