

Cupid In Town

By CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY

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It was a warm morning in midsummer. The sky was intensely blue and the air rife with the smell of dust and heat parched pavements. Fifth avenue seemed as arid as a desert. Houses were closed, their blinds drawn. Maids gossiped in areaways. Instead of the pageantry of carriages which graced the street on winter afternoons there were occasional cabs, lumbering automobiles and buses filled with tourists.

I was strolling along toward the club and devoutly wishing I was any place but in town, when suddenly I espied Honoria Langham. She had come in from a house party on Long Island, and our meeting was the merest accident. I at once suggested the little Casino in Central park as a cool and inviting place for luncheon. Hon-



"I KNOW IT'S SHEER FOLLY," SAID I, "BUT I'D BRAM OF MINE"

oria agreed. "Aunt Myra considers you such a safe companion," she said demurely.

"It's one of the compensations of being ineligible," said I. For I was ineligible, there was no doubt about that. My income of a few paltry thousands barely sufficed to keep me on the social merry-go-round. And I had added indiscretion to poverty by falling in love with Honoria. Of course no one could have guessed it. Even Honoria's aunt would have scoffed the idea of my being a probable suitor. In fact the very dimness of my prospects enabled me to see more of Honoria than I otherwise could have done. I was considered perfectly safe, for Honoria's circumstances demanded that she make a brilliant match, and I was the least brilliant man of her acquaintance. It was the old, old story of the moth and the star. If the moth was foolish, so much the worse for the moth! And as for the star—Honoria and I had long since decided that love was out of the question. So, on the way to the Casino our conversation was strictly confined to platonic plitudes.

We had luncheon at one of the little tables close by an open window, through which the green reaches of the park were enticing to the eye. Sunshine dappled the leaves with the light and shadow. Squirrels frisked across the grass. The hum of the city sounded far away and indistinct. Now and then a breeze stole in, carrying with it a faint, half woody perfume. The mirror across from us reflected Honoria's frills and furbelows, her clear delicate profile and every turn of her graceful head. There were the clink of ice in tall, thin glasses and a gay bubble of festivity and laughter from some of the other tables. Honoria's eyes met mine.

"There are worse places than New York," I observed.

"Oh, what is so rare as a day in town," murmured Honoria.

"I bless the fate which prompted you to leave the seashore and let me have a glimpse of you," said I.

"It wasn't fate; it was dressmakers," said Honoria. She put back her veil with an adorable gesture. "Am I very much burned?" she demanded.

"Only enough to be becoming," said I. "You're a bit brown yourself, Dick," she observed.

"People who make hay while the sun shines"—I began.

"Ah," said Honoria, "that's just what I was going to ask. Are you progressing well with the heiress?"

"Modesty forbids me to say," I answered. "How's old Croesus?"

"Doing nicely, thanks," laughed Honoria. Then her face grew grave. "Dick," she said, "do you realize that this is the last luncheon we'll have together tete-a-tete?"

"I know," said I, "that our year of camaraderie is over. And it was fun while it lasted, wasn't it, Honoria? All our little walks and talks and drives. And it's got to end because we're afraid of poverty."

"We do love luxury," sighed Honoria. "We'd be miserable without it," I argued.

"You," went on Honoria, "must marry the heiress in order to obtain a yacht and all the other things you can't possibly get along without."

"While old Croesus can give you a

house in town and several in the country, not to mention a box at the opera and gowns of Paris creation, yet when I'm steaming around Gibraltar and you're giving splendid entertainments in your brownstone front I dare say we'll look back on these times we've spent together with a good deal of amusement and some regret. Don't you think so, Honoria?"

But Honoria was engaged in spearing an olive and apparently did not hear me.

"I've often wondered," she said musingly, "how it would seem to be poor. I suppose I'd make my own hats and wear ready made tailor suits and live in a little box of an apartment."

"But even a box of an apartment can be made attractive," said I. "I know of some dingy shops on the east side where one can pick up fascinating old prints and brasses for almost nothing and furniture that is a joy to discover. There's a Tuscan lamp that's waiting to send a cheerful glow over polished wood and the backs of one's favorite books, and there are curious andirons, made solely to reflect the gleam of a small hearthstone—such a hearthstone as I have imagined you sitting by, Honoria, while the snow falls without, and!"

"Some of our friends would give us up," said Honoria hastily.

"We'd find better ones to take their places."

"Our greatest diversion," said Honoria, "would be the theater, and we could go so seldom that it would take us a long time to decide which play we really wanted to see."

"We'd enjoy it all the more," I declared. "And after it was over we'd go off together to some quaint cafe—oh, I know of places that you've never even dreamed of, Honoria—places where struggling poets and artists have carved their names on the tables and where a Hungarian violinist plays, not the catchy music of the concert halls, but things that are heartbreak and rapture and longing all in one. And the people we know will be supping at Sherry's or Delmonico's—all the wealthy, foolish people who haven't found out that life is ashes and faces but a picture gallery and talk a tinkling cymbal, where no love is. Are you listening to me, Honoria?"

"Yes," answered Honoria very low.

"I know it's sheer folly," said I, "this dream of mine. We've talked of it so often and decided that it was impossible. But now that we've come to the parting of the ways, do you think that the other things of life really matter so long as we miss the exquisite joy of being together? Ah, Honoria, I know it's madness—worse than madness—to ask it, but could you care enough to give up luxury for a poor duffer of a fellow who isn't worthy of you and loves you with his whole heart and soul?"

"But the heiress—"

"Oh, d—hang the heiress!"

"Dick!"

"I mean confound her! Honoria, for the last time, will you marry me?"

Honoria's answer was so low that I had to lean across the table to catch it.

"Honoria," I cried, "is it true—do you really mean it?"

"Don't, Dick," said Honoria. "Those people at the other table are watching us. They'll think we are engaged!"

"But so we are!" I cried exultantly.

"So we are!"

PIRACY AND PROPOSAL

By EPES W. SARGENT

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Perhaps one reason why Hoffman respected his nephews was because of the excellent understanding between themselves and Alice Cutler. Ewan was bashful and self-conscious in her presence, but the twins were her chums, and Ewan envied them.

He had been trying for six weeks to decide whether or not Alice cared for him, and he was afraid to put his fate to the test. He was not much of a ladies' man. Until he had seen Alice his yacht had been his sweetheart, and a cruise with a lot of good fellows outweighed all the allurements of feminine society.

Now he regretted a little—just a lit-

tle—his devotion to the sea. He did not even know whether Alice thought of him as his nephews' uncle or as himself. Unversed in the ways of women, he could not decide. He might have asked his sister, but he dreaded Gertrude's gibes, so he devoted himself more than ever to the twins, and thus gained a right occasionally to enter the charmed circle, the center of which was Alice Cutler.

Then came the twins' inspiration. Bedtime tales of the Spanish main had fired their imaginations. Here they were on the gulf of Mexico, whence the gold laden galleons had made their start. Nothing would satisfy but that they should go upon a pirating expedition.

Their mother was glad enough to be rid of them for the week the cruise would occupy, and Alice Cutler manufactured a most imposing skull and crossbones flag to be broken out from the masthead when the quarry should be sighted. The twins carefully looked after the saluting cannon and its supply of ammunition, and laboriously practiced carrying wooden daggers between their teeth.

Then came the day of embarkation. The twins kissed their mother goodby,



"I'LL GIVE YOU A DOLLAR A PIECE AS RANSOM," HE SAID.

as dutiful pirates should, and set out with Alice for the pier, while Ewan hurried over to the postoffice to make sure that a belated business letter was properly posted.

He cursed his fate with true piratical fervor when he came to the dock and found that Alice had returned to the hotel without a goodbye for himself, but once on board and under way he became absorbed in the twins' play.

It was one of their greatest charms that they could "make believe" with such absolute seriousness as to convince an outsider that their pretense was real, and Ewan grinned over their circumstantial account of the capture of a beautiful maiden, whom they were holding for ransom.

"We just tied a handkerchief over her mouth," exclaimed Dudley, "an' says, 'Less we get ten thousand dubbins from your father we'll send him your ears.'"

"An' she cried," supplemented Gordon, "an' tried to take the bandage off, an' we tied her hands, an' it was doubletons, not dubbins, what we said."

"Taint, it's dubbins," defended Dudley, and by the time the arbitrator had decided that neither was right on the pronunciation of doubletons the twins were ready to go down into the cabin and decide upon their course.

"Now, what I propose," explained Ewan, "is to get out in the gulf and wait for the galleons from the mines. They should have left Vera Cruz day before yesterday. Shall we do that or shall we set sail for Brazil, land a force and plunder the storehouses of the natives?"

"I don't think mother would like it," objected Dudley. "It's too far away. Besides, we've the beautiful maiden to ransom. We ought to cable her father, as we promised."

"Pirates don't cable," suggested Gor-

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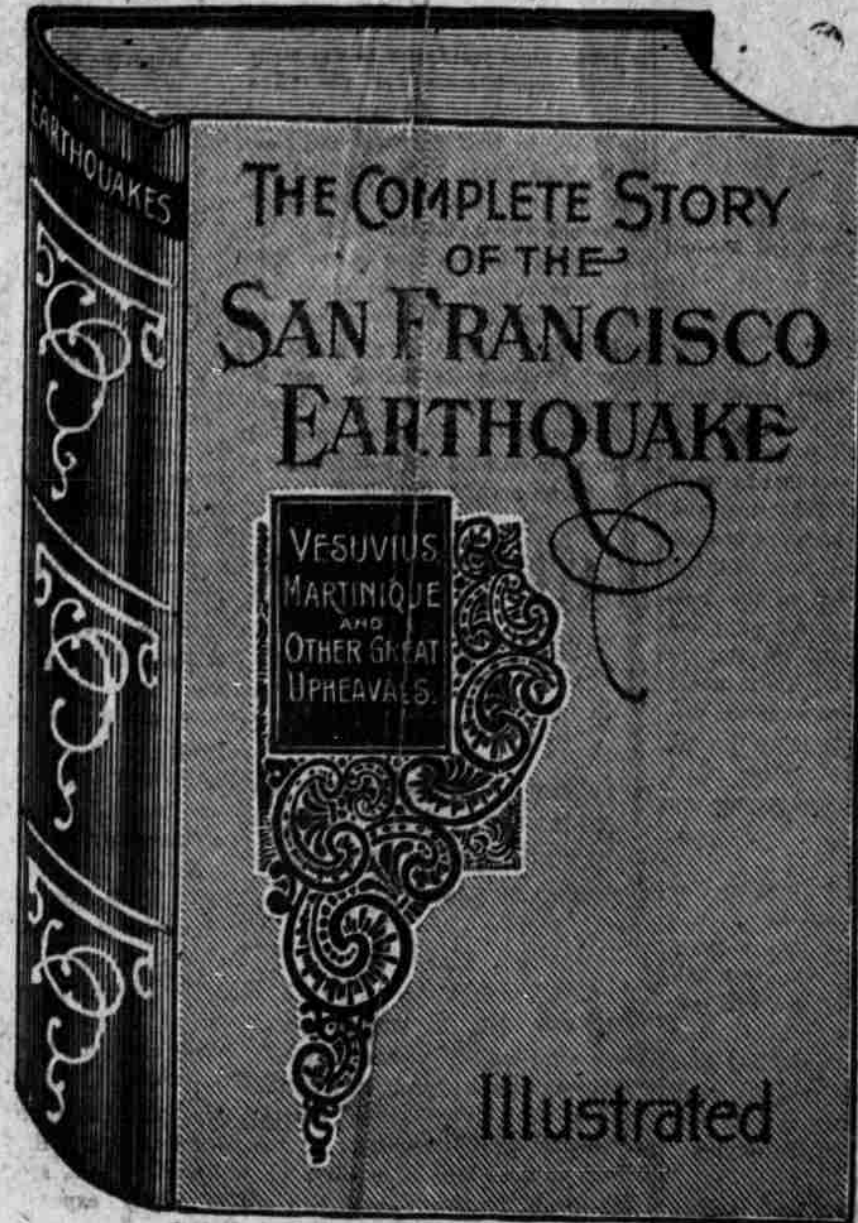
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