

Medals and Things

By MARTHA M. WILLIAMS

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There was frost in the air; also in Mrs. Hubert's manner, as she went between gorgeous ragged ranks of late growth to meet the Trevors. Aunt Bab had halted them there to see the choice late roses and chrysanthemums she was busy hooding and shrouding against the strengthening cold. "I could cut them, to be sure," Aunt Bab explained. "But it is a shame not to let them die happily in the sun on their own stalks."

"How I wish humanity ran in families!" Archy Trevor laughed, taking Mrs. Hubert's hand. "If it did—but there! I won't speculate on the impossible. Instead, here are thanks for what I may or may not be about to receive."

"Vivian, dear—please snub him—hard," Anna Trevor entreated with a plaintive accent. "He has been insufferable now for three days over—he won't tell what. Say right off you won't listen, no matter what it may be. Then he will run away to suik—and we can have a beautiful gossip—"

"About me, of course—I am—fixed—as the laws of Medes and Persians," Archy interrupted.

"Good boy!" Aunt Bab murmured, patting his arm. He kissed her hand, saying with twinkling eyes: "Do your worst, ladies! I'm ready for anything—even to have you set the cats on me—"

"You'd like that, no doubt—now that you have grown a cat fancier," Mrs. Hubert said silkily.

Archy smiled, not quite easily, answering: "There are cats—and cats. I am not fond of—everything that has claws."

"Stop fussing and be human," Aunt Bab commanded. "When you are as old as I am, you'll feel how wicked it is to waste life getting grouchy about nothing. Go on and tell us your great secret, Archy—whether it's about money, marbles, or matrimony."

"It might concern all three—only it doesn't," Archy answered, shrugging. "It's only—all these came in a bunch," pulling from a deep pocket a huddle of ribbons, crosses and medals. "Near-afidavit along with them, saying they're all due me. I can't quite believe it—"

"Archy! You darling!" Anna cried, hugging him close. Aunt Bab did the same as soon as he was free. Mrs. Hubert looked on with humid eyes, her whole being fluid. Archy had been so silent as to what had befallen in those months overseas—he had come back without a scratch, and had seemed to avoid comrades gatherings, though he had clung to his buddy—Joe-George Green by name—closer than to a real brother. They had had many laughs together about something they would not name. When Joe-George went on to California, his last shouted good-by had been: "Lordy, old son—they'll git you yet. Don't I wish I could stay and see the fun!" Even after that Archy had held his tongue.

And Vivian Hubert, whom he had loved and lost as Vivian Dame, had been hurt and chilled—there must be something terrible behind this reticence—nothing could make her believe Archy had played the coward—but there were so many, many other ways wherein he might have tripped and fallen she had been far from happy.

Then he had begun dangling after the Francis woman—who affected the intense in everything. Just now she owned a humanitarian craze—went about doing good, according to her own notion, to animals that she might better have left alone. Cats were her latest specialty—hence Vivian's thrust at Archy—he had actually carried home for the Francis person a litter of blind kittens rescued from drowning, which she insisted were entitled to an easier death. Vivian had laughed easily over the story—thereby confounding the gossip who had told it. But she had cried stilly, half the night after—she had so hoped Archy would understand her marriage had been hardly of her own making, but a yielding to what her elders in their wisdom had decreed. By a cynical jest of fate, death had freed her six months after the wedding day. Now the freedom was Dead sea fruit, turning to ashes on her lips.

But she had rallied as women will, vellel her heart by playing with other suitors, telling herself the while she would never marry anybody. She was striving to hold fast to that mental attitude—even with Archy proven a rare hero they were friends only. He stood tossing the decorations lightly from hand to hand, his sister and Aunt Bab trying hard to snatch them away. Cupping the hands, he held them out to Vivian, saying with his most whimsical smile: "Hold fast what I give you. Remember, Viv, how many times we played that game!"

"Several million, I think," Vivian managed to answer, her fingers clutching hard what he had dropped within them. "I'm wild to look at them—may I?" she went on.

Archy shook his head. "No, I'll drive my bargain sight unseen. These tokens come to me from three fine fellows—Johnny Crapoud, John Bull, Esq., and our kind kinsman, Uncle Sam. You know, it is a privilege to pin any of them on an honest-to-goodness hero—much will you offer for it? And will you choose?"

"I'll take 'em all," said Sam's—if it's no more than

a shoestring," Vivian cried, flushing happily.

"Highest priced in the lot," Archy commented. "But now I think of it, you're fond of high prices—"

He caught himself up sharp. Vivian had grown white as death—she thought he was throwing her marriage in her teeth—could she ever forgive him? His heart turned leaden as she turned from him saying clearly: "Yes, but I have grown wiser with age. So I drop out. Anyway, I could never outbid Mrs. Francis—I'm not in her class."

"Right-o!" Archy flung back, as he took the glittering bundle and passed it to Aunt Bab. "Nan can take a week off for pawing 'em over," he went on. "Think I'll start to California soon."

"On a wedding trip?" Vivian asked, trying to speak lightly. Archy caught something in her voice that made him wheel, look hard at her, then take her hands, and say joyously: "Why, come to think of it, that would be nice—not to say economical. I'm due there, anyway, between this and Christmas. It was surely kind of you to think and speak of it. How long will it take you to pack?"

"Pack? What do you mean?" Vivian began primly, her cheeks, though, betraying her austerity. Archy kissed her handsomely.

"You can't think I'd turn down an old friend cold," he said. "Indeed, I didn't hesitate the least bit—made up my mind to accept before you were half through proposing."

"Don't you dare tell Joe-George I had to do it," Vivian said from the depths of his shoulder, where her face was hidden. "Nor Mrs. Francis," Aunt Bab supplemented. Anna had pity; she dragged Vivian away from them, saying over her shoulder: "Of all the stupid courting I ever heard or read, or dreamed of, this is the very worst."

"Still and all—your 'ero' brother was never more a 'ero,' Archy half chanted, running after them. Imperatively he stopped the young woman, stuck out his chest and said in his deepest voice: "Adorn me, women! If I must go a lamb to the altar, let it be with all my blushing honors thick upon me."

"Now you behave," Aunt Bab said severely, coming to them sadly out of breath.

Archy giggled. "Yes, ma'am, I never will do so no more while I live."

FEARED FOR HIS OWN TRELIS

Chinese Humorists Tell Good Story With Henpecked Magistrate as the Central Character.

Managing wives and henpecked husbands are not uncommon in China, in spite of the subordinate position that women are supposed to occupy in that country. A considerable part of the humor of the Chinese is concerned with households where the woman is master; one popular story, quoted by a writer in the Open Court, is as follows:

A district magistrate was sitting in his court, trying cases. When the chief clerk appeared and took his seat the magistrate saw that his face was full of scratches; so he asked him, "What have you done to your face?" "Yesterday evening," replied the man, "I was sitting under my vine trellis, enjoying the cool breeze, when all at once a gust of wind overturned the trellis, which fell upon me and scratched my face."

But the magistrate did not believe the story. "Evidently these are scratches of finger nails," he said. "I am sure that you had a quarrel with your wife and were scratched by her. Is it not so?"

"Sir, you have guessed right," said the clerk blushing.

"Is your wife such a dangerous person?" inquired the magistrate. "I shall avenge you by summoning your wife before my tribunal and giving her a good thrashing."

Just as he uttered those words his own wife came rushing in from the next room and said, "Whom are you going to beat?"

The magistrate hurriedly said to his attendants, "The sitting is adjourned. Leave the hall quickly. My vine trellis may collapse at any moment!"

Consistency.

We hear so much of consistency. Carlyle said: "Wise men sometimes change their opinions, fools never." Emerson has written:

"With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now, and tomorrow again speak what tomorrow thinks, though it contradict everything you said today. 'Ah; so you shall be misunderstood.' Is it so bad to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood."

Charring Don't Stop Wood's Decay.

Charring is found by the United States forest products laboratory to have little effect in preventing the decay of the butts of telephone poles and fence posts. The coating of charred wood is not usually perfect, and the season checks that form before or after the charring open the way to fungus infection, with decay in the interior of the wood scarcely less rapid than in the untreated material.

Something to Cover Up.

"Joskins says he has no use for newspapers. That he does not take politics to bed with him."

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" 1910	607,390.23
" 1912	1,008,666.37
" 1914	1,287,124.62
" 1916	1,412,086.06
" 1918	1,691,776.12
Nov. 17, 1919	2,198,801.55
Feb. 28, 1920	2,399,303.14
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