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A Fortunate Mistake

"My dear Miss Marden, how are you? I have been wanting to see you all day."

"I'm perfectly well, thank you," said Dulcie.

"Naturally. I simply wanted to give you my warm, my very warm, congratulations on your—what shall I call it?"

"Betrothal? Dr. Truscott. I am not engaged to any one."

"Not engaged? But"—

"Please tell me at once, doctor, who told you."

A little persuasion, and Dulcie won her point.

"Well, Miss Marden, don't be too hard on him. It was Mr. Archibald Tracy."

"Very pleased to see you, Miss Marden," said Archie soon after. "Mother's out, but"—

He stopped. His visitor had risen, frigidly bowed and stood confronting him with an expression of deep scorn.

"How dare you tell Dr. Truscott that you were engaged to me?"

Archie's mouth opened wide in astonishment.

"I did tell Dr. Truscott that I was engaged, and it's perfectly true. The young lady has a name singularly like yours, and that confounded doctor must have confused the two. She is called Marding—Kitty Marding."

Slowly, very slowly, Dulcie's face relaxed into a smile. A moment later her lips parted, and that smile developed into a laugh, in which Archie joined.

"Mr. Tracy, I apologize. Let me congratulate you."

As Dulcie Marden walked home she kept laughing to herself over that ridiculous confusion of names. Dr. Truscott would probably write a letter four pages long, humbling himself to the ground. The incident, now happily closed, had lent a wonderful amount of spice to life.

But has any one ever yet staid the course of a bit of gossip?

Dulcie was nearly home when she spied a figure she knew on the other side of the road coming in her direction. It was Oswald Northcote, one of the few young men she unreservedly liked and had admitted within the inner pale. He possessed a frank, boyish disposition that endeared him to everybody. His nature was generous, his mental powers distinctly above the average.

When he got parallel with her, Northcote raised his hat and then, on a sudden impulse, crossed over the road. Dulcie noted that his cheeks had gone red and that his general looks indicated considerable tension of the nerves. He shook hands with her, and she felt through her glove that his hand was as hot as fire.

"Good afternoon, Miss Marden. I felt I must stop and speak to you—to offer you my best wishes on your engagement to Mr. Tracy."

Dulcie wondered afterward why she did not at once utter the denial which her lips had ready. Perhaps something in Northcote's face and manner deterred her, for she only said:

"Why, who told you about it?"

"Dr. Truscott—this morning," replied the young man, speaking slowly and with difficulty. "I hope you may be—very—happy. Oh, Miss Marden, what a fortunate fellow Tracy is!"

The earnestness and pathetic appeal in the tones strangely affected Dulcie. Only a man laboring under a strong emotion could speak like that. She tried to look into his eyes, but her glance fell before their compassion, and her tongue felt tied.

"If it isn't treason to mention it, I should just like to say what a warm feeling I've recently had for you, Miss Marden. It began with extreme liking, and lastly it has become—something else. But I mustn't say more—only that from the bottom of my heart I wish great joy for you. Goodby."

"Oh, please stop! How can I tell you, Mr. Northcote? It's all a mistake—about my engagement. Mr. Tracy is engaged to a Miss Marding, and Dr. Truscott mixed up the names."

Oswald put his hand to his head. It was swimming with the sudden revulsion of feeling.

"A mistake! Then you are free?"

"Yes," whispered Dulcie, overwhelmed by the passion in his voice. For the first time in her life the divine emotion of love thrilled her soul. Tears blinded her eyes. She could not see a single object in the street.

"I have opened my heart to you, Dulcie. You know what my whole desire is. What do you answer?"

"I can't think now. I am stupefied—the suddenness. Oh, please give me time. I'll meet you here tonight at 9 and tell you."

* * * * * * *

Next day the following note was delivered at Dr. Truscott's house:

Dear Dr. Truscott—You were quite right after all, though you gave me the news hours before I knew it myself and appended the name of the wrong man. I have put dear Oswald Northcote out of the misery into which you unwittingly thrust him yesterday by consenting to be his wife some day. Words cannot express our gratefulness to you for that most fortunate mistake of yours. Believe me, ever yours sincerely,

DULCIE MARDEN.

—Penny Pictorial Magazine.

Cruel.

Young Wife—I don't like that cooking school teacher at all. She has neither patience nor consideration. She's actually cruel.

Husband—Great Scott! She doesn't really make you eat the food, does she?—Illustrated Bits.

The Clerk Not Crazy.

"Am I crazy or you?" shouted the lawyer passionately to a clerk with whom he could not come to an understanding.

"I don't think," was the quiet reply, "you're a man who would hire a crazy clerk."

It Girdles the Globe.

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SERGEANT DAVIES' GHOST

Five years passed, and the mysterious disappearance of Sergeant Davies had not been accounted for. Even his comrades had ceased to speculate over it. Nor would it probably ever have been solved but for one man who had sworn never to cease his inquiries and investigations until the murderers of Sergeant Davies were brought to justice. This man was James Sefall, formerly an ensign in the Earl of London's regiment.

With patient, dogged perseverance and the keen instinct of a born detective he set himself to the task of discovering the perpetrators of the crime and at last succeeded. Bit by bit he joined together the stray pieces of evidence until he had a case sufficiently strong to justify him securing the arrest of two highlanders, Duncan Terig, alias Clerk, and Alexander Dain Macdonald. The fowling piece belonging to the murdered man had been found in the house of one of them and trinkets and valuables known to have been the property of Sergeant Davies had been seen in the possession of both men.

The prisoners were arraigned before the lords of session at 7 o'clock on the morning of June 11, 1754. Then there was made public the strange story of the manner in which the crime and its perpetrators had been discovered.

Alexander Macpherson of Inverey, a farm servant, aged 26, deposed that one night in the summer of 1750, while in bed in a shealing (the long turf thatched outhouses in which highland farm servants sleep in beds ranged along the wall), several others being at the same time in the said shealing, there entered a man dressed in blue whom he took to be the brother of a neighbor, Donald Farquharson of Glendee, who came to his bedside and beckoned him to come out. Macpherson rose and followed the figure outside the door, whereupon the person turned and said:

"I am Sergeant Davies." Then, pointing to a moss, or tract of swampy land, known as Christie's hill, he added: "You will find my bones there. Go and bury them at once, for I can have no peace nor will I give you any until my bones are buried, and you may get Donald Farquharson to help you."

Having spoken these words solemnly and earnestly, the apparition vanished. Early next morning Macpherson went alone to the spot indicated by the wraith, and so exactly had been the instructions given by the mysterious visitant that before he had searched five minutes he came upon a human body imbedded in the moss.

A few nights later the apparition again visited Macpherson when he was in bed in the shealing and reproached him for not having carried out its instructions for burial, urging him at the same time to lose no time in committing the remains to the earth. Then Macpherson plucked up courage to ask, "Who murdered you?" To which the apparition replied, "Duncan Clerk and Alexander Macdonald."

On the following day Macpherson went to Donald Farquharson, told him the story and persuaded him to come and assist to bury the body of the murdered man in dry ground. Farquharson went with Macpherson to Christie's hill, carried the body away, dug a grave in dry ground and there buried the remains. To all his own share in the business Farquharson swore positively and emphatically expressed his belief that Macpherson had told nothing but the truth. The only other person to whom Macpherson confided the story was John Growar of Dalhownie, who deposed that Macpherson, under strict promise of secrecy, told him a few days after the apparition had appeared for the second time how he, in obedience to its commands, had, with the assistance of Donald Farquharson, buried the body.

But there was still stronger corroboration of Macpherson's strange story in the evidence given by Isabel Machardie of Inverey, who deposed that on the night on which Macpherson declared that he saw the apparition for the second time she, sleeping at the other end of the shealing, in the portion set apart for the women, most distinctly saw "something naked come in at the door and go straight to Macpherson's bed, which frightened her so much that she drew the clothes over her head; that when it appeared it came in a bowing posture, but she could not tell what it was; that next morning she asked Macpherson what it was that had troubled them the night before, and that he had answered she might be easy, for it would trouble them no more."

The counsel for the prisoners was one of the most eminent advocates in Scotland, Alexander Lockhart. He was a notorious Jacobite and had gained for himself much celebrity by defending the prisoners captured after the rising of 1745. As in duty bound he threw ridicule upon this story of the ghost, and he made his great points when in cross examination of Macpherson, who could speak nothing but Gaelic and whose evidence had to be interpreted to the court, he said to the witness:

"What language did the ghost speak in?"

To which Macpherson promptly replied, "As good Gaelic as ever I heard in Lochaber."

"Pretty good for the ghost of an English sergeant," said Lockhart, and there was general laughter in court. His case was won. The jury's verdict was "not guilty."

Forgot to Ask.

She—The jeweler says the diamond in my ring is not genuine.

He—Um—er—he told me the ring was real gold. I forgot to ask him about the stone.—New York Weekly.

Blown to Atoms.

The old idea that the body sometimes needs a powerful, drastic, purgative pill, has been exploded, for Dr King's New Life Pills, which are perfectly harmless, gently stimulate liver and bowels to expel poisonous matter, cleanse the system and absolutely cure constipation and sick headache. Only 25c at W L DeLano's drug store.

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