

The REAL AGATHA

BY **EDITH HUNTINGTON MASON**

PICTURES BY **WELL WALTERS FREY CAMPBELL ALE SHIRE WILSON**

Copyright, 1907 by A. C. McCLURG & CO.

CHAPTER IV.

For some days after that I was in a quandary. Here, in the face of my discovery in the library, was Vincent's positive information that Agatha Fifth was the heiress. Reluctantly I determined that the likeness between Agatha Sixth and the picture of the baroness was accidental, and began to devote myself to the unfortunate Agatha Fifth. She seemed much inclined to discourage me, but I persevered and we soon became great friends. I found she was only 18, and drew my own conclusions from this fact. At 18 one's convictions are never very deep-rooted, neither are one's love affairs, and I thought it likely that the girl would soon forget her ill-prospered attachment for Vincent's handsome face, and might begin to think of someone else. Surely this was a very natural belief! So the first two weeks of our stay at the castle sped by

"No; she confessed to me about a week ago that she only said she was the real Honorable Agatha to make me marry her. She thought, the foolish little girl, that she only had to tell me she was the heiress to make me love her. And she said she was sorry and wouldn't do it again and cried like a child, and I forgave her and comforted her. She'll get over it all right!" and laughing hilariously the young rascal ran upstairs.

I was really vexed with Wilfred about this. I thought it was very unkind of him to keep me in the dark for so long about Agatha Fifth's confession. What a lot of time I'd been wasting! I resolved that I would return to Agatha Sixth at the first opportunity, and I felt glad, even justified, that I had not told him about that album which had betrayed the secret to me. At this moment Agatha Second appeared in the doorway.

Several evenings later Agatha Fourth had arranged to give a progressive dinner party. She was to be the hostess and the rest of us were her guests. It was an evening-dress affair, and I must say as we sat down to dinner I never saw a prettier group of girls.

Then the fun began. Agatha Fourth's idea in having a progressive dinner party was for each of the girls to move up one place with each course so that they could all have turns sitting by us. It was delightful; really, I don't know that I ever attended a jollier dinner party. Vincent kept quoting from the Mad Tea Party in "Alice in Wonderland," and the girls laughed at every single thing he said. Mrs. Armistead, I am ashamed to say, was not present; her head ached and she had dined in her room. I am not naturally noisy or riotous, but the laughter and jokes of those six girls were so infectious that I was obliged to join in with them. Vincent sat at one end of the table and I at the other, with three girls on each side of us. The secretary, of course, was not present.

Agatha Fourth had decorated the table with some of the yellow roses and wild fern that grew near the castle. Agatha Sixth and I had found them many times in our wanderings and, by the way, she was looking especially lovely that evening. The girls all wore shimmering white gowns, similar in design, with silver ornaments, but Agatha Sixth's gown was cream-color with ornaments of gold, and well did it become her dark beauty.

We had reached the very end of the dinner, and had just made the last change of places, which left me with my favorite Agatha Sixth on my right and Agatha Third on my left.

Suddenly, as the talk died down and a certain contented silence fell upon us, Vincent rose to his feet, and bowing to us formally, began to speak:

"Ladies and gentleman," he said, making the last word pointedly singular, while the girls all laughed, "I think you are all with me when I propose a vote of thanks to—er—our hostess"—(I felt that he had nearly said "Agatha Fourth!")—"our hostess, for giving us so delightful an entertainment." He bowed to Agatha Fourth and went on:

"If all progressive tea parties are termed mad I hope I may attend many such. But as I look around me, gentleman and ladies fair, across the red glow of the candle that turns the roses to redder gold, and as I gaze upon the youth and beauty here assembled, the like of which I have never before looked upon—he made a courtly inclination of his head that included every maid at the table, and they all sighed—I heard them—"as I look upon this noble room, this exquisite table, and think of the graciousness of such hospitality, I am inspired to propose a toast in which I feel confident you will all join me." At this climax Vincent raised his glass above his head. "To the real Agatha!" he cried—"to the real Honorable Agatha!"

There was an instant of dead silence, and then to my surprise my left-hand neighbor, Agatha Third, rose to her feet, and, with quivering lips, started to say something. But she had hardly time to rise before the other five girls sprang to their feet, and raising their glasses, Agatha Third with the rest, they cried with one voice: "To the Honorable Agatha!" and although it seemed to me that Agatha Third had very nearly let the cat out of the bag by rising, as if to acknowledge the courtesy, yet by the promptness of the other girls the day was partially retrieved, and Vincent and I were still somewhat at a loss as to the identity of our fair and wealthy hostess.

I asked Vincent afterward what he made of Agatha Third's behavior.

"It looked to me," said that young person, "as if those girls had themselves so much in command that they would never betray the secret they're guarding, no matter what you did."

"But didn't you see Agatha Third get up before the others did?" I said, excitedly. "She gave herself away. I tell you, Wilfred, she's the real honorable, without a doubt. There can be no two ways about it!"

"How keen you are!" he said; "and I tell you what it is, Archbald"—Vincent always calls me "Archbald" with the "l" left out and the emphasis on "bald" when he's particularly affectionate or sleepy; he was the latter just now—"I'm just as keen about marrying this heiress as you are; the only difference is that I insist upon being in love with her into the bargain, and you don't. For I'm hard up, fearfully hard up, you know, and the governor's so awfully good, I hate to ask him for another month's allowance just now. I'm way behind as it is, and I owe Jack Gordon for that prize polo pony of his. I offered him £100 for her the day of the Hurlingham games and he sold her to me on the spot. Jack's as hard up as I am—poor fellow. And then, you know, it's all perfectly fair. If we only had the time, that's all. It's pretty quick work to expect a man to find out the heiress, learn to love her and teach her to love him, all in six weeks, and propose on the last day of—"

"But that's just it," I interrupted, "you're not expected to find out the heiress first. That's just what old Fletcher Boyd wanted to prevent when he made the will."

"Nevertheless, you yourself mean to find out first, don't you, Arch?" was Vincent's facetious response.

I was disgusted and made no answer.

"Of course," he went on, "I wouldn't propose to any girl I didn't love, but I'd like the chance to learn to love this particular lady, the Honorable Agatha. I feel that there would be no trouble about her learning to love me!"

Vincent has few really serious faults, but I don't attempt to deny that he is conceited.

"The trouble is," he said, "they're all so attractive I could love one as well as another. I wish, though, I could just naturally fall in love with one of them, and I'd propose to her on the last day and take my chances. Who knows? I'm sometimes lucky. I might win the prize!"

"So you might," I said, "but as it is, we haven't even discovered the heiress as yet—"

"And I can't fall in love with any of 'em," finished Vincent, "because I'm madly in love with the whole six, and there you are!" and he shook his head hopelessly. "Come, let's to bed," he added.

"Not just yet, Freddy," I said. "I never call him that, as I have before stated, but his hair was all ruffled

want to ask you something." She spoke in a low voice, but with perfect composure, though she never lifted her eyes. I caught myself wondering whether she cast them down habitually, so that people might observe the length of her black eyelashes.

"Yes?" I said, to encourage her.

"Of course, you know Lord Vincent; very well, don't you?" As she asked me this direct question she looked me full in the face, and as my eyes met hers I mentally thanked her for her mercy in not often permitting man to gaze into them.

"Yes," I said, recovering myself, "I know him very well."

"And he tells you things, doesn't he?"

"Most things," I replied, wondering at what she was driving.

"Then could you tell me, please, if—if he accepted Miss Agatha—the one with the hazel eyes that you call Agatha Fifth—when she told him she loved him?"

I was never more astounded in my life. How did she know that Agatha Fifth had told Vincent she loved him, and how did it concern her? Perhaps, however, she was acting under Mrs. Armistead's orders, but if so she ought to have said so.

"That's a question of a very personal nature," I said, and eyed her searchingly; "but I don't think Lord Vincent would mind, as long as you know so much about it, if I tell you that he refused the young lady who was indis-

as I spoke I caught myself thinking her really good looking. "If she only did her hair decently," I thought, "I'd call her a beauty, I really believe I should." "My dear young lady," I said, "tell me in confidence and perhaps I can help you. Do you—er—are you—er—interested in Lord Wilfred? If so, allow me, I conjure you, nay, I beg of you, to put all thought of him out of your head. He doesn't mean it, but he is a graceless young flirt. He doesn't mean a word he says. Let me warn you—be advised—"

I stopped short. In the midst of my well-meant flow of words, I stopped short, for, could I believe my eyes, the secretary was laughing at me.

"My dear old man," she said—she did, actually—"my dear old man, your warnings are superfluous, for I am a married woman," and, still laughing, she left the room.

CHAPTER V.

Alone, I sat for a moment speechless with astonishment, as the secretary left the room, and, as I took my way slowly and thoughtfully upstairs, I resolved that this was another thing that I would not tell Vincent; he would be far more likely to ridicule me than to thank me for my effort in his behalf.

Some time after this, on a perfect day, Agatha Third and I—I had spent almost every hour since the dinner in her company. I may remark—had planned a little excursion which would keep us outdoors all day. We were going on a picnic up the little river. Have you ever tried a picnic for two? Given the right companion and a day like that, I'd warrant it to cure any attack of the blues. Agatha Third had assured me that the prettiest spot for our luncheon was a little island in the center of the stream where the current ran broad and deep, about three miles below the castle.

The day was fair, the girl was fairer, and the moments were full of joy to me. We had crossed a little bridge about a mile from the castle and were proceeding up the left bank of the river when a sudden turn of the stream brought two others of our house party into view. On the opposite bank was Vincent in high boots, knickerbockers, white shirt with sleeves rolled up, and a farmer's broad-brimmed hat of straw. He was busy over a broken fishing rod which he was trying to mend. In the center of the stream, where the current ran swift and dangerously deep, a girl stood on a large boulder, fishing. Other boulders at intervals between the one she was standing on and the shore where Vincent was indicated the means by which she had attained her precarious position. I recognized the girl as Agatha Second, and smiled pityingly as I thought of poor Vincent, invariably wasting his time with the wrong Agatha.

(To be continued.)

RAILWAY TIME TABLES.

CHICAGO & NORTHWESTERN

GOING EAST.

No. 12. Chicago Special, local to Boone 9:47 a m
No. 4. Atlantic Express, (local) 2:35 p m
No. 16. Chicago Passenger, (local) 7:00 p m
No. 6. Chicago Limited 8:36 p m
No. 2. Overland Limited 12:35 a m
No. 8. Los Angeles Limited 11:46 p m
No. 46. Freight to Boone 12:15 p m

GOING WEST.

No. 1. Overland Limited 5:44 a m
No. 25. Council Bluffs Local 6:22 a m
No. 3. Pacific Express, (local) 12:48 p m
No. 15. Fast Mail, (local) 1:36 p m
No. 7. Los Angeles Limited 10:05 a m
No. 11. Colorado Special 9:22 p m
No. 47. Freight to Council Bluffs 11:50 a m

Boyer Valley Railway

Daily Except Sunday.

GOING NORTH.

No. 46. Accommodation 6:05 a m
No. 42. Accommodation 2:45 p m

ARRIVE DENISON.

No. 41. Passenger 2:40 p m
No. 45. Accommodation 3:50 p m

ILLINOIS CENTRAL.

GOING EAST.

No. 4. Chicago Express (daily) 9:15 a m
No. 2. Chicago (daily) 7:52 a m
No. 52. Way Freight (except Sunday) 10:35 a m

GOING WEST.

No. 1. Omaha Limited (daily) 6:23 a m
No. 21. Chicago - Minneapolis - St. Paul Express, (daily) 1:48 p m
No. 91. Way Freight (except Sunday) 1:30 p m
Nos. 1 and 2 stop only at Logan, Denison, Wall Lake, Rockwell City and Tara except on flag signals.



AGATHA THIRD.

and I saw to my satisfaction that I was gaining ground with the Honorable Agatha every day, while poor Vincent wasted his time flirting with each Agatha in turn (he had taken up Agatha Sixth since my desertion) or in assisting Miss Marsh to write up a lot of old dead barons who were much better left to a decent and dignified obscurity.

One day, toward the close of the two weeks, I met Vincent hurrying through the hall toward the stairs. He had on an old velvet coat covered with paint daubs, his luncheon basket was over his shoulder, and I guessed that he was going on one of his sketching tours in search of fresh woods and pastures new.

"Where are you going, Wilfred?" I asked, as he stopped, "and where's Agatha Second?" She usually accompanied him on his sketching expeditions.

"Painting," he replied, concisely, ignoring my second question; "and where may you be going?"

"For a walk with Agatha Fifth," I answered, smiling at him—a little pityingly, perhaps. He had lost such a chance!

Vincent chuckled and his eyes looked wicked. "Wish you luck, Arch," he said. "I've been watching your charitable efforts to cut me out and be a father to my little friend, Agatha Fifth, with great admiration—but I forgot to tell you—he lowered his voice, for we could see Agatha Second on the veranda talking to Agatha Fifth—"I forgot to tell you that what Agatha Fifth told me isn't true!"

"Isn't true?" I repeated in consternation.



AGATHA FOURTH.

up and his face flushed and I felt warm toward him because he was so dense. "Surely with a rival as unobscuring as he is," I thought, "I am not heavily handicapped." For I had made up my mind that Agatha Third was indeed the real and only Agatha. That involuntary rising of hers was proof positive.

"I say, Vincent," I called after him, "was that a master stroke of yours giving the toast that way? Did you intend to try to surprise one of them into betraying herself?"

Vincent laughed sleepily. "Good old Archbald," he drawled, "you're always looking for master strokes, but 'pon my honor I never thought of such a thing." And I might have known that he wouldn't.

Left to myself, I was thinking out my plan of campaign as regarded Agatha Third when a slight noise in the back of the room attracted my attention. I looked up, startled, for it was late, and the large, dimly lighted drawing room was rather an eerie place, and saw over the back of my chair the slight form of the secretary approaching. Her hair was as neat as usual and her dress was the same simple gray gown she wore when I had seen her first.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Terhune," she said, timidly, yet without hesitation. "am sorry to disturb you, but would you have the goodness to give me a little of your time?"

"Certainly," I replied, rising, "though the hour is late. Won't you be seated?" and I found her a chair. The secretary leaned back against it and folded her hands.

cret enough to ask him to marry her."

The secretary gave a sudden start, and then, by what seemed to be considerable effort, regained control of herself.

"He refused her," I continued—for the girl and her questions and her genuine feeling interested me—"al though she told him she was the real Honorable Agatha." I was so proud of Vincent for that that I was glad to be able to tell someone about it.

"She said that—and he refused her?" repeated the girl in an awed tone.

"How could he do it, how could he?" "Then it was true? She is really the daughter of Fletcher Boyd?" I cried eagerly. At last I had stumbled upon the truth, for I knew the secretary was in the secret.

But she only smiled at me. "You are a good man," she said, "a good man."

The room was growing chilly and the fire was getting low, and as she spoke she slipped down from the high chair and seated herself on a little stool at my feet, stretching out her slim hands toward the blaze. "I thank you," she said, simply, and gazed into the fire a moment, while I gazed at her slender young figure, her pink and white skin, straight, little nose, and wide, red mouth with its Du Maurier chin—and all in a moment I felt myself pitying the poor little girl. Vincent was such an attractive young scamp, he might be playing fast and loose with her affections without intending it or realizing that he was doing so. Involuntarily I leaned toward her.

"My dear young lady," I said, and

Main Street Livery and Feed Barn...

D. C. THEW, Prop.

First class rigs and careful drivers furnished any time day or night.

Give us a call C. C. Phone 219

HOT SPRINGS AND BLACK HILLS.

Low rates are in effect to the Black Hills throughout the summer via the Chicago & Northwestern R'y. Through Pullman sleeping cars service daily between Omaha and Buffalo Gap and Deadwood. Convenient schedules and excellent train service. Handsomely illustrated folders of Hot Springs, the great natural sanitarium of the west, with list of hotels and hotel rates, detailed map of the Black Hills region and other valuable information, free on application to any ticket agent of the C. & N. W. R'y.

28 3t

A BUSINESS PROPOSITION.

A well known citizen wishes to borrow \$4000 to \$5000, giving gilt-edged first-mortgage security on Crawford County land. Will pay 5 percent straight, no commission. No agents need apply. Address Box 262, Denison.

26tf.

Scott's Emulsion strengthens enfeebled nursing mothers by increasing their flesh and nerve force.

It provides baby with the necessary fat and mineral food for healthy growth.

ALL DRUGGISTS; 50c. AND \$1.00.