

UNCLE ZACK

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—BY—

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"So! That's the way you spend my time, eh? As if you'd got a minute, any more than a penny, of your own? A pretty thing my clients would call it if I was to go wastin' theirs like that—and right they'd be!"

But that is open to question. The clients must have strange notions of taste. He allowed the epithet "pretty" upon the situation, had their collector substituted for his son George. For George was a remarkably good-looking young fellow, while the father was corpulent as to figure, apologetic as to countenance, and probably had never been young, certainly never good looking, since he was born. Very few people would have called it "pretty" had he, instead of George, been caught making love to a pretty girl (the epithet is all right there) in a lane.

If, however, that be a guilty waste of time, there was no doubt of George's being a criminal of the deepest dye. He had been caught parting from his sweetheart with his arm round a waist which was certainly not of old time, and, generally, in so affectionate a manner that any common well-behaved father would have crept noiselessly behind a hedge, and after a sigh and a smile in one, have there waited till he might enter otherwise than as the unwelcome third. Whereas George's father had grimly watched the courting through a gap in the brambles till what he considered the critical moment for a pounce without leaving the lovers a stray whorl to hang on to. For "all men are liars" was a part of his creed, and if ever a man lived up to his faith it was Sampson Valentine, solicitor of Dullington, and of Valentine Hall, the great new mansion in the great unmade park just beyond the edge of the little old town.

"I can't agree with you, father," said George bravely, but divily enough as he disengaged his arm without a symptom of embarrassment at its having been seen there. "My time doesn't belong to the office till half-past nine, and it isn't breakfast time for another hour."

"Then the more shame to you for not being in bed or readin' up Blackstone, or any thing but makin' love—love—to a common bessy's music mistress, and a bad'un at that, own daughter to the worst scamp in town, with writs out against him to fill!"

He glared on George to George's sweetheart, but the latter part of the glare, at any rate, fell flat, for the girl was no longer there. Indeed, she must have made her escape out of earshot before what came after "love" or pride must have kept back her tears. Perhaps it was not brave of her to take to flight before the beginning of the battle, nor wise of her to have let her morning walk coincide with George's. But who ever blames her lack of pluck can never have had to face Sampson Valentine, and as to want of wisdom—long may it be before youth and love become what fools call wise. For in that case story-tellers would starve, which would be a dreadful thing.

"SHAKEPEARE PACAXING SMALL, Harmony and Sinking," was the largely lettered legend on the weather-stained brass plate that further distinguished the broken gate of the weediest front garden of the most dilapidated stucco in the shabbiest back row of Dullington. Here George's sweetheart paused, to transform her tears into a smile—poured sunshine to follow morning rain—and thus passed through the broken-blistered front door and the bare yet stuffy passage into a front parlor furnished in the horse-hair style, where a meek, middle-aged staid man in curl papers sat at a table which might represent either last night's uncleaned supper or this morning's unready breakfast, on a mingling of both, while a personage long-haired, lank and sallow, in a once gorgeous dressing gown, leaned against the mantelpiece and harangued as men do who are listened to by their women-kind.

"It comes to this, Juliet. Here am I, whom I leave others to call a genius if they please—at any rate a man with the aspirations of such, and consequently with the means requisite to obtain them—in short, Shakespeare Small; here am I, condemned by envy, hatred and malice, to vegetate and stagnate in a hole. And when I say 'hole,' I mean confounded hole. The peg of genius in the hole of commercialism, obscurantism, Philistinism, in which inspiration pines and smothered, and goes all but die. It comes to this—"

"Perhaps Shakespeare, dear," murmured Mrs. Small, "if you'd only taken a kindly-mild hymn that people could join in, or a polka they could dance to—"

and went on with his rasher and his harangue. He knew well enough what they were—bills for account rendered, with more or less pemptory postscripts; lawyers' letters, prospectuses and advertisements—ever bankrupt get those; only the usual things that will keep forever and a day without opening.

But while Mrs. Small's ears dutifully listened, her eyes were caught by one of the heap that looked like a real letter; that is to say, something that she had not seen for years. The professor caught her glance. "Well, one may as well look inside," he said, with an effort; for the sight of S. Small, 6 Bellavista Terrace, Dullington, on the back of an envelope had become a horrible to her. This particular envelope was addressed to S. Small, Esq., Dullington, and it bore the London postmark. "Perhappes it's to ask for a subscription to a hospital," he surmised. "Anyhow, it can't hurt. A beggar's as good as a bill to a bolting man. Good Lord! Saved! Uncle Zack's come home!"

"Uncle Zack?" asked Mrs. Small. "Yes, dear old Uncle Zack—long lost—antiquated—read it out," said the professor, leaning back with closed eyes, and in a voice weak with emotion. "Read out the joyful news—Though lost to sight, to memory ever dear."

"Dear Nephew—It is an odd man's wish to live among his chibblains," she began— "Lucy, read it for your mother. Its pathos is too much for her eyes," said the professor, writhing his own.

"It is an old man's wish," read Lucy, "to die among his chibblains' scenes, and to die that old man. No doubt you often heard your dear parents speak of Uncle Zack. I am he. You will be glad to hear things have prospered with me, as I trust they have with you. But, without wife or child, I begin to find Winga—something—N. S. W.—North, south, west, east, and in a— "No, no; 'New South Wales'— "—New South Wales, rather lonesome for the close of my days. I propose, therefore, to arrive in Dullington by the 2:25 the day after to-morrow. I do not know if there be a Mrs. S. Small; but if there be, convey to her my affectionate greetings, and my hope that she will find a night's corner for her new and your old uncle—Zachary Small."

"But who is 'Uncle Zack,' Shakespeare, dear? I never heard you mention his name." "Never heard me speak of Uncle Zack—my long lost Uncle Zack? Bless my soul! Of course, as an orphan while still in school, I never heard much of him to speak of—nor he—'Prospered,' 'New South Wales,' 'without wife or child,' 'lonesome,' 'affectionate'—wants a 'corner' here! By Jingo, if he doesn't live here, and die here, and make his will here, all the rest of his dear old days!"

"Here? Shakespeare?" panted Mrs. Small aghast and looking round. "Suppose the letter's for the billfist?" exclaimed the professor with a snarl at his fingers. And out of the room and presently out of the house he went whistling one of his own tunes, while the mother and daughter, whose belief in him was without bounds, embraced with glistering eyes.

On the third afternoon after this great news a quiet little old man, white-bearded, rosy-cheeked and blue-eyed, carrying a well-worn hand bag in one hand and a badly worn umbrella in the other, and so shabbily dressed as to suggest an indifference to appearances rather than a want of means to maintain them, strolled in an undecided, dreamlike manner from Dullington station towards the town. There was a certain Rip Van Winkle about his seeming to look for familiar local features that he failed to find and stopping at turnings as if he ought to know which to take but could not remember, with his apparent unwillingness rather than shyness about asking. Presently, however, after a more than usually long and puzzled pause, he hesitatingly and deprecatingly accosted a somewhat hurried passerby.

"Pardon me, sir, but you were very gentle and soft—can you kindly direct me to Bellavista Terrace? I ought to know, but it's many a year since I was here and there's been a great deal of change—"

"No change for you, my man," said Mr. Sampson Valentine, for it was he; "not a halfpenny." For he was, besides being busy-minded, a trifle hard of hearing as well as of heart and head; and a scornful half-glance at the old fellow's style and bearing gave an instinctive interpretation to the half-heard "change."

"I was asking, sir," said the other with a slight infusion of sharpness into his tone, "if you could direct me, who am a stranger in this town, to Bellavista Terrace, the residence of a gentleman of the name of Small."

"Ah! A debt collector, eh?" "No, sir. A relation." "And you look like every inch, you do. No, I cannot direct you to the residence of any gentleman of the name of Small. And I don't direct medicaments to the residence of dracals. You've taken my time, and my time's money. Be off with you. We don't want any more Small's here."

uncle has turned up from Australia with fifty thousand a year?" "What?" "It's true enough. Mrs. Blidge has just seen him arrive. And they've new furnished the best bedroom from Jarvis's—and he sees his way to his money, you may be sure. And they've got soup and cutlets for dinner, and that sort of thing, but for nothing. It seems all square enough. A little old gentleman, Mrs. Blidge says, with a white beard—Z. S.; on his handbag, the charwoman says as they've had, in regardless of cost, as may say—stands for 'Zachary Small.' I gather from the young lady at the Blue Lion, where the professor's known. Fifty thousand a year, they say in the town, but it'll be best to stop proceedings if it's but five. Good-day."

Left to himself, Sampson Small threw himself back in his chair and groaned aloud. "If it isn't my father's brother Zachary come back from the bottom of the sea! My uncle—come home with money—and in the clutches of the Smalls!" It is not always prudent, when one is S. Small, to become S. Valentine when there is another S. Small in the same town and a far-away uncle who has never heard of one's change of name. But errors can usually be corrected; though it was certainly a piece of ill-luck that Sampson Valentine had forgotten how many millionsaires have had a preference for going afoot in shabby clothes.

The temperament of genius, as is well known, is remarkably like every other temperament in demanding congenial environment, freedom from domestic and financial worry, leisure for self-expansion and an occasional stimulus which may take almost any form, from contemplation of the wonders of nature or art to whisky and water. Professor Small found these demands fairly well satisfied in a little nondescript chateau on the Terrace, not far round the corner of the Terrace—not even the smallest of tradesmen, whom he objected to meet on various scores—to use a term of singular aptness—but of good fellows who could now and then, at least, treat him at his own value; say, for practical purposes, half a crown when luck was going. It was here that the professor first announced a change of fortune, and hence that the news spread outwards and upwards till not a tradesman in the town who had any credit to his name, or the actual nephew of even a reputed millionaire. So far from her daily marketing being a humiliating penance, Lucy suddenly found it a pleasure, so prompt and civil had everybody become. And being, despite her experiences, one of the simplest of girls, she gratefully accepted the pleasure without speculating as to the cause.

The tastes of self-made colonists are also mostly simple, and Uncle Zack's (as he took very kindly to being called) were no exception to the rule. He seemed positively grateful for any little attention to his comfort or consultation of his wishes; he was content to spend his days in pottering about the town, and comparing it with the Dullington of his boyhood, and to occupy his evenings as an admiring audience to the professor, or in homely chat about everything except himself with Mrs. Short and Lucy. He gave no nookie—nay, nothing seemed to gratify him more than undertaking little jobs and errands so as to save trouble to others. He bored the professor horribly, who set up an exacting professional engagement, without adding that it was at the Blue Lion, in order to escape for a while from those evenings at home, and to brag of Uncle Zack and the expectations so soon to be fulfilled. But Mrs. Small became quick smart and happy, being one of those who live in and for the day; and Lucy struck up quite a friendship with her kindly and gentle old uncle, with which her father was mightily pleased.

And presently a truly wonderful thing happened that sent the credit of No. 6 Bellavista Terrace up—simply sky-high. Mr. Sampson Valentine paid a visit, in person, to Mr. Zachary Small. "Sir," said he, "in an attempt at general justice that became him when the worst of his manners in ordinary—"It takes a wise man, they say, to know his own father. How much wiser a man, therefore, must it take to know his own uncle! If there was any want of warmth of welcome on my part when I first had the pleasure of meeting you—well, all I can do is to say I'm sorry; and no man can do more. Uncle—welcome home!"

"Pardon me, sir," said Uncle Zack. "I think you must be in error. I have no relations of the name of—"

"Valentine? Ah!—I see the muddle; that's only a non do what-you-call-it; an alias, as we lawyers say, to distinguish our branch of the family from—goes with property, you see. It went to my heart, I can assure you, to change our ancient and honored name of Small to that of a modern, to prevent its resumption by my boy George; a fine young fellow, sir, of whom any girl uncle may be proud, and who is longing to welcome you with open arms."

"Everybody is very kind; but still—"

"You don't see it yet? I can put it in a nutshell. I'm the only son of your only brother Peter Small. What woful concatenation has enabled our distant—happily distant—cousin to establish a reputation for himself off you for me. Let me palm you. But 'tis never too late to mend. Let me implore you, my dear uncle, to leave these squalid surroundings and to hasten to the welcome, the comfort, the life-long affection that is waiting for you at the Hall! Low often have I and George talked of Uncle Zachary—how we have longed to see this happy hour!"

"My word!" exclaimed Uncle Zack, whose eyes had been widening and whose face lengthening until they could lengthen and widen no more. "My word—my brother—"

"Peter? Yes—I'll have the brougham round in the twinkling of an eye—"

as a man with his own way to make and ask you to make it with me. But how can I ask you to give up your prospects for my sake—or any sake?" "As if I cared—thought—as if minded being poor! But, oh, George—you mustn't quarrel with the facts before me!" "I must, though, it seems; and for that matter I'd quarrel with anyone because of you. Besides, that's all done. But I can't and I won't be such a mean beast as to—don't you see? You know your father would only show the door to a poor man: I can't go whining to your rich uncle just because he's rich, and that's what it would be; and I can't come between you and whatever it is to yours. Oh, I'll work for you if one man's made a million the other side of the world, another may make a living—and, maybe, when I'm as old as Zachary Small I'll come home and—and—find you waiting still."

At such a forlorn prospect what wonder that tears welled into Lucy's eyes? I fear she will be pronounced but a fearful sort of creature, the drops were still glistening on her cheeks when, after again parting with George—they seemed forever parting—she came face to face with Uncle Zack, who, in the course of his daily prowl, had just discovered the People's Park and was wondering where were the people until he caught sight of two—one approaching and the other retreating away.

"Lucy, my dear, do my eyes deceive me or is that a young man?" "Something, somehow, in his thin and gentle voice told Lucy, though it might have told none else, that he, even he, had once been a young man."

"It's George!" she cried, and then, all at once, out burst all her story; it was all over before she knew that she had begun. "Poor little girl!" said Uncle Zack; and again, "Poor little girl!"

There had been a curious, instinctive sympathy between these two from their very first meeting—like love at first sight under other conditions. Neither was good at words, and assuredly neither possessed a single idea that the commonest and fewest would not assume. Perhaps, the only known to simple souls that never heard the word. Bitter, surely, may cruel, was the old fellow's disappointment on discovering—for of course he knew his dead brother's name as well as his own—how by some blunder through which he could but dimly see, his family had had all the while been due to a Sampson Valentine. Then, his family affection got to the winds! With Lucy's voice ringing in his ears, to be carried off to a Valentine Hall! No! Brother Peter was dead and buried; let him be forgotten, too.

Yet in nothing was Zachary Small's simplicity of soul more singular, for a man who had fought his battle with the world, than in his sincere belief in the sincerity of his nephew's desire for his lifelong company. He knew how warmly he would have welcomed a kinsman, any kinsman, for the mere sake of kinship; he judged others by himself, and took every word of Sampson for the expression of honest affection. It had gone to his heart to reject it—but then Lucy sang.

An now Lucy was unhappy. Perhaps she would never sing again as she ran upstairs—perhaps never even run. Her heart ached and thought how to help her; but his old brain was slow. At length there evolved itself a scheme of such elaborate craft that the world would call it downright diabolic, did it not include as heroic a piece of self-abnegation as a man ever made.

"I have taken the liberty, my dear nephew and niece," said Uncle Zack one afternoon, as the family at number six were finishing their midday meal, "of asking Mr. Sampson Valentine—I believe you know him—to drop in this evening, just in a friendly way."

Had the pudding turned into a bombshell and exploded on the table, no greater amazement, amounting in the case of the nephew and niece, to a gasp, could have ensued; especially when Uncle Zack quietly added—"And I have also taken the liberty of asking Mr. George."

And then Lucy's amazement left even the professor's far behind. As for Mrs. Small, but there are no words to express hers. "I needn't tell you, sir," said the professor, as soon as he had recovered half his breath, "that this house is yours, and that your friends—even your designing, treacherous and mercenary friends, are welcome to its resources, whether of mind and body, even when they are my foes. But little can you know of Sampson Valentine if you think that even for the enjoyment of your delightful society, my dear sir, that sordid Philistine attorney would face a man whom he has wronged, or desert his champagne and his cigars for the purely intellectual and artistic repast which must be below of what is ever the chosen beverage of genius; that whisky of which you are pleased to approve—is all he will find here. He will not, he dare not come!"

"I think," said Uncle Zack, "he will, I don't like him myself; but the more blame to me, for he has a warm, kind heart; and—he will come." "The sweet-smelled perfid, still, a visit from Sampson Valentine to Bellavista Terrace was so essentially and preposterously impossible that a single dose of the beverage of genius sufficed to restore him to his normally sanguine mood; and it was with a redoubled amazement that he heard the last stroke of 8 by the church clock, followed by a knocking at his own door that seemed to proclaim to all Dullington, "I am Sampson Valentine, of Valentine Hall."

uncle this minute—ah, the boy's feelings are too much for him—"

"Thank you, Nephew Sampson," said Uncle Zack. "But before I take up my abode with you, there's something I want you to do—"

"Name it—and it's done!" "Name it—name it—marry your George. And if they're not engaged within five minutes from this—well, I'll go back to Winkawonga, and be a lonely old man for the rest of my days."

It was the professor's face's turn to brighten—of Sampson's to fall. But the latter knew his profession too thoroughly to be astonished at a rich man's whim; and though such an alliance meant good and wormwood, he managed to wrench his face in a fairly successful though very ugly smile.

"George," he exclaimed, "go this minute and embrace your bride. Cousin Shakespeare," he said, "let bygones be bygones. I'll forget your past—here's my hand."

"It is very, very good of you all," said Uncle Zack with a sigh, for none there could guess why he was to give away Lucy and to go and live with Sampson, whom every moment he was getting to abominate more and more. He had been so happy as he was, and now—that was the heroism of his self-abnegation, for nothing youth can do or dream of is fit to be named in the same breath with an old man's surrender of the only thing he has ever cared for when it is too late ever to care for anything again. "Very good of you—all. But indeed I never dreamed of such hearty goodness to a poor, lonesome, stupid old man whom none of you had ever seen. Good-bye, cousins—no, good-bye. We're all friends now. Nephew Sampson, I'm at your service. I'll try to be of some use. There'll be little work about the office that an old clerk can do, and, anyway, I've the comfort of knowing that I shan't cost you a penny. My little annuity—"

"What?" shrieked the professor. "What?" thundered Sampson. "Just a hundred and fifty a year. Not much, but more than enough for me."

"Go back to Winga-Wonga you miserable old impostor!" thundered Sampson, more seriously still; and the next and the last that was heard of him was the clanging of the front door and the crunching of his carriage wheels as he drove off, even forgetting in his fury that he had left George by Lucy's side.

Shakespeare Paganini Small buried his face in his hands and burst into tears. "Take him away," he moaned; "take away the antipedian viper whom I have warmed at my hearth to be the ruin of me and mine." While the poor old viper gazed round at the ruin of his own illusions concerning kindness and such like stuff with bewildered amazement.

But— "Sir," said George, stepping forward with Lucy's hand in his grasp, "you don't know me—but I think I know you. You've brought us together, Lucy and me, and nothing's going to part us now. So if you'll throw in your lot with us—please God, we'll manage to make a home for ourselves and for you, too."

And so he did, and so did they. OUT OF THE ORDINARY. The Germans are a safe and cautious people. There are 17,000,000 people insured in the empire. William the Conqueror's castle at Bonneville, in Normandy, was sold at auction recently for \$25,000. It is said that 1,000 pounds of poultry will cost less to raise than 1,000 pounds of beef and will sell for almost twice as much. To display a crest in stationery and plate in England costs a man a tax of a guinea a year. About 4,000 people pay it. Of three wires of the same thickness one made of copper costs \$100, one of iron \$40, and one of steel \$20. In 1886 the free distribution of seeds by the government amounted to 10,000,000 packets, and now it has reached 20,000,000 packets. In Atchison county, Kansas, a farmer who sold \$100 worth of corn last year. Another one sold \$64 worth of butter and eggs. A Roman journal estimates the value of the libraries in Italy at \$12,000,000, and that of the paintings, statues and vases at \$9,000,000. Nazareth has now its telegraph office, where an Armenian operator, in ordinary European dress, keeps the village community touch with the rest of the world. Rice, raw eggs and boiled venison require only one hour to digest. At the other end are pork, roast beef, cabbage and hard eggs, which require three hours. Taking into consideration the number of ships that are on seas and navigable waters of the world, it is estimated that about 17,000 the world's population are constantly afloat. As a curiosity of the recent German census it is recorded that the returns showed the village of Reutenbourg contained 44 inhabitants, 22 being of the masculine and 22 of the feminine sex. Iron mining is now carried on extensively in northern New York. One shaft in Clinton has already passed through a small vein of pure ore. No other shaft has entered a twenty-three-foot vein. A revolutionary war claim for \$400, the special value of which was \$2,000, contracted under the act of 1773 has just been liquidated by the Treasury Department. The interest and principal amounted to \$2,925. An old tin pan with a \$5 bill pasted on the bottom was found in a pile of rubbish in a New York tenement. The tin pan was the tin out of the pan and sent it to the United States treasury in Newington, and later received a new \$5 bill in return. St. Paul and Minneapolis, it is said, have the lowest death rates of any cities in the world. St. Paul has a death rate of 16.22, while Minneapolis, with a population of 252,718, has a death rate of 16.8 per thousand. J. White, inspector of Canadian immigrant agencies, states that the American settlers who went into the Canadian Northwest last year took with them cash and goods valued at \$6,000,000. Between 14,000 and 15,000 settlers from the United States crossed the border. There is a great demand for reading matter among the troops stationed at distant posts in the Philippines and in Alaska. The Army and Navy League is now endeavoring to meet the want as far as possible, and has invited contributions of books and magazines. At Essex, Conn., the other day a wampum belt owned by a descendant of Herman Garret, who was appointed Governor of the Pequots in 1555, was sold for \$20. The relic is composed of a string of shells formed into a necklace half an inch wide and thirty-three inches long. One of the curiosities of last year's election in respect to the vote cast by the Prohibitionists was furnished by South Carolina, which is literally in the liquor business under the dispensary system, and in which there was no solitary vote cast for the Prohibition ticket in November. In the dialect of Greater New York a "sillier" is one who is always at the window, and "sill" is to look out of the window and watch the happenings in the street, and "silliness" is the act of continuing to look out of the window. These words are the outgrowth of the elevated railroad system. There will be only one building at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo designed in its entirety by a woman, and that one is the exhibit of the books in the States of New England. The woman whose brilliancy as an architect has gained for her this honor is Miss Josephine Wright Chapman, of Boston. Now it is claimed that the book bacilli are harmless. Dr. Reynolds, of Chicago, who has examined an examination of the books in the public library of that city, in his report says: "No disease-producing bacteria were found on any of the volumes—only the ordinary bacteria usually to be found upon the human skin, and upon everything handled by her this honor is Miss Josephine Wright Chapman, of Boston. 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