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HIS BROTHER'S WIFE

by RUDY AYRES

BEGIN HERE TODAY

The marriage of Dolly and Nigel Bretherton proves an unhappy one. When war is declared, Nigel is glad to enlist. He leaves Dolly in the care of his friend, Mary Furnival. Nigel is killed in action and Dolly marries an old sweetheart, Robert Durham. Dolly and Robert sail for America, leaving Mary in Dolly's flat.

When Nigel's older brother, David, calls to see Nigel's widow, Mary is ashamed to tell him of Dolly's marriage. David mistakes Mary for his brother's wife and asks her to come to live at Red Grange with him and his aunt and himself.

Mary had visited Red Grange for a day with Nigel, during David's absence. She loves the place and longs to go there to live for awhile.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

Just for that one short day spent there with Nigel she had been so happy—so very happy. Even now, though it was three years ago, she had but to close her eyes to see the old house, and the belt of trees, and wonderful sloping lawns.

David held out his hand.

"Write and tell me when you have made up your mind," he said.

Her fingers shook in his kind, friendly grasp. She knew that already she wished to make up her mind, knew that she would sacrifice anything to go back there, even if just for one day—one week. But she did not tell him so now, and presently he went away, leaving her alone once more.

All day long the torment of what she wanted to do haunted her; she even found herself weighing up the probable chances of discovery. They were so very small.

So few people who had known Nigel as one of the Brethertons of the Red Grange had ever known him after his marriage in London. And Dolly had never been a girl to make friends; she had dropped almost entirely out of her own set when she married, in the hope that Nigel's circle would take her up. When she found that such a hope was vain, she had not troubled to create a world of her own.

And now she was on the other side of the world. She might never come back, and even if she did—well, she was no longer Mrs. Nigel Bretherton.

"And I loved him best!"

Mary hugged that knowledge tight to her heart when she lay awake at night, torn with conflicting emotions.

She felt as if her heart were fighting her conscience—her heart that longed to go and do this thing, and her conscience which would not let her give in.

CHAPTER XVI

A Chance Encounter

She rose, after a sleepless night, with a splitting headache. It was raining and cold; the whole world looked dreary and depressing. It was one of those days when one feels as if the only possible manner of passing the time is by drawing the blinds against the chill, uninviting outside, and banking up a big fire.

But Mary sat down by the window and stared into the street.

Once she began to write a letter to David, but after the first few words she laid down her pen and could not go on.

The paper lay on the table beside her, with its date and "Dear Mr. Bretherton" staring up at her.

What could she say? How could she answer him?

To tell him the truth, of course, was the obvious way, and yet her heart clung achingly to the memory of that one day amid the beauties of Red Grange. She must go—she must!

But the miserable indecision continued. She put on her hat and coat, and went out into the wet world. The chill, damp air stung her pale cheeks into a faint flush, and soothed the throbbing of her head.

"I will go—I will!" she told herself, as she retraced her steps.

But when she reached the flat again she knew that she was as undecided as ever.

What to do? What to do?

She ate her lunch without appetite. The little maid hovered anxiously about her.

"You haven't heard from Mrs. Bretherton yet, I suppose, miss?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Yes, I have. I thought I told you. She is having a sea trip."

The little girl stared.

"Lor', miss! And shall you go, too?"

Mary started.

"I don't know—perhaps. I hope so."

She felt confused and nervous; she was glad when the girl was gone; but the little conversation had shown her how difficult it would be to keep up a subterfuge for any length of time, if even this girl's innocent questioning made her confused and ill at ease.

In the afternoon she tried to read, but thought danced between her and

SHE WAS SURPRISED AT HER AGITATION.

the pages. She threw the book impatiently aside.

Her restlessness drove her again out of doors; she walked on aimlessly, through the wet grayness of closing daylight.

She was surprised at her agitation; as a rule she was so self-possessed and quiet; this miserable restlessness frightened her.

It began to rain fast; she had brought no umbrella, and in a few minutes she was drenched.

She boarded a crowded omnibus, and found herself wedged in between a stout woman and a young clerk reading an evening paper.

Mary was cold and chilled to the bone; she found herself shivering, and hoped she was not going to be ill.

When the conductor came for fares, she remembered with a frightened start that she had not brought her purse. She looked up at him with scared eyes.

"I haven't any money—I'm sorry—I forgot—I must get down."

The man looked decidedly unpleasant; he muttered something about having heard that tale before. The young clerk with the evening paper glanced at Mary sympathetically.

"Will you allow me to pay for you? It's so frightfully wet for you to walk."

Before she could answer he had produced a penny and taken a ticket for her. Mary thanked him stammeringly.

She was really very thankful. She had dreaded turning out again into the wet night.

He was a nice-looking young fellow. He lowered his paper and began to talk.

He said that the weather was too awful for words. He asked if she had far to go. When she told him the road, he said that his own destination was not a great distance away from it.

"I'm in rooms," he explained. "Not bad rooms, either, considering I only pay twenty-five shillings a week."

Mary smiled; she found his frankness engaging.

"Awful thing, this boat being lost, isn't it?" he said again, after a moment, in a shocked voice. He indicated the folded paper on his knee.

"I haven't heard anything about it," said Mary. "I haven't seen an evening paper."

"It's the Multane—she was bound for Buenos Ayres—rammed by a tramp steamer in a fog or something—the details are not very certain yet, but they say hardly anyone was saved."

Mary was staring at him, white-faced, horrified.

"The Multane! Oh, are you sure?"

He looked up quickly, dismayed.

"I say, do you know anybody on it? I'm awfully sorry. Look for yourself."

He put the paper into her nerveless hands, but she could not read—everything seemed to dance before her eyes.

"Read it to me."

He obeyed in a troubled voice. One or two passengers near them were listening with interest; Mary's white face and startled exclamation had arrested their attention.

The young man broke off suddenly.

"Shall we get out and walk?" he suggested. He thought Mary was going to faint.

She obeyed with pathetic eagerness and haste; she could not bear the gaze of those curious eyes about her.

When they were on the path, the young man drew her hand through his arm. H had rammed the paper into an overcoat pocket.

"I ought not to have told you in such a clumsy way" he began. "Not that I had any idea you would know anybody on the boat."

"Of course not." Mary stood for a moment, her hands over her eyes, then she moved. "I'm all right now—let us go on."

He walked beside her soberly; he had noticed that she wore mourning, and wondered if this strange coincidence had brought about a second tragedy in her life. So many dreadful things were happening every day now; so many women wore black clothes, and went about with hopeless, grief-stricken faces.

Presently—

"I should like to see the paper now, please," she told him.

They were beneath a street lamp. The miserable, drizzling rain was pouring down on them—it dripped from the brim of Mary's hat.

The young man unfolded the paper, and showed her the small stop-press paragraph.

"It is the Multane, you see," he said gravely.

"Yes."

She answered him dazedly. Dolly had sailed on the Multane—Dolly and the man she had married so soon after her widowhood.

"It is feared that very few, if any, of the Multane's passengers are saved, as she sank in a few minutes."

The words danced mockingly before her. Oh, poor Dolly! Poor Dolly!

The young man beside her spoke kindly, sympathetically.

"Don't be too sure. There may be a lot of people picked up that they know nothing about yet. Let me take you home; you're wet through and cold. You'll feel ever so much better when you're warm and dry.

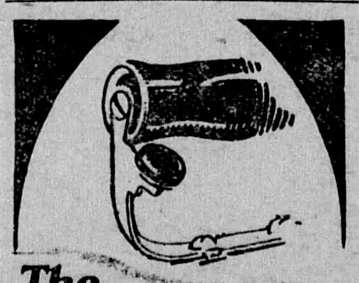
She told him the number of the flat, and offered no demur when he accompanied her to the door.

She was lonely and miserable, and frightened. She wanted a friend badly, and this young fellow was a gentleman, and sympathetic.

"If you like, I will go down to the ship's office and make inquiries," he said diffidently. "They probably have other news by now. If you will tell me the name of your friend?"

(To be continued)

Young Salesman (proposing): "Remember, this is the last day of this astounding offer!"



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A Considerate Husband.

Davy McDonald and his wife Molly lived on an abandoned lumber tract in Texas in a small comfortable cottage. Their home was several miles from the nearest neighbor. They worked a small truck farm and kept a number of cows, pigs and many chickens.

Like many persons who live much by themselves and have never learned to make companions of books, they always retired very early in the evening and rose correspondingly early in the morning. Davy found the nights long and tiresome and was glad of an excuse to rise even before the proverbial lark. He was much like the man referred to by John G. Saxe in Early Rising,

"who cannot keep his precious head
Upon his pillow until it's fairly light."

In speaking to a fisherman who was spending a few days with him, Davy once said:

"I like to get up in the morning: 'long about half past three or four o'clock I wake up and can't go to sleep again; so I get up and go out in the barnyard and look at the pigs and cows and feed the chickens and putter round till breakfast is ready. Now the old woman is jest the other way: she never wants to get up, and I never wake her. I let her sleep jest as long as she wants to."

Now Davy had the reputation of being not overkind to or considerate of his wife, and his visitor was not a little surprised at this expression of conjugal solicitude.

"Ha, Davy, good for you," he said to himself. "I did not know that you were so thoughtful of your wife."

"Yes," resumed Davy, "I never call her or wake her up: as long as she has my breakfast on the table by six o'clock, I let her sleep jest as late as she wants to."

Useful Servants Forgotten.

They are putting up a statue in Strasbourg to M. Clause, the cook who invented the pate de foie gras. The man—or more probably a woman—who invented corned-beef hash or baked beans is more worthy of such an honor, if service to the great mass of the people, rather than to a selected group of epicures, should determine the matter. But, like the forgotten geniuses who invented the wheel and the block and tackle, these useful servants of humanity are lost in the mists of antiquity.

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S81a

Death Spares Only Six Queen Mothers in Europe

Death has taken a heavy toll of dowager queens in Europe this winter, the death of Queen Louise of Denmark following within a few months of Queen Alexandra and Queen Margherita of Italy.

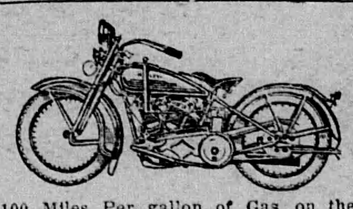
There are now only six queen mothers remaining, those of reigning houses being Queen Cristina of Spain, and Queen Emma of the Netherlands.

The Empress Marie of Russia remains of the great Russian aristocrats, and two Queen Mothers of Greece are still alive, in the persons of Olga, widow of King George I., and Sophia, widow of King Constantine. Queen Amelie, widow of King Carlos of Portugal and mother of ex-King Manuel, also is living.

Pipers and Dancers.

When March, the gay piper,
Has vanished with his song,
Then comes April skipping
The green lanes along.

She cries her silver tears,
Laughs her golden laughter,
Then with a happy step
May follows after.



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