

THE MONEY MOON

CHAPTER I

*Which, being the first, is, very properly, the
shortest chapter in the book*

WHEN Sylvia Marchmont went to Europe, George Bellew being, at the same time, desirous of testing his newest acquired yacht, followed her, and mutual friends in New York, Newport, and elsewhere, confidently awaited news of their engagement. Great, therefore, was their surprise when they learnt of her approaching marriage to the Duke of Ryde.

Bellew, being young and rich, had many friends, very naturally, who, while they sympathized with his loss, yet agreed among themselves, that, despite Bellew's millions, Sylvia had done vastly well for herself, seeing that a duke is always a duke,—especially in America.

There were, also, divers ladies in New York, Newport, and elsewhere, and celebrated for their palatial homes, their jewels, and their daughters, who were anxious to know how Bellew would comport himself under his disappointment. Some leaned to the idea that he

would immediately blow his brains out; others opined that he would promptly set off on another of his exploring expeditions, and get himself torn to pieces by lions and tigers, or devoured by alligators; while others again feared greatly that, in a fit of pique, he would marry some "young person" unknown, and therefore, of course, utterly unworthy.

How far these worthy ladies were right, or wrong in their surmises, they who take the trouble to turn the following pages, shall find out.

CHAPTER II

How George Bellew sought counsel of his Valet

THE first intimation Bellew received of the futility of his hopes was the following letter which he received one morning as he sat at breakfast in his chambers in St. James Street, W.

MY DEAR GEORGE — I am writing to tell you that I like you so much that I am quite sure I could never marry you, it would be too ridiculous. Liking, you see George, is not love, is it? Though, personally, I think all that sort of thing went out of fashion with our great-grandmother's hoops, and crinolines. So George, I have decided to marry the Duke of Ryde. The ceremony will take place in three weeks time at St. George's, Hanover Square, and everyone will be there, of course. If you care to come too, so much the better. I won't say that I hope you will forget me, because I don't; but I am sure you will find someone to

console you because you are such a dear, good fellow, and so ridiculously rich.

So good-bye, and best wishes,

Ever yours most sincerely,

SYLVIA.

Now under such circumstances, had Bellew sought oblivion and consolation from bottles, or gone headlong to the devil in any of other numerous ways that are more or less inviting, deluded people would have pitied him, and shaken grave heads over him; for it seems that disappointment (more especially in love) may condone many offences, and cover as many sins as Charity.

But Bellew, knowing nothing of that latter-day hysteria which wears the disguise, and calls itself "Temperament," and being only a rather ordinary young man, did nothing of the kind. Having lighted his pipe, and read the letter through again, he rang instead for Baxter, his valet.

Baxter was small, and slight, and dapper as to person, clean-shaven, alert of eye, and soft of movement, — in a word, Baxter was the cream of gentlemen's gentlemen, and the very acme of what a valet should be, from the very precise parting of his glossy hair, to the trim toes of his

glossy boots. Baxter as has been said, was his valet, and had been his father's valet, before him, and as to age, might have been thirty, or forty, or fifty, as he stood there beside the table, with one eye-brow raised a trifle higher than the other, waiting for Bellew to speak.

"Baxter."

"Sir?"

"Take a seat."

"Thank you sir." And Baxter sat down, not too near his master, nor too far off, but exactly at the right, and proper distance.

"Baxter, I wish to consult with you."

"As between Master and Servant, sir?"

"As between man and man, Baxter."

"Very good, Mr. George, sir!"

"I should like to hear your opinion, Baxter, as to what is the proper, and most accredited course to adopt when one has been — er — crossed in love?"

"Why sir," began Baxter, slightly wrinkling his smooth brow, "so far as I can call to mind, the courses usually adopted by despairing lovers, are, in number, four."

"Name them, Baxter."

"First, Mr. George, there is what I may term, the Course Retaliatory, — which is Marriage —"

“ Marriage? ”

“ With — another party, sir, — on the principle that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out, and — er — pebbles on beaches, sir; you understand me, sir? ”

“ Perfectly, go on. ”

“ Secondly, there is the Army, sir, I have known of a good many enlistments on account of blighted affections, Mr. George, sir; indeed, the Army is very popular. ”

“ Ah? ” said Bellew, settling the tobacco in his pipe with the aid of the salt-spoon, “ Proceed, Baxter. ”

“ Thirdly, Mr. George, there are those who are content to — to merely disappear. ”

“ Hum! ” said Bellew.

“ And lastly sir, though it is usually the first, — there is dissipation, Mr. George, Drink, sir, — the consolation of bottles, and — ”

“ Exactly! ” nodded Bellew. “ Now Baxter, ” he pursued, beginning to draw diagrams on the table-cloth with the salt-spoon, “ knowing me as you do, what course should you advise me to adopt? ”

“ You mean, Mr. George, — speaking as between man and man of course, — you mean that you are in the unfortunate position of being — crossed in your affections, sir? ”

“ Also — heart-broken, Baxter. ”

“ Certainly, sir! ”

“ Miss Marchmont marries the Duke of Ryde, — in three weeks, Baxter. ”

“ Indeed, sir! ”

“ You were, I believe, aware of the fact that Miss Marchmont and I were as good as engaged? ”

“ I had — hem! — gathered as much, sir. ”

“ Then — confound it all, Baxter! — why aren't you surprised? ”

“ I am quite — over-come, sir! ” said Baxter, stooping to recover the salt-spoon which had slipped to the floor.

“ Consequently, ” pursued Bellew, “ I am — er — broken-hearted, as I told you — ”

“ Certainly, sir. ”

“ Crushed, despondent, and utterly hopeless, Baxter, and shall be, henceforth, pursued by the — er — Haunting Spectre of the Might Have Been. ”

“ Very natural, sir, indeed! ”

“ I could have hoped, Baxter, that, having served me so long, — not to mention my father, you would have shown just a — er shade more feeling in the matter. ”

“ And if you were to ask me, — as between man and man sir, — why I don't show more

feeling, then, speaking as the old servant of your respected father, Master George, sir, — I should beg most respectfully to say that regarding the lady in question, her conduct is not in the least surprising, Miss Marchmont being a beauty, and aware of the fact, Master George. Referring to your heart, sir, I am ready to swear that it is not even cracked. And now, sir, — what clothes do you propose to wear this morning? ”

“ And pray, why should you be so confident of regarding the — er — condition of my heart? ”

“ Because, sir, — speaking as your father’s old servant, Master George, I make bold to say that I don’t believe that you have ever been in love, or even know what love is, Master George, sir.”

Bellew picked up the salt-spoon, balanced it very carefully upon his finger, and put it down again.

“ Nevertheless,” said he, shaking his head, “ I can see for myself but the dreary perspective of a hopeless future, Baxter, blasted by the Haunting Spectre of the Might Have Been; — I’ll trouble you to push the cigarettes a little nearer.”

“ And now, sir,” said Baxter, as he rose to

strike, and apply the necessary match, “ what suit will you wear to-day? ”

“ Something in tweeds.”

“ Tweeds, sir! surely you forget your appointment with the Lady Cecily Prynne, and her party? Lord Mount-clair had me on the telephone, last night — ”

“ Also a good, heavy walking-stick, Baxter, and a knap-sack.”

“ A knap-sack, sir? ”

“ I shall set out on a walking tour — in an hour’s time.”

“ Certainly, sir, — where to, sir? ”

“ I haven’t the least idea, Baxter, but I’m going — in an hour. On the whole, of the four courses you describe for one whose life is blighted, whose heart, — I say whose heart, Baxter, is broken, — utterly smashed, and — er — shivered beyond repair, I prefer to disappear — in an hour, Baxter.”

“ Shall you drive the touring car, sir, or the new racer? ”

“ I shall walk, Baxter, alone, — in an hour.”

CHAPTER III

*Which concerns itself with a hay-cart, and a
belligerent Waggoner*

It was upon a certain August morning that George Bellew shook the dust of London from his feet, and, leaving Chance, or Destiny to direct him, followed a hap-hazard course, careless alike of how, or when, or where; sighing as often, and as heavily as he considered his heart-broken condition required,—which was very often, and very heavily,—yet heeding, for all that, the glory of the sun, and the stir and bustle of the streets about him.

Thus it was that, being careless of his ultimate destination, Fortune condescended to take him under her wing, (if she has one), and guided his steps across the river, into the lovely land of Kent,—that county of gentle hills, and broad, pleasant valleys, of winding streams and shady woods, of rich meadows and smiling pastures, of grassy lanes and fragrant hedgerows,—that most delightful land which has been called, and very rightly, “The Garden of England.”

It was thus, as has been said, upon a fair August morning, that Bellew set out on what he termed “a walking tour.” The reservation is necessary because Bellew’s idea of a walking-tour is original, and quaint. He began very well, for Bellew,—in the morning he walked very nearly five miles, and, in the afternoon, before he was discovered, he accomplished ten more on a hay-cart that happened to be going in his direction.

He had swung himself up among the hay, unobserved by the somnolent driver, and had ridden thus an hour or more in that delicious state between waking, and sleeping, ere the waggoner discovered him, whereupon ensued the following colloquy:

THE WAGGONER. (*Indignantly*) Halloo there! what might you be a doing of in my hay?

BELLEW. (*Drowsily*) Enjoying myself immensely.

THE WAGGONER. (*Growling*) Well, you get out o’ that, and sharp about it.

BELLEW. (*Yawning*) Not on your life! No sir,—‘not for Cadwallader and all his goats!’”

THE WAGGONER. You jest get down out o’ my hay,—now come!

BELLEW. (*Sleepily*) Enough, good fellow, — go to! — thy voice offends mine ear!

THE WAGGONER. (*Threateningly*) Ear be blowed! If ye don't get down out o' my hay, — I'll come an' throw ye out.

BELLEW. (*Drowsily*) 'Twould be an act of wanton aggression that likes me not.

THE WAGGONER. (*Dubiously*) Where be ye goin'?

BELLEW. Wherever you like to take me; “Thy way shall be my way, and — er — thy people — (Yawn) So drive on, my rustic Jehu, and Heaven's blessings prosper thee!”

Saying which, Bellew closed his eyes again, sighed plaintively, and once more composed himself to slumber.

But to drive on, the Waggoner, very evidently, had no mind; instead, flinging the reins upon the backs of his horses, he climbed down from his seat, and spitting on his hands, clenched them into fists and shook them up at the yawning Bellew, one after the other.

“It be enough,” said he, “to raise the ‘Old Adam’ inside o’ me to ‘ave a tramper o’ the roads a-snoring in my hay, — but I ain’t a-going to be called names, into the bargain. ‘Rusty’ — I may be, but I reckon I’m good enough for the likes o’ you, — so come on down!” and the Waggoner shook his fists again.

He was a very square man, was this Waggoner, square of head, square of jaw, and square of body, with twinkling blue eyes, and a pleasant, good-natured face; but, just now, the eyes gleamed, and the face was set grimly, and, altogether, he looked a very ugly opponent.

Therefore Bellew sighed again, stretched himself, and, very reluctantly, climbed down out of the hay. No sooner was he fairly in the road, than the Waggoner went for him with a rush, and a whirl of knotted fists. It was very dusty in that particular spot so that it presently rose in a cloud, in the midst of which, the battle raged, fast and furious.

And, in a while, the Waggoner, rising out of the ditch, grinned to see Bellew wiping blood from his face.

“You be no — fool!” panted the Waggoner, mopping his face with the end of his neckerchief. “Leastways, — not wi’ your fists.”

“Why, you are pretty good yourself, if it comes to that,” returned Bellew, mopping in his turn. Thus they stood a while stanching their wounds, and gazing upon each other with a mutual, and growing respect.

“Well?” enquired Bellew, when he had recovered his breath somewhat, “shall we begin

again, or do you think we have had enough? To be sure, I begin to feel much better for your efforts, you see, exercise is what I most need, just now, on account of the — er — Haunting Spectre of the Might Have Been, — to offset its effect, you know; but it is uncomfortably warm work here, in the sun, isn't it?"

"Ah!" nodded the Waggoner, "it be."

"Then suppose we — er — continue our journey?" said Bellew with his dreamy gaze upon the tempting load of sweet-smelling hay.

"Ah!" nodded the Waggoner again, beginning to roll down his sleeves, "suppose we do; I aren't above giving a lift to a chap as can use 'is fists, — not even if 'e is a vagrant, and a uncommon dusty one at that; — so, if you're in the same mind about it, up you get, — but no more furrin curses, mind!" With which admonition, the Waggoner nodded, grinned, and climbed back to his seat, while Bellew swung himself up into the hay once more.

"Friend," said he, as the waggon creaked upon its way, "Do you smoke?"

"Ah!" nodded the Waggoner.

"Then here are three cigars which you didn't manage to smash just now."

"Cigars! why it ain't often as I gets so far as a cigar, unless it be Squire, or Passon, —

cigars, eh!" Saying which, the Waggoner turned and accepted the cigars which he proceeded to stow away in the cavernous interior of his wide-eaved hat, handling them with elaborate care, rather as if they were explosives of a highly dangerous kind.

Meanwhile, George Bellew, American Citizen, and millionaire, lay upon the broad of his back, staring up at the cloudless blue above, and despite heart break, and a certain Haunting Shadow, felt singularly content, which feeling he was at some pains with himself to account for.

"It's the exercise," said he, speaking his thought aloud, as he stretched luxuriously upon his soft, and fragrant couch, "after all, there is nothing like a little exercise."

"That's what they all say!" nodded the Waggoner. "But I notice as them as says it, ain't over fond o' doing of it, — they mostly prefers to lie on their backs, an' talk about it, — like yourself."

"Hum!" said Bellew, "ha! 'Some are born to exercise, some achieve exercise, and some, like myself, have exercise thrust upon them.' But, anyway, it is a very excellent thing, — more especially if one is affected with a — er — broken heart."

"A w'ot?" enquired the Waggoner.

"Blighted affections, then," sighed Bellew, settling himself more comfortably in the hay.

"You aren't 'inting at—love, are ye?" enquired the Waggoner cocking a somewhat sheepish eye at him.

"I was, but, just at present," and here Bellew lowered his voice, "it is a—er—rather painful subject with me,—let us, therefore, talk of something else."

"You don't mean to say as your 'eart's broke, do ye?" enquired the Waggoner in a tone of such vast surprise and disbelief, that Bellew turned, and propped himself on an indignant elbow.

"And why the deuce not?" he retorted, "my heart is no more impervious than anyone else's,—confound it!"

"But," said the Waggoner, "you ain't got the look of a 'eart-broke cove, no more than Squire Cassilis,—which the same I heard telling Miss Anthea as 'is 'eart were broke, no later than yesterday, at two o'clock in the arternoon, as ever was."

"Anthea!" repeated Bellew, blinking drowsily up at the sky again, "that is a very quaint name, and very pretty."

"Pretty,—ah,—an' so's Miss Anthea!—as a pict'er."

"Oh, really?" yawned Bellew.

"Ah!" nodded the Waggoner, "there ain't a man, in or out o' the parish, from Squire down, as don't think the very same."

But here, the Waggoner's voice tailed off into a meaningless drone that became merged with the creaking of the wheels, the plodding hoof-strokes of the horses, and Bellew fell asleep.

He was awakened by feeling himself shaken lustily, and, sitting up, saw that they had come to where a narrow lane branched off from the high road, and wound away between great trees.

"Yon's your way," nodded the Waggoner, pointing along the high road, "Dapplemere village lies over yonder, 'bout a mile."

"Thank you very much," said Bellew, "but I don't want the village."

"No?" enquired the Waggoner, scratching his head.

"Certainly not," answered Bellew.

"Then—what do ye want?"

"Oh well, I'll just go on lying here, and see what turns up,—so drive on, like the good fellow you are."

“ Can’t be done! ” said the Waggoner.

“ Why not? ”

“ Why, since you ax me — because I don’t have to drive no farther. There be the farm-house, — over the up-land yonder, you can’t see it because o’ the trees, but there it be.”

So, Bellew sighed resignedly, and, perforce, climbed down into the road.

“ What do I owe you? ” he enquired.

“ Owe me? ” said the Waggoner, staring.

“ For the ride, and the — er — very necessary exercise you afforded me.”

“ Lord! ” cried the Waggoner with a sudden, great laugh, “ you don’t owe me nothin’ for that, — not nohow, — I owe you one for a knocking of me into that ditch, back yonder, though, to be sure, I did give ye one or two good ’uns, didn’t I? ”

“ You certainly did! ” answered Bellew smiling, and he held out his hand.

“ Hey! — what be this? ” cried the Waggoner, staring down at the bright five-shilling piece in his palm.

“ Well, I rather think it’s five shillings,” said Bellew. “ It’s big enough, heaven knows. English money is all O. K., I suppose, but it’s confoundedly confusing, and rather heavy to

drag around if you happen to have enough of it — ”

“ Ah! ” nodded the Waggoner, “ but then nobody never *has* enough of it, — leastways, I never knowed nobody as had. Good-bye, sir! and thankee, and — good luck! ” saying which, the Waggoner chirrupped to his horses, slipped the coin into his pocket, nodded, and the waggon creaked and rumbled up the lane.

Bellew strolled along the road, breathing an air fragrant with honey-suckle from the hedges, and full of the song of birds; pausing, now and then, to listen to the blythe carol of a sky-lark, or the rich, sweet notes of a black-bird, and feeling that it was indeed, good to be alive; so that, what with all this, — the springy turf beneath his feet, and the blue expanse over-head, he began to whistle for very joy of it, until, remembering the Haunting Shadow of the Might Have Been, he checked himself, and sighed instead. Presently, turning from the road, he climbed a stile, and followed a narrow path that led away across the meadows, and, as he went, there met him a gentle wind laden with the sweet, warm scent of ripening hops, and fruit.

On he went, and on, — heedless of his direction until the sun grew low, and he grew hungry; wherefore, looking about, he presently

espied a nook sheltered from the sun's level rays by a steep bank where flowers bloomed, and ferns grew. Here he sat down, unslinging his knapsack, and here it was, also, that he first encountered Small Porges.

CHAPTER IV

How Small Porges in looking for a fortune for another, found an Uncle for himself instead

THE meeting of George Bellew and Small Porges, (as he afterward came to be called), was sudden, precipitate, and wholly unexpected; and it befell on this wise:

Bellew had opened his knap-sack, had fished thence cheese, clasp-knife, and a crusty loaf of bread, and, having exerted himself so far, had fallen a thinking or a dreaming, in his characteristic attitude, i. e.:— on the flat of his back, when he was aware of a crash in the hedge above, and then, of something that hurtled past him, all arms and legs, that rolled over two or three times, and eventually brought up in a sitting posture; and, lifting a lazy head, Bellew observed that it was a boy. He was a very diminutive boy with a round head covered with coppery curls, a boy who stared at Bellew out of a pair of very round, blue eyes, while he tenderly cherished a knee, and an elbow. He had been on the brink of tears for a moment, but meeting Bellew's quiz-