Sing a Song o' sixpence, a pocket full of Rye;
Four and twenty Blackbirds baked in a Pie;
When the Pie was opened the King began to sing:
"Oh, Chef, I say! Take this away—

"Let's have some Corn-Pudding"

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BENSON'S PREPARED CORN

The Wedding Eve;

Or, Married to a Fairy.

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued).

"That sounds very charming, but it would not prevent you from feeling hurt and angry when your relatives snubbed and ignored your wife. Think how unfair to the girl such a union would be. I may be considered cynical, but I am always inclined to the belief that the peasant wife of the Lord of Burleigh faded away and died, not on account of the burden of an honor into which she was not born, but because she really could not endure the snubs of her husband's high-born female relatives. Why should poor little Lilith, who is really very happy and contented as she is, have to submit to a similar ordeal?"

"She herself is the best judge of what she can or cannot endure," I said. "May I see her?"

Mrs. Morland rose with alacrity.

"I will fetch her," she said. "But you must not be too much discouraged if she says 'No.' She likes you very much as a friend, but the child has no thoughts of marriage, nor will she have for years to come in all probability. Her temperament is by no means passionate, and she is more child than woman still."

She was leaving the room when I sprang from my seat and stopped her.

"May I ask," I said, "that some one be sent to fetch Lilith here? I want to be myself the first to tell her of my wishes. Will you let me ring for the maid?"

I had my hand on the bell as I spoke, so that she could not refuse me; but I could see quite well that she did not relish the arrangement. But she acceded in a graceful and ladylike manner, resuming her seat and giving orders, to the servant who entered, to ask Miss Saxon to come to the drawing-room.

My heart thumped faster and faster during the short interval before Lilith's appearance.

What would she say? How would she look? Would she wear the white frock in which I had last seen her?

She soon solved all doubts, entering like a dream of youth and beauty, in Parisian-looking loose blouse of rose-colored lawn and white lace insertion over a skirt of fawn-colored silk, a rose-colored silk sash round her waist, and a lovely color in her cheeks and brightness in her dancing eyes.

It is strange how dress alters a woman. With her yellow hair elegantly dressed high on her head and low down on the nape of her neck, her little feet encased in silk stockings and French high-heeled slippers, and one gold bangle on her left wrist, Lilith looked no longer the lovely artist's model I had last seen, but a beautiful and refined young lady. Had she entered in rags, my love and her beauty would have stood the test triumphantly, but, as it was, I told myself with pride that she would have been a fitting wife for a prince, and that a prince might well congratulate himself over winning such a prize.

"Lilith," Mrs. Morland began hastily, and in evident nervousness "Mr. Hervey has come down here to say something to you—something which I think will surprise you very much."

A swift glance, the purport of which I did not understand, was exchanged by the two women, and Lilith grew suddenly very pale.

I was shaking hands with her by this time, and held her hand a long time within my own.

"You are not angry with me, are you?" she said artlessly, looking up into my face.

"So far from being angry with you," I said, taking her two hands, and holding them close, "that I have come today to ask you to be my wife."

She stared at me with dilated eyes, and then looked away, and began to laugh in a nervous, half-hysterical manner.

"How absurd!" she exclaimed. "But, of course, you are joking. I am sure Lady Margaret would be cross if she heard you talk such nonsense."

"Lady Margaret has nothing to do with it," I said, still retaining her hands and trying to make her averted eyes meet mine. "We are no longer engaged. We never loved each other, and we have found out our mistake now. I have always loved you, Lilith, and I want you to try and love me."

"Oh, I can't! It's impossible. You can't be in earnest. You must forget all this at once. It's quite out of the question!" panted Lilith in excitement which it was painful to witness.

Then, suddenly wrenching her hands from mine, she burst into a passion of tears.

Mrs. Morland put her arms affectionately round the sobbing girl and tried to soothe her, glancing significantly at me over Lilith's shoulder the while.

"Lilith is not strong," she said, "and the shock and surprise have been too much for her."

"If you will leave us alone for a few minutes," I suggested, "I will try and reason with her until she gets used to the idea."

"She will never get used to the idea," Mrs. Morland returned emphatically. "Lilith has a great dislike for the very idea of marriage. I was just the same at her age. Consider how very young she is——"

"Will you allow me to speak to her alone?" I repeated icily; and Mrs. Morland, with a slight deprecatory shrug of her shoulders and lifting of her eyebrows, released Lilith from her embrace and rustled out of the room.

The door had hardly closed upon her a very evident wish to escape a tete-a-tete interview with me. I intercepted when Lilith made a spring toward it, in her, and, taking her hand in mine, I led her to a seat. I do not deny that I felt startled and pained by the manner in which my proposal had been received. Had I been halt, or maimed, or blind, instead of a healthy and passable-looking man of eight-and-twenty, my offer could not apparently have inspired greater repugnance and alarm.

"Tell me, Lilith dear," I said very gently, seating myself on the sofa by her side, "why should the idea of marrying me seem so dreadful to you? I thought you were fond of me and happy with me. It did not seem so very long ago that you wanted to be always with me. Have you already forgotten?"

"I was a child then," she faltered, blushing crimson.

"You are not much more than a child now. Listen, dear. I am not rich, and you say you are extravagant. But I have no doubt I shall be able to make quite as much as you will want to spend. I have an allowance of a thousand a year, and at present I am making as much by my art——"

"Two thousand a year!" she exclaimed, opening wide eyes "And you say you are not rich?"

"Well, anyhow, you will be able to have plenty of pretty frocks—as pretty as the one you have on——"

"Oh, that isn't mine. Mrs. Morland lent it me to make me look nice for your visit. I have never had such an expensive dress as this. But perhaps I ought not to have told you," she added, suddenly checking her flow of confidences. "Don't let her know."

"Very well, dearest. I was going to tell you that I am godson and grandnephew to old Admiral Blakiston, who bought my last large painting of a Neapolitan fishing-fleet for five hundred pounds, and that he always talks of leaving me something. But it is better to trust to what I shall make myself; and, with you to work for, you to inspire me, I am certain of wealth and fame. I only tell you these things, darling, because I know you are fond of spending money, and I don't know what else I can say to induce you to like me better."

"I do like you," she said, looking up at me, her blue eyes streaming with tears. "I am very fond of you, indeed, and very grateful to you, and you are very handsome and clever and good, and the nephew of an earl, and a genius—I know all that, and I have often been told about it. But you must not marry any one like me—a little beggar girl that danced about in taverns for her living. It is quite, quite out of the question. And it's only a sudden notion of yours, or why didn't you tell me when you put me here to school that you meant to take me out and marry me at the end of a year? I am sure I was miserable enough then to want some comforting."

"I was not free then, dear, or I would gladly have done so. I telegraphed to Mrs. Morland yesterday within an hour of having my engagement dissolved by Lady Margaret Lorimer."

"You thought of me directly?" she said, looking at me for a few seconds intently in silence. Then she gave a quick little sigh. "It is too late," she said. "I have changed my mind altogether within the past year. I don't love you now at all. And I shall never marry any one."

CHAPTER XX.

I did not stay at Bristol that night, as I had intended doing.

Bag and baggage, I departed back to town, after a tete-a-tete talk with Mrs. Morland had succeeded a tete-a-tete talk with Lilith.

I could not take no for an answer. There was something odd and reserved about Lilith's manner, and her fits of friendly affection alternating with her unaccountable aversion against the idea of becoming my wife induced me not unnaturally to believe that girlish caprice was at the bottom of her refusal of my offer.

She had terminated our interview by suddenly dashing from the room in a flood of tears. Just before, she had owned that nobody had ever been so good to her as I, and that nobody but I had ever loved her. She strenuously negatived my suggestion that she had another sweetheart, assuring me that such was far from being the case.

"I have never met any men here, as you know," she said. "How should I? I am sure no one could be half so good to me as you. But I can't marry you, and you mustn't ask me. Your grand relatives would be always looking down upon me; wouldn't they now? And that splendidly dressed cousin of yours, whom you were going to marry, would want to kill me. No, you mustn't call me changeable. I know I would have jumped at the thought of marrying you in a year had you asked me at Lythinge. But I'm ever so much older now, and I know that when a man marries beneath him, he is always sorry, and makes his wife sorry, too. And I'm not really a bit civilized. I hate things settled and regular. I like picknicking better than dining, and I feel uncomfortable when servants stand about in the room during meals. Do you remember how I wanted 'Mr. Wrenshaw,' as I called him, to have his dinner with us? Well, I'm just a little better than that now. I know the names of things, and how to pronounce them in French, and I can pick out tunes with the notes on the piano, and I don't make mistakes in grammar and utter the common expressions I used to. I've been too much scolded for that! But at heart I am very much the little gipsy I used to be, and I never look at the sea without longing to take off my shoes and stockings and bound along with bare feet at the edge of the waves. And I hate women just as much as ever. Men I like, and I love the smell of tobacco, and do enjoy a puff at a cigarette now and then. But women are so prim. I hate the girls here, who all affectedly mimic Mrs. Morland, and mimic her so badly, and are always trying to be thought fine ladies and something much grander than they really are.

"And I never hear an organ in the street without wanting to catch up my skirts and dance to it, as I used to when I was a little child. And—one thing more I must tell you—when I've been many weeks living in a civilized sort of way, all of a sudden a great longing comes to me to be up and out of it all, like in the old days when father and I got up before daylight, and crept out of some barn where we'd stolen in to rest, before we were worried out of it by the farmer's lads. I don't like houses overmuch; they stifle me, somehow. And I hate stopping in the same place long. I want to be out under the blue sky and in sound of the sea. Oh, I'm not fit to be a gentleman's wife, Mr. Hervey, and if you'd seen a bit more of me during the past fourteen months, you'd know it."

There was a touch of sadness, almost of bitterness, if bitterness were possible in Lilith, ringing through her tones. But, loving her as I did, every word she uttered brought her nearer to me.

"You will be an artist's wife," I said, "and you have the artist temperament. I am no fonder of houses or affected, stuck-up people than you are. I chafe just as you do at the silly restrictions of society, and long for a fuller, a more real, and, more open existence. And I cannot live long away from the call of the sea. So that we have all these tastes, which you think are against you, entirely in common."

"But, Mr. Hervey——"

"Won't you call me Adrian? And won't you try to feel a little fond of me?"

"I will call you Adrian, if you like, and I am very, very fond of you. But I can never, never be your wife!"

And with that she had burst out crying and fled from the room.

To her had succeeded Mrs. Morland, the sweet-voiced, comfortable, and comforting. She strongly advised me to go back to town, and return in a few days to see whether in the interval Lilith had grown used to the idea of marrying me. It was Thursday; why not come again on Monday, to receive her final answer?

When I hesitated, Mrs. Morland hastened to assure me that she herself would do her utmost on my behalf.

"Frankly, I think little Lilith is too unconventional and Bohemian, in spite of all my teaching, to make a suitable wife for a distinguished and popular painter in your brilliant position," she said. "Perhaps she has not been quite long enough with me yet to tone down her gipsy instincts. Now, if you would only let me counsel you to go away for a whole year—at the end of that time Lilith would still be only eighteen, but she would be old enough, no doubt, to appreciate the honor you wish to confer upon her, and would very likely be only too glad to accept your offer."

"It is she, not I, who would be conferring an honor," I said, "and I should not dream of waiting a year. If I had my way, Lilith and I would be married to-morrow."

Mrs. Morland shook her finger at me with indulgent playfulness.

"You young men are so tempestuous and impatient!" she exclaimed. "Anyhow, wait until Monday and be assured I will do my very best to advance your cause."

I did not in the least believe her. It seemed to me that her manner betrayed a most patent artificiality, and that her tones rang false. I had not seen her for so long a time, and I had therefore failed to note that the purring quality of her voice was accompanied by a very feline look in her scintillating, almost pupilless, green-gray eyes. I began to dislike the woman whom I already distrusted, and I rose somewhat abruptly.

"I will come again on Monday, as you suggest," I said. "But may I ask that Lilith be here to see me, and not either with assistant teachers at Illfracombe, or with schoolfellows at Weston-super-Mare?"

The shot told home. Mrs. Morland's clear skin grew crimson, and her pupils seemed to contract as she glanced at me sideways.

"That is really unkind of you," she murmured, in gentle remonstrance. "I would never have let her leave my roof for half an hour had I guessed that you disapproved of it."

I could not even bid Lilith farewell. She was locked in her own room, so I was told, and did not feel equal to seeing me again. So, puzzled, disappointed, and profoundly hurt, yet by no means hopeless, I left Morland House and drove back to the station, where I had left my bag, having been too eager to see Lilith to drive first to a hotel.

The more I thought about her conduct, the more firmly I believed that some pressure was being exercised to induce her to behave with such strange caprice. Doubtless Mrs. Morland would prefer to keep for another year a pupil on whose behalf two hundred a year was paid by regular quarterly instalments. On Monday, however, I would, so I determined, take Lilith away from the influence of Morland House for the entire afternoon, so that I might induce her to speak without reserve.

The train steamed into London on a foggy and depressing autumn evening. Nothing much was doing in town yet, and as I glanced at the posters announcing the contents of the evening papers exhibited along the sidewalk, the chief item appeared to be "Death of a British admiral from sunstroke in Virginia."

My great-uncle, Admiral Adrian Blakiston, whom, as a child, I had only once seen, had, so I recollected, some property near Richmond, Virginia, and I therefore expended a halfpenny to discover whether the paragraph referred to him. Standing under a gas-lamp near the entrance to the station, I scanned the columns of the paper, and discovered, with some slight shock, that it was indeed my distinguished relative, my mother's uncle, a man of seventy-two, whose death was chronicled there.

Already he had been dead some days, for his estate was situated in a country district, and the news had apparently only just reached London. In him I had lost an art patron, for he had recently bought one of my pictures, and had expressed himself as highly delighted with it. Naturally I was sorry for the old gentleman, but a man of twenty-eight, very much in love for the first time cannot be expected to cherish any very deep feeling for a distant connection of over three-score years and ten, whose very appearance is unfamiliar to him.

I crushed the paper in my pocket, together with another which I purchased to glean further details, which last told me that "the late distinguished officer was nearly related to the brilliant young marine painter, Adrian Hervey, A.R.A., Mr. Hervey's mother having been the Honorable Clara Blakiston, Admiral Blakiston's niece."

At my studio I found Wray, who exclaimed:

"Back again, Hervey! I thought you weren't expected until to-morrow?"

"Then why in the world did you call?" I asked testily, for I had no wish to meet the man at that moment.

"Oh, to plague Wrenshaw here, and to try and borrow five shillings of him," he answered imperturably. "But Wrenshaw was not to be touched. Now you've come, it's all right. I'll come in with you."

I stood on the door-step in the worst of tempers.

"Frankly, Wray, I am not in talking humor."

"Nor am I. But I'm in smoking humor, if you'll let me have a pinch of tobacco. Do, Hervey. I haven't smoked since yesterday, and I'm expiring for a pipe."

"Come up, then," I said, suppressing a sigh, "but don't stop long, there's a good fellow. I wouldn't be drawn into talking to-night if a fortune depended upon it."

"All right. I'll take the tobacco and go."

(To be continued.)

Jack—"Once more, Molly, will you marry me?" Molly—"For the twelfth time this hour I tell you I will not." Jack (of the navy)—"Well, twelve knots an hour is not bad speed for a little craft like you."

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SUMMER "DON'TS."

Toronto's Health Officer Offers Advice for Summer Vacationists.

In the summer number of the Health Bulletin, Dr. Hastings, Medical Health Officer of Toronto, offers this advice for those on a vacation at a summer hotel, boarding house or cottage:

Don't drink from a spring that is coming from a rocky district, which is not heavily overlaid with sand or earth. Water contaminated by human beings may flow for miles in such country without being purified.

Don't drink water at a hotel unless you know personally where it comes from.

Don't drink milk, or at least do not feed it to your children unless you have assured yourself that it is pure. You may get the surprise of your life if you quietly find out where your hotel milk comes from, and then investigate the producer's dairy herd and premises.

Don't stay at a summer place where flies abound. It is a direct evidence that the surroundings are unsanitary.

Don't scratch mosquito bites. If mosquitoes bother you very much rub a little citronella oil on your hands and face.

Don't fool with poison ivy. If you get poisoned use the crushed jewel weed to rub on the parts affected.

Don't enter a canoe if you cannot swim. Don't take with you in a canoe a companion who cannot swim. There is no excuse nowadays for not being able to swim.

Don't delay in case of drowning in getting the body ashore and attempting to save life. The Schafer method is probably the easiest and should be persisted in for at least two hours.

Don't go into cold water or for long swims unless your circulation is good. So-called cramps are frequently heart failures which come as a result of the strain on the heart.

If you don't want people to like you, criticize what they do.

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