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A MARRIAGE CONTRACT

It Was Made by Two Mothers For Their Babies.

By JOHN Y. LARNED

Miss Cunningham's mother had been dead a month. The daughter did not wish to live in the big house alone, and she did not wish to leave it. Nevertheless, having no one to live with her, she determined reluctantly to shut it up and become a wanderer. With a view to leaving matters in good order and cleaning out a good deal of accumulation she set herself to work, beginning with antiquated family documents. She was engaged on a trunkful of papers when she came upon what was marked on the back, "Contract between Mrs. Mary Cunningham and Mrs. Sarah Forbes," which set forth that Mrs. Cunningham contracted to marry her daughter Emma, then just born, to Mrs. Forbes' son Edwin, a boy of three years, said marriage to take place when the children should become respectively twenty-three and twenty.

Emma Cunningham sat for some time with this paper in her hand as if in a dream. The contract was doubtless the result of a strong friendship between two young women and probably had been entered into with slight probability of ever being carried out. Emma's mother had never mentioned it to her daughter and quite likely had forgotten it. Emma remembered Edwin Forbes when he was fourteen years old, a well formed boy, whom she had considered attractive, though, she being but eleven, he had looked upon her as a kid and treated her accordingly. His girl chum at that time was a year older than himself.

"I wonder," Emma mused, "if he has ever come across his mother's copy of this contract, for she doubtless had a copy. I wonder where he is and what is his world's work. If he is as nice as he was eight or nine years ago"—

She folded the contract and was about to toss it into a heap of papers to be burned when she changed her mind and, having closed the trunk, took it to her room and locked it in her writing desk.

Emma Cunningham found it difficult to break up her past associations and continued to live on as she was from day to day, month to month. Half a year later she was sitting by the window sewing when a strange young man came up the walk and rang the doorbell. Then a maid brought in a card bearing the name of Edwin Forbes. Being received by Miss Cunningham, he spoke to her in a constrained manner and with great formality.

"I believe, Miss Cunningham, that your mother and my mother years ago were friends. Since I was to pass through this place, my mother asked me to learn something about your family. She is desirous to learn if your mother is still living and how situated."

"My mother died several months ago," Emma replied.

"Indeed! Mother will be pained to hear of her death. Though separated for a number of years from her friend she has never forgotten her."

"I have heard my mother speak of Mrs. Forbes quite often," replied the girl. "I think your family were here when you were a boy of about fourteen."

"That sojourn here was very brief. After we went away again mother tells me that she and Mrs. Cunningham drifted apart from each other. Singular, isn't it, how persons who have been intimate pass completely out of each other's lives?"

"Very."

Mr. Forbes arose, assured Miss Cunningham that he was very glad to meet her again and that his mother would be pleased to hear of her, though she would be grieved to hear of her friend's death. Miss Cunningham replied in equally courteous terms, asked Mr. Forbes how long he would remain in the town and when he said he would not likely get away for several days asked him to call again. With this he bowed himself out.

He had no sooner gone than Emma gave herself up to wondering. Did he know anything about the contract their mothers had made? Did his mother remember it? Had she ever said anything to him about it?

Emma received a letter from Mrs. Forbes condoling with her upon the loss of her mother and regretting the loss of her own friend. The missive expressed a good deal of feeling. The writer explained that her son had not called again on Miss Cunningham because his stay was unexpectedly cut short.

This explanation did not alter Miss Cunningham's opinion that she had no special attraction for Mr. Forbes, and she sighed as she folded his mother's letter and put it back in its envelope. An incipient romance appeared to have been spoiled. Edwin Forbes had not appeared to advantage, being evidently constrained. Nevertheless he was a fine looking fellow and bore the stamp of character on his face. Miss Cunningham was disappointed that he had not been pleased with her. Had he been the reverse she surely would have seen him again before his departure.

What was her surprise one morning to receive a letter from her mother's old friend containing an invitation for

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