Sylvia of the Minute

By HELEN R. MARTIN

CHAPTER I

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He did not know whether to be more amused or irritated at her temerity, not to say impudence, in keeping him waiting. He glanced at his wrist watch. Ten minutes past the time for their rendezvous and he had been here five minutes ahead of time. Waiting fifteen minutes—for a common little Pennsylvania Dutch girl! Really, she must be taught better. He would have to give her a lesson.

Hitherto it had been he who had kept her waiting here at their trysting place. Deliberately. To keep her in her place. Lest she get it into her head that he wanted to marry her! Any girl might expect anything these days—all social barriers falling, no lines drawn—

She was not, as yet, spoiled. She had never presumed to resent his keeping her waiting. Regarded him with awe. Demure little thing she was—

He considered how he should impress upon her the seriousness of the fact that she had displeased him. Go home and not be here when she did finally get here after walking three miles to meet him? No, he couldn't be quite so ruthless as that. Anyway, she would just think he had failed to keep their rendezvous and would not know he had been here and had gone away again.

Leave a note pinned to the tree? Not safe. Even if he did not sign his name. Commit yourself to writing and you're apt to have a lawsuit for damages or "heart balm" on your hands. Above all things he must avoid a scandal—just now especially—on the eve of becoming engaged—

Well, one thing was certain, she must not know he had been so eager as to have gotten here ages ahead of her and so forbearing as to have waited all this time. He'd hide and not appear until after she arrived.

Picking his way to avoid mud, he descended the hill on the slope opposite the one she would ascend.

He found himself surprised that he should be taking all this trouble for a little country girl. Unprecedented in his experience. Never, even for one of his own class, had he put himself out and he was nothing if not a stickler for "class" in these days of failing barriers. First time in his life he had ever been so lured by a girl of low breeding. A Pennsylvania Dutch farmer's daughter who talked the lingo—heavens! How on earth was it that he, usually too pernickety-nice, he admitted it, found the vulgar little thing so irresistible?

Ah, but the fact was she wasn't vulgar, really; only unsophisticated. If she were inherently vulgar, the gum-chewing type, he would not be here. No, not for all the seduction of that white throat so tantalizingly exposed when she bent back her head and laughed; and that unutterable sweetness of her lips; and the dazzling whiteness and evenness of her teeth; and that musical little gurgle when anything amused her. (And such unexpected things did amuse her, like his correcting her English and her manners.)

She puzzled him a little; had from the first; he did not "get" her exactly; something there was about her—it could not be subtlety, she was too simple. But he vaguely sensed that she was not quite so simple as she seemed; vaguely distrusted her; she did, sometimes, with an innocence that was almost suspiciously stupid, say such pointed things; things that did prick beneath the skin a little.

Youthfully priding himself upon his extreme modernism, and upon being a disciple of French decadent critics of art and life, he believed that he, in common with all the new generation who did any thinking, had rejected all religion. But the truth was that in the face of the wreckage of faiths all over the landscape, he did most tenaciously and devoutly cling to the faith of his fathers—their deeply religious faith in the respectability of the Creighton family and its divine right to special prerogatives—the prerogatives naturally inherent in owners of anthracite coal mines.

St. Croix Creighton was glad that he looked much more like a man of letters than a man of business. He cultivated that "literary" look he thought he had; and he did have a good deal to go on—clear-cut features, cold, thoughtful eyes, a rather Byronic head.

Had he not been so well placed in life as always to command consideration, he would hardly have "got by" so smoothly as he did with his little assumptions of superiority and his little affectations. But as no one of his world had ever had the temerity to consider him ridiculous, he did not know he was. To be sure, there was his elder brother, Marvin, who sometimes waxed sarcastic at his expense—but Marvin, in the judgment of his own class, was not a person to be taken seriously, for the obvious reason that he did not take himself nor his great position in the world nor yet the Creighton family itself seriously.

All this is, however, digressing—we have left our young gentleman standing uncomfortably and perilously on the muddy slope of a hill, taking in the view.

His gaze sought out in the distance the red brick farmhouse set down in the midst of Sam Schwenckton's prosperous acres—the home of the girl for whom he waited; its ugliness softened by distance. Did she, he wondered, feel its ugliness? He had tried once to rouse her to some enthusiasm over this wonderful view from the hilltop and all he had been able to elicit from her had been, "The vee-you? Yes, it's nice." A "nice" view! So of course, far from feeling the ugliness of her father's farmhouse, she was probably proud of its fresh paint and generally well-to-do aspect.

From where he stood St. Croix could plainly see, five miles to the right of the Schwenckton' farm, his own home, rising from a hilltop, overlooking a wide area: the imposing estate, "Beechlands," that for two generations had been the home of the powerful Creighton family, visible from all points of the compass for many miles. And in the valley at the foot of their hill clustered the monotonous rows of ugly little houses in which the men and children lived who worked in the Creighton coal mines, creating the wealth which maintained the mansion

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on the hilltop, and at the same time, under a wise and beneficent Providence, earning their own subsistence, however bare and joyless—such was Nature's divinely ordained plan, the Creightons had always reverently and devoutly believed, and no religious believers had ever lived up to a creed more faithfully and consistently.

Our young heir to the great Creighton estate, as he started on his way back to the appointed meeting place, decided that if Meely (that was her silly name—"Meely") were not there this time he would certainly go home.

"And," he told himself as he lit a cigarette and began his second ascent of the hill, "if I do go home without seeing her, she'll surely pay the piper!—if I don't decide to drop her altogether!"

He had an uneasy suspicion that this latter course would not hurt her nearly so much as it would fret him—though it had been she that had made the first advances in their intimacy; at a barn dance in the neighborhood of his home; outraging the rural conventions in her determination to attract his attention by boldly executing a dance solo down the length of the barn, stopping before him with a deep curtsey and holding out her lovely arms in invitation—after which he had danced with no one else during the remainder of the evening.

She had tried that evening to pin him down to a date for their next meeting, but though he had fully intended to meet her again, he had kept her in suspense; not only for that evening, but for two weeks following. Uncertainty—that was the weapon for winning and holding a girl.

He had confidently expected her to try to seek him out. But when a whole week had passed without a sign from her, he had begun to grow restless. Each succeeding day and night that he waited grew longer, intolerably longer, and he had finally realized, with an ironical amusement at his own expense, that all the "uncertainty" he had meant to inflict upon her, he himself was enduring with a poignancy that astonished and angered him. A little hussy like that, a peasant girl, play fast and loose with him, causing him sleepless nights, hungry yearnings to see her again and hold her, fresh and fragrant young beauty that she was, in his arms again, as he had ecstatically done at the barn dance!

But the trouble had been that he did not know where she lived nor even her name. So sure had he been that he would hear from her in a day or two that he had not taken the trouble to ascertain these unimportant facts about her.

It had been only when, quite beaten, he had been about to give in and try to discover her that he had received from her a funny, crude little note. What sport he had at his club showing it around for the enjoyment of his fellow club members!

"Since you are the only Gentleman Frend I got that's a purfect Gentleman in whom I feel I know well enought to ask for such a favur, dear, I am asking you, now, to keep company with me and be my Steady Date."

That was a month ago and he had been seeing her several times a week, furtively, ever since; his "ridiculous infatuation," as he scornfully called it to himself, growing more irresistible with each meeting.

As he reached the top of the hill he was greatly relieved (and thrilled) to see her sitting there under the tree which was their appointed meeting place.

At sight of him she threw away the apple she had been eating with greedy abandon, drew the back of her hand across her mouth and hastily rose.

His peculiar sort of egotism derived an almost sensual pleasure from this girl's worshipful bearing toward him, from her timid admiration of everything about him, which she so helplessly betrayed—of his modish clothes, his finely shaped white hands, his cultivated speech, even his faintly supercilious and autocratic attitude toward herself.

She came toward him, just now, shyly, rubbing her soiled right hand on her hip before offering it to him.

But he waved it off, and resisting, with a strong self-restraint, the tenderness as well as the desire to which she powerfully moved him, he looked down upon her severely as she stood before him.

"Go and sit down again."

She obeyed him like a child, her soft brown eyes fixed upon his face with a doglike anxious uncertainty that acted on his passion for dominance like a titillating stimulant.

She wore a cheap, dressy frock of blue voile trimmed with tawdry white lace, a bunch of artificial flowers on one shoulder, streamers of flimsy blue ribbon at the waist.

He frowned at the slovenly way she sat and she quickly straightened up, pulled her skirt over her knees and tried to look prim.

Spreading his handkerchief on a flat rock a few feet in front of her, he sat down, clasped his shapely hands about his knees and silently, disapprovingly, inspected her. She became uneasy, making a timid, tentative movement to come closer to him, evidently as eager as he was (though less controlled) to begin their "petting party," as she most vulgarly called it. But again he waved her on.

"Not yet," he said curtly. He always held her off in suspense like this for a little while, partly to impress her with a proper sense of her inferiority, partly to prolong the stimulating contemplation of her charms and of her subservience, so that when he did presently permit her to come to him, the nearness of her beauty would be all the more thrilling.

She relaxed against the tree, her pretty head drooping, an adorably childish pout on her red lips. "I'm sure I don't know what I done!" she said in an injured tone, on the verge of tears.

"Did. Say did."

"What I've did," she meekly repeated.

"Oh!" he sighed, "you hopeless child! Didn't they teach you any English grammar at the district school down there?"—with an inclination of his head toward the valley.

"Well, you see, till I was twelf years old a'ready, Pop he wouldn't do it to leave me go to school no more. So I ain't just so good educated that way, like you, Mr. Creighton. You're got an awful nice education—ain't you have? And," she added, drawing a deep breath, "you become your clo'es so! Ach!" She was given to lumping unrelated facts in this way.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Star-Spangled Banner" Finished in Rowboat

The last lines of "The Star-Spangled Banner" were written in a rowboat by Francis Scott Key and were not penned in the hold of a prison ship as the old school books taught.

Legendary history was that Key was a prisoner of war while watching the British bombardment of Baltimore and Fort McHenry during the war of 1812. The correct story has been brought to light by the Woman's Home Companion, which shows that Key was permitted to go to the British flagship under a truce signal to obtain the release of a friend who had been taken prisoner, and arrived just as the enemy was ready to open fire.

The young poet developed his verses during the anxiety of the night, but it was while returning to shore in a small boat the following morning that he wrote exultantly "'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner. Oh! long may it wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Got Through, All Right

Recently there visited in this city a genuine old Georgia "cracker" from the outlying piney woods section of that state. While here he attended for the first time in his life an Episcopal church service. Later he remarked to a friend:

"It was all as interestin' as a 'possum hunt. I never did know much o' what all the folks about me was a-doin', but I jest kept my wits about me an' fell an' riz with 'em every time."—Boston Globe.

The KITCHEN CABINET

There are so many things, best things, that can only come when youth is past, that it may well happen to many of us to find ourselves happier and happier to the last.—Elliot.

HERE ARE SOME COOKIES

We all like to fill the cooky jar. Here are a few to try:

Sand Cookies.—Beat two eggs until light without separating; add a cupful of sugar and continue beating. Add four tablespoonfuls of softened butter, one and three-fourths cupfuls of flour sifted with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Handle and roll with as little flour as possible. Roll very thin and cut with a doughnut cutter. Roll in a little sugar and sprinkle each cooky with a bit of cinnamon and decorate with halves of blanched almonds, using three on each cooky—points all to the center. Bake in a quick oven.

Molasses Cookies.—Put two quarts of flour into a bowl, rub into it one half cupful of butter. Dissolve one teaspoonful of soda in two tablespoonfuls of warm water; add this to a pint of molasses and then add the mixture gradually to the flour. When the flour is moist roll out quickly, cut into round cakes and bake in a moderate oven until golden brown.

Coffee Cookies.—Beat two eggs with one cupful of sugar until light. Add four tablespoonfuls of soft butter and beat again. Add one cupful of strong warm coffee and stir in quickly three cupfuls of flour with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, adding more flour as needed to roll. Roll quickly, cut with a large round cutter and bake in a quick oven until a golden brown. Roll them not too thin. They should be soft when well made.

Dominoes.—Beat the yolks of two eggs, a cupful and a half of sugar, one-fourth pound of soft butter together, until very light. Add one cupful of tepid water. Sift three cupfuls of flour with four level teaspoonfuls of baking powder, add this to the first mixture, beat thoroughly and bake in a shallow, greased pan. The batter must not be over a quarter of an inch thick. When done cool, ice and dot with melted chocolate, using a skewer or toothpick.

Loaf and Layer Cakes.

This is the season of the year when dainty cakes and cookies appeal to the appetite. It is also time to make the fruit cakes and those which will keep for months, growing better. Here are some that come highly recommended:

Six-Months Cake.—Cream one-half cupful of butter and lard, add one cupful of sugar, two well-beaten eggs and one-half cupful of molasses. Mix and sift two and one-half cupfuls of flour, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, one-half teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of cinnamon, one-fourth teaspoonful of cloves and one-fourth teaspoonful of mace. Add alternately with one-half cupful of milk to the first mixture and beat well; then add one cupful of raisins cut into small pieces and dredge with flour using two tablespoonfuls. Turn into bread pans and bake 45 minutes.

Fruit Sponge Drops.—Beat three eggs and one cupful of sugar thoroughly, add one-third of a cupful of water, one cupful of flour, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one teaspoonful of vanilla and a pinch of salt. Bake in patty tins. Scoop out the centers and fill with sweetened whipped cream, or peaches or pears cut fine, and cover with whipped cream when serving. If one likes, instead of the cream, roll the cakes in frosting and then in coconut.

Ginger Snaps.—Rub half a cupful of butter into two quarts of flour. Add two teaspoonfuls of ground ginger, a dash of red pepper and sufficient New Orleans molasses to make a hard dough. Knead the dough, roll as thin as a wafer, cut into small cakes and bake until crisp. These cookies will keep for several months if kept in tin, tightly covered.

Chocolate Layer Cake.—Take one cupful of brown sugar, one-fourth cupful of butter, one-fourth cupful of sour milk, one-half teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of vanilla, one egg, one and one-fourth cupfuls of flour, two squares of chocolate dissolved in one-half cupful of hot water added at the last. Mix as usual and bake in two layers.

Do not serve a heavy hearty dessert after a hearty dinner; follow such a meal with a light dessert of fruit or some such dish as tapioca pudding. The water in which most vegetables are cooked should be saved and used in gravies or some sort of sauce to serve with the dinner. Valuable mineral salts and vitamines which should be used to build up and fortify the body are daily poured down the kitchen sink.

Shredded cabbage dressed with sweet cream, salt and sugar to taste, then add a little cider vinegar, is another well-liked salad.

Nellie Maxwell

New Hebrides

A Patriarch of New Hebrides.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

FRANCE and Great Britain have a strange partnership in the administration of the New Hebrides islands, which lie in the Pacific ocean about a thousand miles east of Australia. For a long time the islands were not formally under the control of any European country. But both British and French commercial activities were growing, especially the latter, owing to the proximity of France's territory, New Caledonia.

Neither power could obtain the agreement of the other to the annexation of the New Hebrides, so the problem was solved at least temporarily in 1878 by the joint declaration of France and Great Britain that the territory should be neutral. This agreement did not work very well, and in 1906 a protocol was entered into stating that the islands should become "a region of joint influence" by Great Britain and France, with separate administrations for the nationals of each, and a joint administration toward the natives. People of all other nationalities must choose or "opt" whether they are to be under British or French jurisdiction.

So today the islands have a queer "scrambled" government not very satisfactory to either the French or British trading companies, the plantation owners, the missionaries, or the natives. There is a British high commissioner and a French high commissioner in the islands; separate British and French police forces; and a joint court presided over by a Briton, a Frenchman, and a third judge selected by the king of Spain.

Both languages are official, but neither is very useful in dealing with the natives. For the New Hebrides natives are still savages. They believe in witchcraft and all sorts of signs and omens, particularly in the spirits of their departed ancestors and in gods which are thought to be incorporated in certain stones or animals. Every village has its dancing ground. Here the natives meet on moonlight nights and perform wild and fantastic antics to the booming of their deep drums, some of which, six feet or more in height and carved from the trunks of trees, are capable of making terrible noises.

What the Natives Are Like.

For years the natives of the islands were the prey of the "Blackbirders," or labor pirates, because they are generally considered more industrious and sturdier of build than the average Kanaka. They are reputed to have cannibalistic tendencies, to be treacherous and of uncertain temper, facts probably due in some measure to the treatment to which they were subjected by these traders. They are Melanesian stock, below the medium in stature, and accentuate the ugliness in their broad, black faces and receding foreheads by sticking coconut fiber in their hair and adorning their ears and flat noses with rings. They pride themselves upon their weapons—spears, clubs, bows, and poisoned arrows—some of which are beautiful in design and elaborate pattern.

The women in general hold a degraded position. The wives of the more important men increase the number of the skirts which they wear at one time as an indication of their rank. The "pooh-bah's" wife wears as many as 40. The "better half" of a man is sometimes buried alive with her husband upon his death.

Quiros, the Portuguese navigator in 1606, was the first white man to see the rugged outline of the coast of the islands, which rise abruptly out of the deep sea in the hurricane zone of the tropics. Believing he had discovered the great southern continent which was at that time the dream of navigators, Quiros may be compared to Columbus, who thought he had found a route to India when he sighted the palm-fringed shores of the West Indies.

He called his discovery Australia del Espiritu Santo, which has been shortened by traders to Santo and is applied to the largest island of the group. Some of the other large mountains and partly volcanic islands are Ambrym, Annatam, Aurora, Api, Pentecost, Eromanga, Malliconllo and Tanna, the home of the "great light house of the southern isles," Tanna volcano, which bursts forth brilliantly every three or four minutes.

Santo a Fertile Island.

Countless streams cut Santo, which is 64 miles long and 32 miles wide, into broad, fertile valleys. From its shores and those of the neighboring islands tons of copra are sent to Sydney, Australia, and to New Caledonia and shipped from there to soap makers the world over. Coffee, cocoa and vanilla, as well as tropical fruits, grow in abundance. Oranges are said to grow so large that both a man's hands can scarcely span one of them, and the pineapples of the islands sometimes weigh 20 pounds. So rich is the soil and luxuriant the vegetation that in many places 5,000 sheep can be kept on 2,000 acres of land.

Vila harbor or Vila, which is set between mountain peaks and gemmed with islands, is the most important commercially among the many commodious and strategic harbors which the islands afford. The scattered little village which dozes under the shelter of its palm trees has built no pier to encourage its shipping. The cargoes must be loaded by the natives in small boats. Though the progress of conquering nations has left its mark in the Catholic and Presbyterian churches, the large wireless station and certain administrative buildings, the town is essentially native in character with its thatch-roofed houses set amid the colorful hibiscus blossoms, and sometimes fortified with stone walls.

One of the oddest customs among the New Hebrideans is the molding of their heads into a pointed, sugar loaf-like shape. The process must begin in infancy, and not all heads are so treated. But the possession of a pointed head is looked upon as a great asset among the natives. A woman with such a misshaped head can marry a chief, whereas her more naturally shaped sister must be content with a commoner for a husband.

The pointed shape is brought about by winding strong fiber cord about the heads of babies. From time to time these cords are drawn tighter. The babies so bound seem continually restless and in pain.

What the future of the islands is to be is a problem. British residents in the South seas, including the Australians and New Zealanders, are anxious to have France's governmental interest taken over by Great Britain or by one of the southern dominions acting for her. Most of the British nationals in the islands are Australians or New Zealanders. The British planters are not permitted to bring in coolie labor from India or elsewhere; but there is no such restriction on the French, who have introduced several thousand Tonkinese coolies.

Japanese Crowding In.

Then there is the problem of Japanese immigration. They have come in large numbers, and the British see growing up a parallel situation to that in New Caledonia where there are more than 6,000 Japanese, and where they have a strong hold on the business activities of the islands, including the famous nickel mines there. The Australians fear that if the New Hebrides should pass entirely under French control, they might later fall into Japanese hands.

The French themselves greatly outnumber the British, and there are perhaps ten French trading ships busy in the islands to one British. In Vila, the capital, the French population outnumbers the British eight to one.

There have been a number of conferences between France and Great Britain at which an effort has been made to place the New Hebrides under a single jurisdiction. Representatives of Australia and New Zealand proposed either that Great Britain take a mandate over the islands, that the French debt to Britain be cancelled in exchange for France's interests, or that British African territory be traded to France for the New Hebrides. But France not unnaturally proposed that the British lower their flag and leave the French in possession.