

had belonged to the company Jared had captained in the war. They called themselves "The Old Guard," and they set to work to give their comrade a royal good time during his visit.

"I say," observed Pearsons, one of the coterie, the second day after the arrival of Jared, "what's the matter with Ross? He don't act natural."

And then the prevailing gossip was received—all the story of how the old couple were "out."

"Why, this is all nonsense!" decided Pearsons. "We must patch up a peace somehow."

He himself went as a committee of one to spy out the lay of the land at Millville. He returned to seek out Jared.

"Old friend," he said, "I've been to see your wife. Say, she's mourning for you."

"Oh, yes—lots!" scoffed Jared. "Did she send for me?"

"Why, no! She'd never give up that strong will of hers to send for you if you never go back, but she wants you just the same. See here, now—"

"Drop it!" almost snarled Jared. "I'll show her I'm just as strong-minded as she is. Tomorrow I'm going off to Kansas to see my brother. May stay there."

Now this alarmed Pearsons. He foresaw that it would not do at all to allow a little family jar sunder the pleasant family relations of years. Once Jared drifted West he might never come back and thus the home life and happiness of two really loving but perverse souls would be wrecked.

He held a secret conclave of "The Old Guard." The next night Jared was invited to a farewell supper. There was plenty of hard cider. Some that he drank was "hoccused." Then when he was fully under its influence, his well-intentioned comrades set about carrying out their plot.

Jared was placed tenderly in a

wagon box filled with fresh, clean hay, and they drove him over to Millville. Now something had happened since the visit of Pearsons to that same town. It was this: The new house had caught fire and all but one side was burned up.

Anyhow, the schemers place Jared within the supporting arms of a big roomy garden chair facing what was left of the new house. They left him to wake up when he would, and worry his own way out of the impending tangle.

When with early daylight Jared opened his eyes, it was to marvel at his strange situation. Then his glance became riveted on the new house.

"Burned down! How's this?" he ejaculated, and, catching a glimpse of the unharmed side of the structure he fairly glared.

"Why, it's not white and green at all. Punkin yaller—I vum!" And he rubbed his head, reflecte^d, was mystified and all at sea, and then reflected some more.

"Bless me, if I don't believe that perverse Betty changed her mind, and painted it my favorite color to please me! And now it's burned down. And she's alone at the old home probably, and—poor old gal! She's met me mor'n half way, and—I'm a wicked wretch!"

Yes, half an hour later, as Jared neared the old home there was his wife straining the milk on the back porch. He approached rather shame-facedly.

"Betty," he said, "you painted over that white and green to please me—"

"Yes, I did," retorted Betty spicily, "but I didn't do anything more. So you've come home, have you?"

"Guess I have," acknowledged Jared, rather sheepishly. "See here, Betty, I reckon I was a little too sot in my ways. I'm sorry for the fire, after all your calculations. Was the place insured?"

"Yes, Jared."