

THAT OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE

Stella Crane had a maid, but preferred answering the telephone herself when she was at home, which was most of the time.

There was nothing wrong with her or Ralph; they both dressed well and behaved respectably, and Stella played a fair game of contract.

It was hard on Stella, whose life in the city was not what she had expected. Her husband realized this and deluded himself and her with the promise that in the near future he would be able to afford more leisure.

She answered the telephone because the maid had a tendency to confuse names as similar as Gillespie and Hammond; and on this particular morning, the vaguely familiar voice at the other end of the wire began the conversation with the intriguing challenge.

"You sound like somebody," said Stella. "Just give me a second to think. I do know. Isn't it Will?"

"You win! I had no idea you'd remember me after all these years."

"I'd thought there was any possibility of your being here."

"Well, it took me a long time to get here, but I made it."

"And how long do you expect to stay?"

"Not more than a day or two. It's just a business trip."

"Well, tell me something about yourself. Are you married?"

"Not yet."

"I thought I'd have heard if you were," said Stella.

"I guess you knew I wouldn't be."

"Why?"

"I don't have to tell you that."

"Oh, Will! You're the same old Will!"

"I wish I was."

"I'd like to see you."

"I'm perfectly mutual."

"I'd ask you to dinner, but Ralph's in Washington and won't be home till day after tomorrow."

"I'm not crazy about seeing Ralph."

"I know, but—"

"Can't two old friends like us get together and talk? I'm not inviting myself to your place, but I wish you'd have lunch with me, and we could go to a matinee."

"It sounds wonderful!" said Stella. "Let me think."

Fifteen years ago, Ralph and Will had been rivals for her love; not exactly her love either, for Will had won that before Ralph appeared on the scene.

Since she had become Mrs. Crane, she had not been alone with any man except her husband, her dentist and the elevator operators in various buildings in which she had lived.

"I got tickets for 'Journey's End.'"

"Oh, you'll love it," said Stella after the briefest of pauses. "Everybody's mad about it, especially the men."

"You haven't seen it, have you?"

"Yes I have, but I don't mind a bit."

"You told me you hadn't seen anything."

"I didn't think you'd pick it out. I thought you liked musical shows. But it honestly doesn't make any difference."

Fields, Coopers or Smalls had related a rough story or joke which she hadn't understood or liked or listened to.

Of course she was not conscious of this or of the difference in her eyes. She felt she could still arouse a man's interest, particularly the interest of a man who hinted that he had remained single because he could not have her.

Will was more than a little excited. There had been fifty girls and women in his life since Stella had gone out of it, but none who had been able to hold him, none who had seemed as desirable as his sweetheart of fifteen years ago.

He believed she had still cared a great deal for him when she married Crane, and he believed that a woman who had cared for him once never could get entirely over it.

Now he was going to meet the only one he had ever really loved and wanted. She had been easily persuaded to see him, and her husband was out of town.

He called up Endicott 9546. "Betty? This is Will again. Say, I'm sorry about tonight, but I just had a wire from Charlie Prince, from Buffalo. He's getting in at seven o'clock and wants me to meet him and stick around with him all evening. No it's business; I can't get out of it. I'll call you tomorrow and meanwhile don't forget me."

He and Stella had no trouble identifying each other. Will immediately noted her plumpness, but was glad it was no worse. He observed too, the new smile, but charged it to embarrassment.

Stella saw that his hair was thin and his face bore the marks of dissipation. Otherwise, he was the same old Will.

He said they had plenty of time and she must order something special to celebrate the occasion.

"I don't feel like eating," said Stella. "I just want to talk and hear you talk."

"And I just want to look at you. That's feast enough for me."

But the waiter was hovering, and to get rid of him they had to make a choice.

"You haven't changed a bit," said Will, after ordering.

"I've changed more than you have. I'm heavier."

"Very little. And look at my hair, or what's left of it."

"I don't think you've lost much—not much."

"I'm not worrying about it, anyway," said Will, who worried about it a great deal. "It's too late for me to care whether I'm handsome or not."

"I think you're just as handsome as ever."

"That's all that matters."

"But I want to hear about you, Will. Are you still with Eoyer?"

"I'm back with Eoyer. I quit them for a while; gave them a chance to miss me. They hired me back for fifteen thousand a year, five thousand more than my old contract."

Fifteen thousand a year was big money in Will's eyes; it was three thousand more than he was getting, and he didn't relish Stella's comment.

"That ought to be plenty for you, a bachelor with no responsibilities. If you were married and living in a place like New York—well Ralph makes nearly thirty thousand and we aren't able to save much. We don't spend much either, but it goes. Food and clothes and rent—everything's so frightfully high."

It didn't occur to Will that she might have overestimated Ralph's income as he had his own, and he was not interested in the cost of New York living. He changed the subject.

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"I didn't think you'd pick it out. I thought you liked musical shows. But it honestly doesn't make any difference."

"It does, too. I'm going to see if I can't get something else."

"Please, Will, don't! For one thing, it's late and I swear I'd just as soon see this again if it wasn't so good. I'd let you change. But I wouldn't have you miss it for the world. There's no girl in it and it's a war play and probably more interesting to men than women but I don't care."

"I do. Let me see if I can't get something for 'Follow Thru.'"

"Oh, they say that's wonderful, but I know they'd be sold out. And I really want to see 'Journey's End' again; I may get more out of it the second time."

"I wish you'd told me. Maybe we can go to 'Follow Thru' tonight."

"Don't let's talk about it any more. Let's talk about you."

"That won't be very interesting."

"It will to me. I want to hear all about your business affairs and your love affairs, and everything."

"Well," said Will, "I've done pretty well in business; that is for me. Nothing like Ralph, I suppose, but I'm satisfied. As for love affairs you ought to know as much about that as I do."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. I guess they're about the same, only the Ritz is more expensive. Maybe it isn't either, but you think of it as more expensive. That's why I didn't suggest meeting you there."

"Listen, I'm not a pauper!"

"Of course not, Will! Just the same, I'd feel guilty if you spent more on me than you can afford."

"A man making fifteen thousand a year."

Stella laughed. "You're the same old Will! You talk like a millionaire. Why the men I know, Ralph's friends and mine, men who make even a bigger income than Ralph, you don't see them spending five or six dollars on lunch. They appreciate the value of money, and that's what you never did, Will. I hate stingy people, but there's a big difference between stinginess and thrifty ones who get along in this world."

Will could not boast that he was thrifty, but he did think he had got along and Stella's theory that he hadn't would have made him pretty mad if the food had been short of delicious.

"You didn't answer my question," said Stella at length.

"I asked about your love affairs."

"I told you I hadn't any since you ditched me."

"Don't say I ditched you, Will. It was just—well, I liked Ralph a lot and he was serious, and marrying him meant getting away from that deadly place. And you must admit you couldn't have married anybody in those days. I did care for you, Will. I still do—"

She stopped as if in embarrassment. She hoped he would sustain the sentimental note, and his next remark sounded encouraging.

"How do you know?" she said softly.

"What?"

"I wish you would."

"No, I mustn't."

"Will was too intent on his spunk to insist."

"It will be dark in the theatre," he thought, "I'll hold her hand and see how she takes it."

"It will be dark in the theatre," thought Stella, "and maybe he'll call me 'dear' again."

Her lecture on economy cost the waiter fifty cents, Will giving him half a dollar instead of a whole one as he had planned. He could not help regarding her as a bit inconsistent when she vetoed his suggestion that they walk to the Henry Miller, only four blocks away.

"I'm frightfully lazy," she said, not mentioning the fact that her shoes hurt.

"All right," said Will, "but if you're going to let me take you to dinner at the Ritz."

"I don't think of it!" said Stella. "For one thing, I'd be sure to see somebody I know. And haven't you business to attend to, people to look up? I mustn't take too much of your time."

"I'll postpone business till Ralph gets back."

"I can't decide just now."

"You want to be sure you like me, I like you. But there are things to be considered."

The seats were in the twelfth row. "These are rotten seats!" said Will.

"You can't get good ones at the box office."

"I got these at my hotel."

"Well, they're all right. You mustn't worry on my account. I told you I'd seen it before. We had the fourth row, that night, right in the center, just perfect. Herb Small got them through the University Club. He always gets grand seats."

The curtain rose.

"This is the British front, in the war," explained Stella. "It's what they call a dugout, where the officers stay. The whole three acts all take place in one scene."

"That officer, that lieutenant or whatever he is," she continued, "he's a school teacher in England. We had he was, before the war. He gets killed later on. It's a terribly depressing play. Lillian Fields cried the night we saw it."

A customer in the eleventh row turned around and gave Stella a nasty look after which she whispered, "This young boy, he's a new officer, he hasn't been at the front before; at least, not at this front. He's been transferred or something. And the hero, the captain, is in love with the boy's sister."

"Not this captain, I don't mean," she went on. "The other captain, the leading man, takes this one's place. He gets mad when he sees his sweetheart's brother. He doesn't want anybody that he knows around because he's really a coward and he's afraid of his girl."

The man in front of them turned round again and said "Shh!" in none too friendly a manner. Stella thought he must be sh-shing someone else.

"The only way he can 'carry on' as they call it, is by drinking, so he drinks hard all the time."

"That man wants us to quit talking," said Will, and congratulated himself on the diplomatic plural.

"It's somebody back of us he's complaining of," said Stella. "Now when the other captain comes in you notice him, notice how big he looks. And they say he isn't really big at all; I mean, off the stage. Some friends of ours the Coopers, they met him at a party and they say he's not nearly as big as he looks. He wears some kind of shoes or something that make him look big. I mean on the stage. You notice when he comes in."

The theatre was dark but Will seemed to have forgotten the hand-holding test.

"The hero the captain, the man that's in love with the young boy's sister, he went to the same school the young boy went to and he was the idol of the school. The boy, the girl's brother worships him. Of course he doesn't know he's a coward and drinks to hide it."

"That other officer there, that young one he's a coward, too, and he pretends he's sick so they'll send him away from the front. But the hero threatens to kill him unless he

quits pretending he's sick. He points a revolver right at him and says he'll shoot him dead if he doesn't 'buck up.'"

"I was frightened to death that he really would shoot him, the night I saw it. I don't like that part of it at all, and it hasn't anything to do with the rest of the play, but the play would have been too short without it. It's awfully short as it is. It doesn't begin till nearly nine; I mean, at night, and it's over about half past ten; that's half past four for a matinee."

Will wished he had brought a box of molasses taffy.

Here's the real captain now, the hero. See how big he looks? And he really isn't big at all off the stage. He's mad at the girl's mother being there. After a while the brother writes a letter to his sister and the captain is afraid he'll tell her about his drinking and so forth. So he wants to read the letter and the boy doesn't want him to, but he says he has a right to censor all mail. Finally the school teacher reads the letter out loud and it's so complimentary to the captain that he's ashamed of having made him read it.

"Isn't the sergeant funny? I guess he's a sergeant. It makes you laugh just to look at him. They're all English, the whole company. I think there are other companies playing it out West or somewhere, and they're all English, too. And it's going to be a picture, a talking picture. Do you like talking pictures?"

"No," said Will. "Or people."

"After a while the colonel comes in and tells the captain that they want to find out who the Germans are in the trench facing them; that is, the number of the German regiment or something. I don't see what difference it makes as long as they're Germans but Ralph says they always want to know so they can figure out the distribution of the German troops, how they're distributed. So the captain has to send some men over to the German trenches, across No Man's Land, and they're supposed to capture a German prisoner and bring him back and then they'll know what regiment is facing them."

"The captain hates to send anybody because it's almost sure death, but he's got to obey orders. He sends the young boy, the brother, the girl's brother, and that school teacher and the young boy gets a prisoner and the school teacher gets killed."

"The funny thing about it is that you kind of wish was the boy that got killed in place of the school teacher. But the boy gets killed later."

"Of course they know what it means to do it and the boy is terribly nervous, but still he's glad of a chance to do something important. He and the school teacher recite 'Alice in Wonderland' before they go; not all of it; just quotations from it so as not to think of what's before them. That's the school teacher's way of keeping his mind off danger, instead of drinking like the captain."

"You wait till you see how the captain drinks. It must be colored water or tea or something. If it were real whisky he'd fall off the stage. It can't even be tea or he'd get sick. Do you drink much Will?"

"I've been on the wagon, said Will. "But I think I'm going to fall off tonight; maybe this afternoon."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I just feel like it."

"I wish you wouldn't. You used to get so silly when you drank."

"I still do."

"But you were kind of funny and amusing, too. And then you usually got very affectionate."

"I'm different now. I get silly at first; not funny at all. Then I get brutal and want to fight people, whoever is with me, my best friends, even girls."

"You don't mean really fight them?"

"Yes, I do. The reason why I got on the wagon is because I was with a girl, a girl I cared quite a lot for; we went on a party and I had about four drinks, and for no reason at all I socked her in the mouth and knocked her down. It's whoever I happen to be with when I get that way."

"Then you ought never to drink anything."

"That's good advice, but sometimes I just have to."

"And it doesn't seem right not to enjoy myself, my first time in New York."

"You certainly don't call it enjoying yourself, to hit women."

"I do, though. I get quite a kick out of it. I don't mean I pick on men especially, but this girl just happened to be there."

For the sake of those readers who have not seen "Journey's End" and who hope to, I will not divulge any more of its content, but will merely state that there were at least two men in the audience who wished they could borrow the captain's gun.

"Will," said Stella as they went out, "I don't believe we'd better have dinner together. I'm tired and you look tired yourself."

"I'm not tired," said Will. "Even if I was, a few shots of rye will fix me up."

"But I'm afraid. I'm afraid Ralph might come home."

"You said he wouldn't be home till day after tomorrow."

"He changes his mind sometimes. He never stays away longer than he has to."

"That's what he tells you."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing at all. But I'm not going to urge you against your better judgment. Do exactly as you like."

"Well, I really think you'd better send me home. It's been grand—"

"I'll take you home."

"No, that isn't necessary at all," she said. "And the maid might see you and wonder."

"All right, Stell. We mustn't let the maid wonder."

"I'll get in this taxi. Good-by. Will it was wonderful of you to give me such a treat."

"I'm the one that got the treat."

"You're the same old Will!"

He called Endicott 9546.

"Betty? Say, I just had another wire from Charlie Prince. He was driving from Buffalo and he burnt out a bearing at 'Binghamton' and can't get here till tomorrow. You haven't made another date have you? That a girl!"—Hearst's International Cosmopolitan.

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W. B. Rankin to Harry A. Folmer, et ux, tract in Belleville; \$1.

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E. R. Hancock, Exec., et al, to Harry Janet, tract in Union Twp.; \$1,505.

James J. Morgan to Sophia Conaway, tract in Snow Shoe Twp.; \$1.

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T. A. Meyer, et ux, to A. E. Mingle, et al, tract in Penn Twp.; \$165.

Harry C. Rothrock, et ux, to Eleanor Gettig, tract in Fort Matilda; \$1.

S. H. Hoy et ux, to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, tract in Benner Twp.; \$16,000.

FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN.

Daily Thought.

Such is Life.

He put his arm around her.

And whispered in her ear.

She listened and then nodded.

As he drew her near.

Then he gently kissed her.

And talked in quiet tone—

The girl was his sister;

He was asking for a loan.

—When and how a man takes off his hat is a subject far from trivial, for the manner in which a man raises his hat indicates at once his place in the "polite" world.

There can be no careless imitation of the act of courtesy in the way a gentleman raises his hat.

The up-and-coming American of today realizes that a pleasing personality and good manners smooth the way to a man of his own age.

So how a man takes off his hat and what he does with it on various occasions is one of those big little things that go to make up a gentleman.