

HURLBUT'S QUEST

BY NELLIE CRAVEY GILMORE

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Russell had made no mistake. There was but one jewel like that in the whole world. He had made sure of that before he bought it for his wife—ten years before. Curious it was; a solid diamond heart, flanked by a score of tiny ruby ones, held in place by the finest thread of gold that was quite invisible at the distance of a few feet.

To-night she was wearing it in a new place—as a sole ornament to the gleaming pile of corn-gold hair that, alone, might have made Nannie Russell beauty-famous. But besides this, there were eyes of a matchless amber-gray, a richly pale, perfect skin, and fine, scarlet lips that were gravely sweet.

Russell gradually let his eyes away from the jewel to a furtive contemplation of his wife's familiar features. No; seven years had made slow progress in ageing a woman of this indestructible type. If anything, she had grown more splendid in her thirties than she had ever been in the old girlhood days of their first love.

She was conversing spiritedly with an ambassador, and Russell thanked Heaven that he had been allotted a seat at the other end of the table. She would hardly bestow more than a casual glance in that direction, and he relied upon his short beard and eyeglasses to protect him from recognition.

The dinner progressed firesomely, and the running fire of small talk Russell found himself obliged to keep up with the lady on his right, was about the hardest work the young broker had ever done in his life.

Presently there was a lull, and he became conscious that all eyes were turned upon the man who sat directly opposite to him.

"Yes," Hurlbut was saying, "it seems I am here on a very absurd quest, considering the fact that I don't even know the fellow's name or address—or that of any of his friends. All I have to go on is that he lived on Fifth Avenue seven years ago—was tall and dark and smooth-faced, with



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the 'prettiest wife in New York,' and spent his work hours on Wall street."

Russell started. Luckily no one was looking at him, and the ridiculous red that poured over his face went unnoticed. After all, how many thousand people there were to whom this description might apply as well as to himself! He sincerely hoped he was not growing egotistic.

"The man was dying, you see—it was out in India—and all I could get out of him was that this friend of his had brought a lot of trouble and seeming disgrace upon himself in trying to

shield him from it, and that I must move Heaven and earth to locate him and make matters right between him and his wife, who, it appears, left him because of this thing."

Russell shifted his gaze transiently to his wife's face. From pale, it had grown all at once bloodless, and she was leaning forward with parted lips and wide, tense eyes. A remark from her dinner partner recalled her to herself, and sent the crimson to her cheeks. She made some hurried response, laughing in a half-hysterical little way to conceal her agitation. Then she looked back at Hurlbut again; he had stopped talking, and Russell almost jumped at the sound of his wife's clear, controlled tones.

"Do tell us all about it, Mr. Hurlbut," she was saying, "a romance like that is too rare not to be interesting."

"There isn't really much more to tell," he answered, smiling, "that's where the trouble comes in. Evans was always more or less gloomy, almost melancholy—except at times; then he was unpleasantly hilarious. One day, he got confidential and told me all about his trouble, but withholding the names of the parties. A month later, he was stricken with a fever, and they sent for me at his request. In some way, he made it known to me that I must look up these people and make things right, now that he was going. But he was too far gone to talk distinctly, and I never could get at the names. The story, in brief, however, is this:

"He was staying with some friends in town two weeks prior to his wedding. A young lady was there, at the house, and Evans—man-like—found himself making love to her in spite of himself. One night, he kissed her in the rose-garden. In some way, it has never been discovered how, the fact came to the ears of his fiancée. She wrote an immediate letter, dissolving their relationship. Evans replied, asseverating his innocence. He could not do otherwise. But the girl refused to budge. He confided in his friend, who, like a brave Don Quixote, took the affair into his own hands and went to see the girl, and, in order to prove to her that Evans was innocent, himself took the blame of the whole thing, and swore that he it was who kissed the young lady in the rose garden. And in turn, the young lady who was kissed, betrayed the man to his wife, and the wife took French leave."

"But did the girl—the one who was kissed—did she uphold the husband in his deception, to protect the other girl's fiancée?"

"Just exactly."

"Then I should have thought that the husband would have explained everything to his wife!"

"He tried, to—pleadings were vain."

"I don't much blame her, do you?"

"Well—I hardly know."

"A man's reply. Were there any children?"

"I don't think so."

"That was lucky. So many women have to endure a continual flagellation of their souls if there are children."

"But the man—think of him! He loved his wife; he must have suffered terribly when she turned on him."

"If he loved her so much, why did he place her in such a position?"

"He thought he could explain; thought that she would trust and believe him. And he loved his friend, and couldn't bear to see his life wrecked all on account of a little nonsense."

Mrs. Russell laughed then, the tension had to give way somewhere, and when she looked up again, her eyes were calm, with a new light in them. "Quite a little drama," she remarked, "and so it has fallen to your lot to arrange a climax?"

"In a way, it has."

"And do you think the woman would believe—"

"On the oath of a dying man? I think so. Don't you?"

She nodded. "I think she would like to, at any rate."

"I gave Evans my solemn promise."

"Why did he wait so long to set matters straight?"

"He never knew of the estrangement till a year ago. He went to India, you see."

After that, there was a silence, and soon the hum of general conversation was resumed.

Half an hour later, on emerging from the smoking room, Russell found himself being presented to his wife.

At the sound of his name, she looked up, startled, and the color faded swiftly from her face and lips.

"Francis!" The name came involuntarily, in a sharp whisper.

The hostess, who introduced them, had disappeared, and Russell drew his wife's arm within his and led her out into the cool, shadowy moonlight.

"Nannie," he said, suddenly getting both her hands in his, "do you think that that woman would still like to believe that her husband had told her the truth?"

She met his gaze for an instant, impassioned, pleading, compelling, and her eyes went down.

"I am afraid she has never—ceased to—believe, dear, since it was—too late."

He stooped and took her in his arms, but for only a moment. Some one was coming, and they moved off down the veranda. At the end of it they came face to face with Hurlbut. Russell held out his hand.

"First chance I've had to speak to you, old man. I was very much interested in that little story of yours to-night. Meet me at the club to-morrow at one, and I may be able to give you



"I am afraid she has never ceased to—"

a clue." He turned to his wife with a little half-laugh, "and if you'll condescend to dine with us at seven, there may be even a chance of meeting some of the dramatis personae."

Where Marston Law Was Good.

In Exeter, Mass., acquaintances of Gen. Gilman Marston say nothing ever amused him more than the following:

A favorite niece living in the adjoining town of Brentwood bought a horse which, not coming up to requirements, she promptly took back and left in the seller's barn. Next day she found the horse back in her barn. Twice more she left it and twice was it returned.

Then she called on the general. He told her to notify the owner that if there was any more trespassing in her barn he would be fined \$10, and to tell him that Gilman Marston said so, and not bring that d—d horse back again.

The niece promptly tacked up on her barn the following notice: "Any trespassing in this barn by man or beast will be fined \$10—by Gilman Marston." The horse did not come back.

EASY TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

Little Girl Knew Simple Way Out of Difficulty.

The Hotel Belleclaire houses one of those rare anomalies—a woman who does things contrary to the advice of her husband. One of the things to which that unreasonable man objects is the occasional "touching up" of his wife's hair. Notwithstanding his forcibly expressed opinion on the subject, the rejuvenating process was undergone one day last week at the hands of a professional hairdresser. Bessie, the four-year-old daughter, was an interested observer of the operation.

"Now, Bessie," said her mother, when the hairdresser had gone, "I don't want you to say anything to your father about mamma having had her hair dressed. Do you understand? If you don't tell him perhaps he won't notice it."

Of course Bessie promised to maintain a discreet silence, which she did up to 6 o'clock, when, meeting her father at the corner, the secret was promptly sacrificed on the altar of filial affection. The man was mad and lost no time in saying so. After he got through talking Bessie was interviewed by her other parent.

"Bessie," said her mother, sternly, "what made you tell? I told you not to."

"Oh, that's all right," said Bessie. "Don't worry. I can easily lie it back again."—New York Times.

Saw Possible Victory.

"Miss May Sutton," said a tennis player, "never gets actually excited in a game, but bad playing by a partner will often arouse a sarcastic humor in her."

"I don't pretend to play well and when I found myself one day in Cincinnati paired with the young champion in mixed doubles I expected to do little and I didn't disappoint myself."

"To tell the truth, I played pretty badly. But Miss Sutton did unusually well and politeness obliged me to shower a continuous stream of compliments on her. At a critical point she saved a game with a remarkable back-hand stroke and I shouted:

"Bravo! Beautiful! Well played, indeed!"

Miss Sutton smiled grimly.

"That's right," she said; "you applaud and let me attend to the ball and we'll win yet."

Call on a Lynn Bank for Beer.

A business institution like a bank sees little of the humorous side of life, although now and then something happens to vary the routine. The employes of a certain national bank in Lynn, Mass., noted for the elegance of its furnishings, such as desks, marble floors, etc., were in the midst of their daily labors when an individual rather the worse for wear and liquids entered, leaned against and rolled along the shelf reaching the whole length of the bank to the teller's window, where he deposited a nickel and stood rather unsteadily. When asked what he wanted, he said: "Glass (hic) of beer." When informed it was a bank desk he was leaning against and not a saloon bar, he hastily murmured an apology and shambled out.

Magnesite Hills.

In the neighborhood of Maléane and Kaapmuiden, 10 miles from Loureco Marquis, in South Africa, large deposits of magnesite, said to be equal to the best Grecian article, have been found. The veins are of varied width, in many places being more than 10 feet in thickness, but the central hill near what is known as Salt Creek appears to be one vast deposit about 2,000 feet long by 200 feet wide, and upwards of 300 feet high. According to the estimate made by the consulting engineer, the deposits of magnesite at this particular point exceed a million tons. The topographical position of the magnesite hills is such that the deposits can be quarried at a very low cost.