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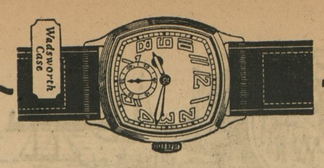

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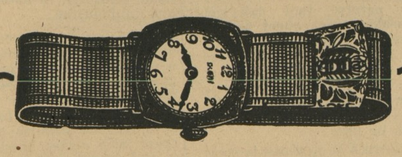

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The O. M. C. Bridge Club

By JANE OSBORN

(Copyright.)

TED CARSON, sitting at his desk in the city, talked to Howard Fern over his telephone.

"Can you come out and play bridge with us tomorrow? It's our O. M. C. Bridge club and one of the couples can't come. You don't know any of them—but they're perfectly harmless. Yes, bring your tuck—and, say, you don't mind passing as a married man, do you? I'll tell you on the way out. And you can meet your wife at dinner. Madge wasn't sure who she'd get—it has to be some one the crowd don't know."

At about the same time Madge Carson called up Alice Gordon, an old friend who lived in the city. "My dear, I hope you won't think I'm dreadfully rude, but I'm asking you to fill in at bridge tomorrow night. It's our turn to entertain the O. M. C. and Clara and Bill have gone South. You see O. M. C. stands for 'Old married crowd'"—though, of course, we aren't exactly old. Well, anyway, we made some fool rules and one of them was that we'd never have anyone belong who wasn't married—and no member is allowed to invite an unmarried stop gap. But really Ted said he'd get some friend of his and I said you could pretend you were married."

So it was arranged, and it was not until Howard Fern came downstairs with Ted for dinner after a hasty change from their business clothes that he knew that the girl whose husband he had been asked to impersonate was Alice Gordon whom he had met five or six times that winter in the city, and in all probability they would meet again occasionally. That was what made the situation a little more embarrassing. But it was agreed that they were to play the role of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Norcott.

After the cards were over the various members took places round the tables drawn together for the supper to follow, and sat while Ted and Madge Carson brought on the refreshments. Some one brought up the subject of proposals and Madge announced that she didn't think that Ted ever did propose to her.

"I certainly did propose," Ted answered. "We were at a Sunday school picnic and I'd been drinking pink lemonade, and we stayed behind the others in the grove—I can remember the mosquitoes. One stung me on the nose when I kissed you."

So that started it. It was moved, seconded and carried that everyone confess how he or she became engaged.

"Don't have the girls in on this," objected Madge. "Because they'd tell different stories and then we'd find out what liars our husbands really are. We'll just listen while you do the romancing. Gerald, it's your turn." So Gerald told briefly of his own proposal, and then came time for Howard—Mr. Bob Norcott.

"You'd better let Bob Norcott out of this," suggested Madge, a little nervously, but half a dozen of the men protested. Howard was in for it, and Madge and Alice waited with some concern. Howard showed no signs of disconcertedness.

"Isn't much to tell," he said smiling assuringly to Alice. "The only really remarkable thing about it was that she was willing to have me. You see I'd met her a few times and she—well, you know how a girl can treat a man without being at all rude. Snippity—I call it. I knew I wanted her and I sat up nights trying to think of a way to get acquainted. Then one night we went to fill in at a card party—much like the party tonight—and I knew right then that I'd got to ask her, and though we had both been asked to spend the night I asked our hostess if I could see her home. I thought maybe I'd get my courage up on the way. It was on the train going in to town that it happened. I never had an idea that she'd have me—" Howard looked up and across at Alice with a straight, eager look that made her blush. But somehow she rose to the occasion.

"You're as bad as the rest," she told him. "I was crazy about you from the first. I think it was I who suggested going home together and I'm sure I did the actual proposing."

Madge gasped her amazement, but no one noticed it, and the confessions went on. Then they finished supper and there was the usual leave taking and Howard and Alice were alone with their host and hostess. Howard said he thought really he ought to get back that night—and as he was going perhaps he could take Miss Gordon. So they started and on their way to the station a few minutes walk away they said scarcely a word.

"You are a very good actor," Alice said at last. "I don't see how you carried it off so well."

"I'm not an actor at all," said Howard without smiling. "You know what I meant. It was pretty hard, though, having to sit there and listen to you, knowing all the time that you were laughing at me."

Alice looked away from Howard toward the dark window. "Perhaps I meant what I said, too," she said.

"Then you really could think of me—you would marry me?" asked Howard.

Alice turned and looked at him. "Of course I meant it," she said and then she laughed. "Didn't I say I had to do the proposing—and now I think I really have."

Cheap at Any Price

Lawyers are necessary. It is cheaper to pay for the advice of a smart man than it is to accept free counsel from some one who doesn't know.

Monarch of Gems

Fred Wells, manager of Premier Mine No. 2, near Pretoria, South Africa, one day in January, 1905, while on a stroll of inspection, found what is known as the Cullinan diamond. It weighed 3,042 carats—1¼ pounds avoirdupois.

Raven Not Altogether Deserving of Bad Name

Two ravens, one which has taken our continental name, American, and the other which has taken the more specific geographic name of the northern raven, are both interesting, croaky and not altogether unbeautiful, for in certain lights their plumage is lustrous.

The American raven is smaller than its more northern cousin. It is a resident of the far western United States. It is a mountain dweller, although it disdains not to descend to the valleys if man is absent therefrom. The raven does not like man and the reason is not far to seek. Man does not like the raven, holding it with the crow its cousin once or twice removed, as being a bird that is better dead.

The diet of the American raven, according to Florence Merriam Bailey, who knows the western bird well, consists "principally of carrion, dead fish and frogs, varied with rodents, mussels, grasshoppers, large black crickets and worms." This collection of food is not altogether a delectable one from the human appetite standpoint, but the raven deserves well of man for making its diet what it is.

Old Scriptural Names Seem to Have Passed

A writer calls attention to the interesting names found in certain sections, such as the village home of his childhood days where the names were almost entirely scriptural, so there were Matthew, Mark, etc., Rhoda, Sarah, Joseph, Benjamin, etc. The three sons of our blacksmith were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the latter being shortened to Bendy. These passed, and their place was taken by family names—Charles, William, Henry, etc. The Twentieth century brought a hideous change in the direction of "gentility!" with such horrors as Gladys, Doris, Daphne, Sydney, Herbert ("Bert" or "Erb"). He says: "I have known a girl with the beautiful name of Irene often summoned hilariously as 'Come on, young Rene,' while a child by the name of Audrey was surprised when I told her that her name was a variant of Etheldreda.—London Mail.

High University Honor

When LL. D. is conferred upon a man it indicates that he has a profound knowledge of the laws of his profession, or that department of knowledge in which he is working. LL. D. is the oldest, highest and most valuable university degree and is conferred only on such as have made themselves very eminent by their skill, learning and original work. It is seldom conferred before the recipient is fifty years of age. LL. D. is usually conferred as an honorary degree, but Shurtleff, Chicago, and McGill propose to confer it upon the completion of required work and examinations in any of the higher departments of knowledge. LL. D. is sometimes conferred as a third degree in line with LL. B. and LL. M. with work in law schools.

Treating the Thermometer

In a certain village the squire gave a thermometer to every cottager, and carefully explained its use.

Soon after their arrival a district visitor entered one house, where a new thermometer hung in the middle of the room. The visitor complimented the owner, and inquired if she remembered the instructions.

"Ay, that I do," was the reply. "I 'angs 'un there, and I watches 'un until he gets above 60."

"Quite right, Mrs. Brown," said the visitor. "And what do you do when it goes above 60?"

"Why, I takes 'un down and puts 'un out in the garden and cools 'un down a bit!"—Weekly Scotsman.

Feet Shod With Hobnails

The skin on the foot of a native Binghi in Australia is the thickest found on any human being, according to "Jim Crow," writing to the Sydney Bulletin.

"One day an old Binghi came to me complaining he had sore feet, and I saw that their soles were badly cracked. As a poor joke I handed him a bag containing a dozen hobnails, and told him how they were used. He sat down, stuck them into his feet and marched off. Three weeks later I asked him how his feet were. He proudly exhibited them—the hobnails were still in the flesh."

Dresses on Exhibition

The dresses worn by wives of Presidents at inaugurals from Martha Washington to and including both Mrs. Wilsons, are preserved on exhibit at Smithsonian institution, Washington. The women say the gown of Dolly Madison is the prettiest, the most artistic, made of heavily brocaded white silk, embroidered in bouquets of flowers in natural colors, sweeping floor length, tiny waist, puffed sleeves, richly simple, it surpasses all the others. Anyway that is what a Kansas woman tells Ewing Herbert, says Capper's Weekly.

Legendary Spanish Hero

Bernardo del Carpio was a celebrated semi-mythical Spanish hero of the Ninth century, who signalized himself by his deeds of daring in the wars against the Moors. He is a favorite hero in the old Spanish ballads and romances, and his exploits form the subject of several dramas by Lope de Vega. According to tradition, he defeated the famous Roland at Roncesvalles. Finding him invulnerable, Bernardo lifted him in his arms and squeezed him to death, as Hercules did the giant Antaeus.—Exchange.

Good Old Days

The old-fashioned hotel had its faults, but the manager was just a human being who accepted you as an equal.

Uncle Eben

"Dancin' is called de poetry of motion," said Uncle Eben, "but when I looks across de floor I don't see many of what dey 'ludes to as 'poetic feet.'"—Washington Star.

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