BUMP CHARLES WEATHERS

THE MERMAID OF DRUID LAKE AND OTHER STORIES

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Содержание

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If Edwin Horton had not had a sleepless time that hot June night it probably would never have happened. As it was, after tossing and pitching on an uncomfortably warm mattress for several hours, he had dressed himself and left his Bolton-avenue home for a stroll in Druid Hill Park just as the dawn made itself evident. That was the beginning of the adventure.

Not a soul was in sight when he reached the driveway around the big lake, and he let out to take a little vigorous exercise, breathing in the fresh air with more enjoyment than had been his for some hours.

About half way around he stopped suddenly and rubbed his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming. For a curve in the road had brought him the knowledge that he was not alone in his appreciation of the early morning hour. Seated beside the water, on the rocks that line the lake shore, was a damsel – a rather good-looking one, as well as he could judge at the distance of a hundred yards. She was leaning on her left elbow and looking

out over the lake in rather a pensive, dreamy attitude. Of course, young ladies don't ordinarily get up before dawn to go out to Druid Hill Park for the purpose of sitting alone beside the broad sweep of city water, and Edwin naturally felt some surprise at the novelty of the sight. Besides, she was inside the high iron railing, and he wondered how she had got there.

In the intensity of his interest he slowed down his pace as he drew nearer along the roadway. Should he watch her unobserved for a while to ascertain her purpose? Should he frankly hail her and ask whether she objected to company? Should he – well, the damsel settled his doubts for him just then by discovering him. She appeared startled, and he fancied she half meant to plunge into the lake. Then she changed her mind, gave him a bewitching little smile and raised her free hand to beckon him. Edwin needed no second invitation. The novelty of the situation was too alluring to resist.

In another moment he had scaled the fence and was clambering awkwardly down the rocks. And as he came close he found her a very pretty damsel indeed, with youthful, rosy cheeks, fetching blue eyes and long, light tresses that hung unconfined from her head down upon the sloping rocks behind her. She was smiling, and yet he thought he detected a renewed disposition to slip away from him before he had drawn too close.

Then he had a shock.

She was only half a woman!

The other half of her was fish – scaly fish – partly submerged

in the waters of the lake!

He paused irresolutely. It was all right, you know, to read about mermaids in old mythologies and fairy tales. But to encounter one in this year of Our Lord, so near home as Druid lake! Oh, fudge! the boys at the Ariel Club would never get through "joshing" him should he ever say he had seen such a thing. It could not be true; it was too amazing! He was a fool to let his nerves get the better of him. He had better cut out those visits to the river resorts, or next he would be seeing pink elephants climbing trees. First thing he knew he would wake up in that stuffy room at home. No, he couldn't be dreaming! There was the railing, and the lake, and the white tower, and General Booth's home, and the Madison-avenue entrance, and the Wallace statue and a dozen other familiar spots in a most familiar perspective.

And there, too, was the damsel in flesh and blood, or, rather, flesh and fish!

She was the first to speak.

"Good morning to you, stranger."

She spoke English – good, clear mother-tongue. Her lips were parted in that alluring smile, and her manner was as saucy as that of any fair flirt he had ever known of womankind.

"In the name of Heaven, who are you?" he stammered as he sat down, awkwardly, beside her.

She laughed outright – mischievously, mockingly.

"I? I am the nymph of the lake. Long years ago I was the naiad of the woodland spring that is now deep down yonder,"

indicating a spot out in the lake. "But they dammed me in and turned great floods of water in here, and mighty Jupiter gave me my new title."

"And are you really half fish?"

She laughed again.

"I am what you see."

As she spoke she gracefully swayed the lower half of her in the water. A million glistening scales prismatically reflected the increasing morning light. She was half fish, all right. There was no doubt about that.

"By gosh! here's a rum go!" muttered Edwin to himself.

"What did you say?" queried the mermaid.

"I said, if you must know, 'By Jove! you are a beauty,'" he replied, gallantly and impetuously.

The mermaid smiled again. The feminine half of her was pleased with the compliment to her good looks.

"I'm afraid you're a sad flatterer," she said, coquettishly. She lowered her blue eyes, then uplifted the lashes and looked full into his face in a manner that made his heart bound. One little finger was shaken playfully at him. Edwin seized the hand. It was warm; human blood pulsated through it! And as he held it his companion gave just a bit of a squeeze. A score of girls had done the same in bygone sentimental hours. But none so deftly.

"This is certainly an odd adventure," he remarked. "Tell me, lady of the lake, do you often sit here in this unconventional fashion with gentlemen callers?"

"What would you give to know?" she asked, teasingly.

"You are the first for a long, long time," she went on. "Last summer there was a man in a gray uniform who saw me, but he looked so uninteresting I swam away."

"When are you here?" he asked, earnestly.

"I love to sit on the bank when fair Aurora makes the dawning day grow rosy," she acknowledged, "but I have to flee to the depths when the full sun comes." She looked to the east. "It is growing late," she added, hurriedly; "I must be going."

"Not yet, not yet," he pleaded.

"Do not detain me," she cried; "I must go. It means life to me."

Gracefully she glided into the water at his feet.

"You will come tomorrow?" he asked.

The coquettish mood returned to her.

"Perhaps," she said, as with long strokes she headed for the centre of the lake. Edwin watched intently until she had gone a hundred yards and more. Then she ceased swimming, kissed her hand to him and dived under the surface as the single word "Farewell" floated over the water.

It seems superfluous to remark that he was in a trance that day. His father, at the breakfast table, jovially prodded him about being late, until he barely caught himself on the verge of telling his queer secret. And so absent-minded was he at the office that he found he had entered the account of a prosaic old firm as "Mermaid & Nymph."

Long before 4 A. M. the next day he was at the lake. The

waning moon was still in the west and there were few signs of the coming day. For half an hour he kept his vigil alone, and had almost begun to think his piscatorial charmer was not coming. Then suddenly he espied her out in the lake, swimming toward him. When about 50 yards off shore she hailed him jovially and bade him go around to the white tower. As he moved along the driveway she kept him company, maintaining the pace with graceful, tireless strokes and occasionally coming nearer to exchange a remark.

"What made you change the trysting place?" he asked.

"Love of change, I suppose," she replied. "A water nymph does not get much chance at novelty."

The half hour they spent upon the water's edge was largely one of sentimental banter between merry maid and enamored man, in which Edwin reached the conclusion that his charmer could give cards to the jolliest little "jollier" in Baltimore. She asked him about his past and present girl friends, and pouted deliciously when he frankly acknowledged them. Finally they parted, she promising to appear the next morning.

The third meeting started a chain of events. They were comfortably chatting on the rocks when Edwin heard the chug-chug of an automobile. The mermaid clutched his arm in alarm. "What are those horrid things?" she naively remarked. "They often make such an awful fuss I can hear them down in my cozy corner."

Edwin's reply was suspended while the machine passed them.

The two men who were in it craned their necks most industriously at the sight of a pair of lovers out so early and seated in such an unusual spot for sentimental couples.

When he turned to make the explanations she had asked, he found it a harder task than he had imagined. Her knowledge of human inventions, of worldly means of locomotion, was not extensive, and he had to begin with the A B C of it and go through a course in elementary mechanics. After the forty-second paragraph of instructions the damsel clapped her hands gleefully and cried:

"It would be great fun to take a trip in one!"

"It is great fun," declared Edwin, for a moment forgetting to whom he was talking.

"But then I couldn't do it!" she exclaimed in disappointment. "I couldn't leave the lake."

The unshed tears in her eyes made him ardent.

"You could do it if you are willing," he avowed, earnestly. "You can take the water with you." Visions of a tank lady in the "Greatest Circus on Earth" came to him.

"You are fooling me," murmured the mermaid. And she pouted.

Edwin rose to the occasion. "I am not fooling," he protested. "It would not be difficult to put a tank of water in the machine for you to put your" – He was going to say feet, but he ended his sentence, stumblingly, "your other half in."

In her joy the Lady of the Lake took his cheeks in her hands

and gave him an impulsive kiss. "You are the loveliest being on earth," she said, enthusiastically.

That settled it. The rest of the conversation that morning was about automobiles, and when they parted it was with a definite assurance on his part that Edwin would be on hand the next morning with a motor car suitably equipped for her use. It was only when he had gotten away that he realized the ridiculous side of the job he had undertaken. He could get an automobile all right. Tom Reese was a good friend, and a willing one, and his car had a tonneau capacious enough to accommodate the ex-naiad and her movable pool. But he would have to tell Tom the whole peculiar adventure to get him to take his auto out at such an unearthly hour.

"He'll think me clean daft when I unfold it to him," said Edwin to himself.

And Tom did, too. He laughed loud and long when Edwin chose what he thought to be a propitious moment and began his confession. "What are you stuffing me with?" Tom demanded, with tears in his eyes. Edwin renewed his explanations, only to bring on another explosion. "You'll be the death of me yet, old fellow," asserted Tom. "You'd better cut out those absinthes." Edwin added details most earnestly. "You're crazy, boy," was the only reply he got. He grew angry and hurt. "Now, Tom Reese," he demanded, "have I ever failed you when you wanted my help?" Tom apologized and began to study Edwin with intentness. "Look here, Edwin Horton," he said, "if there is any

such girl at Druid lake as you describe, she's a 'fake' and she's got you strung mightily." Edwin swallowed this dig at his intelligence peacefully. He saw he had won. "All I ask, Tom," he rejoined, "is that you will take me out in the car and see for yourself." Tom gave him his hand. "I'm from Missouri, and you'll have to show me," he chuckled.

A wash tub from Mrs. Reese's cellar was requisitioned at 3 A. M. for use as a tank. After it had been lifted into the tonneau a hose supplied the needed water. "Climb into the water wagon," ordered Tom, and he threw on the lever and spun out to Druid Hill Park.

The day was still in embryo when the lake tower was reached. But the nymph was there. Her trim blue blouse was still wet after her swim ashore. The morning was summery, but Edwin had appreciated that the ride might be cold for the water lady, and had thoughtfully brought his sister's raincoat.

Tom's astonishment at seeing a bona-fide mermaid was balm to Edwin. The lad stood open-mouthed after Edwin had introduced them. In fact, he was so dumfounded that he failed to notice the hand the damsel had extended to him.

"Come on, Tom," said Edwin; "there isn't much time."

One on each side, the two boys supported the nymph as she cavorted as gracefully as possible up the rocks. They hadn't thought of the iron railing. "Caesar's ghost!" muttered Tom in dismay. "How are we going to get her over that?" Edwin turned to the mermaid. "If you don't mind," said he, "we will have to lift

you." "I don't mind," she said, simply, "if you don't drop me."

At Edwin's suggestion he clambered over first, and then Tom raised the young creature boldly until she was clear of the iron spikes. There Edwin took hold of her and carried her to the auto. She was not a heavy burden, but her wet condition and her combination shape increased the difficulties.

From the moment she was once in the auto her joy was a pleasure to observe. She began by expressing her delight at their thoughtfulness in supplying the wash tub. When the machine began to move she clapped her hands in childish glee. From glee to wonderment her mood changed as they spun along the park roads. A hundred naive questions were asked about the objects unfamiliar to a lady whose habitat was at the bottom of a big pond. Edwin answered faithfully, and had his reward in his enjoyment of her artlessness and winsomeness. Occasionally Tom looked round to share in it.

At a good clip the auto was run out Park Heights avenue and back. The dawn seemed most kindly disposed to the trio, for it was long in coming. And when they had reached Pimlico, Tom proposed a detour by way of Roland Park, to return to the lake across Cedar-avenue bridge. The damsel hailed it with glee, only stipulating that she must be back by "sun-up."

They showed her the turf tracks on either side as they bowled along Belvidere avenue eastward, and they were still engaged in explaining to her the methods of horse racing when Tom started down the long hill beside the Tyson place, Cylburn, leading down

to the bridge across Jones' Falls. The girl was asking questions, with her bewitching face in close proximity to Edwin's, when there came a startling interruption to their fun. Tom, again greatly interested in the talk, failed to notice a large boulder in the road, and the auto shot over it with a jolt that caused him to lose control of the wheel. The big machine regained its balance, but not its course. Instead, it careened to the right and bumped into the ditch before the alarmed occupants had scarcely grasped their peril. Tom was tossed out on the roadway. Edwin was pitched into the front seat, the mermaid shot past him and fell on a clump of green turf and the tub of water upset, and, in seeking an outlet, poured over the car, drenching Edwin.

"Look out for a gasoline explosion!" shrieked Tom, raising himself from the road, apparently unhurt. Edwin knew he could do nothing to prevent such a catastrophe, so he followed the other two out of the auto as quickly as he could. For a moment he and Tom paid no attention to the mermaid, so absorbed were they in the possibility of a blow-up. But when this danger had apparently passed they discovered that she had lifted herself from the grassy sward and was flip-flopping awkwardly in the direction of the brook that runs through Cylburn near the road.

"Come back! Come back! There's no danger!" called Edwin, as he started after her.

The damsel paid no heed. She was intent on getting to that stream of running water.

Again Edwin called, this time more sharply. The mermaid

stopped not, but turned a tearful and much convulsed face to him.

Edwin raced after her. So did Tom. But when they got to the edge of the brook the only sign of her was an increasing ripple on the surface of a little pool. The stream was not so deep but that the bottom could be studied. And yet they saw nothing of her. Evidently she had the enchanted gift of being invisible in water.

Tom looked at Edwin. Edwin looked at Tom.

"That beats the Dutch!" said Tom.

"It's worse than that," replied Edwin, an odd catch in his voice. "We certainly have queered her for good. We must find her and get her back to the Park somehow."

For hours they moved up and down alongside the stream, calling pleadingly, but without response, for their quondam friend. Edwin made a little oration to her in absentia, in which he humbly begged her pardon and swore by all the gods of Mount Olympus – by the great Jupiter, the chaste Diana and all the rest of them, as far as he could remember their names – that he would restore her safely to the lake. But she came not. Tom added his entreaties, but she heeded not. Then Tom suggested that perhaps she had worked her way down the brook and into Jones' Falls, whence she could, if she but knew the pipes, get into her beloved lake again. Edwin jumped at the idea, and, leaving Tom to look after the auto, hastened down the ravine to Jones' Falls, and moved up and down the Falls, calling for the vanished damsel with a fervor that might have caused doubts as to his sanity had anyone heard it.

When he returned, terribly downcast, Tom had gotten the car righted and had discovered that it was uninjured.

"No luck, I suppose?" said Tom.

"No," replied Edwin, moodily.

"Get in, then. We can't stay here all day."

Edwin required urging to leave the spot. Finally he consented to go. As he climbed in he saw the overturned wash tub, and his concentrated wrath and grief were heaped upon it. Picking it up, he hurled it savagely at a tree, and, when it fell to pieces with the concussion, he exclaimed, vehemently and inconsequentially:

"That's the blamed thing that got us into this muss!"

At Druid lake he insisted on another long search. Time and again the auto was stopped that he might call aloud for his charmer. But no answering sound came across the water.

"Curses!" said Edwin. "I'm afraid she's lost for good."

And that is probably the true explanation as to why there has been no mermaid in Druid lake since. She may be in Cylburn brook, she may be in Jones' Falls, she may have reached the Patapsco, but no one has ever seen a creature answering her description and aquatic habits since the damsel who once held the job got giddy and went motoring.

The Goddess of Truth

Not everybody was pleased among the many thousands who on September 12, 1906, saw the industrial parade with which Baltimore celebrated its wonderful recovery from the blow given by the great fire of 1904. Tobias Greenfield, head of a Lexington-street department store, was one who was not. He was angry, violently so. He had been in a chipper mood all morning and had enjoyed watching the long line from the windows of a bedecorated wholesale house on Baltimore street. But when his eyes alighted on the float of his own firm, the anger came. And the longer it stayed with him, the worse it grew, especially as he could not escape the prodding of the friends who had invited him to their warehouse.

When he could decently slip away from them he went to his office and peremptorily called for his advertising manager.

"What the devil do you mean, Melvale," he shouted, "by putting such a scrawny little girl on our float as the Goddess? She looked a fright in the clothes made for Miss Preston, and everyone is laughing at us. Why was not Miss Preston there? How came you to make such a mess?"

The advertising man was nervous under the volley of questions, but he explained at length. Boiled down, it was plain he could give only one reason why the float had been such a mess.

And that reason was William Henry Montgomery.

Miss Preston had been willing to be the Goddess, as planned, but William Henry Montgomery said no. And that settled it.

And who was William Henry Montgomery? Why, Miss Preston loved William Henry Montgomery.

You see, down on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where Maude Preston and William Henry Montgomery were to the manor born, they had sought each other's company so assiduously and for so long that in the length and breadth of Accomac – from Chincoteague to Great Machipongo – every man and woman regarded it as a sure thing that Maude and William Henry would hit it off for a marriage. And they had talked, as people will, about their being an ideal couple, so well suited – William Henry broad-shouldered and solidly knit and Maude molded on classic Diana's lines, erect and queenly, but sweet to look upon. The women thought William Henry a fine-looking lad, while men and women alike regarded Maude as the handsomest creature on the Peninsula below the Maryland line.

And then one day there had been a quarrel. Maude thought a bit of William Henry's advice too assertive, too near to an injunction to obey, and had flared up. And William Henry had flared up likewise. And when the two came to count the cost, William Henry was moodily filling a job in a cousin's lumber-yard in Philadelphia, while Maude, unknown to William Henry, had come to Baltimore to remove herself and her heart-wound from the well-meant, but too gossipy, neighbors in Accomac.

It was a matter of only a few months before she was the best-

liked saleswoman in Greenfield & Jacobs' big store. From Mr. Greenfield down to the rawest cash girl all were glad to exchange a word with her, because there was something delightful in Maude's way of expressing even trivialities, and an especial joy in hearing her talk about "you all" and call a car "kyar," a girl "giurl" and other idioms peculiar to Tidewater Virginians. Besides that, she was too good-looking altogether to be passed without notice. The elevator boys were both in love with her, and their seniors – whether clerks, floor-walkers, salesmen or owners – would walk two aisles out of the way any time to pass by Miss Preston at the counter where she disposed of bolts of ribbon. But best of all was the regard which her scores of girl associates had for her. They liked her because they saw she made no effort to seek or to foster the attentions which the masculines of the store thrust upon her. They liked her, too, for the individuality and perfect neatness she showed in her dress, from the bows of ribbon on her short sleeves to the set of her skirts or the way her waists were arranged at the belt. As for her hair, eight-ninths of the store, being the feminine portion, envied its beautiful wave, and two-ninths mustered up courage to ask Maude how she managed to keep it so splendidly. And the two-ninths, being told, let the other six-ninths into the secret. Thus it was, in Greenfield & Jacobs', that the Maude wave became more popular than the one named after Marcelle.

And all the while Maude quietly went on thinking of William Henry. She heard about him sometimes in letters from Accomac, and knew that he was still in Philadelphia. And there were hours

when she fought the temptation to write to him there, and humbly tell him that she had been wrong to grow angry with him. Perhaps he had forgotten her and was having a good time – she recoiled from the thought, and yet it would come now and then. And when it came, Maude had spells of the "blues" that she found hard to conceal from her new-made friends at the department store and in her boarding-house on Arlington avenue.

Greenfield & Jacobs was one of the first retail firms to take up the notion of having a float in the Jubilee parade. And, having once decided to exhibit, they went at the preparations with characteristic thoroughness. "Let us do it right," said Jacobs to Greenfield. "Let us spare no expense to have a car so beautiful that all Baltimore will remember it as one of the hits of the parade. Let it be chaste and symbolic, and not overloaded with bunting and people."

The head of the firm had the same thought. "We have always tried to tell the truth to our customers," he rejoined. "Why not try to bring that fact home to thousands by a float on which a handsome Goddess of Truth will be giving a laurel crown to our firm?"

"Capital!" exclaimed Jacobs. "And Miss Preston can be the Goddess."

"I had her in mind when I proposed it," remarked Greenfield.

And both men laughed.

Neither partner was up on mythology, so they turned over to Melvale, the advertising man, the duty of working out the details

of the float. Now, Melvale wasn't literary, either; but he knew an obliging young woman at the Pratt Library, and he hied himself to her to ask who under Heaven was the Goddess of Truth and how was she dressed. And the obliging young woman looked up encyclopedias and finally handed Melvale an illustrated copy of Spenser's "Faerie Queene." Melvale had never heard of Spenser, and he had an idea that Spenser spelled his title badly, not even according to the simplified method of Roosevelt and Carnegie. But he took the book and read of the beautiful, pure and trustful Una, the personification of Truth, the beloved of the Red Cross Knight. And when he looked at the pictures he began to grow enthusiastic over the float.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Miss Preston will look great in that Greek gown."

And Melvale sketched the float as it afterward grew into being at the hands of carpenters, painters and decorators at the old car shed on Pennsylvania avenue. There was, first of all, a beautiful little model of Greenfield & Jacobs' new store, about three feet high, over the corner dome of which the charming Goddess, bending forward, was about to place the laurel crown suggested by Greenfield. Behind her were finely modeled figures of the lion and the lamb which are devoted followers of Una. It was artistic; it was symbolic; it was chaste. There was no word of advertising save the neatly lettered inscription:

The Truth stands by us

We stand by the Truth

It was a harder task than either partner imagined to win the consent of Miss Preston to be a goddess for a few brief hours. She was not the sort of girl to like conspicuousness or notoriety, and she flatly refused when the float was first brought to her attention. Then they pleaded with her. Jacobs told her how much she would be helping the firm if she would only agree to oblige them. Greenfield promised to have the finest of Greek gowns made in the store's dressmaking department. And Melvale, clever man, deftly told her how beautiful and good Una was supposed to be, and mildly intimated that there was no other young woman in Baltimore who could possibly fill the bill on that float. Ultimately Miss Preston's scruples were overcome.

And into the preparations she entered with pleasing enthusiasm. Melvale took her several times to the shed to see the float materialize, and stopped each morning at the ribbon counter to tell her about details. The whole store told her a thousand times how glad each was that she was to be the Goddess. Greenfield did as he promised about the costume – and never was Greek gown made of more beautiful white goods, or more

exquisitely and perfectly fitted. Maude read Spenser's poem, more understandingly than had Melvale, and the Goddess of Truth so completely filled her mind during those summer weeks that William Henry Montgomery was almost obscured except when she dreamed how she would like him to see her triumph.

At last came the day of the parade. Melvale, always fertile with expedients, had arranged with Townsend, floor-walker on the fourth floor, who lived on Fulton avenue just where the big parade was to form, that the Goddess Maude might array herself in her finery at his home. Bright and early that morning he sent a carriage for Miss Preston, and ordered the float to be at Townsend's curb by 9 o'clock. The beautiful gown and its accessories, laid away in soft tissue paper, were brought from the Lexington-street store, and a couple of the girls from the dressmaking department were on hand to aid the final making of a goddess.

Maude would not have been a woman had she not taken her time to get into such finery, and Melvale began to grow nervous as the parade hour grew near. The street was in confusion with the gathering of floats and men and curious crowds of onlookers. The chief marshal of the procession, Col. William A. Boykin, had warned him that the line was to move on time, and already there were signs of a start. Five times he dived into the hallway of Townsend's home and called agonizingly upstairs to know if Miss Preston was ready.

Finally she came. And Melvale held his breath as the beauty

of the girl burst upon him, even in the half-light of the hall. While it concealed some of the lines of her figure, the gown accentuated her erect, queenly carriage. Her exquisitely molded arms and her full, round throat had been powdered, a bit or two of rouge had heightened the charm of her face and a touch of black had increased the brilliancy of her eyes, already flashing with the excitement of the moment. There was a tremulous curve to her lips as she glanced at Melvale to note whether he was pleased with her appearance.

"The goddess of men, as well as of truth," he murmured as he bent over and gallantly kissed her hand. Una's flush heightened, but she was pleased with the compliment.

Melvale opened the door and the goddess in white passed out into the morning sunlight on Fulton avenue.

And as she did so she gave a faint scream of surprise.

For there, on the sidewalk, was William Henry Montgomery, her Red Cross Knight.

William Henry was as much surprised as the damsel Una. He had no idea that Maude was nearer to him than Accomac, and he was in Baltimore for the day merely to mingle with the holiday crowds and perhaps encounter some Eastern Shore friend from whom he might learn news of her. His presence on Fulton avenue was due to the identical reason as that which inspired thousands of others curious to see the start of a big parade.

When he saw Maude come out of the doorway, a vision in white, he thought for a moment he had gone insane and

was having a hallucination. Then he reflected that it could not possibly be Maude Preston in Baltimore and wearing such theatrical clothes on the street in broad daylight. Then he looked again and was certain it was Maude. Besides, hadn't she recognized him and put out her arm to steady herself against the arch of the doorway?

"Maude!" he exclaimed, simply, as he hurried up the marble steps.

"Bill Henry!" she cried, faintly.

She held out her hands and he took them.

"I've been sorry a long time, Bill Henry," she said.

"And I, too, sweetheart."

He would have kissed her in complete reconciliation, but Maude was conscious of the crowd on the street. "Don't, Bill Henry," she whispered as she laughed, flushed and tenderly pushed him away. He held on to both her hands.

Melvale, in the vestibule behind, had stood petrified as the incident developed. He was wise enough to understand that a reconciliation of lovers was in progress. Their words, and, above all, the ardency of their glances betrayed that.

From down Fulton avenue came the sound of a great bell. The parade had started. "Hurry," said Melvale, "you must take your position, Miss Preston."

"Take your position, Maude?" asked William Henry calmly, ignoring Melvale.

"Yes, Bill Henry," said his sweetheart, hurriedly; "I'm to be

the Goddess of Truth on that float there."

William Henry turned and looked at the float. Then he stood off a step or two and studied Maude's make up. "I've never seen you look handsomer," he said, slowly, "but somehow you don't seem natural. I'd rather have met you again when you were not so full of paint and powder. I loved you always just as you were, without fancy fixings."

The bell was getting farther away.

"Come, Miss Preston," urged Melvale. "We will have to hurry."

For the first time William Henry recognized the presence of Melvale.

"She ain't going, Mister," declared William Henry, ungrammatically, but firmly.

"Not going!" screamed Melvale.

"Oh! Bill," stammered Maude, "they've gone to such a lot of expense and trouble! And they've been so kind to me!"

"I don't care," returned William Henry. "Down in Accomac we don't like this theatre business for girls we love, and I tell you I am not going to see you in that parade, showing yourself off to all Baltimore and thousands more, too. Who knows how many people are here from down home? If you want this notoriety and fuss, Maude," he went on sternly, "I can leave again."

A tear made its way out of Maude's eyes and threatened the rouge on her cheek.

"Come, Miss Preston," said Melvale.

"No, no; I can't go against what Bill wants," she said, feebly; "not again."

Melvale saw that he faced a serious business dilemma. Cupid had butt in at the wrong moment. It was necessary for Greenfield & Jacobs to be in that parade, and he had about six minutes to get the float in line. As he put it in his report to Mr. Greenfield, "There wasn't any use wasting time trying to persuade Miss Preston with that hulking big Eastern Shoreman menacing me. I had to let her do as William Henry wanted, without bandying words. At the same time I had to find another Goddess in a hurry. That's how I came to make use of Townsend's daughter."

"Was that thin girl Townsend's daughter?" asked Greenfield.

"There isn't any cause to be hard on the girl, Mr. Greenfield. She's not so thin, and she is good looking and with a sweet expression. You put any girl in clothes not made for her – just jump her into 'em without any time for those little tricks that women know so well how to do – and she's sure to feel a guy. And if she feels a guy, she's going to look it. Why, it took those two girls just six minutes to transfer that goddess rig from Miss Preston to Miss Townsend. She didn't have time to powder, and she didn't have time to dab on paint, and, besides, she had had no rehearsals. That's why she was so pale."

"And where did you leave Miss Preston and her mentor?"

"Sitting on the sofa in Townsend's parlor, wondering if they could get a license to be married today, it being a holiday."

"Mr. Melvale," directed Mr. Greenfield, "I want you to find

them again, just as quick as you can, and if they are not already tied up I want you to help them do it in the most handsome style possible in a hurry. Reward Miss Townsend nicely, but get that gown from her and make a present of it to the girl it was made for. She might like to have it for a wedding gown. And as you go out, tell Mr. Stricker to send the bride the handsomest thing he can find in the glass and china department."

"Miss Preston'll appreciate all that. I think she's sorry she couldn't help you out. She has certainly missed a fine chance of being a goddess."

"You're wrong, Melvale; you're wrong! That girl doesn't need a Greek gown and a float and a parade to make her a goddess."

"William Henry don't think so, sir."

A Daughter of Cuba Libre

When they had been at school together at Notre Dame, Catherine Franklin had been most fond of the company of Manuela Moreto, and had listened with wonder and admiration to the fluent stories of the dark-eyed, olive-skinned girl from Cuba, tales of her father's desperate adventures in the trocha in the years before American intervention had rid the "Pearl of the Antilles" of Spanish rule. Spanish-American pupils, daughters of wealthy tobacco, sugar or coffee planters, were not infrequent at this and other convent schools around Baltimore, and Catherine knew enough of them not to yield so precipitately as had many girls to the romantic glamour cast around them by their coming from a strange land. But Manuela Moreto was so winning, and her narratives of bold deeds so piquant, that Catherine had taken her to her heart in a school-girl friendship, had gloried in knowing the daughter of a Cuban patriot and had liberally bedewed her handkerchief and made vows of undying love when their June commencement brought the days of parting.

But that had been five years ago, and in five years, as everyone knows, havoc can be played with a friendship of this sort. There had been a correspondence, industrious at first, then flagging as each found new friends and new interests, and finally ceasing altogether. There was no hint of any misunderstanding, and Catherine felt that if anything serious were to happen in

Manuela's life, if she were to marry, for instance, a letter would come from Cuba. Nothing came as the months added up, and she was satisfied that Manuela was living out her rather monotonous life on Senor Felipe Moreto's tobacco plantation in Pinar del Rio province.

Last August came the new revolution in Cuba, and Catherine found all her interest in Manuela reawakened as she read in daily dispatches of the uprising in Pinar del Rio, of the raids of Pino Guerra, of the feeble resistance of the Government forces, of the burning of plantations and the seizure of horses and cattle. She wondered if her one-time chum could be in any danger.

She had fully made up her mind to write to Manuela, when there came a letter from the latter. Her mother handed it to her as Catherine sat down to the supper table in her home on Caroline street, opposite St. Joseph's Hospital, her cheeks flushed from a vigorous afternoon at tennis in Clifton Park. "It's from Manuela Moreto!" she exclaimed in surprise as she saw the handwriting on the envelope. Then, with increased excitement, she added "She must be in Washington," for she had by this time noted the postmark, the home stamp and the crest of the Raleigh Hotel.

The letter said:

Dearest Girlie – After all these months of silence, you will no doubt be surprised to hear from your Cuban friend, and from Washington, too. You have probably read of the new uprising against despotism in my oft-bled country. We have suffered much, but hope for the best. I cannot tell you now, but I want to

come to Baltimore to see you and the dear old school, and then we can have one of those outpourings of confidence such as used to give us joy. Let me hear from you just as soon as you can.

Yours as ever,
MANUELA MORETO.

"Write tonight and tell her to come and visit us," said Mrs. Franklin, heartily.

"I will if dad will promise to like Manuela," answered Catherine, wistfully eying her father. The Captain was master and part owner of a steamer in the Central American banana trade, and the family knew from repeated outbursts that he had no very high opinion of the Spanish-American.

"I'm not stuck on those Dagos as a rule," said the Captain, doubtfully, "but if all you say is correct this s'norita must be a fine girl, and you know I cotton all right to fine girls."

"Is she pretty?" asked Will Franklin of his sister. Will was at the age when young men think a great deal of girls.

"She's dark," explained his mother, "and she was thin when I used to see her with Catherine at Notre Dame. But if she has filled out as she should have, she ought to be a handsome girl."

Two days later the whole family was at Camden Station to welcome their foreign visitor. Will Franklin whistled as he saw the splendid-looking young woman whom his sister rushed to kiss as she came through the gate. "Gee!" he exclaimed, "she's a stunner!" For Senorita Manuela Teresa Dolores Inez Moreto de la Rivera – to give her all of her names – had not only "filled

out" until she had a fine, well-rounded figure and a handsome dark, oval face, but had also engaging animation and the gift of wearing her clothes well. She looked as trim as can be imagined in her cream-colored linen suit, with a couple of touches of light blue at the wrists and neck.

They sat up late that night in the library of the Franklin home. After supper they had begun to ask questions of Manuela, and she had in response given them her own personal account of the new revolution. It was a narrative that awakened their sympathies for her and her family and all others who had suffered by the internal strife, and it made them strong partisans of the rebels. "They call it Cuba libre, free Cuba!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes, "and yet the days of Spanish tyranny were no worse than the oppression of Palma's crowd. They have held the offices since Roosevelt gave them the government, and they lined their pockets with what you Americans call 'graft.' That made them determined to hold on at all costs, and so my father's party – the Liberals – was not only over-taxed and annoyed by extortions on every hand, but was cheated and robbed at the polls when it tried to get control by an honest election."

And then she told of a night in July when a half-drunken crowd of Government rurales, sent to arrest her father, had set fire to his tobacco houses when they found he had been forewarned and escaped them.

"I cannot repeat to you all the vile abuses they heaped upon me," she added, quietly. "One of them, a mulatto who had been

discharged by my father, tried to kiss me. He is dead now." She shuddered with the recollection. The Baltimore family shuddered at her matter-of-fact recital.

"You mean – that he" – stammered placid, domestic Mrs. Franklin.

"I mean that two of my father's men singled him out and macheted him the first time they met in a skirmish."

On only one point was she reticent. Her father, she said, had come to this country on an errand for the rebels, but what that errand was she did not explain. "He is General Moreto now," she remarked; "and if ever Senor Zayas becomes President and our party comes into control at Havana, they have promised my father greater honors."

For a week Senorita Moreto continued to add to the powerful interest she had aroused in her hosts. By day they tried to entertain her – an afternoon at Notre Dame with the school Sisters, a trip through the rebuilt fire district, a ride to Bay Shore Park, an excursion to Port Deposit by steamboat and other summer opportunities. But of an evening, when the family was all collected in the library or on the front stoop, the Cuban dispatches in that day's News were carefully gone over and afforded texts upon which Manuela vivaciously and eloquently inveighed against the despotism of the "ins" and predicted the triumph of the "outs."

"Upon my soul, Miss Moreto," said the usually level-headed Captain Franklin, "your zeal stirs me so that I find myself

wishing every moment I was fighting on your side."

"I'd love to have you aid us," murmured the Cuban girl. And she lifted her black eyelashes and cast her brilliant eyes at Catherine's father with such intentness that he was confused and looked away without asking her, as he had intended, just how it was possible for him to help the cause.

The next morning Will, who had become the devoted admirer of the pretty Cuban, carried two telegrams for General Moreto when he left home to go to the Hopkins-place wholesale house where he was a clerk. One was addressed to the Raleigh in Washington, the other to the Cuban junta headquarters in New York. Each read:

"You must come at once. I want you."

A reply came that afternoon. It was from Wilmington, and it said:

"Union Station, 7.33 P. M."

Manuela and Catherine met the General at the hour named. The man who alighted from the Congressional Limited and whom Manuela rushed to kiss was slender and undersized, with a swarthy, weather-beaten face, curly gray hair and a white moustache, twisted and re-twisted to the limit. He was in white flannels and was so altogether neat and immaculate that Catherine, perspiring under the sultriness of the August evening, thought him the coolest person she had ever seen. He greeted her with gallantry when introduced, and, though he spoke English with slowness, his pronunciation was good and his voice musical.

After he had made a similarly good impression at the Caroline-street dwelling it was Manuela who proposed that they should leave the two fathers "to smoke together and get acquainted."

As the girls went out of the library Moreto laid half a dozen cigars on the table. "From my own plantation," he said to Captain Franklin, with rather a pompous manner. "I hope you'll like them." The Captain found them the finest Havanas he had ever puffed.

"You go to Costa Rica for bananas, do you not?" the General asked in Spanish.

"Sometimes Port Limon; sometimes Bocas del Toro," answered Catherine's father, in the same tongue. "Bocas del Toro this trip."

"When do you sail?"

"Next Saturday."

There was another silence. Franklin studied his cigar. Moreto studied the fruit captain. Presently he leaned forward on the arm of his Morris chair, in which, truth to tell, he looked rather insignificant.

"My daughter," he said, this time in English, "tells me you are with us in our revolution."

The Captain turned his clear blue eyes on the Cuban.

"Your daughter, Senor," he replied, "is a fine girl." He saw the shadow of disappointment pass over Moreto's countenance. "I'm not much on revolutions. I've seen too many of the bloody

things in the tropics, and it pays me to keep out of 'em. But your girl Manuela has a powerful strong way of putting things, and I'm bound to say, if all she tells is not beyond the mark, my sympathies are with you and your crowd."

"Beyond the mark! Why, Dios, Senor Capitan!" cried the General, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "Why, she could not tell you a tenth of the truth." And he launched into a long narrative of the oppressions in Cuba. The words came like a torrent, mostly Spanish, occasionally English; and Franklin, sitting there fascinated, his cigar forgotten, could think of nothing save that the daughter's fluency was a gift of heredity.

When Moreto had ended and had sunk back half exhausted on the cushions the Captain, usually calm and self-contained, betrayed unwonted enthusiasm.

"I'm with you through and through," he exclaimed as he rose from his chair and sought the Cuban's hand. "You haven't had a square deal, and I'd like to see you get it."

Moreto's black eyes seemed to pierce him.

"Would you help us?" he asked. His tone was so tense and low that Franklin barely caught the words.

"Help you! How can I?"

Moreto paused again. He was not quite sure of his man. Finally he uncovered his aim:

"Take rifles to Cuba."

Captain Franklin stepped back. He did not exactly like the proposal. He had always kept out of such musses, and he knew

it was violating Federal law to be a filibuster.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.