

# A MARE'S NEST.

"Mr. James Blunt has called and would like to see you for a minute, sir."

"All right, Foskit, show him up here."

"And if you please, Mr. Lovegrove, I should be much obliged if you will allow me to go out for a couple of hours; my—er—my sister is coming to town, and er—"

"Oh, that's all right, Foskit. You have worked like a brick during this removal, and I don't think I shall want you this evening; but—sister—Foskit, that's a bit thin—eh?"

Foskit's face expanded with a broad grin, but he did not deny the soft impeachment, and even went so far as to allow himself the indulgence of a wink when he had closed the library door on his master. In a few minutes he returned with Mr. Blunt.

"Well, Jim, and what's blown you in tonight?"

"Halloa, Charley, I didn't know you'd moved. I went round to the old address and was received by the estimable Susan Nibler, who, informed me that you had taken up your bed and walked."

"I had to, my boy, to preserve the domestic peace of my wigwam. As my wife's aunt, Miss Susan Nibler is a woman to be tolerated, but a continual dose of a good thing is not proper for any man. When Kitty and I were married, Miss Nibler insisted upon us taking up our abode with her. I had my doubts about the arrangement, and my forebodings were justified. The old lady is a professional man-hater, and the atmosphere was charged with quarrels from morning to night. Kitty was always in tears, I developed chronic ill-temper, and the more unhappy we were the more joyful the old lady seemed to get."

"And so you parted?"

"After a storm of more than usual sultriness I cut the painter and steered our boat to this little backwater."

"And how did the old lady take it?"

"Well, dear boy, you'd have a hard job to convince her that I haven't taken Kitty away for the fell purpose of taking her life by slow poison."

"I can quite believe it, Charley. But I mustn't waste any more time; I came around to see if you would do me a favor."

"Certainly, old chap; how much?"

"Oh, it's not money this time; many thanks. What I want you to do is this: You see, my wife's cousin is coming down from Manchester, and arrives at Euston 8.30. My wife was going to meet her, but she's laid up with the 'flu,' and I can't go because I'm due at a dinner. Will you let your man, Foskit, go to the station and put her in a cab?"

"I'm sorry, old man, but I've let Foskit go out for the evening."

"That's awkward, and puts me in a hole. I say, Charley, be a good chap, and go yourself."

"What, I? My dear Jim, do you want to get me into trouble? My little Kitty is the dearest girl in all the world, but there's no denying the fact that she's as jealous of me as it is possible for anyone to be, and if she got to know that I met a strange lady at Euston Station—well, the fat would splutter in the fire."

"There's a good fellow, just to oblige me."

"But I don't know the lady."

"Oh, that's all right. I was so certain of Foskit being able to go that I telegraphed to her to place herself in the hands of my messenger, who would be waiting under the big clock, and she would know him by the three red roses in his coat."

"I don't like it, Jim; I tell you candidly."

"It won't take you half an hour; you can go to Euston in ten minutes, and I shall be awfully obliged to you. Here are the roses. Don't forget—8.30, under the clock. Many thanks, old man."

And before Charley Lovegrove could continue his protests Jim Blunt had gathered up his hat and stick and vanished.

"Confound him, I wish he hadn't asked me to do it. I suppose I must go and pitch a little fairy tale to Kitty. I hate deceiving the dear girl; but it would never do to let her know that I was going to meet a strange lady."

While he was thus soliloquizing his wife came into the room.

"I say, Charley; now that we haven't got snail with us, wouldn't it be nice if we had an hour or two at the theatre tonight, and a cozy little supper after?"

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Kitty, old girl, but I quite forgot to tell you that I promised to meet a man at the club—matter of business, you know. I shan't be gone more than an hour."

"Oh, Charley, you're not going to start leaving me for that horrid club; and we—we—we've not been married a month!"

"Now, Kitty, dear, don't be unreasonable, and, for goodness' sake, don't start crying. Look here, I can't get out of this appointment at the club, but I'll cut it as short as possible, and we can do the little supper even if we miss the theatre."

"This is what auntie told me it would be like in a week or two, and—"

"Oh, confound auntie!"

"Yes, that's right; she said you would say that. Ah! you have had

a visitor, a lady. Oh, who is she, Charley? Tell me, tell me."

"A lady? What do you mean?"

"These roses, she has left them for you as a love token. Oh, why did I ever marry you?"

"Because you loved me, I suppose. Now don't be silly, dear; the only visitor I have had was Jim Blunt, and I believe he was taking these roses home to his wife, who is laid up with the 'flu,' and he left them here by accident."

"You—you are getting tired of me."

"What an accusation! Now, my dear little sweetheart, dry your pretty eyes, give me a kiss, and don't be foolish. I am sorry that I have to go out tonight, but I will promise you to be back by 9; that will just give me an hour. Why, you will hardly have time to get ready."

"And you do love me, Charley?"

Charley's response was not expressed in words, and in a few minutes the little storm had passed away and given place to bright smiles and happy laughter, and then he found himself free to set out on his mission.

With the departure of her husband Kitty Lovegrove sat down with a book to spend a quiet hour until he returned, but the fates willed that she was not to be left undisturbed, and this fact was heralded by a prodigious rattle at the front door, which Kitty knew could only be executed by her aunt, the redoubtable Miss Susan Nibler.

She came into the room like a man-of-war with full steam up and decks cleared for action.

"Oh, auntie, this is an unexpected visit. We have just finished dinner, but—"

"Do not speak of dinner; I am too full to eat."

"Oh, of course, if you have dined—"

"You mistake me, Kate; I mean that I am too full of grief. Where is that lovely husband of yours?"

"Charley has gone down to the club for an hour."

"The club! I'll club him. Oh my poor, poor girl—my poor deluded niece! My heart bleeds for you."

"Auntie, what do you mean? You frighten me."

"Aye, and I'll frighten your husband, the perfidious, crawling monster. Oh, I knew it would come to this, I knew it!"

"Oh, what is it? Tell me at once."

"Did I not say to you that if you married that Charles Lovegrove you would regret it?"

"Yes, you did; but I don't regret it."

"Ah, my poor girl, you will when you hear my news. What if I prove to you that he is a blackguard, a scoundrel, and worse?"

"I will not listen, while—"

"You will listen, even if I have to tie you hand and foot and make you do it. I have come to see you, and to expose the baseness of a crawling reptile in the shape of a man."

"Oh, will you tell me what you mean?"

"I will; so now listen and be prepared for a shock. Last week your lovely Charley bought a typewriter. Why?"

"Because he said it would be useful."

"And I have no doubt he does find it useful in carrying on his clandestine correspondence."

"Oh, do be quick and explain."

"This is the explanation; this letter was returned to my house this morning by the postal authorities, marked 'Gone away.'"

"But I don't understand. It is returned to 'Charley.'"

"They returned it to the only signature on the letter; but open it, my dear—open it; you will find another envelope inside."

"But how do you know that—the letter is sealed down?"

"My dear girl, you don't think that I am going to allow a man to play fast and loose with my only niece. I had that letter steaming over the kettle two minutes after it was delivered."

"Oh, I can't open it."

"Then, my dear I will, for I am determined that you shall know the kind of man you have married. There is the envelope; it is addressed to Miss Jane Bates, at an address in Willesden, and here is the missive which, if I mistake not, will land Charles Lovegrove in the felon's dock."

"Auntie!"

"Yes, I mean it; and now listen to this precious letter which your beautiful Charles has clicked on his typewriter. It commences, 'My own darling girl; that is had enough, but there is worse to follow:'"

"I think I can make my escape for an hour or two on Thursday evening. If you can manage it, will you meet me at Euston Station, usual place about half-past 8? I am longing to have a chat with my dear little wife. It is hard for us to be parted, but cheer up, we shall be together again as soon as I have made enough money out of this menagerie."

"With lots of love and kisses."

"CHARLEY."

"There, my dear, what do you think of that?"

"But—I—what does it mean?"

"What does it mean? Why, bigamy, of course. The scoundrel is already married, and is only waiting until he can get hold of your money, and then he will desert you."

"Oh, I can't believe it; it's not true."

"What? You can't believe the evidence of your own eyes? The letter

is addressed from my house, and here, on the very evening he mentions, I find that he has left you, for the first time since your marriage, and to go to his club—his club, forsooth!"

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?"

"Do? Why, get your hat and jacket, put on a thick veil, and we will go to Euston Station and watch him meet this woman, and if that won't convince you, nothing will. It is now a quarter past 8. Hurry up and we shall just be in time."

Impelled by the indomitable will of Susan Nibler, and filled with the desire to know the truth at all costs, Kitty Lovegrove dressed as quickly as possible, and in an incredibly short space of time they were speeding towards Euston. They dismissed the cab outside the station and flitted down the approach with the caution and dexterity of two savages stalking an enemy.

And standing under the clock, swinging his stick with impatience, they discovered Charley Lovegrove, with the three red roses stuck prominently in his buttonhole, emblematical of a danger signal.

As Kitty and Susan Nibler crouched in the shadows they saw a tall, golden-haired girl, with a pretty, laughing face, come towards Charley with outstretched hand. They stood jolting and laughing for a moment, and then Charley detached the roses from his coat and the girl fastened them in her dress. After a little while they entered a hansom and drove away together.

By the time Miss Nibler got her niece home again, Kitty was in a half-fainting condition, and as the servants were all out for the evening she took the poor girl into the kitchen and soothed her liberally with water.

"Now, my dear, this is no time for fainting; you must bear up, and we'll show Charles Lovegrove that he can't commit bigamy with impunity."

"Oh, but, auntie, there must be some mistake!"

"There is no mistake. I believe that man is capable of anything, and it would not surprise me to find that he had a dozen wives."

"Oh, auntie, how can you?"

"I can, that's why, and you see if my words don't come true. Hark! What is that? There is someone knocking at the side gate."

"It will be one of the servants returning."

"Don't you move, my dear. I will open the door myself."

Miss Nibler opened the side door, and a young woman walked into the kitchen. She stood for a moment staring in surprise.

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I—I come to see Charley—I mean my husband."

"What? Charley your husband?"

"Yes. We were married secretly about twelve months ago, but as he lost all his money, we had to part for a time. I am sorry I have disturbed you if he is not in."

"There, my poor niece, see how my words are coming true. A trigamist! A trigamist, that's what he is—a trigamist!"

"Oh, don't! It's terrible—terrible!"

"Oh, it is nothing to what we shall find out. The man is an utter scoundrel."

"I beg your pardon," said the newcomer, "but you are talking about my Charley?"

"Yes, your Charley; and how many other people's Charley we don't know yet. You look a respectable young woman, but I am sorry to tell you that the man you married is a knave. You say you became his wife twelve months ago, and yet only three weeks ago he married my niece, and we saw him meet his third wife tonight at the station and drive off with her."

"Are you mad?"

"No, I am not; I am very sane indeed. But you two people seem to be mentally deficient to allow such a man to deceive you."

"You mean to tell me that my Charley has married this lady?"

"I do."

"Then when I get hold of him it will be the worst day's work he ever did in his life. This, then, is the reason why he wished me to keep our marriage secret, pretending that he'd lost all his money, and me having to go out to service again, while he lived in clover. Oh, where is he? Let me get at him!"

"That's right; that's the spirit I like to see. Come into the drawing-room, and when he comes home we shall see what he will say when he is confronted with two of his victims. Bear up, Kitty, my dear, and trust Susan Nibler to see you through this."

She snorted like a war horse scenting the battle, and led the way to the drawing-room. She had hardly switched on the lights when a latch-key was inserted in the front door, and Charley Lovegrove's step was heard in the hall.

"Kitty, you sit on the couch, and you, young woman, step into the conservatory and come out when I call you."

Miss Nibler sat bolt upright in a high-backed chair, and then Charley entered the room.

"Halloa, aunt, this is an unexpected pleasure."

"Then the pleasure is all on one side."

"Well, so long as one of us is pleased, that is something. But what is the matter, Kitty, that you have been crying?"

"Oh, Charles, Charles, how could you do it?"

"Do what?"

"It is useless to brazen it out, Charles Lovegrove; we have discovered everything."

"Well, the air is so frigid that I shouldn't be surprised if everything included the North Pole."

"Ah, you will not jest when you find yourself in the felon's dock."

"Felon's dock! What for?"

"Bigamy."

"Bigamy? Oh, this beyond a joke."

"I am glad you begin to think so. Perhaps you will deny that you are the writer of this letter, which was returned to my house?"

Charley took the letter and read it.

"I most certainly deny it. I never saw it before in my life."

"Oh, we are quite prepared for a tissue of falsehoods; and now, perhaps, you will deny that you met a young lady under the clock at Euston Station this evening?"

"No—I—ch, by George!"

"Yes, it is by George! And I am glad to see that you have the grace to hesitate before telling another untruth."

"It wasn't that. I was thinking of the coincidence that you should receive this letter and Jim Blunt should ask me to meet his cousin for him at the same time that this mysterious Charley flies."

"Oh, you are dragging Jim Blunt into it now. You men always back each other up."

"I tell you that Jim Blunt came here tonight and asked me to meet his wife's cousin, who was coming down from Manchester. I did not say anything about it to Kitty, because she is such a jealous little girl."

"Wait a bit, Kitty, my dear. He has denied wife number one, but we will now see if he can dispose of the second young woman."

"Second young woman! Have you got any more of my wives about?"

"Ah, then you admit that there is a plurality?"

"Oh, you are talking rubbish."

"You will not say it is rubbish when I tell you that your other victim is here—in this house."

"Then, for goodness' sake, produce her; trot her out, and let her fall upon my neck and call me Charley."

"Your wish shall be gratified. Come here, my poor deluded woman. Now, sir, here is another of your victims. Deny her rights as your wife if you can."

"I not only can, but I do. The lady is an entire stranger to me."

"Woman, is not this man your husband?"

"No, no, that is not my husband—that is not my Charley."

"Then what do you mean by coming here and saying that he was?"

At that moment the door opened, and Foskit, the butler, entered the room.

"There is my husband. Oh, Charley, Charley!"

"What does this mean?" asked Lovegrove. "Here, Foskit, what's your front name?"

"Charles, sir."

"And are you the author of this precious letter?"

"Yes, sir, I sent it to my wife over a week ago, asking her to meet me at Euston Station, but she don't appear to have received it, and so she didn't turn up."

"Because the family I was with have moved, Charley, and I came here tonight to give you my new address."

"Well, I think that disposes of wife number two, Miss Nibler; do you happen to have any more about the premises?"

"Oh, Charley, Charley, and you are not a bigamist?"

"No, Kitty, not yet."

"Oh, I am sorry I doubted you! Do forgive me! It was all auntie's fault."

"And this is all the thanks I get for trying to do my duty," sniffed Miss Nibler.

"Some people would be better employed in minding their own business instead of trying to make trouble for others; but I must say that in the combination of circumstances things looked very much against me. Coincidences, however, have a habit of cropping up, and before pronouncing a person guilty it is always well to make perfectly sure that we have not found a mare's nest."—Tit-Bits.

Dr. Sven Hedin.

Dr. Sven Hedin, the famous traveler, concerning whose disappearance in Tibet there is considerable anxiety in Sweden, comes of an old family which for the last century and a half has been to the fore in the Swedish capital. His father was an architect to the city of Stockholm—an office from which he has now retired. It was Dr. Nordenskiöld's triumphant entry into Stockholm on board the Vega on April 4, 1880, after having compassed the northeast passage, that first turned Hedin's mind to thoughts of travel. He was a distinguished student, and after graduating he went to Baku as tutor in the house of a Swedish engineer. While laid aside by illness there, he taught himself the Russian and the Tartar languages, which he found of inestimable service in later years when he was traveling in Central Asia. Hedin's favorite books are the Bible and "Ben Hur."—Westminster Gazette.

The Doctor's Instructions.

Doctor (upon finding his patient weaker than before)—What does this mean? Haven't you been following my instructions?

Patient (feebly)—Yes, doctor.

Doctor—Been eating animal food right along, have you?

Patient (grimly trying to smile)—Well, doctor, I tried to, but somehow it did not seem to agree with me very well. I managed to worry down the hay and the clover tops all right, but the thistles kind of stuck in my throat, and I had to give it up.—Judge.

Oysters live in water which contains about one part salt to 27 of water.

FATHER, DEAR FATHER!

Father, dear father, come home with me now.

The clock on the dashboard strikes one! Don't fuss with the car any longer, pupah.

You can't get the old tub to run! The cylinder's cracked and the timer won't work.

And mother's been waiting since tea. So tether the car to a post, father dear.

And come home on the trolley with me! Come home, come home—&c.

Father, dear father, come home with me now.

The speed meter clock's striking two! The night has grown colder, the rear tire's flat.

And mamma may fret about you, The car shaft is twisted, the pump's out of gear.

Perhaps before morning shall dawn, Ma may grow real angry and want a divorce—

Come quickly, or she may be gone! Come home, come home—&c.

Father, dear father, fly home with me now.

The clock's striking three!—it's struck out!

Don't fool any more with magneto and coils.

The wires have grounded, no doubt! The child's plea was answered—the answer was short.

Which the night winds repeat as they roam: The gas tank exploded—some noise and some smoke.

And father and daughter blew home! We're home, we're home!—&c.—Judge.

WIT HUMOR

SARCASM

Bobby—"Pa, what's a press censor?"

Pa—"He's a man who knows more than he thinks other people should."—Judge.

Left—"I'm liberal in my opinions."

Right—"Yes, you're so blamed liberal that you lavish 'em on everybody that will stand for it."—Cleveland Leader.

Manager—"Have you a problem in your play?"

Author—"One of the greatest." Manager—"What is it?"

Author—"How to get it produced."—Baltimore American.

Mrs. Meeker—"Oh, doctor, my husband seems to be wandering in his mind this morning."

Doctor—"Don't let that worry you; he can't go very far."—Chicago Daily News.

"I see where the baby Prince of Spain is an officer in the army. In what division is he?"

"I don't know, but it is natural to suppose that he is in the infantry."—Baltimore American.

Cholly—"Let me see—what's that quotation about a nod being as good as a wink, and so forth?"

Freddy—"Why—er—I can't think."—Cholly.

"Oh, I know that. I'm asking you to try to remember."—Chicago Tribune.

"Here, Willie!" cried the boy's father, "you mustn't behave that way. Everybody will be calling you a little glutton. Do you know what that is?"

"I suppose," replied Willie, "it's a big glutton's little boy."—Philadelphia Press.

"Mr. Grumbley writes, 'I don't see how you can have nerve to sell your worthless remedy for fifty cents a bottle.'"

"Oh, indeed! Well, strike out 'have nerve to,' and 'worthless,' and put the letter in our testimonials."—Judge.

Village school mistress—"As for you, Willie Tompkins, yours is a double offence. Why didn't you give up your apples when the other boys did?"

Willie—"Please, 'm I thought you only wanted enough to make a pie!"—Punch.

Applicant (in metropolitan newspaper office)—"Yes, sir; I am ready to accept any position—from office boy to chief editorial writer."

Proprietor—"The editorial jobs are all full at present. Sorry."

"How about that office boy?"

"You don't know enough."—Life.

"So you want to be a consul in an English city?"

asked the President.

"Yes, sir," answered the candidate, promptly. "What claim have you on such an office?"

"I voted for you."