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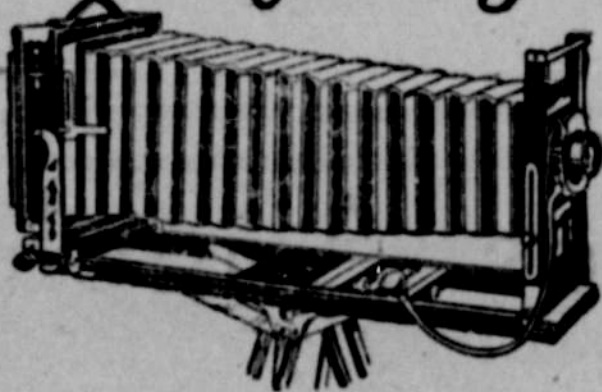
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The Meddlers

How Their Plans Came to Naught.

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The veranda of a hotel in southern Florida was crowded with people, some gossiping, others playing bridge, still others, the younger element, finding amusement in watching the tennis courts.

Beyond the lawn there was a sandy beach that shelved down to the water's edge.

The tide was coming in. In another hour it would be just right for bathing.

The boom of surf sounded cool and refreshing.

On the veranda Mrs. Higginson peered inquisitively at the tennis players.

"Is that Amy Delorme, that girl in white bouncing around the courts?"

Betty Fendon lifted her dark eyes to Mrs. Higginson's round, beamed face.

"Amy is there," she admitted in a tone of dislike, "but she is not bouncing around. She flits like a moth."

"It's all a matter of opinion, my dear," rumbled the older woman in deep chest tones. "Is my daughter Adelaide there, Betty?"

Betty scanned the lawn with amused eyes.

"No," she said wickedly. "Adelaide is sitting on the beach with Professor Hicks."

Mrs. Higginson uttered a sound halfway between a groan and a sob. It ended in a hysterical titter as she got up and lumbered toward the beach.

"Poor Adelaide—and it's her last chance!" sighed Betty.

Mavis Oakes looked pained.

"What made you tell on her, Betty?" she reproved.

"To pay her back for laughing at Amy."

"But you've got Adelaide into a scrape. I was hoping she would run away with the professor. He's a dear, and Adelaide is so funny and solemn and sweet! How did she ever come to have such a parent?"

Betty shrugged her shoulders and stretched her arms in a lazy yawn.

"Suppose we go and talk to Amy," she suggested. "Perhaps we can help Adelaide and the darling old professor."

Mavis followed her friend across the lawn. The players were leaving the courts, and Amy, followed closely by Dan Morland, met them under the spreading trees.

As if conjured by some magician, two other young men appeared to hover around Mavis and Betty.

"Listen," said Betty, beckoning the five about her. "I want you all to help me. It's about Adelaide."

"Adelaide Higginson, the daughter of that awful Mrs. Higginson," explained Mavis.

"Oh, you mean the bony female and the old guy with the shell rimmed spectacles?" asked Larry Whitford.

"Larry!" expostulated Mavis. "Adelaide looks very pretty sometimes, and if her mother didn't nag so I am sure she wouldn't look so worn. Listen to Betty's plan."

"My plan is this," said Betty, blushing under Harvey's ardent glances. "I know the professor is wild to marry Adelaide, and she, poor girl, would like to, only she's afraid of her mother."

"Professor Hicks is probably too bashful to propose an elopement, but given the opportunity I am sure he could persuade Adelaide."

"You see," added Mavis, "if Mrs. Higginson parts them now they may never meet again. The professor is a widower, and widowers are fickle, you know."

"How interesting!" muttered Larry in the ear of his ladylove, but Mavis only pouted. "Let's talk about ourselves, Mavis."

"Humph!" scorned Mavis.

"And so," Betty was saying earnestly—"and so I thought we six might go over to Pendleton village and then telephone over for Adelaide to come at once to the rectory, and another message to the professor, and when they get there you boys might suggest to him about the elopement."

"Ye gods!" cut in Dan Morland. "The man is my friend!"

"Well!" defied the three girls.

Dan grinned.

"All right," he hastened to say.

"He may decline, or Adelaide may," said Amy quietly.

"They may, but they won't," retorted Betty wisely.

Every one laughed, and Betty blushed.

"What else can they do when Mrs. Higginson is obdurate? She says Adelaide must look higher than an underpaid schoolteacher, so if once they are separated Adelaide's mother will see that the romance is killed dead," cried Betty.

"An underpaid schoolteacher!" repeated Dan Morland thoughtfully. "Well, Miss Higginson might do worse than marry Bob Hicks."

"Then you will all help?" asked Mavis.

They promised unreservedly.

The next day was Wednesday, and the six meddlers were very busy. Morland's big motorcar sped away toward Pendleton village early in the morning. Dan Morland was alone, and when he returned to the hotel he was immediately surrounded by his fellow conspirators.

Directly after dinner that night Betty asked Adelaide if she would drive over to Pendleton.

"Mr. Morland and Larry and Amy and I," said Betty. "Your mother will not object, I am sure."

"She is asleep now. She has suffered from neuralgia all day," said Adelaide. "I will go, Betty, dear."

"Just slip a warm coat over that pretty white frock. I'm so glad you wore it, Adelaide!" cried Betty, dancing off.

"I wonder why," murmured Adelaide as she went upstairs.

Mrs. Higginson was sleeping soundly, and Adelaide whisked a motoring cloak out of the wardrobe, twisted a white chiffon veil about her pale golden hair, and, with blue eyes shining like stars, she joined Betty and the two young men in the veranda.

Over in the corner there was a glowing point of light. Professor Hicks was smoking furiously. Perhaps he had counted on having Adelaide to himself that evening.

Near by were Mavis Oakes and her cavalier, Larry.

A half hour later came a telephone call for Larry. He returned from the booth in a very vexed frame of mind.

"I'm called over to Pendleton," he explained. "Could you take me over in your car, professor? All the hotel cars are in use."

"With pleasure!" cried Professor Hicks, tossing his cigar away. "Perhaps Miss Oakes would like to come too."

"Thanks. I should love to."

So the three drove away from the hotel, two of them trembling with excitement at the coming ordeal.

Professor Hicks, the innocent victim of their disturbance, guided the car with his usual cool precision.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked after they had entered the quiet Pendleton streets.

"The rectory," said Larry.

Professor Hicks peered at him through the darkness.

"H'm!" he coughed suspiciously, and Larry pressed Mavis' hand and whispered: "He believes we're going to be married, you and I, Mavis. You wouldn't hate the idea, would you?"

No one save Larry heard her answer, but from what followed it must have been entirely satisfactory to that love-lorn youth.

In fact, the professor had to remind them twice before they realized that the car had stopped at the rectory gate.

"Will you come inside, professor?" pleaded Larry.

In the rector's study there waited a nervous group—Betty and Amy, with a tearfully smiling Adelaide between them, while Dan Morland and Harvey talked to the puzzled looking clergyman.

Larry beckoned Morland into the hall. "Here he is, old man," Larry whispered to Dan. "Go to it!" Mavis and Larry went into the study, leaving Dan Morland alone with the professor.

Those within the room heard sounds of a dispute in the hall, murmured expostulations and then the deep rumble of Dan's persuasive voice.

The girls looked at each other in dismay.

Now that Adelaide, the dear, had consented to their plan, would it not be dreadful if the professor refused to marry Miss Higginson?

"I wish we had not meddled," whispered Betty to Mavis.

Mavis nodded and looked miserable. There was Adelaide with a sweetly tender smile on her lips, her thinness covered by the fleecy white frock, so bride-like.

And there was Professor Hicks, acting so—so—

"Balky!" It was Larry who supplied the right word.

Just then the two men came into the room, the professor smiling, Dan Morland looking baffled.

Dr. Deems came forward, surprised, with an open prayer book in his hands.

Professor Hicks exchanged a look with Adelaide and stiffened his shoulders as he stepped forward.

"I thank these young people for their kind interest in my—our affairs," he said gently, "but I cannot marry Adelaide. You will explain to them why I cannot."

"Oh—oh!" The exclamation, scarcely breathed, ran from lip to lip. Somehow the professor found a place beside Adelaide.

They all looked expectantly at the minister.

"Please tell them why I cannot ask you to marry us, Dr. Deems," repeated Professor Hicks.

Dr. Deems closed the prayer book upon his finger and smiled benignly around the group.

"Because," he said impressively—"be-

cause I married them two weeks ago!" Consternation fell upon the six meddlers.

The quiet Adelaide and her gray haired lover had eloped after all, had stolen a march upon them, had not needed their intervention.

Adelaide's tremulous voice broke the silence.

"I am so glad you all know. You were so dear to plan it for us!"

A flood of congratulations checked her speech.

The six conspirators crowded around Adelaide and her husband.

Dr. Deems was beaming upon them all and offering to go and break the news to Mrs. Higginson.

"I am sure she will listen to reason," he said as he prepared to leave.

And he never told them that it was only after he had explained to Adelaide's mother that Professor Hicks was worth half a million in his own right that Mrs. Higginson gracefully gave in and blessed her children.

As for the six meddlers, in the course of time each couple was married, and Dr. Deems always officiated at the ceremony.

A Royal Snake Slaughterer.

The "secretary bird" is one of the most precious birds in South Africa. It is royal game, and any person destroying one is liable to a fine of £50. Majestic looking birds, they stand about three feet high and generally go in pairs. They are of drab color, with black, feathery legs, and are valued for their propensity for killing snakes.

Where the secretary bird is seen there are sure to be many reptiles about.

The bird beats down its adversary first with one wing and then with the other, at the same time trampling on it with its feet until the snake is sufficiently stunned to catch it by the head with its claws. Then the bird rises far up in the air and drops its victim to the ground to be killed. By this means thousands of venomous reptiles are destroyed.—London Scraps.

Silver Sword of Hawaii.

One of the most curious plants in the world and one of the greatest interest to all botanists is the silver sword. This exceedingly rare plant, with its magnificent silver spines and handsome crest, may still be found in profusion in the upper part of Kaupo gap, the southern outlier of the vast extinct crater of Haleakala, on the island of Maui. It flowers from July to October and occurs hardly anywhere else in the world. Even stranger is the variety known as the green sword, which occurs only in Haleakala crater and is unknown to exist elsewhere.—Honolulu Star Bulletin.

Prince Henry the Navigator.

The kingdom of Portugal counted in its royal house one of the men who hold first rank in scientific attainment and practical application. He was the son of John I. of Portugal and Queen Philippa, who was an English princess. He spent his life in sending out ships on voyages of discovery, and it was through this Prince Henry, called "the Navigator," that Columbus got his idea of seeking for a new land across the sea.

Carrots.

Carrots were first introduced into England by Flemish gardeners in the time of Elizabeth, and in the reign of James I. they were still so uncommon that ladies wore bunches of them on their hats and on their sleeves instead of feathers.

Much Entertained.

Said Cholly—I have just been looking over a volume of revised statutes.

Quoth Algy—Well?

Cholly—I had no idea there were so many interesting ways of breaking the law.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

The lessons of life are lost if they do not impress us with the necessity of making ample allowances for the immature conclusions of others.

Local Market Report

Wheat per bushel	\$.85
Oats " "	.35
Barley per ton	28.00
Wheat chop per ton	32.00
Oat chop " "	30.00
Barley Chop " "	30.00
Flour per sack	1.35
Eggs per dozen	.27
Butter per pound	.40
Chickens, hens per lb	.14
" " spring " "	.14
" " roosters " "	.07
Turkeys " "	.18
Geese " "	.08
Ducks " "	.12
Beef " "	.04
Veal " "	11 1/2
Hogs, live per hundred lb.	6.01
Hogs, dressed " "	7.01
Mutton " "	6.00