

SHE WANTED TO BE LIKE THE HEROINE OF A MELODRAMA AND SHE WAS

ALICE ROTHER of Eminence, Mo., after a series of startling adventures resulting from her novel and melodrama fed imagination, will reach the happy ending of her own melodrama next week when she will become the bride of Arthur Cluxton of St. Louis.

Cluxton was first her hero, then her villain, then again her hero—for he saved her from the fate into which she came near casting herself because of her wild imagination which she had stuffed on cheap novels and stage-struck fancies after she had come to imagine him a villain.

The happy ending came in act III, which is unusual in melodrama, but this one is in real life and the action took place in Eminence and St. Louis. The story, which is best told in three acts, has just become public property because of the issuance of the invitations to the wedding.

ACT I.

Scene: Eminence, Mo. Time: June, 1904.

Alice Rother, 18 years old, the daughter of a well-to-do family, just out of school, was the belle of the country town. Her disposition is romantic in the extreme, and from childhood on she had been a reader of cheap novels. Her mother died when she was yet a child, and her father, overindulgent, supplied her with money, permitted her to purchase all the books she desired, and took little observation of what she read. She occupied the best seats in the theater every time a "show" came to town, and, although her father did not know it, she walked past the hotel many afternoons, hoping that she might catch a glimpse of one of the actors. Her brain was fired with a desire to go on the stage, to wear the near gorgeous gowns that looked like the real thing from the seats in which she sat.

The girl's brain, fired with reading of trashy novels and by the heroic and villainous scenes portrayed on the stage, weaved romances and tragedies in the cloth of her imagination, and she conjured up mysteries to solve, surrounding herself with an atmosphere of romance and mystery—in which she herself was the heroine.

The girl, in spite of this, was innocent and unspoiled, and the prettiest young woman in the county—so the young men of the town said—and she was a favorite and a leader among the young people.

In June Arthur Cluxton, a young traveling man from St. Louis, reached Eminence, and was forced to remain over Sunday. He was a leader among the Gideons, a religious organization of traveling men, a clean cut, energetic young fellow, of good family and excellent prospects. He attended church both morning and afternoon, and just before the evening service he was introduced to Miss Rother by the minister, and with her during services, and afterwards walked home from church with her.

With Cluxton it was a case of love at first sight, and Miss Rother was strongly drawn to him. Twice within the next two weeks he arranged his route so that he could spend Sunday in Eminence, and, at the end of those two visits, he frankly told the girl of his love for her and she, flattered by the admiration and love of the city man, said "Yes" and wore his ring proudly.

Because of the short acquaintance the father insisted that the young people wait at least six months before marrying—and the date was set for Dec. 10.

ACT 2.

Scene: Eminence, Mo. Time: September.

The Grotto Stock company had come to Eminence for a week at the opera house. It was the best "repertoire" company that ever had visited the town and its coming was an event.

But on top of that event there was another, which was quite as important to Alice Rother because, on Tuesday afternoon she had received a telegram from her lover informing her that he would jump from Monet and be with her Wednesday afternoon. Besides she had her new gown and new hat and she would go with Cluxton to the opera house and be the heroine of a little romance herself, and be envied by all the girls.

The bill for Wednesday evening was "The Detective Bride," and she was excited by the strange title, significant of mystery and love, so she felt almost as much interest in the prospect of seeing an exciting melodrama as she did in the coming of the man she was to wed.

Cluxton arrived the next morning and she met him at the station. It was the first time that he ever kissed her publicly and she blushed prettily and drove with him proudly and consciously through town to her father's house, where, for the first time, he was to be the guest. All morning and most of the afternoon they sat in the hammock under the shade of the big maple tree and planned their future life, painting beautiful pictures of the future and planning everything in rosy colors.

Late in the afternoon she laughingly told him to run away uptown as she had to supervise the colored girl in getting the dinner and finishing up the housework, and he kissed her again and walked away happily while she fed, laughing and blushing, up the stairs.

Right there the trouble commenced. She stepped into the "spare" bedroom, which he was to occupy—and on the mantel she saw the photograph of a man and a beautiful woman. Without meaning to spy she stepped toward the mantel and picked up the photograph. "Why, it's Arthur!" she said to herself. "I wonder who this lovely lady with him can be."

The seeds of jealousy were sown. Half an hour later he returned from his stroll through the town and greeted her happily. She looked down and he noted a change in her manner.



"What's the matter with my little girl?" he asked, slipping his arm around her waist.

"O, nothing."

"Yes, there is, sweetheart, dear," he insisted. "And you must tell me."

"Arthur," she said, slipping out of his arms, "who is that woman in the photograph upstairs?"

For a minute the man hesitated. Then his brow clouded.

"It's a sad story, little girl, and one I can't tell you now. Maybe some day you will hear it."

The girl said nothing more and the matter might have ended there but for the playwright who wrote "The Detective Bride."

Somewhat that evening all the anticipated happiness fled from Alice Rother. Her dress was not half as pretty as she

had thought it in the morning and she did not care so much for the envy of the other girls. In fact she was desperately jealous and did not know it.

Then the plot of the play caught her attention and she leaned forward excitedly. It was a cheap little melodramatic plot—the story of a bride whose husband was false and who donned man's clothing, trailed him, exposed his villainy, secured a divorce, and finally married the man she really loved.

But the cheapness and tawdriness of the thing did not appeal to Alice Rother, for from it was born an idea. That night, after she had coldly permitted Cluxton to kiss her good-night, she sat by her bedroom window thinking for a long time. Then, as she turned out the light she said: "I'll do it."

ACT 3.

Scene: St. Louis, Time: September.

Alice Rother, disguised as a boy, has arrived in St. Louis on the track of Cluxton, her affianced husband. She has trailed him to his home on Carondelet avenue and is watching his every move. Twice she followed him through the Pike at the world's fair, while he, unconscious of her nearness, is longing for her to be with him and share with him the pleasures of the fair. The girl's conscience tortures her a little as she sees him sit down at the table, alone amid the gay throng, and write a little note.

But still she believes that she will trap him.

On Sept. 10, towards evening, she was watching outside his home, loitering on the sidewalk across the street, when she saw a mad surge from the house, drew his hat down over his eyes, and walk briskly away. She boarded the same car as he did and rode downtown with him.

On Broadway, near Seventh, the man stopped and waited, eagerly scanning the street in both directions, and within few minutes a tall, handsome woman rounded the corner. The man and woman met. A few feet away, almost within hearing, Alice Rother, disguised, saw the meeting and her breast palpitated with passion. When the couple started away she was after them like a flash. Back after back she followed, until she saw them enter a low drinking resort and then, hiding her terror and shame, she followed and seated herself at a table near the couple, who ignored her presence. The man and the woman remained in earnest conversation for some minutes, until finally Alice, unable to bear the scene any longer, sprang towards them, and, feeling the man's side.

"Villain—I have discovered your duplicity!" The melodramatic outbreak startled the man and the woman and attracted the attention of the crowd. The girl tore off the soft hat she was wearing and her black hair flowed down over her shoulders. A waiter grabbed her roughly by the arms and started to rush her towards the door to throw her out upon the street.

The uproar grew with every minute. The man and the woman remained seemingly dazed by surprise, seated at the table. A policeman ran into the place, and, being told that a woman disguised as a man had caused the disorder, he seized the young girl and started to take her to the door.

Her melodramatic heroics ceased in an instant, and, breaking down, she sobbed and called:

"O, Arthur, save me and I will forgive you!"

The man, the table looked up as if suddenly grasping an idea, and started forward.

Just at that instant Arthur Cluxton entered the place and gazed upon the scene. He saw his sweetheart under arrest in the hands of the police, charged with starting a brawl in a questionable resort. He saw the man and the woman at the table—and then—the situation flashing across his brain in an instant, he stepped forward, spoke easily to the policeman, and led him aside.

A bill pressed into the hand of the policeman settled the difficulty, and a moment later Arthur Cluxton led the weeping girl in man's clothes out to the sidewalk, hurriedly summoned a cab, and, shoving her into it, he leaped in and they drove away.

Expansions followed. The girl, sobbing out the story of her melodramatic effort to trace him down, revealed everything. For a moment he was angry—then, holding her close in his arms, he told her a story. He told her how his twin brother had formed an unfortunate alliance with a woman, who, after a year of happy married life, had gone astray and threatened to wreck the name of the family unless she was paid money, how his brother, still loving the reckless woman, had striven to pay her the money she demanded, how they all had tried to keep the secret of the disgrace—and how, on that night, his brother had agreed to meet the woman and pay her a large sum to step away forever her claims against the family as to the divorce court.

And when he finished the story the girl lay sobbing and repentant in his arms.

Cluxton, having saved his sweetheart from public disgrace, took her back to her home. For months she was ashamed to face him but, every month, he went down to Eminence to see her. She would not receive him, sending word that she was unworthy of him, but, at Christmas time, he finally surprised her, and, in the long talk that followed, he won his point and she set a new date for the wedding.

Just Like Romance She Wrote Was the Romance She Lived

Australian Girl Meets Man She Married Just as She Described the Meeting of the Hero and Heroine in Her Love Story. Was It Accident, or Did She Unconsciously See into Future?

EDINA KILBOURNE, the young girl whose short stories and sketches ever two years ago created a sensation throughout Australia, and who was heralded even in England as one of the most promising young writers of fiction in the English speaking world, has become the heroine of a romance stranger than any of which she ever wrote or dreamed.

The girl, daughter of a well-to-do family in Adelaide, was married last week and is now Mrs. John Lawrence Ashbridge of County Sterling, England, whose estates near Lennontown are noted for their extent and beauty.

The strange part of the whole affair is that Edina Kilbourne's first love story—the one that first attracted attention to her work in Australia—came true when she met the man who is now her husband, and stranger than that, she met him exactly as her heroine in the story met her husband, and, even stranger, the name of her hero was John Lawrence.

The bride and groom, now spending their honeymoon in northern Italy, declare that it was a case of subconscious knowledge; that Miss Kilbourne wrote the true story through some power of seeing into the future; that it was foreordained that they should meet.

However it happened, these are the proved and admitted facts of the case:

Story "Floating in Her Brain."

Edina Kilbourne never was out of Australia until she went to Europe on the trip on which she met her husband, and that was three years after she wrote the story. She never had heard of John Lawrence. She declared that the story had "just been floating around in her brain" for months before she wrote it, and that she could never think of writing the story without the name John Lawrence intruding itself. She admits that she wanted a prettier name, and chose one—Guy Merrivale—as her hero, but that, after the story was written she was impelled by some unknown force to change the name back to the original.

John Lawrence was never in Australia. He never heard of Edina Kilbourne until he met her in Rome on Jan. 17, 1905. He never read the Home Magazine, printed in Australia. He never read or heard of any story in which the name John Lawrence appears.

The story which came true was written in 1902 and sent to the Home Magazine, which printed it. It was a simple, passionate little love story—the story of a lonely girl who met the man she was to love, and both knew it at sight. It was not up to the standard of her stories written later, but for a first attempt it was declared good—at least it was accepted.

Girl's Heart Filled With Longings.

The scene of the story was laid in Rome. The heroine, Mildred Maiden, was the daughter of a retired English merchant. Reared in luxury, with every comfort, with an excellent education, a circle of young people, happy, bright, and

entertaining, who envied her, the girl had fallen a prey to secret longings for a higher, better life—a wider sphere.

Surrounded by everything that could give the ordinary girl could wish, she had been wretched, mooping like a caged wild bird longing for freedom.

The conventional bonds of her father's middle class establishment had galled her; the care free meriment of her companions had been as a pang to her. She hated herself for the feeling of disgust she could not conquer, for the desire to withdraw from them all, and, if she could, not to be what she desired, to be alone. Year after year the girl fought the demon, calling it pride. The longing for the love of a man above the clerks and accountants who sought her hand ate into her heart. She stifled even that cry of heart hurt, set her face to the realities of her life, determined to do her duty—to do as others thought she should do.

By sheer force of will, despite the pain and the heart torture, she made herself fit into the narrow groove of life into which fate had thrown her. She stifled her heart screams and coldly decided to wed a man of her own rank, a rising young bookkeeper with a coarse, jolly laugh, to whom she knew her father wanted to see her married.

Before announcing her decision she determined upon one short, joyous plunge into the life of which, from girlhood, she had dreamed. She could not, she realized, go into the upper social circles even of her home town, despite her father's wealth, but she determined to travel through southern Europe for three months before finally surrendering herself forever to the dead commonplaces of middle class life.

To Attempt to Strangle Her Ideals.

The three months were nearing an end. The next day Mildred Maiden was to start for her home to make the final sacrifice—to attempt to live down her dreams and strangle her ideals.

She, with a girl friend—the only one in the world to whom she had confided her ambitions and her tortures—were sitting together in the balcony overlooking the little garden below the great restaurant of the quinal.

Suddenly a man appeared, moving slowly towards them. Without a word the girl arose and stretched forth her hands. The man, as if dazed, approached slowly, stretched out his hands, and they stood looking into each other's eyes, and without words, understanding that the fate which had guided their destinies through life had decreed that they were to meet and love in this way.

No One Suspected Her Unhappiness.

That, briefly, was the story, and it was perhaps the strange note of sadness, the choked back sob of others, that ran through it all to the happy end, that won success for the story, which, in itself, did not appear extraordinary, but there was something in the way that Miss Kilbourne wrote it that started tears—so the story succeeded—because it sounded true and appealed to human nature.

Now the strange part comes in. No one in all Adelaide

suspected that Edina Kilbourne was not happy—except one first friend, to whom she confessed that she had written the first part of the story as a picture of her own longings and her own sufferings. She told her friend she had queried herself, and that her writing made her happier.

Also there was a young business man with a loud, merry laugh, who, the young girl's friends in Adelaide said, would some day marry the girl.

Last August Edina Kilbourne suddenly announced that she was going to take a trip to Europe, and she invited Sarah Campbell, the girl in whom she had confided her secret longings, to go with her.

There were no objections, and Edina stated that she intended to spend all the money she had made from her short stories during her journeying.

"It's my last fever," she said, laughing. "It's just like that girl in my first story. I'm going away to have one big, long good time, and then come back and settle down."

"Time you did and married Jack," said her father, who failed to see the shudder that went through the girl's slender form.

The last night had come. Edina Kilbourne and Sarah Campbell were in Rome. They were stopping at the Hotel d'Allemagne, but this night Edina, who was strangely silent, proposed that they go to dinner at the quinal.

"I could cry because it is so near over," said Sarah as they were seated on the little balcony overlooking the garden. "It has been divine."

Her Own Romance Comes True.

Edina was silent. From the great dining room behind them the strains of the "Blue Danube" floated out.

"Why, Edina," said Sarah. "That's the same waltz they were playing in your story."

"Yes," said Edina sadly, "and this is the table at which Mildred sat when her happiness came to her."

"How did you ever know about this place?" asked Sarah.

"I read it in a 'Baedeker.' And it is exactly as I pictured it then—the same garden, the same balcony, the same table, the same waiter, the same music—everything, everything but the man," she ended lamely.

Suddenly Edina gasped, her eyes widened into a stare half of fright, and she grasped Sarah's arm. "There he is! There he is!" she whispered hoarsely. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Slowly the girl rose and stood, looking towards a figure making its way between the tables. Her hands were stretched out before her; her eyes shone with the light of love. Slowly the man approached. Without a word he stretched forth his hands and took hers. They gazed into each other's eyes, and then, with a sob, Edina dropped into a chair, and, covering her eyes with her hands, wept while the man tenderly drew them away and kissed them.

Thus did John Lawrence Ashbridge, an unambitious Englishman, and Edina Kilbourne, a modern Australian girl, become engaged.

The love story had come true.



MISS EDINA KILBOURNE'S FAVORITE PORTRAIT.