

THE TWO LEGACIES

By M. QUAD

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In the whole county of Broome there was not a more unassuming man than Peter Day. He was an old bachelor and worked in a grist mill in the village of Coburn. He was not an educated man, and he had no ambitions.

In the same village lived Miss Anna Green, old maid. She had the only millinery store in the place. She was also unassuming and uneducated. Neither had she any ambitions. She just wanted to be a milliner and dressmaker. How it came about that Peter Day and Anna Green became acquainted and engaged to be married was a matter that many people could not understand, but it was known that they intended to get married—some time.

One day two important letters reached the postoffice at Coburn. One was for Miss Green. It was from a lawyer in Indiana, who stated that her maiden sister, who had been living in that state, was dead and that she had left her all to Anna. That sister had not been heard from in ten years. The other letter was for Peter Day. It was also from a lawyer. An uncle of his in Vermont had died and left him his all. The receipt of those two letters was to make a sudden and great change in two lives.

Peter Day had not had a holiday in thirteen years. He had been as steady as an old clock. He had scarcely read that letter, however, when he went to his boss to say:

"You can take your old mill and go to grass with it. I'm not going to be anybody's slave after this."

And Peter almost paralyzed the town by dressing up and loafing around and actually entering a saloon and calling for a beer.

Miss Green had always been very humble to her customers. She had felt it her duty to abase herself. She would no more have dared to dun one of them for a bill a year old than to have put her hand in a lion's mouth. And now what a change! Within six hours after receiving that letter she was saying to Mrs. Adams:

"If you don't like that hat you needn't take it, and you'd better be paying something on that old bill or quit coming here."

When Peter Day went sparking his habit was to slip into the house as if he expected to be kicked out again. He didn't stand up or sit down or cross his feet or drop his hat without asking to be excused for the same. Those two letters had reached town of a Monday morning. Sunday evening came before Peter called on Anna. He had been thinking, and so had she, that there should be no slipping or sliding, but a bold gait and a bold front. He sat down without being asked to, and he held his position like a man in possession. Instead of saying that the long drought was killing the corn he opened with:

"See here, Anna, there's a cast in your left eye!"

"What—what on earth do you mean, sir?"

"And you've a hump to the middle of your nose!"

"Peter—Mr. Day!"

"And I don't like the color of your hair!"

"Sir! Sir!"

"And you don't know nuthin' about grammar, and you can't sing for shucks. I'm here to say our engagement is off!"

"I've been left a legacy," he explained. "I'm goin' to take my place up at the head."

"You got a legacy! And I want you to understand that I've got one too! I was waiting for you to call that I might tell you a few things. Peter Day, you are as ignorant as an ox. You can scarcely write your own name!"

"Miss Green, don't talk to me that way!"

"You are humpbacked, bowlegged and deaf in one ear."

"Miss Green!"

"You haven't enough ambition about you to throw a stone at a gander. Grammar! Why, you never even saw one. You can't speak five words without a blunder. I can't sing, eh? Well, what does it sound like when you try it? And the color of my hair don't please you. What's the color of that on your own head? And I've got a cast in my eye? Yes, I know, and I've got that eye on you. Why, I wouldn't marry you if you was the last man critter on the face of the earth."

"I don't ask you to."

"I'll marry a man as far above you as the eagle is above the crow. I'll be riding in my auto while you are slopping through the mud. Get out of my sight, sir!"

In each case the lawyers had been instructed to settle up things and render an account. It didn't take them long. Three weeks did the business. The "all" that had been left them amounted in the one case to \$17.45 and in the other to \$52.18. Queerly enough, those two letters also arrived on the same day. Peter Day sat on the tavern steps as he read his. He read it three times over and then went down to the millinery store, where he found a weeping woman. He walked right up to her and said:

"Anna, I'm an idiot."

"So'm I, Peter."

"I didn't mean what I said that evening."

"Nor I."

"Hang legacies and lawyers!"

"I'm willing."

"Then you set the day, and we'll be married within two weeks."

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