

ded steadily on, and it was with an expression of positive stupor that he burst all at once and without the slightest transition of the foliage out of the rude woods into a trim gravel road flanked by incredibly artificial Lombardy poplars. In front of him swept a terraced lawn; far across it rose a lordly Elizabethan mansion composed, apparently, of weathered oak, and gay window boxes; a marvellously rolled tennis court swam before his eyes. As he felt Nette at his side and opened his lips to speak, a loud, triumphant shout burst upon the air and a carriage and pair stationed at the end of the drive sprang into rapid motion towards them.

"Ere you are, sir! 'Ere! Just in time, sir! Jump in! All right, sir—I knew by the lady's dress—could you open the door yourself, sir? Mr. Richard said he knew you'd try the old road—'owever did you get over the old bridge, sir? I doubt we can make it this late, but we'll try. Excuse me, sir, but there's no time for talk—in you go, sir."

Under the piercing eyes of the garrulous old servant Nette slipped into the brougham and Antony after her, as one in a dream. The fat boys literally galloped along the crushed stone, whirled through an elaborate iron gateway and devoured the stretch of country road whose scattered houses Antony tried in vain to identify.

"Where are we going?" Nette asked fearfully, but he could only shake his head.

"Somewhere near a railroad station, I hope," he answered; "we couldn't very well walk along the road dressed like this. Evidently this old idiot knows your dress—that's very unfortunate."

"He cannot know it," she insisted, "for it has never been worn. I am sure of it."

"Nonsense," said Antony brutally, and at her incredulous displeasure he softened only as far as to demand:

"Then how did he know you?"  
 "I don't know," she admitted, and they drew up suddenly among a crowd of carriages and motor cars gathered around a quaint stone church.

"Now we'll slip out," Antony began, when all at once a slender young man sprang to the door of the brougham, wrenched it open, seized Antony's hand and burst into a torrent of language.

"Well, you took your time, didn't you? At last! Ritchie was sick with rage—'till we got the telegram. How's Auguste? Car gave out, of course. Poor Emily left dreadfully. Miss—excuse me, but all I can think of is Gertrude, you can just get in—dash over to the cloister and they've left a place. So glad to have met you—yes, indeed, This is William-son. Please ask for mother's carriage directly the ceremony is over—we're going to form an arch of something at the



"Well, you took your time, didn't you?"

house. Hurry up, old man—I had all your work. The rest are in by this time, but I have to attend to the carriages, and you are to take in the late ones. Family on left of white ribbons—for heaven's sake, Miss Gertrude—run!"

He dragged Nette from the step and raced her toward the church; she lifted her skirts and skimmed like a swallow beside him. Antony stumbled to the puffing old coachman, pulled all the silver out of his pocket, and handed it to him mechanically.

"Thank you kindly, sir—I did my best. So many, not knowing either you or the young lady, sir, it was 'ard for us, but I did my best. She looks beautiful, they tell me—'haint that someone waying for you sir?"

Antony ran widdly toward the chuse door, whence issued a pompous and familiar peal from the organ; a strongly,

accented march, to whose measures, he reflected dizzily, no one whom he had yet encountered, had ever been able to adapt his steps. He peered up the little crowded aisle. Half way along it paced a solemn party of young men; four visions of mauve and feathers followed them and even as he removed his hat four more hurried past him and entered the door. They were in couples, each bearing a great armful of white and purple sweet peas, and the maiden nearest him in the last couple, flushed and panting, with one bare arm, was none other than poor Uncle Julius' godmother's own daughter's stepdaughter! She moved demurely, her eyes downcast, the great pearl rising with her quick breath, and Antony wiped the sweat from his brow. A stir behind him, a murmured, sighing tribute, and the bride was passing by. White as the lilies in her hands, a frostlike veil falling over her glistening tress, she glided beside her portly father, and the crowded little church turned to mark her passage as a hedge of sunflowers seeks the sun.

Antony sighed and turned to confront a massive lady swathed in rose-coloured satin and variously adorned with precious stones of all colours. She fixed him with a protruding grey eye, and directed toward him a lissing whisper.

"I am the bride's aunt!" she declared.

Antony stared vaguely at her.  
 "And I hope there is a seat well to the front," she continued severely, if hoarsely.



"I am the bride's aunt!" she declared.

With a shock of comprehension Antony thrust forward his arm.

"I am sure that there is, Madam," he said politely; "pray come with me."

And so it happened that he led the massive satin creature up the aisle in the wake of that mystic procession, outwardly a mask of courtly solicitude, but within him the premonitions of whirling mania. He was literally faint with hunger; the strong sweetness of the lilies and other aromatic plants disposed about the church for its decoration affected him almost unpleasantly with their cloying odours, and the menacing fear that with every step he was involving himself further in a list of crimes so confused as to be, perhaps, yet uncatalogued in the annals of the law, shadowed his soul.

"I, Emily Hildegarde, take thee, Richard—" the tones of the frost-like bride were as clear and silvery as her veil. Richard would encounter a certain amount of self-possession, it appeared. But perhaps young women were all self-possessed, now. Antony could not recall a bride that had trembled, in his experience.

The solemn service hastened to its conclusion. Suppose the marriage should prove to have been invalid because of a fraudulent and criminal usher? It might be possible. . . .

"I am sorry, but the church is filled," he murmured suavely to a beseeching violet-scented pair, marveling at his own self-command.

It was over. Mendelssohn announced it and his echoes shook the windows. Two more hopeful voyagers had launched out upon life, arm in arm, down the smiling, tearful aisle; two more combatants with armour scarcely buckled smiled boastfully on entering the field, nor noted that it was

Thus cynically did Antony muse as the glowing pair swept by, when all at once a soft voice murmured close to his ear: "As for Mr. Williamson's carriage!"

She was gone. They were all gone, in a perfumed cloud of mauve, and with a bound he cleared the three entrance steps and ran to the crowd of vehicles that began to move about slowly.

"Is Mrs. Williamson's carriage here?" he called loudly, and as a one-horse

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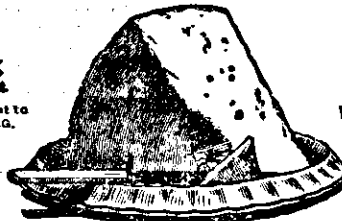
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