

Adjustment

BY MARTHA MOTT

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GEORGE BINDON walked briskly down his driveway and paused for a moment at the entrance. He looked back with satisfaction at the brook and the elm-tree and the whitewashed stone house with the blue shutters. Real pretty, he thought. He looked up and down the main road and caught sight of a figure sitting on the fence.

"Why, she's still there," he murmured. "I don't know as I like that." He paused irresolutely. After all, if that girl chose to sit on his fence for hours at a time, it didn't do anybody any harm, even if it did look queer. He turned his back on her and walked up the hill. His shoulders expressed self-conscious indifference. As a matter of fact, she wasn't even looking at him.

He walked conscientiously for some five or six miles. It was a new thing, this walking. Ever since he had met the poverty-stricken artist he had been wanting to try things that he would have scoffed at ten years ago. It was a strange friendship, between George Bindon, successful real-estate man, and the penniless landscape-painter. They were both rather lonely. In George curiosity was only a little stronger than scorn. In the artist curiosity went hand in hand with the desire for a rich patron. They had talked together a good deal. It was through the artist that George had come to live at Glenwiddon. The property had only been one of many, a good bargain, with money in it. Then the artist had said that it was beautiful, unique. George had listened with interest. Perhaps it was true. Perhaps a fellow was a fool to have a place like that and not live in it. So that was how it was that George Bindon, bachelor of thirty-seven, was established with his

unmarried sister in the house at Glenwiddon.

As for the walking, the artist was at the bottom of that too. George had been going to play golf one day, and had offered the artist a lift in his Packard roadster. The artist had refused. He said he was walking for pleasure, and was turning off soon into the woods. It was autumn, he said, and one should be in the woods. George drove on rather puzzled. He resolved to try it himself some day. This was the day.

When he came to the foot of the hill again, an hour and a half later, he stopped short in surprise. The girl was still there. Something fishy about that, he thought. He started slowly up the hill, staring at her as he approached. He fully intended to speak to her, to ask her if she hadn't anything better to do than to sit on his fence all day. But as he approached, he saw that she wasn't paying him any attention.

She might have been anywhere between nineteen and twenty-nine. She had dark hair cropped short, and long, narrow dark eyes. She was looking out over the valley, her chin resting on her hand. Her position was careless, even awkward. He noticed that her clothes looked expensive—not elaborate like his sister's, but there certainly was style in the short caracal jacket, the brown tweed skirt, and the heavy brogues. He tried to make it plain that he was going to speak to her. Damn it, she's not even looking. He hesitated in the road before her. Gosh, what am I going to say? She's not looking for a pick-up. If a fellow speaks to a girl like that, she might be offended. He walked on quickly, as if he had only stopped to admire the view. A few yards farther on he turned into his own drive. He stopped suddenly as he heard a voice behind him:

"Excuse me, but I think you had something to say?"

He turned and stared at her. She was looking at him with an expression of polite inquiry. He felt as if he had just been introduced to her in some one's drawing-room.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured as

noticing you every time I've been in and out the drive for the last two or three days."

She answered as if she were talking in her sleep: "'I saw an aged aged man, a-sitting on a gate.'" Then she turned to



Real pretty, he thought.—Page 424.

he retraced his steps. He stood beside her with his hand on the fence. "It's—a nice day," he ventured.

"Well?" she asked, and she looked out over the valley again, ignoring his remark. She didn't seem at all inclined to help him.

"I've been wondering about you," he said finally.

"Have you?" She turned to him with a look of faint surprise. "I've never seen you before." The momentary interest faded, and she looked away again. He felt desperate.

"I've been wondering why you sit here on my fence for hours at a time. I've been

him with a smile: "That gave me the idea, and as there wasn't a gate handy I've had to do with a fence." He looked utterly perplexed. "So sorry," she said, "I thought you'd know your 'Alice.' The real reason is that I love this place. I used to live here as a child."

"But you aren't even looking at it," he objected.

"No, but I used to have the north room looking out over the valley. I'd rather look at the view, which is unchanged, than at the house, which has had so many owners since I lived there."

"Well, there's not much chance of its changing owners again in a hurry. It's

my home. Too bad you didn't buy it before I got round to it."

"I buy it?" She looked at him as if he had said a stupid thing.

"Well, I shouldn't think you'd get much kick out of just sitting there and looking at the view. What's the big idea?"

"Oh, I like to sit here. I pretend I own the place. I think of things I would do to it if I had it, and had enough money to run it."

"Well, I'm not going to sell it. I've had good offers, too. One party tumbling over himself to buy it. But I'm going to hold on to it. I'm one as knows the value of living in an artistic locality. I'm afraid you're just wasting your time thinking of it."

"Of course. What else should I be doing? Don't you ever waste your time?" At least, she had condescended to ask him a question.

"Not often," he said. "You know, I think you and I ought to be great friends. We both appreciate a beautiful place, and—and—uh—all that kind of stuff."

"Yes," she answered calmly, "I suppose we ought."

Not much pep to her, he reflected; suppose I kid her along a bit. He climbed up on the fence beside her. She was looking away again over the valley.

"Perhaps you're waiting for some one?" He winked as she turned to him again.

"I don't think I quite know what you mean," she said coolly. She ignored the wink as if it were a physical defect which she was too well-bred to notice. He thought he'd never met such a strange girl. Attractive-looking, too, with those long, dark eyes. He was suddenly extremely conscious of his own rapidly thinning hair and lined face.

"I mean—" he explained with uneasy joviality.

"Oh, yes, of course," she said. "Love sends a little gift of roses, and so on. By the way, are you married?" He was taken aback.

"Why, no."

"I'm sorry I didn't know that sooner," she said. Then she lost interest again.

"Well, really, I don't see what difference that could have made to——"

She interrupted him wearily: "All the difference in the world."

"How come?"

"I've just married your chauffeur."

He jumped down from the fence and stared at her.

"Peter Faraday? What did you do that for?"

"So that I could live here, of course."

Her tone seemed to say, what a stupid question—why else should I marry him? He felt vaguely annoyed. Also, he realized that it would hardly do for Peter Faraday to drive past and see his bride sitting on a fence with his employer.

"I must go," he said. "Good-by—Mrs. Faraday."

"Stella," she said slowly; "and I'll surely see you again. As you see, I often sit on this fence."

"Do you?" he answered. It sounded idiotic, but he was bewildered. He turned his back and walked quickly away toward the house. She remained where she was, looking out on the valley, until the sun had set over the hill behind her.

George Bindon was known among his friends as a good fellow, on the whole, but apt to do queer things. It was certainly strange that he should be discovered at lunch in a cafeteria, with a copy of "Alice in Wonderland" open beside him. Yet so it happened. The part he had played in conversation with his chauffeur's wife had not been entirely satisfactory to him. He didn't explain the book to his friends. He merely shut it up and talked hurriedly of golf.

In the late afternoon Faraday met him at the station. George looked at the man keenly for signs of anger or mockery. He saw only reserve and respect. Faraday was tall and slight. He had quiet gray eyes, and a long, droll upper lip. Whatever his thoughts may have been, his face was impassive.

"Have you got the mail?" George asked.

"Yes, sir." They climbed into the car. George had expected to find out a great deal by means of subtle questioning, in the five-mile drive to his home. It was hard to begin. There didn't seem to be any subtle way of asking a man why his wife had married him.

"Faraday."

"Yes, sir?"

"Are you married?"

"Why, yes, sir. I think you've met my wife."

George observed him again. Faraday was intent on a bad stretch of road. His

"Yes, sir."

George's sister was named Elaine. She had adopted it at the age of seventeen, in place of the more prosaic name of Anna. At dinner that night she began by being resolutely cheerful. George was preoccu-



The girl was still there.—Page 424.

face betrayed nothing. George wished that he himself were driving the car. It would be easier to talk if he had something to do with his hands. How silly for a man to be afraid to question his chauffeur. He said, rather lamely: "Faraday, I didn't realize you were a family man when I engaged you."

"But, Mr. Bindon, you let me have the little cottage in the orchard. What should I be doing living there alone?" He spoke calmly. Evidently he considered the subject closed.

George gave it up after one more attempt: "It's a real pretty cottage, I think."

pied. She stopped soon, and began toying with her rings. She had complacent, dimpled hands, and a wisp of fair hair straggled across her forehead. The maid opened the door suddenly, and the draft blew out one of the candles.

"Candles are real cute," Elaine remarked, "but electricity's better to eat by. We must have an overhead light put in." George glanced round the low room with its great beams in the ceiling.

"Yes, it would light up the corners and make them more cheerful. But I kinda like them dark."

"You always had funny ideas," Elaine replied as she helped him to dessert.

"To-morrow's Saturday," said George. "I think I'll come home in the afternoon instead of playing golf."

Elaine stared at him. "Why, George—how about your exercise?"

"I'll walk from the station," he said hastily.

"If you take up walking this way, you'll be wanting to dismiss the chauffeur soon. And then what'll I do, living way off in the country here?"

"I never thought of dismissing him," he said shortly. When the maid opened the door the candle blew out again. "I guess we *had* better have an overhead light," he added. But he thought regretfully of the dark corners and the distorted shadows on the walls.

The next day was a true October day, with a cloudless sky, coldly and remotely blue. George walked home from the station, and smiled at himself for having been so curious about a chauffeur and his wife. Why, it was simple. He would just go the rounds of the place, and drop in on them to see how they liked the cottage. It would be very formal and distant. He would have a chance to see if she pulled the same line when her husband was there—frigid one moment, and the next asking him to call her Stella. What was she up to, anyway?

He walked cautiously round the place, peeping into the barn and the old sheepfold, more like a sightseer at Mont St. Michel than a landowner looking after his property. He reached the little cottage in the orchard last of all. Faraday was outside, chopping up a great branch that had fallen from an apple-tree.

"Say," George began, "you don't have to do that. You get your wood free from the pile in the woodshed." Faraday put the axe down and slipped on his coat.

"I know, sir," he said; "thank you very much. But I like doing it. It's just one way of getting exercise."

George was amused. "You wouldn't think so if you had to do it."

"Certainly not," agreed Faraday.

Stella appeared in the doorway. "Why, George, I'm so glad to see you. Have you met my husband? But, of course you have. How silly of me! Peter, have you told Mr. Bindon that he *must* stay for tea?"

"I was on the point of doing so," Faraday said with a slight bow.

"I'm afraid—" began George.

"Don't say you can't, because you must," Stella interrupted. "We're both so glad to see you. I must go and put the water on to boil. I'll leave you two to follow. I hate to ask any one to come indoors on a day like this, but if you've been out as much of the afternoon as Peter has, you must be hungry." She vanished into the cottage.

"I'm afraid—" George began again.

"Oh, come now," said Faraday, "you must have a cup of tea with us. And Stella's really quite charming," he added with a deprecating smile. George yielded.

His main impressions of the tea were that Stella had on a dark-blue dress and pearl earrings, that she and Faraday talked very fast about various things of which he had never heard, and that they lighted candles when the sun went down. When he walked home they insisted on going with him. The great elm-tree beside the house was very dark and still. Stella threw back her head and looked up as they walked under it.

"My sister wants me to have it cut down," George remarked.

"Why?" Stella and Peter exclaimed together.

"She says it's dangerous. It may fall on the roof and smash it to pieces."

Peter stood still in the road.

"When that elm goes, it'll be time for the house to go, too," he said.

Then they said good night. George didn't quite dare to ask them to dinner. He was glad that he hadn't, when Elaine greeted him with the news that the cook had gone.

"And how can you expect any one to stay, when you want to live so far away in the country?" she complained. "They simply don't like it." George was silent. He was wondering whether Peter knew that Stella had married him only because he had a job at Glenwiddon. George found it hard to believe, but he had had it from her own lips. He felt sorry for Peter when the truth should be known.

In the morning George and Peter were strangers again. Faraday, the discreet chauffeur, drove Mr. Bindon to the golf club.

As the autumn wore on, Elaine resisted this growing friendship between George and the Faradays.

"What would the neighbors say if they

longed for suburban card-parties and the latest phonograph records. The records, to be sure, George brought home every month, but he seemed to have lost inter-



"Thank you very much, sir, but I like doing it."—Page 428.

knew you were always having tea with your chauffeur?" she asked. But, as George pointed out, one's neighbors were so far away at Glenwiddon that they really couldn't be expected to know anything about it.

After the winter settled in, Elaine found that even a chauffeur's wife was better company than none. Glenwiddon was remote from the beaten track. Elaine

est in them. Even the latest blues pall when there is no one else to agree that "the saxophone in that one is just too cute." So Elaine went often, on one pretext or another, to the little cottage in the orchard. And soon Stella began to come to the big house—very seldom at first, but more often as the winter went on. George fostered this intimacy. He liked to think of Stella calmly suggesting and arranging,

while Elaine fussed and embroidered, and wondered what in the world they could have for dinner.

One evening he came into the living-room to find everything swept off the mantelpiece. Only two tall silver candlesticks remained. George was surprised. The thing had been covered with ornaments of every kind—souvenir shells from Atlantic City, pictures of themselves as children, dishevelled valentines, and a host of celluloid cupids. He found Elaine hovering disconsolately over these treasures where they reposed ignominiously in a corner of the coat-closet.

"It's Mrs. Faraday," she explained. "She said it was too bad to have a parade of cupids marching as to war on a respectable mantelpiece."

George laughed. It sounded like Stella. But Elaine was doubtful.

"I like it cosey," she murmured, "and those cupids do make it seem real homey."

"I know," said George, "but just let's try it this way. We may get used to it, you know." He spoke without much conviction. The cupids were a part of his birthright.

Faraday, too, began to come often to the house. At first he came only to fetch Stella. Later he stayed to talk. He would come sometimes without her, to shovel snow or carry wood. When the spring came, and there were no more great mountains of snow to be attacked, he came anyway. Elaine liked him, but she confessed to George that she always felt as if he were laughing at her.

"Nonsense," George said. He wouldn't for the world have admitted that he himself was a little suspicious of Faraday's courtly manners and obstinate reserve.

When the spring came in good earnest, the Faradays seemed to have made the house their own. They were always there, suggesting shrubs and vines, training ivy, and eternally on guard lest Elaine should plant nasturtiums. George listened meekly while they explained why this corner must be left bare and why that must have a barberry hedge. He was very firm with Elaine about the nasturtiums. To George the Faradays had become a part of the place. The novelty of the situation had worn off. He saw nothing absurd in

having Faraday drop in to tea, and ask in leaving: "What time do you wish to go to the station, sir?" Faraday never dropped the "sir" in his professional capacity.

It was in June that the thing happened. George arrived at the station and Faraday met him with a chastened expression.

"It's Miss Bindon, sir," he said. "I had engine trouble just as I was starting to take her to the train this morning. Then we couldn't get hold of the cab, or any other car, because a tree had fallen on the telephone-wires—so she missed the train. She didn't take it very well, sir." George whistled. Elaine was to have been maid of honor at the wedding of an old friend. He himself had been called away on business, and had missed it, but Elaine had been looking forward to it for weeks. He foresaw a gloomy evening. Faraday said nothing more until he left him at the door.

"May Stella and I call this evening?" he asked.

"Do," George answered, and his face brightened.

Dinner was sombre. Elaine flung out a few remarks more or less to the effect of Doctor Johnson's statement that those who live in the country are fit for the country. She, the inference was, was fit for something better. After dinner she went straight to her room and shut the door. George was disturbed. He lighted a cigar and wandered out onto the terrace. It was a relief to hear footsteps on the drive, and then to see Peter and Stella looming up out of the darkness. They sat down beside him and lighted cigarettes. There was a comfortable silence, till Stella spoke thoughtfully:

"I don't think Elaine is very happy here. She misses her friends. It's so inaccessible in this beautiful Glenwiddon."

George was surprised. "Just what I've been thinking," he said. "But how about you? Don't you find it lonely?"

"Oh, I belong here," Stella said quietly. There was silence again, while George turned the matter over in his mind.

"I suppose the amount of it is that Elaine and I don't," he said finally.

"Well," said Stella judiciously, "you are getting a little fat, so far from a golf course."

"That's not what I mean."

"No, of course not. I was only fooling. You miss having neighbors all around—and you and Elaine must be awfully popular, too."

"Yes," George reflected, "we do have a good time in a gang. Bridge and danc-

"It'll do." Faraday spoke calmly.

George considered. Visions of a suburban home and a radio club floated before his eyes. Anyway, the artist had gone to Paris, and wrote long letters asking for money. George had grown tired of



"I know," said George, "but just let's try it this way. We may get used to it."—Page 430.

ing and lots of people to kid you along when you feel blue. I don't know what I'd do without you two here. I'd just sell the place and skip right out."

"I don't think we'll be here much longer," Stella said, "though goodness knows we hate to leave."

"What!"

"Yes; we've been left a legacy."

"That settles it," George exclaimed.

"I'm going."

"You wouldn't consider selling to us?" Faraday asked.

"But—gosh. Is it a big legacy?"

him. It was too strenuous, living the way a fellow like that wanted you to. He hadn't realized how much the Faradays meant to him. If he was going to lose them, why go on living here, with a discontented sister and a mantelpiece stripped of its cupids?

"You're on," he said in the darkness, and he considered the advantages of a suburban porch as against a shadowed terrace on a June night.

George was genuinely sorry to leave, but he felt that Glenwiddon and the Faradays belonged together. The place with-

out them would be unbearably lonely. Also he saw that they could have no part in the suburban life which Elaine was planning with such enthusiasm. She, at least, had no regrets. She babbled pleasantly of seeing them often at her "little sociables." George said nothing. When he left he shook hands with Stella and Peter with a fervor which surprised all three of them. When he had gone they looked at each other. They were more sorry to see him go than they had expected to be. Elaine had murmured something about "a little reunion." George had merely said goodbye. For once the Faradays had been at a loss for something to say.

Stella and Peter sat on the terrace waiting for their guests. Some friends were motoring from New York to spend the week-end and see the new home.

"I think the chauffeur's uniform was very becoming," she said regretfully. Peter laughed.

"Did I tell you I had a letter forwarded from our agent to-day?"

"No. What's up?"

"He says Bindon has suddenly changed his mind and sold. He's upset because he can't find out who's bought Glenwiddon. I don't wonder he's annoyed, after his struggles to buy it for us in the autumn. He says if we'd only waited, he'd have got it all right."

Stella smiled. "Would he, though? I think it all goes to prove that when you want to get something out of an American business man who's a little tired of making money, the only way is to appeal to his sense of the fitness of things."

"Elaine helped, though," Peter said.

"Yes," said Stella. "Elaine helped."

A Prayer for All People

BY NANCY BYRD TURNER

ONE cannot walk in Lynmouth
Along the tilted street,
For there the Lyn comes leaping down
Impetuous, swift, and sweet,

With fleck of light and shadow
On flowered window-sills
And gossip under kitchen doors
About the Devon hills.

The crimson cottage roses
Hang drenched above its rim.
God send you see the Lyn come down
Before your eyes grow dim!

One cannot lie in Lynmouth
But, dusk to dawn, he hears
As clear as bells along his blood
The beat of old, old years—

Lyn water crying "England,"
Forever on and on. . . .
God let you sleep in Lynmouth once
Before your dreams are done!