

(Continued from Last Week)

The others thought he had merely choked and made no comment other than sympathy. They could not have dreamed that the old "physician" was as ignorant of the taste as of the vigor of pure spirits.

After a riot of handshaking and good wishes, Ira was permitted to escape with his life. Mallory followed him to the vestibule, when he caught him by the sleeve with an anxious:

"Excuse me."

"Well, my boy—"

"Your minister—after you get through with him—may I use him?"

"May you—what? Why do you want a minister?"

"To get married."

"What? Good Lord, are you a Mormon?"

"No, a Mormon?"

"Then what do you want with an extra wife? It's against the law—ever in Utah?"

"You don't understand."

"My boy, one of us is disgracefully drunk."

"Well, I'm not," said Mallory, and then after a fierce inner debate, he decided to take Lathrop into his confidence. The words came hard after so long a duplicity, but at last they were out:

"Mr. Lathrop, I'm not really married to my wife."

"You young scoundrel!"

But his fury changed to pity when he heard the history of Mallory's ill-fated efforts, and he promised not only to lend Mallory his minister at second-hand, but also to keep the whole affair a secret, for Mallory explained his intention of having his own ceremony in the baggage-car, or somewhere out of sight of the other passengers.

Mallory's face was now aglow as the cold embers of hope leaped into sudden blaze. He wrung Lathrop's hand, saying: "Lord love you, you've saved my life—both."

Then he turned and ran to Marjorie with the good news. He had quite forgotten their epoch-making separation. And she was so glad to see him smiling at her again that she forgot it, too. He came tearing into the observation room and took her by the shoulders, whispering: "Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie, I've got him! I've got him!"

"No, I've got him," she said, swinging Snoodleums into view.

Mallory swung him back out of the way: "I don't mean a poodle, I mean a parson. I've got a parson."

"No! I can't believe it! Where is he?" She began to dance with delight, but she stopped when he explained:

"Well, I haven't got him yet, but I'm going to get one."

"What—again?" she groaned, weary of this old bunco game of hope.

"It's a real live one this time," Mallory insisted. "Mr. Lathrop has ordered a minister and he's going to lend him to me as soon as he's through with him, and we'll be married on this train."

Marjorie was overwhelmed, but she felt it becoming in her to be a trifle coy. So she pouted: "But you won't want me for a bride now. I'm such a fright."

He took the bait, took and all: "I never saw you looking so adorable."

"Honestly? Oh, but it will be glorious to be Mrs. First Lieutenant Mallory."

"Glorious!"

"I must telegraph home—and sign my new name. Won't mamma be pleased?"

"Won't she?" said Mallory, with just a trace of dubiety.

Then Marjorie grew serious with a new idea: "I wonder if mamma and papa have missed me yet?"

Marjorie laughed: "After three days' disappearance, I shouldn't be surprised."

"Perhaps they are worrying about me."

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"The poor dears! I'd better write them a telegram at once."

"An excellent idea."

She ran to the desk, found blank forms and then paused with knitted brow: "It will be very hard to say all I've got to say in ten words."

"Hang the expense," Mallory sniffed magnificently, "I'm paying your bills now."

But Marjorie tried to look very matronly: "Send a night letter in the day time! No, indeed, we must begin to economize."

Mallory was touched by this new revelation of her future housewifely thrift. He hugged her hard and reminded her that she could send a day-letter by wire.

"An excellent idea," she said. "Now, don't bother me. You go on and read your paper, read about Mattie. I'll never be jealous of her—him—of anybody—again."

"You shall never have cause for jealousy, my own."

But fate was not finished with the titillation of the unfortunate pair, and already new trouble was strolling in their direction.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Jealousy Comes Aboard.

There was an air of domestic peace in the observation room, where Mallory and Marjorie had been left to themselves for some time. But the peace was like the ominous hush that precedes a storm.

Mallory was so happy with everything coming his way, that he was even making up with Snoodleums, stroking the tatted coat with one hand and holding up his newspaper with the other. He did not know all that was coming his way. The blissful silence was broken first by Marjorie:

"How do you spell Utah?—with a y?"

"Utah begins with You," he said—and rather liked his wit, listened for some recognition, and rose to get it, but she waved him away.

"Don't bother me, honey. Can't you see I'm busy?"

He kissed her hair and sauntered back, dividing his attention between Snoodleums and the ten-inning game.

And now there was a small commotion in the smoking room. Through the glass along the corridor the men caught sight of the girl who had got on at Green River. Ashton saw her first and she saw him.

"There she goes," Ashton hissed to the others, "look quick! There's the nectarine."

"My word! She's a little bit of all right, isn't she?"

Even Dr. Temple stared at her with approval: "Dear little thing, isn't she?"

The girl, very consciously unconscious of the admiration, moved demurely along, with eyes downcast, but at such an angle that she could take in the sensation she was creating; she went along picking up stares as if they were bouquets.

Her demeanor was a remarkable compromise between outrageous flirtation and perfect respectability. But she was looking back so intently that when she moved into the observation room she walked right into the newspaper Mallory was holding out before him.

Both said: "I beg your pardon."

When Mallory lowered the paper, both stared till their eyes almost popped. Her amazement was one of immediate rapture. He looked as if he would have been much obliged for a volcanic crater to sink into.

"Harry!" she gasped, and let fall her handbag.

"Kitty!" he gasped, and let fall his newspaper. Both bent, he handed her the newspaper and tossed the handbag into a chair; saw his mistake, withdrew the newspaper and proffered her Snoodleums. Marjorie stopped writing, pen poised in air, as if she had suddenly been petrified.

The newcomer was the first to speak. She fairly gushed: "Harry Mallory—of all people."

"Kitty! Kathleen! Miss Lowellyn!"

"Just to think of meeting you again."

"Just to think of it."

"And on this train of all places."

"On this train of all places!"

"Oh, Harry, Harry!"

"Oh, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!"

"You dear fellow, it's so long since I saw you last."

"So long."

"It was at that last hop at West Point, remember?—why, it seems only yesterday, and how well you are looking. You are well, aren't you?"

"Not very." He was mopping his brow in anguish, and yet the room seemed strangely cold.

"Of course you look much better in your uniform. You aren't wearing your uniform, are you?"

"No, this is not my uniform."

"You haven't left the army, have you?"

"I don't know yet."

"Don't ever do that. You are just beautiful in brass buttons."

"Thanks."

"Harry!"

"What's the matter now?"

"This tie, this green tie, isn't this the one I knitted you?"

"I am sure I don't know, I borrowed it from the conductor."

"Don't you remember? I did knit you one."

"Did you? I believe you did! I think I wore it out."

"Oh, you little boy. But see what I have. What's this?"

He stared through the glassy eyes of complete helplessness. "It looks like a bracelet."

"Don't tell me you don't remember this—the little bangle bracelet you gave me."

"Did I give you a bangle bracelet?"

"Of course you did. And the inscription. Don't you remember it?"

She held her wrist in front of his aching eyes and he peered as if it were his own epitaph, what she read aloud for him. "From Harry to Kitty, the Only Girl I Ever Loved."

"Good night!" he sighed to himself, and began to mop his brow with Snoodleums.

"You put it on my arm," said Kathleen, with a moonlight sigh, "and I've always worn it."

"Always?"

"Always! no matter whom I was engaged to."

The desperate wretch, who had not dared even to glance in Marjorie's direction, somehow thought he saw a straw of self-defense. "You were engaged to three or four others when I was at West Point."

"I may have been engaged to the others," said Kathleen, moon-eying him, "but I always liked you best, Clifford—er, Tommy—I mean Harry."

"You got me at last."

Kathleen fenced back at this: "Well, I've no doubt you have had a dozen affairs since."

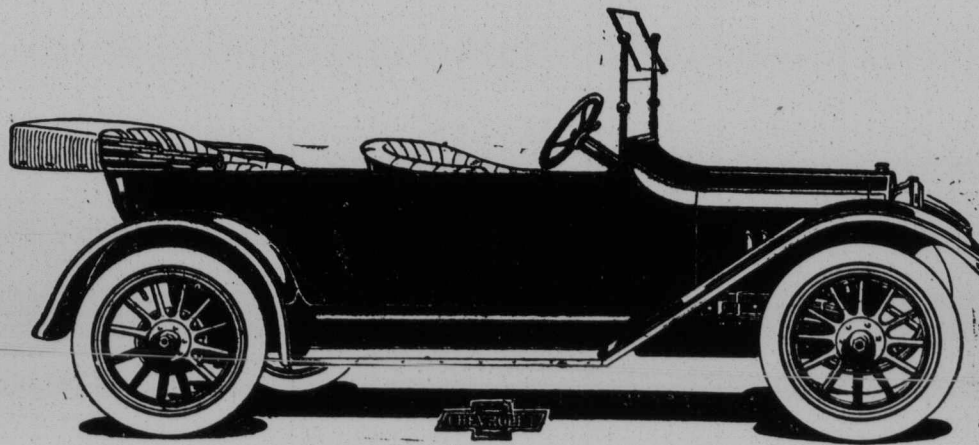
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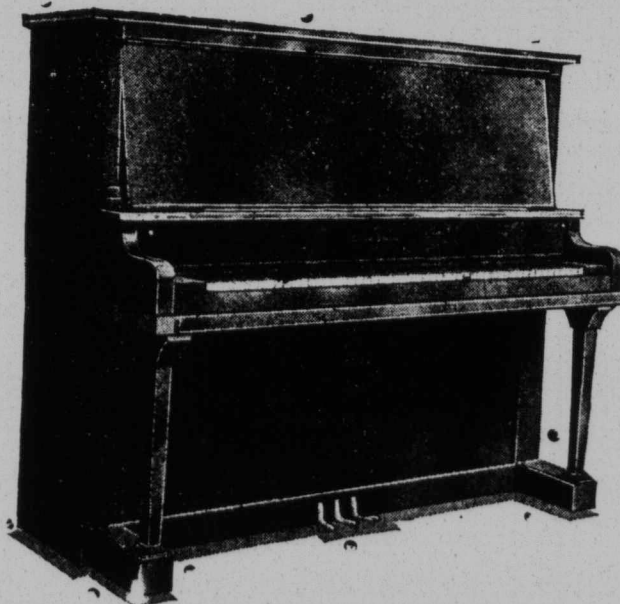


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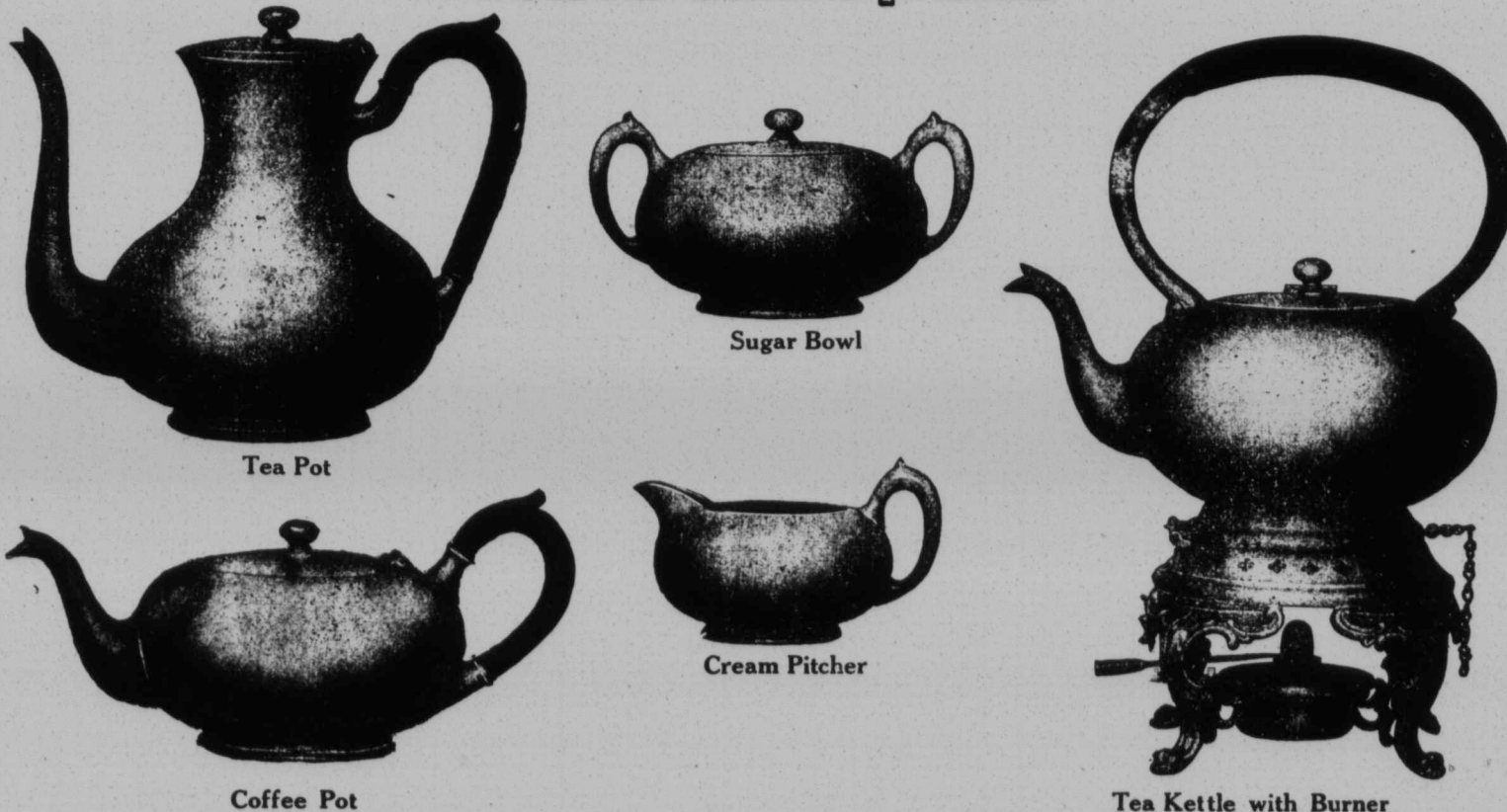
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