

Absentminded Maria

By CATHERINE BURGESS

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It would have been an injustice to Dr. Jardine and to his state of mind on a certain January evening in the year 1884. It doesn't matter what to say that he was in a bad temper. It was beyond that—a disgust with himself, the world and life so consuming as to make his outward actions almost automatic, so separate were they from his inner self.

Yet professional habit was strong. The patients in the long wards saw no difference as he stepped here and there in his tour of inspection and asked the usual questions. Only one young Irish girl, with the clearness of death in her eyes, laid her hand on his as he touched her tenderly and whispered: "Ye'd better be comin' home, doctor, dear. Things'll be straighter—there."

It was not the first time he had thought of it. Really, the inner voice questioned as he listened to the report of the head nurse, what good was his life to the world anyway? Here he had gone halfway across the continent this bitter January to attend at a great operation, and the man had died after all. He was not necessary in the hospital. There were a dozen better men. His wife—but he turned from that thought instantly. His sister—she would forget he had lived or died at the sight of a Lafayette plate.

The head nurse had finished her report. He looked at his desk piled with mail.

"I can't read it tonight," he decided aloud.

"The top one came yesterday by messenger," the head nurse said. "It's marked 'important.'" And she retired softly.

Dr. Jardine broke the seal.

"Dear Brother"—the note ran—"I have heard of some extraordinary old Staffordshire up in Ulster county, and I start in ten minutes. Cornelia Frye knows it, too, so you see there is no time to lose. I may be back before you return from the west, but in case I do not I enclose keys. We have moved in your absence. (He smiled at the seal.) The new apartment is 15 East Eighty-fourth street. The janitor of the old one was impatient. It is on the second floor, to the left. Your room is at the end of the hall. Your affectionate sister, MARRIA."

The note was so characteristic, the situation so fitting a climax to his week of work and strain, that his



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At 19 East Eighty-fourth street the cabman had to work with voice and hand to rouse his fare.

"I never knowed any gen'tleman so far gone before in the morning," he observed to the area rillings.

Unconscious of the impression he had left behind him, Dr. Jardine stumbled up the front steps.

"Jardine, sir? Out! I believe, sir," said a sleepy but boy.

"I know, I am Dr. Jardine."

The boy started, succumbed to the voice of authority and dozed again.

In the room at the end of the hall the principal object of interest to the weary man was the bed, a four poster, with curtains, surprising enough to one who was used to sleeping on an iron cot.

"Confound Maria!" he grumbled. "If she starts collecting antique furniture as well as plates I am lost!"

The four poster was a very inviting sight despite its unexpectedness. Dr. Jardine slowly pulled off his shoes and divested himself of coat and waistcoat.

"I must lie down a moment," he murmured, "and—think—this—over." And the bed received him into its depths.

He dreamed. A weird procession passed before him like the figures in a frieze—and every one was his wife! Now she was dancing, now dancing now weeping, now stern as the angel outside paradise, always gazing at him with unseeing eyes. He struggled to reach her, but could not. He heard her retreating footsteps—retreating, yet sounding always nearer. Striving to solve the puzzle he awoke. The foot steps continued, not loud and ominous as in his dream, but light, fitting steps. They reminded him of some one he had known. For a moment he stared, bewildered, into the darkness of the curtained bed, the steps seeming to echo from his dream. Then he remembered. Maria was in Ulster county. Who was the intruder? He parted the curtains a finger's breadth and looked out. The room beyond was dimly lighted. Trunks stood open, with books and clothing in orderly piles beside them. The clink of silver came from the room across the hall.

"Losing the place, by Jove!" the doctor whispered. He half arose, but at the sound of returning steps he sank back, his eye at the curtain parting.

"Of all things in heaven and earth!" Instead of leaping out he drew the edges closer. "A woman!"

A woman it had entered the adjoining room and who proceeded with a businesslike air to store an armful of silver in one of the yawning trunks. Dr. Jardine watched her, amazed. Her back was toward him, and he noted its graceful lines as she lifted and bestowed her bag. She dozed a lady. Gradually he began to feel like a peeping Tom rather than an outraged householder. How should he announce his presence? Would she faint? What should he do with her? What would Maria say?

At last she lifted the little shaded lamp and turned it toward him. Not four feet from him she put the lamp down and sighed like a tired child. He wondered afterward how he lived through that moment. That she

A WILLFUL WIDOW

By KATE M. CLEARY

Copyright, 1904, by Kate M. Cleary

"So altogether I'm in a deuce of a fix," concluded Carruthers.

He sprang to his feet, looking for all the world like a big, perturbed boy as he paced restlessly across the library floor. He was so well formed, with his straight shoulders and the fine, flexible lines of his body, that he appeared to be ten years younger than the thirty-five allotted him by the family Bible. Then his brown hair would curl even at thirty-five.

"I understand," said Claridge. In truth, he did not understand at all. He had no children of his own. Indeed, he found the caprices of his fashionable wife quite sufficient to absorb his attention. But the liked Max Carruthers, and it did seem to him.

"They're such adorable little things, Max! And you're so absurdly wealthy! If it were not for our house being closed for the summer and Clotilde doing Europe for the sixteenth time I'd ask you to let us take the tots.

"One fancied that a man with your money would have no difficulty in finding a person—or for some day remembering!" Then, pulling himself together, he said: "Forget this business, Molly. It's gross enough, but it's some mistake. Maria's. She has taken a new apartment, and—evidently this is not it. I thought it was. Maybe I made a mistake myself. I was dead tired. Anyhow, I'll get out. I can go somewhere, of course."

"It is hardly worth while," she replied. "It will soon be morning anyway. Jenny and I have been packing all night, or, rather, I have, since she fell asleep taking down pictures. We sail tomorrow on the Oceanic."

He did not answer. The excitement from his business, Molly, it's gross enough, but it's some mistake. Maria's. She has taken a new apartment, and—evidently this is not it. I thought it was. Maybe I made a mistake myself. I was dead tired. Anyhow, I'll get out. I can go somewhere, of course."

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Two hours later there was a knock at the door. Dr. Jardine and his wife looked at each other with eyes in which laughter and panic mingled.

"And you are a respectable widow lady?" he mocked.

But it was only old Jiny who appeared upon the threshold. Her hands and eyes went up in happy gesticulation.

"Thank the Lawd," she cried, "the two stubborn' folks in the world have done come together again! An' Mis' Molly, thes a telephone for the doctah raisin' New York because he ain't come home, an'—"

"But I have come home!" cried Dr. Jardine. "Where's the telephone, Jiny?"

"In a moment be returned, laughing.

"This is 15 East, isn't it?" he inquired. "Well, my sister Maria's jest natchally, as Jiny would say, wrote 'East' when she meant West. I never thought I should live to bless the absentmindedness of Maria, but heaven knows I do now with all my heart and soul!"

And, though Molly was silent, she felt for the first time that she truly loved her sister-in-law.

POINTS FOR SMOKERS.

Some Advice to Follow if They Must Use the Weed.

Very few people are aware how much harm is done to young men by the almost universal habit of cigarette smoking. The man who smokes cigarettes has one always in his mouth and is continually inhaling nicotine until the system is saturated with the poison.

The result of this practice is a catarrhal condition of the nose, throat and bronchi, a disordered and very irritable state of the nerves, a weak and rapid action of the heart and indigestion.

"Thin, anaemic, weak, with clammy hands stained with nicotine poison, ungainly nervous and degenerated muscles, the youth of the land go on ignorantly suffering the consequences of a pernicious habit until attacks of heart trouble, nervous prostration, melancholia, etc., bring their condition to the attention of the physician.

If a man must smoke—and we admit that some do—and he wishes to avoid the result of the habit to those who have become accustomed to its soothing influences—let him choose a mild cigar and have certain set times for indulging. If he puts a certain restraint upon himself from the start in the matter of smoking, he will not overdo it, and there are few men who can smoke more than three cigars a day without injury.—Medical Brief.

MUSIC AND HUMOR.

An English Critic Says That the Two Cannot Be Linked.

There is little room in music for humor and no room at all for wit. When I hear some one speak of the wit of a Chopin scherzo I think, "My friend, you had better see a doctor at once; you are slightly deranged mentally."

In association with words there can be humor in music, as, for example, the prolonged low notes Handel gives to Polyphemus when he asks for a hundred reefs for his capacious mouth. But the humor of Haydn and Beethoven in their instrumental works consists entirely of practical jokes—a sudden low C on the bassoon, a horn passage which no horn player can ever hope to play, a bass who enters a bar too soon or too late. The late Harold Frederic summed up the question beautifully. He said to me one day when I had not laughed at one of his stories: "Musicians have no sense of humor. When I was a young man touching negatives in a photographer's studio I was very much amused by a man's voice that couldn't be found in any piano in our parts. I had no sense of humor. Afterward I developed a sense of humor and lost my voice."—London Saturday Review.

A gentleman had an inquisitive servant, relates Chums, whom he once saw open a private letter of his. The next day he sent another letter by the servant containing a postscript: "You may send a verbal answer by bearer. He has taken the precaution to read this before delivery."

Civil Service.

"Maria," said Boggies to his wife, with an idea of instructing her in political economy, "do you know what civil service is?"

"Jasper," Boggies said, "Boggies, with memory," recent contact with the cock "there isn't any."

EAR OF DIONYSIUS.

One of the Famous Whispering Places of the World.

Among the notable whispering places of the world is the "Ear of Dionysius" of ancient Syracuse. It is in the shape of a parabolic curve, ending in an elliptical arch, with sides parallel to its axis, perfectly smooth and covered with a slight stucco incrustation that renders its repercussions amazingly sonorous. It is 64 feet deep, from 17 to 25 in breadth and 187 deep. It has an awful and gloomy appearance, which, with its singular shape, perhaps gave rise to the popular and amusing paradox that Dionysius had it constructed for the confinement of those whom he deemed indolent to his authority and that from the little apartment above he could hear all the conversation among the captives who were brought to the ancient town of Syracuse in the largest in Sicily. The sound of words uttered with a low voice is augmented in vaults or galleries so as to become audible at a considerable distance from the speaker.

A like effect takes place in a less degree when sound ascends from the bottom of a deep well or when words are uttered at one extremity of a long corridor or passage in a building. If a pin be dropped into a well the sound produced when it strikes the water is distinctly heard at the mouth or the surface of any well or similarly augmented. Try it.—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

How to Make Invalids' Tea.

Make tea for an invalid with boiling milk instead of boiling water. It is much nicer and much more digestible if the milk really boils.

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Historic Race Course.

The vicinity of Belmont park. Long Island, was the early scenes of more racing activity than any other spot on this continent. Here it was that the Newmarket course was constructed in 1623, by the sanction of Colonial Governor Lovelace. This course continued to be the theater of action in racing sports until 1821. It was in this vicinity also that the old Centerville course was constructed, which for many years was one of the most famous of American race tracks. In 1821 the legislature passed an act allowing the speeding of horses in Queens county during the months of May and October of each year, and by virtue of this law the Union course was constructed the same year. This course was located in what was then the village of Jamaica, but the territory it occupied now forms a part of the borough of Queens. From the time of its construction until 1872 the Union course was the scene of nearly all the great racing events of the country.

It was over this course that American Eclipse and Sir Henry, in 1823, thrilled the hearts of the sporting world in one of the greatest turf battles ever witnessed in the annals of racing.—Illustrated Sporting News.

Went Her One Better.

"I never saw you in such a becoming hat, my dear. Did you get it ready made?"

"I was just thinking how 'musically pretty yours' looks. Did you make it yourself?"—Brooklyn Life.

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