

A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE.

BY LILLIAN BETTS.

The street was crowded as usual. The new civic gospel had resulted in covering the street with asphalt. This enlarged the play space for the children. The element of danger in dodging the rapidly moving trucks, carts and bicycles made life, even to the toddlers, more enjoyable. To run in front of a truck, just escaping the horses, so near that the truckman turned white with fright and then red with anger, while he launched a torrent of profanity on the jeering mite of humanity on the curb, was bliss for the mite. To spurt across the street on two fat, wobbly legs, whose extremities are covered with shoes of different sizes, destitute of buttons, in front of a bicyclist scorching on a clear space, and compel him to fall off his bicycle to avoid a calamity, this is joy unspeakable. If the man is so angry as to be speechless, and finds relief in worldless threats, delivered with fists, while the precious wheel is being examined, so much more pleasure for the owner of the fat, wobbly legs. All this is fine, if unconscious, training, for the days to come, when dodging the policeman will be one of the many delightful pleasures of life.

Could any ball-room floor surpass this smooth surface when the genial organ grinder pursues his more or less musical way between the rows of tall tenements? The baby on the third-floor front flattens his little snub nose against the pane on which he dries his tears, as his mouth broadens in a smile at the sight of the dancing group on the street below. There is a promise of the future in this gay scene from which size alone excludes him.

The old grandfather on the floor above, standing with the youngest of seven grandchildren in his arms, is moved to tears and smiles. Tears for days, long ago when he and Gretchen were the leaders in the merrymaking in the village, seen more clearly as the idle hours increase and the outer scenes fade. Smiles, for these is little Gretchen, with the same flaxen pigtailed bobbing and swinging as she tries to teach a dark-haired Rebecca the "two-step." "So like," murmurs the old man, and the tears and smile deepen.

On the next block the push carts hold control. The women push, crowd, argue and gossip, condole and congratulate, as do other women of another life—surpassing them in that the women of the push-cart region do all this in two or three languages.

Men and women with bundles of finished and unfinished coats hurry along with unseeing eyes. Minutes are pennies, and pennies their only known measure of values. Here and there a gay, rollicking laugh out-voices the babel of tongues, proving that the spirit of childhood still remains in spite of poverty and hard work, or worse, no work. The danger of bankruptcy never faces the man who sells all his stock each day at a profit that pays his rent and buys black bread and coffee. The sharp sting of defeated ambition never enters the heart of the woman whose social set uses the same assembly-room—the street. She has the benefit of her neighbor's experience in every transaction. It is given freely as she examines the remnant which by scrimping will make a skirt. The waist that must be worn with it is bright blue, the remnant is purple, but the fortunate buyer, and the experienced, sympathetic friend who has not had a new skirt in five years, cannot bring such isolated facts together, not even when they cover the stately form of Rebecca's mother.

Without theories or laws, without leaders or followers, the great community life, whose capital is common experience and common limitations, develops. No sociological microscope makes these community members self-conscious. Life is lived in careless ease and stoical endurance.

When the streets are still more crowded because school is out and more women and children are at liberty, a young man and girl turned out of a side street and joined the throng on this East Side thoroughfare.

A worn sailor hat trimmed with soiled ribbon and decorated by a new quill of the latest style, worn on eight out of every ten hats in the region, was on the head of the girl, above a mass of reddish-brown hair. She wore a light jacket which must have seen harder service than the hat. This was a size too small for the sturdy figure; it was slight protection from the sharp November air.

The young man, evidently of her own age, made less effort to appear prosperous. His clothes were thin and shabby, his hat was of a shape worn three seasons back. Both hands were thrust down in his trousers pockets.

"I ain't had a bite since yesterday noon. I've walked until I can't walk no longer." The husky tones make it impossible for any but the girl to understand him as they passed through the crowd. Jack was too familiar with hunger to have his voice affected by the present experience. Jack had learned to talk on the street. He early learned to pitch his voice, even when crying, above the rattle, the rumble, and the clanging of cars and carts. His voice-training was carried on without interruption by selling papers during the rush hours at the ferry. Later he assisted the street hucksters. For the past year he

had been first assistant to the opulent street vender who owned a bony gray horse and a bright green waggon. The man's voice was gone, and Jack was invaluable to him, for his voice could be recognized two blocks away. But the gray horse and the green wagon had recently been sold by the widow, after it had been made plain to Jack that their ownership was quite within his reach. Jack was adrift again. A bit harder to bear now, for he had learned to like steady employment. This last year was his first experience in this direction.

Mary, as they call the girl, was silent a moment, and then remarked casually: "I ain't had no breakfast meself. Work stopped Saturday. I gave her me envelope. She gave me ten cents Saturday night. Sunday she wa'n't bad, only a little off. She began hard yesterday. I went out to look for somethin'; when I got back, she was ugly. I kept still, for I knew she'd soon go to sleep, and I might get a quarter out of her pocket. She hadn't a cent, I knew, but what I giv her. I was foolish to stay in; it made her s'picious. She had it somewhere in the bedroom, for she got worse an' worse. At last she sat down and dropped off. Now, thinks I, I'll get a quarter; 'twill keep me until she gets over this. I tried to get at her pocket too soon." There was silence for a moment, and then, with a fierce scowl and clenched hands, Jack asked, "And yer limp?" Mary nodded.

They walked a block before either spoke. "I ain't told yer the shop is goin' to open again soon. The boss expects a big order. If ye're in a box Saturday," she added timidly, "I can perhaps let you have a little." The danger-signal of deep red flushed into Jack's face. Mary hurriedly added, "Tain't fer keeps. Yer forgot," she continued, more firmly, "what yer paid for medicine for me father. If ye're a-goin' to act like this, yer needn't sling the yaller when I'm down." A deep blush came into her cheeks and an unusual tone in her voice as she continued, softly, "I guess yer think I don't know yer hooked yer coat when she was sick and I had to stay home. I knowed how the rent was paid and the landlord's jaw sht. What's good for the goose is good for the gander," she added, with a timid smile and glance into the scowling face.

The scowl deepened. Mary grew restless under it, and walked more quickly. Jack was going through a severe mental struggle. To plan his own affairs a day ahead was an unusual proceeding for Jack. To come to a decision that settled his and Mary's whole future exhausted his vital powers.

His shoulders went nearer his ears as his hands went deeper into his pockets. Three or four times he attempted to speak; at last the sentences came blunderingly: "Mary let's get married. We can't be no worse off together than we is now. Let's get married!"

The shock deprived Mary of the power of walking. The color left her face, and she trembled.

"Come on, Mary. There won't be any more booze. I'll pick up somethin', I ain't afraid. Yer can work a week or two till I catch on. Come, he added, coaxingly, as he almost touched her arm.

Mary at last looked up into the only face in all the world that represented friendship. A stronger word she never used even mentally. If sometimes as Jack remained her unalterable "steady," the thought of a future when they might be married came to her, not even then did she use the word love. It is doubtful if the word were in the vocabulary of either. There was a new expression in Jack's face as she looked at him.

"Where in God's name would we go?" she asked, breathlessly, at last. "She'd break every bone in me body if we went home. There's no place in the world for us." For the first time since they were babies, Jack saw Mary cry.

A power stirred within him he had never known. There in the glare of the sun, in the sight of the hurrying hundreds, he almost took her in his arms. With an oath registered in heaven, but unvoiced by Jack, he vowed to stand between Mary and the world. He'd make a place. A contempt for the strong muscles that had been his pride and protection since babyhood swept over him. Of what use were they if they could not save Mary from crying?

"Mary," he whispered, slipping his arm through hers, "Mary, I made a dollar Saturday. I knew she was on the booze, and I never broke it. I don't know—"

A glorious light came into Mary's brown eyes. "Oh, Jack, yer thought—"

"Yes," he interrupted, trembling at the new emotion that shook him—"yes, I thought yer might need it."

"Oh, Jack!" was all he heard, but the weight on his arm was heavier. Eden opened before them. They entered.

Mary's "Yes" was the "I do" in response to the old, gray-haired clergyman's question. Many were the prudent misgivings that framed themselves in the old man's mind, as Jack, tall and straight, stood before him and made his request.

Jack's "We ain't got nobody but ourselves, and we want to be together" won the day.

Jack and Mary left the old, dilapidated

church man and wife. But not until Jack had made the clergyman smile.

"I got one dollar, mister. I want that to go housekeeping, for we've got to go at once. But I'll pay yer five dollars, blest if I don't. Take my hand on it. It may be I'll have to pay yer in installments. Five dollars is a lot of money, but I'll pay yer as sure as ye're born."

The sun had gone down behind the tall buildings as Jack and Mary came into the street.

Mary was trembling, and now doubtful. Jack rose in his new manhood. He must drive that look from her eyes. 'Twas worse than the look he always found there when her mother was on the booze.

Neither spoke. As they walked toward the East River, and the shadows grew darker, Jack took his wife's hand and passed it through his arm. It was so embarrassing that it dropped shyly out, and was not recovered.

Mary's doubts disappeared; she asked no questions. Happily, nay, joyfully, she kept step with Jack. Life was glorious! Her own home, and Jacks! She could not see for the love that sent sparks before her eyes. She was warmed and fed. The glance of her eyes which Jack caught made his pulse tingle. Protect Mary! Let any one dare to touch her. He almost longed to show her what he would do.

"Mary, stand here in this doorway. This Mike's me fren."

He referred to the groceryman who kept the corner store.

"Well, Yacob! How goes it?"

"So, so," was the response, as the man leaned leisurely on the counter.

"Got your room rented?"

"Naw," laconically.

"Well, I want it."

The man stood up straight.

"Yep. No foolin'. I can't pay the whole week's rent, but I'll giv yer half. Yer know me."

The man looked at him searchingly. There was something new about the boy.

"I'm married, Yacob. I'm sick bumming round. It's me steady, yer know. Old woman kicked her last night. Couldn't let her go back."

By this time the dollar was on the counter. "Dat room is empty," at last responded the old man.

"Yep. Ye'll let me have two soap boxes; we ain't proud if we is beauties. We'll get along all right. Yer know me steady. Der ain't a better girl in de Eight." For the first time Jack's voice broke.

The weak Jacob pushed back the dollar, saying, "Dat's all right; you works it out, see? I need bundles carried, and dis store swept, and dat little devils watched what dake mine tings? Dat's all right. You boxes want? Your steady, where is she?"

Jack pointed over his shoulder toward the hall door. Jacob flew around, and came back leading the blushing, tearful Mary into the light. Jack beamed.

"He's let us have the room. I'll work it out," announced Jack, joyfully.

Mary was mystified, and looked from one to the other. Jack now explained. The burden of life was dropped on Jack's shoulders. Mary gave a happy laugh, and took a step nearer to him, but stepped further away at once, greatly embarrassed. The smiling, sympathetic groceryman bustled about to find his best empty soap boxes. He found a table he insisted on lending them. To show his friendship toward the new home he would carry it upstairs, while Jack followed with the boxes, and Mary protected the store.

In five minutes Jack and Mary were setting the boxes in the dusky room. Jack looked about with a proud air of ownership. When covered carts and open hallways have been one's only home for seven years, a hall bedroom, furnished with a table and two soap boxes, on one of which sits the wife you love, becomes palatial. As they sit in the dusky room, the love-light shining in their faces, although it is so dark they cannot see each other, there is a knock at the door and a scurrying through the hall. Jack opened the door to find a number of parcels. He gathered them up and put them on the table. A bottle and a candle were on top. Jack lighted the candle and put it in the bottle; and when he opened the bundles of bread and cheese and butter, he looked at them for a moment speechless. His honest blue eyes filled with tears. Mary rose and stole softly around the table, slipping her hand through his arm and leaning her cheek against his sleeve. Jack looked down at the brown head, and, putting his head down on it, he murmured, "The duffer!" That was Jack's "God bless him!"—The Outlook.

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John—Ah, ye should get married, Janet, an' then ye would ha' some one to look after ye.

Janet—Me! Me get married! Sure, an' I'm as good as married now. I ha' a parrot that swears somthin' awful an' a monkey that chews an' smokes, an' what more could I ha' if so be I was married!—Moonshine.

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"Let me see your tongue," said the doctor. "Certainly," said the patient, sitting the action to the word. "You're all right," said the M. D., "You've got what is called the shirt waist tongue." "What's that," said the young man in alarm. "Why, there's no coat on it."—Yonkers Statesman.

Intercolonial Railway.

TENDER FOR STATION HOUSE AT WESTVILLE, N. S.

Sealed Tenders addressed to the undersigned and marked on the outside "Tender for Station House at Westville, N. S." will be received until seventeen o'clock, Eastern Standard Time,

SATURDAY, THE 13TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1900,

for the construction of a new Station House at Westville, N. S. Plans and specifications may be seen on and after Monday, the 1st day of October, 1900, at the Chief Engineer's Office, Moncton, N. B., and at the Office of the Station Master at Westville, N. S., where forms of tender may be obtained. All the conditions of the specification must be complied with.

Railway Office, Moncton, N. B., September 20th, 1900. D. POTTINGER, General Manager.

In the Probate Court of the County of Carleton.

To the Sheriff of the County of Carleton, or any Constable within the said County—Greeting:— WHEREAS Frances Mary Kearney of the Parish of Northampton in the County of Carleton, Widow, Administratrix of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, Rights, and Credits, which were of Alexander Kearney late of the Parish of Northampton in the County of Carleton, Farmer, deceased, has filed in this Court an account of her Administration of the said Goods, and Chattels, Rights, and Credits of the said deceased, and hath prayed that the said account may be passed and allowed by this Honorable Court, and an order made for the distribution of the Estate of the said deceased.

YOU ARE THEREFORE required to cite the said Frances Mary Kearney as such Administratrix and all of the creditors and next of kin, and other persons interested in the said estate of the said deceased to appear before the Judge of Probate for the County of Carleton, at a Court of Probate to be holden in and for the County of Carleton, at the office of the said Judge of Probate in the Town of Woodstock, in the said County, on THURSDAY THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER next, at ten of the clock in the forenoon, to shew cause (if any) why the said account of the said Administratrix should not be passed and allowed by me, and an order made for the distribution of the said estate as prayed for by said Administratrix in her petition.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the said Probate Court this fifteenth day of September, A. D. 1900.

LEWIS P. FISHER, Judge of Probate for the County of Carleton. DENIS B. GALLAGHER, Registrar of Probate for Carleton County. LOUIS E. YOUNG, Proctor for Administratrix.