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The Seal Ring.

"Well, this is a hot day!" said Dr. Gray, to himself, as he guided his shaggy little horse round the sharp turn of the road and checked him under the spreading shadow of the giant cherry-tree, whose broad boughs were all sparkling with the ruby pendants, and then walked to the house.

"Halloo!" said the doctor. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked intently in at the kitchen window. There was the trim figure of his pretty daughter standing at the kitchen table, her sleeves rolled back, and a pink checked apron tied about her taper waist, apparently deep in the saccharine mysteries of pie-making. That was nothing surprising; but Dr. Gray could have sworn that a minute ago the apparition of a young gentleman was manifesting a remarkable degree of interest in the pan of sliced apples and various spice boxes and sugar bowls that flanked it, and yet, now that he looked again, Kitty was trumming off the edges of her pie-crust all alone! He walked straight into the kitchen, where the oven-fire was glowing so hotly that Kitty's cheeks were like twin carnations as she worked away at the pies, sifting showers of powdered cinnamon and nutmeg over the juicy slices of July apples, and drenching them in snowy sugar.

"Kit! where's Harry Browne?" Kitty stopped to catch a little star in the centre of the white sheet of pie-crust wherewith she was covering her pastry before she answered in a low tone: "I don't know, papa."

"You don't, eh?" said the doctor, quietly pursing up his mouth in a shape suggestive of whistling. "I suppose not!"

And the doctor proceeded through the hall into his little study, where sat his hopeful young student, Harry Browne, deep in the ponderous pages of a medical dictionary.

"Been hard at work all day, eh?" said the old gentleman, taking off his hat and fanning himself with its broad brim.

"Yes, sir," said Browne; "I've written out that abstract you left, and looked over the papers on fractures, and—"

"All right; all right; you're a most industrious fellow," said Dr. Gray. "You don't leave off work on all sorts of frivolous pretexts, do you?"

"No, sir," said Browne, demurely. "You are convinced that nothing but steady perseverance will enable a man to succeed in the science of medicine?"

"Yes, sir," responded Mr. Henry Browne, moving a little uneasily in his chair.

"Very sensible of you," said Dr. Gray, shrugging his shoulders. "And now—but what are you looking for?"

"My seal ring, sir, I thought it was on my finger but a minute ago. You have not seen it, I suppose?"

"No, not that I know of," said the doctor, taking snuff as briskly as he did anything else.

"I hope it is not lost," said Harry. "I value it very highly as my father's gift. Where can it have gone?"

"Don't know," said the Doctor. "Just give me that list of patients we expect this afternoon, and then go out, and ask Jack to look for your trinket. That boy has more eyes and ears than most people. I believe—I know he has more mischief!"

Harry Browne adopted his preceptor's suggestion; and the old gentleman was left alone, alternately taking snuff, rubbing his spectacles and conjecturing whether his fair daughter was really deceiving him as to her innocent love affairs.

"Confound it," soliloquized the Doctor, petulantly, "it takes sharper eyes than mine to see through womankind's manoeuvres. I'll ferret out the mystery yet, though I hang if I don't!"

The brazen throat of the old kitchen clock had just uttered, in a sort of a shrill tremble, the fact that it was two, past meridian, and dinner was nearly over at Dr. Gray's. Somehow dinner tasted better in the long, shady dining-room of the Gray mansion house than it did anywhere else, for the climbing honey-suckles at the window stirred so pleasantly in the wind, and held back their green wilderness of leaves to admit such delicious scents of new-mown hay and blossom-sprinkled woods that the most delicate appetite could not resist being tempted. And Kitty Gray looked so pretty at the head of the table, her brown hair brushed back and her white throat edged with a dainty lace and the faint color coming and going on her cheek like rosy shadows. No wonder Harry Browne looked at her so often, we should have done the same thing had we sat opposite her at the table.

"I'll take another piece of that apple-pie, Kate," said the old Doctor, extending his plate. "Capital pie; where did the apples come from?"

"I believe Patrick gathered them from the old tree that stands by the south wall of the orchard, papa; the apples hang there like balls of gold just streaked with red on the sunny side,

and I baked them this morning."

"Upon my word you're getting to be quite a little housekeeper," said the Doctor, chuckling. "I suppose some young fellow'll be—Why, halloo, here! what's this?"

For Dr. Gray's teeth, sound and white as ivory, had struck against some foreign substance under the snowy crust of the much-praised pie, with a jar that set every nerve on edge.

"Do they make apple-pies nowadays out of stones?" demanded the old gentleman, tartly. "No, I'm mistaken, it isn't a stone—it's a seal ring!"

And the Doctor quietly held up Harry Browne's missing ornament—a heavy carnelian, set in a ring of chased gold. Kitty turned scarlet; Browne looked amazed and confounded.

"How a seal ring should happen to get baked in an apple-pie I don't know," said the malicious old Doctor, enjoying the confusion of his companions.

"Young people, can you tell me what all this means?"

"I can tell you sir," said Harry, yillantly, seeing that now or never was the time for his avowal. "It means that I am in love with your daughter Kitty, and that if you will give me your consent to our union we will be everlastingly grateful to you."

"Papa," whispered Kitty, with her round arms about his neck, "now be good, and say yes. I wanted to tell you before—I didn't dare."

"Oh!" said Dr. Gray, dryly; "I supposed I should find things out by and by. I wish, however, it may't be at the cost of the snapping toothache."

"May I have her, sir?" pleaded Harry, who had by this time got his arm around Kitty's waist.

"Well," said the Doctor, "I don't know that I've any objection. Have it your own way, young people. Only, if you have any more courting to get through with, I beg you won't do it up over my apple-pies!"

Promiscuous Encounter.

"My dear," said Mrs. Spoonpendyke, glancing nervously out of the window and then timidly at her husband, "my dear, I wonder how that goat got into our yard?"

"What goat?" asked Mr. Spoonpendyke, looking up from his breakfast.

"Why, the goat that's out there."

"Oh!" grunted Mr. Spoonpendyke, approaching the window. "You mean that one, do you? The principles that generally regulate your conversation betrayed me into thinking that your mind might be fixed on some other goat. As for him, I suppose he broke through the fence from the back lot—or," continued Mr. Spoonpendyke, hastily, correcting himself, "perhaps he came to call on you. Better ask him in."

"I'm afraid of him," peeped Mrs. Spoonpendyke, drawing closer to her husband. "What do you think we had better do? If he stays out there he'll eat up everything."

"I believe I'll go and drive him out," said Mr. Spoonpendyke, eyeing the brute with no particular amount of favor. "You come along to head him off, and you'll soon see a goat begin to wish he had been born a girl that some one might learn to love him."

And with this prognostication Mr. Spoonpendyke sallied forth followed by his wife.

"Be careful," she whispered. "When goats get angry they butt, and that hurts."

"Shoo!" commenced Mr. Spoonpendyke, waving his hands and following the goat to a hole in the fence, where a couple of boards had been knocked out.

"Shoo there, now! Sk! Hold on! Head him, can't ye! Turn him! Whoop!" he roared, as the goat whirled suddenly and dashed to the other end of the yard. "What'd ye come out here for?" he demanded of his wife, who had made a little better time than the goat, and had reached the top of a step ladder.

"Don't let him come up here!" she squealed, stamping her feet on the top step, and trying to climb up the side of the house. "Hold on to him and call a policeman!"

"Great scheme!" growled Mr. Spoonpendyke, looking around for a stick. "But I haven't made up my mind whether to call a policeman, or do holding on first. What're making stucco-work of yourself up there for? Come down and get behind that goat, will ye, while I teach him the ways and admonitions of Spoonpendyke. If you ain't mighty careful he'll rub up against that step ladder, and you're liable to come down in sections!"

"This prophesy brought Mrs. Spoonpendyke to the ground without much delay.

"Say, dear," she suggested, "suppose you should go to the other side of the hole, and call him. Don't you think he'd come?"

"Come in a minute, if I happened to hit his right name," retorted Mr. Spoonpendyke, who had found a stick, and was preparing for war. "Now you edge around behind him, so as to give him a starter, and I'll put myself in communication with him as soon as he gets under way."

"Go along, dear. Kun through that pretty little hole like a good goat!" faltered Mrs. Spoonpendyke, apostrophizing the animal in a purely feminine fashion. "Shoo, dear, now, and be real nice." The goat looked at her, thereby freezing her blood, and started slowly for the bottom of the yard.

"Yes, love!" ripped Mr. Spoonpendyke, braving his stick down on the back of the beast with a vindictive grin. "There's a nice little opening for goats that's awaiting for thee!" and down came the stick once more.

"Whe-e-e!" squealed Mrs. Spoonpendyke, as the goat whirled around like a compass at once. "He must be looking for the place to get out, isn't he?" What do you suppose makes him act that way? Whe-e-e!"

The last yell was extracted by a sudden straightening up of the goat, who towered around the yard like a cat in a fit.

"With that headway on, he'll be apt to go through the hole in the fence if I ever hits it," observed Mr. Spoonpendyke, who had joined his wife in the middle of the circuit rather precipitously. "I think I must have struck him a little harder than he meant to have me. Now, you get behind him again, and we'll fix him so that the next time he sees a hole in our fence he'll get a hammer and board up the temptation."

Mrs. Spoonpendyke ceded along the fence, and took her station with considerable perturbation. The goat came down to a trot, and finally stopped and looked a trifle bewildered. Mr. Spoonpendyke grasped his stick with a firmer grip, and figuratively speaking, waited for his wife to deliver the ball.

"Now start him," said he.

Mrs. Spoonpendyke waved her apron, and the goat aiming straight at the hole in the fence bore down upon it with three hundred goat power. Mr. Spoonpendyke aimed a lick at him, and went tumultuously through the hole as the goat struck the fence and bounded back.

"Great gracious!" ejaculated Mrs. Spoonpendyke, swarming up the step ladder and squatting at the top. "Are you hurt, dear?"

"Hurt!" howled Mr. Spoonpendyke, peeping through the hole and contemplating his wife with a savage glare. "Think I'm a nail, to come through a board fence and be clinched without feeling it? Can't you scare that goat away from this hole so I can come back and commune with him once more? Come down off that dod-gasted step ladder, can't ye? Got a notion that measly goat is coming up there to be scared? Come down and throw a brick at him, will ye?"

"I haven't got a brick," murmured Mrs. Spoonpendyke, as she scuttled down the ladder, "but I'll get a flat-iron," and having provided herself with a weapon the use of which she understood, she sallied forth to effect an exchange of situation between the goat and her husband.

"Now go along!" she exclaimed sternly, holding out her war material at arm's length. "Ain't you ashamed of yourself, you nasty goat! Qw-w-w—! Look out, dear!"

But Mr. Spoonpendyke, constant to his want of faith in his wife's suggestions, incautiously looked in, and he and the goat rolled over each other in the vacant lot.

"Did the whole business work in accordance with the schedule?" he yelled, as he picked himself up and fired the remnant of his stick at the flying foe. "Did the whole measly goat get through, or is there more to follow? Don't omit a stanza in this refreshing season of worship! Let's have the whole hymn!" and Mr. Spoonpendyke presented himself at the opening in the fence, with mud-streaked face and tattered habiliments.

"Come in, dear," said Mrs. Spoonpendyke, soothingly. "Come in, now. He's gone!"

"I know he's gone!" howled Mr. Spoonpendyke, crawling through the hole. "I saw him when he went! Oh, you started him! When he saw that vigorous mind of yours backed up by a dod-gasted flat-iron, all he could do was to go! Another time you see me scaring a goat out of the yard, you let things alone, will ye?" and Mr. Spoonpendyke hobbled into the house to change his clothes.

"I don't care!" murmured Mrs. Spoonpendyke, dragging a barrel against the hole as protection against further incursions. "I don't care. The way he was chopping at that goat with his stick, he wouldn't have had him out in a month. You want to treat a goat like a crease, and iron him out, or," she continued, referring to some serious experience, "if you want to make sure of having it go out, you might hire it out as a servant girl."

And with these luminous reflections, Mrs. Spoonpendyke tore her skirt on a nail in the barrel and joined her husband with a hundred consolatory caresses.

"No," said the lawyer, "I sha'n't press your claim against that man; you can get some one else to take the case, or you can withdraw it, just as you please."

"Think there isn't any money in it?"

"There would probably be some money in it, but it would as you know come from the sale of the little house the man occupies and calls 'home'; but I don't want to meddle with the matter, anyhow."

"Got frightened out of it, eh?"

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"Ah! he took to praying, did he?"

"Not for my benefit, in the least. You see"—the lawyer crossed his right foot over his left knee, and began stroking his lower leg up and down, as if to help to state his case, concisely—"you see, I found the little house easily enough, and knocked on the outer door which stood ajar, but nobody heard me, so I stepped into the little hall, and saw through the crack of another door just as cozy a sitting room as there ever was."

"There on a bed, with her silver head way up high on the pillows, was an old lady who looked for all the world just as my mother did the last time I ever saw her on earth. Well I was right on the point of knocking, when she said as clearly as could be; 'come, father, now begin, I'm all ready'—and down on his knees by her side went an old white-haired man, still older than his wife, I should judge; and I couldn't have knocked then for the life of me. Well he began; first he reminded God that they were still His submissive children, mother and he, and no matter what He saw fit to bring upon them they shouldn't rebel at His will of course 'was going to be terrible hard for them to go out homeless in their old age, specially with poor mother so sick and helpless, but still they'd seen sadder things than ever that would be. He reminded God in the next place how different all right have been if only one of their boys had been spared them; then his voice kind of broke, and a thin, white hand stole from under the coverlet and moved slowly over his snowy hair; then he went on to repeat that nothing could be so sharp again as the parting with those three sons—unless mother and he should be separated. But at last he fell to comforting himself, with the fact that the dear Lord knew it was through no fault of his own that mother and he were threatened with the loss of their dear little home, which meant beggary and the almshouse, a place they prayed to be delivered from entering, if it could be consistent with God's will; and then he fell to quoting multitude of promises concerning the safety of those who put their trust in the Lord; yes, I should say he legged hard; in fact it was the most thrilling plea to which I ever listened; and at last he prayed for God's blessing on those who were about to demand justice"—the lawyer stroked his lower limb in silence for a moment or two, then continued, more slowly than ever:

"And I—believe—I'd rather go to the poorhouse myself, to-night, than to stain my heart and hands with the blood of such a prosecution as that."

"Little afraid to defeat the old man's prayer, eh?" queried the client.

"Bless your soul, man, you couldn't defeat it!" roared the lawyer. "It doesn't admit of defeat! I tell you he left it all subject to the will of God; but he left no doubt as to his wishes in the matter; claimed that we were told to make known our desires unto God; but of all the pleading I ever heard, that beat all. You see I was taught that kind of thing myself in my childhood, and why I was sent to hear that prayer I'm sure I don't know, but I hand the case over."

"I wish," said the client, twisting uneasily, "you hadn't told me about the old fellow's prayer."

"Well I want the money confoundedly the place would bring, but I was taught the Bible all straight when I was a youngster, and I'd hate to run counter to such a harangue as that you tell about. I wish you hadn't heard a word of it; and another time I wouldn't listen to petitions not intended for your ears."

The lawyer smiled.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you're wrong again; it was intended for my ears, and yours, too, and God Almighty intended it. My old mother used to sing about God's moving in a mysterious way, I remember."

"Well my mother used to sing it, too," said the claimant, as he twisted his claim papers in his fingers. "You can call in the morning, if you like, and tell mother and him the claim has been met."

"In a mysterious way," added the lawyer smiling.—Christian Union.

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One vice is more expensive than many virtues.

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