

A Fall Fancy.

Bridget, lean the buckwheat butter. Put the maple syrup on. And trot out my biggest blatter. While the golden drops are drawn. Put away the cold roast slices. Give the garden truck the shake. Fire the summer grass and ice. And bring on the hot pancake.

HOW HE GOT OUT OF IT.

"By Jove, Stair's a lucky chap!" "Why, old man? Going to be married, eh—is he?" "No—by all that's lucky—he has got out of it."

Such was the prologue. This was the piece. He had drifted into it. She was very pretty and undeniably well-dressed, danced to perfection, and possessed that perfect ease and grace of movement which marks the highest London fashion and gives it the stamp peculiarly its own.

So they met, night after night, dancing table after table together. They sat in flowery alcoves and on twilit staircases, and talked in a manner befitting the occasion; soft murmurs, half sentences, whispers very close to the shell-like ear. All this was no doubt very pleasant. So the season went on and this reprehensible young man had got no further—may be beginning to ask himself: had she a heart to be stirred at all? Had he himself, and if so, why did her charming company never cause it one single extra pulsation? Yet he found undoubted pleasure in her society. The dances she gave him made the whole evening to him.

He was never weary of contemplating the sway of her graceful figure, the poise of her pretty head, with its clustering curls so artistically arranged; and her voice was so sweet, though it was true that her conversation never wandered from the serious commonplace of society talk. Yet she discoursed on these in a manner which was seductive itself. Beyond taking her at the end of dances for her mother he had made no particular acquaintance with Lady Vi (as her friends called her—a mode which we will also adopt). But one evening she said: "Will you take my mother down to supper to-night? Her usual cavalier has deserted her, and gone home."

Of course he offered his arm directly with the utmost courtesy, though it must be said his mind rather misgave him, and, indeed, at the end of half an hour's study of this lady's fascination left him a much wiser if rather a sadder man. But we must introduce her ladyship with due honors, as, indeed, she was. Lady Vi was in the order of events somewhat older than her daughter. But if this was inevitably so, as we fear it was, she was not the one to admit so damaging a confession. The one invariable complaint which she expected was: "Two sisters surely! Impossible! This young lady your daughter? I must be allowed to contradict you."

In truth she was surprisingly young looking for a lady certainly twenty years older. At a little distance you might conceivably mistake one for the other, especially against the light. The art of dress was employed with that perfection which conceals itself. Lady Vi was no doubt fully aware of all the resources of modern civilization, and she made skillful use of them all. Her manner was even softer than her daughter's; her voice had a penetration which impressed the coldest listener. Beneath that demure and artistic exterior a keen and subtle intellect was constantly at work. Nor was she wont to waste its refinement on trashy books or the like. Her studies were the world in which she lived, and the women who inhabit our sphere supplied her with those objects of scientific investigation and interest which other people are said to find in the follies of the microscope and other toys.

It is also well known that, whatever subject a keen intellect chooses for its special study, the greatest proficiency is reached in it even in a short time, and this lady had not studied for nothing; she ought indeed to have graduated in honors. So he found himself, as it were, impaled beneath a lens of scaly but brilliant strength. His writhings and contortions and awkward attempts at extrication only amused his professor and served to purpose whatever it was. To him, however, was his tormentor's evident intention, and the victim, driven to extremity, was forced to summon all his resources in self-defense and this is what he did. He plied her on that subject with every attention he could devote. After supper was over he never left her side or danced again. He attended her to her carriage, showed her where the various compartments paid no heed to Mabel's reproachful looks, nor found a word to say to her. In short, he transferred himself bodily to Lady Vi, and became from that evening her devoted and abject slave.

At Hurlingham, at Sandown, at Henley, at balls, fetes, regattas and garden parties he was her constant attendant, inasmuch that people began first to titter and then to whisper. And those agreeable and good-natured remarks were freely exchanged which such little games of skill are apt to provoke. Lady Vi accepted his attentions and indeed any man's attention as a matter of right and of course. She accepted, we may say, without specially encouraging them, on the ground that it was Mabel's behalf that men, and young men, ran after her so. Mabel had so many admirers, and they all paid attention to mamma as a simple matter of duty, and his wounded, very ill, and was not believed by anybody. Now Lady Vi had a husband!

A husband is a fact which cannot be wholly ignored or entirely left out of the calculation by the female portion of mankind. And facts are stubborn things, and Sir Hercules was more than a commonly stubborn thing. Our hero had always behaved as if he were entirely unaware of this particular fact. It is true he had never seen Sir Hercules in outward and visible shape, for that warrior did not in general accompany his daughter and wife, spending his time chiefly at his club in more congenial society. He might be seen looking out of the bow window in "Stair's" any day between 1 and 7, and in a blue frock, a very stiff cravat and a buff waistcoat. Sir Hercules had served in his time with distinction, but it was a good many years ago. He served, too, in maintaining a strict military discipline in his household, to which the two ladies were faint, however unwillingly, to render submissive obedience. He succeeded, too, Lady Vi really wished the match for her daughter. There was no fault to find with this misguided young man. He would do for a son-in-law better than many, and she would be glad to have Mabel fairly settled in life, and be able, as she said, to devote herself to Sir Hercules, who could do for her best and lose, as she was in the constant habit of affirming. And yet there were people ill-natured enough to declare that his wife turned the key upon her when she was engaged to him before leaving him for the engagement of the night. But then, as we all know to our cost, some people's tongues are capable of any atrocious invention, to which a virtuous ear should never incline. So Lady Vi firmly resolved to bring the young

man to book, while he, unconscious of his doom, continued to frisk and play like a lamb in a meadow while the butcher is advancing unawares.

It fell out in this way: He was to call for the ladies one afternoon in order to escort them to the park. But he was shown ominously into the shaded and charming room which belonged to Lady Vi, with its screens and draperies, its palms and pots, and fantasies and ornaments. Mabel was not there, however, and her ladyship presently entered alone. He must excuse Mabel, she said, who had a headache and could not go; could not in fact leave her room, so she would give him tea, and they would have a little quiet chat. He began to feel nervous, and his heart, under his white waistcoat, gave a sudden jump. They slipped their tea—Lady Vi slowly, as he thought, and with cruel deliberation. Presently the enemy would, as he well knew, open fire. His courage began to rise, as a brave man's will, with the sense of danger. He resolved to be no craven, and to fight it out with all the desperate valor of despair.

"My dear child has not been looking very well of late—do you think?" began the attacking force in a gentle, murmurous voice, like a dove on an elm tree. "Indeed, Lady Vi, in my poor opinion your daughter never looked more brilliant."

"No, indeed," interrupted the fair speaker with much vivacity. "These constant headaches which the poor child suffers are becoming, I assure you, a serious case of anxiety. I think of consulting Sir Agnew Darke about her. But medical treatment is not the best in such cases. But what is a mother to do?" And Lady Vi heaved a deep sigh.

"Advice, I know, is often useless," said this artless young man, "in cases of organic diseases; but you can not possibly feel any such apprehension with regard to your daughter's health."

Lady Vi's heavier guns now advanced and began to open on the position. "I see I must speak plainly, my dear friend. Young ladies must be silent, but mothers must act freely on their behalf. Your attentions have been so marked that I fear my darling child's happiness is in danger of being compromised. She is suffering in silence, and without a word from you either to explain or justify your heartlessness—yes, and I will say it—your unprincipled conduct."

"Here a laced pocket handkerchief came out and was used with effect. "Speak you must, indeed," murmured her ladyship, softly, but with great decision from behind it, "or I must see my beloved Mabel the premature victim of your attacks, and she would be a heartless man." Tears choked her utterance; sobb shook the pretty hands which held the handkerchief, now being used as a flag of distress, unalterable. Even our young man was for one brief moment disconcerted. But he felt it was now or never, and with bold determination dropped on his knees. He seized the disengaged hand and kissed it fervently. "Now I will speak indeed!" he cried. "Lady Vi, you behold in this attitude" (and he glanced at his knees) "the most devoted of your slaves. It is quite impossible you can for one moment have mistaken my attentions. It is you whom I have ventured to approach through your daughter. Speak, dear lady, and make me the happiest man, as I feel the most audacious of men."

"Good heavens!" screamed her ladyship. "Do you know what you are saying? A declaration to me? What will Sir Hercules say?" "Sir Hercules!" said the ardent swain in a modest voice. "May I ask who is Sir Hercules, and what has he or any man to do with my affairs, I should like to know?" "Simply this," returned her ladyship, wringing her hands, "that he is my husband—my dear, dear old man—and that you, sir, are willfully insulting me. Get up from the carpet this instant, and never let me see you again!"

"Married!" he murmured in the faintest accents, "I am married, Lady Vi, I thought you were a widow and free, I should never—never—have presumed. What a cruel mistake for a man to make! Forgive me, if you can, Lady Vi. It is I who have to suffer. He had his face in his hands, this hypocritical young man, his eyes were closed, and he said, "Forgive me," he pleaded. "Say you forgive me or I won't go away; upon my honor I won't," and he also showed signs of falling on his knees again. "This interview, sir, has been already too prolonged, Begone!"—with a startling vivacity—"and never let me see you in this house again."

"I have not a word to say to you," she cried, "and you are to be gone. Forgive me, if you can, Lady Vi. It is I who have to suffer. He had his face in his hands, this hypocritical young man, his eyes were closed, and he said, "Forgive me," he pleaded. "Say you forgive me or I won't go away; upon my honor I won't," and he also showed signs of falling on his knees again. "This interview, sir, has been already too prolonged, Begone!"—with a startling vivacity—"and never let me see you in this house again."

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A Famous Wooden Leg. A celebrated wooden leg has been discovered in an old Vincennes shop, which was once a smithy, says the Paris correspondent of the London Telegraph. There is abundant evidence to prove that the relic in question is the sham limb which replaced the leg which Gen. Darnesnil lost in the big wars of the first Napoleon. This rugged old warrior defended the fortress of Vincennes against the allied army, and is famous for having said to the invaders when summoned to give up the place: "Bring me back and you shall have my keys." The wooden leg now found had been sent by Darnesnil to a Vincennes smith in order to be "shod." It will now be placed in the artillery museum of the Hotel de Clugny among many other martial and historic souvenirs.

IMPERIAL RUSSIANS.

Critical illness of the Czar's Uncle Nicholas, the Cleavefoot of the Romanoff Family. The czar's two uncles, the Grand Duke Nicholas and the late Alexander II., are critically ill, and their deaths are almost hourly expected, says a St. Petersburg correspondent of the New York Times. The condition of the Grand Duke Constantine, known throughout the world as the most talented and clever member of the imperial house of Romanoff, is said. In the early part of last July he had a cerebral seizure which, after leaving him for several weeks deprived of the power of speech or of making any sign beyond raising and lowering his eyelids, has now at length extinguished every remaining glimmer of intelligence.

Though smaller than his brothers, Nicholas and the late Alexander II., he was vastly their superior as far as brain power was concerned. Indeed, he was so clever that he made numerous enemies and his sharp wit and sarcastic utterances were dreaded by almost all who were brought in contact with him. Nothing was more amusing than the manner in which he was wont to discover proxy boys who were presented to him for the first time. His single eyeglass hung from his neck, and the eyes of the man as ever his interlocutor had embarked on some long-winded speech he would quietly give the elastic an imperceptible twist, and the effect of the softness of the eye-glass rebounding up to his eye, where it remained fixed, without any apparent effort or action on his part. He would then gaze fixedly through the eye-glass at the unfortunate speaker, just as though nothing had happened. The effect of this little maneuver was generally to completely discomfit the new presence, who began to open his mouth in the manner in which the monic appeared to fly up to the grand duke's eye of his own accord, but also by the fact that his intellectual brightness seemed totally unimpaired thereby.

From 1861 to 1865 Constantine held the post of viceroy of the kingdom of Poland. His rule was, however, regarded as being of a liberal nature, and he was succeeded by Field Marshal Count von Berg, whose merciless tyranny and cruel despotism remain one of the darkest spots of Polish history. While it is notorious that Constantine was tireless in his efforts to persuade his brother, Alexander II., to grant a constitution to the Russian nation it is also notorious that he was not for the assertions that he was connected with the nihilist movement. This fact, however, remains, that only a few weeks before the assassination of the late czar, Gen. Levin Melnikoff, who then held the post of dictator to the empire, submitted to the emperor not only the confession of a nihilist prisoner which implicated Constantine, but also a number of documentary evidence in support of the accusation. The czar received the papers without saying a single word, and the following morning handed them back to Gen. Levin Melnikoff with the remark noted on the margin: "I refuse to take any note of this preposterous accusation. It is an infamous calumny. Alexander never made any further reference to the subject, but he continued to treat Gen. Melnikoff with the same marked favor as heretofore, a fact which was not without significance.

At the present emperor had some feeling on the subject of these suspicions against the Grand Duke Constantine is shown by the fact that within a few days of his accession he had the emperor's order depriving his uncle of his post of president of the council of the empire, and also of his office of lord high admiral of the Russian navy. The grand duke then left to leave the capital and to take up his residence in quasi banishment at Ouarda, his magnificent palace near Yalta, in the Crimea. Some months ago Constantine was restored to the post of president of the marriage of his granddaughter, Princess Alexandra of Greece to the emperor's youngest brother, Paul. Since then he has resided in the palace at Yalta in the immediate neighborhood of this city. His eldest son, who was disgraced and discarded by the imperial family in 1876 for having married the daughter of a duke, and the beautiful wife of the grand duke, lived in the palace chapel of its jaded uncle to the present time. He is now in the hands of the emperor's youngest brother, Paul. Since then he has resided in the palace at Yalta in the immediate neighborhood of this city.

Another member of the imperial Russian family who has recently been at death's door, and who is not yet altogether out of danger is the beautiful wife of the grand duke, the eldest brother of the czar. Although her illness is mainly due to natural causes, yet it has been vastly complicated and aggravated by the nervousness of the czar's wife, who, in the six years ago, having been married the daughter of the postmaster of the village in which he was interned at the time the postmaster's residence was destroyed by being notorious nihilists and now undergoing terms of penal servitude in the mines for their connection with the movement.

Prince Peter of Oldenburg, who happened to be present, and who until recently commanded the corps of gendarmes of the imperial guard, immediately exclaimed: "In that case I should at once have assembled the troops under my command and caused them to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Duke Vladimir as next in the line of succession to the throne." This remark made the rounds of the various clubs and saloons here and finally came to the ears of the emperor. The latter, although fond of his brother Vladimir, cordially dislikes and distrusts the latter's wife, who is a German princess of the grand ducal house of Mecklenburg-Schwerin by birth, and who has retained her Lutheran creed instead of becoming a member of the Russian church.

Horried at the bare idea of a Lutheran princess becoming czarina, and aware of the enormous influence which his beautiful wife had exercised over the emperor, somewhat stupid husband of the emperor, after consultation with the procurator-general of the holy synod, M. Pobledonoff, he ordered the emperor to abdicate, ordering the succession to the crown. According to the terms of this decree members of the emperor's family were to be excluded from the throne. Not only the Grand Duke Constantine, but also the emperor's three children, but also the emperor's third brother, Sergius, who is married to Princess Elizabeth, of Hesse-Darmstadt, were to be excluded from the throne, and an immense offense to the Grand Duke

Vladimir's relatives and friends at Berlin. I may say that Prince Peter of Oldenburg, after having been subjected to all kinds of petty slights and insults at the court since the utterance of his remarks as above quoted, has recently been driven to resign the command of the Russian army which he has held for the last six-and-twenty years.

Merchant Traveler: "Maude," he said softly, as he pulled out the tremulo step in his larynx, will you marry me?" "No," she answered, with all the earnestness of sincere conviction. He paused as if in deep thought, and then said: "Strange, strange how a simple word revives scenes and impressions that have passed away. I am almost certain that I have heard that before."

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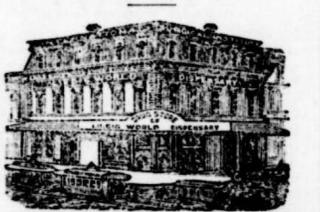
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