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THE HEART CHANGES

(By Tom Jones).

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Mildred leaned thoughtfully against the railing and looked down the long walk, weed and grass choked, leading to the dusty white state road.

She gave the dust cloth that she had come out to shake an angry flap. A man turned up the driveway from the main road. Mildred watched him listlessly, nevertheless not unaware that he was well worth looking at. He was tall and sun-burned, with startling gray eyes and heavy eyebrows. "But his clothes!" inwardly commented Mildred, with a yearning to see Billy Duplessis' up to the minute smartness, or Bob Alton's blonde curls and lavender tie. She recovered herself with a slight shake.

"Mrs. Bacon?" the man was asking in a voice that even Mildred's discontented spirit could not take exception to.

"Miss Bacon," she corrected him. "Will you sit down? I'll call mother;" her voice was courteously indifferent. "Homesick," thought Graham Forbes, indulgently, as he sank into the comfortable willow chair. "She looks just as Kitty Mason did when her folks moved here from the city; only there's more to this one than there was to Kitty. She'll like Mortonville yet."

Mildred would have given vent to shrieks of hysterical laughter if she could have heard the prophecy.

She was confessing frankly to Graham Forbes, sitting on the moonlit steps one night. They had grown rapidly into friendly intimacy. "If you knew," she was telling him, making it stronger because she knew it was agonizing to him, "how I long for a look at Billy's gray shirt and the irreproachable part in Bob's hair, or a pair of Jack's loud tan shoes!"

Graham looked up at her with tortured eyes. "Oh, I don't care about any of them, silly," she laughed down at him, "only I simply yearn to see something civilized."

The day after her confession in the moonlight he met Mildred at the tiny post office, the rendezvous of the entire village. She waved a sheath of letters at him gayly. "They're coming," she informed him, excitedly; "Billy, and Bob, and Jack, every one of them. They're coming up for their two weeks' vacation, and if they like it they're coming up for every week-end."

"I'm sure they will like it," he said, gravely, and lifting his hat, hurried past her down the street. Mildred looked after him with hurt, puzzled eyes, not wholly guiltless of tears.

"Silly little goose," she scolded herself, "I don't see why you should care what he thinks, horrid old dog in the manger!"

Billy and Bob and Jack duly appeared and carried the heart of feminine Mortonville by storm.

But with the coming of September the resorters grew restless. The hotel porches were deserted and the orchestra played wearily to an ever diminishing crowd of dancers. Forbes dreaded seeing Mildred; dreaded to see the unhappy look he was sure would be in her eye and the homesick droop in her lips. He had been making a practice of coming late for his mail as the easiest way of avoiding her, but meetings are inevitable in a small town, and Forbes soon came face to face with Mildred on the main street. He stopped short in astonishment. Mildred's eyes were as happy, Mildred's smile was as bright as if it were the middle of July instead of nearly October.

"Still happy?" he asked in astonishment.

"Still happy," affirmed Mildred. Why?

"I don't know," Graham considered, slowly. "I have been afraid to meet you. I was also sure you would be lonely and homesick now that they are all gone."

"So you were making matters better by staying away?" Mildred teased gayly. "I've missed you all summer. Aren't you ever coming up again?"

Mildred carried home a vision of Graham's relieved, radiant face. It was an exceedingly illuminating vision and served to bring to Mildred's consciousness several things she had not realized.

"So that's why I am so happy, is it?" she smiled to herself that evening while she was waiting for Graham. "And that's the reason I had to manufacture that smile and put it on every morning when I was supposed to be having such a good time." So the smile was very real and happy, though rather tremulous as Forbes came up the steps.

"Are you going back to the city?" he asked, as he was standing up to leave. Mildred shook her head.

"I can't understand it," he said, wondering. "You seem so happy. Aren't you really going back?"

"Jack's sister has asked me up to spend December with her, but that's all," she told him demurely.

"Are you going?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know. I may," Mildred said with a little smile to herself, he was so transparent. "Mother wants so many things in the city. Only for a week, though."

"Don't you want to go?" he asked, eagerly. Mildred looked out across the moonlit lawn and shook her head.

"I hate to go," she confessed. "I love all this so now. The green, green grass and the blue, blue sky

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and even the farm houses and the funny old post office, and—" she paused and drew her breath.

Forbes caught her hand in his. "Really? Do you mean it? Mildred, will you stay here always?"

"I won't stay anywhere else," Mildred assured him humorously, but he swept that impatiently aside. "Always? With me?"

"—the funny old post office, and you," finished Mildred close in his arms.

HIS BRIDE.

The Romance of a Convent.

When Pastukhin, captain in a Russian cavalry regiment, heard that Irma Mazlenikoff had been placed in the Convent of the Passion at Simbirsk, he vowed to effect her release. That he, her lover, should be debarred from entering the convent drove the captain nearly to distraction. However, he found consolation in the thought that Irma was ever thinking of him, and knew that sooner or later he would devise a plan for her escape.

One morning a buzz of excitement ran through the convent. From nun to nun and student to student it was whispered that the good Sister Superior had received an important letter from the Holy Synod at St. Petersburg. On the morrow, it announced, Father Solovieff would be pleased to pay the convent an official visit of inspection.

Many eyes peered at the good father as he drove up in a carriage drawn by three splendid horses. But if the good father was pompous in coming, he was charming in manner, and delighted the heart of the Sister Superior by his praise of the order and discipline that marked her regime.

In the afternoon Father Solovieff announced that he must examine all the students of the convent, so that he should be able to carry a thorough report of the convent to St. Petersburg, both as to its conduct and learning. Naturally such an unlooked-for request created a flutter of excitement among the students. But everyone agreed, from the humblest nun to the Sister Superior herself, that there could not possibly be a nicer priest in the world than Father Solovieff; and, besides, there was no reason to fear that he would find the students lacking in learning.

So one by one the students entered the examination room and there were examined in their studies by the good father. And one by one each emerged full of the praise that he had bestowed on them. He was the most charming father who had ever inspected the monastery! After the examination Father Solovieff made his report to the Sister Superior. The teaching in the convent he declared was excellent. All the students had done well. But there was one who had far and away excelled all the others. This student was Irma Mazlenikoff. She, the good father informed the Sister Superior, was far too advanced for the learning of the convent, and he had decided to remove her at once, and to place her in the famous Convent of the Kremlin at Moscow.

Flattered by such praise, the Sister Superior bade Irma Mazlenikoff farewell.

A few days later the papers announced the marriage of Captain Pastukhin to Irma Mazlenikoff, and the good nuns of the Convent of the Passion nearly died of horror when they learned how they had been deluded by the charming "Father Solovieff."

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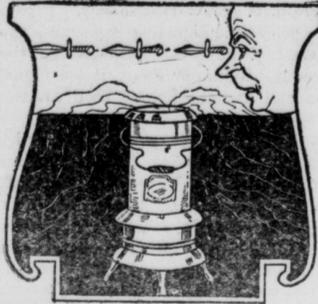
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