

Man of Mouse?

By Martha McCulloch-Williams

"The water, lapping and lapping, in-vited. The day was giddy May, and the invited young Lorena, moreover, owned all the fully normal to shrewdness. So altogether it would have been a miracle if things had gone exactly as they should. A proper young woman of course would have reckoned chances before having her feet and dancing joyously in midstream, where the jets that gave the finest fishing. They were not true lakes, of course—only water mirrors, still and deep, impounded by dams of the winter floods' building. Lorena did not love them. They were so placid they reminded her somehow of Johnny—nothing whatever that put her out of temper."

"She loved glitter, motion, excitement; it was ecstasy to her to dance all day long and half the night after, footing it as lightly, as feely, as wind blown thistle seed. If only she could dance alone! But since that was out of the question she naturally preferred partners who kept step and were nimble. Johnny was neither, yet all the time she had been engaged to him he had felt it his right to say, if she did not dance with him, she must dance with hardly anybody else."

And not at all with Granville Gore, who was the prince of partners, who was handsome and slender and light hearted, with money in both pockets and a trick of spending it with both hands for as Lorena would have said, "Milk is right. He is a man you can trust a man into decency, but a mouse always runs away."

Somehow the emphasis on the last word always made Lorena feel that she recalled it. It would be best if, when Johnny was toward her, she held the soul of kindly justice? Still she had felt that he was unfair. If he really knew anything he might let her know it likewise."

If Lorena could have brought himself to tell her the break might not have come. But he was so proud and mis-terful for that. His wife must believe in him enough to understand that he had reasons for any and everything. Besides he was afraid of seeming un-rich and better looking. Moreover he did not really know much that could be told categorically—it was Gore's general air and manner, com-joined to words dropped here and there that made Johnny certain he had no real reverence for anything remaining."

A girl, any girl, was fair game to him if she didn't sense enough to look out for herself he was not bound to look out for her. Yet Gore was not distinct-ly vicious—rather, indignantly with the did not mean worse by two chains and gilded than to make love to them than ride away. Marry! Not! Not! Not the finest girl alive!

If Lorena had known that! Un-knowing it, she had thought a great many times and a great many things of the fascinating Granville in the three months since the break. He had been away for two of them, and since he came home she had seen him only in crowds. But he had used his eyes so eloquently as to set her heart wildly fluttering. But, sadly enough, she had flattered even Granville by chance and gilded than to make love to them than ride away. Marry! Not! Not! Not the finest girl alive!

Today she was not thinking of im-handy even of Granville. Walden was such a joy. The water came above her ankles. She lifted her skirts light-ly in both hands and balanced her shadow upon the rippling stream. Such a funny shadow—dancing grotesquely even when she stood still."

Substitution—And Weddings

By Martha McCulloch-Williams

Elizabeth crossed the turf so lightly, so lightly, she left a waving trail of deep brown footprints all about the gray grass. The line was stopped and half turned about, but from the last and lightest of the blotches it ran straight to the wicket gate in the hedge. The path to the gate led around, almost under the library windows. Therefore she had avoided it. She did not want to be spied upon, and though the library commonly was empty until long after sunrise, she had come to be certain there was no counting on where Miss Precienne Weir would be at any special hour."

The wicket gave upon a lane shady and secluded, yet a public pass-way notwithstanding both sides of it be-longed to Elizabeth's uncle, Dan. He had been trying to close it ever since he bought the old Moors place, but his rustic neighbors had held stoutly to their right of way. So the young man walking slowly along the lane was not trespassing, unless he walked warily, keeping close to the hedge. Elizabeth smiled shamelessly to see him. Now that she had really brought herself to a clandestine meeting she was all in a happy flutter and amazed at her own hesitations."

Yet she said, smiling up at her tall sweetheart: "You must go right back, Billy, must. Do you hear? Miss Precienne Weir sleeps with both ears and one eye open. Besides, she gets up early more than half the night. And you know she can make Dandy believe anything in the world, except that he ought to marry her."

"H'm! That's a pity! Skepticalism on any other point would be less in-convenient," Billy Melvyn pointed out, hurrying Elizabeth along the lane to-ward the woods beyond the main travel-ling road. It was not at all the way he should go to go home, but some-how Elizabeth made no protest."

Soon they were walking through dewy sweet shads, with lilies straying this and sweet above their heads. And presently Billy had his arms about Elizabeth and was saying, with his lips in her hair: "Honey girl, I've been thinking—hard. Miss Weir is the lion in our path, and there's just one way to get round her."

"What?" Elizabeth interrupted, lift-ing her head a little. Billy looked up among the leaves and colored faintly as he answered: "Oh, we must show Dandy how deceitful she is. She's made him believe it would be sin to let me have you. Now, if I could show her she's faith in her if he knew she was willing to take me her-self?"

"Billy," Elizabeth explored, shaking with laughter, "you wouldn't dare pro-mise to her. Can you live through a breach of promise suit? If only you could do it! But you never in the world can."

"Sire you won't be jealous?" Billy asked, pinching her ear. She made a face at him as he answered: "Just you try it. Why, even if the worst happened if you got mar-ried to the stout present which the dealers make to their customers as a sort of inducement to cut again. The custom is so firmly established that the people are in the habit of waiting for their little present after they have made their purchases, and children ask for it. Mrs. Hort in her book 'The Garden of the Pacific' describes a similar cus-tom in Valparaiso. The Chileans, how-ever, call the gift a 'yappa,' which one readily sees is kindred to the word used here."

Gerald's Wife

By IZOLA FORRESTER

Broderick swung off the 435 ex-press, walked quickly up the steps leading from the railroad platform and took his first look at Pineville. Those who lived in Pineville proper were con-tent to call it Pineville. Gerald had written that they did not live in Pine-ville proper, but in Pineville-by-the-Sea, otherwise Pineville-improper."

All that Broderick saw were pines, plenty of them, a flat white ribbon of roadway and a lot of postoffices, roughly slung, in the midst of the nearest clump of pines. He stepped into the postoffice as the central spot of civilization. Some one was stamp-ing letters behind the glass enclosure, a girl with smooth dark hair. Beatrice had smooth dark hair."

He watched the girl stamping letters with interest and wondered why some one did not tell her to wear her smooth dark hair in two soft braids around her head, or even to wear a crown. There had been no actual engage-ment. He had nothing to reproach her with. He had not been in a position to ask her to be his wife then, but he had thought a girl like Beatrice had meant more by a kiss, a hand clasp, a few vague words of understanding, than other girls. He had thought she might wait until next summer. And now, in April, he had returned to New York to learn that Gerald was in disgrace, had married on nothing, eloped to Pine-ville-by-the-Sea, N. C., and his wife was Beatrice. Gerald's mother had said they were penniless. Gerald's father had remark-ed that he didn't give a rap. They could exist upon love and art."

More or less for Beatrice's sake and a little for Gerald's. Gerald's brother had taken it upon himself to visit the bridal couple and help Gerald. Smooth-ering his own love, he had made up his mind that as long as Beatrice had married a Vaughan she should not suf-fer from it."

There was no bell at the door of the little house with the funny roof. It was merely a bungalow in weather-ed shingles, and he pounced on the door justly until it opened and Beat-ric stood before him."

She was not the blessed damozel type. Her smooth dark hair was wound about her head in just the same crown fashion, and she wore a short dark blue linen skirt and a white shawl. The sleeves were rolled to her elbows, and from her finger tips to her low temples there was flour sprinkled. He had not expected to see her like that. She rose to meet him. Neither had he expected her to act as she did. The color rose in her cheeks, tipping even her ears with pink. It was an old habit. He remembered it."

"I thought you were in London," she said. "You don't give a fellow a very de-cent welcome after he's traveled from London to this wilderness to say con-gratulations." He stepped into the hall after her. She hesitated and laughed, looking at her curled hands and her eyes, and the biscuits are in the oven. I shall have to watch them. Do you mind coming out to the kitchen?"

He didn't mind. There appeared to be only three rooms—the studio-sitting room, the dining room and the kitchen. The dining room and the kitchen were in the sitting room and dining room in line of bedrooms. It was all charmingly, most uncomfortably odd, bizarre and bohemian."

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"He went to the postoffice for the last mail. You must have missed him."

"Well, what ever made him come to this last corner?"

"Oh, because it was the chance of something definite, you know? Don't you know?" she asked quickly, seeing the puzzled look on his face. "Well, Gerald's elopement, Netherly Ames, broke all to pieces. Last fall from over-land and so on, and he was ordered down here. And he couldn't afford to come and stay indefinitely, so he pulled a few wires and things happened. He was made postmaster here at Pine-ville. And he got lonesome and healthy and wonderful again a month ago, so Gerald's in his place, and he's in New York. Don't you see? It was really very elaborate and businesslike and right under the circumstances."

"Oh, certainly, under the circum-stances," agreed Broderick. "So old Gerald's postmaster instead of artist?"

"Oh, he's an artist. He has lots of time to study, and it's good for him—the responsibility, I mean. You wouldn't know him."

"I suppose not," assented Broderick. He tried to reconcile his life's elopement with the fact that the elopement had fallen into place and har-monize. Gerald, Gerald the helpless, erratic, fantastic, irrational, joyous hearted, penniless artist, a person of matrimonial responsibility, a postmas-ter. But then he remembered the young smooth haired person stamping letters. Of course Gerald had found his usual way out of the difficulty. He had hired some Pineville lass to do the heavy work, and he drew the salary. It was like Gerald. But there was Beatrice. Beatrice making biscuit. He looked at her with troubled eyes, see-ing endless vistas of Beatrice making biscuit throughout the years."

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