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Saint Mary's Beacon
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THE LADIES' CUP.

THE STORY OF A RACE THAT CALLED FOR HEROIC DEEDS.

Once, a long time back, Lieut.—now Capt.—Jackson Gould, commanding a company of United States field artillery, had spoken to Bonnie's father of his deep regard for Bonnie.

"You should ask her to marry you," said Mr. Kilbourne.

"I do," replied Jack, "every time I see her."

This was the simple truth. And so fixed was the habit that when Capt. Jackson Gould, on duty now in the Philippines, heard that the Kilbourns were in Hongkong, he secured two weeks' leave to continue the quest. The Kilbourns had been touring Europe, and Bonnie had decided to return to her home in the States via Suez—possibly because the trip would convey her through that part of the world temporarily inhabited by Jack, and possibly because of any other reason imaginable.

Anyway Jack went promptly to Hongkong. He found Bonnie as lovable as always, a good deal tanned and much delighted to see him. She was stopping with her father at the Peak Hotel, and that became Jack's abiding place, too. Together they visited everything worth visiting in and near Hongkong, with side trips up the Canton River and long strolls among the handsome hills. At the end of the first week, they had been in each other's company almost constantly—almost, but not quite.

Jack, thinking of this, sat on the rail of the Peak Hotel porch, and Bonnie, thinking of many things, lay back in a big chair near him. Fifty hundred feet below them spread Hongkong Harbor, and between the shores of the rugged little island and Kowloon, tiny crafts of all sorts dotted the waters. The city, very much congested as to buildings in the Chinese quarter along the Queen's road, and very open in the European section, was a panorama far beneath their feet. The air, cool and bracing, made the very breathing of it a delight.

"On Monday," said Jack, solemnly, "I must return to Manila."

"It's too bad. But you'll be here for the races on Saturday, and that's a blessing."

"Do you really like to have me about?"

"Of course I do."

"Then—"

"The races here are called gymkansas. Funny name that—but not as funny as the contests. The men who take part have to do all sorts of curious things."

"I've seen 'em."

"On Saturday there's one big race. They call it the Ladies' Nomination because all those who enter it are named by ladies, who are invited to take part. I—I've received an invitation."

"That's natural."

"And I'm going to try to win. There is a lovely big cup for a prize."

"But it is such a fool's race, Bonnie."

"Yes,"—sweetly, "I've nominated you."

"Me?"

"Um—h'm."

Jack looked really startled.

"What's the matter with Capt. J. C. Hollingsworth Brantwood, C. B.?" he inquired.

Bonnie returned the look, but with dignity.

"There is nothing the matter with Capt. Brantwood, so far as I know," she said.

"He'll expect you to nominate him."

"Why should he?"

"He's here all the time, or taking you somewhere. And he knows all about that sort of thing. I don't."

"Do you want me to withdraw your name?"

She asked the question steadily, and Jack reached out for her hand, but did not find it.

"Not if you want me to ride—or do I turn handsprings for the cup? You know what I would do for you, Bonnie."

"I thought that we, being Americans, should do our best. There's an Indian Rajah in it and that royal Russian with the queer whiskers. It's a sort of an international gymkana, you see."

"I'm booked. Whom are you going with?"

"The Consul and his family. Papa will be there, too."

"You seem to have left Capt. J. C. Hollingsworth Brantwood—"

"Jack!"

"I was only going to say that he

doesn't seem to be on the program, and I was surprised, and—"

"Capt. Brantwood is in charge of the race. And if he has been good enough to show me some little attention here you should be thankful, and not grouchy. He's going to call on me tonight."

"So am I."

"That will mean a pleasant evening. Will you go down to the club now and study upon the race? I haven't the slightest idea what you will have to do."

"A cake walk, probably. But I will find out and let you know. Whom does the cup belong to, if I win—me or us?"

"Me."

"And if I lose, as I'm sure to do, you will find fault with me for a long time. It isn't a contest with exhilarating prospects—not exactly. If you'd marry me afterwards—"

"Here comes papa to take you to the club."

"Or marry Capt. Hollingsworth?"

"Tut!"

"Or anybody else, to settle my troubles definitely, I would do a gymkana in a bathing suit. It is this awful suspense that—at right, sir, I will come right down."

Jack arose lazily, stooped and touched his lips to Bonnie's hair before she could uncurl in the big chair, and went down the long flight of steps to meet Mr. Kilbourne, who was shouting that the tram car was ready to start on its long flight to Hongkong proper. They took seats in the front end of the car, the Chinese attendants moved briskly about and then the great spread of land and water, houses and boats far below began to rise slowly to meet them. There is no descending sensation in a ride down Victoria Peak in Hongkong—it seems to be a steady rise of the lower parts of the city, until the little station near St. John's Cathedral reaches your feet and you step out at sea level again.

They rode in rickshaws to the club, met many friends, played billiards, and put in a pleasant afternoon couple of hours, at that time of midday when no one works in Hongkong. Later they went to an officers' luncheon in the mess-room at Murray Barracks, and Jack was polite to a tall, robust officer in the khaki uniform of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. But concerning this same officer he found time to say to Mr. Kilbourne:

"Most of these fellows are jolly, but I don't think much of that Capt. Brantwood, with all his titles. Seems to me to be something of a chump."

"Not a bit of it," returned Mr. Kilbourne, heartily. "Fine chap, Brantwood. Bonnie likes him, too."

Capt. Jack Gould looked dissatisfied, and went over to stroke the silky ears of the big cashmere goat, which, as a gift from Queen Victoria, is the honored mascot of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

The race for the Ladies' Nomination Cup was the third on Saturday's card—amile race, starting and finishing before the grand stand, so that the large audience which attends all gymkansas at Hongkong might have a good view of the tortures undergone by the participants. The track is at Happy Valley, which was a burying ground when Hongkong was a Chinese city, but is now a miniature place of recreation set in wonderfully beautiful surroundings. Tall hills inclose it and a big clubhouse with wide porches is built on one side, with sloping green lawns. The track, except that it is perhaps better kept, is just like any other track in the world, and there are golf links and a cricket field within the oval.

"Jack did not go to Happy Valley with Bonnie, for he was busy all the morning picking his Chinese pony for the race. He saw her first when, looking up at the grand stand, she smiled at him across Capt. Brantwood's broad shoulder. The young American officer had never seen anything just like the scene about him at that time—the brilliantly-dressed throngs on the lawn, the grand stand and the clubhouse porches rivaling each other in bright colors, and every second face seeming to show a different nationality. In rickshaws and green-and-gold sedan chairs, with uniformed coolies, spectators kept pouring in, and each group added something to the brightness and animation of the whole.

With Jack on the lawn stood Mohammed Din, the wealthy Indian, and Prince Salchowsk, the Russian navy officer, as well as half a dozen young Englishmen, who were to compete with him in the Ladies'

Nomination. They were not at all jealous of each other, and answered good-humoredly the remarks of passing friends, while waiting for a summons to the paddock.

"I am all right for to meet the egg an' to ride the horse," said the Prince, "but I fear I will not much ride the bikeekle. I only learn now for three days."

"The distance is short—only fifty yards," said a Hongkong physician, also entered.

"Eet iss short, yass, but I find it not take for a long distance to fall off' the bikeekle. Only I go one—two—three yard for to fall off myself."

Still he bought many pools on his own success, to leave with the lady who had nominated him. Jack took few on himself, but learned from Mr. Kilbourne that Bonnie had plunged heavily. He had made no preparations for the race, and looked upon it with some disfavor until he reached the track, when the peculiar fascination of the queer contests took hold of him. During the first two events he was alternately engaged in getting his griffin—which, in Hongkong, means a strong young Chinese pony that has never raced before—in shape, and in admiring the beautiful scene about him. But every time he glanced up at the flag-decorated box of the American Consul he encountered a smile of encouragement—and Capt. J. C. Hollingsworth Brantwood, C. B.

The message from the paddock came in good time, and then Jack went after Bonnie, and escorted her to the square space between the grand stand and clubhouse, usually devoted to the saddling of horses. Now, however, ten bright-colored rickshaws stood in line, each with a large number on it.

"We're seven," said Bonnie.

"I wish we were one," said Jack.

No. 7 stood in the center of the line, and Bonnie was helped to its seat, nine other fair nominators being similarly disposed of by as many muscular nominees at the same time. Capt. Brantwood was present to give final instructions.

"You will race in the rickshaws for seventy-five yards," he said, "and then dismount your lady. She will hold you one egg which you are to eat, and then run backwards for twenty-five yards. Here you will reverse your coat, mount a bicycle and ride for fifty yards. Then finish over the hurdles on your ponies. Don't forget your own number throughout—everything will show it plainly from start to finish."

"The egg?" asked Prince Salchowsk.

"Of course. Are you ready?"

Everybody nodded.

"Then sound the assembly."

To the lively tooting of the bugles all ten rickshaws filed out, the nominees between the shafts, and paraded past the grandstand out to the level track. Jack saw to it that Bonnie was comfortable, and then joined in the general conversation and banter of the mixed lot of contestants. The starter, with his flag, appeared; there was lively jockeying for position, and then they all shot away in a sudden swirl of dust to the cheers of the great throng of spectators.

Bonnie's next sensation was that of a sudden bump, as rickshaw Number Seven came to a quick stop, and Jack lifted her out and set her lightly down on the track. Ten little numbered stands were there, each supporting a small oil stove, a bunch of matches, an egg, water, pepper, salt, cup, spoon and cooking dish. Upon these the ladies from all the rickshaws fell with vigor, and amid the sputtering of matches, the smell of burning kerosene and the sharp remarks that followed the scorching of slender fingers, Bonnie worked briskly. In the distance the anxious murmurs of the crowd could be heard.

Jack lighted the stove, and Bonnie poured on the water and dropped in a little white Chinese egg, marked very distinctly with the figure "7." Then both looked up and their eyes met.

"You were the first here, Bonnie whispered.

"But this isn't anywhere near the wire. How long does it take an egg to boil in Hongkong?"

"I haven't any idea."

"Three minutes will do it in New York and twenty in Arizona. Watch those native women, Bonnie, and as soon as the first one reaches for an egg you spoon this one out. I'll hold the cup."

"But not my hand, please. Let go, Jack—"

"Hold steady, now. That tall girl

on the end is swashing around in her dish preparatory to—now, darling, quick!"

Bonnie made a dab with her spoon into the water, which was not boiling at all, brought up the little egg, and dashed it into the cup held toward her by Jack. Perhaps if she had not dashed it this story would never be written at all. But she did, and immediately afterward there were confusion and embarrassment overwhelming entry Number Seven. The egg had broken all right, but—

"Oh, Lord!" said Bonnie.

Jack started back, but was too game a sportsman to exhibit his emotion.

"It's—it's a dead one, Bonnie," he groaned.

Then he glanced about to see if the other nominees were fixed in the same way, and promptly noted that they were not. Some were gulping at the half-raw eggs and some were dancing about the little stoves.

"You've cooked it beautifully, dear, and it's not your fault. But I've reached my limit. I couldn't—"

"Jack!"

"Talk fast, darling."

"Listen. I'm going to open my parasol a little. When I do, throw it inside."

Bonnie was hoarse with excitement.

"I can't. It—"

"You must."

"It—it'll leak, Bonnie."

She had thrust in front of her the mass of lace and fluffy stuff which had been leaning against the stand.

"For flag and country, Jack. Drop it."

He dropped it.

A fraction of a second later hand Prince Salchowsk and the Hongkong doctor were running backwards, shoulder to shoulder, along the track, being joined at intervals of the same time by the other racers. Two of these fell before the bicycles were reached, where the remaining eight turned their coats inside out and threw themselves upon the wheels. The Prince took an immediate header and three others piled up on him. The Indian, two Englishmen and Jack reached the ponies safely, although entirely out of breath, and then came the scurry for home. It was neck and neck all the way, but Jack's West Point days had taught him something about riding a horse, and he fairly lifted his mount in one big jump at the wire—winner, by a nose, of the greatest race Hongkong had ever seen.

He heard the roars of applause and saw moving colors on the lawns and grand stand, but was too much played out for a moment to notice anything else. Then he felt a punch on his left leg, and looked down to see that Bonnie, blushing and adorably pretty, had come out to lead the winning pony to the paddock. Capt. Brantwood was in the party and he looked at Jack with curious interest.

"What did you do with it?" asked Jack, when opportunity came for a quiet word with Bonnie.

"Dad—poor old Dad. I don't think he will ever forgive me."

"Is he—?"

"Holding it? Yes. But if you love me don't look his way. I never knew such a thing could—why, Jack, he is leaving his seat!"

Capt. Gould glanced up toward the Consul's box and saw Mr. Kilbourne walking, with head very erect toward the rear porch of the clubhouse. The fluff lace parasol was held in one arm, stiffened outwardly at his side.

"There was no one else," sighed Bonnie. "And I didn't dare to leave it alone."

Some days later a group of men in the cafe of the Hongkong Club were talking of the big gymkana, and, not unnaturally, the Ladies' Nomination was mentioned.

"They say young Gould and that rich American girl came to an understanding before they parted," said one.

"He was in a mighty good humor when he left for Manila," added a second.

"Fine young chap," put in a third.

"And she's a beauty."

"Yep."

"He is a good man for to ride a horse, I think," said Prince Salchowsk.

There was silence for a moment. Then Captain J. C. Hollingsworth Brantwood, C. B., who was tugging at his mustache, spoke.

"He is a bloomin' orstrich," he said moodily—and thereafter took no further part in the conversation.

—Los Angeles (Sunday) Times.

American Man's Horoscope.

The average American is a man 5 feet 8 inches in height, with a chest girth of 36 inches and a weight of 150 pounds. He is nearly an inch taller than his English cousin and more than an inch taller than his distant cousin, the German. He probably looks over the heads of all European people. In weight, however, he is exceeded by both Englishman and German, being of slimmer build, although he is probably as heavy as the average European.

His family consists of one wife and three children, a fourth child having died in infancy. His age is thirty-seven years, and he expects to live thirty-seven years longer. His expectation of life is greater by a year or more than that of the representative of any other people, those who most nearly approach him being our kin, the English and the Germans. His wife is thirty-five years of age, is 5 feet 4 inches in height and weighs 126 pounds. She will live to the age sixty-eight years, as her expectation of life is greater than that of her husband. They were married ten years ago. The two older children are pursuing their studies in the public schools, which the youngest child has not yet entered.

Both he and his wife received a common school education, but did not continue their studies into the high school. His home is near Columbus, Ind., toward the southern part of the State, at an altitude of 300 feet above the sea. At this place the mean annual temperature is fifty-three degrees and the annual rainfall forty-one inches. Here he owns a farm of 137 acres, eighty acres of which are under cultivation.—Everybody's Magazine.

A LARGE COVEY.—Two old hunters were swapping yarns and had got to quail.

"Why," said one, "I remember a year when quail were so thick that you could get eight or ten at a shot with a rifle."

The other one sighed.

"What's the matter?" said the first.

"I was thinking of my quail hunts. I had a fine black horse that I rode every where and one day out hunting quail I saw a big covey on a low branch of a tree. I threw the bridle rein over the end of the limb and took a shot.

Several birds fell and the rest flew away.

"Well, sir, there were so many quail on that limb that when they flew off it sprang back into place and hung my horse!"—Exchange.

The Juicy Season.

De rabbit run

From de white man gun,

(Come down on dat trigger!)

De possum say,

"I gope terday—

I mus' hide out f'm dat nigger!"

Fer hit's good times now in Georgy,

In de country en de town;

Taters in de ashes,

En 'possum bakin' brown!

De turkey say: