THE SCANDAL OF SIGNA.

BY WYLLARD.

"Two thousand a year is not a great income," said Lady Jane, ironically, "Still, it rescues dear Noel from absolute want. It was so nice of his godmother—always a most unassuming person, too; indeed, I mistook her for the dressmaker on one occasion when she came to call,and I am afraid she slipped off my visiting list quite a year ago."

"That is a pity, since the whole family are inclined to canonize her now!" said Signa dryly. "However, she does not seem to have borne malice, as she has promoted Noel to the position of an eligible."

"Hardly eligible, my dear! Two thousand goes such a very little way unless one lives in Bayswater or the country. Poor Noel!"

"Oh, I did not mean among us!" said Signa, with a laughing sneer and a glance out of the window at the respectable Sloane street trees, decorously dusty though just in bud. "But possibly some young person in the middle classes may take pity on him now, even though it means Bayswater!"

Lady Jane glanced rather uneasily at Signa's straight young back, which was all that presented itself to her to help out Signa's meaning. And Lady Jane was often at a loss to know whether Signa was in earnest or ironical. She was beginning to think, with despair, that when her youngest daughter talked sense—the sense of Sloane street and the duchess, it meant revolt, and would end in Signa doing some dreaded and unconventional thing, such as waiting to take up a profession or refusing a really sound offer, for instance. Sometimes—since his godmother had behaved in such a really laudable manner—she thought with a sigh, that even two thousand a year and Bayswater would be better than an awful scandal, of which she lived in terror. If Signa must marry a poor man, better Noel, who was, somehow, so satisfactory to all the family, than one of those younger sons with whom the girl delighted to frighten her chaperons.

"SHALL I COME TOO, SIGNA."

Lady Jane is a dear, good soul, but she is accustomed to be unwise in her management of Signa. She allowed her new approval of Noel to be read in the growing maternity of her manner. Hitherto she had been cousinly in her treatment of him—she was not his aunt or that might have been her attitude—and when things looked very black in the matrimonial market she comforted herself aloud with his advantages. Signa hated the obvious. Her temper had been decidely uncertain since Captain Verney had come into what she henceforth styled his "Bayswater income," and she sallied forth this very afternoon in a mood that was ripe for mischief.

She found it at Lady Bloomfield's afternoon crush where the Bohemian element was mingling with the severely social, and everybody was discussing the great "Benefit night" at the Bacchante Theatre of Varieties in aid of the War Fund. The Bacchante is a very superior music hall, and that lent a zest to the way in which everyone was buying tickets—in aid of the charity!

There was a fat man in a long frockcoat standing in the centre of the group of the smartest women present when Signa arrived. He was Batsburg, the proprietor of the Bacchante and the originator of the benefit, but Signa hardly glanced at him. There was no doubt that she was in a very bad mood indeed, and her eyes, roaming about for some evil deed to prove this, did not alight upon Batsburg, as the special means arranged by the Powers of Darkness to help her. It was not with any thought of the fat man and his glossy curls in her mind that she sat down at the piano and volunteered a song. There had been music going on all of that afternoon; but Signa's performance was entirely different, and everyone listened, and indeed, crowded in fro the other rooms to hear. She has a singularly clear voice, strong enough to fill a concert-room, and trained by Da Capri. He never thought that his excellent training would go to help Signa to give Lady Bloomfield's guests a treat such as that performance of "Hy'ar there! Clear the road for Lisbeth."

They were a noisy audience when Signa's singing had suddenly transformed them from well-dressed lukewarm men and women into laughing, applauding human beings, not above joining in that last swinging chorus of the others, and one could seeta seemed no more a drawing room in Pont street, but the cotton-fields of Louisiana. Lady Bloomfield's own high cackle rose high above the voices of the others and one could see the men drawing breath to demand an encore, even as she rose, flushed with the excitement of her success, from the piano, and she heard, all across the room the manager ask who she was. Two minutes later, someone brought him over and introduced him, and they stood by the instrument, talking quickly and earnestly—so deep in conversation, indeed, that Signa would not be interrupted to sing again. It was only when she looked past his broad back that she caught sight of Verney,nonchalant, eyeglass in eye, evidently not at all upset by her reckless interpretation of the notorious negro melody.

"Yes, of course I will!" said Signa to the manager. "I should like it," and she nodded to Verney over his shoulder. Her smile was brilliant.

Half London was in the stalls of the Bacchante on the great benefit night, and the boxes were taken by select parties who thought the auditorium a little public for the light of their presence. I was tickled to see the duchess levelling her glasses at Poppy le Marchant when that young lady danced the conger-eel dance in aid of the charity, and admired the tolerance of her attitude. Lady Jane was in the box, too, and Sir Wilfred and sister, the one who married into the state; but Signa herself was not present, and, when I went round to pay my respects to her grace, I learned that she had pleaded a headache and stayed at home. The cause, I thought, was not far to seek, as Signa would have persisted that she had lumbago if it would have saved her accompanying a party of which the duchess made one.

Batsburg had tacitly promised the house a sensation that night, and we were all a little eager; it had not been announced on the boards, but had floated round society through the private channels, and we kept asking each other who was this new star of Batsburg? The programme was as good as could be, but the performers were old acquaintances; and while we stormed the stage with applause after each item, all felt that Batsburg owed us a new sensation yet. It came between numbers 9 and 10—an "extra turn" which was merely slipped upon the notice board. The band struck up a new air, a catchy thing that no one had heard, and yet, I believe, we all tried to hum it and then into the centre of the wide strip of stage left bare in front of the back-cloth a little ragged London gamin came swinging his impudent dirty face turned to the audience with the sang froid of his inimitable breed. He stood still a minute, and then coolly looking us over, he began to shy personalities at our comments that made the victim shout claim him a success.

There was no doubt about his reality—he was a true arab, apparently brought straight out of the streets, without a dab of paint on him that could be discerned, and supremely jaunty and insolent. Probably, he was one of the boys who sold bogus programmes at the side doors of the hall, or, for a few stray coppers, sang versions of the songs to be heard inside, and Batsburg had primed him up to recognize the front rows of the audience and discourse on their private affairs and was getting quite personal when one concluded that the urchin had been coached by someone who did know. Batsburg had been among these people for weeks in connection with the benefit, and, though, his use of his knowledge might be in doubtful taste, there was no denying that it caught on—the stalls roared as each stinging remark, pointed by one grimy forefinger came clearly across the footlights through the jaunty music.

Suddenly the boy began to dance a kind of double-shuffle and, to the air which the band still played softly, broke into a song, introducing the names of people in front of him. His voice was a sweet, true boy's voice, but marred by that awful East End accent, and it rang through the theatre loud and strong. Young Bracebridge of the Guards, who was sitting between Noel Verney and Mrs. Chiltren Hundreds, almost sprang upright in his seat.

"By jove!" he said. "Its Signa!"

The house did not recognize her all at once and the boxes apparently not at all. But even the awful presence of the duchess and the appalling consequences which loomed in the near future could not restrain the men. They laughed at every wicked point in the song and when he was off the stage they yelled to have him back again. It sounded as if the whole hall were one confused, imperious demand, and though they did not call her by name, it was obvious that Signa was recognized. I wondered what she would do, and almost held my breath when the small ragged figure returned for a brief moment, but only just in sight at the wings. There was a growing terror in Signa's eyes—an expression most alien to them. Either the passing of the excitement, or the realization of her own daring, or else that clamoring audience, was terrifying her. She bowed hastily and pattered off, in spite of the cries to her to sing again. I feared the demand was too long, and that they would force her to come back, and I turned to look round for Verney. But he had disappeared, and he was not in the duchess box, though I looked there with fear and trembling. Her grace was still sitting, calm and smiling, at the front of the box; there was something ominous in her tacit refusal to recognize what everyone knew. Lady Jane's face was like a mask; I thought Lady Leamington was crying, but I could not see her plainly.

The next turn fell flat, though there was a gallant effort to applaud and carry it through. But so many of the men had vanished that it looked as if a wind had swept the stalls bare. It was fatally easy to get behind. They were waiting for Signa.

I sat out two turns; then I followed Verney. He had, as I suspected, left his place before Signa had made her bow, and was waiting for her behind. By the time I got round, the wings seemed to be full of men, chattering in excited voices, and at a little distance stood Verney, cool and lanquid, talking to Batsburg. I heard the manager say, sulkily, "At the side-door-yes, there is a way round," and I went then and there in the direction indicated because I wanted to see the end of the comedy. There was a brogham waiting there; I stood unnoticed on the pavement untill they came out—indeed' it was I who opened the carriage-door. Signa had changed her clothes rapidly, and slipped away from her dressing-room while the men were still awaiting her in the wings. But she was crying bitterly, and it so much surprised me that I felt the whole scene a little unreal. Verney put her into the carriage, hesitated, and stood with one foot on the step.

"Shall I come, too, Signa?" he said.

Her voice came out of the darkness, muffled.

"I am frightened, Noel!"

"At last?" he said, quietly. "Well, I am not."

"I thought it would be fun to scandalize you!"

"Do you mean that I was the cause this time?"

"How dare you have two thousand a year?", said Signa irrevantly. Neither of them noticed me.

"So you thought you would fling your independence of my opinion at me once for all, and see if I could be scared away, eh?"

"Something like that."

"Well, you cannot. Nothing could. I am going to take the onus of the affair on myself from this time forth however, and tackle the family."

"Will you stand by me, Noel?" Signa must really have had a fright to say that!

"There shall be no occasion. They shall not dare to refer to it. Union is strength—it is you and I together now."

He jumped into the carriage, and I closed the door and told the coachman "Home," because by that time they were past thinking of anything but themselves. Lady Jane confessed afterwards that the engagement was the greatest relief she had ever known. She had feared that it would never come off, because it appears that, owing to her blundering and excellent intentions, she had caused a breach between them which Signa would not give Verney a chance to heal. Batsburg was an angel—a fat angel—in the disguise of a frock coat and his Benefit was the medicine that killed or cured.

The amusing part of it is that the Duchess has ignored the whole affair, and as she has declined to acknowledge what everyone knows—that Signa was the sensation of the great War-Fund Benefit—she will have to go to the wedding, on which occasion Signa will make her bow and retire from her war with right and proper behavior—for the present.

Quick Wit a Strong Factor.

Some of the noblemen of Europe owe their present positions and stations of honor to the presence of mind and forethought of their ancestors during extremely critical moments. A hiccough, for instance, is the cause of the Kinskys' princely rank in Austria. It seems that during the midst of some great court function at Vienna the Empress Maria Theresa had the misfortune to hiccough so violently as to cause, not only herself, but her court, great embarrassment. In the midst of her bewilderment young Count Kinsky stepped forward, and with a most clever assumption of intense mortification and humiliation, asked her pardon for his breach of good manners. The Empress received his apology with not only good grace, but gratitude, and before long the young nobleman was bestowed with high court honors and decorations.

Another story is told how the Emperor Napoleon III when out hunting one day, being a very poor marksman, fired at a pheasant, but instead hit General Massena, destroying the sight of one of his eyes. No one could doubt who had fired the shot, but General Massena turned round and soundly berated General Berthier, who had been standing behind him, which castigation Berthier at once accepted and appeared overcome with remorse. Napoleon was grateful to both for thus shielding him, and overwhelmed them both with honors and dignity.

DRINK GALLONS OF WATER.

Practice Said to Acconnt for Japs' Hardihood.

The Nichi-Nichi, a prominent Japanese paper, in commenting on the remarkable health of the Japanese soldier in the field attributes not a small degree of his endurance and immunity from disease to his habit of drinking about a gallon of water every day of his life. The statement was verified by an attache of the Japanese treaty commission who studied medicine at Harvard and practiced at home.

"The Japanese soldier is not permitted to drink much water on the march. He merely wets his lips, rinses his mouth, and takes a small swallow now and then. But in camp he drinks freely. A quart immediately on rising, more after breakfast; and several quarts during the evening. Of course it is largely habit. He has not studied the system's requirements from the physician's standpoint. All he knows about it is that he is thirsty and drinks to satisfy that thirst."

A TYPICAL JAP SOLDIER.

Americans Use Too Little.

"Your people," he went on, "neglect their needs as a rule, in respect to both water and air. They do not drink enough and do not bathe enough. I would not say they are unclean; it is only that they are less particular in their cleanliness. It is a difference in the point of view. The Japanese think a daily bath the very least attention to the body. Many bathe several times a day—a simple sponging, cleansing the pores and giving the soul a chance to breathe. And the air bath is equally a habit. My people cannot at first live in the close American houses. They crave the freedom and perfect ventillation of their bamboo cottages. Drinking and bathing are national traits. We believe that cleanliness of the internal tissues is as necessary to health and comfort as cleanliness of the skin. The waste materials of the body are often poisonous. Their retention is the cause of many sleepless nights, headaches rheumatic pains fits of indigeston. Water in abundance, inside and out, is necessary to every human being."

Wash Inside And Out.

The Nichi-Nichi discourses further on the subject, stating in a naive way the benefit of free indulgence in nature's drink:

"Health is a gift of the gods, and the way to health lies through the domain of cleanliness. As we wash our linen so should we wash our bodies inside and out. Water is the sweetener life. In its free use you shall be as sweet and pure as a mountain brook; as strong as the lion of the sea; as broad as the wind-swept rice fields. You shall hold your head in the stars and your life shall be as peaceful as a summer day."

The largest pin factory in the world is not as has been stated, in the United States but in Birmingham, Eng. where are 370000,000 are manufactured every working day. All the other pin factories in England turn out about 19'000'000.

How to Become Disease Proof.

It has already been suggested that the appendix should be removed from every infant as a routine measure. But this is clearly insufficient, says the British Medical Journal. The surgery of the future must include far more than this. The tonsils and turbinate bones of the nose must be cut out, because they may harbor germs. What Arbuthnot Lane calls the "human cesspool" (that is the large intestine), must be removed along with a considerable part of the upper portion of the alimentary canal, because it won't be needed when we begin to live on M. Berthelot's tabloids and pills. The too readily decaying teeth will be pulled out in early life and the germ proof store variety inserted. The failing human eye will be anticipated by spectacles in early youth. Deficient moral sense and degeneracy will be treated by ventilation of the brain and removal of the offending areas.

Thus protected against the perils of civilization, the man in the coming centuries will be able in his journey through life to defy the countless enemies that seek to rob him of health—sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

FRONTIER HOSPITALITY.

The Prairie-Dog said to the Snake,
"Your home is my hole, prithee make,
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And 'twixt us and you
A rattling good game we will shake."

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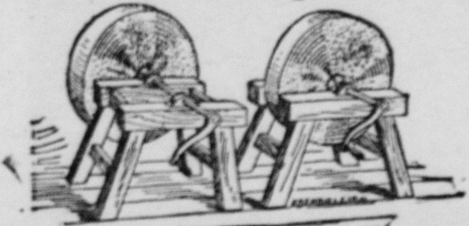

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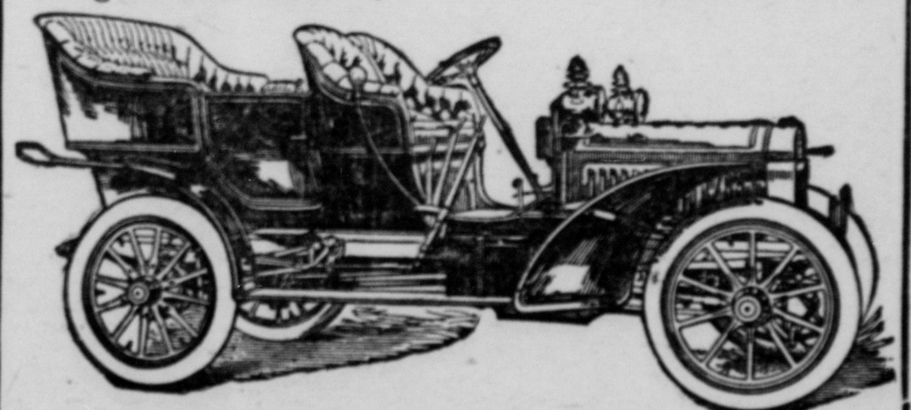

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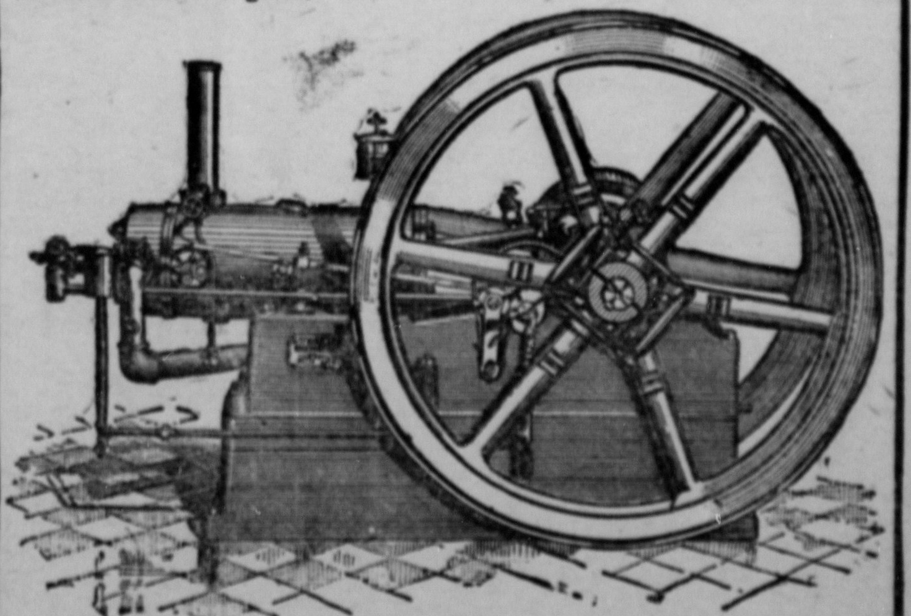

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