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Cupid—and a Call

By EDITH MORGAN WILLETT

The rector of All Souls paused in the hall to remove his clerical hat and smooth the ruffled auburn hair beneath it; then he pushed back the portiere and briskly entered Mrs. Minturn's luxurious drawing room.

Half past ten o'clock. He glanced dubiously at the gilt timepiece opposite. A trifle early for a morning visit, but he couldn't help other women as he could not help this matter must be settled without delay, and his letter written to the bishop and off by the 8:30 train.

Dropping with satisfaction into a deep, cool Morris chair, Mr. Marble congratulated himself resolutely on the step he was about to take.

It had been a serious problem and hard to decide, especially (as he acknowledged) for a man of his whimsical, over-fastidious tastes. Even now other women in the world—girls even, good looking ones too! (a reminiscent blush overspread his carefully shaven face)—but for charm, position, and—well, general attractiveness (here his eyes strayed appreciatively out of the window toward conservatories and well-kept lawns where many gardeners pattered about) there was no one in Wheatley better fitted than Lydia Minturn to adorn—

At this point with some embarrassment he rose to greet her.

"I was especially anxious to see you this morning," Mr. Marble told his business boldly after a tactful prologue of banalities. "There is something exceedingly important I desire to communicate to you."

"To me!" echoed Mrs. Minturn. She looked at him with innocent, illustrious blue eyes and fingered her rings pensively.

"What can it be, I wonder! Has that wretched vestry been bothering you again, or is it the poor throat? Do you know you're looking very badly?" She leaned toward him with pretty earnestness. "What you want, my dear friend, is rest—a complete rest and change!"

Want it! Of course he did, but the rector of All Souls, being a subtle student of the other sex, "walked delicately"—like Agag!

"Not much rest for me!" he ejaculated with a tired smile. "The bishop is seriously urging me to accept a call to Shooting Rock, Arkansas."

And at her cry of dismay— "Yes, it's a good way off," he said grimly—"a lovely spot 70 miles from a railroad track. A mission of a thousand miners that have never felt a civilizing or refining touch; pretty desperate characters, some of them, I understand, but of course it's a splendid field."

He paused as Mrs. Minturn laid a white, restraining hand on his arm.

"Don't say another word," she begged. "It's too awful! How can you even talk of going to that dreadful place. You might think of us!" There was a touching catch in her voice.

"What would I—do without you at Wheatley? Oh, Mr. Marble, say that you won't go!"

"There is only one consideration that would induce me to remain!" said the Rev. Ronald with decision.

His moment had come, and he seized it with characteristic promptness; also her unresisting hand. How soft it was, and how her rings sparkled!

"Lydia," he cried, putting the time-honored question with striking originality, "will you be mine? Will you make me the happiest of men?"

Twelve o'clock struck, and Mr. Marble rose, somewhat flushed and disheveled from a kneeling posture.

"Then it's irrevocable, and you won't have me!" he queried blankly.

The fact, even now, seemed preposterous, incredible.

Mrs. Minturn nodded and dabbed her eyes with a few square inches of real lace.

"It's not that I wouldn't have you!" she explained lucidly. "It's Jack! Don't you see, you understand that my poor husband wouldn't have liked it if he'd been alive, and isn't it just the same now—that he's dead and gone—even more so?"

Mrs. Minturn put out her hand. "We can be friends, at least, can't we?" she pleaded. "And you won't go away?"

The Rev. Ronald Marble turned the knob. "If I do," he said sternly, "it is because you have made it impossible for me to remain! Good morning!"

And the portiere swung to behind him.

The rector of All Souls followed Janet Noble into her cosy sitting room.

"I wanted especially to see you this morning," he said with real emotion, coming to a standstill by the fireplace. "I have just received an important call, and you ought to be the first to know it."

"A call!" repeated Janet Noble interestedly, as she took up some plain sewing.

She was president of the woman's auxiliary, secretary of the parish aid

society, and soprano of the church choir, besides being a tall, handsome girl with bright brown eyes and vivid color.

"Yes," Mr. Marble returned with enthusiasm. "I am called to Shooting Rock, Arkansas—a beautiful, lonely spot 70 miles from a railroad track. "Oh, it would be glorious!" she interrupted him eagerly.

Her hands were clasped tightly together and her kindling eyes made his pulses throb exultantly. "Of course you must take up this great work! We shall miss you here undoubtedly!"—there was the faintest tremble in her voice—"but one mustn't think of oneself! Those poor people need you! It is your duty to go."

How beautifully she looked with the sunlight on her hair, the inspiration in her eyes!

"There is only one consideration that would induce me to go," said the Rev. Ronald with decision.

"Janet," he cried, "will you be mine? Will you make me the happiest of men?"

The words pouring from his lips had a strangely familiar sound, and, alas, it was with a strangely familiar pang that Mr. Marble listened to her answer.

When it was all over and he had dejectedly picked up his hat for the second time that morning, Janet walked with him to the gate he had opened so hopefully a half-hour ago.

"I'm so sorry," she faltered, as he lingered in spite of himself at the wicket. "I wish I could help you with that great work!" There was a ring of genuine missionary regret in her voice. "You must see for yourself how impossible it is!"

Poor Mr. Marble, looking at her, could not see it at all.

"Then, there's no hope for me!" he asked gloomily.

"I'm afraid not, as far as I'm concerned," she responded. "But there's always hope! Mightn't there be some one else, Mr. Marble—some other woman better fitted for you?"

The rector of All Souls only gave her a scorchingly reproachful glance and turned away without a word.

As he bent his lonely steps towards his boarding house, Mr. Marble became aware of other steps, feminine ones, approaching behind, and a furtive glance around showed him Miss Cornelia Wythe, his district visitor and devoted aid, in close pursuit.

"What's the matter?" she panted, overtaking the flying cleric just as he reached the corner. "You seem to be in a great hurry!"

Mr. Marble turned and faced her with a dazed smile.

"I am," he said, then quite involuntarily: "There's a letter to the bishop that ought to be written and off by the 8:30 train. I wanted especially to see you this morning." With astonishment he heard himself utter this last sentence.

The well-known formula had flashed unbidden to his lips, and helplessly, parrot-like, he stammered out: "I've just received an important call to Shooting Rock, Arkansas, and you ought to be the first to know it!"

Miss Wythe's glance of pleased interrogation only added to poor Mr. Marble's confusion.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" she inquired practically.

"Do!" ejaculated the Rev. Ronald, and with the recollection of the morning's wrongs hard upon him he gave an impossible groan. "What on earth do you expect a man to do, with never a woman to help him!"

Afterwards, when he was quite calm again, Mr. Marble saw clearly just how she had taken it—that innocent little speech of his—but in the blackness of the moment all he could realize was that Miss Cornelia Wythe had taken him, "for better or worse" and entirely without his own consent.

It was long after luncheon time that the Rev. Ronald turned his steps at last towards his boarding-house—engaged, he told himself blankly, to a lady he had never for a moment contemplated in a matrimonial light.

This was the result of his morning's Crimean waves of mortification, horror, and actual dread surged up into his high cheek-bones at the thought of it all.

He, the rector of All Souls, offered himself to three women in as many hours!

It was scandalous, unpardonable, in any other man! What would Wheatley say when it heard, as it must soon of its sickle, frivolous rector?

What would they think of him, those two whom he had wooed so ardently in quick succession—sweet Mrs. Minturn and Janet Noble? His heart smote him! How he had pleaded with them!

Then upon his sombre meditation—"Mr. Marble!" broke in a voice he knew, and, raising his head, the horrified rector beheld at his very elbow Janet's mother—an exceedingly large woman—coming towards him with cordially outstretched hands.

Involuntarily he shrank from her beaming face. What did it mean? Mrs. Noble's next words enlightened him only too well.

"I just had to stop you!" she was saying warmly. "You do look so blue and downhearted, Mr. Marble. Girls will be girls you know." Here her voice sank to a confidential whisper, as with elephantine subtlety,

"I think," she suggested, "it's just possible that if you happened to drop in this evening Janet might be glad to see you!"

The rector of All Souls underwent no surprise at the sight of the dainty note he found in his room five minutes later.

"My dear Ronald," it began, and even that unwonted opening left him without emotion. He was past all that now.

"I have been thinking earnestly over our talk this morning. After all, as you say, my duty is to the living, not the dead. Can't you come in and see me this evening? I shall be waiting for you in the balcony about dusk.

Yours ever, LYDIA.

That afternoon at 3:30 a telegram was despatched to the bishop of X, in which the Rev. Ronald Marble accepted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the call to Shooting Rock, Ark. He went alone.

CALVERT IS OLDEST ACTRESS.

Records of Ladies Who Helped to Make History on the Stage.

The veteran actress, Miss Dolores Drummond, who celebrated her eighty-second birthday in London recently, is not the oldest living actress. That distinction appears to belong either to Mrs. Charles Calvert or Miss Genevieve Ward, each of whom was born in 1827, and is in her eighty-third year. Miss Ward was born in March, but January is understood to be Mrs. Calvert's natal month.

Mrs. Calvert is probably the Mother of the stage in age and Mrs. Kendal in length of service. It is pertinent to remember, in this connection, that Mrs. Kendal has often been styled the Matron of the Drama.

Table with columns: Name, Born, Debut, stage. Mrs. Calvert 1827 1843 48, Miss Drummond 1828 1846 53, Lady Bancroft 1829 1846 50, Miss Ellen Terry 1844 1856 64, Miss Ward 1827 1855 65, Sarah Bernhardt 1844 1862 58, Mrs. Kendal 1849 1854 66.

William IV. was on the throne in the year of Miss Dolores Drummond's birth. Miss Drummond played with G. V. Brooke, Charles Keen, Barry Sullivan, Joseph Jefferson, Edwin Booth, and Henry Irving. "Mrs. Kendal" they were always called, "by playing Fortia in a crolinoe."

Why Man First Searched for Gold. The story of what the Lancel (London, Eng.) calls "an ethnological discovery of revolutionary importance" was told by Prof. G. Elliot Smith in a lecture at the Royal Institution recently. Briefly, this was of a pre-historic race of nomadic men whose remains have been found in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and the islands of the Pacific.

The strangest fact about this is that wherever this race of wanderers left traces of its culture there might also be found natural deposits of gold. This race of gold-seekers flourished before the earliest pyramids were built: about 2500 B.C. they were digging gold in Palestine and Persia. They were always to the American side of the Pacific by pearl beds.

Prof. Smith went on to tell how gold came to acquire so great an influence in the world. The earliest evidence of its use comes from Egypt and dates from about 4000 B.C. In those days, however, gold was not money; it was not used in coinage, it was not a precious metal in the sense of making its possessor wealthy.

The ancient Egyptian symbol for gold is a conventional girde of cowrie. It was endowed in their belief with the virtue of vitality. It increased fertility, preserved youth and was given to those who died in the belief that death was a sign of diminished rather than absent vitality, and that with this additional source of vigor the dead might carry on some sort of life beyond the grave. After a time the demand for cowries must have exceeded the supply, for models were made in imitation of the real shells from the clay of the river bed. Then gold, also found in the river beds, was used to make model cowrie. The beauty and lustre must have attracted their beliefs, till presently the substance rather than the form acquired a magical significance.

Molasses as Auto Fuel.

The West Indian molasses that used to be turned into rum will have to be utilized in some other way, now that the United States is no longer a legitimate buyer of alcoholic drinks. Dr. Walter Baunard, writing in Sugar, thinks that it will be used to drive automobiles and for the general development of power for traction and other purposes. Not that it will ever be substituted for gasoline, in its crude form. It must first be turned into alcohol; but after this transformation its value will be greatly enhanced. Investigation carried out recently under the auspices of the British Government, indicate that the use of alcohol as a motor fuel has great possibilities, and the committee in charge suggests not only that the by-products of sugar-production be used in this way, but that many other products yielding sugar, starch, or cellulose may be similarly utilized.

When it comes to making predictions the outfit board, weather prophets and A. Mitchell Palmer are all in the same class.—Detroit Journal.

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