

couple of pebbles in a bottle, and it was a case of holdin' on and hoping the thing would stay right side up. I hadn't worked up much enthusiasm about gettin' to St. Paul's-in-the-Wood before, but I did then, all right.

"There's her carriage waiting at the chapel door!" says Sadie. "Shorty, we must stop this."

"It's out of my line," says I, "but I'll help." We made a break for the front door and butted right in, just as though they'd sent us cards. It wasn't very light inside, but down at the far end we could see a little bunch of folks standin' around as if they was waitin' for somethin' to happen.

Sadie didn't make any false motions. She sailed down the center aisle and took Aunt Tillie by the arm. She was a dumpty, pie-faced old girl, with plenty of ballast to keep her shoes down, and a lot of genuine store hair that was puffed and waved like the specimens you see in the Sixth-ave. show cases. She was actin' kind of nervous, and grinnin' a silly kind of grin, but when she spots Sadie she puts on a look like the hired girl wears when she's been caught bein' kissed by the grocery boy.

"You haven't done it, have you?" says Sadie. "No," says Aunt Tillie; "but it's going to be done just as soon as the rector gets on his other coat."

"Now, please don't, Mrs. Winfield," says Sadie, gettin' a waist grip on the old girl, and rubbin' her cheek up against her shoulder in that purry, coaxin' way she has. "You know how badly we should all feel if it didn't turn out well, and Pinckney—"

"He's a meddlesome, impertinent young scamp!" says Aunt Tillie, growin' red under the layers of rice powder. "Haven't I a right to marry without consulting him, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, yes, of course," says Sadie, soothing her down; "but Pinckney says—"

"Don't tell me anything that he says, not a word!" she shouts. "I won't listen to it. He had the impudence to suggest that my dear Mulli was a— a corn doctor, or something like that."

"Did he?" says Sadie. "I wouldn't have thought it of Pinckney. Well, just to show him that he was wrong I would put this affair off until you can have a regular church wedding, with invitations, and ushers, and pretty flower girls. And you ought to have a gray silk wedding gown—you'd look perfectly stunning in gray silk, you know. Wouldn't all that be much nicer than running off like this, as though you were ashamed of something?"

Say, it was a slick game of talk that Sadie handed out then, for she was playin' for time. But Aunt Tillie was no come-on.

"Mulli doesn't want to wait another day," says she, "and neither do I, so that settles it. And here comes the rector now."

"Looks like we'd played out our hand, don't it?" "Wait!" says she. "I want to get a good look at the man."

He was trailin' along after the minister, and it wa'n't until he was within six feet of me that I saw who it was.

"Hello, Doc!" says I. "So you're the dear Mulli, are you?"

He near jumped out of his collar, Pinphoodle did, when he gets his lamps on me. It only lasted a minute, though, for he was a quick recoverer.

"Why, professor!" says he. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"I guess some of that's right," says I.

And say, but he was dressed for the joyful bridegroom part!—striped trousers, frock coat, white puff tie, and white

gloves! He'd had a close shave and a shampoo, and the massage artist had rubbed out some of the swellin' from under his eyes. Didn't look much like the has-been that done the dive under my couch.

"Well!" says I. "This is where the private cinch comes in, eh? Doc, you've got a head like a horse." "I should think he'd be ashamed of himself," says Sadie, "running off with a silly old woman!"

The Sullivan temper had got the best of her. After that the deep lard was all over the cook stove. Aunt Tillie throws four cat-fits to the minute. Then Doc steps up, puts a manly arm half-way round her belt line, and lets her weep on his Sunday coat.

By this time the preacher was all broke up. He was a nice healthy-lookin' young chap, one of the straw'ry-blond kind, with pink-and-white cheeks and hair as soft as a toy spaniel's. It turns out that this was his first call to spiel off the splicin' service.

"I trust," says he, "that no one has any valid objection to the uniting of this couple?"

"I will convince you of that," says Doc Pinphoodle, speakin' up brisk and cocky, "by putting to this young lady a few pertinent questions."

Well, he did. As a cross-examiner for the defense he was a regular Joe Choate. Inside of two minutes he'd made torn mosquito netting of Sadie's kick, shown her up for a rank outsider, and put us both through the ropes. "Now," says he, with a kind of calm, satisfied, I've-swallowed-the-canary smile, "we will proceed with the ceremony."

Sadie was near cryin' with the mad in her, she bein' a hard loser at any game. "You're an old fraud, that's what you are!" she spits out. "And you're just marryin' Pinckney's silly old aunt to get her money."

But that rolls off Doc like a damage suit off'm a corporation. He had us down and out. In five minutes more he'd have a two hundred-pound wife and a fifty thousand-dollar income.

"It strikes me," says he, over his shoulder, "that if I had got hold of a fortune in the way you got yours, young woman, I wouldn't make any comments about mercenary marriages."

Well say, up to that time I had a half-baked idea that maybe I wasn't called on to block his little game, but when he begins to rub it into Sadie I sours on Doc right away.

"Hold on there, Doc," says I. "I'll give in that you've got our case quashed as it stood. But maybe

some one else has got an int'rest in these doin's." "Ah!" says he. "And who might that be?" "Mrs. Montgomery Smith," says I.

It was a chance shot, but it rung the bell. Doc goes as limp as a straw hat that's been hooked up after a dip in the bay, and his eyes took on that shifty look they had the first time I ever saw him.

"Why," says he, swallowin' hard, and doing his best to get back the stiff front he'd been puttin' up—"why, there is no such person."

"No?" says I. "How about the one that calls you Monty and runs you under the couch?"

"It's a lie!" says he. "She's nothing to me." "Oh, well," says I, "that's between you and her. She says different. Anyway, she's come clear up here to put in her bid; so it's no more'n fair to give her a show. I'll just bring her in."

As I starts towards the front door Doc gives me one look, to see if I means business. Then, Sadie says, he turns the color of pie-crust, drops Aunt Tillie as if she was a live wire, and jumps through the back door like he'd been kicked by a mule. I got back just in time to see him hurdle a five-foot hedge without stirrin' a leaf, and the last glimpse we got of him he was headin' for a stretch of woods up Connecticut way.

"Looks like you'd just missed assistin' at a case of bigamy," says I to the young preacher, as we was bringin' Aunt Tillie out of her faint.

"Shocking!" says he. "Shocking!" as he fans himself with a hymn book. He was takin' it hard.

Aunt Tillie wouldn't speak to any of us, and as we bundled her into her carriage and sent her home she looked as mad as a settin' hen with her feet tied.

"Shorty," says Sadie, on the way back, "that was an elegant bluff you put up."

"Lucky my hand wa'n't called," says I. "But it was rough on the preacher chap, wa'n't it? He had his mouth all made up to marry some one. Blamed if I didn't want to offer him a job myself."

"And who would you have picked out, Shorty?" "Well," says I, lookin' her over wishful, "there ain't never been but one girl that I'd choose for a side partner, and she's out of my class now."

"Was her name Sullivan once?" says she. "It was," says I.

She didn't say anything more for a spell after that, and I didn't; but there's times when conversation don't fit in. All I know is that you can sit just as close on the

back seat of one of them big benzine carts as you can on a parlor sofa; and with Sadie snuggled up against me I felt like it was always goin' to be summer, with Sousa's band playin' somewhere behind the rubber trees.

First thing I knows we fetches up at my shack in Primrose Park and I was standin' on the horse block, alongside the bubble. Sadie'd dropped both hands on my shoulders and was turnin' them eyes of hers on me at close range. François was lookin' straight ahead, and there wasn't anyone in sight. So I just took a good look into that pair of Irish blues.

"What a chump you are, Shorty!" she whispers. "Ah, quit your kiddin'!" says I. But I didn't make any move, and she didn't.

"Well, good-by," says she, lettin' out a long breath. "By-by, Sadie," says I, and off she goes.

Say, I don't know how it was, but I've been feedin' ever since that I'd missed somethin' that was comin' to me. Maybe it was that bull pup I forgot to buy.



Then Doc Puts an Arm Round Her Belt Line and Lets Her Weep on His Sunday Coat.

PRESERVE THE WILD FLOWERS--By René Bache

POPULAR sentiment in behalf of the wild flowers is rapidly growing. There is already a society for their protection, which is gaining members all over the country, and one of the States awhile ago passed a law forbidding anybody to pluck or otherwise interfere with the climbing fern, the most beautiful of our native plants of this order, which, though plentiful in former days, has been well-nigh exterminated through being gathered wherever found for decorative purposes.

It is the same way with the trailing arbutus, which in some parts of the United States is better known as the May-flower. To an extent it has been protected by its inconspicuousness, but its dainty little blossoms, which are among the earliest harbingers of spring, are so admired that at that season of the year people search the woods for them, plucking everyone that can be found. Thus, and through no other cause, the charming plant has disappeared.

When every blossom is plucked, and none is left to produce seed, the vegetable species, whatever it may be, is doomed to speedy extermination. Thus it has been with many of our wild flowers, the most beautiful ones necessarily suffering most, and the woods and fields, erstwhile so gaily carpeted and attractive to the eye in a charming variety of colors, are left barren and unadorned.

To make the mischief worse, rural districts in the neighborhood of cities are persistently searched for wild flowers to supply the local markets, and the efforts of the people engaged in this industry—floral "pot-hunters," they might be called—are largely accountable for the desolation in this respect of many suburban regions. The holly has nearly gone; the fringed gentian, ultramarine of hue, has all but disappeared; and it is rarely nowadays that one sees the lovely wild orchid known as the lady's-slipper—almost the only conspicuous orchid native

to these latitudes, which was so common only a few years ago.

Traveling by rail through the marshes of New Jersey in late summer, one sees the otherwise unattractive landscape glorified by multitudes of pink marshmallows, exquisite of hue and somewhat resembling wild roses. The winding stream-banks are lined with them, and here and there whole meadows are transformed by them into the loveliest of parterres. One longs for a chance to descend from the train and pluck them. Yet, if such a thing was practicable, all of this beauty would long ago have disappeared. It has been preserved by its inaccessibility. If the region was within reach by excursionists, they would soon pluck the last marshmallow, and nothing would be left but a desert.

It is against the people who are loudest in their professions of love for wild flowers that the flowers themselves most need protection.