

SERIOUS
COMPLICATIONS

BY

M. FRANCES HANFORD-DELANOY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

MARION HANFORD EDDY

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TO
MARION HANFORD EDDY,

to whom she is indebted for the illustrations, and many suggestions (particularly in the "building up" of the characters, "Fritz" and "Molly") while engaged upon this work; and also to Miss Dolly Chapman, Miss Belle McCurrie, Miss Edith Cook, Mr. Ben Ramsdell, Mr. Van Britton, Mr. Frank Bouterious, Mr. Frank Cleaves, and Mr. George Hermance, Miss Eva Fabens, Miss Eva Falkinham, Mr. Fred Henkenius, Dr. Eichwaldt, Mr. Fred. W. Delanoy, Mr. Harry Lally and Mr. Chas. Storey, this book is dedicated:

BY THE AUTHOR.



M. FRANCES HANFORD-DELANOY.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

M. Frances Hanford-Delanoy wrote her first story at the age of fifteen years, while a student at Clinton, N. Y., and entered it in a class contest for a prize, which was awarded to her. Later, this story—"Tribulations of an Elderly Maiden"—appeared in a Utica paper. Returning to her home in Chicago, she entered a college for young ladies, where she again carried off the prize for a composition, entitled "A Dream," which she read in class, and was afterward called upon to read before the students, from the rostrum of the "Assembly Hall." She was married at an early age, and, soon after, removed to California, where she has since resided. Following the advice of friends, she wrote descriptive sketches, notes, and comments for a time, under the pen name "Marie Francis." Some years ago she met with a painful accident, which has since confined her closely to her home. During many weary months, while reclining on her couch, using a lapboard for a table, she, with pencil and posters, circulars, old envelopes, wrapping paper and any available material wrote humorous stories and sketches, under the pseudonym "Mehitable Yaeger." Going into the country, she began writing longer stories. Most of her stories are woven from fragments of dreams, and from circumstances which have come under her observation. Once a story was begun, she worked upon it indefatigably, until it was completed in pencil, laid it away and rested until the "spirit moved" to begin again.

Lately she has had these pencilings copied into MS. for the publishers, but her hand and pencil are seldom idle. Mrs. Hanford-Delanoy is descended through Thomas Hanford of colonial times, from Sir John Hanford, (knight) of Stockport Castle (dating from the eleventh century) in Cheshire, England. The Hanford motto, carved in stone over the door of the ancient mansion at the junction of the Avon and Severn is "Honorare Novissema."

THE PUBLISHERS.

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SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW ARRIVAL.

“ABBOTT’S STATION, sir.”

The conductor waved one hand toward a gentleman, and with the other, pulled the bell cord. “Only stop a second, sir.”

“Toot—toot,” whistled the engine, “clang—clang,” sounded the bell in response to the conductor’s signal, and the person addressed, gathered up his belongings, and started for the door. The train slowed down, and the passenger stepped from the platform of the car to the platform of a private station, on the property of Mr. Paul Abbott, a country gentleman.

“Puff—puff,” went the engine before the wheels had fairly stopped turning, away went the train, and was soon out of sight.

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Our traveler was Mr. Robert Corson, or (as he was familiarly called) Bob Corson, late from Australia, but just now out from New York, where he had arrived on business matters. His sister lived in California, and he had suddenly made up his mind to cross the continent, and drop in upon her unannounced.

“Not a soul in sight,” said he, as he looked about. “Hanged if I know whether to go north, east, south, or west. There’s a road over there, that appears to be well traveled,—guess I’ll stay here,—somebody will show up between now and sundown.”

Turning about, his eyes fell on a miscellaneous assortment of boxes, barrels, and bundles piled on the other end of the platform.

“Hello,” he exclaimed, “guess somebody orders goods at wholesale in this region,—I’ll investigate.” Suiting the action to the words, he clambered about and read the names on the various pieces of freight.

At last, the address on two boxes and a barrel (“Mrs. L. C. Raleigh, Magnolia Villa, Abbott’s Station,”) caught his eye. “Luck attends me,” he said; “somebody will come for this plunder—I’ll make myself as comfortable as possible, until that somebody shows up, and then I’ll

The New Arrival.

go along with the rest of the baggage. I came to surprise Laura, and I guess I'll do it with a vengeance."

Laying his grip on the end of the bench, he took from his pocket a cigar and lighted it. Stretching himself out, and using his grip for a pillow, he prepared to pass the time until some one appeared, of whom he could inquire the way to Mrs. Raleigh's house.

The day was perfect; the air was odorous with the mingled perfumes of wild honeysuckle, alfalfa, and orange blossoms. Half hidden by trees and shrubbery, here and there appeared a dwelling; "Which one," thought Bob, as he smoked his cigar and looked about, "is sister Laura's? The next time I undertake to surprise anybody in the country, I'll not land myself at a wayside station; don't think this bench would make a very comfortable bed; I don't think I would enjoy spending the night here, and I don't believe that I would particularly like making the circuit of this region on foot either. Oh, well, I'll get there all right." He threw away the stump of his cigar, spread his handkerchief over his face, and while waiting for some one to come along, fell asleep.

Time passed.

"Hi dere, you Bill,—steady now,—I vas not

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vant your feet in dees vagon,—vat's de madder mit you?"

Bob sat up and rubbed his eyes, and listened.

"You vas jump oud your skhin for vone leedle horsefly ven he bide mit de mout—I tink ven one dose leedle peesy bees vas do de peesness mit you—you tink you sit mit me dees seadt on, don't it? hi now!"

"Helloa! Helloa!" called out Bob.

"Whow dere, you Bill."

Running to the corner of the station, Bob called out, "Hi there—Helloa! Helloa! Stop a moment, can't you?"

"Yah, I vas *coom* to sthop vone moment dot blace—Vat you vant mit me, eh?"

"Can you direct me to Magnolia Villa?—Mrs. Ral——"

"Mine gracious! You vas vant to go to Meeses Raleigh's? Vell—vell! I vas life dot blace *mineself*. I vas just coom to dake all dose tings home to dot blace, mit dees vagon."

"That's good;—then you live with Mrs. Raleigh? I am Mr. Corson—her brother. I have come to visit her."

"Her brodder!—Vell—vell. Meester Corson! Vas dot so! Vell, I vas Fritz."

"Well, Fritz, I'll go along with you."

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Fritz drove past the station; turning around on the other side, he brought the wagon bed on a level with the platform.

"Here; I'll give you a lift," said Bob, as he picked up a box, shoved it into the wagon, and rolled on the barrel, before Fritz had disposed of the lines, and clambered out.

"Dere vas some more already," said Fritz. "Dose Obbott's dey vas get all dose hams, dot flour, und dose tings."

"Abbott," repeated Bob, as he clambered about among the boxes and barrels. "Here you are, Fritz," said he, tossing a package into the wagon—"this belongs to Abbott. I'll help; we'll get loaded up in short order—I'll go on the seat with you."

Everything on, Bob climbed up, Fritz gathered up the lines and headed the horses for "Magnolia Villa."

Arriving at Mr. Abbott's place, Fritz gave a signal whistle; out ran a couple of hunting dogs, and leisurely down the graveled walk came a Chinese servant, taking a general survey of Bob as he came.

"What for you ead so many hams, Sing?" said Fritz, as he got down from the seat to help carry the things in.

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“Missy Cola alle time clompany,” answered Sing. “Alle time slandwich—you sabbee?—boilee ham, choppee ham, slicee ham, puttee on blead alle same buttee.” Taking a ham in each hand, Sing walked slowly to the house, while Fritz shouldered a heavy box and trotted up the walk.

A young girl ran down the steps from the veranda, and came flying down the path; when she reached the gate, she glanced up at the man on the seat of the wagon; their eyes met; she stood and looked at him in surprise.

“Helloa, Nellie,” called Bob to her; “I know you in spite of your long frocks, ha! ha! ha! ha!”

“Why, Uncle Bob!” exclaimed she, recovering from her surprise. “Where did you come from?”

“From New York,” he replied. “What are you doing here?”

“Why, I came to see Cora, of course.”

“Where are you going now?”

“Home.”

“Are you going to walk?”

“No, sir, I am not. I can’t fly, and I am not going to ride—neither am I going to swim—how do you *think* I’ll get home? Ha! ha! ha! ha! Come down and go with me. Won’t mamma be surprised to see you? Come down, I say, and I’ll row you up the *river*. Ha! ha! ha!”

The New Arrival.

Bob got down from the wagon seat—Fritz climbed up and drove away, while Bob and Nellie left the dusty road, and went across lots to the river.

Reaching the Raleigh wharf, Nellie sprang from the boat, leaving Bob to make it fast. Stepping on to the veranda she called in at the open door, "Somebody coming, mamma,"—and ran back to meet her uncle.

"Mamma, here is Uncle Bob," called Nellie, pushing him into the room.

Laura looked quickly up from the book she was reading, and springing to her feet, she exclaimed: "Robert Worth Corson! You *here*? And you never let us know you were coming." Affectionately greeting him, she asked: "How did you find the way? Aren't you tired and hungry? When did you leave New York? How long can you stay? When——"

"One question at a time, sister," said he as she rattled on. "I didn't find the way, I just waited at the station, until your Dutch comedian hove in sight. I sang out. Then he informed me that he belonged to your menagerie, and had come for your freight. I loaded myself in with the rest of your goods—and here I am. Now that I am here, I would like a bath and some-

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thing to eat; after that, I'll answer your multitudinous questions; if I don't finish to-night, then to-morrow, or the day after."

"Uncle Bob, are all old bachelors like you? You are just as jolly as ever. Uncle Bob, why *don't* you get married?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed. "Nobody will have me, Nellie."

"Nonsense, Uncle Bob, I know somebody; ha! ha! ha! There's Maude Alder at Cora Abbott's, she is just lovely—she lives in San Francisco—she will like you, ha! ha! ha! wouldn't it be funny if——"

"Ha! ha! ha! Nellie, *you* a matchmaker; oh, Nellie."

"Perhaps, Nellie," said her mother, "she might not fancy living in Australia. Bob, are you going to spend all your days on foreign soil? Sell out your old sheep ranch and invest in an orange grove; settle down here."

"I've sold out in Australia, but I'll not settle down anywhere, until I get a bath. I am going upstairs to find a bathtub just now."

Mrs. Raleigh sent Nellie to order a lunch for her uncle; then stepping to the hall she opened a door, telling Bob to enter and make himself comfortable.

The New Arrival.

“Meeses Raleigh, Fritz, he vish you to dell me vat he vill do mit dot shentleman’s trunk.” The speaker was a rosy-cheeked German girl, to whose question Mrs. Raleigh replied:

“Tell him to bring it in here, Molly.”

“So you have your sandwiches made by a Dutch girl; I thought to be in fashion in California, one must have a pigtailed China cook,” laughed Bob, as he closed the door, after Fritz had left the trunk.

Robert Corson was a bachelor of thirty-two. He was fond of travel and cared little for society. He was genial and of jovial disposition; personally, he was a handsome and attractive man. Although kindhearted and sympathetic, and quick to see and understand the trials and sorrows of others, he was inclined to look on the bright side of life; to him, friends often said: “Fate has dealt kindly with you—the current of your life flows easily and tranquilly on, undisturbed by any trouble or disappointment.” They were mistaken—“Still waters run deep.” Bob had had his romance and his dreams. Hidden away amongst his few worldly goods was a little parcel—a tiny glove, and a withered rose wrapped in tissue paper; he never opened the package, but often, he looked at it, and sighed, as he thought of the hap-

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piness that he had hoped might one day be his, had "Fate" not interposed.

He had spent many years of his life in Australia; but his sister, since the death of her husband, had urged him to come to California and locate near her, and he had given her wish due consideration. It was now his intention to settle up all business matters and remain quietly with her until he decided whether to remain in California, or to establish himself in New York.

Laura Raleigh's husband had been dead about five years. She and her only living child, Nellie, occupied the beautiful home that Henry Raleigh had purchased but a short time before his death. It adjoined the home of Mr. Wilber Randall's family, who were old friends and had been neighbors of the Raleighs, when they lived in San Francisco.

Nellie had received her education in a private institution in San Francisco; but school-days were over now, and she had returned, to remain with her mother at "Magnolia Villa."

About two years previously, Mr. Paul Abbott (a wealthy widower from New York City) had settled in the neighborhood. He had come out to visit the family of Mr. Alder, who lived in San Francisco. Becoming enamoured of the climate,



NELLIE RALEIGH.—Page 18.

The New Arrival.

he had visited different portions of the state, and finally he had purchased the land adjoining that of the Raleigh's; built a handsome mansion, and settled down to enjoy life in Southern California, leaving his son and daughter to remain in the East, until they finished their education.

It happened that Nellie Raleigh, and Mr. Abbott's children, arrived at home at about the same time—the two girls soon became warm friends; Cora introduced her brother Tom to Nellie, and Nellie introduced to them, George, the son of Mr. Wilber Randall.

Nellie proved a strong attraction to Tom, and Cora was equally attractive to George. When Cora had settled herself in her new home, Maude Alder (her childhood friend) came from San Francisco to visit for a few weeks, and found herself an odd stick, until Bob arrived, and then he and she paired off, as the others had done, and found each other quite congenial.

The Abbotts, Randalls, and Raleighs enjoyed life—there were no dull days at the "Riverside Neighbors" (by that name these three families were known far and wide about the country), so intimate had they become.

There was the beautiful river with its three tiny wharfs and pretty rowboats. There were

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saddle horses for those who cared to ride, there was a comfortable carriage at each place, there were rustic seats on the broad verandas, and in shady nooks in the gardens; there were hammocks, swinging in the garden under the trees. One could be as comfortable out of doors as within. Often by way of variety, lunch was served on the tables on the roomy verandas, and always there were extra places at any of these tables, for our "Riverside Neighbors" lunched wherever the noon hour found them.

Mr. Abbott looked on for a time at the merry-making; then it was noticed that he was becoming more particular about his dress—always wore a fresh flower in his coat, and kept his boots polished until they shone like mirrors. It was also noticed that he was exceedingly deferential toward little Nellie. No one thought anything about it particularly—she was the youngest of them all; and an only child—used to being petted; besides *she* was the daughter of Laura Raleigh.

Some Introductions.

CHAPTER II.

SOME INTRODUCTIONS.

BEFORE the arrival of the young people from school, Mr. Abbott spent much of his time at Laura Raleigh's house. The old gentleman was lonely; so was she. He was alone with the servants in his house, she was similarly situated in hers. So through the long winter evenings he sat by her fireside and played cribbage, backgammon, or chess. The Randalls happening in occasionally in the evening, invariably found the old gentleman there, and speculating as to whether there was or was not anything in it, mentioned it to George—of course he told Tom,—Tom told Cora. Cora laughed heartily at “such *nonsense*,” and told Nellie. Nellie elevated her brows and replied, “Wouldn't it be funny?” and forgot all about it. *She* was taken up with the *younger* Abbott's attention to herself. Tom was devoted to her, and had no time for gossip—his and Nellie's affairs were

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more interesting than those of the old people; and George was blind to everything but the mischievous and fun-loving Cora.

So intimate had these two girls become, that each was as much at home in the other's house as in her own. Nellie, out for a gallop early in the morning, happened into breakfast at the Abbott's, Cora happened in to dinner at the Raleigh's, on the same day. George Randall, rowing down the river on the way to Abbott's (to see Cora, of course), invariably stopped at the Raleigh's. If Nellie was at home, Cora was pretty sure to be there too; if Nellie was not at home, she was off somewhere with Tom, or else she was with Cora, at Abbott's.

Mrs. Raleigh owned a library of choice books. One day Cora happened in, when Tom and Nellie were rowing on the river. A book lying on the table caught her eye; she opened it, became interested, and sat down to read. Laura Raleigh coming into the room some time after, found her curled up in an easy-chair, completely absorbed in the volume.

"Are you fond of literature?" Laura asked.

"Oh, yes, indeed," answered she, "but papa has not bought many books lately, and I have absorbed all of ours, and I miss the privilege of a circulating library."

Some Introductions.

“My books are at your disposal,” said Laura, “you may read here whenever you like.”

After that Cora was more at the Raleigh's than ever; she would spend hours, curled up in a chair, in the library, or she would creep away into the shrubbery in the garden, to enjoy some book, until she would be interrupted by the peculiar whistle that George would give, on the way down the river, before he reached the little wharf at the Raleigh's. If she answered, he would stop the boat, wait for her while she went to the house for her hat, and then row her home.

Sometimes she would fail to answer him; then he would shove the boat out into the stream, and row down to her home, only to find her gone; then when she heard the dipping of the oars as he returned, she would give a shrill whistle, step out from her hiding place, and laughing at him, step into the boat and let him row her home. She was in love with George, and she knew that he was in love with her; but she was a coquette, and so the poor fellow had a hard time of it in finding out whether she cared for him or not. She teased him, and laughed at him and his love-making. He could not get from her a “yes,” or a “no”; but “patience is a virtue,” and this virtue he possessed in an unlimited degree. He combined it with perseverance, and in time he received his reward.

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CHAPTER III.

PAIRING OFF.

THERE was no more cribbage or chess for Laura Raleigh and Mr. Abbott, now that the young people were at home. Mr. Abbott was getting frisky; he insisted on taking part in all out-door sports of the young people. If Tom played football, why shouldn't he? People need not grow old unless they want to—the spirit is always young. Thus reasoned old gentleman Abbott; he would exercise and limber up a bit.

He bought himself a saddle horse, and galloped about the country. It is true his joints ached, but no matter, it was because he had been lazy. He would become accustomed to exercise. He arose early in the morning, and was off before breakfast for a row on the river, while the others slept. Once he upset his boat by running into a snag, to which he clung and yelled lustily for help, as his boat, bottom up, went sailing down stream. Fortunately, Ben (the Randall's hired man) happened to be fishing, and saw the accident; he

Pairing Off.

plunged in, and landed the only fish he caught that morning, namely, Mr. Abbott. It was a big haul in more ways than one. Two golden tens jingled merrily together in Ben's pockets when he slid in at the back door of the Abbott mansion, and handing a golden five-dollar piece to the housemaid, told her to go upstairs and throw out of the window a suit of Mr. Abbott's clothes, and be quick about it, and keep her mouth shut.

Ben had dragged Mr. Abbott into the stable at Randall's, had filled him with whiskey, wrapped him in the carriage robes, and hidden him under the hay, while he went to get a dry suit of clothes for him.

The boat with Abbott's name, in big, black letters on it, was rescued as it floated down stream, and returned to its place by some neighbor. Of course we all know that boats sometimes break away from their moorings, and go floating down stream, so it is not surprising that Tom advised his father to fasten his boat hereafter with a chain, and, of course, the old gentleman very readily acquiesced, but when he went rowing again, which was not for some time after (for he had in some *unaccountable way* taken a severe cold), he was careful to take some one with him, and his Newfoundland dog sat in the stern of the boat. The

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dog enjoyed it (so Mr. Abbott said), and *he*—well—*he* “was fond of the *dog*.”

Mr. Abbott showed especial fondness for Nellie; he complimented her and petted her. The first choice blossoms from his conservatory were for her. He went often to dine at her mother's house, and was exceedingly gracious to Mrs. Raleigh, but he never spent an evening alone with her. *Nellie* brought him his hat and cane when it was time for him to go. He was *Tom's father*, why *shouldn't* she be attentive to him? He was evidently fond of *her*.

George looked on and smiled. He thought to himself: “He is courting the mother through the daughter.”

Laura looked on and smiled. She thought: “He wishes to win her affection for my sake.”

Tom and Nellie thought: “He sees the attachment between us, and he is delighted.”

It had never occurred to Abbott that Tom had the *slightest thought* of love, or matrimony; to him he was only a boy, and the young people were like brother and sister. Nellie was used to being petted; she was a favorite with everybody. Bob teased and caressed her. Molly, the housemaid, and Fritz, were always ready to do anything for

Pairing Off.

“Mees Nellie.” Cora was fond of her, and naturally Tom would be attentive to his sister’s friend.

One day Nellie told her mamma that Tom and she could not live without each other, and that some day they would be married. “You know you like Tom yourself, mamma; and I told him I knew you would be glad,” said she, throwing her arm about her mother’s neck. “And you are, aren’t you, mamma?”

Nellie told Cora of her engagement to Tom. Cora told George. All took it as a matter of course, and *nobody* thought to tell Mr. Abbott of what they supposed he could *see* for *himself*.

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CHAPTER IV.

SCHEMES.

ONE morning Fritz brought in with the rest of the mail for Magnolia Villa, a newspaper from New York for Mrs. Raleigh.

Glancing over it a marked paragraph attracted her attention. It was an obituary notice. Mr. W. B. Raleigh, a well-known attorney of New York City, was dead.

William B. Raleigh was the only brother of Laura's late husband; being many years the senior of Henry Raleigh, William (his brother) had climbed well up the ladder of fame, before Henry had placed his foot firmly on the first rung. Separated by the whole breadth of the country, and occupying different social positions on account of the difference in their finances, they had become almost strangers to each other, their letters being short and infrequent.

At last Henry (or Harry, as he was called) died. William and his wife sent a letter of condolence

Schemes.

to the widow, and she never heard from them again, although Henry left a daughter, in whom William should naturally have been interested, having no children of his own.

Nearly seventeen years before, when Nellie was a baby, Will Raleigh had brought his wife to San Francisco to visit his brother, who was then a clerk on a moderate salary. They had not informed Harry of their intended trip to California, and their coming was very unfortunate for them all. Two of Harry's children (twins) had just died of diphtheria, Laura was worn and ill from grief and overwork; Harry was in straitened circumstances on account of unavoidable expense. It was impossible for them to make their guests' visit pleasant for them, or even to make them comfortable, so after a stay of a very few days they took their departure.

This visit, or rather the remembrance of it, had always been a thorn in the flesh to Laura. Her husband was poor, Will Raleigh was rich; and being rich, neither he nor his wife were able to see, or understand, that Harry and Laura had done the best they could to entertain them, but had gone away believing that they had been received with indifference.

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Now, Will Raleigh was dead. Had he remembered Nellie? Probably not. He had never written and inquired about her, and her father had been dead five years. This and much more was passing through Laura Raleigh's mind as she sat for some time in retrospection.

Finally she arose, and folding the paper, laid it away. Taking her embroidery, she went out into the garden, and taking a seat, tried to interest herself in her work; failing in this she rested her elbow on the rustic table, leaned her head in her hand, and let her mind wander as it would.

Bob brought his bicycle in from the avenue, leaned it against a tree, threw himself into a lounging-chair near his sister, and lighted a cigar.

Mrs. Raleigh never looked his way or spoke a word, but sat silent as the Sphinx, looking into space.

For some time Bob smoked in silence, and studied her face. Finally, he said: "Well, sister, what is it? You are as oblivious to everything about you as if you were both blind and deaf. I believe on my soul you are putting up a job,—ha! ha! ha! ha! You'll have to be watched,—ha! ha! ha! ha! I have been watching you for at least fifteen minutes. Why are you so silent?"

Schemes.

She glanced at him and quietly said: "I was thinking——"

"That fact is quite apparent; from your preoccupied air, one would declare that you were deep in some plot."

"I was thinking," she repeated. "You remember Harry's brother Will?"

"Well, yes, sister, now that you mention him. You know that I never saw him but once, and that was long ago. What about him?"

"He is dead. I've been thinking——"

"So you have remarked several times. Hope your thoughts center on something more interesting than a dead man."

"Of course you know that once on a time Harry was a clerk in the freight office of the Central Pacific Railroad, in San Francisco. That was before he began to prosper."

"Yes, I know. Well, sister?"

"When Nellie was a baby, and just after we lost the twin boys, Will Raleigh and his wife came to visit us in San Francisco. We were terribly cramped for room,—they dropped in on us unexpectedly. We were in a sea of trouble—in fact, could scarcely keep afloat—it was very inconvenient for us at that time—and—well—they didn't make a long stay."

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“Used to high living, I suppose.”

“Of course,” replied Laura with a sigh. “Well, we kept up a sort of correspondence until Harry died, and that ended it.” She gave a shrug of her shoulders as she continued: “But then you know that relations-in-law are *no* relation at all, and the wife of my brother-in-law would be *no* relation to me. To tell the truth, I didn’t like the old lady, she was an eccentric, purse-proud thing, as stiff as a ramrod—a talking dictionary—*no* relation to me.”

“You are quite a philosopher.”

“I’ve heard nothing of them since.”

“Ha! ha! ha! You informed me a moment ago that the old gentleman is quite dead.”

“Well, so he is.”

“Appeared to you in a dream?”

“Bob, cannot you be serious?”

“Yes, grave as a judge if the occasion requires—proceed, sister.”

“A friend in New York sends me a paper now and then; in one received to-day was a notice of the death of William B. Raleigh.”

“Well, how do you know that it was *the* W. B. R.?”

“Oh, his ancestors are mentioned clear back to Noah. He was the descendant of this one, who

Schemes.

was the descendant of that one, and so on. You see I know their names, for Harry often told me about his family; he was proud of his English ancestry."

"H'm! But you said you were thinking; so far you have not enlightened me on the subject of your thoughts and gratified my curiosity."

"Will's wife must be quite an old woman by this time; you know Harry was *years* younger than his brother."

"Yes, yes. But unless you make your long story short, you'll forget what you were thinking about,—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Well," said Laura nervously, "if she is living her husband must be a widow, and——"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! That's news,—ha! ha! ha!" laughed Bob.

"I don't see anything to laugh about," said she resentfully.

"Of course not. It's the most *natural* thing in the world for a *dead man* to be a *widow*. It is very consoling. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"You know that if I said that it was a slip of the tongue; what I meant was, that he must be a *widower*."

Again Bob exploded with laughter. "Don't get in any deeper, sister, or I'll never be able to

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haul you out. You mean that *she* is *his* widow, don't you?"

"Of course; that's just *exactly* what I said. She couldn't be any other widow, could she?"

"She might."

"She might? How?"

"She might have been a grass-widow."

"Oh, Bob, what nonsense you do talk. You are too old to be so absurd."

Bob threw away the stump of his cigar, stretched himself full length on the lounging chair, pulled his cap over his face and said: "I am going to take a nap; ramble on, but when you get down to your thoughts, just waken me, please."

"I am thinking of asking her to make another visit," said Laura.

Bob sprang up, exclaiming: "Great Scott and Holy Moses, sister! What in heaven's name do you want of a cranky old woman, the relation of a relation-in-law, who is no relation at all (that is a quotation; you are the author of the original, I believe). Lord! an antiquated old ramrod! I'll take the first overland train for New York. Yes, I'll skip to Australia. Confound old women! I hate the whole army of them. I had an experience with *one*; it'll *last* a lifetime. What *do* you want with her?"

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“Now, Bob, that is just what I’ve been trying to tell you; but you are such an everlasting talker that you haven’t given me a chance. I have an object. I’ve been thinking—you know that she is wealthy——”

“Aha! you are a *schemer*. You *have* been laying a plot. Go on. I am all attention.”

“She must be rolling in wealth.”

“Oh, it’s money, eh? I see. Any children?”

“No, not one. You know Will became celebrated as an attorney, seldom or never lost a case. Made a fortune. Invested well.”

“And the walking dictionary gets it all.”

Laura sighed as she replied: “I suppose the widow *will* get it all. Nellie was her uncle’s only living relative. I don’t suppose he even *thought* of *her*. Well, it’s not quite fair. Do you think so?”

“Didn’t enjoy their visit in San Francisco, eh, sister? Perhaps the old ramrod remembers.”

“Oh, well, that was long ago. Southern California, you know—orange groves, flowers and fruit, a lovely country home, and then the climate.”

“Great inducements, truly. Maybe they will fetch her,—if she isn’t too ancient to undertake the journey.”

“Oh, no. It was always her boast that she sur-

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mounted all obstacles by her great will power. I believe she will come."

"But suppose she has gone to the other world?"

"If so, my letter will be returned."

"And if she has made the celestial journey before her esteemed better half, you may yet find that Nellie may come in for her uncle's wealth. Better be patient, sister."

"The notice stands that he left a widow. I shall write. Delays are dangerous."

"Now, sister, if she were only a *young* widow, I would stay, and set my cap for her. You see I might learn a lesson in scheming from you."

"If she were only young she would stay in New York and marry again."

"And you would lose her *valued* society."

"Now, if Nellie would be attentive to the old lady, Mrs. Raleigh might——"

"I understand. But it seems to me, Nellie is attentive in a more pleasing direction. How about young Abbott? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Nellie is always obedient."

"Nellie is like a bird. She needs freedom, the society of young people. Don't tax her too hard, sister."

"Oh, it would be for a short time only. Nellie is very young. Mrs. R. is very old—and——"

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“Well,” interrupted Bob, as he rose with a yawn, “when are you going to set the machinery of this gigantic scheme of yours in motion? Better take time——”

“To-day—*now*—this *very minute*,” she replied, and stepping on the veranda she disappeared in the house.

“Cora! Cora!” rang out Nellie’s voice, as she came running down the avenue.

Bob recognized the voice and stepped quickly to the gate. As she came flying through he caught her in his arms. “Pay toll, madcap,” said he, lowering his head for a kiss.

“Oh, Uncle Bob, where *is* Cora? Have you seen her?”

“Not a glimpse of her to-day, Nellie. What is going on now?”

“Fritz is getting out the horses, and the boys are going to take us for a drive. I can’t find Cora. Oh, dear! oh, dear!” And she stamped her foot impatiently.

George rowed down the river and whistled, rested on his oars for a moment, whistled again, then rowed up the river.

“There is George,” said Bob. “You see she is not here; she has gone home across lots.”

“No, she has not,” said Nellie very decidedly.

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“She was to stay to dinner.” With a sly glance at Bob she added: “So will Maude. Cora has just gone off with a book. I’ll lock the bookcase and throw the key into the well.”

“She might smash the doors, and destroy valuable property; the temptation would be great.”

“I’ll throw the books down the well, then—*there!*”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Bob, in mock alarm. “We’ll all be poisoned; I’ll have to inform mamma of your evil intentions at once. Ha! ha! ha!”

“You may laugh. *Books! ugh! books!* All very well for a rainy day, but when a girl is just out of a stuffy old school, no ogress to keep tab, and a great big world to roam about in——”

“And a *great big boy* to roam about *with*, oh, Nellie.”

“Now, Mr. Bob, don’t interrupt. There’s the blue sky overhead, the shining river with its dancing boats only a stone’s throw from the house. Oh, Uncle Bob, *isn’t* it a beautiful world? Ponies to ride, butterflies to chase, fences to climb. *Books!* I never want to see one again. Who can *read* when the birds are singing, the flowers blooming, and—and—so much fun.”



CORA ABBOTT.—Page 39.

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“And—and—so many beaus—oh, Nellie, Nellie, ha! ha! ha!” laughed Bob.

“I am going right into the house,” she retorted, springing up the steps of the veranda. With her hand on the doorknob she turned and archly said to him, “Maude is down on the avenue; she didn’t say so, but perhaps *she* would like to see—*somebody*.” With a silvery laugh she vanished into the house. Bob mounted his wheel, struck out for the road and was soon out of sight.

“Toohoo-toohoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo,” sounded from the river, and there was a low laugh behind the shrubbery.

George pushed his boat up to the landing place, threw a rope over the stake, and stepped out, unconscious of a bright pair of eyes that were watching him from behind a clump of pampas. Entering the garden, he said aloud: “What in thunder has become of that girl! She is here somewhere; wonder if I’ll be lucky enough to find her?”

With a peal of laughter Cora Abbott stepped quickly to his side.

“Did you rise out of the earth?” asked he.

“No, sir, I rose *off* the earth. Oh, George, I’ve been doing something *awful*. Ha! ha! ha! Perfectly awful! *Awfully* awful! Oh, ha! ha! ha!”

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“That must be very awful, indeed; but it seems to be awfully funny as well as awfully awful.”

“Nellie called and called, but I dared not move. I’ve been a prisoner for ever and ever so long, George. I’m glad you came, I’m just *dying* to tell some one all about it, and *you* are the only one to whom I *can* tell it.”

“That’s right, dear,” said he, leading her to a seat; “make me father confessor, and be forgiven.”

“But I’m planning to do another awful thing. Oh, ha! ha! ha! *Such* a scheme, George; such fun. Oh, ha! ha! ha! ha!”

“I am in for fun every time; tell me all about it. I’m curious.”

“Oh, George, I’ve been eavesdropping. Really, I couldn’t help myself. It was not intentional. I couldn’t get away without making things very embarrassing all around.”

“Stood it out, did you?”

“Yes, I had to. That was not so bad, but—but—oh, ha! ha! ha! Oh, George, it put *such* an idea into my head. Oh, it will be such *fun!*”

“Well, why don’t you tell me? Do you want me to die of curiosity, or have my hair turn gray with suspense?”

“I took a book from the library and crept in there,” Cora said, pointing to a clump of trees.

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“I got to thinking about—about—somebody—I must have fallen asleep.”

“Who was that somebody?”

“Perhaps it was you—perhaps it was——”

“Who?”

“Somebody else. Never mind. The next thing I heard voices—Mrs. Raleigh and Bob—such a scheme. Oh, George.” And Cora laughed merrily.

“Corson planning an elopement, a highway robbery, or——”

“Now, George, Bob wasn’t in it at all.”

“Mrs. Raleigh planning to kidnap papa? Who would suspect it?”

“Now, George, do keep still. It’s a long story. You know that Mrs. Raleigh is a widow.”

“I take the lady’s word for it.”

“Her husband had a brother William.”

“Never heard of him.”

“He’s dead.”

“That’s interesting, very.”

“George, you are perfectly horrid. Yes, he’s dead. The widow is rich and she wants to invite the widow here, and she don’t know that his wife’s dead, and that she is young and beautiful, and so she is going to invite her here, on account of the

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money. She will make a mess of it. So *there*. Now what do you think of *that*?"

George tossed his head and laughed long and loudly at Cora's anything but explicit information. When he recovered he said:

"That's *exceedingly* interesting. Oh, ha! ha! ha! If she makes a worse mess of it than *you* have, I'm a *mummy*, 'so there.'"

"You laugh," said she indignantly. "I thought *you* would be *shocked* at such a scheme."

"Perhaps I would be," he replied, "if I could understand how any woman could be dead, be a wife, be rich, be a widow, be old, be young at the same time, and be the victim of a scheme, on top of all that. Oh, Cora, Cora, turn around; your face is prettier than your back hair."

Cora faced about with a jerk, and retorted: "I didn't say any such thing. The first wife would be old; but she died long ago. Mrs. Raleigh doesn't know it. Mr. W. B. Raleigh married again—a young and beautiful girl—she and I had been schoolmates; her father was dead, and to please her mother she married Attorney W. B. Raleigh. Just after the poor girl was tied for life to the old codger, a never-before-heard-of English relative died, and her mother proved to be her heir—just *think* of it."

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"Whose heir?" questioned George. "You are not very explicit."

"And *you* are awfully *stupid*. The English woman's heir, of course."

"Then I suppose the young and beautiful girl died, didn't she?"

"Well, I guess she didn't do any such thing. There is where the *fun* is coming in."

"But you said the girl was tied for life, and just before that you informed me that the old codger to *whom* she was tied is now dead. You meant that *he* was tied for life. We will let it pass. What next?"

"Mr. W. B. died, and it seems he has left all his wealth to the widow. Of course she was perfectly miserable with the old man. She was in love with some one else when she married, but her mother was getting old, they were poor, and you know the rest. Isn't it *sad*, George?"

"Well, no! I rather think the girl has the best of it; but it seems to me that you are a long way off the track of the awfully awful-awful."

"Mrs. Raleigh wishes to invite Mrs. W. B. R. to visit here. She has probably written her letter before this—to Mrs. W. B. R. No. 1, of course."

"But how will she manage it when the old lady is dead?"

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“Why, you great big goose, can’t you see that the *young* widow will get the letter? Ha! ha! ha! She probably never heard of Mrs. Raleigh—Laura, I mean.”

“Then she will be mystified,” said George. “What do you suppose she will do when she receives the invitation? You say she will get it. Then I suppose Laura doesn’t know that *you* ever knew anything about the W. B. family.”

“Mrs. W. B. R. will get a letter from *me* at the same time. She will come, you may rest assured. Yes, mark my words,—*she will come!* No, it never once entered my head that there might be any relation between this family of Raleighs and the one in New York. Nellie never mentioned having had an uncle beside Bob Corson. I was *amazed* at what I overheard.”

“So the old lady died and left the distinction of being a widow to a younger woman?”

“Yes, a young and lovely girl.”

“H’m! a charming widow—h’m! Widows are *dangerous*. So you are quite *sure* that she will come?”

“Positive; to *my* house, of course. So will her mother—as Mrs. W. B. R., to *this* house, ha! ha! ha! *She* was a great actress. It will be a good joke on Mrs. Laura Raleigh, ha! ha! ha! ha!”

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Molly, the housemaid, had entered from the side unnoticed by the young couple. When Cora finished speaking, she said: "Mees Cora, Mees Nellie, she vas peen look all ofer, efery blace for you. I vill dell her you vas here, don't it? Dose horses, dey vas all ready to go ride."

"I will go right away, Molly," she replied. Catching George's hand she gave him a jerk, and said: "Come along, George," and both ran up the steps and into the house. A few moments later Tom, George, and the three girls climbed into the carriage. Tom took up the lines, and away went the party down the road.

The horses had been standing in their stalls for some time without exercise, and consequently they were in as high spirits as the young people.

Fritz had been doing considerable grumbling while harnessing them into the carriage. He felt that the young men were reckless, and did not understand the necessity of giving their attention to the management of the horses; so when Tom, taking the lines in one hand, slipped an arm about Nellie, and chirruped to the horses to go, which they did like the wind, he felt that he ought to follow, and keep them in sight. He feared an accident. With this in mind he turned into the garden to speak to Mrs. Raleigh about it.

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Molly had turned to go out on the avenue, but meeting Fritz at the gate she came back and stopped to talk with him at the foot of the steps to the veranda. Lifting a finger in a mysterious way, she said:

“Fritz, I vill dell you somedings; I vas hear dot Mees Cora dell dot Meester George dot she would pring vone actress friend to dees house, to joke mit Meeses Raleigh; vat you tink of dot? Dere vas some foolishness mit it; I does not understhood vat dees vas all apout.”

“Cheeminy Christmas! You don’t say?” said Fritz.

Fritz was troubled, and so he was not as interested in “dot foolishness” as he would otherwise have been. “It does not pee mine fault,” said he, “if does horses de mischief does raise mit dose young plades; dere is too much foolishness mit dose young laties; dose horses, dey tend to de peesness mit demselfes.”

“If dose young shemtlemans lose demselfes der headts, dot don’t is your peesness, ain’t it?”

“Vell, I tink dose young fellers has lose dere headts already, don’t it? Ven first go de heart, den follers de headt after, ain’t it?” and Fritz slipped an arm about Molly’s waist.

“No,” she very decidedly said, giving him a

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push; "dot ain't it. First go de *headt*, den follow de *heart* after, *dot's* it."

"*Mine gracious!* Dot vas *so*. I vas not under-stand." Fritz put his hand under her chin, turned up her face, and imprinted a sounding smack on her lips before she was aware of his intention, and said: "Ven de *headt* vas opset den de *heart* run away mit it, *dot's* it."

"Don't you fool mit yourself, Mr. Fritz," she said, giving him another shove, "I vill not lose mine *headt* already, dot vos foolishness. Ven dere vas no *money* come in de door, de *heart* fly oudt de *vindow*, *dot's* so."

"Vell, I hafe safed some mit mine money. I vas puy vone dose leedle ranch, mit all dose vines, und tings."

Molly snuggled up to him, and said: "Vas dot *so*? I hafe safed mit mine money, too."

"*Vell! vell!* Vas dot *so*? You don't say!" said he, giving her a bearlike hug. "Den I *vill* puy dot leedle ranch! You like dot leedle ranch, eh?"

"Yah, I like dot."

"You vill come und life dot leedle ranch mit me, eh?"

Giving him another shove she replied: "I vish you go *puy* dot leedle ranch first."

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Again placing his arm about her, he said: "I vas dell you I vill puy dot leedle ranch, und you vill puy all dose leedle peegs, und dose scheekens; ve vill haf vone cow, und I vill dake care dot cow, und you vill make dot butter und sell dose eggs; und I vill puild vone leedle house, und vone pen for dose peegs, und vone scheeken house; und ve vill blant dose podadoes, und dose cabbages, und dose vines, und dot fig tree, eh?"

"Und," replied Molly, as Fritz gave her a hug, "I vill sot dose hens, und make dot kraut——"

Throwing both arms about her in delight, he said: "Und ve vill pee fery hoppy under dot fig tree mit dot cow und dose peegs."

"Und eferyting vill pe peautiful, *peautiful*," exclaimed Molly, throwing both arms around Fritz's neck, "und ve vill pee vone marriet coubble."

"*Mine gracious!*" exclaimed Fritz, as he caught her in both arms and held her tight, "dot *vas so*."

Laura Raleigh, with a letter in her hand, opened the house door in time to see her two German servants folded in each other's arms. For a moment she regarded them in amazement, then she called: "Fritz!"

Molly unclasped her arms and took to her heels, while Fritz, blushing to the roots of his hair, stammered: "Yah, mam, Meeses Raleigh."

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“See that this letter goes in the next mail,” said Mrs. Raleigh. Handing it to him she went inside.

Molly, on the other side of the gate, beckoned to Fritz. “Vat you tink dot Mees Cora mit dot actress? I vas tink Meeses Raleigh, she does not like dot—dot Mees Cora, she vas vone dose—vat you call 'em—corker? Dot's so.”

Fritz started off with the letter, and Molly entered the house.

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CHAPTER V.

A MISTAKEN PROPOSAL.

ON entering the house, after unfolding her plan to her brother, Laura Raleigh seated herself at her desk and wrote the following letter:

“MAGNOLIA VILLA, NEAR LOS ANGELES.

“MRS. W. B. RALEIGH, OF NEW YORK.

“MY DEAR MRS. RALEIGH: For many days past I have been thinking of you, and longing to see you. At last I have decided to write. I most earnestly request you to favor me with a long visit. You cannot imagine a more delightful place than my beautiful home; a roomy house, with broad verandas on all sides, set in the midst of an almost tropical garden, bordering on one of the most picturesque streams in the state, a river that murmurs and sings as it dances and sparkles along between its shady banks, reflecting the fleecy clouds of our California sky. There are fine drives about the country. I believe you are fond

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of driving. There are the orange groves, such pictures of loveliness, bearing at the same time both blossoms and fruit, the air laden with the perfume of the blossoms of the innumerable varieties of wild flowers; the beautiful ferns. Well, in fact, it would be *useless* for me to *attempt* to convey to your mind the beauties and attractions of the paradise in which I have made my home. You must *see* in order to *appreciate*. Words are inadequate to do our glorious Southern California justice.

“With love, I anxiously await your reply.

“Believe me, truly and sincerely yours,

“LAURA C. RALEIGH.”

Laura Raleigh had returned to the garden (after giving her letter to Fritz to post), bringing her embroidery. Now she was sitting under the trees, trying to concentrate her mind on her work.

Her sudden appearance in the midst of his courtship had so confused Fritz that he forgot to speak of the matter that had brought him to the garden. With the letter in his pocket, he went to the stable and saddled a horse. The restlessness of the animal brought to his mind that the carriage horses had shown considerable spirit.

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He felt troubled; the young folks had taken the river road, the young men were thoughtless, and he felt that something might happen. Going back to the garden, he saw Mrs. Raleigh. Taking off his cap, he said to her: "Meeses Raleigh, I tink dere vas too much foolishness mit dose young beobles; dose horses dere headts, dey vas full mit der tifel, und dose young shentlemans, der headts, dey vas full mit dose young laties. I tink ven dose young beobles come pack dey vill valk home mit demself."

"You don't anticipate an accident, Fritz?" she anxiously inquired, as she rose from the bench.

"I don't tickypate nodings," he answered. "You see, Meeses Raleigh, it vas dees vay: Meester Tom, he cannot manage dose horses mit vone hand; dose horses dey know dot vas so, and dey vas schmell de rat. I vas tink I vill go vone horsepack mit mineself after dose young beobles, don't it?"

"Yes, yes, Fritz, go. Make them come back."

Fritz left the garden, and Laura stood looking after him. Molly opened the house door, and called: "Meeses Raleigh, vas you at home dees day? Dot shentleman Obbott, he vas come in de parlor. He say he vish to speak mit you in de garden."

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“Tell him I will be delighted, Molly. Show him out.”

“Aha!” thought she, “he wishes to *see me* personally. Now he’ll pop the question; I know it, I *feel* it. He knows that I am alone. I am sorry that I told Fritz to send the children home.”

As Mr. Abbott stepped out on the veranda, she went up the steps to meet him, extending both hands. “Really, Mr. Abbott, this is an unexpected pleasure. I so seldom get a chance to see you alone, since the children came home—‘the children’—it seems strange to think of *you* as being Tom’s father. Really, it seems more as if you were his elder brother.”

“I wanted to see you *alone*,” he said, “I’ve something to say. H’m! h’m! You know, my dear Mrs. Raleigh—that—that—Cora and Nellie are already like sisters—and Tom—well, of course, he admires Miss Nellie——”

“Yes, yes, Mr. Abbott,” interrupted Laura. “I understand it all perfectly; it really is delightful to have the young folks so devoted.”

“So it is, h’m, h’m! So it is. Delightful, h’m, h’m!”

“It brings the old folks nearer together, but there—you—why, you are only a boy. You

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don't look a day over thirty—not a day, Mr. Abbott.”

“Do you really think so?” he inquired in delight.

“I most certainly *do*,” was the reply.

“Then you don't object to my age?”

“Certainly not.” After a pause she asked: “Why do you remain a widower, Mr. Abbott?”

“H'm,—ah—h'm.”

“Why, Mr. Abbott?”

“I—ah—h'm.”

“Your children will leave you some time.”

“Hope they will. Oh—ah—h'm—h'm—Madam—I—ah.”

“You will be lonely. (Pause.) Your dear departed wife would wish you to be happy.”

“H'm! My dear madam, I've been—been—contemplating matrimony.”

“Why not, Mr. Abbott?”

“Why not; I mean, h'm, the object of my affection—is—so—so——”

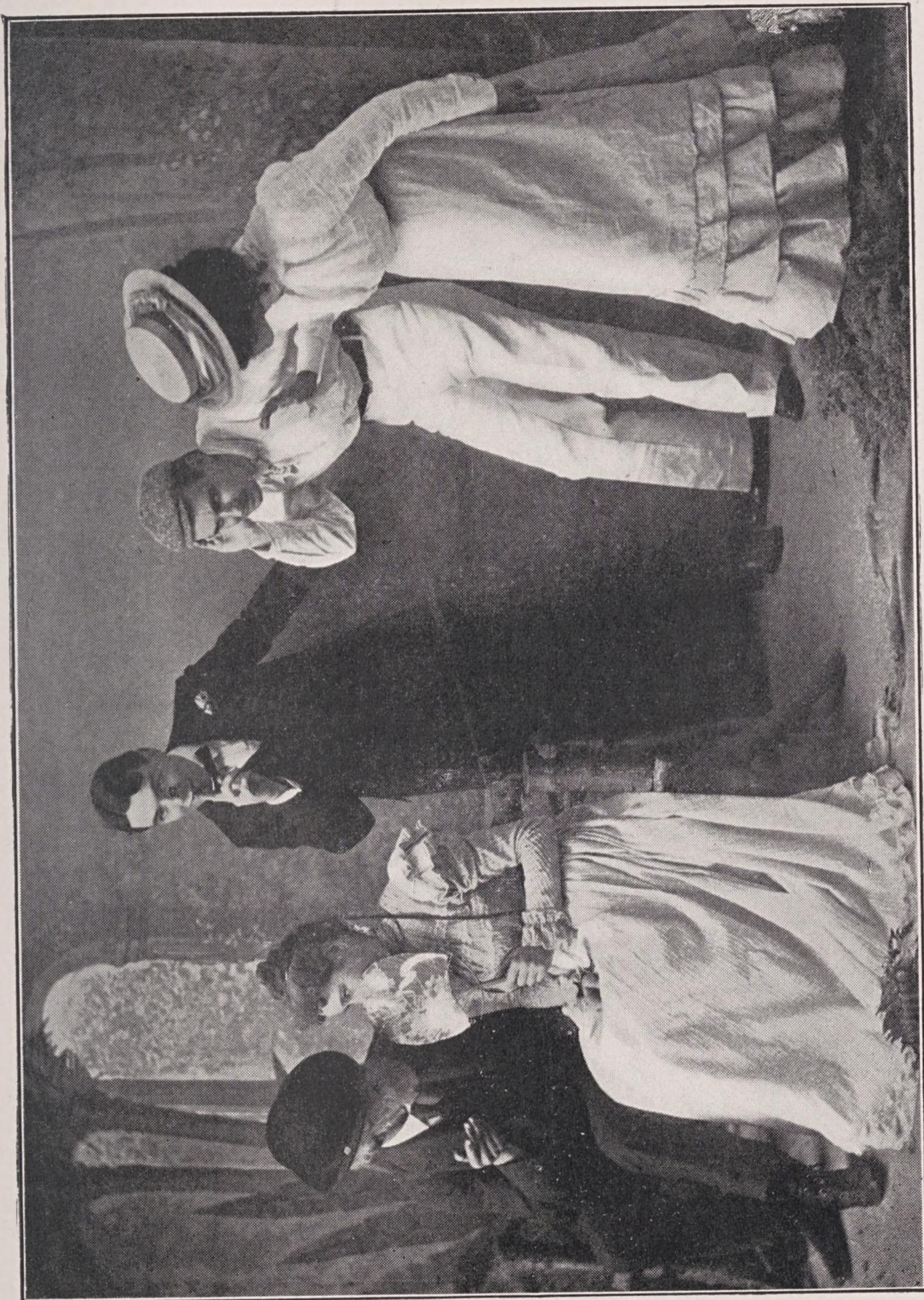
“So what?”

“So much—younger—so—oh—h'm——”

“That's nothing, nothing at all; only a trifle, not worth mentioning, Mr. Abbott.”

“I have dared to—to hope—since—since——”

“Since when?”



LOVE CANNOT HIDE ITSELF."—Page 56.

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“Since—since I’ve been coming, been interesting—in—in——”

“In whom?”

“In your *family*.” The old gentleman drew a long breath and wiped his forehead.

“Indeed,” said Laura.

“You know I told you how fond Cora is of Nellie, and I feel certain that Cora would be delighted,” continued Abbott.

“Of course. I am certain that Nellie would not object.”

“Quite certain, Mrs. Raleigh?”

“Positive, quite *positive*, Mr. Abbott.”

“The little darling! You are quite sure that she will not think me an old fool?”

“She will think just as I do, that you are the dearest and best man in the whole world.”

“I see that you understand me perfectly, madam. I don’t know how to express myself in words, but you understand it all; you are willing.”

“I understood it from the very first, Mr. Abbott.” Looking coquettishly at him, she added: “Love cannot hide itself.”

“Then you consent, you approve my choice; you will speak to Nellie?”

The old gentleman in his delight placed his

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arms about Laura's waist and gave her a hearty embrace, saying: "You have made me so happy."

Screaming with laughter, pell-mell rushed the boys and girls into the garden. George was hatless and his coat was torn; the girls' dresses hung in rags. Silence fell like a thunderclap upon them as the tableau met their gaze.

Laura sprang to her feet. The blood rushed to her face, dyeing it scarlet; but Abbott rose from his seat, his face wreathed in smiles, when his eyes fell on Nellie. Under his breath he said: "There she is, the *angel!*"

The young folks looked from one to the other, and formed their conclusions, while Nellie rattled on, and told her mother how the horses had become unmanageable, and how, but for the timely arrival of Fritz, they would have gone, all of them, into the river; how Fritz had jumped from his horse after catching their bridle and had forced the horses to back into a fence and wreck the carriage; how Tom rolled down into the river and had to swim ashore; finishing her narrative by informing her mother that she need not be frightened, for they were none of them killed, not even *Fritz* or the *horses*.



“ ‘RESTORES NATURAL COLOR.’—IT MIGHT TURN IT RED.”—Page 57.

A Young Old Man.

CHAPTER VI.

A YOUNG OLD MAN.

ON the morning after the accident Nellie awakened with a pain in her side, so her mother kept her at home, insisting on her being perfectly quiet; and it was nearly two weeks before she again went to the Abbotts' home. Meantime Cora had sent out invitations for an evening party.

Mr. Abbott was possessed to learn to dance. In the privacy of the old gentleman's room, poor Tom had to play the dancing master every evening.

One day Mr. Abbott went into town and ordered a dress suit. Happening into a drug store he inadvertently bought a bottle of hair restorer. Finding no one in the sitting-room when he reached home, he sat down and tore the wrapper from the bottle.

"They say that hair dye injures the brain,—wonder if it is safe to use it?" said he to himself. "This label says: 'Restores natural color;' it might turn it red." Rising he went to look in the glass.

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“White is more becoming than red. I don’t believe I want it *red*, but I *do* wish it wasn’t *quite* so white.” Making an elaborate bow to his reflection in the mirror, he went on: “The old lady said I didn’t look a day over thirty—by Jove! I don’t *feel* a day over thirty. Many people are prematurely gray. I guess I won’t use the stuff.”

He put the bottle on the table and began practicing a dancing step. Singing, “one, two, three, kick,” he danced about the room until he was tired, then he sat down to read the paper; finally he began again, “one, two, three, kick.” Forgetting all about the hair restorer he danced out into the hall, giving Cora a vigorous kick as she entered.

“Well, papa,” said she, “you are getting as frisky as a spring lamb. What’s getting into you, anyhow?”

“Why, you booby! Can’t you see that I am learning to dance? I must get that kick so that I can dance at the party to-morrow night. One, two, three, four, kick. I didn’t get the kick right that time. Tom will have to show me again. One, two—— Play it, Cora.”

Cora seated herself at the piano and played for a while, but she laughed so at the old man’s antics, that he became offended and went upstairs.

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"All alone," called Maude, appearing in the doorway a second later. "Where is Nellie?"

"Nellie cannot come to-day. You know that she was slightly hurt on the day of the runaway. Tom has gone to see her."

"Of course he has gone to see her; he went yesterday, and the day before, and he will go again to-morrow; pretty strong attraction there,—ha! ha! ha!"

"Nellie is a lovely girl."

"And papa and the widow,—ha! ha! ha! ha! Anything serious there?"

"Lord knows, I don't. They are on very friendly terms; whether or not there is anything in it, I cannot determine. Ah, there's George," said she as she looked up, and saw him standing in the doorway. "Come in, George."

"I suppose you girls are too busy to go for a row on the river.

"Oh, George," answered Maude, "we will be tired to death by evening. To-morrow night will be the party, and we must rest and be as quiet as possible to-day."

George had sauntered towards the table. His glance fell on the bottle Abbott had left there. Taking it in his hand he exclaimed: "Christopher! what is *this*?"

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"I don't know, George," said Cora, turning about on the piano stool. "I didn't see that before. Where did it come from? How did it get in here?"

"Well, I didn't bring it. It didn't fly in through the window," said George.

"It isn't mine," said Maude; "I am not taking drops."

"*Drops!* Ha! ha! ha! ha!" laughed George. "It isn't Tom's property; his hair isn't thin; I don't believe he is laying in a stock of hair restorer in anticipation of matrimonial difficulties."

"*Hair restorer!*" exclaimed Cora. "Hair dye? George, what a tease you are." Rising, she took the bottle from him and looking at the label, read: "'Hair Restorer—restores natural color.' Why, it must—why"—she gasped—"it—it must be——"

"You've hit it—ha! ha! ha!" laughed George, and he added: "The widow must object to white hair." Taking the bottle from Cora he placed it where he had found it, and went and sat with her on the sofa.

"But papa's hair is beautiful," indignantly declared Cora.

"So it is," agreed Maude. "What does he want with such stuff?"

"Papa must be crazy to think of such a thing."

A Young Old Man.

“Cora, where is Tom?” asked Mr. Abbott, entering the room.

“He has gone to see Nellie, papa.”

“Gone to see Nellie?” he repeated. “What business has he to go to see Nellie? I must see him. I *want* him.”

“He will soon come, Mr. Abbott,” Maude said.

His glance rested on the bottle. “Oh, Lord! oh! ah! Go and find Tom,—both of you—*all* of you—oh, Lord!—I must have *Tom—go*, I say, every one of you—*Go!—go at once!*”

“Oh, papa,” Cora remonstrated, “there is no need of that.”

“Scour the neighborhood,” roared Abbott, desperately, “I *must* have Tom.”

“Have patience, papa; we would be sure to miss him, if we were to go now.”

Abbott was on pins and needles; what should he do? Any moment they might see that bottle of dye. He began to hum a tune in a very conscious way, and wander about the room. Gradually he approached the table; with his back against it, he reached behind him for the bottle, and off it went, striking the table-leg and breaking.

Crying, “The carpet will be ruined,” Cora sprang to pick it up.

Abbott, giving it a shove with his foot, sent it

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flying across the room towards George, who sprang to get it, inquiring: "What's that?"

Abbott sprang forward, and as George stooped, he gave it a kick, and answered: "Paregoric! oh! ah! ah! *Cod Liver Oil!* Oh! oh! Good Lord!"

This time, Maude made a grab and captured it. Abbott snatched it from her (cutting her hand), and put it in his pocket.

Cora went to find the housemaid, George followed her, and Maude went to bind her hand.

Abbott picked up the fragments of glass, put them in his pocket, and said to himself, "Glad they didn't see that label; they would think that I am crazy. It's too bad about the stains on the rug. Guess it'll come out."

Delighted at the success of his maneuver, he began his "one, two, three, four, kick," and kicked until the servant came to renovate the carpet.

A Tangle.

CHAPTER VII.

A TANGLE.

THE day of the party had arrived. The drawing-rooms were gay with their floral decorations, for our California people are lavish with their flowers. Wagons, carts, buggies, and vehicles of every description stopped at the mansion and unloaded flowers by the bouquet, box, basket, and bushel. Ben went early in the morning the day before, on an expedition of his own; late in the afternoon he drove up to the Abbott's, and with a pitchfork, tossed out a load of wild ferns in great variety.

By four o'clock there seemed to be no more room for flowers, but still they came.

Nellie was out at last, much to Tom's delight, and ready to help the girls with their work.

Mr. Abbott was in high glee; he danced away by himself—one, two, three. "My, how *young* I feel," he said, as he stood on one leg and whirled about, as he kicked in the air with the other. "I'll dance with the best of them to-night."

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“Helloa, little girl,” he called to Nellie, as she came in with Tom. “I haven’t seen *you* for a *year*. Tom, I want you to show me those steps again; I can’t get that kick. Hold on a minute, I’ll get into my dress suit; it has just come.”

“Come, boys and girls,” called Cora from the dining-room; “there is a bushel of flowers out here; come out and let’s see what we can do with them.”

Mr. Abbott went upstairs; Tom and Nellie went into the dining-room.

“George,” said Cora, “go into the other room, and get my scissors, I left my basket in there, and you will find them in it. Go now, that’s a good boy.”

George entered, and after turning everything topsy-turvy in the basket, without finding them, he said to himself: “The room is unoccupied; everybody is busy; I’ll call her and see her *alone*.” Going to the door, he called: “Come here a moment, Cora.”

“Can’t you find them, you goose?” Cora said as she entered. “That’s just like a man.”

“What? A goose?”

“Nonsense! *You* are a gander.”

“You promised to tell me about that actress joke; tell me now.”

“Well, I wrote to Mrs. W. B. R. No. 2, and in-

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formed her that Mrs. Laura Raleigh, of 'Magnolia Villa,' is the widow of *her* late husband's brother. I also told her that Mrs. Laura knows nothing of the death of her predecessor (Mrs. W. B. R. No. 1). I told her to come and visit *me*; and just for a lark, to have her mother come along, and *accept* the invitation from Mrs. Laura (representing herself as Mrs. W. B. R. No. 1), and present herself at Mrs. Laura Raleigh's house. Won't that be jolly, George? Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Is she very beautiful?" inquired he.

"Who? The old lady?"

"No, no! The *young* widow, of course. I'm not interested in *old* women."

"Exquisitely beautiful—you—you won't fall in love with her, George?"

"Well, I am very susceptible, you know, to feminine charms—if you don't claim ownership to my heart before she gets here—it—well—it might go——"

"Where's 'papa,' Cora?" Mrs. Raleigh inquired sweetly, appearing in the doorway. "I've made him a white tie for this evening."

"I really don't know, Mrs. Raleigh," she answered. "Perhaps you may find him in the dining-room."

"One dance with me to-night, George?" called

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Laura, vanishing into the next room; "now don't forget."

Cora turned to him with a laugh, and said: "The old folks are getting giddy. Here's papa jigging away for the past three weeks as if his life depended on it; he dances down to breakfast; he dances away to bed; and positively, George, I caught him bowing himself *double*, before the mirror, this very morning."

"When do you think 'papa' is going to *double* with the widow Raleigh?"

"I don't know. They are very good friends—but he does not seem very loverlike."

"Ha! ha! ha! How *does* a man act when he is in love, Cora?"

"Humph! He generally acts like a *fool*."

"Complimentary! Do *I* act like a fool?"

"I never said you did."

"Seriously, how about 'papa's' actions? Doesn't he act like a fool? Begging your pardon for the question."

"Well, I don't see that he pays her any *special* attention—I wonder if he really *is* thinking of matrimony and——"

"Goodness! Cora! Where are your eyes? A box of cambric handkerchiefs, against a box of Havana cigars, he popped on the day of our ac-

A Tanole.

cident. Didn't we interrupt their tête-à-tête?"

"But *Nellie* is to marry *Tom*. It would be perfectly ridiculous for papa to marry her mother."

"Spooning, of course," said *Nellie*, entering. "I have no time for such nonsense—come along now, both of you, and help dispose of the rest of those flowers. Come—soon it will be dinner-time, and then we must dress, and then we must dance—dance." Catching *Cora* about the waist, she whirled her about the room and out into the hall.

George was about to follow, when the dining-room door opened and in came *Tom*. About his waist was pinned a red tablecloth which trailed behind him as he walked.

"George Washington and Abraham Lincoln!" George exclaimed. "What's up now? What's that thing for?"

Spreading out the cloth, *Tom* made a low bow, and replied: "The old gentleman is going to practice dancing. This is my train; I am the lady, you know."

"Humph! You must enjoy that business."

"I'm hoping for a marriage settlement."

"Guess you'll earn it. Don't the old gentleman know how to dance?"

"Yes, like a turkey on a hot griddle. He has

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no idea of time, but he wants to get that kick-ity-kick, and he must be humored."

"Guess I'll stay and see the fun."

"No! It won't do—it might embarrass the old man."

"Tom," called Mr. Abbott from the head of the stairs, "are you there?"

"Yes, father, all ready—come along."

Abbott came down in a long dressing gown; he said he had changed his mind about putting on his dress suit, because he "feared he might get a speck on it." He wanted Maude to play, or he would never know when to "kick." George went out, and sent her in.

"What shall I play, Mr. Abbott?" she asked, seating herself at the piano.

"Play that kick—kick——"

"But, father, you can't kick in that thing," Tom remonstrated.

"Yes, I can," Mr. Abbott said, giving a vigorous kick. "I am as limber as an eel. Begin now, Maude."

Maude played, Abbott put his arm about Tom, and began: "One—two—three—four—kick——"

"Now, Governor," Tom said, as his father walked all over his toes, and twisted himself up



“ONE, TWO, THREE,—MY, I’M ’MOST AS YOUNG AS TOM!”—Page 69.

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in his drapery, "slide your foot this way—don't trample on my train——"

"One—two—three——" sang out the old gentleman. "My! I am 'most as young as Tom——"

"Kick, father, kick—don't step on my toes——"

"Put your toes in your pocket—one—two—three——"

"Oh, Lord! Father, do keep off my train—here—one—two—three—kick—why don't you kick?"

Mr. Abbott sent his foot vigorously skyward, landing a heavy blow on Tom's thigh, and said: "*Kick? I did kick.*"

"Yes; so you did. You kicked *me*. It isn't necessary to kick off the roof——"

"Well, what did you get in the way for? One—two—three—four—well, why don't you dance?"

"And why don't you kick in time?"

"When *shall* I kick?"

"Kick when you say four—and don't try to hit the chandelier."

"All right—try again—here goes—one—two—three—*thunder!* What the devil have you got that pin there for!" exclaimed Mr. Abbott, as he tore his hand on a pin in Tom's drapery, and started an original dance.

"Never mind," said Tom; "try again—one—

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two—three—kick.” Down came his foot on Abbott’s toes.

Hobbling about on one leg, while he nursed his foot with his hand, he yelled at Tom, “*You—you, sir—why, you dance like a buffalo calf.*”

“Maude, play the lancers,” Tom ordered.

Abbott, still hopping about on one foot, strenuously objected. “No, no,” said he, “I want to get that kick-kick.”

“Oh, *you* can kick up-to-date, Governor.”

“*Do I?—Do I?*” asked Abbott, in delight.

“Yes, but *always* have a room to yourself when you do it,” said Tom drily. “It’s dangerous for—*others.*”

“Hey? Humph! You can’t do that kick *yourself*, that’s what’s the matter with *you,*” snapped the old gentleman.

“We will try the lancers—bow to me—I’m your partner, you know.”

Abbott bowed to him; turning to the corner he bowed and said: “Bow to the corner.”

The young people, hidden behind the portières, shrieked with laughter. Tom clapped his hands and shouted: “Bravo! Bravo, old boy!—Oh,—ha! ha!”

Mr. Abbott didn’t enjoy being laughed at, and he objected to being called “old boy.” “What’s

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that? What's that, sir?" he indignantly asked of Tom. "What do you *mean*, sir?"

Mr. Abbott had practiced dancing for three weeks; he had learned to "bow to the corner."

"Swing your partner," called Tom.

Abbott, about used up, tangled himself in Tom's drapery, stumbled against a chair, and down he went, pulling Tom on top of him.

Nellie laughed heartily, as she gave her hand to Tom, and helped him to rise, while George rescued the old gentleman.

Molly entered, bringing a bundle, and said: "Mees Nellie, your mamma send me bring dot pundle, and somedings—she vas say you not come home to dress—I vill put dot pundle here." Laying it on a chair, she went out, just as the bell rang for dinner.

Cora slipped her arm about Nellie and danced out into the dining-room, followed by the other young people.

"I am slightly tired; I will stay here and rest awhile," Mr. Abbott said, as he sank into an easy-chair, and, breathing with an effort, rubbed his shins.

Suddenly remembering the parcel that Molly had brought, Nellie ran back to get it.

Mr. Abbott called softly: "Nellie?"

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“Did you speak, Mr. Abbott?” Nellie asked.

Rising from the chair, he seated himself on the sofa, and replied, “Yes, Nellie—come and sit here by me. I’ve something to say to you.”

Nellie went and sat beside him.

“H’m! h’m! It’s awfully warm in this room, don’t you think so?”

“Why, no. But you have been exercising, and you are tired, you know.” After a pause Nellie said: “You wanted to speak to me, Mr. Abbott?”

“Oh—ah—yes, dear—we will have a nice quiet little talk by ourselves. You like this place very much, don’t you? Seems like home, eh, dear?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied.

“You are very fond of—of—of Cora?”

“What a funny question—ha! ha! ha! Certainly I am.”

“And you like Tom—too—pretty well, don’t you?”

“Why, yes, of course,” Nellie answered in some surprise, “and I think a great deal of *you*, too.”

“I am last but not *least*,” said Mr. Abbott, with a melting look at her. “Cora will, I suppose, some day marry George; and then—well—*you* could be mistress of this house, direct the servants, mend the linen—in fact, *you* could make this place an

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earthly paradise—and—and—be such a *sweet little wife.*”

“He intends to give this place to Tom,” thought she.

“I suppose you would like to be married, would you not?” Mr. Abbott questioned.

“Not just yet. Mamma says I am too young; I am not quite eighteen yet, you know.”

“Say when Cora is married?”

“Yes, if mamma is willing.”

“Oh, she will be willing. I have spoken to her on a subject that interests us all, and I requested her to speak to you about it. I presume she has done so. Eh, dear?”

“Oh, yes, yes,” she said, nervously.

“And you are perfectly willing?”

“Anything that makes mamma happy, pleases me.”

“Then you are perfectly happy?”

“Very happy.”

“You will give me a warm place in your heart—you will love me?”

“Very dearly, Mr. Abbott.”

“Don’t call *me* Mr. Abbott, my pet,” he said, imprinting a kiss upon her lips.

“It would be rather premature to call him papa,” thought she, but she made no comment.

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Cora appeared in the doorway; "Nellie, come to dinner; you will be late in getting dressed. Papa, why in the wide world don't you come and get your dinner?"

Nellie skipped out. Abbott followed, taking a dancing step, and singing, "One—two—three—kick."

Cora crossed the room and lowered the shade; turning, she beheld Mrs. Raleigh's servants, in their Sunday best, standing in the doorway. "Why, Molly, what do you want?" she asked.

"Vell, Mees Cora, I wants nodings; but Meeses Raleigh, she vas send me ofer to help mit de ladies' dresses; und Fritz, he vas come to wait mit de door, or de refreshments, or somedings," Molly replied.

Cora was inclined to be vexed at Laura's officiousness. She left the room, saying: "Very well, then," but she neglected to tell the servants where to go.

Left to themselves, Fritz and Molly glanced about the room and took in the floral and other decorations.

"Cheemeny!" exclaimed Fritz. "Dere vas in dees house, grade doings going on."

"Yah," Molly replied, "dot vas vone vat you

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call 'im—*ball*? Dey have vone dose dot blace vere I life pefore—all de laties, dey hafe de peautiful long dresses—de shentlemans, dey hafe de coadt mid de two tails pehint—und de low necked vests, den dey hafe de music und all dose playtings—und de ribbons—und dose laties, dey chase der-selves round dose shentlemans mit dose ribbons—dose shentlemans, dey go on der knees mit dose ribbons—den dey get up, dose shentlemans, und den dose laties chase demselves mit dose shentlemans round demselves some more mit dose ribbons—und dey call dot nonsense—von *Shermon*. I nefer see dot foolishness in Shermony.”

“Mine gracious! Dey do dot? You don't *say!*”

“Dot's so. Dey do dot und den dey eads some-dings.”

“Vell, vell! Dees feller vill pee on hand ven dere is somedings to eadt. Don't you forget dot, py Christmas.”

Mrs. Raleigh, arrayed in a gorgeous reception gown, entered.

“Why, Molly!” she exclaimed, “what are you doing here? You and Fritz go at once to the kitchen. Oh, Molly,” she called, as the girl went out, “find Miss Cora, and tell her I would like to speak to her.”

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Mrs. Raleigh glanced about the room. "When I am mistress here," thought she, "I'll have this room furnished in crimson and gold. Of course Mr. Abbott could not be expected to show much taste in furnishing. I'll have those French windows taken out and I'll have a tower built on that corner—it will improve the place wonderfully. Nellie and Tom can reside at 'Magnolia Villa,' Cora will, I suppose, reside with the Randalls when she marries George. I don't suppose that her papa has told her of his intentions yet—of course it would be rather embarrassing for him to do so; I'll do it myself. Ah, Cora, here you are; I wanted to speak to you," she said, as Cora came in.

"You sent for me?"

"Yes, dear, sit here by me; I've something to say to you," said Mrs. Raleigh, seating herself on the sofa. "I suppose you have noticed the attachment between—between—Tom and Nellie—*young eyes are quick to detect—lovers.*"

"Why, of course, Nellie told me when she told *you*. Don't you remember? Nellie and I confide in each other, and Tom is my brother."

"When they are married, the families will be more closely related."

"I shall have a dear little sister."

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“Nellie will have a papa.” After a pause she repeated: “H’m,—Nellie will have a papa.”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“Has ‘papa’ ever suggested that the families may be even more closely connected?”

“No, never.”

“Then you do not know that before Nellie has a papa, you will have a mamma? He has not intimated as much?”

“Papa has not taken me into his confidence.”

“But you are satisfied? you are perfectly willing?”

“Anything that makes papa happy, pleases *me*, Mrs. Raleigh.”

“Good girl—but you must learn not to call *me* Mrs. Raleigh—I’ll have another daughter.”

“But it is rather premature to call you mother.”

Mr. Abbott came dancing in. Kissing his fingertips, he gracefully tossed a kiss to the delighted Laura. “Helloa!” he called. “Are you here? You came early.”

“I’ll go,” said Cora, seizing the opportunity to make her escape. Under her breath, she said: “Elderly lovers are as silly as young ones—and three is a crowd.”

Mrs. Raleigh arose from the sofa, and extending both hands to Mr. Abbott, she said: “You

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look as happy as a bird. If you were a bird, you would spread your wings and soar away."

"Never!" declared he, taking her hands, "Never! Leave my darling? Never!"

"How fond he is of me," she thought. Then she said: "Oh, Mr. Abbott—Paul——"

"That's right—call me Paul."

"And *you* must call *me* Laura."

"Certainly; certainly." To himself he said: "H'm, I couldn't very well call her 'mother.'"

"I suppose that before very long there will be another brilliant social event here—Paul."

"Hey—eh? What?" he ejaculated, sitting down.

"Why, a wedding," said Laura meaningly, seating herself beside him.

"Mine? My wedding? Do you mean mine?"

"Why, no, no; of course not, my dear—Cora's—Nellie and I will be married at home——"

"*Hey! What?*" ejaculated Abbott, half rising from his chair in intense surprise. "*You—you've* been hit by Cupid's dart? The little rascal must *camp* in this neighborhood. How strange that Nellie didn't tell me."

It was now her turn to be surprised; with a puzzled expression she looked at him in astonishment. "Nellie—didn't—tell—you? What?"

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“Why shouldn’t she tell me? She will become a member of this family—you gave your consent.”

“Gave my *consent!* Why shouldn’t I give my consent? What has that to do with you and me?” she asked, becoming more and more perplexed. “I am very fond of Tom. Why should I not consent?”

“Fond of Tom?” he vociferated. “What the devil are you driving at? What in thunder do you *mean*, madam?”

“What do *I* mean? What do *you* mean?” asked Mrs. Raleigh in amazement. “There is no cause for jealousy—why should I *not* be fond of Tom?”

“I’ll—I’ll—speak to Tom,” shouted Mr. Abbott, springing to his feet.

“Speak to Tom,” she echoed, hastily rising. “You—will—speak—to Tom?”

Abbott paced the floor in excitement. “Good Lord!” said he, “I’ll have a stroke of apoplexy.” Turning furiously on Laura Raleigh, he roared: “Madam, I’ll talk this matter over with *you* tomorrow; I’ll speak to Tom first;” then angrily rang the bell.

“Tell some one to send Mr. Tom to me at once,” said Mr. Abbott to the servant who answered the

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bell. Addressing Mrs. Raleigh, he roared: "I wish to see my son alone, madam."

"Very well, sir," she indignantly replied. "I wish you to understand, sir, that *you* are no gentleman, sir," and she left the room.

"And I can say the same of you," called the old man after her.

Two Announcements.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS.

PACING the room like a caged lion, the old gentleman voiced his indignation thus: "Now I guess the devil is loose. Was it Shakespeare said 'Beware of the viddy'? No, it couldn't have been Shakespeare. Who the dickens was it, anyway? Well, no matter—he knew what he was talking about. Good Lord! That woman's old enough to be—to be—Tom's mother! She has designs on Tom, eh? Humph! He is only a boy—why, it was only a year ago or so that he was in knee pants. H'm—after Tom—that Raleigh woman—tricky, designing, old. I'll put a stop to this nonsense. I'll bring him up with a short turn. Disgrace the family, scandalize the community. I'll—I'll——"

"You sent for me, father?" interrupted Tom, calling from upstairs.

"Yes, sir! Come down here," answered the old gentleman.

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“Well, here I am,” said Tom, entering.

“I sent for you, sir—yes, sir—you *rascal*, sir—I want to know, sir, what the devil you mean, sir, by your conduct, sir?” roared Abbott. “Do you think, sir, that I’ll allow you, sir, to make a confounded, *infernal ass* of yourself, sir——”

“Hold on—hold on here! What the devil are you driving at?” shouted Tom, striving vainly to make himself heard.

“What the devil do you mean, sir, by engaging yourself, sir, without consulting *me*, sir——”

“Hold on—hold on, or you’ll burst a blood vessel. I don’t——”

“I am to be *considered*, sir—the family is to be considered, sir. Yes, sir——”

“I propose to marry to suit myself, sir——”

“I—ah—a—ah—eh?” Abbott was purple with rage.

“You didn’t consider the family in *your* choice,” retorted Tom.

“Hold your tongue, sir——”

“You didn’t ask my consent to——”

“Your consent!” shrieked Abbott. “Your consent! I have made a suitable choice, sir——”

“So have I,” Tom declared.

“I’ll cut you off with a nickel, sir——”

The old man had struck a vulnerable spot.

Two Announcements.

“Because I shall make an angel my wife,” said Tom, bitterly.

“An angel!” sneered his father, “an *angel!* Humph! That Raleigh woman an angel! That tricky, designing——”

Tom was furious. “Stop—father, stop!” shouted he, at the top of his voice, “I’ll not listen to another *word.*”

“You are an infernal idiot; a blasted, doggoned ass. I—ah! ah! oh!”

The old gentleman, too furiously angry to speak another word, stalked out of the room, meeting Cora and George in the doorway.

Tom was excitedly walking.

George called out, “Helloa, Tom, what’s the row? The old gentleman seems to be considerably excited.”

“He is mad—rearing, tearing mad,” Tom answered, and marched out to find Nellie.

“Ha! ha! ha! ha!” laughed George; “not the slightest doubt of that.”

“Out of sorts with everybody—ha! ha! ha! ha! —a lover’s quarrel, you know. Oh, George, isn’t it funny? Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Cora.

“You don’t mean——”

“Ha! ha! ha! Yes, I do,” she interrupted. “My papa intends to give me a mamma, and my

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papa and my *mamma-to-be* have had a spat—s-p-a-t, spat. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Quarreled?” asked George, in amazement.

“Yes, George; sad to relate, it is so. Molly overheard them, and I overheard *her* tell Susan. I always hear everything.”

“Aha! Then I was right in my conclusions—they *are* engaged.”

“They were engaged. *She* herself informed me of the fact a moment ago. Now—they have had a row. Ha! ha! ha! ha!”

“What do think about it, Cora?”

“Two old fools—oh! oh! I didn’t mean to say that. Ha! ha! ha! It’s ridiculous—perfectly absurd. They ought to know better; but I suppose they will marry.”

“Fact. When will Cora marry George?”

“Oh, when she has time to think about it.”

“You love me, don’t you?”

“Oh, perhaps. It doesn’t pay to be too precipitate,—the old couple have quarreled already, George;” and she looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

“Will you take me?” he persisted.

“Yes, if—if—ha! ha! ha! Oh, George.”

“*If?* If what?”

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“Oh, if I don’t take somebody else. Ha! ha! ha!”

Rising from beside her, George went across the room, seated himself carelessly in an easy-chair, and said: “Well, I’ll leave the field to that ‘somebody else.’ I believe you said that the young widow is exquisitely beautiful—lovely—charming. She will arrive soon—and——”

“George?”

“Miss Abbott.”

“George, are you *very* fond of me?”

“Oh, well, ‘kissing goes by favor.’ I might be as fond of some one else,” he answered. Crossing his knees, he settled back comfortably in the chair, and whistled “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

Finally Cora again called: “George?”

“Miss Abbott?”

“Come over here, George.”

“It’s too much trouble—I’m very comfortable where I am.”

“Come nearer, George. I have to talk too loud.”

“Then don’t talk. It is too much trouble to get up, *Miss Cora.*”

Another pause, and she again said: “George?”

“Yes.”

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"Come over *here*. I want to tell you something."

"Well, tell it. I'm not deaf."

"But you are too far away; and——"

George rose; going halfway across the room he sat down again, saying: "Tell it."

"George?"

"Well, I am listening."

"I said I *wanted to tell you something*."

"I have not objected; why don't you tell it?"

"It's a secret."

"Then *don't* tell it."

"*Come nearer*. Oh, George—I—I—do—love—you—and—and——"

"And what?" he asked, seating himself beside her on the sofa.

"I—I—*won't* let you make love to the widow—so *there!*"

"Will you marry me?"

"Yes, George."

There was a swift movement of two pairs of arms, that sent the rosebud flying from the button-hole of George's coat, and irretrievably smashed the flowers that adorned Cora's corsage. There were several sounds that might have been mistaken for the popping of champagne corks.



"I—I—WON'T LET YOU MAKE LOVE TO THE WIDOW—SO THERE!"—Page 86.

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Putting his head in at the open door, Tom called out: "Helloa, there, if I am intruding——"

"Oh, Lord, no," said George, springing up; "congratulate me, and announce our engagement this very night—will you? She has promised *at last.*"

"Oh, you miserable wretch," exclaimed Cora to George; "just see what you have done—you have smashed my sleeves."

"That's nothing; it can't hurt the sleeves. *You* nearly smashed my *heart.*"

The guests were now arriving, and Fritz, the stableman, was stationed at the door to admit and announce them. And this is the way he did it: Putting his head in at the drawing-room door, he shouted, "Here vas all dot family of dose Villiams; und Meester Bob, he vas here too," he added, as Bob, with Maude on his arm, entered the room.

Nellie came in and fastened a flower in Tom's coat. Abbott came in and sat down, looking as awkward as a crab, in his new suit.

"Here vas dose fiddler fellers," yelled Fritz, making the motion of drawing a bow.

Laura appeared in the dining-room door. She had ordered a new gown for this reception, and she had made up her mind to be present. "After all,"

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thought she, "isn't Nellie to marry Tom? I'll not stay away."

Thick and fast the guests were arriving. "Here vas dot—Vat-you-call-'m," called out Fritz, as "Vat-you-call-'m" entered, his face scarlet with indignation; for "Vat-you-call-'m" was a *titled* gentleman.

The musicians struck up a waltz. The dance over, Tom led Nellie to a seat near his father, and, when all were seated, he said: "The cotillion will be led by George Randall and Cora Abbott, whose engagement I announce."

Mr. Abbott, his face beaming with delight, sprang to his feet, and almost jerking Nellie out of her seat, called: "And *this* little lady has promised to be my wife."

"*Your* wife! You lunatic!" shrieked Tom, as Nellie, half dead with fright, cried out, "Oh, Tom! —Tom!" and sprang into his arms.

Laura Raleigh, springing forward, struck first with one hand and then the other, two sounding, stinging blows on Abbott's face, and shrieked at him, "You wretch! You monster!" and fell fainting in Bob's arms.

All was confusion. Some of the ladies gathered up their skirts and made a hasty retreat; others gathered in the corners and wrung their

Two Announcements.

hands, and shrieked. Cora and George induced Mr. Abbott to let them take him to his room. Laura was laid on the sofa, Nellie was hysterical. When Laura Raleigh was sufficiently recovered, she and Nellie, accompanied by Bob, went home in the carriage.

The principal characters in this drama gone, no explanations were forthcoming. The remaining guests gathered in groups and discussed the affair. Finally, Mr. Wilber Randall informed those who had showed no inclination to take their departure, that it was his belief that Mr. Abbott was suffering from the effects of gas, administered by the dentist who had extracted his teeth; and not being entirely responsible for his actions, he had probabaly taken more wine at dinner than was good for him.

Mrs. Wilber Randall said that she hoped they would understand and appreciate Miss Cora's position, and excuse her; the carriages would be called, and they were requested to take their departure, as it was necessary that Mr. Abbott be kept perfectly quiet.

When Fritz closed the door after the last departing guest, Molly came down the stairs and said: "Mees Cora, she vas dell me, ve vas to go to

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de kitchen, und get somedings to eadt. Meester Obbott,—he vas seek.”

“Vell, I vas all readty ven dere vas somedings to eadt,” Fritz answered.

Going to the kitchen, they found all the servants of the “Riverside Neighbors” assembled; we may be sure they all did justice to the good things provided for the supper.

“This bates the worruld, so it do,” said Pat (the stableman); “them guests they do be afther lavin’ the primises widout a bite to ate; wid der stumickses impty, an’ not a dhrap o’ onything to dhrink a-tall-a-tall; ther whistles av them as dhry as an impty whiskey bottle, begorra.”

“All the more for us then, Pat,” remarked Ben,—“so, Fritz?”

“Yah, dot vas so,” answered Fritz, his mouth full of cake, “und dees feller vas always readty to eadt it.”

“What fol allee folks go?” questioned Sing. “I no sabbee—Misse Cola, she tellee me evelybody stay—two—tle—clock. Wachee mallee?”

“Vy! I vas dell you dot Meester Obbott, he vas seek,” answered Molly.

“Te! he! he! he! he!” squeaked the Chinaman. “I no tinkee he sick,—te! he! he! He not velly sick,—he allee same heap clazy,—te! he! What

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fol allee time hoppee—jump aloud, allee same hoppee flog, te! he! he! He ollee man—he not chillen,—I know, he heap clazy, te! he! he! he! te! he!”

“Give me another dish of ice cream, Sing,” said Ben.

“I tinkee you allee gettee sick,” said Sing. “You Ben, you Flitz, eatee too muchee.” Patting his stomach, he added: “Heap big bell, you gottee, Ben—te! he! he! Him Flitz, he gettee achee in bell,—te! he! he! Allee light—you eatie—I no care—heap plenty slandwich, cake, ice cleam, evelyting.”

“Onything to dhrink, ye pigtailed haythen?” asked Pat.

“Huh! what fol *you* talkee *me*? You Ilish—huh!”

“Give us a dhrink to wet the whistles av us, Sing.”

“Me no likee Ilish—you gettee self.”

“Begorra, Ben, there’s a big pail full av limonad,” said Pat. “I’m afther squozing thim limons meself, so oi did; let’s be afther gittin’ av it before it’s spoilt intoirely.”

“Ben,” called Mrs. Randall, “we are ready to go home now. Drive around.”

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CHAPTER IX.

IN A FIX.

MOLLY and Fritz walked home across the meadow at midnight, and the morning found neither one of them in a very amiable mood.

Nellie had a headache, and was late to breakfast; and for the first time, Molly was impatient with her.

Mrs. Raleigh had not closed her eyes in sleep. She had turned the conversation between herself and Mr. Abbott over and over in her mind; the more she thought about it, the more she felt that she had been outrageously abused. She felt an angry resentment towards Mr. Abbott, in spite of the fact that she had come to the conclusion that he was drunk when he announced that he was to marry Nellie.

It never occurred to her that he was in ignorance of Tom's engagement to the young girl, and if for a moment she had suspected that the old gentleman was in love with her daughter, she would

In a Fix.

have thought that he had taken leave of his senses. Almost any one would have thought the same.

George was convinced that Cora's father was out of his mind, and told her so. She was more than half inclined to believe it. Subsequently the "Riverside Neighbors" arrived at the same conclusion, and poor Mr. Abbott found himself in a very serious situation.

Mr. Abbott had proposed to Nellie with her mother's approval, as he supposed, and he had, as he believed, been accepted. He could not understand why she was so frightened when he made his engagement known. Why had her mother committed assault and battery upon him? Why was there such a commotion? All this was bad enough, but on top of all these trials and tribulations, Tom—his son—had accused him of being drunk, and there seemed to be but one solution to the indignity and outrage that had been inflicted upon him; Mrs. Raleigh had made up her mind to marry *Tom*, or prevent *him* from marrying Nellie. But then Nellie had clung to Tom—why was that? "A drowning man will catch at a straw." Tom was handy—the poor little girl was *afraid of her mother*—of course that explained it all, to *his* satisfaction.

Mrs. Raleigh had slapped his face in his own

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house, and in the presence of his guests—wouldn't *she* make a desirable mother-in-law!

Mr. Abbott's blood boiled with indignation at the insult Mrs. Raleigh had inflicted upon him. He would see the woman and demand an explanation. He had spoken to Tom—evidently his children were leagued with *her* against *him*.

Poor Mr. Abbott had become entangled in a net; and the more he struggled, the more securely he was bound. He found himself in a most deplorable predicament.

The Widow.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOW.

“YOUR station, madam.”

Giving the bell-rope a pull, the conductor made a grab for basket and grip, piled on a seat opposite a funny little old lady, in a widow's dress.

“Only stop a moment, madam—wayside station, you know—this way, please.”

The little old lady gathered up the rest of her belongings, and followed the conductor to the platform of the car.

Handing the basket and grip to the brakeman, the conductor lifted her bodily, and set her down on the platform of the little box station, just as her trunks turned a somersault from the door of the baggage car and landed on end, in front of the little waiting-room that had been built on Abbott's property for the convenience of “Riverside Neighbors.”

Before the widow could collect her wits, the train was under motion and nearly out of sight. Picking up her satchel and basket from the ground

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where the brakeman had thrown them, she looked about her; not a soul was in sight.

Seating herself on a bench, she removed a pair of smoked glasses. "Perhaps," she said to herself, "the train is ahead of time, or there may be some delay in getting the carriage ready."

Glancing up at the front of the station, she read in big white letters (framed in black) on the door, "Abbott's Station." "This must be on the Abbott's land," thought she.

Catching a glimpse through the trees, of a stately building, she said aloud: "I wonder if that can be Cora Abbott's home?"

A tiny bird flew down, and alighting at her feet looked saucily up at her. She tossed a few crumbs from her basket; he pecked them up and flew away. Now and then came the scent of orange blossoms. She heard the murmurings of the river; no other sound, save the twittering of the birds, and the humming of bees, as they flew from flower to flower, disturbed the stillness. The air was soft and balmy. She inhaled it with delight, and thought: "At last I am in Southern California; my dream is realized. This is Southern California as Nature made it, with man's assistance. It is grand and beautiful. Mrs. Raleigh is right—it is a paradise."

The Widow.

She looked at her watch. "Why," said she aloud, "I've been here an hour; that seems strange. It is getting along towards noon, and no one has come to meet me." She opened her satchel, took out a book and tried to read; half an hour more passed—she was beginning to get anxious.

"Whow! Whow, there!"

The widow (or, as I shall call her, Mrs. W. B.), clapped on her glasses. "At last," thought she, "some one has come for me."

A team turned the corner of the station, and backed a big farm wagon up to the platform.

She began to feel troubled; for a moment she hesitated, and then she went forward, and enquired of the man who jumped down from the seat, if he could direct her to "Magnolia Villa."

"It is over there," said he, pointing with his whip; "but, good Lord, madam, you'd be just dead beat out, if you tried to walk there. Were the folks expecting of you?" he inquired. "I didn't hear Fritz telling that anybody was bein' expected there to-day, madam."

"They must have received my letter. I don't understand why no one has come for me."

"Well, well, madam, something has gone amiss, I'll be bound; maybe they was not expectin' of you until evenin', mam. I can drop in an' tell

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the folks as I pass. I live just t'other side of the Raleigh's; but you see, mam, that it takes time to load up this here freight, mam."

"You say," said Mrs. W. B., "that you live just beyond the Raleigh place?"

"Yes, mam. I am the Randall's man," he answered.

An idea occurred to her, and trying to suppress an inclination to laugh outright, she said: "I'll go along with you; it will save time."

"Lord's sake, madam! An old lady like you? Heavens! How could you stand it? But of course, mam, if *you* don't mind, I'll be proud to take you up. Let me see," said he, meditatively, "it might be easy enough for you to get up, but it wouldn't be so very easy to get down. Now, if you were a young girl, like Miss Cora or Miss Nellie——"

"Oh, I'm all right—I'm pretty spry."

"Well, I guess we can manage it. You're a little woman—I can lift you down."

Ben (for it was he) loaded up the freight. "Now, madam," said he, "these here trunks, I 'spect, air your'n. I'll take them along, as there's plenty of room. Now, madam, put your foot on the hub, so—that's it—take my hand, now step on the top of the wheel, so—that's it—now take

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hold of the back of the seat, and give a spring, and there you are."

"Oh—oh, dear—oh," called Mrs. W. B., as she seated herself and looked down at Ben, "I cannot sit up here. Oh, dear! I feel giddy; I'm afraid I shall fall headlong between the horses' hoofs. Oh, dear! help me to get down;" and *down* she came.

Ben took off his cap and scratched his head, until he scratched up an idea; then he said; "I'll fix you—just get in back and sit on one of them there trunks—if you're afraid, hold onto the back of the seat, or to my coat tails."

"That's it," she cried. Clapping her hands and laughing merrily, she climbed in, and springing lightly over the trunks, seated herself on one of them.

Ben scratched his head again, and looked curiously at her, as peal after peal of musical laughter burst from her lips. He had never heard an old, white-haired lady laugh like a young girl before, and he was completely nonplussed. Wondering to himself, he climbed in and turned the horses' heads towards home.

Ben was a good-natured fellow of sociable disposition, and he was doing the lady a favor; so he

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felt it his privilege to entertain her, which he did.

By the time she reached Laura Raleigh's house she had quite a history of the "Riverside Neighbors."

Ben had been very voluble, and had talked of everything and everybody. He had spoken of Laura's brother, but never once had he spoken his name (an unaccountable happening). Had he done so, this story would have been less interesting, as Mrs. W. B. would never have gone to "Magnolia Villa."

Tom's Father.

CHAPTER XI.

TOM'S FATHER.

ON the morning after the party at Abbott's, Tom and his father had a wordy war, which resulted in further misunderstanding.

Abbott declared that he had engaged himself to Nellie; that, although Mrs. Raleigh had done her best to capture him, he had *never* thought of her as a wife. He declared emphatically, that Nellie *had* promised to be his wife, and that he meant to marry her.

Tom was in as great a state of excitement as was the old gentleman, so it is not a matter of surprise that he failed to enlighten his father of the existing relation between himself and Nellie, who was the innocent cause of all this misunderstanding. He was at a loss to understand why his father persisted in saying he meant to marry the little girl. He jumped into his boat and landed at her home, to get from her, if possible, an explanation. The excitement of the night before

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had been too much for her; "She was not up yet," Molly snapped at him, when she answered his ring.

On reaching home again, Tom found his father gone. He looked everywhere about the place, and so did Cora, but nowhere could the old gentleman be found. George arrived and joined in the search, but Mr. Abbott was gone. Going to the stable, they found that he had taken his horse.

After Tom had left his father's presence, Mr. Abbott began pacing the floor, and indulged in the following soliloquy: "So that Raleigh woman is *not* after Tom, eh! It's *me—me—*good Lord! It's me, and she has gone and told *everybody* that she is going to marry *me*. I'll see her to the devil first—h'm,—marry *her*! Why, she is old enough to be—be—well—Nellie's mother; anyway, she is old enough to know better. I'll go and see her and demand an explanation."

Walking to the stable he threw his saddle on his horse, mounted, and while Tom was returning *from* Mrs. Raleigh's by the river, Abbott was galloping along the road on the way there.

Arriving, he rode into the stable-yard, gave his horse into Fritz's care, went to the house and rang the door bell. "I want to see Mrs. Raleigh," said he to Molly, when she opened the door.

Tom's Father.

Molly had had her instructions. "Meester Ob-bott, you cannot see Meeses Raleigh; she vill not see you, und I vas peesy." Going into the dining-room, she began sweeping.

"Mrs. Raleigh won't see me, eh? She won't see me, eh?" said Abbott, following Molly into the room.

"No, sir, she vill see nopoty dees day."

"Tell her I'll stay till she will see me."

"Vell, you vill hafe all de day to stay den. She vas not get up yet."

Another ring at the bell. Molly laid down the broom and went to the door.

"Molly, is father here?"

Abbott recognized Tom's voice. He opened the china-closet door and stepped in, closing it after him.

"Yah," answered Molly, "he vas say he spend de day. He vas in dot dining-room und I vas try to sweep dis day. I don't like dot nonsense."

Tom entered. "Why, Molly," said he, "father is not here."

"Vy, dot vas so!" she exclaimed, looking in at the door; "he vas gone already."

"Where do you suppose he went, Molly?"

"How you tink I vas know dot?" she snapped.

Another ring at the bell. Molly laid down her

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broom, saying: "Dere vas dot pell some more already," and angrily she went to answer it.

"Molly, is papa here?" inquired Cora.

"Or Mr. Tom?" added George.

"I'm here," called Tom from the dining-room.

"Oh, Tom, did you see papa at all this morning?" asked Cora.

"Of course I've seen him, and *heard* him too. He said he was going to marry *Nellie—Nellie!*"

"Ha! ha! The old man has a crack in the upper story. He engaged himself to her mother," said George.

"That's a *lie*," cried out a voice from the closet, followed by a crash and clatter of falling dishes and pans.

Mr. Abbott, being rather cramped for room, and tired of standing, had seated himself on a nearly empty sugar barrel. When George declared that he had engaged himself to Mrs. Raleigh, he could stand no more. Lustily calling out, he attempted to rise and make his presence known; the lid of the barrel gave way, and frantically catching at the shelf above, down that came, while he, in a sitting position, sank towards the bottom of the barrel, and was covered by an avalanche of pickles, jam, jelly, and broken crockery.

Tom's Father.

The young people looked at each other in astonishment. Before they could recover, "Help! oh, help! I can't get out," came in a smothered voice from the closet.

George opened the door, and out fell a deluge of broken china and glass. A pair of very lively legs was all that was visible of Mr. Abbott, but from the depths of the barrel came a voice, "Oh, Lord! I'll smother."

"Well, this is a pretty pickle!" exclaimed George, as he and Tom rolled the barrel out into the room, and proceeded to haul the old gentleman out, first removing the conglomeration composed of Mrs. Raleigh's pickles and preserves.

Mr. Abbott's hair was dyed red, his clothes were torn in ribbons by the nails in the side of the barrel, and, with his face smeared with jelly and coated with sugar, he presented a ludicrous appearance; but, all unmindful of the figure he cut, he stamped his foot with rage, and roared, "I never engaged myself to Mrs. Raleigh. It was Nellie, I tell you—Nellie."

"But," said George, "Nellie is engaged to Tom."

A look of astonishment spread over Mr. Abbott's face. In spite of its coating of sweetness, it was easy to see that he turned pale. Looking from one

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to the other, he gasped, as he tried to repeat:
“Nellie—engaged—to—*Tom*?”

“Oh!” cried Cora, wringing her hands, “his mind is unbalanced, no doubt—no doubt. Oh, what shall we do? We must inform Mrs. Raleigh of his condition.”

Abbott’s face turned from white to red, under its covering of jam. “What do you mean? Do you think—do you think——”

“Come home, father,” interrupted Tom.

“You don’t think—oh, Lord!” Again the old man’s face blanched.

“Come, papa.”

“I’ll see that damned woman first,” roared Abbott.

“Father,” remonstrated Tom, “don’t go and make an infernal ass of yourself. You are acting like a fool. What do you mean by it?”

“I tell you I *thought* I was engaged to Nellie.”

“Nellie! Why, Mr. Abbott, you are old enough to be her great-grandfather. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!” roared George.

“I tell you, his mind’s unbalanced. We all *know* that he engaged himself to Nellie’s mother,” said Cora.

The old man was beside himself with rage. “I

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never! never! That tricky old—Good Lord! You are a set of lunatics—I—that design——”

“Papa, dear, come home with me.” Cora laid her hand on his arm as she spoke.

“Don't you *papa dear* me,” he roared savagely, shaking her hand away.

“Come, father,” said Tom, trying to catch him by the arm.

“I won't be *papa deared*,” shrieked Abbott, grabbing the broom.

“Come, now, Mr. Abbott,” coaxed George, taking the broom away from him.

“I'll see that woman first—I'll—I'll——”

Cora wrung her hands and cried, “Oh, Tom, Tom. This is awful. Papa, do come home.”

“What the devil do you mean? I am not crazy!” and Abbott picked up a chair.

“Oh, father, do be calm and come home.”

“I *am* calm,” shrieked the old man, flourishing the chair. “It's *you!*”

George made a dive from the rear and captured the chair, while Tom tried to hold down the old gentleman's arms; but Abbott got away, and again grabbed the broom, shrieking; “I won't go, I tell you——”

Fritz came hastily in, threw up his hands and

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shouted: "*Gott in Himmel!* Vat was all dees apout!"

"Help us, Fritz," called Tom.

Three men against one used Abbott up, and he collapsed. They lifted him bodily and carried him out.

The Arrival.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARRIVAL.

MR. ABBOTT could no longer use his legs and arms as they carried him out, but he could use his voice and he did.

Molly in the kitchen heard it, and came running in. She gave one glance about the room, placed her arms akimbo, and said: "Vell, dees vas vone putty peesness, ain't it?"

Mrs. Raleigh, upstairs in her bedroom, heard the commotion, and jumping out of her bed, ran downstairs, and came flying into the room, calling out: "What's all this disturbance?"

"It vas dot shentleman, Obbott, Meeses Raleigh," replied Molly. "He vas gone off mit his headt, und all dosh beobles, dey vas come to dake him home. Just look dot barrel—dot lit vas busted—look dose deeshes, look dose peekles, und dot jam, my! my!"

"How did all this happen?" asked Mrs. Raleigh.

"Vell, I tink, Meeses Raleigh, dot Meester Ob-

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bott he do dot foolishness mit it. He vas say dot he vas shpend de day. I does not know vat he vish mit dose peekles und dot jam. My! my! he vas shmash all dose nice leedle deeshes—mine gracious!”

Fritz entered with a letter in his hand. For a moment, he looked askance at Mrs. Raleigh, who seemed perfectly oblivious of the fact that she wore her nightgown, then he said: “Meeses Raleigh, here vas vone ledder for you. It vas come yesterday ven you vas ot dot Obbot house, und den I forget dot ledder some more.”

Taking it, Mrs. Abbott said: “Roll that barrel out into the kitchen;” then she sat down to read her letter. “Heavens!” she exclaimed. “It is from Mrs. Raleigh! She will be here on the fifth—that’s to-day. Good Lord!” She rang the bell, and Molly answered. “Go and tell Fritz to get the carriage out and go at once to the station for an old lady. Find Miss Nellie, and send her here to me. Tell Fritz to lose no time. Be quick, Molly.”

Nellie, standing at the head of the stairs, heard her mother’s voice and came down. Entering, she said: “Here I am, mamma. What is the matter? What ails this room? Why, mamma, you are in your nightdress.”

The Arrival.

“Heavens! So I am! Well, I am almost distracted. Mrs. Raleigh will be here to-day, probably on the evening train; but to avoid a mistake I have hurried Fritz to the station now. I hope she was not on the *morning* train. Now, Nellie, you must be very quiet and dignified before her. She is very austere. I am exceedingly anxious to receive her with the most profound respect and courtesy. I am especially anxious that *you* make a good impression. Her presence will, during her stay, put a quietus on the merrymaking of you young folks, but you may be paid well in the end for your sacrifice.”

Mrs. Raleigh started to go upstairs, but returning, said: “Oh, Nellie, I meant to tell you that you must not go to the Abbott’s for awhile.”

“But, mamma, you——”

“My dear, you are not aware that Mr. Abbott is demented, and quite violent. Cora and Tom may come here as often as they like, but at present *you* must not go there. I shall go often to see the poor man. I will be able to do more to soothe and comfort him than a child like Cora, as she is young and inexperienced.”

“Poor Mr. Abbott. I’m so sorry. I almost suspected that he was crazy.”

Just then Molly came flying into the room; in

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her excitement, she nearly upset Mrs. Laura, who had turned towards the hall door, intending to go back to her room.

“Oh, Lord! Lord!” exclaimed Molly, waving her arms about like the sails of a windmill, “dot latdy, she vas come mit dose beobles,—dose Randall’s hired man, dot Ben. Mine gracious, Meeses Raleigh, you vas not dressed for coompany—my! my!—Ben, he vas pring dot latdy to dees house mit dot sphring-vagon—dot *big* vagon. My! my! She vas sit on de trunk. Mine gracious! Lord! Lord!”



"MINE GRACIOUS, MEESES RALEIGH! YOU VAS NOT DRESSED FOR COMPANY!"—Page 112.

First Impressions.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

ARRIVING at "Magnolia Villa," Ben clambered down from his seat on the wagon, gave a signal whistle to attract the attention of Fritz, who by the way, had stopped at Abbott's to gossip with Pat and so had missed meeting them. Going to the back of the wagon, Ben lifted Mrs. W. B. out, and set her down on the walk.

She walked leisurely up the path, and finding the front door open, she entered. Hearing voices, she went quietly in the direction whence the sounds came, and stood in the dining-room door, observing, but unobserved, until Molly, turning to leave the room, confronted her, and called out in confusion, "Here vas dot ladty—und mine gracious, she vas look at *you*." Then she fled to the kitchen.

Laura, with a scream, dived into the china closet and slammed the door, leaving poor little Nellie to face the guest, who was to have been received with such "respect and courtesy."

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The girl's face flamed crimson; she stammered: "Are—are you—you—Mrs. Raleigh—the old—oh——"

"Yes, young woman, I am Mrs. Raleigh—the old——"

"Oh, mamma will—be—be—so—sorry—so—oh—I didn't—mean——"

"I presume you, young woman, are Mrs. Raleigh's daughter."

"Yes, I am Nellie."

"Young woman, I do not approve of nicknames. I shall call you Helen. I presume your name is Helen."

"No, my name is Nellie,—just Nellie."

"Well, Helen, you are a very charming person in appearance. I hope your character corresponds." Very abruptly she inquired: "Where's your mother?"

"Oh—she— isn't—up—oh—she—well, she isn't—dressed—yet——" stammered Nellie. "You must—excuse—excuse—she'll be down to—to dinner—she hasn't—had—had breakfast—yet——"

"Not dressed yet?" said Mrs. W. B., severely. "Why, it is near noon. Do you breakfast at noon? Don't you dress before dinner? What kind of folks are you?"

First Impressions.

“Yes—oh, yes—but—oh—you must—excuse—her——”

“Don’t you own a carriage?”

“Yes—yes—but—but—well—Fritz has gone—to—to get you, *now*.”

“Well, young woman, I am *here*.”

“Mamma will be—so—so—sorry——”

“Oh! Will she!”

“I—I—didn’t—mean—mean that—but she—she didn’t get your letter——”

“H’m! Didn’t get my letter? and Fritz has gone for me? Young woman, you should know that is wicked to prevaricate.”

“It—it didn’t come—in time—oh, you must excuse—mamma—she is—is—distracted—and—one—one of our neighbors has—has lost his mind——”

“Humph! Hope he will find it again. Young woman, how did it happen?”

“Oh! He’s—he is in—insane.”

“Oh! Why didn’t you say so, young woman? So you have distracted women and mad men in California! I have heard there are no mad dogs here. Have you any other wild animals?”

“I—I don’t know of—any——”

“What a misfortune that you have such a disagreeable impediment in your speech!”

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“Oh, don't you want to go to your room? You must be tired after your long journey.”

“Pardon me, young woman; I never *allow* myself to become fatigued; but I wish to be allowed to remove my wraps, and remove the stains of travel, and I would request a glass of iced water.”

“Please come upstairs,” said Nellie, leading the way.

Mrs. Laura Raleigh opened the closet door and listened until she heard the bedroom door above close; then making a rush for the staircase, she vanished just as Tom entered from the conservatory. Nellie returning, found him seated on the couch and sat down beside him, saying, as she suddenly changed from gravity to mirth: “Oh, Tom, she has come!” And her frame shook with laughter.

“*Who* has come?” he asked.

“Why, don't you know? Our guest, of course.” Again she was convulsed with laughter.

“Do you mean the widow W. B. R.? How do you like her?”

“She is horrid, just awfully horrid.”

“So? What is she like?”

“A fence rail dressed up and stood on end; stiff as a poker. There's not a joint in her whole body; if she should fall over, she would never be able to get up. And you—well, wait until you

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hear her talk. A 'Polly-wants-a-cracker' voice. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"You seem to think it very funny," remarked Tom.

"Well," said Nellie, a thoughtful expression coming into her face, "it wasn't funny a bit. She scared me almost to death."

"So then, the 'fence rail' is an ogress?"

"You know we didn't expect her so soon, and mamma—well, she wasn't dressed for company, so I had to show her to her room. I would as soon face a cannon, as to be with her, alone. She wears blue glasses, and it seems as if her eyes were gimlets back of them, and would bore a hole through me. Oh—but, Tom, mamma says I must not go to you house—because—because——"

"Well! What?"

"Your father——"

"Nonsense! He's harmless. There has been too much excitement. He declares, though, from A to Z, that he never engaged himself to your mamma."

"Well, he had his arms about her, anyway, on the day of the accident. I saw it—oh, ha! ha! ha! It was awfully funny. Ha! ha!"

"Nellie," said Maude, stepping in from the

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veranda, "I am off for San Francisco this evening. I am here to say 'good-bye.'"

Looking up, Nellie replied: "Going home so soon, Maudie?"

"Yes, mamma has sent for me, as she has a visitor from New York. I am wanted at home."

"*Our* guest has just arrived."

"And Nellie declares she is the embodiment of beauty and grace," said Tom.

"Ha! ha! ha! Keep an eye on Tom, Nellie," said Maude. "Widows often prove dangerous."

"You just bet I will," Nellie replied.

Maude kissed her good-bye, and kissing her fingertips to Tom, she went out as swiftly as she had come in.

Tom again slipped his arm about Nellie, and for some time they sat and talked, as lovers do.

Mrs. Laura Raleigh, in her company dress and manners, came downstairs, and talked to the young folks, while waiting for her guest to make her appearance.

The Widow Expresses Her Views.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WIDOW EXPRESSES HER VIEWS.

MRS. LAURA RALEIGH rose from her seat and went forward to meet Mrs. W. B. when she entered. Extending both hands, she said: "I am most happy to welcome you to my home."

Mrs. W. B. very stiffly extended one arm and shook hands with her hostess, much as if she were using a pump handle, and said: "Without doubt, madam, I shall *appreciate* your hospitality. I have *enjoyed* my reception." Looking about the room, she added: "You have a most beautiful place, madam, but you have not shown a *particle* of taste in furnishing." Adjusting her glasses, she looked sharply at Tom, who was nudging Nellie.

Laura hastened to introduce him, as the son of a neighbor, mentioning the fact that he was to become her son-in-law.

"Indeed!" Mrs. W. B. replied, as she gazed

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steadily at them. "Permit me to remark, that I do not approve of children marrying. I was *thirty-five* when I married, and I most certainly was too young then—h'm! But, madam, I am shocked that you allow such familiarity between the two. Why—why—the young man actually has his arm about the young woman."

Tom hastily removed his arm, while she continued: "I do not speak from experience, madam. I never *allowed* such impertinence myself; no—but it must be exceedingly embarrassing in case of an estrangement, to have to remember such—things. Madam, permit me to be seated." Seating herself exactly in the center of the straight-backed chair in the room, she sat bolt upright, and folded her hands in her lap.

"She is a *stunner!*" whispered Tom to Nellie.

"Let's go into the garden," whispered she.

Mrs. W. B. adjusted her glasses, and looking sternly at Nellie, said: "Young woman, has your mother never taught you that to whisper in company is unpardonable rudeness? H'm! I'll excuse you this once. I *heard* what you said. H'm! You should ask permission of your mother if you wish to go. When I was *your* age I never even thought of eating my breakfast, without first asking permission of my mother."

The Widow Expresses Her Views.

“I wonder how long this creature will stay?”
thought Laura

“Another demented,” whispered Tom.

“Oh, I’ll die; come, let’s run.” Laughing hysterically, Nellie caught his hand, and they both fled. Outside in the hall they gave way to their merriment, and laughed heartily.

“Madam, this is amazing!” exclaimed Mrs. W. B. to Laura. “Such actions! Allow me to change my seat!” Rising very stiffly, she moved to another chair, and used her vinaigrette.

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CHAPTER XV.

MRS. RALEIGH AND MR. ABBOTT.

“LAURA, Mr. Abbott has sent——”

Bob, coming quickly into the room and seeing his sister's guest, failed to finish what he was about to say, but, bowing to Mrs. W. B., said instead, “Excuse me.”

She gave a startled look, partly rose from her chair, and sat down again; quickly recovering herself, she rose and stiffly returned the bow.

“Mrs. Raleigh,” said Laura, “this is my brother Robert; Mr. Corson.”

Again she started, and again she recovered herself; putting out her hand very stiffly she shook hands and said: “I am, sir, most happy to meet you. You have a verbal message for your sister. I most graciously give you permission to deliver it.” And then she sat down, as stiffly as she had risen.

Looking curiously at Mrs. W. B., Bob said to Laura: “Mr. Abbott wants to see you, sister; has Tom been here?” he continued.

Mrs. Raleigh and Mr. Abbott.

“Yes,” his sister replied; “he has gone outside with Nellie.”

“Madam, if Mr. Abbott wishes to see you *here*, Mr. Corson may escort me into the garden,” said Mrs. W. B.

“Oh—no—no, no. He is confined to his room with a slight attack—of—of—well—he enjoys my presence——”

“Certainly, certainly, madam. Go—by *all* means, go.”

“Yes, sister, go. Tom will take you down.”

“Yes, go,” thought Laura, “anywhere to get away and draw a breath,” and she went to get her hat.

“We will get along famously,” called Mrs. W. B., when Mrs. Raleigh passed the hall door on her way out.

Laura Raleigh stepped into the boat, and Tom rowed her to his father’s place.

Mr. Abbott had begun to realize his position; his anger towards her had somewhat decreased—he felt that his safety now depended on his ability to explain matters as best he could, without making himself appear ridiculous in the eyes of the neighbors.

For a long time he talked to her, trying to ex-

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plain that he had not intended to offer her his hand and heart—in fact, he had already disposed of his heart, and he had supposed that he had also disposed of his hand.

The more he tried to explain matters, the more convinced she became that the old gentleman was not responsible for anything he said or did; she believed that his mind was unbalanced, and in some way he must be cared for until he recovered.

He tried his best to convince her that he was perfectly sane, all to no purpose. She listened and smiled. He could see that argument was unavailing, for she treated him like a peevish child.

Her efforts to soothe him only exasperated him. His anger rose. He accused her of being the cause of all his troubles. He lashed her with his tongue, and finally he *swore* at her.

She then came to the conclusion that it was useless to be offended at anything he said, but she believed that with patience and devotion she could dispel the darkness that now obscured his reason, and that soon he would be himself again. He must not be confined; he must have his liberty. She would look after him, herself; it was her right, and she would send Fritz to watch him and

Mrs. Raleigh and Mr. Abbott.

see that no harm befell him when he roamed about his estate.

Bidding "Paul, dear," good-bye, she went home. Going to the kitchen, she prepared some charlotte-russe. When it had set, she called Fritz and told him to take it to Mr. Abbott, and see that he got it.

Fritz took her meaning literally, and according to his own ideas, did his best to obey orders.

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CHAPTER XVI.

BOB AND THE WIDOW.

"HAVE you ever been in California before?" inquired Bob of Mrs. W. B., after Laura had gone.

"No, never," she answered quickly. "Oh—that is—is—oh——" she stammered. Recovering herself, she abruptly said, "Mr. Corson, you may escort me into the garden. This place suits me; I shall stay all winter."

"Will you take my arm?" said he, offering it.

"Most certainly I shall, Mr. Corson," she replied, as she rose and stiffly slipped her hand under his arm.

Outside, Nellie called: "Uncle Bob! Oh, Uncle Bob! Old Bill has a nail in his hoof; come out."

Excusing himself to the old lady, he went to look at the horse.

Cora Abbott entered from the conservatory as Bob went out the hall door.

Bob and the Widow.

Extending both hands, Mrs. W. B. R. stepped briskly up to her and said, "Miss Abbott, I am delighted to see you."

"Beg pardon! *You know me?*" said Cora.

"Certainly! I am Edith's mother. Don't you know me?"

"You have come? But where is Edith?"

"She will be here next week, if nothing happens."

"You traveled alone at your age?"

"Why not? That is nothing."

"No one will ever suspect that you are *not* Mrs. Raleigh, No. 1," said Cora. "I never noticed the strong resemblance between you and your daughter before. Edith is the very *picture* of you. If your hair were not white you might pass for *her*."

"Yes," remarked Mrs. W. B., "I have a *friend* who has *actually* mistaken one for the other."

"Is it possible? Oh, won't it be fun when Edith comes, and Mrs. Laura finds out who Mrs. W. B. R. really is?"

"I am not quite sure that I quite approve of this scheme. You didn't write that your father was ill——"

"He has been indisposed only for a day or two; it is nothing serious."

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"You never wrote a word about Mr. Corson."

"I never thought of him. You will like him. I'll tell you all about the people here."

Cora was interrupted by the entrance of Bob, Nellie, and Tom.

"I'll escort you into the garden now, Mrs. Raleigh," said Bob.

"Oh—no, no, Mr. Corson, I have no desire to go. This young person is more entertaining than anybody I have yet met; she will give me the history of all of you." Nodding her head to Cora, she continued, "Go on, dear. Tell me first about your father."

"The excitement of having so many young people about him has unsettled papa's mind," Cora began.

"Humph! He is as crazy as a bed-bug," Tom declared.

Adjusting her glasses, Mrs. W. B. looked at Tom and said: "Young man, your language is shocking. Permit me to say, it is downright *vulgar*."

"Now, Tom," reproached Nellie, "his mind is unsteady, that's all."

"That's *all*, is it?" replied Tom.

"Now, Tom," said Cora, "there is nothing the

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matter but over-excitement; he will be himself again in a few days."

"Still, he should have an attendant," remarked Bob.

"He should not be too closely confined," said Laura, entering and sitting down; "there is not much work here just now. I thought Fritz might watch Mr. Abbott when he is out of doors—just keep an eye on him, you know. A stranger would have a bad effect on him. I think that Cora, Tom, and I, with Fritz's help, can take good care of him. I have sent Fritz with some charlotte-russe for him."

"Mrs. Raleigh," said Cora to Mrs. W. B. R., "Papa always likes the people that I like. I have taken a fancy to you, and I am positive that he would enjoy your society. You must spend part of your time at our house."

"Oh, Lord! another lunatic in the house!" exclaimed Tom aloud. Clapping his hand over his mouth he hastily made his exit.

Bob laughed outright. Cora turned away her face to hide a smile that threatened to expand into a laugh, while Mrs. W. B., making an heroic effort to keep her face in repose, said, "I was once introduced to an insane person, and I found it

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exceedingly difficult to find any subject on which we could converse."

"Perhaps he was not an educated lunatic," Bob said, looking sharply at her, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, yes, he was; he—was a woman, and she insisted on talking Latin."

"Look here, Meeses Raleigh, vat you tink mine face?" angrily asked Fritz, entering, with his face all cut and covered with blood. "Py tamn! I vas not going to do de peesiness of dake care of dot insane crazytic. Just look dot face. It vill pe all spoiled, und Molly, she vill dell me, go in vone bucket und soak mine headt. I does not like dot, py tunder!"

Everybody knew what had happened. *Fritz* could see nothing to laugh about; but it was impossible for the *others* to restrain themselves. All but Mrs. W. B. R. laughed heartily. *She* was taken with a violent fit of coughing, and it was some time before she could recover.

Fritz felt that he had been abused, and to be laughed at, aroused his indignation; they had added insult to injury. The usually placid Fritz was angry. "Yah; you laugh mit me, eh? You laugh mit de mout on de oder side somedimes, don't it? Dot Meester Obbott he dake dot tamn

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jelly—‘charleyrose’—und he do dot foolishness mit it. Just look dot peautiful face.”

Mrs. W. B. R. said to him: “First apply some warm water—no soap—then a soft towel—then some court-plaster.” Turning to Laura, she said: “I presume, madam, that you have some court-plaster in the house—black—by all means black. I have great faith in black. It——”

“No! Py tunder! I vas not hafe dot blaster plack.”

“Oh, yes, Fritz,” coaxed Mrs. W. B. R.

“Vell, Meeses, Molly, she vill say dot like dose fellers I look, vat do de prize-fight. I vas not like dot.” And he left the room.

Laura, saying, “I’ll go and get the court-plaster,” followed him.

“Induce him, madam, to use black. There is nothing in this world to compare with it,” called Mrs. W. B. R. after her.

Bob looked amused. “Why do you prefer black?” he asked.

“I am amazed at your question. It is a violent contrast, and does not shock one’s *artistic* sensibilities like a flesh tint that does not match, sir,” she replied.

Nellie giggled, and Cora laughed outright, while Bob shook with merriment.

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Mrs. W. B. R. stiffened herself up, and looking from one to the other, said: "Young women, your conduct is shockingly impolite. Mr. Corson can be excused; *he* is only a man."

Bob threw up his head and roared with laughter. Recovering himself, he said: "These ladies, after spending the winter in *your* society, will become paragons of dignity." Again he laughed merrily.

Mrs. W. B. R. arose. Standing as straight and stiff as a lamp-post, she haughtily said: "Sir, I do not understand your levity."

He replied as he arose, "I am certain that you will when *we* are better acquainted."

Nellie laughed hysterically and ran out.

Bob made an elaborate bow to Mrs. W. B. R., kissed his hand to her, and followed Nellie.

Then Mrs. W. B. R., turning to Cora, said, "I really believe Bo—— Mr. Corson sees through my disguise."

"Oh, no. He is jolly—he wants to have a little fun at your expense, that is all. Don't mind him, or anything he says."

"Do you think he takes me for an eccentric old woman?"

"I don't doubt it."

"I doubt it."

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“Keep your character until Edith comes, and then, come to me.”

“Is Bo—— ah—oh—Mr. Corson engaged, or—or—married?”

“There is a flirtation between him and a San Francisco girl—Maude Alder. Nothing serious yet. Why do you ask? Afraid for Edith?”

“No, no! Oh, no—I—he is not young.”

“About thirty-two. Gracious! I am forgetting all about papa. I *must* go. How time does fly! Good-bye. I will see you to-morrow.”

Cora stepped out on the veranda, and ran down to the gate.

“Bob suspects me; so I must be a poor actress,” said Mrs. W. B. R. aloud, when she found herself alone.

“Meeses Raleigh, she vish me to excuse you for vone leedle dime; she vas go mit dot Meester Tom to dot Obbott house already.” The speaker was Molly.

Mrs. W. B. R. wandered about the garden for some time, and then went upstairs.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE "LUNATIC."

"MOLLY, I am going to Mr. Abbott's. Tell Fritz to wash the windows and transom to-day. When Mrs. Raleigh comes down, tell her I will not be gone long." Mrs. Laura Raleigh closed the door and went upstairs, to get ready.

Molly put the room in order, and went to the kitchen.

Soon after, Fritz brought a step-ladder; leaving it in the center of the room, he went to get a pail of water and some cleaning cloths.

A few moments later Mr. Abbott opened the door, and putting his head in, looked about, hesitated for a few seconds, and entered. His hair was disheveled, his clothes in disorder, and he was pale and haggard. There was the look of a hunted animal in his eyes. "Oh, Lord! what can I do?" said he, as he paced the floor. "If Mrs. Raleigh would only listen to reason! The Lord help me in my trouble! I made a blasted fool

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of myself. I know it. Yes, I *do* know it. I'll never do it again. Oh, yes, I will—oh, I will—I'll—I'll marry the widow—if—if they will let me. Oh, Lord! I'll marry *anything* to get out of this fix. Oh, Lord! Lord! I'll never fall in love with an infant again. They sent that damned Dutchman. Oh, Heavens! Where is Mrs. Raleigh?"

Coming in with a book in her hand, Mrs. W. B. R. saw the gentleman standing in the darkened room. "Pardon," she said, "but do you wish to see Mrs. Raleigh?"

A ray of hope entered his heart. "Here was a stranger. She would listen," he thought. Brightening up, he advanced towards her, saying: "You are just the woman I want to see. You look as if you had some sense."

As he came near, the light from the window fell on his haggard face. She shrank away in terror.

Following her, he continued: "There is a misunderstanding in—in——"

Again she moved away—and he followed, saying: "Do listen. Do let me explain."

He was now between her and the door, and the windows were closed. What should she do now? Who *was* this man? This was passing through

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her mind, as she stood beside the ladder, trying to keep it between them; but she was dumb with fright.

Abbott was desperate. He sprang forward and caught her by the arm, with a cry of despair. "Oh, Lord! Madam, I am *Abbott*."

That was enough; with a piercing shriek, she caught her skirts, and with the sprightliness of a monkey, she sprang up the ladder. No old lady of seventy was ever before as nimble as she. Even the old man, in spite of his troubles, was amazed.

He stood bewildered and in despair, at the foot of the ladder, and looked appealingly at her, as shriek after shriek escaped her. Abbott realized that he had not improved matters; in desperation he called: "Don't! *Oh, madam, don't!* I am *not* crazy," and taking hold of the ladder, he placed his foot on the first step.

"Heavens!" thought she, "he is coming up. I'll be killed." Clutching the top of the ladder to steady herself, she hurled the book at his head, raising a lump on his forehead, and then shrieked at the top of her voice, "Help! Murder!"

He staggered, sank on a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Cora and Tom had missed their father; be-

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lieving that they would find him at "Magnolia Villa," they sprang into the boat and were just landing, when Mrs. W. B. R.'s piercing shrieks saluted their ears.

Leaving the boat to drift down the stream, they flew to the house, and entered the dining-room, just as Laura Raleigh came running downstairs.

"Father!" "Papa!" "Paul!" They all cried out together.

"Father, what are you doing here?" These words were spoken by Tom as he laid hands on the old gentleman's shoulders.

Mr. Abbott had borne all that mortal man could endure. He would not go home. He showed fight. He raised his arm and gave Tom a blow in the stomach that gave him a worse ache than any he had ever experienced from eating green apples.

Abbott had made another mistake. Tom was convinced that his father was dangerous, and must no longer be allowed his liberty, and somehow he must be gotten home.

He consulted with Laura Raleigh and Cora. They decided to make the attack together.

The old gentleman was furtively watching them. He was on the alert. When they ap-

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proached him, he suddenly arose. With a quick movement, he reached behind him and grabbed the chair, and with a rapid whirl brought it between himself and them.

Mrs. W. B. R. sat on top of the ladder and shrieked, while Laura and Cora wrung their hands, and Tom nursed his stomach.

“Paul, let Laura take you home.” The speaker was Laura Raleigh.

“Not a *step!* Not a *step!*” shrieked Abbott.

“Oh, Paul—dear Paul——”

“Paul—don’t you Paul, dear, me, you tricky, designing, old——”

“O—oh—o—h! He means me—me!—o—h!”
Laura Raleigh wrung her hands and wept.

Mrs. W. B. R. still sent shriek after shriek ringing through the house.

“Father, you must come,” said Tom, renewing the attack.

Round and round the room they went, upsetting tables and chairs.

“Let go, I tell you. Oh, *let go,*” shrieked Abbott at Tom, when he caught hold of him. “You are *crazy*—all of you.” Like a madman he held them at bay.

“Oh, Mr. Abbott,” Laura said between her sobs,

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"we will not harm you; we will take care of you, if you will only let us."

Mr. Abbott did not appreciate the kind of care he had received. He was not going home until he made them understand that he was not a lunatic.

Round and round the room they went. Abbott was as agile as any of them; they could not capture him.

Mrs. W. B. R. called out, as desperately she clung to the ladder (expecting momentarily to be upset), "Oh—oh—I wish I were at home."

"You are a set of damned fools, every last one of you," roared the old gentleman.

"Mr. Abbott, I do wish you'd go home," cried Laura.

"I won't stand that *damned Dutchman*——"

"Gosh! I vum! Dere vas dot insane crazy-tic."

The "damned Dutchman" stood in the doorway, with a bucket of water and some cleaning cloths; his face was striped with black court-plaster, and about his forehead was bound a handkerchief.

"Catch him, Fritz," called Mrs. W. B. R., from her perch on the top of the ladder.

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Fritz put down the bucket and made a dive for the old man.

Abbott made a dive for the door; but Fritz headed him off.

A prolonged shriek from Mrs. W. B. R. brought Bob and Nellie to this circus.

Nellie stumbled over the bucket, and lifting up her voice to a high key, added to the confusion.

Abbott cried out, "Oh, Bob,—Bob—save— me—
save me from my children."

With a shrill cry of, "Oh, Robert—Robert! Save me! *Save me!*" Mrs. W. B. R. sprang from the ladder, and throwing herself in his arms, clung to him desperately, her glasses falling to the floor.

Bob looked into her eyes and held her close. A few locks of golden hair lay tangled across the white. The hand that Bob held in his was white, plump, and smooth. The glove that lay hidden away with his treasures would fit it.

Bob's heart gave leap after leap. The room might swarm with lunatics; what cared he? The woman he held in his arms was—Edith.

When Mrs. W. B. R. sprang from the ladder, Abbott ran up and seated himself on top of it, as she had done.

Fritz stared in open-mouthed astonishment, and

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then placing his hands on his hips, he ejaculated: "Vell—vell! Dot vas peat der tifel. Gott in Himmel! Vat *vill* he do next?"

George came running in, and seeing Abbott perched at the top of the ladder, he called: "Get him down,—tip the ladder."

As Tom, George, Cora, and Fritz, made a rush for the ladder, Abbott yelled: "Don't! Oh, Lord! *Don't—I'll come.*" Springing down, he rushed for the door.

Fritz, with lightning rapidity, snatched the tablespread and threw it over Abbott's head, completely enveloping him.

George threw both arms about the old gentleman, pinioning his arms to his sides. Fritz and Tom helped lift him; together they carried him out, Cora, Laura, and Nellie following.

Outside, they bound him; and then, putting him in the carriage, took him home.

Mrs. W. B. R. was completely unnerved. Forgetting the part she was playing, she clung to Bob as if her life were in danger, and no one else could save her. "Oh, he tried—to—to—strangle—me—oh—oh—Bob—take—Bob—take me—away—oh, oh,—I wish I—I were—at—at—home—oh—o——" she managed to say.

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“There, dear,” said Bob, stooping to pick up her glasses, “you are safe. I’ll protect you against a *whole lunatic asylum.*”

“Oh, it’s awful—awful—oh—oh——”

“Here are your glasses. Let me see you to your room now, and I’ll see you again. Rest for awhile. *I* must go to town and find an attendant for the poor man.” Lightly he kissed the shining hair that was revealed by the displacement of the white wig. With his arm about her, he led her upstairs, and leaving her in ignorance of the fact that he had recognized her, went on his wheel to town.

When Mrs. W. B. Raleigh was introduced to Robert Corson, he had noticed her momentary surprise. Consequently, he had regarded her attentively, and had become convinced that she was *not* the old lady whom his sister expected. He had set deliberately to work to confuse and embarrass her, hoping that she might forget the part which she was evidently playing, and betray her true character.

She was a puzzle to him. Her face seemed familiar, yet he could not place her. In spite of her severity of manner he felt drawn towards her. The disfiguring smoked glasses she wore, con-

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cealed her eyes, yet he felt instinctively that she was watching him suspiciously, and was ever on her guard, and he dared not stare impertinently at her.

Her face was as stolid as that of the Sphinx; his efforts to induce a laugh were unavailing. But when Fritz appeared, with his tale of woe, he watched her closely. The corners of her mouth twitched convulsively; up went a white hand, to hide the laugh that she could not suppress, and on that hand gleamed a ring that Bob knew and recognized. It had once been in his possession.

This time Bob was the startled one; but as quickly as she had done, on meeting him, he recovered his composure. He knew that behind those smoked glasses were a pair of bright eyes that were watching him, and would follow his every movement.

He would keep his discovery to himself, for the present. She should not suspect that she was recognized, but he would try to unravel the mystery of her presence in his sister's house. What was she doing there? Why was she wearing a disguise? He could not understand it. Was it possible that Mrs. W. B. Raleigh had sent *her* there to play a trick on Laura?

Patience, thought he, and time will tell; but

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when in her fright she called him by name and clung desperately to him for protection, he had to exercise all possible self-control to withhold from her the knowledge that he possessed, and wait for a *denouement*.

Fritz's Account of It.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRITZ'S ACCOUNT OF IT.

AN hour later, Molly entered the dining-room with the tablecloth on her arm, which had been used in the capture of Mr. Abbott.

Replacing it on the table, she thus voiced her opinions: "Dose Obbot's, dey vas hafe gread doings. First, dey wants Meeses Raleigh, den dey wants Fritz. Ven dey wants *me*, I vill go right away mit mineself from dees blace. Dere vas plenty of crazy insanes in dees house."

Fritz entered the room. His arm was in a sling, his shirt sleeve was gone, and on his forehead was a lump that matched Abbott's. In addition, he had a black, blue, and green eye.

Molly continued (not observing him): "I heard dot old lady say she vas vone poor octress; I vill lock op dot silver——"

"Py Christmas! You don't say!"

Molly turned about, and emphatically said: "Dot's so!" Throwing up her hands, she ex-

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claimed: "Vell, vell, you vas peautiful mit *dot* face. Fery peautiful! I *like* dot face; I tink I vill go life mit *dot* face on dot ranch—ugh!"

Fritz slipped his arm about her.

Molly continued: "You vas vone putty pair of spectacles." She pushed him away and repeated: "You vas fery peautiful mit *dot* face."

"Yah, I vas know dot I vas peautiful. I *feel* peautiful. *I vas tamn mat!* Py tunder!"

"Yah, you gife op de peesness mit dose horses, und you go und do de peesness mit vone crazy insane, don't it? und get vone plack eye?"

Fritz again put his arm about Molly, and replied: "Vell, py tamn, I vas not do any more peesness mit dot insane crazytic, vat don't got no sense. Vy, ven I dell him dot he vas *crazy*, und dot crazytics don't *know* ven dey vas crazy, den he get mat at *dot*, und——"

"Hit you mit de face—make you vone prize fight. Go avay," and she gave him a shove.

"Naw! He don't hit me; he trow dot tamn jelly 'charleyrose,' und he smash me my face, und——"

"You go again already some more—don't it? ugh!"

"Vell, Meeses Raleigh, she dell me try again some more."



DOT VAS JUST IT. I DO GET DE VORST OF IT."—Page 147.

Fritz's Account of It.

"Yah! Try again some *more*. Dot Meester Obbott, he vill try again some more, succeed again mit your *headt*." Bobbing her head by way of emphasis she said, "Dot's so."

Bob entering, interrupted with, "Molly, Mrs. Raleigh wants you."

Fritz's dilapidated appearance, the woe-begone expression on his face was too much for Bob's risibilities. He laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

Poor Fritz. His face was striped with court-plaster, the result of his first encounter with "dot insane crazytic." Now he had in addition, a lump as big as a hen's egg on his right temple, his left eye was for the present useless, and his arm had retired from service for a rest.

When Bob had sufficiently recovered his gravity to speak, he said: "You look, Fritz, as if you had been in a fight and gotten the worst of it."

"Yah, Meester Corson, dot vas just it. I *do* get de vorst of it."

"You must have made the old gentleman angry, Fritz."

"Naw! Meester Corson, he vas not mat mit *me*. He vas mat mit Meeses Raleigh. It vas dees vay: You see Meeses Raleigh, she—she vas send

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dot jelly charleyrose in vone of dose leedle gloss deeshes. Mr. Obbott he say dot he do not vish it; den I dell him he must ead dot jelly, or Meeses Raleigh, she vill not like dot. He say, '*Tamn* dot charleyrose, und *tamn* Meeses Raleigh; she vill send me some moonshine next and dell me ead dot.' I say, 'Now, Meester Obbott, you know dot vas foolishness; nopody could ead dot moonshine,' und he dake dot jelly, und he smash dot leedle gloss deesh mit mine headt und vaste *all* dot charleyrose—dot peautiful——”

“Are you mad, Fritz?” asked Bob.

“I vill not *sthand* dot *tamn* nonsense. I vill not do dot again some more, mit dot insane crazytic. Yah, I *vas* mat; *I vas tamn mat*. I vas so mat, dot I button up my coadt so I could not bust, py tunder.”

“That’s pretty mad, Fritz.”

“Vell, if I vas get busted, I cannot find again myself de pieces. I did not come take care dot insane crazytic. He dell me mine headt vas crack; I dell him mine headt vas not crack. Den he dell me he *vill* mine headt crack. I don’t like dot.”

“He don’t know what he says, Fritz.”

“Don’t you foo! mit yourself, Mr. Corson. He do know *fery well* vat he talk apout. He tell me

Fritz's Account of It.

I vas vone fool Dutchman. Vat you tink now? You tink he don't know vat he talk apout? H'm! He *do* know, fery vell, vat he say."

That was enough to set Bob roaring again with laughter.

Fritz saw nothing to laugh about, and became furiously angry. "Yah, you laugh at dot. I vill dell you somedings more den. He dell me go to dot *blace*, vat polite shentlemans does not talk apout. Vat you tink dot?"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! You won't be asked to go again, Fritz. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Fritz, misunderstanding his meaning, looked at him in surprise, and said: "*Ask* me? He don't *ask* me, he *order* me. He order me go dot *blace*."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! You must not mind that, Fritz."

"I vas not *mind* dot, eh? You tink I *go* dot *blace*?"

"Oh, no, no, Fritz. Ha! ha! ha! ha! He will have an attendant now."

"Vell, you tell dot 'tendant to pring vone dose tings de paseball man's put mit de face on, und vone dose jackets vat you call de strait-coat, ain't it?"

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“He won’t make any more disturbance, Fritz. He will be quiet now.”

“Yah? Meester Corson, don’t you fool mit dot shentleman Obbott. He vill be quiet, you tink? Just look ot mine peautiful face ven I vas going to be marriet.”

“Mrs. Raleigh! Oh, Mrs. Raleigh!” shouted Cora from the outside.

“Fritz! Where is Fritz?” loudly called Tom, as he burst into the room, followed by his sister, who was as pale as death.

“What is wrong?” inquired Bob, as Laura Raleigh, attracted by the calling, came running in.

Cora wrung her hands and cried: “He has gone—gone.”

“Und, py tunder, I vill *stay* gone,” said Fritz.

“Who has gone?” asked Bob.

“Oh, there is no time to lose. He has gone. Scour the country. Drag the river,” frantically shouted Tom.

Laura turned pale, sank on a chair, and shrieked: “Paul—gone——”

Edith heard the noise and ran down.

Molly ran in. “Vat vas de drouble?” she excitedly asked.

“Oh, Bob—Bob. It’s papa,” shrieked Cora.

Fritz's Account of It.

"Oh, help us. Perhaps he's drowned." She fell in a swoon on the floor.

Laura shrieked hysterically, and Nellie came flying in.

"Oh, he has escaped," cried Tom.

Laura fell fainting from her chair, Molly grabbed the bucket that still remained where Fritz had left it, and frantically running from Cora to Laura began sprinkling them, while Nellie wrung her hands and cried.

Suddenly Bob called, "Out with the horses, Fritz; no delay."

He ran towards the stable, followed by Fritz and Tom, and soon it was known far and near, that Mr. Abbott, in a fit of *insanity*, had left his home.

Molly helped Edith to bring Laura and Cora to themselves, and get them upstairs to lie down. When Cora was able to go home, Edith (as I shall call Mrs. W. B. R. hereafter) accompanied her, but Cora did not recognize her.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE LOVERS ARE PARTED.

ROBERT CORSON, Tom, George, and Mr. Randall, Ben, Fritz, and Pat out on horses, hunted near and far, but Mr. Abbott was gone. He could not have more completely disappeared if the earth had opened and engulfed him. No one had seen him. What was to be done next?

A thorough search was made along the river banks for miles—no trace of Mr. Abbott. If he had fallen, or thrown himself into the river, the body had been swept away.

Mr. Abbott's horse was found grazing along the road near home (on the day that he had disappeared), but he was neither saddled nor bridled. He had probably broken his halter, and walked out of the stable when no one was about. No one gave the matter a thought. Not for some days after, did Pat discover that Mr. Abbott's saddle was gone.

“May the divil fly away wid de dhirty thafe,”

The Lovers are Parted.

said Pat. "What would a dhirty thramp be doin' wid the masther's saddle? Sure an' he couldn't ride it widout de horse. Begorra, if the old mon was here now, he'd be afther takin' the head afe ave me, so he would, an' that's no loie oim telling yez."

Cora and Tom were broken-hearted. They knew not which way to turn. Was their father dead? Or was he hiding from them? The days dragged themselves slowly away. Cora wandered about the house in a listless manner; her mind was occupied by thoughts of her father. George sought to comfort her. He could not believe that Mr. Abbott was dead! he felt that they would yet find him.

Tom rode about the country, exploring every nook, every hut and cabin. He never for a day gave up the search. In the evening he would seek Nellie, and in her society strive to throw off the horror that oppressed him. They had little to say to each other. The happy days were gone. Tom was restless; his face showed plainly his mental suffering, and Nellie suffered because *he* suffered.

Laura wandered about the house, unable to concentrate her mind on anything. She was irritable and unreasonable; and whenever Mr. Abbott was mentioned, she became hysterical.

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One day, she told Bob that after due reflection, she had arrived at the conclusion that there was insanity in the Abbott family, and that she had decided to separate Nellie and Tom. "Nothing," so she said, "would induce her to allow her daughter to marry the son of a lunatic."

"Why," said she, "Nellie might awaken some morning and find herself strangled. Insanity is hereditary; *every one* knows that. Tom would be a lunatic next; or, if he was not, his children would be *sure* to be insane."

Bob reasoned with her; he coaxed, he argued; finally he ridiculed her. All to no purpose; she was firm in her resolution to separate the young lovers.

Nellie was informed by her mother that she must give up all hope of ever marrying Tom. *She* ran away to Mr. Abbott's house, and told Cora.

Mrs. W. B. R. proved herself an angel in disguise. It was she who kept things going smoothly about the house. She became the housekeeper, and no one disputed her authority, although Molly regarded her with suspicion. She was gentle and patient with Laura Raleigh, who, it must be confessed, was anything but a congenial companion.

Mrs. Raleigh informed Mr. and Mrs. Randall

The Lovers are Parted.

of her intention to break the engagement between Tom and Nellie, stating her reasons.

They had never given a thought to the subject; they were surprised that they had not. They talked the matter over between themselves, and came to the conclusion that Mrs. Raleigh was perfectly right. "Without doubt," said Mrs. Randall, "there is insanity in the family. Nothing has *happened* to affect Mr. Abbott's mind. No. He had had no trouble of any kind,—his mind had given way, without any *apparent* cause; *of course* it was hereditary insanity. Cora was the daughter of a lunatic, who had, in all probability, thrown himself into the river. His mania was suicidal. Cora might develop a mania for murder. Who could tell? If George married her, he might find his throat cut some morning. Marriage with *her* was out of the question, and not to be considered for another moment."

George was called. His father told him that never, with his parents' consent, could he marry Cora Abbott; he must give her up. "She was a lovely girl—yes; but she was the daughter of a *lunatic*. *She* might become insane—without doubt she would."

Poor George! He pleaded, he argued. He declared that Mr. Abbott was only temporarily in-

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sane; that he had not been properly treated—that Mrs. Raleigh had interfered with him, and that Fritz had angered him. That it was *his* belief that they would yet find him. He would not believe that he had destroyed himself.

With a heavy heart, George left his father's presence. Stepping into the boat, he rowed down to Mr. Abbott's house to see Cora. There in the garden he found Nellie crying and sobbing in her friend's arms.

Nellie sobbed out her story, and George poured out his woes. Tom entered the garden. Nellie flung her arms about his neck, and declared that her mother had "broken her heart."

A week before, the world had seemed so beautiful to these young people—now, life had lost its charm. The sun shone, but it had no warmth or light for them; the world had become cold and cheerless. A week before, they had laughed and sung under the trees in this garden, where now they sat, struggling with a load of sorrow that almost crushed their young hearts.

Cora's greyhound ran to his mistress to be petted, Tom's spaniel fawned at his feet; neither received any attention. Settling themselves on their haunches, they turned their noses heavenward, and set up a most doleful whining.

The Escape.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ESCAPE.

THE second time that Mr. Abbott was taken home from "Magnolia Villa," Cora and Tom decided that until a suitable attendant for their father could be found, it was best to confine him in his room.

Fritz had helped to capture and bind Mr. Abbott, but he declared that he had had all the experience *he* wanted with "insane crazytics." He had had his beauty spoiled in "de first blace, und *now*, dere vas vone plack eye, und de next ting, he vould pe plack *all ofer*. Vone eye und vone arm vas bedder dan none, und now he vould go right away."

Mr. Abbott had exhausted his strength in the struggle he had made for his liberty. He made no further disturbance; but when his arms were unbound, he threw himself on his bed and remained perfectly quiet. When George and Tom left the room, and locked him in, he made no objection; in

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fact, he did not *seem* to be aware that he was a prisoner.

The old gentleman, on the way home, had been thinking about his peculiar plight. It had occurred to him that violence was ill-advised on his part; that he must restrain himself, no matter how trying the circumstances, or he might find himself confined in an asylum. So when Tom brought his dinner, he ate it quietly, and said not a word.

Just before he retired to his own room for the night, Tom looked in at his father; the old gentleman was apparently quietly sleeping. On the morrow there would be a man of experience to attend him, so Tom went to bed and to sleep.

At four o'clock in the morning, Mr. Abbott arose and dressed himself. He packed his grip, opened the window, and threw it out on the lawn, climbed out on the roof of the ell, crept along to the fire-escape, and down he went. Going at once to the stable, he saddled his horse and hung his grip on the pommel of the saddle. Mounting the horse, he struck out for the station. The train was due at five o'clock. Taking saddle and bridle from the horse, he let him go; crawling under the platform he hid the saddle and bridle in a dark corner, then he kept out of sight until he heard the train

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approaching. Crawling out, he signaled the engineer. "Toot, toot, toot," answered the engine. The train slowed down, Abbott stepped aboard, and before any of the "Riverside Neighbors" were awake, he was on the way to San Francisco.

Arriving there, he went to a hotel and remained in his room all day. The next morning, after he had made himself presentable, he started out for the home of his friend, Mr. Alder. Reaching there, he told the family that business had called him to San Francisco, that he would probably remain a week, and he would be pleased to be their guest. A day or two later, he took Mr. Alder into his confidence and explained matters explicitly to him, not trying in any way to excuse himself for his "foolishness." He told him that he would like Mrs. Raleigh to come to San Francisco and have a talk with him; he was anxious that he and she should arrive at some understanding by which the affair could be kept from the community in which they lived.

So Maude wrote to Bob, informing him of the old gentleman's desire to see Mrs. Raleigh in San Francisco.

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CHAPTER XXI.

MAUDE'S LETTER.

ABOUT a week after Mr. Abbott's disappearance, Robert Corson was standing, one morning, by the gate at "Magnolia Villa." A thick cloud of dust down the road attracted his attention. Nearer and nearer it came; suddenly Fritz, on horseback, emerged from it, galloping as if his life depended on the swiftness of the horse.

Catching sight of Bob, he frantically waved a letter in the air, and shouted, "For you, Meester Bob."

Bob's first thought was that it contained news of Mr. Abbott. Stepping forward to receive it, he noted the postmark—San Francisco.

"Dot leddar," explained Fritz, "it say on de outside, Meester Corson, 'in haste'; dot leddar, I could not pring faster,—dot vas so."

"That's all right, Fritz; it means I must read it as soon as I get it."

Maud's Letter.

“Mine gracious! Was dot so!” exclaimed Fritz, as he sprang from the saddle, and led the horse towards the stable.

Bob read the letter. With an exclamation of surprise, he entered the house, and called his sister Laura. To her he read the letter, which was from Maude Alder. “You must go at once,” said Bob; “go and get ready! I’ll see you on board the train, and I’ll look out for everything here, while you are away.”

Molly was sent to look for Nellie, but she was nowhere about the place.

Bob knew where she was most likely to be found. He stepped into the rowboat, cast the rope from the stake, took up the oars and soon landed at Mr. Abbott’s place. The whining of the dogs attracted his attention. Going into the garden he went in the direction from which the sound came. The dogs heard the footsteps, and sprang to meet him; the young lovers sprang to their feet. Four pairs of eyes almost obscured by their red and swollen eyelids, and four tear-stained faces met his gaze.

The sight of their grief was too much for tender-hearted Bob. After telling Nellie of her mother’s intended departure, he took Tom aside and requested him to come to “Magnolia Villa” on the following day, and have a private talk with him;

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to which Tom agreed. Taking Nellie in the boat, he returned with her to the "Villa."

Three hours later Laura Raleigh was on her way to San Francisco.

Another Announcement.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER ANNOUNCEMENT.

NELLIE knew that her mother had been suddenly called away, but where, neither she, nor any one but Bob, knew.

The poor child was heart-broken; during the day she wandered disconsolately about the house and garden,—she ate but little, and she slept still less.

A few days after Laura Raleigh's departure, Bob (one morning on entering the drawing-room) found Nellie lying on the couch, and weeping as if her heart would break.

Seating himself beside her, and gently stroking her hair, he asked if she and Tom had quarreled. "Tell me," said he, "why you are so unhappy."

Flinging her arms about his neck and hiding her face on his shoulder, she sobbed, and brokenly said: "Oh, Uncle Bob, if you—you—loved some

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one—very dearly—would you give—give him up—because—his father went insane—and—and lost himself?”

“No, dear, I *would not*,” he said emphatically. “Nonsense, Nellie, put such a notion out of your dear little head. Mr. Abbott was only temporarily insane, and they harassed him; no one knew how to properly care for him, and he ran away. It is not so very long since he left. He will come back all right some day. He should have had an experienced attendant.”

“Bu—but—mamma says—says——” sobbed Nellie.

“Hang what mamma says—I’ll speak to mamma again.”

“Did she tell you? She told—me—me—oh—oh—Uncle Bob——”

“Yes, she told me; but I’ll have another talk with her——”

“It’ll do no—no—go—good—she says—says—Tom will be a lunatic—next——”

“Tom will be a fiddlestick! Nonsense, Nellie. I’ll have another talk with Tom. *I’ll* take a hand in this matter——”

“Oh, Uncle Bob—I—I—suffer—I don’t want to live—without—without——”

“There—there, dear; I know—I’ve been there

Another Announcement.

myself," Bob said, and he sighed as he caressed her.

"Do you think Cora and Tom will be—lunatics—be—because——"

"No, Nellie; that is the rankest kind of nonsense. Here comes Auntie."

Mrs. W. B. R. entering, and seeing Nellie weeping in her uncle's arms, said: "Why, Nellie, tell me what troubles you? It distresses me to see you unhappy, dear. Tell auntie your troubles; perhaps I can comfort you."

Nellie went and placed her arms about Mrs. W. B. R.'s neck and said: "Oh, Auntie, you are so good and so kind to us all. I didn't like you at first, but somehow you don't seem the same as you did when you came here. You have been so patient with poor mamma——"

"I am at a loss to understand what ails Laura," said Bob to Mrs. W. B. "Why should *she* take this matter so much to heart? She actually seems to *grieve* about Mr. Abbott. It seems strange——"

Nellie looked at her uncle in surprise, and exclaimed: "Didn't you know? Why! I supposed *everybody* knew——"

"Knew what?" he asked.

"Knew *what*? Why, Uncle Bob! They were engaged."

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This time it was Bob's turn to be surprised. "They were engaged? Great Scott! Engaged?"

"Engaged!" echoed Mrs. W. B. R. "Laura never told *me*."

"Why, yes," said Nellie, "I supposed everybody knew. We saw him with his arm about mamma—and—he—and, mamma—oh, it was awfully funny." Nellie was convulsed with laughter.

Bob looked from Nellie to Mrs. W. B. R., and said very dryly, "They must be a *pair* of lunatics. Guess it's contagious."

"Oh, Uncle Bob, how *can* you say that? You *know* mamma is not crazy."

"Well, if she isn't, she is the next thing to it. Now, little girl, run into the garden and find Tom; he is waiting for you. No more tears; depend on Uncle Bob to help you. He will see that you are not made unhappy."

Nellie threw her uncle a kiss, and ran out through the conservatory, into the garden.

After Nellie had gone, Bob said to Mrs. W. B. R.: "Laura did not see fit to confide in me, but if everybody knows of this nonsense, she must be about dead with mortification."

"Why do you call it nonsense?" she asked, as she arose to go. "We are *never* too old to *love*."

Another Announcement.

"Don't go," said Bob; "sit down. I want to talk with you."

"Cupid is thousands of years old," continued Mrs. W. B. R., seating herself, "and he is just as loving and lovely as ever, Mr. Corson."

Bob seated himself near her, and looking seriously at her, he said: "*You* are not too old to love, and to be loved. You are *not* what you wish to appear to be."

Mrs. W. B. R. drew herself up haughtily, and frigidly she said: "Imagination, Mr. Corson. One does not change character as one puts on and off a glove."

"Nor does one change one's face by a pair of spectacles. You are *not* Mrs. Raleigh. You are playing a part."

"I *am* Mrs. Raleigh," said she.

"For some reason, and what that reason is, I do not know, you have chosen to present yourself here as the widow of the late W. B. Raleigh. I *saw* Mrs. Raleigh years ago."

"I have said, sir, that I am Mrs. Raleigh. The years change us all."

"They do not make black eyes *blue*, nor do they make the *old, young*."

The telephone was ringing, but Bob paid no

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attention. He said very decidedly: "*You are not Mrs. Raleigh.*"

She replied quite as decidedly, "*I am the widow of the late W. B. Raleigh.*"

Still the telephone rang. Bob sat and looked earnestly at Mrs. W. B.

Finally, she said: "Mr. Corson, are you not aware that some one calls at the telephone?"

Bob arose and answered the call. Turning to Mrs. W. B. R., he said (as he took up the bell and rang for Molly): "It is George and Cora,—they are married. They have *eloped*. Great Scott! I guess George's father put in *his* objections. They want Fritz to bring them home in the carriage."

Molly, in her Sunday best, came to answer the bell.

"Molly," said Bob, "tell Fritz to get the carriage ready and go to the station for a young married couple."

"But, Meester Bobbart," remonstrated Molly, "ve vant to go to dot station mit ourselves ven Fritz, he get pack mit dose leddars. He vas gone already."

"Send Fritz in here to me when he comes," then said Mr. Corson to her. Taking a letter from his pocket, he unfolded it, and seating himself beside

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Mrs. W. B. R., said: "Here is a letter from Maude; it will interest you. I'll read it to you."

"MY DEAR OLD BOB: Mr. Abbott came to our house a few days ago, and told papa a story as ludicrous on one side as sad on the other. He wants Mrs. Raleigh to meet him in San Francisco. Tell her to humor the old gentleman. He does not want his children to know where he is at present.

"Yours,

MAUDE."

"So Mr. Abbott is in San Francisco?" she said, when Bob had finished reading. "I suppose, then, that Laura is there too?"

"Yes," he answered, "I advised her to go. I told her I would look out for everything and everybody, you included."

"Vat you vant mit me, Mr. Corson?" asked Fritz, handing Bob a letter.

Bob answered: "Get the carriage ready, go to meet the train, and bring home a young couple, Fritz. Let me know when you are ready."

"But, Meester Corson, I vish to go und be vone married couble mineself."

"Plenty of time, Fritz. You must go for Miss Cora, Mrs. George Randall."

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“Meeses Randall! Mees Cora? Vell, I vill go for Meeses Randall,” said Fritz, and he hurried out.

Bob opened his letter. It was from Laura, informing him that she would be at home on the morrow. “We will carry things with a high hand before she gets here, and we had better be about it,” he said, as he folded the letter, put it in his pocket, and arose to leave the room.

“What do you mean, Mr. Corson?” Mrs. W. B. R. inquired.

“I mean that Nellie shall not be made unhappy. You can use your influence with her; I have had a talk with Tom, and he has procured the license. I have an errand in town now, and you can talk to Nellie until I get back. You will probably find her in the garden.”

Bob went off to town, and Mrs. W. B. R. went into the garden to find Nellie.

Tom and Nellie Elope.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOM AND NELLIE ELOPE.

WHEN Nellie was sent into the garden by Uncle Bob, she found Tom sitting under a tree waiting for her. He told her that he and Bob had had a long talk together on the day after her mother left; that Bob had given him a piece of advice and that he had acted upon it. It remained now for her to decide whether she would stand by him, or by her mother. "She has gone away now," he said, "and I am glad of it."

"Glad of it, Tom!" She looked at him in surprise and asked, "Why?"

"Yes, I am glad she went. I hope she will stay a month. You were eighteen yesterday, were you not?"

"Yes, Tom."

"Your mother told Bob that nothing would induce her to allow you to marry the son of a lunatic."

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"Oh, Tom,—I know, oh—I know it," said she, clinging to him and sobbing.

"We'll run away."

"And not tell mamma?"

"After we get back."

"What would she say?"

"What could she say?"

"Oh, Tom, I—I—don't—know."

"Bob told her that *he* would run away with the girl, if he were in my place. What do you think about it?"

"Did Uncle Bob say that?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, he did, and he told me the same thing. He meant it, too, and let's do it."

"What would Auntie say?"

"Hang Auntie."

"Oh, Tom! She is so good and kind, I wouldn't hang Auntie——"

"No, Nellie," said Mrs. W. B. R., entering the garden, "she loves you and wants to see you happy."

"Auntie, did you hear what Tom said?" asked Nellie.

"Yes, dear, and I advise you to do what Tom says."

"Will you do it?" Tom asked of Nellie.

Tom and Nellie Elope.

"Yes, Tom," she replied.

Hastily rising, he took her hand and saying, "Let's go at once," he started toward the gate.

"Wait for Uncle Bob," said Mrs. W. B. R.; "he will soon be in."

"Oh, Auntie,—I—I—can't—go—to-day——"

"Your mother will be here to-morrow, Nellie," said Mrs. W. B. R., "and then——"

Molly, entering the garden, interrupted, saying: "Mees Nellie, I does not know ven Meeses Raleigh vill pee coming home, already, und I vill vish to gife von veek's nodice. I vill pee going away."

"Going away!" they all exclaimed in surprise. "Going away! Why do you leave?"

"Vell, you see I vas not so young like I vas. I hafe safed mit mine money. I vill hafe vone leedle house mit mineself, already."

"Live by yourself!" exclaimed Tom and Nellie.

The color was mounting in Molly's face, but she said: "You does not understhood; Fritz he vas go away soon too."

"Who is going away soon?" asked Bob, as he entered the garden.

Nellie answered, "Molly is going away, and she says Fritz is going away soon. Everybody seems to be going away."

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“Molly says she is going to live by herself,” said Tom.

“But I don’t understand why Fritz is going away,” said Bob.

Molly rolled the corners of her apron and said: “Vell, Meester Bobbart, he vill puy vone leedle ranch. It vas dees vay: I hafe safe some mit mine money, too, und Fritz, he vant me to go life on dot ranch, und—und—make dot kraut—und——”

“Fritz is going to be married,” said Bob; “yes—yes—he told me he wanted to be ‘a marriet couble.’ H’m, I see.”

“Yah, Meester Bobbart, he vas going to marry mit me.”

“You will not leave to-day?” inquired Bob.

“Oh, no, sir, ve vill stay for de veek. I hear dose horses, I vill go,” and with her face flaming crimson, Molly made her escape.

“Tom, you have the license, and the carriage is at the door. Nellie, get what you want, and go with Tom.”

“Bu—but—but—how—can——”

“No time for buts, Nellie. Come, I’ll go with you; come.” Tom, holding Nellie by the hand, followed Bob.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

MATRIMONY ON A GRAND SCALE.

MRS. W. B., sitting alone on the garden seat, after Bob and Nellie had gone, turned over in her mind the events of the past ten days. She flattered herself that in spite of everything, she had sustained her rôle. "Now," thought she, "it is time for me to go away. I intended to go to Cora Abbott's, but I am half afraid. I wonder when Mr. Abbott will be at home, and if they will keep him confined? I suppose Cora thought that George would be a protection to her. I—I wish I knew if Bob has any idea who I really am. I wonder if that Maude is a pretty girl, and I would like to know if he is in love with her. Oh, I don't know where to go, or what to do next. I have had one experience with a lunatic, and I don't want another. I am afraid to go to Cora's. I'll have to go home—and—and—will I never see Bob again? Oh, Bob, Bob, if you only knew——"

Letting her head fall on the table, she hid her

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face in her hands, and sat for a long time in retrospection.

Bob entered; but so lost in "memory's halls" was she, that she neither heard nor saw him.

For some time he stood looking at her; then he approached, and laying his hand on her head, said: "Come inside with me. There is something I wish to say to you."

Mrs. W. B. raised her head, and looked at him. Something that looked suspiciously like a teardrop crept from under her glasses and started down her cheek; but she, with a quick motion, intercepted its progress with her handkerchief. Taking the arm that Bob offered, she went with him into the dining-room.

Seating himself beside her on the couch he said: "I want you to give me your confidence now, as we are alone. Tell me your true name."

"Raleigh," she answered. "It is not a very uncommon name."

"You *pretend* to be the widow of the late W. B. Raleigh, an attorney of New York City."

"I do not pretend," said she.

"Tell me your Christian name. You hesitate? Do you think I do not know you?"

In surprise, she partly rose from the couch, exclaiming: "You *know* me!"



"OH, ROBERT, THERE'S SOME ONE COMING!"—Page 177.

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Slipping his arm about her, he pulled her down beside him, and said: "Yes, Edith, I know you."

Again she endeavored to rise, but he had his arm about her, and prevented her.

"I must go away," she stammered; recovering herself, she said decidedly: "Mr. Corson, I shall go away; your conduct is unpardonable."

"No, you shall not go away now. I'll not risk losing you again. You must explain. When I knew you in New York, I loved you, but I knew your mother didn't favor my suit, and you were shy, so I was not sure of you——"

Trying to rise, she interrupted: "I must go." But Bob was persistent. He said as he held her on the seat, "You cannot go until we understand each other better. Why did you not answer my letters, as you promised you would?"

Covering her face with her hands, she replied, "I did, as long as I received them."

Trying to remove her hands from her face, he asked: "Edith, did you answer them all?"

"Yes, Robert. Oh, Bob, Bob!" Springing up, she exclaimed, "There's some one coming."

"Meester Corson," said Fritz, standing in the doorway, "I vas leave dose horses mit dot carriage ot dot station, und Meester Randall can drive home

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mit himself. I vish to go now und pee vone marriet couble mit Molly."

"Thunder! Haven't they come yet?" exclaimed Bob.

"No, Meester Corson, dey hafe not coom."

"But, Miss Nellie. Mrs. R——. Oh, Lord, Fritz, if Mr. Randall takes the carriage—Fritz, you must go back. Ride a horse and bring the carriage back."

Fritz placed his hands on his hips, and very blandly said: "Vat vill I do mit de horse, Mr. Corson?"

"Tie him behind the carriage, you ninny. Go! Go now."

"Py tamn!" ejaculated Fritz, "I vas mat like I vill bust."

"It is early, Fritz, there is plenty of time." It was Edith who spoke.

"You must bring Miss Cora here, and then you must go for Miss Nellie," said Bob.

"Vell, py tunder! I vill go, und den I vill go to dot min'ster mit Molly, py tamn!" and Fritz hurried out, to go again to the station.

Edith sat down. Placing his arm about her, Bob asked: "Why did you come here, Edith? Did you know that *I* was here? Why do you impersonate Mrs. W. B. Raleigh?"

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“Laura wrote—Cora wrote—and I came—I—did not know—that you—were here—no, oh, no,—I was to go——”

“I am glad you didn’t,” said Bob, holding her close. “Did you know that I was Laura’s brother?” he asked.

“No,” replied she, “or I never would have come. Oh, Bob, I—I lost all trace of you—I answered your letters as long as I received them,—I married——”

“You married! You are married!” exclaimed Bob, springing to his feet.

“Oh, no, no. I am a widow.”

Bob sat down, exclaiming: “You did—did write! You married! You are a widow! Christopher! Whew! Why are you here?”

“Laura invited me. I am the widow of the late attorney, W. B. Raleigh—the second wife.”

“The second wife!” Bob repeated in amazement, “*You* married W. B. Raleigh? Great Scott! And you came here in that rig——”

“To turn the tables on Cora Abbott. We are old friends and schoolmates. She wanted my mother to come here as Mrs. W. B. Raleigh. No. I—— She does not know that mother is dead.”

Bob said to himself: “May she rest in peace.” Aloud he said: “Does Cora know you?”

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"She takes me for my mother."

"Edith," said Bob, drawing her head down on his shoulder, "You *did* love me; do you love me now?"

"Oh, yes. Oh, Bob, so much, and I've been so—so unhappy."

Molly, in her best gown and her wrap and hat, appeared in the doorway.

Springing quickly to his feet, Bob shouted, "What the devil do you want?"

"A telegraph for you, Meester Bob," Molly said, handing an envelope to him. She left the room, but she had seen the "old lady's" head resting on Bob's shoulder, and she did not forget it.

The telegram was from Laura Raleigh; she wanted the carriage sent to meet the evening train.

"There come Cora and George," said Bob. From the window he saw them coming up the walk.

Edith rose. When they entered the room she threw both arms about Cora, exclaiming, "Cora! Dear Cora!"

Naturally, Cora was surprised at this demonstration. She looked sharply at Edith, as the truth dawned upon her. Throwing herself on a chair, she laughed until the tears rolled down her

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cheeks, while George stood in amazement, unable to comprehend the cause of such an explosion.

When he had sufficiently recovered from his surprise, he asked, "What's up, now? I see nothing to laugh about."

A peal of laughter from Edith was his only answer.

George looked at her, and repeated the question.

"George," said Bob, slipping his arm about Edith, "this lady is to be my wife."

"*Your wife?* Another lunatic—yes, a pair. It must be contagious."

Bob roared with merriment, and led Edith out into the garden.

"Has Bob gone mad, that he must fall in love with his grandmother?" said George to Cora.

Another scream of laughter from Cora, and then she said: "Oh, George, don't you think she is lovely? Bob does, and so do I. Ha! ha! ha!"

There was a ring at the telephone. George answered it. "Great Jupiter!" he exclaimed, going to ring the bell, "Nellie and Tom are married!"

"Heavens, George! Do you mean that Nellie and Tom have eloped?"

"Yes," he answered, "Guess it's contagious."

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Molly with her hat and wrap still on, answered the bell. "Somepoty ring?" she asked, shortly.

George said: "Send Fritz."

"Dere vas some foolishness, already," she snapped, as she flounced herself out. Meeting Fritz in the hall she sent him in.

"You send for me?" he angrily asked.

"Go to the station for a young married couple," said George.

"Dree dimes already I vas go to dot station. I vish to go to dot min'ster, und be vone marriyet couble mit Molly, mineself. She vas vait for me—she vas all ready."

"Going to be married, Fritz?" George inquired.

"Plenty of time, Fritz," said Cora. "It's Miss Nellie, Mrs. Tom Abbott."

"*Got in himmel!* Mees Nellie! Meeses Tom Obbott! Vell, I vill go for Meeses Obbott." His wrath somewhat lessened, Fritz went for Nellie, but he did not go alone to the station; two others accompanied him.

"Well," said George, "what will happen now? 'It never rains but it pours.' Bob will be running away with the old lady next."

Cora laughed merrily, and said: "Well, suppose he does. Oh, George! Ha! ha! ha! Wouldn't it be a joke if he should? ha! ha! ha!"

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"It's perfectly ridiculous—scandalous! You wouldn't laugh if Tom married Mrs. Raleigh."

"Of course not. That is a very different affair. Oh, George—ha! ha! Perhaps papa will try to elope next. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Yes," said George, "He might fall in love with the housemaid, Susan. Why doesn't Bob tell you where your father is, and when he will be at home?"

"He was requested *not* to tell at present, but he knows that he is being well cared for, so I am not troubled about him. Bob says he is in good hands and is safe."

"When do you expect the young widow?"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! I don't know, George. Ha! ha! ha! ha! You can't fall in love with her, now. You are twice too late. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"I believe she is a myth, a creature of your imagination. She will never come."

"Oh, George, you stupid! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, Cora," cried Nellie, bounding into the room, followed by Tom, "what will mamma say? Tom and I are married."

"What will you and Tom say? George and I are married."

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“Married? Do you mean it?” asked Tom in surprise.

“Why, Cora Abbott,” exclaimed Nellie, “have you and George really gone and done it?”

“Yes, we eloped. Father and mother object to the daughter of a lunatic,” said George.

“Mees Cora, Fritz, he vas pring dot ledder for you. Pat he vas dell him he tink you vas ot dees house dees dime.” Molly had come quickly in, and she still wore her hat and wrap. After giving Cora the letter, she turned to go.

When Nellie (seeing that she was dressed in her best), asked: “Where have you been, Molly?” she answered: “I hafe peen noveres, ain’t it? I vas peen going all de day, but Fritz, he spend all de dime put dose horses in dot carriage, dake dose horses oud dot carriage, und pring all dose marriet coubles. Fritz, he vas say he vas madt, und I vas madt, too, mine gracious!”

“Why, I don’t understand you, Molly,” said Nellie in surprise.

“Do you want to go somewhere?” Tom asked.

“Yah, Meester Tom, I vas going to pee marriet mit Fritz.”

“They are going to follow *our* example, and be married to-day,” said George to Tom. “You see it’s contagious.”

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"I does not know apout dot," snapped Molly. "Meester Bob, he go in dot carriage to dot station, he coom pack in dot carriage, und he dell Fritz, he must vonce more again take him to dot station, und Fritz he vas get madt ot dot foolishness. Dot octress, she go too." Molly bobbed her head, in a very knowing way.

"Actress! Actress!" they all exclaimed.

"Dot octress dot Mees Cora vas send to dees house to joke midt Meeses Raleigh. I know—I know."

"Are you crazy too?" they all asked.

"No," replied Molly, "I vas not looney mit mine headt. I see Meester Corson mit his arms around dot octress. I see—I see—und I vas hear her say dot she vas vone poor octress. I see dot old voman—she vas *not* vone old voman—dot old laty she vas vone young laty. She don't lock de door, and ven I vas open dot door she hafe dot vig not on; she schream und she schlam dot door mit mine face und I don't like dot nieder." Going to the door, Molly called back, "I vas know vat I vas talk apout."

"What does this mean, Cora?" asked the others in chorus.

An explosion of laughter was the only reply.

"I guess the old lady is bald," said George.

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“That’s it,” said Nellie, emphatically, “Auntie must be bald.”

The matter thus settled to the satisfaction of all, they suddenly remembered that Cora had a letter. “Read your letter,” they all cried.

Cora sat down, and opened it. “From Maudie,” she said; “listen and I’ll read it to you:

“‘DEAR CORA: Mr. Abbott will leave for home to-morrow. I assure you, dear, that your papa’s mind is sound as mine. You know, dear, that we are all foolish sometimes. A young girl is as attractive to an elderly man, as to a young one—why not? And he—well, he is the same dear man he has always been. I am to be married to-day—I shall go down to your home on my wedding trip. I hope you will be glad to see me again.

“‘Yours,

“‘MAUDE.’”

“Great Scott!” exclaimed George.

“Holy Moses! If father——”

“I wonder if Maude has——”

Cora interrupted Nellie, saying: “Maude married! I wonder if she has lassoed papa?”

The entrance of Fritz put an end for the time being, to their conjectures.

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Fritz was angry—so angry that he was red in the face. Said he: “Mees Nellie, I vas go und dake mineself right away. I vill not pring any more dose marriet coubles to dees blace. Dot Meester Bob, he go in dot carriage mit vone young laty und he dell me wait py dot station vone leedle dime und pring him home mit dot laty.”

“Where did he go, Fritz?” asked the young people.

“Vell, I does not know dot. Meester Corson, he dell me wait by dot station; und I say to myself, ‘Py tunder! I vill go now und pring mine-self vone marriet couble mineself, mit Molly.’ I vill onhitch dose horses und den I vill go.”

There was a ring at the telephone, and Fritz went out.

Tom answered the call, went to the table and rang the bell.

“What’s going on now?” the young folks asked.

Tom replied: “Bob wants the carriage.”

Molly flounced in and angrily said, “Vell! I vas here, don’t it?”

“Send Fritz,” said Nellie.

“I vill send Fritz,” snapped Molly, and flounced out.

“Well! Bob *has* gone and done it, if he has gone and married his grandmother,” remarked George.

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Nellie was indignant. "How *could* Uncle Bob marry his grandmother?" she asked.

Cora held her hands on her sides, and was convulsed with laughter.

Fritz stalked into the room, hat in hand. "Vell, dees vas Fritz!"

Tom told Fritz that Mr. Corson wanted him to bring him home with the carriage.

Fritz was furious. He threw his hat on the floor and stormed about. Said he: "Dere vas some more marriet coubles, don't it? I vill lose me mine headt! I sveal to gosh, I vill dake me away from dees blace. I vill not go to dot station some more, alreaty. I vill go to dot min'ster mit Molly."

"But if there is a lady with him, she can't walk home, you know," said Cora.

"Py tunder!" said Fritz, picking up his hat, "Dees dime vonce more I vill go mit dose horses. I vill not go again already, py tamn. If dot Meester Abbott send me mit dot carriage, he vill just valk home mit himself. I'll just fool dem folksvone pundel," he said to himself as he went to harness the horses and again take the carriage to the station.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" roared Tom, "Fritz is getting riley."

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"So is Molly," said Nellie.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" laughed Cora. "They want to go and be married."

"That's natural," said George.

"It seems so strange not to have Auntie here; I wonder why she went to town with Uncle Bob?"

"She is in love with him," said Cora, doubling herself up and screaming with laughter.

"Don't talk nonsense, Cora," said Nellie, tossing her head contemptuously.

"Fritz said that a young lady went with Bob. Who in the world could it have been?" said Tom.

Cora found voice long enough to say, "Mrs. W. B. Raleigh did go with Bob. I saw them go out together. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Perhaps they won't come back together," said George.

"Oh, George, George, what a gander you are. Oh—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"I thought Bob and Maude were attracted," remarked George.

Nellie then informed him that her uncle had had a love affair two years ago. That after losing his heart he had the misfortune to lose the young lady who had it in her possession.

To Tom's question, "How did he lose her?" she replied: "I have no idea; he said she promised to

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answer his letters if he wrote to her, but he received only two, and he never heard from her afterward."

"Well, I declare!" George exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that Bob never had an affection of the heart until two years ago? Humph! Bob must be thirty-two, at least. Who was the young lady, Nellie?"

"I forget what her name was. She was as beautiful as an angel, and she was young, of course. She had no father, and her mother was an actress."

With an exclamation of surprise, Cora leaned forward towards Nellie and excitedly asked: "Was her name Barlow? Try to remember, was it Edith Barlow?"

"Barlow—B—Edith—E—Edith," said Nellie, trying to recall the name. "I believe it was—Edith. Yes, I am sure it was Edith, but I do not remember that Bob told her surname."

Cora's eyes shone with excitement; the color rose in her cheeks, and she said: "Well, this has been an eventful day!"

"And the events of the day have quite excited you," replied George.

Said Tom, "A love story is always exciting."

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“Why, of course it is,” said Nellie. “But poor Uncle Bob.”

“Go on, Nellie. Tell us about Bob’s love affair,” said George.

Nellie assured them that she knew but little about it. She only knew that Bob had fallen in love at first sight with a young lady in New York, that he had managed to obtain an introduction to her, and that she had *seemed* to like him.”

“Then why the dickens didn’t they marry?” questioned Tom.

“Her mother didn’t like him for some reason, and she was not very polite——”

“Showed him the door?” asked George, making a very suggestive motion with his foot.

“Oh, no, **not** quite as bad as that,” said Nellie, “but he was called to Australia, and after a while his letters were returned **unopened**.”

Cora had been listening with **undisguised** astonishment; but when George, thinking that he was furnishing the sequel to Bob’s affair, said: “And now he consoles himself with his grandmother,” she shrieked with laughter.

“Cora, if you know anything funny, why don’t you tell it?” asked Tom.

“It *isn’t* funny; it’s sad,” said Nellie.

Cora volunteered the information that they

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would not think so, very long, and then she laughed as if Bob's love affair was the funniest thing she had ever heard.

Tom remarked: "You must think that Bob has lost his head."

"Oh, no, not all. Bob has found the custodian of his heart. I know the *sequel* to Nellie's story."

"Then you had better tell it," said they all.

"The daughter was beautiful——"

"Nellie told us all that—go on," interrupted George. "That is a matter of course. Telephone, Tom."

Tom called in the telephone: "Hello—all right." Taking up the bell, he rang for Molly.

"What is wanted now?" came in chorus from the others.

Tom answered: "Mrs. Raleigh wants the carriage."

Nellie asked: "Mamma or Auntie?"

"Your mother," Tom replied. "Go on, Cora."

Cora continued: "The mother became ill——"

"Vat you vant dees dime?" asked Molly, glaring at Tom.

"Mrs. Raleigh wants the carriage, tell Fritz."

"Fritz, he vas not come yet!"

"Send him in when he comes," said Tom.

Molly's eyes blazed. In answer to George, who

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asked, "What's the matter Molly?" she said, "*I vas madt, py tamn.* Oh—oh—mine gracious." Covering her face with her hands to hide her confusion, she fled.

"Continue, Cora," said they all.

"To please the mother, she married a wealthy widower——"

"Helloa, all of you," called Bob. "Congratulations are in order. Matrimony is contagious. My wife has gone to remove her wraps."

George sprang to his feet, exclaiming: "Jerusalem! Oh, Bob! Do you mean it?"

Cora rushed to Bob, and giving her hand, she said to him, "I congratulate you with all my heart."

"Thunder!" ejaculated Tom, "Whom have you married?"

"Uncle Bob, have you married Auntie? What *have* you done?"

A beautiful young woman, of not more than twenty-two, entered. Going to Bob she slipped her hand under his arm, and smiled at Cora, who called: "Well, Edith. Edith, you deserve to be happy."

The others looked from one to another, and repeated: "Edith! Edith!"

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Nellie rang the bell for Molly, and said: "I wonder why Fritz doesn't come."

Bob, taking Edith's hand, introduced her as his wife.

Again Nellie rang the bell.

"Where is Mrs. W. B. R.?" asked Tom of Bob.

"You'll never see *her* again," he answered.

Again Nellie rang the bell.

George said: "Bob, Mrs. Laura Raleigh is at the station, she must have gotten there after you left."

"Great Scott!" said he, "I forgot all about her dispatch. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Tom put his arm about Nellie, and together they went to look for Fritz. They found the carriage gone, and returned to the house.

George inquired of Bob if Mrs. W. B. R. went away with him. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he asked: "Did she come back with you?"

To this question, Edith replied: "Only Mrs. Corson came back with Bob. Mrs. W. B. Raleigh will *never* come back."

Cora, making a very low bow to Mrs. Corson, said: "She became a widow——"

Bob finished the story by saying: "Now she is my wife."

Laura Raleigh stalked into the room, followed by Mr. Abbott. With indignation, she inquired:

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“Why didn’t you send Fritz to meet me with the carriage? We waited for him until we were tired of it, and then we walked; and we are completely tired out.”

“Why, father! Why——”

“Why, papa, we expected you to-morrow,” said Cora, interrupting Tom.

Nellie, looking at Mr. Abbott, informed him that *Cora* and *George* were married.

Of course the announcement was a surprise; but when Cora informed Laura that *Nellie* and *Tom* were a newly-wedded couple, she was amazed. Mr. Abbott was interested in a picture on the wall. Of course *he* heard nothing of what was said.

Suddenly Laura’s eyes rested on Edith; before her stood a stranger, a young and fashionably attired woman; who was *she*?

There was a merry twinkle in Bob’s eyes when he introduced her as, “My wife, Mrs. Corson.”

Even Mr. Abbott forgetting his interest in the picture, turned to look at Bob’s wife.

“Mrs. Raleigh is gone,” said George, “and she is not coming back.”

“Gone! Mrs. Raleigh gone! Why did she go?” Laura asked.

“Sister, the *second* wife of W. B. Raleigh is now Mrs. Robert Corson.”

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Mrs. Raleigh looked at Edith, and her face turned crimson; but she managed to exclaim: "Bob! Married! Second wife! Great Heavens! What will happen next?"

"I vas pring mineself home mit dot carriage vone marriet couble," shouted the delighted Fritz, pushing Molly into the room. Pointing to her, he said, "*Dees is mine vife.*" Suddenly he spied Mrs. Raleigh, for a moment he stared at her, and then recovering from his surprise, he exclaimed: "Vell! Meeses Raleigh! Tunder and blitzen!"

A very satisfied smile crept over **her** face, as she said: "If you please, I am *Mrs. Abbott.*"

"Mrs. Abbott! Mrs. Abbott! Mrs. Abbott!" "Father!" "Papa!" "Mamma!" "Laura!" sounded on all sides, by voices ranging from bass to treble.

"Mine gracious!" shouted Molly. "Look all dose marriet coubles."

Fritz threw up his hands in disgust, and fairly yelled: "*Gott in Himmel! She vas gone und marriet dot insane crazytic.*"

THE END.

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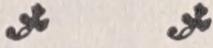
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