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The Man From Home

By BOOTH TARKINGTON and HARRY LEON WILSON

A Novelization of the Play of the Same Name

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During the last half of his speech there was a tone of affectionate regard, at which she bridled resentfully.

"I quite fail to understand your point of view," she said frigidly. "Perhaps I had best make it clear to you that I am no longer thinking of getting married."

"Well, Lord 'a' mercy!" ejaculated Pike, leaning back in his chair and smiling at her, but she affected not to notice the lighter tone and went on.

"I mean I have decided upon it. The ceremony is to take place in a fortnight."

Pike brought the front feet of his chair down with a crash.

"Well, I declare!" he cried.

"We shall dispense with all delays," she went on, and Pike regarded her solemnly for a moment.

"Well, I don't know as I could say anything against that. He must be a mighty nice fellow, and you must think a heap of him." He sighed.

"That's the way it should be." He looked at her. "And you're happy?"

"Distinctly!" said Ethel decisively.

Pike looked off over the blue bay, and then his gaze traveled to where Horace had been standing, and with a start he turned to her again, speaking eagerly:

"It ain't that fellow I was talking with, yonder?"

And she voiced an indignant protest.

"That was my brother?"

"Lord 'a' mercy!" ejaculated Daniel and then recovered himself. "But, then, I wouldn't remember him. He couldn't have been more than twelve when you was home last. Of course I'd 'a' known you."

"How?" demanded Ethel. "You couldn't have seen me since I was a child."

"From your picture, though now I see it ain't so much like you," he answered, and she stepped forward, with astonishment.

"You have a photograph of me?"

"The last time I saw your father alive he gave it to me—to look at."

"And you remembered?"

"Yes, ma'am."

A look of incredulity passed over Ethel's face, and she replied:

"It does not strike me as possible. However, we will dismiss the subject."

"Well, if you'd like to introduce me to your—to your?"

"To my brother?"

"No, ma'am; to your—to the young man."

"To Mr. St. Aubyn?" cried Ethel, recalling a step. "I think it quite unnecessary."

"I'm afraid I can't see it that way. I'll have to have a couple of talks with him, sort of look him over, so to speak. I won't stay around here spoiling your fun any longer than I can help—only just for that and to get a letter I'm expecting from England."

Ethel bit her lip vexatiously.

"I do not see that you need have come at all. We could have been spared this—this mortification."

"You mean I mortify you? Why, I—I can't see how."

"In a hundred ways," she replied, "every way. That common person who is with you?"

"He isn't common. You only think so because he's with me," returned Daniel sadly, looking down.

"Who is he?" demanded Ethel sharply.

"He told me his name, but I can't remember it. I call him 'doc.'"

"It doesn't matter. What does matter is that you needn't have come. You could have written your consent."

"No, ma'am, not without seeing the young man," answered Pike resolutely.

"And you could have arranged the settlement in the same way," went on Ethel unheedingly.

"Settlement! You seem to have settled it pretty well without me," returned Pike, smiling.

"You don't understand," said Ethel impatiently. "An alliance of this sort always entails a certain settlement." She paused. "Please listen. If you were at all a man of the world I should not have to explain that in marrying into a noble house I bring my dot, my dowry."

"Money, you mean?" asked Pike, puzzled.

"Yes, if you choose to put it that way."

"You mean you want to put aside something of your own to buy a lot and start housekeeping?"

"No," she flared. "I mean a settlement on Mr. St. Aubyn directly."

"You mean you want to give it to me?"

"If that's the only way to make you understand—yes!" she flared.

"How much do you want to give him?" asked Pike thoughtfully.

"A hundred and fifty thousand pounds," said Ethel desperately.

"Pike whistled.

"Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars?"

"Precisely that!" said Ethel.

"Well, he has made you care for him," said Daniel. "I guess he must be the prince of the world! He must be a great man. I expect you're right about his not meeting him. I probably wouldn't stick up very high alongside a man that's big enough for you to think so much of as you do him. Why'd I have to squeeze every bit of property your pa left you?"

"Is it your property?" she flared a man.

"I've worked pretty hard to take care of it for you," he answered gently, and instantly she regretted the sharp speech.

"Forgive me," she pleaded. "It was unworthy of me—unworthy of the higher and nobler things that life call me to live up to—that I should give up. The money means nothing to me. I'm not thinking of that. It is a necessary form."

Pike looked at her keenly.

"Have you talked with Mr. St. Aubyn about this settlement—this present you want to make to him?" he asked.

"Not with him."

"I thought not," he went on amusedly. "You'll see. He wouldn't take it if I'd let you give it to him. A fine man like that wants to make his own way. Mighty few men like to have fun poked at them about living on their wives' money."

"Oh, I can't make you understand!" cried Ethel despairingly. "A settlement isn't a gift."

"Then how'd you happen to decide that just a hundred and fifty thousand

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The police are chasing a bally convict chap under the cliff.

pounds was what you wanted to give him?" he demanded.

"It was Mr. St. Aubyn's father who fixed the amount," replied Ethel desperately.

"His father! What's he got to do with it?"

"He is the Earl of Hawcastle, the head of the ancient house."

"And he asks you for your property—asks you for it in so many words?"

"Yes, as a settlement."

"And your young man knows it?"

"I tell you, Mr. Pike, I have not discussed it with Mr. St. Aubyn."

Pike laughed.

"I reckon not," he said amusedly.

"Well, sir, do you know what's the first thing Mr. St. Aubyn will do when he hears his father made such a proposition? He'll take the old man out of the back lot and give him a thrashing he won't forget to the day of his death!"

She was about to answer when from a distance came the roll of drums and then the sound of a bugle. The sounds came from afar off, as if below the cliff.

(To be continued.)