

The Wedding Eve;

Or, Married to a Fairy.

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued).

I was more than vexed, as I will own at once; I was downright angry. Allow me a lovely young man of seventeen to go about visiting promiscuously her school-fellows' homes at Ilfracombe or at Weston-super-Mare? Schoolfellows frequently possessed brothers, and male friends generally. There was no knowing the undesirable entanglement into which my Lillith might be drawn by the relatives and acquaintances of the "young ladies of neglected education" with whom she was receiving her instruction. For she was my Lillith now, or soon would be. I could think of her as mine, and without any ridiculous vanity I could imagine her assenting with composure, if not with satisfaction, to the suggestion that she should become my wife. If she had not retained something of her old feeling for me, she would hardly have stolen from Mrs. Jackson's house at midnight, and down in front of my studio, so that she might feel herself near me.

That parting kiss of hers, too, meant a great deal to me. I could not get the picture of her soft lips upon my cheek now. If she had not loved me at least a little, would she have taken leave of me thus?

The next twenty-four hours were spent in the restless excitement, the uncertainty, the mingled hopes and fears, which go to make a lover a miserable and generally-to-be-complimented creature. Not until now did I thoroughly realize the hold that passion for Lillith possessed over me. Her portraits, my own sketches from memory of her, and the little framed drawing by Nicholas Wray of her and Saladin, were my only consolations. I was strongly inclined to repair at once to Ilfracombe and find Lillith myself, and only my dread of missing her restrained me. That which I could not sleep, and which I could not eat, was the thought of my marriage. There was no sense in long engagements, I told myself. As Lillith had herself pointed out, she was too old to be kept at school like a child. I should do no more art work now until I had married her. For I found it quite impossible to settle down to any serious work, with my pulse throbbing and my brain burning with excitement at the mere thought that Lillith would become my wife.

Of course, I should encounter the strongest opposition and disapproval on the part of my relatives, from my Uncle Carchester downward. I should be exceedingly sorry to offend him, for I cherished him as a warm and grateful affection. He was in failing health, and for many years it had been the dearest wish of his heart that his beloved daughter should marry. I had been a nephew, I thought, to a poor, dear gentleman, to remember that the fortune for which he had sacrificed so many years of peace and freedom in his life was so far from being a blessing, that he would consider that I had treated her badly. And yet, had she not first insulted me cruelly and then given me my freedom, I would never have taken it, having first resolved to tear up the crazy passion by the roots, and to fulfill the contract into which Midge and I, when little more than children, had entered.

That my uncle would exonerate me from blame was, however, not to be hoped; nor did I try to altogether exonerate myself. I had loved Lillith from the first moment when I met her, and even my romantic affection for her as a child of barely sixteen years had been of so spontaneous and absorbing a nature that in itself it was disloyal to Midge. Insensibly to myself, my conduct toward my fiancée had become colder during the past fourteen months; and, in spite of her full and varied social life and her many flirtations, she had noticed and resented this.

But all deception was over now. I had burned my ships when I had confessed that Midge's taunts, I had confessed that were I free, I should marry Lillith. In the future my wife and I would stand together with the world's opinion all against us. Up to this point, though all my artistic career, I had had to endure hundreds of more or less covert sneers concerning the influence of my aristocratic connections, and my marvelous luck in drawing an allowance on which I could at least live in ease and comfort with the immediate prospect of wedding one of the wealthiest heiresses in London.

Now, all these conditions would be changed, and in the small hours of the morning, when I was lying in bed, I faced all this as one does face things in the early grayness before the dawn with cold, unhelpful mind. It would be an upheaval into it doubt, but I would stand myself into it heart and soul, for the sake of the woman I loved; and what more precious incentive could I have to stir me into winning wealth and fame?

This was the woman my soul longed for, the complement of my own nature, the being presaged in my dreams, whose diaphanous form had so often seemed to flit, will-o'-the-wisp-like, between me and my canvas. Long before my eyes had ever been blessed by a sight of her, I was positively startled to realize how wonderfully like Lillith was to those cream-fancies of mine, which had for ever pictured a slim, blue-eyed, yellow-haired, youthful, unreasoning creature, all laughter and all love.

At four o'clock I went to bed at last, and slept heavily until half-past eight. At nine, while I was enjoying my morning tub, never more refreshing than after a short night—Wrenshaw tapped at my dressing-room door.

"It's Mr. Wray, if you please, sir. I told him you were out of town, as were your instructions, but he insisted upon going up to the studio, saying as he had left some canvases and things there."

"Hang the fellow!" I muttered, below my breath. Wray was a desperate stayer and my train started at eleven thirty-five. "Get rid of him as soon as you can, and let me have my breakfast," I said aloud.

But half an hour later Wrenshaw came to me again, a comic picture of despair.

"That Mr. Wray, sir, he won't go. He's got his canvases, but he's taken the armchair, and his feet on another, and he's filling the room with his nasty, cheap tobacco smoke. I spoke to him strongly, sir; but says he: 'Your master and shelter never refuse an hour's rest and a pipe, and he says, depend upon it, sir, he has come to borrow money. When a gentleman—leastways a man—won't be put off from seeing another, it's always a favor he comes after; and it's generally ready money.'"

Wrenshaw seldom delivered himself of so many words; but he disliked Wray. I believe, only a little less than he disliked Lillith. For my own part, I was exceedingly annoyed by the presence of this uninvited guest at my studio. It was especially irritating to reflect that, although I might have breakfasted down-stairs or out of the house, and slip

off to Bristol without meeting him, I should practically leave Lillith's reputation in his hands, since he was quite unprincipled enough to find out for himself which I had taken down from the walls and placed just within my desk, and the unquiet artful enough, to discover that she had visited the studio not many days ago. Little Wilson, a friend of his, had seen me dining with her tete-a-tete at the Regent Street. Charlie Brockton had recognized me by her side in a cab; and Midge had already openly put the most unjust and cruel interpretation upon my relations with Lillith at once, and stop to all possible scandal; but it was intolerable to me to think that her name should be made a light of, even for a short time, by a man of so bitter and so cynical a disposition as Nicholas Wray.

Under these circumstances I resolved to see him, and so at least get him out of the studio. From Wilson's account I guessed, too, that he was in very low spirits, and that he was not his own words. Wrenshaw confirmed the idea. For many months none of his brilliant black-and-white work had been seen about town, and I could not but think that a man of such brilliant capabilities should really be in want, even though his misfortunes were more often than not the result of his foolish excesses.

Moved by all these things, I ascended to the studio, and found Wray just as Wrenshaw had described him, taking his ease upon a couple of chairs, and filling the room with a most disagreeable odor of such brilliant capabilities should really be in want, even though his misfortunes were more often than not the result of his foolish excesses.

"Hello, Hervey," was his greeting, as he lazily stuck out one of his long, white hands. "I had told him I was not at home to anybody," I answered absently. "I am only in town for a few days, during which I have been extremely hard at work; and in two hours' time I am leaving London again. So you will excuse me if I begin my remarks, starting at me over his pipe, and smoked on in silence, while I rang the bell and gave some orders to Wrenshaw about my breakfast."

"May I ask where you are going in such a haste of a hurry?" he inquired, as the door closed on the man.

"I am going to Bristol. I would not be a bad notion for me to go to Bristol and ask my Cousin, Kate Morland, to put me up for a few nights. Would you like a fellow-traveler?"

"No, Wray," I replied emphatically. "I most certainly should not."

"Well, that's frank, at any rate!" he observed, laughing impudently. "And may I ask what takes you to Bristol of all places?"

"Surely you must remember," I said, "that a young girl in whom I am deeply interested is in the care of your cousin, Mrs. Stanhope Morland, is she not?"

"Oh, ah, yes, your cousin for so long, and haven't heard from you, and I'd forgotten all about it. But, now that you recall it, I remember a little dancer, a beggar-girl, who somehow picked up with you and me in the studio, and wanted to spend her life with you."

"Please be careful with your words," I said coldly. "I am going down to Bristol to-day to ask that girl to be my wife."

Wray sprang up in his chair. He had grown pale with excitement, and was staring at me incredulously. "What in the world are you talking about?" he exclaimed. "In six months you will be married to Lady Margaret Lorimer; the papers are full of it. They will have to be filled with contradictions. Lady Midge dissolved our engagement yesterday morning."

"Oh, a lover's quarrel! That is nothing," said Wray, in tones of relief. "If you really have been keeping that dancer, a child at Kate's school all this time, and it has come to Lady Midge's ears through some infernally good-natured friend, of course she would not be your friend. That magnificent woman would be a tigress of jealousy, and would brook no rival. She is quite right, mind. She is a superb creature; and as to that girl—pooh! a mere trifle of relief."

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into faithfulness by oaths and blows. With such an ideal and romantic and sensitive nature as yours, marriage and Lillith Saxon would mean a tragedy and your ruin in body and soul. Give your word, Hervey, not to carry out this mad freak of yours—or, at least, promise me to see Lady Midge before you attempt to go down to Bristol. Heras is my friend and the perspiration stood out upon his face. His unlooked for vehemence, so utterly at variance with his usual lazy equanimity, partly astonished and partly annoyed me. But during his long and passionate protest I had time to reflect that, being the man he was, he could neither understand the love I felt nor the nature of the wish that inspired it. So I affected to eat my breakfast, persuading myself the while that I must forgive his abuse of Lillith, since it could be only his genuine concern for my welfare which inspired it. "I am sure you mean well, Wray," I therefore observed, as calmly as I could, when he had finished speaking and stood holding on to the back of a chair close to the table at which I was seated, "and there is no need for me to say that you should otherwise do. But you must understand that this is the last time that Lillith's name is mentioned between us until she has become my wife."

"I drew a long and sharp through his teeth, and remained silent for several minutes. Then, in a strangely subdued manner, he took his hat and his cigar from the place in which he had tossed them, and without once looking back at me he left the studio.

"I have warned you," he muttered, with his hand on the door, "I can do no head." The consequences be on your own head."

CHAPTER XIX.

Little enough I thought or cared for Nicholas Wray's warning, as I took my place in the train on my way down to Bristol.

My mind was wholly concerned with wondering how Lillith would take my wooing, what she would say, and how she would behave.

Had she not herself wished that all days might be like the brief time we had spent together in London? Had she not, little more than a year ago, when I drove her to the station, and stood by her shoulder, and imploring me not to leave her among strangers? Had she not expressed her willingness—nay, more, her eagerness to adopt any means to get me? And, above all, had she not escaped from Mrs. Jackson's at midnight, a fortnight ago, for the mere pleasure of walking up and down the street, and dancing in the doorway, and glad to receive me in my new character of a humble suitor for her hand? It was not, surely, a question of weeks after entrance into Morland House establishment she had, as she admitted to me, looked for and longed for my visits every day. Her present position was uncertain, but I noticed that my wife would be secure. And best encouragement of all for an anxious, eager lover, there was that soft kiss of hers "like Diana's kiss, unasked, unthought of, had laid upon my cheek when we last parted."

In such thoughts and recollections I beguiled my journey. A cold, moist wind was blowing over the water, and I lay in my berth, in an open fly, the driver of which enlivened the way by delectating upon the popular local topic of the number of suicides frustrated or successful during the last year. I wished, with the unreasonableness of lovers that the weather had not changed so suddenly for the worse, and that the near neighborhood of Morland House, but the sight of the low-lying building, nestled among its elm-trees set my heart bounding with a boyish delight and my blood tingling with hope, so that I longed to spring out of the cab, and bound on ahead, shouting to Lillith that I was coming to bear her off as my bride.

Another and an older servant than the girl I had seen on the occasion of my last visit, opened the door to me. Mrs. Morland and Miss Saxon were both at home, she said, glibly in answer to my inquiry, "Would I walk into the drawing-room?"

Mrs. Morland did not keep me waiting long. She rustled into the room in a handsome gray silk dress, elaborately trimmed with lace and studs, and her dark hair dressed in the latest style, and looking altogether like a plate in a fashion paper. She held out a small, plump, much-ringed hand for me to shake, but I noticed that its touch was not only cold and clammy, and that her comely, fresh-complexioned face wore an anxious expression which she strove vainly to mask in smiles.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Hervey. Pray sit down. I was so sorry Lillith was not here yesterday. But you see, the dear girl had seemed just a little bit—not exactly ill—but droopy lately, and I thought, for the sake of the peace of the house of a lady who was once one of my assistant teachers—a most charming and cultured woman of responsible age—would do the dear child good. Lillith is growing up, and she requires a little petting and change of air now and then."

"It is very thoughtful of you, I'm sure," I said, speaking with some reservation. "I had hoped, however, to have plenty of change from this time forward."

A look of unmistakable alarm flashed into Mrs. Morland's eyes. "You do not contemplate taking her away from her studies, do you?" she suggested. "The place suits her so admirably, and she is making such progress. And then—pardon me—but it is an understanding always that pupils remain with me not less than two years. I cannot do myself justice in less than that time. I thought I explained my custom in this respect to you on the occasion of your first visit, and I certainly understood that you agreed to that understanding."

"Miss Saxon leaves Morland House before the two years are up," I said very coldly. "I was thinking of Lillith's worn-out boots, and threadbare gloves, and all that sort of thing, so I entered into any agreement of the kind you suggest."

"But she is much too young and too ignorant to leave school yet. She knows nothing of the world. Her manners are so much unformed. And, then, she is so much attached to me that it would break her heart to part from me suddenly. Besides, although it sounds egotistical on my part to say so, when would she find the affectionate sympathy, the real home influence which she enjoys under my roof?"

Mrs. Morland was evidently much shocked. Her sweet voice actually quavered. "I hastened to assure her that I had no idea of removing Lillith to any rival 'finishing' establishment."

"But Lillith is no longer a child," I went on. "She is a beautiful, marriageable young woman—and, in short, Mrs. Morland, I have come down here to ask her to be my wife."

"Your wife!" she repeated blankly, staring at me with a consternation she did not attempt to conceal. "Mr. Hervey, is this a jest? Everybody knows that next season you are going to marry Lady Margaret Lorimer."

"Everybody is wrong, Mrs. Morland. Lady Margaret has dissolved our engagement."

"And you really thought," Mrs. Morland said, rising from her seat in her growing excitement, "you could really possibly think of proposing marriage to a girl in such a position of life just to give her and spite your former fiancée? Surely such a proceeding would be altogether beneath you. Let me beg and entreat you to think better of such a preposterous plan."

"There has never been any question of my marrying Lady Margaret," I said. "Pray dismiss such an idea from your mind. I wish to marry Miss Saxon because I love her, and for no other reason."

"Oh, my dear Mr. Hervey," Mrs. Morland exclaimed, in her softest and most persuasive tones, sinking down on her seat again and joining her hands in what appeared like very real anxiety. "For your own sake, for the sake of your family, your genius, and the splendid career before you, I implore you to give up all idea of such a terrible mesalliance. Lillith herself regards you with respect and gratitude, wholly in the light of a protector or father."

"There are just eleven years between us," she said. "Years are nothing. Remember your relative positions. As far as I can gather, Lillith's early training and associations were of the lowest and most sordid kind. You have educated her out of pure charity; but if you were to marry her, would the world believe it? You know how shamefully censorious people are. Could you bear the sort of thing that would be said about your wife?"

"The world Mrs. Morland," I said, "is nothing to me. An artist makes his own world."

(To be continued.)

SEEING ABOUT THE WORLD

A WANDERER'S TRAVELS IN MANY LANDS.

Interesting Description of Six Years' Rambling Over the Globe.

To most men there comes, at some time or other, the desire to travel and "see the world." Most frequently it comes to the young man in the early twenties, and only too often is the desire killed—or, at least, put among the impossible ambitions—by the stronger ties of the desk or bench, and the very urgent necessity of earning a living wage.

The desire came to one young man, Mr. A. Loton Ridger, and how he carried out his ambition is told in the fascinating volume "A Wanderer's Trail," which is a faithful record of travel in many lands.

The beginning was the most difficult part in Mr. Ridger's experience. He wanted very badly to go abroad, but his efforts to get a foreign appointment were unsuccessful, says London Answers.

Making a Move.

At last he took a definite plunge. Ten pounds in his pocket, and with unlimited hope and the unbounded enthusiasm of youth, he boarded a tramp steamer bound for San Francisco.

Through the kindness of a ship-broker he had been able to arrange this first passage, paying only the small sum of three shillings a day for mess-money. His first journey was uneventful enough, though the sixty-nine days of the voyage to San Francisco were full of interest for the man who had never been out of England before. A short stay in Frisco preceded his search for work among the fruit ranches of California; but the idea of making the principle of "Get a Move On" the leading one in his life led the adventurer into a maze of quickly-changing berths.

From fruit-farming he became pursuer on board a boat bound for Portland, Oregon. Here he asked for a job in a lumber camp.

"Do you mind getting killed, young fellow?" the boss foreman asked, and on being assured that the young man would take his chance, he gave him a note to the boss of No. 1 camp, and thither Ridger went. He took on the job of fireman of the donkey-engine at the rate of three dollars a day and all found. He knew nothing about the work, but was prepared to do his best.

As a matter of fact, he did one morning's work in that camp—and then he was sacked! The boss decided that the new man was never intended to be a fireman. Trying another camp, he failed to get work, so set out for the little wooden settlement of Stella. Here he earned something by stacking timber for a week, at the end of which time he decided to change his occupation, and became a strawberry-picker.

Much Work; Little Pay.

This proved to be the worst job struck in six years' wandering, and once more a change of scene was sought. Various jobs followed in quick succession, most of them distinguished by the big amount of hard work they entailed and the microscopic amount of pay they brought.

In America, particularly in the West, there is a very large floating population of men who go from one state to another, spending part of their time in a lumber camp, the summer in Klondyke, and then when the winter comes on they get rid of their earnings in a couple of months among the lights of one of the big towns. When broke they will start all over again, and repeat the programme till illness or a

bullet in a Frisco brawl brings down the curtain.

Thus in his wanderings Mr. Ridger was rarely lacking companion-ship. He "beat" the trains with the hoboes—in other words, crawled on to a freight train as a stow-away and took his chance of being discovered.

After laying sidewalks in Vancouver, and being an assistant in a cigar store, he decided to go to Alaska. There is a wonderful word picture of the far-famed White Pass, the Gateway of the Yukon, the land of gold, and the graveyard of many hundreds who joined in the great gold rush of '97.

But there was no gold here for the single-handed adventurer, and he returned by way of Vancouver to Seattle. Hard times in this American town led him to work his passage to Japan on a boat that was nothing but a "coffin-ship." After a stormy voyage across the Pacific and weeks of gales and misfortunes, he landed in Japan with three shillings still between him and starvation.

From Japan to Korea, through Manchuria, and then on board a Japanese coal tramp, down the Chinese coast, he came, after many adventures, to Boston in the United States. As there were no fortunes going a-begging, he returned to England with ten shillings in hand.

That ought to have been the end of his adventures, but, having tempted Fate, that mistress herself now took a hand. In a short time Mr. Ridger found himself in the Transvaal, a fully-qualified miner, with a Government certificate. This work was abandoned when an opportunity came to join an expedition which was being fitted up to go North in order to recruit natives for the mines. The magnitude of this undertaking, which entailed travelling some thousands of miles, was realized by none, least of all by those who organized the expedition.

Sadder But Wiser. The innumerable difficulties encountered by the small party of white men who undertook the task were enough to satiate the appetite of the most wildly adventurous man that ever breathed. It was ten months later when our wanderer came back to Johannesburg, a sadder and wiser man. He decided to leave South Africa, and by devious ways and with many odd jobs on the road came back to England.

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