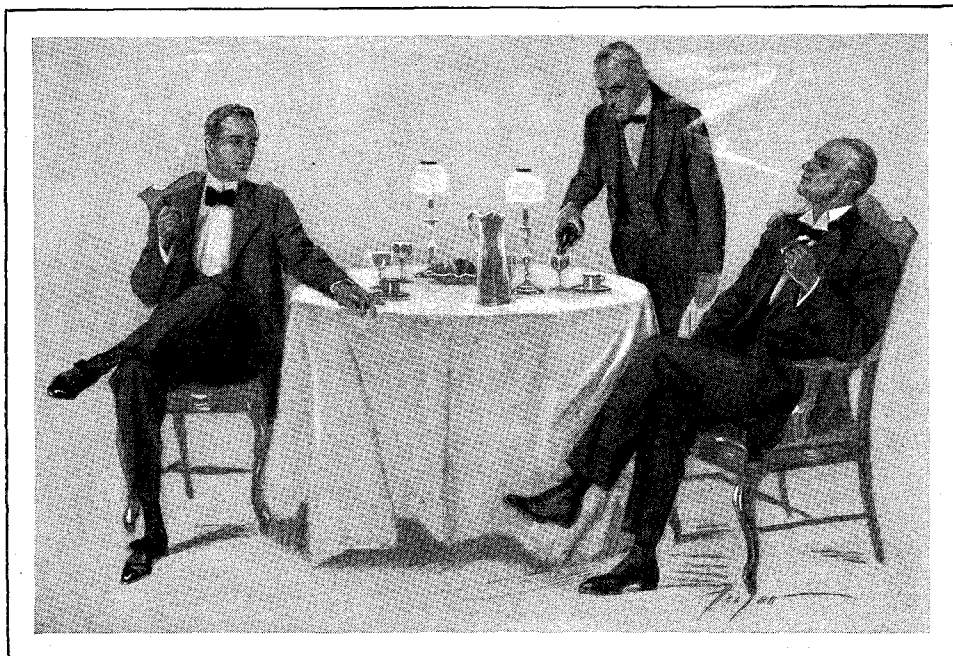


THE CORRECTION OF MOTHER

BY MONTAGU MARTIN

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNGERFORD OPERATION," "THE DIAMOND
KIRBY FOUND," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES M. RELYEA



"GOING TO CELEBRATE SOMETHING?"

A WEEK after his return from studying architecture in Paris, young Dick Aspinwall was dining with his father. The two men looked like brothers, and they were otherwise like brothers, for several reasons. Dick was an only child, John Aspinwall had been a widower for a long time, and the difference in their ages was barely twenty-two years.

The butler passed the cigars, and Mr. Aspinwall smiled contentedly through the smoke at his tall, handsome boy.

"Well, Dick, ready for work?"

"Yes," said Dick. "They don't want me to start in at the office until next month. I could dash off a cathedral or two while I wait."

"I may have a little job for you. It will take you away from New York for a while."

"That'll suit me all right, dad. I'm sick of floating around town at clubs, and teas, and things. Besides, all my old crowd is pairing off and getting spliced. Makes a lad like me feel lonesome. What's the job?"

His father blew a cloud at the ceiling of the dining-room. Then he squared himself briskly at the table.

"Bennet," said he, "the madeira—the '36."

"Sir?" murmured Bennet, hesitating.

"The '36," repeated Aspinwall with emphasis; and Bennet hurried off to the cellar.

"Going to celebrate something?" laughed Dick.

Mr. Aspinwall resumed his operations in the direction of the ceiling, until the butler had solemnly filled two glasses and retired.

"Now, then, my very dear boy," said John Aspinwall, stretching his arm across the damask so that his big hand touched Dick's, "I am engaged to be married. Hold on! Pledge her health first, before you speak a word!"

Dick blinked for a moment, but he was game as a pebble.

"Here's to her!" he said. "And to you, Lord bless you both!"

"That's the proper sort, Dick! Here's back at you, with a loving heart!"

"Tell me, dad, who—what's her—do I—"

"You don't know her," interposed his father. "Miss Elizabeth Dallas. Lives in Carrowdale, near Chicago. Young—beautiful—by George, I'm the luckiest man alive!"

"Of course!"

"Of course what?" demanded Mr. Aspinwall good-naturedly.

"They all say that."

"You'll say that when you meet her, old fellow."

"Well," remarked Dick, "I'll be—"

"Delighted," supplied the other.

"Let's see—we were talking about a little job for you, weren't we?"

"Yes, we were," assented Dick grimly.

Mr. Aspinwall left the room, and his son frowned at the epergne. Dick was not sure that he was pleased. Who was Elizabeth Dallas, anyway? If she sincerely loved the governor, and could make him the right kind of wife, well and good. The governor's happiness was paramount. But what if she were a foolish beauty—or worse, a fortune-hunter?

"This is the scheme," said Mr. Aspinwall, returning with a bundle of papers. "I've bought, on the quiet, a couple of farms, up in the end of Massachusetts. I want to have the place landscaped, or whatever you call it—and a new house built, and so on. Run up there and have a look round. I'll wire to Weston, the caretaker, that you're coming."

"By the first train to-morrow," agreed Dick.

Later in the evening, the elder Aspin-

wall sat down at his desk and added a postscript to a letter to Miss Dallas. He wrote:

P.S.—I have told Dick. Everything lovely. When do you wish me to bring my boy to you to be introduced? We are at your command, as always, dear Elizabeth.

He received an answer in two or three days.

DEAR JOHN:

Don't come for a fortnight. My poor brother Alexander is laid up with gout at some hotel in the backwoods of New England, with only his flyaway niece Betsy to look after him. They do not know of your existence, and I can't write it—I must tell it to them. Perhaps we might go together to see them. More of this in my next.

II

It was quite dark when Dick arrived at the little railway-station in the Berkshire Hills. Zenas Weston met him with a farm-wagon, and Mrs. Weston gave him trout and honey-spread griddle-cakes for supper. He rolled into bed early. The sheets had an elusive scent of geranium, and he was half-glad that he had come.

In the morning, when he stuck his head out of the window, his gladness was complete.

"Yes, it is a sightly place, for a fact," conceded old Weston at the breakfast-table. "Always was. But some thinks the Fenn place, up yonder, is sightlier yet."

"Your father bought that, too," said Mrs. Weston. "Land knows what for! The Fenn house ain't been lived in for so long that it's to pieces, a'most."

"Excepting the outside doors—I keep them locked," said Zenas.

Dick pocketed the keys and walked up the slope, along a grassy road. To his right stretched a broad, friendly valley, jeweled here and there with the sparkle of blue water; close on his left, the bold and wooded hills curved against the sky like vast green billows. Dick filled his lungs with the cool air, taking deep breaths of it.

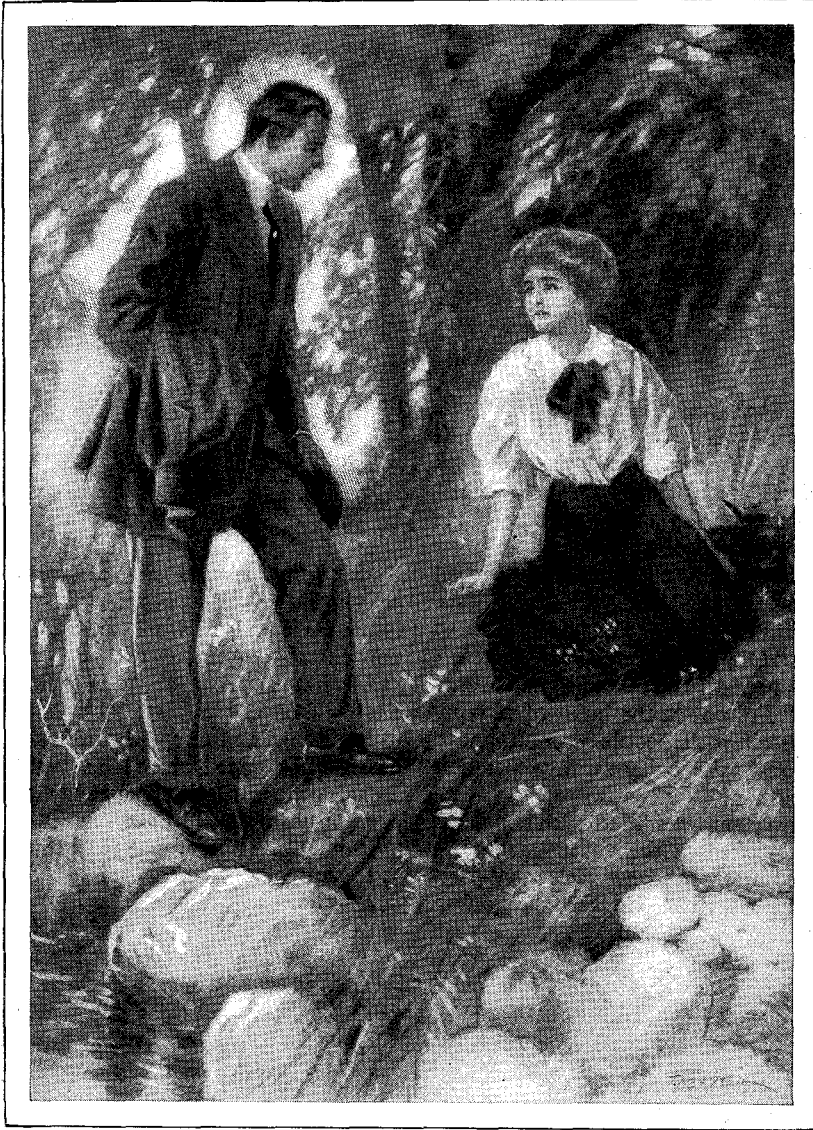
The old Fenn house stood near the road. It was walled in by a riotous hedge of lilacs and rose-bushes, run wild, but flowering bravely. Dick scattered the wet blossoms as he pushed through. Beyond

the perfumed barrier he halted, took off his cap, and with it brushed the leaves from his clothes.

"Oh! How do you do?" said a musical voice above him.

cleared away the vine from the window, which had no sash. "I was just coming down the ladder—and what if I hadn't noticed you?"

"Ladder!" said Dick, eying it. "That



"YOU MUSTN'T STAY, BECAUSE MY SHOES AND—"

Dick started. An upper window of the house was partly overgrown by a thick vine, and a girl's pretty face was framed there.

"I—I beg your pardon!" blurted Dick, not a little taken aback by this surprising apparition.

"You'd better!" she declared, and

thing won't hold you. Where did you dig it up?"

"I found it in the wood-shed. It held me once. Go away, please!"

"But what's the matter with the stairs?"

"Don't be absurd!" she said severely. "The house is locked."

"Well, I have the keys, you know," said Dick. "I happen to be running this ranch."

"My gracious alive!" exclaimed the girl, disappearing.

Young Aspinwall chuckled and turned toward the door. Then he thoughtfully turned back again and removed the ladder from the window.

The inside of the house was dim and musty, with its tattered wall-paper and grimy floors. Dick tramped noisily up the sagging stairs.

"Miss Fenn?" he called.

The silence was profound.

"Mrs. Fenn, perhaps?" said Dick politely, addressing the shadows of the narrow hall.

There was a faint giggle from somewhere.

"Now, look here," he continued, "this is no sort of joint to play hide-and-seek in. I may fall down, and break my neck—and then how will you feel? Haven't you such a thing as a conscience?" He was edging craftily on tiptoe in the direction of the giggle. "I shall have to sit on these stairs until you come out," proclaimed Dick; and he thereupon opened a door. "Oh, there you are!" said he.

"I was here all the time," she answered loftily. "I'm not in the habit of playing hide-and-seek with people I don't know. And I don't take away strange people's ladders, either."

The bare room was filled with sunshine, and Dick looked at the young lady with unbounded approval. She was very pretty indeed, and she wore a short golfing skirt and a white waist.

"But let's not be strangers," he suggested. "My father's bought this house, and my name is—what's wrong?"

The girl was kicking desperately at something behind her. Dick looked down and grinned. Her coat was spread on the floor, and in it was heaped a small pile of ancient brass ornaments and cracked china.

"Ho, the loot—bloomin' loot!" quoted Dick.

"I don't care!" she said, blushing furiously. "I couldn't find anybody—I just climbed in—Uncle Alec is crazy about antiques! And I was going to inquire of the hotel-clerk, and you can keep your old stuff, if you want to!"

"By no means," disclaimed Dick amiably. "I shall walk back to the hotel with you;" and he picked up the jacket by the sleeves. "Uncle Alec must have quite a collection," he said, "with such a classy second-story worker to help him."

"Oh!" she cried. "What a hateful young man!" And suddenly she flew out of the room, and slammed the door.

The latch caught. Dick tugged and pounded, and at length freed himself, and rushed down the stairs; but the girl was nowhere in sight. He had her little coat, however. He handled it with vague reverence and was oddly consoled.

A name had been written by the tailor beneath the dainty collar-band. This was what he read, before he quite realized what he was doing:

MISS ELIZABETH DALLAS, CARROWDALE,
ILLINOIS.

"Suffering Solferino!" said Dick to the rose-bushes. "My future step-mother!"

III

ALL that day, and most of the night, he weighed the situation excitedly in his mind. When he awoke in the morning, he went at it again.

"What I must do," he soliloquized sternly from his pillow, "is to chase over to the hotel, and out with the whole business." He gazed across his bedroom to a chair whereon a little coat lay in tender proximity to a Norfolk jacket. "Oh, thunder!" he observed, and jumped up.

It was obvious that Miss Dallas had not guessed who he was.

"All the better," growled Dick, brushing his hair ferociously. "I can do the detective act. I can find out whether she's fit to be my mother. I don't believe she is. She's a coquette. She's a thief. She's the most charming girl I've ever seen in my life!"

Nevertheless, he did not go to the hotel on that day, nor on the next. He decided that the plans for the development of his father's property were keeping him altogether too busy. These plans, curiously enough, obliged him to be most of the time in the vicinity of the Fenn place, skulking behind a thicket with a girl's coat under his arm.

One afternoon this highly discreditable vigil was rewarded. He saw an envelope



"DO YOU SUPPOSE YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS RASCAL AS WELL AS OF ME?"

pinned to the front door of the old house. It was addressed:

TO THE PERSON WHO STOLE THE LADDER.

Inside of the envelope were a bank-bill and a sheet of note-paper; and Dick read what was written:

Uncle says I must offer to pay you for the things. Where is my coat? The path under the white birch is a short cut to the hotel.

Dick scowled.

"Forward little flirt!" he said. "Great Scott! Is this the way for mother to behave with an entire stranger? I'm going to lecture her. It's a duty that I owe to the governor."

He found the white birch, but he had gone hardly a hundred yards into the woods when he lost the path completely. The walking, however, was easy and

pleasant. Soon he heard the ripple of a brook, and he swung toward it. Circling a huge boulder, he stopped short. A girl was wading barefoot in the brook. It was Miss Elizabeth Dallas, of Carrowdale, Illinois.

Dick dodged respectfully behind the boulder, but he could not escape a distracting glimpse of a snowy ankle and of a trifle more. He pondered for half a minute, and then, in quick succession, manufactured three violent and absolutely unconvincing sneezes.

"Nice fix to catch mother in!" added Dick, under his breath.

When he peered again around the rock, he saw that Miss Dallas was seated on the opposite bank of the stream. The distracting ankles were tucked safely out of sight, and she contemplated Dick with much demureness as he splashed across.

"What's the matter?" inquired Miss Dallas. "You look just as my nurse used to, when she was going to spank me."

Dick bit his lip angrily.

"Didn't I pay you enough?" said Miss Dallas.

"That's not the point at all," snapped Dick.

"You needn't take a fellow's head off," she retorted. "I mustn't ask you to sit down, because my—"

"I can talk better standing up," Dick said impressively.

"Some people can," averred Miss Dallas, with an encouraging nod. "But you mustn't stay, because my shoes and—"

"Never mind," interrupted Dick. "I don't care about your shoes and—that is, I have something more important to speak about—Miss Elizabeth Dallas!"

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "How did you find out?"

"From your coat," said he.

"But that spoils the whole thing," she announced sadly. "It was so romantic and Peter Panny, without our knowing each other. I had decided to call you Sylvio."

"Well, my name is Aspinwall."

"Sylvio is nicer," maintained Miss Dallas, and dimpled her pretty cheeks at him.

"Don't do that!" said Dick.

"Do what?"

"Don't look at me like that," he explained. "It is not proper for a young lady in your position."

Miss Dallas glanced apprehensively down at her golfing-skirt.

"My position is your fault, Sylvio," she said. "If you'd only walk on—for a few minutes!"

"No," declined Dick, folding his arms resolutely. "I have an unpleasant duty, and I'm going to get done with it. I hate a preaching prig, Miss Dallas, but let me tell you—and I've got a perfectly good license to tell you—let me tell you that your behavior is altogether too frivolous, considering your future husband and your future family."

"My future wh-what?" she stammered.

"Your future husband and family," said Dick, keeping his embarrassed eyes fixed on the ground.

"Well, of all the impertinence, Mr.—"

"Listen!" he persisted. "I know the man you are going to marry."

"Do you?" gasped Miss Dallas.

"His name is Aspinwall!"

"Is it?"

"I know him exactly as well as I know myself."

"Oh!"

"And I have known him exactly as long."

Miss Dallas started to get up, but she suddenly thought better of it, and sank down again.

"Mr. Aspinwall, or whatever it is," said she, "are you proposing to me?"

"Oh, my Heavens!" mumbled Dick helplessly.

He took a blind step backward, toppled over in the shallow water, and struggled for a footing among the slippery stones.

Miss Dallas glared at him regally. Her prettiness was transformed, in a flash, to the scornful beauty of a young queen.

"Go!" she decreed.

Dick grabbed an alder for support.

"Miss Dallas," he faltered, "I botched it, of course; but I want to say you're the finest girl—woman, I mean—and my father is the very luckiest—and—"

"No, no, no—don't speak to me!" she commanded. "Don't ever speak to me again!" She pointed an imperious finger. "The road isn't far. If you're a gentleman, you'll find it!" insinuated Miss Dallas.

"But I," moaned Dick, "am the son of the—"

"Will you go?" she cried.

"You bet I will!" said Dick haughtily.

IV

A BRIDGE spanned the brook at the highway, and Dick, perching himself on the rail, loaded his pipe. The tobacco, however, did not relieve his depression.

"Botched it?" he mused bitterly. "I should say I did! What will dad think? She'll tell him."

He drummed his heels on the timber and frowned at an approaching vehicle. A man and a woman were in it. The man shouted and waved his hat.

"Hello, my boy!" he shouted.

"Hello, father!" responded Dick, gripping the rail. "Where in the world did you—"

Mr. John Aspinwall laughed and reined up the horse on the bridge. His companion, a strange lady with soft eyes, held out both hands immediately to Dick.

"Reckoned we'd surprise you," said Mr. Aspinwall. "Elizabeth, do you sup-

pose you can take care of this rascal as well as of me?"

Dick and the sweet-faced lady murmured cheerfully but unintelligibly at each other. Then, through a mist of bewilderment, he heard something about a brother Alexander and a niece Betsy, who were staying at the hotel, near by.

"Betsy's my namesake," concluded Miss Dallas.

"Too bad you didn't know about them before," said Mr. Aspinwall.

"Wasn't it?" gulped Dick.

"Hop in," his father directed. "We're driving up to Weston's."

Dick fumbled sheepishly with his cap.

"I guess—I guess I won't bother you to carry me," he said, with the vacant, blissful smile of a happy lunatic.

"There's a short cut along this brook—and I believe I can find her again!"

"Her?" echoed Mr. Aspinwall sharply.

"Yes!" vociferated Dick, and vanished in the bushes.

NIGHT AND THE AGES

Dusk with a charm has lulled
The noisy world to sleep;
Only the stars keep watch,
And the never-resting deep.

Think of the countless years
That night has come to men,
Going they knew not where,
Nor if it came again!

Over the sparkling blue
Of the gem-isled Grecian seas
It crept with its shadows cool,
Hiding the argosies.

Cæsar its coming knew
Where, by his camp-fire's light,
He dreamed of his far-off Rome
And the steps that lead to might.

Over red Waterloo
It laid the shroud of peace,
Cooling the parching lips,
Bringing with death surcease.

Centuries now have gone—
Still do we watch it come,
Touching the heart with peace
Till railing lips are dumb.

Here do I welcome it,
As countless men have done;
Ages have come and passed,
But night makes mankind one!

Arthur Wallace Peach

CURIOSITIES OF THE LINKS

BY EDWARD W. TOWNSEND

AUTHOR OF "CHIMMIE FADDEN AND MAJOR MAX," ETC.

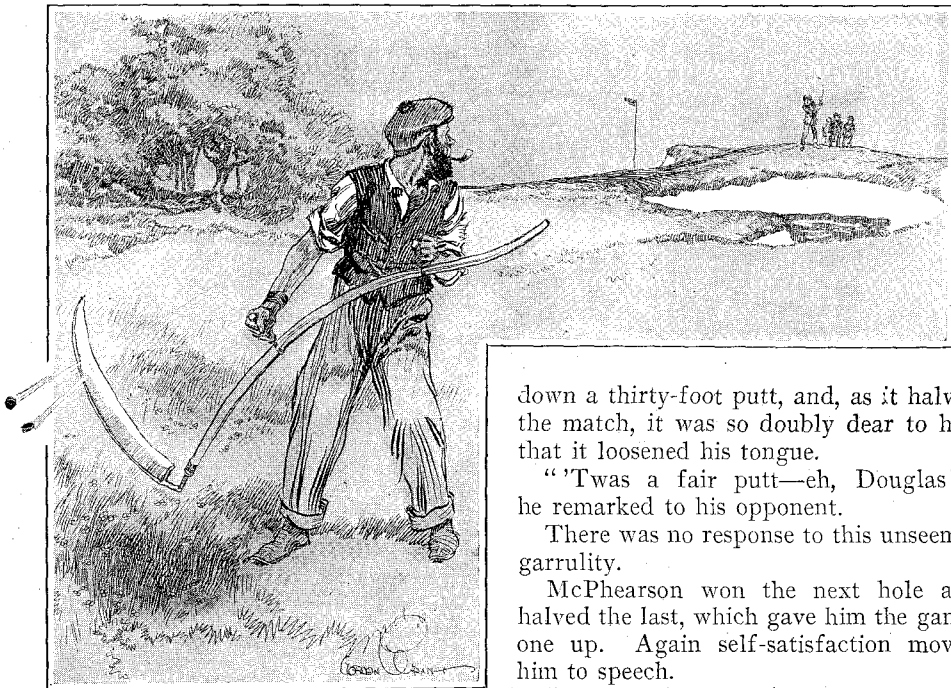
ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

WITH President Taft on one side of the ocean and ex-Premier Balfour on the other, praising and delighting in the physical benefits of golf, that aspect of the game threatens to divert public attention from its other attractive qualities. It is a game of mysteries and surprises.

When Mr. Balfour spoke of it recently as a silent game, there was on this side of the Atlantic amazed dissent. The weather itself, said our golfers, is no greater incentive to speech. Even when Mr. Balfour's interpreters explained that he spoke

of the time consumed in making the rounds of the links as proper seasons of silence, not of the greater time thereafter consumed in discussing the rounds, Americans still failed to understand. That is because we play the game on this side in a different spirit from that in which it is played on the other side, and especially in Mr. Balfour's ain countree.

A story will illustrate the point. Two devotees of the game were making the round, and fourteen holes had been played without the exchange of a single word. At the fifteenth hole McPhearson ran



THE BALL STRUCK THE EDGE OF THE
KEEN BLADE

down a thirty-foot putt, and, as it halved the match, it was so doubly dear to him that it loosened his tongue.

"'Twas a fair putt—eh, Douglas?" he remarked to his opponent.

There was no response to this unseemly garrulity.

McPhearson won the next hole and halved the last, which gave him the game, one up. Again self-satisfaction moved him to speech.

"A fine day for the game," he remarked.