

In Maytime

Anne Maynard Kidder

Table of Contents

<u>In Maytime</u>	1
<u>Anne Maynard Kidder</u>	1
I.....	1
II.....	2
III.....	3

In Maytime

Anne Maynard Kidder

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- I
- II
- III

I

Timothy Trask was an eminently correct young man. His dress, his speech, his manners were all the most correct of their kind. If he discovered that anything was the proper thing to do, he always did it, even to the extent of playing very poor golf in an irreproachable pink coat. He was a great lover of the antique, which is in itself a very correct thing to be at the present time, and he possessed a collection of ancient armour, which was hung about on the walls of his wide front hallway, a grim line of swords and battle-axes, and great round shields.

Large as this collection was, in the mind of the fastidious Timothy it was incomplete without a certain Crusader's dagger, exposed to view in a New York dealer's window. Timothy had stood looking at this dagger with longing contemplation, for once unconscious of his pose before the public gaze. His imagination had conjured up an enticing scene in which Timothy Trask figured as the centre of an admiring throng of acquaintances, all watching with breathless eagerness while he told the story of the ancient dagger and pointed out its jewelled hilt and the fine gold chains attached to each end. Then he had counted over his railway stocks, his mortgages and government bonds, and had sadly taken the train back to Philadelphia.

The dagger continued to fill an unobtrusive place in the New York window, and an altogether too prominent place in the mind of poor Timothy. All his antiques grew tiresome and commonplace in comparison with this one little jewelled hilt. At last one evening he decided that he must have it if it ruined him. With a sudden burst of confidence he told the whole story to three friends in his smoking room, and announced his intention of going to New York the next day.

Unlucky confidence for Timothy! A look of subtle meaning passed from one to another of the friends. One of them, in spite of warning glances from the others, picked up a copy of the Ledger from the table, and nonchalantly pointed to a full-page account of a May-day fête, reviving the Elizabethan plays and dances, to be given the next day at Bryn Mawr.

"Here's a lot about the learned ladies. Going to give some sort of show or other. Elizabethan! Hm! Reading extracts from history, I suppose, perhaps all dressed up, like a Dickens reading. It says something about 'correct costumes.' I wonder if Tim's cousin is to be in it. Look here, Tim, when are you going to take us out to see that pretty cousin of yours?"

"I have not seen Marion Hall since she was a child, and have no desire to make her acquaintance," said Timothy icily.

In Maytime

Because Timothy was so correct, he particularly detested and disapproved of college girls. They represented to his mind a mixture of spectacled phenomena of learning, and of cheering, basketball playing New Women. In either capacity he found them peculiarly objectionable. He often said of them, with a fervent horror he might have expressed towards wild Indians, "I sincerely trust it will never be my misfortune to meet one."

His feeling towards college girls was well known to these friends and it had occurred to one of them that it would be delightful to see Timothy at the May-day festivity, surrounded by hordes of college girls on their native heath. The incongruity of the picture was so pleasing to the others that the idea had been instantly seized upon, and they determined, by some hook or crook to get Timothy to Bryn Mawr.

Now the avowed trip to New York gave them their opportunity. One of them could meet him at the station and manage in some way to lead him astray.

The victim serenely played into their hands. When the conspirators appeared Timothy was just in the agony of trying to hide his near-sightedness and at the same time discover which was his gate. All the officials seemed occupied at that moment, and he had no time to go back to the bureau of information.

"Hello, Jenks, where are you bound for? I have just two minutes. Can you see which is the New York gate?"

"Over there," replied Jenks, unblushingly pointing to the sign "Bryn Mawr special," under which was a hurrying crowd in holiday attire. Timothy noted the throng and bustle of an express, and pushed through the gate just in time to get a seat.

II

"To the May-pole let us on,

The time is swift and will be gone!"

The blue sky, the green campus, the laughter, echoing on every side, repeated the invitation of the song, while the sun poured gayly through the windows, and the voices without mingled with those within. A breakfast party was in progress on the fourth floor of Merion. It was not the first time such a function had been held there, but this morning the fantastic costumes of the guests, the piles of gay cheese-cloth heaped in a corner, the swords and plumed caps lying on top of notebooks, gave the party an unusually festive and holiday appearance.

A herald clad in yellow and white, adorned with rampant lions before and behind, was scrambling eggs by the window-sill, and a forester in a brown jerkin was making coffee in one of the egg-shaped coffee-pots so apt to turn upside down when least expected. A marshal had just set fire to her blue and red coat-of-arms, and was kneeling in front of the divan, engaged in carefully pasting on a patch.

Every now and then a knock announced a newcomer whose costume was greeted with laughter and eagerly examined. Presently a forester appeared, in Lincoln green jerkin and smock. Her arms were full of many-coloured banners, which she proceeded to hang out of the window, flaunting an expanse of purple lions and gilded dragons upon the spring breeze. Then she procured a plate of eggs and potatoes, and a cup of coffee, and sat down on the floor.

"We have been indulging in a little archery practice this morning," she said, laughing softly at the remembrance. "It is going to be very picturesque shooting down that avenue of trees, but it is singularly fortunate that the target is safely out of sight!"

In Maytime

"Don't be discouraged! Wait till you hear the heralds striving to sound their horns," said the sword-dancer, who was sitting on a perilous rocking-chair without a back, while her hair was being turned up beneath her collar. "There, listen to them now!"

There came through the open window a feeble noise, ending abruptly in a squeak, followed by shouts of laughter. Looking out they saw a herald standing with her head thrown back and her trumpet raised to her lips, her tall, young figure, in its white and yellow, silhouetted against the green campus. A motley but appreciative audience paused in the task of putting up May-pole streamers to applaud her.

While the others were so engaged, the forester came and sat down on the floor by the marshal, and watched her put the finishing touches to the damaged costume.

"Will you do something for me?" she asked, a trifle shyly.

"With pleasure," said the marshal, outlining her coat-of-arms with black paint.

"Don't say you will so quickly. I had a letter from some one, the other day, saying he was coming to May-day. I wrote him that I didn't want him, but I am afraid he will come anyway, and I don't want to see him."

"Oh!" said the marshal, looking up. "I can't make up my mind," said the other girl. "I wish I could, but I can't, and I simply won't see him till I do."

"Oh!" said the marshal again. "I suppose you want me to keep him out of your way?"

"If you only would," assented the forester, with a pleading gaze.

"But my dear young innocence, there are going to be a few thousand people here, more or less. How am I to find one unattached young man?"

"Oh, I only mean, in case you happen to hear of his asking for me. People will come to you, you know. Don't have him too much on your mind."

"I will try not to," said the marshal, dryly. "If you will hear my advice, I think you had better see him for yourself, and settle it, yes or no, one way or other."

"You don't know how hard it is," murmured the forester, with a little sigh.

The marshal rose to her feet with a grim expression, which indicated that she would like the chance of settling it. And with an inward remark upon the nuisance of having men mixed up with college functions, she went to the oval mirror and put on her coat-of-arms.

"The rehearsal is at ten," she announced. "Now, please be on time, every one, so that it need not take quite the whole morning to form the procession. Don't forget the cloaks for the band, Elizabeth, and do all of you remember that no one is to wear patent leather shoes!"

She seized her marshal's staff and departed.



When Timothy arrived at the Bryn Mawr station, that afternoon, he found himself in the centre of a dense crowd,

In Maytime

which was surging up the road. He had no liking for crowds, and avoided them on all occasions. It annoyed him intensely to be surrounded by indiscriminate numbers of chattering people, pushing against him, and pressing him along with them. In spite of his efforts to maintain his usual dignified carriage, he was swept along at a fairly rapid pace, through a gateway, and up a long path to the side of a low stone arch; through which appeared a vista of gleaming white road and green trees.

At Haverford when the familiar Cricket Club came in sight, Timothy had come to a sudden realization of the trick his friends had played him. And when every one trooped out of the train at Bryn Mawr, he had decided to yield to curiosity and make the best of a bad situation. But it was in no genial mood that he approached the college. And now he almost wished he had taken the next train back, to vent his anger on those three friends.

He was sandwiched in between two stout ladies, one of whom poked him in the neck with her parasol, while the other explained the details of Mary's costume, just completed the day before, by the maternal sewing-machine. Timothy correctly protected his necktie from the parasol's advances. Taking out his eyeglass, he assumed his most extreme expression of bored indifference, hoping to indicate to every one around him that he, at least, was not here willingly for a day's holiday, and anticipated no diversion whatever from anything forthcoming. The thought of himself, Timothy Trask, inside a woman's college, waiting by the roadside for a circus procession, was enough to make him grit his teeth, and swear at the three idiots who had been instrumental in sending him there.

Suddenly a hush fell upon the expectant crowd. With a blast upon their shining trumpets, eight heralds appeared in Pembroke archway, dressed in white and gold, with the Pembroke coat-of-arms emblazoned upon their breasts. Behind came lumbering along four oxen, great, patient beasts, decked out with leaves and branches, dragging the May-pole. Some mighty forest-giant had been sacrificed to these revels. It was painted white, and festooned with garlands. A line of flower girls trooped along on either side, flowers in their arms, on their short gay-coloured skirts, and adorning their wide hats.

Laughter rippled down the line of spectators, as through the archway came nine donkies, one behind another, solemnly bearing the famous Nine Worthies of Old English pageant. Odds, my life, we find ourselves in high company! Here is Julius Cæsar, clad in scarlet, with a truly Roman nose, and behind him King Solomon, in all his purple glory, while Sir Godfrey de Bouillon, that virtuous knight, brings up the rear on a most restive steed. Next, mounted on a high cart, came the maidens of Spring, fighting their old battle with grey-coated Winter. That is right, pelt him with flowers, and cover his snowballs. He has no place to-day.

It seemed as if Pembroke Arch were a gateway to the past, and jovial Old England were pouring through it.

Now came the ring of horses' hoofs upon the stone paving. Make way, there, for Maid Marian, the Queen of the May, with Robin Hood, that gallant and sturdy rogue, riding by her side! There followed all his merry men, come from the shades of Sherwood to join in the revels, for what true yoeman will not trip a measure with a pretty maid, when the sun shines on May-day? Behind came the fool, in motley red and yellow, bells upon his two long ears, bells upon every point of his skirt and cape, bells upon the sceptre which he shook above his head. Happy fool, with light feet and lighter heart! Treading close on his heels the Hobby-horse was showing his paces. For the most part he walked along, sedately enough, saving his breath to curvet and prance, later on, in the Revesby Sword Plaie.

With music and laughter the pageant moved on, a train of shepherds with softly bleating sheep, milkmaids, peddlers, ballad-mongers, and last of all, mounted upon a float, a strange company indeed. They were dressed in classic Grecian folds prepared to act in The Excellent Pastoral of The Arraignment of Paris. Cupid is proverbially abroad on May-day, but here he stood, in actual guise, and Pan, too, playing his pipes, and stately Minerva, with her snaky shield.

In Maytime

The pageant wound in and out, around the grey stone buildings, a long thread of living colour. Before Timothy well knew what he was doing, he found himself pressing eagerly on with the crowd to the May-pole green. The flower-crowned pole was loosed from behind the patient oxen, and borne upon eager shoulders to the centre of the green. It was raised aloft in the air, tottered for an instant, a great cheer went up, and it sank into its socket. Then struck up the fiddles and pipes, the dancers hastened to their May-poles, and holding aloft the gay streamers began the dance with a bow and a courtesy.

"All fair lasses have lads to attend 'em,
Jolly, brave dancers who can amend 'em."

They wound the coloured ribbons about the four poles, while the rest of the merry-makers danced at will and to the lilt of the gay tunes, in twos and threes, as their fancy led them.

Timothy watched two flower-girls, tripping a measure with a forester, smiling at him over their shoulders, and finally giving him each a hand and dancing away into the crowd. He felt his pulses beat the time as they had never done in a ballroom. It was the open air, and the gay costumes, and the spirit of Old England, which had somehow taken possession of him. Here was nothing but sunshine and feasting and dancing all day; and after sundown, rest under a hawthorne bush. Timothy even longed to give a hand to that dainty shepherdess and join in the dance.

"Come together, come, sweet lass,
Let us trip it on the grass."

Presently the music ceased and the dancers scattered to their separate plays. Timothy suddenly bethought him of his cousin. For the moment his desire to claim acquaintance with an Old Englander got the better of his hatred of college girls, and he asked one of the nearest groups where he might find Miss Hall. A tall marshal standing near heard the question, and turned around with a start.

"Did you ask for Miss Hall?" she said. "I will be glad to direct you if you will come with me."

Now Timothy was unaccustomed to having young women, with golden hair, and shining, eager eyes, hold out their hands to him, and say, "Come with me!" He was so taken by surprise that with a mumbled, "Much obliged, I'm sure," he followed her meekly through the crowd towards Dalton Hall.

"It is most unusual," he told himself with misgiving, "for her to address me, a complete stranger, in this way. It must be the policy of the college to propitiate outsiders. I wonder if she would do it to every one."

Then, quite irrelevantly, he wondered if he had on his most becoming shape of collar. For some reason he felt very tolerant towards this girl's naive eagerness.

Presently she turned back to him, and said: "Would you not like to come over here and see The Ladie of the Maie? It is such a pretty little play."

"After all," thought Timothy, "no one knows me here."

He followed her submissively to the very front row of spectators, and sat down on the grass, a thing he had not done before for at least ten years. While they watched, the marshal explained that these shepherds and shepherdesses were all grave seniors, and in one more month would be Bachelors of Arts in fur-trimmed hoods. She told him all the old oral jokes, and Timothy, to whom they were quite new, was much-diverted. In return he

In Maytime

raked up his almost forgotten college tales. They were not new to the marshal, but she appreciated them so sweetly that Timothy thought they must be even more amusing than he had fancied.

The shepherds departed with their flocks of white, softly-bleating sheep, but before the audience had time to wish them back, a gay, rollicking ditty struck up, and the chimney-sweeps came running in, Jack-o'-the-Green leading. They joined hands and danced around him in a circle, still to the same rollicking measure, while Jack-o'-the-Green, peering through his covering of branches and leaves, bowed to each one in turn. The music stopped with a quick chord, the chimney-sweeps dropped to their knees and pointed their brooms at the figure in the middle. Then the music began again, and with their brooms in front of them, they ran out. Timothy and his guide stood up, and moved onward with the crowd. He began to feel that there was no immediate necessity of finding Marian Hall. He could just as well take a later train back to town. The marshal was very courteous, and he did not wish to appear rude by leaving her too unceremoniously. He even wished something would happen to detain him.

"I want to take you to the Saint George Plaie," said his guide. "It is very funny, and the grads. do it with a great deal of spirit "

Timothy's heart beat fast as he suddenly realized that the marshal was purposely lengthening her task, that she was no more anxious to find Miss Hall than he was. Yet she had known him but half an hour! It made him feel strangely humble.

"Do you know," he said, "I have not even been introduced to you?"

"Let me introduce myself," said the girl, gaily. "Sir Marshal, at your service."

"And I am Sir Lancelot," he declared, modestly, "just returned from the Crusades, and glad to be back in merry England."

"Then, fair Sir Knight," said the marshal, "let me guide you to where Saint George is slaying the unbeliever in sport, as you have so often slain him in reality."

With more of such agreeable foolery, they made their way to where Saint George was indeed slaying every one around him, to the diversion of the spectators. For years afterwards the thought of the Dragon, with rainbow snaky locks, writhing in the throes of death, would bring to Timothy a smile of retrospective amusement.

It was a staging fit for A Midsummer Night's Dream. Pembroke was in the background, its grey walls overhung with ivy. A green elm spread its branches on one side of the open space, and on the other was a cherry-tree, a mass of pink blossoms, its soft petals carpeting the grass beneath.

There was no further question of finding Marian Hall. Sir Knight and his guide wandered about everywhere, and Timothy's friends would surely have doubted their eyes, could they have seen him taking in everything with the air of a happy child, while he stated his theories on Old English dances, and masques, and costumes.

At last he said: "Where is that fellow, Robin Hood, whom I saw in the procession? He must be shooting his arrows somewhere about the green."

"I believe he is," said the marshal, without enthusiasm, adding to herself, "How vexatious if I cannot keep him away from there. He will see her, of course, and my day's work will have gone for nothing."

"I should like to see him immensely," observed Timothy.

In Maytime

"It is a long walk," objected the marshal.

"Not too long, surely," said Timothy, with a glance, adding persuasively, "I should hate to go alone."

"I should hate to have you," cried the marshal, with unmistakable sincerity.

"Ah!" said Timothy, intoxication mounting to his brain. He wanted to grasp some one by the hand and tell him what an altogether pleasing and agreeable world this was. "Ah!" he said again, "we will go together."

The marshal flushed and murmured, "Idiot!" Then she grew pinker than ever with vexation, while Timothy watched her confusion with an agreeable thrill.

"If he will go," thought the marshal, "I must certainly go too, to see that he doesn't get within speaking distance."

So they walked on, past Taylor Hall, and across the May-pole green, down to the hill below Radnor, where Robin Hood's men were holding forth. The crowd of people surged and eddied past them. All the wide expanse of campus was covered with moving throngs, and dotted with the brilliant May-day dresses. Banners of purple and gold and crimson were flaming from every window.

"I have stepped right out of America," remarked Timothy. "This place must be rather like a May-day fête, even on ordinary occasions."

"I hope not," thought the marshal, wearily.

"Those grey stone buildings, with all that ivy, are like feudal castles. I should think that the girls wandering about must be rather decorative, if they wear their caps and gowns."

"Thank you," murmured the marshal.

"I feel like a trespasser," continued Timothy. "The place just suits your costumes. We have no business here. Why did you let us in?"

"I don't know what object there would have been in getting it up, if we didn't let you in," said the marshal, striving not to be bored.

Timothy was still in the clouds as they pushed their way into the inner circle of the crowd, just in time for the finish of a bout at quarter-staff between Robin Hood and Little John. Then Robin Hood ran to the top of the hill, and blew a shrill blast upon his horn. A shout answered him, and his band of merry men, all clad in Lincoln green, came pouring over the brow of the hill. Long ago, when Timothy was a child, Robin Hood had been his hero. He had procured a bow and arrow, and was wont to strut about the back-yard, pretending to shoot the dun deer. Here he was face to face with the famous outlaw, and the old glamour gathered about him. After the familiar scene of Little John's christening, the drinking-horns were filled, and the band threw themselves down upon the soft grass, covered with violets. All listened while the minstrel touched his harp, and the beautiful voice of Allan-a-Dale sang the plaintive old ballad Islington.

Timothy was still hearing the echoes of the song when his guide said to him, "It is all over. That is the last of the day."

"I should like to see it over again," sighed Timothy.

In Maytime

The girl laughed impatiently. "If you are going back to town to-night, I am afraid you will have to go at once. The train leaves in about ten minutes. Good-night," and she held out her hand to him.

"Good-night," said Timothy. "Do you know," he said, "I have to thank you for one of the pleasantest days of my life."

"I am very glad," said the marshal, not knowing what else to say.

"I am going home to write a love-story," declared Timothy, "all about Old England and May-day, and you shall be the heroine!"

"Thank you very much," said the marshal. "It is getting very late, Sir Knight. I must really say good-bye."

"Good-bye, good-bye, Sir Marshal till next May-day," cried Timothy. He stood still, looking after her tall, erect figure, as she made her way through the dwindling crowd.

Darkness had fallen quickly, and the space about him was almost deserted. The great grey buildings loomed up dimly in the twilight. A group of girls strolled past him, singing Islington, and the wind brought back the sweet, plaintive notes. Timothy still saw beside him the quaint Figure of the marshal, the curls flying out from beneath her rounded cap, her eyes looking up at him as she explained the May-day sights and sounds. It seemed hardly possible that she was not a reality, that he could stretch out his hand and not touch her. But he would see her again; Philadelphia and Bryn Mawr were not far apart. The distant train whistled, and gave a few warning puffs, which rapidly increased in number as it drew out of the station. Timothy leaned against a tree and indulged in dreams. Two foresters were standing near by, talking eagerly. But it was some time before Timothy realized the purport of their words.

"It was the funniest thing you ever heard of," one of them was saying. "Poor Eleanor! I saw her with him some time ago, and now she has just told me what happened. You see I asked her to take care of Jack for me, and keep him from finding me why, yes, of course I had my reasons and somehow she got hold of the wrong man. She has kept this creature with her all the afternoon, all the afternoon, my dear, thinking he was Jack! And she says he is the most awful stick, and has bored her to death, poor dear! Isn't it a joke on her? It is a good joke on me, too, because I was so sure that Jack would come. I wonder why he didn't!"

Lights were beginning to twinkle in the windows. The chorus of Islington still came back on the breeze, but it sounded quite different to Timothy. Somehow everything had suddenly become commonplace.

"I think," he said, with a deep breath, "it was a pretty good joke on me."

Then he pulled down his hat, buttoned his coat, and set off towards the station, with all possible speed.