

LOVE AND PAINT.

Why Miss Baxter Gave Up Her Chosen Profession.

The dining car was in a shimmer of light. The dead white of heavy linen, the opalescent glint of glassware and the quiet gleam of silver trembled together in the swift motion of the train.

She felt half a notion to lay her head on the table and cry outright. She glanced down instead and fingered her ring—his ring—while her glasses grew misty.

In the few minutes Miss Baxter had been in the car she had noticed her companions. As she raised her head, she was startled to see a familiar face dimly taking shape across the table.

"Mr. Woodson, where did you come from?" she demanded at length, as his well-known features gradually took definite shape before her.

"From New York, of course. Does my dress suit look as though I'd boarded the train in these rural precincts? I thought you knew the cut better."

"Do you mean to say that you've been in this train all this while—after after last night?" Miss Baxter asked with slightly heightened color.

"Guessed it, the first time," Woodson exclaimed, brightening. "I tell you, Grace, you should have gone into the law instead of art. You'd have been great on cross-examination."

"Never mind, Mr. Woodson; you seem to forget that I prefer to make my own career—we've discussed that before, however. And so you've been on this train ever since I have?" she concluded, reflectively.

"A little longer, in fact. I made a mistake and got here half an hour early—read the time-table backwards, hence these clothes. But now, see here, small girl," Woodson went on with great deliberateness.

"I'm a brute, a miserable brute!" Woodson remarked to himself with considerable force, as he watched her striding toward the half-dry creek.

"But some one ought to have told her. Her art is all foolishness. Look at Fleming, even. He's forty, and I'd like to know where he'd be if it wasn't for his teaching. But I'm a brute, just the same, a heartless brute!"

"Harry, you're cruel. You know Mr. Fleming was going out there for the color, and I thought it would be a good chance to continue my outdoor work."

"Fleming! That prig! Well, I didn't know before that he was going. I see there is still more reason why I should go now—and stay."

"But I forbid your doing any such foolish thing."

"To tell the truth, Grace, I thought of staying all the time—of going into some business there."

"Why, you never told me of it before."

"Well, I never thought of it till after I left you last night. Then it occurred to me I might go into sheep or cattle or something like that."

"At Manito?"

"Why not?"

"It's a summer resort."

"So much the better. I'd only want to be there in the summer, anyhow."

"Harry, you're a trifle."

"Well, I can peel an orange, anyhow—if you'll allow me," Woodson exclaimed, taking from her hand the one she was making a sad mess of.

"Harry, I never can forgive you for doing this," Miss Baxter concluded, after a moment's contemplation of the whirling blur of green through the car window.

"Well, I never could forgive myself if I hadn't—and there it was," he asserted, dispassionately, laying the pulpy, broken sphere of the orange before her.

It is quite a jaunt from Manhattan to Manito; but one morning they exchanged the cushioned weariness of the train for that blue hollow of the hills, with its gray-colored roofs and gables showing here and there up the canyon, like a scattered troop of butterflies.

So they painted from morning till night, keeping two or three studies under way at once—putting in blues where Woodson saw greens, and purples where he saw nothing but nondescript sand, and doing all the inexplicable things that should be done according to the gospel of the luminists.

Woodson sat by and chaffed. He couldn't paint. He wouldn't smoke. He parried Grace's occasional inquiring glances by explaining that he was negotiating to go into the cattle business; a man was going to bring him a herd on trial.

Meanwhile he arrayed his shapely figure in cowboyish top boots, blue shirt and slouch hat, which became him immensely and made a sinister impression among the blazers and tamis suits of summering Manito. Grace was absorbed and satisfied. One day an idea struck him. "Grace," said he, "I found a little bit down here the other day that I'd like to have you sketch—to send home, you know. You'll do it, won't you?"

"Why, of course, I'll speak to Mr. Fleming."

"Oh, hang Mr. Fleming," Woodson broke in. "Fleming's all right in his way, but I want you—your sketch, you know."

The place was quite a distance away, over the mesa. They set out for it the next day.

"Here it is," Woodson exclaimed, after quite a tramp, pointing over the burning plain to where a row of cottonwoods were banked against the sky, tremulous in the vibrant air.

"It doesn't seem to compose very well," Grace murmured, holding the tips of her fingers together and inclosing the picture in a rosy frame, through which she gazed, half shutting her eyes in truly artistic intentness.

"Well, never mind that; get the character of it. You know Fleming says the character's the thing. That's what I want—the character—the true character of this beastly country."

So Grace donned her big blue apron and set to work with her biggest brushes. But somehow she had trouble. The quality of that sky, burning with light and yet deep in hue, did not seem to reside in cobalt, however fresh from the tube. The value of the stretch of plain, tremulous under the faring heavens, disturbed her, too, and when she came to put in the airy wall of cottonwoods along the horizon the whole thing ended in a painty muddle.

"Oh, I can't do anything to-day!" Grace exclaimed, petulantly, wiping her troubled brow with the back of her hand and leaving a streak of blue along her forehead that intensified her puzzled look.

"Why don't you put those trees in green?" Woodson asked, with serious concern, as Grace renewed her struggles with the regulation blues and purples.

"But I don't see them so," she murmured in a moment of absorbed effort.

"Grace," he blurted out almost before he knew it, "I don't believe you see anything. Excuse me, but I don't believe you ever did. I don't believe in your art; I don't believe in your career; I don't believe in your independence! You're simply spoiling the nicest girl in the world with it. You see everything through Fleming's eyes. You see things blue and purple because he does; and he—well, he sees things that way because some fellows over in Paris do, and I don't believe in it. There, now, I've said it, come!"

But it was not arranged that he should finish what he had to say. He had looked down to the ground where he sat as he spoke of Fleming. When he looked up, Grace was several feet away from him, hurrying down the hill, with her head bowed.

"I'm a brute, a miserable brute!" Woodson remarked to himself with considerable force, as he watched her striding toward the half-dry creek.

"But some one ought to have told her. Her art is all foolishness. Look at Fleming, even. He's forty, and I'd like to know where he'd be if it wasn't for his teaching. But I'm a brute, just the same, a heartless brute!"

There was a plum thicket along the creek, and watching Grace disappear within it Woodson set about picking up her sketching kit. This done, it occurred to him that it would be a proper penance on his part to wash her brushes—he had always hated dirty brushes so. Gathering them up, he started toward the creek. When he got there he could see no sign of Grace. Could it be that anything had happened to her? The thought made him catch his breath for a moment. He knew she was impulsive—capable of any rash move in a moment of excitement. Then he heard a stirring in the plum thicket, and came face to face upon her in a little opening, crying softly to herself.

"Grace," he called out, "why, what's the matter? I know I'm a brute, but I didn't think you'd take it so."

"Oh, can't you help me?" she pleaded, and began grasping about and feeling aimlessly around with her hands.

He saw that her hair was loosened and that her wrists and face were scratched and bleeding in a dozen places.

"Why, what's the matter?" he queried again, as she came groping toward him and stumbled against him.

"Can't you help me at all?"

"Of course I can, small girl, you're all right. Nothing shall touch you," he reiterated as his arms closed around her.

"Oh, silly, can't you see I've lost my glasses?" she exclaimed, pulling away from him and flushing red among the greenery. But he held her tight.

"You don't want them, you see better without them, blue eyes. Confess now, you never really saw before. Give up trusting in those wretched glasses and trying to be independent. Come, see your career through my eyes."

But still she held back at arm's length, really defiant. His fingers left a white circle where they clasped her wrists. She seemed ready to cry and then smiled instead. "You'll get my glasses if I promise?"

He nodded.

Suddenly throwing her arms about his neck she said: "I always liked your eyes," and pressed a kiss on either lid. "Maybe you were right about my art," she added, seriously. "But—this needn't interfere, need it?"

"Interfere! why, I'll tell that man that I've decided not to take his estate and we'll turn the whole herd into paint."

Then he reached over and carefully disengaged her glasses from the twirl where he had seen them hanging as he entered the thicket—G. Melville Upton, in Kate Field's Washington.

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TRAINS GOING NORTH.

Table with columns: No. 14 Daily, No. 78 Daily, No. 23 Daily, No. 27 Daily. Rows: Leave Wilmington, Leave Magnolia, Leave Warsaw, Leave Goldsboro, Arrive Fayetteville, Arrive Selma, Arrive Tarboro, Arrive Rocky Mt., Leave Tarboro, Arrive Weldon.

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TRAINS GOING NORTH. No. 14 Daily, No. 78 Daily. Rows: Leave Weldon, Le Bedford, Le Jarratts, Le Stony Creek, Arrive Petersburg.

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