

Fate and Cousin Phineas

By Leonard A. Hartman.

JULIAN'S uncle, Tobias Rowland, was a man of considerable fortune. But, as the Sunday school papers often tell us, money alone does not make happiness. Although Uncle Tobias was rated by Messieurs Bradstreet and Dun as being A No. 1, financially speaking, he was sour, cantankerous, and discontented. He never married. Instantly, married readers will, I presume, rise to declare that he should have taken unto himself a wife.

During his later years, old Tobias came to be of this opinion himself. "Every man," he declared to Julian, "ought to marry."

He had this declaration in mind when he made his will, about a year before he died. His nephew was to inherit the estate in case he married within one year of his uncle's death. In the event of the marriage not taking place, a distant cousin, Phineas Parker, would receive the legacy. In due time and according to the course of human events, Uncle Tobias died, leaving his money and his will behind.

When Julian learned of the marriage clause in the will, he was surprised, but not downcast, for he already contemplated marrying; he was sure Miss May Ivins—that was the young lady's name—would not object to the taking place of the ceremony within the year. May most emphatically did not. Julian seemed about to gain a wife and a fortune.

Cousin Phineas, the next in succession, was elated. He had not expected a son and now was, possibly, in a fair way to gain the whole estate. Cousin Phineas, being by way of profession a money lender, was neither very poor nor very honest. He resolved to trust in Fate and to wait watchfully.

In truth, Fate did seem to smile upon him. Three times the wedding day was set and as many times was it postponed. In June, the bride's mother became suddenly ill; in September, an unexpected rain washed out the railway and kept several important guests away. The wedding was put off until Thanksgiving. Two days before the chosen date, the colored maid developed a case of scarlet fever and the entire family, including the bride, was quarantined. Naturally, the wedding festivities were interrupted. The quarantine was removed on Friday, the 22nd of December. The year of grace ended at midnight of the 24th. Unless Julian were married by that hour, he would forfeit the fortune to the heir presumptive, Mr. Phineas Parker.

Accordingly, Sunday noon was decided on as the day and the hour. Julian would have preferred to have a larger margin of time but, though the wedding was to be a quiet home one, Mrs. Ivins declared she must have a day in which to prepare.

"A wedding is a solemn event. Sunday will hallow and dignify it," she said to Julian. He was forced to acquiesce.

Phineas had fully acquainted himself with all these details. Although he was apparently about to lose a fortune, he resolved to trust in Fate.

Saturday morning being dreary and chilly, few persons entered his money-lending office. It was a gloomy place, with dirty windows and dusty corners. Phineas sat before his desk. On his sallow face was a complacent expression. Frequently a hard smile creased his leathery cheeks. He was thinking of the Rowland fortune. The marriage had been postponed so many times that it really seemed as if Fate was intervening and—

Suddenly Phineas sat up straight. He reached for the desk telephone.

"Is this the Edmont apartments? I would like to speak with Julian Rowland."

Julian was a little surprised to receive a call from the money-lender and still more surprised when that worthy smoothly asked him to call at his office about 5 o'clock to receive a little wedding gift.

At four, Julian had a most important engagement; in company with May he was going to the courthouse for a marriage license. However, he felt quite benevolent and he resolved to let the chauffeur drive May home while he should go directly from the court house to visit Cousin Phineas.

Thus, Fate once more came to the aid of Cousin Phineas.

Getting a marriage license—for the first time at least—is usually considered to be a confusing situation. Julian ac-

complished the operation as successfully as most novices do. While he was consummating this annoying but necessary matter of red-tape, May waited for him in the motor car. Then followed that other inevitable forerunner of a wedding the engaging of a minister.

"Let me see the license, Julian; I will look at it while you are at the minister's," said May with a faint blush.

He handed her the document: it was in a long manila envelope with the words "Marriage License Bureau," printed in large black type across the front.

"I shall be gone only a minute," and he ran up the steps to the Rev. Mr. Newton's front door.

Dr. Newton, who was a social favorite, was engaged. It was some time, therefore, before Julian came out. May said she had not become impatient, for after she had finished reading the license an Italian with a very squeaky organ and a sadly agile monkey had taken his stand on the corner, to the great delight of thousands—so it seemed—of children.

The distance to Phineas's office was short. Here, Julian left May. Not until he was getting out of the automobile, did Julian think of the marriage license, emblem of the law's majestic power. May handed it to him and he stuck it carelessly in the outer pocket of his overcoat. The glaring letters proclaimed its contents to all the world. He did not mind; like all bridegrooms he wanted everyone to know he was going to be married.

Phineas came out of his inner office to greet Julian.

"I have a caller, but he will detain me only a few minutes. Have a chair. I'll be with you soon."

Then he retired to his office, and Julian could hear the mumble of voices. The temperature of the room in which he sat was tropic. The old-fashioned hard coal burner shone red hot, and not a window was open. Julian felt the beads of sweat on his face. He went to the window and raised it and took off his overcoat. There was no coat rack, so he threw it over the back of a chair. The long envelope stuck out conspicuously from the side pocket.

Phineas lingered yet to favor him, his overcoat pocket. He glanced at his watch. The hands pointed to 5:30. The court house closed at 5, and would not be opened till 10 o'clock Monday morning. To win the legacy, Julian must be married by midnight of Sunday. If by any chance the license should be lost, another could not be got before Monday, and—

Phineas jumped from his chair. Fate clearly pointed the way. He walked resolutely into the outer office. The overcoat still lay on the chair.

"Oh, Julian," he cried, "come back into the office. I want to show you some little trifles I bought this morning."

From a drawer in his desk Phineas took three tiny boxes. In each sparkled daintily a diamond scarf pin.

"Choose the one you like best and accept it as a wedding gift from me," he said munificently.

Julian took the boxes a little fatuously. He was astounded by such unusual generosity. At that moment the telephone bell in the other room rang. Fate was surely aiding Phineas.

"Pardon me a moment," and he left Julian to admire the gleaming pins.

It took but a second to dispose of the telephone. "I am busy, call me later," he cried in the mouthpiece; in his haste the words fairly leaped over each other. Then he swiftly tiptoed across to Julian's coat and drew out the envelope. In another instant he had placed it in the great safe, pushed the heavy door shut and set the time-lock.

Julian had chosen one of the pins when his cousin rejoined him.

"I hope you like it."

"Indeed I do; I shall always remember your kindness."

Phineas led the way back into the outer office and graciously assisted the visitor into his coat. Julian, dazzled by the brilliant gift, entirely overlooked the fact that his license was gone.

When his guest had departed, Phineas sat down at his desk, lit a cigar and chuckled. Then he laughed, long and softly. By-and-by some one came up the stairs, two steps at a time. The door was flung open and Julian dashed

in. He was panting and his face was red with running. He was very much excited.

"I have lost my marriage license," he cried. "I must have left it here. I hadn't gone a block when I missed it. It must be here."

"What does it look like?" asked Phineas slowly.

"It was on a long Manila envelope in my outside pocket," Julian explained.

Phineas threw back his head and slowly blew out a great cloud of smoke.

"Why, yes, I did see such an envelope." He paused to flick the ashes from his cigar.

"I was sure it must hold some important document, so I put it in my safe that no harm might come to it."

"Oh, then I can get it," said Julian, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"No, I'm afraid you can't. The time-lock is set for Monday morning. No power short of dynamiting the building can open that door before then," answered Phineas coolly.

The room had grown dark, but not too dark to prevent Phineas seeing Julian go white as death. He stood there silent, motionless. Finally he spoke. His voice was harsh and tired.

"That means," he said, "that I shall be penniless."

Phineas said nothing. He merely smiled. Suddenly the boy spoke, and his eyes lit up, "I don't care if I am a pauper, so long as I have May."

"It is not likely that she will care to marry you, now that you've lost your money," and Phineas laughed merrily.

"That isn't true. You know it's me she cares for—not the money," exclaimed Julian.

Phineas drummed idly with his fingers on his desk. He was becoming bored.

"Perhaps," he murmured indifferently.

Julian said no more, but turned and went out. Phineas sat in the darkness for a long time. He did not know how long; for he was absorbed in pleasant schemings. The ringing of the 'phone at his elbow brought him out of his reverie.

"Hello."

"This is Julian," came the voice on the wire.

"Humph."

"Cousin Phineas, the marriage license is not in your safe. May had it in her handbag. She put it there this afternoon while I was at the minister's, for she was afraid I would lose it. But in watching an Italian organ grinder and his monkey, she forgot all about the license and gave me the empty envelope. We should be delighted to see you at the wed—"

Phineas let the receiver drop.

"Well, I'll be—" but why go into details? Fate had tricked Cousin Phineas.

American cotton mills have been ordered to burn all cotton seed in Egyptian cotton, for fear of the pink boll weevil.

MAINTAIN SALOON, MINISTER URGES

Keep Liquor Establishments Until Substitute Is Found, Says Rev. Carl Knoll.

VICE SEGREGATION IS BEST

Rev. C. F. W. Stoever of Tacoma Speaks Before Lutheran Synod on Social Evil Conditions.

Bellingham, June 18.—Ministers of Evangelical Lutheran churches of the Pacific Synod engaged in a lively debate this afternoon in one of the sessions of the 14th annual convention of the synod now in progress here. An address on "The Relation of the Pulpit to the Evils of the Day," delivered by the Rev. D. J. Q. Westheim of Victoria, B. C., occasioned the discussion, which at times became animated.

The Victoria minister touched on the saloon question and the social evil and his views were subjected to comment by the different pastors present.

Stoever Advocates Segregation.

"The social vice evil is something we must contend with," said Rev. C. F. W. Stoever of Tacoma, who was a candidate for mayor in a recent election, "and it is by a segregated district that this evil may be best regulated." Others differed in this view, while the matter of the doing away with saloons received vigorous attention, Rev. Carl Knoll of Chehalis declaring that the saloons should be permitted to exist until something could be offered in their place.

Officers of the synod were elected at this morning's session as follows: President, Rev. M. E. Boulton, The Dalles, Oregon; secretary, Rev. Emil Meyer, San Jose, California; treasurer, Rev. F. S. Pageler, and statistician, Rev. Franklin Busaard of Bellingham.

Tonight's meeting was turned over to the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies. Mrs. J. H. Harpster and Miss Emile L. Weiskotten, missionaries from India, addressed the meeting.—The Tacoma Daily Ledger, June 19th, 1914.

(Paid Advertisement.)

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