

SERIAL STORY

The Real Agatha



By Edith Huntington Mason
Pictures by Neil Walters, Fred Campbell, Aleksei Wilson

SYNOPSIS.

Lord Wilfred Vincent and Archibald Terhune are introduced at the opening of the story, in England, the latter relating the tale. The pair on an outing miss their train and seeking recreation meet "the Honorable Agatha Wyckhoff." Her hand is much sought after, because of her wealth. On visiting the Wyckhoff castle they are introduced to two other girls, both known as Agatha Wyckhoff. At dinner three other Agathas Wyckhoffs are introduced and the plot revealed. The deceased step-father, in an eccentric moment, made his will so that the real Agatha, heiress to his fortune and the castle at Wyke, England, might wed her affinity. Thus Mrs. Armistead, chaperon, was in duty bound to keep the real Agatha's identity unknown and suitors were invited to tryout for the hand of the heiress. An attempt by Terhune to gather a clew from the chaperon fails. Vincent shows liking for the chaperon's secretary, Miss Marsh.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

My new knowledge, while it robbed the affair of its piquant mystery—for I had decided that Agatha Sixth was in truth the real Honorable Agatha—made my game even more exciting, now that the stakes were assured. I read with Agatha Sixth, walked with her, talked with her, and played chess with her all the first week; and as nearly as I could make out Vincent's program ran something like this: Before breakfast he took a horseback ride with Agatha Fifth; after breakfast he played golf with Agatha First; tennis with Agatha Third; and took Agatha Second out sketching. In the afternoon Agatha Fourth played Chopin to him by the hour. Agatha Sixth he had not approached, fearing me, as was natural. In the evening he played games with them all or retired into the library with Agatha Fifth, who seemed to have lost her head over him completely.

This program he repeated day after day with reckless lack of generalship and yet every now and then, to my surprise and disgust, I caught him deep in his unfortunate flirtation with Mrs. Armistead's secretary. It wasn't fair to the poor girl, and I told Vincent so plainly. We were sitting on the low stone balustrade of the castle—Vincent in riding clothes and looking as fine a lad as any in old England. He was waiting for Agatha Fifth to go riding with him, although it was later than usual, all of us having breakfasted. For myself, I wore my tennis things, which become me greatly. If I do say it, for I intended to play a set with those tennis fanatics, Agatha Second and Agatha Third, as the aristocratic Agatha Sixth was a late riser and had not yet come downstairs.

"No, Vincent," I said, "it won't do. Flirt with all the Agathas, if you must, but when it comes to the secretary, let her alone. To say nothing of what is due her, think of the time you're wasting. We have only six weeks—think of it—six weeks to make a try for twenty millions of dollars!"

"You forgot to say that a wife goes along with the filthy lucre," he said, and somehow I felt uncomfortable. Vincent has a faculty for making one feel uncomfortable. It makes me quite angry—he's no better than the rest of us, but he's so confoundedly innocent about some things.

I was going to explain to him that he needn't speak as if he thought that I were the sort of a man to marry a girl merely for her money—when his face lighted and he spoke more rationally. "God," he said, "what a rare lark it would be to toss up a coin and take a chance at it. Six to one only—you'd have a good show to win out!"

match! I can just see how tickled he'd be to have his youngsters so well provided for. The dear old governor! And Vincent's eyes moistened. "So you see," he went on hurriedly, "Miss Marsh's attitude toward me is entirely friendly. She is merely the confidante of my difficulties of the heart, and her taste, I find, is excellent."

"It is also changeable," I said dryly. "If the course you have been pursuing is through advice of hers." Vincent smiled. "And then you know," he went on, ignoring my thrust, "she's writing a very interesting book, the history of the barons of Wyckhoff, and I'm helping her. I'm awfully interested in genealogy, you know."

This was true. Incongruous as it may seem, Vincent's one serious hobby—I don't consider his paint-dabbling serious—which had to do with research and scholarship, was his love for things ancient in general, and family trees in particular. It had been Baroness Wyckhoff's wish that some review of the lives of the barons of that name should be made, since the last one had died, and Mrs. Armistead had given her secretary this work to do. I eyed Vincent searchingly as he spoke, but his face was so thoroughly unconscious that my suspicions were disarmed completely.

"Yes," he said, "there are a lot of very interesting old books in that library."

"Yes," I said, "that's why you and Miss Marsh spend so much time there, I suppose. I'm glad to hear it. I really couldn't see what you thought was so attractive—" A sharp blow in the chest interrupted my speech.

"Shut up," Vincent hissed in my ear; "don't you see Miss Marsh?"

As he spoke that young person tripped lightly up the wide stone steps of the veranda and was about to pass on when Vincent stopped her.

"Good morning," he said, his hat in his hand. "Are you beginning work so early?" and he looked at the papers carried under her arm.

"Yes," she said, "I have a new idea about that last chapter we wrote."

"I'm sorry I can't be with you this morning," he answered, and she passed

into the house. She wore a white frock and a natty little blue apron, and I must admit looked very fresh and dainty, but Wilfred's tone was so cool and conventional that I mentally freed him again from my accusation that he was in the midst of a warm flirtation, though you will agree with me that appearances had been very much against him.

But that evening when he and I were having our nightly bedroom colloquy I was obliged to admit that Vincent, considering his methods, had accomplished a great deal. With some embarrassment he related to me the tale of his horseback ride in the morning, and I must say it completely unsettled my belief in the discovery I had made as to the identity of the real Honorable Agatha Wyckhoff. Neither Vincent nor I knew what to make of it.

"Do you know, Arch," he said, striding up and down my room. "I've been through a horrible experience to-day? It was an awful shock to me, and a lesson."

"I'm glad it was a lesson," said I. There are so few lessons in Vincent's life. "Yes," he said, "I felt like a beastly cad. And I don't see what I've done to deserve it. Of course, I've held her hand a couple of times—" "That had habit of yours again," I murmured. "And I've looked at her a lot—she's got the most soul-moving eyes I know."

"Here he broke off and went into a rhapsody over the sky-line and the grazing sheep, and said something about Utopia and Eden and other things like that, until he got through at last and came to the interesting part. They can't help going on like that, those artist fellows, and Vincent never loses an opportunity to get in a bit of description."

"Well," he continued, "I was just enjoying that view and saying nothing, when she stopped switching the tops of the harebells with her crop and, turning those warm hazel eyes of hers on me, she said in a low voice, as if what she said didn't matter at all, 'I love you!'"

"What!" I shouted. "She didn't?" "She did," asserted Vincent ruefully, but with firmness—"She did. Just like that, out of a clear sky. Simply folded her hands and looked at me and told me she loved me."

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!" I ejaculated. Nothing else seemed adequate. "What under the sun did you do?"

"Why, I told her simply that I didn't love her, and couldn't marry her, and I was very sorry, but I thought we'd better get on our horses and go home."

"Quite right, if you don't really care," I said, "but oh, Vincent!" as a thought struck me, "just think, she might have been the Honorable Agatha—the real and only honorable!"

"She was!" said Vincent. "I was speechless. This was the end of it, then. I saw the millions taking unto themselves wings, and my pan of milk spilled. The real Honorable Agatha had been discovered, the secret was out, but she had avowed herself as loving Vincent and he had spurned her. After such a performance there was no chance for either of us."

"How do you know she was?" I asked, weakly.

"She told me so herself," he answered. "But after you refused her, I suppose?"

"Of course," said Vincent, resignedly.

"But, Wilfred, my boy," I cried, springing up, and knocking off my glasses in my excitement, "couldn't you change your mind, couldn't you fix it up? If she really cared I should think you could!"

Though this event would have proved the deathblow to my own hopes, still my interest in Vincent's welfare is so genuine that I couldn't help this anxious expostulation. But again he misunderstood.

"You don't mean that, I know, Arch," he said. "Of course I wouldn't marry the girl when I really don't care for her. But wasn't it the deuce of a position to be in?"

"Oh, Wilfred, Wilfred!" I mourned, "twenty millions right in your grasp, and you threw them away. I wish I'd had your chance. Your poor father, how disappointed he'd be if he knew."

"He'd be more disappointed in me if I had changed my mind and said I would marry her just for the sake of the money," said the young man, crossly, and turning on his heel he left the room. Vincent's getting more quick tempered every day lately, and he used to be so good natured. I'm sure it was only natural and very disinterested in me to bewail for him the result of the unfortunate affair that morning.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WHEN ONE DOES BEST WORK.

Time Varies with the Occupations of the Worker.

The records give an average age of 50 for the performance of the master work. For the workers the average is 47 and for the thinkers 52. Chemists and physicians average the youngest at 41; dramatists and playwrights, poets and inventors follow at 44; novelists give an average of 46; explorers and warriors, 47; musical composers and actors, 48; artists and divines occupy the position of equilibrium at 50; essayists and reformers stand at 51; physicians and surgeons line up with statesmen at 52; philosophers give an average of 54; astronomers and mathematicians, satirists and humorists reach 56; historians, 57, and naturalists and jurists 58. As may be noted, there is a rearrangement of the order at this time, but the thinkers, as before, and as would naturally be expected, attain their full maturity at a later period than the workers. The corollary is evident. Provided health and optimism remain the man of 50 can command success as readily as the man of 30. Health plus optimism read the secret of success; the one God-given, the other inborn, but also capable of cultivation to the point of enthusiasm.—Century.

Bernhardt's Wonderful Wig. Speaking of Sarah Bernhardt's performance as Eleonore in "The Courtesan of Corinth," the Paris correspondent of a Berlin paper says: "And the wig—who will describe it? We know that it was made in London by the man who has no superior in the business. We know also that Bernhardt insisted on the maker coming to Paris with his handwork in order that he might adjust it properly, because, she says, 'the best wig, when improperly placed, is only a wig, while artistic adornment makes it part of the person who wears it.' He came and received—shall we believe it?—1,000 marks for his trouble. But it was worth it to the actress and to the audience, for it gave Bernhardt the appearance of being a woman of 30—she is really a little older."

Hired Help in Argentina. Male servants in the Argentine capital get 66 cents to \$2.20 gold a day and female help 40 cents to \$1.10.

OPEN DEALING IN PAINT.

Buying paint used to be like the proverbial buying of a "pig in a poke." Mixtures in which chalk, ground rock, etc., predominated were marked and sold as "Pure White Lead," the deception not being apparent until the paint and the painting were paid for. This deception is still practiced, but we have learned to expose it easily.

National Lead Company, the largest makers of genuine Pure White Lead, realizing the injustice that was being done to both property owners and honest paint manufacturers, set about to make paint buying safe. They first adopted a trade mark, the now famous "Dutch-Boy Painter," and put this trademark, as a guaranty of purity, on every package of their White Lead. They then set about familiarizing the public with the blow-pipe test by which the purity and genuineness of White Lead may be determined, and furnished a blow-pipe free to every one who would write them for it. This action was in itself a guaranty of the purity of National Lead Company's White Lead.

As the result of this open dealing the paint buyer to-day has only himself to blame if he is defrauded. For test outfit and valuable booklet on painting, address National Lead Company, Woodbridge Bldg., New York.

QUITE SAFE WITH HER.

One Secret "Tootsie" Surely Never Would Pass Along.

"John, love," said the young wife, "you oughtn't to have any secrets from me."

"Well, Tootsie?"

"You go to lodge meetings, and you never tell me anything about them."

"They wouldn't interest you, dear. I don't mind giving you the password, though, if you'll promise never to disclose it to a living soul."

"I'll promise never to tell it to anybody."

"Remember it's to be repeated only once and very rapidly."

"I'll remember. What is it?"

"Aldaborontophosphorosticos."

"What! Please say it again, a little slower."

"Have you forgotten the conditions already? I said 'only once and very rapidly.'"

(Tearful pause.)

"O, dear! I wish you hadn't told me!"

European News Disseminators.

A French statistician calculates that there is one newspaper published for every 82,000 inhabitants of the known world. In Europe, Germany heads the list with 5,500 newspapers, of which 800 are published daily. England comes next, 3,000 newspapers, of which 809 are "dailies," and then comes France, with 2,819 newspapers, of which only one-fourth are daily or published twice or thrice a week. Italy comes fourth, with 1,400 papers, and is followed by Austria-Hungary, Spain, Russia, Greece and Switzerland, the last having 450 newspapers. Altogether, Europe has about 20,000 newspapers.

India's Savings Banks.

The postal savings bank of India was established in 1882, in which year the depositors numbered 39,121 and the deposits amounted to \$32,243. In 1907 the depositors numbered 1,190,220 and the deposits amounted to \$49,223,283, which, perhaps, should not be considered large in a country having a population of some 300,000,000, but the average Indian farmer, mechanic, servant or laborer never deposits money in a bank, but hides it away in a pot or box in the ground.—New York World.

A Double Miso.

Cittman—Now that you're living in the country don't you miss the early morning noise and bustle of the city? Suburbs—I do if I miss the 6:54 train.—New York Press.

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