LING TI TALES

And Other Stories of Adventure

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

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STOLEN: ONE BODY

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"I—I—I Am John Kelvin!"

HOW VERA AIDED CUPID

By MALCOLM BROWN

Two persons in Fairview were writing letters at the same hour, a graceful, lovely young woman of twenty-five, Marcia Westbrook, a grave-faced, handsome man of thirty, Rolfe Durward. Neither knew of the employment of the other, yet each was writing of the other.

Thus ended the letter of Durward to his close friend in a distant city; "As to your question of getting married and settled down, that is far distant. I do not think I am generally a favorite with the fair sex. There is a young lady here, a Miss Westbrook. I have not had her out of my mind since I first saw her, but she is rich. I am poor, and I am as a glow-worm coveting the star."

The letter of Miss Westbrook was, coincidentally, also to a close friend, and it ended: "No, dear, do not think I have taken leave of my senses, but tell me just what you think of a face that presents to me a boldness and attraction I cannot resist. His name is Rolfe Durward. He has a respectable position, and, like myself, I think, he has met with those buffets of fate that make the heart mature and likely to respond only to the real merits of life."

The grave strain in the missive had a basis. Marcia Westbrook had lost father and mother in a single year. She had been left in charge of three young children, her sisters. She had given her life to them and had seen little of social pleasure.

"I am going downtown, children, and will be gone about an hour," said Marcia, forgetting the letter to her girl friend which she had slipped into the pocket of her dress she had just discarded.

"Now, then, we've got a whole hour to play 'company!'" she announced to her companion. "Come upstairs and we'll dress up like real full-grown ladies."

Inside of five minutes a queer procession came through the front door and crossed the garden. Vera led them past the garden, across a lane, and crept under the bars of a fence guarding a pasture field.

"Now this is a fair, a fair summer resort, sweetness," said Vera. "I'll be a princess sitting under that tree yonder."

Meanwhile Rolfe Durward, with a half-day vacation before him, pocketed his letter and proceeded to take a stroll. Of course the Westbrook home was a magnet, the way his thoughts ran.

She had found the letter in Marcia's dress pocket.

"This is an invite from my friend, the queen," he was saying, and ended the protestations declaration in a scream of mental terror.

"Oh, hurry! hurry!" she cried. "It's the mad cow loose!"

In a flash Rolfe Durward took in the scene, turned suddenly from tragedy to comedy.

"Run, quick! Fast!" he ordered—"and jump the fence!"

Just leaping the fence, Rolfe was grazed by the bulky head of the infuriated animal. One sharp horn tore a rider clear up one forearm and he landed with a wrench on the ground beyond the fence.

The signet ring had slipped from Vera's finger and he secured this. An open letter and a photograph lay where she had abandoned it.

With a start of incredulity Rolfe recognized the portrait as his own. It must have been secured from the village photographer. And then his chance fell upon the open letter to view his own name, a few words only with it, but enough to instantly fill his soul with the most extravagant joy.

"I also found these," he said, handing Marcia the signet ring and the letter, as he had discovered it, open.

"You—you read," fluttered Marcia.

"I could not help but see my name and a few words with it, and—I am glad."

"By a strange coincidence," he said, his voice trembling, "I also wrote a letter today, still unmailed. It is only fair that you should see it."

"Do not read it!" she whispered, and ran into the home in happy confusion.