

# Chance Meeting.

By The Duchess.

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III.  
"What hour do you expect Miss Linton to arrive?" asks Lillian, presently. "I daresay she has come by now; it is also possible she may not have come at all. I have told you she is not famed for punctuality."  
"Then I think you had better get back as soon as you can to meet her. She may by chance be punctual this time."  
"Better have a last look at the river first," carelessly.  
"I think not, and besides I am sure the mist is thickening; it will be wet night."  
"Well, it looks like it," says Lansdale, with a glance above; after which he rows her back in silence to the landing slip.  
Lillian runs lightly up to her room and throws herself into a chair. After all what a fool she has been, or rather Aunt Bessie has, of course he has



fastens it near her fair throat. been engaged all this time to that other girl. And yet—he had not been in such overgreat hurry to get back to meet her. Still he had called her lovely. Lovely! she recalls a photograph of Miss Linton belonging to Aunt Bessie, and surely a face that is all grey eyes, set very widely apart, and a nose that distinctly turns up could hardly be called that. Lovers must be blind indeed, and Mr. Lansdale the blindest of all. Suddenly an angry desire to show him what might honestly be called—at all events—pretty, seizes upon her. She pulls down her hair, and does it up again in her most coquettish style. Takes out her latest silk blouse—a charming thing, all pale-blue, with a little chiffon of the same color, and tries it on. Yes, it will do! She adds a skirt to it, fastens her neck-band with the little diamond star papa had given her on her last birthday, and finally, seeing a pale-pink rose pushing its way through the window as though to get a peep at her (and no wonder, too!) she plucks it, and fastens it near her fair and slender throat.  
Just at this moment Aunt Bessie opens the door.  
"What! dressed already?" says she. The surprise is involuntary, but she quickly suppresses it. She has caught the situation. "Wise child! How I

wish I were you. Now you can really rest before dinner. And how sweet you look, dearest."  
Mrs. Musgrave is a student of nature. She is quite aware that to sell any girl in the world she is looking charming is a greater help to her appearance than even a new frock from Worth.  
"We came in early, Mr. Lansdale is expecting a friend this evening."  
"Letty Linton? Yes, she has come. She and Geoffrey are old friends."  
"And dear ones, apparently."  
"Are they?" asks Aunt Bessie the wiser.  
In spite of the early dressing, Lillian and her aunt arrive a little late in the dining room. Their own special



"She Does Not Raise Her Eyes" table is waiting for them, as well as the man who attends on them, and who regards them with a reproachful eye—but Lillian scarcely notices his mild reproach. Her glance has wandered instinctively to the small table a little beyond hers, where four people are sitting. Mrs. Musgrave is nodding to them. There is an elderly lady, very fat, very good-natured-looking, a girl—yes, certainly her nose has a heavenward tilt; a young man with brown eyes and a rather weak mouth, who is Captain Westroph, and Geoffrey Lansdale.  
A parti carree! And all seem very merry. The waiter is pouring out champagne, and Lansdale, leaning a little over the table, is evidently telling some absurd story—telling it to the party generally, of course, but certainly more particularly to Miss Linton. The lamp, dimly shaded with pink, casts a soft glow on the four faces. Presently a little low chorus of laughter arises. The story has come to a delightful finish!  
How happy he—they all seem!  
When dinner is over, the fat lady rises and comes toward Mrs. Musgrave's table.  
"Dear Mrs. Musgrave," she says, in tones that suit her size, "you must introduce me to your niece." She holds out her hand to Lillian, who tries to grasp it. "We are connections, I think. And this is my girl—Letty."  
"How do you do?" says that young lady, in a loud, clear tone, and with the friendliest smile at Lillian. "Geoffrey told me all about you. Great chums you and he—oh?"  
"Really, Miss Linton, I—"  
When next afternoon Geoffrey Lansdale comes up to Lillian asks her to go for a row with him, it is with difficulty she suppresses her astonishment. There is a touch of scorn in her eyes as she answers him, although her voice is studiously ordinary.  
"Are you not going with Miss Linton?" asks she.

"She wouldn't come. She hates boating. Makes her ill, she says."  
Lillian hesitates for a moment. To refuse now, after all these days, will seem like pique. Yes, whatever it costs her, she must keep up the present state of things to the end. There is only today—tomorrow she will be far away from him. A quick, sharp smile comes in the most unaccountable way, on the head of this thought.  
"I should like to go very much," says she, quickly. "I love the sea."  
"Your only love?" with a careless smile, yet his eyes search her face for the answer.  
"Oh, yes," says she, smiling too, but absently.  
"We shall have our last look at Proudly river after all," says he, as they push off. And after a little while, having rounded the bit of wooded land, they enter the narrow strip of water that leads to the mouth of the river. Down this the boat glides smoothly, passing by many black rocks that guard it on either side, and that are overhung with ivy and topped by giant fir trees. And now here at last is the river, opening over its stones, gleaming like snow in the fitful sunshine that breaks through the trees overhead, sending green lints upward to the sky, and foaming over its stones, rushing always, as all rivers do, to their eternal home in the ocean.  
"Tell me," says Lansdale, abruptly, "why did you change your mind about going home, that day—after I arrived?"  
He had heard then.  
"Often change my mind," says she, coldly.

"Naturally. But why on that particular occasion?" She makes no answer to this, and seeing she will not, he goes on, almost with the avowed determination of provoking her.  
"Why did you want to go?"  
"Was it perhaps to prepare a welcome for me?" You know, of course, that I meant to pay a visit to your mother."  
"I," she stops, grows crimson, and her eyes flash. "If you will insist on knowing," she says, "I left home to avoid meeting you."  
A pause.  
"What a great deal of trouble to take about nothing," says he at last. "I can only express my regret at having driven you to such extremes to get rid of me. It is very good of you to have made matters so clear—as otherwise I might still have gone on to see—your mother."  
"I hope you will do that still," says Lillian, who is now very pale. Her voice is trembling. "I am sorry I said anything about it. If—it all sounds so inhospitable. You will come and stay with us."  
"I think not, thank you." He has taken up his oars again. "That river is beautiful here, is it not? Shall we stay a little longer, or—"  
"No. Let us go home," says she, in a low tone. She does not raise her eyes. They are full of tears.  
[To Be Concluded.]

Circuits.  
"Why did she marry Fiddleback?"  
"Because she was in love with another man, and the man was in love with another girl, and the girl was in love with Fiddleback. It was the only way she could get even with the other girl, you see."  
—Life.

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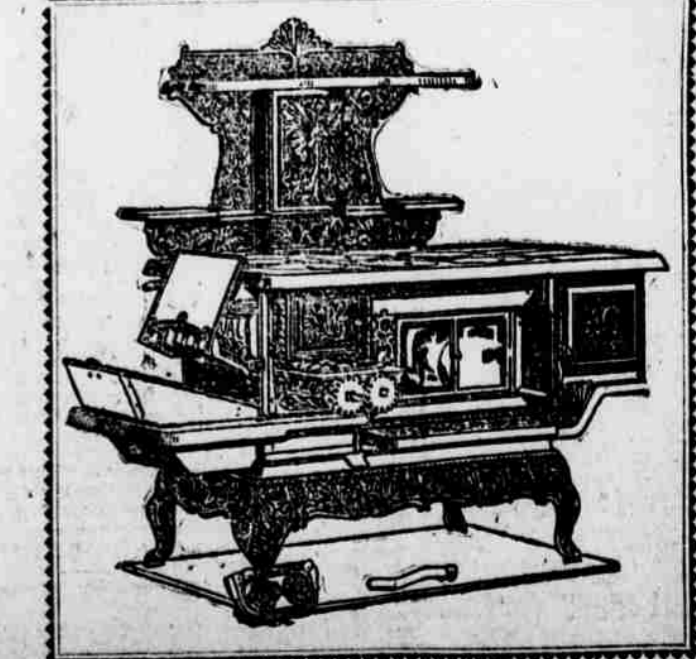


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