

One of These Country Girls

By PAUL SCOTT MOWRER

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They sat shoulder deep in the bracken, heedless of the night dews—a man and a girl, she in his arms. He had thrown away his cigar so that all his attention might be upon her.

There was no doubt she was well let us say magic, as her cheek against his shoulder, she gazed up at him with parted lips and shining eyes half closed. Once she asked shyly: "You ain't—you ain't glad, are you Mr. Blane?"

His answer was a chain of hot kisses which he pressed about her throat. And then he murmured foolish words without meaning, as is the way of men when they are drunk of the scent of a woman's hair.

Suddenly there came a faint sound from the direction of the farmhouse. The girl began to struggle in his arms. "Oh, you mustn't—stop!" she gasped.

He would have helped her, but she was already on her feet.

Back from the roadside through the bracken to the barbed wire fence she bounded and stood listening, her fingers on the topmost wire.

"They'll be wondering where I am," she whispered as he joined her. "I better be gone."

"No, not yet! Haven't you forgotten something?"

His throat felt hot, and his voice sounded unusually hoarse to him.

"What?" she demanded quickly.

"Why, I've got to leave day after tomorrow."

It was a potent argument.

When he reached out his arms she let him have his way, until again through the night came a sound, shrill this time, and unmistakable:

"Ger-tie-e-e! Oh, Ger-tie-e-e!"

"Quick! Lemme go!" pleaded the girl, pushing from him. "Why Mr. Blane, I believe you're cold; you shivered."

The man protested, but the girl put her hands to his shoulders and turned up the collar of his coat.

"Are you goin' out in the mornin'?" she asked.

"I've got to. I came after ducks, you know. I've got to have a few to take home with me."

"You take keer you don't ketch more cold" warned the girl. "Now ain't you goin' to give me a boost?"

Blane helped her over the fence.

"Tomorrow night?" he panted, keeping hold of her.

She nodded.

"Is that all you can say?"

She hung her head and leaning close to him murmured with evident reluctance the words his vanity wished to hear.

As the last tremulous syllable hung on her lips she broke from him and ran across the field in the direction of the barn.

Blane strode back to the road. From an inside pocket he drew a handful of cigars.

Two of them were crushed open—whereat he chuckled grimly; but a third was smokable.

With it in his teeth he walked up the road a little way, for he did not want to return until Ger-tie had been in some time.

Presently with a gesture of irritation, he threw away the cigar. The smoke had increased the burn in his throat.

"I'm a fool!" he exclaimed. "A dog-goned fool!"

And he was thinking now, not of the cigar, but of the girl, the scent of whose hair had intoxicated him.

When he entered the house the family were evidently in the kitchen. Mrs. Schneider had left a lamp for him by the foot of the stairs, and he ascended at once to his room. Before going to bed he wrote a dutiful note to his wife.

He addressed it simply to "Eloise Blane," for he knew that when Ger-tie came in the morning to make his bed she would find the letter and carry it to her brother, Oscar, to be mailed in the village.

Ger-tie was an intelligent girl. She would likely have understood "Mrs. Franklin Blane," while "Eloise Blane"—that might mean anything: sister, aunt or even distant cousin.

He was glad he did not have to write much for his head ached: tired out, he guessed.

At 3 a. m., in prompt answer to the rattle of his alarm clock, he dressed and after filling his whisky flask from a tall bottle, took his gun and left the house.

The night, it seemed to him, was unusually cold. He must have been cold ever since going to bed, for his headache persisted and his feet were like ice.

He stamped them on the springy earth as he made his way through the woods back of the farm down to the lake. Heavy clouds overcast the sky, deepening the darkness under the trees.

It was well that he knew the path, else he might have had difficulty in finding the canvas duck boat that lay where he had left it among the sedges.

He tugged vigorously at the oars, so that the light craft had soon crossed

ed the rippling open water, and was sliding through the black, confusing channels of the wild rice beds.

In these vast labyrinths of weeds and weed choked water it is easy to lose one's way, for the wild rice in autumn stands higher than a man. But Blane in the three weeks he had passed at the farmhouse by Lake Ribenu, had learned the landmarks.

He could almost have told his direction from the contours of the dark masses of trees that lay against the phosphorescent luminosity of the sky, away off toward the shore.

Once his oar struck a big garfish that had been dozing near the top of the water. In its fright it leaped squarely against the boat, and Blane was so startled he nearly lost an oar among the submerged vegetation which made rowing so difficult.

But the incident served to wake him up; he began to think of the ducks—how they come like specters out of the morning mists, and how the gun leaps for joy at the command of the finger.

With the first faint light of dawn the sport began. Blane crouching in the boat behind his "blind" would see the birds when they were but specks in the mist that ascended from the marsh.

The specks swiftly grew to spheroidal bodies enveloped in a haze of beating wings, and then the report of the gun rolled out over the wild rice. In the excitement of shooting Blane forgot his headache.

Gray dawn ripened into gray morning, and by the time he judged the last brace of teal had passed it was full day, and he set about gathering in his spoils.

In the open water this was simple enough. One after another he lifted the birds into the boat, sixteen of them, all glistening with wet necks, long and limp, feathers ruffled where the shot had entered but not blood-stained.

There were two however which had tumbled far to one side, in an expanse of weed choked water almost impossible to penetrate. Only by using one oar as a pole was Blane able to pry himself toward them.

After he had picked up the nearer one, it was still some fifteen feet to the second. Just behind him was an overturned stump, very old, that rose like a great touseled head above the water, with sprays of grass growing in its crevices.

Against this he placed the end of the oar and shoved with all his might. The boat lurched. It came so suddenly to a stop that he barely saved himself from toppling overboard.

A glance told him all. He had run on to a submerged snag. Water was gushing into the boat through a long gash in the canvas.

Blane swore gently to himself. Then watching the water climb higher and higher around his ankles, he swore loudly and repeatedly. But there was not even time for profanity.

In a minute more he would have found himself sinking quietly into the marsh. By way of stimulating ideas, he drained his flask and flung it savagely at the malevolent duck which had led him into this strait. The bird was not yet dead.

It answered his bad aim by flapping its wing—in derision? he wondered—and by silently opening and shutting its bill—was it laughing? But with a series of sickening shudders the boat was already settling.

Blane saw only one chance. He must reach that gnarled stump.

He dropped his gun, placed a foot on the stern of the boat and leaped!

As soon as the first chill shock of the water passed off, he began to splash toward the goal.

To swim was impossible because of the water weeds.

He tried to touch bottom with his feet, but they only became more entangled in that treacherous vegetation.

Masses of water weeds clung heavily about his chest; slime filled his ears and lapped at his mouth.

But by reaching a hand at arms-length in front of him and striking desperately downward, he found he was able to make some progress and after an exhaustive struggle, he did actually reach the stump and climb out upon it.

Revived by a moment of resting, he was somewhat inclined to laugh.

It seemed to him ridiculous to be perched out there all alone, like a turtle on a log in the center of a wild rice marsh. But the cool wind, which began to go through his wet clothes as if they had been netting quickly brought home to him the truth of his situation.

Unless something extraordinary happened, he was likely to have to remain a good long time huddled in that selfsame stump.

Immediately uncomfortable shivers began to course up and down his spine.

In five minutes he was shivering violently. His head throbbed with pain, and despite his shivering, he hardly knew whether it was from heat or cold he suffered.

To a robust man who has experienced little of illness nothing is so terrifying as the discovery that his pulses are drumming at double speed, that his throat burns, and that his skin is growing abnormally dry and hot.

Blane was taken with a panic. He recalled his headaches and his various sensations of the night and of the day before. He even blamed Ger-tie for having kept him out there in the wet bracken.

It was three weeks since he first set eyes on her, and in the last week

of those three he had spent part of every evening in her company.

The speed with which he had brought her to the desired state of compliance did not surprise him, for he considered himself an adept in these matters.

At the club it was a favorite saying of his that "One woman does not make a summer!"

He quite understood the force of the impression which he, as a city man of strong will and a certain polish, was able to make on simple country girls.

There were good reasons not entirely understood by the members of his family, why he always went duck shooting alone, and each year in a different locality. But this Ger-tie—magnetic little thing—he had believed he really liked, as much as a man can like one of these curious, earnest, unreasonable creatures.

Now she had repaid him by keeping him out in the deadly night dews of the Croppie country. But she must have known a city man could not stand that sort of thing!

Why, she had let him catch a fever! And fevers are sometimes fatal. Well, since she had got him into this mess, she better come and get him out of it! Yet he knew how little this was likely.

The Schneiders were not a worrying sort. Their boarders might be absent two or three days at a time without giving them the least alarm, as long as enough baggage remained to cover the board bill.

So Blane cursed the whole lot of them for their unnatural indifference.

After a while he became calmer. His head reeled, he felt somewhat weak, but he knew he must try to do something, he could see that very clearly.

All around him lay the marsh, with here a patch of waving, green-gray wild rice, there a clump of lilly pads or an expanse of black water.

The distant shores were rich with autumnal reds and yellows and bronzes, softly blended under a haze of purple.

Near by, level with the surface, lay the duck boat. The ducks he had shot were floating within it, more gruesome now than admirable.

Finding in none of these observations any offer of hope, Blane leaned down and felt the water.

He was so cramped with cold that it seemed to him the water was warm er than the air. At least he could escape the wind!

Painfully he let himself down beside the stump until he was submerged to his neck, supporting himself by hanging to a root of the stump.

At first the sensation was luxurious but by the end of an hour he became dully aware of a numbness. His skin felt as if it were crimping all over him.

He was considering vaguely what to do when he felt a violent shock. In his drowsiness he had allowed his head to sink until he had breathed in water. His subsequent chokings and coughings stimulated him so that he was at last able, by a great outpour of effort, to clamber up to his old position on the stump.

Then came the wind through his wet clothes again and the accompanying fits of chill. His teeth chattered until he thought they would fall from his head. Prolonged tremors traversed his huddled body.

He tried to sit up and cry out in the wild hope that somebody would hear him, but he was hardly aware of his own voice.

Finally, in a fit of swooning weakness, he sank like a bag across a patch of roots, and lay quite still.

There are moments between sleeping and waking when it seems that nothing could be so sweet, in life or beyond it, as a state of undreaming semiconsciousness.

Thus did it seem to Blane, when, an indeterminate time later he began to realize that something was disturbing him. Yes! Something had hold of his arm! He was being shaken!

At first he did not remember where he was; but as his sensations of pain and stiffness quickened, reminding him only too vividly of his hopeless plight he became alarmed.

What was it had hold of his arm? With difficulty he turned his head, and found himself looking up into the face of—Ger-tie!

Her features were somewhat distorted, he thought, but there, was no doubt it was Ger-tie. She was speaking to him.

Without knowing or caring what she was saying, he smiled at her, closed his eyes and let her drag him where she would.

When he awoke he was in his bed in his room at the Schneider farm.

A stranger with a white beard was sitting beside him holding a watch. The window shade was drawn so the he could not see very well what was going on.

(To be continued)

Worth Considering

"I'm going to a summer hotel that makes a specialty of good things to eat. The manager weighs nearly 300 pounds and his wife tips the scales at more than 200 pounds."

"Still I wouldn't jump to conclusions. How do you know they eat here?"

A bathing suit that shrinks every time it is worn may not be inmodest.

Matrimonial packages are not all ways what they are tied up to be.

NEW NAVAL ATTACHE GOES TO LONDON



Capt. W. D. McDougall.

Capt. W. D. McDougall, formerly of the president yacht Mayflower, but recently on duty at the naval observatory, has been assigned to duty in London as naval attache of the United States embassy, succeeding Commander Powers Symington. Captain McDougall's father, the late Gen. Clinton McDougall, was several years ago a member of congress from New York.

Foolish Spending

"Dear," said Mrs. Jimplecute, looking across at him when the colliers had left, "I wish you could let me have \$10 over and above the house money this week."

"It has been a rather hard month, but I suppose I can. Have you any objection to telling me what you contemplate doing with all that money?"

"I am going to spend it foolishly."

"Foolishly?"

"Absolutely foolishly."

"That being the case you may certainly have it. This spending money foolishly appeals to me. If I had not spent \$10 foolishly not long ago I would make it twenty instead of ten."

"You? How?"

"Quite a long time ago a sweet appearing little bit of a woman with a beautiful baby came up to the dentists across the hall from me. He was engaged and every chair in his waiting room was occupied, so this little lady came into my office and asked to be permitted to sit there for a while. You know how wild I am about beautiful babies. I am afraid I admired her baby rather extravagantly. Anyhow every time she visited the dentist until her work was done she brought the baby in for me to see, so that we became well acquainted in a casual way."

"The idea!"

"Yes. One day when I returned to my office the stenographer told me that the little lady with the baby had called and had left a telephone number and had asked me to call up when I came in. I called up and she asked me 'If I could come out there to her house right away. I went out immediately.'

"You did?"

"Certainly. I found that her home was a neat little cottage and she was sitting out in the porch swing when I arrived. I was glad to see that the baby, which she held in her arms was well. To make a long story short, her husband had gone to Kansas City, where his mother lived, in order to sign up some papers that would permit her to sell off some property."

"And you believed such an—"

"I expect I must have. But, you see I was holding the baby then and she was looking at me just as she talked—"

"I see the picture."

"She had just received a letter from her husband telling her that he was ill and to please come to him at once. He had sent her plenty of money the preceding week, but she had spent a considerable amount of it on tinery for the baby."

"So she asked you to—"

"No she did not. I beat her to it and asked her how much."

"Oh Jared!"

"She said \$10 would be plenty, so I let her have the \$10. I should have received that money on the 10th of the month if she had kept her word—"

"O-o-o-h! Was her name Llewellen?"

"Yes, but how—"

"I received a \$10 bill thru the mail on the 10th, with just a card with her name on it. I forgot to mention it."

"Of course you did, but you didn't forget to spend it. Now, I've been doing that little woman a gross injustice. What do you want of ten more dollars?"

"If you must know it was to get you some perfectly beautiful earrings for your birthday. The man is going to bring them today. He smuggled them into the country without paying duty on them and—"

"Gee whiz! Of all the easy marks the women are the worst! Take the men and get a dress pattern. I have sworn off smoking. You told the truth when you said you were going to spend it foolishly, all right."

BRIDES ELECT PAY ONE THIRD ON GOWNS THAT DIDN'T ARRIVE

Now They're Wondering How They'll Get Troussaus in Time for Weddings

Greenville, Ala.—Half a dozen brides elect in Greenville, whose weddings were set for the next few weeks are in an embarrassing position because they haven't any wedding gowns and little time is left to get them. It all came about by the visit of a young man of attractive demeanor who stopped at the best hotel in here and soon made the acquaintance of several leading citizens. By this means he obtained audiences and displayed a tempting line of samples purporting to come from Chicago tailoring establishment. He offered unusually low prices and liberal conditions and engaged a local seamstress to make any necessary alterations when the garments arrived. The goods and trimmings were "just too lovely for anything" in the view of many of Greenville's young ladies, including several brides elect, who willingly advanced the one third in cash.

The salesman had to hurry to the next town, and neither he nor the stunning gowns have been heard from since.

Mariam's Last Hour

Mariam was going. For a week the housework had stood still, "because," as Mrs. Woodside said, "you can't ask a maid to do anything when she's leaving."

For a week the kitchen range had been cold, likewise the water tank beside it; and, there being no gas heater in the Woodside home, the grownups had contented themselves with cold baths and the children with such purification as could be accomplished with occasional bed-time teakettles of hot water. "I ought to have Mariam start the fire," said the Mistress, "but it means tugging up coal from the cellar and I'm afraid to ask her."

The hour of Mariam's departure had arrived. She lazied thru the breakfast dishwashing, then disappeared upstairs to pack. Mrs. Woodside went into the deserted kitchen and said, "Now I'll have a fire and boilerful of hot water at last!" She brought kindling and coal from the lower regions, she built the fire and stoked it for an hour, until the water tank gave out a grateful heat. Then she went to look for Mariam.

The outgoing maid was not in her room. Mrs. Woodside came down from the third floor perplexed. Could Mariam have gone without saying good-by?

Then from behind the closed door of the bathroom came the joyous sounds of one luxuriating in a porcelain tub filled with glorious hot water. Mariam was taking a bath.

An Expensive Shade

When a trolley conductor on the night turn woke up one afternoon his industrious little wife brought out for his admiration a lamp shade made of colored tissue paper. She had made it with her own hands, and its scalloped border was perforated with innumerable little holes, thru which the light of a parlor lamp would fall on the table.

"Tell me if you don't think it pretty," she said, holding the shade out for the husband to inspect.

"It looks lovely," began the man; but as he looked at it more closely he turned pale and said, "You made these holes with my bell punch?"

"Yes, dear, while you were asleep. But what is the matter?" asked his wife.

"Oh, nothing," he murmured, faintly; "you've only rung up enough fares on that lamp shade to mortgage my year's salary. Every one of those holes will cost me five cents, that's all."

The man who hands out free advice to others always goes elsewhere for his own.

When a man says a bright thing he nearly always forgets the quotation marks.

"SUN AND AIR NATURE'S BEST TONICS" SAYS AUDREY MUNSON, ARTIST'S MODEL



Audrey Munson, bathing at Venice, Cal.

VENICE, Cal. — (Special) — Miss

Audrey Munson, an artist's model known to the studios of Europe and America, attributes her health and beauty to the many summers she has spent in the water and open air. Miss Munson, who has been splashing the past several weeks at the beaches here, is an excellent swimmer and a lover of the exercise.

"Pure air and water and sunlight are nature's great restoratives," declared Miss Munson recently, "and it would be an easier matter for more people to be beautiful if this were better understood. I'm sure if I did not keep the best of health I would soon lose my good looks and cheerful spirits. Health is certainly the first wealth and usually the means of every other wealth."

"Most healthy people if not actually beautiful are certainly good to see. I'm sure every girl who hopes to make the most of her appearance cannot do better than attain her greatest possibilities in the way of robust health. She can certainly learn to swim and enjoy it, because everybody can, and I'm sure it's the most healthful of enjoyments."

"Young girls do not realize well enough the wide channel between the full bloom of perfect health and merely not being sick. If every girl did all she might to gain her best strength and health there would be lots more pretty girls. Health brings a radiance and a fine clearness of eye. And there's nothing to help in this way as the pure air and sunlight whenever you go for a swim."

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