

Serial Story.

## THE DISTRESSES OF DAPHNE.

By W. E. NORRIS

(Author of "My Friend Jim," "Major and Minor," etc.)

same man who went away. I never saw such a change in any one in my life. You are twice as large—and brown! Papa! Here is Captain Adair home again. Come and look at him."

The colonel came briskly across the platform and grasped Adair's hand with almost the old cordiality. It was a gay, bright day, they were on a joyous errand, and the light in Adair's face was not a thing to ignore.

"Where have you been? We have managed to get along without you, but it was only because there wasn't any fighting going on. There has been a campaign of love instead of war. Here's Hecker coming in with a wife. Where are you going to?" The colonel stopped. He had forgotten for an instant the story which Mary had told him of that letter.

"Before very long," Adair said gayly. "I'm coming in this very evening to talk to you about it."

A look of indescribable relief came over the faces of Mary and the colonel. The colonel rejoiced that everything was going to be explained, and he was going to get his best friend among the young men of his regiment back again. Mary was full of joy to think that any further complication in regard to Nina was removed.

Mrs. Acton was in the usual flutter of a woman of her sort at any news of an engagement.

"Tell us about her, Captain Adair. Is she a Japanese? Does she wear a kimono and her hair in a bow knot? Did you meet her on the steamer? They say there is no place like a steamer for the susceptible young man. But then I never thought you were a susceptible young man. I don't think it's much of a compliment to all the pretty girls we have in the army for you to go off to Japan to fall in love."

"Oh, it's an old story," Adair said, happily. "It began long ago."

The colonel was beaming upon him. All this sounded so natural, so above board, so different from the ugly thoughts he had harboured of Adair.

There was a scream from the engine, and the train from the East came around the curve and drew up before the platform. People crowded before Adair. He drew back a little. He was not particularly intimate with Hecker, and he did not care particularly about his wife. He wondered what sort of a woman would care enough for him to marry him; and then his common sense told him that probably the very nicest sort of a young girl would care for Hecker; would probably care for him long after she found him out.

Mellish was crowded close up against the train. As the passengers came out he watched for Lieutenant Hecker, and then he turned his eyes towards Adair. Adair had walked towards the ambulance, and had allowed himself to be hidden by the crowd.

As Mellish looked back towards the train he saw a face that made him white to his lips. Following Hecker's wife was a worn, sad-faced woman, who was evidently a subordinate of some sort. She was carrying part of the wraps, and there was none of the festal and alert air which belongs to the friends of a bride.

She saw Mellish as he saw her, and, with a paleness which matched his own, stopped still and looked at him. Neither of them spoke a word, and then she walked on behind Mrs. Hecker, who was moving slowly almost in the joint embrace of Mrs. Acton, Mary, and the colonel. "The journey was lovely," she was saying. "Not a thing to mar it. I am so glad to see you all. Is there anybody else over?"

"Adair is here, somewhere. Where is he?" the colonel replied.

"Oh, yes, I remember him," Mrs. Hecker said. "So good of him to come over."

"Is Adair here?" Hecker said. He was in such a transport of pride and delight that it would have seemed that nothing could add to it; but at the mention of Adair's name there was a higher note of exultation. Hecker looked at his wife's trim figure in her travelling gown, her air of complete elegance, and wanted to call the whole world to witness.

"Where is Adair? Ah, there he is! Adair, come here and meet my wife."

He pulled him from behind the corner of one of the little buildings, and Adair turned his face to see Nina, Nina—his wife—holding out her hand to him, and smiling.

(To Be Continued.)

SYNOPSIS OF INSTALMENT I.—At a great ball in Dresden, Daphne Hamilton displaces her mother by dancing three times with Otto von Kahlenberg, the handsomest man in the room. He has been introduced by Captain Clough, the recipient of Mrs. Hamilton's complaints, himself a close friend of Daphne's and to tell the truth, her would-be lover. Mrs. Hamilton guesses Clough's wishes and is therefore most perplexed at the apparent help he gives to von Kahlenberg in the latter's obvious pursuit of her daughter.

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CHAPTER III.  
IMPOTENCE.

"Three cheers," cried Mrs. Perkins, with boisterous cordiality. "I was just saying to my girls, 'Now you may depend upon it the Hamiltons will turn up this morning,' and here you are, sure enough. And how are you both?"

Mrs. Hamilton suffered her hand to be gripped and murmured "How do you do?" resignedly. It is difficult to say why we all find it so offensive to be described as "the So-and-Sos" to our faces, considering that we invariably speak of our acquaintances in that way behind their backs; but poor old Perkins would have been offensive in any case—as offensive as she was apparently unavoidable.

"You'll have to fall into line," the good woman went on, quite unconscious of having given umbrage, "with all these thousands of water drinkers. We should never get to the springs at all if we didn't form a cue and wait our turn."

Three parallel cues of the patient Curgasse were advancing, step by step, towards the Kreuzbrunn that crisp, sunny morning, while the band in the neighbouring kiosk played operative selections to cheer them on their way. At Marienbad, as at all such places, the day begins early, and although the clocks had just struck seven everybody was out and about. Natives of the country, for the most part—some yellow complexioned, some preternaturally obese—with a sprinkling of Russians, Britons, and other aliens discernible here and there in the throng; upon the whole not a particularly attractive crowd, but then who or what can look attractive at seven o'clock in the morning? Well, the blue hills, perhaps, and the dark pine woods, and the bright, white houses in the foreground. Mrs. Hamilton's eyes sought these, while her ears gave scant attention to the volubility of her fat friend, at whose heels she plodded slowly onwards, glass in hand. Her daughter had been led away by Minnie and Rosie, who presumably stood in no need of the healing waters. She herself must perforce submit for another five minutes or more to the company and conversation of Mrs. Perkins; but it was not, she thought, incumbent upon her to answer categorically the questions which were fired off at her every now and again, or to give a detailed narrative of her movements since her departure from Dresden, three months back.

"Oh, we have been travelling about," she made compendious reply and then relapsed into silence.

Presently, however, it occurred to her to put a question on her own account—a question couched in accents of mild remonstrance.

"What could have made you expect to see us here this morning? We only arrived last night."

"Ah," returned Mrs. Perkins, with an arch glance over a massive shoulder. "A little bird whispered to me that you were not far off."

Jack was already at Marienbad then. Well, that was a relief; the more so because, as his firesome habit was, he had omitted to acknowledge epistolary reminders.

"I flatter myself," Mrs. Perkins resumed complacently, "that I am rather a good hand at putting two and two together, and when a certain person appeared upon the scene the day before yesterday, full of anxiety for news of you, I thought 'Now we are getting warm; now we may look forward to meeting dear Mrs. Hamilton again at any moment.' In point of fact, I took the liberty of promising

him as much. He seemed so delighted and so grateful, poor fellow."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Hamilton distantly. "He can scarcely have been surprised, though, for I wrote some time ago to tell him that we should be here about the middle of the month."

Mrs. Perkins at any rate was surprised. "Oh!" she ejaculated, with rounded mouth and eyes, "you are in correspondence with him? Dear me!—I didn't know."

There was no reason on earth why Mrs. Hamilton should not correspond with Jack Clough, whom she had known intimately from his childhood; but she did not feel called upon to furnish this inquisitive stranger with explanations. She was enabled, immediately after reaching the Kreuzbrunn, with its ministering maidens, to slip away from Mrs. Perkins, who was accosted at that moment by some Heaven-sent deliverer, and as she stood outside in the sunshine, sipping her rather nauseous draught and gazing down at the parti-coloured assemblage of promenaders in the long alley, she thought to herself, "Delighted and grateful! Well, if he looked like that!—but I can hardly imagine that he did. It is never Jack's way to exhibit his feelings. Sometimes one almost doubts whether he has any."

That doubt seemed, to say the least of it, justifiable a few seconds later when, turning round at the sound of Daphne's voice, she found herself confronted not only by Jack (who did not look like anything—not even like the traitor that he was), but by a radiant, young man who bowed low and hoped Mrs. Hamilton had not forgotten him. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Hamilton had very nearly forgotten Count von Kahlenberg; his name had never been mentioned between her and her daughter during their recent pleasant wanderings, nor had she thought again about his threatened descent upon Marienbad. But at the sight of him her original, instinctive dislike for the man awoke afresh, doubly stimulated by the swift conviction that he was Mrs. Perkins' "little bird," and that Jack Clough must have guided him to his present place of sojourn. She had to give him her hand and tell him, with frigid civility, that she quite well remembered his excellent histrionic performance at Dresden; what she was altogether powerless to bring about was the discouragement and discomfiture which it was her intention to inflict upon him. He walked along the shady promenade between her and her daughter, conversing with the easy, fluent garrulity of one who does not doubt his welcome, and she was fain to admit that he could talk pleasantly and amusingly enough. He had many acquaintances, native and foreign, amongst the water-drinkers; he told his companions who they all were, and related anecdotes respecting some of them which moved Daphne to ready, girlish laughter, and even extorted the tribute of an occasional smile from the reluctant Mrs. Hamilton. His English was perfect; but then, as he incidentally mentioned, he had lived a good deal in England and delighted in English life. Upon the whole, an amiable, well-bred, well-mannered young man; only—there was that disquieting, insistent resemblance of his to a dead man who had been young once upon a time, but never amiable, never well-bred nor well-mannered.

By the advice of local physicians a glass of Kreuzbrunn water usually alternates with one from the Ferdinandsbrunn, which latter spring is situated at the opposite extremity of the broad gravelled walk. Arrived at this destination, Mrs. Hamilton effected a change of partners, withdrew Captain Clough from the assiduous attentions of Miss Minnie Perkins, and, on resuming her obligatory march, with the younger divi-

sion well ahead, fell upon him tooth and nail.

"Jack, this is too abominable of you! When I so particularly told you that I did not want to see any more of your theatrical friend."

"Quite so; but the difficulty consisted in his having particularly told me that he did want to see more of you. One can't hope to please everybody."

"And do you suppose that you will get out of the difficulty by pleasing nobody? I needn't tell you that you don't please me, and I can't see what chance there is of your ultimately pleasing him; for I beg to assure you once for all, that nothing would induce me even to contemplate a son-in-law of that nationality."

"Oh, a son-in-law!—your thoughts travel at that pace!"

"Not any faster than yours. Come Jack!—you must acknowledge that you have thought of that possibility."

"Well, one contemplates possibilities, of course; but one doesn't mistake them for certainties. Likewise, one endeavours, as I hinted just now, to please, somebody, and I flatter myself that I have at least pleased Daphne. Whether Otto von Kahlenberg will please her to the extent that you fear remains to be seen; but I can imagine nothing wiser than giving him the opportunity. We all know what familiarity sometimes breeds."

"Ah!—but are you really so clever as all that?"

"Perhaps I am not so stupid as to let them sigh for one another apart. Moreover, he is constantly in London; you couldn't, in any case, have prevented him from looking you up, if he were bent upon looking you up."

"But she hasn't been sighing at all!"

"So much the better."

"Yes; only why not have left well alone? Daphne, I really believe, has been thinking of nothing but music all

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