

# THE MAID AND THE WIDOW

By Anne Warner

Author of "A Woman's Will," "Susan Clegg and Her Friend," "Mrs. Lathrop," Etc.

(Continued from last Sunday.)

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DAY AFTER FALLING IN LOVE.

The next day was a very memorable day for Jack. The day after a falling in love is always a red-letter day; but the day after the falling in love—ah!

One looks back—far back—to the day before, and those hours of the day before, when her sun had not yet dawned, and struggles to recollect what ends life could have represented then. And one looks forward to the next day, the next week, the next year—but, particularly, to the next meeting with sensations as indescribable as they are delightful.

Whichever way you tip it, the kaleidoscope of the future arranges itself in equally attractive shapes of rainbow hue, and the prospect over land or sea—even if it is raining—looks brilliant green, and brighter red, and brightest yellow.

Upon that glorious "next day" of Jack's the weather was quite a thing apart for February—partaking of the warmth of May, and owing that fact to a sun which early June need not have scorned to own. Under the circumstances, the house party overflowed the house and ravaged the surrounding country, and Jack and Mrs. Roscott began it all by having the highest cart and the fastest cob in the stables and making for the forest just as the clock was tolling ten.

"Do you want a groom?" asked Burnett (who was occasionally very cruel). "Well, I'm not going to wait for him to get ready now," replied his sister (who had sharp wits and did not disdain to give even her own family the benefit of them).

Then she gathered up the reins and whip in a most scientific manner, and they were off.

Jack folded his arms. Oh, but he was nappy! He didn't care where they went or what they did, so long as he had her all alone to himself, and might revel in the bliss thereof.

They bowled away upon a firm, hard road that skirted the park, and then plunged deeply into the forest. Mrs. Roscott handled the reins and the whip with the hands of an expert.

"I like to drive," said she.

"You appear to," he answered.

"I like to do everything," she said. "I'm very athletic and energetic."

"I'm glad of that," he told her, warmly.

"He really thought that he was speaking the truth, although upon that first day if she had declared herself lazy and languid he would have found her equality to his taste. (Because it was the first day.)

"I'm very independent," she declared, further.

"I like that, too," he assured her.

"Oh, I didn't do all in England," she confessed. "I never dared let them know at home what a failure I was as an English woman. I mortified my husband's sisters all the time. Just think—after a whole year I often forgot to say 'Fawcety, now!' and used to say 'Good gracious!' instead; and I don't believe I could get the hang of when to use 'lawt' and 'gawt' the way that they do if I lived there for a century."

Jack laughed.

"My husband's sisters were very unhappy about it. They did want to love me, because I had so much money; but it was tough work for them. Did you ever know any middle-aged English young ladies?" she asked him, suddenly.

"No; I never did," he said.

"Really, they seem to be a thing apart that can't grow anywhere but in England. Every married man has not less than two nor more than three, and they always are a little gray and embroider very nicely. Some one told me that as long as there's any hope they are athletic, but as soon as it's hopeless they take to embroidering."

"It isn't necessary," he said. "I can set myself afire under any circumstances."

He lit a cigarette.

"Is he English?" he couldn't help asking then.

"Yes," she said; "I like the English."

"You appear to like everything to-day." He did not intend to sound bitter, but he did it unintentionally.

(Confounded luck some fellows have!)

"I do. I'm very well content today." He was silent, thinking.

"Well?" she queried, after a while. He pulled himself together with an effort.

"I think perhaps it's just as well," he said.

"What is just as well?"

"That I know."

"About what?"

"About him. I shan't ever take the chances of calling on you now."

She laughed.

"He wouldn't kick you out unless I told him to," she said. "You needn't be too afraid of him, you know."

"Forever!" she answered, with emphasis; "at least, it seemed like forever. Mamma left me there when I was nineteen (she married me off before she left me, of course) and I stayed there until last winter—until I was out of my mourning, you know—and then I was on the Continent for a while, and then I returned to papa."

"How do we strike you after your long absence?"

"Oh, you suit me admirably," she said, turning and smiling squarely into his face; "only the terrible 'and' of the majority does get on my nerves somewhat."

"What 'and'?"

"Haven't you noticed? Why, when an American runs out of talking material he just rests on one poor little 'and' until a fresh run of thought overwhelms him; you listen to the next person you're talking with, and you'll hear what I mean."

Jack reflected.

"I will," he said, at last.

His face grew a trifle flushed. "I'm not afraid," he said, as coldly as it was in him to speak; "but I'll leave him the field."

She turned and looked at him. "The field?" she asked with puzzled eyebrows.

"Yes."

Then she frowned for an instant, and then a species of thought-ray suddenly flew across her face, and she burst out laughing.

"Why, I do believe," she cried, merrily, "I do believe you're jealous of the man at the door."

"Weren't you speaking of a man in the drawing room?" he asked, all her phrases recurring to his mind together.

"No," she said, laughing; "I was speaking of my footman. Oh, you are so funny!"

His horizon glowed again so suddenly that he quite lost his head, and, leaning downward, kissed the hand that held the reins.

"I'm not funny," he said. "It was the most natural thing in the world."

She curbed her laughter. "You'd better not be foolish," she said, warningly. "I don't mix well with college."

"I'm thinking of cutting college," he declared, boldly.

"Don't let us decide anything definite until we've known another twenty-four whole hours," she said, looking at him with a gravity that was almost maternal; and then she turned the horse's head toward home.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE OTHER MAN.

That evening Burnett felt it necessary to give his friend a word of warning.

"Holloway's going to take Betty in tonight," he said, as they descended their lower stair together.

"Who's Holloway?" Jack asked.

"You can't expect to have her all the time, you know," Burnett continued.

"She's really one of the biggest guns here, even if she is one of the family."

"Who's Holloway?"

"Last night the matter had her all mapped out for General Jiggs, and I had an awful time getting her off his hook and on to yours, and then you drove her all this morning and walked her all the afternoon, and the old lady says she's got to play in Holloway's yard tonight—just 'ill' bit, you know."

"Who's Holloway?" Jack demanded.

"You know Horace Holloway; we were up at his place once for the night. Don't you remember?"

"I remember his place well enough; but he hadn't got in when we came, and hadn't got up when we left, so his features aren't as distinctly imprinted on my memory as they might be."

"That's so," said Burnett, pushing aside the curtains that concealed the foot of the wee stair; "I'd forgotten. Well, you'll meet him tonight, anyhow; he came on the five-five. Holly's a nice fellow, only he's so darned overfull of good advice that he keeps you feeling withersome."

"Who will I have for dinner?" the guest inquired glancing around to see if there were any silver tissues or distracting curls in sight.

"Well," his friend replied, rather hesitatingly, "you must expect to balance up for last night. I reckon."

"Your cousin, I suppose," Jack said.

"Burnett nodded."

"She wanted you," he said. "She's taken a fancy to you, and she can afford to marry for love," he added.

"I'm thankful that I can, too," the other replied, fervently.

Burnett laughed at the fervor.

"You make me think of her teacher," he said. "She sings, and when she was sixteen she meant to outrank Patti; she was lots homelier then."

"Oh, I say!" Jack cried. "I can believe 'most anything, but—"

Burnett laughed, and then sobered.

"She was," he said, solemnly; "she really and truly was. And her mother said to her teacher, there in Dresden: 'She will be the greatest soprano, won't she?' And he said: 'Madame, she has only that one chance—to be the greatest.'"

Jack laughed.

"But why 'Lorne'?" he asked, suddenly. "Why not 'Burnett,' since she's your uncle's child?"

"Oh, that's straight enough; there's a lypken there. My uncle died and my aunt married a title. My aunt's Lady Chibleywicks but the family name is Lorne. And you pronounce my aunt's name Chix."

"I'm glad I know," said Jack.

Just then voices and rustling became apparent in many directions, and Aunt Mary's nephew wondered if any other fellow present had such a tempest within his bosom as he himself was conscious of attempting to regulate unperceived. And then, after all, she wasn't among the influx. Miss Maude was, though, and he had to go up to her and talk to her; and terribly dull, hard labor it was.

While he was rolling the Steyphus stone of conversation uphill for the sixth or seventh time, Jack noticed a gentleman pass by and throw a more than ordinarily interested glance their way. He was a very well-built, fairly good-sized man of thirty-five or forty years, with a handsome, uninteresting face and heavy, sleepy, dark eyes.

"Who is that?" he asked of his companion.

"Don't you know?" she said, in surprise. "That's Mr. Holloway. He's just come. Oh, he's so horrid! I think he's just too awfully horrid for any use."



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