

The Joy of Living

By Sidney Gowing

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PARTNER!

SYNOPSIS.—Distilling the prospect of a month's visit to her austere aunt, Lady Erythra...

CHAPTER III—Continued

"Say! Let me find you one! I've a brain-wave!" "What do you mean?" "Go shares with me!"

"Where was that?" "At the place where I had a job," said Almee.

"Come on into it with me—come to Stanhoe!" said Billy explosively.

On the outskirts of the little market town of Stanhoe was a cyclist's rest-house. Here the two travelers had tea under a laburnum tree on the lawn.

"Mrs. Sunning, 2 Ivy cottage, lets lodgings," announced Almee triumphantly.

Ivy cottage proved to be a pretty little Jacobean building fronting on a green lane just outside Stanhoe.

"Great!" said Billy. "You take the room here, old chap, and I'll take the other. We'll share the parlor."

"Bless your pretty face, who'd think anything else?" she said.

"That's all right," said Billy imperturbably. "Guess I ain't inquisitive."

"I suppose they do," said Almee, regarding him thoughtfully.

She Dropped.

companied Billy to Mrs. Dale's door, and, returning, retired to her own room.

She laughed gently. "He isn't a frump, anyhow!" "The reverie took shape. Then, with a little sigh, she slipped off her shoes, and, carrying them with her, stole very softly down the staircase to the front door.

A feeling of intense annoyance seized Almee. Where was the freedom she had sought? She returned to her bedroom, put on her shoes, leaned out onto the sill, and began very quietly to descend the trellis.

CHAPTER IV

Georgina Berners paced the floor of her bedroom at Jervaulx abbey, and wondered why the universe had not crashed in ruins about her head.

"What on earth will happen when they find out?" she said, shivering.

"Don't make such a row, you fool!" hissed a voice.

"Dear old Georgina! You're a brick!" said Almee, hugging her.

"When I got here," said Georgina feebly, "I thought I could explain somehow, but Lady Erythra met me on the steps and took me for you, and everything went right out of my head."

"Well, I was saved. That's more important. You haven't done anything wrong, my snow-white lamb. What then?"

"I didn't—I wasn't!" said Georgina in almost fearful indignation.

"And a jolly safe line, too! I can see we've always underrated you, Georgie. And you mean to say they never even got an inkling, all through that there was anything unusual?"

how are we going to clear things up and make it all right for you?" "Stop it? I wouldn't stop it for a kingdom. It's perfectly splendid!"

"Aha—Alexander! Yes. Is he as owlish as his photograph? What did you say to him, Georgina?" "I—I—hardly anything. He told me all about his missionary work in Manchuria. He—"

"No, no! I'm sorry, Georgie," said Almee soothingly. "I couldn't help



"Almee!" cried Georgina.

pulling your serene leg. I won't say a word against your cousin Alexander."

"He is a gentleman, at any rate," said Georgina, rather spitefully "he is a person one can respect."

"I won't and I can't," said Georgina mournfully, "and you know it."

"But don't you see how impossible it is! Your father will come here to see you before he goes. And he—he'll expect you to write to him!"

"Listen!" said Almee, blotting the sheet and reading it aloud with much satisfaction.

My Dearest Daddy: I arrived here safely, and already I'm quite one of the family.

"A very proper letter," said Almee, affixing a stamp to the envelope, with a determined thump. "One should always consider one's parents, and spare them pain. And that postscript is a touch of genius; the only thing in the universe Dad is afraid of is mumps. He hasn't had them, and he says they are a formidable affliction to the aged, and very undignified."

"Where was that?" "In the rose garden—" Georgina broke off suddenly.

There came a sudden thumping on the bedroom door.

"Almee!" said the stern voice of Lady Erythra. "Why is your light on at this hour? What are you moving about for? Is anything wrong?"

CHAPTER V

Morning and the song of birds. The sunshine streamed into the room, bringing with it the God-given fragrance of an April morning;

"Morning!" he cried.

"Have you been down long?" exclaimed Almee.

"I've covered sixty miles since then. Just a little breathe."

"Rest!" said Almee scornfully. "I want to live, not rest!"

"Do I look as if I had?" "No, by the Great Horn Spoon, you don't!" said Billy, eyeing her with a flash of admiration.

"That's all right. Rang a baker up an' got a roll an' milk at Syderford. Nothing done yet—couldn't breakfast without my partner."

soft wind of the morning caressed them as they rode. Not that it had any pacifying effect on Almee's spirit.

"Here we are!" said Billy, turning onto a long, deserted stretch of high road, running delightfully level and straight. He let the Sphinx out.

Almee knelt eagerly on the grass, and Billy fluently explained, dismantling the parts as he talked.

"I'll show you how to drive her now," said Billy. "Stationary, till you get the hang of her."

"Fine!" said Billy enthusiastically. "Partner, the Sphinx is your big sister! Now we'll run her on the road—I'll ride the pillion an' coach you. But for the land's sake go easy with the throttle. She'll rush you clean off the British Isles if you give her any gas."

Almee started dead slow. The ease and resiliency of the drive, once the Sphinx was running, astonished her. Gradually Almee increased speed to fifteen and twenty miles. She was intoxicated by the sense of power, answering to the least touch of her fingers.

"Glorious!" she gasped.

"Rather!" said Almee, in spite of a sense of difficulty with her dress and the Sphinx's tank, low though it was.

"Throttle down!" said Billy sharply.

Intending to obey, Almee blundered again, and closed down the extra air inlet. The Sphinx roared in protest, and shot ahead like a bullet from a gun.

astating crash. In front was a right-angled bend, inviting sudden death. Billy leaned swiftly forward.

"Cad? If there's only one gentleman on this earth, it's Billy."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

At the Art Gallery. "Why do they always depict 'Echo' as a woman?" "Because woman always has the last word."