

A STORY OF REAL LIFE

By WARRINGTON ABERT
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Strange incidents have brought about marriages, but the strangest of all was that which served to unite me and my wife. If I hadn't opened a certain book on a certain day I should either have remained a bachelor or married some one else. Had I opened that same book a day earlier there would have been no such effect. I could not have opened it a day later, for I have never since been in the room where it was kept.

I was at the time curate of a church in a small but aristocratic town. My salary was \$800 a year. I had heard stories of girls setting their caps for unmarried clergymen, but I saw no evidence of the truth of these stories in my own case. Most of the girls of the congregation were daughters of well to do, some of them rich, parents. Whether the girls did not encourage me because they were aware that I had nothing but my salary or because I was not especially attractive to them I don't know. The fact remains that I was not encouraged.

I thought at the time that my sermons were a trifle too heavy for their intellects. I was given to philosophic thought, and my thoughts found a vent in my homilies. I could see from the want of attention of these girls when I was preaching that they were thinking of the set of their garments, the appearance of their hats and such matters rather than of the ideas I was endeavoring to convey to them.

But there was one young lady whom I noticed fixed her attention upon me from the time I began to speak until I had finished. I would have been at a loss to know whether her interest was in my remarks or me had she not the moment I had concluded my sermon turned to her hymn book or her pocket book for the collection, seeming to forget all about me. As she was the only young lady in the church with a fortune in her own right I never dreamed of marrying her, though she was rather good looking and a very estimable person.

Of course I had the entree to her home, and many a pleasant evening or afternoon I spent with her chatting upon subjects that were agreeable to me and seemed to be agreeable to her. She appeared to be pleased to start me talking and sat with some fancy work to her hands listening. At that time I supposed a man entertaining to women to be one who could talk well. I have since learned that a good listener would be his most dangerous rival. But the lady did not seem to care to talk herself, leaving me to do it all.

This kind of chat about ideas is a very poor conductor for any warmth of the heart. Love is not intellectual. A rhinoceros may love, but a rhinoceros is not a thinker. Birds love, but they don't reason as to where they will build their nest. Instinct tells them how and where to do that. I never made a start on saying anything ten years ago. To do so did not occur to me. I came with nothing but a petty salary, and I was to be a girl with a fortune in her own right. I should expect to be burned out of the house and probably my pastorate at such presumption.

I received a call that would give me more salary, but I considered the field a better one than the one I occupied. I wished to be a worker as well as a preacher. In the parish where I was there were few poor people and consequently little good to be done among those who most need, to my thinking, a clergyman. I accepted the call and the evening before my departure for my new field called upon the young lady who had shown so much appreciation of my intellectual endowments. I had some new and as I thought, original points to bring up by which I hoped to leave a final impression.

In the midst of my presentation of my views my friend rose and asked to be excused for a few moments. I was a trifle put out, for I had reached an important turn in what I was saying. Since she did not return at once I cast about for something to look over while waiting. I sat beside a table, and on this table was a single book. Taking it up, I opened it. It was a trashy novel. Turning over the leaves, I came upon a piece of paper on which was written an unfinished note. I was about to put it aside when my eyes caught my own name.

Before my ideas of right had time to crystallize I had seen enough to compel me to see more. This is what I read:

"George Dunham goes away tomorrow, and my heart goes with him. I would be happy if he had said one word from the heart rather than millions from the brain. This waste words!"

When the writer of this fragment returned I had risen and was looking out of the window. She resumed her seat as though she expected me to resume my intellectual discussion. Instead I fired at her a whole blunderbuss load of the worst love twaddle man ever spoke to woman.

Before sending this story to the printer as "an incident from real life" I showed it to my wife. She read it through carefully, I watching her to note its effect upon her. I expected to see indications of surprise. I was disappointed.

"Stupid!" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me it never occurred to you that I left that note there for you to see?"

SHE SAVED HIM

By BENJAMIN L. TUCKER
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I was riding one day on a road in what was then a territory of the United States in an unfrequented region I belonged to the country, though not to that particular part of it, and was dressed in the costume in vogue there—namely, a woolen shirt and trousers, high boots and sombrero. Hearing the call of horses behind me, I turned and saw two men coming. Each man rode a horse and led another.

I thought nothing of the matter till they came close behind me, when I heard a rough voice shout:

"Hands up, stranger!" I knew enough of the practices of the country to understand that if I didn't drop my bridle rein and shove both hands up over my head I would get a bullet in me. My revolver was at my hip, but to draw it would be sure death. One of the men rode in advance of me and kept me covered, while the other ordered me to dismount and give up my revolver. I did so, and, taking my horse in tow, he left me the horse he had been leading and together they rode on rapidly.

It was an hour after this that I heard other horses, and several men came up to me and surrounded me. One of them recognized in the horse I rode a stolen property. I told him the story of how I had come into possession of it, but he said I might spare myself such arms as that, and I was taken back to the nearest town and thrown into jail, charged with horse stealing.

The jail consisted of the second story of a small brick house, the windows of which had been fitted with bars. I was put into one of these rooms. The upper part of the door also was barred, so that the jailer could see a prisoner without opening the door. I knew it would only be while the man who had lost his horse could get together an improvised court before I would be tried and if I couldn't prove I wasn't a horse thief I would be hanged. Being a stranger there, I didn't see how I could furnish the evidence.

It was about sunset of the day I was arrested, while I was pondering on the chances of swinging, that I looked up and saw a young face at the barred opening in my door. By the long hair parted in the middle I knew the owner of the face to be a girl. She appeared to be about sixteen, but he was not much over fourteen. She was looking at me sympathetically. I was twenty-one years and at that age said to have been good looking.

"What y' been doin'?" she asked. "Horse stealing." I didn't think it worth while to assert my innocence. "What'll they do with y'?"

"Hang me."

A whitish tinge came on her face, and her eyes grew very big.

"D' y' want me to let y' out?"

"Can you do so without its being known that it was you who did it?"

"Reckon so. I'm a purty good liar."

"How can I get away?"

"There's horses below. There's nobody about jist now."

"Well, if you can let me out you may save my life."

She went downstairs, brought up a bunch of keys and with one of them unlocked my door. It was then that I got a full view of her. She was tall, well formed and but for her skirts, which were so short they looked as if she had outgrown them, would have passed for nineteen or twenty. She was rather a wild looking thing, not at all tidy, and her hair was uncombed. She ran to a small stable in rear of the jail and led out a horse that stood addled and bridled. Taking the reins in my left hand, I put my arm around her, giving her a kiss full of fervent gratitude, then, mounting, dashed away. The last glance I gave her showed me a red spot in each cheek she had doubtless been kissed for the first time by a full grown man.

I had been out an hour, and my horse was getting jaded—he was a very slow beast—when, hearing a gallop behind me, I urged him on, turning at the same time to learn who was coming. I saw skirts fluttering in the wind. Not being afraid of a woman, I slowed up and the next time I turned saw that my pursuer was the girl who had let me out of jail. She was riding astraddle, and her hair was flying.

"Well," I said, "what is it?"

"I jist thort I'd go with ye."

I was startled. Many things passed through my brain, the principal being that if caught I would be surely hanged for horse stealing, to say nothing of abduction. But I couldn't be more than hanged and might as well be hanged for both as one.

"Well, come on," I said.

We rode till darkness came and, for the matter of that, till daylight. Then we were safe.

I told the girl, who was a niece of the jailer's wife and had never been taught anything, that we must part for awhile, since I intended sending her to school. She vowed she would stay with me. But I stood firm, promising that if she would remain at school two years she might come back to me.

She consented at last, and during two years we never once saw each other, though we corresponded. Through her letters I was able to note the improvement going on in her. At first they were dreadfully crude; indeed, so much so as to be amusing. But from the first bespoken innocence. At last she returned, and great was the change in her. We are now man and wife.

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