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For the Bloomfield Tin THE SECRET MARRIAGE.

JUST as the sun was sinking, one fine day in June, a carriage stopped at the gate of the old stone church in Merton and two ladies, "young, lovely and richly dressed, were handed out by a gentleman who had, for the last half hour, been pacing up and down the church-yard, pausing now and then to read the name on some mosscovered stone or leaning for a moment against one of the magnificent old trees that beautified and solemnized the spot. It seemed, by his eager greeting, that he had been impatiently waiting the coming of the beautiful girls whom he directly conducted into the church. Almost immediately after them the good old rector entered, leaning on the arm of his nephew, a slender, graceful youth, whom he had brought as a witness of a ceremony he had been urged to perform in the most private manuer. Reverently the old man opened his book and the young people silently placed themselves before the altar. The quiet of the lonely church, made more impressive by the shadowy dimness of the twilight hour, the full, deep, solemn voice of the rector and the low though earnest tones of the young respondents, which alone broke the almost painful silence, gave an air of sadness to that strange bridal, and when Robert Elliot signed that marriage certificate, as a witness, his hand trembled and his young heart sank with a sad foreboding of sorrow either to himself or the young and beautiful pair who had just received the nuptial benediction. Silently and slowly the parties left the church and as much to the surprise of the boy as to the horror of the good sexton who opened the gate to them, the bride-groom, after a few hurried sentences and a warm embrace, handed his weeping bride into the carriage, then pressing the hand of her sister, who was already seated, with a fervent "God bless you," and one glance of anguish, turned hastily away and mounting a horse which awaited him, rode off rapidly in one direction while the carriage immediately rolled away in another. "I'm afraid they'll come to no good," hald the sexton as he shut the heavy iron gate and placed the key in his stont leather ponch, touching his cap respectfully to the rector as he finished, and "good night, master Robert" to the strippling who just then stopped and took from the pavement, where it had probably fallen from the hand of the bridgroom, in that hurried parting, a folded paper which he instantly recognized as the marriage certificate. Robert Elliot was his sister's son, orphan boy whom he was training to fill his own place, as he hoped, in after years, but those who saw the fire in the boy's dark eye and marked his proud, firm bearing, even in early youth, thought him. illsuited to the holy calling, and he himself had many a vision of honors gained and laurels won in a far different sphere from that socluded village. Still he remained at the parsonage, a dutiful and patient pupil, dearly loving the good old man to whom he was the last earth-flower; the only being, out of heaven, he could call his own.

his boyhood, or rather I should say I knew him as a boy, for he has been many years absent from his country and I did not know of his return, till he came this afternoon to request me to perform the ceremony." "The lady is very beautiful, very," said

Robert thoughtfully, and to himself rather than to the rector, who, however, somewhat to the boy's surprise, immediately replied,

"She is very beautiful, and I fear Richard has done wrong in persuading her to become his wife without the consent or knowledge of any of her friends except her twin-sister, who, a school-girl, like herself, and of course as much a stranger here, is not a very safe counsellor."

"I wish you would tell me all you know of them, dear uncle," said Robert, "for I feel a strange interest in them. The lady is so gentle and lovely and the gentleman seemed so stern and cold, so prompt and determined. I almost hated him when he turned so abruptly from his carriage and rode off, as if relieved at having performed a painful duty."

"Nay, Robert, you wrong him ; he is summoned to attend his father immediately, who is only waiting his arrival there to sail from New Orleans for Cuba, where he has large estates which require his constant supervision, and where his son's assistance and society are particularly needful to him. Old Mr. Harding is an honorable and warm-hearted though eccentric man, and Richard, knowing his excitable temper, dared not take his bride with him, and when I urged him first to obtain his father's consent and then come and ask her openly of her relatives, as a gentleman should do, he told me that to wait was to lose her forever, for her step-father was his father's bitterest enemy; that she was the daughter of a British officer who resided many years at Halifax and left, at his death, no fortune to these twin girls and a widow, whose weak nature disqualified her to stand alone in the world, and whose polished manners and great beauty rendered her still very attractive, who had within a few months after her widowhood married a man of wealth and influence but of inferior rank, which so incensed the sister of her late husband, Col. Ormond, that she refused to have any intercourse with her, and even threatened to bestow her little fortune on a charitable institution, instead of giving it to her nieces as she had often promised. But now, dear Robert, we must talk of other things more nearly concerning ourselves, for I have much to say to you before you leave me next week for College."

"Isn't the masther down yet, ma'am," said Norah, opening the door of the little parlor, and adding in a half vexed tone, "I wonder he don't come when he knows

the care of an old friend, took his own little property and departed for the city, where he immediately commenced his college studies. The new family arrived at to consciousness, nor for one moment after the rectory and bright young faces were did his delirium cease. He often murmurseen at the windows and graceful figures occupied the rector's pew in church ; yet still, children went by the gate with a slowor step and a pause in their mirthful talk, and many a matron wiped away a tear as her eye fell on the new white stone which marked the good old rector's quiet grave. . . . . . . . .

About four years after these events, Miss Ormond sat in the parlor of her niece, Cornella, (who had been married several months previous to Lieutenant Frank Courtney of the United States army), reading a newspaper, when she suddenly exclaimed :-

"What a strange advertisement !" and immediately read aloud, "Any person who can give information of a certain Edith Merton, who was several years since privately married to the late Richard Harding, and who can bring proof of the marriage and of the lady's identity, will hear of something greatly to her advantage by calling on Edward Weston attorney and councellor at law No. 72-Street, Philadelphia.""

"Strange, indeed," said Mr. Courtney, and turning to his wife he added, "Cornelia, was not Mr. Harding an acquaintance of yours, a lover of Edith's, or something like it, before you left Halifax ?"

"Yes-no," stammered Cornelia, " that is, he was our fellow passenger from Halifax, and my sister liked, or rather he liked -" and blushing and confused she stopped abruptly, for just then Edith entered the room, and noticing the wondering looks of her aunt and Mr. Courtney, and the confusion of her sister, asked anxiously what was the matter. Aunt Ormond immediately handed her the paper, pointing to the advertisement, which she had no sooner glanced at than her brain reeled and she sank fainting on a sofa. All was now confusion and anxiety. The secret which the sisters had so long and faithfully kept was revealed, and in the family council which followed it was decided that Mr. Courtney should proceed immediately to Philadelphia and learn all Mr. Weston could tell him of Richard Harding's death and of his wife too, for, from the hour of his parting with her at the church door, his young wife had received no intelligence of him, and until she saw the advertisement was of course not aware of his death. It was strange the name should be Edith Merton, they thought, but perhaps Mr. Weston could explain it, so they wisely determined to say nothing of the affair until and astonishment at the clandestine marthey knew all he could tell them. Mr. riage, she entered with all her youthful Courtney found Mr. Weston very ready to energy upon the task of proving it, insisted impart all the knowledge of the case he possessed, which was, briefly, that about a month previous to their interview he had received a package from the United States consul at Cuba, containing a letter from the honorable gentleman, informing Mr. Weston of the recent death of Richard Harding, Sen., : also that the said Richard had, in his last illness, earnestly desired that the will and letter accompanying might be conveyed (as soon after his decease as possible to Mr. Weston. "Harding and I were old school-fellows and friends, and I was not surprised to find myself named executor of his will, though the document itself excited no little astonishment and seemed to promise some difficulty in its execution, since it expressly says in due form, "I bequeath all my estate, real and personal, of whatever nature and wherever found, to Edith, wife of my late son Richard Harding, now residing, if she be yet living, in parts unknown to me ; and if she cannot be found within five years from the date hereof, I devise the same to James, the only son of my brother James Harding, of Boston, Mass., U. S. In the letter which accompanied the will he writes, "Soon after we arrived at home after our last visit to the United States, my son was seized with the fever which terminated his life, and as I watched anxiously by him one day, he told me of his marriage with a beautiful and portionless girl, and besought not only my forgiveness for having acted without my sanction, but also my permission to return as soon as he was able to Massachusetts, and claiming his bride, to bring her to our luxurious home, or to allow him to remain in America with her. I was beside myself with rage, and forgetting the weakness of my boy, I loaded him with reproaches, swearing in my wrath that he should never again leave. his West Indian home, never again behold the being who had come between his tove comfort and amusement. About this time the bridegroom, Richard Harding, since erty of the parish-and leaving them under and me. When I stopped to take breath, the bankers who held Miss Ormond's little dust.

my boy had fainted. Horror-struck, believing him dead, I summoned the attendants. He was soon restored to life but not ed the names of Edith and Merton, but said nothing distinctly, so that I could learn nothing of the family of his wife, nor obtain the least clue to her station or residence. I will not tell you how wretched my life has been since, how remorse and shame have haunted me, nor why I have resolved to bequeath my fortune (as a sort of atonement, a poor one I own, to the memory of my boy,) to the woman he loved, if she can be found. You will for our old friendship's sake seek her diligently, and at the end of the five years specified in my will, if you hear nothing of her, will deliver the property to my nephew, whom I hate though he is my only brother's son, but who ought in justice to inherit a portion of the fortune the germs of which, at least, I received from his grandfather."

After reading the letter, Mr. Courtney gave Mr. Weston the little information he could afford, and was surprised to learn from that gentleman that Mr. James Harding had already been to inquire if any claimant for the fortune had appeared.

"He is," added Mr. Weston, "a grasping, avaricious man, whom I detest almost as heartily as did his uncle, but unless you can furnish me with ample and unquestionable proofs of your sister-in-law Miss Ormond's being the lady who was married to Richard in Merton Church in June, 18-1 shall be obliged to hand over the deeds of property to him at the end of the five years specified in the will; but I presume you will have no difficulty. There is, of course, a certificate, and the marriage is recorded in the parish register, and there were undoubtedly witnesses of the ceremony who must be found and requested to give their evidence. Be assured I will do all in my power to place Miss Ormond, or rather Mrs. Harding, in possession."

Mr. Courtney anticipated no difficulty in obtaining the desired proofs, and with a light, hopeful heart he returned to his family. Great was his astonishment to learn from Edith that so far from being able to produce any proof of the marriage, she had nothing but her wedding ring, containing their initials and the date ; that there were no witnesses except her sister, and that she did not even know the officiating clergyman's name. She knew only that the rite was solemnized in Merton Church, and to Merton Aunt Ormond insisted on going, accompanied by Edith, immediately. A new life seemed given to the old lady. Now that she had recovered from her anger on having Edith called "Mrs. Harding," much to her annoyance, and talked of their golden expectations to all their acquaintance. Poor Edith !' since reading that important advertisement she was a changed being. Sad and pale, she shrank from society, even that of her most intimate friends, and her aunt could have scarcely imposed upon her a more painful task than the visit to Merton. It was made, however, and was unsatisfactory. The sudden death of the good old rector had prevented the recording of the marriage ; the sexton, not liking the new rector, or the new laws he made, had "handed in his keys" and "moved off to the West." The rector's nephew was reading law in the office of Messrs. Parchment & Smoothwit, of Michigan, and old Mrs. Stanton's failing memory only enabled her to say, "Robert was a good boy and she hoped no harm would come to him, for he went right away when his grandpa' died, and nobody had heard of him since." What was to be done? Several letters were addressed to Robert Elliot without eliciting a reply, and Mr. Weston, unable to encourage his client, could only bid her wait patiently, and remind her that five years was not long to wait for such a fortune. Mr. Courtney was soon ordered to Florida, and spite of the urgent entreaties of his wife, Miss Ormond, feeling herself too old to bear the transplanting, positively refused to accompany them, and Edith would not leave her, even to go with that darling sister from whom she had never been separated a day. Soon after the Courtueys were gone. Aunt Ormond was seized with a paralysis which deprived her of the use of one side, and so affected her mind that she was incapable of managing her little household affairs, and in many respects so childish as to draw largely on Edith's patience and ingenuity for her

No. 44. fortune failed, and her income was reduced in consequence to one-eight of what it had been. How were they to live now? They had never had too much, and that which was left them was a mere pittance. Poor Edith ! Nobly she bore her burden, bravely she endured her trials, and many a one who saw her with calm brow and firm

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heart steadily performing her daily duties, wondered at her insensibility, while a few, who understood her better, breathed an carnest prayer that she might be able to prove her right to the estate she claimed.

Meanwhile Mr. James Harding was not inactive ; on the contrary, he exerted him self continually to find proofs that Richard Harding had never married, and he so often called Edith an impostor, a deceiver, that many believed his report and some even among her own acquaintances began to look coldly upon her.

The affair remained in this state for many months, when Robert Elliot happened to visit in that vicinity, and while walking with a friend in Boston, he chanced to meet Edith. The face attracted his attention, and finally he said to his friend,

"The young lady we have just passed, puts me strongly in mind of a strange incident that happened the night before my uncle died." And then he briefly related the circumstances already recorded regarding the mysterious marriage.

Burton, who had been intently listening to his friend's words, now exclaimed,

"Why, Elliot, the fates have sent you here just in time, and I will henceforth believe in presentiments and special providences as devoutly as yourself or Grant Thorburn. It was only yesterday I heard Weston say his father would give his right arm to find Miss Ormond's marriage certificate, or one credible witness of the marriage, for which it seems he has been seek-"Where is Mr. Weston? Can I see him

immediately?" said Elliot, excited beyond control by Burton's account.

"We will go directly to his rooms, for he is now in the city," replied Burton ; and a few minutes' walk brought them to Mr. Weston's door, and a few more sufficed to acquaint the lawyer with their errand.

Having listened eagerly to the story, he asked Elliot, rather peremptorily,

"Are you willing to appear, in court next week and repeat this story on oath? and can you tell me where the sexton you speak of may be found? and above all things can you produce that certificate?"

Elliot gave the little lawyer the sexton's address, promised to attend the court at the appointed time, and then said,

"I cannot tell any thing of the certificate ; I remember my uncle's telling me to place it his prayer-book, and that I must record it on the morrow : before morning he was a corpse, and I so overwhelmed by my first sorrow that I have no distinct recollection of any thing that occurred until after I left Merton,"

When Robert handed the certificate that evening to the rector, the old man's face saddened for a moment and he said,

"They should have taken more care; put it in my prayer-book, my son; they will doubtless call for it soon, and to-morrow you must record the marriage for me in the parish register."

Robert placed the paper as desired, and then seating himself on a low bench at his uncle's feet, began talking of the strange and secret marriage, saying,

"Did you know the parties before, nir 2"

""I never saw the bride or her sister till we met in the church, but I have known the furniture with the house was the prop-

my cakes will be all spiled for him?

"You would not wonder," peevishly replied Mrs. Stanton, the housekeeper, "if you had heard him talking in his study with Robert till almost morning. I suppose they have both overslept themselves."

"Well, and sure it's a pleasure to talk to the boy any time, and the ould gintleman was just beginning to say his last words afore he leaves for the school, ma'am and sorry we'll be whin he's gene."

They were interrupted by the agonized voice of Robert, crying :

"Mrs. Stanton, Norah, come, come quick to the study ;" and in an instant both were standing at the study door, appalled at the scene within. In his highbacked arm chair close by the open window, just where Robert had 'left him the night before, sat the good rector, looking so calm, so beautifully quiet, that for one moment they almost thought he slept ; but the repose was too deep, too rigid for sleep, and the two women paused and looked at each other with sad, troubled faces for several minutes, ere Mrs. Stanton pressed a cold hand in hers, and murmuring, "He is dead, poor old gentleman," burst into tears.

The death of their beloved pastor spread so deep a gloom over the whole parish, so many hearts were heavy with sorrow, that Robert felt almost ashamed of the utter loneliness and desolation he felt while so many sympathized in and shared his grief. Day after day the Summer sun rose and set and found Robert lingering yet in the lonely rectory, pale and hopeless, and not until Mrs. Stanton told him that her grandson had come to take her to his home in a neighboring village, did he seem to comprebend that the house which had so long sheltered him was his home no longer. Then he roused himself, and with reverential care packed the few books and other articles which had belonged to his uncle-

"But his books," said Mr. Weston, "what became of his books?"

"His library was not extensive; and when I left the rectory I placed all the books, carefully packed, with a friend, and they have remained unopened, undoubtedly until now.".

"By your good leave, sir, they will remain no longer unopened, for we will send suitable persons to search them, and mayhap this long-missing certificate, on which so much depends, will be brought to light."

Elliot assented of course, for why should he refuse?

The result of the search was the discovery of the certificate, which was the only evidence required to convince Mr. Weston that Edith was the person to whom the fortune rightfully belonged. Before concluding this narrative, I perhaps, should state that it was only about six months after the discovery of the certificate, that Robert Elliot induced Edith to again go through the marriage ceremony, but this time it was not "a secret marriage."

## Burning a Corps&

The idea of "Cremating" the dead has received a practical illustration in Europe. The London Times' Berlin correspondent writes that the body of Lady Dilke was burned on the 10th inst., at Dreaden, strangers being permitted to be present .--The coffin was placed in the chamber furnace and six minutes later the coffin burst; five minutes more and the flesh began to to melt away. Ten minutes more and the skeleton was laid bare. Another ten minutes and the bones began to crumble. Seventy-five minutes after the introduction of the coffin all that remained of Lady Dilke and the coffin were six pounds of