

The Secret Wedding.

Story of a Long Delayed Honey-moon.

By AGNES G. BROGAN.

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"Then it is all over, Nan," said the man slowly, "and you will not have me?"

"I am sorry, Tommy, dear, but I shall never marry any one as long as I live," she answered, with a tremulous little catch in her voice.

The man regarded her thoughtfully. There was a troubled and thoughtful look upon his usually smiling and almost boyish face.

"Nan," he said presently, "I want to talk to you."

The girl drew her chair nearer the fireplace and shaded her face with her hand. "Yes, Tommy," she said.

"We have known each other all our lives," he began. "Why, I carried your books the very first day we went to school. You could not say my name distinctly then, Nan, so you called me 'boy,' and sometimes when I had pleased you it would be 'boy, dear.'"

"Tommy," she cried beseechingly, "I must know," he reiterated.

"You shall have my confidence," she said at length, "but it must be sacred, for the story has never passed my lips before. My own father and mother do not know."

"You may remember the summer of my first long dress and planned up hair, when I went away to visit my father's sister, and because we often speak least where we feel most deeply, so I never meant to say a word to any one who made that summer the happiest I have ever known."

"One evening when the syringas were filling the room with their fragrance we sat in the twilight, my little old aunt and I, she primly erect in a straight back chair, while I played and sang the sweet old songs that she had loved in her girlhood. 'Douglas, Douglas, Tender and True,' still lay upon the piano before me when a young man, an acquaintance of my aunt, entered the room. He told me later that Douglas was his own name and that as he was passing the house my voice seemed to call to him and he had answered the call. Through all the joyful days of my visit we were inseparable companions. He told me of his father's death and of the fortune left his only son on condition that the son should not marry before his twenty-fifth year. This clause, however, was subject to change if the mother desired to alter it. Then he told me of his mother. Proud and lacking of affection she seemed to be

from his unconscious description, but ambitious above all things that her son should make a name in the world."

"Some day she will know you, Nan," he would say. "And when I have finished my college course she will change the will, and we shall be married."

"I have never known a nature like his, strong and dominating, yet with such personal charm of manner that it never occurred to me to dispute his word, or perhaps I had no wish to do so."

"The day came for my departure, and Douglas was also leaving for college. My aunt waved a goodby from the porch, where autumn leaves now grew in place of the syringas which had bloomed at my arrival. She was glad to have Douglas drive me to the station, and he—oh, he was desperate at the thought of parting, fearful that

I might forget him, and so—and so— Her voice broke at the recollection; then she hurried on.

"His masterfulness swept away all my objections, and I could not resist the charm of his eyes like two frightened children, and again I searched for him through a blur of tears." She covered her face with her hands. "That was ten years ago," she whispered, "and I have never seen him since."

The man jumped to his feet and stood looking down upon her. "I do not understand," he said slowly.

She smiled, and there was a strange bitterness in Nan's sweet voice. "Do you call?" she asked. "It was very dear to me when I began to see things plainly. Carried away by the impulse of the moment, my lover regretted his rash act; also the loss of a fortune. He knew that he could rely implicitly upon my secrecy, for I was conscience-stricken at the tender welcome of my father and mother as they met me at the end of my journey, and rushed to my room to write a wild, frightened little note: 'Never let any one know, I cautioned him. It would break my parents' hearts to learn that I had deceived them. Some day we shall be married over again. Until then never, oh, never let any one know.'"

"As the days passed and no word came from Douglas I wrote again and still again until at last I came to realize the truth."

"Boy," she said softly, "you will never know how much you helped me then. Did you guess at some hidden sorrow that you were so kind?"

"Poor little girl!" the man said pityingly. "Poor little girl! And you intend to sacrifice your life like this—faithful to the memory of a cur and a coward?"

"Why, else is there left for me to do, Tommy?" she asked simply.

"There must be a way of escape, you said, considering. 'How old were you then, Nan?'"

"Seventeen."

"Not quite twenty-one."

"I do not know much about these things," he said, "but I believe a marriage of that kind can be annulled."

"You must let me tell one other thing," said the man presently, "and ask his advice. I shall repeat the story without mentioning your name to Old John, who is a lawyer. If it is possible to have the marriage annulled with perfect secrecy he will know."

"I have heard you speak of this John before," she said wearily, "but this means so very much to me. Are you sure that you can trust him?"

"Trust Old John!" he exclaimed.

"Why, Nan, he has been getting me out of troubles and scrapes since my first college days. David and Jonathan's names should be on them. I would trust John with my very life—in fact, he gave it back to me one time. You remember the epidemic of typhoid that swept through our college during my freshman year. Old John was the first to succumb, and when he returned from home white and thin he found me lying isolated and sick with no one to care for my proper care, and he took me to his own rooms and nursed me there through delirium and convalescence as tenderly and as tirelessly as a mother might have done. Often in the silence of the night I would awaken to find him bending over me. Why, Nan, it was he who wrote the first rambling letters to you from my dictation, and when your answers came he would lay them upon my pillow and steal silently away."

"Care free and thoughtless, I accepted all Old John's sacrifices. The debt has always been upon one side, but if ever a time comes when I can make it up to him"—He paused, and there was a look of determination upon his face which Nan had never seen there before. "I will do it." He finished quietly.

She went to the door with him as he was leaving.

"I will call tomorrow," he said kindly, "to let you know what John advises."

When he had gone she called after him. "Tommy," she cried, "Tommy, let us leave things as they are." But he did not hear.

She was very pale when he saw her the next afternoon.

"John says that he must question you, Nan," he told her, "and see the marriage certificate before he can form an intelligent opinion. It will be a painful experience, I know, but he is kind and thoughtful and will spare you all he can."

So she went with him to the great stone building. "I would rather be alone," she said. So he left her at the office door, which stood ajar. She looked so small and white and frightened that he came back for a moment.

"Goodby, boy, dear," she answered. "Goodby, Nan," he said again.

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FREEDOM. There are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought. —Charles Kingsley.

CHARACTER. The gifts of wealth, place, ease and luxury are dispensed with a good deal of caprice, but nobody ever heard that a character was got by chance.

Accumulated Work. A Story For Labor Day. By CLARISSA MACKIE. Copyright by American Press Association, 1911.

"It's rightly named," growled Mr. Shafter as he drank his morning coffee. "Every holiday ought to be called 'Labor day' so far as I am concerned. Do you know what I've got to do tomorrow, Helen?" He put the question aggressively, and his maiden aunt looked pityingly at Mrs. Shafter.

"No, dear; what have you to do tomorrow?" asked Helen serenely.

"Do!" spluttered her husband, passing the toast to Aunt Electa with a savage lunge to emphasize his remark. "To begin with there's the lawn to mow, the chicken pen to clean out, the cellar to whitewash—if you wouldn't begin housecleaning so early, Helen, a fellow might have a show once in a while—oversee that six tons of winter coal gets in all right and clean up after the coal man."

Later in the day, after Mr. Shafter had sunk into his Sunday afternoon nap in the hammock, Aunt Electa called Helen into the summer house on the lawn and talked long and earnestly to that young woman.

"Certainly, dear Aunt Electa," agreed Helen sweetly. "James always retires early on Sunday, and we can have our own way about everything."

"For a married woman that will be an unusual treat." And Aunt Electa's eyes twinkled merrily.

"Then let me hasten its coming," cried Helen blithely. "I shall have an early supper and hustle James off to bed."

When James Shafter awoke the next morning he heard the unusual clatter of a lawn mower and sniffed the fragrance of freshly cut grass. "Good Lord, it does seem as though Finley might let a beggar rest a little in the morning. It can't be more than 6 o'clock." He craned his neck to look at the timepiece and noted with satisfaction that his guess was correct to a minute. Still his opposite neighbor's busy lawn mower was an unpleasant reminder that his own grass needed shaving that morning and after that was accomplished stretched the tasks he had enumerated the day before—chicken house, cellar and coal man.

"After and turned over in bed. The sun shining through a chink in the closed blinds awakened him at last, and another glance at the clock assured him that three hours had melted away. It was now 9. He bounced out of bed and into his morning bath, while his mind calculated how he could divide the remainder of the short end holiday into working shifts and squeeze out time enough to read his newspaper."

He found a delicious breakfast awaiting him in the cool and shaded dining room, and as he ate he complained bitterly of the noise Finley had made that morning with the detested lawn mower.

"Woke me up ahead of time, Helen, and I dropped off to sleep and never awoke again until half an hour ago. It's going to be a scorcher too."

"It is hot already," agreed Helen cheerfully.

"Shafter kissed her pink cheek and murmured appreciation of the breakfast and so went out on the front piazza to survey the ragged lawn he had left the night before. "I suppose I may as well pitch in now as any time," he muttered, and then stopped short.

Instead of the untidy lawn he had worried over there stretched a smooth expanse of velvet turf, neatly trimmed about the flower beds and newly wet with the revolving sprinkler.

"Great Jove!" muttered Shafter, and sought his wife, noting that his opposite neighbor's grass was untouched as yet.

"Helen, who the dickens cut the lawn?" he demanded, puzzled.

"I did," she returned. "It's great sport. Such a time as I had! I was afraid you would wake up."

Armed with hoe and shovel, he entered the chicken yard and prepared to make the abode of those industrious tenants quite trim and tidy, but some magic hand had forestalled him here also, for the chicken house had been

more thoroughly cleaned than it ever had been under his practiced hand, and in addition a fresh coat of white-wash dazzled his eyes. Several white hens poked impatient heads at him from nest boxes filled with fresh hay.

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Shafter, and carried the tools into the shed. Once more he sought his wife. "Helen, you didn't clean that chicken house?" he demanded authoritatively.

"No, I didn't," returned Mrs. Shafter, shelling peas on the side piazza. "Aunt Electa is responsible for that."

"Aunt Electa!" shouted the horrified husband. "Why—why—that's no sort of work for an elderly lady?"

"Why—why—that's an elderly lady?" demanded Aunt Electa from the doorway.

"But, Aunt Electa, that chicken house is not the sort of work—" "Go to, James!" interrupted the good lady smiling; "stop arguing and enjoy your holiday."

"Holiday?" snorted James from force of habit, and then, with sudden recollection of how his work was dwindling, he rushed to the cellar to vent his discontent upon slapping whitewash on its stone walls. But once more he was foiled—again he was dazzled, for the work was done. He opened the door and peered into the coal bin in the desperate hope that the coal man had neglected to come, and he almost whooped with joy when he saw that his hope was fulfilled. He was staring in the seclusion of that blackened, stone-walled room when he heard the shriek of the speaking tube in the outer cellar.

He answered it.

"James," said his wife's voice, and there was a tremor in its evenness—he wondered if she was laughing—"James, dear, just to make sure I telephoned the coal office and as it is a holiday they will not deliver until a rocky point. A short distance on from that point a white plume of spray kept bursting into view, fading, coming and fading again with the regularity of a revolving light."

One afternoon I was lying on my back, watching this scene, my hands under my head, one leg thrown over the other, my hat shading my eyes; indeed, my indolence in keeping with my surroundings, especially the lazy splash of the water and the effortless soaring of the gulls. Hearing a rustle of skirts behind me, I instinctively rose and held my hat in hand, waiting for a young girl who was coming to pass on. To my surprise her face indicated recognition.

"Alexis!"

"Lisa! What brings you here?" "To this particular spot? You saw your name on the hotel register and have been looking for you."

"But what brings you to America?" "Oh, I read of the independence of the American women and the fields of labor open to them. I couldn't sit and twirl my thumbs waiting for my father to find a husband for me. I preferred to make a career for myself."

"But, Lisa, do you expect to make a career for yourself at a summer resort?"

"No. I have but just arrived in America and have been told that it is now the dull season. I came here to wait for busier times."

Lisa Vasselevna was the daughter of a gentleman whose estate adjoined my father's in Russia. We had been playmates as children, but I had not seen her since my departure for the university. It was natural that the meeting should bring me great pleasure. We walked down to the foot of the rocks, thence to the beach and strolled northward on the sand. Lisa told me many things of home—that my brother had gone into the army; that my sister was engaged to be married; that her father had received an appointment under the government. These bits of news she gave me as we walked side by side.

"Where are you staying?" I asked.

"At the same hotel as you. But I am going to change."

"No, I will change."

"A farmhouse will suit me better. I am without a chaperon, and a hotel is not the best place for me."

I was somewhat surprised that this independence of character which had led her to choose a field of labor should be found side by side with such deference to custom. However, the change of residence was essential and we resulted in avoiding criticism, for we were constantly together. Usually in the morning we would sit on the beach looking at the bathers. In the afternoon we would go to the rocks and watch the water pour in and out of the caverns at their base. Occasionally we would take a boat with a single sail, which I could manage quite well.

The Nihilist Lovers.

How Two Russian Exiles Found Oblivion.

By F. A. MITCHEL.

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I make this record, which I have sealed, to be opened by my oldest son as soon as his mother and I shall have passed away. I have brought up my children to refrain from the slightest reference to their parents' childhood and youth, telling them that to do so would imperil their very lives. The story of how they as young people passed out of existence will therefore only be read when the narrator has passed away. I shall give my real names. I shall call myself Alexis Olszoff, which is a confession that I am a Russian. My father is a landed proprietor and, though not noble, is a gentleman. When I came to the proper age he sent me to the university, where I became intimate with the most pronounced radicals, and my father, hearing of my affiliations, took me away before I had finished my studies. When I reached home I had a long conference with him respecting my future, and it was decided that I should go to America.

The third summer after my arrival in the new world I spent a vacation at the seashore. While there a favorite lounging place with me was on the rocks directly in front of the hotel. It was a fascinating spot. Beneath the waves kept up an incessant influx and reflux. To the left stretched a broad band of foam composed of innumerable curves, at the farther end of which the beach was broken by a rocky point. A short distance on from that point a white plume of spray kept bursting into view, fading, coming and fading again with the regularity of a revolving light.

One afternoon I was lying on my back, watching this scene, my hands under my head, one leg thrown over the other, my hat shading my eyes; indeed, my indolence in keeping with my surroundings, especially the lazy splash of the water and the effortless soaring of the gulls. Hearing a rustle of skirts behind me, I instinctively rose and held my hat in hand, waiting for a young girl who was coming to pass on. To my surprise her face indicated recognition.

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I watched her closely to observe the effect of my words, but they had no effect, at least none that I could detect. Her gay mood lasted till we parted. Then I saw tears.

"Lisa," I said, "give me your confidence; trust me."

"I cannot even trust myself," she replied and ran away.

There were times when she would show a tenderness for me, which I only accounted for on some ground that we were solitary companions in a foreign land. Once when we were walking on the beach by moonlight she felt for my hand and held it in hers with her face averted. I tried to catch a glimpse of it, but without avail till she turned and looked at me as serenely as the moon was looking on the ocean.

One morning Lisa and I were walking on the beach. The wind was northerly, and though the sky was cloudless, the air was crisp. Both felt its invigorating influence, and suddenly Lisa started to run. As she did so she took a handkerchief either from her belt or her bosom. I thought I saw something white flutter away from her and fall on the sand, but supposed it was the sunlight on the handkerchief. She was running very fast, and I had all I could do to catch her. When I did so I had forgotten to ask her if she had dropped anything. That evening the moon, which had wandered, rose late, and I concluded after leaving Lisa to go to the rocks and watch it come up out of the water, making a trade of lighted waves, crests between me and it. I was chilled sitting still and concluded to go down on to the beach. Indeed, I missed my companion and wished to bring her nearer to me by going over the ground where we had walked during the morning.

and skim over the ocean. Remembering the restrictions in such matters that Lisa had been used to at home, I apologized for asking her to go out thus alone with me. A curious expression crossed her face as she said: "What have I to do with such absurdities?"

Again the inconsistency of her behavior puzzled me.

Indeed, in all things Lisa was singular. As a child she had been serious, and now that she was a woman that seriousness had deepened into—what? I could not define it. She seemed to have been lifted far above the narrow old world views among which she had been born. And yet she did not seem fitted for the humdrum existence of a working woman. She certainly was not in a hurry to set to work. If I questioned her as to her plans she would say, "Time enough for that, when I have returned to the city."

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ing. I was strolling along meditatively when I saw something white on the sand. I picked it up. It was a letter. I have strong eyes and could make out by the dim moonlight the address on the back. It was Nina Nikalovich. The Russian name naturally attracted my attention. I don't know what it was that induced me mechanically to slip the letter from its envelope. I am not used to reading other people's epistles. Perhaps it was some working of the brain in advance of logical reasoning, perhaps fate. At any rate, I did so and unfolded it. The light was not sufficient to enable me to read the finer writing within, except one word that stared me in the face—my own name.

Striking a match, I read the few lines of the letter. It informed Nina Nikalovich that during the previous spring I had been seen in Philadelphia.

Then I remembered that I had seen Lisa drop something during the morning when she was running on the beach. It must have been this letter. She had not come upon me by accident. She had been hunting for me. What for? Suddenly a scene came up before me, a scene enacted while I was at the university in Russia. All

was clear. Clear? No; there must be some mistake. How could anything connect Lisa with that scene?

I staggered back from the beach to some rocks and sat down. The north wind, which had chilled me before, was now not cool enough to drive the fever from my temples.

It was some time after this—it might have been five minutes, it might have been an hour—that I sat up and looked out, dazed, upon the ocean. I heard the crunching of feet on the sand. Some one was coming.