TIM BRANIGAN'S COURTSHIP

By B. W. Channing

BRANNIGAN carried ice for the Sylvan Spring Ice company. He was a goodly young fellow, standing six feet one in his stockings, with a countenance deeply bronzed by weather, out of which his wide blue eyes laughed unceasingly. His flannel shirt, open a little at the base of the strong, round throat, and his broad felt hat, indented with a verdjeal "Denver poke," gave him a cowboy effect. He was perfectly cognizant of this, and traded on it with the maids at the various houses on his beat, before whom he swaggered not a little, dropping hints of a western past, strewn with Indian scalps.

"And was you ever there, now, Mr. Brannigan?" one of them once asked him, and he answered, ambiguously:

"Aw, an' if I hadn't a been, how would I get the wound on me crown?"

"What wound on your crown? Go on!"

"I'll show it ye if ye'll step over here."

Brannigan bent his burnished curls, and pretty Norah stretched on tiptoe to meet them. But just as the two heads reached one level, the hero lifted his own quickly and kissed the fresh-colored face that looked so intently at him.

"Shure, the situation was that convaynient, I cudden't help it!" he urged, fleeing to the door with a smart cuff ringing in his ears.

But he was to learn that there was a type of womanhood demanding more deferential approach.

The first time he saw Alma was on a hot afternoon in August, when she had just come down from Nova Scotia, and was feeling the atmosphere of the South end oppressive.

Her mother, who kept a boarding house, and had combined with that responsibility the care of a shiftless second husband and his two small boys, had written to Halifax that Alma was needed. Alma was a slender, dark-

"I AM NOT THAT KIND," SAID ALMA.

haired girl, with a delicate complexion, and slim, ladylike hands.

Brannigan, swinging in with his huge ice block, took a swift, appreciative look at her, dumped the ice in its receptacle, and stopped on the return swing for conversation.

"'Tis a warm day!"

"Dreadful!" said Alma, listlessly.

"I didn't see you before?"

"No. I've just come."

"Ye'll not stay here! the old lady can't kape no gyurl more than a week; 'tis a hole of a place!"

"I'm Mrs. Brown's daughter, from Halifax."

Brannigan went away at that, suddenly speechless.

He saw her nearly every day after, but he did not seem to make much headway. A packet of chewing gum, which had appeared to him a graceful attention suitable from any gentleman to any lady, was received with disappointing coldness.

"It's very kind of you,' she said, "but I never use it. Mrs. Dalby, where I lived in Halifax, thought it was common."

One day about a month after her arrival, he found Alma alone in the kitchen—and marked with concern that her eyes were red with crying. Now, Brannigan had a man's philosophy regarding tears.

"Aren't ye well at all?" he asked, coming up beside her.

"I'm all right!" said Alma, holding her head down, and plunging her thin little arms into a tub of suapsuds.

The next moment she was startled and scandalized by the clasp of an arm about her waist, and the touch of a brown mustache on her cheek.

"Ah, cheer up!" whispered Brannigan, tenderly, "it don't sthorm ivery day!"

He stepped back to avoid the expected slap; but the girl made no sort of demonstration. She simply stood there with a white face and looked unutterable reproach.

Tactics of so novel a kind were discomposing. Brannigan's bronzed cheek flamed, and the laugh died out of his eyes.

"Say, I'm mighty sorry!" he murmured; "I diver thought but ye'd like it! The gyurls mostly does, an' 'tis no harm at all."

"I'm not that kind," said Alma, sternly.

"I'm mighty sorry," he repeated, and as Alma showed no signs of relenting, went dejectedly to the door.

"'Twas sweet, what I got of it," he mused, "an' 'tis bad luck I'll get no more. She's not the kind, it's true for her."

The next few times that he carried ice to the house he did not see Alma, and when he did, on the fourth day, her manner was excessively dignified. But Brannigan was hard to snub. Instinctively, he reconstructed his too florid vocabulary, and altered some of his ways.

"She's worth takin' trouble *for*," he said to himself.

His gentle persistence had its reward, and after awhile they had become so far friends that Brannigan hazarded a new departure.

"Do you iver go out Sunday avenings?" he inquired one fine Saturday.

"Sunday afternoons I do," Alma amended.

"'Tis great out in the park."

"I've heard it was nice."

"I'd be proud if ye'd ride out there with me tomorry?"

Alma's delicate color deepened. She gazed fixedly at the handle of the door.

"Let's say three o'clock."

"I'm not through my work till four."

It was the same thing as an assent.

"I'll call for ye at four!" He went off beaming, but her voice made him turn back in sudden panic.

"Don't call for me," she said, in a low, hesitating tone; "you—I'd rather you wouldn't. Maybe I'll be at the corner at four."

The ride out on the open car was very pleasant. Alma enjoyed every bit of it, though she asked herself frequently what was she about.

Brannigan was not introspective; besides, he knew what he was about perfectly. He paid Alma's fares with an authority she dared not gainsay, and sat with his arm on the back of the seat behind her.

His heart swelled; he almost wished some man would do something for which he could knock him down. He had the primitive instincts of the tribal lover; he wanted to show his strength to the woman he desired, and to have her know that strength would always stand between her and danger.

This feeling increased as time went on, and he saw more and more clearly that Alma was unhappy at home. Her eyes were often red. She complained of headache, and on being pressed confessed that "the boys were tiresome."

One afternoon a strange man came with the ice.

"Tim Brannigan's hurt," he explained. It appeared that Brannigan had been at a fire, and rushing out of the burning tenement with a forgotten baby, had broken his leg. He was in the city hospital.

The next day Alma dressed herself with care in the blue gown Brannigan liked, and the Sunday hat with its soaring plumes and outspreading ribbons, and started for the hospital.

When Brannigan saw Alma enter the ward his face was irradiated with joy. And yet, when she reached the bedside, he was lying very still, with closed eyes—or, with eyes that seemed to be closed.

"Ah, an' is it you?" he asked, faintly, feigning a languid awakening. "'Tis good of ye to come, but I'm that wake I can scarcely take it in!"

"O, but you'll soon be better, Mr. Brannigan!" she said, struggling not to cry.

"Ah, an' do ye think so?" he asked, feebly.

Alma looked down at his splendid porportions in perfect seriousness.

"Do you feel pain anywhere?" she asked, fearfully.

"Ahful, just here!" said Brannigan, laying a muscular hand upon the cardiac region.

Not a muscle of her face changed, as he saw through his half-shut eyes. A ripple of laughter passed over him, and he bit his lips under the long, tawny mustache. And while he laughed, he could have fallen at her feet—she was so adorably innocent!

Alma saw and wholly misinterpreted the tremor which shook him.

"Are you cold?" she inquired, anxiously. She knew that it was a bad sign to feel cold in serious illness.

"Froze out!" said Brannigan, in a choked voice, another and more violent tremor convulsing him.

"Don't they give you anything for a chill?" she asked.

"They can't give me nothin'," he whispered, "twouldn't do no good!"

Poor Alma began to cry. She did not know people never died of a broken leg; and with Brannigan's young strength and health it was inexplicable.

But, certainly, he was near his end. Reckless of observation, she bent her face to his and kissed him.

And then a strange thing happened, for the helpless sufferer revived, returned her farewell salute with interest, and held the girl close in a clasp of astonishing vigor.

"O, my! Mr. Brannigan, aren't you ashamed? And me thinking you that ill!" gasped Alma.

"I niver told ye there was anything wrong wid me arms!" he cried. "An' I was just sufferin' for a kiss, dear! Ye've niver let me have one till now! (he repaid himself for the deprivation). Ah, Alma, darlin', say ye'll go to the priest wid me when I'm out o' here! I've a tidy bit in the bank, an' niver a soul dependin' on me, an' I'd make ye so happy ye'd not know yerself—"

He became aware of the severely-disapproving regard of a middle-aged nurse on the other side of the bed, and let Alma go. Then he winked with glad effrontery at the intruder.

"'Tis all right!" he assured her; "kissin' ain't agin the rules whin it's a man's own gyurl he's goin' to marry—is it, now? An' ye're goin' to marry me the minute I'm out, aren't ye, Alma, me dear?"

Alma was torn with a variety of emotions; but she loved Brannigan.

"Yes," she said.—Boston Globe.

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AN EXASPERATING BLUNDER

"WHY, Oliver, what possessed you to think that Cousin Berta was engaged?" exclaimed Edith Rankin.

Then she began to laugh, and looked over at Cousin Berta, who sat at some distance reading a book, and quite too far away to hear her cousin's merry laugh, or form any guess as to the cause of it.

"It's too ridiculous," continued Edith. "But do tell me, Oliver, what put it into your head to think that Berta was engaged?"

"Well, I don't know that I thought it all of my own unaided fancy," returned Oliver Blount, as he leaned against the trunk of one of the great cherry trees to which Miss Rankin's hammock was tied.

"Somebody told me she was engaged, Edith. I forget now who it was. But since I've answered your question, now answer mine. What is there so very amusing in the thought of Berta's engagement?"

"Well, it's ridiculous," laughed Edith again. "You see, she's so brown—so very, very brown."

"Yes," replied young Blount, turning his gaze for a moment toward the object of their remarks, "she certainly is brown."

"And then, bringing his gaze back again, he allowed it to rest somewhat critically and very admiringly on the fair maiden lying in the hammock, and his thought was:

"And you, fairest Edith, are so blonde—so very blonde."

He continued aloud:

"But that is no good reason why Beta should not be engaged. There is no objection to a pretty girl being brown. Some people have been known to prefer them so."

"Goodness! Do you think Beta pretty?" exclaimed Edith, in her sudden interest raising herself on her elbow, and immediately being nearly capsized.

"Mr. Blount caught her, and as she really was half-thrown into his arms, he had no choice but to hold her there an instant while he steadied the hammock, and then to lay her head back on the silken cushion.

And in that moment's contact Edith felt that they had more nearly returned to the relation of two years ago than at any time during their renewed acquaintanceship, about a week before this date.

Somehow their thoughts drifted back to those bygone days, and, instead of talking any more of Cousin Beta, Edith began to remind Oliver of many a long-forgotten incident of their precious acquaintance.

And so the minutes passed in these reminiscences of old times, until the gong sounded for dinner, and everybody about the grounds rose from their various places and sauntered toward the hotel.

Edith Rankin had been as much in love with Oliver Blount as such girls ever are with any one except themselves.

In other words, she had known that he was the catch of the season. She would have been quite willing to marry him, and she quite intended that he should be desperately in love with her before many weeks had passed.

"There, Carmena, that will do!" concluded Miss Rankin, aloud, as she slipped away from the fingers of her maid, and, catching up a great bunch of roses, pinned them in her belt as she floated downstairs, and presently entered the dining-room redolent of beauty and perfume.

But Oliver Blount did not so much as raise his eyes at her entrance, and Edith saw that his gaze was riveted on the sly, sensitive face of her cousin, seated opposite.

And, to her intense chagrin, she was conscious of a peculiar expression on Berta's countenance—a something she could neither define nor understand, but which, she felt vaguely, indicated that they were not strangers, as she supposed.

"Can it be possible they have known each other? Where could she have met him? But it's impossible. She never could have known him! She must have spoken of it to me, some time, as often as she has heard me speak of him; and if she has known him all this time, and not spoken of it, there's some mystery, some secret between them. Oh! the sly creature! Commend me to these quiet, reticent girls for deceit."

Whatever else Miss Banken was, she certainly was not reticent, and she lost no time in asking her cousin plainly in regard to her acquaintance with Oliver Blount.

"Berta, you never mentioned that you had met Oliver," she said, the first moment she found herself alone with her cousin.

"I don't know that I have, Edith!" returned Berta.

And a bright pink, that Edith saw was very becoming, flushed up to the girl's clear, brown cheek.

"Of course you don't—as often as you've heard me speak of him! How anyone can be so deceitful!"

"Edith!" said Berta, with evident pain. "I never thought of deceiving you or anyone. How could I think it would interest you to know that I had met Mr. Blount?"

She could not have told her cousin that even to speak that name was a liberty she seldom allowed herself, and then only in the sacred silence of her own thoughts.

"Well, tell me all about it now!" exclaimed Miss Banken, impatiently. "Where did you meet him?"

"Last summer, when I was traveling with Mrs. Marston. She is a distant cousin of his, and one of the children is called after him—"

"Dear me—how touching!" thought Edith, while Berta continued, unsuspecting her cousin's disagreeable thoughts.

"It was in Switzerland that Mr. Blount joined our party, and as I had the whole care of the children, sometimes he accompanied us when we went on excursions. I don't think Mrs. Marston had any idea how dangerous it was, or else she never would have allowed me to take the children. One day there was a snowslide, and I chanced to become aware of it before anyone else. The children were safe, but Mr. Blount was directly in the way of it, and I managed to drag him backward just as the immense mountain of snow came thundering down, and crashed into a ravine, almost alongside of us. Another moment, it would have struck him and carried him down along with it."

"Good gracious! How romantic!" exclaimed Edith. "Then you saved his life?"

"He chose to think so," said Berta, coldly. "But it was a mere chance. If anyone else had been there, it would have been the same thing."

She turned away, and presently left the room, and Edith saw very plainly that she would not be questioned further on the subject.

"She's in love with him, and doesn't know it," thought the more experienced girl, "and be careful. Some one says pity is akin to love, and already she has the enormous claim upon his attention of having saved his life. But gratitude isn't love, and I don't believe a man likes to feel that a woman has saved his life. Any way, I must devise some means of keeping them apart."

"To think you should have been right about Berta being engaged!" said Edith that same evening to Oliver Blount.

They were on the veranda, and the shadow of the vines made the dusk of twilight so deep that Blount's sudden start was not seen by his companion; but had the light been less dim she might even have noticed a slight paling of his handsome countenance as he said:

"Is she really engaged, then? I'm sure I wish her all happiness. I knew her slightly last year when I was abroad, and I think her a lovely character. But who is the happy man—if it is not an indiscreet question?"

"Ah, I can't tell you that just yet! She hasn't given me her entire confidence; but she wears his ring. I have seen her kiss it again and again, as if it contained the whole world for her in that little heart that is carved on the stone. Such a curious ring it is!"

Oliver's own heart gave a sudden bound as he listened.

"Then it is to the giver of the ring that she is engaged?" he asked.

"Why, certainly—to whom else? She wears it on her engagement finger, and no girl ever kissed a ring as I have seen Berta kiss hers, unless she was crazy in love with the giver of it."

Blount made no remark; but Edith did not doubt that she had produced the right effect on his mind, and perhaps she had; but she would have been tolerably mystified if she could have known just what this effect was. To her amazement the revelation she had made to him had not the effect she anticipated. Oliver neglected all opportunity of devoting himself to the fair Edith, and was constant as her shadow to the shy, brown Berta.

"The man must be going crazy. I believe the sly creature has bewitched him," thought Edith, almost in despair, as she watched him walking along beside Berta one day, his head bent low to catch the murmured words.

Her gaze followed him till they disappeared within an arbor all overgrown with honeysuckle, and then curiosity, not untouched with jealousy, overcame all other feelings, and Edith flew toward the arbor, and, hidden by the wild growth of vines, listened to the voices within.

"You wear my ring, Berta, dear," Oliver was saying, "and you promised to wear it forever as a token of my gratitude. You would not let me say more at that time; but now you must listen to me, darling, and promise to wear another ring—a plain gold one—as a token of my heart's devotion to the only woman I can ever love."

"Oh, Mr. Blount—Oliver!" faltered Berta; but she did not draw away from the encircling arm. "How can you care for me? And Edith—I always thought—I'm sure she thinks, too—"

Edith's cheeks began to flame with rage and mortification. She felt a disposition to strangle her cousin before she could say anything further, and she had to bite her lips to keep from crying out.

"Oh, no; the fair Edith knows better than that; besides," added Oliver, seizing Berta's hand and kissing it, "but for her I would never have dared to tell you the secret of my heart; it was Edith herself who told me that she had seen you kiss this little ring of mine in such a way that she knew you loved the giver."

An exclamation she could not repress burst from Edith's pale lips.

"Oh, what a fool I have been!" she muttered. "I actually have played the girl's game for her."

But the lovers were too much occupied to hear any voice just then except their own low murmurings; and Miss Banken, with a sudden feeling that she had heard enough, glided away from the overhanging vines and hastened back to the hotel.

Bitter, almost unendurable, was her humiliation; but she was sufficiently a woman of the world to hide it from all eyes. And her voice was loudest of all in hearty congratulations when, in the course of a few days, the announcement was formally made of Berta's engagement.—N. Y. Weekly.

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HAVE MANY ROYAL CHAIRS.

Some Monarchs Can Find an Enthroned Seat Wherever They May Go.

The thrones of monarchs of the old world are not always located in the royal palaces. That is, some potentates can boast of more than one such piece of ornamental furniture. For instance, Great Britain has no distinctive and exclusive throne. Instead there are four—the wooden chair, with the slab of Scotch stone, in Westminster abbey, which has served as the coronation seat of the monarchs of this realm for seven centuries; the sumptuous chair of state in the house of lords; the chair on which the late queen sat when holding a drawing-room in Buckingham palace, and the gilt arm-chair at Windsor in which the sovereign sits to receive letters of credence or recall from foreign envoys or accord audience to dusky potentates.

The czar of Russia is even more diversely throned. Each of a dozen chairs of state are at various times styled the Russian throne. The two most remarkable are the chairs of Ivan the Terrible and the one in St. George's hall of the winter palace at St. Petersburg. The former is of turquoises. In the back alone there are 16,000 of these gems. The other chair is of costly woods, with ivory and gold, richly jeweled and embossed with the imperial eagle. The seat is of ermine and the arms are ivory tusks.

Farther east, in Teheran, the shah displays himself on a white throne looted from Delphi in 1759. It is of ivory, overlaid with gold, and ablaze with gems, its value being estimated at over £1,000,000.

MONKEYS ARE DANGEROUS.

Keepers in the Philadelphia Zoo Take Precautions Before Entering Their Cage.

Monkeys are not classed as savage animals, but, nevertheless, the keepers at the zoo are as chary of entering a monkey cage as they are of going into the domicile of the leopards or any of the smaller species of the cat tribe. The "monks," in spite of their apparent friendliness, are a treacherous crew, and many an unwary keeper has nursed painful wounds as a result of boldly venturing into the apartments allotted to the simians.

A little precautionary action is necessary to protect even the man who feels them should he have occasion to enter the dens. The monkeys unsuspectedly attack anyone who ventures among them, and by force of numbers will endanger the life of the bold visitor.

Whenever a keeper decides to go among the animals he lies on the floor and emits a hissing sound. The hereditary enemy of the "monk" is the snake, and at the first hiss the little animals will seek the hiding of the cage in terror. By a judicious use of the awe-inspiring sound the attendant can keep the monkeys out of the way for a brief period. When a long stay in the cage is necessary, says the Philadelphia Record, the keeper generally borrows a bull snake, a harmless but formidable-looking variety, from the reptile house, and with this coiled about his waist is safe from any covert attack while at work.

IOWA TOWN'S DAILY MIRAGE.

Singular Illusion That Is Visible in Cedar Rapids Whenever the Sun Is Shining.

Every day in the year when the sun is shining a mirage may be seen in this city, says a correspondent of the Chicago Inter Ocean. So far as is known this is the only place in the world where this phenomenon of nature can be so regularly observed, although there are many places where it takes place under certain atmospheric conditions. The mirage here is on one of the principal streets of the city and makes the street appear as if there was a pond of water covering it. So natural is this appearance that many times residents of the city who are not posted as to the mirage have turned from the street to escape going through the water that they thought they saw in the distance.

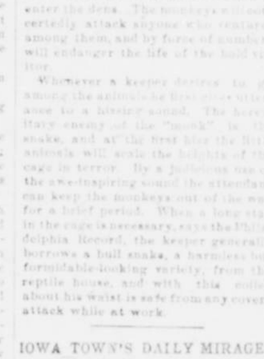
The best place to view the mirage from is on First avenue, in front of Coe college, between Twelfth and Thirteenth streets. On a bright day, by looking down the avenue four or five blocks away will be seen this lake of water covering the roadway. Passing street cars are so plainly reflected in it that it is difficult to realize that there is no water there.

Prof. Bates, of Coe college, accounts for the mirage by the fact that the avenue is slightly inclined from the indicated point of view. A person, therefore, looks down at the mirage at an angle of about 30 degrees, and his line of vision crossing the downcoming rays of light obliquely at that point produces this singular illusion.

Horrid.

Harriet—Sadie's husband never gets excited, never fights back, and she simply cannot make him cross.

Estelle—Yes. The horrid thing. He is simply exasperating.—Brooklyn Eagle.



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