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### A HASTY MARRIAGE

Shortly Before the Wedding the Groom Had Not Seen the Bride

By F. A. MITCHEL

A young man—he was about thirty—was on the roof of a little trap of a house nestling among trees on the margin of a lake in the heart of Vermont. His costume was a pair of soiled trousers and a flannel shirt. What occupied him on the roof was replacing rotted shingles. A woman in an auto, which she was driving herself, saw him from the road, which ran a hundred feet from the house. She stopped her machine and called to him. "I say—you there—on the roof!"

The shingler looked up. "Are you married?"

"No."

"I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll marry me right off."

The man was about to drive a nail, but suspended his work and looked at the woman for a moment, then said: "Wait a bit, I'll come down and have a look at you. If you're not a Gorgon I don't know but I'll take you up."

He slid down to a ladder, descended by it to the ground and walked leisurely toward the woman who was so anxious for a husband.

"Hurry up!" she called.

The man hastened his steps and soon stood beside the auto. In it was a young woman between twenty and twenty-five years old and comely.

"What I have to say must be said in a hurry. I have property which was left me in care of those who will inherit it in case I don't comply with a condition of the will, which is that I shall be married by the time I am twenty-two. I shall be twenty-two in three days. Those who will inherit if I don't are after me to shut me up on the ground of lunacy. Oh, heavens!"

She paused, listened, then went on. "I thought I heard them coming. I have only half an hour's start."

"I'll get in and you can tell me the rest on the way."

"Oh, do!"

He got in beside her, and she started on.

"I understand your case," he said. "You wish me to marry you to comply with the provision in the will."

"I do."

"And I as your husband will have a

prior right to those who are after you to your care?"

"I didn't think of that."

"Turn to the left here. Do you see that spire over there? The parson lives in that little white house with green blinds beside it."

She turned as directed, and the man continued:

"You wish me to agree beforehand not to claim any marital rights, the marriage being one of form solely, except as shall aid you in your legal contest, and to consent to an annulment when you desire one?"

"How nice to have you say it all instead of having to do it myself! I have always considered you country people stupid. You surprise me."

"This agreement must be verbal and a secret between us or it might defeat its purpose. You'll have to trust me. If I go back on my pledge you can't hold me since there is neither a written contract nor witnesses to a verbal one."

The only reply to this was a gasp.

Suddenly there was a sound coming from behind which both knew to be from an autocar whose driver was gaining power for his machine by cutting of the muffler.

The woman, yielding unconsciously to the instinct of relying on a man for protection, was about to relinquish her grasp on the wheel to throw her arms around her companion when, seeing her design and not being in position to steer the car himself, he admonished her sharply.

"Hold on for your life!"

This steadied her, and she kept the machine in the road while the man, reaching over to the wheel, turned on all the speed of which the car was capable.

The road was tortuous; the machine rocked and skidded. But fortune favored the fugitives, and, although several times they came near going over, they kept right side up till they struck a straight level, at the end of which was the church and beside it their goal.

"Here we are," he continued as they dashed up to the white house with green blinds. There was a honk behind them, and, looking back, they saw a cloud of dust. "All depends on our finding the parson at home!" He jumped from the car, ran to the house and hammered on the door. The summons was answered by the parson himself.

"Will you marry us?" asked the lady, who had come up.

"Got a license?"

"Oh, heavens! Must we have that?"

The groom expectant explained in a few words the situation, and the clergyman consented. The pair went inside, gave their names and were married.

"Got a gun in the house?" asked the groom.

"A fowling piece I shoot birds with."

"Let me have it!"

The clergyman brought his gun and gave it to the man who had asked for it. There was no reason why he should not do so, for it was not loaded. At the same moment an auto with two men in it dashed up to the parsonage. They were both well dressed, and one of them was an attorney. The clergyman responded to their knock, opening the door.

"I have a warrant for the person of Lucile Havens," said the lawyer.

"No such person here," responded the groom.

"There she is! I demand that she be given up to me peaceably."

"That lady is my wife, Mrs. Charles Cummings."

Both the newcomers started.

"Are you a clergyman?" the lawyer asked of the parson.

"I am."

The men who were after the girl consulted apart from the others; then the lawyer advanced and said:

"There are doubts as to the legality of this marriage. The groom being evidently a countryman and of a different station in life from the bride, it is evident that the marriage has been made for the sole purpose of defeating the law. I demand the person of Lucile Havens or Lucile Havens Cummings, as the case may be."

He advanced toward the bride. Cummings took up the gun which he had stood in a corner and, aiming it at him, told him that if he laid a finger on his bride he would shoot him. The lawyer saw determination in the other's eye and drew back. Then came another consultation between the two who had come for the woman, at the end of which they entered their auto and started back in the direction from which they came.

"I am glad to have served you," said the groom.

"I will be pleased to recompense you," replied the bride in a state of happy excitement.

She took a roll of bills from her pocket and was about to hand one of them to the clergyman when her husband waved her back.

"It is the groom's part to pay the wedding fee," he said. "Mr. Gregory, I haven't the wherewithal with me, but will hand it to you later."

The bride looked surprised at this, but was too happy at having escaped being taken to a lunatic asylum to think much about it. She bade the clergyman adieu with her thanks, then asked her husband to get into the car that she might drive him back to resume his shingling. He assented, and they drove away.

"If you will give me your address," said the wife, "I will send you a check for the thousand dollars I promised you."

"I would advise you to defer that payment. These gentlemen who were after you will doubtless endeavor to

prove that it was a mere agreement to defeat the law, and I fear they will succeed. There were no witnesses present."

"Oh, my goodness gracious!"

"I think you had better do nothing at present in remunerating me. I am in no especial need of money. Rather I would advise my remaining near you to protect you in case they try to get possession of your person. Once you are in their hands I might not be able to get you away from them—at least not without a legal struggle."

"If you will go to the city with me I will bear all expenses and remunerate you liberally."

"I will go with pleasure."

By this time they had reached Cummings' house. He alighted to get together his belongings and shut up his house. This required time, and his wife waited more than half an hour for him. When he returned she did not recognize him till he threw a satchel into the auto before getting in himself.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed in astonishment. "What are you doing in those clothes?"

He entered the auto and as they drove along briefly told her his story. He was a professor in a college. Having a taste for rural life, he had bought a little shack beside the lake and fitted it up for summer occupancy. There he lived in camp costume during vacation time. He found it rather lonely, but since he was obliged to do a great deal of studying it was the best way of living during the heated term that he could devise.

This sudden transformation, the prospect of having to deal with an educated gentleman in a matter of such importance to her, was simply piling joy upon joy on the young bride.

She was driving to a country seat about twenty miles distant, belonging to the estate which she had inherited, the intention being to take a train from there for the city. But on arrival it was decided to remain where they were until the enemy should by some overt act make known what his course would be. If a chaperon were needed for a husband and a wife there were others in the house besides the servants, and it came out on a trial which subsequently took place that the couple behaved with great circumspection.

When September came Professor Cummings went home to resume his college duties, and his bride, fearing that if she were separated from her legal husband an effort might be made by her opponents to get possession of her, went with him. Meanwhile a quick courtship had been going on, which ended in a proposal, and it was suggested, in view of the exigencies of the case, the couple be married again and live together as man and wife. But Professor Cummings was opposed to another marriage on the ground that it might be construed as an acknowledgment that the first was invalid.

as it was the neeress would not have complied with the terms of the will since she had been twenty-two years of age some time before; consequently they returned to occupy the same house, and a second marriage never took place.

When Napoleon Died. July 10, 1821.—The news has just arrived of the death of Napoleon. He died on the 5th of May. I was much astonished at the way the news was received. The hero which the whole French nation had worshipped, whom all Europe had trembled before, it might have been an ordinary actor who had died. Really one could feel great disgust. A mighty man indeed he was with all his faults. The first I heard of it was cried about the streets, "La Mort de Napoleon, a St. Helene, Deux Sous." Oh, the glory of it!—"A Diary of James Gallatin in Europe" in Scribner's Magazine.

Glancing Blows. Testy Old Woman—There now! I guess you won't go around poking your nose into other people's business after the raking I just gave you. Reporter—Well, don't get proud about it, madam. You didn't hurt my feelings much. I've been insulted by experts.—Life.

Not a Complaint. "Of what complaint," asked the insurance agent, "did your father die?" "Well," was the reply, "it was not exactly in a sort of way, as it were, a complaint precisely, if you understand me. The fact is the jury found him guilty."—London Telegraph.

Sorrow Is the Sanctum. When an editor laboriously cuts down a candidate's eight column speech to two columns the candidate is mad at him for printing so little of it, and everybody else is in a like frame of mind toward him for printing so much.—Ohio State Journal.

The Difference. "Say, papa," asked little Roy, "what is the difference between an optimist and a pessimist?" "An optimist, my son," replied papa, "thinks the times are ripe, while a pessimist thinks they are rotten."—Ladies' Home Journal.

They Avoid Odd Numbers. The Klamaths have a superstitious dislike of odd numbers, and they studiously strive to have in their houses an even number of windows, doors, rooms and cupboards.

Ought to Be. Mistress—This isn't a clean knife, Jane. New Servant—I'm sure it ought to be, mum. The last thing I put with it was a bar of soap.—Boston Transcript.

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