

A Page of Interesting Short Stories

LOVE'S RETREAT

BY WILL SEAT.

T was a dear little house. "Florence and Drake went over every corner of it that first wonderful day when they saw Wrecker's Cove from a car window, and seized their suitcases, and fairly fell off the train."

"I won't go another mile," said Flo, willfully. "It's gorgeous here. Drake, just look at those little islands, and the necks of land stretching out to sea, and O, look at the long salt marshes out yonder. Drake, I'm going to stick my feet down in deep and become indigenous to the soil. Isn't that what you call it?"

"It's a peach of a spot," Drake returned gratefully. He had set the suitcase down and mopped off his forehead. "I wish we were honeymooning this month instead of last month, girl."

Ever since the wedding day they had wandered from hotel to hotel, hunting a restful, dreamy spot of sweetheating solitude. This day they had been on their way to Shepherd's Landing.

Yet midway along the little sleepy railroad line, the train had switched out around a headland of tumbled brownish green rock, and suddenly Wrecker's Cove lay revealed, a curve of sand so smooth and white it looked like creamy silk outspread in the sunlight.

"Here we light," said Flo joyously. "I hope there's a hotel."

There was, but it was not pleasing. It was a one-story edifice with a bar room and a long dining room with pink mosquito netting over the long tables.

"Are those cottages to let?" Drake had asked the proprietor. He was also local station agent, and express agent, and ran the livery stable.

"Ain't nuthin' ter speak of," he said cheerfully. "We don't have many folks stop off long."

"No, certainly not," Drake acquiesced. He stared out at the beau-

tiful lonely panorama of sea and sky, and shorelands. "Any tents to let?"

"Not that I ever heard of. Have you been up to the Tamerlin cottage? But, sure, I doubt if he'd let it with all them things in it."

"I haven't heard of it. You point the way, and I'll find it."

The hotel keeper pointed out a sort of bird house that seemed to hang to the side of the brownish green headland.

"There it is," he said. "It ain't nuthin' to look like. The fellow that came here and built it was peculiar. He was married, too."

Drake was silent. Florence shouldered her trunk. They followed their guide up the path to the bird house.

"How long have you folks been married?" This impulsively.

"Seeral years," Drake told him cheerfully.

"So? I thought you was just a pair of honeymooners. I saw your names in the society notes down at Boston a few weeks ago. I read all the society news, 'cause you don't get much excitement up here on the shore."

He stopped. Down the path came a young man. The hotel keeper hailed him warmly.

"Going ter let your house, Mr. Tamerlin?"

"I had not thought of it, Hickson, but—"

"I'll take it for three months, cash in advance," Drake put in with one of his feebly strategic impulses.

That afternoon Flo opened the little front door with her own key as housewife, and walked in. It was a joy, that house. The great fireplace called out a welcome to them. There was a crane in it, and a big black kettle hung on it, waiting for a friendly hand.

There were little quaint cupboards in unexpected places. The dishes were Chinese, dull green and deep blue and white. The chairs were of hickory, toned to a deep brown, with huge soft denim cushions in them. And everything was brand new.

"I don't see why Mr. Tamerlin fixed this all up adorably just for a bachelor's shack," said Flo, suspiciously, after a few days' residence. "Drake, it's the dearest little place, and I've

found shirtwaist boxes tucked away with linen, sheets and pillow cases, and everything."

"Isn't that customary among civilized tribes?"

"But these were exquisite, stupid. And all marked with an embroidered monogram. And there are traces of a feminine touch everywhere. I wonder if he's killed her, and buried her under the kitchen floor, or down on the headland some place. It's weird, don't you think so?"

"What the dickens do I care about another fellow's family troubles? We're in luck to get the place, we're not dig up any skeletons. The fishing's great down off the Point, and I've paid three months in advance. We won't go home till October, when the leaves begin to turn leather colored out on those big oaks yonder. Like it?"

"I would, if I didn't fret over that other woman. I go around using her things, and wonder if she would care. Everything is in such dainty order. There's not a pipe in the whole place excepting yours."

"Lo a me, love my pipe."

"Where did Mr. Tamerlin say he was going?" Flo went on absently.

"He didn't say. I saw him sitting on a lone rock in the office yesterday morning the other side of the boat landing. He's not a native, I found. He built the house last year, and fitted it up early in the spring. In June he went away, and came back just a week before we came. He said Mrs. Tamerlin would be on later."

"Then she is his wife."

"In a tone of relieved conviction. "Maybe they've quarreled and separated. Drake, dear, think of it!"

"He looks miserable enough for any tragedy, the poor kid. I think I'll get him out fishing and let him unburden his mind."

Drake grinned. He was big and genial and happy. The nervous worries of another man's heart strings were amusing. He would get hold of the boy and shake him up a bit, show him the whole world did not revolve down the drop curtain just because Dan Cupid sulked, and wouldn't play.

"But this was the eyes which held Dr. Dane's regard while strange thrills

better acquaintance with Tamerlin, and twice he was rebuffed. His landlord did not fish. He did not care for boating. He was not going to stay long at Wrecker's Cove.

"How about all those trunks and boxes in the cellar?" asked Drake, mildly. "Taking any of them away? My wife's been a bit nervous over them. Spoke of skeletons."

"They contain my bride's trousseau and her family belongings," replied Tamerlin, in a melancholy tone. "If they are not in your way, I should like to leave them. They are very dear to me."

feelingly one morning. "Over the whole place there still lingers some indefinable influence, don't you think so, boy dear?"

"If she was a good cook, then I'll swear it was catching."

Drake leaned back against the wall in a large hickory chair, and beamed on the face of nature. Below him the little train had just glided in and out again. He could see a few passengers strolling up from the station, then the lone little hack suddenly wakened to life, and darted up the incline towards the Tamerlin cottage.

"O, Drake, what if after all, it

sounded on the front screen door. She was striking looking. All in gray she was, silver gray corduroy, with a natty shirt waist, and hint of old rose in her tie, and a rough light gray hat with gun metal pin. Also a suitcase at her feet. But she looked tired, and Flo was tender hearted.

"This is Mr. Tamerlin's house, I was told."

"Yes, won't you come in? Flo put on her nicest welcoming smile.

Her visitor entered and deliberately looked about the living room, at the low friendly book shelves, the broad window seats, the nice small-paneled windows with the frilly eave curtains, and rows of flowering plants.

"He has made it all very homelike for you, hasn't he?"

She sank into one of the hickory chairs, and removed her hat, leaning her head back on the brown cushion.

"I love it," said Flo impulsively. "It's the happiest summer we've ever spent, and it seems so wonderful here together. It's an ideal place for a honeymoon."

"How long since—since you came here?"

"About two weeks—But we shall stay here until fall."

She looked Flo over curiously, with little hard lines about her mouth as though she wanted to cry. "Do you really love him in so short a time?"

"Love him? Drake?"

They both rose, facing each other like two little jealous tigresses.

"Are you talking of my husband?" demanded Flo, haughtily, as haughtily as she could from 5 foot 2.

"I am speaking of the man who, by all laws of love and good faith should be my husband," retorted the stranger.

"This whole house was built for me, for my honeymoon, do you hear? I only returned from British Columbia yesterday and found that Billie Tamerlin had broken his word to me, and I have come for my things."

"Your things—?" Flo tried to explain as light broke on her.

"You needn't try to claim them, too, at all. I sent them down the day be-

fore we were to be married, two trunks and my books and a lot of things from my room at college. It was all arranged and had been for weeks, weeks, do you hear?"

She was clenching the edge of the little oak table until her gloves parted at the seams.

"My brother and father didn't like Billie, and I was going to run away with him, and—then a letter came from the West from dad, and he was horribly ill, and so of course I went to him. I left word for Billie, and did he never received the letter. I was frightened, and in haste to catch the first train West, and left the letter on my bureau. O, it is all such a terrible mixup, and I hate the sight of you, whoever you are."

Flo stood amazed at the reckless, heartbroken flood of words. Outside on the veranda there came the sound of masculine footfalls, and she turned with relief as Tamerlin and Drake entered the room.

Tamerlin never stopped for conventionalities. With two steps he reached the side of the stranger, and took her into his embrace right before his tenants.

"We'll step outside for a few minutes," Drake began tactfully, but Tamerlin stopped him.

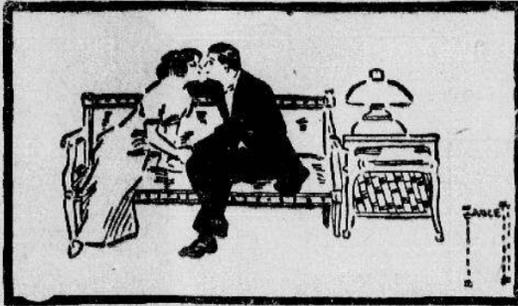
"Don't Ederly want you to meet Mrs. Creston. She will be Mrs. Tamerlin just as soon as I can dig up the gentleman who ties love knots around here with swiftness and dexterity."

"I thought you had grown tired waiting, Billie," came a little muffled tone from the head on his shoulder.

Flo and Drake stared out the door at the steaming quicksilver of the sea at high noon far below them. "I thought she was your wife."

"Where would I have found a wife in six weeks? Didn't I hang around and munch my heart waiting for some word from you? I thought you had gone away for good, of course, and rented the shack when the chance turned up. Ederly, will you sublet this place back to me?"

"Just looking up the next train on to Shepherd's Landing," responded Drake, with a cheerful smile of renunciation.



"ISN'T THAT CUSTOMARY AMONG CIVILIZED TRIBES?"

"Leave them by all means, my dear boy," Drake said hastily. "And don't worry. We'll look after the place. Life's pretty rough after all."

Tamerlin nodded his head slowly, and strode down the beach. The next day he left on a little coasting auxiliary yacht. After him went the sympathy and regard of his tenants.

"Drake," she remembered suddenly. "Didn't Tamerlin come back last night? Mr. Hickson said so when he brought up the mail."

"Did he?" Drake's brain worked slowly at deduction. "Shall I go and find out?"

"O, of course, scoot!" Flo pushed him out of the back door as the knock-

should be she—alive!" whispered Flo, the tears springing to her eyes. "Maybe they were separated. The poor girl!"

"She doesn't look pitiable," Drake returned, looking down at the figure which was alighting from the hack at their garden gate. "Shall I stick, or do you want to manage her?"

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A KIND MAN

BY ELSIE ENDICOTT.

R. DANE walked to and fro in his garden. It was a clear, soft evening in May. He had come home from his rounds some while ago. How strange to him was this large leisure of his country practice, after the whirl and night and day calls on his time of those strenuous years in London!

He was only 40, but he looked older, for he had never spared himself until a bad breakdown about a year ago had decided him to accept a country practice where his work would be light.

At that very juncture a modest fortune had unexpectedly come to him.

So he looked about him, bought a country practice from a retiring medical man, took over his house, and added a long bungalow annex to it, with wide verandas, where he could find either sunshine or shade as he desired, and settle down to a life of idleness—that he would have hated—but of pleasantly tired, varied by intervals of leisurely leisure.

He was not dependent on patients, but he had a sufficiency of those who could pay, and gave his services gladly and ungrudgingly to the poor among the laborers and cottagers.

It was a peaceful, pleasant life, and Ivor Dane was happy in it in a measure; but now that the strain of arduous work had ceased, he was oppressed from time to time by a sense of great loneliness; a longing after some of the sweetness of life which had never been his.

And upon this sweet golden spring evening a wave of loneliness seemed sweeping over him, perhaps because the peaceful hush of a happy world about him brought back such vivid-remembrance of that spring and summer when he himself was a young lover, when he went wooing his mate in all the pride of his strong young manhood; when he believed that he had but to make his way a little further, and those lovely golden eyes, which lighted and shone at his approach, these hands so confidently outstretched in greeting and welcome—would be his very own.

For he had been so sure that Ruth loved him. But he was poor, and she had no dowry.

And he had gone—to make his crown a pound, like the lover of the sweet old ballad. And in his absence misfortune had fallen upon Ruth's parents, and the old story repeated itself.

He had never blamed her; for she had promised him nothing, and doubtless the parents she loved so well had put unconscious pressure upon her.

Well, well, all that was long past now, a good twelve years since sweet Ruth married, and he knew nothing of her life since.

"Clip-clop, clip-clop, clip-clop," a horse was trotting down the lane which ran behind his house, and Dr. Dane could see a farmer he knew riding along from market, and perched up in front of him was a little, brown-haired boy in a wide sailor hat.

"Hello, Doc!" cried the man. "You there? Well, this youngster wants a word with you, and if it don't suit you to take him home alone by-and-by, send round to me and I'll get him taken somehow. It's five miles to his

home. I overtook him on the tramp to a kind doctor what folks all talked about. Shall I hand him over, and he'll tell you all about it?"

"By all means," answered the doctor. "I'm just going to have my tea. The youngster can take it with me." The youngster was smiling all over a very attractive and a very square built face; square, wide brow, with curling brown hair shading it. But it was the eyes which held Dr. Dane's regard while strange thrills

ran through him the while. Where had he seen those before?

Ah! How well he knew. How it all went into that dream he had been recalling. The little 10-year-old boy walked up the path beside him, toward the broad veranda, where the tea had been carried out, and in those few minutes he had seen all those familiar expressions chasing themselves over the child's face.

"I say, what a ripping place," cried the little fellow.

"See if my cakes are ripping, too, Sonny!"

"Oh, I say, but how do you know my name?"

"Is that your name?"

"Well, it's what mother calls me. My real name's a funny one. It's the name of a friend of mother's what she was very fond of. It's Ivor. I say, you've broken that plate. And your big dog's eating all the cakes!"

THE CHILD WENT OFF INTO AN EXPLOSION of laughter, and Ivor Dane pulled himself together.

"Now, sonny, tell me what has brought you here today?"

The child's face grew suddenly grave. The golden eyes grew wistful, troubled, serious.

"It's about my mother I've come," he said, with a manner far older than his years.

"Is she ill?" asked Dane hastily. And he sounded the table gong as he spoke. "The dog-cart round in 20 minutes," was his order, then his eyes turned back to the boy.

"It's like this, you see. She isn't very well. She coughs at night; and her eyes hurt her when she does her beautiful work."

"Do you mean your mother has to work for a living?"

Tears gathered in the little boy's eyes.

"If I was grown up she should never, never work. O, that wicked man!"

"What man, sonny?"

"Him that took care of the money when daddy died. He said to me, 'You must take care of your mother, and I've always taken care of her, though I was only quite little when daddy died.'"

"But a man had the money to take care of, and he ran away, and then everything was sold, and mother came and lived in the little cottage, and she does beautiful work, and people buy it."

"But she gets tired, and she won't have a doctor, 'cause she says that costs so much money, and they tell you to do things that she can't do."

The little fellow moved up nearer to Ivor, and he drew from his pocket a small leather bag, and out of this bag poured sundry small coins.

"And then somebody told me there was a nice, kind doctor over here, who didn't want a lot of money, and I've got some money of my very own, and I thought—"

"Finish your tea, Sonny," spoke Ivor Dane, very quietly and kindly. "I will take you home and see your mother. But you shall keep your money to spend on little things for

her."

Sonny and the big dog had a fine time of it together on the veranda; and it was a very joyous little lad that sat perched up beside the doctor on the high cart.

"Here's our church," cried the child, as a square tower loomed up from behind a group of elms, "and our little house is down that lane. Oh, there's mother looking out for me. I expect she wonders where I've been. I did tell her I was going to take a long walk, but I didn't say where."

Dane lifted out the small boy and the big basket that was under the seat. He fastened the reins to a sapling.

Up the path from the cottage a slender figure in black was advancing. The sun had set, and the clear, soft twilight lay round them. But such light as remained seemed to focus itself upon a sweet, pale face, and golden, shadow-rimmed eyes, where gold-eyes lay sleeping.

The child rushed headlong to meet his mother. She came forward with a smile on her lips to greet the tall stranger advancing out of the shadows. The basket was hastily set down. He made one long, forward stride—

"My Golden Eyes!"

Those eyes—startled and full of overpowering emotion—sought his face. Then came that rush of tears which no man ever witnesses in woman's eyes without a strange throbbing of emotion.

"Ivor! Ivor!"

How it happened neither of them knew; but the next moment she was sobbing on his breast, while the small boy leaped up and down in wild excitement crying.

"O, mother! O, Mr. Doctor! O, how ripping! You're mother's friend,

what I was called after. O, I say, how ripping! How simply ripping!"

"Sonny," spoke the big doctor, in a voice with a queer throbbing in it, "you carry that basket indoors and set out supper from it. I'm going to take my horse to the inn. Then I'm coming back to take supper with you."

They sat around the table together. The child did most of the talking, but the strong man and the frail woman looked at each other, looked and looked, and could not turn their eyes away.

And when the little boy at last had left them for bed, Ivor Dane stretched out his hand toward her and said once more in that deep and vibrant voice of his: "My Golden Eyes!"

With quivering lips she looked into his face.

"Have you forgiven me, Ivor? My heart was always yours; but I was very young, and they wanted it so badly—all of them. And he was always—to the last—a kind man to me."

"I bless him for that, my life; but he left you to poverty and weakness and suffering."

"He left the child; and he trusted a man who played us false. I have never blamed him."

"You never would. Nor will I. My darling, my darling you will come to me now!"

"Yes, Ivor. Let me belong now all to you. And you will love the boy, too?"

"For your sake and his own, and for those golden eyes which looked into mine today, and sent thrills of hope through my veins."

She uttered a sound between laugh and sob. The golden eyes he could not see were full to the brim with happy tears.

UP TO HIM

BY WALTER GREGORY.

BARBARA had listened for the sound of Lucy's light feet too many times not to know who it was coming along the road behind her, but she did not turn until Clark Townsend drew up and called cheerfully: "Let me take you home, Barbara?"

"I did not know you would care to, Clark," she hesitated, flushing.

"Of course, I care to," he said, lifting her in carefully and gathering up the reins again.

For a time there was silence save for Lucy's feet on the soft wood road. The girl was evidently too ill at ease to speak.

"I have you in a trap at last, haven't I?" the man smiled, covering her cold little hand with his big warm one. "And I'm not going to let you go, Barbara, until you tell me what it's all been about."

"What do you mean?" asked Bar-

bara.

"I guess you know what I mean. What happened all of a sudden that you should send me this? He took carefully from an inner pocket a folded paper, out of which something dropped that shone in the twilight."

"How do you suppose I have felt to see my girl running round with that artist chap? I really think that I deserve a better explanation than I have had."

"O, Clark," she wailed suddenly. "You do—but I'm afraid I cannot make you understand. I—I just couldn't marry you!"

"Of course not, Barby dear, if you did not love me enough. But I thought you did—I thought—well, never mind. What came up, anyway?"

"Nothing—that is the trouble. I could not endure it! Nothing happened to me, no experiences like other girls have. People have told me since I was a child that I ought to marry Clark Townsend. When I told mother we were engaged, she said, 'Why of course, I've known it this long time. I've got everything planned about the wedding and your house-

keeping."

"I had been so happy before I told her, but after that I cried myself to sleep—you couldn't know about that, Clark. But that was beginning."

"No, I did not know," Clark admitted.

"Everybody knew, before we did ourselves, that we ought to be married at Christmas so that Brown could move out of your place the first of January. And they knew we would spend our honeymoon with your sister Grace in Pleasantboro."

"I planned out the dearest kitchen, all built and blue, but when I mentioned it mother insisted nothing was so good as drab, and settled the matter by getting me a set of those wretched gray cooking things that I've always despised."

"I do not know what you will think of me, Clark, but that is the truth about it! It seemed as if I just couldn't endure it—to be married according to rule, and just to settle down afterward and live by rule. I've lived that way all my life and I know what it means—I don't dare try to endure it!"

"But that doesn't explain that artist fellow that has hung round you all

summer. Does he fill the bill better than I did, Barbara?"

"There has been this one comfort, at least, no one has known what to expect. And mother has been furious."

Young Townsend watched the girl hurry up the path to the side door of the big farmhouse with a whimsical smile.

Yes, he could see how her existence had been depressingly matter-of-fact for a romantic young thing like Barbara Shepard. The unlovely severity of the comfortable house told its own story; its exterior prepared one for a drab kitchen with gray utensils.

"Lucy," he said, shaking the reins affectionately over the sleek back of his favorite gray, "that child is longing for romance in her gray little life, and I take it, it's up to us to produce the goods!"

"Barbara," said Farmer Shepard next morning, looking severely at his pretty daughter, "didn't I see Clark Townsend's gray mare out here by our gate last night?"

"Very likely you did, dad. He brought me home from the Pine road."

"Well, I don't want to see him here again, do you understand?" with rising irritation.

"Why Hiram?" expostulated his wife, "are you crazy? There ain't a nicer young man anywhere round than Clark!"

"Just the same I'm not going to have him hanging round Barbara. I want you both to understand it."

"Then you'd better tell him so, yourself," retorted that young person, indignantly. "I certainly shall not."

"I have told him, young lady," roared her irate parent, "and now I'm telling you! And I want this the last word on the subject."

"You and Clark had everything fixed up between you and you were not satisfied. I don't know who was to blame, and I don't care, but I'm not going to have that fool business gone through with again."

Late that evening Barbara sat at her window thinking of Clark who was forbidden even her front gate, when his voice called softly from below: "Barbara, come down, just for a minute."

"Oh," she whispered frantically,

"Oh, Clark, please go away!"

"Not until you come down, please."

Trembling, Barbara made her way through the silent house and let herself noiselessly out of the unused front door.

"What made you come?" she sobbed nervously, when the young man loomed close in the darkness. "If father finds you here he'll never forgive me and I do not know what he will do to you. What has happened? He—he threatened to shoot you if you came here again. Please—please go away, quick!"

"You mean you do not want me to stay, Barby?"

For answer Barbara clung to him very satisfactorily.

"Listen, dear, I can't give you up like this. Why we love each other, do we not, little girl?"

"O, yes; but what is the use?"

"There is this much use; we are going to be married tomorrow. Now listen; I'll be down here at the bend in the road at 12, sharp. You must manage to get away while they are at dinner. If I can once have you in the rig, I'll put up Lucy against any horse in this neighborhood!"

Dinner was prepared early at the Shepard home next day that the farmer and his wife might go to town. It was with the utmost difficulty that Barbara escaped at the appointed hour.

"By Jove," cried Clark as he swung her into his buggy, "your folks have turned into the road. It's going to be a close call!"

And Lucy shot off as if she realized the part she had to play.

But the license was safe in his pocket, and the minister's door stood open. Clark just held her hand a little tighter when voices sounded outside and Farmer Shepard and his wife came in breathlessly, as the ceremony began.

"Barbara Shepard, what a looking bride," sobbed her mother, when the minister's voice had ceased. "Now I guess you can see, Hiram; you've always thought I was too steady with her! She's got her head, now, and mercy knows a—ere she will sit."

"Never mind, mother," soothed the farmer with astonishing good-humor. "It's up to Clark to manage her, and I'm not worrying about him any!"