A PROPOSAL BY PROXY.

BY MRS. GEORGE CORBETT.

From New York Weekly.

CHAPTER II.

"I believe it is only about a month ago," answered Gladys, who was as much at cross purposes as he was. "But there is plenty of time to make up one's mind in a month, and I really thought him horribly slow."

"Oh, indeed! Then you are quite prepared to accept his proposal?"

"Certainly. Don't I tell you that I have been waiting for it? Stay! there are, of course, certain pecuniary considerations—"

"You need not trouble about them, Miss Young. I have Clarkson's authority for stating that he intends to be most liberal in pecuniary matters."

"Oh, isn't that lovely? And it's really an engagement?"

"Certainly, if you are willing to be t party to it."

"And when can I see him? I want to come to a difinite arrangement as soon as possible. Do you think I might go and see him tonight?"

"Well, I don't know, Miss Young. I'm not so sure that it would it be quite the proper thing for you to do. I had better see Mr. Clarkson first and tell him that my mission has been entirely successful. Then he will call and see you himself tomorrow morning, and you can arrange details between yourselves."

"Yes, that will be best. And tell him that it's a difinite engagement."

"Oh, that's all right As you say, it's a definite engagement. But I'd better be going now. I have done all that I can, and I feel—"

Poor Kenneth was going to say that he felt rather upset at the eagerness with which his friend's proposal by proxy had been accepted, and at the certainty that his own faint hopes were shattered. But he thought better of it, and welcomed the girl's jubilant interruption.

"Don't imagine that I am not grateful to you," she cried. "You have sent me into the seventh heaven of delight."

Kenneth Saxon quitted Miss Young's presence, feeling more disgusted than he had ever dreamed it possible to feel with her, and pulled his mustache quite savagely, as he strode toward Clarkson Dean's home.

"Well, if she isn't the most mercenary little wretch it was ever my lot to meet," he reflected. "She never invuired if he loved her, but thought of pecuniary matters from the start. Not much need, either, to beat about the bush with a girl who tells you plump that she has been expecting such a message. I don't believe she cares a straw for him, although she has accepted him. It's a purely mercenary business on her side, and it is a blessing that I didn't propose to her myself, seeing that I am, by comparison with Clarkson, only a poor man."

Clarkson was looking through the window, which commanded a view of the street, for the return of his old friend. All the while Kenneth had been away, he had been tortured by the conviction that he had taken a foolish step in proposing by proxy.

"I ought to have popped the question myself," he muttered. "She is a high-spirited girl, and may resent the diffidence which made me afraid to propose to her in person. What fools men can be when they are in love. Ah! there he comes at last. Now to know my fate! If his glum face is an index, I have been rejected."

Poor Clarkson had barely patience to wait until Kenneth entered his sitting room, so anxious was he to know what he had to tell him.

"Come! out with it, Kenneth," he said, hastily. "Have I been refused?"

"On the contrary," was the reply given without any of the elation which the occasion would seem to warrant, "you have been accepted with eagerness, and I had no trouble whatever in delivering my message. You are to see her yourself tomorrow morning."

"Isn't that lovely!"

"That's just what she said."

"Did shh—really? I say, old fellow, you've done me no end of service and I shall be grateful all my life. Of course, you'll be best man."

"Thanks; I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me."

"Excuse you, why? You like Miss Young, don't you?"

But Kenneth's feeling had been probed enough for one day, and he felt a sudden access of emotion that made further conversation just then intolerable to him.

"I must be off now," he said, desperately, and there was something in his dejected manner that suddenly revealed the whole truth to Clarkson Dean.

"Good heavens," was the latter's reflection, "I do believe he loves her himself! What a brute he must have thought me."

But any regrets on Kenneth's score had no chance of being explained to that much enduring young, for he left the place without any further ceremony, and strode toward his own residence.

On the following morning Gladys took especial pains with her toilet, for she wanted to make as good an impression as possible upon Mr. Clarkson. She was ready by ten o'clock, and was waiting in the parlor when the servant announced "a gentleman to see Miss Gladys," and, rising eagerly to meet the theatrical manager, she was astonished to see Mr. Dean approach her with a beaming face that bespoke perfect satisfaction with the whole world.

"You darling!" he exclaimed, almost before the door was closed behind the servant; "how shall I thank you enough for making me so happy."

And then, before the amazed girl could fathom his intentions, he had her in his arms, and was kissing her passionately.

But he was soon convinced that he had made a mistake, for the young lady whom he thought to be his plighted wife struggled wildly to free herself from his embrace, and, as soon as her were free, she gave her adorer a push that sent him staggering from her.

"How dare you!" she panted, furiously. "What reason have I ever given you to suppose that I would allow you to kiss me?"

"What reason?" was the astonished reply. "Why what better reason could you give me than to accept me for your future husband?"

"Accept you for my future husband? You must be dreaming, Mr. Dean!"

"Not if my proxy gave me a correct version of the interview of the interview that took place between you yesterday. He told me that you accepted my proposal without the slightest hesitation."

"But I have never seen anyone who had such an unusual message as a marriage proposal to bring to me, and, in any case, I should not be likely to accept anybody by proxy!"

By this time Clarkson was becoming convinced that there was something wrong somewhere, and and he stammered rather than spoke his next question.

"Surely Kenneth Saxon was here?"

"Certainly But he came on business connected with an engagement I have been applying for. He came from Mr. Clarkson."

"He came from me! Don't you know that my name is Clarkson—Clarkson Dean?"

At this confirmation of a horrible doubt that had begun to assail her, poor Gladys turned so pale that that Clarkson feared she about to fall, and would have gone to her assistance, had she not waved him back.

"Do you mean to tell me that Mr. Saxon had no messege from Mr. Clarkson, of the Elysian Theatre, for me?"

"I repeat that he was here entirely at my request, and if there has been a mistake, pray let me rectify it now. I have loved you ever since the minute I first saw you, and—"

"Oh, Don't!" she moaned. "I can't bear it! I shall never get ever this humiliation. And I suppose he despises me for all the horrible things I said! Do you know I told him I expected his message; that I was delighted to receive the proposal he brought to me; that pecuniary considerations were of importance in the matter? Oh, dear! I think I shall go mad! and to think that Kenneth could have the heart to bring me a proposal from anyone else."

By this time the girl was crying wildly, and poor Clarkson considered a speedy departure the best course for him to persue. So he quitted the room at once, leaving Gladys to sob out her rage and humiliation at her leisure.

"The fact of the matter is that they are in love with each other, and I have been slow not to perceive it before," he though. "But my name isn't Clarkson Dean if I don't put matters right now."

Mr. Dean must have been as geed as his word, for when the writer last heard of Miss Young, she was engaged to be married to Kenneth Saxon. The manager of the Elysian Theatre has never offered her an engagement. But as she has given up all thoughts of going on the stage, that doesn't matter.

Miss Eva Young cannot understand her sister's failure to appreciate Mr Dean. The latter is now more in love with Eva than he ever was with Gladys, and when he proposes to her he will certainly not do so by proxy.

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