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HIS BROTHER'S WIFE

by RUBY AYRES

BEGIN HERE TO-DAY.

Dolly, a governess, marries Nigel Bretherton for his money. The marriage proves an unhappy one. When war is declared, Nigel is glad to enlist. He leaves Dolly under the care of Mary Furnival. Mary comes to live in Dolly's flat.

When word comes that Nigel has been killed, Dolly marries an old suitor named Durham and together they sail for America. Nigel's older brother, David, calls to see Nigel's widow. He mistakes Mary for Dolly. Mary is ashamed to tell of Dolly's marriage.

David goes to call on a friend named Fisher who shows David a picture of Nigel's wife. David sees that it is not a picture of the girl he takes for Nigel's widow. A letter comes to Mary from Dolly, written en route to America.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

"Write to me if you can; I will send you an address as soon as we land.

"We have had glorious weather so far, and I haven't been ill at all. I am so glad, as a seasick bride must be too awful, musn't it? Robert is quite well off, you know, and gives me heaps of money. It is such a change after having one's income doled out by a stingy brother-in-law. I wonder if the saintly David has turned up at the flat yet, and what he said when you told him?

"Mary, mind you tell me everything that happens, and what you are going to do. I said in my letter I left for you that you might sell the things and keep the money, and I still hope that you will. You were very kind to me, and I don't like to think I have treated you badly.

"Mary, you ought to have married Nigel instead of me. You would have adored him, I know. Robert sends his love to you, and hopes to meet you some day. Perhaps you might come out here to stay with us for a little while. Would you like that?

"We are going to live in an hotel to start with; houses are so frightfully dear, and anyway, I hate housekeeping, and having to look after servants!

"What a lot of things have happened in these last few months! I am glad to say that on the boat we don't hear much about the awful war; people seem to be trying to forget it. There are some Americans who sit next to us at table. They have taken a great fancy to me. Robert gets quite jealous, poor darling."

Mary threw the letter down with a little shudder. She could not believe that it was indeed Dolly who had written it—Dolly, whom Nigel had loved so much. How cruel life was, how horribly cruel and unfair!

She could not touch her breakfast. She wandered restlessly about the little flat, unable to settle to anything.

The door of Nigel's room had been kept locked since he went away. She deliberately turned the key now, and entered.

It still smelt faintly of smoke. It was still littered with his possessions. There was a worn-out pipe on the shelf, and a jar half filled with tobacco; shabby slippers were kicked carelessly beneath a chair.

Mary sat down on the sofa where she had so often seen him lolling to read and smoke, and looked round the room with mournful eyes. So full of his presence the room was still, and yet—he would never come back any more. She would never hear his laugh, or his cheery whistle. He was dead, wiped out, and forgotten.

She was so lost in her own sad thoughts that she never heard the door-bell or a step on the landing outside—never saw a man, who stood on the threshold hesitating for a moment as if in doubt whether to enter, until he spoke.

"May I come in?"

She started up with a little smothered cry. David Bretherton stood there. She went to him agitatedly.

"I am so sorry—I did not hear you—I was dreaming—"

He came into the room, and stood looking round him.

"This was Nigel's room?"

"Yes."

His grave eyes swept her face, and a sudden kindliness filled them.

"You must not stay on in this flat," he said. "It is killing work living alone with memories."

She looked at him, trying to smile.

"I am only staying till things can be arranged. I don't want to live here; I couldn't afford to, even if I did."

A curious expression flashed across his face. Was this her way of leading up to the thing he had been expecting? he wondered, and was ashamed of the thought even as it was born.

She looked so unlike an adventuress. It was impossible, when one saw the pallor and grief of her face, to believe that she was exploiting a dead man's memory for her own gain.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAVID'S OFFER.

He walked over to the window, and stood with his back turned to her. Standing so, he asked a question.

"In the letter you gave me yesterday—my brother's letter—he speaks of a friend of his, a Miss Furnival."

No answer. Mary clasped her hands. She looked at his averted face

And now he turned and looked at her steadily.

with wondering eyes. Almost it was on the tip of her tongue to say:

"I am Mary Furnival. You knew that, didn't you? Surely you knew that?"

He went on speaking before the words were formed.

"Nigel seems to have thought a great deal of her. He speaks of her as his best friend. I should like to meet her, to thank her for what she did for him, and—and his wife."

And now he turned, looked at her across the room steadily.

For a moment Mary could not speak. In that lightning pause her mind seemed to have covered miles and miles of thought. Her agitation fell from her. She felt as if she were looking down on a written suggestion planned by a masterly hand down to its minutest detail.

Here was a way to save a dead man's memory, and shield his name. Unconsciously David Bretherton had shown her how. He asked for Mary Furnival! What easier than to say that she had married, and was even now on her way to America, whilst she—she—

She allowed herself to travel no further down that line of thought. She began to speak slowly and collectedly, meeting his eyes fairly and squarely.

"She is married. Mary Furnival was married just a week ago. She is on her way to America now with her husband."

Bretherton was standing with his back to the light, and she could not see the flickering amazement of his eyes. When he spoke his voice was quiet and very courteous.

"Is that so? I am sorry. I should have liked to thank her. Perhaps when you write you will do so for me?"

She did not answer. Her heart was beating fast. All at once she was afraid of what she had said and done.

He went on:

"I came here this morning because I wanted to see you before I go home—to the Red Grange. I wanted to ask if you would care to come down there, to live there."

Mary stared at him. "I! To live there!"

For a moment she forgot that she had allowed him to think that she was Dolly; for the moment she could only remember the beautiful old house as she had seen it that once with Nigel—the ivy-covered walls, the sloping lawns. A faint color tinged her pallor. Her eyes flashed.

"Oh, I should love it—love it!" she breathed, then stopped.

What right had she there? Why was he making her this offer?

David continued evenly.

"If Nigel had lived, it would eventually have been your home. I am sure it would please him to know that you are there, even though he is gone."

The color had died from Mary's face. She was white enough now. She stammered as she tried to speak. "You mean that I—because I—because he—"

She could not go on.

He answered her simply and unfalteringly:

"I mean that, because you loved him, it will give me great happiness if you will come."

CHAPTER XV.

DAVID'S OFFER.

"Because I loved him!" Mary echoed David Bretherton's words faintly. For a moment she looked past him, away into a distance that was landmarked by four years of faithful friendship, ending in a lonely grave.

"Don't answer me at once," David went on. Think it over. You are lonely, and there is plenty of room down at the Red Grange. My aunt lives with me—possibly you know that—and I think you would like her. I hope you will agree to do this. I want to show in some small way my appreciation of your kindness to Nigel, and I think to take you there—to his home—"

He stopped, as if waiting for her to speak.

There was a curious look of baffled interest in his eyes. This woman was a conundrum to him. Apparently she had no wish of trying to get money out of him, and yet what was it that kept her from frankly avowing that she was not his brother's wife?

All his life women had been of small interest to David, but this one was somehow different.

He moved to the door, pausing for a moment to look back at her and the little room, still so full of his brother's memory.

"Write to me when you have made up your mind," he said. "You know my address. I am going down to the Red Grange this afternoon."

Mary made a little, involuntary movement. Words trembled on the tip of her tongue—words which would once and for all have made matters clear between them, words that would once and for all have settled the question as to whether she should accept his offer or not.

She had only to say: "You are mistaken; I am not Nigel's wife. I am Mary Furnival!" and her chance of going back to the Red Grange would be gone for ever.

She thought of its beauties with a very real heartache.

(To be continued.)

What a Good Queen Should Be.

"A good Queen should be, first of all, a good housekeeper," asserts Queen Marie of Rumania, so she is educating Princess Iliana in household duties, as well as in ordinary educational subjects. When that is done, she will be ready to see her princess wed.

Queen Victoria on Whiskers.

Naval officers must not wear mustaches unless they also have beards. This was the edict of Queen Victoria, made in 1869, one of her letters, recently discovered in London, reveals. The order was an indication of how the queen studied details of administering her realm.

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ISSUE No. 19—'28.

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A Memorable Spot.

Thousands of tourists and motorists pass along the excellent road by the side of the Thames which leads from Staines to Windsor with no thought that they are traversing perhaps the most memorable piece of land in England. Quite recently it has been under water owing to the flooded condition of the Thames.

Runnymede is a meadow by the side of the road, from which one catches a glimpse of Windsor Castle. Magna Charta Island lies in the midst of the stream. The barons are said to have been camped on the meadow and the King on the north side of the river, and the delegates of the contending parties met on the island to discuss the "protocol." It is generally believed that the King placed his seal on the document which is usually regarded as the foundation of British liberties in a pavilion erected on Runnymede.

Minard's Liniment for backache.

Hockey, Ancient Game.

In Athens, in 478 B.C., Themistocles built an old wall of sculptured marble. This wall was found half buried in the dust of nearly twenty-five centuries. During the operation of excavating this wall it was found that Themistocles had built his wall on one much older and so the more ancient one was dug out. Much to the astonishment of the scientists some of the huge marble slabs had chiseled on them six young men engaged in playing hockey and holding in their hands almost modern hockey sticks and all being ready to assault the ball which was on the ground.

Later examinations showed that the builder of 478 B.C. has ruthlessly used these and other handsome and very ancient works of art as a foundation for his own wall. How old the hockey slabs are has not yet been discovered but they are undoubtedly earlier than one thousand years B.C.

Next.

Mr. Pester—"You women have the vote now. What more do you want?"

Daughter — "Another constitutional amendment giving votes to women only."

Dangers of Mouth-Breathing.

An investigation recently made in schools in England developed that half of the school children who breathe through their mouths, a third of these who are hard of hearing, and a fourth of those who suffer from enlarged tonsils had these defects before coming to school, though the age of entrance is early in England. The need of preschool medical attention was clearly shown.

Minard's Liniment for burns.

A Fine Price.

Mrs. Jones—"Fine feathers don't make fine birds."

Jones—"No, but they make a fine bill, when I have to pay for those you have on your hat."

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