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CON AMORE

By IDA M. GOULD

ELINOR GAGE followed her husband and wandered through a path she had newly begun to explore. A narrow path so unimportant to her, she crossed on a calm, blue bank, listening to the humming of insects, she let her eyes search the bushes, and they fell on a glittering small object, which proved to be a ring. A large emerald, bearing the words "Con Amore," set in diamonds, flashing the more pathless from the foliage, she slipped it on her finger.

When the old routine of school teaching was resumed the ring adorned her left finger.

As the next summer vacation ended she planned to spend a few days in Boston sight-seeing. On one of her jaunts she lost the ring. How she missed it! She inserted a description and promise of reward in the lost and found columns of the newspapers.

Returning from her pilgrimages next day, she found a tall, middle-aged gentleman awaiting her.

"I am Mr. Linn Childs," he announced, stiffly. "You are the advertiser of a ring, Miss—"

"Gage," faltered Elinor.

"Miss Gage, is this the ring you lost?"

Carefully holding the ring so that it might be seen on all sides, he noted the joyous expression of the girl's eyes as they identified her lost property.

"Yes—oh—yes," gasped Elinor, reaching for the ring, which the man still held.

"This is my ring," he began, with his unsympathetic manner. "Where did you find it?"

"At Beechwood."

"I thought so. I lost it there last summer. It was a gift from my wife."

The stern eyes softened.

"Miss Gage, why not accept a duplicate ring from me? I owe you that much for restoring a cherished keepsake."

"I cannot agree to such an arrangement."

"It seems fair to me," smilingly said the owner of the ring. "May I ask if you are in Boston permanently this winter?"

"Oh—no. I start tomorrow for the West, where I teach school." Elinor looked frankly into the man's honest eyes.

"In fact, Miss Gage, the ring bearing with the outside by which we have met, may I hope to see you soon again?"

"I think not. I have been the one who has been—"

...ing her hand.

"As usual, then, perhaps at Beechwood next summer."

"Perhaps." Elinor watched him disappear past the crowd in the lobby.

"The more adventures until I find another keepsake," thought Elinor.

At Beechwood the following summer Elinor went, as usual, walking, hunting through familiar nooks with excited memories of the beautiful day she had so unexpectedly found. Nothing was farther from her thoughts than the man she found awaiting her one day, after a long tramp in the woods. Her face was aglow with her walk, her hands full of pine branches, so, greetings exchanged, she dismounted and sat down.

Five guests remained on the porch, for the air became chilly early.

Mr. Childs asked Elinor if she would go for a constitutional stroll.

When he said good-night he placed a package in her hand, saying it was a trifle he had picked up in Boston and asked her judgment on it.

Elinor found the package to be a ring, almost a duplicate of the lost one, differing only in the omission of the words "Con Amore."

Next morning, intercepting the giver as he was about to start on one of his daily walks, she protested that he should not have offered her the gift.

Fearing to create comment from bystanders, she walked slowly down the road, trying to appear unconcerned, he keeping step, until they reached a turnstile.

"Take care!" he warned, too late, however, for she had twisted her ankle in stepping back too quickly.

"Lean on me, until we get to the house, Elinor."

White with pain from exertion, she had to submit.

The nearest doctor was called. He prescribed perfect rest for ten days.

Clapters could be written narrating the daily talks and readings and Mr. Childs' tender ministrations to distract Elinor from her painful condition.

When Elinor was able to limp to the hammock under the apple tree, her devoted attendant ceased his readings and began to plead his own suit.

Once more he placed the package in her hands.

"Is it just like the one you offered me before my accident?" queried the girl.

"No. Look for yourself, Elinor."

"Oh—how lovely!" exclaimed the girl, coloring as she met the earnest eyes that met her.

"Accept it with the description 'Con Amore,' which has been added. Does the pleasure that an offer in your heart, dear?"

"The Amore," whispered Elinor, as he kissed her.

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