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The One who forgot

By RUBY M. AYRES

BEGIN HERE TODAY

PETER LYSTER, veteran of many battles in the World War, is saved from death when a shell bursts in the British front lines. He recovers from his injuries, but the shock has snapped a thread in his mind. He has lost his memory. Peter has forgotten his engagement to...

NAN MARRABY, in London, just before departure for France. Nan is heartbroken because Peter fails to remember even when brought face to face with the girl who has been wearing his ring over her heart ever since the day of their last parting. Nan has been living with...

JOAN ENDICOTT in a small London apartment. But, since Joan's husband is returning on leave, and a wire from home has informed Nan that her stepmother has died suddenly, Nan has decided to go back and care for her three young stepbrothers. Through Peter's plight Nan has become acquainted with...

LIEUT. JOHN ARNOTT, who is arranging to take Peter to the home of his sister, situated just a few miles from Nan's home town. Nan is now aboard a train, homeward bound. The train only stopped once on the journey down into Hertfordshire. Nan went to the window and looked out. She had said that she hated the country; but it was not really true—nobody could hate the country, especially in the spring.

The guard blew his whistle—the train began to move slowly away when the door of Nan's carriage was flung open and a man precipitated himself in. He tumbled inelegantly onto the seat and looked across at Nan with a smiling apology.

"I'm sorry—I nearly missed it." He stopped, and a little frown crossed his brows. "I beg your pardon, but surely—aren't you Miss Nan Marraby?" The blood flew to Nan's face.

"I am, but..." The man held his hand to her. "My name is Setton," he said. "You remember me—I met you with Peter Lyster the last night he was in England."

A wave of crimson rushed over Nan's face; with distressed eyes she stared at the man. "Of course—I remember you," she said, incoherently. "I—I—remember you perfectly." She gave him her hand; her mind seemed to be working at lightning speed. Had she seen Peter since his return from France? If so, had he heard anything?

"It's odd how one meets people again," she hardly knew what she was saying. "I suppose you don't live down this way—my home is at Leavenden; I am just going there now."

"I don't really live here," he answered; "but, as a matter of fact, I've taken a furnished home for the spring and summer months. I was always rather keen on the country."

"I hope we shall see a great deal of one another," he added. Nan flushed. "I don't expect I shall go out very much," she said constrainedly. "As a matter of fact, I was wired for this afternoon—my stepmother has died very suddenly, and—there are three little boys left."

Setton said he was sorry. "Are you going to stay at home—permanently?" he asked. "I gather from what you say that you have not been living at home."

She rather resented his tone. "I really don't know," she answered, and looked away from him out of the window at the flying country.

"And—Lyster?" the man opposite to her was saying. "I hope you have good news of him?" Nan turned her head slowly; the question had been asked in all innocence; apparently Setton knew nothing of what had happened.

"Mr. Lyster is in London," she said. "Indeed." His rather subtle smile brought the color to her face. "Perhaps I shall be seeing something of him, then," he said, easily. "Lyster will be coming down, of course?"

"I don't think so," Nan forced herself to smile. Her mind leapt ahead into the future and she knew that this man must hear sooner or later what had happened.

She forced herself to go on: "Perhaps I had better tell you that Mr. Lyster and I are no longer engaged," she said. Her voice was quite steady, but Setton was shrewd enough to guess that it held underlying pain.

He raised his brows. "Is that so?—I must sympathize—with Lyster," he added courteously. "I really don't think you need trouble," Nan answered. "We just discovered that we had—made a mistake." The last words were a rush. "I hope if you meet him, Mr. Setton, that you will not mention my name at all."

He leaned forward and touched her hand with his own. "I think it is a most sensible view to take," he said. "If all women were like you, Miss Marraby."

Setton was looking at her with undisguised admiration. He was delighted to find that he was to have this girl for a near neighbor. "So you have three small stepbrothers?" he said. "Yes." "Perhaps you will allow me to take them out in my car sometimes," he suggested. "I have a great deal of time on my hands and I am very fond of children."

Gadsden now. How are you going to get out to Leavenden?" "There will be a trap of some sort," Nan answered. "And if not I shall leave my bag at the station and walk."

"My car will meet me," he told her. "I shall be delighted to drive you out if I may."

Nan wanted to refuse, but she thought it would seem absurd. "It's very kind of you," she said.

The train ran into the station and Setton opened the door. A liveried man came forward to meet him and took his suitcase. Setton indicated Nan's modest bag on the rack.

"I am going over to Leavenden first," he said. He and Nan walked out of the station together. As they bowed along the lanes in Setton's car she caught little glimpses of yellow primroses in the woods, and now and then the faint, elusive scent of wood violets.

"I need not tell you that there was another woman in the case all the time..." The words haunted her. There was something parallel between her own story and the case of which he had spoken. The other man had just pretended to have lost his memory, whilst Peter...

She closed her eyes for a moment and thought of Peter Lyster's worn face as she had seen it only that morning; the tired look in his eyes, the absent-minded, indifferent way in which he had seemed to regard everything, and she knew it was impossible to doubt him.

"If you will ask your man just to put me down here," Nan said. "I can wait the rest of the way; the house is quite close now."

Setton spoke to the driver, and the car was stopped. Nan got out; she grabbed her small suitcase hurriedly. She did not want this man to go up to the house with her; she held out her hand.

"Not goodby," he answered quickly. "I hope this is only the first of many such meetings."

She did not know what to answer. "And, Miss Marraby, if ever you want a friend, I hope you will remember me."

Nan's color deepened. "You are very kind, but—I'm a very independent person. I don't think it's at all likely—thank you, all the same."

"But he would not take the rebuttal; he only smiled. "I hope you will remember," he said again. He stood looking after Nan as she ran down the lane that led up to the house.

(To Be Continued)



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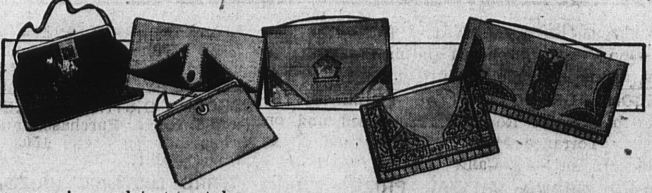
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