

were coming towards them—one a tall, grey-haired man; the other a boy, evidently at boyhood's most cheerful age, and bubbling with appreciative laughter, and bubbling with appreciative laughter, and bubbling with appreciative laughter. "Oh, sis!" he bawled, derisively, holding shocked hands in front of his face. "Oh, sis!"

The man made an impatience gesture for silence. He walked straight towards the waiting pair. His steel-blue eyes were grim. As he and his companion came to a halt the latter would have seized Rayner's hand. The elder man thrust him back.

"Captain Rayner," he said, "last night we had some conversation. Did I not make myself plain?"

The other bowed stiffly. "Perfectly plain," he agreed. "But I did not concur in your conclusions. I do not now."

The new-comer made another impatient gesture, as if he brushed aside something tangible, but unseen.

"If you persist in this persecution I'll report you to your commanding officer!" he cried. "I'll—I'll break you!"

Rayner drew himself up. "My service record will stand your investigation, Mr Winslow, or anybody else. I am persecuting nobody. Your daughter and I love each other—that is all."

"Love!" Winslow almost stamped his foot. "On her behalf I refuse for her what you are pleased to call love. For myself, for my daughter, and for my son I decline your acquaintance. They hear my orders not to speak to you again!"

The boy gave a sudden startled jump. "What!" he cried. "I'm not to speak to him—to him?"

"No," said his father, coldly. "I do not wish you to endanger your future prospects by an intimacy with a military mount-bank! You can go on to the bathing-place. Your sister and I will join you when Captain Rayner sees fit to go."

The boy's face grew dark and obstinate. "I wanted him to come and bathe with me—at the river's mouth," he muttered. Rayner wheeled towards him sharply. "Not there, Jack," he said. "It's spring tide to-day. The water would be up to the higher sands and they would be quick."

Winslow frowned and stepped in front of the lad. "I am perfectly capable of looking after my own son's safety," he sneered;

"so you need not attempt to continue a conversation under the guise of solicitude. This, let it be understood, is the last word exchanged between myself, my children, and you."

His daughter looked at him fearlessly. "No!" she said. "Till I am of age I shall continue to obey you father, but I am going to marry Laurance. That is my last word."

Winslow made no comment. He stood looking at Rayner in stern, silent expectation.

Rayner looked at Violet. Neither spoke, but the message they exchanged was plain to anybody's reading. And

He drew off his cap and swung it round his head. A cheery yell was borne upon the breeze—one in which Jack Winslow's tones were defiantly recognisable. Then the three were lost to view. Rayner turned towards the wooden fence, reached it, and passed into the enclosure. He made his way towards a group of men who were employed upon the roof of a hangar. The sentry saluted with a seriousness in which his officer suspected, but could not discover, traces of a grin.

On the sands the three walked silently. Behind his father's back Jack offered his sister the sympathy of a grimace. She

bathe from the rocks at the river head-land. She gazed listlessly.

"Very well," she said, and, as the others passed on, sat down upon the wind-swept stretch of grass which marked the limits of the tide. She looked at the wooden ramparts of the Flying School, and as she looked found a ray of comfort to illuminate the depression which was fast filling her mind. Laurance was there, and Laurance's career for the future was safe. After to-day there were to be no more life-risking experiments—the terrifying visions which had ceaselessly filled her imagination were to be things of the past; in future she could take up the day's paper without that choking sense of apprehension which had been hers every morning of the last six months. That was a surpassing gain—that filled her heart with thankfulness. But two years—two years? To one of her age it seemed a very eternity. How could she fill all those thousands of hours in which Laurance would hold no part—hours in which she was neither to hear his voice, nor meet his smile, nor touch his hand? A little sob escaped her. Her face sank down upon the sun-dried grass.

Suddenly a sound broke in upon her pre-occupation, borne by the breeze from the direction of the headland. Even at that distance she seemed to recognise in it an accent of agony—or fear.

She started to her feet; she listened intently. The sound came again, and this time there was no mistaking it. It was the voice of a man confronted by some sudden stress of despair—her father's voice, calling aloud in anguish, sharp and shrill as the shriek of an animal trapped and helpless before the grim approach of death. She began to run, calling aloud in answer, her feet faltering under the burden of sudden fear.

She passed a corner of the jutting rocks. She came to a halt. Another cry escaped her; she clasped her hands together in an agony, helpless, desperate.

The tide was turning and the white line of breakers at the river's mouth was high. Not far short of it and a full furlong from the river's bank a dark object moved upon the shallow, and yet seemed neither to advance nor retire. It beat upon the surface, sending the spray flying this way and that, but it



"Run—for heaven's sake, run! Every second may make a difference! Run! Run!"

they smiled—confidently. Then, with a little gesture towards the boy which expressed friendliness and farewell, the soldier drew back. Still without comment and without a backward look, Winslow motioned his children along the path.

Rayner watched them as they passed across the waste of dunes towards the river, shrugged his shoulders, gave a dreary little laugh, and then smiled again cheerfully. For, as the three figures topped the last sandhill, which would have finally hidden them from his sight, one stopped and a white handkerchief was waved in farewell.

noded and smiled, but the smile was a watery one. The light seemed to have gone out from the sky, the freshness from the breeze. The future was veiled greyly by those two blank years which intervened before Laurance Rayner could come and claim her for his own. She was nineteen; till she was twenty-one she had to wait—to wait. The word rang through her brain in a weary monotone. Her dejection found witness in a deep-drawn sigh.

Her father looked at her. "If you are tired, stay here," he said. "I will go with Jack. He is going to

# From "Hoops to Hobbles"



## THE EVOLUTION OF FIFTY YEARS

As one looks back upon the days of '61, various and interesting reminiscences are brought to mind. For instance compare the seemingly weird styles of head-dress, gowns; the crude means of conveyance, the mode of living, and many other things characteristic of that period, with present-day methods and modes, and the modern achievements appear almost miraculous.

This fact is illustrated in the accompanying picture which reveals two of the fair sex as they were then and as they are to-day—the wonderful evolution of fifty years. The Bon Ton and the Royal Worcester Corsets have likewise been a part of this magical evolution, and have proved an all-important factor in giving limber health, grace, and beauty. These world-famous Corsets are stocked in an immense variety of styles and prices by Smith and Caughey, Limited. Ladies are cordially invited to inspect without being asked to purchase.

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