

A Race For a Wife

By EDITH V. ROSS

Miss Jaquelin Medocroft—she was usually called Jack—was an athletic girl of the period. She was the best skater and tennis player in the county, and, as for motoring on land or water, she had no equals among women and few among men. Jack was one of those ingenious, helter skelter, fearless persons who are always beloved. All the men were in love with her, and she was positively pestered with proposals. She began preparing for love bankruptcy by being so tender hearted whenever she refused a man that upon his begging her not to deny him all hope she said he might hope just a little bit. The next man she promised she would try to love him. And so it went on, the numbers of these aspirants for her hand increasing every day till she did not know herself how many of them there were.

One day she received a lecture from her mother in this wise:

"Jaquelin, do you know that you are wasting your opportunities? You won't always be young. One by one these young men who wish to marry you will begin to drop off till all are gone. And then what will you do?"

"I'll look out that the last one doesn't get away."

Jaquelin stood half an hour of this talk, at the end of which she told her mother that she would come to a decision among her lovers immediately. The good lady asked her to name those who had proposed to her. Jack gave the names and was told that her decision would not be interfered with except in the case of Dick Gregory, who was very much among men what Jack was among women. The mother's preference was Henry Hilliard, a young clergyman.

Why Jack didn't decide between these two men instead of following the course she did no one knows. That one of the two was her preference every one supposed. Only one man could have first place in her heart, but which that one was only Jack herself knew. She had only to accept the one, and the other, with the rest of her suitors, would relapse, so far as she was concerned, into nothingness.

Jack wrote each of her admirers that, not being able to accept them all, she would institute a test examination as to their fitness. In Lapland, she said, the groom must catch his bride. She proposed that the man she would marry should catch her. She lived on a river that some fifty miles below passed the city of B. She would leave the next morning for B., but whether by rail, steamboat, trolley car, motor-car or aeroplane she did not say. The man who first proposed to her after she had commenced her journey would be accepted.

We will follow only the efforts of two of the applicants, Dick Gregory and Henry Hilliard. Hilliard was loath to enter upon so undignified a contest. But his objection was based solely on account of his being in orders. In his heart the plan delighted him, for he was as fond of athletic sports as either Jack or Dick. He had been while in college a quarterback on the university team, had won a prize in a motorboat race and had done some flying in the air.

None of Jack's suitors believed that she would select an ordinary method of conveyance. The question was whether she would go by land or water. Gregory possessed an advantage in the fact that he owned and operated an aeroplane. He could therefore go quickly and see over a broader area than one moving by any other conveyance. He selected his flying machine for his conveyance in the contest. Hilliard chose an automobile.

Both these men went to the steamboat landing and railway station, thinking those places the most advantageous points from which to learn of Jack's movements. Hilliard arrived there half an hour after the day boat had left the dock and learned that Jack had left on it. What had been expected of her—that she would go in some conveyance of her own—failed. Hilliard turned his auto down the river, taking a road that ran on the bank beside it. It was not long before he overtook the steamer and hoped to get aboard at the next landing place, which was some twenty miles below.

Gregory reached the starting point soon after Hilliard and gained the same information, but he was obliged to have his aeroplane dragged to open ground for starting and then to make several attempts before getting up in the air. When finally he arose he saw the steamer pursuing her way down the river far below.

Now, the two rivals were in one respect in the same fix. The winner must get aboard the boat. Hilliard, seeing the aeroplane, realized this and wondered how he might get ahead of his rival. Putting on all speed, he got into a position in advance of the boat and, leaving his car on the shore, plunged and swam for the channel in which the boat must pass. Gregory, seeing the move from above, dipped and, leaving his aeroplane on the surface, also took to the water. Then commenced a swimming match between the two men. Gregory had struck the water without calculating sufficiently on the movement of the boat, which came upon Hilliard first and he was taken aboard.

Jack is now the clergyman's wife and admitted as soon as the race was over that she had hoped he would win. The two make a very sedate couple.

A Case of Woman's Action Under Difficulty

By EUNICE BLAKE

Why are people invariably comparing the sexes? They are not to be compared. The man usually has an advantage in his field, a woman in hers. And yet these fields are continually overlapping, or, rather, there are many exceptions. For instance, a woman will at times show a man's bravery. The unexpected is more liable to happen with woman than man. Usually a woman is more resourceful than a man. The following story illustrates some of the points above noted, the one most particularly illustrated being that one can never know what a woman will do in an emergency:

One afternoon two friends, James Wakefield and Henry Smythe, while waiting to take out their best girls in an automobile, engaged in a dialogue as to woman's courage. Wakefield was engaged to Lucy Trowbridge, while Smythe's fiancée was Helen Ormsby. This is what the men said:

Henry—Your girl has one thing about her that I like. She is fearless.

Jim—How do you know that?

Henry—Oh, I've seen her out at sea in rough weather. She was very plucky.

Jim—You can't tell much about women's pluck because they're stupid about appreciating real danger. I don't expect bravery in a woman, and I wouldn't value Lucy any higher if I knew she were capable of standing up in the face of a volley of musketry.

Henry—If Helen should show a lack of nerve I would despise her as much as I would a cowardly man.

Jim—I should consider her all the more womanly and the more to be loved.

The quartet started on their motor trip about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Henry had the wheel, and Jim sat beside him, the two girls occupying the rear seat. They lived in a large city and started out on one of those boulevards only to be found in large places. Having gone some twenty miles, they turned, reaching the city limits just about dusk. Henry stopped the car and got out to light the lamps.

He was just outside the city limits, where the police were not plentiful, and in a lonely place in the road flanked by woods on either hand. He was lighting the lamps when he heard a voice shout, "Hold up your hands!" and a man from either side advanced, covering the party with cocked revolvers.

Henry stood with a lighted match in his hand regarding the robbers with an expression of antagonism on his face and did not raise his hands till he had been ordered to do so a second time and been told that if he didn't obey a bullet would be put in his brain. Jim's hands went up on the first order. Helen was not able to obey, because she fainted dead away. Lucy was somewhat tardy in holding a hand aloft, but did not require a second command. Henry was ordered to resume his seat at the wheel.

All being in position to be plucked, a third man mounted the footboard and proceeded to relieve them of their valuables. Henry Smythe, though disgusted at being taken at such a disadvantage, had the good sense to permit himself to be robbed rather than risk being killed. Jim made no pretense of resisting, or even desired to, handing out his watch and chain and \$27 in bills, besides change in his vest pocket, of his own accord.

When the plunderer came to Helen he seemed to be conscience stricken at robbing a woman who was lying unconscious. At any rate, he passed her Lucy's right hand was still pointing to the sky. It was unglowed, and the robber, seeing that there were no rings on it, jumped off the footboard with two gold watches and chains and some \$60 that he had taken from the men. Then the robbers all disappeared in the woods.

Henry turned and saw Helen in a dead faint. Lucy was sitting up straight enough, but seemed to have lost her tongue. She had neither screamed nor spoken since the episode commenced. The expression on Henry's face as he looked from one to the other was peculiar.

"Lucy," he said, "what have you lost?"

Lucy made throat sounds without opening her mouth and frowned.

"Are you struck dumb?" asked Jim.

Lucy, glancing aside to make sure that the robbers were gone, dropped from her mouth into her hand three rings, including a twin diamond valued at \$200.

"Oh, that's the reason you didn't speak," said Henry. "You're good pluck. Look at Helen."

At this Helen opened her eyes, and, strange to say, they shone with a dangerous light on her fiancé.

"You should know something about what you comment on before doing so," she said to him coldly. "It is all right for you to admire Lucy's pluck, but there was no real pluck shown by any one of us. It wasn't a case for pluck. It was a case for stratagem. Lucy won by one ruse. I by another. Instinctively I relied on man's—even a bad man's—dislike to injure a defenseless woman. The more defenseless she is the more he is disposed to let her alone. I pretended to faint and have not lost my engagement ring. Here it is."

Taking it off her finger, she handed it to him. He took it reluctantly.

The party rode home with but little conversation. Smythe called on Helen Ormsby the same evening and tried to undo what he had done. He failed.

A Ridiculous Affair

By F. A. MITCHEL

"Bert, there is something I wish you to do for me."

"What is it, John?"

"It's a very simple job if done right, but a rather delicate one."

"Well, go on."

"Lucy, you know, is emerging from childhood into womanhood."

"Your daughter Lucy?"

"Yes. She is fifteen, a very dangerous age. And she is just now in great danger."

"How so?"

"A youngster of eighteen has been making up to her, and Lucy seems to fancy him. You never can tell what these youngsters may do. Lucy needs to go to school for several years yet. And as for this young Markland, he's nothing but a boy and is dependent on his father for a living."

"But what have I got to do with all this?"

"If I can tide Lucy over these bars till she gets old enough to have some sense she will take care of herself. You are thirty-two years old and a bachelor, within three years of middle age. You are my friend and to be implicitly trusted with my daughter. If you will pay Lucy a little attention and just enough to flatter her at receiving it from a mature man she will drop the boy. The spell being broken, she will be all right again till the next case of puppy love comes on. And quite probably she'll be nineteen or twenty before she experiences another affair, and by that time she'll have some sense."

"I'd like to help you, John, but I can't see how an elderly fellow like myself can have any influence over a child of fifteen."

"I don't wish or expect you to get her in love with you. I simply wish you to let her see the difference between a man and an undeveloped boy."

"Well, to please you I'll see what I can do, but I shall feel very queer trying to make believe that I am struck with a mere child."

"Come and dine with me tomorrow evening. After dinner I'll go around to the club for a game of whist. You can then make a beginning. Mrs. Grant, the housekeeper, will be at home, but no one else. You can have a game of lotto with Lucy, or dominos, see?"

Mr. Bert Tisdale groaned.

"Oh, I know it will bore you," added his friend, "but really, Bert, I think you can do me a great favor. There's nothing I dread for young persons of both sexes like the period until they reach a marriageable age."

Mr. Tisdale had often seen Lucy Wentworth, but not since she had put away her doll. At the dinner the next day he noted her especially. She had somewhat developed since he had last seen her and was now a lithe creature, whose skin and other features still partook of the softness of a child's. She had a very sweet smile and a pleasant prattling way with her. After dinner her father went out, remarking to his friend:

"Please excuse me, Bert; I have an engagement. Stay right where you are. I'll be back presently."

On Wentworth's departure Lucy, who had been asked by her father to entertain his friend for half an hour or so, proposed, not a game of lotto, but to sit side by side on a sofa and look over an album of foreign photographs.

During the next few weeks Mr. Tisdale made visits to Mr. Wentworth's house with increasing frequency. All seemed to go well.

"Good boy," said the latter, slapping the former on the back. "You're doing the job splendidly, but don't overdo it. I don't wish you to turn her head."

Tisdale forced an uneasy smile.

"By the bye," continued Wentworth. "I've got to go away on business. When I return Lucy's school will have come to an end for this year and I'll send her into the country. I've noticed that the boy has dropped out, but I think that next fall I'll take the precaution to send Lucy to boarding school. So long, old man."

Tisdale stammered a goodbye, adding that he would ease off in his effort to save Lucy while her father was absent.

Wentworth remained away a little longer than he had expected. When he returned he found that in his scheme to prevent his daughter from a premature marriage with a boy he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. On entering his home he was handed a telegram:

Forgive us, Bertie and I have been married. It's all my fault.

Wentworth was thunderstruck. A week later the two chums stood facing each other.

"For heaven's sake, Bert," said Wentworth, "what in the name of conscience induced you to?"

"What induced me to?"

"I didn't dream that you were a natural born—"

"Any man exposed to anything in petticoats may be a fool."

"But Lucy! She's barely passed out of childhood. However, what can't be cured must be endured. You'd better take Lucy to Europe for a year or so. By that time she'll be more mature and the affair won't look so ridiculous."

The ridiculous affair occurred ten years ago. Mr. Tisdale is now forty-two and his wife is twenty-five. It does not occur to any one that there is anything ridiculous about their union.

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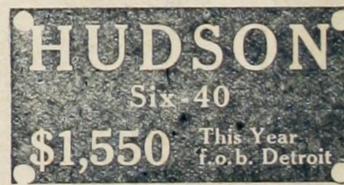
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