

A GENTLEMAN

By GRACE O. WEATHERBY.

(A 1920, by McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

With a last furtive look around the station, Bessie, only daughter of C. A. Davis, millionaire, climbed up the steps of the express to Boston, and disappeared with the train. She sank into the first vacant seat she came to, and opened her purse for the ticket. A goodly roll of fresh, crisp yellowbacks gleamed from within, indicating that Bessie's stolen pleasure trip was very generous. It was only that they were too careful of her. Goodness, couldn't she take care of herself?

She smiled complacently. "I guess so?" She wondered if they had found her note yet. She'd be back on the 6:30 train so no one should worry. Bessie looked about her. The train was quite full as it was only 9 o'clock. She glanced at the man beside her. He was young and good looking! In fact he looked the "perfect gentleman." Such a picture Bessie had cherished in her heart for years. He was her ideal! She had found him! He was returning her stare, and thinking her very lovely. Then, perhaps because they were both very young, and happy they smiled at each other. The man straightened himself slightly.

"Bound for Boston?" he queried, his voice rich, and well cultivated.

"Yes," shyly answered the girl, while an unbidden flush mounted to her cheeks at her own unaccustomed boldness. "Are you?"

He nodded. "It was getting mighty dull down at the house. Mother in sick of company and won't have any, so I decided to take a trip to Boston to see a game."

Before Boston was reached, Bessie had told him of her escapade. He laughed heartily. When they reached the gate at the station, Bessie looked up at her new acquaintance. "Goodby, I hope you enjoy the game." She turned away, but the boy hurried after her.

"Oh, I say, don't go off that way. Listen, you've got a whole day to spend here, and so have I. Can we—won't you—what I mean is will you spend it with me? Please. We'll go to Nantasket beach. Come on, will you?" The girl glanced up at him. "No, I can't really. It isn't right I couldn't! Please don't ask me. I don't know you." She stammered, and then laughed helplessly. "I'd love to!" she finished.

"Good!" he exclaimed. He was all boy.

Then followed a wondrous day to the "poor little rich girl." With a perfect gentleman at her side she "did" all the things she had wanted to do since she was a child.

They lunched extensively and expensively, the boy laughingly refusing to allow the girl to pay her own bills. They thrilled over the roller coaster, they sailed in the captive airplanes.

At 4 o'clock they sailed for home, and on arriving at Boston found they had time for more ice cream. Between spoonfuls the Perfect Gentleman cried, "Hold still! there's a bug on your neck. Wait, I'll get him." Bessie held still, and presently the "bug" was gone. They dawdled so long after their ice cream that they narrowly missed the six o'clock train. The boy caught her wrist. "Come on, this way!" and presently, panting, they found themselves once more in a train seat headed homeward bound. They chattered all the way, the boy rather nervously. When Bessie's station was reached she turned to him.

"Goodby, I've had a simply glorious time, and thank you ever so much."

"Not goodby, but so long," the Perfect Gentleman answered. "I'm coming to see you next week."

"So you are. So long, then!" And she was gone.

She found her father waiting for her in the roadster. He was plainly worried at his daughter's latest escapade, and he greeted her none too graciously.

"You scamp! Do you realize what time it is? Where on earth have you been?"

Bessie snuggled close to her father, cooing. "Oh, Daddy, darling, I've had a perfectly wonderful time!" She proceeded to tell him all about it. He listened stolidly, with only an occasional "humpf!" to show he was listening.

"Am I in time for supper?" asked Bessie, as she finished, glancing at her wrist. Then she gasped. Where her dainty platinum watch had been now only a light streak in the tan of her arm appeared. It was gone! "Oh, Daddy," she moaned. "My watch is gone."

"Eh, what's that?" asked her father. "Lost it, did you? Shouldn't wonder, after all that!"

"Oh, dear!" Bessie's hand went to her throat, and she gasped anew. Her jawfaller was gone! Where... how on earth? Then in a flash Bessie remembered the "bug" remembered how the boy had snatched her wrist and pulled her through the crowds to the train. Clever boy! More calmly now she opened her purse. Of course the roll of yellowbacks was gone.

"Daddy, everything's gone!"

"So he 'fished' you, did he? Tough luck!" and he wisely refrained from scolding her further. She was already sufficiently punished for her stolen trip.

Of course money could buy another watch, another jawfaller, and another roll of yellowbacks, but no money on earth could bring back her dream of the "Perfect Gentleman." He was gone forever.

HOUSE WORTH PRESERVING

John Balch Home, in Beverly, Massachusetts, a Precious Relic of Early Colonial Days.

An effort is to be made among the descendants of the original owner to save the John Balch house which was erected at Beverly, Mass., in about the year 1638, says an announcement of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The house is said to be still intact except for the sills, and a greater part of the rafters. About 1850 it was enlarged by a two-story extension and later the original cottage was made a full two stories in height, but with careful restoration it is said that this unique example of an "Old Planter's" home can be preserved.

John Balch came from Somerset county, England, with Capt. Robert Gorges, who was commissioned governor of New England. They were the first colony of settlers to come direct to America from England as the previous settlers, the Pilgrims, had first gone to Holland. Balch was among the original members of the first church in Salem, and figures prominently in the affairs of that time. According to earliest records, the energy and intelligence necessary for the success of the early colony was supplied by four of the settlers, of whom Balch was one. These four are known as the "Old Planters," and the Balch house is the only one left belonging to one of them.

The Balch family even in earliest days stood for the American ideal of freedom, as none of them took part in the persecution of the Baptists, the Quakers or witches, and one grandson of John Balch was a strenuous proponent against such persecution. The value of the Balch home as a relic of early colonial days is held by the society to be inestimable, not only to the members of the Balch family as an heirloom but to the general public as well.

Gratifying His Taste.

Sarah Simpson is a very strong-minded woman. If you don't believe it ask her husband.

"Now, Samuel, remember! If that man Johnson offers you anything to drink you will refuse?"

Samuel sighed as he agreed to her order.

Later as they started for home Sarah eyed her spouse with gloom in her face.

"When Mr. Johnson made that peculiar sign to you," she began, "and shortly afterward you both hurried from the room, where did you go, Samuel?"

"O—yes, my dear! He merely asked me to stop into his study to look at some old books he bought recently. You know I have a taste for books."

"Yes, Samuel, and from what I heard, your taste for books was highly gratified. You forgot to close the study door and I heard a smacking of lips and then you exclaimed, 'Ah, that's the stuff!'—Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph.

Couldn't Lose the Pattern.

Mary and Nellie, two small sisters, went to visit at grandmother's in the country. Since it was their first visit away from the city they found much to please and delight them. The chickens were their particular favorites and hunting the newly laid eggs their chief pleasure.

"Be careful, children," said grandmother one day, "not to take away the nest egg." So the girls guarded it carefully. One day, however, when they were trying to see who could find the larger number of eggs, Mary approached the nest first. Seizing the nest egg she started for the house.

"Oh, grandmother," cried Nellie, hurrying after her sister, "Mary's got the egg the old hen measures by."

The Best Man.

He persisted in saying that he was going to be calm, cool and collected when he was married, but on his wedding morning he nearly had nervous prostration when he couldn't find the ring. The best man produced it. Then he went to the church without the license, and the best man had to return for it. While waiting for the bridal party to march down the aisle, the poor bridegroom actually needed physical support, his knees were shaking so. The best man was discouraged and disgusted, and finally in desperation leaned toward the bridegroom and whispered in his ear. "If you've got gold feet, I'll marry her for \$10.00!"

Far Too Sociable.

"I'm fidgetin' on movin' fudger back into the hills!" grinsly said a citizen of the Straddle Ridge region. "It's getting to be too dad-bummed thickly populated yurabouts for comfort."

"Why, I thought you liked sociability, Hank?" returned an acquaintance. "It's sorter pleasant to have your neighbors come around once in a while, and—"

"Yes, but that there infernal cuss that has just moved onto the old Buck-aloo place wanted to borrow my fiddle yesterday!"—Kansas City Star.

Safe Speechmaking.

"Did you lose your voice while you were making speeches?"

"No," replied Senator Sorghum. "I applied my new system of speechmaking. First I let the chairman of the reception committee take all the time he wanted to introduce me. Then after every two or three sentences I'd mention the name of Our Candidate and let the audience consume most of the time in cheering."

"FIRST STOP, LADY"

By MYRTA ALICE LITTLE.

(A 1920, by McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

Little Mrs. Lane shaded her eyes from the bright sunlight that flared against the car windows, and tried to discover whether the jolly train was really nearing the station, or just halting for nothing. If only daughter had told the timid little traveler how long the trip to the city was.

Trembling fingers drew a letter from a worn bag. Her spectacled eyes, gazing to the motion of the train, read: "Mummsie Dearest: Hal has broken our engagement or he let me break it. I'm lonely and hurt, and I need you. I want to lay my head in your lap and have you tell me why he did it. I care so much, Mummsie, and I can't understand. I would come to you, but there's my position. And I promised to tell you if I needed you. Just get on the morning train and get off at the first stop. It's a big place. You can't miss it. First stop, and I'll meet you at Track 3. I'll expect you Tuesday. MAMMA."

The white head bent lower over the trim black dress, bobbed a bit from side to side, pillowed itself against the red velvet cushions. The blue eyes quivered shut. Little Mrs. Lane was asleep.

Then came a terrific jolt, a crashing bang of noise, and the train stopped. The door and both iron gates were open, and the brakeman stood on the ground at the right.

"Is Benton the first stop, sir?" quavered the weak little voice.

"First stop, m' lady," shouted the brakeman, standing forward.

So there was not a moment to lose. Mrs. Lane mustered all of her courage and climbed down the steps at the left, and stood, a frightened little figure on the ground that crunched with cinders beneath her feet. The train moved off. So this was the "big place," but there was nothing in it.

Over the brown open country trotted a white horse drawing a buggy. A man was driving. He came nearer the patch of cinders, sighted Mrs. Lane, stopped, got down and began speaking as a woman might speak to a child.

"How 's this? Lost out on the ranch? Well, well! We'll have to see about this."

Then little Mrs. Lane poured forth a part of her tale to him, about her daughter in Benton, sending for her and the train's first stop, and the girl not being there to meet her, and her being afraid, and would he please tell her how to find her daughter.

"You'd better come over to my shack, first, little lady," said the man. "You've got off some 20 miles by rail this side of Benton."

"And it ain't Benton? I didn't get off right? He meant the next stop was Benton, and he didn't call this a stop at all?" trembled the puzzled voice. "This ain't no place at all, sir?"

The man smiled. "It's not your fault. Get into this rig here and I'll drive you over to the shack, give you some tea and get word to your daughter somehow, and we'll take the next train. How 's that?"

Over the ten little guests' convalescence increased in feeble wisps. But her wanderings about Maida grew and she loved them.

"She's such an independent girl, sir, is Maida," she quavered. "She's never willing to rest too hard on other folks. I expect that's the trouble with the man that let her give him up. I ain't never seen him. But likely he decided that she was unfeelin' when she was tryin' to be strong for the two of 'em. Ain't you drinkin' no tea, sir? 'Twould steady your nerves, mayhap. Maida Lane is what I call a thoroughbred, so to speak. If she is my girl!"

The man sprang to his feet. "I'll tell you what I'll do, little lady," he said. "I'll take my car and drive you into town the short cut over the hills."

The old eyes lightened. "You're awfully kind to a stranger," said Mrs. Lane. "I was coming on track 3!"

"Glad to help you get there. Lonesome out here. Came out myself to forget."

During the drive the man was silent. The little lady drowsed among the cushions he had piled for her. Just as they came in sight of the station she awoke. And surely that was Maida walking briskly toward track 3. The man's halloo stopped her, but she evidently saw her mother before she saw him. She rushed toward her and took her in her arms.

"I got off at the wrong place, but it was the first stop. He's been awful good to me," said the mother. "I don't know his name."

Then Maida looked, gave a sharp little cry and her pride and control gave way in one swift instant. But the man's arms were already about her.

"I was a brute not to understand when you wouldn't kiss me that night and when you sent me home and told me to stay. I do understand now. Don't tell me. But I thought you didn't care, Maida—so I—"

"Care?" cried Maida. "If I told you how much I cared I'd have crumpled all up in a heap and cried forever."

"So you built your wall of ice and stayed behind it. Your mother made me see."

At first the little lady in black had been puzzled. But slowly her eyes grew bright.

"So I did get off at the right place, dearie, after all!" she whispered.

"The first stop was the right one, Mummsie," Maida breathed. "The only one the gods would let you make."

THROWN UP BY THE OCEAN

Mysterious Islands Have Brief Day of Existence and Disappear Under the Waters.

Volcanic islands often appear in the midst of the sea only to sink again beneath the surface in the years to come. The latest one to appear is off the coast of Alaska, near the Aleutian group. This is the third island to arise in these waters, says an exchange, within a little more than a century. In May, 1796, following violent tremors, an island about three miles in circumference and 500 feet high, suddenly came into existence as testified to by a Russian admiral whose fleet witnessed the startling occurrence. Soon it began to shrink in size until now there is only a little of it left. In 1873 there was another convulsion, and a new island rose close to the remnant of the other one. A year later the first landing was made upon it. It was still very hot and about 500 feet high. It is now less than half its former size.

Expedition island, off the northwest coast of Australia, was 13 miles long, and famous for its beauty. It was visited as late as 1852. It has totally disappeared and is now 50 feet below the surface of the ocean. In 1683, Torca, a large and beautiful island in the Indian ocean, began to smolder. The center sank in, leaving a fiery lake, and its inhabitants took to their boats. Finally the whole of Torca vanished and its highest peaks are now hundreds of feet below sea level.

The League of Nations is not a new idea for America. In the sixteenth century there was formed a permanent league of five tribes of Indians for the purpose of stopping for all time the shedding of human blood by violence and of establishing lasting peace among all known men by means of a constitutional form of government based on peace, justice, righteousness and power, or authority.

This is according to J. N. B. Hewitt of the bureau of American ethnology. The founders of this stone-age league of peace, Mr. Hewitt says, were the Mohawks, the Onondagas, Oneidas, the Cayugas and the Senecas, five Iroquoian tribes dwelling in the central and eastern regions of what is today the state of New York.

The founders of this league had never heard of Christianity, and yet, to quote Mr. Hewitt, "they proposed for themselves and for their posterity the greater task of gradually bringing under this form of government all the known tribes of men, not as subject peoples, but as confederates."

Thumbs as Pens.

A suggestiveness recently made that the system of "signing" checks by means of finger prints should be adopted. To some people this would come as a new idea, but as a matter of fact the system, if taken into use, would only be a revival of a very old custom. In the days when only a few people could write it was quite a usual thing for a person to signify approval of a document by making a thumb-print on a dab of sealing wax.

In India, where a large number of the people cannot write, a somewhat similar custom exists. An ordinary ink pad is kept handy in most offices where a native's signature is likely to be required, and the man presses his thumb upon this and then on the paper.

Cling to Ancient Custom.

Faithful to the traditions of their tribe, many members of the Chippewa tribe of Wisconsin gather each year about a large "spirit stone" now in the State Historical museum at Madison and invoke the favor of their old-time gods, part of the ceremony consisting of placing a pinch of tobacco on the stone. This stone was gathered several years ago by a scientist and after being shown at Chicago and St. Louis, finally found its way to the State Historical museum at Madison. Every year there is a gathering of the faithful about it and the hall rings with the old-time ceremonies.

Effective Compromise.

Heck—You say you never have any domestic squabbles; how do you avoid them?

Peck—Well you see, immediately after we were married my wife and I came to an understanding. She said: "Now, Henry, we must neither of us be selfish and always try to run things. We must make mutual concessions. I propose that when we agree on any matter you are to have your way, and when we disagree I am to have my way. Then we shall get along nicely." And we have.—Boston Transcript.

First Oil Refinery.

France is engaged in developing her oil industry, which has long been neglected. It is said that the very first efforts to refine petroleum were made at Pechelbronn. These commenced four centuries ago. To a great extent they were failures, but it is positively stated that for 180 years a refinery has been in operation at that place.

Bison Going Out of Business.

The bison of the world number 8,539 and of these 8,473 are in North America. There are 90 wild and 3,303 in captivity in the United States. The total number stated above may be reduced by the operations of the war in Russia, where there were a few before the conflict.

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Candor Proof of Love. "Do you think he loves you?" "I think so. He is beginning to talk like a member of the family." "In what way—telling them all he loves them?" "No. He said to me last night that we have got to begin to teach my little brother not to be so fresh. And then a little later he said my father certainly does smoke rotten cigars."—Houston Chronicle.

The Proper Name. "That fellow's great ambition is to be the champion eater of his time." "You mean consuming ambition." "One of the things you can't pay on credit is experience." "The elevator to success is not running—take the stairs." "It's difficult for a stout woman to get away from solid facts." "Ability without stability is sure to end in disappointment." "If you are dissatisfied with your lot, advertise it for sale." "Culture is more a matter of absorption than of acquisition." "It is not all who turn their backs that see.—Danish Proverb."