

"Fretty"

By Nancy Hazlitt

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Alfretta ran about the garden singing shrilly:

"Dear, dear, what can the matter be?
Dear, dear, what can the matter be?
Dear, dear, what can the m-a-t-i-e-r be?
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon.
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon.
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon.
To tie up my bonny brown hair."

"Fretty, I really wouldn't call him out of his name—you know it isn't Johnny," Cousin Langley said provokingly from the leafy depths of the grape arbor. "Besides, your hair isn't brown, not in the least. Instead, it's pure carrot color, also mighty pretty. If I were painter person I might call it something else, but being what I am, a stickler for truth!"

"Would you know the truth if you met it in the road?" Alfretta flung at him. "I don't believe so," she went on disdainfully, shaking her glowing waves at him.

She was bareheaded, and the sun struck out high lights from the Titan mass above her white forehead, then fell down to waken green gleams in her long lashed eyes. Slim as became seventeen, tallish, light on little arched feet, with a long neck upbearing her face, she was distractingly pretty, especially to eyes jaded with artifice and sick of fashion—more specifically, Langley Madden's eyes.

Langley was only a third cousin, but assumed that the tie of blood entitled him to take an attitude so critical. It was more than brotherly in its candor. He had come to Alderbrook farm for six blessed, idle weeks after the stress of a long fight and the triumph of a big legal victory. He had not been there in years, although the place belonged to him. Its present occupants, the Lanes, had lived in it to oblige him. Therefore he had had but a faint memory of Alfretta as a solemn young person who had disdained to be friends with him, choosing rather to make companions of the dogs, the kittens and her pony, Snap.

He recalled that she had barely tolerated Susette Barlow, who, in spite of being bigger, came sometimes to play with her. Susette had been a famous



"I REGARD IT AS MY DUTY TO MARRY YOU."

comrade. He had kissed her often, called her his little sweetheart and actually gone the length of sending down to her from the city after he was back there a birthday ring. Notwithstanding, he had found her married and happy, with a baby as round, rosy and dimpled as he remembered her. Ten years, he had reflected, made big changes every way. Still he was not quite prepared for the change they had wrought in Fretty.

The name was of his own coinage; in all other mouths the girl was Alfie. He had been quite taken aback to find that she did not resent his version of the banal mouthful. Indeed, she had said, with a little hovering smile, "The one comfort about my name is, no matter what people call me, they can't possibly make it worse than it is."

The saying had in a way startled him; he had not thought to find philosophy at seventeen in the rural regions. But as time went on he discovered that the philosophy was the least of Fretty's surprises. Young as she was, unformed and inexperienced, she had a way with her, also a poise quite wonderful to see. He did not wonder that she had taken captive his artist friend Vernon; it was Vernon's habit to fall fitfully in love with every girl who was in the least out of the common. Fretty had not a single usual fiber in her. In proof, take the fact that Vernon's adoration had not in the slightest degree turned her head.

"What have we to say to the painter person, Fretty?" Cousin Langley asked, coming out and laying hold of her hands. "Are we going to tell him to go about his business or are we going to say, 'Yes, and thanky, sir,' when he asks?"

"He won't ask," Fretty said, not trying to take away her hands. "You see, I told him at the very first I regarded it as my duty to marry you. Otherwise you would waste all your money—besides, it was the only way to keep Alderbrook in the family. He agreed with me, although I think he was sorry; it must have seemed a shame to him to miss such an opportunity. He

admitted that flirting was a necessity to him. That is why, I think, he is away just now."

"Indeed!" Langley said, his tone an interrogation.

Fretty nodded, echoing: "Indeed! Yes; Mrs. Wortham—your divinity—has opened Grasmere—came herself the day before yesterday. So Mr. Vernon couldn't stay longer."

"Who says she is my divinity? And how do you like it, seeing you have appropriated me?" Langley asked, coloring in spite of himself. He felt all at once young and raw and ridiculous and was in a temper over it. He wanted to shake Fretty—shake her hard. She was jesting, of course, but how beautifully she had turned the tables on him. Quite unaccountably he found himself trembling, his hands moist, his face, he knew, high colored, and all without any reason.

It could not be that the bare suggestion of Fretty—the child, the plaything, the creature he loved to tease—as his wife, the mistress of his home and heart, had thus overcome him. For five years at least he had thought of Georgina Wortham in that position. She fitted it so beautifully and was quite evidently ready to accept it.

"I always answer mother's letters for her. Remember you wrote her about Georgina two years back at least," Fretty said, smiling sweetly, with the faintest touch of malice. "As to my liking her, what does that matter? I have nothing to do with her, only with you."

"You are quite resolved—to take me, I mean?" Langley asked, his eyes downcast.

Fretty looked pensive. "It seems one must do one's duty, however disagreeable," she said, with a little sigh.

Langley erected himself. "In that case, suppose you kiss your crown of martyrdom?" he said, putting his face close to her lips.

Fretty sprang back as far as their clasped hands permitted and said, with dancing eyes: "Next year will be quite time enough for that. You see, I am going away in the fall to be finished at the Winslow school. Mother insists upon it, and I myself think it best. I shall come back a fine lady—fine enough, I hope, to do the family credit. May I trust you not to marry Georgina in all that time?"

"Certainly not," Langley said promptly. "You will have to take me now or risk losing me altogether. And I hate finishing schools and all their works. If you go through the mill I won't have you—that's flat!"

Fretty snatched away her hands, laughing heartily. "What an actor was lost in you, Cousin Langley!" she said. "You had such a ring in your voice! I wish Tommy Hartwell had been in hearing."

"So! You want the heathen to rage, you minx!" Langley said, again imprisoning her hands, then the ring coming back to his voice stronger than ever. "Fretty, I know you were in fun, but, please, dear, let's make it earnest. I want you—nobody else. I have been wanting you ever since I came, without having sense enough to know it."

"How about Georgina?" Fretty murmured, turning away her head so Langley might not see the mounting color in her cheeks.

Langley laughed triumphantly. "May I be vain enough to speak the frozen truth?" he asked, his lips very close to Fretty's ear. She turned a little more away from him, saying very low:

"No! I can guess it. Georgina won't have you; therefore you want me to save your broken heart."

"Of course. But how did you guess it?" Langley asked, his heart thrilling at thought of her care to save another woman from slurring. He had meant to tell her what he knew for truth—that while Georgina would have accepted him for his position and potentialities and given him courageously help throughout their joint career her heart was by no means engaged, she being of the equal temperament that spends its wildest devotion upon itself. Moreover, there was Vernon. All along he had suspected some kindness, even more, between the pair. They might have each other and welcome. Fretty, sweet, slim, red-haired Fretty, was the one wife in the world for him.

Impulsively he caught her to him and said between kisses: "I see it all now. You're a witch. You saw how I needed comforting and proposed to me right off the reel. Henceforth, I shall live to keep you from being sorry for it."

"And I'll make you sorry for it as long as you live if ever you dare say that again!" Fretty interrupted.

Again Langley laughed. He could afford to. Fretty, in spite of her brave words, was nestling to him like a happy child.

What Teacher Said.
Last Sunday Benny made his debut as a Sunday school scholar. When he came home his relatives and friends were anxious to hear a report of his experiences.

"Well, Benny," said his mother, "did you say the text?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And did you remember the story of the lesson?"

"Yes, ma'am. I said it all off by heart."

"And did you put your penny in the basket?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Benny's mother grabbed him up and hugged him ecstatically.

"Oh, you little precious!" she said. "Your teacher must have been proud of you. I know she just loved you. She said something to you, didn't she?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I knew it," said the fond parent. "Come, Benny, darling, tell mother what the teacher said to mother's little man."

"She said," was the startling reply, "for me to bring 2 cents next Sunday."

—New York Post.

A Great Gun

By GRETCHEN GRAYDON

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"Oh, yes! Billy has it again, and this time very bad," Mrs. Wheat said, nodding across at her son. "But you won't wonder at it when you hear the new sweetheart's name—Sarah-Susan—Miss Sarah-Susan Gunn."

Billy turned all colors. Connor, his chum, laughed explosively and said as soon as he could speak: "Billy, I call that positively immoral! You had better be courting twins. How ever will you fix it? You may propose to Susan and be rejected or accepted by Sally. You may even be married wrong. Think too, of being always a mere gunner's mate!"

"Shut up!" Billy interjected, his face scarlet, but grinning in spite of himself. "Wait till you've seen her at least. Mother makes fun of her names because she can't find fault with her any way else. And Sue isn't to blame. She didn't name herself or choose the family she had to be born in."

"No, but you do choose the family you marry into," Mrs. Wheat cooed.

She was less than twenty years older than Billy and still a very pretty and very lively woman.

Connors thought her stunning. So did his Uncle Tim. Harking back suddenly in his mind to something a year old, he whistled aloud and asked abruptly: "Say, Mammy Wheat, is it the same way with Tim? Did you turn him down because you wouldn't be Mrs. O'Toole?"

It was Mammy's turn to blush. The blush made her younger and prettier than ever. "Who says I had the chance to be Mrs. O'Toole?" she began, but stopped as both the youngsters growled derision and unbelief.

"Tim was the worst ever," Connors said decidedly; "couldn't eat or sleep, used to hang out of the windows all 'prom' week just to stare up the street toward, where you were staying; in the greatest fidget, too, to get his place fixed up new. And then, after he'd walked about with you one teeny half hour, he quit—cut out everything except my allowance and scooted across the pond with just half a steamer kit. Don't say you don't know why, mammy! It won't do any good—not with us two. We know. He wanted—because you sent him. Poor old Tim!"

"I do," Billy said heartily, wringing the tardy hand. Mammy detached herself from Tim and flung herself upon Billy's breast, half sobbing, half laughing out: "Wait, son, until you know! Are you willing to be poor to make me happy?"

"Sure," Billy said, giving her a hug. Sarah-Susan bridled. Larry in his most innocent fashion began to explain. Before he had said fifty words she wheeled upon mammy:

"As you have begged your son, madam, for your whim, understand I refuse to countenance your duplicity. I agree with your late uncle. Such conduct is positively immoral."

As she spoke she had been stripping herself of Billy's ring, a simple affair of thready gold with a diamond spark on it. But she quite forgot the diamond pendant at her throat, the circle of brilliants about her arm, not to name many more jewels resting upon her dressing table. Majestically she tossed the ring to Billy—poor crestfallen Billy, who stood at his mother's side.

But when Mrs. O'Toole-Merrion drew his head to her breast and patted it as she had done when he was three years old, he lifted it bravely and smiled up at her, saying: "It hurts, mammy, but I'm not going to cry. And I'm not going to starve either. Tim will see to that."

"Sure," Tim said, hugging his new son. Mammy and Larry considerably looked away.

Clever to care really for my dear, big, blundering, pretty boy, but she cares a whole lot for what he can give her. You ought to see her eying my pearls. I could forgive her a little if she had no pearls of her own. To be rich and grasping is so much worse than to yearn for what one never has had. I could break up the match tomorrow by letting her know I hold the purse strings, but that would lose me my boy, and he's everything."

"She shan't have him, and you shan't lose him. Listen! I've got an idea," Larry said.

Mammy bent toward him, her brimming eyes shining. They talked in whispers for two minutes, then Larry rushed away, headed for the telegraph office.

Exactly three weeks later Mammy Wheat, with Larry in attendance, went up to the city upon a steamer day. The pair got back late to Ferabrook and slipped into the hotel by the side entrance wholly unseen. But soon there was inscribed upon the register in Larry's most sprawling hand, "Mr. and Mrs. F. T. O'Toole-Merrion, Mount Merrion, County Meath, Ireland." And underneath, in Greek letters, "They've found it."

"What's all that about?" Billy said, coming up and leaning over Larry's shoulder.

Larry laid hold on him, saying, "Get your Gunn and come see." As he dragged Billy toward the main staircase he added: "Don't you get heart failure. You'll come out all right, if only we live through it."

Sarah-Susan, in wait for Billy, was easily carried along. As the three entered Mammy's private parlor they saw her standing beside a tall, handsome fellow, baldish and grayish, to be sure, but ruddy and with the happiest merry eyes. Shamelessly he put his arms around Mammy, not even giving Billy a finger until he had said: "I had to have her, even if it meant changin' me name and nation, son. Sure, life was no life without her. Wish me joy, lad, of my new home and a wife in it."

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Berlin's Economy Flats.

In a good part of Berlin—that is, in one of the most desirable locations—one can get a flat for anything from \$20 to \$50 a month that could not be had in New York for less than \$150 if it could be found at all. I have such an apartment in mind, and it is only one among thousands in Berlin. It is on the third floor, and German flat houses are seldom more than four or six stories high. It does not lie in a straight, unbeautiful line along a narrow, dark hallway, but is built around a big square entrance that might be used for a reception room if it were needed. The rooms are large, and each has outside windows. The bathroom is as large as an ordinary "inside" bedroom, as we know bedrooms, and it is fitted up with every modern luxury conceivable, including a splendid shower. The kitchen is too nice to be true, says a writer in Leslie's Weekly. It is lined halfway up with beautiful blue and white tiles. It has a white tile floor, and its gas range is made of blue and white tile to match the walls. It has a blue and white tile refrigerator built in the wall, and there are rows of white porcelain jars upon white tile shelves to keep things in. It would be absolutely impossible for such a kitchen to be dirty.

Evolution of the Sword.

During the first twelve centuries of the Christian era the sword varied little in the essential features from the lines of the broadsword. The blade was lengthened, it is true, and less curved, but the crosspieces of the hilt were usually straight, and the simple, workmanlike look was preserved. The change to the elaborate hilts of several centuries later was made gradually. There were slight changes in the crosspieces from time to time—the stiff straight lines little by little began to curve gently toward the blade. The knob at the end of the handle, usually a simple disk or ball of metal, was varied into a trefoil, a fluting or a small Maltese cross. Blades and scabbards were engraved with inscriptions, a practice which had indeed been found in Danish barrows bearing unmistakable Runic characters cut in the bronze blades. The cross hilted sword the crusaders carried on their pious errand to the Holy Land not infrequently displayed the sacred monogram either carved or inlaid.

VARIETIES OF MAPLE

THERE ARE FIVE DIFFERENT KINDS OF THE NATIVE SPECIES.

The Sugar Maple Has Well Defined Characteristics of Its Own, and These Will Always Prove an Unfailing Means of Identification.

Although the family resemblance between the different maple species is strong, the sugar maple has definite characteristics of its own, and these are an unfailing means of identification. It is a tall, erect tree, with smooth branches, hard bark, which breaks into long fissures, several inches apart on the main trunk, and with dark brown twigs. The leaves are opposite each other on the stem, and in winter, if one looks carefully at the scars of the leaves left by the small fibers which held the leaf in place.

The buds are brown and sharp pointed, with small overlapping scales, and the terminal bud, at the tip of the branch, is larger than the lateral ones which grow opposite each other on the stem. Always hold firmly in mind the fact that the sugar maple has brown, pointed buds, for even in summer they serve to identify the tree after the season's growth has been completed. The buds and the peculiar appearance of the bark, which looks as if it had been plowed, are the most distinctive characteristics.

The four other native maples are the red, or swamp, maple, the one from which Thoreau in his youth succeeded in extracting a small quantity of sugar; the white, or silver, maple, a water loving species; the moosewood, or striped, maple, a beautiful tree, and the spiky, or mountain, maple, a roadside shrub.

The red maple, the most brilliant of the family both in spring and autumn, and the sugar maple are quickly told apart.