

OFFICE, 14 WEST FOURTH STREET.

A KISS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

OR, HOW MR. PICKLEBY CAME TO BE FLOODED. Our boarding-house is not a common boarding-house, nor are our boarders common boarders.

But, however select a company may be, the fact that they are select is not an infallible proof that nothing disreputable can occur among them.

This has been especially proved in our case. We have just been deeply agitated, excited—shocked! Happily for the reputation of our place, the affair of which I speak had a gratifying termination.

In our boarding-house resides an inveterate old bachelor named Wigley. Mr. Wigley is by no means such a person as some people invariably represent old bachelors to be, neither in appearance nor disposition.

One day last week, Miss Celestia Nobbs—another of our boarders, and a maiden lady of thirty-five or thereabouts—heard a noise in the hall below, and stepping out of her apartment, she leaned over the banisters, to see what was the cause of it.

"I am so glad you are come!" she heard a voice, which she at once recognized as Mrs. Pickleby's, and the next moment she saw that lady pass beneath her to meet a gentleman, of whom she had but a partial view.

"Come with me—come to my room; Mr. Pickleby is at his office, and I am alone." Then, both started to ascend the stairs, and Miss Nobbs hastened to withdraw into her room, but not before she caught a better glimpse of the man who was with Mrs. Pickleby, and discovered in him as she thought, no other than Mr. Wigley.

Miss Celestia Nobbs is one of those pure and immaculate beings, the chief desire of whose hearts it is that nothing sinful shall occur on earth, and who, feeling themselves to be spotless philanthropically, as they seem to imagine, spend their time in prying into the affairs of other people, and dictating to them the course they should pursue.

"Ah! ha!" said the spinster, as she closed the door of her room, and walked on tip-toe to a seat—"it is come to this, has it? I always thought there was something more than everybody knew going on between the two."

"If the wicked, shameless creature thinks," said Miss Nobbs to herself—"if she has the faintest idea that such actions will be suffered in this house, she will find herself mistaken, I can assure you."

"She heard footsteps without, and as she passed into the hall, she saw Mr. Wigley descending the stairs, and heard him leave the house."

"Left her, have you?" she uttered under her breath. "Well, well, I never expected to witness such goings-on—never! But you're found out—you'll know—both of you!"

She hastened to the room of Miss Nobbs, on the floor above. Miss Nobbs is a confident of Miss Nobbs, a few years older than herself, and a few degrees thinner in person. Miss Nobbs was gratified to find Mrs. Briggs in company with her friend on this occasion. Mrs. Briggs, I may as well state, is a widow lady of some twelve years standing who had long endeavored—it is generally believed by nearly all in the house—to captivate and ensnare, in the meshes of matrimony, Mr. Wigley.

Miss Nobbs smiled mysteriously as she entered, and, carefully closing the door, she seated herself beside her friends.

"I am glad to find you together," she said, "for I have a thing of the greatest importance to make known."

"Do tell!" exclaimed Miss Nobbs, with an eager air—"what is it?"

"Something you'll be surprised to know. Oh! it is the most wonderful thing in the world how deceptive some people can be! Never in all my life—"

"But what is it?" exclaimed both the ladies in a breath.

"The most shameful goings on you ever witnessed, I'll be sworn!" replied the excited virgin, in so impressive a manner that the curiosity of the listeners became unendurable. Then pausing a moment, to let her words take full effect, Miss Nobbs looked solemnly from one to the other, and continued:

"Will you believe it ladies, when I tell you that I saw with my own eyes, Mrs. Pickleby in the hall below with a man?"

"You don't say!" uttered Miss Nobbs. "Shocking!" exclaimed Mrs. Briggs. "Gracious heavens!" ejaculated both the listeners simultaneously, elevating their hands in horror and surprise.

"Yes, she told him she was all alone—that Mr. Pickleby was not at home—and so, they went off together. Oh! it is almost incredible, such shameful conduct!"

"The immodest, unblushing thing!" exclaimed the widow, indignantly.

"Such wickedness!" echoed Miss Nobbs. "But who is it she was with?"

"Mr. Wigley."

"Is it possible?"

Mrs. Briggs was stricken dumb by the announcement of the name, and for a few moments, gave some token of an intention to swoon; but thinking better of it, she refrained!

"This is a terrible thing!" said Miss

Nobbs earnestly, after enjoying fully the sensation she had created.

"Terrible indeed!" uttered Miss Nobbs. "And not to be borne!" exclaimed the indignant widow, her face assuming a very rufescent tint as she spoke.

"It must not be borne!" said the spinster. "The reputation of this house will not allow such things to pass unnoticed!"

"And our reputations!" chimed the other maiden.

"Think what we should be made to suffer," cried the widow, "if it should become known that we live in the midst of such iniquitous scenes!"

"Our characters are not to be trifled with thus!" exclaimed Miss Nobbs, with a determined air, "and this thing must not be suffered to stop here!"

"Poor Mr. Pickleby!" sighed Miss Nobbs. "I pity him from my heart!"

"And so do I," said the widow; "for I dare say he is not the least suspicion of his wife's perfidy."

"He must know it," uttered Miss Nobbs, speaking in a low and deliberate tone of voice.

"You are right—he must know it; but how?" inquired Miss Nobbs.

"We must tell him!"

"Will it be proper?"

"It will be doing our duty."

"Yes," said Mrs. Briggs, "it will be but the performance of a Christian duty. We must tell him!"

"And I, for one, am ready to go and perform that duty," remarked Miss Nobbs, with a meek and resigned look as if she had taken it upon herself to suffer at the stake.

"And I," said the widow.

"Oh, I will accompany you; I am sure I only want to do what is right," said Miss Nobbs submissively.

"Then let us go at once."

"Yes; the sooner he has his mind disabused in respect to his wife, the better."

Forth, accordingly, the immaculate trio sallied as soon as they could make the necessary preparations, and bent their course toward the store of Mr. Pickleby, in the lower part of the city.

The merchant was busily engaged in the transaction of some business, when he saw the three ladies approach him. He suspended operations, and inquired what happy circumstance had brought them thither.

"It is a sad errand on which we are come," said Miss Nobbs, shaking her head with a melancholy air.

"A dreadful errand!" affirmed Miss Nobbs dubiously.

"A more dreadful errand you could not imagine!" added Mrs. Briggs, making a strong effort to shudder.

"For mercy's sake, ladies!" cried the alarmed man, turning pale, "what is it?"

"In the first place, Mr. Pickleby," said the first spinster, "we wish to assure you that you have our sympathies—that we feel for you."

"From the very bottom of our hearts," added the elder maiden.

"And nothing but a deep sense of duty," remarked the widow, "has induced us to take the step we have, in order to reveal to you such distressful news."

"What is it?—what is it?" exclaimed the merchant, frantically. "Don't keep me in suspense; what has happened?"

"Your wife!" uttered Miss Nobbs, in a significant tone.

"Yes, Mr. Pickleby, your wife!" repeated the other two in a breath.

Mr. Pickleby staggered backwards, while a look of dreadful terror overspread his features.

"My wife!" he gasped, "what of my wife? Is she sick?—is she dead?"

Miss Nobbs closed her eyes, and shook her head slowly.

"Then why do you alarm me so? what would you have me understand?"

"Is there not something that, to your noble mind is worse than death?"

"Eh!—what—what do you mean?"

"But Mrs. Pickleby—she—she—"

"And now, said Wigley, after helping his adversary to his feet—'now, that our affair is settled, please tell me what I have flogged you for.'"

"For intruding with my wife, as you well know, replied the defeated, but still indignant man."

"It is a lie!" said Wigley.

"It's the truth, responded Pickleby, 'and I can prove it.'"

"You can't do it. Come, we will go and see Mr. Pickleby herself; and show me a witness if you can."

"Very well; it is just what I desire. Mrs. Pickleby washed the blood from her face, arranged his disordered garments as well as he could, and accompanied Mr. Wigley home."

Miss Nobbs, Miss Dobbs and Mrs. Briggs were called, and an explanation demanded by the accused Wigley. Miss Nobbs persisting in the truth of what she uttered, the whole party, at the request of the injured husband, proceeded to his wife's apartment.

Mrs. Pickleby, to the surprise of all, was not alone; a man was with her. As soon as Mr. Pickleby saw him he smiled, and advanced and shook him by the hand.

"My brother!" said he, turning to those who had followed him.

Miss Nobbs' face became crimson.

"I fear, she stammered, 'that I have unintentionally made a mistake. This must be the gentleman I saw; and he is so like Mr. Wigley, that I was led to believe he was no other. I beg pardon!'"

As the trio of ladies took their departure, Mr. Pickleby was heard to utter divers maledictions upon the heads of all meddling, busy-tongued scandal-mongers; but he soon recovered his temper, explained the whole affair to his wife, joined heartily in the laugh that was raised at his expense, and ended by inviting Wigley to join their party that evening in a game of whist.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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