



MR. BURKE

BY WINONA GODFREY

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CHRISTABEL worked in the suit department (pardon me, suit section) at Hathaway & Eaton's. She did not live in a hall-room and survive on six dollars a week; she was not tempted by the floor-walkers nor pestered by the buyer's assistant—which proves that there is a difference.

On the contrary, she drew fifteen dollars every Monday and lived very nicely with an aunt who had a comfortable little home of her own. When she went out Sundays in a stylish white serge suit, attended by Mr. Williston who had a good job with Fuller & Jenks, you couldn't have told them from members of the "younger social set."

Still if Christabel's poverty was of the comparative sort, it was none the less irksome to her. Having always had to count the pennies, she longed to indulge herself in that most delectable of ancient and modern vices—extravagance. She ached to rival the queens of She-did-in-glory-of-attire; to luxuriate in opera boxes, yachts, and limousines; to number her pearls as the present puffed rice for breakfast; and to have all the hair one really needs.

It may be guessed that she dreamed of millions. Mr. Williston was scratched at the post.

But the recipe for marrying millions resembles greatly that for making a hare-stew—it is first necessary to catch your millionaire.

Now Christabel from a careful perusal of the works of O. Henry learned that it is not true that poor girls never get a chance at millionaires—the trouble seems to be that the poor girls do not recognize the deceptive features of Opportunity when he tips his hat, as it were.

She perceived that, other things being equal, it was simply up to her not to fall asleep at the switch. The "other things" consisted of a nice arrangement of millionaire-bait. From the wistful nibbling of mere other-men she ventured to infer that her assortment of flies, *et cetera*, should be quite adequate. Or, preferring her own judgment, she had only to look in the mirror.

Occasionally, it is true, she grew weary of sitting patiently upon the banks while what she considered real life flowed gayly by.

"Gee, I'm tired!" her friend Miss McGuire was accustomed to observe about five-thirty ever so often. "This is sure the strenuous life! That woman that just went out tried on seventeen suits and then said she'd come in later and see what we had. I certainly get sick of this grind. To-night, I bet I'd marry the first Chinaman that asked me!"

"If he'd promise not to put you to work in the laundry, I suppose," remarked Christabel. But she was rather in that mood herself. Meeting Mr. Williston on the way home she declined to let him call that evening.

"What's the good of bothering with him?" she reflected mercenarily. "He'll never make more than twenty-five or thirty a week."

It was the very next morning that turning over to Miss McGuire a blonde lady who wanted something plain and quiet in red with plenty of gold braid and brass buttons, Christabel advanced to a young woman and two young men who were looking about.

"Something for you?" she inquired in her cool contralto, and had taken them all in to their heels during the three words.

Miss Agnes Millard, indeed, she recognized at once from previous meetings; she was a society belle, the daughter of a millionaire, and one of those most admired and envied by her lowlier sisters. Miss Millard was interesting enough, but her cavaliers were of a type that made Christabel see-check-books and palaces. Young, aristocratic, smooth-shaven, immaculate, with their gloves and their sticks, it was obvious that they belonged to that sphere in which the weary cease to work.

One it was soon apparent was young Mr. Millard, the other they called Val. Both eyed Christabel with distinct approval.

And Christabel realized with a little pang that if she had met them in an opera box or upon the deck of a yacht she could very

likely have had either. But she did not now give them more than the fleeting fraction of an impersonal glance.

She showed Miss Millard motor-coats with interest and efficiency, succeeded in pleasing her, returned her parting smile (only), and proceeded to the next customer with no outward hint of a heavier heart.

"There was one," Miss Millard commented to her escorts a trifle maliciously, "who was not impressed by your manly beauty."

"And a peach, a pippin, a beauty-bright!" quoted young Millard, from something or other. "My hat! what devastating eyes!"

"Val" remarked that the wind was coming up.

About four o'clock that afternoon, a messenger-boy came in with a note for Miss Christabel Shannon. She received it in considerable mystification—and read—

Mr. Valentine Burke desired very much to make the acquaintance of Miss Shannon, and as they seemed to have no mutual friends, he was venturing to ask permission to introduce himself.

He would refer her to the firm of Millard & Co. as to his standing and character, or to Judge the Hon. James F. Stillwell.

Would she do him the very great honor of addressing him at the Jonathan Club?

Christabel leaned rather heavily against a pillar.

"Well, he hurried!" she smiled to herself. She did not mention the circumstance even to Miss McGuire. That evening she spent addressing Mr. Burke at the Jonathan Club, and it took a good many sheets of specially-bought notepaper to say finally that Miss Shannon would be glad to see Mr. Burke any Thursday evening. This was Tuesday. She hesitated quite a while over any Wednesday evening.

She made no inquiries of Millard & Co., or of Judge the Hon. J. F. Stillwell, in regard to the character and standing of Mr. Burke. It is the eternal feminine, not to really want to know. Besides she needed no endorsements to her certainty that her millionaire had at last arrived.

Of course there was nothing positive about his calling the first Thursday, still she put on a new gingham dress that was very simple and becoming. Then she went out to select a rose for her belt, sitting afterward on the front porch, which was screened with Crimson Ramblers and William Allen Richardsons.

He came striding briskly down the street from the car, instead of chugging up in an automobile, and he snatched off his straw

hat when he saw her sitting there at the end of the little nasturtium-bordered walk.

She rose to greet him without embarrassment. "How do you do, Mr. Burke?" she said. And—

"This is awfully kind of you," he replied, taking her proffered hand, which was cool and white and well-manicured.

He decided against going into the house, and presently Aunt Ellen in a clean white apron came out to her favorite rocker.

Aunt Ellen was plump and white-haired, with a twinkle in her blue eyes and the sweetest bit of a brogue on her quick tongue. She and Mr. Burke got on famously.

Neither she nor Christabel put on any extra airs and graces for Mr. Burke's benefit. He saw them just as they were every

day and with every one, and he did not seem displeased.

The moon was rising when he started reluctantly to go. He hoped to be allowed to come again soon—he had spent such a pleasant evening—and would Miss Shannon care to go to the theater with him some night next week? She would indeed. She did not offer him the rose in her belt.

After he had gone she sat a long time very still, with her chin in her hand.

And that summer, like youthful dreams, so sweet, so fleeting, sped deliciously away. Mr. Burke was a frequent visitor, and when he wasn't calling he was taking Christabel somewhere. But he did not take her to places where they would be likely to meet the city's smart set.

This did not appear to be designedly, however, and Christabel did not allow herself to wonder about it. Mr. Burke's intentions would seem to be evident enough; Christabel in her twenty-two years of life had seen enough of men not to be in the least doubt about his symptoms. Not that she tried to dissect him, only sometimes she was a little frightened at her own happiness.

To have everything come out in this fairy-tale fashion was not in accord with the world she knew. Time was when, tired and cynical, she had expected her liberating millionaire to be old and unattractive. One can't have everything, she reminded herself, and she had made up her mind that she would be able to marry old Eaton himself for the leisure and pleasure his money would buy. Now she doubted it. Think of Burke! so young and tall and good to look at! and a millionaire, too!

The fatigue and monotony of store life she bore uncomplainingly (not that she had ever whined about it), but now she could feel that it was a task soon over, a trial that would soon be forgotten in new joys.

Christabel was rather uncommunicative and Aunt Ellen had not been made at once aware of Burke's status and unconventional approach. She had taken him at first for just another of Christabel's young men, only nicer and more the gentleman, she thought. When she saw how things were going with them, however, she began a little affectionate probing. And received certain information with rather different feelings from those with which it was imparted.

"Dear, dear!" she said to herself as she washed the breakfast dishes. "A millionaire! and I thought he was such a nice young man! Christabel's only a poor girl for all her beauty and spirit, the darlin'! and from all I hear most of them young millionaires'll bear watchin'! Sure a pretty face will draw moths just like a candle, only the peril is usually 'tother way about, worse luck!"

"Tis not his social position I'm afraid of," she assured herself with spirit. "Sure we've Brian Boru's own blood in our veins!"

She felt the situation to be full of danger and herself powerless to cope with it. Though 'twas no wonder Christabel liked the young man, Aunt Ellen liked him her-

self, directed into a big room full of important-looking people.

"Tell the judge 'tis Mrs. Ellen Shannon would speak with him," explained Aunt Ellen to the pleasant young man who addressed her. "And tell him 'tisn't exactly business, 'tis just a little personal matter that won't take a minute."

"All right," said the young man, very pleasantly indeed, "I'll tell him." He went away, and presently beckoned her into an inner room.

An elderly gentleman with a mop of white hair and eyes that twinkled very like Aunt Ellen's own rose to greet her within.

"Tis only a minute of your time I want," began Aunt Ellen, "to ask you about a young man named Burke."

"No hurry at all," smiled the judge. "Valentine Burke? He was here himself a little while ago and spoke of you, Mrs. Shannon." And the judge's eyes twinkled more than ever.

"Did he now? You know him well?" asked Aunt Ellen eagerly.

"Since he was a boy."

"Well, is he a good boy is what I want to know?"

The judge's deep voice held the merest hint of amusement. "Why, yes, I think he is. A very good boy I think I might safely say."

"That's all I want to know," declared Aunt Ellen. "My Christabel's getting fond of him, I can see, and I wanted to know something about him."

"And whether he can support a wife, I suppose," twinkled the judge again. "I think he'll be able to do that all right, too, if she doesn't ask too much."

"He isn't rich, then?" put in Aunt Ellen, quickly. "I heard he was, but I'm not caring at all about the money if he's a good boy himself."

"That sentiment does you credit, Mrs. Shannon. I'm sure Val would be pleased to hear you say it. Riches often take wings, but good qualities seldom, you know."

"Right you are, judge," agreed Aunt Ellen, earnestly. "I won't keep you any longer. Thank you for botherin' with me, and good-day to you."

She dropped him an old-fashioned curtsy and hastened out.

On second thoughts she said nothing of this to Christabel, whose dream only grew sweeter with the passing days.

And at last the love and the question in Burke's eyes became articulate. He loved

her more than words were ever made to express. All that he had and was and hoped to be were hers to juggle as she would.

"Oh, Christabel, I love you so—will you marry me?"

"Yes," she whispered, and her fresh young lips were Burke's.

Charley's being married for his money—it's as plain as day."

"Is it?"

"I suppose I'm a romantic idiot," he went on softly, "but I can't think of anything that would hurt me more than to find that the woman I loved had married me for money. That's what fellows like Millard have to contend with, and rich girls, too. Now, we"—he stopped to kiss her fondly.

The awakening doubt in Christabel's mind, the startled quickening of her heart, seemed to put only an added fervor upon her lips. She clung to him for a moment with an intensity that brought an exultant joy to his eyes.

"Money," he breathed tenderly, "is nothing to us, is it, honey?"

"No," she whispered faintly back.

The talk drifted a-field, then afterward he said:

"Aunt Ellen will be lonely here without you. Would she come with us, do you suppose?"

"I'm afraid she couldn't bring herself to leave the little old place," Christabel believed. "She's lived here so long!"

"I wonder how she'd like us to come and live with her?" laughed Burke. He was joking—or was he?—but again Mr. heart sank.

When he left her: "Do you love me?" he asked deeply.

"You know it," answered his Cinderella of the shops.

"Then I'm richer than Millard by a good many millions," said Burke. And he went gaily homeward.

The face that Christabel saw in her mirror was white, there were shadows in the eyes that had lately looked back with such frank happiness. Burke was not what she had thought him; he was poor. Not poor as she was perhaps, but poor in comparison with what she had promised herself.

There are women who are born for luxury as certainly as there are women who are born to be cooks. No matter whether they ever attain it or not their desire is for purple and fine linen, the delicacies and refinements of wealth and station. And this not necessarily from indolence or snobbishness, by virtue rather of tastes and ambitions that are inborn.

Christabel, a girl who had never known anything but poverty, knew herself equal to any elevation, and with the confidence of true ambition she had expected to attain the desired heights. To find herself deceived was a blow indeed. She had not been deceived by Burke—she had deceived herself. Burke had made no pretensions; had no reason to guess her exalted ideas concerning him. The link between him and young Millard was likelier that of a college friendship than of financial equality.

True, in marrying Burke, she would advance some steps. They would very likely have a pleasant apartment, perhaps a servant, her own life would be easier, planter—but this mediocrity had not been her dream. Sick of poverty and its limitations upon her love of beauty and freedom, she had asked of life wealth and the power that it gives, with her barter ready in her hand, youth, beauty, capacity, and a greater gift to be had for the winning. All this for Burke!

Well, all was not over—what had passed was not irrevocably final. She might return her catch to the stream of men and cast her line again. More cautiously next time. She could give Burke up—give up Burke!

She flung a glance in the mirror—and laughed.

Next morning all traces of the blow she had received were erased. She was even more serene, gayer, than before. The little wedding preparations went on with an increased ardor. Aunt Ellen was happy—Burke was jubilant.

Neither guessed that once more Love Triumphant wore the added jewel of Renunciation.

They were married quietly in a little neighborhood church. Millard and Judge Stillwell, Aunt Ellen and Miss McGuire were the only witnesses. Mr. Millard's automobile conveyed them to Aunt Ellen's for the wedding supper, a proceeding that pleased her more than gifts of rubies.

They were to take a little trip afterward, and good-byes having been said at the house, Millard's car again carried them to the station.

Burke at last lifted her into a brilliantly lighted car that was a fairyland of flowers that gleamed with silver and mahogany that shone with mirrors, hung with marvellous lace, and carpeted with velvet. He stood looking at her wonder, her incredulous joy, tenderly.

"I—don't understand," she murmured, lifting those pure eyes questioningly to his. He took her in his arms.

"This is unimportant," he said. "The great thing is that you married just me!"

As their lips met, a voice sounded distinctly through an open window.

"No, sir, This is Millionaire Burke's private car."



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HE HOPED TO BE ALLOWED TO COME AGAIN SOON—HE HAD SPENT SUCH A PLEASANT EVENING

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