

Truly a Floral Tribute

by Vivian Farmer

Chap. 15

Hilda decided to work a little longer on the clippings and documents she had amassed over the months. From one elderly lady who had spied the box at an auction sale she had been attending with her daughter, and bought it for a quarter, she had received a box of photographs. She thought ruefully now of all the hours she had spent peering at the pictures with a magnifying glass, taking them to seniors homes and to elderly friends until even most of the more obscure and faded prints were identified. There had been street-scapes, family portraits, snap shots of picnics, cycling

groups, babies, even the photographic portraits of a dog and several horses. Oddly enough, the animal pictures had been among the first to be identified, and a chapter of the history had been devoted to stories of these creatures. Family members long gone, had been recalled. Families of whom no members remained were discovered and their story recorded.

To a woman of Hilda's nature, intrigued as she was by people and their lives, reviewing this material had been a labor of love. She had laughed at the tale of old Dick Tanner, being so startled when a beaver he had thought dead, and was about to skin for its pelt, revived and so startled poor Dick that he fell into the River Nore. The beaver had sat back on his tail to watch the man floundering in the fast flowing stream, then trotted off to its own endeavors. Then there was the story of the rear right wheel coming off of the Methodist parsons open carriage just as he and his family were driving a visiting Bishop, down the hill to the what had been called "First Bridge", on a tour of Weavers' Mills. The wheel had preceded them down the hill and across the bridge. The Bishop had remarked on the runaway wheel as they tooted merrily along. The wheel flashing by startled the horses and they swerved to the left away from it, stopping in the gutter, where the carriage had drooped only a few inches between the frame and the bank of the ditch. The Bishop assured everyone who would listen for years afterward that it was Divine Providence that had guided the horses into the ditch and saved them injury from the overturning of the conveyance. That team of horses was duly recorded in the history.

"Oh bother," Hilda thought. "It really isn't considerate of me to not phone William. I can't think what Jeremy was in such a stew about, but I'm going to make the call anyway." With that, she set the papers aside and went into the kitchen to the phone.

"Amy?... Hilda here. Is your father about?"

"Hello Mrs. Hamstead. Dad's in the garden. I saw him there a few minutes ago. Do you want me to call him in?" Amy offered.

"No, that won't be necessary dear. Just tell him that I have to go to Kingston earlier than I thought and will have to miss the meeting this afternoon. The publishers want to discuss the history we've compiled." Hilda was careful not to lie outright, but her conscience still jarred. "Ask William to call me later this evening and let me know how

the meeting goes, if you will."

"Oh, but wasn't he going to drive you there after the meeting?" Amy queried. "He mentioned something about it at breakfast this morning."

"Oh dear, I knew this would happen. Jeremy has to make a trip to Kingston and as William was going to make a special trip, and I knew he wanted to spend as much time with you as he could before you go out west, I accepted Jeremy's offer. It gives me more time with the publishers as well.... getting there earlier I mean." Even to Hilda's ears, her words sounded false.

Amy smiled to herself at the anxiety in the other woman's voice, recognizing how Hilda hated to offend anyone. "There now, I'm sure Dad will understand. Don't you think of it again," she assured. "I'll give him your message as soon as he comes in and perhaps he can phone you himself before you go."

"Would you dear," Hilda said gratefully, "I do so hate to feel that I'm putting him out."

"I'll have him call when he comes in for lunch," Amy promised.

Feeling much better for having left a message, Hilda tidied up the pile of papers and set them back in the cupboard. Before she went to dress, she turned the answering machine on by the phone. She had been talked into getting one by the Bi-Centennial Committee, so that people could leave messages for her when she was busy with her various activities. It had been a nuisance at first, and, or so she thought, too impersonal an invention to get people to use, but it appeared that some people enjoyed leaving her little greetings on the machine, finding the novelty of it quite entertaining. The one time she appreciated it was when she went to her room to dress, for, as she said, people instinctively seemed to know when she was in no state of dress to answer the phone and call right at that moment. She now had the luxury of leaving the telephone to answer itself.

She was not surprised therefore, when just as she stepped out of her slacks and laid her blouse on the bed, the phone rang. With a smile, she heard it stop after three rings and went on about selecting her outfit for the afternoon.

Jeremy listened to the phone just long enough to ascertain that he had reached Hilda's number and that

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