

The ESCAPE

A POST MARITAL ROMANCE

BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

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SYNOPSIS.

The Escapade opens, not in the romance preceding the marriage of Ellen Slocum, a Puritan miss, and Lord Carrington of England, but in their life after marriage. The scene is placed just following the revolution in Carrington castle in England. The Carringtons, after a happy party, engaged in a family life, are led by the wily Lord Carrington and his wife each made charges of faithlessness against the other in continuation of the quarrel.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"But I thought, my dear child," began Lady Cecily with covert malice in voice and manner, "that you did not approve of the—er—wicked little pastebards."

"I have been converted by"—Ellen looked around—"by Lord Strathgate's arguments this afternoon."

Lord Strathgate had not made any arguments that afternoon, but he was too clever not to follow my lady's lead.

"You flatter me, dear Lady Carrington," he murmured, with a knowing glance that made Carrington want to kill him then and there.

"Ellen," whispered Debbie, "you are not going to let them play, are you?"

"I'm going to play myself," returned Ellen recklessly in a loud, clear voice.

"But, my dear Lady Carrington, you don't know one card from another," expostulated the admiral who had observed with dismay the course of events.

"Sir Charles Seton will teach me," returned Ellen, quickly.

"With pleasure, your ladyship," said Sir Charles.

"But you promised," said Debbie artlessly, turning to that gallant young soldier, "to show me that rare old edition of Richard Baxter in the library."

"Baxter, the Saint's Rest!" snickered Athelstrong. "Good Lord, she's got him there."

"It doesn't make the least bit of difference, Sir Charles," began Ellen, commiserating his look of dismay at the sneers and laughter of the company. "I know you would help me if you could, but Miss Slocum has the prior claim and someone else will teach me."

"I will take upon myself that honor," interrupted Strathgate quickly.

"Sir Charles, will you take me to the library?" now interposed the shocked and scandalized little Puritan.

"Lady Carrington, your instruction awaits you," said the earl, bowing.

"On second thought, Lord Strathgate," returned Ellen, "I don't believe I feel equal to learning a new game."

"Have your religious scruples returned, Lady Carrington," exclaimed Lady Cecily, insinuatingly, "or are you afraid of losing money?"

"I will cut the cards with you, Lady Cecily, or you, Mrs. Monbrant, this instant for a thousand pounds and then we will see which of us is afraid," returned Ellen with wonderful composure.

"You are mad," began Carrington, as the two ladies addressed shrank back in dismay.

"Your pardon, my lord, I am addressing your friends, not you. Do either of you ladies take me? No? Is there anyone there who wishes to tempt fortune in this way? You only play for money and not for the game, I understand. Duke, will you cut me for a thousand pounds? No? Will you, duchess, or you, General Athelstrong?"

"If you make it 50, my dear lady," began the general.

"Admiral, I know you don't play," interrupted Ellen, disdaining the little man and his little stake, "so there only remains—" She looked at the other two men.

Strathgate stepped gallantly into the breach.

"I have not the honor of being your husband, Lady Carrington—unfortunately," he added under his breath—"and I will cut the cards with you for any sum of money—or anything else."

"Done!" cried the lady, "the highest card takes the thousand pounds. I shall have to depend on you gentlemen to tell me which is high, if I have won."

"I shall stand by you," Carrington said to his wife, "with your permission, and see fair play."

"By God, sir!" cried Strathgate, springing to his feet, "does that mean—?"

"It means nothing but that a husband's place is by his wife's side when she ventures fortune, reputation or honor," returned my lord, very high and mighty.

"Madam," said Strathgate presenting the pack, "will you cut first?"

Ellen lifted the top card.

"The tour of hearts," she exclaimed. "The three of spades," said Strathgate, turning a card. "The thousand pounds is yours and I am the richer in your triumph, madam," he added, bowing gracefully.

"Two thousand pounds against two of yours, for another cut, my lord," said Ellen.

"The knave of hearts," said Ellen, turning her card.

"The unmanly ace of clubs takes in custody your knave," returned Strathgate after making his cut.

"Once more, and this time for £3,000."

"I cannot dislodge a lady," returned Strathgate smiling, although his face was growing somewhat pale. Surely this was play such as he had never ventured upon.

"Ellen, stop!" cried Carrington, dropping his hand upon her shoulder.

"My lord, you hurt my shoulder. Thank you," she added as he removed his hand.

The cards were cut again, and once more Strathgate won. Ellen found herself £4,000 in his debt.

"Tis £4,000 then. Would you see it on the board?"

"Your word is sufficient for me," replied Strathgate.

Again Ellen lost and found herself in debt £8,000.

"Five thousand pounds the stake now," cried my lady, cutting once more.

And this time Ellen won.

"How stands the score now?"

"You owe me £3,000," said Strathgate.

"Once more and now for £6,000 pounds," said Ellen, her face flushed with excitement.

Ellen's luck was with her and this time she won.

"And now," she said, "the score is in my favor."

"Yes, madam, for £3,000."

"Do you wish to quit now, my lord?"

"Never," said the earl. "I will play with you to the extent of my fortune."

"Seven thousand pounds," cried Ellen.

And this time fortune was against her, for my lord of Strathgate won.

"For God, the score weaves like a see-saw," cried Gen. Armstrong.

"Now she owes him £4,000."

"Ellen," said Carrington, desperately, "I beg you to stop now."

"Is Lord Carrington afraid his wife will lose all her money?" deftly interposed Strathgate, sneering.

Back and forth the wagers went with varying fortune between the two until after half an hour's fierce and



"Whatever Game You Like."

wife's £. O. U. is yours and I confess I'm glad of it."

"Madam," said Carrington, standing up grim and grave and proffering the paper to his wife, "I return you your debt of honor."

"By no means, sir," returned Ellen, proudly, "it shall be paid to you in the morning."

"Better to me than to Lord Strathgate," said Carrington bitterly.

CHAPTER IV.

A Dance, a Kiss, a Meeting.

Taking the assent of the company for granted, Ellen, who had assumed the unexpected role of leadership in the evening's entertainment, summoned the servants and directed them to move the furniture from the center of the room in preparation for the dance.

"If you can't and won't dance, Lady Carrington," said Mrs. Monbrant, who knew very well Ellen's inability.

"Five thousand pounds the stake now," cried my lady, cutting once more.

"I can't play either," answered Ellen.

"What, neither play nor dance?"

"I can't," said Carrington.

"Then we are mistaken in one point," added Ellen. "I can dance if anyone will play."

"But I thought," began Carrington nervously.

The door opened and in came Miss Debbie followed by Sir Charles.

"Egad, Seton!" snickered the duke, "did you know Baxter's 'Saints' Rest' so engrossing that you forgot all about us?"

"Debbie, I'm going to show these people how to dance, will you play for me?"

"Play for dance?" cried Debbie.

"What shall it be?" said the helpless Debbie as Seton led her to the harpsichord.

"Yankee Doodle!" cried Ellen.

"Dammed rebel tune!" muttered the duke under his breath in an aside.

"You are surely not going to attempt to make a spectacle of yourself before these our friends," remonstrated Debbie.

"Ellen Doodle!" cried Debbie.

"Darned rebel tune!" muttered the duke under his breath in an aside.

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