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CHAPTER XXXIX.

Then Jerry smiled, remembering that the encouraging bit of news that he had meant to give Nora he had never delivered. Yet it was important, too quite as important as the matters that had caused him temporarily to forget all about it. He had intended to tell Nora of Trask's assurance that after the election he would find a place for him in somelaw office. She would be so relieved to know that the question of getting a start need no longer cause them anxiety!

Nora strolled along the spacious aisles of the fourth floor of Bilbow and Slosson's. As usual, the young women who presided over the millinery and ligerie counters gazed at her enviously, the floorwalker with the neat black mustache and emotional dark eyes greeted her with affability, and the customers whom she passed turned their heads to follow her with interest. But these demonstrations failed to provoke in her the usual agreeable reaction, the new costumes and dresses displayed upon the forms failed to win her critical scrutiny, the persuasive perfumes that the discreet and subtle management caused to permeate this aristocratic section of their establishment failed to give pleasure to the most fastidious of her senses. Even the survey of herself in the long mirrors at the ends of the aisles was mechanical, abstracted, indifferent.

Patrick Maguire emerged from the elevator and came towards her. Nora blushed and trembled when she saw him; as they approached each other, walking slowly, she pressed a hand to her throat; her heart was jumping and battering. Maguire looked grave and determined; he lifted his pea-green Fedora hat and replaced it on his head without a smile.

"I got your letter," he said, as he turned and walked with her. "After getting it, I had one or two things to attend to, and then I came round here at once. It doesn't go, Nora, it doesn't go."

"What do you mean?" she asked faintly.

"You're going to knock off work here and come out with me while I tell you."

"I can't possibly do that."

"Oh, yes, that's what you're going to do. And I can't wait for you to change your clothes either; what you have on will do very well. So just tell whoever's in charge that you're going out and don't know when you'll be back."

Nora laughed nervously. "You must think I want to lose my job.'

"You won't lose it. Tell 'em you'll buy the clothes you have on; that's true enough. They suit you well; I like you in them, and I'll buy 'em for you."

"I wouldn't let you."

"Oh," said Maguire with a faint smile, "I guess you will."

The forewoman came bustling up, puzzled, interested, and pleasant. "Oh, Mrs. Corcoran," she said, "Mr. Stratton has just sent up word that you're to have a holiday. So you're excused, of course. What a nice day for it!"

"A holiday!" cried Nora. "I don't want it. I haven't asked for it. I—"

"Now don't you form the habit of rejecting everything that's offered to you, Nora," interposed Maguire. "You'll go awful wrong if you adopt that for a policy." He turned to the forewoman. "Mrs. Corcoran's going to keep these things she's got on. Just charge 'em to me—Patrick Maguire; Mr. Stratton will tell you it's all right.

"It is not. I won't hear of such a thing."

"Now, now, what did I just tell you about the awful mistake of rejecting what's offered to you?" Maguire's voice was soothing; he winked at the forewoman. "Come on now; we don't want to waste any more time. Of course you're going to keep these clothes."

"Why, of course, Mrs. Corcoran." The forewoman employed the honeyed manner that she exhibited only to customers of distinction. "They're so lovely on you; good gracious, I wish somebody would make me such a present."

"You might just as well wear them, Nora," urged Maguire. "If you don't, they'll be sent round to your house. Why not wear them and increase the pleasure of your holiday?"

"That's right too," agreed the forewoman.

"I must say—" began Nora; but Maguire interrupted with a remark to the forewoman, who interpreted it correctly as a dismissal.

"Just see that it's charged to me, will you, please?"

"I must say," repeated Nora, as the forewoman withdrew, "this is the strangest kind of an answer to that not."

"Sometimes," said Maguire, "it's necessary to take radical measures."

He summoned the elevator; Nora entered it without protest. She had no idea he could be so decisive, and she was interested in discovering now what his intentions were.

In the automobile he glanced at his watch. "Eleven o'clock. Too bad you should have had to miss so much of your holiday. But after getting your letter I had things to do that prevented me from coming earlier."

"Tell me, how were you able to get me this holiday?"

"Oh, Bilbow and Slosson will do anything for me, within reason. I fixed matters for them so that they could throw a bridge across Exchange Alley to their new building; it meant getting special legislation through the City Council. And I never held 'em up for it—not to any great extent."

He made no allusion to the letter, but when he had driven out beyond the suburbs he stopped the car and drew a small box from his pocket. He handed it to her.

"There's one of the things I had to do," he said. "See how you like it."

She opened it with a premonition of what she should find. Yet she was unprepared for the splendor that she uncovered—a ring in which was set a magnificent diamond.

"It's very handsome," she said. She looked at it a moment longer and then held it out to him.

"Put it on," he said. "See how it looks on your finger."

"Oh, all right."

She began to take off her right glove.

"The other glove," he suggested. "It's on the left hand that it's worn."

"Anything to oblige you. Of course I don't bind myself in any way."

"Of course not."

She slipped the ring on her finger and held it up so that the light played on it.

"Does it happen to fit?" he asked.

"Yes, it's just about right."

"Of course if it weren't and you liked the stone, it could be set in a ring of the right size."

"You don't expect me to accept such a gift."

"I wouldn't have bought it if I hadn't expected you to accept it."

"It's out of the question. I should take a ring like that only from the man I was engaged to."

"Well, let's not argue the point. Just wear it to-day to celebrate the holiday. Don't you like to see it on your finger?"

"It's perfectly wonderful," she admitted.

"Feeling and seeing it on your hand will give you pleasure to-day, wont it?"

"Yes, I suppose it will."

"That's all that's necessary."

He started the car and drove on without further speech. His silence and his air of purposefulness seemed to Nora formidable; this ride became exciting; she was unable to think of things to say, because she was so keenly expectant and apprehensive. Indeed, she couldn't tell whether it was expectancy or apprehensiveness that agitated her.

Maguire observed that she did not put on the glove that she had taken off. She kept her bare hand in her lap and frequently spread out the fingers and set new colors to flashing in the stone. Frequent sidelong glances told Maguire that she was more interested in looking at the ring than at the objects along the road.

Presently he stopped the car again, out in the open country. He produced another little packet and handed it to her. "See what you think of that."

Opening it, she discovered a pair of earrings, into each of which was set a large and lustrous pearl. She looked at Maguire with consternation.

"Goodness!" she cried. "Are they real?"

"Sure," he answered, with a note of injured sensitiveness in his voice. "Do you think I'd be giving you imitations?"

"You mustn't, mustn't talk of giving me such things."

"All right, I won't talk of it," he said indulgently. "But just put them on. They'll help you to enjoy your holiday."

She sat gazing at the pearls with rapt eyes; she held them in her hand reverently. Never before had she touched anything so rare, so rich, so fabulously expensive. As she looked at them, they seemed to have the power of putting her into a trance.

Out of something very like that Maguire's voice, gently insistent, summoned her.

"Put 'em on, Nora; let's see how you look with 'em on."

She laid the precious things carefully in her lap and began to unpin her veil. "I wonder," she said, "if you're crazy or am I?"

"Must Haves" and "Would Likes."

I know at the outset that the average woman would never follow the "short cuts" and "plans" which I adopt to get through with the work which falls to the lot of mothers, with or without help. As a matter of fact, no woman will follow exactly any other woman's methods, for individuality asserts itself in housework as in everything else and we must all cut our goods to suit our pattern. But as women are women, I feel pretty sure that mighty few would even try to adopt my plan for I have a strong leaning towards masculine styles in housekeeping.

To begin with, I make a strong line of demarcation between "must haves" and "would likes." The "must haves" include plain food, clean clothes and rooms and lots of soap and water applied to bodies and house furnishings. The "would likes" include fancy work, crocheted doilies, pillow shams, embroidered towels, bric-a-brac stuck up all over the mantel and piano, photographs in like places, plate rails covered with fancy china, fancy pillows, lace curtains which take a week's time to "do up,"—in short, all the frills and furbelows so dear to the feminine soul, and so conspicuous by their absence in a bachelor's bungalow.

All these things are nice, if you like them. I'll grant they, or a few of them, play a part in our aesthetic education, but I contend they are non-essential. And O, the time they take to make them and then keep them nice.

Along with the furnishing, which I eliminate as time-killers, I include fancy cooking, frosted cakes, fearful and wonderful entrees, desserts and salads that take an hour to make and two minutes to eat, and all the related line of dishes which call for a half-dozen ingredients and give you an attack of indigestion. These has taught me, are not only non-essentials, they are criminals. Dyspepsia lurks in their train and women's strength is wasted in their making.

Add to this list of things cut out, the daily wearing of delicate lingerie and house dresses which require much ironing and you have stricken out about all that beauty-loving women dote on. So you see why I say I know beforehand that no one is going to follow my advice.

I think perhaps the hardest part of being a young mother is the getting used to the sacrifices you have to make for your children. Up to the time of your first baby's arrival you have been expecting other folks to cater to you. From the time your firstborn arrives you begin to live a new life, a life of service to others. At first the nurse and your mother tell you you must do this and that for the baby's sake, but before many months you wake up to find the young tyrant telling you himself. For some inscrutable reason, children assume from their earliest conscious moments that their mother is their own personal property with no rights which they are bound to respect. And after awhile conscientious mothers begin to feel a little themselves as though their duty to their children was paramount.

And as a matter of fact it is. I heartily believe that the most important thing a mother has to do it to serve her children. Children first, house next, is the true way. Too many mothers turn it about and make the children second. A clean, well-kept house is to them of more importance than happy children. But they are wrong. They will have many years to keep up the house after the children are grown, but the years when they can train their children into right habits of living and thinking are all too few.

If I were a young mother to-day I should sit down with a pencil and paper and make a list of everything I try to do in a week. Then I would go through it and pick out the things I get done and those I never manage to get at. I should study both lists and decide on what must be done in order to keep up in good health and what I want to de because everyone else is doing it. Those last things I'd kiss a fond good-bye until the children are grown up.

If there was anyone in the neighborhood whom I could get to help me a few hours each week I should hire them, even if the farm is not paid for in the time limit I'd like. A little help now, and time and strength to enjoy your babies is of more importance than a deed to a farm. And I should buy everything I could in the way of labor-saving devices to save myself the drudgery of heavy farm work. You will have enough of it if you save yourself all you can. No doubt you have a cream separator. Don't stop with that. Get a power washing machine, a mangle, a charcoal or gasoline iron, bread mixer, a fireless cooker, everything you hear of that will help save your strength. These things are no longer experiments any more than tractors and motor trucks. They are things you really need and should insist on having.

Above all, be your own mistress. Don't let neighborhood habits or opinions influence you to try to do things for which you have neither time nor strength. A large per cent. of the things women do are done for no other reason than because "folks will talk." Let them talk. You can afford to if your refusal to conform to their standards gives you a few hours extra time for pleasure or rest.—D. H.

Short Cuts To Housekeeping.

Ten cents worth of camphor gum, one pint of gasoline mixed is one of the best things for chilblains.

In preparing grapefruit for the table, if it is rolled, as one rolls a lemon, the fruit is more juicy and the pulp is loosened, giving a better flavor.

When baking apples try my way: Run the corer only part way through. Into this little cup place the sugar, spice and a little butter, and they will cook into and flavor the whole apple. The fruit will also keep in shape better than when the entire core is taken out.

Use a bean pot to bake your apple sauce by cooking as you would on top of the stove, only do not sweeten until done, then add sugar and spice while hot. The flavor is delicious thus baked. All dried fruits are improved by this mode of cooking.

Who has not opened their cream separator in winter to find from one to three spoons of cream sticking to the parts and thereby wasted? I did, until I evolved this for myself and would like to pass it on to other farm women, if any have that trouble: After the machine is in motion turn through a generous half-cup of boiling water and follow immediately with the milk; then, if water instead of skim-milk is used to flush the bowl, have it a little warmer than fresh milk instead of cold, as in warm weather. Warming the cones, etc., before screwing the bowl together, also helps.

WHAT ABOUT CLOTHES?

British Officer in London Comments on Problem of Prices.

"With this armistice being signed," I said to the tailor, "I expect I shall be wanting some civilian clothes soon; but I suppose if I leave it for a time the prices will go down a lot, will they not?"

"No, sir," he replied; "on the contrary, they will go up. There will be so many like yourself requiring civilian clothes that the price of cloth is bound to go higher. If I was you, I should most certainly order your clothes now."

"I'll think about it," said I, and walked out of the shop.

As I had to go back to France on the completion of my leave, and, being in the Royal Engineers, it was generally expected that we should have to remain out clearing up, laying railways, making roads, rebuilding bridges, etc., for months, if not years, I decided I would not follow the tailor's advice, and so I sauntered further down the Strand.

Having to wait near one of the many Government offices which seem to full of immaculately-dressed officers, it was borne in upon me that my own old tunic was extremely shabby, and that perhaps I had better really invest in one more new khaki rig-out, if only for the sake of the old corps, so I called in another "civil and military" tailor's establishment.

Said I to the manager: "I am afraid I shall have to get another tunic some time; but I suppose the prices will be very much down shortly, as they will not be required, so perhaps I had better wait a few weeks."

"On the contrary, sir," he replied. "If I might offer you advice, you will place your order at once, as the the prices are sure to go up by leaps and bounds, because they will be stopping the making of khaki cloth, in order to cope with the civilian trade."

"I'll—er—think about it," I said, and again walked out of the shop.

My account with Messrs. Cox & Co. not showing the huge credit balance that one would expect for an officer on leave from the Front—well, I just left it at that, and continued my peregrinations down the Strand, wondering to myself why peace should bring about a scarcity of both khaki and civilian clothes, and should thereby be the reason of still further inflating the exorbitant prices that war has produced.

Band Medley Wanted.

British bandmasters have a busy time ahead of them. For it may be presumed that this year there will be many festivities in which our Allies will participate. Most of the military bands have mastered the intricacies of the Czecho-Slovak National Hymn, and some are making acquaintances with the Hediaz Chant. What is wanted is a composition containing a recognizable bar or two of all the Allied patriotic melodies which may be played, for instance, whenever the toast of the Allies is honored.

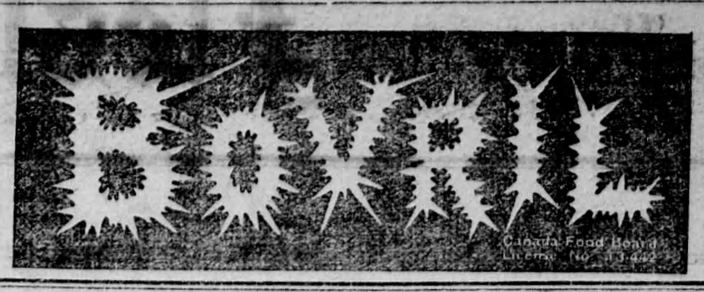
He Explains.

"Are you down on matrimony?"

"Not at all," said the old bachelor. "Matrimony is well enough."

"Yes?"

"And I believe in letting well enough alone."



WHEN JACK TAR COMES HOME

TASK OF DEMOBILIZING THE NAVY SERVICE

How British Ex-Sailors Will Make Their Re-Entrance Into the Civilian Life.

The demobilization of the Navy will be a busy time for those concerned with the preparation of the various documents, and with the execution of the procedure necessary for the release of the different classes of men, says a London newspaper. Many innovations will be encountered by the clerical staff, but all of them are for the better.

Before the war, the discharge of men to the shore was a simple process for the paymaster and his staff. There was only active service ratings and occasional reservists to be dealt with. The man of the Royal Navy proper signed on for a period of twelve years' service, at the end of which he was free to sever his connection with the Navy, but without pension. If he was a man of good character he had the alternative of signing on for a further ten years—i.e., until the age of forty, when he was entitled to leave the Service with a pension. Then there were the rather exceptional cases of men who were discharged "Service no longer required," or who purchased their discharge to obtain more congenial employment ashore.

In Pre-War Days.

In all these cases the procedure was much the same. The men fell in at the ship's office and received their pay, to which was added the sum realized by the auction of their kit; they then passed along to the captain's office, where they were handed their Service certificates, a railway pass to their homes, with a meal allowance for their journey; and, then, unless they joined the Fleet Reserve, the Navy said good-bye to them.

The paymaster closed their accounts, forwarded their National Health Certificates to the Admiralty, and other men were drafted to the ship they had left in their place.

Under this system no arrangements were made for the future of unpensioned men. The ratings discharged at the end of twelve years' service were often smart men who had decided to better themselves; these were a distinct loss to the service. They were generally helped by the Navy Employment Agency, or some similar institution; often they obtained good jobs on their own initiative. The others—men unwilling, or not allowed to re-engage, or men who had earned a very small pension at the end of their twenty-two years, or men invalided just found themselves adrift in a sailor's suit, with a few pounds in their pockets and a railway pass. On the other hand, the men of the reserves and coastguard who were called up for fourteen or twenty-eight days' annual training were able to return to their civilian work at once, so their discharge involved no hardship.

The New System.

But during the war the naval personnel has grown from 120,000 to some 500,000. Apart from the men of the Navy proper, there are pensioners, Fleet Reserve, Royal Naval Reserve, R.N.V.R., coastguards men for "Hostilities only," men of the trawler section, mercantile ratings, and the Australian, Canadian, and South African branches of our naval forces, all serving afloat under different systems of pay and different agreements.

Unlike the soldiers, the sailors were not called up in groups, but entered voluntarily, for the most part, under special engagements. The extracting of the balance of pay due to each man will be no light task, and, in addition, each will be furnished with a civil employment form, a protection and identity certificate, a demobilization ration-book—all of them war innovations.

Equally necessary are some further arrangements which have been made for the well-being of the discharged sailor. After dispersal from ship or barracks he will receive twenty-eight days' leave before his final discharge, during which period he will be paid leave allowance at the rate of 2s. 1d. per diem. Before the war, leave allowance was but 2½d. a day, and was not credited in these circumstances. Before he goes home the sailor will receive a sum of £2 12s. 6d., to provide himself with a civilian suit; an overcoat will be loaned him, if necessary; and he will be provided with food for his free journey.

Jack's "Perks."

Arrangements are being made so that Naval Reserve men can draw their accumulated war-retainers at local post-offices soon after their arrival home. There is also the prize-money, etc., to look forward to. This will add grist to the mill.

The long service man who is remaining in the Navy will not receive all these concessions immediately; but later on, when his time comes for pension or discharge, he also will reap the benefit of these changes. The war has put an end to the somewhat callous methods previously in force.

"'AIG WANTS YER!"

Care for the Enemy Wounded is Characteristic of Tommy.

The British Tommy has carried with him into the trenches his love of chaff as well as his love for humanity. A correspondent reports an incident that well illustrates both qualities:

"Any winklin' to be done along 'ere?" asked one of the perspiring victors. "Or do we get a bit of a rest and a chainge?"

"Coom on, let's get on wi't," answered the Yorkshire lad.

So they moved along the captured trench, "winkling"—that is to say, digging the cowering Germans out of their holes, if necessary, with the point of the bayonet, and with bombs in readiness.

There were four of them on this expedition—a cockney, a Yorkshireman, a young fellow from Liverpool and a Berkshire rustic. The cockney, Harry Taylor, otherwise known as Chippy, was in civil life a conductor on the Underground; the Yorkshireman, Sam Sykes, otherwise Bill,—the connection is obvious,—was a wool comber; Dicky Sam, from Liverpool, had been a stevedore, and Piggy, from Berkshire, had been a farm laborer.

"Oxford-circus, all chainge!" shouted Chippy into a black hole. "Come along, Fritz. 'Aig wants yer."

The dugout proved to be empty.

"Non-stop Golder's Green!" shouted Chippy into the next opening. "Off the car first, please!"

A wailing shout of surrender came from within, and six pale Huns hurried out, one saying eagerly that he lived at Golder's Green.

"Now, if you gentlemen will kindly wait your turn, an assistant will be disengaged very shortly," commented Chippy. "Next gentleman, please!"

Dicky Sam watched over the prisoners, while the others went on to the third and last opening. "Pass along down the car, please!" cried Chippy. "Anybody at 'ome?" He peered into the gloom and at last made out one recumbent form.

"Come on, Fritzie, then," he said persuasively, "and nurse'll div 'im a ickle sausage."

"Pig-dog Englander!" snarled the "winkle."

"Pig-dog yerself!" cried Chippy indignantly. "Give yer a taste of bay'nit in a minute."

To their surprise the German burst into tears. Chippy hesitated no longer, but entered the dugout, and knelt by the prostrate man.

" 'E's wounded!" he called out. "Get the others back and pass the word for stretcher bearers. There, matey," he added soothingly, "Cheer up, we're all soldiers 'ere."

A Natural Enquiry.

Lord George Wellesley said at a luncheon:

"One result of this war will be that the English workingman will be better paid. He'll be content no longer with his wages of the past.

"The English workingman is showing in numberless ways his resolve to have a better share of the good things his labor creates. I know a lady who, when the submarine crisis was at its worst, lectured in the east end of London on 'Cheap and Tasty Dishes for the Masses.'

" 'My next dish,' the lady said in the course of her lecture, is boiled cods' heads. A boiled cod's head, dear friends, is, properly prepared, a dish fit for the gods. You take four cods' heads of good size and quality, place them in a casserole with salt and pepper, an onion and——'

" 'Wait a bit, ma'am!'

"A gaunt chap had risen from a front seat. He was pointing his long forefinger at the lady and scowling.

" 'Wait a bit, ma'am!' he repeated. 'What I want to know is, who gets the cod?' "

"Who is dumb? He who does not know how to say kind things at the proper time."—Hindu Saying.

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