

ALICE DEVINE

By EDGAR JEPSON

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CHAPTER V. (Continued.)

"Conversation before cards for me, Herbert," I said coldly; and I went on talking to Miss Maynard.

She seemed all right, she looked a nice girl, and she talked a nice girl. But you never can tell; and the Director frocks of the two girls were about as direct as they make them. I was really annoyed by the one the ghost girl was wearing.

I went on talking till I felt that Herbert was changing the bit sadly. When I grew afraid that at any moment he might snort, I said:

"Well, I'll go and flutter for a while."

I sat down on the farther side of the table so that I could watch Herbert and Miss Maynard and as I played began to size up the gathering. It seemed harmless enough. Morrisdale was banker—a fifty pound bank—men were staking fivers and tenners. I knew most of the men playing; half a dozen of them were serious gamblers, the others were young ones on the racket. I did not think the game would stay so gentle as this all evening. As I played I watched the ghost girl and Miss Maynard. I did wish those Director frocks were not so confoundedly direct.

Miss Maynard was talking away to the solemn Herbert, and he was talking to her. But presently I grasped the fact that she kept looking toward the door. Three more men came in, one of them that hulking brute, Sir Theobald Walsh. They came to the table. Miss Maynard still kept looking at the door. Then in came Freddy Gage, Herbert's private secretary. I saw the look he and Miss Maynard exchanged and I knew whom she had been looking for.

Freddy had been one of my fags at Eton and I had always liked him. I have always believed that he wrote Herbert's speeches as gently as articles for him. To speak roughly, he has four times as many brains in his little fag as Herbert has in his capacious bullet head. He went to Herbert and the two girls and began to talk. I went on with my game, considering things. It was all very well, but however much she might look for his coming, I did not think that when it came to get his business. Freddy, with his brains and five hundred a year, besides his salary, stood much chance against Herbert with his seven thousand. Several times I caught the ghost girl's eye; she was looking at me in a puzzled kind of way. Evidently she had not yet grown used to my not being a simple commoner; she was rearranging.

Then Otto Steiner and the pebbled duke went to the couch and began to talk to the ghost girl. Freddy Gage seemed to do a little readjusting, for in about two minutes he carried off Miss Maynard through the window on to the balcony; and Herbert came across to the table, looking rather puzzled and began to play.

The pebbled duke went on talking to the ghost girl; but his eyes kept straying to the table. Then he came to get. At once Walsh rose and went to the ghost girl, pulled a chair up to the couch and leaning over her in a proprietary sort of way began to talk in her ear. I was annoyed. Walsh is not the kind of man whom one likes to see within a quarter of a mile of a decent girl.

Steiner took the bank and made it a three hundred bank. Miss Maynard and Freddy Gage came back into the room looking very pleased with themselves, and coming to the table, watched the play. It was higher, men were betting twenties and fifties. Then I saw the ghost girl sitting up very stiffly and frowning and her eyes were sparkling angrily. Walsh was smiling in an ugly way.

I got up and went across to them.

"You look as if you found the heat of the room rather trying, Miss Devine. Won't you come out on the balcony and get a breath of fresh air?" I said.

Walsh scowled at me and said something about her being very well where she was.

She rose quickly and said: "Oh, yes, I should like to."

"Disagreeable brute, Walsh," I said, when we had settled down into two easy chairs among the plants.

"I don't like him. I'm very glad you took me away from him," she said in a hesitating way.

"Go on disliking him—hard," I said. "You know what these baronets are. They shouldn't be encouraged. Whenever you come across a baronet sit on him."

She laughed softly; then she said: "It's all very well; but what if they won't be sat on?"

"Walsh is a pertinacious beggar," I said. "But keep on sitting on him, and in time he'll understand what's happening."

"I do what I can," she said. "But he doesn't seem to understand yet."

"Never mind; keep on. It's the only way," I said.

She leaned back in her chair and looked across the gardens. Then she looked at me and said rather quickly: "Why did you give me a false name? It wasn't fair."

"Oh, all my friends call me Garth. Don't you know. And it might have made those children uncomfortable to know that they were with a lord. I've known it work that way with people; goodness knows why. Besides, peers have such a bad name. You might have got straight out of the car and run for your life, if you had known that I was a peer."

"Are you ever at a loss for an excuse?" she said smiling.

"No—now you come to speak of it, I don't think I ever am. But these are not excuses, they're good solid reasons. Still, you might have told me when we were talking about those hieroglyphics."

"Yes; of course I might. But why should I? Besides it was a bit difficult I couldn't say: 'By the way, my real name is Lord Garthoyle,' could I?"

"Perhaps not. But I like things above board."

I could not see exactly how that liking went with the ghost trick. But there women are like that; they must humbug.

"I haven't thanked you for getting

at the gambling parties of a non-descript millionaire."

"She isn't!" said Herbert.

"I don't think she knows she is, any more than Miss Devine does. But that's what they are doing all the time."

"But it's absurd!" cried Herbert.

"Scruton's is not a gambling hell; the play's perfectly fair there. I asked La Quoene and I asked the duke. They were both sure that it was."

"Were they?" I said. "What does that matter? The play is quite fair at Monte Carlo. Every one will be saying that Miss Maynard was a decoy at a gambling hell, if you bring her into prominence by marrying her. And you will bring her into prominence. You are so eligible."

"Well—well—they'll say something just as bad about any one I marry."

"Not about Anne."

"I wish you'd get that silly idea out of your head. I'm not going to marry Anne," said Herbert pettishly.

"I was sure that he was; but it was only a matter of time," I said.

"It isn't only that; but Miss Maynard wouldn't make the kind of wife you want. She's had a poor time; and if she marries a rich man, she'll make up for it—hard. She'll set up the backs of all your political crowd; and she'll never take the trouble to learn the political game—the drawing room part of it. She won't be bothered with it."

"You're wrong—quite wrong. I know that Kitty is fond of pleasure. She admits it—frankly. But she has a plastic nature; I should mold her."

I looked at Herbert hard. The idiot who could say that about Miss Maynard was worth looking at.

"You couldn't mold her in a hundred years—not with a club," I said slowly. "If there's any molding done, she'll do it. Within six months of your marriage she'll have a regular attendant at every big race meeting in England."

"Preposterous!" said Herbert.

"I'll bet you a tenner," I said.

"You know I never bet," said Herbert.

"No, you don't; and yet you propose to marry Miss Maynard."

"But I don't see the connection," said Herbert stiffly.

"Which shows you have no business to be marrying Miss Maynard."

"But I do see that I am foolish to consult you. The fact is, Rupert, you are so incorrigibly frivolous yourself that you are incredulous of the possibility of seriousness in any one else," he said pompously.

"It isn't that at all," I said. "But there are some brands of seriousness that I don't mix. Yours is one of them. Herbert rose solemnly and said: 'I see that I was foolish to consult you. I had my doubts, grave doubts, of the wisdom of it. Good morning.' And he stalked toward the door."

"Good morning," I said. "But don't forget that I've told you."

He went out solemnly.

I had done no good; but that did not trouble me. I had not expected to do any good. The important thing was that I had told Herbert the facts, and my mind was quite at ease.

I went round to Scruton's next party—he gave them twice a week—for I felt that as the head of the family I ought to keep an eye on Herbert's love affair and besides I wanted to know if the ghost girl had forgiven me for having been so open with me.

(CHAPTER VI. (Continued.))

I talked to her two or three times in the interval of playing; but she would not come on the balcony again. Perhaps she felt that it led to confidences. I talked to her about Kitty Maynard, of course, for I wanted to know as much as possible about her; and once more she said what a pity it was that the Maynards were so hard up.

"Well, Miss Maynard must marry a rich man," I said.

"She says she means to. But I do hope she won't. It isn't right to marry a man—you don't love," she said in a very genuine tone.

"It's often done," I said. "And Freddy Gage would be awfully cut up."

"You've noticed that? You are quick!"

"It's pretty obvious," I said.

"It would be so much the best thing to do. He's very nice. But I'm afraid he hasn't enough money," she said with a sigh.

Some one joined us and I got no more talk with her that evening.

After that I fell into the way of going to Scruton's parties regularly. I had to keep an eye on Herbert. His love affair was going on in a very satisfactory way, for him; and he was wearing it very carefully. But I saw nothing wrong. Indeed, with such seasoned gamblers as Tony Le Quoene, Steiner and two or three of the other men who were playing at the table, it would have been very difficult for there to be anything wrong. I watched Scruton with particular care when he took the bank. He seemed far too clumsy a dealer to play any tricks with the cards. Besides, he sat about seven hundred over his bank.

Men kept dropping out and talking to the girls for a while and coming back again. They talked to them with too easy an air to please me. But it was no business of mine. Scruton undoubtedly used the two girls to attract men to his parties.

I dropped out myself and had another talk with Miss Maynard; and it made me surer than ever that she could never do for Herbert. Soon after two, the two girls slipped away; and then Herbert went, and then Gage, and Walsh, and two or three others. I took it that these came chiefly on account of the two girls; and I was annoyed to see that Walsh was one of them. The rest of us broke up at about a quarter past four.

I walked home rather slowly; one way and another I had plenty to think of. Well, I had had a pleasant evening.

CHAPTER VI.

The Rescue of Herbert Polkington.

I was finishing my breakfast rather late next morning when Richards ushered in Herbert. He said "Good morning," and I told Richards to pour him in a cup of coffee. He poured it out and went out of the room.

"Well, what do you think about Miss Maynard?" said Herbert.

"I think, my good chap, that outside is good enough for you," said I.

"Nonsense! Why?" said Herbert.

"She's a thoroughly nice girl and very clever."

"She's clever and pretty and nice. But all the same it won't do. You can't marry a girl who is acting as a decoy

if they enjoyed being engaged. What's the matter?"

"You do ask straightforward questions."

"Well, I must do my best to smooth the path of true love."

"True love," said the ghost girl softly. "Yes, one would have to do that. But—but—oh, well, Kitty isn't happy. I think your cousin wears her a little."

"Herbert would wear a turban if he got a fair chance at it," I said.

"And he's rather exacting. He forbade her to come here but she would. She said she wasn't going to desert me, and he was angry."

"Herbert is a fool; but she must know that. She's really worried about Freddy Gage, I suppose?"

"I've no right to talk about it," she said quickly.

"No more have I, but we mustn't let that prevent us," I said. "It's a case of three in a hole. Now, if I were to haul Herbert out by the scruff of the neck, the other two would be happy enough. I should like to do a little rescue work."

"If only you could! But you can't! Your cousin is very obstinate. It distresses me to think of their marriage. I can only see unhappiness for Kitty—for both of them—in it."

"That's all there is to see."

"Oh, why doesn't he carry her off by force and marry her?" she cried.

"I should rather densely," I said.

"I mean Mr. Gage not Mr. Polkington."

"Oh! She'd let him, would she?" I said.

"I oughtn't to have let you know," she said quickly.

But she had let me know, and it set me thinking in fact, gave me an idea. At Scruton's next two parties, things did not seem to be getting any better. I saw from Herbert's sulky face that the molding process was not working well, but he was very snappish when I told him how it struck me. On the fourth evening before the announcement of the engagement, I came on Freddy and Miss Maynard in the central garden. Neither of them had any right to be there, since they did not belong to the families of any of the tenants. They seemed to be quarreling and not enjoying the quarrel. She went off to see the ghost girl and I insisted that Freddy should dine with me.

He was very like a funeral and the champagne was some time ironing the frown out of his boyish brow.

"But don't you think it's a jolly shame your letting that poor girl come to grief by marrying that prig Herbert?" His face went crimson and I thought he would throw his plate at me.

"Damn it all, Garthoyle! I've enough to worry me without you starting to nag at me!" he said.

"Well, why don't you stop it?" I said.

"Stop it? How can I stop it? Haven't I tried to stop it? Haven't I told her forty times what an aggravating rotter Polkington is? Haven't I argued with her, and begged and begged her not to ruin her life by marrying him? Don't I know him? Haven't I had two years of him?"

"You have," said I.

"She couldn't stand him; she's not the kind of girl."

"She isn't," said I.

"But she's made up her mind to marry a rich man, and nothing will stop her. She's sick to death of being hard up. It's hopeless."

(To Be Continued.)

ARREST MADE IN SHORT TIME

OTTUMWA LAD TRIES NEW GAME IN OSKALOOSA BUT GETS CAUGHT BY OFFICER.

The speedy recovery of stolen goods and arrest of the thief who gave Ottumwa as his residence, is reported in the following from the Oskaloosa Herald:

A young man who gives the name of Joe or George Johnson of Ottumwa, and who has represented himself to be a sailor with the United States navy, has put himself in bad with Oskaloosa people and informations have been filed in the office of Squire J. W. LaFollette charging larceny upon which warrants for arrest have been issued and search for the defendant started. Johnson engaged a room at the Theo. Richmond boarding house last evening. He had not been in the house but a few hours until he appropriated a suit of clothes and a new hat from a wardrobe, sold the suit at a convenient second hand store and with the proceeds left for fields anew. He also took a pin, an heirloom, from Mrs. Bible, with whom he boarded for a time after coming to Oskaloosa. Constable Arthur S. Shaw recovered the clothes but the pin is still missing. The lad took departure for New Sharon last night. As soon as the papers were in the constable's hands he immediately got busy, and finding his man had bought a ticket for New Sharon via the M. & St. L., he called officers at that place by phone. Johnson was there all right. He was arrested soon after the officers were placed upon his trail and the Oskaloosa constable went after him and had him in custody here within a short time.

Theo. Richmond states the boy did not even sleep in his bed last night. When he did not appear for breakfast an investigation was made, disclosing the theft of the clothing. The matter was laid before the magistrate, the clothing located, and recovered, and the party under arrest, all within the space of three hours, a record for business of this character, more particularly so, when the perpetrator had fled and was a fugitive from justice.

Mrs. Bible's loss exceeds \$25, and this may be a serious charge for the defendant, taking his case into the district court.

Children's Evening Story

THE TALE OF FATTY COON.

Fatty Coon Goes Fishing.

One day Fatty Coon was strolling along the brook which flowed not far from his home. He stopped now and then, to crouch close to the water's edge, in the hope of catching a fish. And one time when he lay quite still among the rocks, at the side of a deep pool, with his eyes searching the clear water, Fatty Coon suddenly saw something bright, all yellow and red, that lighted on the water right before him. It was a bug, or a huge fly. And Fatty was very fond of bugs to eat, you know. So he lost no time. The bright thing had scarcely settled on the water when Fatty reached out and seized it. He put it into his mouth, when the strangest thing happened. Fatty felt himself pulled right over into the water.

He was surprised, for he never knew a bug or a fly to be so strong as that. Something pricked his cheek and Fatty thought that the bright thing had stung him. He tried to take it out of his mouth, and he was surprised again. Whatever the thing was it seemed to be stuck fast in his mouth. And all the time Fatty was being dragged along through the water. He began to be frightened. And for the first time he noticed that there was a slender line which stretched from his mouth straight across the pool. As he looked along the line Fatty saw a man at the other end of it—a man, standing on the other side of the brook! And he was pulling Fatty toward him as fast as he could.

Do you wonder that Fatty Coon was frightened? He jumped back—as well as he could, in the water—and tried to swim away. His mouth hurt; but he plunged and pulled just the same, and jerked his head and swirled and wriggled and twisted. And just as Fatty had almost given up hope of getting free, the gray colored bug or fly, of whatever it was, flew out of his mouth and took the line with it. At last, that was what Fatty Coon thought. And he swam quickly to the bank and scampered into the bushes.

Now, this was what really happened. Farmer Green had come up the brook to catch trout. On the end of his fish line he had tied a make believe fly, with a cork hidden under its red and yellow wings. He had stolen along the brook very quietly, so that he wouldn't frighten the fish. And he had made so little noise that Fatty Coon never heard him at all. Farmer Green had not seen Fatty, crouched as he was among the stones. And when Fatty reached out and grabbed the make believe fly Farmer Green was even more surprised at what happened than Fatty himself. If the fish line he had tied a make believe fly, with a cork hidden under its red and yellow wings. He had stolen along the brook very quietly, so that he wouldn't frighten the fish. And he had made so little noise that Fatty Coon never heard him at all. Farmer Green had not seen Fatty, crouched as he was among the stones. 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