

By a Hair's Breadth

By D. H. TALMADGE

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It once happened that a boy wandered away from his home, thus producing distraction therein. He was a little boy, and his years were few. He was gone for hours, many hours, of daylight and darkness, and during the interval between his going and his coming, for he returned safe and sound at last, his mother was prostrated with nervous apprehension and his father's face aged plainly. The alarm bells were rung; the community postponed its business affairs and joined in the search; the schools were dismissed, and children vied with men and women to find the missing, but they were unsuccessful.

They found upon the river bank tracks made by the boy's small shoes; they found his straw hat floating upon the surface of the stream in a heap of driftwood; they found, trampled in the sand of the shore, a paper bag bearing the name of a local confectioner, who testified that the boy had purchased a penny's worth of caramels that day. And suspicion became conviction—the boy had been drowned!

The river was dragged until the night came down, and one boatload of determined spirits worked grimly with the chains and hooks by the flickering light of lanterns until the clocks struck 12. Then, discomfited, they retired to await the sunrise.

That was a night long to be remembered in the town. It was a night of speechless agony in the boy's home and of sorrow broken slumber in the homes of other boys. There is something peculiarly sad in the thought of a child's form alone in black waters under a starless sky or—and this was the faintest of hopes—in the thought of a child wandering alone in the darkness, crying out his terrified little heart, stumbling here and there, not knowing which way to turn.

Tears were many in the town that night, but none flowed in the boy's home. Eyes were dry there and hot. Lips there were dry and burning. Hour after hour the father paced the floor, looking neither to the right nor to the left, his sweat cold hands clinched, his breath bursting from him as from one who strives to the limit of endurance at some manual undertaking.

The clocks struck 3. The front door opened and closed with a bang. A cry indescribable was sounded. The boy was in his father's arms.

At daybreak the good news went forth, and the story was told and told

passed down the stairs, but not so quickly that he was not heard by a man standing by the sideboard in the dining room. The man fired a pistol, and the boy's father fired in return. The first shot had no effect. The second had. When the boy's father turned on the electric light, the man was lying upon the floor bleeding.

"You've fixed me, I guess," he said, grinning in a ghastly sort of way. "You've hit me in a nerve center or something. I'm paralyzed. I can't wiggle."

"Serves you right," grimly commented the father of the boy, and he telephoned for the police.

But before the police came there was a sound of swishing garments upon the stairway, and the boy entered the room. His eyes were wide with wonder as he looked from his father to the form upon the floor. Then with a little cry he ran to the form and knelt beside it.

"Hello!" he said.

"Hello!" was the groaning response.

"How are you, kid?"

"Real well," replied the boy. Then he turned toward his father. "This is him," he announced simply.

The boy's father was much affected.

"What?" he ejaculated. "Him? Oh!"

He also knelt by the wounded man's side, saying nothing, only trying to staunch the flow of blood, and while he worked the police arrived.

He arose, confronting the officers. "I have made a terrible mistake," he said to them. "I thought this man was an enemy to my household, and he was not. You are not needed. I'm sorry I put you to so much trouble. If one of you will step to the telephone and tell Dr. Bigley to come here at once, I shall be obliged. After that you may go."

The burglar was nursed back to health in that home. He was there three weeks. He should, for the sake of the story, have gone into the world a better man, but he did not. Six weeks afterward he was arrested in another city on a charge of burglary, convicted and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. A short time prior to his arrest the boy's father received a letter from him, inclosing \$15 in currency. It said:

Dear Sir—Here for my bond during my present stay at your house. I like to square the deal with you. I am glad to see you. Yours truly, JAMES DOUGLAS.

The father of the boy read the letter several times and pondered much.

"The man's had tendencies," he told himself, "outweigh the good by only the fraction of a hair. Poor fellow!"

Gordon's Way.

Lord Wolseley used to tell of three subalterns who were in the trenches before the Sedan—Wolseley, Gerald Graham and Charles Gordon.

When they were relieved at night, the gigantic Graham, the perfect type of the sword, used to pick himself out of the trench and walk straight to his tent, careless of the fact that he was making himself a cock shot for the Russian marksmen.

Evening after evening the Russian soldiers used to gather more and more thickly, but Graham would take no advice. He wasn't going "to bother about those fellows."

Garnet Wolseley, with ambition even then to be one day the commander in chief, used to crawl through the very slush of the trench on his hands and knees for a hundred yards or so before he got up and made a bee line for his tent. He did not mean to be shot if he could help it.

"And Gordon?" the listener asked.

"Oh, Gordon," said Wolseley; "Gordon was funny. Sometimes he would crawl with me and the very next evening get up, hook arms with Graham and go off talking eagerly."—*Candid Friend.*

Janet's Way of Growing Younger.

As a matter of fact Janet was born exactly two years before her brother Fred; therefore in the natural course of things when he was ten she was twelve and gloried in it. When Fred was known to be fourteen, she still confessed to sixteen.

When Fred boasted eighteen years, she timidly acknowledged herself just over nineteen.

When Fred came home from college and had a party in honor of his twenty-first birthday, Janet said to her friends: "What a boyish fellow Fred is! Who would think he is only a year younger than I?"

When Fred declared himself twenty-five and old enough to get married, Janet said to a gentleman friend: "Do you know, I feel very jealous of Fred getting married. But, then, I suppose twins always are more attached to one another." And two years later at Fred's wedding she said with a girlish simper to the guests: "Dear old Fred! To see him married today, and to think when he was only five years old they brought him to see me, his baby sister! I wonder if he thinks of it now?"

The Old Constitution.

The Constitution originally carried forty-four guns. A particularly interesting history is connected with this ship. During the war with the Barbary powers in 1803 she was Commodore Preble's flagship in the Mediterranean and played a conspicuous part during the whole war.

Lieutenant Wadsworth, who was blown up before Tripoli in the ill-fated Intrepid, was one of the officers of the Constitution. In the course of the war with England in 1812 the English papers laughed at the Constitution and spoke of her as "a bundle of pine boards sailing under a bit of striped bunting." But when under Captain Hull she captured the English frigate Guerriere, a vessel of nearly equal force, the people who had before ridiculed her called her "one of the staunchest vessels afloat." A few months after this victory the Constitution, then commanded by Captain Bainbridge, compelled one of the finest frigates in the British navy, the Java, to strike its colors.

DOCTOR AND PATIENT.

It Is Not Always Feasible to Tell the Plain Truth.

As a rule you can never take a woman at her word. A Louisville woman and her husband went east for recuperation. It was their intention to interview a leading physician before they came back in order to get his opinion of the wife's health. She had been far from well and finally concluded nothing would satisfy her but the verdict of this medical celebrity.

Accordingly husband and wife called by appointment upon this specialist. "Now, doctor," said the woman, "I want your honest opinion. I like candor and don't wish to make the trip here to be told any falsehood about myself."

"This sounded very open and courageous, so the expert went to work. He looked at her well, asked questions, made a minute examination of the case and finally inquired, 'Did any doctor ever tell you you had so and so?'"

"Only one—the horrid brute!" was the reply. "I have been to ten or twelve, and he was the only one who was so ignorant and rude as to tell me such a thing, and I discharged him at once."

"Discharged him!" exclaimed the expert. "Why, madam, he was the only one of the lot who told you the truth."

—*Louisville Times.*

Fresh Water Sponges.

That certain sponges can do a great deal of harm is now maintained by a French scientist.

According to him, the water supply of some cities and towns has been polluted by them, and the water supply of others may be polluted if steps are not taken to prevent it.

Sponges of this kind are found only in fresh water and are known as "coronaspungia." A close examination shows that each of the various parts of such a sponge is composed of three layers. First, there is a flattened layer of epithelial cells, which covers the outer surface; next, there is a digestive layer of cells, each of which is surrounded by a collar, from which projects a little tongue or whip, and, finally, between these two there is a third layer, containing the reproductive cells as well as the spicules and fibers which form the skeleton.

In some sponges the spicules are composed of silica and in others of calcium carbonate.

After some time sponges of this type decay, and if the water inhabited by them is used for drinking purposes the pollution caused by them is likely, according to the French scientist, to prove injurious to the public health, and therefore he recommends that the water be cleared of such sponges wherever it is possible to do so.

There are sponges of this kind in many rivers and ponds in this country.

Mozart and Beethoven.

The stories of how men of genius have had future fame predicted for them in their early youth must generally be taken with a considerable grain of salt. As authentic as most is the account of the first meeting of Mozart with the young Beethoven, which took place on the latter's first visit to Vienna in the year 1787.

Mozart, then at the height of his fame, asked him to play, but, thinking his performance a prepared piece, paid little attention to it. Beethoven, seeing this, entreated Mozart to give him a subject, which he did, and the boy, getting excited with the occasion, played so finely that the composer of "Don Giovanni," stepping softly into the next room, said to his friends there: "Pay attention to him. He will make a noise in the world some day or another."—*Chambers' Journal.*

Our Surprising Insouffers.

Few people in England, remarks a London paper, who grow the sunflower for ornament have any idea of its usefulness. And then it proceeds thus to describe the sunflower on its native heath in the United States:

So rich is this plant in oil that the seed of one of these monster plants will yield fifty gallons of oil, while the refuse of the seed after this quantity of oil has been expressed weighs 1,600 pounds when made into cattle cakes.

Three Classes.

Henry Thomas Buckle's thoughts and conversation were always on a high level. Once he remarked:

"Men and women range themselves into three classes or orders of intelligence. You can tell the lowest class by their habit of always talking about persons, the next by the fact that their habit is always to converse about things, the highest by their preference for the discussion of ideas."

An Epitaph.

In a cemetery in Trumbull county, O., there is a tombstone on which the following epitaph, composed by the son of the deceased, is inscribed:

Here lies our father beneath the sod. His spirit is gone to meet his God. We never more shall hear his tread Nor see the wen upon his head.

How He Explains It.

Stephen—So it is all over with Miss Bolter. How did it happen that she threw you over?

James—I don't know for certain, but I suspect it was because she wasn't hopelessly in love with me.—*Exchange.*

Fellow Feeling.

Mrs. Meeks—How do you know that stranger you were talking to is a married man? Did he say he was?

Meeker—No, but he looked sort of sympathetic when I told him I was.—*Chicago News.*

Some people can be made to believe anything except that they don't know anything.—*St. Louis Globe.*

KITTY'S WARD.

Kit's hair was black, it grew to all a black, lustrous mass of years and days. Some one with a head of such a crown, some shape of strength or symmetry to call: One shatters it in bits to wear a wig; One cradles it in a cradle of lace; And one to walk the night in a gown. Carves it space in toys and tinsel.

But Kit's hair was black, it grew to all a black, lustrous mass of years and days. Some one with a head of such a crown, some shape of strength or symmetry to call: One shatters it in bits to wear a wig; One cradles it in a cradle of lace; And one to walk the night in a gown. Carves it space in toys and tinsel.

—*Edith Wharton, in Scribner.*

"Your gown is very becoming, Kitty; no end becoming, in fact."

"No end becoming?" I retorted scornfully. "What a sentence! And besides, Jack—"

"Ah! Parlor, I'm sure," languidly: "It suits you a marvel, Miss Delbert—down to the ground—anything you will."

"But Jack—"

"And your hat I like, too," critically. "Those gray plumes are so graceful and—er—droopy, you know, and—"

"Jack Vale Montague!" I interposed wrathfully. "I will not listen to your nonsense any longer. You are simply trying to gain time, Jack."

"Have you invited Maud Ellis for Thursday yet?"

"No," miserably.

"Do you intend to or not?"

"No," in a little weak voice.

"Jack!" I expostulated warmly, "this is outrageous. It's—it's very shabby of you besides."

"Well?"

"Obliging! Ah!" burst out Jack. "But, Kit, do you deny that I walked two miles in the blazing sun of this same blessed August day for two yards of impossible lining, and the Pillsbury mill? What do I want of the lining? What do I want of the mill—one copy of the Pillsbury Advocate, at best? You cannot deny that I did this thing. And if you cannot, dare you question my obligability?"

Here Mr. Montague paused a little, stung by his last effort in Websterian cologne, and I remarked calmly:

"That isn't at all what I was talking about. I said that there is no one to take Miss Ellis Thursday. If you don't throw yourself into the breach, I shall have to. I shall give up my escort to her—ask it of him, that is, as a special favor."

"If you are going to sweat about it in that odious way, you are at liberty to do so, of course," I observed, coldly.

"I am ashamed of you, Jack!"

"I dare say. But I'm not moody. And if you call that an odious way of sweating, I can produce plenty of others. Why are you so wild to have her go—this Miss person? Who is she, anyway?"

"Miss Ellis," I returned with dignity. "Is a dear friend of mine, and because the one with whom she was going was left to ask her. Every one else is invited, too."

"Every one but Jessie Wills?"

"Haven't she been asked?" I demanded, excitedly.

"Yes, she has."

"Well, what do you mean, then?"

"I mean to take her, of course, seeing I asked her to go."

"Jack! Why, that's different! Why didn't you say so hours before this? Any way, maybe—why, of course, Maud Ellis will go with her brother."

"I didn't say so before, because!" said Jack meekly. "I expected to do exactly as you told me, guardedly."

"Guardedly!" I could hardly not used to it. This tall handsome man, every line of whose features when in repose showed an inflexible will and self-reliance, to be addressing me, quite three years his junior, and a trifle above his shoulder, as guardian, and the law sanctioning the epithet. It was very ridiculous, and even now when I had known my "ward" six weeks, it sounded absurd. To be sure, Jack became twenty-one three years ago, and virtually assumed control of his own affairs. Nevertheless in name I was his guardian.

It had happened this way: Quite thirty years ago my mother and Jack's father had been sweethearts. They were distant cousins, and my mother's uncle, who was also her guardian, had approved of the match thoroughly and had made them joint heirs of his fortune, which was a large one. But one day there had been a quarrel over what exactly I never knew, and they had separated, my mother in a fit of pique marrying another man, a good, kind man, who eventually became my father. But first they had adopted my dear aunt's child as their own. Meanwhile, Jack's father had married, too, and two years afterwards Jack was born.

When the little girl my mother had adopted was almost five years old, four events occurred, one after another, which complicated matters afterwards. First, my uncle, with whom my mother had not corresponded for over a year, died, and left to fortune to my mother's heiress, until Jack should become of age, when it was to pass to him with its former owner as his guardian. Six months after this my father had died.

Only a few weeks after this my mother had followed him, leaving me, a week-old baby, as her legal heiress. Instead of the adopted child, for she had left no will, Jack's father and mother were both dead, and he spent the last six years abroad, attaining his majority three years before I had ever seen him. So this summer a sister of my uncle's had invited us both to spend the summer with her at her country home. A stray cousin or two had run down from time to time, but I had stayed six consecutive weeks, and Jack had, too.

The much-talked-of Thursday came at last. It was a joyous and dancing party given by Mrs. Paul Weatherly, who was, in her own eyes, at least the flower of the aristocracy of the vicinity. But before we were ready to start Jack and his guardian had a battle—a distinct war of words, whose number in our series could almost be designated by two figures. It had begun when I had come into the tiny drawing room dressed to go. Jack looked at me calmly for a moment and then went back to the magazine he

was reading, saying, "I don't think the lavender is becoming to you, but I'll say nothing." He being a member of the family, he was not to be called.

"Well," I remarked sharply and indignantly. "He raised his eyebrows indignantly. Still no remark."

"Do you like my dress?" I demanded point blank. "Is it pretty?"

"I know very well it was, and that pink was really becoming to me."

"Well, yes," said Jack, faintly. "It's very good."

"Oh, well," I said lightly. "It doesn't make the slightest difference. Do me whether you like it or not. I only asked for—"

"For instance," indolently, "where are the roses I sent up?"

"Upstairs," I answered indifferently, coldly ignoring the fact that they lay in my bouquet holder in the hall. "I prefer pink ones to the white."

"Pink on pink. Ah, yes," said Jack, reflectively, "delightful contrast; striking one's eye."

"Well, I don't suppose you care," I observed sputteringly.

"If 'Oh, no,' he said, coolly, 'yes at all. Your hair looks better high than low, Kit.'"

"The exact reason why I did it was," I answered wrathfully. "I enjoy resembling an *Equilina*."

"Yes? Wear their hair low, do they?" he inquired with interest. "The Japanese now, you know—"

he paused suggestively.

"I don't like you a bit to-night. I said with delicious frankness. And I shouldn't dance with you to-night, Mr. Montague. I decided that long ago."

"No?" with a little mocking smile, hadn't considered that as yet, Kit?"

"Well, I had," I answered vivaciously.

"And I won't be called Kit again, if you please."

"All right, Kittie."

"For Kittie by you," I went on. "My name is Catherine."

"Yes, so I understand," he said, indifferently. "Or Kate. Now I prefer Kate, do you know?" A name which he knew I detested.

"Jack Vale Montague, I hate you!" I observed, cordially, as I hurried out to throw his old white roses into the fire.

A tiny slip of white paper fell to the floor as I lifted them. On it read:

"For love is a full-blown rose, they say. For heart-borne love one must not wait away. For friendship the heart must be true. By evening let them bloom in the day."

"Let them bloom as they may!" And each one lay before me a full-blown rose. I buried my face in them and suddenly, as I saw Beverly Donovan coming up the steps. How I disliked Beverly Donovan! Light people, as a class, appeared to me detestable, then, for the gentleman was a decided blonde. Nevertheless, in another two hours I was waiting the length of Mrs. Paul Weatherly's ball-room with him, and Jack's roses were in my hand, and two in my hair. White roses did look better on pink, after all.

My card was filled except one number, a waits, and when I was seated I saw Jack making his way towards me. Just at that moment Mr. Donovan was looking at my card.

"Have you a dance for me, Kittie?" asked Jack, as his glance rested just for a moment on his flower in my hand.

"Have I?" I asked Mr. Donovan.

"Just one—a waits," he said, "and I just on the point of claiming it." He added regretfully. "I have only three, you know."

"Only three?" I asked in as great surprise as if I had not thanked my lucky stars for it not five minutes before. "There, take that one, by all means. I am afraid," I said, sweetly, turning to Jack, "that I have none for you, Mr. Montague."

"As you please," he remarked indifferently, and walked away.

Some way it was not a very pleasant evening. Everything was lovely, everyone else declared; the sea was "poems in snow"—one young lady remarked ecstatically, on the consumption of her third. Nobody tore my dress or spilled lemonade on it; my partners were good; the music was excellent; the orthodox requirements for a successful evening were fulfilled, and yet things did not seem right. I stood at length waiting for the last waltz, when the music suddenly stopped, the room with one of Chopin's exquisite values.

"Impromptu extra!" called the prompter, gayly, and—in a moment some one had passed his arm lightly about my waist and I was whirling, gliding through the dream measure of that perfect time with Jack!

It was the first time that I had waltzed with him. After the first moment of surprise, I said nothing, thought of nothing except to dread the time when the music should cease and then—

"Kittie," murmured Jack's voice, "do you know—can you guess what you did when you wore my flowers to-night?"

"Yes. That I decided pink flowers not so pretty on pink as white ones," I answered slowly.

"No," he said passionately. "No, Kittie, not that. May I give my own meaning? Is it that their message is anything to you?"

One quick clasp of my hand upon his, one glance from my eyes to those above me; then the sweet waltz notes died away and I had lost my ward.—*Evening Wisconsin.*

A Witty Reply.

Dr. Reid, the celebrated medical writer, was requested by a lady of literary eminence to call at her house.

"Be sure you recollect the address," she said, as she quitted the room.

"Chesterfield street," the doctor, "I am too great an admirer of politeness not to remember Chesterfield, and I fear too selfish ever to forget Number One."

How Many Days.

She: "This dress doesn't become my complexion—I must change it."

He: "More changes? I can't stand it, you'll ruin me!"

She: "Oh, silly! I don't mean to dress—I mean the complexion. Frank!"

One Quick Clasp.

A recent advertisement in a London paper said that the world's longest bad temper was two years old, and was set on foot by a man of business. Apply at this office.—*London Times.*



HE RAN TO THE FORM AND KNELT BESIDE IT

again how the boy had gone to the river to fish and had crawled out upon a log the better to get his ridiculous bent pin of a hook within reach of the big, fish. Thus he told the tale himself. The log had not been fastened securely, and it had sailed away with him, far, far away, miles and miles, almost to Europe, he thought. He was not frightened much. It was fun until the river ran between high bluffs over great stones and the log dipped and pitched and rolled. He fell off at last, and a man who had been watching him from a cave up in the bluff came rushing down and waded and splashed and swam after him and pulled him out, and turned him upside down and spanked him to get the water out, and carried him to a cave, and built a fire and dried his clothes, and fed him some luscious dried beef and crackers, and finally, long, long after dark, put him upon his back and gave him a dandy ride home.

"He was a real nice man," said the boy in concluding the account. "He told me stories of kings who had heaps of money and of queens who had so many jewels they didn't know what to do. I told him I'd bet they didn't have any more money than my papa or any more jewels than my mamma, and he seemed greatly interested. He didn't come clear to the house with me. He put me down at the corner and told me to scoot, and I scooted."

"Heaven bless him!" said the boy's parents fervently. "We should like to see him and thank him for the great service he has rendered us."

"I wish you could," returned the boy earnestly. "He was such a nice man."

One night about two weeks later the boy's father was awakened by the sound of a rising window sash, and he crept from his bed and took a revolver from a bureau drawer. Softly he

NEW CENT THE PEARL... (Large advertisement for Pearl brand products, including various types of pearls and jewelry, with detailed descriptions and prices.)