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A Matter Of Honor.

By Clarissa Mackie.

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"I am very sorry," began Helen in evident distress, "but—"

Richard Hilton held up a restraining hand.

"Don't go on. I know what you mean," he said heavily. He was staring at the third finger of her left hand, where a curious ring scattered prismatic rays of light in the June sunshine.

"Of course it is Littleton, after all," he said as if stating an undeniable fact. Then, with a slight bow, he turned and walked away down the smoking shanty.

Miss Vincent looked after him with dazed brown eyes and a strangely numb feeling in her heart. When he had rounded the lighthouse point and disappeared within the shadow of the tall structure she shivered a little, as if with cold. She had been perched among the bowlders under the sheltering cedar clothed banks when Hilton had found her an hour before, and said she sat there after his departure with wistful, dreamy eyes fixed on the flashing sails beyond the breakwater.

"Hello, little cousin! Been looking everywhere for you. I might have guessed you'd be somewhere by the sea and sea waves." Jeffrey Littleton swung himself to a seat beside her and gathered a handful of white pebbles from the cranies of the rocks.

He was a slightly built, rather good looking young man with eyes placed a trifle close together and a small rosebud mouth like a girl's. He caught Miss Vincent's sun browned hand with an air of possession that changed to consternation as she pulled it hastily away.

"I am only your fourth cousin, Jeffrey," she said petulantly.

"It is quite evident that you wish the relationship was still more distant," he said ruefully. He took careful aim at a stone down on the water's edge and shot a white pebble downward. "How do you like Miss Wendell?" he asked with elaborate carelessness.

"She is charming!" cried Helen enthusiastically. "I like her immensely. You know we were at school together, although in different classes."

"And someone—what do you think?" Jeffrey asked.

"She is lovely," said Miss Vincent, looking curiously at him. For the first time since their engagement three years before Jeffrey was showing interest in another woman.

How gladly she would have welcomed the diversion during the last twelve months of her awakening to what love really meant! But, no; Jeffrey had been a devoted lover, apparently blind to her growing indifference toward him.

The fact that their betrothal was a family affair and as yet unannounced would have made it easier for her to have told him the truth and thus broken off the engagement, but a certain pity for him had stilled the words that had so often trembled on her lips, for only since the advent of Richard Hilton into her world had she known what love was—that sweet upland path that one knows instinctively leads to heights of bliss—heights whence it takes a lifetime to descend.

It was the old story of a pledged word and a love come too late. She had turned Hilton away and Jeffrey was speaking again in a slow, hesitating way, very unlike his usual manner.

"You remember that day in Rome when we were looking in the window of old Riccio, the goldsmith, and we both saw the ring?" He touched her finger gently with one hand.

"Yes," she said, a little breathlessly. "It was not often that they spoke of such matters. Their engagement had been singularly free from sentiment."

"And you admired its quaint setting, and so I bought it and we called it an engagement ring," he went on lightly. "It is needless to relate that the houses of Vincent and Littleton rejoiced greatly and that our boy and girl attachment settled into a Darby and Joan-

fatness." There was a tinge of bitterness in his voice that caused an up-lifting of her pretty brows.

"And?" she suggested haltingly.

"I have thought perhaps you might have tired of me and wanted your freedom, only—your conscience—you know you have a conscience, little cousin—"

"I am sorry, Jeffrey, that my 'conscience' as you call it, has been the means of binding you to an unwelcome contract. No; do not speak," she said coldly. "It is true that I would never have been the one to break the engagement because my word is my law, and—"

Her voice broke suddenly.

"I thought you'd be pleased," cried Jeffrey in consternation. "You know—Hilton—see?" He stammered confusedly as she started to her feet.

"Jeffrey," she said in a low, passionate voice. "Don't you know that you are too late now? Why didn't you jilt me before?" She sank back on the rocks and buried her face in her hands with a little sobbing cry.

"I cannot," she said coldly, and it dropped into his reluctant hand. Presently he found himself following clearly defined footprints in the damp sand. He skirted the beach and circled the lighthouse. When they ceased Jeffrey found himself face to face with Richard Hilton.

"Hello, Hilton!" he said genially, evading the other man's miserable "going down the beach" if you are I wish you'd just take this handkerchief to my cousin—Miss Vincent. She's sitting on the rocks beyond the point." He held out a morsel of cobweb and lace.

Hilton hesitated.

"I don't know," he said doubtfully. "You see, I'm waiting for the 4:30 train. I'm going back to the city to-night. Important business—"

"Well, all right. You see, I'm going to take that same train myself—must catch the Loretta tomorrow morning—going abroad for three years, and—"

"Just a little long at the back," the barber insinuated as he adjusted the cloth.

Joachim explained that he liked it that way, and the tonsorial artist was silent for awhile.

"Rather thin on top, sir," he said, conveying his own idea that to sacrifice length to thickness was poor policy. But Joachim glared at the barber and tossed his Honkles mane. The barber scraped away for awhile in a moody, discontented fashion. But it was hard to disconcert him.

"Better let me trim the edges for you, sir. Just half an inch all around."

Joachim remained firm, however, and then the barber, losing what little tact and ingenuity he had, vented his feelings in the most scathing expression of contempt that suggested itself to his tonsorial mind with:

"Well, of course, if you want to look like a German musician it's nobody's business but your own."

Profitable Litigation. On the boundary line of two farms in an Austrian village there is a large gooseberry bush, from which the two farmers have for years gathered the product. "What grows on my side is mine, and you may have the rest," was the agreement.

Three years ago the neighbors had a misunderstanding, and this came to a climax when the gooseberries became ripe. A lawsuit followed, and appeals were made to higher judicial bodies. The final decision has just been recorded in an Austrian paper.

Each party is to have the right to pick the berries which grow on his side of the line, just as it was originally, but neither may destroy the bush. The costs are charged half to each litigant. Each farmer had to pay 225 krona. The yearly yield of the bush is worth about one-half krona, and the judge told the fighting farmers:

"With good luck it will take you only 800 years to make the bush pay. Take good care of it."

The Last Straws.

By Carl Williams.

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Though the windows were opened to the fullest, no breath of air seemed to enter. The awning ropes hung limp and lifeless. The mailbags that were bound in gay braid did not stir.

From the hall came the clatter of the cleaners as they worked in other offices already emptied of workers, and once or twice one of the women poked her head through the open door to see how soon she could get in to clean room No. 802.

Stella bent wearily over the typewriter, her flying fingers writing in the addresses from a huge list on the desk beside her, while at a nearby table the office boy slipped in the circulars which the envelopes were intended to carry.

To Stella it had seemed the last straw when just before closing time the office manager had brought her the voluminous list and had ordered her to see that the circulars were sent out that evening. He was going out of town and had left early.

The other clerks had slipped out as soon as he had disappeared, and with only the assistance of the boy she had to send out 300 circulars. In his hurry to get away the manager had not even left the usual "supper money," so she would get nothing to eat until she reached her boarding house. It would be long after the regular dinner hour, and she would be lucky to get anything at all.

It was nearly 8 when the last envelope swallowed up the last circular

and she was free to go. The elevator had stopped running, so she and her helper faced a walk down eight flights of stairs. For the third time in as many hours Stella told herself that this was the last straw.

She was not used to the grinding toll of the city, and even the regular came hard. When her father had died and his wife had followed him to the grave within a few months all of the little savings had gone to the physician and the undertaker.

Stella faced the task of self support bravely enough, but there were times when her overtaxed nerves were rubbed to rawness and even the little things of life bore heavily upon her.

The extra work coming at the close of a particularly trying day had exhausted her vitality. Listlessly she climbed aboard an uptown car and sank into a seat, glad that the home going rush was over, and that she did not have to stand up all the way.

The approach of the conductor roused her from her absorption, and she opened her purse. As she glanced into the change compartment she gave a cry of dismay. The pocketbook, never well filled, even on pay days, was bare of coin.

Fearfully she tumbled its contents into her lap, replacing the articles after shaking them out one by one, but the 35 cents which had been there when she returned from lunch had disappeared.

"That bluff don't go!" The conductor's voice was hard and unfriendly. He had had a row with the inspector on the last trip, and his ill humor had not yet subsided.

"You'll have to pay or get off," he added as Stella looked up with the tears trembling on the heavy fringe of lashes. "We don't have to take tears for tickets. Got the coin?"

Not daring to trust her voice, Stella shook her head and thought of the three mile walk ahead of her. The other last straws became insignificant in the face of the new trouble.

The conductor reached up to pull the rope, but across the aisle a man rose and checked him.

"Don't get off, miss."

Stella looked up into the friendly face and smiled her thanks through her tears.

"I've got the change handy."

"You must let me send you the money," she said. "I am very greatly obliged to you."

"I forget where I live," was the unshining statement. "Just you forget it, too, until you see some one that

needs a nickel real bad and tell 'em I sent it."

He sank back in his seat, rejoicing in the fact that Stella's confusion prevented her glancing across the aisle, which enabled him to regard her steadily without embarrassment.

Disappointed at the turn affairs had taken, the conductor retired to the rear platform to devise new names for the inspector, and Stella looked out of the window with a new sense of contentment.

Nine months she had lived in the city, and this was the first time that any one in the throngs of men and women had paused in the rush of the workaday world to be friendly. Coming at a time when the last straw had nearly had the effect of breaking her spirit, if not her back, the courtesy was doubly welcome.

She turned suspicious, however, when she rose to leave the car and found that her companion was following her. He read her thoughts with quick comprehension.

"I live on this street," he explained, with a frank smile. "I live at 237."

"I live at 240," she cried, blushing to find that she was pleased to know that he lived nearby.

"Skerry's?" he asked. "I say, I know the old lady. If I come over after dinner will you let her introduce us and go out roller riding? It's nice to ride up to the bridge. There's sure to be a breeze there."

Stella nodded. If the particular Mrs. Skerry was willing to act as sponsor, surely a trolley ride was proper. Stella beamed on the young man.

"My name's Jack Murray," he went on, anticipating the introduction.

"Miss Stella Meade," she volunteered in return. "I'll be glad to go riding with you, Mr. Murray. I'd hate to stay in the house. This has been such a dreadful day. When the manager told me to stay and get out of a lot of circulars it seemed like the last straw that broke the camel's back. Then the idea of walking home seemed worse than that."

"Last straws may break camels' backs," she said, with a smile, "but we ain't camels, you see. There's always some one hanging around to lift the load when it gets too heavy."

Stella flashed him a grateful glance as she stepped in front of her boarding place and watched him cross the street to the flathouse where he lived with his mother. Mrs. Skerry, sitting by the basement window, greeted her to come in.

While the tired girl ate the half warmed food her landlady dilated on the good qualities of the Murrys. Mrs. Murray was a member of the same church society to which the boarding mistress belonged, and the son she thoroughly approved of.

Not until after 11 did they get back from the roller ride, for there was a park beside the bridge which was the terminus of all-pleasure rides. They had to dance a little, and Jack twice treated her to ice cream. As they stood on the steps of her boarding place the man looked down into her face.

"And you'll let me call for you again soon?" he asked. "Don't wait until the straws make too heavy a load."

Stella nodded an assent.

"There aren't going to be any more straws," she declared. "I guess the only straw was loneliness, and I'm not lonely now."

"And you're not going to be if I can help it," was the hearty reply, and Stella's heart beat faster as she realized that soon she would be neither lonely nor alone. Unlike the camel's load, her last straw had led to happiness.

Bargains in Babies. Among the deacons of a Presbyterian church in an Ohio town was a good old gentleman familiarly known as "Uncle Thomas." Although too deaf to hear, he was a member of the church, and his zeal in religious work was untiring. Owing to a shortage of song books in the Sabbath school some additional ones were ordered by "Uncle Thomas," who applied the pastor of their arrival, and latter agreed to announce the fact from the pulpit on Sunday morning.

The pastor made the promised announcement, among others, concluding with this one:

"Parents wishing their children baptized will please present them at the close of the service."

The good deacon jumped to his feet and in the loud voice peculiar to the deaf bawled out, "Those who haven't any can get them at my house for 50 cents apiece!"

As "Uncle Thomas" and his wife had always been children's best friends information almost broke up the meeting.—Success Magazine.

The Dog. The dog is man's most faithful friend. A man may die, but a dog won't; a man may get drunk, a man may slander his neighbor, a man may embezzle and defraud, a man may borrow money, a man may steal money, a man may go into politics, a man may knife his best friend, a man may run people down with an automobile, a man may gamble himself to ruin, a man may waste his substance in riotous living, a man may go to heaven, but a dog won't. Can these things be truthfully spoken of a man's best friend? man has about him? There is a strong affinity between man and the dog. It must be the affinity of contrast. Yet any man will resent being called a dog. Possibly the dog would resent being called a man if he understood. I do not know. I only know that the maxim works but one way, and if we should say, "Man is the dog's most faithful friend," there would be many to evil, saying that it was mighty rough on the dog.—Success Magazine.

