The Wedding Eve;

Or, Married to a Fairy.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued).

"No. At least," I added hastily, "I have certainly drawn her several times."

"She is not a professional model, then?" Madge inquired, in the same careless tones.

"No."

"It seems almost a loss to art for she is really very pretty is she not?"

"Very."

"Is she—a lady?"

Something in her tone vexed me greatly.

"She is not highly educated or so well-born as you" I began.

"Oh, my dear Adrian," Madge exclaimed, with a little shrug of her shoulders, "pray don't drag me into the discussion! I am not in the least well educated. I never can tell what eight times eight are, and only last week I thought Nantwich and Droitwich were in Holland. And as to birth—well, beer and candles aren't exactly Norman, are they? No, leave me out of it, if you please, while we are discussing this pretty little dancing person, whose face by the way, seems oddly familiar to me. Perhaps she is in the ballet of some theatre, and I have seen her there?"

The light, icy insolence of her tone, and something extra staccato in her method of speaking, taught me that she was putting a strong curb on herself, and it flashed upon me that Charlie Brockton had probably told her of his passing me and Lilith in Northumberland Avenue a fortnight ago. It was far better, as I instantly decided, to talk the subject out, as Madge had evidently formed an altogether wrong idea of the character of Lilith.

"I want to speak to you about this very girl," I said. "Will you sit down and listen to me?"

"With pleasure, if you really wish it. But, pardon me for asking the question, do you think it is wise?"

"Do I think what is wise?"

We stood close together, facing each other. Both, I know, were pale, both excited, and beneath our apparently collected manner lay an undercurrent of fierce excitement.

"I mean," she said, looking straight into my eyes, "if I ask you no questions about this little dancing model person, if I merely request you to destroy her photographs and to promise me never to hold any communication with her again, and if on my side I promise never to refer to her, will not that be the best and wisest end to the business?"

"No!" I exclaimed energetically. "It will not! You have to hear the whole truth about Lilith Saxon, and I am sorry that you should so far misunderstand me as to suppose that it is truth of which I reason to be ashamed."

"I suppose nothing," she began, and then suddenly, to my great astonishment, she broke down.

Passionate tears streamed down her face, and for a few seconds her frame was shaken with sobs. But as, in bewilderment and distress, I advanced with the idea of consoling her, she waved me impatiently away.

"I am only overtired with the journey," she said, she whose flawless health and energy were proverbial. "I—don't look at me while I am crying in this stupid way! It makes me look hideous."

I retreated to the far end of the room, and pretended to be occupied with my brushes and colors. Gradually Madge's quick sobs ceased, and, taking a bottle of eau de Cologne I fetched her from my dressing-room, she threw some of the scent on her handkerchief, and applied it to her cheeks and eyelids. Then, after a prolonged powdering of her face and arranging her hair before an antique mirror which flung on the wall, she went back to the armchair.

"You can go on with your story now," she said, "if you really want to tell it. Though I warn you it is a mistake."

She did not look hideous at all after her tears. She was unusually pale and a little overpowdered, but I had never seen her look gentler or more attractive.

"It isn't a long story," I said, "but it is most necessary that you should know it. Last summer I went away for a few days to a place that fellow Collars told me about. I meant to stay for a week-end only, but I did not return until the following Wednesday. Do you remember?"

"I remember very well indeed!"

"At this place, Lythinge, in Kent, near Sandhythe, I put up at an inn, the 'Rose and Crown,' the only one in the village. The first night I was there there came to the inn a child called Lilith Saxon."

"A child?"

"She was not quite sixteen, and looked much younger. She was half-starved and ill-used. The landlady, Mrs. Nokes, knew all about her history, and can confirm what I say. Horatio Saxon, the father, was a lazy, drunken brute, who had once been an unsuccessful actor. He had married a lady, the daughter of a city curate, the Reverend James Pritchard."

I paused, and glanced at Madge. The softened expression had left her features, and her mouth looked hard and set.

"I found the child practising dancing in an empty room. Her mother had worked herself to death in this man Saxon's service, and her little sister Bessie, had died of cold caught from singing at night in the streets. This lovely child was being dragged by this old reprobate about the marsh villages, and made to dance in taverns to earn coppers to keep him in beer, and tobacco, and laziness. The child's story touched me. I got her some food, and when, after I supposed she had gone to bed, I strolled out to smoke and think in the moonlight by the churchyard that overhung the marshes, Lilith crept after me to tell me that her father had not returned. As I was leading her home, we met him. He was drunk, and tried to strike her. I intervened, and he turned his rage on to me. He struck at me, and, missing me, fell on a heap of stone in the road. The fall killed him."

Madge was watching me closely under frowning brows. She did not appear in the least touched, but she never once moved her eyes from my face as I continued speaking:

"Can't you see that I felt in some way responsible for the tragedy which robbed the child of her only protector, vile and degraded though he was? I had to stay at Lythinge for the inquest and the funeral, immediately after, I sought out her grandfather, and only succeeded in finding his tomb. Then I visited her father's cousin, a certain John Saxon, a socialist shoemaker of Rye. But he would not agree to take her, and finally I placed Lilith in the care of a Mrs. Stanhope Morland, who keeps a finishing school for girls of neglected education near the Clifton Suspension Bridge. There Lilith has remained ever since, nor have I seen her for more than a year until I came across her most unexpectedly, shopping in Regent Street, one afternoon about a fortnight ago. She will be eighteen next year, and will then be leaving Bristol. More than once I have thought about consulting you as to her future.

I was silent. Madge's mouth grew more scornful.

"It was almost a pity that you have never mentioned her before," she observed. "The relations in which you stand toward her, as a guardian of twenty-eight toward a ward of seventeen, are so likely to be misunderstood, you see."

"Not by any one who knows and trusts me," I said, controlling my temper as best I could.

"Knowing is not always trusting," observed Madge, scornfully.

I sprang from my seat.

"What do you mean?" I cried. "In what direction do all these sneering comments tend? Do you suppose I am a villain, and that I am lying to you?"

She started up, her dark eyes ablaze with anger.

"I mean," she said, hissing out the words at a white heat of passion, "that this low-bred creature with whom you are infatuated is not a child at all, but a woman. I mean that you are in love with her; that you cannot speak of her without changing color like a girl; that she has been seen here breakfasting with you; that you have been recognized driving about London at night in hansoms with her head on your shoulder; and that you actually flaunt your folly in the eyes of the world by surrounding yourself with her portraits. I mean that I know all this, and that I would have forgiven it, for I know something of the world and of the arts which such creatures as she exercise to ensnare men. But this attempt to hoodwink me and to interest me in her behalf by a series of paltry lies—that I will not and cannot forgive. Is it to prepare the way for making me receive your mistress after I have become your wife?"

"By Heaven!" I cried, moved out of myself by rage at her taunts, "if you were a man you should not stand there and say such words to me!"

"But being a woman, and a woman who was foolish enough to give her whole heart to you years ago, I shall speak the truth without fear of your violence. Adrian," she cried, suddenly changing her tone, "how could you try to deceive me? This fancy of yours will pass away, dear; it is wholly unworthy of you. Go back to your work and forget that you ever met this creature. I have often heard of such entanglements before, and I know quite well how loath you are to see the evil, sordid side of people, especially of women. But dear, dear Adrian, it is not for my own sake only, but for yours, that I beg and implore you to break off this intimacy with this impudent and shameless vagrant. Such a connection will be a miserable drag upon you long after its chains have galled you, and——"

"Stop!" I cried. "I won't listen to another word! Lilith Saxon is as good and pure as you are!"

"Adrian!" she cried again. "How can you be so deceived? Listen, dear; if you will only break with her now, I will never reproach you; I will never even mention her name. But I warn you you must choose between her and me."

"Madge," I said, turning upon her with sudden sternness, "we are betrothed, and in six months you will be my wife. But I feel no love for you either before or after marriage unless you retract the accusations you have made against me and Lilith."

She fell back a step, staring at me with dilated eyes.

"You love her so much!" she whispered hoarsely. "If I set you free—what would you do?"

"I should marry Lilith."

There was a long pause. Then she drew a quick breath that sounded like a sob.

"You are free, Adrian" she said; and passed out of my presence without another word.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the risk of appearing a heartless brute, I will admit exactly what I did after the door had closed upon Madge, and I knew myself to be a free man.

I was sorry, genuinely sorry, that I had quarreled with her. I was extremely fond of her. I had never met nor have I encountered since, a cleverer or more charming woman, or a more amusing and, when she chose, sympathetic companion. Few men admired her more than I. She was both beautiful and fascinating and had an absolute genius for dress. With all that, she was generous, brave, and unselfish, loyal in her friendship, and exceedingly kind-hearted, although it was very difficult to deceive her by any tale of distress not wholly genuine.

And yet my feeling when she thus broke an engagement which had grown up with us for at least ten years was wholly one of gladness and relief. Madge, as I knew well, would speedily be able to console herself among the well-filled ranks of her admirers. Five years ago, when I had suggested, by my uncle's wish, that she should marry me, she had been altogether opposed to the idea. She had often expressed her distaste for the notion of being "tied up for life," and for several years past she had never missed an opportunity of trying to make me jealous of her string of suitors, each of whom was a much better match for her from a worldly point of view than I.

And now we were free. Madge could carry her wealth and her wit to the needy family of her grand duke; and I—well, I could, as I did, seize a time-table and turn over the pages in prodigious hurry to find the next train for Bristol.

It was eleven o'clock, and there was a train in half an hour, which would suit me perfectly. My hand was on the bell-rope to summon Wrenshaw to pack my bag, for I proposed to stay the night in Bristol, when I remembered my ill-luck on the occasion of my last visit, and Mrs. Morland's earnest request that I would let her know in advance whenever I purposed calling at Morland House.

Clearly, it was not a too well-kept establishment, in spite of Mrs. Morland's admirable manners, and since Lilith was in the habit of visiting other pupils at their homes, it might be as well to make sure that she was at Clifton before undertaking the journey.

Much as I chafed at the delay, I could not bear the thought of missing her; so, as I did not wish Wrenshaw to be too conversant with my affairs, especially now, when I strongly suspected that he had been telling tales about Lilith to Madge I hurried off to the nearest telegraph office, and despatched the following message reply paid, to Mrs. Stanhope Morland:

"From Adrian Hervey, Room 6, The Studios, Rivermead Street, Chelsea: Am coming down to see you and Lilith this afternoon. Please reply immediately."

Back to my rooms I went, and fidgeted about impatiently until Mrs. Morland's answer should speed me on my journey. And in little more than an hour it came. I hurried to the door when I heard the telegraph boy's knock, and tore open the fateful brown envelope.

"Pray come to-morrow afternoon. Lilith at Ilfracombe to-day with friends.
"Katherine Stanhope Morland."

I was more than vexed, as I will own at once; I was downright angry. What was Mrs. Morland thinking of to allow a lovely young girl of seventeen to go about visiting promiscuously her schoolfellows' homes at Ilfracombe or at Weston-super-Mare? Schoolfellows frequently possessed brothers, cousins, and male friends generally. There was no knowing the undesirable entanglement into which my Lilith 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 Lilith 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 solely for the pleasure of walking up 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 recall the fluttering 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 all the restless excitement, the uncertainty, the mingled hopes and fears, which go to make a lover a miserable and generally-to-be-commiserated creature. Not until now did I thoroughly realize the hold this passion for Lilith 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 could not remain in the house. I was strongly inclined to repair at once to Ilfracombe and find Lilith myself, and only my dread of missing her restrained me. That night I could not sleep, and busied myself with plans for an immediate marriage. There was no sense in long engagements, I told myself. As Lilith 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 Lilith 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 for him 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 stepdaughter should marry his favorite nephew. I think it soothed him, poor, dear gentleman, to remember that the fortune for which he had sacrificed so many years of peace and freedom in his middle age would remain in his family. He was so fond of Madge that, of course, 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 firmly resolved to tear up the crazy passion by the roots, and to fulfil the contract into which Madge 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 Lilith 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 Madge. Insensibly to myself, my conduct toward my fiance 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, goaded by Madge's taunts, I had confessed that, were I free, I should marry Lilith. In the future my wife and I would stand together with the world's opinion all against us. Up to this point, through 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 upon 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, walking restlessly up and down my studio, I faced all this as one does face things in the early grayness before the dawn with cold, uphopeful mind. It would be an uphill fight, no doubt; but I must throw 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?

(To be continued.)

PRINCE HENRY OF PRUSSIA.

Who Enjoys the Complete Confidence of King George.

Amongst the numerous foreign descendants of Queen Victoria there is only one to whom King George accords his entire confidence and friendship. That Prince is Henry of Prussia, brother of the German Emperor. King George and Prince Henry bear to each other certain close affinities. They are, for one thing, first cousins. Prince Henry's mother was King Edward's eldest sister, our Princess Royal, afterwards wife of the German Emperor Frederick. Also the facial resemblance of King George and Prince Henry is most marked. Moreover, they are both sailors.

There are no two brothers in the world, perhaps, who are more unlike in character and disposition than the Kaiser and his only brother. The Kaiser is a Prussian to the life, and all the affectations and impulses of a thousand years of Hohenzollerns may be said to be personified in him. His brother, on the other hand, has from infancy been his gentle "mother's son."

In the days when the Kaiser and his brother were boys it was always Prince Henry who stood up for his mother, and whatever was English in the Prussian Court. With the Kaiser it was always the Hohenzollerns who were to be championed. Queen Victoria quickly developed a strong affection for Prince Henry, who, though a lively lad, was very kind-hearted and studious, and always got along well with his English relations. Queen Victoria as easily conceived something almost amounting to dislike of the heir to the Prussian crown. And the time came when little Prince Henry used to come to England alone!

The King's Friend.

As second sons of future Emperors, our King George and Prince Henry developed their remarkable friendship while boys of ten years old.

And if any circumstances were wanting to complete the bond of real affection which existed from youth between Prince George of Wales and Prince Henry of Prussia it came with the strange quarrel that arose between the new German Kaiser Wilhelm II. and his mother, the Empress Frederick. The latter lady, unable to bear in her widowhood, as she had as a wife, the scorn and malice of old Prince Bismarck, spoke out in her own defence, and found her eldest son arrayed against her as the champion of the venomous Prussian diplomat. Most people know how angry Queen Victoria was at the insults offered to her eldest daughter after twenty-five years of loyal residence in Prussia, and, needless to say, the then Prince of Wales (King Edward) and his two sons were equally amazed and mortified at the Kaiser's treatment of his mother.

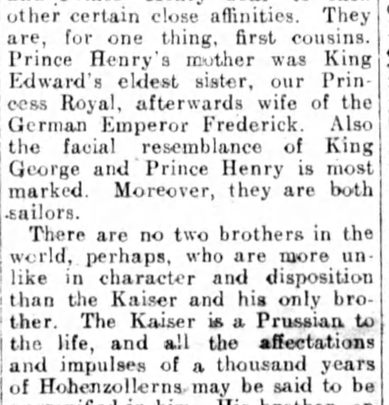
However, the time had come when Prince Harry himself had good cause to hate the objectionable Bismarck. Looking round for a bride who should become chatelaine of his magnificent palace in Berlin, Prince Henry one day encountered in the apartments of the Empress Frederick, in Berlin, a charming Princess who was as English as any daughter of Windsor or Buckingham Palace could well be. She was the Princess Irene of Hesse, and her mother had been King Edward's ill-fated sister, the popular Princess Alice.

Prince Henry of Prussia.

The happy pair, however, found themselves embittered once again by the unfeeling Bismarck. This hateful old man had become the bugbear of the German Royalties, and they seemed incapable of doing anything without his sanction. He was not quite powerful enough to frustrate the love-match of Prince Henry and Princess Irene of Hesse, but he gave them some very unpleasant doubts and fears. Their marriage eventually took place, and no Royal union of our day has been blessed with greater felicity. The Prince and his wife are, of course, rather more closely related than is usual, even amongst Royal personages.

INSECT INGENUITY.

Insects are now making their appearance in the garden, and there is no better place than a garden to study these wonderful creatures. At present a dark-colored beetle—the oil-beetle—may be observed, and as soon as the bees come the larva of this beetle contribes to get upon a bee's body, so as to be carried away to the bee's home, where it feeds upon the food there, and eventually leaves as a perfect beetle. Other kinds of beetles act as grave-diggers; certain ants keep a dairy; and there are masons, carpenters and upholsterers among the bees. The mason-bee constructs its cell of mortar. By dropping saliva on bits of earth and mixing both together, it pounds the mixture into a sort of cement. It then works this into the shape of a mould, inside which the female deposits her egg. Several such mortar cells may often be found lying close together. The carpenter-bee makes its home on decayed wood, and lines it with pieces of leaves, which it cuts off in the form of a circle and adjusts so skilfully that its nest is made water-tight, without any coating. A very ingeniously constructed home also is that of the upholsterer-bee, which dexterously cuts out the petals of the half-expended flowers of a poppy. It then strengthens the folds, and fits them so that a splendid tapestry overhangs the walls of its home in which the honey is deposited.



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FROM BONNIE SCOTLAND

NOTES OF INTEREST FROM HER BANKS AND BRAES.

What is Going on in the Highlands and Lowlands of Auld Scotia.

West Calder dressmakers have come out on strike owing to dissatisfaction with the increase of wages given which was 24 cents a week.

The death has occurred in Aberdeen of Mr. George Falconer, advocate, one of the most prominent law agents in the city.

It is expected that the telephone system to Blair Atholl will be in full working order in the course of a month.

Plans have been passed by the Kirkcaldy Dean of Guild Court, for an extension of Kirkcaldy Hospital, consisting of additional ward, containing 20 beds, operating theatre and other rooms.

Brechin Castle is on the market. It is the property of the Earl of Dalhousie and extends to about 2,330 acres, with a rental of over $11,000 per annum.

Lady Nairn of Rankeilloin has offered to give a permanent home for the Victoria nurses of Kirkcaldy.

Mr. James Fairweather, an Ayrshire schoolmaster, committed suicide after a walk of thirty miles by shooting himself on the suspension bridge at Glasgow.

On the cairn on the battlefield of Culloden a large wreath of ivy sent by Lieut. D. P. Menzies of Menziestown, has been placed by clansman Alexander D. Menzies, C.E., Inverness, in memory of the men of the clan who fell there.

A woman who was charged with stealing a large sum of money, when examined by X-rays at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, was found to have swallowed fifteen sovereigns and five half sovereigns.

A cow which broke away from an attendant caused great excitement in Perth. It attacked a number of persons and rushed at a number of soldiers in Barracks Square, who were drilling. The animal was eventually driven into the barracks coal yard, where it was secured.

About 500 men will be affected by the decision of the Ormskirk master builders to grant an increase of two cents per hour to all men in their employ.

At the annual meeting of Glasgow Choral and Orchestral Union reference was made to the need for a large concert hall in the city. The financial statement for the past season showed a surplus of $5,780.

While lighting a paraffin lamp at her residence, Parliamentary Street, Glasgow, Margaret Britton, 55 years of age, was so seriously burned that she had to be conveyed to the Royal Infirmary.

On the advice of the committee of management the Clyde Navigation Trustees will oppose the Glasgow Corporation provisional order for power to construct a bridge over the Clyde at Oswald Street.

Sir John Stirling-Maxwell, Bart., chairman of the executive committee which has been formed to obtain a supply of radium for use in Glasgow, has issued an appeal to support the movement.

While the motor car of the Glasgow Fire Department was proceeding to a fire it collided with a taxi at the corner of Buchanan Street. The passenger of the taxi was badly injured.

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