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For Woman's Love

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FOR WOMAN'S LOVE

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CHAPTER I.

A BRILLIANT MATCH.

"I remember Regulas Rothsay—or Rule, as we used to call him—when he was a little bit of a fellow hardly up to my knee, running about bare-footed and doing odd jobs round the foundry. Ah! and now he is elected governor of this State by the biggest majority ever heard of, and engaged to be married to the finest young lady in the country, with the full consent of all her proud relations. To be married to-day and to be inaugurated to-morrow, and he only thirty-two years old this blessed seventh of June!"

The speaker, a hale man of sixty years, with a bald head, a sharp face, a ruddy complexion, and a figure as twisted as a yew tree, and about as tough, was Silas Marwig, one of the foremen of the foundry.

"Well, I don't believe Regulas Rothsay would ever have risen to his present position if it had not been for his love of Corona Haught. No more do I believe that Old Rockharrr would ever have allowed his beautiful granddaughter to be engaged to Rothsay if the young man had not been elected governor," observed a stout, florid-faced matron of fifty-five. "How hard he worked for her! And how long she waited for him! Why, I remember them both so well! They were the very best of friends from their childhood—the wealthy little lady and the poor orphan boy."

"That is very true, Mrs. Bounce," said a young man, who was a newcomer in the neighborhood and one of the bookkeepers of the great firm. "But how did that orphan get his education?"

"By hook and by crook, as the saying is, Mr. Wall. I think the little lady taught him to read and write, and she loaned him books. He left here when he was about thirteen years old. He went to the city, and got into the printing office of *The National Watch*. And he learned the trade. And, oh, you know a bright, earnest boy like that was bound to get on. He worked hard, and he studied hard. After awhile he began to write short, telling paragraphs for the *Watch*,

and these at length were noticed and copied, and he became assistant editor of the paper. By the time he was twenty-five years old he had bought the paper out."

"And, of course, he made it a power in politics. I see the rest. He was elected State representative; then State senator."

"Yes, indeed. You've hit it. And now he is going to marry his first love to-day, and to take his seat as governor to-morrow," continued the matron, with a little chuckle.

"Regulas Rothsay will never take his seat as governor," spoke a solemn voice from the thicket on the right of the road along which the party were walking to the scene of the grand wedding. All turned to see a strange form step out from the shelter of the trees—a tall, gaunt, swarthy woman, stern of feature and harsh of tone; her head covered with wild, straggling black hair; her body clothed in a long, clinging garment of dark red serge.

"Old Scythia," muttered the matron, shuddering and shrinking closer to the side of the bookkeeper, for the strange creature was reported and believed by the ignorant and superstitious of the neighborhood to be powerful and malignant.

"Regulas Rothsay will never take his seat as governor of this State!"

As the beldame repeated and emphasized these words, she raised her hand with a prophetic gesture and advanced upon the group of pedestrians.

"Now, then, you old crow! What are you up to with your croaking?" demanded Mr. Marwig. "Look here, Mistress Beelzebub! Do you know that you are a very lucky woman to live in a land where not only may a barefooted boy rise to the highest honors by talent and perseverance, but where a malignant old witch may torture and terrify her neighbors without fear of the ducking stool or the stake?" he demanded.

The beldame looked at him scornfully, and disdained to reply.

"Wait!" said a stout, dark, middle-aged, black-whiskered man, Timothy Ryland by name, and one of the managers of the "works" by state. "Wait, I want to question this miserable lunatic. She may

have got wind of something. Tell me, old mother, why will not the governor-elect take his seat to-morrow?"

"Because Fate forbids it," solemnly replied the crone.

"Will the governor be—murdered?"

"No; Regulas Rothsay has not an enemy in the world!"

"Will he be killed on the railroad, or kidnapped?"

"No!"

"Will he be taken suddenly ill?"

"No!"

"What then in the fiend's name is to prevent his taking his seat to-morrow?" impatiently demanded the manager.

"An evil so dire, so awful, so mysterious, that its like never happened on this earth!"

"Arrest her, Mr. Ryland! She ought to be locked up until she could be sent to the asylum!" exclaimed old Marwig.

"I have no power to do so, my friend," replied the manager.

"Why, where is she?" inquired Mrs. Bounce, trembling. "Who saw her go?"

No one answered, but every one looked around. Not a trace of the witch could be seen. She had passed like a dark cloud from among them, and was gone.

It was a glorious day in June. A long, deep, green valley lay low between two lofty ridges of the Cumberland mountains, running north and south for ten miles, and near the boundary lines of three States. This lovely vale was watered by a merry, sparkling little river called the Whirligig, which furnished the power for the huge machinery of the great firm of Rockharrrt & Sons, proprietors of the Plutus iron mines and the North End foundries, which supplied the mighty engines on the great lines of railroad from the East to the West, and whose massive buildings, forges, furnaces, store-houses and laborers' cottages occupied all the ground between the foot of the mountain and the banks of the river, on both sides of the Whirl-

igig, at the upper or north end of the valley, where a substantial bridge connected the two shores.

This settlement, called, from its position, North End, was quite a thriving little village. North End was not only blessed with a mission church, having a schoolroom in its basement, but it was provided with a post-office, a telegraph, a drug store, kept by a regular physician, who dispensed his own physic (advice and medicine, one dollar), and a general store, where everything needed to eat, drink, wear or use (except drugs), was kept for sale.

On this bright June morning, however, the great works were all stopped. There was a general holiday, and as this was at the cost of the firm, it gave general satisfaction. All the people of North End, except the aged, infirm and infantile, were trooping down the valley, on the rough road between the foot of the West Ridge and the side of the river, to a fete to be given them at Rockhold on the occasion of the marriage of old Aaron Rockharrt's granddaughter, Corona Haught, to Regulas Rothsay, the governor-elect of the State.

It was a marriage of very rare interest to the workmen and their families. To the men, because the governor-elect had been one of their own class. The elders remembered him from the time when he was a friendless orphan child, glad to run the longest errand or do the hardest day's work for a dime, but also a very independent little fellow, who would take nothing in the shape of alms from anybody. To the women, because he was going to marry his first and only sweetheart, and on the very day before his inauguration, so that she might take part in the pageantry that was to be his first great success and triumph.

On one side of the river, at the foot of the East Ridge, stood Rockhold, the country seat of the Rockharrts, in its own park, which lay between the mountain and the river. The house itself was a large, heavy, oblong building of gray stone, two stories high, with cellar and garret. From the front of the house to the edge of the river extended a fair green lawn, shaded here and there by great forest trees. Under many of these trees, tables with refreshments were set, and seats were placed for the accommodation and refreshment of the out-door guests. In sunny spots, also, some white tents were raised and decorated with flags.

As a group of working men and women sat on the west bank of the river, waiting impatiently for the return of the ferryboat, they saw, from minute to minute, carriages drive up the lawn avenue, discharge the occupants at the main entrance of the house, and then roll off to the stable yard in the rear.

These seemed to come in a slow procession.

"Only the nearest relations and most intimate friends of the family are invited to the ceremony. There have only been five carriages passed since we have been sitting here, and I don't believe there was one come before we came, or that there'll be another come after that last one, which was certainly the groom's," said Old Marwig.

"Oh! was it, indeed? But how do you know?" demanded Mrs. Bounce.

"It is the new carriage from North End Hotel! And he and his groomsmen had engaged it. That's how I know! Here comes the ferryboat! Now for it!"

The boat touched the banks, and as many as could find room crowded into it, and were speedily rowed across the river and landed on the other side, where they found a few of the lawn party there before them.

"There is Mr. Clarence Rockharrrt coming toward us!" said Mrs. Bounce, as the party walked up from the landing, and a medium-sized, plump, fair man of middle age, with a round, fresh face, a smiling countenance, blue eyes and light hair, and in "a wedding garment" of the day, came down to meet them, and shook hands with all, warmly welcoming them in the name of his father. Then he led them up to the lawn and gave them chairs among the unoccupied seats at the various tables.

"If you please, Mr. Clarence, is the groom in good health and sperrits?" meaningly inquired Mrs. Bounce.

"Mr. Rothsay is in excellent health and spirits, thank you," replied the gentleman, looking a little surprised at the question: an then moving off quickly to receive some new arrivals.

The guests for the lawn party were constantly arriving, and the ferryboat was kept busy plying from the shore to shore.

It is time now to introduce our readers to the house of Rockharrrt.

Old Aaron Rockharrrt, the head of that house, was at this time seventy-five years of age and a wonder of health and strength. He was called the "Iron King," no less from his great hardihood of body and mind than from his vast wealth in mines and foundries. In size he was almost a giant, with a large head covered by closely-curling, steel-gray hair. His character may be summed up in a very few words:

Aaron Rockharrrt was an incarnation of monstrous selfishness.

His manners to all, but especially to his dependants, were arrogant, egotistical and overbearing. He was utterly destitute of sympathy or compassion. There was no room for either in a soul so full of self. In his opinion there was no one on earth, neither king nor Kaiser, saint nor hero, so important to the universe as Aaron Rockharrrt, head of Rockharrrt & Sons.

Yet Aaron Rockharrrt had two redeeming points. He was strictly truthful in word and honest in deed.

His wife was near his own age, a quiet, gentle, little old lady, small and slim, with white hair half hidden by a lace cap. If she ever had any individuality, it had been quite crushed out by the hard heel of her husband's iron will. Their eldest son and second partner in the firm was Fabian Rockharrrt, a fine animal of fifty years old, though scarcely looking forty. He had inherited all his father's great strength of body and of mind, with more than his father's business talent; but he had not inherited the truth and honesty of his father.

Yet there is no one wholly evil, and Fabian Rockharrrt's one redeeming quality was a certain good nature or benevolence which is more the result of temperament than of principle. This quality rendered his manner so kind and considerate to all his employes that he was the most popular member of his family.

Clarence, the second son, was much younger than his elder brother, and so diametrically opposite to him and to their father, both in person and character, that he scarcely seemed to come of the same race.

He was really thirty-five years old, but looked ten years less, and was a fair blonde, medium-sized and plump, with a round head covered with light, curling yellow hair, a round, rosy face as bare as a baby's and almost as innocent. He had not the satanic intellect of his father or his brother, but he had a fine moral and spiritual nature that neither could understand or appreciate.

There were yet two other exceptions to the family character of worldliness and selfishness. There were Corona and Sylvanus Haught, a sister and brother, orphan grand-children of Aaron Rockharrrt, left him by his deceased only daughter. Sylvanus, a fine, manly young fellow, resembled his Uncle Clarence in person and in character, having the same truthfulness, generosity and sincerity, but with a mocking spirit, which turned evil into ridicule rather than into a subject of serious rebuke. He was three years younger than his sister. Corona was a beautiful brunette, tall, like all the Rockharrrts, with a superbly developed form, a fine head, adorned with a full suit of fine curly black hair, delicate classic features, straight, low forehead, aquiline nose, a "Cupid's bow" mouth, and finely curved chin. This was her wedding-day and she wore her bridal dress of pure white satin, with veil of thread lace and wreath of orange buds. Hers was the very triumph of a love match, for she was about to wed one whom she had loved from earliest childhood, and for whom she had waited long years.

Here was Corona Haught's great victory. She had seen his opponents, her own family, bow down and worship her idol. Yet, at the culmination of her triumph, on this her bridal day, why did she sit so pale and wan?

From her deep, sad reverie she was aroused by the entrance of her six gay bridesmaids.

"Corona, love, good morning! Many happy returns, and so on!" said Flora Fields, the first bridesmaid, coming up to the pale bride and kissing her.

All the others followed the example, and then Miss Fields said:

"Cora, dear, 'the scene is set'—otherwise, the company are all assembled in the drawing-room. Grandpapa and grandmamma are in

their seats of honor. The bishop, in his canonicals, is waiting; the groom and his groomsmen are expectant. Are you ready?"

"I know getting married must be a serious, a solemn, even an awful thing when it comes to the point. And most brides do look pale! But you—you look ghastly! Come, take some composing spirits of lavender—do!"

"Yes; you may give me some. You will find the vial on the dressing-table."

The restorative was administered, and then the "bevy of fair maids" left the chamber and went down stairs.

There, in the great hall, they met the bridegroom and his six groomsmen; for it was the custom of that time and place to have a groomsman for each bridesmaid. The bridegroom and governor-elect was not a handsome man—that was conceded even by his best friends—but he was tall and muscular, with a look of strength, manliness and nobility that was impressive. A son of the people truly, but with the brain of the ruler. The whole rugged form and face assumed a gentleness and courtesy that almost conferred grace and beauty upon him, as he advanced to greet his bride.

Why did she shrink from him?

No one knew. It was only for a moment; and happily, he, in the simplicity of a single, honest heart, had not seen the momentary shudder.

He drew her hand within his arm, looked down on her with a beam of ineffable tenderness and adoration, and then waited, as he had been instructed to do, until the groomsmen and bridesmaids had formed the procession that was to usher them into the drawing-room and before the officiating bishop. They entered the crowded apartment. The bishop, in his white robes, stood on the rug, supported by the Rev. Mr. Wells, temporary minister of the mission church at North End, and the ceremony began. All went on well until he came to that part where the officiating minister must read—though a mere form this solemn adjuration to the contracting lovers:

"I require and charge ye both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed,

that if either of you know just cause why ye may not be united in matrimony, ye do now declare it."

There was a pause, to give opportunity for reply, if any reply was to be made—a mere form, as the adjuration itself was. Yet the bride shuddered throughout her frame. Many noticed it, but not the bridegroom.

The ceremony went on.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

Old Aaron Rockharrrt, who stood on the right of the bridal party, stepped forth, took his granddaughter's hand, and placed it in that of the groom, saying, with visible pride:

"I do."

The rites went on to their conclusion, and the whole party were invited into the dining-room, where the marriage feast was spread, where the revelry lasted two full hours, and might have lingered longer had not the bride withdrawn from the table, and, attended by her bridesmaids, retired to her chamber to change her bridal robes for a plain traveling suit of silver gray silk, with hat and gloves to match.

There the gentle, timid, old grandmother came to bid her pet child a private good-by.

"Are you happy, my love—are you happy?" she inquired. "Why don't you answer?"

"My heart is full—too full, grandma," evasively answered Corona Rothsay.

"Ah, yes; that is natural—very natural. 'Even so it was with me when I was young,'" sighed the old lady, who detected no evasion in the words of her darling.

The bride went down stairs, where the bridegroom awaited her. There, in the hall, were collected the members of her family, friends, neighbors and wedding guests.

Some time was spent in bidding good-by to all these.

"But it is not good-by, really; for the majority of us will follow by a later train, and be on hand for the inauguration to-morrow," said old Aaron Rockharrrt, who seemed to have recovered his youth on this proud day.

"And, grandpa, be sure to bring grandma. Don't say that she is too old, or too feeble, or too anything, to travel, because she is not; and she has set her heart on seeing the pageantry to-morrow. Promise me before I leave you," pleaded the bride.

"Very well; I will bring her," said Mr. Rockharrrt, who would have promised anything to his granddaughter on this auspicious occasion.

"You will find your traps all right, Cora. They went off by the early train this morning," said Mr. Clarence.

"And I trust, Rothsay, that you will find my town house comfortably prepared for your reception," said Mr. Rockharrrt.

The bridegroom handed his bride into the carriage that was to convey them to the railway station. The carriage crossed the ferry, and in a few minutes reached the other side, and rolled toward the railway station.

The road was at this hour very solitary, and the bridegroom and his bride found themselves for the first time that day *tete-a-tete*. He turned to her, and drew her head to his heart and whispered:

"Cora, speak to me! Call me your husband!"

"I—cannot. My heart is too full," the girl muttered evasively.

But his grand, simple, truthful spirit perceived no prevarication in her words. If her heart was full, it was with responsive love of him, he thought. He bent his face lower over her beautiful head, that lay upon his bosom, and kissed her.

Soon they reached North End, where all the aged, infirm and infantile who could not come to the wedding were seated at their cottage doors, to see the carriage with the bridegroom and bride go by.

Smiling and bowing in response, the pair passed through the village and went on their way toward the station which they reached at half-past one o'clock.

They had to wait about ten minutes for the train to come up. They remained in the carriage; for here, too, a small crowd of country people had collected to see the bride and the bridegroom, who was also the governor-elect.

The train from the East ran into the station. The bridal pair left the carriage and went on the cars, and the governor-elect and his bride set out for the State capital. It was a long afternoon ride, and the sun was low when the train drew in sight of the State capital, and slowed into the station.

An immense crowd had gathered to welcome the governor-elect, and as he stepped out upon the platform, and stood with his bride on his arm, the cheers were deafening. When these had in some measure subsided, the hero of the hour returned thanks in a simple little speech. Then the committee of reception came up and shook hands with the governor-to-be, who next presented them in turn to his wife.

At last the pair were allowed to enter the carriage that was in waiting to convey them to the town house of Aaron Rockharrrt. Other carriages containing members of the committee attended them. They passed through the main street of the city.

The procession of carriages passed until it reached the Rockharrrt residence, opposite the government mansion, where the committee took leave of the governor-elect and his bride, who entered their temporary home alone, to be received and attended by obsequious servants.

There we also will leave them.

Visitors to the inauguration were arriving by every train.

Among the arrivals from the East came Aaron Rockharrrt, with his wife, his two sons, Fabian and Clarence, and his grandson, Sylvan, the younger brother of Cora.

The main door of the mansion was open, and several gentlemen, wearing official badges, stood without or just within it.

"By Jove! we are just in time, and it has been a close shave! That is the committee come to take him to the State house!" exclaimed old Aaron Rockharrrt as he stepped out of the carriage, and helped his feeble little wife to alight. He led her up the steps, followed by the other three men of his party.

"Good morning, Judge Abbot. We are just in time, I find. We came up by the night train, and a close shave it has been. Well, a miss is as good as a mile, and we are safe to see the whole of the pageant," said the old man, speaking to a tall, thin, gray-haired gentleman, who wore a rosette on the lapel of his coat.

"Yes, sir; but here is a very strange difficulty—very strange, indeed," replied the official, with a deeply troubled and perplexed air, which was shared by all the gentlemen who stood with him.

"What's the trouble, gentlemen? Is the chief justice ill, that his honor cannot administer the oath, or what?"

"It is much worse than that—if anything could be worse," gravely replied one of the committee.

"What is it then? A contested election at this late hour?"

"The governor-elect cannot be found. No one has seen him since eleven o'clock last night. He is missing."

CHAPTER II.

A LOST GOVERNOR AND BRIDEGROOM.

"Missing!" echoed old Aaron Rockharrrt, drawing up his huge frame to its fullest height, and staring with strong black eyes in a defiant and aggressive manner. "Missing! did you say, sir?" he repeated sternly.

"Yes, Mr. Rockharrrt; ever since last night," replied Judge Abbot, chairman of the committee, in much distress and anxiety.

"Impossible! Never heard of such a thing in the whole course of my life! A bridegroom lost on the evening of his marriage! A governor lost on the morning of his inauguration! I tell you, sir, it is im-