

Joyce Marlow's Engagement

"Well, Canham, I congratulate you. You are one of the lucky ones."

"Oh, as to that, you know, I think I've got my head screwed on the right way. Of course, Joyce is a very pretty girl and all that, and I've always known that she was fond of me, and when old Marlow made such a pile of money in mining shares I said to myself, 'George, my boy, go in and win.'"

"And you went in and won?"

"Jumped at me, my boy. Welcomed me with open arms and all that sort of thing."

"And when is the wedding to take place?"

"Oh, in a month or two. I'm not going to tie myself up in a hurry. I'm off to Scotland for some shooting first."

There were but half-a-dozen members in the smoking-room of the Rycroft Club, and as they all listened with some amusement to the self-conceit and complacency with which George Canham announced his engagement to Joyce Marlow, there was not one of them who did not feel inclined to kick him.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of another member.

"Hallo, boys! Heard the news?"

"No; anything startling?"

"Rather; John Marlow has come a cropper."

"What?"

"An absolute smash. Liabilities something like a hundred and fifty thousand. Played for a big coup on a rising market, but the Beckstein gang were against him. Prices fell with a crash and wiped him out."

Amid a painful silence they all looked at George Canham. White to the lips, he had risen from his seat.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Canham; I did not know you were there. This will be rather a knock for you, won't it?"

"By George! I'll see about that. I'm not going to be made a fool of by John Marlow. He'd no right to accept my proposal for his daughter when he knew that he was on the verge of bankruptcy."

"My dear Canham, three days ago Marlow was a rich man, and no more contemplated ruin than the Bank of England."

"I can't help that; if he's gone under I'm going to take jolly care that I'm not dragged down with him. I'm not rich enough to support the whole family."

"Don't do anything rash."

"Rash! What rot! I'm off now to settle it at once. I'll let them see that I'm not going to be fooled with."

In a white heat of righteous indignation at what he termed "Marlow's duplicity," he entered a hansom and drove to Berkeley Square. John Marlow, a strong, handsome-looking man of about forty-five years of age, received him in the library.

"Ah, Canham, I am glad to see you. I was just about to send round to your place."

"But, I say, you know, what's all this in the paper to-night? It isn't true, is it?"

"I am very sorry to say that it is. The Beckstein lot were too much for me, and I'm afraid I lose everything."

"But it's not right, you know; it's precious hard lines, I call it."

"It is the fortune of war, or rather, the Stock Exchange. Up today, down to-morrow."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that. It's rough on me, I mean."

"On you?"

"Yes; you allowed me to be engaged to your daughter, knowing all the time that in a few days you might be a beggar."

"I see; and will that make any difference between you and Joyce? I understood you to say that you had an income of two thousand a year."

"And I mean to keep it, too. No fool speculations for me. But don't you see that while your name is being bandied about in the newspapers—"

"You do not care about marrying my daughter. Is that it?"

"Well, you see—"

"Mr. Canham, you are one of those men who not only reconcile us to our misfortunes, but make us actually welcome them. Had it not been for this trouble you might have married my daughter, and we should have found out your true character when it was too late."

John Marlow touched a bell and a servant appeared.

"Tell Miss Joyce that I would like to see her in the library."

"Oh, I say, I don't want to upset Joyce, you know."

"My wife died a few hours after my daughter was born, and for eighteen years Joyce has been my constant and confidential companion. I think I know how much you will upset her."

At that moment Joyce Marlow entered the room, a fair-haired girl of striking beauty, with wonderful hazel eyes.

"Joyce, my dear, George has come to see us in our trouble."

"Ah, it is kind of you, George. I knew you would not delay in bringing us your sympathy."

"Oh, as to that, you know, Joyce, I—"

"One moment, please; allow me," said Mr. Marlow. "When this gentleman, a few days ago, did us the honor of proposing for your hand, I understood you to say that you loved him."

"Why, of course, I did, dad."

"You thought him honest straightforward, and chivalrous; and I must say that I had a somewhat similar opinion myself; but when trouble visits us we find our friends. Joyce, we have lost our money, and I am sorry to say we have also lost the respect which this gentleman had for it."

"What do you mean, dad?"

"I mean that since our fortune has gone Mr. George Canham declines to associate his name with ours."

For some moments Joyce Marlow stood in silence—like a beautiful pale statue.

"Is—is this true?"

"Well, you know, I don't want to—"

"Deny it! deny it! Let me hear from your own lips that it is untrue. I have always looked upon you as a true man, a man to be proud of, a man to love, and I gave you my love freely and unreservedly. I cherished a regard for you, and placed you first in my heart. Have I been mistaken? Are my father's words true?"

"I always knew that you thought a lot of me, Joyce, and I think we'd have got on capitally together, but—"

"But now that I would be coming to you empty-handed you find that your love for me was merely affection for my gold."

"I don't want you to fret about it, Joyce."

"Fret about you! Had you been taken suddenly from me without this revelation I would have been heart-weary with grief, but if I shed a tear now it will be one of joy. When I think about you in the future, if I ever do, it will be to laugh—to laugh with delight at having escaped the machinations of a fortune-hunting knave."

"Oh, I say, you know—"

"A true friend is a mainstay in the time of trouble, and not an evil thing that comes hot-foot to increase our sorrow. I only ask one thing, and that is that I may never see your face again. Now go."

Mr. George Canham, with ruffled dignity, seemed prepared for argument, but Mr. Marlow inserted his hand down the back of his collar, lifted him to the door, and thrust him, not too gently, into the hall.

For all Joyce's brave words before George Canham, it must not be thought that she did not suffer. She had loved him with all the passion of a first affection, and his sudden appearance in his true colors wounded her deeply, but for all that she put on a brave face before her father.

The next few weeks were full of anxiety and worry; everything had gone in the crash and the house in Berkeley Square was sold up. Then an offer of employment came to Mr. Marlow.

"Joyce, my dear, I have had an offer to go out to Australia prospecting for gold. It is a good chance and I think I must take it. The life would be too rough for you, so I think you had better go to your aunt's place at Little Willoway and stay until I can send for you. She writes that she will be glad to have you, and I think it will be better if you take her name for a time."

After further conversation, so it was settled. John Marlow sailed for Australia and Joyce found herself established with Mrs. Birfield, her widowed aunt, at Little Willoway.

Mrs. Birfield, although fairly well off, had found time hanging heavily on her hands; and being of an energetic nature sought to make it fly more rapidly by opening a small general shop, to which in due course the post-office was added; and it was something of an event in the village when Joyce Marlow came to assist in its management. She did not care very much for her occupation, it is true, but it kept her from thinking.

The principal landowner round Little Willoway was Mr. Godfrey Reid, a wealthy young fellow, just a few years past his majority, who lived with his sister Muriel at Willoway Hall, and the young squire was one of Mrs. Birfield's numerous friends, who liked to drop in occasionally for a cheery chat.

Mrs. Birfield noticed, however, that after his introduction to Joyce his visits were more frequent, and the quantities of fishing tackle he purchased were prodigious.

The trend of his thoughts may be gathered from a conversation he had with his sister one morning during breakfast.

"I say, Muriel, you've often wanted someone to come and stay here as your companion. Why don't you try Mrs. Birfield's niece?"

"Didn't know she had a niece."

"Oh, yes; been staying with her for six or seven weeks."

"Pretty?"

"H'm—well—yes, rather. I say, sis, she's the most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life."

"Ha, ha! I thought so. Now, don't blush, my dear boy, and I'll go and see your paragon to-day, and see whether I ought to encourage you or not."

And the upshot of her visit was that a few days later Joyce found

herself installed in very comfortable quarters at Willoway Hall as companion to Muriel Reid.

To Joyce the change was a welcome one from the humdrum shop, and Muriel in a short time fell as much in love with her as her brother had unmistakably done.

In their daily companionship and friendly intercourse it is not to be wondered that Joyce began to find herself taking a more than usual interest in Godfrey Reid, and, although she had made up her mind never to marry until her father had cleared off all his liabilities, she could not help the young squire taking first place in her heart.

Godfrey Reid, however, knew nothing of her resolution until one day he boldly put his fortune to the touch and declared his love. Her refusal was gentle, but firm.

"I am sorry to have to give you pain, Godfrey, but as things stand at present I can never be anything to you."

"But you—you love me, Joyce?"

"I do not wish to deny that. You are the only one in the world I care about, except my father."

"Then why—"

"I will tell you. A few months ago we were very rich, and then misfortune overtook us and my father failed. I have resolved never to marry until all his liabilities are paid off and our fortune is rebuilt."

"But where is your father? I have more money than I know what to do with. Let me—"

"Ah, no; he would never do that, although it is kind of you to suggest it. He is abroad at present, and I have every confidence that he will achieve his object."

"Then if I ask you again when your father returns successful, what will your answer be?"

She looked up at him shyly, her lips half parted in a happy smile, and he read his answer in her eyes. With a laugh of joy he took her in his arms and sealed the compact with a lover's kiss.

As the time went on Godfrey Reid and his sister made preparations for their usual stay in London during the season, and wished Joyce to accompany them, but this she declined to do.

"I do not wish to see London again until my father returns, and I shall be much happier here looking after the house and the servants, if you will allow me."

To Godfrey, of course, her slightest wish was law, and he left her at Little Willoway, reserving to himself the right to run down and see her occasionally.

So Godfrey and Muriel threw themselves into the gaieties of the London season, and were soon surrounded by a number of friends and acquaintances, and amongst the latter Mr. George Canham contrived to make himself particularly agreeable.

And, as the season progressed, the outcome of Mr. Canham's attentions to Muriel was recorded by Godfrey in the postscript of a letter to Joyce:—

"Almost forgot to tell you that Muriel has done it, and fixed it up to marry Mr. George Canham."

Godfrey Reid and Canham were in the Rycroft Club one afternoon, and Canham was reading the "Times":—

"Heard about this new gold-mine they've found at Wallyborro? Seems to be one of the richest ever discovered."

"Heard about it?" answered Godfrey. "I should think so, seeing that I am half owner of it."

"You?"

"Fact. Got a cable to-day to say that everything was fixed up. It happened this way. You remember a man named John Marlow, who went smash some time ago? Well, he'd been very kind to me in many ways after my father died, and helped me with my investments. When he went down I offered to help him, but all he would allow me to do was to send him to Australia prospecting, and if he found anything I was to finance it on half shares."

"And John Marlow?"

"Owns one-half, and is likely to become a very rich man."

George Canham's cupidity was aroused. Why had he been such a fool with regard to Joyce Marlow? He was not much in love with Muriel, and she had no fortune except what her brother chose to give her. It was not too late, and if he could only find Joyce he flattered himself that he could make it all right with her.

His opportunity came sooner than he expected. Muriel and Godfrey suddenly tired of London and resolved to give Joyce a surprise by returning unannounced, taking Canham with them.

When they arrived at the Hall, however, Joyce was absent on a visit to Mrs. Birfield. It was growing dusk when George Canham lit a cigar and went for a solitary stroll in the park, and suddenly he came face to face with Joyce.

"Joyce! Have I found you at last?"

"I do not understand you, Mr. Canham."

"Ah, Joyce, do not turn from me. If you only knew how I have suffered since last we parted. I was mad, a fool then, Joyce, and did not know my own heart, but I have learnt my lesson since then, and I cannot live without you. Let me hear you say you forgive me, Joyce."

"This is an insult, Mr. Canham, not only to me, but to Miss Muriel Reid."

"Ah, you have heard that, but it is all a mistake. It is you I want, Joyce, and you only. Muriel is nothing to me."

"I am glad to hear it, for her sake. Perhaps you will have the manliness to tell her so."

"Pardon me, Miss Birfield, but I think the explanation is due to me," said a voice, and looking up saw Godfrey Reid and his sister standing before them.

"Miss Birfield! You are making a mistake, Mr. Reid; this lady is Miss Joyce Marlow, and my betrothed."

"The mistake is yours, Mr. Canham," answered Joyce. "It is quite true, Godfrey, that my name is Marlow and I was once betrothed to Mr. Canham, but when my father lost his money he declined to marry me."

"What, you John Marlow's daughter? Then, Joyce, I have good news for you, and claim your promise. The wheel of fortune has turned again, and your father is on his way home a rich man."

"Oh, Godfrey, at last!"

He drew her towards him and kissed her. Muriel had stolen quietly away amongst the trees, and Canham stood there the picture of baffled rage.

"As for you, sir, you are a contemptible scoundrel, and I advise you to clear out at once, or my servants shall horsewhip you from the place."

Thinking discretion the better part of valor, George Canham took the hint and slunk away.

"Joyce, my love, this is a night of happiness for us, but we must not forget, in our joy, that it is a time of sorrow for Muriel. Run in, dear heart, and let your womanly sympathy comfort her in her trouble."—London Tit-Bits.

PROFITED BY EXPERIENCE.

How a Prussian Officer Got Even With a Jew.

A Prussian army officer stationed at Berlin frequently had occasion to borrow money from an accommodating Israelitish friend, who only charged 3 or 4 per cent. a month. As a general thing the officer, Baron von Pump, was able to meet his obligations, but on the occasion to which we allude he was not able to do so. Moses Levy was promptly on hand to collect the money. He called on the Baron von Pump in his room and presented the note, but I have no money to pay this one. You will have to wait."

"I don't wait at all. Ven you don't pay dot note right away, I goes and prints dot note to a shustus of cer peace before, and sues on der spot!"

Baron von Pump quietly locked the door and put the key in his pocket, whereupon Moses' legs began to wobble about and his eyes to protrude with anxiety for he was afraid of personal violence at the hands of his creditor.

The Baron produced a pistol and focused the unhappy Israelite.

"Now, Mr. Judas Iscariot, you take that note of mine and eat it."

"Scheneral, I vas shoost joking mit you; I can wait so long as you vants."

"I can take a joke as well as anybody, and now it is your turn to take a choke. Chew up that note and swallow it, or you are a dead man," said the officer, and he pressed lightly on the trigger.

In vain did Moses protest that he didn't feel like eating, and that he was in no hurry for his money.

"Down with it!" thundered the officer.

Although Moses was in no danger of perishing for lack of food, he clearly perceived that he might prolong his life by the collation to which he was so cordially invited. He chewed up the note, principal and interest, and craning out his neck he managed to get it down.

"Now you can go and bring suit on that note if you feel like it. Perhaps the clerk of the court will put you on file if you tell him where the note is," said Baron von Pump.

A few days afterwards the Baron received some money from home, with which he promptly paid Moses what was due to him.

"Scheneral," said the money-lender, "der next times ven you vants der moneys, shoost come to your old friend Moses Levy, who vill never go pack on you."

"All right, Moses. Next time I need money I'll let you know."

Not long afterwards Baron von Pump needed money, and notified Moses to bring the desired amount to his room. Having counted over the money the officer took a sheet of paper and began to write out his note for the amount at ninety days.

"If you please, Scheneral, shoost put that right away. I would not have dot."

From under his coat he drew forth a huge cake of gingerbread and held it towards the Baron.

"Now you shoost write dot note out on dot gingerbread, so ven I has to eat him again I vill not suffer so mooch as I did ven I swallowed dot oder note."

There is but one method of greatness, and that is hard labor.

When the American troops entered Manila, on August 13th, 1898, there were fewer than 800 schools on the island. To-day there are over 2,900 schools, with more than 200,000 pupils. There are 3,000 Filipino teachers in these schools, and more than 7,000 American teachers. English is taught and spoken everywhere.

SOME WEDDING STORIES

INTENSELY DRAMATIC SCENE AT THE ALTAR.

The Man Who Yawned at His Wedding—Bridegroom Who Came Late.

That the matrimonial cup may come to grief even at the eleventh hour has often been demonstrated, but seldom under such exciting circumstances as at the recent wedding of a young Belgian named Deneck.

Deneck and his bride, Celeste Voisin, the pretty daughter of a Bethune peasant, were standing before the mayor, with a crowd of attendant relatives and guests, when, just as his worship was about to pronounce the words which would have made them man and wife, the bridegroom yawned. The mayor, surprised and indignant, immediately stopped the service. Deneck yawned again, and, while angry mutterings were heard among the relatives, said, "I have thought better of it, and I don't think I want to be married at all."

But he had reckoned without the Voisin family. As he made for the door Celeste rushed after him and soundly boxed his ears with her dimpled fists, while her three brothers fell on him and pommelled the recalcitrant lover until he began to shriek for mercy and to beg to be allowed to marry the girl. When he was finally rescued by the mayor and his clerk he was in such a sorry plight that it was found necessary to take him to the hospital, where he has had ample leisure to reflect sadly on the indiscretion of yawning at his wedding.

Curiously enough, on the very same day a pretty wedding that was arranged at Novers, in France, ended in disaster from

A VERY DIFFERENT CAUSE.

The bridal party had for some time been assembled at the church, when the bridegroom made a tardy appearance, to find the bride full of tears and reproaches at his dilatoriness. This stormy reception was so little to his liking that, without a word, he turned on his heels and walked out of the church.

It is but a short time since the curtain was rung down in a West of England church on a drama of love and revenge. A year or so earlier the marriage had been arranged and every preparation made, when on the very eve of the wedding-day the bride-to-be received a curt note from the lover informing her that he loved another better than herself, and had no intention of appearing with her before the altar.

The wedding was cancelled; for a time the girl went away to hide her grief and her chagrin, and returned to find her sickle lover had already jilted her successor in his affection and was anxious to return to his former love. The opportunity for revenge had come unsought. She encouraged his advances, became engaged to him, and once more the wedding-day was fixed.

The church was crowded with spectators, and the ceremony had reached the critical point when the priest asks the bride, "Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, etc., so long as ye both shall live?" For several seconds the question remained unanswered; then, turning a look of scorn and contempt on her false lover, the lady answered, in a voice that rang through the church and thrilled the spectators, "Never!"

And as, with head erect, she walked down the aisle followed by her bridesmaids there was heard

A MURMUR OF APPLAUSE

from the hundreds who knew how richly the man deserved this public humiliation.

There was a touch rather of humor than tragedy in the climax to a recent rustic wedding in the North of England. On their way to the church the bride and bridegroom had had a squabble, begun in jest and ending in earnest, as to which of the two should clean the husband's boots, and the subject rankled in the latter's breast after the service had commenced. Determined to have the matter settled once for all, before answering the question, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" the man turned to the lady and asked, "Now is ta going to clean my boots or isn't ta?" "Not I," was the defiant answer. "Then I see off home," said the man, and away he walked; and it was only when the bride followed him and with tears protested she was quite willing to attend to his foot-covering that he consented to return and complete the ceremony.

To give but one more of these stories of weddings that fail, only a few months ago an indiscreet glass of whisky drunk by a man on his wedding morning proved fatal to his matrimonial schemes. It had been a condition of the engagement and marriage that the lover should promise never to touch intoxicants, for which he had a dangerous weakness. Just before starting, for the church on the wedding morning, however, his best man insisted on a "farewell glass together"—an invitation which the bridegroom, after vain protest, accepted.

That one final indulgence was fatal; for the ceremony had barely begun when the bride detected the odor of spirits. She immediately stopped the ceremony, and declaring "I cannot marry a man who drinks or who breaks his word," she left the church with her friends.

The habit of strenuous continued labor will become comparatively easy in time, like every other habit.