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THE WAY

OF A
MAID.

From the porch the view was superb. Upon either side were the woods; at our feet the great yard, with its vivid turf, its old oaks, its well-trimmed evergreens and its winding gravel walk, gently sloped to the public roadway; across the roadway broad pasture lands, contentedly munched over by a thousand cattle; beyond the pasture-lands flowed the blue river.

Happily had Colonel Everett planned, when he had so built that the main portion of his estate should be in front of him, and that, like a patriarch in his tent door, he might sit upon his porch and count his flocks and herds.

To-day, here against the thickly timbered hill-crest stood the huge house, its commanding position, its odd crenelles and turrets, giving it the appearance of a castle, while its generous verandah proclaimed it a comfortable home. There, below, extended, almost as far as the eye could cover the busy, thriving meadows. But Colonel Everett was dead, and the head of the vast property was this slip of a girl now idly swaying in the hammock, athwart the porch corner.

"Clarice, I said abruptly, "you ought to get married."

"I know it," she admitted with promptness.

"Then why don't you?" I asked.

"Echo answers 'Why?' she murmured.

The hammock ropes squeaked as she swung to and fro between the columns.

"You must see—of course you do—that Everett Place should be in charge of some man clothed with more authority than a mere salary can give," I continued.

"He should be interested in it because it is his and yours. Money will buy service, but it will not buy interest. The manager of Everett Place should be its owner—that is, its joint owner."

"Tis a pity to let an overseer play hob with such an estate."

"But I'm quite satisfied with the overseer as you are pleased to call yourself," objected Clarice. "Every body says you've done finely, and I'm sure that I've got more money than I can spend."

"Which is one I have in mind to the present," I replied. "Your husband would feel free to invest the money, for it would be his money also; on the other hand, a conscientious manager or overseer naturally hesitates to take the risk, if the investment would fall outside the farm."

"I expect you're tired of being tied down in the country," accused Clarice, peevish, bright-eyed, around the corner of her hammock pillow at me, sitting upon the rail with back against a pillar.

The vehemence with which I hastened to deny was so sincere that it was ludicrous.

"However," I concluded, "your father did not intend that I should stay here always. He must have foreseen that you would some day be married, and my stewardship could be only temporary."

"Why couldn't you be my husband's steward as well as mine?" demanded Clarice—maybe with a trace of malice.

"Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed.

"Mercy!" she cried, with a little giggle. "I had no idea that your task was so disagreeable."

"It isn't disagreeable," I retorted, dismayed. "But your husband, you understand, he'd be your husband, and—"

"Yes, I certainly hope so," interrupted Clarice. "I should insist on having it in black and white."

"—and while I'm glad to serve you, he ought to be able to run his own affairs. Besides, I want to be something more than a dried-up secretary, another man's hired help all my life."

"Well, what?" asked Clarice, gazing at me curiously.

"I could not tell her my heart's desire, though it was on the tip of

my tongue, as ever. I had been left in trust by her father; in trust of his daughter's lands, but not of his daughter's life. I must not overstep my office. So I responded, enigmatically: "Much."

Which Clarice received with a dry: "Thanks."

"Why don't you get married?" I persisted. "You are old enough—"

"How indecately candid—to remind me that I'm twenty-three!" she sniffed severely. "And how very rude! You should have said that I am young enough. I'm angry with you, Cousin Phil!"

"And to my personal knowledge you have had offer after offer—"

"And not all from the same person," she corrected.

"No; from many young men of good character, good family and good position, and why you refused some of them is more than I can fathom."

"Possibly I didn't love them," she suggested, softly. "Supposing, Mr. Wise-Acre, you pick out a husband for me," she added. "It will so simplify matters—you being unbiased."

"Pick out a husband?" Quick as a wink I might have replied "Philip Armsted"—but I didn't. My name had no business in the candidacy; and while it yearned to break prison I blurted, haphazard:

"Jasper Tait!"

"Jasper Tait!" repeated Clarice, indignantly. "A would-be Beau Brummel! I have no wish to be a valet!"

"Robert Harne."

"Ha-ow's your haws, Miss Clarice?" mimicked my pert auditor. "No; the man I marry must have mind above such a subject."

"Brandon Sawley."

"A sport! He might wager me on a horse-race—and not lose!"

"Well, Edmund Buff," I proposed, triumphantly.

"Puddin' head Ned? Gracious! He's the other extreme. I prefer Bran."

"John de Voe, then. What's the objection to him?"

"None! He isn't worth it. Good character! Bad character! He has no character at all! He's like gelatine; tasteless, colorless."

"Fritz Fentox."

"Puh! A cheap edition of Bob. I'd never get farther than the kitchen. He wants a drudge, not a wife!"

I paused, at loss for another name, and inwardly exultant over the trenchant way she had swept aside those which I had already presented.

"Done?" she inquired, sweetly.

"Yes—that is, while there are lots more, I don't see but what you had better choose for yourself," I responded, with meekness.

"Cousin Phil, how old are you?" asked Clarice, suddenly sitting up and facing me.

"Forty winters and thirty-three summers," I replied. "Or, forty with my beard on, and thirty-three with it off."

"Which [makes seventy-three," asserted Clarice. "But at the lowest estimate, don't you think that you ought to have acquired more sense—about girls?"

"It's hard to learn that I have tried and failed, Clarice," I confessed, though rather startled by her insinuation.

"Yet, positively, you expose yourself by saying that I had better choose my own husband! And you preface that remarkable advice by attempting, like a big, innocent calf, to aid me by a list which, I must admit, you selected with heroic impartiality! Oh, Philip the Foolish!" and she laughed mockingly.

I flushed. I did not take kindly to being put upon the same plane with a "big, innocent calf," even by Clarice—or should I say, especially by Clarice!

"However, your advice is timely, no matter if it isn't very original," she resumed. "I will choose—there!" She emphasized her "there" by plumping, with a little spring, out of the hammock.

"I'll tell you the rest after supper to-night," she vouchsafed, with

an energetic shake of her crumpled skirt about her dainty ankles; and tripped toward the door. Midway she halted an instant, and patting me on the head, purried: "Don't feel bad, Phil. Calves are such dear things."

An instant more and she had fled, leaving her light touch and clear laugh as my pleasant memory of her presence; her acceptance of my rash counsel, as my unpleasant.

According to the design which Clarice unfolded—and a madcap whim it seemed to be—within the week we sent out invitations to the most elaborate dancing party, for the twenty-ninth, that the vicinity had ever known. Hospitable Everett Place was to eclipse all its past record. Town and country alike were bidden, and the neighborhood was agog.

It was my duty to enter cheerfully into Clarice's countless plans concerning the forthcoming event; but nevertheless, I was miserable. Practically, the night of the twenty-ninth meant to me the end. It meant goodby to Everett Place; it meant good-by to Clarice.

I had been here eight years, eight happy years, shadowed only by the death of the colonel. When he had been able to realize the dream of his life, and with his millions had retired here to establish a country house and to develop himself to his passion—fancy stock—he had sent for me, whom he always had favored among his younger relatives, to be his secretary—and, I cannot but add, his son.

When he had died, so unexpectedly to all, I found that I had been named his executor, Clarice his heir.

Since then five years had flashed by. Clarice, whom I had seen first in her girlhood, had attained her womanhood. My executorship has long been fulfilled. Still, at the wish of Clarice, and because it was best for the estate that I should I had stayed at Everett Place to manage it.

That I loved Clarice goes without saying: loved her not as a sister, or as a second cousin, but as Clarice—just as Clarice. And our very intimacy prevented my telling her so. I did not wish to subject her to any embarrassment which she might feel by reason of a ridiculous sense of obligation. Moreover, I was ten years her senior, and was, save her housekeeper-aunt (an amiable but dense person), her only adviser.

Everett Place had prospered, but it was time that manager stepped out, husband stepped in. Who he would be I did not know; Clarice evidently did.

The twenty-ninth arrived, and everything had been prepared. When the sun sank we lighted the great house, room to room, until it looked like a festal palace. As I was hastening to dress, Clarice recalled down the hall:

"Prink your prettiest, Phil! 'Tis the last chance you'll have to dance with me before my wedding."

This warning was not one calculated to lift me into the very best of spirits, I must acknowledge. Toilet completed, upon scrutinizing myself in the glass, as many a man has done in fact as well as in fiction, I beheld a face as melancholy as that of a mute at a funeral.

The guests streamed in, so that for an hour we were kept busy welcoming them. Quickly the ball-room filled. We could hear, where we were standing below, the strains of the orchestra and the rhythmic swish of feet upon the polished floor.

"You can go up, Clarice," finally I suggested. "You might as well be dancing, and I'll stay here to greet late comers. I don't care to dance anyway."

"But you'll dance with me, won't you?" she inquired.

"By all means," I answered, adding glumly, "if I have a chance."

"You'll have the chance, I promise you," she returned, over her shoulder, smiling back at me as she ascended the wide stairway upon the arm of a fortunate cavalier. So subtle was the smile that

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my glumness melted, and I, too, smiled. It was a shame for me to throw a damper upon the occasion.

A number of things, here and there, occupied me, and when I was enabled, at last, to seek the ball room, I was in better humor. But, as I had thought probable, my "chance" to dance with Clarice was an extremely forlorn one, inasmuch as upon me developed to attend to the least popular girls, and she herself was the belle as well as the hostess of the gathering.

In fact, I never got near her until, during an interval between dances, she beckoned to me.

"It's ten o'clock, Phil," she announced, as I bent over her, "and time for the german, you know. Now make your speech."

I glanced at her imploringly. The task appalled me.

"Oh, Clarice, I can't!"

"Can't! The idea!" she protested gaily. "Who ever heard of a lawyer having stage-fright! Go ahead you goose!"

"If you don't I will," she threatened, while I faltered.

"Pshaw! I'll do it if you will tell me what to say, Miss Everett," volunteered John de Voe, who was sitting beside her.

That was enough. The effrontery of this nincompoop gave me the needful stiffening, and while everybody watched I stalked across the room, and took stand before the recess where the orchestra was concealed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said—the words which I had been rehearsing to myself for a week coming mechanically to my tongue. "I'm sure that you will agree with me that Everett Place ought to have a master as well as a mistress. We are about to begin the german, and Miss Everett has done us the honor of inventing for the first figure what she terms 'the matrimonial figure!' It is for the men generally, but the man—"

"Only single men need apply," interrupted Clarice, in dulcet tones, to my confusion.

"The man," I proceeded, frowning. "whose favor she accepts is—himself accepted, and—and—I believe that's all."

With this lame finish I started to sit down.

"Not all, by any means!" corrected Clarice, mischievously, hopping upon her chair to speak, and there steadying herself by grasping the shoulder of her neighbor on either hand. "My partner—whoever he may be—and I will lead the german, company permitting, and we'll be married, and live happily ever after," of course. And it was Phil who advised me to choose a husband, so he is responsible.

Phil, help the men select their favors—in case they want any. They may favor other ladies—that should be understood, please—but they will not necessarily be convicted of wishing to marry them."

Clarice subsided, and a buzz of amazed comment arose. The men rallied quicker than did the women and led by the more audacious Mades like Brandon Sawley and Jasper Tait, flocked to the table whereupon were displayed the special favors—tidy golden hearts.

Some of the men returned to their seats; others lingered on the floor. A hush of anticipation fell over the gathering. All waited.

"Well," said Clarice, plaintively, "does nobody want me?"

Nobody! Why hardly a bachelor in the room but was openly her suitor, while not a few of the staid benedicts were accustomed to cast sheep's eyes at her.

The red in her cheeks deepened, until, above her fair neck and shoulders, her face was a beautiful crimson rose poised in a marble vase.

On a sudden Brandon Sawley, with the remark, "Nothing dare, nothing do," marched straight across the floor, and, bowing low offered his favor. Clarice looked him full in the eyes, and, smiling, shook her head.

Brandon bowed again, and defiantly marched back to his chair. People laughed, but I admired his pluck.

His failure emboldened other aspirants. Jasper Tait strutted to discomfiture. Next Fritz Fentox stumbled over, and sheepishly retired.

Then Horace Munn, Robert Hayne and Gilbert Henry, in a row.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Clarice. "I can't marry the three of you, so I will have none," and she hid her face behind her fan.

One after another, old and young of town and country, some jokingly, some darily, and some white with a great hope, essayed the venture, and one after another met a refusal which, while varied to fit the opportunity, was the same in purpose.

Finally came a lull. The list of candidates seemed to be exhausted.

"Oh, dear, sighed Clarice, demurely, but her eyes a-shine with a merriment, "must I miss this lovely waltz?"

From my station by the table I scanned the room, and I did not see a single available man left. Was this scheme merely a joke? Had I been inveigled in a farce? Already couples, unable to resist the strains which had long been calling them, were drifting over the floor.

That mix of a Clarice!

Suddenly a hum of interest attracted my attention. I turned my head toward the spot where Clarice had been sitting, but here was Clarice by my side!

"Phil," she pouted, "I so want to dance!"

I started in amazement, now at her, now at the golden heart, I perceived, I had been unconsciously twirling in my fingers. The pout changed to a tender smile; before my stare her brave gaze fell.

A great light broke upon me, and unrebuffed I laid the golden heart in her soft palm.

Tobacco in Texas.

Cuba and Sumatra must look to their laurels as producers of fine tobacco, if the plan of the Southern Pacific railroad to establish Texas as a tobacco State do not miscarry.

The road's industrial agents have long been experimenting with the soil of certain sections of the Lone Star State, and are convinced that that it is well adapted to the culture of high grade tobacco, including many kinds now imported.

If these plans of the Southern Pacific carry through, well informed tobacco men say that the tobacco trade will be almost revolutionized, with inestimable benefits to the country at large. If Texas can place itself on a level with the foreign tobacco markets the vast sums now paid for transportation will be saved.

The Texas product would not interfere with that of Kentucky, Virginia and other States, owing to the different grades in tobacco grown. The seedling planters of the North would not suffer, but the foreign leaf would be displaced. Of course not nearly all the vast State of Texas is adapted to tobacco growth. Experts believe that the rice belt is the only part fitted for the cultivation of the high grade product.

President Castro, the South American Dictator, whose recent defiance of two world powers has so astonished Europe, is, in truth, an extraordinary man. Measuring but five feet four inches in height, lame, of humble origin, uneducated, and essentially ignorant of all the refinements of western culture, he is none the less one of the most forceful men Venezuela has produced since the days of Bolivar.

He won his way sword in hand to the Yellow House, or President's Mansion of Caracas. He has met pressure from abroad by insulting first France, then the United States, and now Germany and Great Britain. His latest defiance of these powers, after they had wiped out his entire navy, at one fell blow, was such a delightfully Spanish performance that it made him the hero of the hour in all South America. It remains to be seen whether Cipriano Castro is a Don Quixote or a Fernando Cortez.—Collier's Weekly.

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