

HER HUMBLE LOVER

"Late, of course; it always is when you particularly want it to be punctual," says the beauty, catching him and arranging his coat and collar for the hurrying time.

"Perhaps I'd better go and tell them to put the horses to the carriage, hadn't I?" he says, eagerly. "You know, I'm going to ride on the box with the coachman, so I shall see them before you do, Miss Derwent. Oh, I am so glad—so glad my Signa is coming back! And, I say, mamma says that I am to call her—Signa, you know—my lady, but I shan't, you know—would you?"

"Certainly not," assents Laura, promptly.

"That's the way you inculcate obedience to parents, is it?" says Lady Rookwell, coming out after them from the pretense of looking at the sky, but in reality to peer toward the station, and at the all half clock. "Who's that boy going now? He will break his neck running up and down those stairs, Laura!"

"I'm going to see that the flag-ropes are all right!" shouts Archie. "I've left one of the girls to pull up the flag on the tower directly Hector and Signa come inside the house!"

And he disappears from view.

"Who is that riding up the drive?" asks her ladyship, as a horseman gallops toward the house.

"It is Sir Frederic," says Laura.

"What a good fellow he is! How well he has discharged the trust Lord Delamere committed to him! The earl will not find a thing wrong, and the steward himself says that Sir Frederic has worked harder than any paid steward would have done."

"Yes," assents Lady Rookwell, "we shall have to call him Sir Frederic the Good, instead of the Great. He certainly is wonderfully changed! It was a sharp lesson, but it has effected a marvelous cure. From a selfish, self-opinionated country squire, the man has grown into a humble-minded, unselfish gentleman."

"Good-morning!" calls Laura, stepping on to the terrace.

Sir Frederic looks up, with a quiet smile, and lifts his hat; then, dismounting, comes slowly up the steps. As he does so, the change that has taken place in him can be detected in his face and manner. The old stiff shyness and self-consciousness have gone, reserved gravity and self-respect that have nothing of vanity or conceit in them. He is as quiet as of old, not given to many words; and there is a certain vague sadness in his eyes and in the lines about his mouth, as if the events of the last twelve months had left their mark upon him.

"Well, Sir Frederic, the time approaches," says Lady Rookwell, giving him her hand; and it is noticeable that she does not address him in the tone of half sarcasm, half satire, which used to come into her voice in the old time; there is more of respect in her manner, but not less of liking.

"Yes," he says, quietly, taking out his watch, "they will be here very soon now. I think everything is ready; I have just ridden through the street, and seen the arch; the ringers are in their places. Perhaps it would be as well to send the carriage to the station; better early than late. I am glad it is such a magnificent day. The old place looks well."

And his eyes wander over the noble front.

"Yes, thanks in a great measure to you," says Lady Rookwell. "I am sure Delamere will be very grateful to you for all you have done. If he had been here himself the estate could not have been better managed, or so well; you do understand how to run an estate, Sir Frederic—I'll say that for you."

"Thanks," he says, and he does not blush as he would have done a few months ago. "I have done my best, as I promised; I am sorry the task was not a harder one."

"Well, you have done all that was to be done, even to the last moment. But come in now and wait for them. I don't ask you to sit still; for none of us can do that—we must keep moving about—but come and be restless."

He hesitates a moment, then he looks at her steadily.

"Thanks; but I am going away now."

"Going away! Where?" demands her ladyship, sharply.

"To London," he says. "My train starts a few minutes before theirs arrives."

"Oh, Sir Frederic!" murmurs Laura, who fully understands his motives,

indignation, while tears of sympathy for him glitter in her eyes.

Lady Rookwell grins.

"Hotty totty!" she says, fixing her piercing gaze on the beautiful face, "Sir Frederic has found a pretty champion! He! he!" and she laughs. "Did I wound his tender heart? Well, then, you shall stop and comfort him," and utterly regardless of the beauty's indignation she goes off.

Sir Frederic takes his horse to the stables; the carriage, now all ready, stands in the yard waiting to start, and Archie runs down the steps and climbs eagerly on to the box.

"Off with you!" says Sir Frederic, with a smile. "Lucky young dog, you will see them first!"

As he turns to enter the house, the rector and his wife appear. The rector, sleek and smiling, shakes hands with Sir Frederic.

"Ah—happy day this, Sir Frederic! What a touching sight it is to see a contented peasant gathered together to—ahem!—welcome their lord and master from—ahem!—his sojourn in distant countries. I trust to see my dear niece, the countess, in possession of perfect health. It has been a trying time for my dear friend, the earl."

"Ah, we have been so anxious," murmurs Mrs. Podswell. "The dear countess—she always speaks of Signa as the countess, and generally manages to bring the little in twice as many times as there's occasion for in the course of her allusions to her—the dear countess wrote us a beautiful letter. What she must have suffered! We don't quite understand yet what really occurred," she adds, with sharp curiosity, but Sir Frederic does not rise to the bait.

"I daresay she'll tell you," he says. "Your friends, Lady Rookwell and Miss Derwent are inside," and Aunt Amelia, with a sniff, passed on, balked and disappointed.

And now the time is getting short indeed. The crowds at the railway station and the arch grow thicker, and give notice of the approaching train—the railway signal is mistrusted by the simple village folk—pass the word along that the special train has left the last station.

A hum and murmur of expectant excitement runs through the throng, and the station-master, with a great white rose in the button of his best coat, donned for the occasion, comes out and shouts:

"It's a comin'!"

In the saloon carriage of the approaching train, Delamere and his wife look out upon the familiar scenery. With her hand fast clasped to her chest, Hector points out the white towers of the Grange as they glide into sight.

"Near home, my darling," he says quietly.

She rises and leans over him.

"Dear old Northwell! How glad, oh how glad I am to see you again! Look at the sea! Here the Look Tower is St. Clare, and Whitfield's boat-house. And there is the little bay where first—where first we met, you and I. Oh, the past is all a dream, and this is reality. Oh, how glad I am to be back amongst it all, Hector!"

"Well," he says, watching her and delighting in her delight, "I would never leave this spot. And, after all, why should we?"

"But what is to become of the other places—the castle in Scotland and the house in town?" he says with a smile.

"Let them all be," she says, fervently. "Here, in this beautiful place, I know more of happiness than in all the world beside. Ah! if you were a woman—"

"Well, if I were a woman," he asks, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"You would love the place you were the happiest in."

"Then I shall love, and I do love this," he says. "But sit down, darling; the air is cold, for all the sunlight. Let me put these furs round you. So," and he draws the soft sables round her white throat. For times have changed, and he has resumed his old duty of looking after her. Not that she seems to require much looking after, for, although the face is somewhat pale, there is health in it, and in the bright eyes that shine like violets with the dew upon them.

"I hope Archie will come to the station to meet us," she says, nestling close to him in her costly furs. "I wonder whether he has grown? I shall be quite jealous of Laura; all his letters are full of her. Are you tired, dear?" and her eyes grow anxious in a moment.

He laughs, and puts his arm round her.

"Tired! I wonder how long it will be before you lose the idea that I am an invalid," he says. "Why, you require a great deal more nursing than I do! You nearly killed yourself in nursing me, and you still keep it up, though the sharpest pang I feel now are the pangs of hunger. My dear, you will find me riding to hounds before the week is out if this weather lasts. By the way, that reminds me; I must see after the hunt; we must do our duty, you know."

"Our duty, yes!" assents Signa, eagerly. "Hector, dear!"

"Well?"

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It is so unexpected that Signa drops her veil to hide the sudden crimson that covers her face, but some one in the middle of the crowd shouts, "Three cheers for her ladyship!" and as the cheers rise, she, with true instinct raises her veil and bows her head in acknowledgment, while her arm trembles within Hector's.

The crowd follows them respectfully but eagerly to the carriage, and when the horses, rather startled by the noise, plunge forward, the crowd runs after it.

Archie jumps on Signa's lap, and nestles amongst the costly babies, with his arms round her neck.

"What a long, long time you have been away!" he says, excitedly. "I thought you were never coming back—and I have missed you so! And is Hector really better?" turning to look at him and snatch at his hand. "I wanted to come out to you, wherever it was, but there was no one to take me! I shouldn't have been afraid to go alone, and I told 'em so. And it's such a beautiful—but I wasn't to tell you! You'll see it directly—there!" and he flings himself at the window and claps his hands, as the triumphal arch appears in view.

"Hector!" exclaims Signa, with child-like delight, and a little breathless with excitement. "Oh, how good and thoughtful of them! It is beautiful! Archie, dear!"

"Isn't it?" he assents, joyously. "And they've been at work such a time on it, and Sir Frederic helped; he"

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draw it on paper first, and built up some of it himself."

Signa glances at her husband quickly.

"It was very kind of Sir Frederic," she says, with sweet gravity. "Oh!" and she breaks off with a little cry. "Look at the people, Hector; all Northwell must be there!"

"There!" shrieks Archie; "there are the bells! I was listening for them! Isn't it grand? Signa, it is like the queen coming in, isn't it?"

Before she can reply, there rises a ringing cheer, followed by a storm of quick hurrahs, and the horses crowd and suddenly stop. Lord Delamere looks out gravely, but with a pleased light in his eyes. Not for himself is he gratified, but for his darling.

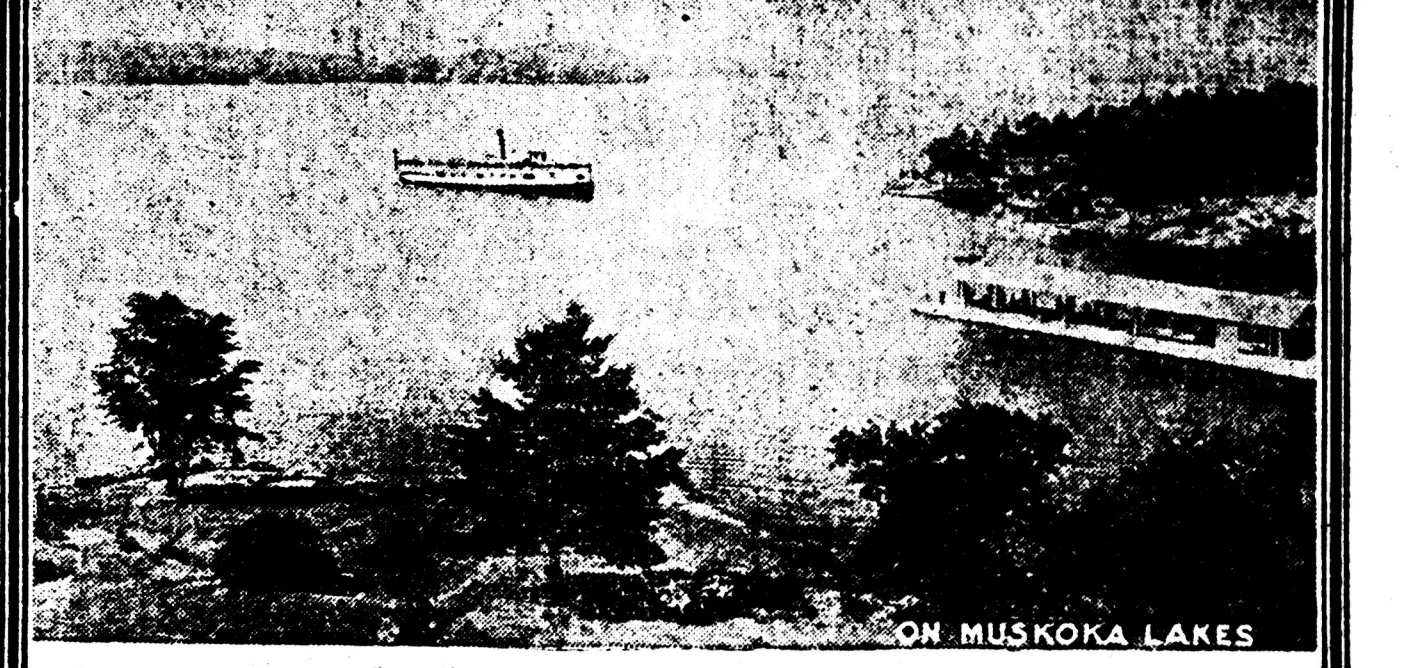
With a sudden impulse he rises, and touching the spring of the hood causes it to fall back, and converts it into an open carriage, and still standing, takes off his hat.

"Signa," whispers Archie, in a frenzy of delight, "he's going to speak to them."

(To be continued.)

Give the hustler half a chance, and he will take all of it.

Hunting Ground of Hurons Now Favored Holiday Haunt



The regions pictured here are in the Highlands of Ontario, and were the hunting grounds of the Hurons before the ships of Spain turned to the westward from Palos. The Hurons selected in these Highlands of Ontario some of the loveliest districts in Canada. The scenic beauties, the health giving atmosphere and the excellent fishing are now attracting a steadily growing army of visitors. One day's journey from most of the large centres places the traveller in Muskoka, Lake of Bays or Algonquin Park, and the Grand Trunk lines thread the territory in such a manner that every point is made easy of access. From the train you may visit the sporting stores and then launch out into the deep woods by canoe. Whole families now spend their vacations camping in Algonquin Park. Fleets of steamers give service over the Muskoka Lakes and the Lake of Bays. While these districts have lost none of their primitive loveliness every form of recreation has been provided, including golf links for the devotees of the royal and ancient game. There are modern hotels for the lover of social life and quiet spots for those who wish to be near the heart of nature, while in Algonquin Park log cabin camp hotels have been constructed back from the beaten paths of travel, which combine primitive surroundings with the comforts found in hotels in large cities.



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