

Haunted by a Voice That Has Caused him to be Jilted at the Altar by FOUR WOMEN



HENRI DORAN, until recently director of the Symphony orchestra in Paris, is a haunted man, followed by the invisible, mysterious presence of a woman who has prevented his marriage four times in four years.

Four years ago M. Doran, who is young, rich, talented, and a favorite in dramatic, musical, and art circles of Paris, was engaged to marry Mile. Antoinette Le Febré, the daughter of a retired banker in the Rue de la Paix. The preparations for the wedding were made, the bride's trousseau bought. The day arrived. There were two ceremonies, of course. The civil ceremony, where the bride was to sign the marriage contract, and the church ceremony, where the priest was to sanction the union.

The guests were assembled, but as Mile. Le Febré bent over the table, pen in hand, to sign the marriage contract, a voice—the voice of a woman—whispered into her ear:

"I beg of you, do not marry Henri Doran. You will be sorry all the days of your life."

Mile. Le Febré paused with pen uplifted and gave a startled glance over her shoulder, expecting to see a woman standing near her. But only her father, smiling, and yet with tears in his eyes, stood by her. There was not a woman near her. The women among the guests were chatting, laughing. None of them was near enough to have whispered the warning.

"Didn't you speak, father?" asked the bride of M. Le Febré.

"Why, no, my child."

Again She Hears the Voice.

Again Mile. Le Febré bent over the marriage contract. Something in her manner indicated fright and the room suddenly became as silent as a death chamber. The gas jets flickered violently, throwing strange, weird shadows across the white page of the marriage contract. The bride, pale as death, shuddered involuntarily as she bent to sign her name under the bold, manly signature of Henri Doran. Again came the agonizing whisper in her ear:

"Don't, I beg of you, don't sign. It is disgrace."

Throwing the pen on the table Mile. Le Febré gave a startled glance around the room and fell to the floor in a swoon.

Of course, the marriage was postponed. But Mile. Le Febré never would consent to fix a date for the ceremony again. She refused even to see her betrothed and finally insisted upon breaking the engagement. To Henri Doran, to her parents, to none of her friends would she give any reason for her strange refusal.

Henri Doran was overwhelmed with disappointment and mortification. For three months he refused to appear as the director of his orchestra. When he again resumed his place there was a look of sadness upon his features that no amount of companionship could efface.

Eighteen months went by and Henri Doran again sought to make a fair girl his bride. This time he chose Mile. Doubligne, a beautiful girl 22 years of age, and the daughter of the musician under whom Doran had studied for three years.

Again the day for the civil ceremony arrived, and again the guests assembled in the drawing room of the old music master to witness the signing of the contracts. Again the bride with her laughing friends about her bent over the table to sign the contract.

Another Wedding Stopped at Altar.

Henri Doran watched her anxiously. The scene in the parlors of Banker Le Febré's mansion eighteen months before arose vividly before his vision, and he wondered inwardly if his happiness was again to be dashed from him by some mysterious, intangible essence of the unknown.

There was not a tremor in the firm hand of Mile. Doubligne as she placed the pen to the paper. She wrote—

"Marie—"

Suddenly her pen stopped. She looked up suddenly, glanced around the room, her face paling visibly.

Again she started to write. Again she stopped. Then burying her face in her hands she sobbed softly to herself. She refused to be comforted by her aged father. To her girl friends she declined to tell the reasons for her grief. When Henri Doran approached her she shrank from him, and a few moments later he left the house, never to return again.

Twice had Henri Doran been jilted by women he was about to marry, and both times under the strangest of circumstances, each time for no apparent reason. His friends began to comment on the strange coincidence. At first it was suspected that some incident in his past life that might be construed as a blemish upon his name or reputation had suddenly become known to the two young women.

The two young women were questioned by intimate but discreet mutual friends, but both Mile. Le Febré and Mile. Doubligne declined to discuss the matter. Neither would tell at the time why they had refused to sign the marriage contract. Afterwards they both revealed the secret.

Third Attempt to Wed.

One year ago Henri Doran sought a third time to enter the state of matrimony. He permitted only six months to elapse after his strange rejection by Mile. Doubligne before he proposed to Millicent Angsley, an English girl studying art in Paris. She was an orphan and made her home with her aunt. Having no home of her own, and her aunt being anxious to return to England, Miss Angsley consented to an immediate marriage, with only the formalities made necessary by law.

It was not without inward misgivings that Henri Doran escorted Miss Angsley and her aunt to the notary's office. He could not help feeling that even this fair English girl, who undoubtedly loved him with all the purity and tenderness of a girl's first affection, would at the last moment turn from him and refuse to proceed with the ceremony.

His fears were realized. The girl did not even wait for the notary to prepare the papers. She had hardly seated herself in the notary's office before she sprang suddenly to her feet, gazed wildly about her, trembling with excitement.

"I can't go on," she cried. "I dare not, O, Henri, what is it? What is it?"

Try as he could, Henri Doran could not quiet the girl. She wept and became hysterical. She alternately clung to him and shrank from him. Then suddenly she hurried from the notary's office, stopped a passing cab, and giving the address of her lodgings drove away.

Doran and the girl's aunt followed as quickly as possible. When they arrived at the girl's home she refused to see the man whom only an hour before she started to marry. She unpacked her trunks and again took up her life as an art student. Not until recently did she refer to the matter.

Fearless American Is Daunted.

Henri Doran's fourth and last effort to marry was made two months ago. This time the girl was an American—



Harriet Mann



Henri Doran

brusque, independent, athletic, and fearless. She had come to Paris to cultivate her voice, having earned the money for her expenses before coming. She was practically alone in the world.

Before proposing to Harriet Mann—that was her name—Henri Doran told her of his three efforts to marry other women. He concealed not a detail. He told her minutely all the circumstances attending the refusal of Mile. Le Febré, Mile. Doubligne, and Millicent Angsley to sign the marriage contract—told her how they afterwards shunned him—told her how his friends avoided him. Then he asked Harriet Mann to marry him.

The American girl told him she would give him his answer in a week. Then she began a little investigation on her own account. She went straight to an American artist friend, a manly man who could go everywhere, see everything, hear everything. She asked him to look up the past record of Henri Doran.

"I want to know what kind of a man he has been. If he has been straight, if he has never deceived a woman, if he has been good to his folks, I'm going to marry him."

That was Harriet Mann's way.

Her American artist friend gave only the best accounts of Henri Doran's character. The only thing that could be brought against him was the fact that three young women, for some mysterious reason, had in turn refused to marry him, even at the last moment.

"I think Henri Doran needs me in his life," said Harriet Mann. And she told Doran she would marry him.

But she didn't. Like Mile. Le Febré, Mile. Doubligne, and Millicent Angsley, she refused even at the instant that she started to sign the marriage contract.

"I'm sorry, Henri, but I can't," was all she said.

He First Hears of the Voice.

But Harriet Mann did not become hysterical. She told Henri Doran that just as she was about to sign the contract a voice—the agonizing voice of a woman—whispered to her:

"Never marry that man. I beg of you, don't. You will repent in sorrow all the days of your life."

"I can't imagine," continued Harriet Mann. "why I should hear a woman's voice at such a time. But I've faith in you. I'm going to wait one month. If in that time I can find no reason why I should not marry you I'll sign the contract if all the dead women's voices in eternity whisper to me not to."

And so Henri Doran is waiting. In the meantime Harriet Mann and her artist friend have visited Mile. Le Febré, Mile. Doubligne, and Millicent Angsley in turn. To each of these women the American girl has said plainly that she loves Henri Doran and means to marry him. She has told each of them how she heard the whisper of the mysterious voice just as she was about to sign the contract. Each one has told her that the same mysterious voice prevented them from marrying Henri Doran at the last minute. None can explain it.

In the meantime all Paris is asking two questions:

"What is the mysterious voice from an unknown world that interferes to prevent Henri Doran from becoming a married man?"

"Will Harriet Mann marry Henri Doran?"