

A DEAN'S DILEMMA.

The afternoon sun streamed in through the library windows of the deanery of Ancaster, lighting up the rosy features and comfortable figure of the dean as he stood in frowning contemplation of two letters.

One, written in a sprawling, masculine hand, he took up and perused for the dozenth time.

In the wretchedly written note his affectionate son Reginald wished to inform his father that during his last vacation in town he had been introduced to Miss Lorraine, the well known actress; that he had specifically fallen in love with her, an affection that Miss Lorraine reciprocated, and, further, that, provided the dean gave his consent, dear Elmo had promised to marry him whenever he liked.

Was Reginald mad, he fiercely demanded, to ask permission to bring into the sacred atmosphere of the close a woman branded by the name of actress?

For many years, as Reginald well knew, both he and his deceased wife, Lady Augusta Meredith, as prominent members of the society for the suppression of the drama, had labored long and earnestly to prevent followers of the theatrical profession from posturing in any hall of entertainment in Ancaster.

Had his son forgot that throughout the length and breadth of the country Very Rev. John Meredith, dean of Ancaster, was renowned for his pamphlets on "The Degrading Influence of the Stage?"

Once and for all to let Reginald understand that, to his father's mind, an actress of any rank whatsoever was but a synonym for the sordid woman, and that should Miss Lorraine persist in her marriage with his son, she would enjoy the pleasure of wedding a man alienated alike from his father's heart and his father's purse.

Another blow had fallen upon the dean. In the second note, dated the previous day, Rev. Jabez Browne, minor canon of Ancaster cathedral and a prominent member of the dean's pet society, begged to inform his ecclesiastical superior that, despite every opposition, the proprietor of the Jubilee hall had at last obtained a dramatic license, and that highly colored posters, whereupon was depicted a female dancer in the most outrageous costume, were to be seen plastered on every square hoarding in Ancaster.

Would the dean be content to stand idly by while the shameful picture of this Miss Lorraine in her colorized past seal corrupted the morals of every schoolboy in the diocese?

"A lady to see you on business, sir," announced the butler at this moment.

As the dean crossed the hall on his way to the drawing room his mind conjured up a vision of the usual dowdy lady visitor with whom familiarity had bred in him a species of contempt.

The drawing room door stood slightly ajar. As the dean entered his foot made no sound upon the thick Turkey carpet. The lady was seated with her back to the long French window which opened upon the garden.

The dean, though a trifle short-sighted, had time to catch sight of a charming profile. He gave a little warning cough. The visitor turned hastily around.

"Good afternoon, madam," began the dean, bowing slightly in the direction of the armchair. "I fear I—er—have not the honor of your acquaintance." Somehow the dean had a vague consciousness that the lady's profile bore a familiar resemblance to some one of his feminine acquaintances. Though not in her first youth, the dean, from the elegance of her figure, judged her age to be between 30 and 40. A pair of sparkling dark eyes, surmounted by a fringe of golden hair, surveyed the dean with a curiously intent glance which half embarrassed him.

"I trust you will pardon the liberty I have taken in calling upon you," she said, with a little quiver in her voice, "but my errand is a very different one, and—"

She paused and uttered a deep sigh. The dean bowed gravely. This preamble was probably but the opening for the usual begging scheme.

The agitation of his visitor increased. For an instant a faintly crimson handkerchief was held to her eyes—an action which considerably hurried the dean.

"Yes," exclaimed the lady fervently as the dean paused for an answer, "you and you alone can assist me. In me you behold a distressed widowed mother who appeals to you for help in her great trouble."

After all, she was only a beggar. He would give her 5 shillings and hint at her speedy departure.

"No, no!" ejaculated the lady as the dean fumbled for his purse. "It is not money. It is justice I want. My story is brief.

"To come to the point immediately, a few weeks ago your son Reginald proposed to my daughter Elmo. She agreed to marry him on condition of your consent. That consent you refuse. My daughter, as proud as you, immediately broke off the engagement. I say nothing of your son's feelings. Those are for you to consider, but I cannot have my daughter's life spoiled without making one effort!"

lady's sob, "your errand is entirely in vain. On no consideration whatever will I give my consent to Reginald's marriage with an actress."

To his surprise the sob suddenly ceased. The lady rose from the chair, and thrusting her handkerchief in her pocket confronted him with angry, fearless eyes.

"On no consideration?" she reiterated, with a scornful emphasis, accentuated further by a glance of withering contempt. "When you have heard the rest of my story, I think you will not refuse my request."

"Never, madam," he reiterated forth with all the impressiveness of tone with which he was wont to pronounce anathema marmatha. "And further threats are useless. I will never withdraw my opposition."

To his consternation the lady burst forth into a peal of laughter. The next moment she had crossed the intervening space between them, and with a smile of familiarity which almost froze the dean's blood had laid her gloved hand upon his coat sleeve.

"What, Johnny?" she said, her dark eyes flashing roguishly. "Not even for me?"

Staggered by this amazing address, the dean stood as one petrified. With a half terrified glance he looked down to meet the gaze of those sparkling black eyes, which were fixed upon him with a curious intensity of purpose. Suddenly a dimness came before their sight. "The blood ran cold from his cheek."

"You!" he gasped hoarsely. "Lottie!"

In the space of a single minute a quarter of a century had rolled away from the dean's mind. He saw himself a student at Oxford, mainly in love with the dark eyes and rosy cheeks of Lottie Marsh, the daughter of a country innkeeper.

With a shudder at the remembrance of his own youthful folly, he thought of those passionate love letters he had hid—these fervent kisses he had once pressed on Lottie's ruby lips.

"Yes," said the clear voice of his old love, breaking it upon his meditations, "it is Lottie—the Lottie whom you throw over for a rich wife; the Lottie whose daughter's happiness you would wreck with as little compunction as you wrecked her mother's; the Lottie who, despite your baseness, has loved you all her life, who has kept all your letters."

At these words an ominous presentiment stole over the dean's heart. To give due effect to her tragic declamation Lottie made a slight pause and looked expectantly at her companion.

"Well," resumed Lottie as her dumfounded companion still made no sign, "I think you will give your consent now."

"No," burst forth the dean, suddenly recovering his presence of mind; "in spite of our old acquaintance I must still refuse my consent."

He drew himself up with a certain dignity and glared solemnly down at the trim figure which stood so close to his side.

But with one hand laid lightly on the back of her chair Lottie still surveyed him with the same disconcerting glance.

"Of course you are prepared for the consequences," with the slightest suspicion of a sneer. "I shall first instruct my solicitor to bring a breach of promise action against your son."

The dean reddened slightly, but reflecting that in all probability the matter could be settled out of court by means of a certain money compensation he shrugged his shoulders with a wretched air of indifference.

"How the circulation of The Times will go up," continued Lottie, eyeing the dean more closely, "when the account is published of how both the dean of Ancaster and his son in turn failed an actress. So appropriate, you know," with a sneering laugh which made her companion's blood again run cold—"the father throws over the mother and the son repeats the example with the daughter."

"You are confusing matters," he said, with a wretched attempt at ease. "After five and twenty years' silence you can scarcely sneer me for breach of promise—more especially as you have been married in the interval. And as for my son, I have no doubt we can come to some pecuniary arrangement which will compensate you for any inconvenience either you or your daughter may have suffered."

"No, John Meredith," she said slowly, "I refuse your pecuniary offers. So far as my own case is concerned, I admit it would be useless to sue you for breach of promise. But," with emphatic emphasis in her tone, "your letters and the account of your old flirtation, as you might be pleased to call it, shall be given in the pages of The Times along with your son Reginald's in order to show the public the force of heredity. Like father like son, you know."

"And then, madam," she ended, with a wicked smile, "how delighted every one will be to read that the president of the Society For Suppression of the Drama was once mainly in love with Lottie Lorraine, the celebrated dancer and burlesque actress."

Boas of perspiration broke out on the dean's forehead as the awful nature of the dilemma flashed upon his mind. The situation was frightful.

the publication of those idiotic, passionate love letters, with the account of his youthful flirtation worked up in the "spicy" style of The Times, would cause not merely the loss of prestige in his own diocese, but would render him the laughing stock of the country. Visions of cartoons in the comic papers headed, "I am Dean and the Dancer," arose before his fevered mind.

With a triumphant look at his arched face, Lottie again addressed him.

"When are the letters to be published?" she asked in a dangerously quiet voice.

In their preoccupation neither had heard the entrance of another person into the room. With the familiarity of old friendship the minor canon, passing the open drawing room and seeing the form of the dean, had stepped in to discuss the question of the posters.

At the sight of a golden haired woman clutching the dean's arm and looking up into his face the Rev. Jabez Browne uttered a sudden exclamation. With a startled expression the dean turned around.

"I beg your pardon," said the canon in a frigid tone. "I am afraid I interrupted."

"No, no," exclaimed the dean, who after the first shock of surprise was disposed to look upon the canon's appearance as a divine interposition from his present difficulty. "I am at liberty now. This lady," bowing in the direction of Lottie, "has finished her business."

But the canon's mental balance had received a shock. The sight of the dean's agitation had not escaped his lynx eyes.

"Another time," he said coldly. "My business is simply connected with those theatrical posters. I presume I have your sanction to arrange a meeting for their removal from the boardings?"

At the word posters Lottie had pricked up her ears.

"What placards are those?" she asked, coolly stepping forward and addressing the minor canon.

"The disgraceful advertisements of a theatrical company," thundered forth the minor canon, in whose eyes Lottie had met with little favor, "in which a creature is represented in the disgraceful attire of a ballet dancer."

"Oh, indeed!" remarked Lottie deliberately. "Considering that the dean's future daughter-in-law happens to be the prima donna of the company and that the humble person who now addresses you is no less than her mother, the shameless creature, you can hardly expect his reverence to consent to hold such a meeting."

Two months after this event an announcement of the marriage of Miss Elmo Lorraine to Reginald, only son of Very Rev. John Meredith, dean of Ancaster, appeared in The Times.

From the moment of his unwilling consent the dean had refused to hold any further communication with his son.

On the morning after the wedding a letter directed in a feminine handwriting arrived at the deanery by the early post. As the dean read the contents his face assumed an apoplectic hue, and for the first time for many years a shockingly profane exclamation escaped his lips.

"My dear Johnny—Pardon the familiarity of the address, as this is the first time I shall call you by the old name. As your son's wedding is now an accomplished fact I wish to clear my mind of a few trifle matters I had the pleasure of narrating for your benefit at our last interview."

"In the first place, I am neither the mother nor any relative of your new daughter-in-law. The similarity of our names was a mere accident."

"Mrs. Reginald Meredith, I believe, is the daughter of an old college friend of yours, Rev. James Lorraine, who unfortunately died penniless, leaving no resource for Miss Lorraine but to gain her living on the stage by means of an exceptionally fine voice."

"The story of your opposition to her engagement was a matter of general knowledge in the company in which we were both taking part. In posing as her injured mother I saw a way to gratify my own revenge for your youthful desertion and at the same time a means of conferring happiness upon our prima donna."

"Hoping you will pardon my little trick and with kind regards to Canon Browne, believe me to remain, your old affectionate friend,

"P. S.—I have omitted to state that all your letters were burned years ago when I first married my present husband, who is, I am thankful to say, still alive."—Hartford Times.

Characteristic Steinitz Anecdote. A characteristic story is going the rounds concerning Steinitz, the famous chess player. Steinitz is said to sometimes stand quite still in the midst of a crowded thoroughfare while he mentally considers some opening or end game in all its bearings. "Move on!" said a policeman to him on one occasion. "I beg your pardon, but it is your move," said Steinitz courteously, but with firmness. —Westminster Gazette.

A Small Affair. "You have a pretty extensive ranch down in Texas, haven't you, Colonel?" "Yes, sir." "And then, what do you do with it?" "I don't do anything with it. It is a little seven by nine concern."

"Seven by nine what?" "Miles." —Indianapolis Journal.

THE SCHOOLMA'AM'S RAISE.

Year by year, and day by day, she saw the city peopled with more and more of these little fellows. With hosts of children large and small, and patiently she taught them all. And as the summer swiftly flew, she sometimes taught their children too. Through weary months of busy days the schoolma'am hoped to

She did all that a woman could. Her arguments were sound and good. She drew positions up, so the That all the people ran to sign. The summer contract all agreed. That she should have in you, indeed. The board of education made. Long, smiling promises of aid. While out of all the tangled maze The schoolma'am hoped to

At last it seemed the way was cleared— At last the board could not decide. Just how these funds should be applied. Raise by experience? Or by grade? So still they wavered and delayed. They waded out a girl or two Who didn't have enough to do. These surely were the baloney days The schoolma'am hoped to

But weary decades came and went. Until her faithful life was spent. And now across her lonely grave The long green grasses gently wave. Her tombstone, in its ancient place, Stands up, yet lies upon its face. For though it says she has gone higher I know her soul must still aspire. And lingering long for Gabriel's days When every schoolma'am

—F. M. AHS in Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.

An Ideal Husband. A woman with a most vivid imagination describes what she considers a good husband. The strange part of it is that with all the angelic qualities with which she insists he must be endowed she expects him to live happily with an earthly wife. Here are her views: "An ideal husband is first of all a thorough Christian. He is truthful, affectionate and ambitious; one who is thoughtful of those around him and a lover of home, music and children; a man who is not given to boasting or conceit. He is generous, amiable, ready to lend a helping hand in the kitchen, garden or sickroom and a thorough gentleman; prudent and industrious, leaving good impressions wherever he goes. An ideal husband must be brave, true, generous, loving, sensible, gentle, kind, clever, well educated, one in whom I can place the most implicit confidence. He must have always loved his mother. He must love his mother-in-law for his wife's sake, one whom his wife can look up to and feel proud of. He must be good to his own children. If he goes to his club, he is always at home at reasonable time." —Chicago Times-Herald.

Smitten With Religion. I think the funniest incidents I observed during the civil war, says General Sherman in his reminiscences, were some of those that occurred among the colored people during my march from Atlanta to the sea. Many of the negroes hailed the coming of the Yankees, bringing the freedom of the colored people with them, as a certain indication of the immediate approach of the judgment day and the end of the world. Consequently there was a great religious excitement among the darkies, and by many of these poor creatures protracted or revival meetings were held.

The incidents that occurred at some of these meetings beggar description. I remember on one occasion the preacher tried his utmost to induce one big buck negro to come to the "mourner's bench," but without avail. At length, losing all patience, he exclaimed:

"By do holy agstida, do word ob do Lord dose smite dat man."

Suiting the action to the word, he felled the buck senseless to the ground by a tremendous blow on the head, delivered with the ponderous volume of the Scriptures.

Harvey Combe's Reproof. Perhaps the neatest reproof to a long winded preacher was that given by Harvey Combe when lord mayor to Dr. Farr. As they were coming out of church together Farr was so foolish as to ask the other how he liked his sermon. "Well, doctor, to speak frankly, there were four things in it that I did not like to hear. They were the quarters of the church clock which struck before you had finished."

The Surroundings. The heroine had the center of the stage. "Amid such surroundings," she exclaimed, looking raptly at the people, "who could not be happy?" Upon her felicity broke the villain rudely.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed through his nose. "Wait!" She shivered with a nameless dread. "Wait," he cried, "till you see the scenery we get when we go on the road." —Detroit Tribune.

All "Sticks." Manager—There wasn't a stick left after the fire in my theater. Sympathizer—What! Do you mean to say that all the members of your company were burned to death? —New York Herald.

Results. A postbox asks, "Oh, where does beauty linger?" We think that we are breaking no confidence when we reply that in these artistic times it generally lingers on the toilet table until the girl puts it on with a brush and a powder puff. —London Tit-Bits.

SEA LIONS KNOW A GOOD THING.

How One of Them Carried Some Cheerful News to His Fellow. Once upon a time Lake Merced stood high in the estimation of the city anglers. It was accessible and didn't require much influence to cast a line in its waters. Big fish lingered among the woody depths and browsed along the sandy shores on the western end. Cornelius Stagg then kept a roadhouse opposite the old race track, and there was a good dinner for the belated angler under his roof and a good bed. Scott Tidball, the artist; John Adams and dozens of worthy fishermen since departed have swung their rods over the ripples of Merced and compared notes around the blazing fire at night and were perhaps as boastful and mandacious as the anglers of the generation that succeeded them.

The trout era passed away and was followed by an epoch of carp. These mud grubbers fattened on the hardening grasses and led a life of undisturbed and ignominious indolence. Nobody wanted them at any price, and the barnacles grew upon the elders of the gang from simple and untaken laziness. Then another change took place, and the fish commissioners announced that they were going to put muskellunge in the lake. A month or so afterward they did, and it was supposed that the reign of the carp was over, and that these voracious fresh water sharks would completely exterminate them.

A sagacious sea lion felt recently that there must be something worth seeing beyond the neighborhood of the Cliff House and Suto heights. So he made a journey to Lake Merced and found the water and the surroundings congenial. He tasted the carp and approved of their flavor, and being a genial and generous lion he returned to the seal rocks and told his chums where he had been and what he had seen. An excursion party, consisting of a select number of gentlemen and lady marine lions, was at once organized, and on a fine moonlight night the band started for Merced. Everything was just as the pioneer had represented, and a brilliant season of feeding and general enjoyment was inaugurated.

About this time the Spring Valley company drew a net across the lake to see how the muskellunge were getting on. The sea lions, now permanent residents of the lake, languidly heaved their flippers to the fishermen to encourage them to keep on with their nets and let them know how many muskellunge were left, for the muskellunge had got to the last dozen or so of carp when the sea lions came in, and the sea lions had done up the muskellunge when the experimental nets were cast. Nothing but a few catfish and stickleback now remain in Lake Merced. —San Francisco Bulletin.

It Was True. An Oil City gentleman, who, like many others, is fond of fishing for trout, had nearly finished a long day's tramp on a stream which was strewn with cut poles, bait boxes and other evidences of the native angler.

He had noticed, but ignored, an occasional sign tucked to a tree of "No fishing on this stream," not allowing the weather stained admonitions to interfere with what little enjoyment he was getting. The day was nearly over, and he was nearing the mouth of the stream when he was hailed by a resident of a neighboring farmhouse.

"Hello, cap'n!" "Well?" "You been fishin' up there?" "Yes." "Can ye read?" "Yes." "Did ye see that sign tellin' ye there's no fishin' up here?" "Yes, and it's true too."

Then the tired sportsman stopped on to inspect a likely hole, and it wasn't until after he had put on a fresh bait that the light seemed to break upon the farmer's understanding, who granted and faced about for home. —Oil City Blizzard.

The Origin of the Four Post Bedstead. In medieval times, when life was very insecure, it was usual for people to sleep on a bed which was surrounded by sides of boards, with strong posts at the four corners. These sides contained sliding doors, which could be fastened inside. When men retired to rest, they took a weapon with them. If attacked in the night, they were aroused by the noise made by the crashing in of their wooden defenses and were able to defend themselves. When the law became strong enough to protect human life, the sides of the bedstead were gradually dispensed with, but the four posts remained. The box-like bedstead still survives in the rural parts of Scotland and is almost necessary where the earthen floors and imperfect ceilings cause much damp. Emily Bronte, in "Wuthering Heights," describes one of those bedsteads in the old mansion as forming a "little closet." Mr. Lockwood, who had to sleep in it, says, "I slid back the panel sides, got in with my light, pulled them together again and felt secure."

Down to the Limit. "Your offense," said the territorial judge, "was most flagrant. I feel compelled to give you the full limit of the law."

"Judge," pleaded Soapstone Bowers, "this here is no less than an insult. It is the first time I was ever held down to a limit in my life." —Indianapolis Journal.

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