The Result of a Caprice

By LOUISE B. CUMMINGS

"Auntie, why were you never married? I have heard that in your youth you were a great belle."

"My dear," replied the old lady, "why I was not married is a painful story to me. It has been constantly with me ever since I was nineteen years old, but I have never talked about it. There is a lesson in it for young girls like you, and on that account I will tell it to you."

Then the old lady told me the following story:

You know that I was born and raised in the south on one of those plantations that represented typical high life there before the war destroyed the institution which was its foundation. I came of age shortly before the struggle opened. I suppose it is true that I was a belle. Would that I had not been such, for the attention I received turned my head and caused what embittered my life.

Among my suitors were Alfred Beale and Edgar Turnlee. Turnlee was my favorite—indeed, I was very much in love with him—but I wished to be striven for and alternately encouraged him and his rival, Alfred Beale. One day I was sitting in the drawing room of the plantation house with Edgar. My back as well as his was toward the door opening into the great hall, while my face was toward a large mirror resting on the mantel over the fireplace. I caught a glimpse of the reflection of Alfred Beale in the hall.

He saw both Edgar and me sitting together. He paused and looked at us, making no sound to indicate to us that he was there. Indeed, he was eavesdropping, but I thought little of that. I was wrapt in the idea of being an object of strife between two young men and was tempted to see what would happen between them should I purposely increase their antagonism.

I had been expecting a proposal from Edgar and now gave him every encouragement. He was placing an arm around my waist and his face was near mine when I gave a little shriek and drew away from him, assuming to be indignant. Beale stepped into the room and, glaring at Edgar, upbraided him. Edgar looked an appeal to me to exonerate him.

It is impossible to give reasons for the freaks that enter the heads of young persons, especially young girls, in the matter of coquetry. Instead of taking the blame of Edgar's act upon myself, I walked out of the room, leaving my admirers to settle the controversy in their own way. I had no sooner left them than it occurred to me that I had acted abominably. If I had gone directly back and confessed the situation might have been saved. I was about to do so when I remembered that such an acknowledgment would bring down upon me the contempt of both men—that is, if it were believed, which I doubted.

While I was deliberating I heard both men go out of the house. I started to call them back, but hesitated, and before I had made up my mind what to do they were out of hearing.

I wondered what would come to pass between them. It did not occur to me that they would fight a duel. Dueling by this time had largely died out in the south, and I was too young to have heard much of an obsolete custom. What chiefly concerned me was that I had so deeply wronged the man I loved. I was not only suffering from consciousness of having done him an injustice, but was panic stricken lest he should never forgive me.

The affair began in the afternoon, and from then until bedtime I was in a state of dread, not that anything serious might occur between the rivals, but that I had lost my lover. In the middle of the night my father came into my room and asked me for an explanation of what had happened, for he had heard of it. Instead of telling him the truth, I left him with the impression that Edgar had transcended his rights and Alfred had resented his act. I asked father what had come of it, and he replied that I would learn the result in the morning; then he left me.

This was the first intimation I had of anything serious between the two men. Suddenly it flashed upon me that they would fight. I trembled. I lay turning the matter over in my brain, which was like a boiling caldron. With the first light of dawn I arose, dressed myself, stole down the great staircase and out on to the veranda. Looking out from behind a vine, I saw Edgar and two other young men riding by the plantation. Going to the barn, I saddled my horse, mounted and followed them.

I cannot dwell on the rest. It is too painful. I was some time in finding where they had gone. When I reached them they had fought a duel with pistols, and Alfred Beale was lying on the ground, while a surgeon was bending over him. I hurried to him to see if he were dead and was assured that his wound would not be fatal. I turned to Edgar. He gave me a look that has haunted me ever since. I saw in it that I had lost him forever.

You have heard my story. May it be a lesson to you that love is not a game for passing the time that young persons regard it. Love is a serious matter and should be treated seriously. Better the European method of matches made by parents than the follies committed by some young men and women when left to their own caprices.

PERILS OF BAD AIR.

Reduced Vitality, Loss of Appetite and General Bad Health.

Air is bad when it is overheated, when it contains an excess of moisture and when it is chemically contaminated. This is the conclusion of the New York state commission on ventilation as summarized by Professor C. E. A. Winslow, chairman.

The first indictment against bad air shows that an increase in temperature beyond the normal 70 degrees produces serious derangement of the vasomotor mechanism of the body, resulting in a rise of temperature, increased pulse and a lowered blood pressure, with a corresponding decrease in efficiency, both physical and mental. In addition to this, overheating conduces to an undesirable congestion of the mucous membranes of the nose, thus possibly paving the way for colds, sore throats and attacks of various germ diseases.

The work of the commission also proves that chemical accumulations in the air as a result of air stagnation bring about a decreased appetite for food, which, in turn, must have an unfavorable effect on the entire body. In the commission's experiments the people living in fresh air ate 4½ to 13 per cent more than those living in stagnant air.

"These experiments," says Professor Winslow, "indicate that fresh air is needed at all times and in all places. While we have changed our ideas as to what causes bad air, ventilation is just as essential to remove heat produced by human bodies as it was once thought to be to remove the carbon dioxide produced by human lungs, and it is now proved also to be essential for carrying away chemical products which exert a measurable effect upon the appetite for food. People who live and work in overheated and unventilated rooms are reducing their vitality and rendering themselves an easy prey to all sorts of diseases."

WARRING ON RUST.

Problems With Which Iron and Steel Experts Are Wrestling.

This age of steel has roused a world wide battle with rust, and more chemists and other experts are studying possible weapons for this battle than are busy on almost any other industrial problem. Concrete owes much of its present growth to the difficulty of protecting steel and iron against rust.

Absolutely pure iron will not rust, and fairly pure iron will rust only slowly. One way, therefore, is to improve the grade of iron, and manufacturers now sell iron that is guaranteed to withstand rust for considerable periods. It is possible, though expensive, to purify iron completely by electricity, and electrolytic iron, as it is called, may before long be common commercially.

Surface coats of protection are, however, the favorite methods of today, and many such coatings have appeared lately. The latest one is a metal coat that can be applied on an iron of steel structure after it has been erected in much the same way that paint is applied. Finely powdered metals—such as tin, lead or zinc, or all three in proper proportion—are mixed in oil and painted on the bridge or column or other structure that needs protection. Then the painted surface is heated by a hand torch or in whatever way is most convenient.

The oil burns away, and the powdered metal melts, but does not run. As the metal cools it takes a tight grip on the iron surface and forms a tin or alloy coat, which stops rust.—Saturday Evening Post.

Selecting the Golf Ball.

The small heavy ball will go farther than the lighter or larger ball for the player who can hit it extremely hard owing to its less resistance from the air. Because of its weight and small size it can bore its way through the air almost like a bullet. In the case of a lady or a very light hitter I firmly believe they will get much better results with the large light ball since because of its greater resiliency it will get the maximum distance from a much lighter blow. So my advice would be for a light hitter to use the light ball, the average hitter the medium weight and the hard hitter the heavy ball.—Outing.

Phi Beta Kappa.

Phi Beta Kappa are the names of three letters of the Greek alphabet, the initial letters of three Greek words, Philosophia Biou Kubernetes, which means "philosophy the guide of life." This is the name of the oldest of the Greek letter college societies. Membership is bestowed as an honor for exceptionally good scholarship. The society originated at William and Mary college in 1776, but has extended to many other colleges and universities. There are about 17,000 names in the catalogue. Members wear a gold watch key as a badge, with emblem and inscriptions.—Philadelphia Press.

They Help In a Way.

"Riches are not everything," declared bitterly the poor, but honest, suitor, who had just been rejected. "They cannot insure happiness."

"Perhaps not," replied the practical maiden, "but they at least provide means to pay the premiums on the policy!"—Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Correct.

Jack—You say Jones is living above his income.

Bill—Yes; he gets his income from an apartment house and lives on the top floor!—New York Globe.

The nobleness of life depends on its consistency, clearness of purpose, quiet and ceaseless energy.—Ruskin.

The Checkerboard Man

By WILLIAM CHANDLER

A stagecoach was bowling along over a road on "the plains," they being that portion of the continent lying between the Missouri river and the Rocky mountains. There were half a dozen passengers inside the coach, half of whom were ladies, and five men outside. Four of the outsiders were of the roughest element of the region, which in those days was not at all smooth. On the seat with the driver sat a man in a checkerboard suit.

The four men in his rear were talking in a vein not at all appropriate for the ears of ladies and so loudly that they could easily be heard in the coach below. The man in the checkerboard suit upon hearing a very coarse remark turned and looked at the man who made it, but said nothing.

"My young friend," said the man looked at, "do you see anything to admire in my appearance?"

"I don't see anything to admire in your language."

The man hitched a revolver around from his hip, saying, "What d'ye think o' that?"

"I have no use for firearms; never carry 'em myself."

The other clinched his fist. "What d'ye think o' that?"

"Oh, that's something I can understand. I carry those tools myself."

"Well, then, if you find anything more about me you don't like you'll get it behind the ear."

The checkerboard man made no reply to this, but when the other launched forth another coarse remark, accompanied by an oath, the former turned and said in a subdued voice:

"I say, my friend, you want to talk in a way that is unpleasant to my sensitive ears. We can't both have our own way. How would it do for us to stop the coach, get down and have a friendly set-to to settle the matter?"

"What! A little whippersnapper like you fight a six footer like me! I'd spoil your clothes."

"Oh, that won't matter. I can take them off above the waist."

"Go him, Jim," said one of the other men.

"Go him! Why, if I'd hit him real hard I might break him. He's too purty to be smashed like a piece o' chiney."

Jim's companions were anxious to see a mill and insisted upon his accepting the challenge. The coach was halted. The two principals walked a short distance from it, followed by most of the men inside and outside, while the driver remained on the box and the ladies crowded to the window. The checkerboard man threw off his coat and vest, while his antagonist remained in woolen shirt and trousers tucked in his boots. One of the men relieved him of his revolver, while another drew a ring with the point of a dirk knife on the ground. When all was ready the principals started for the center of the ring.

The spectators were looking for the fight to begin when they were startled at seeing Jim lying on his back. His antagonist had planted his fist under his jaw so quickly that ordinary eyesight was incapable of following the action. Jim sat up and looked about him, indicating that he scarcely understood what had happened. Then he rose to his feet, but before he could square himself on his legs he was down again.

He began to get riled and, jumping up with fair agility, went for his enemy like a bull, aiming a blow at his cheek. But his enemy was not there, and before Jim could aim another blow an arm was around his neck, and he was receiving a quick succession of taps on his nose, bringing a stream of blood, which trickled on the virgin soil of Colorado. He struggled desperately to free himself, but that crooked arm was like iron and was choking him. When both eyes were closed and his nose resembled a beet he was released and stood tottering and groping. One of his party went to him and led him back to the coach.

Every one understood what the fight was about, and all united in a shout of triumph. The conquered man was helped up on to the coach by his friends. The checkerboard man resumed his coat and vest and climbed to his seat by the driver. When all were aboard the driver chirruped to the horses and the coach rolled on. It had been stopped just seven minutes.

At the next relay was an eating house, where dinner was served. All left the coach and before dining gathered around the checkerboard man, offering him congratulations, the ladies of the party being especially complimentary in their remarks. The four men who had done the loud talking kept by themselves, but when the conqueror was granted a respite his victim shuffled up to him and put out his hand.

"Stranger," he said, "whar did ye learn how to handle yer fists?"

"Oh, that's my profession. I run a school for boxing in Chicago."

"I' don't mean it!"

With that the fellow slunk away, and when the coach started up again neither he nor any of his friends was with it. They had received so many marks of disfavor from the passengers that they did not care to finish the journey with them. As for the checkerboard man, he had the satisfaction of being a hero for the rest of the ride, and at the parting every lady gave him some trinket as a memento of her gratitude.

CHINESE EDIBLE DOGS.

They Are Fed Mainly Upon Daintily Prepared Vegetable Food.

English bon vivants have tasted the merits of the Chinese edible dog, and they pronounce it very good dog indeed.

The dog is destined from the beginning for the table. Like the edible rat of the same country, it is fed mainly upon vegetable food, which is often delicately prepared and specially devised, in order to give the dog's flesh a peculiar flavor and aroma. The result is something quite different from the flesh of the ordinary dog of the western world.

The genuine Chinese edible dog is known by its bluish black tongue, which is a peculiar mark of its variety. In infancy and early youth the dog's tongue is red, and upon reaching maturity and the edible age it suddenly becomes black, sometimes within two weeks.

Another peculiarity of this dog is its lack of the barking faculty. It is said that the dog can bark, and on occasions does so, but these occasions are rare.

Many experiments, most of them unwilling, were made with the flesh of dogs during the Paris siege. Newfoundlands and St. Bernards were preferred, under the mistaken impression that they would prove more eatable than other varieties. They proved to be detestable in all cases.—Every Week.

CORK TREES OF SPAIN.

How They Are Stripped of Their Bark at Ten Year Intervals.

An important industry in Spain is the cultivation of cork trees. This tree is an oak which grows best in the poorest soil. It cannot endure frost and must have sea air and also some altitude. It is found all along the coast of Spain, the northern coast of Africa and the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

There are two barks, the outer of which is stripped for use. The cork is valuable according as it is soft and velvety. When the sapling has reached the age of ten years it is stripped of its outer bark for two feet from the ground. The tree will then be about five inches in diameter and about six feet up to the branches. This stripping is worthless. The inner bark appears blood red, and if it is split or injured the tree dies.

When eight or ten years more have elapsed the outer bark has again grown, and then the tree is stripped four feet from the roots. This stripping is very coarse and is used to make floats for fish nets. Every ten years thereafter the bark is stripped, each year two feet higher up, until the tree is forty or fifty years old, when it is in its prime, and may then be stripped every ten years from the ground to the branches.—Exchange.

Royal Kisses.

The kings and high officials of Europe when they meet always embrace and kiss each other, no matter what their relations have been in the past or may be in the immediate future. This is a kiss of respect. It may be given on the lips, the cheek, the brow or the beard and is nicely adjusted, according to the age and rank of the giver. From this close personal contact it passes through many forms—kissing the hand, parts of the clothing and even the ground trodden upon, according to the idea of respect or fear inspiring the one who performs the act. The nations of the west have not adopted this ancient custom as a form of salutation, but have reserved it for the more tender relationships of life.—Christian Herald.

Dumas and His Porthos.

Dumas, like Balzac, was fond of his own creations. Among them all he loved Porthos best. The great, strong, vain hero was a child after his own heart. One afternoon, it is related, his son found Dumas careworn, wretched, overwhelmed. "What has happened to you? Are you ill?" asked Dumas fils. "No," replied Dumas pere. "Well, what is it then?" "I am miserable." "Why?" "This morning I killed Porthos—poor Porthos! Oh, what trouble I have had to make up my mind to do it! But there must be an end to all things. Yet when I saw him sink beneath the ruins, crying, 'It is too heavy, too heavy for me!' I swear to you that I cried!" And he wiped away a tear with the sleeve of his dressing gown.

An Old Indian Drum.

The Sioux Indians formerly had a conjurer's drum, which they called wa-kanchanchagha. It was used on religious and ceremonial occasions, had two heads frequently decorated with crude pictures of animals, and was beaten with great vigor for the purpose of appeasing the wrath of their offended deities or of contributing to the recovery of the sick.

Africa.

Africa is the most elevated of all the continents. It is the "continent of plateaus." The great tableland in the south has a mean altitude of over 3,500 feet. The wide tableland on the north has an average elevation of about 1,300 feet.

Impossible.

"Can't you play tennis without making all that noise?"

"Why, how can you expect us to play it without raising a racket?"—Baltimore American.

Excluded.

Ascum—Well, well! I congratulate you, old man. And how is the baby to be named? Popley—By my wife's people, it seems.—Exchange.

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