Mining With a Feather.

Placer mining in Mongolia is a primitive process compared even with the American pioneer method of washing out gold in a pan. The Mongol—so Dr. Ferdinand Ossendowski tells us in his book Beasts, Men and Gods—lies flat on the ground, brushes the sand aside with a feather and keeps blowing into the little excavation so formed. From time to time he wets his finger and, picking up on it a small bit of grain gold or a diminutive nugget, drops it into a little bag hanging under his chin. In that way he collects about a quarter of an ounce, or five dollars' worth, of gold a day.—Youth's Companion.

Answered by Another Question.

Teacher—If one man can build a house in twelve days, six men can do it in two days.

Bright Pupil—Then if one ship crosses the ocean in six days, can six ships cross in one day?—London Answers.

Tribute to Civil Engineer.

From the standpoint of the artist, the civil engineer type represents the highest type of masculine perfection. He has the imagination to conceive and the practicality and intellect to execute his conceptions.—Emily Nicholls Hatch.

There's no hope for an old bachelor who can't induce even a widow to marry him.

The best cure for hard luck is hard work.

Matrimonial Adventures

Mrs. Redmond's Shame

BY

Maximilian Foster

Author of "The Whistling Man," "Keeping Up Appearances," "Shoestrings," "The Whirlpool," "Rich Man, Poor Man," and "The Trap."

MAXIMILIAN FOSTER

Maximilian Foster says of himself that he writes only when there is no fishing! And fishing is more than a hobby with him, for he has invented a fly that is not only a winner in snaring trout, but has equal merit in catching salmon. He will talk to you at length about the piscatorial sport, but he is most reluctant to tell you how and when he started his career as an author.

I met him first some years ago in Maine, and it took all day before I elicited the following facts:

Due to a desire to support himself by writing, he joined the newspaper world for the reason that he believed that the newspapers supplied the best experience. "The young writer," he says, "has little experience of life, but on a newspaper he not only widens his own, but gains a knowledge of other people's."

Mr. Foster's first story, 10,000 words in length and sold to the Atlantic Monthly, was written entirely at night in a newspaper office. He was doing rewrite work at the time, and would write down a page of that and then turn to a page of his own story. It was a long and laborious job, but after that first success he sold many stories to the Atlantic Monthly. He has written much fiction which appeared in the leading magazines.

Mr. Foster attributes his success to his eight years of work in the newspaper world, but he has another record. During the time we were in the great war he was United States government correspondent abroad.

"Mrs. Redmond's Shame," written expressly for the Star Author Series of Matrimonial Adventures, carries its own particular message to the married.

MARY STEWART CUTTING, JR.

It was a quarter to eight that morning—a full fifteen minutes past the usual hour—when the door of Redmond's bedrooom opened and Redmond hastily emerged. In the same haste he hurried toward the stairs. He was late, that was all there was to it—late at breakfast; and, as he reached the stairs, his eyes on the hall clock as he brisked along, his absorbed, somewhat boyish face wore on it a look of concern not unmixed with guilt.

"Dear, dear!" he clucked.

To be late at one's own breakfast table is, of course, not so heinous an offense; but, as Redmond's haste denoted, the case here was different. Time—and with it promptness—naturally concerned a woman as active and influential as Redmond's wife. At any rate, in the life, the career she had made for herself, Mrs. Redmond long had found it necessary to regulate her day to a schedule, every minute of which was actively employed. She was, in fact, that Myrta Redmond whose prominence as president of the Women's State Civic Federation was statewide, if not national; and with the demands this and her other activities made upon her, it was only reasonable that Redmond should do nothing to conflict with her appointed plans. He was, it seems, the minor official of an insurance company in the city.

An absorbed and reticent, self-effacing person, Redmond seldom if ever came in contact with his wife's official life. Even if he had, however, it's unlikely that he would have made much of an impression on her wide circle of acquaintances, her social and political associates. Among people of affairs, the selected, active set that surrounded Myrta Redmond, he would have been adjudged obscure, perhaps ineffectual—in a word, one they termed "domestic."

That, indeed, was the word. True, once in his wife's career, though it was only once, Redmond had appeared as honorary secretary of a meeting Mrs. Redmond had convened, the original appointee having succumbed at the final moment to a distressing attack of migraine. His shy embarrassment, however—his ignorance, too, of the mere fundamentals of parliamentary law—at once had betrayed his unfitness; and, propelled from one embarrassing blunder into another, the ladies, his wife's associates and herself included, had diplomatically relieved him of the place.

The hall downstairs was long and spacious. It was, in fact, in character with all the house spacious not only, but even vast. However, though there were only these two to occupy it—they, John Redmond and his wife—this, too, had its explanation. Space, or as Myrta termed it, "scope," Myrta in her active life needed naturally; and it was for this the house had been selected, a habitation suitably roomable for committee meetings, for caucuses and the like. But then, this air of largeness, of "scope," was due not entirely to the size of the structure itself; the furnishings—that, or, rather, the lack of them, accented this; and, as Redmond hastened along the hall, the sight of its present bare emptiness pricked him with another thrust of conscience, a stab. Tonight a meeting, a committee caucus, was to be held. Myrta's candidacy and her campaign for a state office were to be discussed; and already the man-of-all-work, prompt at the task, had begun to move out the chairs, the tables and other furnishings. Later, they would be replaced by rows of folding stools chartered from the local undertaker.

Redmond's concern grew more evident. He was still hurrying; but as he reached the breakfast room and stepped inside he stopped abruptly.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

The breakfast room was vacant. Mrs. Redmond was neither there, nor, as it appeared, had she already breakfasted and gone; and, staring at her empty place, Redmond's astonishment grew.

The day was one of vital importance to his wife. At 8 p. m. the caucus would be called; and from now till then every moment of her time would be taken, planning, arranging, seeing fellow members, marshaling all her forces for the night. The office she sought was that of state supervisor, the peak, the apex of all her present activities and ambitions; and, as Redmond knew too, her candidacy for the place was to be no easy victory. Already opposition had reared its head; and, his air of questioning, his astonishment growing on him, Redmond hurriedly drew out his watch.

He had made no mistake, however. It was a quarter to eight—fifteen minutes past the hour; and again Redmond shot a glance at his wife's vacant place.

He was still standing there, watch in hand and wondering, when the pantry door opened, and a gaunt, angular figure in cap and apron appeared. It was'n maid, the Redmond's waitress.

"You're late," she greeted abruptly, bluntly.

Redmond knew he was. That, however, did not concern him now. Neither was he the more concerned in the maid's brusque abruptness. Of his own choice, Redmond would have preferred a different, less thin-lipped, sere and flint-eyed Hebe to serve him his repasts; but Mrs. Redmond, naturally, had made the choice. The woman, Harriet Lipp, was a protege of hers, a fragment, in fact, of that human social-wreckage Myrta Redmond, in part with her career, made it a habit to snatch from troubled waters and relaunch again in life. The waitress, in fact, owed not only her present place to Mrs. Redmond, she owed also her liberty to her, Mrs. Redmond's influence with the state pardon board having obtained Harriet Lipp's release from a three-years' sentence in the penitentiary. As Mrs. Redmond, however, had pointed out, it was for a crime of violence, not one of ignoble meanness or stealth, for which Harriet had been committed; but of this distinction, a difference in Mrs. Redmond's view, Redmond was not thinking now.

"Where's your mistress?" he inquired.

"Upstairs," the woman answered, briefly.

The reply, too, was as blunt, as brusque as it was brief; and, his distaste of her growing, Redmond stared at the woman.

"When is Mrs. Redmond coming down?" he asked.

Harriet Lipp's air did not alter.

"She ain't," she answered, and Redmond started.

"What?"

"She's breakfasting abed," said Harriet Lipp.

"In bed?" Redmond echoed.

"Uh huh!" repeated Harriet Lipp.

Wondering, vaguely perturbed now, Redmond wandered to the table. In the same wonder he drew out a chair and seated himself, the maid watching him with hard, aggressive eyes. It was nothing new, though, that Redmond should breakfast alone. Often, in her full, active life, Mrs. Redmond was up and away even before he had come downstairs. There were days, too, often weeks, when her official duties, public affairs, called her entirely from her home. No, to be alone was nothing new. But now . . . Mrs. Redmond breakfasting in bed. That was new, yes.

A woman's trick—that breakfast in bed. It was a trick, too, a woman's trick, of a sort that Myrta heretofore would have scorned. The soft, the indulgent, the femininely feminine things popularly presumed of womankind, Mrs. Redmond instinctively and contemptuously disdained. To her they meant but one thing, a confession of sex, of the weakness a confession of sex involved. The parity of the sexes, the abolition, rather, of all sex, that was Mrs. Redmond's watchword.

"Here!" Redmond said sharply to the maid, "bring me my eggs and coffee."

He sat there, staring at his hands. Something had happened, he saw that; something visibly out of the way. Redmond, in fact, in the twelve years of his married life, had grown, if only subconsciously, too familiar with his wife's ways, her habitude, not to sense that something unusual had occurred to her. Its indications, however, were not merely the otherwise trivial circumstances of her breakfasting in bed; of late he had noted in his wife's usual calm, her somewhat complacent self-restraint, a hint of nerves, of temperament—a reaction as if she labored under some secret weight, a burden. Uneasy, now, a frown puckered on his brow. What had troubled her? he wondered, his uneasiness gaining ground.

It was rarely, if ever, now, in these later years that Mrs. Redmond confided in the man she'd married. Between the two it was as if the usual marital situation had become reversed—he, not she, the dependent; she the master hand. The change, however, if such had happened, was not just equitable; for Redmond, if he were the inferior, bent under what virtually was a double responsibility, that of the provider, the one who brought in the living; with that, he, to all intents and purposes, ran the household as well. Of that never mind, however. With all the other calls on Mrs. Redmond there might have been no household, save that John Redmond had stepped into the breach. He had not complained. Overshadowed by his wife, submerged in her growing prominence, the added task John Redmond had shouldered as if a duty, his.

He was not thinking of it now. He was not thinking, either, of how he himself had become submerged, thrust inconspicuously into the background of their married life. Wonder still reigned among his thoughts; and, in their confusion, his mind leaped with a quick informality from one thought to another. It is the way with those who mull things over, solitaries. Something was wrong, wrong with Myrta Redmond; and his mind dwelt on that; something wrong with Myrta.

With Myrta, yes, not just Mrs. Redmond. You understand, no doubt. In other words, there were in Redmond's mind two figures, always two: Myrta, first; then—well, the other, Mrs. Redmond. The two were vividly distinct. Myrta, the one he'd married, had (to him) never changed; she still was the one, the same; but the other, the Mrs. Redmond who'd taken his name, still was using it—she and Redmond were far apart. It was only at odd intervals now, brief and far apart, that the Myrta he'd married came back to him. She was still there, though. She was there now. Trouble . . . .

A "mere" husband, an appendage. Well, the term fitted well enough. It was queer, though, the twist the moment gave to it. In trouble, if she were, Mrs. Redmond was not merely Mrs. Redmond. He was a husband—yes; and instinctively to him she became transformed. She was Myrta; and as Myrta, his wife, if Myrta needed help . . . .

Redmond, startling, had half risen from his chair when the pantry door opened, and the woman, Harriet Lipp, stalked forth.

"There's y'r eggs," she pronounced.

Redmond resumed his seat. To Myrta he could have flown, offering aid. To Mrs. Redmond—well, that was different.

He sat there, mooning. The Lipp woman had withdrawn; and his eggs grew cold within the cup. Mulling it over, his thoughts were now going at full tilt, galloping. In the way with those who moon, who mull, one thing ran into another, piling up in magnitude. If something really was wrong, what was it? A hundred thoughts raced into his mind . . . Politics . . . Schemes . . . Plots for place, for power, . . . With women, women didn't differ much from men. Politics, too, were Mrs. Redmond's daily pabulum. Had she done something? Had she compromised herself? Unwitting had she let herself into something ugly? Vague stories, sinister whispers of politics, public affairs, leaped into his remembrance. Her ambitions he knew. He knew, too, that she—that is, Mrs. Redmond—would make no distinction in methods. "In politics no sex" was the watchword of these women, Mrs. Redmond's associates, hers as well. They fought with the same tools as the men. But if Myrta . . . .

Myrta again—Myrta, not Mrs. Redmond. An exclamation, sharp, explosive, escaped him. Shoving back his chair he rose abruptly.

Harriet Lipp, as if her eye had been glued to the crack in the pantry door, at once shoved it open.

"Say, you ain't et y'r breakfus'!" she barked.

Redmond had flung down his napkin on the cloth. He looked at the figure in the doorway.

"What did your mistress say?" he demanded.

Harriet Lipp's eyes narrowed defensively.

"Say when?" she countered.

"This morning—just now!" rapped Redmond, his temper rising. "Is she ill?" he snapped again.

"No, she ain't!" the woman answered.

"Then why isn't she coming down?" asked Redmond.

With direct finality the woman answered him. "She's a-breakfustin' a-bed," said Harriet Lipp.

That ended it.

For a long moment afterwards the hard-featured maid stood there at the pantry door, one hand at her breast, her face strained as she gazed after him. A breath escaped her. The mystery of all this, though, was not revealed to Redmond. Already he was at the stairway hurrying upward.

Mrs. Redmond's room was at the front of the house, on the floor above. For years—four years now, nearly five—she and her husband had occupied separate rooms. As Redmond reached the door he paused. His hand uplifted, he made as if to knock, then desisted. Standing there, he put one ear to the panel and listened.

It was only for an instant, though. The next instant, without even the formality of a knock, he thrust open the door and stepped inside.

"Myrta!" he exclaimed.

She lay there among the coverings of the bed, her back to him; and as he entered, calling to her, she did not move. Along the pillows the masses of her thick, silky hair, like ropes of burnished copper, lay strewn; and above the counterpane a limp, slender arm, girlishly rounded and pink, revealed itself. She was still young, only a year or so over thirty; and now, as Redmond looked at her, her figure among the coverings seemed appealingly slight and youthful. More than that, though, in its supine pose at the moment there was a suggestion of laxity, of helpless dejection that he was quick to see.

"Myrta!" he cried again.

She answered him then. It was, however, Mrs. Redmond rather than the Myrta he called who spoke. Nor did she turn. From among the pillows her voice rose, formal and precise—the voice of Mrs. Redmond, the public woman's voice.

"What is it?" she inquired.

Redmond paused midway across the room. His air, his look, eager and anxious, altered, too.

"You all right?" he questioned.

A pause. She still did not turn, and in the pause he stirred uncomfortably. Then from the bed came her voice, its note, as before, still precise.

"All right? . . . Why do you ask, pray?"

Uncertainly, he took a step toward her.

"Why, you see, you didn't come to your breakfast," he faltered.

Again she replied, this time with a change, a note of petulance in her voice.

"I'm breakfasting here," she said.

"I know—but the meeting—tonight's—your time," he faltered again.

Another pause. Then, from the pillows the reply. It came slowly, as if, with the effort, ponderously.

"There is to be no meeting," said Mrs. Redmond.

"What?" interrogated Redmond.

A movement of restless impatience stirred among the pillows.

"I have called it off—canceled it."

Perplexed, he ruffled up his brows.

"You have postponed it?" he inquired.

There was again a movement among the pillows, sharp, vehement, visibly emphatic.

"I have told you once," Mrs. Redmond said, as sharply; "there is to be no meeting. That is enough, isn't it?" seh uttered crisply.

"Myrta!" exclaimed Redmond.

Swiftly he hastened to the bed. In the same haste, the alert alarm bred of his concern for her, he laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Myrta! . . . My dear!"

"Let me alone, pray!" Mrs. Redmond directed annoyedly.

The hand on her shoulder she shook away. With the same movement she drew the coverings about her. This, too, she did with a cold, formal deliberation whose dignity was unmistakable. Now, however, wonder, trepidation, too, had the better of Redmond, and he missed the majestic rancor of the gesture.

"Myrta, what's wrong? What's happened? Tell me!" he cried.

She turned then, momentarily tense, her features vital with the emotion she still strove to repress. Her voice harsh, she spoke—Mrs. Redmond.

"You, of course, would not understand. It's ended—that's all," she said.

Redmond gaped.

"Ended! What's ended?"

"Everything—for the time, anyway," she replied. "I'm done for, that's enough, isn't it?"

"Done for?"

Her lip for an instant curved bitterly.

"You heard me!" she returned. "You don't suppose for a moment, do you, that I could run now for that office!" She laughed harshly. "This year?" She laughed again, the laugh more rasping; and, his jaw dropping, agape, Redmond stared at her.

"Myrta!"

Among the pillows she again gave her shoulders a shrug.

"Bah! . . . Fancy facing those women now!"

The women she meant he knew. They were those other women, her associates—public women like Mrs. Redmond herself. Why, however, she could not face them Redmond had yet to grasp. Startled, he caught swiftly at his breath. Then, as he stared down at her, the thought, the suspicion already that morning engendered in his mind, saw in her strained, embittered face the answering echo, an affirmative.

Shame! . . .

"Myrta," said Redmond, his voice thick, "what have you done?"

"I?"

She looked up at him sharply, tossing from her brow the thick, bronzed masses of her hair.

"What! You mean you don't—don't understand?"

"What's wrong, Myrta? Tell me," said Redmond, stoutly. "I'll help you, I'll stand by you, dear. If it's trouble—if even it's wrong—"

"Wrong?"

"Yes, if even shame—"

He got no further. A laugh, sharp and intolerantly bitter and disgusted, came from among the pillows. It caught Redmond midway in his words, and left him, like a stranded fish, gasping impotently.

"You dolt, you numbskull!" said Mrs. Redmond.

She told him then. It was to Redmond, too, the news was, as if she, Mrs. Redmond, had reached from the bed and felled him to the floor. He stood riveted. Then into his face, his eyes, leaped the light, transfiguring like a swift burst of sunshine through a cloud.

"Myrta!" he shrilled. Radiant, quivering to his feet, had he dared he would have reached down and gathered her to his arms.

He dared not, though. It was Mrs. Redmond, her face distorted with the bitterness of her defeated ambitions, that gazed up at him from among the pillows.

"Pshaw!" she said, her lip curled anew—"you're like all men, all you husbands. That's all you think about!" She gave her shoulders another disgusted, embittered shrug. "Go away—leave me; I want to sleep," she said.

Redmond went. It was as if he went, too, treading the mountaintops.

Rich Vein of Quicksilver.

Japan will soon be independent for its supply of quicksilver. A rich vein said to extend seven miles on the surface and to vary in width from two to six feet, has been discovered. The ore assays 18 per cent and the vein increases in thickness the deeper it is followed.

No man is smart enough to tell his own son anything when he leaves college.

Too much dignity merely scares the children.