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Marcia's Problem

Being a Story of Literary Education

By BARBARA PHIPPS

The prime cause of the drawing together of Winslow Tymerson and Mildred Swift was that they were both intellectual, both what the dancing set called "booky." Now, intellectual persons may love as well as other persons, and the chances are that when they get down to the "real thing" they will be like other real lovers—lovely doves—and as real little children talk baby talk, so will these intellectual lovers talk love talk.

What I do mean is that they will say what they really feel, clothing it in language that has been used by lovers from time immemorial.

When Tymerson met Miss Swift he had recently been graduated at one of the oldest universities in America, one in which knowledge had reached a pinnacle so high that the professors, looking down from it upon what was beneath, as a man viewing surrounding peaks from the highest of a mountain range, had begun to take the position that those outside their own ivy clad college walls were mere pinheads in the intellectual world.

Tymerson was a fair representative of his alma mater, and this is a prime reason why Miss Swift was first attracted to him. At the time he was introduced to her there were several persons in the group, including a young man whose intellect had just been hatched under the ordinary collegiate method at a one horse college containing a mere bagatelle of a thousand students and which dated back not more than 150 years.

An elaborate lecture on literature could not have given so marked an impression of the superior literary judgment of Mr. Tymerson as this quiet squelching of the person who had ventured an opinion in his presence. But there was an especial reason why it impressed Miss Swift. She, too, was a college graduate and during her college career had contributed to the periodicals issued at her alma mater. More than this, emboldened by her literary prominence while in college she had soon after being graduated aspired to the writing of a story, or, rather, a novel.

The literary atmosphere she had breathed was, like that found in high altitudes, rare. In the school she had been taught to admire cultured families. The imagination was tabooed. Dramatic situations were considered as pertaining only to yellow literature. Some writers of this school had attained an elevation where the atmosphere was so rare that only readers with lungs especially prepared for it could breathe at all.

One of the first requirements—or fancied requirements—of literary beginners is criticism. As soon as Miss Swift had become impressed with Mr. Tymerson's literary judgment she was desirous of submitting her work to him to secure his opinion of its merits. But the young authoress knew that when a man of the world is given something to read which has been written by one of his lady friends it is with the expectation that he will say something complimentary about it. Miss Swift, desiring an unbiased opinion, determined to wait for an opportunity to get her novel before Mr. Tymerson's critical eye without his knowing that she was its author.

This preliminary may make it appear that there was no love affair between these two young persons. On the contrary, their hearts struck the love gall as soon as they became acquainted. If there was the coldness of intellectuality between them they met in the season of ethereal mildness, and that is half of Cupid's battle, for it is well known that the little god fires his arrows in the spring with more telling effect than any other season.

A courtship ensued which lasted for a year. Then Mr. Tymerson spoke. From what has been said of him it may be supposed that his proposal was a model of courtliness expressed in the choicest English. This is not so. Love and intellect have nothing to do with one another, and when love asserts itself intellect takes a back seat. The proposal took place in a fashion very ordinary and in which a large number of proposals are made. Tymerson one evening essayed to kiss Miss Swift. She objected on the ground that he had no such right, whereupon he grew ashamed and gave himself the right by stammering out a disjointed statement that he loved her and would she marry him? It was after the break had been made that love's baby talk came in.

During all this time Mildred Swift kept her literary labors to herself. Six months after she had written her novel she read it, not having seen it in the meantime, and it struck her as worthless. She had been doing what most beginners do—copying from others. She realized, too, that she had been

laboring to write as she had been taught, the one supreme method approved by the high-mucky-mucks among literateurs. At the time she read her novel she ran across a statement of one of the few real literary geniuses of the nineteenth century that the school in which she had been brought up was a very narrow one.

Miss Swift had accidentally struck a theme for a story that appealed very strongly to her. She determined to throw off the prejudices to which she had been educated, give herself free rein and write a Mildred Swift novel. She soon became engrossed in her work, and by the time she had half finished it she seemed to "walk upon the winds with lightness"—not that she was conscious of the value of this moving without effort. Indeed, she doubted if she were producing anything of value, because it was so easy for her.

It has been said that on Miss Swift's first meeting with Mr. Tymerson she desired his criticism. Now that they were lovers she dared not risk turning his love into contempt by submitting to him any of her literary work. In other matters she leaned on him; this she kept within herself.

When Mildred finished the work in which her whole being was absorbed, she waited a week to give her mind a little freedom from it, then read it over. About the middle of the book she struck a snag. Something went against her. She became dissatisfied with her work, tossed it into a drawer and left it there for some time. Then one day she read it again. It occurred to her she might remedy the blemish that had upset her, and she did so. The next day, without giving herself time to think about it, she started it out on a voyage among publishers. But, principally on account of fear that it might cost her her lover, she concealed the authorship. After her manuscript had been returned with a printed slip by twelve publishers it was accepted by the thirteenth.

Meanwhile Tymerson had accepted a position as book reviewer for a magazine. He found that the stories used by publishers who were in the business to make money were not the kind he admired himself. He soon learned to put his personal opinions aside and speak few words that sold well. He wrote a few stories, but they were considered too thin for the public taste.

One day among the new books dumped upon his desk for him to read and review was a novel called "Marcia's Problem," by Hester Gwynne. He read it, but hardly knew what to say about it. It was not of the school he considered the acme of literature, and it was not of any other school with which he was familiar. Personally he had no use for it. He resolved to write the only criticism he had ever written, giving free vent to what he preferred to say.

"The book has been put together," he said, "with no regard whatever to literary laws. It cannot be classed with dramatic fiction, with imaginative fiction or with realism. It is a hodgepodge. Generally speaking, it is very bad. Nevertheless there are bits here and there that indicate some ability on the part of the author. She is doubtless a beginner who, if there were literary schools at which she could learn the commonest principles underlying the telling of a story, might some day produce something of value."

Notwithstanding this criticism the public did—though very slowly—take a fancy to "Marcia's Problem." It grew in favor and was read by all classes. That is to say, it appealed to both intellectual and simple minded persons. The reasons assigned for this by those who were disposed to ask the question was that it was human. It was also unique.

It was soon after Winslow Tymerson and Mildred Swift were married that "Marcia's Problem" began to attract the attention of the public, and this occasioned an overhauling of the criticism that had been written on it at the time of its appearance in print. The manager of the magazine with which Winslow Tymerson was connected went into his book reviewer's office one day with a copy of the story and asked him what he had said about it. Tymerson got out a copy of his review. The manager read it and said that since it had probably been forgotten—since it was true—Tymerson had better write it up again, giving it a better send-off. The reviewer had no option on the matter, and, since his name was not signed to his reviews, he wrote a new criticism, beginning with the words, "This remarkable story, which shows especial adaptation to construction on the part of the gifted authoress—"

One day when Tymerson went home after business his wife showed him a check for \$12,000 she had received from her publisher sandwiched between his two criticisms on "Marcia's Problem."

"I wrote that story, dear."

"You wrote it?"

"Yes, I wrote it."

"I never heard of your doing it."

"To tell the truth, dearie, when I first met you I wanted your criticism on my literary work. But I don't value criticism any more. I don't think it possible for any one to say what is high grade literature. Some please what one calls the literateurs, and some please the great uneducated multitude, and that satisfies me."

He sat down in an easy chair, looking very much cut up.

"Don't think about it, lover," said the wife, kneeling beside him and putting her arms about him, "but give me one little teeny weeny kiss."

He leaned over to kiss her, then suddenly brightened up.

"How much is that check?" he asked.

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NOTICE

Public notice is hereby given that the Board of Local Improvements of the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois, has filed in the County Court of Lake County, Illinois, a certificate that the following improvement has been completed, and that it conforms substantially to the requirements of the original ordinance for the construction of the same, to-wit:

An ordinance providing for the Grading, Draining, Curbing, Paving with Macadam, roadway having a bituminous macadam surface Eighteen Feet (18 ft.) wide, including concrete gutters, an otherwise improving Beech Street from the Eastern line of the paved roadway in St. Johns Avenue, Easterly to the Western line of Sheridan Road (Excepting the site of the Concrete Bridge herein provided for); St. Johns Avenue from the southerly line of Lincoln Avenue produced westerly across St. Johns Avenue and southerly to the southerly line of Beech Street produced westerly across St. Johns Avenue; Forest Avenue from the Northern line of Wade Street, produced Westerly, southerly to the easterly line of the paved roadway in St. Johns Avenue, herein provided, Linden Avenue from the easterly line of Forest Avenue, south-easterly to the southerly line of Beech Street; and constructing a reinforced concrete girder-type bridge in Beech Street, between Wade Street and Linden Avenue, spanning the ravine in Beech Street; all in the City of Highland Park, Lake County, Illinois.

Highland Park Special Assessment of said Court Docket Number 220, and that application has been made to said Court to consider and determine whether or not the facts stated in said certificate are true. That a hearing will be had upon said application on Saturday, the Thirtieth day of January, A. D. 1917, at the hour of ten (10) o'clock in the forenoon of said day, at the County Court Room of said Court, in the County Court House, at Waukegan, in said Lake County. Objections may be filed to said application on or before the hour of ten (10) o'clock in the forenoon of said day.

Samuel M. Hastings, H. H. Hitchcock, E. G. Huber, Ward W. Willis, Frits Bahr.

BOARD OF LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK

Dated at Highland Park, Illinois, December 15th, 1916.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT NOTICE NO. 223

Notice is hereby given to all persons interested that the City Council of the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois, have ordered that a connected system of water mains be constructed and laid in along and under Woodland Avenue from Sheridan Road to Groveland Avenue, Groveland Avenue from Woodland Avenue to Lambert Tree Avenue; Lambert Tree Avenue from Groveland Avenue to Ashland Place; Ashland Place from Lambert Tree Avenue to Oakland Avenue; Oakland

NOTICE

Avenue from Groveland Avenue to St. Johns Avenue; and St. Johns Avenue from Oakland Avenue to Woodland Avenue, all in the City of Highland Park, Lake County, Illinois.

The ordinance for the same being on file in the office of the City Clerk of said city and having applied to the County Court of Lake County for an assessment of the costs of said improvement according to benefits, and an assessment thereof having been made and returned to said court, the final hearing thereon will be had on the Thirtieth day of January, A. D. 1917, or as soon thereafter as the business of the court will permit.

Said assessments is payable in Nine installments, with interest at the rate of five (5) per centum per annum on all installments from and after date of issue of first voucher. All persons desiring may file objections in said court before said day and may appear on the hearing and make their defense.

Thomas Morton, Officer appointed to make said Assessment. Dated at Highland Park, Ill., December 28th, A. D. 1916.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT NOTICE, DOCKET NO. 68

Notice is hereby given to all persons interested that the City Council of the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois, have ordered that there shall be constructed a Portland Cement Concrete Sidewalk four feet wide in upon and along the Northernly side of Sard Place from the Westernly line of High Street from the Westernly line of High Street Westerly to the Easterly line of Pleasant Street and on the Southernly side of Sard Place from the Westernly line of High Street, Westerly to the Easterly line of Central Avenue, excepting therefrom Street intersections, all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois. The ordinance for the same being on file in the office of the City Clerk of said City, and the said City having applied to the County Court of Lake County, State of Illinois, for an assessment of the cost of said improvement according to the benefits, and an assessment therefor having been made and returned to said court (Docket No. 68) the final hearing thereon will be held on the 13th day of January, A. D. 1917, or as soon thereafter as the business of the court will permit.

Said ordinance provides that the aggregate amount of said assessment shall be divided into five (5) installments bearing interest at the rate of five (5) per cent per annum.

All persons desiring may file objections in said Court before said day and may appear on the hearing and make their defense.

R. G. Smith, The person appointed by the President of the Board of Local Improvements to make said assessment. Dated at Highland Park, Ill., this 28th day of December, A. D. 1916. (44-45)

STATE OF ILLINOIS, County of Lake, ss. CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY

March Term A. D. 1917. Bessie Adella Norton vs Oscar Edward Norton

In Chancery No. 8307. The requisite affidavit having been filed in the office of the Clerk of said Court.

Notice is therefore hereby given to the said Oscar Edward Norton, defendant that the above named Complainant heretofore filed her Bill of Complaint in said Court on the Chancery side thereof, and that a summons thereupon issued out of said Court against the above named defendant, returnable on the first day of the term of the Circuit Court of Lake County, to be held at the Court House in Waukegan in said Lake County, on the First Monday of March A. D. 1917, as is by law required, and which suit is still pending.

Lewis O. Brockway, Clerk. Waukegan, Illinois, January 2nd, A. D. 1917. George E. Phillips, Complainant's Solicitor, Room 3, State Bank Bldg., Highland Park, Ills. (45-48)

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