

SWINGING ON THE GATE.

I can see a picture painted. I can smell the drying hay
Where the busy mowers rattle through the lazy summer's day;
I can see the hungry plowboy wading through the billowed corn,
With expectant ear to windward, listening to the dinner horn;
While unconscious of necessity, the future or of fate,
I make wondrous childish journeys as I swing upon the gate.

Strange how back among the many recollections of the past
Memory will grope and wander till it brings to us at last
Some poor, foolish, fond remembrance, seeming hardly worth the while,
Yet somehow made wondrous potent, like a tender passing smile,
Fleeting, gone, and soon forgotten—yet remembered by and by
With a swelling in the bosom and a dimming of the eye.

Now my temples fast are graying and my eyes have sober grown
With the years of varied happiness and sorrow I have known;
Still I sometimes hear the echo, when the evening lights are low,
And without my darkened casement ghostly breezes eerie blow,
Of the friendly, rusty rattle of the latchet as when late
In the hazy, lazy summer time we swung upon the gate.

—Lowell Otus Reese, in Leslie's Weekly.

HE ASKED HER FIRST.

"HE must marry somebody," said her mother.

"I don't see why she shouldn't refuse them both, if she wants to," said her father.

The girl proceeded with her breakfast calmly. She had endured the arguments of her excellent parents on the subject of her matrimonial future for several weeks. Indeed, they were much more disturbed about it than she was herself. Being pretty, a trifle spoiled, thoroughly healthy, and essentially feminine, she was in a delightful state of indecision.

Jack was everything that an ideal lover should be—reasonably good-looking, absolutely devoted to her, a demon at all games, and entirely lacking the most elementary notion of financial prudence.

Monty, in his own peculiar way, was almost as suitable. If he wasn't handsome, he was the best dressed man in Belsize Park, which is saying a great deal; he played no game, except "bridge," which he had reduced to a fine art; and his financial condition was literally glittering.

Jack appealed to the romantic side of her character, and had the support of her father; Monty appealed to her prudence, and had the support of her mother.

"You will have to make up your mind directly," said her mother.

"I am afraid I can't, mother," said the girl, helping herself to toast cheerfully. "It is so tiresome."

"If I were a girl, I shouldn't hesitate five minutes," said her father, meaning Jack.

"No more should I," said her mother, meaning Monty.

"I think I shall accept the one who asks first," said the girl, handing in her cup for a second edition of coffee.

"Don't be wicked," said her mother. "Not a bad notion," remarked her father, reflecting that he could wire to Jack, and give him a hint.

"You don't mean what you say," said her mother thoughtfully.

Of course, she hadn't meant it, but having said it, she began to think that she did. "Why not?" she said. "I suppose I must be a duffer, but I don't know my own mind a bit. Monty represents a carriage and furs, and—ah—I really think I should look rather jolly in furs. Not clipped rabbit skins, you know, but real furs."

Her mother nodded approval. "You are a girl who wants to be well dressed," she said.

Mr. Bush looked at his daughter doubtfully. "What does Jack represent?" he asked.

She pouted. "I don't quite know," she said. "I think he represents everything that's jolly except the carriage and furs. That's what is so aggravating. If I could only take a little bit of each, it would be all right. I don't feel a scrap like a girl always does in books. I simply don't know what I want, and I shall accept the one who asks me first, because I like them both very much, and—and I dare say it will be all right."

Her parents shook their heads at her recklessness, quite forgetful that if they had not been so urgent, the girl would have been able to make up her mind without assistance.

"Shocking," said Mr. Bush, and he made up his mind to send off a wire to his favorite as soon as he reached the city. "Jack must cut up here this morning, and get it over," he reflected. "It's only a kindness to her to save her from that snob."

His wife popped on her bonnet as soon as he had left the house, and stepped round to the nearest telephone call office. "I must give Monty a hint," she said. "Margaret will thank me some day for saving her from poverty."

Happily ignorant of the steps her parents had taken, Margaret set about

her little round of household duties. At 11 o'clock Mr. Winterflood came to tune the piano. He had wrestled with the drawing room piano, once a quarter, for fifteen years, and the little old man, with his red pocket handkerchief and black bag, was a particular favorite of Margaret's. Her mother, having learnt on the telephone that the glittering Monty would arrive soon after 11, was anxious to send the old fellow away, but Margaret wouldn't hear of it.

"Suppose somebody calls," said the older lady, not daring to tell the truth. "Nobody is at all likely to call," said the girl lightly.

So Mr. Winterflood proceeded to his irritating task, tapping note after note in a vain attempt to adjust an instrument on which a certain healthy young lady delighted to play comic opera with the loud pedal down.

Margaret sat by his side. "It gets worse and worse," said the old man, sadly. "Some of the notes in the bass are almost dumb."

At that moment Mrs. Bush entered the room with an expansive smile of triumph on her face. "Monty has called, and wants to see you particularly," she said.

"Monty?" said her daughter with a frown. "What brings him here?" Then she remembered with a start her reckless words at the breakfast table, and her heart sank.

"If you are a wise girl you will seize the chance," said her mother; then she added piously, "but I don't wish to persuade you. I think you said you intended to accept the one who asked you first."

The girl sighed, and swept rather angrily out of the room. It was really too bad to have one's words taken up like that. She didn't want to accept any one just now. Whoever heard of a man proposing before lunch?

She found the glittering youth in the library. His attire was as nearly perfect as the most expensive tailor could make it, but it was easy to see he was nervous.

"What a funny time to call," said the young lady rather rudely, but she was not in a gracious humor. "I thought you were busy in the city at this time in the morning."

"So I am as a rule," he said with a somewhat vapid smile. "But I had a telephone message—"

"Of course, it's awfully nice of you to look in," she said hastily. "You didn't come to the concert last night?" "No," he stammered. "The fact is I understood that you—you were going with some one else."

The young lady frowned. It was rather a sore point. Jack had promised to take her and he had not turned up, so that she had been obliged to go with her parents. Monty had unconsciously scored one, and her mind reverted to the furs.

"I wanted to ask you something," he began.

"I'm just going shopping," she said with sudden energy. "You can come too if you like, and then you can ask me as we go along." With true feminine procrastination she was trying to postpone the evil moment, for she had an insane feeling that she would have to keep her word, and accept him if he succeeded in asking her the question.

"I want to know, if—"

"What about umbrellas?" she asked severely. "Is it likely to rain?"

"I don't think so," he said. "The question I was going—"

"Of course, yes, you were going to ask me a question," she said sweetly. "Now, isn't it funny? Whenever people ask me questions, I always give the wrong answer."

Her eyes were sparkling with excitement. She had obstinately made up her mind that if he succeeded in proposing, and forced her to give an an-

swer, it should be 'yes.' She had also decided that she didn't want to say 'yes,' but didn't quite know why she objected. So she was fencing for her life, and wondered why Jack didn't happen to look in, or a chimney catch fire, or indeed anything happen to save her from her own obstinate folly.

Without giving him a chance to say a word, she chattered on. And all the time she was chattering she was thinking and trying to reconcile herself to the inevitable. But the more she looked at him, the less alluring became the prospect of a carriage and furs. She noticed that his forehead was both narrow and low, and though she had not much brain herself, as she reflected, she liked it in other people. Besides that, his watch chain troubled her. Why did he wear such a very heavy one?

"But I can't stand here listening to you," she said at last, when she found her breath was giving out. "You are such a chatterbox, Monty. I'll go and pop on my hat, and we'll go out."

"But I haven't asked you my question?" he gasped, and in sheer desperation he placed his back to the door.

"Oh, dear, how slow you are," she said. "If it's about the dance—"

"It isn't about the dance," he stammered. "It's about you. I—I want you to marry me."

Nothing could have been more awkward than his proposal, but it reduced her to a state of despair.

The piano tuning was going on solemnly. Tap—tap—tap, went the notes, followed by a grand flourish of chords. Then tap—tap—tap, again.

"Why?" she asked, argumentatively.

"Why—what?" he gasped, blinking his little eyes in a bewildered way.

"I really must call at the butcher's," she said, jumping at the chance for delay given by his indecision.

"But—will you?"

"You mean, marry you?" she asked demurely. "You don't give me time to think."

"I'm awfully fond of you, and—and all that sort of thing," he said, eagerly. "We should be tremendously jolly, and—all that sort of thing. The governor says I can draw up to \$5,000 a year out of the business for a start, and—things would be ripping."

She looked at him desperately. What was she to do? She began to feel for some queer reason that to accept him was almost impossible, but she had given her foolish little word.

Then a bright idea struck her. Perhaps he would let her off.

"Suppose I don't love you," she said.

"That doesn't matter a bit," he said cheerfully. "If you will promise to marry me, I expect I shall make you love me in time. I am—oh, lord, what a beastly row that piano-tuner is making."

"Perhaps it would be better to talk it over another morning," she suggested.

"No, no, tell me now," he said. The piano tuning had suddenly ceased, and he was dashing at the subject bravely. "I'm awfully fond of you, Margaret. The fact is you—you have fairly bowled me over. I can't say exactly what I mean, because I am not much of a hand at talking, and all that sort of thing, but—"

There was a gentle knock at the door, and Monty muttered something under his breath which no British printer would set up in type.

It was little Mr. Winterflood who entered.

"Good morning, miss," he said. "I hope I haven't disturbed you."

"Not at all," she said, beaming with pleasure.

"Oh, I found something of yours in the piano," said the little man.

"Something of mine?"

"Yes, it's a letter. No wonder the bass notes were nearly dumb. Good morning, miss."

She took the envelope, and tore it open. It was addressed to her in Jack's handwriting.

"Dear Maggie"—it ran—"I expect you'll be wild with me for not turning up to take you to the concert. But I have been summoned into the country by telegram. Uncle Tom is seriously ill, probably dying, and has asked to see me. I leave Euston to-night, and have just dashed in here hoping to catch you, but too late. I shan't be back for two or three days at the soonest. Good-bye, dear little girl, or rather au revoir. This is my birthday, and I made up my mind a long time ago that I would ask you to-day to share my lot. Will you be my wife? There! at last, I have summoned up my courage. When I come back I will try to tell you how much I love you. Good-bye, once more.—Jack. I am leaving this on the top of the piano, so that you will find it in the morning. Wait for me, Maggie. Don't promise yourself to any one else, until I have told you all I mean."

For some inscrutable reason that letter cleared the way. She knew exactly what her answer was. She knew, not only who she did not want to marry, but whom she must marry, unless she wanted to be a miserable woman for the rest of her life.

"Is it settled?" asked her mother, after Monty had gone.

"Quite," she said. "I kept my word, and have accepted the one who asked me first. Jack came last night. There's his letter."—Montreal Family Herald.

PLAN TO EXCHANGE BABIES.

Clearing-House by Which Different Nationalities Are Traded.

One of the curious things now current in Europe is the scheme of a Frenchman named Michael Breal, broached as long ago as 1886, and which is being again taken up.

It consists of a wholesale exchange, a swapping of children from one family to another.

Here is a Parisian father in modest estate, with a son. This man has an ambition that his child shall have a thorough knowledge of German. The proper thing would be to place the child in some German family for a while. But the difficulty for the father is to discover just the right sort of family—one who would receive the child, and, above all, one who had a child to swap. The Parisian father would be spending no extra money in housing the German child and teaching it French, while his own was eating at a German table. Meanwhile two nations were understanding each other better. It was a splendid scheme, if only it could be carried out.

What was needed was a baby broker, as it were, an exchange, a clearing house for children, an agency to keep tab of families willing to swap children and to engineer the swap. A man named Toni Mathieu saw the chance, and improved it during the vacation period last year. He had prejudices to overcome. After a deal of letter writing he won the indispensable, not to say inevitable, sanction of college professors, of great authors, prominent lawyers and members of Parliament.

He even succeeded in placing an order for five children on trial. He devoted a whole year to booming the enterprise. And it was heart-breaking work. He would win the approval of a lot of English or German or Scandinavian families, only to find in his own land no readiness to trade. And yet, in spite of everything, he has succeeded in a measure. The scheme is working and Mr. Mathieu has decided to found a society and push the idea for all it is worth.

An elaborate system of correspondence has been drawn up already. There is a precautionary exchange of photographs first and a severe cross-examination of all concerned. The closing details of the railroad journey, under suitable escorts in the case of girls, are easily looked after by the exchange.

LIVING RENT FREE IN LONDON.

Unscrupulous Persons Who Take Advantage of the Law's Delay.

Many people in London make a business of living rent free. "It is almost incredible," said the head of a large firm of house agents the other day, "the number of persons who never pay rent from one year's end to another."

"The method is, either by bogus references or by impressing a sense of their good faith on a house agent, to obtain the lease of a house, most frequently over £50 a year in rent, and when the landlord applies for his rent to defy him. When he attempts to eject them by legal process they stay until the very last day the law allows, and then clear out bag and baggage, and start the same operation elsewhere. As they always furnish on the hire system, distraint is of no service to the landlord."

Their object of taking houses of a rental over £50 is to get above the jurisdiction of the County Court, which is more summary in its methods than the high court.

To a smaller extent the delay involved in ejection by County Court action is also taken advantage of by exploiters of the law's delays, but these methods are not so impudent as that of "jumping" a house, which is sometimes adopted.

Not long ago a house owner, on looking through his morning paper, observed that a man who had been charged with assault was reported to live at one of his houses, which he had supposed to have been vacant for twelve months. On investigation he found that it was occupied by a tenant, who refused to clear out.

The usual legal form had to be gone through, and it was a month before the landlord got possession. Similar cases have happened where the "jumper" has gone the length of taking in lodgers, or even of selling the house.

Landlords sometimes prefer to buy a tenant out rather than invoke legal process, and a quicker procedure for ejection than the courts allow would be welcomed by landlords and house agents.—London Express.

No More than Right.

"I'd like to have your check for that little midnight supper I served at your house last month," said the caterer.

"You'll have to wait until I get the doctor's bill for curing me of indigestion," replied the victim. "That comes off your bill."—Philadelphia Press.

There is one consolation for the girl whose parents can't afford to send her to college: she would probably look like blazes in a cap and gown anyway.

Popular Science.

At a recent meeting of the Camera Club in London, Dr. E. F. Gruen described his new fluid lens, designed especially for making photographs with short exposures in ordinary night illumination. Fluid lenses were originally employed to overcome the difficulty of chromatic aberration before the combination of flint and crown glass was invented. Dr. Gruen employs them for their "photographic rapidity." They also possess extraordinary depth of focus. Good results were obtained with snap-shots in various theaters with the ordinary stage illumination, and even kinematograph pictures of stage scenes were made without special lighting. It is hoped that lenses of this description will greatly widen the field of photography.

According to a writer in Mines and Minerals, there are in use in some deep mines wire ropes, or cables, only a few inches in diameter and a mile long, on the ends of which hang buckets, or platforms, by which miners are let down into or hoisted from the bowels of the earth with a speed greater than that of the average railroad train. In many cases these long cables form the only means of communication between the bottom of the mine and the surface of the earth. In some cases the weight of the cable greatly exceeds that of the material to be carried, and the problem of making it sufficiently flexible to be wound on drums requires the highest skill for its solution. Long cables are made tapering, so that the cross-section increases with the amount wound off.

The recent German South Polar expedition added much to our knowledge of the antarctic continent. It showed that the westerly shore of that mysterious land descends steeply into a deep sea, and that it is occupied by a volcanic formation. The inland ice covering the continent is regarded as without doubt the most extensive glacial area now in existence on the earth. It presents a picture of the ice age which once prevailed in northern America and Europe. Evidence was found that in former times the antarctic ice extended even farther than it does to-day. Large marine mammals and flocks of rare birds were found frequenting the coasts, and German scientific enthusiasm found gratification in the study even of the microscopic bacteria dwelling in that far cold land.

The earnestness with which the problem of mechanical flight is being attacked is attested by the elaborate equipment of the "laboratory of aerodynamics" recently erected at the Catholic University of America. Among the apparatus is a wooden tunnel fifty feet long with a cross-section of six square feet, in which a wind of any desired speed can be generated by means of a suction-fan placed at one end of the tunnel. In the wind current thus developed are placed objects of a great variety of kinds and shapes, whose resistances, lift, drift, surface friction, etc., are to be determined. A pressure gauge that can be read to less than one ten-millionth of an atmosphere is used to determine the pressure at all points in the stream of air. The object is to furnish trustworthy data for calculations in aeronautics.

Poplar Trees as Lightning Rods.

In Holland the Lombardy poplar is often used as a lightning rod, and is planted near haystacks and isolated farm houses. This poplar has the habit of growing nearly vertical, with the branches in an upright position; as soon as the rain falls the water runs along the branches and forms along the stem a constant stream of water from the top to the ground. When lightning strikes in the vicinity, the tree being the highest object has the best chance of being hit, and when the lightning strikes the tree it finds in the stream of water which flows down the stem a safe conductor towards the ground. Of course the stream goes seldom in a straight line, and at places where the limbs join together the flow of water takes often another direction. The limb may be doomed, but the haystack is saved.

The Albatross "Coke-Walk."

Sailors visiting the island of Laysan, in the Hawaiian group, are greatly amused by the curious antics of the Laysan albatross, or gony. These birds sometimes perform, in pairs, a kind of dance, or, as the sailors call it, "coke-walk." Two albatrosses approach one another, nodding and making profound bows, cross their bills, produce snapping and growling sounds, rise on their toes, puff out their breasts, and finally part with more nodding and bowing, only to come together again and repeat the performance. Occasionally three engage at once in this singular amusement. The spectators are always impressed with the extreme "politeness" of the birds.

A church has as much trouble in discharging a preacher gracefully as the average man has in breaking off his marriage engagement.