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LIBERTY AND HUMANITY

A MATTER OF PRECAUTION

By M. M. WILLIAMS

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"It's your manner, Marjorie—so distant and stand-offish. A man needs encouragement if he—well, if you expect him to get anywhere," the very new Mrs. Gordon said to her maid of honor, with the accent of supreme wisdom possible only to supreme ignorance.

Marjorie's answer was a soft chuckle. Alicia's role of experienced matron diverted her amazingly. Step-sisters, close friends notwithstanding, when Frank Gordon had come mooning after her, she had engineered the transfer of his facile affections to her housemate so deftly, so subtly, neither of the newlyweds suspected her agency. She had foreseen how it would be—Alicia with her liquid nature, taking form from what it fell into, would try to live up to the Gordon dignity, partly in loving obedience to her Frank, but more through her own aspirations.

As a first fruit, she must marry off Marjorie—she would miss her, of course—but a solitude of two was enticing. In the honeymoon year even the best-beloved terium quid crowds a dovecote, no matter how roomy.

"You are really pretty," Alicia went on patronizingly. "Prettier than I am"—this without conviction. "But then you are older—twenty-three almost—besides—" stopping there embarrassed, and looking away.

"Besides, I'm almost a pauper with a fine feeling for the fine things money buys," Marjorie supplemented, not bitterly, but with darkening eyes. "Maybe you are right. Maybe I ought to be advertising myself in the 'object matrimony' class. But, somehow, I just can't see it. Lazy as I am, work looks better to me."

"Marjorie!" Alicia exploded. "You know that's out of the question. Frank will never allow it. People will say, oh, dreadful things. We must consider our position. But you are joking—you must be. There is nothing you can do."

"I am a mighty competent cook," Marjorie said, slowly, pulling herself together after the explosion, which had hardened her nebulous consciousness of need into something imperative. Until the moment of speaking, she had never thought of her cooking as an asset. Now, by a lightning calculation, she reckoned it, plus a bond or two, a few sticks of furniture, and a right good will, as a provision, wholly adequate for independence.

The house was Alicia's—work there was impossible. Further the countryside already was suffering a plague of tea rooms, wayside inns and booths of home-made dainties, aimed at motorists beginning to be booth-shy. But somewhere there was a place for her—she must find it—the sooner the better.

Next morning Alicia read tearfully a scrawl which ran: "Don't fret, honey—gone to seek my fate—not sure yet whether it will turn out a fortune or a husband. Tell folks what you please—you can make them believe anything, you lie so deliciously. You'll hear from me through Judy—she knows everything—and won't tell. Be good to yourself and keep Frank in his place until I come back. Love and all the rest of it, from the Wicked Marjorie."

Judy knew everything, through having been the door of hope.

"Dem Warrens people ober to Pine Hill done come yere tu learn what we all doin', and wus ragarin' an' chargin' case dee couldn't git no cook ter stay wid um—not since Jincy, Judy's sister, had been wrested from their kitchen by sudden matrimony. Oh, yessum, dee paid all right—'most anything wus asked um. But de ole lady she wus cranky as a ram's horn, even befoh she fell and broke so many bones. Den de two trained nurses and dat dar ramrod-legged man, her son, even wusser. Dey wus sho'ly too much fer any plain wukin' ooman. Maybe er lady mought stand um. Miss Mahje better run 'long ober dar, light an' make begagement, 'pendin' on Judy ter send on her suitcase—and keep her mouf shet ter everybody."

Marjorie nodded—she was beyond speech. But she hugged Judy tight, and ran away trying hard to whistle. Six hours later, on the edge of sundown, she was in the Warren kitchen, saying to herself as she glanced around: "Tuesday of creation week couldn't have been a patch on this." The ramrod-legged son had fetched her to the door, waved a helpless hand at the spectacle within, then vanished murmuring he would make it worth her while to stay.

Faith my move mountains, but virgin ignorance can give it three in the game. If Marjorie had known half the week following taught her she would never have adventured into the Warren household. One nurse was a kindly incapable—so was the remnant elderly maid. But the head nurse, Miss Snickers, made up for both by abuse of the permission even head nurses have to be hateful. Small wonder when she had marked down the ramrod-legged one as her special prey and saw in Marjorie a potential rival. Especially after order came out of chaos and meals were no longer penances but full-fed delights. The tongue-tied Mr. Warren had no need to praise them orally—the smacking of his lips was sufficiently convincing. Also and further he began almost to thrive to an extent which moved Jim Leslie, his imported scientific farmer, to say, grinning at Marjorie: "If you keep this up you'll be able to get blood out of that turnip."

Casual contacts with this person, who did for himself and came into the kitchen only to bring fruit and vegetables, were Marjorie's main alleviations. She knew she was a puzzle to him—also that he found study of it fascinating. Audaciously she had no fear that he would recognize in Joy, the Warren cook, the Marjorie Joyce Millburn he had danced with casually at the senior prom five years back. Then he had been slight—now he was tanned, muscled, almost burly. Yet she fancied she would have known him without hearing his name. His manner towards her was friendly—kind yet touched with a fine respectful chivalrous reserve infinitely refreshing.

Upon a sweltering late August twilight the scent of ripe grapes enticed Marjorie to the long arbor which ran down the main garden walk. She was very tired—but happy—hadn't she a hundred dollars to show for her month's toil? Crabbed old Mme. Warren had mouthed angrily as she paid it—John was a fool—no good girl could be so heartlessly extortionate—with sickness in the house—and so little to do. John had checked her peremptorily there—later, in the hall, he had apologized almost timidly for his mother—she was so old, so ill—she would never be better—he knew, if she did not, what a godsend Joy had been to them. He had looked even more—Marjorie smiled wryly, remembering his eyes. Possibly the memory helped to send her out of doors recklessly conscious that in the arbor she risked encounter with Leslie—he had a theory that grapes should be cut while sunwarm.

"I'll let you help if you are very good," he called gayly as she came within range of his lantern light. Hanging directly overhead it hung revealing white illumination upon her lifted brow, her round throat, the small quizzical curl of her lips. Instantly he knew her—as instantly he dropped grape-shears and basket, leaped from the ladder and caught her hands, saying: "Want a prize idiot? Here he stands."

"Any proofs?" Marjorie asked saucily. "A whole month of it—I ought to have known you at the very first," he said hushedly, falling back a pace. Miss Snickers was advancing majestically upon them, leading a reluctant captive—Mr. Warren—and brandishing a letter as though it were a dagger. As she came close she thrust the letter upon Marjorie, hissing: "By special messenger—he's waiting for the answer."

"He is—judicious," Marjorie answered, taking the missive, which was addressed: Mis mArJoRy Joy-Milbun.
at Pinehill warrens.

Saying ceremoniously: "Excuse me," Marjorie broke the seal and read, "You come back HomE, uNc Dan is done Found he-self. Say ef I Dont find you quIck, he'LL Kill me. I'm in dEe Kyar down At de big Gait—you come wid de sHofEr—make him Tote you Close."

"You are going, of course?" Leslie said. He had read shamelessly over her shoulder. She nodded. Miss Snickers interposed. "Not until your bags are searched. I insist upon that—for my own protection. A person sailing under false colors is capable of almost anything. I do not propose to jeopardize my good name—"

"She is not going if I can help it," Warren almost shouted, clutching Marjorie's arm. "Stay—as my wife. I loved you the minute you came."

Miss Snickers screamed and promptly fainted. Marjorie brushed past her, saying to Mr. Warren: "Thank you—but it's no." Then ran toward the back door. Leslie reached it ahead of her, held it shut and said in a shaken voice: "Marjorie, I've loved you five years without knowing it. I know all about you. Uncle Dan's finding himself will make you an heiress. So I—I—it seems I had better tell you. I've got a million in my own right—and expectations—"

"Why tell me?" Marjorie asked primly, but with dancing eyes.

"Just as a matter of precaution—so I won't be set down as a fortune hunter," Leslie answered, possessing himself of her hand.

ALL RIGHT TO BLEACH HAIR

New York Magistrate Settles Question Which Has Long Been More or Less in Controversy.

If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out. If your hair is not the shade you dote on bleach it, color it or cut it off if you wish. Whose business is it? A mother-in-law recently accused her daughter-in-law, a handsome young blond, of bleaching her hair—using peroxide on it. A magistrate had to settle this matter; and the newspapers made much of it, and one would think from perusing what they had to say there is some law, statutory or unwritten, that makes it almost a felony to discolor the hair.

Nothing of the kind, declares the New York Telegraph. Many women bleach their hair, and it is quite all right if they wish to do so. Dark-haired girls and women and those with black hair frequently turn the color of their locks to that of a brickbat, with henna. And red-haired ladies sometimes change their color to that of yellow field corn. That is their affair and no one has a right to complain. Many folk twit those who have thus improved on nature, but they will do so no more—the magistrate has settled that.

A Good Instance.

Teacher—Can you give me an instance of the economy of nature?

Pupil—She used sheets of water to cover the beds of rivers.

WELL ON ROAD TO WEALTH

Farmer Undoubtedly Has a Great Scheme Unless Some Indignant Motorist Should "Catch On."

Straight ahead lay a long, straight stretch of road, and the man at the wheel of the car settled down in his seat. It was evident he was preparing for a sprint.

But before he was well under way an honest-eyed old farmer stepped from the roadside toward him and held out a detaining hand.

"Thowt mebber ye would be a-goin' to go full steam ahead," he remarked casually when the car slid to a standstill.

The motorist nodded in reply.

"Well, just take a look through these at that tree over the bend," went on the farmer, producing an elderly pair of field glasses, "and happen ye'll change your mind."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the motorist when the glasses disclosed a blue trousered figure perched on a branch in the tree. "I say, thanks most awfully!"

There was the sound of coin clinking on coin and then the motor went sedately down the road at about six miles an hour. And at the beginning of the clear stretch of roadway the honest-eyed farmer was counting his cash.

"The idea o' carting the old scarecrow from the orchard and perching it in that 'ere tree works out pretty well!" he chuckled as he heard another car approaching.—London Tit-Bits.

MUSIC IN COST OF LIVING

Inhabitants of Densely Populated Flats in New York City Begin to Take Alarm.

Opening windows on the first warm days of the year bring a warning that this will probably be the most musical season New York has ever seen, says the Evening Star of that city. The apartment-house court has always been cosmopolitan in its musical tastes and prone to prodigality in its volume of more or less musical sounds in summer, and this time it appears that not only are all the young men home from the army but that the high cost of everything has also made the apartments more densely inhabited and more continuously so than ever before.

The magnets are lacking that once drew folk away from home in the evening. Beer is negligible as a corner attraction. The movies are more expensive and more tiresome. Soda bears a war tax paid by the dispenser and also charged to the consumer. Home has become a rather forced haven for all and music is being overworked in an attempt to relieve its tedium.

This season we have with us, apparently, not only the phonograph and the player piano—those resources of the musical and unmusical alike—but there is also an apparent return of the child who practices on the piano.

Illuminated Traffic Cop.

With a view to solving the difficulties that beset motorists and traffic officers on Boston streets after nightfall the officers of the First motor corps are conducting experiments throughout the city to make a traffic handler visible to drivers as well as to pedestrians.

An experiment demonstrated that with the help of three light bulbs, which burn continuously, white bands crossed on his breast and long white gauntlets, a traffic officer can be seen by motorists even at the busiest and darkest of corners.

One of the lights is placed on the traffic guard's hat and the other two on his shoulders. They are fed by batteries in the pocket of his overcoat. Both red and white lights have been tried. So far the red lights seem to be more satisfactory.—Boston Globe.

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BIG GUNS MUST BE MOBILE

Otherwise in Future Wars They Will Be Quickly Wiped Out if "Spotted" From Above.

While the war was in progress new military inventions and improvements were for obvious reasons kept secret in America. Now, however, they are beginning to leak out.

For example, there is a new 14-inch gun, which is called "pride of the army." All big guns in future will be made mobile (on rails or drawn by gasoline tractors), because otherwise they would invite their own destruction. With the help of "spotting" airplanes they might be quickly wiped out.

The guns which now defend American seacoast forts are stationary, and the big ones of no larger caliber than 12 inches. They are to be replaced by 14-inch rifles on mobile mounts, and it is manifest the plans of the fortifications will have to be altered.

Newest American battleships carry 14-inch guns, which have been deemed the most effective weapons of their type in the world. Some of them did duty on land in France toward the end of the war. But this new rifle (a product of army ordnance experts' best ingenuity) is superior in several respects. It will throw a shell 35 miles.

Poor Packing Causes Waste.

Few persons considering the cost of living realize that more than $700,000,000 is added to the cost of their food, clothing and other necessities each year because of the waste caused by damage, unscientific loading and the tremendous cost of packing these commodities. The railroads and the shippers realize it, as shown by their conducting a campaign to reduce to the minimum the waste through damage, and to utilize to the utmost the capacity of freight cars, which are hauled half empty.

These are some of the items which enter into this waste estimate—damage and theft, $100,000,000; wasted lumber used only once in packing cases, $240,000,000; empty car space, $209,000,000; and the staggering cost to the railroads of hauling half empty cars more than 6,000,000,000 miles, $157,000,000. It is estimated that from 10 to 25 per cent of the cost of foodstuffs goes to pay for the crates which are thrown away.

Big Railroader's Hobby.

Carl R. Gray, the new president of the Union Pacific system, has one hobby—that is his family in which he takes the greatest interest and pride. "When his two boys, who are now at college, were attending preparatory school at Baltimore," says J. G. Donley, Jr., in Forbes' Magazine, "he never missed a baseball or football game in which the school team participated unless he was away from home. And he knew every boy on the teams by his first name. One of his greatest delights was to get out on the baseball field on a summer evening and 'bat flies' to his boys. When not on the road or in his office, he spends all of his time with his family."

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