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INDEPENDENCE

The Winning of Edmonia.

By JANET CHRISTINE STEPHENS.

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There was nothing of the knight errant about Percival Bonney. In the thoughts of Edmonia Turner, thoughts which invariably formed the frowning background to Percival's waking hours, he was discouragingly and moderately inoffensive.

She had once stated succinctly, as was Edmonia's way, that the only thing about him that remotely suggested standing up for itself, was the cowl-like at the back of a square and otherwise irreproachably groomed head. The subject of this rather doubtful approval was secretly encouraged in the belief that the cowl-like indicated an aggressive spirit which seemed to be the heroic attribute in the imagination of Edmonia's set.

Edmonia's faintly appreciative remark had been inspired in her mother's attic during the rummaging of a rain bound house party, when, upon the discovery of an ancient coat of mail, Percival had pulled it out from under the eaves and had fallen speedily to calculating how many chain discharges it would have made for Mrs. Turner's carefully ordered kitchen.

This was too much for Edmonia. A man who could evolve discharges from the fabric of romance must be lacking in the most rudimentary instincts of civility. It counted for naught with her that Percival Bonney was evincing a business ability that made his father prouder every day or that she had never had a rival in his loyal devotion to her.

She dreamed of the clash of armor and the risks of joust and tourney, a knight who should perform feats of arms for her sake and rescue her, if need be, from a tyrant's might. In the free wholesomeness of American society the tyrant had not appeared, and to do Edmonia justice she really did care a great deal for Percival's allegiance, only she desired a more daring proof.

It was therefore incumbent upon this thoroughly consistent young lady that she steel her heart against the pleasing picture which a tall, broad shouldered, gray clad figure, bat off and light hair tossing in the breeze, made against a morning sky on the first day of one of his erratic autumnal visits near her country home.

She accordingly let her disdainful glance dwell upon his offensively ruddy cheek and ignored his unaffected stare of astonishment at her modern equipage, a brilliantly red automobile at a standstill upon the country road.

"What, ho, Rebecca!" he greeted her when within speaking distance of where she sat in the crimson ramble. "Armed cap-a-pie I see! Is the drawbridge down?"

Edmonia smiled tolerantly and gave him her hand.

"But why linger so far from the paternal castle? Has thy gentle palfrey gone lame?"

Edmonia glanced suggestively back along the highway. "I'm waiting for a friend." She said it with conviction.

The dusty road stretched in two long, undulating lines in either direction. No one was in sight. Percival's gaze abandoned its quest and returned suspiciously to the crimson ramble. "Could I," he asked anxiously, "figure in that capacity?"

She reddened in turn, then scanned him critically. "Perhaps." She was still rather doubtful of his capabilities. Mentally scolding as inexcusable a devotion to his business which had made him hitherto ignore the automobile craze, he flattened himself out after the manner of the ardent automobilist under her car and confided his despair to her tongue.

It was bad enough not to be romantic, but not to be even useful was unbearable. He had not the slightest idea of how to start the machine. He crawled out from under the machine and mounted to the driver's seat.

Her sudden accession of trust, inspired by his businesslike manner, provoked him to fresh endeavor. He made a great show of moving brakes, tightening useless screws and peering into the machine while she scanned the scenery.

Whatever he finally did to that automobile to start it Percival does not know. Suddenly it slid out of the shade into the road like a bird from under his hand. "Aha," he cried, with an assurance that he was far from feeling, "I thought so!"

He held a trembling hand upon the wheel and answered irrelevant questions at regular intervals. They were now gliding along between hedgerows of gorgeous autumn color. He began to feel more at ease. Edmonia hummed a little song as old as it was sweet:

The rose that all are praising
Is not the rose for me.

He looked at her and in that look forgot his new responsibility. She was gazing steadily down the dusty turnpike, a little smile upon her lips, as though she would see the knight of her dreams in plumed helmet and shining armor riding to bear her away.

"He couldn't catch us," said Percival in response to her thought. She started and looked with more interest at her companion. He had spoken in the confidence that is born of ignorance.

"Say, Ted," he continued, "I don't know much about your 'flowers of civility.' I don't even understand the first thing about an aut— He caught himself up. He positively would not divulge this humiliating fact. He went on more confidently: "But yet

are the rose for me, sure, red. You must say you will marry me this time," he ended, with an air of desperation, "or I'll—"

The threat was not completed. In the earnestness of his plea Percival had forgotten that he was running an automobile for the first time in his life. They were now going at a tremendous speed and every instant gathering momentum. Edmonia gripped his arm as they lurched around a curve and bounced over a culvert.

"Hang on!" yelled Percival as they approached a slight descent. In his clumsy efforts to control the machine he inadvertently put on more speed.

"What are you doing?" screamed Edmonia. "Stop! Why, you are running away with me!" she laughed tremulously.

"Why not?" he shouted wildly, as she thought, recklessly. The idea of stopping was a delectable one now to Percival, but one which he felt that he must abandon.

The roadsides of fireweed and goldenrod flew by like a track of flame. Hens flapped from under his wheels as they passed farmhouses at a rate of speed that made the occupants rush out of doors to stare after them. Outraged cries followed them when a barking dog was not quick enough to elude those blurring wheels and with a yelp of pain rolled over and over into the ditch. Three horses halting by the roadside in front of another house stamped as they whizzed by and raced them out of sight.

Edmonia now tried to expostulate with her mad cavalier. But Percival said nothing to her almost fearful appeals. His whole attention was concentrated on keeping the thing within the limits of the road.

"Beats Lochinvar!" he yelled breathlessly as they grazed a watering tub. Edmonia moaned. "You are crazy!" she cried. "Let's go home! Oh, take me home!" she commanded him.

"Home!" Percival ground the word passionately between his teeth. "You will be lucky if you ever see home again. We shall never stop!" But even as he spoke he felt something respond to his groping fingers. The machine was obeying his controlling hand. Joy and a relief that rolled over him like a wave made him shout aloud.

Edmonia received this new demonstration as the exultation of a captor and commanded and implored by turn. But he did not at once diminish his speed. He knew now that Edmonia had not realized his impotence. He put the machine at a hill and plunged down the other side. Edmonia was clinging to him with wild promises.

He brought the car carefully to a standstill and climbed painfully to the ground. Edmonia was sobbing into her handkerchief. He hoped he was accepting the role of victorious knight modestly, but the iron was hot!

"Ted," he cried, "you've got to keep your promise, you know. I'm not much of a knight, and I don't know how to run!"

His unsuspected confession was interrupted for the second time as she suddenly, to his astonishment, smiled up at him through her tears.

"I never was driven like that in my life!" she remarked, with pride. "But—let's go home in a buggy!"

"Not until we're married!" said Percival firmly.

Edmonia refused to continue in the car, however, so they walked on to the nearest town, where the minister's fee was the first of a series of more mundane charges which punctuated their homeward journey in the buggy.

But in his new joy, which was only enhanced by peculiar interludes with the wrathful owners of slaughtered hens, the fearful mistress of an injured dog and damages due to the recovery of errant horses, Percival made it a triumphal journey.

Why He Saved Them.

For weeks upon weeks the heavy rains descended upon the holiday resort of Lakeswash, and the proprietor of the Punt and Puntpole was looking very blue. Indeed, those two straw hatted, miserable looking objects out in the Lakeswash canoe were the only visitors of the season. The hotel proprietor gloomily watched their clumsy endeavors to navigate their tiny craft. Suddenly, plop, splash! "Help!" In a moment the hotel proprietor had changed from a sluggish do-nothing to a frenzied rescuer. Putting out rapidly in a boat, he succeeded in reaching the terrified men just at the critical moment.

"Oh, thank you—thank you!" they cried as they scrambled into the boat. "Don't thank me!" growled the hotel keeper. "Thank the weather! Visitors is so scarce this year we can't afford to let even the fools drown! I did it for your board and lodging!"—London Answers.

For a Loaf, All Right.

As the tramp looked at Mrs. Godard he felt a thrill of hope. Here was surely an easy and benevolently inclined person. "Could you gimme a dime to buy a loaf o' bread?" he whined.

Mrs. Godard's guileless soul looked out at him through her nearsighted eyes, and she fingered her purse hopefully.

"I have only a quarter here," she said, "and I'm really too tired to walk home."

"Sure, I can change it for you," said the tramp cheerfully as he took out a dime and a nickel, and not until Mrs. Godard was halfway home on the car did it occur to her that there was anything unusual in the transaction.—Youth's Companion.

Generous.

"What would you do if you went fishing and a whale were to bite your hook?"

"Make him a present of it."

Gordon's Last Chance.

By TAYLOR WHITE.

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"Jimmie, do you speak slang?" demanded Maud Tolliver suddenly as her small brother came into the room.

"Do I walk on my feet?" demanded Jimmie in surprise. "Pipe your lay, angel face. I'll get you somehow, even if your speaks are all to the muddle. Throw it off your chest."

"It's this way," explained Maud. "You know Mr. Gordon?"

"I've seen him once or twice," admitted Jimmie, with a grin. Gordon was a regular visitor at the Tolliver home.

"Papa wants me to marry him," explained Maud. "He's so strict and proper that I hate him. I thought that if I were to talk along and 'act up' perhaps he would leave me in peace. He hates a slangy girl. He said so last night."

Jimmie grinned appreciatively. He had no great liking for the eminently staid and correct Gordon. He hated men whose suits always looked as though it was the first time they had been worn.

His own preference was for Barry Spaulding, who occasionally offered him a cigarette and who talked to him precisely as though he was a grownup.

Gordon never seemed to see him, never laughed and joked, and Jimmie entered into the conspiracy with his whole heart after being assured that Maud would never disclose the source of her education in slang.

Before the week was out Gordon looked troubled. He was very much in love with Maud after his own fashion. There was no want of real affection, but Gordon was no gallant wooer. He had been accepted by the family, and in his quiet, patient fashion he was laying siege to Maud's heart.

He had fancied he had been making headway until she developed a trick of interlarding her speech with slang expressions.

At first he was shocked, but as Maud acquired proficiency and grew more and more slangy Gordon withdrew from his campaign. Though he loved the girl as much as ever, he assured himself that a wife who used slang was utterly impossible.

In secret Maud gloated over the fact, but bore herself demurely when her father sharply questioned her concerning her treatment of Gordon, for the latter's visits had fallen off, and, though Gordon had pleaded business as an excuse, Mr. Tolliver had an idea that there was something else that might explain the lover's sudden lack of interest.

Then fate took a hand, and so it happened that Jimmie Tolliver, crossing the avenue, slipped on the muddy paving and fell directly in front of a rapidly advancing automobile.

There was a cry of horror from the spectators, but one man sprang forward and with an easy movement grasped the boy's arm and carried him to safety.

For a moment Jimmie was too dazed to comprehend; then he slowly came to realize that Gordon, unmoved as ever, stood beside him, answering the questions of the crowd, but refusing to give his name.

"All right, old man?" he asked as he saw that Jimmie was pulling himself together. "Suppose we move on. This crowd is a little too eager."

He signaled a passing taxicab and directed the driver to go to a tailor's where Jimmie's muddled garments might be made presentable. The rush of cold air drove the last of the cobwebs from Jimmie's brain, and, gazing admiringly at Gordon, he decided that Maud was wrong in her estimate of the man. There was fire under the ice, red blood beneath the waxen, immobile expression, and Jimmie's heart warmed to his rescuer.

"Say, Bo," he demanded suddenly, "are you still dead nuts on Maud?"

"I esteem your sister very highly," admitted Gordon.

"You're all right," declared Jimmie admiringly. "If you want to win cast your port ear over this way and make a noise like a listen."

The noise of a listener was continued long after the visit to the tailor's was concluded. Gordon's face was as expressionless as ever, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

Some evenings later Maud, coming downstairs, reached the lower hall just as Gordon was admitted by the butler. Jimmie had been cautioned under pain of losing his promised reward to say nothing of his rescue, so it was merely "that tiresome Kenneth Gordon" whom Maud greeted with perfunctory cordiality.

"I buttered in to tear off a piece of talk with the boss bloomer wearer. Is he in?" asked Gordon.

"If you mean my father"—began Maud loquaciously.

"That's the guy," interrupted Gordon. "Will you tell the delegate from the wax works to ask him to grease his heels and slide down here?"

"I will go myself," offered Maud nervously. Gordon was as coldly correct in appearance as ever, but perhaps he was drunk.

"Nix on the scamper," declared Gordon, raising a detaining hand. "Use the butler for the wireless, and we'll call out some conversation while he makes a home run."

"I must go," explained Maud. "I forgot something upstairs, and I must see about it at once."

"Tell it to wait," commanded Gordon. "I'm the head of the procession

just now. Don't you bother about the water carriers."

"But"—began Maud. And Gordon interrupted again.

"Don't be a goat and butt in," he urged. "Hit the plush."

He pointed to a chair, and timidly Maud seated herself. As she had led the way into the parlor the butler had disappeared, supposing that he would not be required further. To ring for him now would only make a scandal among the servants. Perhaps her father would come down in a few minutes.

He usually spent the evening in the library when he did not go to the club, and in either event he must pass the open door. If the worst came she could call for the butler, but meanwhile perhaps she could induce Gordon to leave quietly. She took the chair indicated, sitting nervously on the edge, ready to spring up and run should occasion demand.

"It doesn't cost any more to have a whole chair," reminded Gordon as he sank into a seat between her and the door. "I want you to put me wise to some things. What's your grouch against me?"

"I have no grouch," protested Maud eagerly. "Indeed, I like you very much."

"I never saw you on the front steps waiting for me," said Gordon grimly. "Let it come out with a rush. I'm in wrong. How can I square myself?"

"There is nothing to be squared," insisted Maud. "I don't see how you can imagine such a thing."

"Naughty, naughty!" reproved Gordon, shaking his forefinger at her admonishingly. "Look here, kiddo, put me next! You don't like me, and I like you. I can't help it if I've got a frozen face. It was wished on me, and it's none of my doings. Tell me how I can loosen up so you'll have a yin for me."

"A yin?" repeated Maud uncertainly. This was a word not in Jimmie's vocabulary.

"A yin—a yearning," explained Gordon. "I want you to think that I'm the whole works, and you won't even let me be the second hand. Fix me up so I can come into the big tent and be a part of the program. I'm the 'what is it' out in the freak tent, and I don't like the job. I may not be quite your style, but I can learn. I'm the star pupil in the little red schoolhouse, and I'll always be at the head of the class if you'll be the teacher. I love to love my teacher."

Maud sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing.

"Mr. Gordon," she said coldly. "I will not prolong this interview. I do not know what is the matter. I do not want to know, but you must go, please. I cannot listen to you when you talk this way."

Gordon had sprung to his feet when Maud rose, and now he smiled down into the flushed, angry face.

"It seems," he said a little sadly, "that my latest effort is no more successful than the earlier attempts. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and yet you are not pleased."

"What do you mean?" gasped Maud in astonishment.

"You learned slang for my benefit," he reminded. "When I do the same thing you object. Of course my slang is more pronounced than your own, but then you have only Jimmie, while I have the valuable assistance of several elevator boys, my office boy and the janitor's son, who qualifies as an expert. You use slang to disgust me—with yourself. I am using it to disgust you—with slang."

"And you know?" gasped Maud. "Jimmie has told?"

"Be it said to his credit that the temptation was great," said Gordon gently. "Do not blame the lad. He meant well in giving me my last chance to win you. He saw beneath the surface and was sorry for his part. I foolishly imagined that if I could excel you in the use of slang I might startle you into an interest that I see now you never can feel. It was a foolish experiment, Miss Tolliver, and I ask your pardon for having bored and then frightened you. It was my last chance, and I hoped that it might succeed."

"I gather from Jimmie's remarks that you fear paternal pressure will be brought to bear on you. I beg to assure you that I will so contrive the situation as not to involve you. I am—sorry that—the last chance—failed."

The little pauses in his speech were Gordon's only evidences of emotion. They were only little halts in the evenness of his soft, even voice, but they showed the strength of feeling, and it touched Maud with a sudden emotion.

"Don't go," she said softly, laying a detaining hand upon his arm. "Perhaps the last chance has not—I mean"—But she could say no more. Gordon's arms were outstretched, and in his face, no longer expressionless, there was a look of such appeal that she suffered herself to be drawn within their protecting circle. The last chance had won.

Accounts For It.

Belle—I don't like that man you introduced to me yesterday. He has such a flyaway manner.

Nell—He can't help that. His business is making balloon ascensions.—Baltimore American.

Like the Smoke.

Gunner—He had a fancy cigarette named after him.

Guy—And how did he stand the fame?

Gunner—Oh, he is all puffed up!—St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Abstract ideas and great conceits are ever on the road to produce terrible catastrophes.—Goethe.