Sweet Miss Margery

"Many, many thanks, Mr. Stuart, and heaven bless you, sir. You are very good to me."

Tears rolled down Mrs. Morris' pale face, and the young squire turned away with a sudden expression of sorrow. At the door he hesitated for a minute, then said hurriedly:

"I shall walk a little way along Linton's Lane, Mrs. Morris. I want to ask Margery about Bright's crops."

"Ay, do, sir," replied the sick woman warmly; "she will be rare glad to see you."

Mr. Crosbie strode down the path, and let the gate swing behind him. He turned to the right, and walked quickly along in the glaring heat, with his eyes fixed in an almost eager way on the long straight road before him. Away in the distance appeared an object—a patch of something pink moving very slowly toward him. His pace increased, the distance lessened between this object and himself, and gradually the pink patch melted into the slender form of a girl, her bent head covered with a flapping white sun-bonnet, a small basket on her right arm, and a book between her two little brown hands. She came on very slowly; apparently the heat had no effect on her, although the sun was beating on her with scorching force. Mr. Crosbie slackened his pace as they drew nearer, and at last came to a stand-still. The girl was so deeply absorbed in her book that she was unaware of his presence till, looking up suddenly, she saw him just in front of her. The book dropped, a flush of color mantled her clear transparent fact, and a look of intense pleasure shone in her great blue eyes.

"Mr. Stuart! Oh, how you startled me!"

"Did I, Margery?" returned Stuart, removing his felt hat and grasping her hand firmly. "What are you made of? You must be a salamander to live in this heat; yet here you are walking along as if it were in Iceland; and you look as cool as"—hesitating for a simile—"as a cucumber."

"Oh, I don't mind a little sunshine!" said the girl, with a slightly contemptuous curl of her short upper lip. "In fact, I don't feel it. But where are you going, Mr. Stuart? Have you seen mother?"

"Yes," replied the young man, turning beside her and taking the basket from her arm. "She told me you had gone to Bright's farm, and I am anxious to know how his crops are."

"He is grumbling, of course," Margery answered; "but I fancy he is on the whole well satisfied."

Their eyes met, and they both burst into a merry fit of laughter.

"You don't care a bit about the crops—you know you don't!" remarked Margery, severely, as she tried to banish the merriment from the corners of her mouth.

"Well, strictly between ourselves, I don't. It is a fearful confession for a farm-owner to make, but it is the truth."

"Ah. I am glad you do tell the truth sometimes!" said the girl, with a bright glance from her glorious eyes.

"You must be a witch or some sort of fairy," Stuart declared, suddenly, "for prevarication, let alone untruths always fails when I meet you."

He was watching her with intense earnestness, enjoying the sweet witchery of her beauty. For she was beautiful; her form was so slender and lithe; every limb, from the tiny feet in the rough country shoes which could not hide their daintiness, to the small delicately shaped hands, browned and tanned as they were, spoke of grace and loveliness. Her head had a sort of imperious carriage that made the simple cotton gown appear a queenly robe, and the face beneath the flapping sun-bonnet was one to inthral la sterner man than Stuart Crosbie. The complexion of pale cream white which even the sun could not kiss to a warmer shade, the sweet rosy mouth, the great wondrous eyes fringed with long dark lashes, and the mass of ruddy golden curls that twined about the brow and delicate throat were but a few of the attractions that Margery possessed. One of her greatest charms was the simplicity and unaffectedness of her manner; perhaps it was that as yet none had whispered flattery in her shell-like ear, none had tried to sweep away her girlish frankness and youthfulness by adulation and undue admiration. But Margery never seemed to think she possessed beauty, nor even that that beauty was such as a queen might sigh for. She found more pleasure in tossing the hay, romping with the children, or, in quieter moods, diving into her books than in posing before her mirror; and she was quite unconscious of the exact meaning of Stuart Crosbie's eyes, which filled with a fire of admiration and ecstacy whenever they rested on her.

"Now," she said lightly, turning her book round and round in her hands after they had been conversing for several minutes, "since I am a fairy, I shall get this question answered. Why did Mr. Stuart take such a long walk in the broiling sun which does affect him if he does not care a scrap about Farmer Bright's crops?"

"Why?" echoed the young man. "Why, to meet you, Margery!"

"Oh, how kind of you!" she returned quietly; then, looking up with a smile, she added. "Come now—I shall begin to doubt my power. What—"

"But that is the real downright honest truth. I told Mrs. Morris it was to ask about the crops, but I tell you the truth."

"And why could you not tell mother the truth,' she asked quickly—'why not say you wanted to see me? She would have been honored at such a thought."

Stuart Crosbie bit his lip. His brow clouded for a second, then he answered quietly:

"Yes, you are quite right, Margery, I ought to have said so. Well, never mind—I will next time. And now tell me what you have been doing all this age. What is that book?"

"The Mill on the Floss"—holding it out.

"Hum! Looks dry—is it?"

"Dry!" exclaimed Margery. "Oh it is so beautiful! Have you never read it?"

"I hardly think so," confessed the young squire. "I will look it out in the library when I get back, and dig into it to-night, when I am smoking."

"Miss Lawson doesn't approve of story books," said Margery; "but I am not so strict."

"And how are you getting on?"

"Oh, all right! I am deep in German just now. I speak French every day when I go to the rectory. I want to be perfect by the time her ladyship comes back. Mother has told me all about her kindness to me. I can scarcely remember her when she went away, but she must be nice."

"Nice!" exclaimed Mr. Crosbie. 'She is a brick—a million times too good 'for that old curmudgeon Sir Hubert!"

"No one seems to like him," Margery remarked thoughtfully—her face had grown almost sad; "but mother is never tired of telling me all about Lady Coningham—how she took me when I was a baby, and my poor dear real mother was killed, and put me with mother Morris. I am not very old, Mr. Stuart, but I feel I can never repay her ladyship all she has done for me. Sometimes I seem to have a faint misty recollection of the days when I first came here, and I can see a face that was—oh, so pretty and kind!"

"My mother always says Catherine Coningham was very beautiful," Stuart said, as the girl paused. "I remember her as a faded pale woman, very kind, as you say."

"There is one thing she did I can never, never forget," Margery went on—"that was her goodness in burying my poor mother in such a pretty spot, and putting that cross on her grave. It does me good to go there, Mr. Stuart. I almost think my mother knows I go. She must have been sweet, she was so beautiful! I always wear my locket, you know"—she put up her hand and produced a tiny heart of gold—"it is such a comfort. I wonder who I really am!"

"I think you are a princess," observed the young man gravely; 'you look it."

Margery shook her head.

"We shall never know, I suppose," she said sadly, "and I shall always be the nursery rhyme girl, 'Margery Daw,' as Lady Coningham christened me."

"It is the prettiest name in the world!" cried Stuart warmly. "And—and it suits you!"

"So you would say if you caught sight of me on the village see-saw," said Margery laughed heartily. Then she added. "But we are home; and you have carried my basket all the way. It must be nearly 4 o'clock."

"No!" he exclaimed incredulously. "By Jove, I shall have to tear—" Then he stopped abruptly and asked, "Margery, when are we going to have that picnic we decided on a month ago?"

"Oh, some day!" she answered, going into the garden and closing the gate.

"But 'some day' is so vague. Shall we fix it for next Wednesday? That is your half-holiday, I know."

His eyes were fixed on her face with such earnestness that for the first time she seemed to feel their power. She colored faintly and held out her hand.

"Yes, Wednesday, if you like—if mother is well enough to spare me. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," he answered.

He gave one last look, and then hurried up the hill. He had a good hour's walk before him, his toilet to make, and the drive to Chesterham to accomplish as well. That Lady Charteris and her daughter Vane would be received at the station by the young squire of Crosbie Castle seemed very improbable indeed.

CHAPTER IV.

The dressing-gong sounded sonorously through the corridor of Crosbie Castle. In one of the many charming rooms situated in the towering wing a young girl was standing. The open windows overlooked a sweep of verdant lawn, majestic groups of veteran trees, and to the left a clump of smaller wood-growth, touched with every tint of green. From beneath, the scent of many a flower was borne on the air and wafted to her, bringing with its fragrance a sense of purity and delicacy that was utterly wanting to the faint odors that hung round the costly glass bottles her maid was placing on the toilet-table.

The mistress of the dainty apartment was leaning against the open window deep in thought. She was tall and slight, with a face of delicate loveliness and charm, albeit spoiled a little by a slight expression of indifference and discontent. She had hair of the warm brown shade peculiar to Englishwomen; her eyes were large, of a clear but rather cold blue; her mouth was small and well shaped, disclosing white, even teeth when her lips parted. There was an easy graceful nonchalance about her carriage; and, without being a strictly beautiful figure, Vane Charteris had an indescribable air of hauteur in the slope of her shoulders and well-poised head that put to shame many a rival better favored by nature. Her eyes were fixed at this instant on the figure of a young man walking quickly across the lawn to the house, followed by half a dozen dogs. He was by no means unpleasant to look upon; and so thought his cousin, for she watched him with evident attention and interest.

"My squire of Crosbie pleases me," she murmured, moving languidly from the window; "for once mamma has shown discrimination with worldly wisdom."

She seated herself at the glass, and let her maid unpin her luxuriant tresses till they fell upon the folds of her pink silk wrapper in glorious profusion. Vane Charteris had been out two years. Worshiped from her cradle by her weak widowed mother, she had entered society's world haughty, indifferent and selfish. The admiration she received was but a continuation of the adulation that had been lavished upon her all through her life; she had no aims, no hopes, no ambitions, but was content with her imperious beauty and the power that gift had brought. At first Vane was a great success—her proud coldness was new, and therefore, a delightful experience; but after awhile society grew weary of her automatic ways. The season just ended had been a lesson to her. She saw herself deserted, and her power slip from her; and, as this truth came home, she woke, suddenly from her dreams, and realized that something more was expected of her if she would still reign as queen.

Lady Charteris little guessed the workings of her daughter's mind. She had grown to consider Vane as a priceless jewel which must be carefully watched, carefully tended and thought for. She judged the girl's nature to be one of the highest, combining true Charteris pride with utter indolence. Possibly the mother had felt a touch of vexation when she saw girls far below her child in beauty wed nobly and well; but she love Vane as her life, and regret was banished in the pleasure of her presence.

This was the first visit of the beautiful Miss Charteris to Crosbie Castle. Hitherto she had contented herself with meeting her uncle and her aunt in London; but this year the mood seized her to accept their oft-repeated invitation and spend a few weeks in their country home. She had heard much of her Cousin Stuart, but had never seen him since her childhood as during the past two years he had been travelling, and before that time she had never left the seclusion of her schoolroom.

Sore with the knowledge of her social failure, dissatisfied with her mother, herself, and everybody, Vane had sunk into a morbid, depressed state. She left town without a sigh (though, when she contrasted this journey with her migration of the former season, she might have given vent to one, for instead of hearty farewells and expressions of regret, she was neglected, save by her maid and her mother), and actually felt a thrill of genuine pleasure as she bowled through the country lanes and drank in the sweetness of the air. She stole many hurried glances at her cousin during the drive—Mr. Crosbie had reached the station in the nick of time—and found herself agreeing with the oft-repeated praises her mother had sung concerning him. There was a manliness, a frankness, an absence of self-consciousness and conceit about Stuart Crosbie that pleased her jaded spirit; he was as handsome as any of her former admirers, while possessing many other advantages they did not. She listened quite interestedly to his chatty account of his travels, and was surprised at the pleasure she derived from them.

"What will mademoiselle wear?" the maid asked, after she had coiled and waved the luxuriant hair round the graceful head.

Vane woke from her musings.

"Oh, anything, Marie; it does not matter! No; on second thoughts, give me that plain white silk."

Marie went to the inner room, and returned with a mass of soft, rich, clinging drapery on her arm, and assisted her mistress to aljust the robe in silence. She was wondering a little why mademoiselle should have chosen so simple a gown—it was not her usual habit. But, when the last touch was given, and Vane stood gazing at her reflection in the mirror, the maid was fain to confess the choice was good. The tall, supple form looked inexpressibly graceful in the long, soft folds, the delicate masses of lace brought fichu-like across the bust gave a touch of quaintness to the whole, and the purity of the silk gave a softened, fresher look to the pretty face, for once free from its discontent. Vane looked long at herself, then turned to her maid:

"My gloves and fan, Marie. Thanks. Do not trouble to wait for me to-night. Leave my wrapper here; I will brush my hair myself. I dare say you are tired."

"Merci bien, mademoiselle." Marie murmured, marvelling still more. She was unaccustomed to any notice, to say naught of kindly words, from her young mistress.

Vane drew on her long white gloves, then went slowly through the corridor and down the stairs. The sun was declining, the heat of the day was dying, and a faint, delicious breeze came in through the many open windows. Miss Charteris passed through the great hall, the tap-tap of her heels sounding distinctly on the tesselated floor, and stood for one instant at a door that led first under a colonnade and thence to the grounds which her windows overlooked. While she was standing here her cousin sauntered into view; and, moving forward with languid grace, she went to meet him.

"La dame blanche," he said, tossing away an unfinished cigarette. "You startled me, Cousin Vane—you crept out so quietly and look so like a spirit."

'I am quite real, I assure you," Vane answered. "But why have you thrown away your cigarette?"

Stuart laughed as he answered:

"It is against my mother's rules to smoke immediately before dinner, but I love my weed, and am scarcely conscious when I am smoking or not. Please forgive me. I have been a savage for so long, I have forgotten my good manners."

"Ah, I want to hear all about your travels and adventures," said Miss Charteris. "Have we time to stroll up and down for a while before dinner?"

"But you will be tired," remonstrated Stuart, mindful of his mother's injunctions; "and"—glancing at the small, dainty white feet—"I am afraid you will ruin your pretty shoes!"

"I am not afraid of either calamity," Vane responded, with a smile; "however, let us split the difference and go to the conservatory."

Stuart agreed willingly. He was most favorably impressed by his new cousin. She was no hypochondriacal creature, but a young, beautiful girl and likely to prove a most agreeable companion. He glanced at her dress as they sauntered slowly along the colonnade to the conservatory, mentally declaring it to be most charming and simple, deciding it to be most probably the work of her own hands, and would have been thunderstruck had anyone informed him that the innocent-looking garment had cost nearly fifty pounds.

Vance Charteris saw his cousin's admiration, and her heart thrilled. Once more she would taste the joy of power, she would no longer be neglected. A vision of future triumph filled her mind at that instant. She would wake from her indifference. The world should see her again as queen, reigning this time by charm and fascination as well as by her beauty. The color mounted to her cheeks, the light flashed in her eyes, at the thought, and she turned with animation and interest to converse with the man beside her.

"You have a beautiful home, Stuart," she observed, after they had walked through the heavily scented conservatory to the drawing room. "I am glad I have come."

"And I am heartily glad to welcome you. I have heard so much of my Cousin Vane, such stories of triumphs and wonders that I began to despair of ever receiving her here."

"You forget," said Vane, softly, waving her great feather-fan to and from—"there is an attraction here now that at other times was wanting."

She spoke lightly, almost laughingly, but her words pleased the man's vanity.

"Can it be that I am that attraction?" he asked, quickly. Then he added, "Cousin Vane, I am indeed honored."

"You jump to hasty conclusions," she retorted, "but I will pardon your excessive vanity, if you will give me a stray of stephanotis for my dress."

"Is it your favorite flower?" he asked, leading the way back to the conservatory.

"I love all flowers," Vane answered—"that is," she added, carelessly, "all hot-house flowers."

"You shall be well supplied in future."

"Thanks."

She drew off her gloves and pinned the spray of wax-like flowers amid her laces. Her hands were white and delicate, yet Stuart's mind unconsciously flew to two little brown ones he had seen that afternoon grasping a plainly bound book. There was even more beauty in them than in his cousin's—he thought.

(To be Continued.)

THE KINVAD BRIDGE.

Then the fiend named Vizareska carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked Daeva-worshippers who live in sin. The soul enters the way made by time and open both to the wicked and the righteous.

At the head of the Kinvad Bridge, the holy bridge made by Mazda, they ask for their spirits and souls, the reward for the worldly goods which they gave away below.

Then comes the well-shapen, strong, and tall maiden with the hounds at her sides—she who can distinguish, who is graceful, who does what she desires, and is of high understanding.

She makes the soul of the righteous go up above the heavenly hill; above the Kinvad Bridge she places it in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves.

Note.—The Kinvad Bridge crosses over Hades to Paradise. For the souls of the good, it grows wider (nine javelins width); for the wicked it narrows to a thread, and they fall from it into the depths of Hades.

VALUABLE SUGGESTION.

In a provincial city the General Postoffice is in a side street and very difficult for strangers to find. A youth whose prospensity for practical joking has more than once got him into trouble, called one day and inquired for the postmaster. He was told he was very busy.

"Will no one else do?" asked a clerk.

"Certainly not," was the answer.

"Very well. Will you wait, sir?"

"With pleasure."

Presently the postmaster appeared, and inquired the stranger's business.

"Well, it's simply this, sir," was the answer. "I've been having a look round some of the back streets, and I have discovered a place where you could hide the postoffice even more than it is here. Good morning."

WIT AND HUMOR

PAT'S EXPLANATION.

(Life.)

"How is it, Pat, that your friend, Murphy is out of jail?"

"Faith, an' the man that he killed got well."

ALTERNATION.

(Puck.)

Farmer Silow—Do you alternate your crops?

Farmer Timothy—Yep. Have 'em killed by one thing one year and another the next.

OH, YOU MUNCHAUSEN!

(Boston Transcript.)

Marks—Biggs has trained his cat to bring his slippers.

Parks — That's nothing. I know a writer on horticulture who has trained cut worms to sharpen his lead pencils.

THE WORST OF IT.

(Megendorfer Blaeter.)

Merchant—It seems to me that you ask high wages considering that you have had no experience in this business.

Clerk—Ah, but you forget that that's just what makes it all the harder for me.

MORE PRECISELY STATED.

(Philadelphia Record.)

Mrs. Wigwag — When your husband takes you to the theatre, does he ever go out between the acts?

Mrs. Guzzler—Well, I wouldn't express it in just that way. He sometimes comes in between drinks.

SLIGHTLY ENVIOUS.

(Washington Star.(

"I suppose you are happy with all the wealth you would have accumulated?"

"There is only one man I envy," replied Mr. Chuggins.

"Who is that?"

"The motor-cycle policeman. Every once in a while he gets a chance to violate the speed limits without being arrested."

NECESSARY STEAM.

(Chicago Record-Herald.)

"Your father has money enough; why don't you get him to quit working?"

"We've tried, but there's no public job on which we are able to get him appointed."

HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE!

(Baltimore American.)

"Why did you dismiss George, Gladys? He's a good steady fellow, doing well, and would make a fine husband."

"I know all that, but, oh, Gwendolin, I never could be happy with a man who pronounces garage as though it rhymed with carriages."

SWITCH OFF!

(Boston Transcript.)

Modiste—Do you want a train on your gown, madame?

Customer—Yes, and I want it on time, too.

RUSHED TO DEATH.

(Philadelphia Record.)

"Are you busy these days?" asked the doctor.

"Busy!" exclaimed the undertaker. "I'm simply rushed to death."

MONARCHS.

(New York Sun.)

Knocker—You didn't go abroad to see the king crowned?

Bocker—No, I stayed home and watched the new janitor move in.

LAMENTS.

(New York Sun.)

Little Bopeep had lost her sheep.

"That's nothing," cried Wall street; "we've lost our lambs."

Herewith they lamented slack business.

MORE ACRIMONY.

(Philadelphia Record.)

Nell—Maude boasts that she always has a man at her feet.

Belle—Yes, I have noticed her shoestrings are always coming untied.

SHE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD.

(Philadelphia Record.)

Guzzler—My life was a desert till I met you.

Miss Caustique—Ah! At least I have the explanation of your wonderful thirst.

THE ANNUAL QUESTION.

(Harper's Weekly.)

"Well, Hawkins, old man," said Witherbee, "has your wife decided where she will spend the summer?"

"Yep," said Hawkins. "She's going abroad."

"So? And how about you?"

"Well, I don't know yet," sighed Hawkins. "I haven't decided yet whether to stay in town or go into bankruptcy."

A DISCOVERY.

(Washington Star.)

"I have discovered a way of making our predictions less misleading," said one weather bureau employee.

"A new system of calculation?" asked the other.

"No, indeed. Instead of using the ward 'probably' in our announcements we will use the word 'possibly.'"

CONCERNING UNCLES.

A uncle is a kind of folks
Jus' chuck full to th' brim with fun.
He hasn't any little girl—
Then how's he know how to treat one?
A uncle doesn't have to be
So dreffle big and high an' tall.
He can be uncles just the same
If he will 'cide not to grow tall.

But his two eyes must be th' kind
At looks as if nex' time he spoke,
Why he is going to tell to you
Some dreffle funny kind of joke.
What makes him buy a hat that jus'
Hangs roun' to tell him he must go?
'Twon't do no good to hunt for him,—
He won't be anywhere's, you know!

Once w'en my Uncle Fred comed long
He picked me right up from th' floor,
Where I was 'monishing my doll,—
She got her pinkest dress all tore!—
"Th' place for little girls to be,"
(That's what my bestest uncle said)
"Is sitting on a uncle's knee
Til it gets time to go to bed."

There's stories in th' chimney fire
And he will hunt them out for you,—
I wonder where the fairies went,
An' w'en my uncle Fred got thro'.
'Cause w'en I went to sleep an' dreamed
There's somethin' cookin' dreffle far,
That's Uncle Fred a burning up
Th' cunnin' little white cigar!

An' w'en I thought I heard th' wind
A-rustlin' in th' cherry tree,
'At's when my Uncle Fred spread out
Th' big newspaper over me,
An' Katie wouldn't found me 'tall,
Exceptin' for that little curl,
'Cause Uncle Fred he looked all 'round,
An' he don't see no little girl!"

Don't want to go to bed at all!
Not, anyway, till by-and-by!
But Uncle Fred don't like to see
A little girl begin to cry.
If folks won't go to bed an' dream,
How can it get to-morrow day
That's w'en th' big red aut-mobile
Will want to ride us miles away.
And so I condescend to let
Him take me "pig-a-back" up-stairs—
I guess my Uncle Fred forgot
A little girl mus' say her prayers,
'Cause "It's a shame to wake her up!"
Is what my bestest uncle said,
W'en he jus' dump me, shoes an' all,
Right on my dainty, little bed!
—Marie Louise Tompkins, in Harper's Weekly.

WORTH KNOWING.

An effective method of ridding a lawn of dandelions is to go over the yard and put a drop of sulphuric acid from a medicine dropper into the heart of each dandelion plant, being careful not to touch the surrounding grass with it. One drop will be sufficient to cause the death of the roots of a small plant, but large plants of od growth may need a second application. If a lawn is watched carefully for a season or two and the sulphuric acid applied to all new plants, you may soon rejoice in a dandelionless lawn. Use caution in handling the sulphuric acid, and do not let it touch your skin.

To remove grease from a kitchen table scrub well with hot water to which half a teaspoonful of whiting has been added; wipe and then dry thoroughly with a clean cloth. This will make the table look equal to new.

Mutton drippings will not set hard and waxy, as it usually does, if directly the fat is poured from the baking tin, the vessel containing it is put at the back of the stove and allowed to stay there until the stove itself cools.

To remove the smell of fresh paint, put a pail of cold water in the room and change it every two or three hours.

To prevent white fabrics, such as tulle or silk evening gowns, choice lace or crepe shawls, from becoming yellow when packed away, sprinkle bits of white wax freely among the folds.

In making cookies, if the dough is thoroughly chilled it will not only be lighter, but will not stick to the board when rolling. Some housekeepers also chill their doughnuts before frying.

OF COURSE.

"Oh, Bill, what's the Knight of the Bath?"

"Why, Saturday, you bonehead."—Yale Record.

Mrs. Muggins—Is your husband a sound sleeper? Mrs. Buggins—Yes, indeed. Sometimes the sound is simply awful.