

CHRONICLE'S SHORT STORY.

A RACE FOR A WIFE.

BY E. NEWTON BUNGEY.

Miss Dorothy Marsden, the daughter of Sir John Marsden, of Colthrop Hall, near Winton, was well known to all the townspeople, who always welcomed her pretty face and charming manners. No fete or gathering party was complete without Sir John's beautiful daughter, and at the last three regattas she had presented the prizes. It is an undeniable fact that fully two-thirds of the young men in the town and its vicinity were in love with her.

Dorothy's chief delight was being on the water, whether she was sculling, punting or in a canoe. She once pulled in a trial racing eight, and did not make half a bad show.

It follows, therefore, that any young man who wished to make a good impression on Dorothy must be as fond of the river as she was; furthermore, he must be able to pull a good oar.

Such a man as this was Dick Greville. A Cambridge he had rowed in his college eight, and would have been given his blue against Oxford but for an unlucky sprained wrist just before the final eight was selected.

He absolutely worshipped Dorothy Marsden, and would have made any sacrifice for her. He was a good-looking man standing close on six feet in height, besides being well off from a financial point of view. Altogether, he seemed a fitting match for Dorothy Marsden; but, though he had asked her on several occasions to marry him, she had refused each time.

The truth was that Miss Marsden was young and overbrimming with youthful energy, and she really could not decide whether she cared sufficiently for Dick Greville to marry him, but admitted to him that she was very fond of him, but she was hardly certain whether she was sufficiently fond of him to couple her life with his for as long as they lived.

With each refusal, however, Dick Greville had become more grimly determined than ever to win Dorothy, and his love for her grew stronger every day.

But a sudden change was brought about by the unexpected deaths of Lord Irvington and his son. As a result, Geoffrey Campion, Dorothy Marsden's cousin, became her apparent, the new Lord Irvington being Dorothy's uncle.

Geoffrey Campion has always been one of Dorothy's most devoted admirers, and now that he was the future Lord Irvington, Sir John Marsden was very anxious that his daughter should be the future Lady Irvington.

But Dorothy by no means reciprocated her cousin's feelings. One day both Campion and Greville, amongst other guests, were present at a garden party given by Sir John Marsden. Naturally enough the conversation turned on the regatta, which was to take place in less than a month's time.

"I suppose we shall have to go through the same old farce of rowing over the course for the cup," said Campion.

He was referring to the Winton Silver Challenge Cup, which had been presented to the town many years ago to be competed for by the respective town eights. For a number of years there had been several eights in the town, and there was always a ding-dong race for the cup.

For the last five years, however, there had been only one eight in the town, and in order to maintain possession of the cup they rowed over the course by themselves, there being no challengers.

"Really, someone ought to start another club, so that there can be a race for the cup," said Dorothy. "It is a shame for your eight always to hold the cup."

"Bring forward the eight, my fair cousin," said Campion in airy tones, "and we shall be only too willing to row against them."

"Of course, it is too late to get an eight out of the town before this year's regatta," replied Dorothy, "but there shall be one next year if I have to stroke myself."

A chorus of laughter greeted this remark, Campion in particular being highly amused. He himself was captain of the Winton Rowing Club and rowed stroke.

"I should like to see the eight in Winton who could beat our crew," he said in somewhat supercilious tones.

"Would you?" asked Dick Greville, quietly.

Campion gazed at the speaker with a none too amiable expression on his face. He knew that he and Dick were rivals and the fact was far from being a pleasant one.

As a matter of fact, Dick Greville was quite good enough to row in the Winton Rowing Club eight, but while Geoffrey Campion was captain of the club there would be no chance of his rival to allow him a chance of distinguishing himself.

"Most certainly I should," Campion replied. "Shall we have that pleasure next year?"

"How long is it before the regatta?" asked Dick.

"Three weeks and four days," said someone.

Dick reflected for a few moments and then said quietly:

"I will do my best to let you have the pleasure this year."

A murmur of surprised applause greeted this reply, for Dick was a universal favorite.

"Of course, you know the rules," said Campion coldly.

"Every man in the competing eights must have been born in Winton or lived there for more than four years."

"I quite understand that," was the reply he received.

Presently Dick Greville walked away, and immediately Geoffrey Campion laughed aloud.

"Why, what rubbish!" he said. "How can Greville possibly hope to train a crew in such a short time. At any rate we shall have some fun in watching them row."

Never did he utter a truer remark than the last, but he did not for a moment realize to what extent the fun would lead them.

Dick Greville called on a chum who was a good oarsman, and told him his story. He detailed his scheme and his friend, Arthur Jervis, was greatly taken with it.

"It will make them the laughing stock of the river," he said. "Now, what other men do you propose to have in the crew?"

After a little discussion they had nine names on paper, including their own, and during the evening they called on each man. Fortunately they met with no refusals, and before bedtime the new crew knew all about the scheme and were all very enthusiastic and amused at the prospect.

Dick got his eight together and every evening they practiced hard in a reach several miles from the town.

At last the regatta day came round. The weather was perfect and a large crowd assembled. The racing was good, but everyone was waiting expectantly for the last event on the card, Mr. Greville's eight vs. the Newton Rowing Club eight, for the Newton Challenge Cup.

The Newton eight, looking very spruce and smart, were the first to appear, and as they carried their sixty-foot racer from the boathouse, they were enthusiastically cheered.

Then Dick Greville's eight came out and a ripple of laughter ran around the onlookers.

The men stooped and seemed very nervous, and looked no more like a racing eight than a dromedary and as they launched their boat they were greeted with ironical shouts and cat-calls.

The crowd screamed with laughter as the men quarreled about their oars. As for Dick Greville, he scowled at his men and looked very ill at ease.

"If you'd rather not row," Campion called out, "we are quite willing that you should retire."

Another laugh greeted this taunt, but Greville took no notice of it.

At length the two eights were ready and the gun was fired. Immediately the Newton eight went away with a rush, the pace being thirty-eight strokes to the minute. In a minute they drew two lengths ahead of Greville's crew and then slackened to a paddle.

Roars of laughter greeted the scratch eight as they splashed along. Their oars dipped in the water regardless of time, and they shot oceans of spray into the air. They pulled anyhow, some took short strokes and others took long. In direct defiance of all racing ideas the men kept on shouting to each other, whilst they took not the slightest notice of the time set by Greville, who was rowing the stroke.

Dorothy, on board the umpire's launch, followed behind, and she sorrowfully watched the absurd display of Greville's crew. This was all she could do, after all his promises. How galling it was!

Rowing well together at a slow, easy stroke, the Newton eight kept their clear two lengths lead. On each man's face was a broad grin, for they were all watching the queer antics of Greville's crew.

In this manner the two eights covered two-thirds of the course. With each minute the rowing of Greville's eight became worse, until the Newton eight could not contain themselves, and many of them burst out laughing.

Suddenly there came a sharp "Now!" from Greville's lips. Immediately each man behind him sat up straight, their ears struck the water together, and, with a machine-like precision, they propelled their boat along at a great pace.

Before the Newton crew understood what had happened Greville's eight had drawn level and rowing like a machine, had shot half a length ahead.

The suddenness of the change came as a surprise to all.

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with such a shock that the Newton men lost their heads and began to row raggedly.

Each second saw the scratch eight increasing their lead. The men rowed splendidly together and were striking thirty-six to the minute.

For a few moments the spectators were so amazed that they were absolutely silent, but then they woke up, saw through the ruse, and a roar of encouragement for Greville's men filled the air.

A ding-dong race was now in progress, but the scratch eight had got too big a lead. Each man pulled like a Trojan, and, try as they could, Campion's boat could not catch them. And amidst stentorian cheers, Greville's men passed the winning post a length and a quarter ahead.

Campion was furious with rage, and bitterly denounced Greville's tactics. But Greville retorted that, even in spite of the artifice, a trained crew like the Newton eight ought to have won.

Newton has never forgotten that race, neither has Dick Greville ever forgotten Dorothy's softly murmured reply when he put an all important question to her shortly afterwards.

They had a proper race at the following regatta, and Mrs. Richard Greville handed her husband the cup which his crew again had won.

Kaiser Honors American Painter. Berlin, Jan. 25.—The Kaiser conferred the Order of Merit on John A. Sargent, the American painter, today.

To Outline Japanese Policy. Tokio, Jan. 25.—Foreign Minister Komura will make a speech in the Diet in a few days announcing the government's policy not permitting lower class Japanese immigrants.

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