

The Girl of the Orchard

By HOWARD FIELDING

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CHAPTER I.

A QUESTION OF PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

THE problem before me was this: If a girl with all legs and arms at the age of 13—and one can't remember much of anything else about her appearance—what will she look like on her nineteenth birthday? At the first glance it seemed to be difficult of solution, and after pondering upon it during many thousands of miles of travel on the sea I was no nearer to the answer except as I was nearer to the girl.

It is true that I had had a great bundle of my father's letters to assist me. They were waiting for me at Loureco Marques, when by the tardy blessing of heaven I succeeded in getting out of the Transvaal, where I had spent two years that will not bear thinking about. Previous to that experience I had studied mineralogy and chemistry in Germany, whence, upon an offer that seemed flattering, I had gone to President Kruger's realm just in time to get into all kinds of trouble. Suffice it to say that I never did a day's work for the mining company in whose service I went there; that, thanks to the long range of modern weapons, I was quite badly wounded at a distance of nearly a mile from a foolish little riot with which I had no connection, and that I lay many months in prison charged with an offense the nature of which has not yet been disclosed to me.

Enough of such recollections. This story begins with my father's letters. Those which I found at Loureco Marques were written after his anxiety in regard to me had been relieved. He knew that I was coming home, that I was none the worse for my wound and that my desire to roam had probably been curbed by my experiences. So he wrote of the future, and very cheerily. It appeared that all things had gone surprisingly well with him. He had never been poor. He was now rich, as he expressed it, "really beyond my desires—somewhere between my own and yours, perhaps—but you will not need to worry much, my boy." A fine old father he always was. I could not have chosen a better. It smote upon my heart that I was all to him and yet had left him so much alone.

However, there was Sibyl; no kin of his, to be sure, but very tenderly regarded, the daughter of his friend, and quite helpless in the world except for him.

"Sibyl has developed beyond anything that you would believe," he wrote in one of those letters. "She is a very brilliant young woman; the promise of her girlhood is more than fulfilled."

Now, to be honest, the promise of Sibyl's girlhood, as I remembered it, was not much. She lived at our house after her sixth year, but I never paid any particular attention to her, except to tease her, in the amiable effort to make her cry. It was one of Sibyl's peculiarities that she never would cry in any person's presence. Even when an infant, as I had been told, she would hide her tears under a pillow, at the great risk of smothering. At a later period she would shut herself up in the dark to indulge her grief, and after some of my experiments with her youthful feelings it had been necessary to open all the clothes closets in the house and even to explore the cellar in search of her. Experimenting, by the way, was always my forte. As a boy I spoiled many clocks by taking them apart, and doubtless the same spirit of research often prompted me in my attacks upon the nervous systems of my fellow creatures.

I was away at school during the major part of my youth and so saw less of Sibyl than would have been natural, considering that she dwelt under my father's roof. My most distinct recollection of her was as she used to sit at the table, rigid, embarrassed, hiding her long arms and long hands under the cloth; her hair brushed straight back from a forehead so thin that it shone upon the curves like a porcelain doorknob. The composite of these impressions may have placed her in my mind at about the age of 12. My father mentioned in a letter which I found at Gibraltar that Sibyl would be 19 on June 15, quite probably the date of my arrival in Chicago.

After reading this statement I looked back through the other letters in a vain attempt to find something descriptive of Sibyl's personal appearance. I would have welcomed a word upon the color of her eyes, and the mention of her weight would have greatly assisted me in rectifying a mental picture that must now be far out of date. Nothing of the sort existed in these documents. Sibyl's wit, vivacity, scholarship, accomplishments—it appeared that she sang well—were often referred to, and especially her amiability. The last was ominous, for goodness of heart has been set against beauty since the days when our early ancestors dwelt in the branches of trees.

My father did not say that he wished me to marry Sibyl. He was so careful not to say that I caught him dodging it on every page of all those letters. His satisfaction at some word of mine in a late communication to him indicating that I was bringing my whole heart home was really amusing, and it was immediately followed by some rather vague allusions to the number of Sibyl's admirers. I was not

cheered by discovering that the chief among them was a young man who had just ascended the pulpit and might be disposed to hold beauty as a mere transitory earthly vanity and those traits which are commonly lumped as "goodness" to be the truly valid attractions. There was also a hint about Arthur Strickland, and this was nearly fatal, for Arthur as a youth was a special providence for homely girls. A fellow who has that trouble never gets over it, so far as I have been able to observe.

Now, upon the subject of beauty I am not quite right in my mind. I can not honestly say that I ever so much as asked a girl to dance, except from motives of politeness, unless she seemed to me to possess the element of beauty. For me the whole matter begins there. I admit the existence of all the admirable qualities that are mentioned by name in the dictionary, but if they were united in one woman and she were not beautiful I could as easily fall in love with the "Data of Ethics" as with her.

It was a perfect certainty that my father wished me to marry Sibyl. He had expressed such a hope long before, and I knew that it was as strong in him as ever, though there was not a word directly upon that theme in these last letters. Doubtless he feared the usual result of parental interference with a young man's liberty of choice, and, besides, he was too good a father to burden me with a definite expression of his wish. Therein lay all the sorrow of the situation. If he had been the sort of father that may disinherit a fellow or invoke the wrath of heaven to punish disobedience, I should have been positively pleased with the prospect of disappointing him. But he would never do any such thing; he would always be kind and generous, always helpful, sincere, resourceful in my interests, a comrade through and through, always a gentleman and the everlastingly unapproachable model of fathers. Confound him! That was where he had me. I should marry Sibyl out of respect and love for the dear old governor, supposing, of course, that the girl would take me, as she certainly would, for precisely the same reason.

So that was all settled, and it remained only to guess and at last to know what particular form of ugliness the poor child had developed into since my eyes had last beheld her. She must have been almost 14 on that occasion, but my memory refused to serve me in regard to it. The wavering, composite image which I have already mentioned was the best I could exhumate.

There had been something peculiar about Sibyl's hair. It was what the children called "calico hair," because it presented a pattern in colors, a widespread but singularly inaccurate term, as calico, strictly speaking, has no pattern. However, Sibyl's hair had many; it underwent a change of hue much more violent than is ordinary and very capricious in its scheme of progress. When she was a little girl, her hair was light—or was it dark? I couldn't remember. Anyhow, it changed from one to the other; changed to match the color of her eyes—or did it match them first and not afterward? I couldn't say. I remembered the striped head, but not the course of its evolution.

Sibyl was a bright girl, though greatly repressed by embarrassment; an original girl, if ever there was one, for she never said or did the expected thing. I remember when my father



She used to sit at the table, rigid, embarrassed.

brought home a little dog in a basket as a present for Sibyl in response to her shy but very earnest request. It was the queerest looking beast that I ever saw; surely nobody but my father could have picked it out, a creature homely beyond belief, yet impossibly amiable, bright and amusing, as the event proved.

At the sight of it Sibyl was enraptured. She gathered Boggy (for so he was named) to her bosom and overwhelmed him with endearments. Almost immediately afterward she mysteriously vanished, to be found, after considerable search, in a small dark room with Boggy in her arms. The dog's woolly head was wet with Sibyl's tears, but the child stopped crying the instant that she was discovered, as she always did. Pressed to state the cause of her weep, she carefully studied her voice for this reply: "Uncle Sumner al-

ways likes homely dogs."

The natural inference was that Sibyl's pet had been a disappointment to her, and thus my father viewed the case. The truth was far away, as subsequently appeared. Sibyl saw in the selection of Boggy a crowning confirmation of her previous observations and deductions. My father had ever a kind word for a crop eared cur, and such would look after him on the street and wish to be his dog. He would buy a scrawny horse of a teamster and turn it out to pasture for the rest of its days, and he would give his patronage to the freckled newsboy with a nose like a little piece of putty. Sibyl had seen these things, and her sentence complete would have been this: "Uncle Sumner always likes homely dogs—and me!"

This incident of long ago was in my mind as the ship that brought me home sailed into New York harbor. It had come up out of the past as the result of much delving among battered rubbish of memory. It showed that Sibyl had recognized her misfortune early in life, and in connection with the fact that I had never received a portrait of her in all the years of my absence it possessed a melancholy value. We had exchanged letters at rare intervals—essays I would better call them, sketches of travel on my part and on hers the quaintest comments upon matters impersonal—and I had asked her for a picture more than once, without even eliciting so much as a refusal.

A customs tug slid up along the side of our big ship, and there stood my father on the little craft's deck. Not a day older he seemed to me, straight, stalwart, handsome and distinct from all others. When he came aboard our vessel, he seemed to be the captain or an admiral over the captain's head. It was impossible to see him anywhere without the feeling that he must be in command.

I had called to him as the tug ran alongside, but he had failed to see me. Upon our deck he looked straight at me for a second's space without recognition; then he started and raised his hands, surprised.

"Marshall!" he exclaimed, taking my right hand in his left and laying the other on my shoulder. "Marshall!"

He seemed to find an assurance in the name, as if it helped him to realize that there was no mistake. "Why, you've grown a foot!" he cried. "You're taller than I am. And you've changed so—I can hardly believe it's you."

"It began while I was in Europe," I replied, "but I got the height while I lay abed in Pretoria. It quite often happens, of course, that a fellow grows an inch or two under such circumstances, but I got nearly three."

My father complimented me most heartily upon my added stature and robust appearance. When he had last seen me I had stood scarcely 5 feet 10 and had been hollow in the chest from a long habit of huddling over a table when reading.

"Sibyl will be struck dumb at the sight of you," he said. "She likes men of good height, and that's why every little five footer falls in love with her." "How is Sibyl looking these days?" I asked, with carefully veiled anxiety.

"Bless the dear child!" he responded enthusiastically. "She's the picture of health."

When that's the best that can be said of a girl's looks, let Cupid drop dead in the scuppers and be washed overboard. I turned my face away and groaned.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN. HE thought of my father's impatience touched me deeply. He was one who hated railroad travel, especially in the warm weather, yet he came a thousand miles for the sake of seeing me a day earlier; partly, also, that I might be spared the necessity of hurrying to him. He knew that there were matters I would like to arrange in New York and old friends I would wish to see.

"I must return tonight," he said. "There's a directors' meeting day after tomorrow that I have pledged my soul to attend. Lucky for the collateral that your steamer wasn't late, my boy. And I'm so glad, so deep down glad, to see you."

The tears came into my eyes as he spoke. He has such a strong and manly sincerity and such a voice. I inherited enough of it to sing fairly well, but my ordinary speech, compared to his, is like the March wind toying with a loose shingle on a barn. "I'll go back with you," said I. "I'm impatient to see Sibyl!"

He looked at me with a quick flash of pleasure, and I felt like one who had paid something on account of a debt. The sensation was so agreeable that I rushed on recklessly.

"It's singular," said I, "that a fellow so susceptible as I am should have knocked around the world for almost five years and come home with his heart absolutely unscarred. My little flirtations and follies have hurt neither myself nor any one else."

"That's good; that's mighty good," he said, with his hand upon my shoulder. "In fact, it's too good to be true. I'm afraid you have seen your own heart clearer than some others, for you're a fine burner of a man, Marshall, to use the old fashioned phrase. But I'm

sure you've always been straightforward and honest."

He paused and then added: "As for your hurrying home to see Sibyl, it won't do any good. She isn't there. I told her you'd stay a few days in New York."

I couldn't help feeling relieved. If Sibyl had come upon a visit at such a time, it was clear that she could not entertain any sentimental memories of me. There was little reason why she should. I had never been especially kind to her. Indeed the thought came to me edged black with remorse that I had done nothing to make the child's life happy under my father's roof. Doubtless she remembered me very justly as a selfish brute and viewed my father's obvious wish regarding our future with feelings much more unpleasant than my own.

(To be Continued.)

PROGRESSIVE IDAHO LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

(Continued from Page Two.)

northern part of the state, known as the Cocur d'Alene district. Lead mining began in Idaho in 1888. The total product since that time is more than sixty million dollars. Last year the lead output was \$5,737,299. Combined with the lead is silver. Idaho has produced more than one hundred million dollars' worth of this metal. The coinage value of last year's product was \$7,682,509.

Nearly every county in the state has mines of valuable minerals. There are immense deposits of iron, coal, and copper in Idaho that have not yet been opened. The total output of Idaho's placer gold mines is estimated at more than five hundred million dollars, but deep gold mining in the state is still in its infancy. The greatest ore bodies of Idaho have just been opened—those of the new Thunder mountain district—and remain to be mined. In the state, however, are several gold and silver camps, where mines and mills are in active operation. The districts of De Lamar and Silver City have already produced and are now producing great quantities of the precious metals. Large areas of Idaho's mineral belt have not yet even been prospected. These lie in the mountain region that is extremely forbidding and difficult of access, but these fields will before long be explored by the eager wealth seeker, and no doubt many rich mines remain to be discovered.

The mineral districts of Idaho are not mined alone to any one section, but are distributed throughout the whole area of the commonwealth. A great deal of outside capital is being expended on developing the various mineral districts. The camps of Neal, Pearl, Atlanta, Buffalo, Hump, the Seven Devils, and others are undergoing development, though the largest amount of money by far is being expended in the big Thunder mountain district. The copper deposits of Idaho are known to be extensive. Some of these are in the Thunder mountain country, on what is known as Profile creek, and not far from the Dundee and Summit gold mines, which are well known.

In connection with the foregoing account of the industries of the state it should be said that Idaho is fortunate in having an efficient immigration department, which has done much to make known her resources and to inform, attract, and guide would-be settlers within her limits.

Magnificent Scenery.

Majestic scenery must be seen to be appreciated. Any description of the beautiful or imposing in nature always seems feeble and weak. Photographs fail to give the impressions which are made by wonderful mountains or tremendous waterfalls. Paintings, even, cannot portray them. To understand what Idaho possesses in these grand creations of nature one must visit the state. The mountain districts furnish some of the most rugged and astonishing scenery in the United States, and Idaho's largest river, the Snake, contains, among a series of mighty waterfalls, one which is second to Niagara alone. Thirty miles from the town of Shoshone, in the southern part of the state, are the great Shoshone falls. The volume of water here is less than that of Niagara, but the fall is greater. Just at the approach of the fall the waters are beaten into a foam by ragged rocks; then comes the perpendicular about 210 feet to a horizontal being about 400 yards wide. This is one of the most remarkable sights on the continent.

On the same river are the remarkable Twin Falls and the Thousand Springs. First is a pair of huge cataracts, where parallel streams are separated by precipitous rocks and fall crumbling together into the smoking cauldron below. At the Thousand Springs vast quantities of water bubble noisily from the earth, their sources being hidden by the sage brush, so that they seem to burst from the roots of this vegetation.

Idaho has other and important beautiful scenes. Her mountain cataracts in the midst of rocks and timber are a series of charming pictures. And these expressions of nature are not confined to one district alone, but are distributed to all corners of the state.—Idaho Number of Leslie's Weekly.

NATIONAL GUN CLUB TOURNEY

FRENCH LICK SPRINGS, Ind., Oct. 6.—The national gun club, the organization of which was completed in Indianapolis a few weeks ago, began its first annual national tournament here today under auspicious auspices. The organization already gives promise of becoming the foremost organization of marksmen in the country.

Represents the Sultan, Cheikh Bey, Turkish minister to the United States, is in reality not a properly accredited envoy, having never presented his credentials. In theory Tur-



key is not diplomatically represented at Washington. Personally Cheikh Bey is very popular. He is extremely affable and fails to come anywhere near the old time notion of the grand Turk, blending in a charming way the manners of the orient and the occident.

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