# The Wedding Eve;

Or, Married to a Fairy.

CHAPTER XII .- (Continued).

Mrs. Morland I had found very like her portrait, and looking not a day older. A little overplump, a little overdressed, but sweet-voiced, agreeable, and good-natured of aspect. I had left Lilith with her, confident that they would soon be friends, and had returned to town a little pained and regretful, but convinced that I had done the best that lay in me for the child I loved. Up to the very moment of parting she had been quiet and sorrowful and more or less indifferent in manner, which was the nearest approach to sulkiness which she could compass; but as I was leaving Morland House, she darted into the hall after me, and, clinging to me, besought me in a passion of tears to take her back with me and not leave her among strangers.

all these strange women!" she had sobbed. "I don't want to be a lady, or any- seven months Madge and I were to be thing but just your servant; and I am | married. The church, the bridesmaids, sure you can't care for that Lady Madge the material for the bride's gown, all

as you would for me!' Lilith's rear, had taken her from me, my work were wonderful; but only on and endeavored to assist me in pacify- that one point did we seem to touch. I ing her, while she listened very sym- was vexed, without caring sufficiently

let me know whether her new charge jarred upon me. It was clear to me that was becoming reconciled to her changed she cared for me very little, if at all. surroundings, that lady hastened to as- Her transient gleams of tenderness tosure me that Lilith was making friends ward me grew less and less frequent, with every one, and was already both her flirtations with other men more

tinued, "but the child's infatuation for spring; and, should nothing intervene you-which, under the circumstances of to prevent it, on the second of March. your exceptional generosity and kind- in the following year, Madge Lorimer ness, is not only natural, but creditable and I should become man and wife.

—will no doubt die a natural death, if, Before that date, I had resolved that for the space of six months or so, she should know all about Lilith, as was does not see you and does not too often only right, and her clever brain might hear from you. I have had very young solve the enigma of Lilith's future. But girls of the same impressionable tem- up to now the child's name had never perament under my care before, and I once passed my lips in speaking to my have invariably found that regular fiance; even if she were induced to behours of study, plenty of open-air exer- lieve the real facts of the case she cise, a well-occupied mind, and the con-stant, cheerful companionship of members of their own sex, have in a few on. months' time sufficed to dissipate any silly fancies of being in love, which may have been previously formed in their untutored brains."

This was a pretty strong hint to keep out of the way of Morland House, but later the soft splash of oars and the it was one which I did not need, having sound of voices close under the boatalready determined, for my own sake, side told of an arrival at the yacht. as well as Lilith's, to give Clifton a wide berth for at least a year. Mean- and my uncle's, and started up from my time, as two hundred a year made a hole chair to greet them. in a thousand, it behooved me to work hard, the more so as I was resolved up- about fifty-five years of age, and looked on accumulating a marriage portion, so older. A slight, dignified, quiet-mannerthat my pretty Lilith, on leaving school, ed man, of rather less than medium should not find herself penniless upon height, worn, handsome face, and silverthe world.

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HUME TRADE CATALOGUE

To speak the plain truth, I had considered Mrs. Morland's request for a hundred and seventy-five pounds a year rather unnecessarily high at first; but ed to me the items of expenditure, from the services of the French, the German. On this particular night, Madge and the Latin, the drawing, the music, the he had returned from dining with fencing, and the dancing and deportment friends at Cowes, and had renounced masters, to such items as tennis-shoes the ball they had intended going to, on and rackets, swimming costumes, dumb-bells, and Indian clubs, as well as "such that evening he had complained of toilets as befitted a gentlewoman," that I was constrained to admit the profit must be small, especially as there were no holidays to mitigate the expenditure. and to supplement the amount with the sum of twenty-five pounds a year of private pocket money for my little protege.

Not for very much longer could I deny myself the pleasure of seeing her. "I hate school, I hate learning, I hate told myself this as I smoked in the moonlight that night at Cowes. In just these things were already chosen, Mrs. Morland, sailing into the hall in Madge's sympathy with and interest in pathetically to my explanation that, since her father's death, I had been Lil-But when, on my return to town, I and perfumes, her pinched-in waist, wrote to Mrs. Morland, begging her to elaborate toilets, and cynical talk, all marked every day. And yet paragraphs "And you must pardon me for saying, were constantly appearing in the papers dear Mr. Hervey," Mrs. Morland con- anent our forthcoming marriage in the

Suddenly, as I lay on a deck-chair, pondering over these things, I heard the yacht hailed from the shore.

"Lady Margaret, ahoy!" The call was answered, and a little A moment later I heard Madge's voice

Lord Carchester was at this time

gray hair and moustache, year by year seemed to become more bent, more thin, and more silent. Only when he was alone with Madge and me did he unbend to show the gentle, kindly humor that underlay his ordinary re-serve. Between him and his stepdaughter there existed a deep and genuine affection and sympathy. Both were, as I was secretly convinced, in awe of the little old "Diamond Queen," Madge's mother, who possessed to perfection the art of making herself disagreeable and everyone about her uncomfortable. Lady Carchester never forgot and never omitted to remind her second husband that she had been the widow of an earl and a millionaire when she stooped to marry him, and that she was, more-over, possessed of twenty-five thousand over, possessed of twenty-five thousand about her; in her ears, hair, and on her a year from her father. Jackson's candbreast, diamond fireflies gleamed and breast, diamond fireflies gleamed and sparkled. She was a little tired by a recent consumption, certainly, while day of intense heat and an uninterruptthe Hervey's went back to Plantagenet ed series of festivities and flirtations, times, and had fought and been en- and her dark eyes looked softer and nobled in the Wars of the Roses. But for old descent, Lady Carchester, as

and if we liked to pay the men at the strong. I think I'll just put this round Heralds' Office to find out lies for us, him."

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height. Give me a big balance at the fanciedbanker's, diamonds like mine, a good sounding title, solid advantages nobody can help seeing. But this stuff about your absorption in your art had come ancestry isn't worth the paper it's writ- between us, and made you more coldly

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It cannot be denied that Uncle Carchester, whose princely generosity and I asked, the more warmly as my conart-loving disposition had led him to science secretly confirmed her accusamore than live up to his moderate for- tion. "You must indeed suppose me untune, had married Madge's mother, feeling and ungrateful—"

Tord Sandling's widow, chiefly on acBut at that unlucky word she started Lord Sandling's widow, chiefly on account of her wealth A lady with an income of something under two thousand manner, and, with a little hard laugh, a week is a temptation to a widower in moved away from me. the forties, with a position to keep up tainly been made to regret it, and, but for the love he bore his stepdaughter, it is probable that the same roof would called love—offered me every day by that lady was as plausible as she was plump, and she had so minutely explain- the same time my uncle and the "Diamond Queer.

account of my uncle's health. Early fatigue, and Madge, who was all that an affectionate daughter could be in her care of him, insisted on coming

back to the yacht at ten o'clock.
"You must be good and lie down," she said to him now, taking his arm and drawing him toward the saloon door. "And you ought to be taking your hearttonic all this time. If you neglect my instructions, sir, in this disobedient way, shall I tell you what I shall do?"

"What then?" She frowned and shook her finger, threateningly. Then she said, in an aweinspiring whisper;

"I shall telegraph for mama." We both burst out laughing, but my uncle petitioned for a cigar on deck before he turned in, and Madge hastened to fill a deck-chair with cushions, and to bring him a little table, with his cigar-box and ash-tray upon it.

"And now I'll mix you a delicious iced whisky-and-soda, with a slice of lemon, just as you like it," she said, and rustled off, in search of the materials, in her trained silk evening gown. Lord Carchester looked after her af-

"It is astonishing that a girl like that should be "he began, half-musingly, thinking aloud, and then checked himself, and flushed slightly.

"Her mother's daughter-I know what you mean," I said quietly. "But you must remember you only see the sweetest side of her. Madge is a splendid girl, but she can make herself very disagreeable if she likes."

"I suppose you are too young, or too much absorbed in your work, really to understand or appreciate her," he said, sighing. "This evening, for instance, she was the life and soul of the dinner-party; only I knew what a bitter disappointment your absence was to her." "My absence? She hardly asked me

to come.' "Simply because she cannot bear making you do anything distasteful to you. Adrian, how is it that, with all your intelligence, you so entirely fail to un-derstand Madge? If I didn't know to the contrary, on my soul, I should think nothing could blind you to her fascinations but some unfortunate attachment for another woman."

He looked at me curiously as he spoke, and then paused, as though to invite my confidence. But I smoked on in silence. In truth, there was nothing to tell, for how could a romantic fond- sers. ness for a girl I had only known a week -a little, unformed creature eleven years my junior-affect my relations with Lady Madge?

"Well," Lord Carchester said, at last. impatiently, "is there another woman?" "You know there is none, sir," I returned, "but my cousin Madge. And

here she comes." After waiting on her stepfather, she drew a chair up beside mine. She was dressed in black satin, made in the shape called "Princess," a style I have always admired on a good figure; and of the beauty of Madge's figure there could be no doubt. The smooth, firm, ivory-white skin of her bare neck and shoulders showed through the filmy white wrap she had thrown loosely less keen than usual.

Lord Carchester's head drooped back she tersely expressed it, cared not a "brass farthing."

"What a pack of nonsense it is," she would say, "to talk of a family being ancient, as though, like cheese and wine, it is the better for keeping! We all date back to Adam and Eve, I suppose; and if we liked to pay the men at the strong. I think I'll just put this round.

> As she spoke, she drew the wrap from her shoulders and laid it lightly over

"Let me get you something else; you'll

"Let me get you something else; you'll catch cold," I said, starting up.

"No, no! I've been stiffing all day.
And I never catch cold. You know how tremendously tough I am. If I feel chilly, I'll go into the saloon."

"It's all your vanity," I said, laughing, "You know you have a beautiful neck and arms, and you want me to notice them, having no fresher admirer to practise on. Well, I'll do what is expected of me. You are beautifully dressed. Madge, and you look altogether dressed, Madge, and you look altogether most fascinating—like a sketch from a lady's newspaper, or one of Jan Beer's belle Parisiennes. There, will that con-

"Yes; I will translate it. I look hand-some, but not in the least your style." She spoke the very thought that was in my mind, and she knew it. "I should think you must get heartily sick of compliments," I said, ignoring

her remark. "No woman ever gets sick of being told she is beautiful. Even if she knows it isn't true, she likes it. You think I am very vain, Adrian; but, in real, sober earnest, there's only one man in the world whose admiration I should care for, and-and I am not in his

She spoke bitterly, and there was a sound of tears in her voice. Before I

sound of tears in her voice. Before I could respond, she went on again.

"Adrian," she said, "when you have fully achieved the brilliant success for which you have worked so well, and which I long for as much as you do, I wonder whether you will become a little less devoted to your art, and a little more devoted to me?"

I drew my chair closer to here and

I drew my chair closer to hers, and took her soft, strong hands in mine.
"Why, Madge," I said, "you are not
in the least yourself to-night. You are quite soft and sentimental. I hope, dear, I shall be devoted to you and to my work together. I certainly could never have accomplished even what I have without your help and encourage-ment. This yacht, with the chance it gave me of making those Mediterranean studies, has been invaluable to me, and your belief in me has been still more. "Then I have really been of some use?

"Of some use? My dearest Madge, you have been invaluable to me." She leaned toward me so that her shoulder touched mine, and looked up in my eyes in a wistful, eager way quite new to her.

"I am so glad to hear you say that," she murmured; "for during the past years, on the few occasions when I have

we could all have family trees a mile in seen you between your sea trips, I have

"What?" "Fancied that something more than

kind than ever." "How could you think such a thing?"

up, all softness gone from her face and

"Ungrateful," she repeated. "Oh, no, on a few thousand a year But if he had | the idea never occurred to me. I had not married for money, he had most cer- expected gratitude. It is not a quality more impressionable and less art-loving persons than yourself, Adrian. No doubt it is for my money. What else should they see in me? So you would say, at least, as I am not your style. But gratitude is an offering I don't expect away from 50 well regulated a perpect even from so well regulated a person as you!"

And with that she swept scornfully away, and, a good deal to my surprise, my uncle Carchester opened his eyes, sat up in his chair, stretched himself, and rose, taking Madge's wrap carefully on his arm.

"I must say, Adrian," he observed, as he passed me, "that you're a bad hand at making love. Also, you don't in the least understand your Cousin Madge."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

A month later I took the train for Bristol, resolved upon paying a surprise visit to the Morland House establishment for "finishing" young ladies of neglected education.

In six months I should be married to Madge, and I knew her well enough to be quite sure she would brook no rival, and that, however fanciful and platonic my attachment to Lilith might be, must be banished to the limbo of a bachelor's dead loves, never to be resuscitated. After our wedding it had been settled that we should go for three months' cruise in northern flords, so that our return to London would precede by only a few weeks the termination of Lilith's two years at Morland House. After that date the girl's future would be my wife's care and not mine, as I knew well; for, although I had so far never given Madge the slightest cause for jealousy, I was pretty certain that she could be transferred into a veritable Cynisca if confronted with a rival.

My wife! The word in connection with Madge aroused in me no enthusiasm, and for more than a year something like a dull regret. On every hand I received congratulations. A beauty, an heiress, a brilliant, fascinating, and gifted woman, the daughter of an earl, and the wellbeloved adopted child of the head of my house—the thought of winning such a condescending to notice the shopbride should have made my heart leap in anticipative joy; yet it seemed to be irresponsive as lead within me. As Madge had said herself, with bitter —I left him outside—but I'm afraid truth, she was not "my style." I admired her, liked her, esteemed her; but he's become disgusted and gone
I cherished deep in my mind the mehome." mory of my little marsh fairy's kisses. and valued them a thousand times more highly than all Lady Madge's generosity and discriminating encouragement. (To be continued.)

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"Madam," said Plodding Pete, "I once had a wife and family, but I couldn't be contented, so I left home." "Well, here's a turkey sandwich for you. Very few husbands are so considerate."

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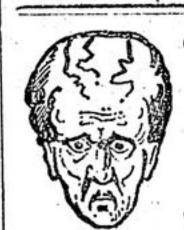
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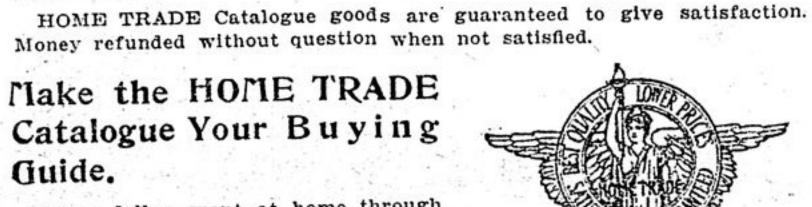


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