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THE TOP ROUND OF THE LADDER.

(Original.)

Camilla Deming was a country girl who went to the city to join in the literary scramble. Ambitious and possessing some means, she intended to eschew the drudgery of editorial work and strike at once into authorship. But one man in her native village was sufficiently intellectual to secure her friendship, Curtis Forster, a young physician who had studied his profession in town and returned to practice in the country. He was plodding and practical. He strongly advised her to choose a role offering greater chances of success, that of wife and mother, with himself for the husband, and when she refused begged her if she were unsuccessful to consider the offer still open.

She had met with some success by writing stories for the country papers and began in her new field with others more finished, it is true, but the same simple work that had so pleased her neighbors. Occasionally she would dispose of one of them to a magazine, but at the end of a year after figuring up her net proceeds she had gained but a twentieth of her expenditures.

She had brought with her from the country a bit of editorial work, which had remained in the bottom of her trunk. Feeling that she should make an effort to add something to her income for the next year even if it were not by her chosen creative work, she took out this manuscript, smoothed the rumpled pages and looked it over. It consisted of a series of selections from the most affecting scenes in the works of Washington Irving, to each of which she had written a brief introduction, admirably imitating the author's style.

It was accepted, and the book made a hit. The author's income for the year from this source was equal to her expenditures. Her publisher suggested the writing of another similar book made up of extracts from the humor of a noted author.

The publisher's suggestion was accompanied by so handsome an offer that she accepted. The second book was more popular than the first and the proceeds derived many times larger. Then commenced a scramble among publishers for the works of Camilla Deming. Success is gratifying in any form, and the young author was very much delighted with hers. She did not now consider her work simply editorial. At any rate, she saw in it an opening for her own creations.

She had long had on hand a novel which from time to time she had submitted to publishers, then revised and submitted again, always with the same result—"Unavailable." Selecting one of a dozen publishers who were now hounding her for her work, she placed it in his hands, and it was published immediately.

About this time she received a note from Dr. Forster congratulating her on her progress. She replied in a vein of exhilaration, giving with charming naïvete the remark of her last publisher, "You will soon be at the top of the ladder if you don't marry." Forster replied, "Marry and turn the ladder upside down."

The novel was a success. Though not as successful as the two previous books, still it sold well. Camilla waited before entering upon any new work till this fact had been established then went to her publisher for a conference. He told her that there was a demand for a work like her previous ones and suggested that she take up Thackeray and extract scenes as she had done with Irving.

Somehow the advice fell on Camilla like a wet blanket. She was at a turning point in her career. What should she do? She felt the need of some one in whom she had confidence to assist her in seeing the problem in its true light. Packing her belongings, she took a train for home. Arriving there, she sent for Dr. Forster, stated her case and asked his advice. He took a copy of each of her three books and promised to see her when he had carefully read them. In a few days he called upon her with his report, which she well knew would be the plain, unvarnished truth:

"The sale of your first two books was based on the genius of another. Publishers, in order to secure that which they were sure of selling, so flattered you that they partly convinced you that your success was largely due to your own effort. Your novel is pleasing, but not a work of genius."

Camilla drew a long sigh—the sigh of one bitterly disappointed.

"Camilla," the doctor went on, "what is this you lament—that you are not pre-eminent in creating imaginary beings who are intended to move before us like real people, enact their triumphs and weep at their failures? It is a noble field, I admit, a field in which there have been but few real masters, but there is a nobler one. In it the characters are real and come from the great Creator. It is a field into which I would myself gladly enter if you would consent to enter it with me. If you will abandon the fictitious and take up the real, your characters will be a husband who adores you and children whose being is not the fanciful emanation of your brain, but a part of yourself. The scene of your romance will be a real home; the hopes, fears, success, failures of your story those of an actual united family."

Before he had finished the doctor had advanced and taken her in his arms. When he had concluded, Camilla pondered awhile, then, looking up with a smile and a twinkle, said: "You've turned the ladder upside down, and I'm on the top round."
JAQUELINE EASTWOOD.

Talked Too Much.

In a certain village of New Hampshire there is a quaint old character known as Boss Mellin keenly alive to the truth of the old saying, "Silence is golden." Mellin's gift in this respect approaches genius, though he was fully aware of what he deemed his shortcomings therein.

Mellin used to make mattresses for a living. One day a native of the place entered his shop and asked, "Boss, what's the best kind of a mattress?" "Husks," was the laconic response of Boss.

Twenty years later, so runs the tradition, the same man again entered the shop and again asked what, in the opinion of Mellin, was the best kind of a mattress.

"Straw," said Boss.

"Straw? You told me husks was the best!"

Boss Mellin emitted a sigh. "I've always ruined myself by talkin'," said he.

Maiden Insurance.

The Maiden Insurance company is a singular Denmark institution. It is confined to the nobility, and the nobleman, as soon as a female child is born to him, enrolls her name on the company's books and pays in a certain sum and thereafter a fixed annual amount to the treasury. When the young girl has reached the age of twenty-one she is entitled to a fixed income and to an elegant suit of apartments, and this income and this residence, both almost princely, are hers until she either marries or dies. The society has existed for generations. It has always prospered. Thanks to it, poverty stricken old maids are unknown among the Denmark nobility, but every maiden lady is rich and happy.

Not Responsible.

"Hold on," said the learned chemist. "Didn't I give you a bottle of my wonderful tonic that would make you look twenty years younger?"

"You did," replied the patient, "and I took it all. I was then thirty-nine, and now I am only nineteen."

"Well, then, will you please settle this bill you owe me for the treatment?"

"Oh, no! As I am only nineteen now, I am a minor, and minors are not held responsible for the bills they incur. Good day, sir!"—Illustrated Bits.

Wanted the Earth.

She had been on the ocean three days and suffered the throes of seasickness all that time.

When all hope of relief had fled, one of those well meaning nuisances came to her and asked her:

"Is there anything I can do for you? What do you want?"

"You can do nothing for me. I want the earth."

And she sincerely did.—Short Stories

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All Oxfords Perfectly
Fitted.

W. H. DUNBAR
DILLON, S. C.