

Pre-War Lady

A ROMANCE
by Margaret Widdemer

READ THIS FIRST:

It is the year 1930, and Roger Scarlett, good-looking, substantial bachelor of about thirty-five, with his sleek, rather young and attractive seventeen-year-old, are attending a night club show in New York, accompanied by Dick Stoddard, a brother officer from the war days, and his girl friend, Kay Gardner, a rather sophisticated woman of thirty. As they sit listening to the entertainment a woman entertainer, billed as the "Pre-war Lady," comes out to sing. She is golden-haired, beautiful, is clad in the dress of a young girl of the year 1918, and wears a necklace. Both men are visibly moved by her appearance and declare she is like someone they used to know. Kay, a little put out because Dick is moved by the singer's appearance, declares she wants the "Pre-war Lady" brought to the table and persuades Roger to send a note to the manager, Manny Rose, who served in the same regiment with Stoddard and Scarlett overseas. Rose appears, but tries to make excuses for the masked singer, saying she is shy. He resents Stoddard's presence. Then the singer appears again, starting both men with the song "Bend Sinister's Stream." The scene shifts back to the war days in the Valley mansion on the Hudson, where Robin Vailty, young poet and officer, with his friends, Roger Scarlett and Dick Stoddard, are preparing to leave for overseas. Robin's sister, Emilia, young and innocent beauty of the times, is there also. Both Roger and Dick are in love with her, the former in a quiet, friendly manner, and the latter in an impulsive way. They are preparing to attend a dance. Roger, Dick and Emilia leave for the dance, Robin remaining at home to be with his aged father.

[NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY]



Marry me before we go across.

CHAPTER 5

THE VILLAGE remembered that seven generations of Staders, sprung from an arrogant, handsome redcoat lieutenant and a stupid, handsome German peasant girl without benefit of clergy, had been prolific, handsome, beautiful, given to petty dishonesty of word and act at worst, but balance and charm that smelt of little of charity at most; quick-witted, overfriendly, hard on Tommy Stader, a man of impressive presence and unshakable pomp of manner, had been an omnivorous reader; he finally announced that the Staders were really Stoddards, connections of the poet and critic, and named his boy Richard Henry to prove it. The village suspended judgment about Dick. His mother was a solid, honest Jackson from "Tucky-hoe way"; he might take after her yet, in spite of his black-haired Stader looks and bold Stader ways.

Dick had got a job in a real estate office. He had gone to Plattsburg; and there he had made friends with Robin, to whom Dick's Stader background and his rise from it made him more desirable and romantic and valuable than any number of boys with his own background and traditions. It was a moment when, to quote an essayist of the moment, "pride had given way to a wild humility, classic consciousness to a wild democracy, honor in the old sense to a burning passion for reform." Robin felt a little guilty, in his young pre-war passion for reform, at having been born to money and an old code and an assured social position. He felt that in itself low birth and poverty and lack of tradition proved a man to be higher and finer in every way than himself.

Besides all this, Dick had charm and assurance. It was the Stader way to assault a position. To the end of her days, Emilia was to have the nameless something which allures men; but the touch of old-fashioned dignity her father's upbringing had given her kept most of them from daring too much. Dick would have been assured with Cleopatra or Queen Mary of England. He went on whispering love-talk to Emilia as they danced.

"You peach, you little beauty . . . you darling," Emilia, I'm crazy over you," she said nothing, only smiling dreamily up at him. She was half mesmerized by the music and the motion. He spoke again, suddenly, more intensely.

"Emilia, darling, marry me. I'm mad over you. Marry me before we go across. Lots of fellows and girls are doing it. What do you say, you sweet thing?"

She stared at him, a little startled, snapping awake, out of the trance of swirling arms and motion and music. But Emilia was not quite ready for love yet. Eighteen, before the war, was mentally older, emotionally younger than now.

"Dick—we can't—we don't know each other well enough."

"That's not it. If we love each other well enough, it's all that counts!"

The music stopped. He led her quickly away, out on the forbidden steps, before a too-zealous chaperon should hurry up to her with some

strange young officer from the South or West who had to be given a good time. There, under the stars, in the evening wind that blew her hair about her face, he stood close by her and pleaded.

"Come on, Emilia, I'm crazy over you. And it would be a lark! Let's get it over with, and then—" He laughed, and sang softly to the drum sound of the band, breaking in, "When the war is done, I'll come to you."

The uniform and the moment and the splendid vitality of the boy who pleaded with her so ardently moved her. But other thoughts held her back.

"I mustn't, Dick, I can't. We don't know each other well enough yet, we're too young; and this is too great a time for us to be thinking of such things."

"This is the very time, because it is so great," he said, and she was half persuaded again. "If you love me, you will! I adore you. You angel, you darling—" he would have had her in his arms again. "Do you love me?" he demanded. "Say you do."

She looked up at him. "Dick, I don't know. I'm afraid—it might be glorious. And there's another reason why I can't marry anyone, not for six months or a year, anyway."

He snatched at it, not asking her reason, not caring much. "Then, will you wait? Will you give me an answer in six months? Give me some hope to take over there, while I'm fighting and maybe being wounded. Your love would protect me, like a talisman."

Charm, romance, glamour, excitement—they were all on Dick's side. But still she could not feel that she had for him all the things she had believed love to be. Yet—it might be love.

"Yes," she said quietly. "I'll give you your answer in six months, Dick. That is, if you would rather wait."

"I'll wait. I know you'll marry me if I wait. You love me now, only you don't know it."

He thrilled her secretly. Of the sort that swept one to the saddle and away, this gallant Dick Stoddard, with his laughter and his arrogant, charming certainties. But the steady old Dutch blood that had given her a yard of golden hair and a rose-and-white skin had given her other things, too. She wanted to be swept away—part of her. But there was the other thing, the great thing. He bent forward to kiss her. . . . One of the ordered raids of the chaperons, sweeping the girls and men back into the room to do their duty by dancing, occurred. Emilia found herself herded in, introduced to some stranger for the fortieth time that evening, and mechanically dancing and replying to him, to the music—the wonderful, romantic, exciting music.

They left at twelve. Roger took charge of Emilia automatically; Dick had to go down, belatedly, to see his people. They were silent, crossing the turf. It was too beautiful a night to go in, they were too restless, even controlled Roger.

The river was black except where the moon made a track on it, and where silent strings of barges trailed low lights at intervals. Far up was the light of a warship. Sharp-scented asters and chrysanthemums grew in big, casual-seeming masses here and there. They could see the red low-

light of the window behind which Robin and his father were still alone together, a little way above them. The sky was black velvet with tiny star-spots close and bright and white, the moon was almost high. The two of them were alone on the woodlands at the other side, only the river wall below. The wind blew warm as June, but with the fall tang of smoke and autumn flowers. A little of the music echoed still about Emilia; she began to dance on the turf, singing again the silly, sweet tune that rang in girls' heads that year—"Sally the while you kiss me fond adieu . . ."

The frail courage and pink-lighted unconsciousness of the waltz-rhythm turned suddenly real and passionate to Roger, there with her alone on the moon-whitened green lawns. He made a step forward to catch and kiss her where she turned slowly, all warmth and innocence allure. Then he held still—this was his little sister and his princess, as well as his love. He couldn't treat her like some painted, blond little girl picked up at a dance.

"Let's go down to the river," he said, his deep voice abrupt with the effort of keeping his hands off her. "I'd love it. I'm all alive, aren't you? I never felt so alive. I could dance or run—or live—forever!"

"I feel so, too," he said.

They both laughed a little wildly, as Emilia and Dick had laughed together earlier. On both sides of the walk that ended at the arbor before the steps to the water were tall monthly rose trees, flowering still.

"The roses aren't withered yet," she said.

"That hung o'er the wave? Yes, they are," said Roger, "the climbing roses on the river wall are."

Emilia laughed and ran before him through the arbor, kneeling in the moonlight beside the low stone parapet, overgrown, all its length, by trailing rose vines.

"Remember when we all helped mother plant these?" she said, speaking softly.

"I remember." Isabel Valaty, dead for years, was a living memory still.

"Then you ought to remember that there was one monthly climbing rose!" She knelt at the river's edge, her arms full of long stems. The moon was quite high now. It turned her into a silvered image, silver-gold for hair, silver-blue for gown, statue-silver face and body. Her hair, loosened by the evening of dancing, had been pulled all down by a catching rose bough. It was such hair as girls envied then. And like everything else about Emilia, it was part of the romance she sent out from her like a scent. She was Melisande in her tower, or, farther back, one of the Grimm princesses they had read about together. With a childish confident coquetry she broke one of the withers, set with tiny pink roses as she had told him, and tied it round her head.

"These are the 'roses that hung o'er the wave,' and they aren't withered!" she said, smiling.

The touch of her hand, and her smile up at him, broke his control. He drew away from her, so as not to be tempted to snatch her into his arms, and said abruptly, "Emilia, will you marry me before I go?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

STATE'S ROAD LAW DRAWS ATTENTION

National Magazine Soon To Print Article on North Carolina Plan

Daily Dispatch Bureau, in the Sir Walter Hotel, BY J. C. BASKERVILLE.

Raleigh, Sept. 22.—Because of the interest being shown in the North Carolina road law throughout the entire United States and the likelihood that numerous other states will consider similar laws when their legislatures meet this winter. The Country Gentleman, one of the nation's leading farm and agricultural publications, will soon print an article dealing with this road law. Ben Hibbs, of the editorial staff of The Country Gentleman has been in the State for several days now making a study of the law and how it has operated since it went into effect here on July 1, 1931.

The North Carolina road law, enacted by the 1931 legislature, under which the State took over some 45,000 miles of county roads and put them under the maintenance of the State Highway Commission, attracted nationwide attention at the time of its enactment. No State had ever before attempted to abolish all taxes on property for road maintenance and to take over the task of maintaining all roads at State expense. For under the present law, the counties were relieved of the responsibility of maintaining county roads with a consequent saving to the taxpayers of from \$10,000,000 to \$12,000,000 a year. The cost of maintaining all highways in the State under the present law is paid from the revenue received from the State tax on gasoline.

Because of the tremendous amount of property tax reduction brought about by this road law and the fact that it has been operating satisfactorily for more than a year now, other states are again becoming interested in it and want to know more of the details of how it has worked out. Mr. Hibbs said. He estimates that at least 30 states will consider similar laws this winter when their legislatures meet.

State Undecided On Relief Funds To be Asked For

Daily Dispatch Bureau, in the Sir Walter Hotel, BY J. C. BASKERVILLE.

Raleigh, Sept. 22.—Dr. Fred W. Morrison, director of relief for North Carolina, is in Washington today conferring further with officials of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation with regard to relief loans for this State. He is expected to return tomorrow or Saturday.

It is not known as yet how much money North Carolina will ask to borrow from the \$300,000,000 Federal relief fund appropriated by Congress since so far reports have been received from only about 52 counties.

Wife Preservers



It is time to discard the old broom and buy a new one. Old, worn out tools do not make for efficiency.

NONSENSE AT THE HOTSPOT TOTS BURLESQUE SHOW



AIN'T THAT A WONDER? BOB SWANWELL, STANTA, TENN. SWANN

Check This Great Stomach Remedy By Your Watch

Relief In 3 Minutes Or Money Back

No bluff about this offer to stomach sufferers, says Parker's Drug Store. Either mentha pepsin ends your distressing symptoms or you get your money back. You're the sole judge.

What's more, a tablespoonful of this artificial digestive juice (just like that you are supposed to have in your stomach) will, when taken before meals, effectively prevent attacks of stomach agony.

Ask any good druggist about mentha pepsin and he will tell you the same thing: Prompt relief or money back!—Adv.

Boy Dies of Hunger



After telling his teacher that he had had nothing to eat for 24 hours, nine-year-old Freeman Viollette, R., of Albany, N. Y., collapsed and died of hunger. He was one of four children. The father, a World War veteran, has been out of work for nearly two years.

Many of these reports are so incomplete that they give little insight into what has already been done for relief by local effort or as to how much will be needed this fall and winter from Federal funds to augment what funds can be raised locally, it was said at Dr. Morrison's office today.

Until fairly complete reports have been received from a majority of the counties, cities and towns in the State, both as to what has already been done from local agencies for relief and as to what is needed from now until December 31 to take care of their needs, the State will not be able to secure any loans whatever, it was pointed out, unless present regulations are changed.



DEAR NOAH—IN A SCOUT CAMP DO THEY HAVE BOYCOTTS?
BETTY HERRAN, DECATUR, MICH.

DEAR NOAH—IF SUMMER SAUSAGE, WHAT ARE THE REST?
ROSEMARY BUSCHMANN, TOLEDO, OHIO

SEND IN YOUR NUMB NOTIONS TO DEAR OLD NOAH—RIGHT NOW—A POSTCARD—

Flour Special THIS WEEK END

1-16 barrel 30c, 1-8 barrel 55c, 1-4 barrel 95c, 1-2 barrel \$1.85, one whole barrel \$3.70.

I also have 15 Coca Cola barrels for sale.

M. G. EVANS

Phones 162-163.

ARE YOU AFRAID to sleep at night?

You can banish the fear of fire that disturbs your night's rest by doing two things now:

- (1) Safeguard your home against fire.
- (2) Insure your property adequately in a sound stock fire insurance company that offers positive financial protection.

Our clients know their financial interests are secure against fire. If you require insurance—

TELEPHONE

Insurance Department

Citizens Bank & Trust Co.

W. H. FLEMING, Manager
Henderson, N. C.

Have You Paid Your Carrier IF NOT—PAY HIM TODAY

Don't Borrow From Your Carrier

He's probably one of the fairest business fellows you know anywhere—your carrier. He has no capital of his own behind him. All his expenses are current; he has no sinking fund. And yet he must pay the company promptly for every paper he takes out.

If you haven't the money to pay in full when your subscription falls due, your carrier pays for your paper and WAITS for his principal and profit.

Can you afford to borrow both his earnings and the money he uses to pay for your papers?

Surely you don't intend it that way. Because he is so courteous he probably hasn't made this plain to you. He plods along patiently, and confident.

Every circulation auditor insists every paper must be paid in advance—or promptly each week—SO IT'S UP TO THE BOY IF YOU DON'T SETTLE WITH HIM.

Thank You!

Henderson Daily Dispatch

MANY INJURED WHEN CIRCUS TRAIN RAMS BOX CARS



Crashing into the rear end of a string of box cars in the yards of the Illinois Central railroad on the outskirts of Evansville, Ind., a 30-car special of the Robin and Chetny circus was badly damaged and 27 persons were injured, most of them circus performers. The train was en route to Nashville.