thing. For a man who liked that sort of girl she would have made an adorable wife—but not for mine!

AT the end of the first week, I drifted into Pete's house one rainy day and found him in the library gnashing his teeth over a musty tome and running his fingers through his hair. "Rum things, girls!" he stormed while he ran his finger down the page to try for the particular paragraph in which Schopenhauer affirms that woman's rightful sphere is—well, not exactly an intellectual equality with man. Schopenhauer would have liked Sally; for she didn't pretend to aspire to be anyone's intellectual equal.

"What's up?" I said, lighting my cigar. "Doesn't your plan work to suit?"

"Oh, well," he said, "we haven't given it a fair trial. It takes all my spare time, though, to live up to Nell and her topics of conversation, although she's a dear girl at that."

Somehow, I didn't like to hear Pete saying that Nell was a dear girl, even though she was. I didn't want anyone to say that but myself. Then I laughed. I couldn't help it at the picture of Pete's trying to live up to Nell, while I, the critical, was living down to dear little Sally. I said so. And when I said "dear little Sally" I suddenly realized from Pete's expression that he felt just as I did about that. So we were quits.

"I notice," I said reflectively, "that Nell doesn't seem to be interested in me. She seems to think of no one but you. Your rule doesn't seem to work both ways, apparently."

Pete nodded his head dismally. "I know," he said. "Why, last night at the dance Sally never looked at me. And when I asked her for a dance, she said her card was full. But it wasn't; for I saw her give that Carter chap two dances after that—he came in late."

Girls were certainly queer things, we agreed on that.

Three weeks of this sort of thing went on. Relations between Pete and me began to be a bit strained, and as for the girls—well, where they had been almost inseparable when we appeared on the scene, there seemed to be a decided coolness. I began to question the wisdom of Pete's plan, especially since Sally seemed to be—well, rather falling in love with me, although the good Lord knows I hadn't encouraged it! I confided in mother, and she—I regret to say it—she snickered.

"If being with a girl fourteen hours out of twenty-four, buying her candy and flowers and music galore, and escorting her to every place where you are invited, isn't encouragement," said mother, "then I don't know the proper definition of the word." Mother's sense of humor is too keen sometimes. And somehow, in this case, it hurt to think she did not agree with me.

IN the meantime Pete began to grow more and more morose. I met him in the postoffice one morning, where he was waiting for the mail.

"You don't look happy," I said, feeling my way.

"You go to blazes!" he said inelegantly. "If it hadn't been for you, I shouldn't have been in this mess!"

"What mess?" I asked. It didn't seem much of a mess to me, being with Nell every day and every evening, hearing her gurgly laugh, seeing her flush with pleasure when you brought her a new book—Oh, hang the thing, anyhow!

"Well," I said, "let's ring off. Let's change back again and quit this nonsense. Here's the summer almost half gone, and we want to make up for lost time."

Pete turned upon me like a stag at bay. "Change!" he said. "Change your grandmother! Pretty time to change now—now!"

"Why? Why not?" I said. "Now's as good as any time—to-day. We'll begin at once. I never thought your old game would work, anyway."

Pete looked at me sadly. "We can't change," he said. "We can't ever undo this again. Nell and I are engaged."

"Engaged!" I said. "What the—"

"That's what I said!" he exploded. "Engaged! Last night! I've seen it coming on for sometime and felt that she was getting to like me too well. And last night I decided I'd cut the whole thing and go down to Narragansett for the rest of the summer with my folks. And when I told Nell she began to weep on my shoulder, and before I knew it I was so sorry and felt such an infernal cad for leading her on as I had done, that I proposed and was accepted. I'm going up to Morton's now to buy the ring."

Well! Things whirled before my eyes for a moment and I saw red. Then I began to look at it calmly and dispassionately. Perhaps it was best after all, and if Nell loved him, of course she didn't love me and would not have married me, anyway. But I never realized until that moment just how dear she had become to me. "What about Sally?" said Pete.

Sure enough, there was poor little Sally, Sally with her merry laugh, her confiding way, her sweet kittenish manner. Sally loved me, I was sure of it. And then I began, too, to feel like a cad myself.

"There's only one thing for you to do," said Pete savagely, "and that is to marry Sally. If you've led her on to care for you and don't do the decent, square thing, by Heaven I'll make you answer for it to me! I'm not going to have her suffer because you've been playing with her."

Playing with her! I playing with Sally, when Pete had suggested the whole thing himself! And now he was accusing me of playing with Sally! What had he been doing with Nell? I'd like to know!

Still, I would be game, I decided. So I said, "Come on, we'll shake hands, and I'll go along with you and buy a ring for Sally." After all, Pete and I had been friends too long to have a thing like this break up a comradeship of so many years' standing.

Pete looked rather gloomy as he selected the big solitaire. "I suppose that's all right," he said. "Every girl wants a diamond when she is engaged, doesn't she?"

I didn't know. There was a big emerald there that caught my eye,—square cut, liquid, with a wonderful light in its green depths, like a deep, silent pool in which is reflected the verdure of overhanging trees. I once heard Nell say that emeralds were her favorites of all stones; but I wasn't going to tell Pete that—not on your life! I wondered, after all, if Sally would not prefer a glittering diamond; but then I decided in favor of the emerald. I saw it shut in its velvet case and put it mechanically into my pocket, wrote a check for it, and stalked out after Pete. I still had my bridge to cross, and I dreaded it.

I WENT home to luncheon; but I couldn't eat. Mother looked at me rather anxiously, I thought. "What is it, son," she said finally. "I think you look a little pale. If I were you, I shouldn't play tennis in the middle of the day when the sun is so hot."

"It isn't that, Mother," I said. Somehow I couldn't tell her what a cad I felt myself, after all. "I—I'm going to ask Sally to marry me," I said.

Mother smiled. "I am very glad," she said. "I always liked Sally, and I think she will make a very sweet wife."

Yes, that was it; she would make me a "sweet wife." But what of the comrade, the intellectual companion, I wanted, like Nell, who understands a man's every mood, who knows when not to talk, who— I got up and pushed my chair away from the table. Then I dragged myself up stairs to my room and stayed there fighting it out all the afternoon. After all, Sally wasn't to blame, and since I couldn't have Nell—why, like the girl in Florodora, "I must have some one," so it might as well be Sally.

That evening out in the vineclad arbor at Sally's house I asked her to marry me. I didn't tell her that I loved her and all that business; but perhaps she didn't notice it, for she accepted me. I knew I ought to kiss her, and I bent down to seal our contract as I have been brought up to think is always done by the proper lover; but Sally gave me a little push and said, "Oh, no, dear! Please, not yet!" That was queer, I thought; but, then, girls were queer, anyway. Still, it seemed strange to be proposing to a girl without telling her that you loved her and all that. Then I thought of the ring. There was a full moon and it was bright as day. I got out the emerald and slid it on her finger. Sally looked down at it—and then I thought she seemed a little disappointed.

"What's the matter, dear?" The "dear" sounded cold and hard, rather; but I couldn't help it, I felt so miserable. "Would you have preferred a diamond?" I said.

Sally smiled faintly and said, "Oh, no, this is per-

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CATRINA

By Owen Oliver

Drawings by Wladyslaw T. Benda

I SAW Catrina first at a sleepy little railway station, when I was holiday making in Spain,—a tall, slim girl who traveled with a troupe of acrobats, as I afterward learned, and did wonderful feats upon a high trapeze. She was pretty and mischievous, and I smiled at her as I might smile at a child, forgetting that a Spaniard is a woman at sixteen. She turned to look at me, and stepped backward off the edge of the platform in front of the advancing train. Spanish trains—thank Heaven!—move slowly, like everything in that Old World country. I had just time to snatch her out from the rails, before the edge of the buffer knocked me aside. She knelt and kissed my hand, when I staggered to my feet half stunned.

I met her afterward at the town where we alighted; and after I had met her two or three times I decided to go away. The rescue had predisposed Catrina to fall in love with me, and Catrina was easy to fall in love with, and I had no mind for either event.

When I went to say goodby I found her desperately ill with fever. I mistrusted the Spanish physician's skill; so, being a doctor, I took her case in hand. The crisis came on the fourth day. I had sat on a stool in a circus tent for hours, watching her by the light of an ill smelling lamp, when at last she fell into a natural sleep. Then I rose and gathered together the drugs I had borrowed from the apothecary.

"She will live," I said, and looked down on her, as I thought for the last time.

"She owes you two lives," said the huge old man who broke iron with his fingers and held all the troupe on his shoulders. She called him Uncle; but he was no relative of hers, only the father of an old servant of her mother's.

"Two lives!" I said. "My pretty Catrina!" I bent down and put back her wealth of black hair and kissed her forehead. I owned an elder brotherly affection for the child.

"Two lives to pay!" droned the crone by the bedside. They called her Annette, and she told fortunes at the fairs, and some said she had the evil eye. "She will pay both, Englishman, one with a ring of hemp and one with a ring of gold!"

The old man crossed himself. "Annette has the second sight," he assured me, "and Catrina is a good girl, Signor. Her people were different from us; but when they died there was nothing for the little one, and so—" He shrugged his shoulders. "Catrina is a good girl," he repeated, "and she," he nodded toward the crone, "has the second sight." He crossed himself again.

"Catrina is a good girl," I repeated, and kissed her forehead again. Then I went. I found my eyes wet as I walked away.

EARLY the next morning I started again on my travels. I went fast as one who flees from folly; not my own folly, I told myself, but Catrina's.

I avoided the towns and larger villages where I might have met the acrobats again, and spent three weeks in the wildest part of the country. Then a party of bandits took me. Their leader was Sebastian Gurni, called the Black Arrow. He had a birthmark of that shape on his cheek, and sometimes he marked it on his captives; but he treated me with the courtesy of a Spanish gentleman.

"Doubtless," he told me, "your friends value your society even more than I do, Signor; but I will put only my price upon it." He named a ransom which came out at about three thousand pounds in English money.

He might as well have said thirty thousand pounds, for all the chance there was of my friends finding the