

THE AGE OF PERFECTION.

Worshippers of womanhood. No more old shibboleths repeat. (Youthful hyperbole and crude.) Their fulsome praise is now effete. But with a measured rapture greet Nor indiscriminately strive To prove all women young and sweet— The perfect age is thirty-five.

A FAIRY OMNIBUS.

I think everybody gets a touch of romance some time in his life. The green glade of olden days is probably replaced by a busy street, your armor clad knight by a city man in a frock coat and silk hat, your distressed damsel by a practical, level headed, energetic little typewriter, perhaps.

Now, I dare say you would scarcely believe that a bald headed, middle aged, stout old solicitor like me—getting every day more engrossed in business, and more and more apt to be a trifle crusty in my temper, owing to a tiresome liver—was ever sufficiently "interesting" to play the part of a modern knight errant.

Let me tell you all about it, and how it ended. It's commonplace enough, I know, and I dare say most of you have gone through something similar, but if it does nothing else it may perhaps serve to stir up pleasant memories.

I had nearly completed my articles, and was reading hard for my "final," when one morning the firm told me to go to a client who was ill and take instructions for her will.

She was an old maiden lady living in Paddington, and our people had transacted all her business for her for something like 40 years.

It was a wet day—one of those days that we get from time to time in London, when you feel as if you would like to go to bed and not get up again until things have changed.

Holborn was like a little river, and the traffic stopped and splashed along in a way that made you feel damp even to watch. I stood on the curbstone waiting for a chance to cross without being smothered with mud, when I noticed a girl standing near me. She, too, was trying to cross.

rheumatic fever than sacrifice the good opinion of a pretty girl. Things are different now—I'm a married man. But, bless your heart, you can't escape destiny by getting outside an omnibus. I hadn't been up there three minutes, the rain had only just commenced to soak through the knees of my trousers and trickle down my legs, when the conductor came up with a significant grin on his face.

"If you please, sir," he said, "there's a young lady inside wants to speak to you."

I climbed down the ladder with which buses in those days were furnished. There she sat in the corner, half smiling, half blushing. There was nobody else inside.

"Won't you get wet if you go outside?" she said. "I was afraid you might think I was a nuisance," I answered. "I guessed as much," she said frankly. "But it would be a very poor return for your kindness if I drove you into consumption."

I think that upon the whole that was the most delightful bus drive in my experience. The conversation flowed in a torrent, and I believe we exchanged as many confidences and opinions in half an hour as some people do in a lifetime. It was wonderful. It was like touching by accident the hidden spring of some secret door which opened into a new atmosphere, a new fairyland. We were more like old friends than chance acquaintances, and it seemed as if neither could tell the other too much.

Points of agreement and disagreement were noted eagerly. We had read the same books, visited the same places, and wherever we turned there was new ground of sympathy. She had only been in London a week and had not visited any place of amusement. I wondered if I could find a chance here of pushing my advantage and approached the subject with delicacy and caution.

But at this point it seemed that the mutual confidence stopped, for she declined to understand my tactics and remarked that her time was too fully occupied to get about much. Only too soon we reached the place where I had decided to alight. We shook hands warmly and thanked each other rather vaguely and nervously, and then I found myself once more on a nasty, wet London pavement.

I had had a glimpse of fairyland, but it was only a glimpse. I was back again in the practical, uncomfortable world, with a living to be earned and a will to make. The gates of fairyland were closed, for, like a donkey, I had omitted to find out the fairy's name and where she lived.

It seemed impossible to bring one's mind back to the legal subtleties of willmaking, but it had to be done, and I trudged heavily on my way to our client's house, finding, to my infinite disgust, that I had got out of the omnibus much sooner than I need have done. Imagine my surprise when, on reaching the house and being shown into the dining room, I found there the heroine of the lost shoe. That settled it. I felt that heaven had decided I was to marry that young lady, and I formed the pious intention then and there of giving heaven every possible assistance and made such a delightful hash of her aunt's will that it required some six or seven visits to put matters straight.

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