Men Were Deceivers Ever

In one of the coolest, shadiest nooks of Kensington Gardens, Maisie Brooks sat one summer afternoon, grateful, after her long morning's work, for the peaceful resting-place, for the scent of the flowers, the sparkle of the sun upon the water.

She made a pretty picture, despite the short serge skirt which much wear and many wettings had caused to shrink most woefully, the mended boots, and the general air of shabbiness which pervaded her attire. For her small head was daintily set upon her shoulders, and the wealth of soft, fair hair would have made even a plain face charming. For the rest—a somewhat pathetic mouth, big, grave eyes, a straight nose, and a creamy skin, faintly tinged with rose. Pity that so fair a face should wear so sad, so weary an expression.

From under her heavy white lids, fringed with curling lashes, the girl gazed at the loiterers—young girls, charmingly dressed, smart Society women, nursemaids with picturesque-looking babies, depressed governesses bearing the burden of unruly children. Gradually, however, the passers-by grew fewer, and at last the place seemed deserted save for herself and a tall, distinguished, albeit slightly shabby individual, who was evidently making his way towards her seat.

Maisie felt a sudden interest in the new arrival. Had he been resplendent in patent boots, the latest thing in ties, and of a fashionable "get-up" generally, the girl would not have vouchsafed another glance, but there was something about the tired droop of the head, the patient weariness in the large, dark eyes that touched her, familiar as she was with the heart-sickness of hope deferred.

"Out of a berth, poor fellow," she murmured and sighed sympathetically. She knew so well all that the phrase implies. The daily answering of innumerable advertisements demanding impossible qualifications, for a wholly inadequate salary; the journeys to all parts of London only to learn that the coveted position has been obtained by a more fortunate individual and the ever-growing fear that the small store of money and credit will be exhausted and still find an anxious one in the great army of the "out of works."

Her cogitations, however, were brought to an abrupt close, for the stranger had grown very white, and with a moan fell back against the seat.

How it all came about Maisie could not tell, but in an incredibly short space of time she had found a keeper, dispatched him for a glass of water, and having revived the stranger was listening to his history with rapt attention.

Born in Australia, Robert Everett has passed the first twenty years of his existence in a lonely station far up the country. His mother was dead, his father a reserved, taciturn sort of man, had never given him any information as to his standing or position in England. After the old man's death, however, Robert discovered among his papers certain letters which showed that he was distantly related—if not more nearly connected—with a noble family.

Seized with a desire to find out who and what he really was, Robert sold his farm and came to England. Once in London he unearthed what seemed to him to be irrefutable proofs that he was the rightful claimant not only to large estates, but to a title.

His father had disappeared from England, owing, it was believed, to some love affair, and in the interval which had elapsed between his leaving the country and his death, accident had removed the three nearest in succession to the baronetcy. The present holder of the title, Sir Lionel Everett, belonged to a younger branch of the family, and Robert's claim was undoubtedly a strong one. But money and possession are all-powerful, and after two years of fruitless effort and interminable law proceedings young Everett found his money exhausted, and the suit as far from being settled as at first.

"It sounds absurd, doesn't it?" he asked, with a weary laugh. "How can I expect you to credit such a story when I can neither show you proofs, nor mention anyone who knows me? At this present moment I have not a friend—the solicitors who took up the case have abandoned it now that my money's gone, and I am, so to speak, laughed out of court. It is useless to hope that you will believe me."

"Indeed, I do believe you," said Maisie softly, convinced despite herself that his tale was true.

"Thank you," he said quietly, and stretched out his hand. A moment's hesitation, and then she slid her soft white fingers into his, and somehow each felt they had sealed a compact.

"What are you going to do?" asked the girl presently. "I mean until the case is settled."

He looked up wearily. "Get work of some sort, I hope; if not—starve."

"But—but——"

"I have some sort of shelter," he answered, reading her thought. "I'm living in an attic in Bloomsbury—fortunately I paid the rent a month or so in advance, so I shan't have to sleep on the Embankment at present."

Maisie fumbled in her pocket, and with a shamefaced blush emptied the contents of her purse into his hand.

"Late again, Miss Brooks. This is the fourth time within the last

"'Tis little enough, only a few shillings," she said pleadingly, "surely you won't refuse it? I think poor people should always help each other, and a little while ago I was as hard up, every bit as you."

He looked at her inquiringly, and for the first time he realized that, though pretty, she was hardly fashionably attired.

"Like you, I am an orphan," she said, "and have to make my own way in the world. I am a typist in one of the large shops in Westbourne Grove, and I live at Notting Hill."

"Poor little girl," he thought, and involuntarily a look of pity, mixed with admiration, flashed into his eyes. "I won't refuse your help," he said at last, "at any rate for the present; and now"—as her luncheon hour over she rose to go—"when may I see you again?"

For a moment the girl hesitated. Was it prudent to see this good-looking stranger any more? Conventionality said "No." Inclination "Yes."

"I have a holiday on Saturday afternoon," she answered.

"And you will be here?"

"Yes."

"Thank you a thousand times."

They parted at the gate; she returned to the emporium where, for the princely salary of eighteen shillings a week, she sat in a small office and typed for all she was worth from nine o'clock in the morning till seven at night; he, to find his way to the nearest coffee-house and enjoy the first square meal he had eaten for days.

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month. Such unpunctuality—in this establishment at all events—cannot be tolerated. If it occurs again I shall be obliged to dispense with your services."

It was evident something had occurred to ruffle the serenity of the head of the counting-house, for, as a rule, Miss Brooks was something of a favorite with the powers that be.

Maisie faltered an excuse to the effect that she had not been well, but it was received with stony silence; and, with a sinking heart, the girl realized that for some unknown reason Mr. Hilton was determined, sooner or later, to dismiss her.

"He wants your place for his niece," whispered a fellow clerk; "she's just up from the country and is mad to get into an office."

"But why does he choose me?" asked poor Maisie.

"You don't stand up to him, my dear. Any of us others would answer him back, or speak to old Brown"—the owner of the emporium—"but you take things quietly, and you get sat upon. Take my advice and be more cheeky."

But "cheekiness" and Maisie were as far asunder as the Poles. It was positive anguish to her even to contemplate a war of words, and rather than complain to "old Brown" she would have gone at a moment's notice. Her forebodings were only too quickly realized—within a fortnight she had left the emporium, and the manager's niece typed in her stead.

It was some six months since her first meeting with Robert Everett, and during that time their friendship had steadily increased. She had brought him luck, so he declared, for within a week of their acquaintanceship he had obtained an appointment through the influence of some Australian friends, and was now doing very fairly well.

They did not talk quite so much now-a-days of the "case." Maisie was inclined to think that it would be better were he to abandon it once and for all, and settle down to a more peaceful if more monotonous existence. The young fellow, however, was obstinate; every penny he could save from his salary he put by, determined, as soon as he had raised the sinews of war, to return to the attack.

But when he heard Maisie's news he faltered for the first time in his resolution.

"I'm not quick at figures," she sobbed, "nor at typing either, and fearfully slow at shorthand. I was a long time before I got employment at Brown's, and I can't go to Aunt Lucy's again; they're none too well off themselves."

"Why do you depreciate yourself so dreadfully, Maisie?" he asked a trifle crossly. "I assure you it doesn't pay, in this world, at all events. Cheer up, little woman," he added more kindly, "you'll get a crib sooner or later. I'll speak to everyone I know. Before long you're sure to hear of something. Cheer up."

But in spite of his admonition, Maisie felt a curious sense of desolation as she watched the tall, straight figure out of sight. She did not know what she had expected, but she felt that had he been in trouble, somehow or other she would have acted differently.

Wilfred apparently arrived at the same conclusion, judging by his soliloquy over a midnight pipe.

"She's the sweetest little woman in the world," he declared, "and I'm an ungrateful ass to have hesitated a moment. She didn't beat about the bush when I was down on my luck. We'll get married next week—if—"with a sudden doubt, "she'll have me. I've enough put by to start housekeeping, and the case," he sighed regretfully, "must go by the board. She's worth more than a thousand titles."

He decided to call for Maisie directly he left the office on the morrow. They would go to the theatre, and he would be very kind and very loving to make up for his coldness of to-day. But he was unexpectedly detained in town, and the following morning found him laid up with an attack of the influenza fiend, too ill to move, even to scribble a note. She would be sure to write, he argued; she would be sure something was wrong.

But he had not taken the girl's extreme sensitiveness into consideration. She had expected him, as usual, the previous afternoon, and a dull pain had crept into her heart as the hours went on and never brought him. By the next morning she was wrought up to a pitch of grief and excitement painful to witness. She had been mistaken in him; now that he was getting on, he despised the poor little girl who had so rejoiced in his friendship.

"I shall die," she moaned, "I shall die."

Why should she not write and ask the reason for his treatment? Her pride revolted at the idea. She would wait in silence—even if it killed her.

And the second evening passed away, and the next morning found her wild-eyed and despairing, waiting once again for the letter that never came.

And so, the victims of mischance, these two fond hearts drifted apart, as suddenly and strangely as they met. Maisie received the offer of a situation in an office in Manchester at a much larger salary than she had ever dreamt of getting, and which she dared not refuse; and yet, how could she go to a strange place among strange faces, without a word, a sign of leave-taking, from Robert?

At last she dispatched a timid little note, telling him she was leaving London, and begging for an answer by return. Poor Robert was delirious when it arrived, and so, all forlorn and with a pain at her heart almost too great to bear, the girl set out.

Some three weeks later Robert, pale as a ghost and singularly gaunt, drove up in a hansom to the house where Maisie had lodged. Only that morning he had been given his correspondence, and, contrary to doctor's orders, and in defiance of everything and everybody had driven off to answer, if not too late, Maisie's farewell note.

He found the place deserted and empty. The landlady had moved, so the neighbors said, shortly after the young lady left.

And, notwithstanding all his efforts, no trace could he discover either of the landlady or Maisie. The tide of life had swept past him, leaving him stranded on the beach—alone.

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A year since Maisie had left London, and already Time, the universal healer, had worked wonders. True, she still occasionally experienced a faint tremor at the postman's knock, and sometimes indulged in day-dreams of a happy reunion with Robert. But such wistful longings did not affect her materially, and gradually she grew more contented than she had ever been. Her employment was congenial—she was secretary to one of the heads of the firm—and, free from the fear of constant fault-finding.

She was the only woman in the building, and inasmuch as she was extremely pretty and singularly sweet-mannered, it is not surprising that all the employees, from the senior clerk to the smallest office boy, were her sincere admirers. More than one had shown an inclination to develop into something nearer and dearer, but she felt chary of ever again embarking on the troublous sea of love; besides, she could never care for any man save one.

Sometimes the thought flashed across her that perhaps her letter had miscarried—such things had happened. Once, when the longing to see or hear from him—it was Christmas time, and she was terribly lonely—mastered her, she penned a note couched in stiff, not to say stilted, language, giving her address, and saying "she would be glad to know how he was." A sudden rush of tenderness made her add a postscript which caused her, after it has gone, tears of mortification and distress.

"I can never forget you," she wrote; "you are all I have." And answer there was none.

Fate had gone more intervened. Robert had gone to Australia for some important documents necessary to prove his identity, and the letter was sent after him, only to reach Australia the day after he had sailed for home.

After that Maisie steeled her heart. There were others.

Accordingly, one of her most devoted admirers, a good-looking young giant of the name of Ernest Arnold, was suddenly raised to the seventh heaven of delight. Once she even deigned to accompany his sisters, under his care, to a fancy ball given in aid of some charity.

But the young fellow's hopes of a delightful evening were crushed by the unexpected line his lady fair took up. Maisie wore a mask and domino.

"What's the name of that tall girl in crimson, the one with that pretty little fair thing? Are they sisters?" she asked of her partner.

"Sisters-in-law," he corrected. "The tall one is Lady Lionel Everett—she is chaperoning the other, Miss Daisy Everett."

"Is Sir Lionel Everett here?" asked Maisie, a sudden desire to see Robert's rival possessing her.

"Yes, that chap over there, dressed as a Crusader.

"By-the-bye," he went on, "it's rumored that Sir Lionel is about to lose his title. Some colonial or other has turned up, and it's been suggested that he should marry Miss Everett and so keep the money in the family."

Maisie looked eagerly towards the group.

Daisy, fair as a lily, dressed as Elaine, a tall, splendidly-dressed Toreador bending over her, while Lady Everett chatted to a Monk.

Something about the Spanish Cavalier seemed curiously familiar to Maisie, and she longed to hear his voice.

A desperate determination took possession of the girl. She dropped her fan at the Toreador's feet.

He stooped and picked it up, hazarding a flowery speech in a grandiloquent style.

Maise's heart beat fast.

"You should suit your compliments to your costume, or vice versa," she said softly.

"Is my tongue so very rough and ready?" he asked.

"Not always," she answered. "Sometimes it is subtle. Sweet, then cruel, wounding when most it caresses."

He started forward, but with a little mocking laugh she glided away.

For the rest of the evening the Toreador sought for the yellow domino in every corner, until at the stroke of twelve everyone unmasked.

He was standing in an ante-room with Daisy Everett, facing a mirror. As he removed his mask, smiling admiringly enough at the fair Elaine beside him, the heavy draperies at the door were parted, and a figure in yellow domino glided to the glass.

"Maisie!" he called.

A voice answered "Robert!"

And then, regardless of Miss Everett's horrified amazement, he held her to his heart, fastening kises on her lips, her hair, her eyes.

"But why had he disregarded her letter—her appeals—"

"My dear," he said, "if ever a man paid for his folly I have done so. I never had your letter till too late. I was very ill, my own, and when I came to you, you'd flown."

And so it came to pass that, after all, Robert Everett married Maisie Brooks before the title and position he so longed for came to him even as she had desired.—Pearson's Weekly.

SALT FROM ENGLAND.

Shipped Over in Bags and Shipped Back in Meat.

One thousand sacks of English salt passed through the customs office in Kansas City the other morning. It is a fine quality used in packing meats for export and comes from Liverpool, says the Kansas City Star.

A peculiar thing about this same salt is that it must travel back to Liverpool again, though in a different form. Here it is used in packing meat which will ultimately find its way to John Bull's breakfast table. John Bull believes in reciprocity, as proved by the salt received. He uses our meat only on condition that we use his salt in packing it. This arrangement suits Kansas City packers and causes them little inconvenience.

When the salt is received they pay a duty of 12 cents per hundred pounds. When it is returned with beef and pork an export duty of the same amount is charged. Uncle Sam collects 1 per cent for handling these products through the customs office. The exporter and consignee get together and are not, in the end, out very much.

Tons of salt are received in Kansas City for use in the packing houses in the west bottoms. It comes in sacks weighing about 225 pounds each. It is mined in the south of England, and is of a much finer quality, say the packers, than they could possibly secure in this country. So the arrangement suits both parties to the contract and salt comes over in sacks and returns in packed meats.

NATIONALITY NO DIFFERENCE.

They are laughing in Washington over a rebuke that a sentry of one of the departments administered recently to the Russian Ambassador's coachman.

The coachman, it appears, wished to drive his master's carriage along a roadway that for some reason was barred. When the sentry refused to let the carriage pass the coachman remonstrated.

"I drive," he said, "ze Russian Minister."

"I can't help it," returned the sentry.

"Let me t'rough," persisted the coachman. "My master is ze Count Cassini, ze Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of ze Czar of All ze Russias."

"Frenchy," said the sentry, "I wouldn't let you through even if your master was a free-born American citizen."

Curiosity is looking over other people's affairs and overlooking own.

THE BEST DISPOSITIONS

WHY MARRIED PEOPLE ARE THE BEST NATURED.

Society of French Sociologists Say That There Are Exceptions to Every Rule.

That matrimony exercises a very distinct influence on the temper of men and women has been admitted as the result of an unusual and interesting investigation by a society of French sociologists. This verdict was based on reports concerning the temper, amiability and general disposition of men and women, both married and single, and in some instances of people before and after marriage.

It was found that marriage has a soothing effect; there is something about matrimony which brings a feeling of peace and contentment in most cases, although not in all. The society decided that there are exceptions to every rule.

Taking the woman's point of view, it was easy to see how her temper has improved by matrimony.

When she marries she has, it was assumed, attained the ambition of her life; she has got a husband and a home of her own; she looks forward to a happy life; in fact, the future is as bright as future could look.

THIS IS BOUND TO TELL.

Perhaps before marriage she was inclined to peevishness; she might even have had a dread of becoming an old maid; she might have a discontented family circle to deal with, and so on.

These things are all brushed away when she marries. She enters a condition which enables her to see a roseate hue on the most ordinary things of life, and where happiness prevails, or ought to prevail.

If this does not improve her temper, even supposing it to have been good enough before, nothing can.

Then the society takes up the man's point of view. He is, after marriage, well attended to; he has love waiting on him at all times; his slippers are by the fire, nice and cosy, when he comes home tired of an evening; a change of clothes awaits him if he comes home soaked, and his many other little wants are looked after.

Now, a man living with his mother or sisters may be well enough attended to, yet there is always a certain lack of interest; but it does not do for a wife to be uninterested where her husband's welfare is concerned; her happiness, her future—everything depends on his health being well looked after.

All this tends to soften his temper, which benefits his health, and his temper benefits again.

Moreover, there is a pleasant, comfortable feeling engendered by the knowledge that you possess a home of your own. You look around—that is your piano, your sideboard, your this, that, or the other thing; and there comes a nice glow of pleasure. You may light your pipe here, just as you please

NO ONE WILL COMPLAIN.

Before marriage you had to smoke in a stuffy little parlor, or else go out of doors to enjoy your after-dinner pipe. What a difference, to be sure! Well, very naturally, this gives you satisfaction, and your temper is sweetened.

Perhaps before marriage a man or woman is very impatient; everything must be rushed through with, anything to get done. But if you are very impatient the temper suffers, it makes a man or woman very short and grumpy.

After marriage—or at any rate after young ones arrive—what a change! How patient the most impatient man or woman becomes! That blessed, though much anathematized, condition known as "teething" does a vast amount of good in this world. A teething baby has been the salvation of many a short-tempered, impatient man and woman. The young one simply won't be put down; no amount of coaxing does any good. One has to grin and bear it; but whilst bearing with the screaming you receive valuable tuition; you are taught to be patient, and once the lesson is learnt it never leaves you.

Besides, these soft baby fingers have an extraordinary effect on the temper of either man or woman. The pat of a baby's hand can drive the darkest scowl from the face, and one look from the innocent eyes of a baby can drive the bitterest thoughts from the mind. Let a husband and wife lose their tempers over any little thing—a baby's crowing will make matters all right again.

"RETURN AT ONCE."

Merchant—"Did you deliver my message to Mr. Smith?"

Boy—"No, sir; he was out, and the office was locked up."

Merchant—"Well, why didn't you wait for him, as I told you?"

Boy—"There was a notice on the door saying 'Return at once,' so I came back as quick as I could."

The Maid-Servant—"Professor, madam has just returned from her journey." Professor—"Remind me by-and-by to give her a kiss."

The Marquis of Londonderry, owner of the famous collieries, possesses photographs of all interior parts of the mines, as well as elaborate maps of the workings. He takes the great interest in the mines.