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## THE HAND OF FATE

By JANE MOUNTFORT.

Nan crept to her room after a long walk with her father and threw herself upon the couch.

Some inner consciousness argued one should not weep where there was no love; yet her parents were so dear, and she had never seen, indeed, she had scarcely heard of him, until the reading of his obituary notice, when she learned that his vast estates were left to her and her father on condition that she marry, within a year, a distant cousin, who, since childhood, had lived abroad.

This cousin being duly notified, replied that he would return to his native country in six months, and would abide by her decision.

"Rather decent of him," thought Nan, "since of course he can care no more for me than I for him; but, oh, the thought of being traded like cattle for a paltry house and lot!"

Sublimating the indignation, she fell into a troubled sleep. In her dream she seemed powerless to avert some calamity which was overtaking her. Then in the midst of her despair, she felt a hand clasp her own. It was a man's hand, large but well formed, with a curious band of twisted gold upon the third finger.

The strong pressure gave her courage, and she woke with a smile upon her lips.

"I will do what I believe to be right whatever happens."

So the months slipped by until one night, after an unusually unpleasant interview, there came no message of comfort in dreamland.

Instead, she found herself on a lonely country road, vaguely stumbling—not knowing why nor where she went. Shadowy forms passed in the darkness, and almost in her own ear, the hoarse whisper:

"Pretty good haul that trip—eh, old pal?"

The next moment the moon, partially emerging from a cloud, showed her in its pale light, the figure of a man, lying across the path directly at her feet.

As she bent over him, trying in an incomprehensible agony of suspense to distinguish his features, a slight movement of the right arm attracted her attention, and she saw, with a start of horror, that the hand before her, though cut and bleeding, was the hand of her dreams. The ring was gone.

As suddenly as it had come, the vision vanished. Nan woke—calling aloud in her fright.

The realism of it haunted her—not for a moment could she forget that silent form in the road. In vain she appealed to reason; at last she had to admit that she loved the man of her dreams.

She told herself that, even had he once been a reality, which was exceedingly doubtful, he probably lived no longer.

Her other self—that self which will listen to no reason—cried out that she loved him, living or dead—that she would have no other love but him.

Then for the first time in many days she remembered her cousin; remembered also that the six months had passed, with no word from him.

The same day, passing a pawn shop, she was startled to see in the midst of watches, bracelets, all manner of second-hand jewelry, a band of twisted gold. Surely there could not be two rings of the same curious workmanship. Trembling with excitement she requested a closer view of the trinket.

The clerk named a price and Nan thought a moment—she had just the sum in her purse.

In 10 minutes she had slipped the ring on her finger and left the shop—believing herself the possessor of a valuable clue toward the identity of the man she loved.

"Gentleman in the parlor to see you, Miss Nan," said the little maid who opened the door.

By that sixth sense which all women possess in a greater or less degree, Nan instantly knew who was awaiting her.

"You are my cousin?" she said simply by a way of greeting.

He told her he had started to come to her a month before—how he had been attacked and robbed in a small town not far away—and how he had been nursed back to life by a kind farmer, who had found him, the next morning, lying in the road, apparently lifeless.

Nan scarcely listened; she was looking into his eyes, and thinking there was something about this big man not altogether unfamiliar. Then came thoughts of that other. She began nervously to remove her gloves.

Suddenly he stopped his recital. "Little cousin," he exclaimed, "May I ask where you found that ring?"

"Something about the man inspired confidence. Before she realized it, Nan was telling this formerly hated suitor the story of the dreams, and her fears for the man of whose very existence she could not be sure.

Hardly had she told him half, when he caught her in his arms, exclaiming:

"Have I really found you, dear little dream maiden?"

And Nan, understanding many things in that happy moment, took his big right hand in her two little ones and pressed her lips to the scarred ring finger.—Boston Post.

**The Longest Courtship.**  
The longest courtship on record was that between Franz Rosner and Anna Renner, of Oberpollitz, Bohemia. They had been courting for seventy-five years, but repeatedly deferred the bridal day. At last Franz became fatally ill, and was recently married on his deathbed, at the age of one hundred and died two days later. The age of the widow is ninety-three.

## A QUESTION OF PREMONITION.

The Feminine Point of View Revealed to the Fullest.

"The paper says," remarked Mr. Booth, one evening, after supper, "that the Salaria got in yesterday. The passage was calm, and every one on board was well." He paused, and looked tentatively in his wife's direction. She kept on with her needle-work.

"Don't you think that the Coopers were foolish, my dear?" he inquired. "No, I can't say that I do," she replied. "If Mrs. Cooper felt that the ship was going down, what could she do except refuse to go?"

"That's one way of putting it," admitted Mr. Booth, "but here is the situation: John and his wife and the two girls had all their luggage on board."

"Not all," interrupted his wife. "There was a big trunk which hadn't come. He fair, James."

"All right, then; they had got themselves on board and most of their luggage. The ship was due to start half an hour. Suddenly Annie Churcher, John by the arm in that nervous way of hers, and says, 'John, I've just had a premonition that this ship is going down before it gets to Europe. Take me home, John, take me home!'"

"You are perfectly heartless," interrupted his wife. "I don't think Anne was quite as foolish as that. She isn't well, you know, and she couldn't help feeling as she did."

"But why didn't she tell the rest of the passengers, then?" inquired Mr. Booth. "That would have been the better thing to do. Suppose I was in a theatre, and knew that it was about to burn down. Wouldn't it be my duty to inform the audience? I should rise, and say, 'Ladies and—'"

"James, don't treat such a subject in such a frivolous manner. You lack sympathy. You have no tact at all. I almost feel that you've said something like this to Annie already."

"No, not yet," he replied, "but I may. It strikes me that she was a very heartless woman. Very selfish, too, not to warn the others. I wonder that her husband gave in to her."

"What else could he do?" asked Mrs. Booth.

"That's exactly the point—what? She was prepared to make a scene." Mrs. Booth nodded.

"You think that she would have made a scene? Then I am surprised at John—surprised and shocked. I did not realize that he, too, is so thoughtless. If he had let her make a scene, then the passengers would have known the impending danger, and no one would have gone, and the ship—"

"But the ship got in safely," said Mrs. Booth, carried away by the imaginary narrative.

"So it did," agreed her husband. "But if that had happened, it mightn't have. You never can predict, you know!"

Mrs. Booth regarded him doubtfully, not quite knowing whether he was in earnest or not.

## USE FOR LUXURIES.



Mother—Freddie darling, where is my string of pearls?

Freddie—You mean the million dollar ones, mother? I lent them to the little girl next door to skip rope with.

Hence These Tears.

"Mamma, where do the cows get the milk?" asked Willie, looking up from the foaming pan of milk which he had been intently regarding.

"Where do you get your tears?" was the answer. After a thoughtful silence, he broke out again: "Mamma, do the cows have to be spanked?"

The Retort Direct.

"See here," cried the artist, who had come to complain about the materials he had bought, "I can't imagine anything worse than your paints."

"That's strange," replied the dealer; "don't you ever use your imagination on your painting?"

Still Anxious.

"So your financial apprehensions are over?"

"Not entirely," answered the man who is never satisfied to be happy. "I have quit fretting about getting my money out of the bank, and am now worrying about how to get more in."

A Doubtful Bag.

Salesman—Sorry, we're quite out of game, but I can recommend the sausage.

Mr. Von Sharpshooter—"It'm, yes! But the wife would not believe I shot 'em.—Half Holiday.

Brilliant Lightning Display.

A brilliant and startling spectacle was witnessed a short time ago in a Tyrolean valley near Tanneheim. A violent storm arose suddenly, and several globes of lightning rolled over the surface of the lake. Then a column of water arose thirty feet high from the middle of the lake, and from its top small fishes darted. The spectacle lasted about three minutes.

## Was It a Dream?

It was after 5 o'clock in the evening. The clerks and stenographers had gone home.

I sat in my large arm chair in my office and gazed comfortably out into the streets. A cold sharp wind was blowing and driving sleet before it. My office was warm and pleasant and I was happy in the satisfaction that my business was prospering.

It is pleasant, gratifying, to know that you are growing wealthy and to be looked upon as a business success.

With these pleasant thoughts in my mind I half closed my eyes. On opening them I was startled to see a pale, gaunt, ragged woman standing before me. I was more startled because I had not seen or heard the door open.

She looked at me blankly, showing neither anger, timidity, boldness, fear; neither supplicating nor commanding.

I trembled, vainly tried to calm myself, and said in a chattering whisper, "Do you need money?"

"What," she replied in a voice that froze my blood, "do the dead need money?"

"Dead," I repeated, "Dead! How did you come to die?"

"Yes," she replied, looking at me with her cold, awful eyes that she never took from my face, "I was murdered in your factory. I died of overwork and foul air to make you rich; so that the world would smile on you."

"Why didn't your husband support you?" I asked, grasping at that straw to evade her cold-blooded accusation.

"Because he was killed by you. He was caught in a hand and whirled around the wheel until he was mangled to death. It would have cost four dollars to have put guard rails around it. You called it an act of Providence. Do you think GOD kills people to save four dollars?"

"But," I interposed, remembering the case, "you were given five hundred dollars."

"Will five hundred dollars take the place of a husband's love; will five hundred dollars care for and protect a woman's children like their father?"

I wished that she could take her terrible eyes off of me.

"How much did your factory make last year?"

"Forty thousand dollars," I replied, and for once did not feel like boasting of it.

"How many lives of men and women does that represent worn out; how many days robbed from childhood; how much misery and suffering does that forty thousand dollars stand as a monument for?"

I could not reply, but forced by her eyes, which pierced me like a sword, I asked this question, which I already knew the answer to: "Do you have any children working in my factory?"

"When you walked through the factory to-day and saw my boy you said to yourself that you would tell the foreman to discharge him because he is getting too feeble from overwork and lack of a mother's care to do the work any longer."

"And my daughter," she continued mercilessly, "you took her out of the office last week. You said that she was too intelligent to work in the factory."

A cold sweat came over me. I sat paralyzed in my chair and could make no reply.

"But you said to yourself that she was too beautiful."

I screamed and sprang to my feet. It was dark in the room. I had been dreaming. I rushed down into the lighted street.

It was so terrible to be alone in a dark room with one's conscience.—Robert Handell in Minsar's Magazine.

Congo Free State.

The Congo Free State in mid-Africa has 900,000 square miles of territory. At present its imports amount to only about \$4,000,000 a year, consisting mainly of cotton-wool goods, liquors and beer, canned meats, vegetables and other food products, steamers and boats, machinery, clothing, arms and ammunition, hardware and metals. The chief products of the country are rubber, ivory, gum copal, palm kernels and palm oil.

The Date of Buddha.

On the authority of the available inscriptions and of the tradition as recorded in the Ceylonese chronicles the date of the Nirvana of Buddha is found by the latest writer on the subject to be 487 B. C.; and as tradition assigns 50 years as the period of his life, he must be considered to have been born in the year 537 B. C.

Maybe All for the Best.

Distressed at his son's refusal to enter the ministry and his preference for dealing in horses, a farmer was afflicting his sorrow to a neighbor.

"Oh," said the latter, "don't take it so much to heart. I believe Tom will lead more men to repentance as a horse dealer than ever he would as a minister."

The Last Thing on the List.

When a man thinks his son isn't likely to be good for anything else, he generally tries to get him to study medicine.

Indian Philosophy.

Quench Parker, a Comanche chief, recently visited an ice plant in an Oklahoma town. He was much interested in everything pertaining to the plant. After he had been shown (throughout the building, he remarked: "White man smart. White man keep smart. White man smarter than God. God make ice in winter; white men make ice in summer."

## SHALL WE DO BUSINESS WITH YOU?

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A famous history, remarkable for its historical associations and long-sustained popularity. Recently renovated, repainted and partially rebuilt.  
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A landmark among the hotels of Washington, patronized in former years by presidents and high officials. Always a prime favorite. Recently remodeled and rendered better than ever. Opp. Pa. R. Dep. WALTER BURTON, Res. Mgr. These hotels are the principal political rendezvous of the capital at all times. They are the best stopping places at reasonable rates.  
G. G. DEWITT, Proprietor  
Manager.

### WELL KNOWN NAME.

Ethel—We've got a new piano.  
Glady—What kind is it?  
Ethel—I dunno—yes, I do. It's called "Easy Monthly Payments."

This Ever Happen to You?  
"Here, girl," called out the man in the restaurant, sharply, glaring at the little waitress from over the top of his menu, "aren't you going to take my order to-day? I've been waiting here for about ten minutes to give my orders to somebody."  
The girl, hurried over to his table. "What do you have?" she inquired. The man continued to look at the sheet of food quotations.  
"Hum," he grunted, apologetically, "I have not decided what I want yet."  
"I'll be back in just a minute," said the girl. "You can be pickin' out what you want." And away she went. The man scowled after her and then went at the job of picking out enough things for a meal. It was some moments before the girl got back, but the man didn't say anything. It's embarrassing sometimes not to have your order ready.

No Disappointment Here.  
A man who had been convicted of stealing was brought to be sentenced before a certain "down East" judge, well known for his tender-heartedness.  
"Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment?" asked the judge, not unkindly.  
"Never!" exclaimed the prisoner, suddenly bursting into tears.  
"Well, well, don't cry, my man," said his honor consolingly; "you're not to be now."

Fishing By Telephone.  
Consul Louis Goldschmidt, of Nantes, France, makes the report that a use for the telephone in fishing has just been invented in Norway. A microphone, the role of which consists in amplifying submarine sounds, is shut up in a thin, water-tight steel box and kept in constant communication by metallic wires with a telephonic receiver installed on the fishing boat. It is stated that with this apparatus the fisherman is always informed of the approach of fish. Moreover, it is said that each kind of fish gives in the instrument a particular sound. Thus the arrival of herring is signaled by a sort of whistling; the codfish announces its arrival in the neighborhood by a sort of grunting.—Consular Report.