

The Home Reading Circle

The CONVERSION OF MAJOR HARRINGTON.

MARY C. FRANCIS

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PART I.

"You haven't had Firefly out of the stable for almost a week in spite of the fine spring weather. Esther, I thought you were going to ride her to town yesterday afternoon, but James tells me that you walked over to Clifton Corners and took the car. I can't imagine why you care so much less for horseback riding than you used to."

Major Harrington looked with a keen eye across the table. Behind the coffee urn Esther blushed. "I think I really don't care less," she said, with a trace of hesitation, "but the weather has been so lovely for walking lately. Don't you want another cup of coffee?"

"Yes; very fine for walking, horseback riding or bicycling. If these wheeling people keep up their external craze we shall all be run over and killed some fine day yet. Yes, give me another cup of coffee, my dear, and a little more cream, please. Here are two letters for you." The sweet, fresh air of a May morning came into the stately dining room of Scarlet Oaks through a half open window.

There was silence in the room for a few minutes while Major Harrington devoted himself to his paper and Esther read her letters, and then the major broke out in a characteristic manner: "Ah, just as I said; here's another bicycle accident, a woman killed at a railroad crossing. Gad, I think there ought to be a law against the things; and as for women riding them, every one of them ought to be locked up. Don't you see, it's this sort of thing I'm protecting you against when I won't let you ride a wheel? Just look at that!" He handed the paper across the table.

Esther quickly took in the headlines and then a paragraph lower down in the column. "Why, uncle," she said, in a timidly protesting manner, "don't you see it was all the engineer's fault. The woman was—"

"The woman was an idiot to be on a wheel at all," cried the major, in his most irascible mood. "Would she have been killed if she had been at home? No, sir; let me tell you, a woman never ought to mount anything that hasn't an intelligence of its own. If she had been on horseback the horse would have known enough not to try to cross the track. Ellis, tell James to have Firefly ready at three o'clock this afternoon for Miss Esther. You must take a gallop, my dear. The best country rider in the county ought to get out oftener than you have been doing lately."

"Oh, yes, I will," said Esther, hurriedly, "and—you won't forget that you promised to take me to the Millington-Irving road race tomorrow, will you?"

Major Harrington paused near the door. "I'm not so sure that I promised."

"Yes—yes—you did. You promised both Mr. Bronson and myself that you would."

"And Mr. Bronson, what interest has he in this race?"

"Why—I think he will be there somewhere."

"Ah, well, if Mr. Bronson is to be there perhaps I had better be there myself," said the major, significantly. "Yes, I will take you, and I hope the sight will cure you of your craze for cycling."

Half an hour later Paul Bronson was closeted with the major in the library. Scarlet Oaks was heavily mortgaged to the real estate syndicate which Paul

here and we will attend to the final details."

It was late in the afternoon when two cyclists turned into the long stretch of road, three miles from Scarlet Oaks.

"The funny part of it is that he doesn't for a minute suspect the real reason why I went to see the race. If he knew that you were to be one of the riders I could never get him to lay eyes on the course."

It was Esther. "And what would happen to both of us if he even suspected that you and I are in love with each other and that

you have been riding the taboored wheel for months," said Paul. They laughed. "Matters are getting serious now," continued Paul, "and something must be done at once. If the trust company forecloses the mortgage on the last day of May and the major carries you off abroad—"

"But I won't go."

"You will have to go unless we do something. Our masquerading is at an end now, Esther, and we must face the situation."

They wheeled leisurely along. "I do not know for any real reason myself," said Paul, "but I put off speaking about it until after tomorrow in order that you might see the race. I must see you when I cross the tape at the finish. Everett beat me by a hair's breadth last year, but I'm in first-class condition now, and I'm going to win that race."

"Oh, Paul, it will be the first race I ever saw, and do you know it seems to me it will be enough to bring Uncle Jack around to see you win it."

"Not much," said Paul, grimly. "He is wedded to horseflesh. The fact is, I don't think it will do us much good, but it's a desperate case anyhow, and I am simply determined that you shall see the race. If the worst comes to the worst you will keep your word, won't you? We won't be the first who got married and asked permission afterwards."

He circled around in the road and came nearer to her. As he did so he caught sight of a tall, military figure on horseback in their rear. "By Jove! Esther," he said, quickly, "if the major isn't right behind us. Lean over a little and take the cross road to Clifton Corners—he can't tell us from Adam at this distance."

The major looked after them musingly. "A bicycle courtship very interesting. If I hadn't kept a strict eye on Esther she would have been gadding about the country in the same way with young Bronson. Hanged if I know what to think of women nowadays. I'll take Esther to the race tomorrow for the express purpose of keeping Bronson away from her—as if I weren't up to their little game."

The major chuckled and gave the reins to his horse.

"The morning of Memorial day dawned in clear and perfect brilliancy. The whole countryside was in a state of excitement due to the great annual bicycle road race over the famous Millington-Irving twenty-five mile course, and the entire route was lined early with thousands of spectators. Twenty-five miles from Scarlet Oaks Paul Bronson mingled with the racers who thronged about the starting point."

"How are you, Paul?" asked a tall young fellow. "Hope you're in good shape today."

"Never was better," said Paul, cheerfully. "I'm out to win today or retire for good. I hardly expected to see you here, Tom. How is this?"

"Oh, I don't expect to win. This is merely a training exercise for me. I say, Paul, the boys are with you, don't you know. Good luck to you, old fellow; we all hope you'll win."

"Thanks, Tom, but I may have a tough tussle. How many starters are there?"

"Oh, only a million or so—a lot of the worst-looking skates I ever saw. There are only a dozen really good men in the lot. All you have to look out for is accidents. If you get tangled up with a cyclist, and the entire route was lined early with thousands of spectators. Twenty-five miles from Scarlet Oaks Paul Bronson mingled with the racers who thronged about the starting point."

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It was but a few minutes after eleven when two men shot over the tape at the beginning of the race, heralded by a loud cheer from the multitude that seemed to promise victory for them.

"What a beautiful motion! Garrett has," said an enthusiastic girl in a fetching bicycle costume. "Just look at him. And with that start, too. Oh, I'm sure he's going to win."

Her more experienced companion laughed. "Wait till you see the finish before you are so sure of that. Just keep your eye on some of those fellows who delight to clip in and out down the time limit to nothing, and come sailing down the home stretch as if they had started at the night before. You see, the really fast men are all at start yet."

"Out of the way there!" said a marshal, pushing back the too reckless on-lookers.

As he uttered the warning the ten men who had followed the leaders on the seven-minute limit came down the course like the wind and disappeared in the distance. Close behind them followed a bunch of starters who had crossed the tape a few minutes later, and who had set a rattling pace from the first. Each different set of riders seemed to create fresh enthusiasm for the crowd, and it cheered loudly as they flew past. Over one hundred men followed at intervals of fifteen seconds, and the great race was on in earnest. Half an hour after the start a bird's eye view of the course was enough to stir the blood. Almost one hundred and fifty men, cut in in perspective against a background of shouting and applauding spectators, came down the road in a swift flight

like a dissolving view, their motion varying from the kaleidoscopic whir as they passed the eye line to the dim and almost imperceptible specks far away as the eyes could reach. Hotter and hotter and more determined grew the contest as it drew to a finish; those who had survived the long and difficult test had all their powers in a final effort to win.

Many of them showed the effect of the struggle. Paul hid down well from the first, and half way down the course had pulled away from the main bunch, and was close in the rear of the leaders. All were saving themselves as much as they dared, for the final and decisive strain.

Once Everett threw back a quick glance. "Looking out for Bronson?" cried the man behind him. "He's a mile or so back there somewhere."

TO BE CONTINUED.

RANDOM REMARKS ON HEALTH AND HYGIENE

The importance of an early formed habit of conscientious self-control is urged by a writer in Leslie's Weekly. Every thoughtful person, he says, can readily understand how a habit of giving way to every trivial physical impulse is almost inevitably formed when no special care is placed upon the general manner in which the legs, arms and boys also were taught to keep themselves in hand, and allow no motion that was not necessary, they were on the watch for every trifling movement and it was stopped almost before it began. At an assembly of what is supposed to be the most highly cultivated class in a great city, a gentleman was recently annoyed during the entire evening, because a woman in front of him, handsome and elegantly attired, constantly turned and twisted her head and contorted her countenance. Possibly she was afflicted with a form of uncontrollable nervousness. More likely she was simply the victim of a habit, begun in self-consciousness or embarrassment, continued through heedlessness of neglect, and finally culminating in a personal peculiarity almost impossible to break up. Genuine nervous twitches of the head and face, are, perhaps, the commonest incident forms of this kind in childhood. Since they are often not

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Women's Reliance.

After Many Discouragements They Turn to Munyon.

Mrs. Margaret Huppey, Mill Street, between Twenty-seventh and Twenty-eighth Streets, Pittsburg, Pa., says: "I



had dyspepsia and neuralgia and suffered intensely. I was so bloated at times that I could not wear my usual loose. I had treatment from many doctors with no effect. I went to the Munyon office and consulted with the physicians and the result of the remedies he prescribed has been a complete cure of all my troubles.

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painful and sometimes amuse more than they alarm, they are too likely to run for months without any special attempt to check them. Thus a life habit, ultimately mortifying to the owner and revolting to the spectator, is liable to be formed.

Dr. George F. Shraday, in recounting in the Forum the modern advances in medicine and surgery, says: "The great improvement in the present as compared with the past methods of administering medicines deserves a passing comment. Scarcely a generation ago the threat of a dose of the nauseous drugs of the day was sufficient to suppress the spirit of evil propensities in the most wicked boy. Castor oil was a punishment, rhubarb was a terror and senna an abomination. The nauseous mixtures of our grandparents are now replaced by the elegant and almost tasteless compounds of modern pharmacy. The essential oils of the former medicines are now given in the forms of condensed extracts and alkaloids in proportionately reduced bulk and in consistently concentrated form. Single remedies with special indications take the place of the old-fashioned shotgun mixtures. Tablets, pellets and pills no longer offend the palate; and even quinine, the bitterest essence of taste, now comes in sugar-coated armor. The irritable stomach which detests the essential oils of the former medicines are now given in the forms of condensed extracts and alkaloids in proportionately reduced bulk and in consistently concentrated form. Single remedies with special indications take the place of the old-fashioned shotgun mixtures. Tablets, pellets and pills no longer offend the palate; and even quinine, the bitterest essence of taste, now comes in sugar-coated armor. The irritable stomach which detests the essential oils of the former medicines are now given in the forms of condensed extracts and alkaloids in proportionately reduced bulk and in consistently concentrated form. Single remedies with special indications take the place of the old-fashioned shotgun mixtures. 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