

A Photograph of William Thaw III. Starting in His Aeroplane to Reconnoitre the German Trenches



Mrs. William Thaw III., the charming lady whose love has changed her husband from a waster into a useful citizen and war hero.



Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, sister of Mrs. Thaw III., whose original doubts about 'William' have been dispelled.

Heights, Pittsburgh's most fashionable suburb.

William Thaw, III. was truly regenerated. After the honeymoon he rolled up his sleeves and went to work, looking after his business interests and assisting his mother in her many charities. Having still some unused energy, he took up aviation as a sport. He found that whiskey as a stimulant could not compare with the ozone of the upper atmosphere; his capable hands and normally level head had found their ideal avocation. William Thaw's record as a man-bird is familiar to all patrons and admirers of that sport.

He invented a stabilizer which rendered an aeroplane all but "fool proof." He was one of the leaders in making a mechanical waterfowl of the airship, and became one of its most expert pilots in this country. His achievements were heard of abroad, and when the war broke out he found no difficulty in entering the flying corps of the Foreign Legion of the French army.

He made daring flights over the German trenches. Several times he was reported killed. The special exploit which won promotion and the Military Cross for him was undertaken as a volunteer to gain definite information about a certain developing German operation. The feat was an extremely dangerous one. Thaw flew along the German front in a terrible rain of shells. Several times his craft was seen to waver. He accomplished his purpose and returned to the French lines. The wings of his aeroplane were riddled, even his garments were torn with fragments of exploding shells.

How the French Government recognized his services and valor is told above. To-day the erstwhile "town drunkard" of Pittsburgh is that city's most applauded hero. The Thaw family is in an ecstasy of pardonable joy and pride.

As for Mrs. William Thaw III.—well, it is enough to say that she finds her judgment vindicated. She has turned the tables upon the ancient warning about marrying a drunkard to reform him.

# How Love Made A War Hero of Pittsburgh's Wealthy Scapegrace

## The Rare Romance of William Thaw III, in Which the Girl Who Married "to Reform Him" Actually Did It.

**G**REAT is Dan Cupid of the Olympians—and Pittsburghers. Formerly, up to a few years ago, neither Olympians nor Pittsburghers considered the possibility of William Thaw III, getting on the water wagon. If accident had landed him aboard that justly esteemed vehicle it would have been simply a huge joke. The idea of his getting on voluntarily and staying on would have been laughed to scorn.

But they were forgetting about Cupid. One day Cupid got busy after his time-honored custom and the seemingly impossible happened.

Something else has happened. Just as Cupid rewarded the reformed town scapegrace of Pittsburgh with marriage to a beautiful girl who believed in him, so he has rewarded her for her love and faith by gaining honors for himself and the whole Thaw family which could be gained only by a sober man. They have received the news that for gallant services as a pilot in the French military aviation corps he has been commended in army orders, decorated with the Military Cross and promoted to be a sergeant—all this after five months' service as a private in the American Corps of the Foreign Legion.

Thus is reversed the familiar, distressing spectacle of a girl marrying a drunkard to reform him, and living to repent amid the ruins of her illusions. Thus it is proved that the same sort of brawn and courage and public usefulness which enabled the original William Thaw to win a great fortune and an honored name still exist in his direct line. And, at last, a pleasant chapter is added to the several unpleasant ones in the Thaw family history.

The psychologists who specialize in juvenile delinquency will tell you that one of the chief causes of misconduct in boys is a surplus of energy, physical and mental, which is provided with no proper outlet. That was the case with William Thaw III. A big, hearty chap, tireless in mind and body, he had nothing upon which to expend his energies except the task of scattering an income of something like \$25,000 a year.

He entered upon that task with enthusiasm several years before he reached his majority. He loved jovial company and was most democratic in his choice of companions. Especially after he discovered that he could easily drink his club companions under the table while remaining steady on his own legs, a millionaire fellow drunkard was no more congenial to him than an ordinary working man of equal convivial talents. More than once in those days he scandalized his family and friends by roaring his way down Pittsburgh's choicest avenue arm-in-arm with a day laborer—and it was of no

consequence to him when in that state what was the hue of his companion's complexion.

Most of the other Thaws had a surplus of apparent dignity in place of his own excess of vitality. Harry K. Thaw, half brother of William III.'s father, was incapable of behaving so vulgarly in public, and such scenes deeply humiliated him.

The youth's capacity for liquor was astounding. Here is an instance. As he entered the Allegheny Country Club one afternoon where a crowd of his associates were gathered one of them challenged him to a drinking bout. William Thaw III. was entirely agreeable. His adversaries entered the arena in relays. When three successive challengers had rendered themselves unconscious, young Thaw was still able to go on. The waiter declared that Thaw had consumed sixty-eight brandy-and-sodas.

His family were in despair. They had tried everything they could think of to divorce him from drink, and all efforts had failed. Now they sent him to Mercy Hospital, an institution largely benefited by the fortunes of the young man's mother and grandmother. He found himself in a ward with fifty or more other men whose principal business in life was drinking. The Sisters gave them buttermilk—nothing stronger. The sight of that buttermilk set William's always active mind going.

He was permitted to take a walk every day, accompanied by an attendant. One day he returned carrying a great tin bucket filled to the brim with buttermilk. The Sisters were highly pleased. Half an hour later the alcoholic ward was in a state of riot. Thaw and all the other patients were disorderly. How they had obtained the whiskey was a mystery. Thaw's walks were not curtailed, however, and for three successive nights the alcoholic ward of Mercy Hospital bore out its description with a vengeance.

Then the mystery was cleared up. The irrepressible William had bribed his attendant, visited an accommodating tinsmith, had made to his order a huge tin bucket with a false bottom, which concealed under his generous gifts of buttermilk enough whiskey to "paralyze" a whole inebriate asylum.

Mercy Hospital had no further use for William Thaw III. About this time Pittsburgh became too small for William. Following the example of his celebrated half-brother, Harry K. Thaw, he transferred his attentions to New York, London and Paris. Starting with the American metropolis, he proceeded to enlarge the technique of his chosen art. In one of the big hotels he observed a very pretty girl gently holding the hand of a full-sized man

while she produced delicate pink polish on his spatulate nails.

When William saw the manicurist's customer hand her a silver half dollar he blushed for his sex. Then he took the vacant chair and offered his own hand for sympathetic treatment. When the job was finished he gave the astonished girl a hundred-dollar bill—and walked away with a sense of having balanced the scales of justice.

The pretty manicurist was absent from her post the next day. The hotel management reported her ill.

William got the idea into his head that New York chorus girls were underpaid, and therefore lacking in proper nourishment. He confided in Oscar at the Waldorf-Astoria, and Oscar, for the reasonable amount of something like \$5,000, helped William properly feed and otherwise nourish twenty of the reigning stage beauties.

Via London and Paris—which he found to be mere replicas of New York—William visited the Far East. Egypt amused him much. It appears that he amused Egypt, for presently the Thaw family were involved in a more or less expensive controversy over the claim of a dusky beauty of that country that William had married her. Egyptian women are notoriously imaginative.

William came home "pronto," as they

say out west of Pittsburgh. On the ship sailing for New York the celebrated traveller, "Doc" Owen—Doctor of Laws (of draw poker)—helped him while away the nautical hours. These services were said at the time to have cost him \$200,000. The Thaw family were moved to act. William and his ultimate fortune of \$2,500,000 must be saved. His mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Thaw; his sister, Mrs. Bird Thaw Collins, and the latter's husband, Henry L. Collins, joined in a petition to the courts to have William declared a habitual drunkard and incompetent to manage his estate.

Highly offended, William sought the solitudes of Watch Hill, Mass., where he came face to face with Gladys Virginia Bradley—and Dan Cupid.

At last William's superabundant vitality had found a worthy outlet. He adopted a new motto, and proceeded to act upon it with the utmost vigor. Adapting a famous "Robin Hood" refrain, this was the motto:

"And all my days I'll sing the praise" of lovely Gladys Virginia Bradley, and unconditionally pass up, sidestep, abro-

gate and render null and void the "brown October ale" part.

"First, you've got to stop drinking," was the refrain of Miss Bradley's answering song.

William was ready to stop anything—except loving Gladys Virginia. As evidence of his good intentions he stopped drinking for six months. Miss Bradley considered, and suggested that he make it "unanimous." William appealed to his delighted mother, who sent to Miss Bradley this note:

"To Miss Gladys V. Bradley, bride-to-be:

"I hereby promise that if you marry my son he will be a good, model husband; that he will not return to his former bad habits; that he will not drink intoxicants, and will be a good member of society."

"MRS. WILLIAM THAW III."

Miss Bradley was convinced, though her sister, Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, still retained some reasonable doubts about the possibility of permanently reforming William. On December 1, 1910, they were married. William's mother presented him with a delightful home, worth \$250,000, located on Sewickley

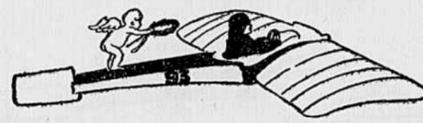
## What Love Did for William Thaw III.

### His Record Before



- Drank 68 brandies at one sitting at a country club.
- Lost \$200,000 to "Doc" Owen in a poker game.
- Gave a girl \$100 for manicuring his nails.
- Haled into court by his mother and sister as an habitual drunkard.
- Spent the income of his \$2,500,000 fortune in high living.
- Gave a dinner at the Waldorf to twenty stage beauties, with "the sky as the limit."
- Created consternation among the Sisters of Mercy by his pranks in the alcoholic ward of their hospital.

### His Record After



- Remained sober six months and won his bride.
- Presented with a \$250,000 home by his mother for good behavior.
- Won fame as an aviator and inventor.
- Joined the French army as a private and spent six months at the front.
- Read the Bible to the men in the trenches on Thanksgiving Day.
- Promoted to the Aviation Corps for signal bravery.
- Made twenty flights, one in a rain of shell-fire, over the German trenches.
- Awarded the Military Cross by the French Government.