

## RUNAWAY MARRIAGE

Partly out of pique and partly because her parents disapproved of the match, she had promised to elope with him.

It wasn't to be any trivial elopement, but a run to Liverpool, a marriage there by special license, and a trip by fastest steamer to New York. Arriving there, they would cross America, and gradually work their way around the world and back to London in a year or two.

George Webley was rich, and could easily afford this kind of wedding tour.

In olden times the parents of Tilly Markham would have been more anxious that their daughter should marry George Webley rather than the poorer, but, of course, more moral young man, Tom Bantury. But times had changed and it was the daughters that now looked for money with their lovers.

The girl admitted to herself that she liked Tom Bantury best, but he had certainly treated her very badly. They had had an appointment for a picnic up the river, but without a word Tom had gone away, and, worse still, he had sent no explanation or excuse for his desertion.

Tilly agreed that they would write letters to all concerned while on the voyage from Liverpool to Queenstown, and mail them there when there would be nothing but the broad Atlantic between them and New York.

Tilly met the postman on the steps as she was going out of the house that morning, and he handed her a bundle of letters. She had no time to read them, nor in the cab, for there was barely time to reach the station, where she found Mr. Webley impatiently awaiting her.

"I was very much afraid we should miss the train," he said, as he hurried her out of the cab. "I have reserved a compartment."

"There's another train, isn't there?" she asked.

"O, certainly but a railway station isn't the pleasantest place in the world to wait and since I left my hotel I seem to have met every friend I have in London, and all wanting to know where I'm going."

"And of course you told them," said Tilly.

The young man laughed as he held open the door of the railway carriage for her to enter. He quickly followed her, and a moment after the 10.10 a. m. train slid out of the great station and began its northern journey.

Tilly sat in her corner by the window and carelessly turned over the letters in her hand. Most of them were from girl friends, but on the envelope of one of them she recognized the fine, bold handwriting of Tom Bantury.

"Dear Miss Markham: I was unexpectedly called away from London more than a week ago by the sudden illness of my uncle, Sir John Trellan. Before departing from Trellan Hall I wrote a letter to you, explaining why I could not be at the picnic up the river.

"Through my own stupidity, and the hurry of getting away, I find I left your letter on my table in my rooms at the Temple. I found on my return this morning, as I said, my own letter, which was not posted, so, of course, you did not receive it.

"Will you forgive me, therefore for breaking an engagement with you and your friends without explanation? And may I call this evening as I have something of importance (to myself at least) to say to you? I will remain all day in my chambers at the Temple, awaiting your answer with some anxiety."

He signed himself "Yours very truly, Tom Bantury," and then added in a postscript, as if an afterthought, "I should have told you that my uncle died two days ago, which makes a great deal of difference in my plan of life, as perhaps you are aware."

Tilly Markham was a cautious young woman, and always considered that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. She looked at George Webley, and he smiled across at her.

"Where do we stop first?" she asked.

"Willsden Junction, I believe, and we ought to be there now."

"How long do we stop?"

"Only a few minutes."

"Do you think you could get me half a dozen telegraph blanks while we are stopping there?"

"O, I don't need to go out for them," said Webley; "I always carry plenty of them with me, and stamps also."

When the train slowed up at Willsden she said:

"Do get out, George, and find me a time table; for I want to know how many times this train stops before we reach Liverpool."

Webley had no sooner disappeared than the young lady called the guard to her.

"Where is the next stop, guard?" she asked.

"At Bletchley, Miss."

"How long before we reach there?"

"We are timed for Bletchley at 11.14."

She had already written her telegram, and all but the instructions where to reach her. It ran:

"Tom Bantury, Coke-upon-Littleton Chambers, Temple. What do you wish to see me for this evening? Answer Bletchley station, on board the Liverpool express. Tilly."

"Can you send this off for me at once?" she asked the guard, slipping it with a coin into his hand.

"Certainly, miss."

Just as the train was leaving George Webley sprang into the compartment with the time-table in his hand. Tilly opened it and found the number of stops the train made between London and Liverpool.

When she reached the station, she said:

"O, George, I wish you would get me a cup of tea."

"I don't think there is a refreshment room here," he said dubiously, "but I'll go and see."

The next moment the guard came up.

"Here's your telegram, miss," he said. She rapidly tore open the envelope and read:

"The matter on which I wish to speak to you is impossible to explain in a telegram. When do you return?"

She took another of the telegram forms and rapidly wrote:

"If you have anything to tell me, now is the time to tell it. I do not know when I shall return to London."

Then, turning to the guard, she asked:

"Where do we stop next?"

"At Rugby, miss—11.59."

She quickly wrote where to telegraph her as she saw George approaching. She added hurriedly to the guard as she thrust her message into his hand:

"Bring me the answer when we get to Rugby."

When the train slowed up at Rugby Station, Tilly leaned affectionately over towards the young man and said:

"Now, George, you go over to the refreshment room and eat all you have an appetite for. I don't think I care for anything till we reach Liverpool."

"May I not bring you a cup of tea?" asked George, anxiously.

"O, certainly, certainly, if you bring it two minutes before the train is off."

Another man might have thought this request a rather singular one, but George had no brains to spare, else he would not have been on this silly eloping expedition, so he thought nothing of it, but jumped out as soon as the train came to a standstill.

The guard soon came to the compartment with the telegram in his hand. Tilly opened it and read:

"Utterly impossible to telegraph what I wish to say to you. Tell me where you are staying at Liverpool, and I will leave by first train and meet you there."

Tilly, with a sniff of impatience, seized another of the stamped forms and rapidly wrote:

"I may sail to-morrow with some friends for America. There is no chance of your seeing me if you do come; therefore, whatever you have to say to me say it now; it is your last chance. Telegraph me at—"

She looked inquiringly at the guard, who promptly answered: "Next stop Crewe. We reach there at 1.35."

She gave the guard a handful of money to pay for the extra wording of this despatch. That good man was rapidly becoming rich. He sighed as he remembered that the next stop was the last before reaching Liverpool. He wished that he was on a train for Scotland with such a passenger aboard.

"Here is your tea, my dear," said George, as he came gingerly along with it in his hand. The girl drank it with many expressions of gratitude towards her lover.

At Crewe the guard came to her with the final telegram. It was terse and to the point. It ran:

"I love you. Will you be my wife?"

Lend me another of those blanks," she said to George.

"I haven't another, but you can get one at the telegraph office."

The train was moving off, so she said.

"Never mind, I can send the telegram from Liverpool."

They reached the terminus in an hour. Turning to the guard, Tilly said:

"Would you mind taking my things to the telegraph office for me?"

And to George she added: "You wait here until I send for you."

When they reached the telegraph office Tilly turned and said quickly to the guard:

"When is the next train back to London?"

"On this line there is not one until 4.50, but you can get one on the Midland at 3."

Tilly took a last telegraph blank and wrote:

"Certainly. Why couldn't you have said so at first, and saved me all this telegraphing. I return to London immediately. Call and see me to-morrow."

This being sent off, she turned to the man who had been her friend all the way through.

"Now," she said, "take me to the Midland train." As the guard hesitated she added, "I am going to give you a sovereign."

The guard personally conducted her to an empty compartment of the London train. She scribbled a note to Webley on the back of a telegraph blank. The note read:

"Dear George: I have concluded not to go to America this trip. Our proposed elopement was a very foolish affair, and I hope you never thought I was in earnest about it. Take my advice and

go to America. I am told that the girls over there are much prettier than yours truly."

"Tilly Markham."

"There," said Tilly, giving the note to the guard with the parting tip, "take that to the young man who is guarding his luggage. Don't tell him where I have gone, nor give him any information. He will offer you much money, of course, because he has plenty. Take the money and tell him I have gone to the country. Tell him anything you like, only not where I have really gone."

The guard touched his cap and departed. After the London train had steamed away from its station, the guard handed George the note. He did not get the money he expected. A look of relief passed over the young fellow's face, and he swore a little. Then he whistled, and said to himself more than to the expectant guard:

"Sensible girl; I was getting a little tired of it, myself."—Chicago Journal.

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## Better

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## Cured

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Richibucto, May 6, 1896.

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