

## THE MATCH MAKER

(Short Story)

Walter Tremaine stole quietly into his own room at one o'clock in the morning. He must move softly lest his sisters should awake. He sat down to smoke and think. He was twenty-six, handsome, wealthy, and had three maiden sisters. He was madly in love, for the first time in his life, with a frivolous college girl of eighteen, Sybil Rond. His sisters adored him, but he could never bring a bride among that trio of spinsters; they would never allow him to live elsewhere.

The oldest was Emma. She had passed her forty-fourth birthday. Grace was thirty-six and Clara, twenty-eight. She was tall, dark beauty, resembling her Italian mother. Her face and figure were perfect. The elder sisters were jealous of her beauty, and had placed her in a Catholic convent in France when she was fourteen, and there she remained for the next eight years. Her gay spirit was broken and she cared little for the world and men. She gave all her time to art and literature, since even now her sisters restrained her every pleasure.

Walter told Sybil how hopeless their state was. The only way out was to find them husbands, but who could marry any but Clara? And she was very prejudiced against the opposite sex. Sybil laughed at his gloomy outlook. Instantly her alert mind formed a plan.

"Cheer up, Walter boy," she consoled him, "pack them all off to Atlantic City for the summer. I will go too, and Clara will be my companion. Within a few weeks we will be rid of them".

"You don't expect to drown them do you?" he asked slightly suspicious.

"Certainly not," she laughed back.

A week later the three sisters and Sybil Rond were established in one of the fashionable hotels of Atlantic City. Clara wore beautiful and fashionable clothes which were in accordance with her artistic nature. Her hair was not bobbed, and this worried Sybil somewhat. One evening she deliberately (though she pretended it an accident) turned a box of oil paint on Clara's long hair. This made bobbing necessary. Both were

pleased with the result.

The next morning the two went out on the beach. Fate was with Sybil. They met a rising author with whom Sybil was acquainted. He wrote highly educational articles, which few could appreciate. He was fastidious and had never found a woman to suit his literary views. Sybil presented Clara: "Mr Allison, here is a lady who has a keen appreciation of classical literature and art. She adores Virgil and Shakespeare and Milton are her daily companions. You will enjoy each others company. I will leave you now, for you will be talking of Aureas and Macbeth, so I would be lost. I will call for you at lunch, Clara". She was off, leaving them together.

Clara was confused, but Mr. Allison was impressed with her intelligent eyes and perfect European features. He placed a chair for her and seated himself opposite.

"Do you care for Dante?" he asked, drawing a book from his pocket.

"Oh, yes, she replied, brightening at the mention of her favorite author. "I have read his works many times; are you interested in art, such as Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna'?"

"Indeed, I am," he replied.

They talked on, forgetful of time. He, for the first time finding a woman of her grace and beauty who had classical knowledge which surpassed his own, was indeed amazed. She, found a man who was chivalrous and interested in things worth while.

It seemed that they had been together for only a few moments when Sybil called for Clara. She was happy, for over their heads she could see cupid with his bow. She had other reasons for joy. On her return to the hotel Sybil found an old friend, Mr. Davenport, an explorer of Africa and the South Sea Isles. He had been ill and his eyes were weak. To keep away the glare of the sun they bandaged temporarily. He had collected many strange birds, this being his "hobby". Sybil had one inspiration; Miss Grace was a "nut" on the subject of feathered creatures! She hurried for her, telling her that a man had a new species of her favorite subject. Miss Grace went with her glory. She introduced them.

"Mr. Davenport, Miss Tremaine is very fond of birds and wants you to

tell her about your canaries. He has been sick and that is why his eyes are weak and bandaged", she explained to Miss Grace. "Now I must go", and she rushed off.

"Oh, you see many birds, don't you?" asked Miss Grace in an awed voice.

He at once proceeded to tell her of his wanderings, pleased to find a female listener. He pictured her as lovely, and when the bandages were removed he was blind with love for her. The lady told Sybil that night that he was "a darling man".

Sybil wrote to Walter!

"Two are as good as gone, but the worst is still to come. I have no plans for Miss Emma, but I will settle her somehow. You know love works rapidly at their age.

SYBIL".

As the days passed Clara grew more beautiful. The new happiness gave a glow to her cheeks and a light to her eyes. More than one man asked for an introduction to the graceful beauty, from whose side the author never stayed for long. Miss Grace and Mr. Davenport were planning a trip to Hawaii—together.

One morning Sybil received the shock of her life; it even threatened her health in its severity. As she rounded a corner of the porch she ran into Miss Emma, the prim old maid, in the arms of a sturdy man whom Sybil did not know. She stood fixed, in horror.

Miss Emma saw her and sobbed; "Oh, Sybil, dear, this is Mr. O'Days, we were once engaged but quarrelled; he has been looking for me for years. If we hadn't come here I would never have seen him. We are going to be married at once and go to Ireland to live happily ever after. Send for Walter dear."

Sybil went weakly to her room. She wrote in haste to her fiancée.

"Dear Walter boy, I am almost too excited to write. I am rid of them all at last. Miss Emma is going to

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