

The Real Adventure

By Henry Kittell Webster

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COMES THE GREAT EVENT IN ROSE ALDRICH'S LIFE, THE PROSPECT OF A BABY, AND SHE REALIZES THAT WOMAN'S FINEST PROFESSION IS MOTHERHOOD—BUT PLANS GO SADLY AWRY

SYNOPSIS—Rose Stanton marries Rodney Aldrich, a rich young lawyer, after a brief courtship, and instantly is taken up by Chicago's exclusive social set and made a part of the gay whirl of the rich folk. It is all new to the girl, and for the first few months she is charmed with the life. And then she comes to feel that she is living a useless existence, that she is a social butterfly, a mere ornament in her husband's home. Rose longs to do something useful and to have the opportunity to employ her mind and utilize her talent and education. Rodney feels much the same way himself. He thinks he ought to potter around in society just to please his wife, when in reality he'd rather be giving his nights to study or social service of some sort. They try to reach an understanding, following the visit of two New York friends, who have worked out satisfactorily this same problem.

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

But she went steadily on. "You were always so dear about it. But tonight—oh, Rodney . . . !" Her silly, ragged voice choked there and stopped, and the tears brimmed up and spilled down her cheeks. But she kept her face steadfastly turned to his.

"That's what I said about being married and not sowing wild oats, I suppose," he said glumly. "It was a joke. Do you suppose I'd have said it if I meant it?"

"It wasn't only that," she managed to go on. "It was the way they looked at the house; the way you apologized for my dress; the way you looked when you tried to get out of answering Barry Lake's questions about what you were doing. Oh, how I despised myself! And how I knew you and they must be despising me!"

"The one thing I felt about you all the evening," he said, with the patience that marks the last stage of exasperation, "was pride. I was rather crazily proud of you."

"As my lover you were proud of me," she said. "But the other man—the man that's more truly you—was ashamed, as I was ashamed. Oh, it doesn't matter! Being ashamed won't accomplish anything. But what we'll do is going to accomplish something."

"What do you mean to do?" he asked.

"I want you to tell me first," she said, "how much money we have, and how much we've been spending."

"I don't know," he said stubbornly. "I don't know exactly."

"You've got enough, haven't you, of your own . . . I mean, there's enough that comes in every year, to live on, if you didn't earn a cent by practicing law? Well, what I want to do is to live on that. I want to live, however and wherever we have to—live on that—in the suburbs somewhere, or in a flat, so that you will be free; and I can work—be some sort of help."

"You can wash the dishes and scrub the floors," he supplemented, "and I can carry my lunch to the office with me in a little tin box." He looked at his watch. "And now that the thing's reduced to an absurdity, let's go to bed. It's getting along toward two o'clock."

"You don't have to get to the office till nine tomorrow morning," said Rose. "And I want to talk it out now. And I don't think I said anything that was absurd."

"I shouldn't have called it absurd," he admitted after a rather long silence. "But it's exaggerated and unnecessary. Next October, when the

begin right away." Then she looked up into his face. "It will be too late in October," she repeated, "unless we begin now."

The deep, tense seriousness of her voice and her look arrested his full attention.

"Why?" he asked. And then, "Rose, what do you mean?"

"We're going to have a baby in October," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

The Door That Was to Open.

What a silly little idiot she'd been not to have seen the thing for herself! She'd been, all the while, beating her head against blind walls when there was a door there waiting to open of itself when the time came. Motherhood! There'd be a doctor and a nurse at first, of course, but presently they'd go away and she'd be left with a baby. Her own baby! She could care for him with her own hands, feed him—her joy reached an ecstasy at this—from her own breast.

That life which Rodney led apart from her, the life into which she had tried with such ludicrous unsuccess to effect an entrance, was nothing to this new life which was to open before her in a few short months now. Meanwhile, she not only must wait—she could well afford to.

That was why she could listen with that untroubled smile of hers to the terrible things that Rodney and James Randolph and Barry Lake and Jane got into the way of hurling across her dinner table, and to the more mildly expressed but equally alkaline cynicisms of Jimmy Wallace.

Jimmy was dramatic critic on one of the evening papers as well as a bit of a playwright. He was a slim, cool, smiling, highly sophisticated young man, who renounced all privileges as an interpreter of life in favor of remaining an unbiased observer of it. He never bothered to speculate about what you ought to do—he waited to see what you did.

Well, in the light of the miraculous transformation that lay before her, Rose could listen undaunted to the tough philosophicisms her husband and Barry Lake delighted in as well as to the mordant merciless realities with which Doctor Randolph and Jimmy Wallace confirmed them. She wasn't indifferent to it all.

"Jim's pretty weird when he gets going," Eleanor Randolph said to Frederica, on the next day after they had been dining at the Aldriches, "but that Barry Lake has a sort of surgical way of discussing just anything, and his wife's as bad."

"We never got off women all the evening," Barry Lake had had their history down from the early Egyptians, and Jim got off a string of pathological freaks. And then Rodney came out strong for economic independence, only with his own queer angle on it, of course. He thought it would be a fine thing, but it wouldn't happen until the men insisted on it. When a girl wasn't regarded as marriageable unless she had been trained to a trade or a profession, then things would begin to happen. I think he meant it, too.

"Well, and all the while there sat Rose, taking it all in with those big eyes of hers, smiling to herself now and then; saying things, too, sometimes, that were pretty good, though nobody but Jimmy seemed to understand, always, just what she meant. They've talked before, those two. But she was no more embarrassed than as if we'd been talking embroidery stitches."

So far as externals went, her life, that spring, was immensely simplified. The social demands upon her, which had been so insistent all winter, stopped almost automatically. The exception was the Junior League show in Easter week, for which she put in quite a lot of work. She was to have danced in it.

This is an annual entertainment by which Chicago sets great store. All the smartest and best-looking of the younger set take part in it, in costumes that would do credit to a chorus dresser, and as much of Chicago as is willing and able to pay five dollars a seat for the privilege is welcome to come and look. Delirious weeks are spent in rehearsal, under a first-class professional director; audience and performers have an equally good time, and Charity, as residuary legate, profits by thousands.

Rose dropped in at a rehearsal one day at the end of a solid two hours of committee work, found it unexpectedly amusing, and made a point, thereafter, of attending when she could. Her interest was heightened, if not wholly actuated, by some things Jimmy Wallace had been telling her lately about how such things were done on the real stage.

He had written a musical comedy once, lived through the production of it, and had spent a hard-earned two weeks' vacation tramping with it on

the road, so he could speak with authority. It was a wonderful Odyssey when you could get him to tell it, and as Rose made a good audience, she got the whole thing at her dinner table.

The thing got a sociological twist eventually, of course, when Jane wanted to know if it were true that the chorus girls received inadequate pay. Jimmy demolished this with more wrath than he often showed. He didn't know any other sort of job that paid a totally untrained girl as well. It took a really accomplished stenographer, for instance, to earn as much a week as was paid the average chorus girl. The trouble was that the indispensable assets in the business were not character and intelligence and ambition, but just personal charms.

"But a girl who's serious about it, who doesn't have to be told the same thing more than once, and catches on, sometimes, without being told at all, why, she can always have a job and she can be as independent as anybody. She can get twenty-five dollars a week or even as high as thirty."

The latter part of this conversation was what she was to remember afterward, but the thing that impressed Rose at the time, and that held her for hours looking on at the League show rehearsals, was what Jimmy had told her about the technical side of the work of production, the labors of the director, and so on.

As the weeks and months wore away, and as the season of violent alternations between summer and winter, which the Chicagoan calls spring, gave place to summer itself, Rose was driven to trench herself more and more deeply behind this great expectation. It was like a dam holding back waters that otherwise would have rushed down upon her and swept her away.

And then came Harriet, Rodney's other sister, and the pressure behind the dam rose higher.

Rose had tried, rather unsuccessfully, to realize that there was actually in existence another woman who occupied, by blood anyway, the same position toward Rodney and herself that Frederica did. She felt almost like a real sister toward Frederica. But without quite putting the notion into words, she had always felt it was just as well that Harriet was an Italian contessa, four thousand miles away. Rodney and Frederica spoke of her affectionately, to be sure, but their references made a picture of a rather formidable sort of person.

She'd discovered, along in the winter sometime, that Harriet's affairs were going rather badly. It was along in May that the cable came to Frederica announcing that Harriet was coming back for a long visit. "That's all she said," Rodney explained to Rose. "But I suppose it means the finish. She said she didn't want any fuss made, but she hinted she'd like to have Freddy meet her in New York, and Freddy's going. Poor old Harriet! We must try to cheer her up."

She didn't seem much in need of cheering up, Rose thought, when they first met. All that showed on the contessa's highly polished surface was a disposition to talk humorously over old times with her old friends, including her brother and sister, and a sort of dismayed acquiescence in the smoky seriousness, the inadequate civilization, of the city of her birth.

Toward Rose herself, the contessa was, one might say, studiously affectionate. She avoided being either disagreeable or patronizing. Rose could see, indeed, how she avoided it.

About this time the question where Rose and Rodney were going to live after their lease on the McCrea house ended, had begun to press for an answer. October first was when the lease expired, and it wasn't far from the date at which they expected the baby. They spent some lovely afternoons during the days of the emerging spring, cruising about looking at possible places.

This was the situation when Harriet took a hand in it. It was a situation made to order for Harriet to take a hand in. She'd sized it up at a glance, made up her mind in three minutes what was the sensible thing for them to do, written a note to Florence McCrea in Paris, and then bided her opportunity to put her idea into effect. To her Rose was simply a well-meaning, somewhat inadequately civilized young person, the beneficiary, through her marriage with Rodney, of a piece of unmerited good fortune.

When she got Florence McCrea's answer to her letter, she took the first occasion to get Rodney off by himself and talk a little common sense into him.

"What about where to live, Rodney?" she asked. "Made up your mind about it yet? It is time someone with a little common sense straightened you out about this."

Harriet couldn't be sure from the length of time he took seeing that

his pipe was properly lighted, whether he altogether liked this method of approach or not.

"Common sense always was a sort of specialty of yours, sis," he said at last, "and straightening out. You were always pretty good at it." Then out of a cloud of his own smoke, "Fire away."

"Well, in the first place," she said, "if you had your house today you'd be lucky if the paint was dry and the thing was fit to move into by the first of September."

"But we've got to get out of here, anyway, in October. And that means we've got to have some sort of place to get into. It is an awkward time, I'll admit."

"No, you haven't," she said. "You can stay right here another six months, if you like. I've heard from Florence. When I found how things stood here, I wrote and asked her if she'd lease for six months more if she got the chance, and she wrote back and simply grabbed at it."

Rodney smoked half way through his pipe before he made any comment on this suggestion. "This house isn't just what we want," he said. "In the first place, it's expensive."

Harriet shrugged her shoulders, picked up one of Florence's poetry books and eyed the heavily tooled binding with a satirical smile before she replied.

"I'd an idea there was that in it," she said at last. "Freddy said something. . . . Rose had been talking to her." Then, after another little silence and with a sudden access of vehemence: "You don't want to go and do a regular fool thing, Roddy."

She Stared, Bewildered.

You're getting on perfectly splendidly. But if you pull up and go to live in a barn somewhere and stop seeing anybody—people that count, I mean—"

Rodney grunted. "You're beyond your depth, sis," he said. "Come back where you don't have to swim. The expense isn't a capital consideration, I'll admit that. Now go on from there."

"That's like old times," she observed with a not ill-humored grimace. "I wonder if you talk to Rose like that. Oh, I know the house is rather solemn and absurd, it's Florence herself all over, that's the size of it. But what does that matter for six months more?"

He pocketed his pipe and got up out of his chair.

"There's something in it," he admitted. "I'll think it over."

"Better cable Florence as soon as you can," she advised.

Rose protested when the plan for living six months more in Florence McCrea's house was broached to her. She made the best fight she could. But Harriet's arguments, re-stated now by Rodney with full conviction, were too much for her. When she broke down and cried, as she couldn't help doing, Rodney soothed and comforted her, assured her that this notion of hers about the expensiveness of it all, was just a notion, which she must struggle against as best she could. She'd see things in a truer proportion afterward.

Very fine and small and weak, Rose Stanton, lying in a bed with people about her, let her eyes fall heavily shut lest they should want her to speak or think. . . . Then, for a long time, nothing. Then presently, a hand, a firm, powerful hand, that poked up her heavy, limp wrist and two sensitive finger-tips that rested lightly on the upper surface of it. After that, an even, measured voice—a voice of authority, whose words no doubt made sense, only Rose was too tired to think what the sense was:

"That's a splendid pulse. She's doing the best thing she can, sleeping like that."

And then another voice, utterly unlike Rodney's and yet unmistakably his—a ragged voice that tried to talk in a whisper but couldn't manage it—broke queerly.

"That's all right," it said. "But I'll find it easier to believe when—"

Something queerly like a laugh broke his voice when he answered. "Oh, you darling! Yes, it's all right. That isn't why I'm crying. It's just because I'm so happy."

"But the baby!" she persisted. "Why isn't it here?"

Rodney turned and spoke to someone else. "She wants to see," he said. "May she?"

And then a woman's voice (why, it was the nurse, of course! Miss Harris, who had come last night) said in an indulgent, soothing tone: "Why, surely she may. Wait just a minute."

But we've got to get out of here, anyway, in October. And that means we've got to have some sort of place to get into. It is an awkward time, I'll admit."

"There were twins, Rose," she heard Rodney explaining triumphantly, but still with something that wasn't quite a laugh, "a boy and a girl. They're perfectly splendid. One weighs seven pounds and the other six."

Her eyes widened and she looked up into his face so that the pitiful bewilderment in hers was revealed to him.

"But the baby," she said. Her wide eyes filled with tears and her voice broke weakly. "I wanted a baby."

"You've got a baby," he insisted, and now laughed outright. "There are two of them. Don't you understand, dear?"

Rodney started to speak, but some sort of admonitory signal from the nurse silenced him.

The nurse went away with her bundle, and Rodney stayed stroking Rose's limp hand.

In the dark, ever so much later, she awoke, stirred a little restlessly, and the nurse, from her cot, came quickly and stood beside her bed. She had something in her hands for Rose to drink and Rose drank it dutifully.

"Is there anything else?" the nurse asked.

"I just want to know," Rose said; "have I been dreaming, or is it true? Is there a baby, or are there twins?"

"Twins, to be sure," said the nurse cheerfully. "The loveliest, liveliest little pair you ever saw."

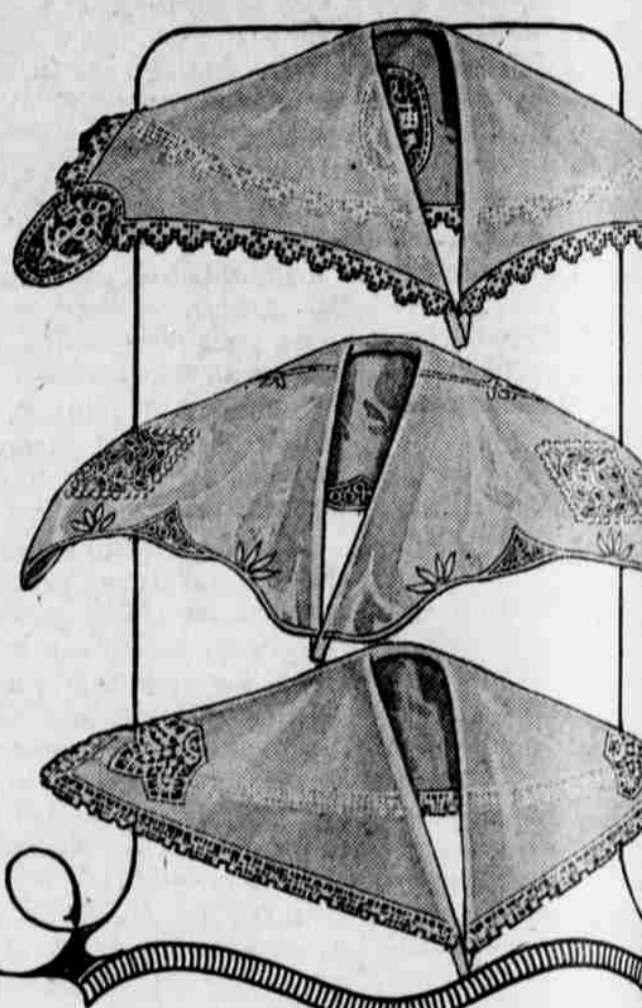
"Thank you," said Rose. "I just wanted to know."

She shut her eyes and pretended to go to sleep. But she didn't. It was true then. Her miracle, it seemed somehow, had gone ludicrously awry.

Knowing that they have plenty of money to raise twins properly, why should Rose resent the fact that she has been presented with two babies instead of one?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What Well Dressed Women Will Wear



In the Play of Summer Styles.

Organdie is the gay and spirited sourette in the play of summer styles. It hobb up everywhere, with all sorts of summer frocks, as a part of their make-up or in accessories worn with them. In the weave called swiss organdie it is more sheer than ever and disports itself in all the new and lovely shades of colors that grace the joys of midsummer. It is used in bands and borders on frocks made of other sheer fabrics, in petticoats and in collars and cuffs, in frills and in vestees. It is of much service in separate collars, like those illustrated here. Along with Jabots, collars of this kind simplify the summer wardrobe, saving the day, with their crisp daintiness, for the overworked wool or silk frock that serves many purposes. Pretty accessories of this kind help out the tourist immensely and are the easiest of all belongings to carry along on a journey.



Auxiliaries of the Red Cross.

The American Red Cross is engaged in so many humanitarian and philanthropic activities that its work must of necessity be departmentized and each department thoroughly organized for the sake of efficiency. A chapter of the Red Cross, in any locality, represents all of the Red Cross activities. Under its supervision different committees are organized for the different kinds of work to be done, each committee devoted to one particular object or class of work. In communities where no chapter exists Red Cross committees may be formed, by special authority of the director general of civilian relief, for special Red Cross activities. These committees are called auxiliaries.

Several auxiliaries may be formed in the same community, to take care of the several different classes of work to be done. Where a chapter exists auxiliaries must be formed with the consent of the chapter, and they will be a part of the chapter and subordinate to it.

The Red Cross is the only society authorized by the government of the United States to render aid to its land and naval forces in time of war. Therefore women who wish to help should first join the American Red Cross and