

# MARIA'S MONEY

She Drew Too Much on Her Imagination

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Maria Bevis dusted the glass showcase in her little store, piled the bolts of percale and gingham neatly on the shelves, hung some imitation lace collars in the window and unlocked the door for the day's business.

Behind the store, which was the front parlor of her house, were the rooms where Maria lived.

As she sat at the window waiting for customers she saw a girlish form hurry past and enter the grocery store. Maria Bevis smiled sadly.

"Shiftless," she muttered, snatching irritably at the red yarn of her ball. "If that ain't just like Amy Lane. Probably just got out of bed and gone to the store for something for breakfast! I never could believe Cousin Sam's daughter could be so different from me! Bevises have always been thrifty and hardworking. Somehow Amy Bevis was different; then she went and married Howard Lane, and everybody knows it's starvation business running a country newspaper. But—"

The door swung inward with jangling bell, and a little, black-eyed, white-haired woman hopped in like a sparrow and perched on a chair.

"Well, Maria, how goes it?" twittered Ida Ramsell girlishly.

"It's all right, Ida," returned Maria dryly. "Going out to sew today?"

"Yes—up to Mrs. Bremer's. I'll want two yards of slate colored silks and two spools of black thread No. 40, I guess. Just saw Amy," remarked Ida.

"So did I."

"Amy looks sick, Maria."

"Probably she eats too much pastry. I hear she lives out of the bakery," sniffed Maria, squinting nearsightedly into a box of thread.

"They are having a hard time to get along," murmured Ida kindly.

"Humph! Howard better go to work and do something that will bring in real money. I never dreamed when I lent that money to Amy's father that he would die without a penny. When I spoke to her about it she and Howard up and promised to pay every cent, with interest."

"I heard they said they would pay compound interest."

Maria flushed. "You do hear a lot of trashy talk, Ida! Howard did say that, but it's all talk. They've never made but the one payment on the interest. I never expect to get the rest."

"I expect it's a good deal for you to lose," suggested Ida inquisitively.

"That's a personal matter," returned Maria stiffly. "It's enough that I lent it to Cousin Sammy, and he gave me the note for it payable on demand. Amy and Howard have promised to pay it. But, land, I've given it up!"

"Folks say you don't speak to Amy and Howard now," ventured Ida Ramsell as she arose to go.

"For once folks are right. I told 'em I didn't hold to keeping acquaintance with cheats."

"Maria!" For once Ida's sharp voice was warmly sympathetic for young Howard Lane and his wife. Amy Swiftly she changed the topic. "Mr. Busby told me to tell you that you was appointed one of the delegates to the convention at Ripple River. There'll be twenty-five churches represented. Mrs. Bremer's another. I suppose you'll go?"

"Go nowhere!" cried Maria bitterly. "I can't afford to, Ida. If Amy would pay me that money I could go."

"Well, I'm sorry, Goodby," said Ida hurriedly, and the door jangled after her. "My," she breathed as she skipped down the street. "Maria must have lent them a lot of money! When I think of all the things she's wanted to do and couldn't because of the money tied up in that family loan I feel as if she was a martyr."

Ida Ramsell repeated that remark the next afternoon at the sewing society, and a buzz of laughter went around the group of busy women.

"It must be thousands of dollars," observed Mrs. Bremer quietly, "although I never could understand how Maria Bevis could get hold of very much to lend. I remember, when I went into black for Mr. Bremer, I offered to sell her my new garnet eels, but Maria said she couldn't afford it just then; she'd lent every penny to Sammy's folks and they hadn't paid her back."

"Too bad of her to talk so much about it," said the minister's wife. "Family affairs are best kept in the family."

"That's what I'm always telling Maria," chirped Ida Ramsell, sewing jerkily. "But she will gabble about it. Does seem if her milk of human kindness was turned to vinegar and she just rejoiced in gettings slips at Howard and Amy."

"I wonder how the baby is," murmured Mrs. Busby, the minister's wife. "Better, so Amy said when I ran in there yesterday. Seems they had trouble with the milk from Long's. Howard wants to buy a cow, but I guess he doesn't dare to until they pay Maria."

That same night Amy and Howard Lane sat in their garden and talked of the future and played with Joyce, who seemed much better. From a treat on the grass came sounds of laughter and

threads of music, where a fair was in full swing.

Howard's arm was around Amy's waist. "Dear, if you hadn't married me you might have been over there enjoying yourself," he said, a little bitterly. "Now you are ashamed to go because you haven't got decent shoes to wear and because if you spent a penny Cousin Maria would frown and call us—"

"Cheats," faltered Amy, with a little laugh. "Never mind, Howard. I've been to lots of fairs, and I've got you and baby, and that's enough for any girl. Only I do wish we could pay Cousin Maria's note."

"They started to go into the house when a man entered the front gate and came briskly toward them. "Mr. and Mrs. Howard Lane?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," said Howard.

"I'm Tobias Bevis—Maria's brother. Guess you've heard of me from your father. Amy, ain't it? You was a little girl when I went away. Your father, my Cousin Sammy, mortgaged his house for \$1,000 to send me to California to get back my health. Well, I got it back and went to Australia, and I've been making money. I've brought back Cousin Sammy's money with compound interest. It's here in this packet. I'm sorry I couldn't give it to him direct. He was one of the best men in the world." The man's voice trembled as he finished speaking.

Without questioning why this long delayed loan was only now being repaid, Howard and Amy ushered Tobias Bevis into the house and listened to his story.

"I came here first. Maria wasn't home, and I went to the minister, Mr. Busby, and he gave me the particulars of Cousin Sammy's death. I'm sorry, Amy, that your father lost his home on account of me, but I'll make it up. If I can, to this little girl of yours. Did you say her name was Joyce?"

He played with the baby while Amy and Howard counted the money with trembling fingers and unbelieving eyes. Twenty-two hundred dollars! What wealth! Perhaps there would be enough left after Cousin Maria's awful debt was paid to give them a fair start in the world. Paying the interest had always kept them back.

"We must go tonight," whispered Amy, and Howard nodded assent.

Tobias promised to care for the baby until their return, and the happy pair hastened to Maria's house, where they found that spinster in a state of perturbation over the discovery of a man's leather suit case on her front piazza.

"What in time has happened?" she asked tartly as she ushered them into her sitting room.

"We've come to pay the note," said Amy proudly. "Will you please bring it at once, Cousin Maria? We must get it off our minds."

"With compound interest," added Howard.

Maria looked at them blankly. She had never expected the note to be paid, and she had not looked at it for years. Slowly she walked to the china closet and took down a large blue china teapot. She thrust her hand in the top and drew out a bundle of yellowed papers.

Her spectacled eyes selected one and brought it to the table and laid it on the red cover. "There it is," she said skeptically. "Do you want to pay the whole of it?"

"I hope it isn't over \$2,000," whispered Amy prayerfully as she turned over the note.

She stared uncomprehendingly at it and gave it to her husband. "What does it say?" she whispered tensely.

Howard read and his face flushed.

"Cousin Maria, do you mean to say that this note is only for \$25—that that is all Father Bevis borrowed from you?" he demanded hotly.

Maria nodded dazedly. "I guess that's right," she said sheepishly. "Somehow I got to thinking how many things I could do with that money. It got to seem like a whole lot. I—"

She paused helplessly, while Howard counted out \$30 and pushed it across the table. Then he caught up the note and set a lighted match to it. When it crumbled to ashes he looked across the blacked fragments on the red cloth into Maria's scared eyes.

"Maria Bevis," he said gravely, "you've spoiled the three years of our married life, all for that paltry little sum. It is paid in full. How are you going to pay us back for the agony you have caused us? You have made us the laughingstock of the village and—"

"Don't Howard," said Amy softly. "Please don't. She is sorry."

"What would Rippledale say if it knew how much we really owed you?" Howard added remorselessly.

Maria's head dropped into her hands. "Tell 'em," she sniffed miserably. "I don't blame you one mite!"

There was silence. Then Howard spoke abruptly. "We won't tell a word, Maria. People may think what they please about the amount, but it is your place to inform every one that the note is paid, the debt is canceled. Will you do it?"

"Yes," cried Maria fervently. "I'll tell 'em tomorrow at the missionary meeting, and I don't suppose you'll ever have much to do with me again."

"Nonsense," said Amy brightly. "I'm coming over tomorrow morning with baby to buy something for new little dresses and we will have a cozy chat."

But Maria Bevis punished herself in her own way. When her brother Tobias came in and surprised her by his sudden arrival she told him the whole story, and any one who knew Maria Bevis and realized how she worshipped this young brother might understand that Maria Bevis was not too old to learn a lesson.

# The Emigrants

A Story For Labor Day

By EVELYN C. GOODRICH

In what is called the Black forest in Germany lived a poor couple, Jacob Gaetz and his wife, who had but one child, a daughter, Gretchen, who was the main comfort of her parents. She and Hans Dreckel, the son of a blacksmith, were brought up together, each being the other's only companion, for the region in which they lived was sparsely settled, and no other family lived near them.

Jacob Gaetz was a woodcutter. When Gretchen was nineteen years old there came a great commotion in the family. Hans Dreckel one day met Gretchen on the road carrying a bundle of fagots and said to her:

"Gretchen, I have come to an important decision. I am young and strong and am not satisfied to remain here in the forest, where there is nothing for a man to do but cut wood. One can earn only money enough by so doing to keep body and soul together, for if we ask a better price our employers say to us: 'There are plenty of men who would like the work at the same price. If you are not satisfied we will employ others in your place.' I shall go where there are labor unions, and, since I hear that there are better prices paid in the United States of America, I shall go there."

Hans kept his eyes on Gretchen while he was speaking and saw hers gradually fall till they rested on the ground and were wet with tears. Till this moment Hans had never thought of Gretchen other than as a playmate and, after they were grown, as a friend. But now, when he saw the tears gather in her eyes because he was to leave her, a new sensation was born in his heart, a tenderness for the maiden with whom he had been reared, and, taking her in his arms, he kissed away her tears.

When Gretchen reached her home and threw the fagots beside the fire place she sat down in a chair and covered her face with her hands. Her mother, who was washing the breakfast dishes, paused and said:

"What is the matter, Gretchen?"

It was a long while before the mother could draw from her daughter that Hans was going to that far country, America. But Gretchen did not tell her what was of far more importance to all of them—that he had asked her to go with him as his wife. It was hard for the poor girl to lose her companion and, since the announcement of his intended departure, her lover.

There would have been no cause for sorrow, but reason for rejoicing, if she could have yielded to his wish. This she could not do, for it would have been cruel for her to leave her old father and mother, who would now need her more and more every day. She only said that Hans was going to America, knowing that if her parents knew they were keeping her from going with him it would trouble them greatly.

When Hans found that Gretchen would not go with him he asked her to promise him that if her parents died she would come to him. But this was not much comfort to him, for on that condition his sweetheart was not likely to join him for many years. And, as for Gretchen, it meant that she must lose her parents in order to join her lover.

The day Hans departed he said to Gretchen: "You know that my father is old and cannot live long and my mother is not my own mother, but my stepmother. Father will never come to me in America, and when he dies mother will go to live with one of her own children. But there will be nothing to prevent your bringing your parents with you to my new home. They say money is made very easily there. A skilled laborer gets 12 marks a day. Out of that I can save 6 marks a day at least and can send this money to you so that you may all join me in—"

"Oh, Hans," exclaimed the girl, "you are so good, so hopeful, but you must learn to do something that will enable you to earn so much money, and in those countries where high wages are paid they say it costs more to live. But," she added, "I will come to you if I can ever do so without bringing sorrow to my dear father and mother."

Hans kissed her again and again, then strode away without once looking back, lest he should show the moisture in his eyes, which he considered unmanly.

Eight years passed, during which the lovers remained true to each other. In all this time there was never an interval of more than a month that Hans did not write to his sweetheart, and she always replied to his letter with her whole heart. Hans prospered and offered to send her money to bring over her parents, but she never ever mentioned the matter to them. Nor did they know that they were keeping apart two young persons who but for them might be happy together and rearing a family of children. In all these eight years Gretchen never breathed a word to her parents of the sacrifice she was making for them.

One day when Jacob was cutting wood, a fierce storm came up and blew a huge limb from a tree, burying him under it. He lived but a few days,

when his wife and daughter found themselves without even the support of an aged woodcutter. Gretchen at once wrote to Hans announcing her father's death and in a few weeks received a reply. Folded in the letter was a paper which ordered a bank to pay her 300 marks. Hans told her to use it as she liked, either for support of herself and her mother or to bring her mother to him in America, where he and Gretchen might be married and her mother could live with them.

Gretchen, who was a prudent girl with great self control, thought over Hans' proposition for several days before coming to a decision. When she had made up her mind as to the only course to pursue that would be just to Hans she confessed to her mother that when he had gone to America he had asked her to be his wife and she had refused to leave her parents.

"I am too old to go so far, Gretchen," said the old woman, "but I will no longer be a burden to you. Go to Hans. I will remain here."

It was a long time before Gretchen could persuade her that such a course was impracticable and that her mother could only repay the sacrifice that she and Hans had made by giving her consent to go to America. Hans had learned the mason's trade and was getting 12 marks a day for his work. But recently he had set up as master mason and employed men to work for him.

When the old mother became convinced that it was her duty to make the trip she consented, and the two sailed for America in the steerage of an ocean liner. They arrived at the port of New York in due time and expected to find Hans there to meet them. In this they were disappointed, but he had been there and had made arrangements for them to be admitted into the country by the emigrant authorities, pledging himself to take care of them, so that they should not be a burden on the people. He also left instructions for them to come to him in a neighboring city, with tickets on the railroad to take them there.

When Gretchen and her mother reached their final destination they learned the reason of his not having met them on the arrival of the steamship. A strike had been declared by a certain trade union, and other trades had been gradually drawn into the struggle between capital and labor, including the masons. Hans had great influence with the men of his trade and was exerting himself to persuade them to keep the peace, assuring them that by doing so they would certainly win every just demand.

On arriving at the city where Hans lived they carried all their bundles except one box, which, being too heavy for them, they left to be brought later to the address that had been given them. Hans had expected them to hire a conveyance, but the frugal life they had led had not prepared them for such extravagance. So they walked, Gretchen inquiring the way, and passed through a street that was filled with workmen. On a wagon a man was standing speaking to a crowd of laborers who had gathered about him. They stopped to listen to him but could not understand him since he spoke in the English language. But they could see by the upturned, intense faces that he was producing a profound effect upon them.

"Let us go on," said the mother. But Gretchen seemed disposed to listen to the man, though she did not know what he was saying. In vain her mother tugged at her to get her to go on, but in spite of the urging she remained. It was only when the man ceased to speak and getting down from the wagon, was lost in the crowd that Gretchen consented to pursue their way.

When they reached the house where Hans lived they found a suit of rooms on the second floor comfortably fitted up. They were received by a woman whom Hans had deputed for the purpose, who told them that Hans was very busy and they must make themselves at home till he came.

After awhile they heard a cheering in the street which seemed to be approaching the house and growing as it came nearer. Then there were shouts of "We've won! We've won!" The crowd stopped before the house where the two emigrants were, and a man stood on the steps for a few minutes cheered by the crowd. Then he hurried up the stairs and burst into the room. He and Gretchen flew to each other's arms.

"Himmell!" cried the old woman. "It is the man on the wagon!"

Gretchen had recognized Hans the moment she laid eyes on him, though he was but little more than a youth when they parted and he was now a man and very much changed. Their meeting was a happy one in many respects. In the first place, the winning of the strike was a great advantage to Hans, who had feared enforced idleness, whereas now that it was settled he could proceed with work he had contracted for. Gretchen and her mother had completed a journey both dreaded and their future comfort was assured. There was no reason for haste or delay in the wedding, so Gretchen was called on to fix the day, and, inasmuch as she had no trousseau to prepare, she chose an early date, since Hans desired that they should all get settled down to their new life and he give his mind to his work. The bride and her mother had no friends in their newly adopted country, but the groom had a plenty. A number of bridal presents from them came in, some of them from well-to-do persons for whom Hans had constructed buildings, and they were quite valuable.

Hans is prospering and is considered one of the most reliable men in labor matters, he being always consulted before any important action is taken.

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