

A Twentieth Century Romance.

By EFFIE W. MERRIMAN.

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CHAPTER V.

In all her life Letty had not heard such language as this from the lips of a young man. She was inexpressibly shocked, yet withal she was interested. It was quite delightful, she told herself, to meet one so very unconventional, but she did not care to be seen in his company by other men whose good opinion she might one day wish to win. Although she had longed all her life to meet a man different from the men of her acquaintance, now that she stood face to face with him she wished him to be properly conventional.

Harold had not finished speaking when he suddenly realized that this was the twentieth century, and that the world had changed while he slept. "Do you mean to say," he demanded, with a sudden change of tone that was almost ludicrous, "that it is the custom in this unenlightened community for ladies to call upon gentlemen?"

"I most certainly do," replied Letty. "Well," returned Harold after a little period of silence, "I think if we are to be friends"

"As we should for grandma's sake," eagerly interposed Letty, who was so anxious to continue the acquaintance that she did not think how her remark might be taken until it had escaped her lips.

"Oh, my dear fellow," she added quickly, "I beg your pardon, I'm sure!" Letty was consumed with mortification. She had always been careful not to remind any man that he was growing older every year and consequently less attractive, and it was exasperating that she should now have been so thoughtless as to remind this beautiful young fellow that he had been the recipient of her grandmother's loverlike attentions.

As will be seen, Letty did not quite understand the courtships of the nineteenth century—perhaps because a number of the books which her grandmother had left her had been written by Howells.

Harold was far from being pleased. It is never pleasant to be reminded, more especially by a handsome young woman, that one belongs to a past century. Letty could not but perceive that he was hurt.

"What can I say?" she asked, distressed beyond measure at his silence. As she spoke she went to his side and tenderly took his hand in hers. Her touch thrilled him, while it angered him, and he pulled his hand away, quite as a grieved young girl might have done in his day. The action reminded Letty of previous flirtations, and she began to feel more at home with him. She quickly decided that, after all, young men were all very much alike, and that there was none of them who could not be won by the lucky young woman who knew how to work upon their susceptibilities. She was congratulating herself on the pleasure she would have in a flirtation with this "quizzical young fellow when her dream was rudely shattered by the look of determination on Harold's face as he arose and stood before her.

"Miss Everett," he said frankly, "I should like to become better acquainted with you, but I cannot sacrifice all my ideas of the fitness of things to the absurd customs of this generation."

"Are our customs more absurd than yours were?" asked Letty. "They seem so to me."

"May that not be because you are not used to them?"

"Perhaps so. However, I do not mean to conform to them in any way that seems to me to reflect on my manhood."

"But they are established."

"I cannot help that. I assure you I would if I could. As I said just now, I should like to know you better. Can we not strike a compromise that shall enable us to become friends?"

"We might try. I should feel flattered, I'm sure."

"Suppose, then, we agree to meet in the park and dispense with calling and a few other of the restrictions of society conventionalities? I will try to forget the customs of the nineteenth century if you'll ignore those of the twentieth, and we will be as free as the birds."

Letty agreed, thinking that if this peculiar young man could afford to run such a risk she certainly could. She comforted her uneasy conscience with the thought that no eligible young woman was severely condemned for sowing a few wild oats unless the results were too rank to be overlooked by a most indulgent public.

Harold was about to bow himself from Letty's presence when he caught sight of a woman striding down the street.

"Why," he exclaimed, with a merry laugh, "I believe that is my friend Mary. She is an odd specimen of humanity, isn't she?"

"May I ask what you know about her?" inquired Letty. "Only that she proposed to me on sight"

The sentence was never finished. There was a sudden loud report, which seemed to break the world into bits, and a stunning blow which pounded it together again. For a moment Harold felt himself to be the embodiment of confusion in a world of darkness lighted only by stars which danced madly before his eyes. There was a sound of excited voices, which seemed to come from the stars. Then came an interval of blessed quiet, when he was conscious of neither light nor darkness—when there was no world and nothing in it.

Harold was unconscious but a moment. When he recovered, he found himself lying at full length on the porch, with Letty bending over him.

"Are you better?" she asked tenderly. "What is the matter? Have I been shot?"

"You came near being. I saw your danger just in time to knock you down.

The bullet passed above you as you fell. "You knocked me down!" "I did. I could have saved you in no other way."

"I think," replied Harold, with a smile, "that I might as well have been shot."

As he spoke he started to raise himself from his recumbent position, but in a moment Letty had lifted him to his feet and placed him in a chair.

"Why did you do that?" he asked angrily. "I have not yet become so helpless that I must be lifted by a woman."

Before Letty could explain that she had only done what custom demanded of a woman Harold's attention was drawn to Mary, who was struggling to free herself from the hold of several stalwart women, who were endeavoring to secure her by means of cords.

"I have had her arrested," said Letty, following his glance. "What are you going to do with her?" asked Harold of the women.

"We are waiting for the ambulance," they replied. "She will soon be placed where she can make no more disturbance."

"It was she who fired at you," explained Letty. "Poor Mary! She has a good heart, but a violent temper."

"Let Mary go free," interrupted Harold. "You need not arrest her on my account. I can take care of myself."

"Ah, my dear sir," they replied, "you do not know the world as we do."

"And I don't want to," retorted Harold. "Release Mary, I say, or you'll be sorry!"

"We might as well do as he requests," said Letty to the women, much as if he had been a persistent child, too attractive to be denied that which he desired.

Mary was released, and Harold turned abruptly away, wishing that he had never awakened. He hated to live in a world ruled by women, and he wondered



"Release Mary, I say, or you'll be sorry!" if there were any new inventions in the methods of committing suicide which were superior to those of his day. He had not walked far when he was overtaken by Mary.

"Why did you make them release me?" she asked abruptly. "Because I did not want you arrested on my account."

"But I tried to kill you."

"I wish you had succeeded."

"Are you so very unhappy?"

"I am hungry and homesick and utterly disgusted."

"Have you been to a physician?"

"No."

"A good one lives here. Hadn't you better go in?"

"It is all nonsense. I want food, not medicine."

"You will find that it is food. Don't pass the door. You must go in sooner or later, you know. You will feel better when your system has been replenished."

"I presume you are right. Well, I'll go."

Harold turned to go up the steps of a fine house bearing the sign: "E. A. Coburn, M. D. Food prescriptions a specialty."

"Over the way," said Mary, interrupting him, "in that store with the sign 'System Supplies' across the front, you will be able to purchase what you want. It is the best place in the city. They do not adulterate their compounds."

"Thanks," said Harold. "You are the first one who has given me any practical information."

"I hope," faltered Mary, "that you will not think me unwomanly for mentioning these things."

"Unwomanly! Why should I think that?"

"Most men object to having women speak of such things. They prefer to have us think that they are too angelic to require system supplies."

"They must be like some women I used to know," replied Harold, with a laugh. "Well, good night, Mary."

Harold ran lightly up the stone steps, but before he had touched the bell he was again detained by Mary. "Harold," she said softly, "did you interfere in my behalf because you have decided to love me a little?"

"Don't be so silly!" exclaimed Harold in disgust. "I was just beginning to think you quite a jolly girl. Why must you spoil it all?"

"I understand," replied Mary bitterly. "You have given your heart to Letty, but she will never care for you half as tenderly as I could. There is no tenderness in her nature."

patience. Worse yet, their love of money would lead them to ply their profession with other than humanitarian motives."

"Notwithstanding," replied Harold, "a feeling of delicacy leads me to prefer a man. However, if there is no man to be had, I suppose I must yield to the inevitable as gracefully as may be."

Dr. Coburn not only prescribed for Harold, but administered some of the food which she thought his system demanded most urgently, and when he left her office he felt that life was much better worth living. He had at last found one change in the twentieth century which met with his hearty approval—Dr. Coburn refused to take the fee he offered, saying that it would be considered a bribe, and that the salary paid by government was quite remunerative enough to meet her needs.

When Harold reached his own door, he chanced to glance back just in time to see two figures, one on either side of the street, disappearing into the shadows. He at once surmised that he had been followed by Mary, who in turn had been followed by Letty.

CHAPTER VI.

Several weeks had passed since Harold's proposition to meet Letty in the park had been made and accepted, and the two had become more and more deeply interested in each other. In fact, the time had come when each felt that matters might as well be settled between them at once, and one fine morning each started for the park with the firm determination to make a proposal of marriage that very day. Both were strangely excited, for neither felt sure of the sentiments of the other. They had succeeded very well in ignoring customs and conventionalities, and their relationship during these weeks had been much like that which might exist between two men or two women who understood each other, and who were thrown together in a strange land where no one understood them.

It was like that, with one little exception—the difference in the influence which love exerts on two whom nature intended for companions. Indeed conventionalities had been so entirely forgotten that neither Harold nor Letty thought that the other might claim the right of proposal, but each acted according to the promptings of the heart. It was not until they attempted to put their thoughts into words that conventional difficulties arose to make trouble between them.

"My darling," began Harold as soon as he caught sight of Letty. "Little sweetheart," rapturously exclaimed Letty at the same moment.

Each heard the other. When you remember that it was not a whit more flattering to Letty to be addressed as "darling" than it was to Harold to be called "little," you will understand why each broke the sentence off at that point and stared at the other in silent disapproval. It was not that each did not want the love of the other, but that each preferred to be in suspense a little while to having love thrown at him or her without the asking. It was too much like being drowned in a barrel of sirup.

Letty was the first to recover herself. "Did you speak?" she asked stiffly. Harold thought he might have misunderstood her, and he was sure that if she had understood him she was entitled to further explanation.

"I was about to say," he began, his manner showing great embarrassment, "that—that is, I had thought—Letty, the fact is I love you!"

"Harold," replied Letty gravely, almost sternly, "why could you not have waited a moment? I was about to make the same declaration."

"Then I am glad I did not wait," declared Harold fervently. "I like a woman a better who does not wear her heart on her sleeve."

"But, little one," added Letty tenderly, "can you not see that your manly modesty demands that you keep your sentiments a secret until the one you love has disclosed hers?"

"I must confess that I cannot," replied Harold. "It is man's duty to propose."

"Excuse me, sir. It is woman's privilege."

"See here, Letty," said Harold, with sudden decisiveness, "there are some little matters which have got to be settled between us, and we might as well discuss them now. We have been willfully blind since we first became acquainted."

"I am afraid custom has more to do with life than we had imagined," admitted Letty.

"We will assume that we are to be married," continued Harold. "Who is to pay the expenses of the family?"

"Why, I shall do it, of course," replied Letty, surprised that he could ask so foolish a question.

"Indeed you will do nothing of the sort," said Harold firmly.

"But, Harold, it has been the custom for—"

"I don't care a cent about the custom," interrupted Harold. "Wouldn't I be a fine sort of a man to be dependent on a woman?"

"Can you imagine how I should feel

to be dependent on a man?" retorted Letty.

"But," argued Harold, "it is according to nature that woman should raise children and man should work for her and them."

"Nature!" repeated Letty scornfully. "One can illustrate any text from nature. Watch the beasts and the birds. Does the female bird sit idly by while the male builds the nest?"

"The male certainly is not idle," replied Harold. "In my mind idleness and inferiority are synonymous, and I refuse to accept such a position."

"Yet you would force woman to accept it," Letty was discovering that things which in romances were quite delightful were often not even endurable in real life to one not brought up in the belief that they must be endured.

"It is different with women," replied Harold. "They are most charming in a subordinate position."

"That is precisely what we think of men," returned Letty calmly.

"Well," said Harold angrily, "you may as well understand once for all that I shall never place myself in a position of dependence. I wouldn't do it for the best woman living."

"Nor I for the best man," replied Letty, with equal spirit.

Letty and Harold had reached a point in their walk where the road crossed the park in opposite directions. Without a word of explanation each took a separate path.

Harold had gone but a few steps when he was met by Mary.

"Yes," she said, replying to his look of inquiry, "I overheard every word. I thought it would come to this."

Mary looked as if she would like to add that she was not sorry, but if she thought it she kept the thought to herself. She had made herself very useful to Harold in many ways since the day she shot at him, and the two had become very good friends. Harold believed that Mary had opened her eyes to her own folly, and that he need not fear any further confessions of love on her part, and Mary had bravely decided that since she could not win Harold's love she would at least deserve his friendship. They had talked together a great deal about the delights of the nineteenth century. Harold had quite forgotten the annoyances of that day and joined with Mary in wondering how a condition so perfect could have led to the war or revolution between the sexes.

Harold had told Mary of his hope to win Letty and now looked to her for the sympathy which she had always shown when he was in distress.

Mary understood and determined to be equal to his expectations, though her heart broke.

"I think," she said quietly, "that you have not understood Letty. She has always declared that she would not marry until she could find a man whom she would find companionable."

"That is precisely the quality which I desired in a wife," interrupted Harold.

"Yet neither of you treat the other as I should imagine a companion would wish to be treated. Each seems to me to be struggling for the mastery. You are willing that Letty should be twentieth century except where her ideas of the fitness of things come into collision with your own. Letty is delighted with a nineteenth century man except when he would force her to bow to customs which would rob her of her cherished independence. Let me tell you, Harold, that Letty can never be like her grandmother."

"I have not said that I desire it."

"You have repeatedly spoken to her of that lady as being everything desirable. History tells us that she was a very ordinary young woman, rather pretty, but extremely sentimental and possessed of very little independence. Letty can never be like that. She is too"

Mary's estimate of Letty will never be known, for the conversation was interrupted at this point by a noise which sounded to Harold like the threatening growling of an angry beast. "What in time is that?" he interrupted, but before Mary could reply a fearful apparition appeared before his astonished gaze. It was larger than the largest house he had ever seen. At times it appeared to be perfectly round, and it rolled along the ground with a force that must have crushed even the largest of the huge trees had it not flattened itself so as to avoid them. As it came nearer the sound of growling increased to that of the rumble of heavy thunder, and pent up lightning seemed to shine from its myriad eyes.

"It is coming this way," gasped Mary. "Harold, have you ever worked?"

"No," replied Harold. "Why should I? My father's wealth"

"Will not save you," interrupted Mary. "That"—pointing to the terrible thing swiftly rolling toward them—"that is the 'Colossal Scheme.'"

Even as she spoke she took Harold by the shoulders, and with almost superhuman strength tossed him to one side. The huge creature rolled on, leaving poor Mary crushed to death on the very spot where but a second before she had been so full of life and strength. A crowd of mourners soon gathered about her prostrate form.

"It is fate," said the more philosophical among them. "No great Scheme was ever set on foot for the benefit of humanity that did not count its innocent victims by scores before it began to operate successfully."

"But what is this Scheme?" inquired Harold.

"It was started," explained the Live-forever, "for the purpose of annihilating those individuals who are born tired. I presume it was in search of you, who have as yet made yourself useful to no one; but, as you see, our noble Mary has given her life for yours. Young man, you must work for a living, either as housekeeper, shopboy, chamberman, nurseboy or retailer of system supplies."

Harold was about to declare himself in favor of the last mentioned alternative when Letty, who had been bending over Mary, came to his side and placed her hand on his arm.

"Harold," said she softly, "should you prefer to have me like my grandmother?"

"Letty," he retorted, "should you prefer to have me like my kinsman, Mr. James Winthrop?"

Then the lovers looked into each other's eyes and smiled. They realized that each was dependent on the other—made so by a love which was stronger than the prejudices of either—and simultaneously they agreed to strike a compromise.

"We will spend our lives," said Harold, "in trying to teach that what one thinks is right because it seems to be in the natural order of things is more often right only because custom has taught us so to regard it."

"We will," added Letty, "look forward to a day when we shall have taught people to consider a condition right because based upon principles of exact and impartial justice."

They threw their arms around each other, and their lips met in a rapturous salute.

THE END.

Political Hash.

The business men of this country are "pretty sleek" on trade deals—buying and selling and charging "all the traffic will bear." But when it comes to big transaction such as controlling the money, locking it up and letting it lay idle until the demand for it increases its value 50 per cent—they are not in it at all with the financiers.

We have, according to them, been just in sight of good times ever since the repeal of the Sherman law. But now comes Bradstreet, who is the high priest of the business men, and says:

"The unfavorable conditions prevailing in commercial and industrial circles throughout the country, together with the prospect for no material improvement during the summer, marks the present season as probably the dulllest relatively for twenty years. At no time since panic and business depression manifested themselves last year have reports as to the volume of sales of merchandise, the manufacture of staple goods and the disposition of merchants generally to buy except for absolutely immediate wants, been so pronounced and so general throughout the country as during the past few weeks."

"Superficial examination of business conditions leading to unwarranted optimistic conclusions as to nearby future of trade have not been wanting; but, as a matter of fact, based on comprehensive and careful examination, the next few months promises a continuance, if not an intensifying, of existing conditions of extreme dullness and depression."

Of course ordinary mortals with good horse sense knew this even before the repeal of the Sherman law, but it will be received as a piece of bad news by the "sanguacious" business men of the country. After a while some one will discover (?) the fact that we need more money in circulation and he will be called a great financier.

We venture to say that not 1 per cent of the business men of the country ever study economic questions except for one side, and that side is given by the men who make millions of dollars through being able to control the currency.

The respectable democrats in "Willie" Breckinridge's district are doing what they can to save themselves the disgrace of his being returned to congress. The other day they got together and gave him the following certificate of character:

Whereas, the representative of this district in congress has covered himself with disgrace, and the people whose servant he is with mortification and shame by gross and frightful licentiousness, by lying and deceit, by the violation and disregard of every tie that human beings hold sacred, and by such shamelessness and disregard of moral obligations as has made him the wonder and scorn of the whole world; and,

Whereas, this matter in all of its phases possesses distinctive and terrible features which place it almost alone and unparalleled in the record of human depravity in our country, striking at the very foundation of social order and life and mocking at its purity of our women and the sacredness of our homes, rendering the author of these crimes a public enemy; therefore we pledge ourselves to use every honorable means to prevent the re-nomination of W. C. P. Breckinridge. We appeal to our democratic friends by the honor of the district and in the name of God to rise in their might and prevent the fearful moral degradation which would be bound up in the election of this man.

They then passed resolutions requesting him to withdraw from the race. Out of regard for decency he ought to do it. If "Willie" does succeed in being returned to congress we shall insist on the above certificate of character following him, and a copy should be sent to every school girl in the country.

In 1870, when the bill was introduced to repeal the income tax, John Sherman spoke as follows:

"I repeat that the maintenance of the income tax is an absolute necessity for any system of internal taxation. If the senate and house should determine after full consideration to repeal the income

tax I am in favor of the repeal of all the taxes upon consumption that bear upon the great masses of the people. I do not believe there is any such complaint about the income tax. If I had my own way I would retain the income tax at 5 per cent making such modifications as would afford the proper exemptions. I would maintain the income tax at 5 per cent on all incomes above \$1,000, and then throw off these taxes upon consumption that do oppress the poor and do take dollars out of the coffers of the people who earn them by their daily work."

Just the other day he made a speech against the income tax. He said it was a war tax and there was no necessity for it. It was a tax on classes. The idea of taxing a comparatively few because you can reach them and because they live in large cities was an act of agrarianism and injustice. If they legislated for classes in this country then the system would break down. All men were alike under the law and the same rule should apply to all. The old republic ought to be belted over the head with a dead cat.

Yes, sir, we are in favor of every patriot owning a good repeating rifle. The constitution guarantees him this right and the indications demand it.

Mudge—I wonder why a girl always shuts her eyes when a fellow kisses her? Yabsley—I never noticed anything of the sort, but I suppose it depends upon the kind of face the fellow has.

PERSONAL NOTES.

Lulu B. George, a wall paper designer of New York, drew a Chinese pattern so popular that 300,000 rolls of the paper have been sold.

One of the three dozen shirts possessed by Napoleon at St. Helena and divided at his death among his companions, has been sold by auction for 150 francs.

Jules Simon had a cataract removed from one of his eyes lately and underwent the operation with a coolness and fortitude that few young men would have equaled.

The combined assets of the Rothschild family in Europe are not less, it is said, than \$2,000,000,000. The virtual head of the family is Nathaniel, Lord Rothschild of London.

Dr. Claus Dalis, who has been elected to a professorship in the university of Chicago, has been for some years at the head of the department of Scandinavian language and literature at Yale.

The widow of General Phil Sheridan, with her three children, lives in Washington. Phil, her only son, attends school in that city, while her two daughters attend Eden hall, a Catholic seminary, near Philadelphia.

Samuel B. Arnold, who was implicated in the project to abduct President Lincoln in 1865, and sentenced to the Dry Tortugas for life, being afterwards pardoned by President Johnson, is now keeping a meat stall in the Broadway market, Baltimore.

The Louisiana legislature has voted an appropriation to erect a handsome statue to Thomy Lafou, a negro philanthropist, who died at New Orleans a few months ago after a life of benevolence, leaving nearly all of his fortune (\$800,000) to charities.

THE PASSING SHOW.

The parliament of Finland has passed a law prohibiting all railroad traffic and mail delivery on Sunday.

Henry Spitz of Altoona, Pa., was fatally injured while saving his little daughter from death under an electric car.

The average watch is composed of ninety-eight pieces and its manufacture embraces more than 2,500 distinct and separate operations.

A sturgeon weighing 300 pounds and having a leather belt attached to its tail was caught off Wickford in Narragansett bay one day lately.

That which is popularly known as the funny bone, at the point of the elbow, is in reality not a bone at all, but a nerve that lies near the surface.

Two men in Buffalo got into a fight as to whether or not "the sun draws up the water that makes the rain." One struck the other and broke his neck.

The members of the Woman's Christian Temperance union of Brooklyn, N. Y., have resolved to buy their groceries in future from dealers who do not sell liquor.

A traveler recently returned from England says the girls there are all indulging in the hair-dressing freaks known as "bath-buns." He describes them as hard, round knots of hair, generally covered with a net and looking as their name implies exactly like a bun—or like a rubber ball that had been thrown and stuck against the back of the head. But handsome or hideous, the bath bun will drive out the graceful psycho knot if Dame Fashion so orders.

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