ARRIET and the PIPER

by Kathleen Norris



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Harriet Field, twenty-eight years old and beautiful, is the social secretary of the flirtatious Mrs. Isabelle Carter, at "Crownlands," Richard Carter's home, and governess of 17-year-old Nina Carter. Ward, twenty-four years old and impressionable, fancies himself in love with his mother's attractive secretary. Mrs. Carter's latest "affair" is with young Anthony Pope, and the youth is taking it very seriously.

CHAPTER II.—Presiding over the tea-cups this summer afternoon, Harriet is profoundly disturbed by the arrival of a visitor, Royal Blondin. Next day, at a tea party in the city, Blondin makes himself agreeable to Nina, and leaves a deep impression on the unsophisticated girl.

CHAPTER III. — Harriet's agitation over the appearance of Blondin at "Crownlands" is explained by the fact that he had been a disturbing element in her life ten years before, and she fears him. The man is an avowed adventurer, living on the gullibility of the idle rich. He frankly announces to Harriet his intention of marrying Nina, who, as the daughter of the wealthy Richard Carter, is a highly desirable "catch," and urges her to aid him. She is in a sense in his power, and after pleading with him to abandon his scheme agrees to follow a policy of neutrality.

CHAPTER IV.—Harriet visits her married sister, Linda Davenport, with whom she had had her home during her unfortunate acquaintance with Blondin, and tells her of his reappearance. The two women, realizing the unscrupulous nature of the man, view the future with apprehension.

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Harriet slept in the room with Julia and Josephine that night, or rather tossed and lay wakeful there. At about two o'clock the wind streamed mercifully in, hot and thick, but prophetic of rain, and Harriet, wandering about to make windows fast, encountered Linda, on the same errand. When the worst of the crackling and flashing was over, the girl glanced at her watch. Three o'clock, but she could sleep now. She sank deeply into dreams, not to stir until Linda's alarm clock, hastily smothered, thrilled at seven, and the small girls rose with cheerful noise, to let dreams of hot sunshine upon her face. Immediately after breakfast the small girls attacked their Saturday morning's work with a philosophic air that rather touched their aunt. Pip had hurried away after his hasty meal, the boys were turned out into the backyard, which Pip was expected to paint while he watched his small brothers. Harriet's heart ached deeply for Linda as she watched the Jersey marshes from the car window a few hours later. Josephine was to be a stenographer when she finished high school, and little Julia had expressed an angelic ambition to teach a kindergarten class some day. Nina, at their ages, had her pony, her finishing school, her little silk stockings, and her monogrammed ivory toilet set, her trip to England and France and Italy with her mother and brother and grandmother.

Suppose that she, Harriet, was right in suspecting that Ward's feeling was more than the passing gallantry of a light-hearted boy? It would be a nine-days' wonder, his marriage at twenty-two with his mother's secretary, more than four years his senior. But after that? After that there would be nothing to say or do. Young Mr. and Mrs. Ward Carter would establish themselves comfortably, and the elder Carters would visit them; Isabelle absorbed as usual in her own mysterious thoughts, and Richard Carter—

Harriet's thoughts, none too comfortable up to this point, stopped here, and she flushed. She would not enjoy telling Richard that she was to marry his son. Those keen eyes would read her through and through, and while her father-in-law [illegible] her, and all [illegible] and a [illegible] should serious[ly] [illegible] business, wha[t] [illegible] might be, and show himself a worthy son of his clever father.

"Why not—why not?" Harriet asked herself, as she reached Madame Carter's pretentious apartment house, and was whisked upstairs. She was to meet Nina here, and she glanced about for the big limousine at the curb, as an indication that the old lady might be ready to accompany them back to Crownlands. But there was no car in sight. The maid's first statement was that Miss Carter had gone home with her brother, and then Madame Carter came magnificently into the room.

"Well, our bird has flown!" said the old lady. Harriet could see that she was pleased about something.

"Gone home with Ward?" Harriet asked. Madame Carter never shook hands with her; there was conscious superiority in the little omission. She sank into a chair, and Harriet sat down.

"Ward and his friend, this Mr. Blondin," Madame Carter said. "A very interesting—a most unusual man. A very good family, too—excellent old family. Yes. Nina assured us that she had to wait and go home with her daddy, but that—" Madame Carter [illegible] a deep significant smile gave Harriet [illegible] to please —"but that didn't [illegible] somebody very much!" she added. "So I told Nina I thought Granny would be able to make it all right with Daddy, and off the young people went."

She [illegible] with a benignly triumphant expression, and a complacent rustle of silken skirts. Harriet, beneath an automatic smile, hid a troubled heart. Royal was losing no time. Ward his innocent instrument, and this fatuous old lady of course playing his game for him!

Harriet saw that she was pleased and flattered by an older man's apparent admiration of Nina; and that she would further the girl's first definite affair in every way that lay in her power. It was maddening; it was exasperating beyond words. An honest warning would have merely flattered her with its implication of her importance; ah, no, Isabelle and Harriet might try to hold the child back—but Granny knew girl nature better than either of them!

"Well, then, I must follow them home," Harriet said, pleasantly. "You don't come back tonight?"

To this Madame Carter very pointedly made no answer; her plans were not Miss Field's business.

"The child is growing up!" the old lady said, smiling at some thought. "Well, we must look for love affairs now!"

Harriet felt that there was small profit in following this line of conversation. She glanced at her twisted wrist.

"I think I will make that two o'clock train, Madame Carter, unless there is



"A Very Interesting—A Most Unusual Man—A Very Good Family, Too—Excellent Old Family."

some errand I might do for you?" she said respectfully.

This courtesy, from a beautiful young woman to an old one, always antagonized Madame Carter. Harriet knew that she was casting about for some honeyed and venomous farewell, when the muffled thrill of the bell came to them, and the footsteps of Ella were heard. Immediately afterward Richard Carter came quickly in.

He met Harriet at the door.

"How are you, Miss Field? Tell Nina to hurry; I've got about five minutes!" he said, pleasantly.

"Don't keep Miss Field; she is making her train!" said his mother, coming forward under full sail, and laying both hands about his. "I'll explain about Nina."

Richard Carter gave his mother the peculiarly warm smile that was especially her own.

"Went on with Ward, eh?" he said, in his hearty voice. "That's all right, then. Oh, Miss Field!" he called, after Harriet's discreetly retreating back, "the car's downstairs. Wait for me [illegible] I'll run you home in half the [illegible] he train takes. I'm playing in [illegible] finals, Mother—"

[illegible] turning for just a nod and [illegible]d no more. But as she entered the lift, the girl said to herself, with a passionate sort of gratitude: "Oh, I like you! You're the only genuine and unselfish and kind-hearted one in the whole crowd!"

She went down to the street, and saw the small car waiting. He was driving himself today. With a great sense of comfort and relaxation Harriet got into it, and was comfortably established, and tucked in snugly, when Richard came down. He smiled at seeing her, got into his own seat; the machine slipped smoothly into motion, the hot and sordid streets began to glide by.

"Ever think how illuminating it would be, Miss Field, if we kept a list of the things that are worrying us sick, and read 'em over a few weeks later?"

"I suppose so!" the girl said, a little surprised, and yet with fervor. "We'd have a fresh bunch then, and be worrying away just as hard!"

The spontaneous response in her tone made Richard Carter laugh.

Harriet was content to enjoy this restful interval between the hurry and crowding of Linda's house and the currents and cross-currents that she must encounter at Crownlands. She watched the green country go by, the trees silent and heavy with their rich foliage, the villages blazing with the last June roses.

They flew by the great gates of the country club, and turned in past Crownlands lodge, and Harriet got out at the steps, and turned her happy, flushed face toward the man to thank him. Whatever she saw in his face as he smiled and nodded at her pleased her, for she went upstairs saying again to herself, "Oh, you're real—you're honest—I like you!"

It was delightful to get back into the familiar atmosphere, to catch the fragrance of flowers in the orderly gloom downstairs, to take off her hat and her hot, dusty clothing, and have a leisurely hot bath; to put on fresh and fragrant summer wear, and to go downstairs presently, rejoicing in being young and comfortable, and tremendously interested in life. The significance of Richard Carter's parting look, its honest admiration and friendliness, augmented by her own glance at a chance mirror on her way upstairs, stayed with her pleasantly.

At one end of the terrace there was an awning whose shade fell upon the brick flooring and the jars of bloom; and this afternoon it also shaded Isabelle, in a basket chair, and the big hound, and Tony Pope. Harriet cast them a passing glance, and wondered a little in her heart. The boy was handsome, and fascinating, and rich, but it was just a little unusual to have Isabelle so openly interested in any one.

Undefined and vague, this was still somewhere in the background of her thoughts as she returned to Crownlands, and when she met Ward Carter, wrestling with the engine of his own rather disreputable racing car, out in one of the clean, graveled spaces near the garage.

Harriet felt a little quickening of her pulses as she saw him. There was no mistaking the pleasure in his eyes as she came close.

"Spark plugs?" she asked, with the sympathy of one to whom the peculiarities of the car were familiar.

"She's fixed now; I've just cleaned 'em," Ward announced, flinging away his cigarette and straightening his back. "She'll go like a bird, now. Say, get in and try her, will you?" he asked, eagerly. "Come on—come on, be a sport!" But perhaps he was as much surprised as delighted when she very simply stepped into the low front seat. He gave her more than one sidewise glance as they went dipping smoothly up and down the green lanes, and said to himself, "Gosh—when she crinkles those blue eyes of hers, and her mouth sort of twitches as if she wanted to laugh, she is a beauty—that's what she is!"

About a week later they met for a few moments in this very side garden. It was early evening, and twilight and moonlight were mingled over the silent roses, and the trimmed turf, and the low brick walls.

They came straight toward each other, and stood very close together, and he took both of Harriet's hands.

"Now, what is it—what is it?" the man said, quickly. "I've been waiting long enough. I can't stand it any longer! I can't go away tomorrow, perhaps for two weeks, and not know!"

"Ward," the girl faltered, lifting an exquisite face that wore, even in the faint moonshine, a troubled and intense expression, "can't we let it all wait until you get back?"

"Why, Harriet," and his arm went about her shoulders, and he bent his face over hers, "Harriet, why not let me go happy?" he pleaded.

"You'll see a dozen younger girls at the Bellamys' camp," Harriet reasoned, "girls with whom it would be infinitely more suitable—"

"Please!" he interrupted, patiently. And almost touching her warm, smooth cheek with his own, and coming so close that to raise her beautiful eyes was to find his only a few inches away, he added, fervently, "You love me and I love you—isn't that all that matters?"

Did she love him? Harriet hoped, when she reviewed it all in the restless, tossing hours of the night, that she had thought, in that moment, that she did. It was wonderful to feel that strong, eager arm about her, there was a sweet and heady intoxication in his passion, even if it did not awaken an answering passion in return. Under all her reasoning and counter-reasoning in the night there crept the knowledge that she had known that this was coming, had known that only a few days of encouraging friendliness, only a few appealing glances from uplifted blue eyes, and a few casual touches of a smooth brown hand must bring this hour upon her. And back of this hour, and of a man's joy in winning the woman he loved, she had seen the hazy future of prosperity and beauty and ease, the gowns and cars and homes, the position of young Mrs. Ward Carter.

She had let him turn her face up, in the strengthening moonlight, and kiss her hungrily upon the lips, and she had sent him in to his dinner half-wild with the joy of knowing himself beloved. Harriet had gone in, too, shaken and half-frightened, and with his last whispered prophecy ringing in her ears:

"Wait a year—not! I'll go to the Bellamys', because I promised to, but the day I come back, and that's two weeks from today, we'll tell everyone, and this time next year you will have been my wife for six months!"

(To be continued.)

STILL POND

Miss Hilda Jewell spent last week-end with her aunt in Chestertown.

The Epworth League at their business and social meeting on last Friday evening decided to have an entertainment in the near future.

The devotional service of the Epworth League will be led to-morrow evening by Mrs. Clarence Ford.

Mrs. Harper's Sunday School Class will hold a supper at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Dill on Wednesday evening, Jan. 25. Come help a good cause.

The Friendship Rebekah Lodge meets on next Thursday evening. Come out and support the new officers.

The school children have been enjoying the skating this week.

—Twelve large white perch were picked up in the back yard of Mr. Charles S. Evans, of Wicomico [illegible] following a violent storm last [illegible] The high tide inundated his yard [illegible] when it receded these fish were [illegible] it is stated.

WASHINGTON COLLEGE

On Thursday, Jan. 13, the Adelphia Literary Society had a very interesting meeting. M. Z. Levy gave an impromptu talk on the cheering song. E. A. Goodrich delivered an impromptu talk on the debaters of the college. Prof. Johns gave a very interesting and educational talk. His speech dwelt on the meaning of the word, "Adelphia." Its literal meaning, as he explained, is "brotherhood." But it had a wider meaning, that of co-operation. Then he proceeded to explain how numerous great things had been accomplished by co-operation in the past and how we may accomplish numerous more things for ourselves and the college by the same method. The "Moonbeam" was read by Mr. C. Wingate. Mr. Purnell, the critic, in commenting on the meeting, commended every one on his good work, but mentioned especially the "Moonbeam," which he said was better than the usual.

Two sections of Prof. Woodman's class were again engaged in a debate on Thursday, Jan. 12, at 7.30 p. m. The subject was "Resolved, That Motion Picture Theatres Are An Asset to a Community." The affirmative was represented by Messrs. Wingate, Byron and Lewis. The negative side of the debate was presented by Messrs. Jarman, Langham and Levy. The judges were Dr. S. Hall, Mr. W. D. R. Straughn and Mr. K. Sunagawa. The decision was given in favor of the affirmative. To the credit of the students of Washington College it may be said that a good percentage of them turned out to hear the debate.

The Mt. Vernon Literary Society held an election of officers on Wednesday, Jan. 18. Mr. Howse, who has been confined in a hospital with a broken ankle, and who is expected to return very soon, was elected president. Mr. Langham was elected V. P.; Miss Helen Jones, Rec. Sec.; Miss Helen B. Rasin, Cor. Sec.; Mr. Ruark, Treas.; Miss R. Brown, Sergeant-at-Arms; Miss Hickman, Historian, and Mr. Smoot, Critic.

MILLINGTON

Mr. Price Vansant, of Wilmington, spent last Wednesday with his mother, Mrs. Mary A. Vansant, who is quite sick at her home on West Cypress St.

Rev. Rowlenson, pastor of the M.E. Church at Crumpton, preached quite an interesting sermon at Asbury M.E. Church on Friday evening of last week to a large and attentive congregation. Rev. Bolton, of Clayton, Del., also preached a most helpful and impressive sermon last Sunday evening and ably assisted Rev. O. H. Connelly in his great revival services, which he is now holding. He was also assisted by Rev. C. E. Kirby, of Trinity M. E. Church, South. This is the third week of these services and at least 45 persons have confessed Christ at this writing. May there be many others follow in their steps before these meetings are closed.

The Mothers' Jewels of Asbury M. E. Church meets every Wednesday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Henry A. Minner.

Miss Susie R. Jones, Mr. J. Burgess Anderson and Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Jones motored to Philadelphia last Tuesday, where they attended the automobile show held there.

Miss Edna Brinsfield, of Baltimore, was the guest this week of her sister, Mrs. Robert M. Logan.

The Ladies' Card Club was entertained by Miss Clara H. Bryan at her home on West Cypress St. on Friday evening of last week.

Mr. Warner Porter, who has been quite sick the past two weeks with pneumonia, is improving nicely, we are glad to state.

Mrs. J. E. Hurlock, who has been quite sick the past ten days with pleurisy, is improving. Miss Lillian Pratt is also on the sick list.

Mrs. S. S. Comegys and daughter, Mrs. Eva C. Sykes, gave a delightful card party at their home on W. Cypress St., on Thursday evening of last week. High scores were won by Mrs. Isaac Gibbs, Jr., of Massey, and Dr. C. H. Metcalfe, of Sudlersville. Those present were: Mr. and Mrs. Austin Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gillespie, Mr. and Mrs. John Stokes, Dr. and Mrs. C. H. Metcalfe, Misses Ella Roberts and Emma Gilles and Messrs. Scott Roberts and Medford Roe, of Sudlersville, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Gibbs, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Massey and Mrs. L. C. Clark, of Massey; Mrs. R. E. Feddeman, Mrs. Elizabeth Collins, Mrs. J. E. Spear, Dr. and Mrs. Merritt Brice, Mr and Mrs. Paul Comegys and Misses Clara H. Bryan, Anne Radnor and Florence Comegys.

Mrs. J. P. Ahern visited her daughter, Mrs. Francis E. Fitch, of Chestertown, last week.

Mrs. S. S. Comegys and Mrs. Eva C. Sykes returned home on Monday of last week after spending a few days with the latter's sister, Mrs. L. C. Clark, of Massey.

Mrs. Alice Hurtt, of Wilmington, was the guest this week of Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Hurtt.

Kissed Girls 2106 Times—Princeton freshmen, answering a questionnaire, voted two to one in favor of the modern girl. In fact, they record 2106 kisses bestowed by the yearlings upon the modern girl. The few that objected based their objections on the [illegible] that the modern girl is too much [illegible]ted in: Violations of the Volstead Act, over-painting, smoking and insincerity. The freshmen voted the most valuable thing obtainable at the institution was the varsity [illegible]

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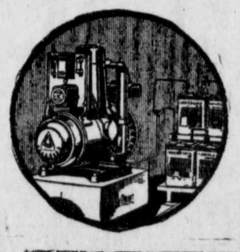
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