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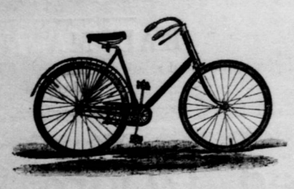

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Cast your eyes in upon the fine display of the newest and most elegant styles in Footwear you have ever looked upon in Butler that we are now offering to the public.

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If you are looking for a house that your dollar is worth 100 cents to every man, woman and child.

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CHAPTER VII.

"Craig," said Dr. John, sitting down on a nail-keg, "why did you come here?"

"Because you sent for a lawyer and for Miss Patten. I connected the mystery with the young lady I had assisted to run away, whose fate has been a good deal of trouble to me ever since. I wanted to help her, if need be. Is she very ill?"

"Getting better fast. It was mad folly to start on a journey sick as she was. I don't blame you, Craig, for that long ride and the risk you ran; she is very winning, this troublesome little lady, and brave too. It is a wonder what a woman can endure, a slight frail creature whose hand you could crush in your fingers."

"But she had," said Oliver, uneasily, "plenty of money, had she not?"

"She was traveling in the day coach, and has, I think, about five dollars in a shabby little purse. Miss Patten was right when she said we should not see Mrs. Minny until the money you gave her was all gone. Where has she been all these long months? By her finding the dog, Miss Patten probably knows now."

"Yes, and it was as I thought—something entirely original. Near Boston Mrs. de Restaud got acquainted with an elderly female who ran some sort of a retreat for aged pets, invalid dogs and cats. The idea was so novel Mrs. Minny decided to stop over and see the place. Finding Mrs. Blinn agreeable, and Syke contented in the society of his kind at the retreat, she remained. She met a sailor from Newcastle in the street one day, and he told her Miss Patten had not been home for a long time. So she decided not to write anyone, but to remain hidden. One day a few weeks ago she came home from the village much upset, and acted oddly; she had either seen some one or read something in a newspaper, for the village storekeeper saw her poring over one, looking much upset. Two days later, leaving a note containing board for her dog, she disappeared. This Mrs. Blinn, who seems to be a good sort of a person, worried a great deal, looking for her everywhere, and in her search wrote to the postmaster at Newcastle, for she had heard Mrs. Minny speak of having been there. Through that letter Miss Patten found Skye, and then started for Denver."

"She may have seen De Restaud, or that servant of his," mused the doctor. "Well, now you are here—though I'd much rather a stranger had come—I want you to draw up a paper setting forth the facts in this case in proper legal phraseology."

"I fail to comprehend just what you mean."

"You see," explained the doctor, "the French people are particular about documents; and between the property of De Restaud's father and this child of Mrs. Minny's there is only a feeble child."

"Mrs. Minny's child?" repeated Oliver.

"Why, of course. Perhaps I had not mentioned it. A nice boy—healthy, I think, and bound to outlive his cousin across the sea. The little chap born in that poor place, that switchman's hovel, may be the heir of millions. So there must be no flaw in his title or the record of his birth."

"A child, and she here friendless, almost alone." Oliver's face saddened. "Poor little thing!" he muttered, "what a hard world it has been for her!"

"She is sensible about it, too," went on Dr. John. "She wanted me to write for a lawyer and have everything straight."

"Did she suggest sending for me?" asked Oliver, oddly.

The doctor hesitated. "No: she has forgotten you, old boy. Women are not particularly grateful. Then it has been a long time since she saw or heard of you. Your vanity may be hurt, but is it not better that she has forgotten?"

"Undoubtedly," Oliver said, coldly. He went toward the house hurriedly. "A freight train passes here in a half hour; I will go on that; so get your papers ready and have the people here sign their statements. Miss Patten should also get that Mrs. Blinn to give an account of Mrs. de Restaud's stay at her house."

Mrs. Macon cleared the kitchen table and brought pens and ink. Oliver wrote swiftly, comparing his notes with the doctor's remembrance and Mrs. Macon's assertions. Finally she and her husband signed their statements, the doctor his, and then Oliver looked at the clock. How hard that writing had been to him no one ever knew. From the closed door came the murmur of voices—one that thrilled every nerve and set his heart fast beating. A feeble cry now and then sounded strangely—the little life that had come in this far-off place and that might mean so much in the future. Outside, the white-headed children played in the sunshine. Skye, liberated from his hideous basket, which he always regarded with terror and plaintive whines, rollicked with them, glad of his freedom. How infinitely painful to record those facts before him, and to think of her as he had seen her first, that child woman in her clinging yellow gown petalled like a flower with its wide ruffle, her glowing hair, her beautiful pathetic eyes! She had gone so far from those days in bitter experience and suffering. Was she changed, grown saddened and old, care-worn with thought?—a calculating woman, forced to be for the child's sake? Odd, in his mental picture of her he could find no place for the child. He could remember her with the little Skye terrier and that childish manner, but as a woman, a mother, never.

Ill, friendless, homeless, no waif of the streets was ever more desolate than she when she stepped off the train at this barren spot, forced to accept the charity of strangers. Her dead father would have risen from his grave could he have known. His every thought, his sister said, had been for little Minny. Well it is the dead do not know.

"How fortunate you were on that train!" Oliver said, suddenly.

Dr. John started. "Me? Yes, it was, and that I should have found our little runaway. I own up I looked for her all the time I was away."

The door opened and Miss Patten came softly in.

"She is asleep, poor dear," she said, gently. "I guess my eyes is red. I was upset, and she don't seem to think she done any harm in not letting me know where she was, she was so desprit and scared-like."

"When you return to Boston," said Oliver, "have Mrs. Blinn make a statement of Mrs. de Restaud's stay in her house. I must caution you also to be very careful of the marriage certificate and all other papers you may have concerning your niece."

"You can trust me," said Miss Patten, grimly. "I took 'em away from that farm of theirs when I was a-visiting there, and I mean Minnie's baby shall have his rights, for he's part Patten, anyway, and would 'a' been my brother Sam's grandson. Sorry I be he ain't alive to see him. Minny says she saw a Bosting paper that offered a reward for her whereabouts or any information concerning her, giving her name right out in the paper, and that was what made her go away from Mrs. Blinn's, who was a kind, good woman, if she is in a foolish business; but I don't know why dogs and cats shouldn't be took care of, and folks in Bosting is always running to some new freak. Minny evidently thought Mrs. Blinn would tell on her and get the reward; but Mrs. Blinn said she'd 'a' done by Minny as her own child."

"Was that what made her come west?" asked Dr. John.

"The poor little soul thought it her duty to go to her husband, brute as he is," said Miss Patten, brokenly. "And to think that I said she was frivolous and hadn't no stability! As much grit as I've got, I wouldn't dare go to that wolf's den on the Troublesome and to be in that man's power. I always thought he wa'n't right in his mind. Minny cal'lated on account of the baby he'd be more kind, and for the baby's sake she ought to make up with him."

Oliver drummed idly on the window-sill. Dr. John walked up and down

"WIMMEN DON'T GET NO'CREDIT FOR BEIN' BRAVE."

the room, that had grown so still one could hear the ticking of the clock.

"Wimmen," said the switchman, slowly, "don't git no credit for bein' brave and goin' through things 'count of what they thinks is their dooty. My wife thinks it's hern to live here 'count of me, when she left a good home back east. That little woman in there is larnin' the woman natur' of endurin' for a man; but where my wife 'ud live and make comfort outer it, she'd jest lie down an' die a-frettin'."

"You've read her right," said Miss Patten, solemnly, "an' I'm goin' to take her home with me. She ain't goin' no further west, nor to no lone farms in mountain valleys, which was nearly the death of her afore."

Oliver glanced at the clock, then abruptly said good-by. He left no message for Mrs. de Restaud, nor did Miss Patten ask him for one. She was rigid in her ideas of what was proper, and he respected her for it.

"P'raps," she hesitated, "you'd like to see the baby. I could fetch him out without waking him."

"No," Oliver spoke; "a city bachelor, as you called me once, Miss Patten, has no interest in infants. I—I think I should be rather afraid of him."

He and the doctor walked up and down beside the track, waiting for the train. The latter had his big pipe but not his flowered dressing-gown. His embroidered cap was at the retreat for invalid pets. Skye had not chewed it, Mrs. Minny asserted, for she meant to keep it forever, especially now, as he was such a dear man.

"She—she—likes the baby?" Oliver asked, awkwardly, as he lit a cigar.

"I am sorry to say she does not manifest any rapture at all. I think she was more delighted to see her dog. I always have the idea when I see her with young Francois that she is a little girl playing with her doll. She is afraid of him if he cries, and moans because he has black eyes and looks like the Frenchman."

"Well," said Oliver, smiling sadly, "the chapter is ended. I have turned a page in my life's story. She will be safe and sheltered now, and I delegate to you my position as adviser. In the next elopement Mrs. Minny makes you must be the assistant. There is my train; and so good-by."

Oliver thought the whole affair would pass from his mind, especially as Dr. John on his return said they had gone to Maine and Mrs. Minny had never mentioned him; but one day a month from that time at the switchman's house a letter came to Oliver. He looked at the scrawly superscription, the post-mark Newcastle, and he knew well Hannah Patten did not attempt an Italian hand. He smiled with pleasure: it was good to be remembered after the long silence, and he had braved many dangers for that ungrateful young woman, the worst an encounter with her frenzied husband.

"DEAR MR. OLIVER: To think you were so near and I could not see you! I cried when they told me. I am not going to pay your money back yet until I get my own from Mr. de Restaud. We have put our case in the hands of an old lawyer here who was a college-mate of my dear dead father, and he thinks I ought to get a divorce, and has written to Mr. de Restaud so. We watch the baby closely, for fear Henri will try to steal him. I have never thanked you for helping me run away. How good you were! I think of you often; but Aunt Hannah will never speak of you, and folks here think it is dreadful to be divorced. They say I am she that married a Frenchman—I suppose they think he is from Canada—and is going into the courts to get a separation from him. For no fault of mine I must be disgraced. Even Aunt Hannah admits I never ought to go back to him: it would not be safe.

"I had a nice time at that dogs' home; it was a funny place, with the nicest old dogs and cats. Skye had a grand time. One dog was fifteen years old and had to be fed on gruel. Still, I think taking care of poor animals is better than theosophy and those fads, and Boston does have some real good freaks. I expect some day they will build an old maids' home. You never saw so many old maids as there are there. Mrs. Blinn has seven sisters in one of those Newton towns—there's an endless chain of them—and not one of them—the sisters, not the towns—ever had a beau.

"Please do not dislike me, or at the mention of my name put on your haughty look, as you did when I said things offending your nice sense of what a woman's conversation should be; and write me one little letter to say you are still my good friend. I shall never ask you to help me again; I do not need it; so you will be safe in continuing our acquaintance. Aunt Hannah does not know I have written you. I get too many moral lectures anyway from her, for she says I must educate myself so my son will have a high opinion of me. He does not bother about me, but divides his attention principally in blinking at her and the lamp, with a leaning towards the light. That last is naughty, is it not'

"Always your friend (as the doctor calls me),

THE TROUBLESOME LADY."

The wound was not healed, Oliver thought bitterly. Why of all women must he care for this one and be so haunted by her memory? Every look of hers, her words, her gestures, the little yellow gown, were as plain to him after a year as if he had seen her but yesterday. He had striven hard to forget, to do his duty. Yet was there harm in writing just a few lines? The narrow path was terribly lonely in life—not a path that had been his in the past; and yet—and yet she was a child. That stern honest old woman believed in him and trusted to his honor.

While he mused, the shock-headed boy knocked and thrust in his freckled face. "Gent ter see yer," he said, hoarser than usual, for there had been a baseball match the day before, and he had been excused from duty, because his "mudder was sick."

"Show him in," said Oliver, locking the letter in his desk. The last man he expected to see entered the room, shut the door behind him, took a chair, then, with almost a threatening gesture, moved it close to the desk. Henri de Restaud!

CHAPTER VIII.

Oliver wondered if the Frenchman had come to kill him. There was no time to cry out or to move in self-defense. If De Restaud came to murder, he was prepared to do it quickly; up in the valley of the Troublesome he had been called a good shot. A vagrant ray of sunshine filtered in between the slats of the closed blind, resting on a faded spot on the carpet. Oliver idly watched it, while thoughts of his past, the present, the woman who had just written him, went through his mind swifter than ever electricity carried a message.

A lamp lit and bright, a flash, a crash and darkness. Oliver's fingers tightened on the arm of his chair. His lips quivered. He seemed to be gazing down the unfathomable depths of eternity. The sins of his past came and leered at him; the awful, unanswered question of the centuries, of all recorded time, haunted him. "And afterwards?"

He had heard that madmen quailed at bravery, were deterred from evil purpose by quiet common sense. So he looked steadily at his visitor. What a dreadful creature he had become! Nor was it liquor alone that had crazed his brain. There is a drug so easy of purchase, so pleasing of effect at first, that insensibly it steals away reason, caution, decency. On the hairy hand of the Frenchman were tiny red dots; and similar dots tattooed all his body. He had not learned to take morphine in the convenient capsules, and his dissipation was attended by a tiny pain like the prick of conscience. He was terribly pale, with the glazed pallor of a corpse, his eyes weirdly bright, his hair, a few months ago untouched by time, streaked with gray. Of all sad drift on the shores of time a human wreck like this is the most dreadful.

"You are surprised to see me," De Restaud said, calmly, but his long thin fingers trembled, showing the agitation he strove to repress.

"I should be glad to assist you in any way," Oliver answered, his voice strangely hoarse, the words coming with difficulty.

"I think you can," said the other, slowly, "for you seem to have influence with her and that old she-dragon, her aunt. I know all about that night, your visit down the railroad. I know I have a son, and for his sake I want you to help me."

"What can I do? Surely you must have a lawyer of your own. I would not undertake your case for any consideration."

"Do not be too hasty, Mr. Oliver. I do not require your services in any legal capacity, but, as you say in this country in your labor difficulties, as an arbitrator. My nephew in France is dead, and my father writes me to come home and bring my wife and child."

"She will never consent," Oliver said, hastily. "Her aunt would not let her go."

"I think a husband has some rights, Mr. Oliver. You see I am very temper-

"YOU ARE SURPRISED TO SEE ME," DE RESTAUD SAID.

ate in the matter, though I have cause for anger. Now, my son has a future; my father will make him his heir, for my brother is rich, and, besides, none of us are long-lived. I shall not last long; you see I have failed very fast. I want to go back to my own country and live the few days left, and I—I—want you to help me." He broke down then in a womanish way and took out his handkerchief. Oliver had felt contempt before; it turned to pity now for the shambling creature so wretched in his mental degradation. "I am willing to forgive her the disgrace she has brought upon me," he sobbed, "even that application for divorce. My father will overlook the fact that I married out of my station—beneath me; though never before would he notice my marriage. The child has made all the difference in the world, and I haven't even been allowed to see him. It is a crime to treat a father so. Even an American court must recognize my rights."

"I have no confidence that you would treat your wife decently if she came back. It would be an unwise experiment," Oliver said, coldly.

"But I give you my word I will. She can have that awful aunt with her always. I will not say three words to either of them. She can have her own house in Paris, or live with my father: only I ask that my child shall be brought back to me and my father shall be his guardian. You can see yourself I am fair and generous in the matter. There is a great difference between the heir of the De Restaud millions, one of the finest names in France (I know I am not a worthy representative of the family, monsieur), and the child of a divorced woman in that frightful Maine town, where they go to sewing societies for one pleasure and to prayer meetings all the week. You know my wife is not fit to bring up a child. How did she act with you? Was that right and proper even in an American young lady, eh?"

"I fail to see anything in the conduct of Mrs. de Restaud that would not stand the most searching investigation," said Oliver. "Your own case would not be so clear; and I warn you an American jury is always on the side of a woman if she is good and has been wronged."

"You are on a very high horse, Mr. Oliver. Perhaps I can assist you to dismount. My wife's lawyer writes me she will sue for a divorce. Very well, so shall I myself."

"Really, Mr. de Restaud, this is none of my affair," cried Oliver, impatiently. "I refuse to listen to you any longer."

"You will, monsieur, because it shall be your affair."

"How?"

"I shall name you the co-respondent. Your drive with my wife that night will have no romance for a jury of sober-minded citizens. Do not be too hasty. I have listened to conversation at a club political here, and I have heard you desire office some time, to be governor of the state. The scandal which you cannot silence will hurt your chances, eh? I find the world eager to hear such things—the newspapers of the opposition most anxious to publish ugly stories of an opponent.

"YOU ARE AN INFERNAL SCOUNDREL," SAID OLIVER.

You have made many enemies in your profession; this will be their opportunity."

"You are an infernal scoundrel!" said Oliver, white to the lips. "If you were anything but a morphine wreck I would throw you out of my office."

"I do not desire to quarrel. I am a sick man—much weaker than I thought." De Restaud paused and wiped his wet forehead, breathing heavily. "This has been a task. You know the consequence; you persuade my wife to come back to me, with the aunt if she desire, but my child, and go to France, or I bring suit for divorce and the custody of my child and tell all the facts."

"It is utter folly," cried Oliver. "What can I do? I have no influence over your wife; I hardly know her; and the aunt will never permit her to return."

"The old lady is strict; she is proud, too; and a young woman who has been through a divorce trial seldom comes out with a good name—not without reproach. Consider it well, and write Miss Patten what I say. Truly I think my wife has a great fancy for you."

Oliver rose and opened the door. "Mr. de Restaud, I will write you my decision. I really must ask you not to prolong this interview. There is a limit to my forbearance."

De Restaud bowed, mockingly. "I shall look for your answer soon. Perhaps the doctor also could influence Mrs. de Restaud. I esteem the doctor; he is an honest man, and has been good to my son."

With a polite bow the Frenchman disappeared, and Oliver went back to his desk. What should he do? What could he do? De Restaud would carry out his threat, there was no doubt of that. And, after all, would it not be better for his wife to return? If the family in France would care for her and the child they would be safe, and most women would look forward to such a bright future. If she refused to come, a trial, the publicity of a courtroom, the newspapers, a lifelong something to be whispered about her by some one who had heard. How explain that daring ride across country? Viewed in the cold light of reason it was a foolish thing; and he, Craig Oliver, must go on the witness-stand and be questioned. A lawyer is a poor witness, and he would be. A man of his age doing such a romantic silly action. Then that story to the conductor. The other side would find him, of course, and perhaps a passenger who had seen Minny's farewell. The whole thing was unexplainable. Then his own past—the life of a wifeless man of the world—how would the jury of hard-working men view that? They had families and no temptations, and he was rich and had enemies. It was social and political death to him, and he knew it as he sat there, yet he did not write.

A week later Dr. John came in. There was no need of telling him. He had met De Restaud, and had come to see what Oliver would do.

"I have not written her," said Oliver, awkwardly, "except a little note thanking her for her letter. I shall not write what he wanted."

"I have, though," said Dr. John; "both to Mrs. Minny and her aunt. The Frenchman cannot trouble them long, and after a year or so Mrs. Minny will be a Parisian. All I know of Paris and life there is from novels. Gad, I think if they are true Mrs. Minny will be quite at home in France. She likes things different, you know."

"I should be a coward to advise her in this matter," cried Oliver. "I shall have nothing to do with it."

However, after an hour's talk with his sensible old friend he changed his mind and wrote a severely formal letter to Mrs. de Restaud, advising her to return to her husband. Her answer was a piteous appeal. What did he mean? After all that had happened, did he think she should trust herself with a man who everyone said was crazy. Dr. John read and shook his head. "She won't come," he said; "but you keep on writing, for the Frenchman means what he says. I see him often as he comes to my office. She need not say three words to him, and her aunt can be with her always until she is safe at his father's."

This was duly written, but the answers both from Miss Patten and her niece were unsatisfactory until a few days before the time set by De Restaud. Oliver, maddened by her disregard of his warning, for he learned De Restaud had his lawyer engaged and the case would be presented, telegraphed her: "Are you coming or not? I beg you will come at once. We cannot face the consequences." He felt like a coward, but what else could he do? Fight with a madman in a courtroom? It was horrible. The answer came promptly from Mrs. de Restaud; she would start at once.

Oliver took the telegram and went to find De Restaud. The suit for divorce must be stopped. He had done his part, and there was no need for further anxiety. He drove to Dr. John's office, but the doctor was up in the mountains attending a case, and would not be back for a day or two. He knew where De Restaud lived—a furnished house he had hired for a few months—and he drove there. After some delay, Annette, more corpulent than ever, opened the door in response to his ring. She seemed worried and timorous in her manner, and looked at him blankly as he asked her in English if monsieur was at home. Then Oliver remembered, and tried in imperfect French. She brightened up.

"No, monsieur," she said, eagerly; "he is seldom here; and Louis is always away. I like the farm better. I am alone always, always. Monsieur is so bad, too—oh, dreadful! even Louis is afraid of him."

Oliver hesitated. The poor soul was even friendly, she was so lonely. Perhaps she was not bad-hearted.

"Do you think it would be safe for madame to return?" he asked, slowly, recalling each word from an imperfect memory. He repeated it, as she did not comprehend; then her manner changed.

"Oh, monsieur," she cried, in horror, "never, never! He has said he will kill her. He walks all night, sometimes, and raves about her, and looks so dreadful. Louis said he did not like madame, but for the general's sake, she must keep away from monsieur. There would be a crime; and the De Restauds are so proud. I think monsieur is quite mad now; and he is so thin; he eats nothing, and some nights there are two men to hold him, he sees such things. I did not like madame, she was not a French lady, but I wish my worst enemy no such fate as to be here."

"You knew," said Oliver, "there was a baby, a little boy?"

"Yes, monsieur, and I am thankful. Madame may have a good heart; she loved the little dog. I think she would do right to go to France—to the general; he is a grand man, and now there is no one of the name; little Alphonse in Paris is dead, and his beautiful mother is dying of grief, they write us."

Oliver slipped a dollar in the woman's fat hand. "You are a good soul," he said, kindly. "I trust some day you will be back in France and have a farm of your own."

"Thanks, monsieur—and the beautiful poultry I had such comfort with in the mountains; it was better there."

He heard the bolts rattle behind him as he went to the waiting carriage. The poor soul was almost a prisoner from her fears. What should he do? Mrs. Minny had started, and he could not reach her by telegraph. He told the driver to go to the different gambling houses, and at each one he got out and searched for the Frenchman. He was not gambling, the dealers told him, all knowing De Restaud only too well, for the mad Frenchman had been a familiar figure in the night world of Denver for years. At the police station Oliver could learn nothing; De Restaud had evidently bought immunity from arrest. Sick at heart, Oliver gave a description of the object of his search to a detective and went home. In the early morning the man came to his house. He had not found De Restaud, but had learned and told such a story of depravity and vice that Oliver's half-formed purpose became an instant decision.

"You see," the detective said, coolly, "when a gent gits down he's apt to be a sight lower than jest a borned tough; and, as I can learn, this pertikler one has set out to see jest how quick he kin fling away what little life he's got left in him, an' how low he kin git a-doin' it; an' this ain't harf I've learned."

"It is enough," Oliver said, briefly, as he paid and dismissed him. Then he hastily ate breakfast, left directions for his clerks, and took the train for the east. He had written Mrs. de Restaud what road to come to Chicago, for he might wish to telegraph her there, and he reckoned there was yet time to meet her before she took the train for Denver. He would tell Miss Patten the whole story and send her and her niece back. He would advise them to go direct to Paris. Annette's advice was good. He was careless never to have thought of it before.

Oliver shuddered at the prospect of the case in court. He would have to endure it if De Restaud would not listen to reason. Perhaps he could keep it out of the papers. But he knew in his heart not; he was well hated. "All for the Troublesome little lady," he sighed. "A pretty mess I got myself into, assisting distressed damsels. And yet what man situated as I was that night would have done otherwise?"

In the depot in Chicago a pretty young woman was frantically searching for a particular baggageman. She had on a neat blue gown, a seal-skin jacket, and a jaunty hat set over her curls. She was so sweetly pretty that several iron-hearted train-employes were moved to interest and sympathy.

"He was quite short and fat," she said, anxiously, "and Skye really seemed to like him, and he said he would take the very best care of him."

"What is the matter, Mrs. Minny?" said a voice just behind her.

"Oh, Mr. Oliver!" she cried, delightedly, giving him both her hands. "How glad I am to see you! I have

"WHAT IS THE MATTER, MRS. MINNY?"

been so worried! I hate traveling! I can't find the man who has my dog. Oh, there he is!"

A fat baggageman came along the platform at that moment, dragging a disconsolate mass of wool tied by a disproportionately large rope.

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" Minny beamed on him, hugging the dog in her arms. "Isn't he nice? He knows everything."

"A sight," said the man, pleasantly, "and wasn't no particular trouble."

"Here is my trunk check," Minny said, giving it to Oliver, "and my satchel is somewhere: in that corner I set it down; it's a wonder I did not lose it. Oh, what a time I've had! Now where shall we go?"

"To find Miss Patten," smiled Oliver' taking the satchel and umbrella, while she followed carrying the dog, and the small audience of train men looked after her in open approval.

"To find Miss Patten, of course."

"Oh, goodness! I wish we could!" giggled Mrs. Minny.

"What?" cried Oliver.

"It's her turn, Mr. Oliver. She has run away."

"Not with you? You are not alone?"

"Why, of course. Who was there? I think it is mean of you to look cross, when I came to keep your name out of my troubles, because the doctor wrote it would ruin all your political prospects. You helped me once, and I am coming back to a man I—I hate—yes, I do—and am afraid of, so no one will say a word about you." She looked at him with triumphant virtue so satisfied and sweet he hung his head, the words of reproach dying on his lips.

"Well, there's the baby and nurse-girl," he said, hopefully.

"Why, no," she laughed. "Didn't I tell you? Aunt Hannah stole the baby, She ran away herself this time. Oh, do hire one of those cunning cabs, and we'll go for a drive, and I'll tell you all about it."

"The hansoms would be too cold, Mrs. Minny. We will take this carriage," he said, calling one; and she, very well pleased, got in with the dog while he deposited her luggage on the front seat.

"You see," she said, leaning back on the cushioned seat as the carriage left the noisy stone pavement and talking was possible. "Aunt Hannah got it into her head that I did not love Francois — the baby — enough. He really did seem to fuss the moment I took him; and Aunt Hannah knows so many rules for bringing up children that I was nowhere with my own child. Old maids do, you know. Then he got to look more like Hen—M. de Restaud—every day; and that was a trial. Aunt Hannah said he was just fretty, but I thought him de Restaudy. I suppose I am awfully wicked, but I was glad Aunt Hannah wanted him. Then there was—" Mrs. Minny hesitated, and looked away; a faint blush colored her round cheek—"a red-headed young man who took me riding—horseback riding. I am sure there is no harm in that. A homely young man," she added, seeing the shadow on Oliver's face, "not nice at all; but one must have some friends. And then one morning when she was making the bed Aunt Hannah found your letter under the pillow—your first one, not the ugly one telling me it was my duty to come back to my husband. Funny business letters those, not like you or that lovely ride we had. I was desperate at having to come back; so maybe I was mean to Aunt Hannah. One day she and the baby and its clothes disappeared, and she left a note telling me that I was not to search for her, for she was going to put Frankie—that's what she calls him—in safe keeping."

"I am sure there was no harm in that letter," he said, stiffly.

"Oh, she wouldn't read it; I couldn't get her to; and, just to tease because she said my behavior was scandalous, I kissed the letter and hid it away."

"Well, this is a nice affair," said Oliver, smiling a little because Mrs. Minny was so gayly happy. "I don't see what we are going to do. I thought your aunt would be with you, so I hurried on to prevent your coming. It would not be safe. Your—Mr. de Restaud has grown worse—I think is losing his mind. I came to send you to France, to the old general, where probably Miss Patten has gone. Now you are alone. De Restaud has a spy following me, I am sure; he had in Denver, and—" Oliver could not say his worst suspicions.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

She Would Think of Him.

"What would you think of a man who kissed you the very first time you met him?"

"I don't know what I'd think, but I'd think of him a great deal."—N. Y. World.

Hard.

Wild Man of Borneo—Phwat are yez cryin' about, Miss Sims?

Circassian Beauty—I have just come from the death bed of the ossified man, and, oh, the poor fellow died so terribly hard!—Life.

Never Idle.

Baseball Crank—Why, doctor! What are you doing out here?

Doctor—Oh, just killing time!

Baseball Crank—Great Scott! I should think you would leave your business at home when you come to a place of this kind!—Puck.

He Could Do It.

Clerk—I really cannot read this letter, sir; the writing is too bad.

Principal (impatiently)—Nonsense! The writing is good enough—any ass could read it. Hand it to me!—Truth.

Town and Country.

She does not heed the cable-car
Which goes with speed intense;
She cares not for the trolley wire
Whose voltage is immense.
The old excursion steamer brings
No terror to her brow,
But when she's in the country she will run across acres of ground and climb barb-wire fences to escape the affable though inquisitive gaze
Of an aged, docile cow.

—Washington Star.

MERELY A MATTER OF TIME.

Fanny—Who is that handsome fellow?

Maude—My intended.

Fanny—Why, I didn't know you were engaged.

Maude—Neither *am* I.—Truth.

One for the Complexion.

Mildred (very literary)—Let us subscribe for a magazine between us.

Muriel—All right.

Mildred—What one do you suggest?

Muriel (ironically, with a glance at her friend)—Let's get a powder magazine.—Vogue.

Certain of It.

"I've got a cold or something in my head," was what the simple little chappie said. The summer girl, with roguishness demure, replied: "Oh, it must be a cold, I'm sure."—N. Y. Tribune.

Why He Laughed.

Professor (to student)—What are you laughing at?

Student—At your appearance.

Professor—Do you laugh over every little tribing absurdity that you chance to see?—Alex Sweet, in Texas Siftings.

Chance to Show His Ability.

He—I have been quite a traveler all my life.

She (yawning)—Won't you please show me how you do it.—Town Topics.

The Sure Test.

"How do you know he's a real professional humorist?"

"Because he can never see anything funny in anybody else's humor."—Chicago Record.

A Good Reason.

Hunter—I suppose the game is pretty well killed off by now?

Farmer—Oh, Lord, no! Yer see, ther ain't ben no one huntin' up here but fellers like you from the city.—Judge.

Reputation Hard to Make.

Robby—How did the sphinx get the credit of being so wise, papa?

Mr. Morris—By keeping his mouth shut for three thousand years.—Tid-Bits.

One Exception.

Artist (with enthusiasm)—The lines of beauty are always curves.

Little Girl (amazed)—I guess you never saw a man on a bicycle, did you?—Good News.

What Did She Mean?

Clara—Papa gives me two hundred dollars every birthday.

May—Ugh; you must have quite a sum of money.—Arkansaw Traveler.

Various Airs.

There's mountain air and sea air
And foreign air, I s'pose,
But one must be a millionaire
To fill his lungs with those.

—Detroit Free Press.

An Alternative.

Plaintiff (to his counsel)—If I had known that it was such a difficult matter to get a divorce I'd sooner have remained single.—Truth.

To Be Congratulated.

Teacher—For what were the ancient Romans remarkable?

Dick Hicks—They understood baking.—N. Y. World.