



A WOMAN'S SECRET.

By HOWARD FIELDING.

COPYRIGHT, 1899, BY CHARLES W. HOOKE.

IN A rash moment Mr. E. Cunningham Curtis, Jr., had declared his love for Miss Maud Brooke, and she had promised to be his.

It was highly injudicious. Young Mr. Curtis, though he had a few odds and ends of property bequeathed to him by his uncles and aunts, was really dependent upon his father. He might be cut off at any moment with what answers in modern high society to the traditional shilling. It is the part of prudence in these days not to engage oneself to a millionaire's son until after the millionaire's will has been admitted to probate. Probably Miss Brooke knew this as a matter of education, but she did not think about it. She was deeply in love with Mr. E. Cunningham Curtis, Jr., and during the progress of his declaration, which was really quite eloquent and thrilling, she never once remembered that he had a father.

It is probable that young Mr. Curtis forgot that circumstance also, for he was really as much in love as any one can be without going mad. It happened, however, that they had considerable opportunity for conversation after the first wild outburst of inconsiderate emotion, and in their discussion of the future, natural at such a time, the plain, hard fact disclosed itself thus: If anything happened at that time to disturb the amicable relations between Curtis senior and Curtis junior, the latter's whole future would be ruined.

"And you think he wouldn't like our engagement?" queried Miss Brooke.

"I wouldn't dare to risk it," responded Mr. Curtis.

"Then perhaps I would better release you from your promise," she suggested.

"Not for the Kohinoor and seven gold mines," he replied, rising enthusiastically to the occasion. "And, besides, it isn't at all necessary. We can keep it a secret."

"I'd like to tell mother," said the girl.

"I—I don't believe I can keep it from her."

"I'm afraid you can't keep it from anybody," said he, "you're such an honest, open-hearted little girl. No, no. An engagement is a woman's secret, which means that it's harder the next day to find one who doesn't know it than one who does. Why, our very manner to each other will betray you. You'll be at my house tomorrow evening when my sister gives some kind of a dancing rumpus, and before you've been there ten minutes every one will know."

Mr. E. Cunningham Curtis, Jr., intended these remarks to be playful, but Miss Brooke, being such an honest, open-hearted little girl, took them in dead earnest, and she was not pleased.

She was just a bit cold to him after that, and almost her last words to him were a promise that she would keep the secret.

Young Mr. Curtis sincerely hoped that she would. He believed that his father would make a fuss about it if he found it out. About five years before there had been a similar disturbance in the family, and it had resulted in the eldest son's being put on probation, which meant that he was obliged to get along on a meager allowance for a long and dismal period. E. Cunningham Curtis, Jr., shuddered at the recollection of his brother's fate.

"My father," said he to himself, "will roar like 50 mad bulls at the idea of my marrying into the Brooke lawsuit."

The suit in question centered about the will of the late Mr. Brooke, who had left his property in such a tangle that every golden strand picked out of it just sufficed to pay the lawyer who had done the picking.

"I must be a bit careful tomorrow evening," was Curtis' conclusion. "Confound it! Everybody in the world ought to know by this time that I'm in love with the dear little girl. But it mustn't be suspected that we're engaged. A fake quarrel might be a good thing."

On the following evening when Miss Brooke appeared in the palatial halls of the Curtises her accepted suitor viewed her almost with alarm, and the next instant his heart surged up into his throat, and he longed to claim her there before them all. His pride clamored for a public acknowledgment of his victory. Never had her beauty seemed to him so far from the ordinary, so separate and distinguished.

"Upon my word," he muttered, "she makes the rest of these girls look like Coney Island types."

He had the pleasure of greeting her a moment later, and he could not quite conceal his emotion. But the young lady herself was as cool as snow. Her manner toward him excited an obvious interest in the people who happened to be near enough to observe it, and when she presently permitted Arthur Ripley to lead her away into a convenient corner glances were exchanged and heads were nodded.

Ripley was a young man whom the other fellows sometimes referred to as a "professional beauty." Curtis, who

had strong claims to be considered handsome, had never been jealous of any man's good looks before. He had not supposed that such an absurdity was possible. But when he saw the admiring glances which were cast upon that very notable couple he was aware of a desire to take Ripley outside and make a snowplow of him.

It was nearly an hour later when a figure of the cotton brought Curtis and Miss Brooke together and gave the first chance for a confidential word. By that time Curtis was in the condition of Inventor Tripler's liquefied air exposed in a tin dish—it is very chilly, but it boils.

"My dear Maud," said he, "you are doing this thing altogether too well."

"It is not so hard as I had supposed it would be," said she. "Shall we walk a moment?"

It was the first time that she had ever expressed a disinclination to dance with him, and the trivial incident affected him preposterously. The thought came to him that this could not be acting. The situation constituted a true emergency. He was in danger of wrecking his love. The right word might save him, but before he could make up his mind what it was the exigencies of the dance required him to escort his partner to her seat—beside the handsome Mr. Ripley.

Curtis escaped from the gay throng at the earliest possible moment and crossed the main hall of the house to the small reception room, which seemed to be deserted. He was surprised to find his sister Mabel there alone. There was a suggestion in her appearance that she had recently wiped away a tear or two from her eyes.

"Why, little girl," he cried, "what's the matter?"

The situation flashed upon him in an instant. This poor child was crying about Arthur Ripley, who had been her chief admirer for a year or more.

"I know all about it," he said. "But don't you worry. Things are not what they seem."

Such a remark as that requires an explanation, and if a girl doesn't get it from a fellow she is not as good a cross questioner as the average of her sex. The result in this case was that within ten minutes Curtis had told his sister of the engagement.

"There's nothing between Ripley and Maud," said he. "She's trying to keep our secret, that's all, and she's using Arthur as a blind. As for him, he simply can't get away. And perhaps he fancies that he's annoying me."

The effect of this disclosure seemed to be good, and Curtis did not regret making it. He cautioned his sister against hinting even in the most shadowy manner at the facts in the case. Of course he knew that she would not mean to betray it, but when it's a question of secrecy one can't be too impressive.

In the hall Curtis encountered Ripley, who asked him if he had seen Mabel. Curtis told him where Mabel was, and Ripley went into the reception room.

"So Mr. Ripley has escaped at last," said a voice in Curtis' ear.

He turned to confront his aunt, Mrs. Rogers. Let us admit that Aunt Martha Rogers had her good points, but she unquestionably possessed many of the characteristics of the disagreeable woman.

"Maud Brooke must have been reading the Wall street news," said Aunt Martha. "She's heard what young Mr. Ripley succeeded in doing with his \$100,000 his father loaned him."

"Why, what did he do?" inquired Curtis. "I haven't heard anything about it."

"The papers say he has made a million," replied Aunt Martha.

"Nonsense," responded Curtis. "If Ripley had made such a bit as that, he'd have mailed a circular letter to every address in the directory. He's not the fellow to hide his light under a bushel."

"Maud Brooke evidently takes a different view of it," was the reply. Curtis was angry clear through.

"Now, look here, Aunt Martha," said he, "I don't like to hear you speak that way of Miss Brooke. She is the least mercenary woman in New York."

"When her engagement to any poor man is announced," said Aunt Martha, "I'll believe it."

"It would be announced tonight," said he, "if the poor man had the courage of a white rabbit."

Well, it's evident that after such an indiscretion Aunt Martha had to be let into the secret. The information was the only bribe that she would accept in exchange for a promise of silence.

Indeed she would not give such a promise without a qualification.

"Your parents ought to know of this," she said in the familiar tone of one who scents the pleasure of doing something disagreeable at the command of duty.

"For the love of heaven," said Curtis, "don't tell my father. I can't stand a controversy with him just now. If you insist on telling somebody—"

"It is my duty," said Aunt Martha.

"Then tell mother or let me do it. Here she comes now. Mother, I have just confided to Aunt Martha the deepest kind of a secret. I am engaged to Maud Brooke."

"I am very glad to hear it," said this most amiable of mothers, taking her son's hand in both of hers. "And your father will be delighted."

"My father—will be—what?" cried the young man.

"He will heartily approve," was the reply. "I know precisely how he feels in this matter."

Curtis gasped.

"Upon my word," said he, "the dear old man has very carefully concealed



"NOW, SIR," SAID HE, "PAY ATTENTION," his sentiments from me. Have you forgotten what he said about the Brooke lawsuit?"

"Maud does not need any fortune," said she. "You will have enough for both."

"Do you really think that father feels that way about it?"

"Certainly he does. If you have any doubts, you'll find him in the billiard room."

About half an hour later young Mr. Curtis, passing through the hall, deserted Maud Brooke standing by the foot of the great staircase and looking somewhat distraught, though two young men were doing their best to entertain her. Curtis got her away from them and led her to the reception room, where they found several young people amusing themselves with Mabel's little spaniel Cupid. The young people were good enough to go away presently, leaving the room to Cupid and the lovers.

"Edward," said the girl in a wistful tone, "I wish I could tell Mabel about our engagement. You know I've acted in such a way tonight as to make people believe that you and I have quarreled, but I don't want her to think so. You see, I'm only a woman, and a secret weighs upon me."

Curtis laughed gently.

"Cupid," said he, "come here."

He swung the dog to the top of a table and made him stand up.

"Now, sir," said he, "pay attention to what I have to tell you. There was a profound secret in my keeping in the early part of the evening. I was pledged to say nothing about it. And in the two or three hours that have elapsed since then I have nobly succeeded in telling the secret to every blessed member of my family except by brother, who is in San Francisco, and I expect to telegraph it to him before morning. You, Cupid, are the sole remaining Curtis who hasn't been let in, and I feel that you should be informed without delay. Cupid, I have the great honor to be engaged to Miss Maud Brooke, the prettiest and sweetest girl in the world. Run away, little dog, and if you find anybody whom you know who hasn't heard of this tell him at once. And, by the way, what do you think of it?"

Whereupon the little dog put his paws on the young lady's shoulder and tried to kiss her.

"They all take it just that way," said Curtis, and then he also tried to kiss her, with much better success.

THE SCHOOL AT GENEVA

The Inmates Escape and the Novel Spectacle OF A "GIRL" HUNT FOLLOWS

Facts and Figures Bearing on General Prosperity—Secretary Gage on Country's Finances—His Answer to the Vagaries of Carl Schurz.

GENEVA, Neb., Sept. 24, 1900.—There is room for much improvement in the management of the State Industrial School for Girls at Geneva. Particularly is this true in regard to affording relief to taxpayers.

So far as the accounts are concerned Steward Brennan has a mark to his credit for the accounts of this institution have been kept in better shape perhaps than those of any other.

The management, however, deserves to be reckoned with. It is both weak and extravagant.

Superintendent Weber draws a salary of \$1,500, but that does not seem to thoroughly appease his appetite. He has added his wife's name to the pay roll as "housekeeper" at \$30 per month. In addition to this he has two "family managers" on the pay roll, Annie Patterson and Fredella Willard, who draw a salary of \$800 per year each.

T. J. Wilson is on the pay roll as "farmer" at \$30 per month.

W. E. Baber and W. H. Kummer are on the pay roll as engineers at \$50 per month each.

Michael Martin is on the pay roll as "extra man" at \$20 per month.

There is a matron at the institution and why a "housekeeper" is needed is a question that can only be explained by Superintendent Weber. The only explanation thus far offered is that it was occasioned by the desire of Superintendent Weber to reap a more bountiful harvest.

The record in the auditor's office would indicate that the "housekeeper's" duties are to some extent those of a tourist. Voucher B41583 is a voucher drawn in favor of the wife of the superintendent "for going to Omaha and bringing back Blanche Green." In this voucher a claim for back hire was made and allowed, though with the city of Omaha covered with a network of street car lines it is difficult to determine why a hack was necessary, unless to use the common everyday street car would not comport with the dignity of the occasion. Street cars are largely used by the common people, it is true, yet now and then you will see on them bankers, capitalists and business men. It is perhaps asking too much to require state employes, whose bills of this sort are paid by the taxpayers, to put up with such a primitive accommodation.

EXPENSIVE "RUNAWAYS."

There is a painful lacking in connection with the management, in the way of discipline. The inmates are given too much freedom, and this results in escapes from the institution, with consequent assaults on the treasury to pay the expense of capturing and returning them.

Last April the people hereabouts were treated to a real exhibition of "girl" hunt. They had seen "fox" hunts and "wolf" hunts until they had ceased to be of interest, but it was a novel experience and attraction for them to see a "girl" hunt. Three of the inmates had escaped and Superintendent Weber threw out a line of scouts and scoured the whole country for miles around. Nine stalwart men were engaged to run down three puny specimens of the opposite sex. The "runaways" were finally captured and returned and the state was presented with a bill of expense amounting to \$28 for "helping return the runaway girls" in the language of the voucher. Neither in the bills rendered nor in the voucher are the names of the captives given (see voucher B46594).

Superintendent Weber has not been a brilliant success in managing this institution. He has failed to maintain the standard of discipline and has inaugurated few, if any, beneficial changes. A considerable reduction might be made in the expense of the management that would involve no reduction in the volume of "loaves and fishes," that, under the Poynter administration, is not to be counted on or expected.

At Geneva, as at other places where state institutions are located, there is complaint of the manner in which drugs, groceries and supplies are purchased. It is the same story told over and over again in these columns.

FACTS ABOUT PROSPERITY.

OMAHA, Neb., Sept. 24, 1900.—Prosperous conditions are in evidence in every county of Nebraska. No one but a rank partisan would attempt to assert that such conditions are transitory or unreal. It is a matter of slow growth—there is nothing artificial or uncertain about it. Within four years the farmers of Nebraska have been delivered from the bondage of debt and thousands of them boast of a surplus.

It is true that the requirements of the impending campaign have suggested the fullest exposition of facts relating to changed conditions in every county in order that the people of one county may be apprised of the degree of prosperity in every other county, but the republican managers do not need to magnify or over-state the facts, which in most cases speak for themselves.

Emphasis may be given to one all-important fact, to-wit: That while the farmers are producing abundant crops and receiving higher prices therefor than ever before paid, at the same time the mechanics and laboring men in cities and towns are all busy, receiving higher pay for shorter working hours than ever before and that the demand for their services exceeds the supply.

A careful inquiry into the status of things reveals these conditions:

1. That farmers are getting 32 and 34 cents for their corn (of which there is a large surplus), whereas four years ago they got but 6 and 10 cents.

2. That stock raisers and farmers are getting \$6.50 for fat steers, whereas four years ago they got \$2.75 and

increase of prices during this time. Steers, for instance, sold July 31st, 1896, at from \$2.75 to \$3.70; July 31st, 1900, they brought \$5.50. Hogs sold July 31st, 1896, at \$2.77; July 31st, 1900, the price was \$5.09. The price paid for sheep July 31st, 1896, ranged from \$2 to \$5.50; July 31st, 1900, the range was from \$4 to \$5.45. In the month of July, 1896, the receipts of hogs were \$7,000; in July, 1900, 178,000 (in round thousands), and the price, as given above, but little more than half in 1896 of that in 1900.

THE WHOLESALE TRADE.

Information gained from a large number of the principal business men of Omaha through letters of inquiry and personal interviews discloses the fact that, without a single exception, of business in Nebraska's chief city during the four years the republican there has been a marked "expansion" party has been in charge of national affairs. In securing this information no regard whatever was had to political affiliations, the desire being to make the exhibit a perfectly fair one in every respect. The line of inquiry covers a comparison of amount of business in 1896 with 1900; comparison of the number of employes then and now, and also of the wages paid. The replies show, with one exception, that the lowest increase in amount of business is 20 per cent, ranging from that up to 950 per cent, with a large proportion of instances where the percentage of gain was 75 per cent to 100; the increase in the number of employes ranges from 15 to 200 per cent, and the range of increase in salaries paid is from 10 per cent to 53 per cent. The increase in a large proportion of cases is from 25 to 50 per cent.

WOULD ENDANGER PROSPERITY.

The secretary of the treasury, in his reply to Mr. Schurz, with reference to the money question, said: "It ought to have been apparent to you, as it no doubt was, that I was speaking of possibilities of the case under circumstances and conditions as they now exist, but you pressed the point so far, at the next session of congress, which will meet in December, legislation could be had which would completely forestall unfriendly action toward the gold standard, even if Mr. Bryan were elected and should cherish the firm-set purpose declared by him on September 16, 1896, at Knoxville, Tenn., where he said: 'If there is any one who believes that the gold standard is a good thing or that it must be maintained, I warn him not to cast his vote for me, because I promise him it will not be maintained in this country longer than I am able to get rid of it.'"

"You rebuke me in polite terms for sounding a false note of alarm disquieting the business community, and especially when uttered by one in authority. I am not at all skilled in controversy and have had no practice in dialectics, but I will indulge in a few words in the way of rejoinder to your criticism."

"In 1896 you are yourself quoted as saying: 'The mere apprehension of a possibility of a substitution by Mr. Bryan's election, and of the consequent placing of our country on the silver basis has already caused untold millions of our securities to be thrown upon the market. Scores of business orders are recalled, a large number of manufacturing establishments have restricted their operations, enterprise is already discouraged and nearly paralyzed. . . . And if these are the effects of a mere apprehension of a possibility that would be the effects of the event itself. There is scarcely an imaginary limit to the destruction certain to be wrought by the business disturbance that Mr. Bryan's election would cause.'"

"I am unable to perceive," continued Mr. Gage, "why the consequence, in a minor degree, perhaps, would not ensue now, which you so forcibly foreshadowed then. When consequences so great as these are involved the forces operating to inaugurate them should be resisted at every point. Even the possibility of danger should be avoided. It is a familiar fact and one altogether too much in evidence that an administrative officer, filled with hatred and contempt of a particular law, can, by perverse ingenuity, practically nullify its operations."

Referring to Mr. Schurz's suggestion that Mr. Bryan's hands could be tied by the present congress, Mr. Gage said that it would require new legislation by a party whose policy would have been rejected by the people through their last expression at the polls, that the next session of congress will re-open March 4, 1901; that the free silver minority would be justified by their constituents in using all the resources of dilatory procedure to prevent such legislation and that such legislation would probably be impossible. "Your remarks seem to show that you rely upon the exercise of power already conferred upon the republican party to prevent the country from experiencing disasters which Mr. Bryan will, if he can, bring upon us," said the secretary. "May I not suggest that the way to secure safety is not to take power from those upon whom you rely for protection and confer it upon those whose action you may have good cause to regret?"

"But even admitting that congress, dating from March 4, 1901, will not be able to effect any change in our present financial legislation, what may we fairly expect will be the effect of the continued agitation of the question upon business and industry set in motion by a president bent upon the restoration of free silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 and elected upon that platform?"

"You suggest that I retract what I have said, in fairness to the business community, which should not be unnecessarily disquieted, especially by those in authority. In thinking as I do, that the election of Mr. Bryan would be a real menace to the commercial and industrial interests of our country, because of the purpose he cherishes and the power he would possess, I do not feel at liberty to act upon your suggestion. I feel it my duty to at least wait until after Mr. Bryan himself has retracted his statement of 1896, that 'it (the gold standard) will not be maintained in this country longer than I am able to get rid of it.'"

"Very truly yours, (Signed.) 'LYMAN J. GAGE.'"

Where there's a will there's always one or more lawyers.

The motorman on the electric street car is a nonconductor.



HE TURNED TO CONFRONT HIS AUNT, MRS. ROGERS.