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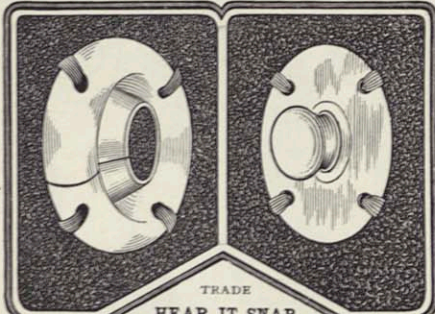


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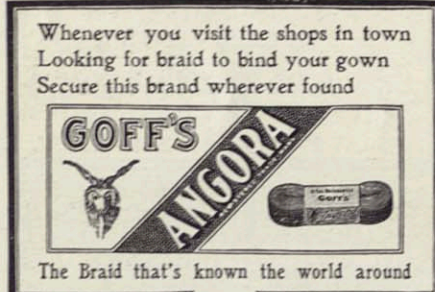


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The Eighth Proposal

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

"Speak up, Marion," laughed Carey.
"Oh, yes, I'll speak up! Well, it so happens, Minnie, that I do want my walk with Arnold this afternoon, even after all these years, as you say."
"Bravo! Now, then, Minnie!"
Minnie laughed. "Oh, we'll go, in that case, and we're sorry we came, aren't we, George? But if you two are engaged, without telling me, I think it's mean."
"We aren't engaged," Carey affirmed promptly.
"Well, good-by. If you should shortly feel the need of congratulations come to me."

When they were alone again Marion turned to Carey. "She'll tell every one she meets that we're engaged," she exclaimed. "It's abominable!"
"What?"
"The whole thing. And she told me the other day that some one said that you admired Hetty more than you do me."
"I do. In some ways."
"Arnold, are you in love with Hetty?"
"That is a question I must refuse to answer."
As he spoke a servant brought in a telegram. She tore it open and looked at it fixedly. "There's no answer, William." Then she added, turning to Carey, who had not moved: "Mr. Wessington is coming this evening."
"That Englishman?"
"Yes."
"Is he in love with you, Marion?"
She laughed. "That is a question I must refuse to answer."
"All right, dear girl; that's perfectly fair. Let's go outside."
They sat down in the shade on the lawn and for a short time both were silent. Then he said abruptly: "And the third time?"
"That was at Jamestown. Well, 'Eliot' was there, too."
"And the fourth time?"
"That was—oh, why rake up these old matters?"
"Curiosity, retrospection, jealousy. Why was it?"
"Well, I found that I didn't care about him, and I made up my mind I'd be very sure before I accepted—any one."
"I see. A very praiseworthy resolution indeed. but why, in view of such a resolution, did you wire me to come to Nantucket, and flirt with me like mad for three weeks there?"

She flushed. "Because—I hated your flirting with Bessie Whiting."
"You didn't want me to marry her, then?"
"No."
"Why not?"
"I suppose because I—I liked you too much myself. There!"
"But not enough to marry me."
"Not enough to marry you. By-the-way, did you want to marry Bessie?"
"Want to marry Bessie? My dear girl, a man doesn't want to marry two girls at one time."
"Bessie is very nice!"
"Oh, very. Well—number five?"
"Let's talk of something else."
"No."
"Then tell me about Mrs. Potter?"
Carey rose suddenly. "Hang Mrs. Potter."
"With pleasure. Did you make love to her?"
"I did."
"And did she return your affection?"
"Such as it was, she did."
"And Jarvis Collamore?"
"Jarvis Collamore had no objection, so far as I know. He is used to it."
"Were you in love with her?"
"Yes, more or less. She is an unusually fascinating woman. Now let's chuck all that, Maidie."
"Just as you like. I'm going up for a sleep now as I wish to look my best to-night."
"For Wessington?"
"For Wessington."
"Observe my delicacy in not asking again whether he is in love with you or not."
"I observe. Good-by."
When she came down three hours later Carey went up to her.
"Did you sit down in front of your glass to study your face when you left me?"
"I—did. And I've come to the conclusion that I'm not so bad, after all! How do I look?"
"Shall I tell you what I think?"
But she left him as he was about to go on, and joined her mother and one or two early guests.

Giles Arthur Lewellyn Wessington decided that he had never seen the beautiful Miss Wheelock so lovely as she was that night in her plain black gown. He had had no intention of proposing to her that evening, or even that week, but it is exactly what he did, as they two sat in the corner of the veranda and listened to selections from Tschaikowsky's Pathetic Symphony.
An hour afterward Miss Wheelock and Carey stood by the lake in the starlight.
"To continue—the sixth time?"
"Oh, don't, Arnold. Why should I refuse you if not because I didn't want to marry you?"
"Was that why?"
She did not answer.
"Well, let that pass. But the last time. Two years ago—here?"
"Because—surely to-day is past? It must be to-morrow!"
"It's not eleven yet. Tell me, Maidie."
"Then if I must, I don't know why."
"You don't know?"
"No. Perhaps it was because I was so used to it—to you."
"Perhaps it was. Why did you refuse Giles Arthur Lewellyn just now?"
"That's unfair of you."
"I asked you why you did, not whether you did. Any one could see what had happened."
"Then—because I didn't love him."
Carey was silent for a few seconds, and then he said: "You didn't give that reason for refusing me, Marion."
"Didn't I? Well, I'm sleepy! Good-night."
"Good-night. Only one more question. Why did you refuse me the eighth time?"
"The eighth? There were only seven times."
"No, eight. I've been asking you all day as hard as I could. And you understood."
"Then—I've been accepting you all day as hard as I could."

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