A strong light that came from an immense pile of jewels.

Carmen Sylva & Elizabeth Queen of Roumania

Author of a Real Queen's Fairy Tales

He fell on one knee before Carma and implored her to forgive him.

Elisabeth

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ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ROUMANIA, better known by her pen name, Carmen Sylva, has written a new book of fairy stories, which is published by Davis & Co., Chicago. These stories will charm all young lovers of beautiful tales. They are delightfully written. In theme and in style they reveal the work of an experienced writer endowed with a wealth of imagination. While in no sense sermons, they yet teach as their most important lesson the necessity of a boundless love toward all creatures which expresses itself in acts of kindness and self-denial. These fairy tales differ from some of the old-fashioned sort in that they avoid dwelling upon descriptions of the horrible and the grotesque; though they do not fail to offer a variety of incidents as original as they are picturesque. As an example of the pretty fancies sketched in the stories is the one which forms the theme of "Hans' Adventure With the Shadows." Hans is a lad who for some time wonders in vain what becomes of shadows when the sun goes down. The replies which his mother gives him do not satisfy him. Finally to his questionings comes the answer from the shadows themselves. They stop to talk to Hans one night as they are leaving the world. They offer to take Hans with them that he may see the Shadowland, where all the shadows dwell when they are supposed to have vanished from existence. Hans has a series of interesting adventures among these ethereal beings, and comes back to earth all the better for the knowledge he has gained of those replicas of ourselves.

Beautiful in conception and treatment is the story told in "A Festival in Heaven"; of the joyous reception accorded some sorrowing souls when they journeyed to heaven from the world which had used them so ill.

One of the stories which shows best Carmen Sylva's style and the peculiar play of her fancy is "Carma, the Harp Girl." It is in part as follows:

All along the banks of one of the long, narrow inlets which the lake throws out in all directions into the woodlands around, a band of joyous children were hurrying, shouting for glee, "Carma is coming! Carma is coming!"

And in a little boat that kept appearing and disappearing between the tall forest trees sat a girl, whose sweet girlish face was framed in a wealth of curly brown hair tied lightly back by a red ribbon. Her deep-blue eyes, blue as the waters of the lake, had a strange brightness, as though they were lighted up by an unseen ray; there was a tinge of sadness in them, too, at times, as they looked out from under the high arched brows, and from behind the fringe of long, dark lashes whose shadows swept her cheek. Her soft, velvety skin was slightly sunburned, her lips were of the richest red, her teeth milk-white; her small hands held a harp, a source of glad expectancy to the impatient little crowd that escorted her boat. The boatman who rowed it seemed to be an old friend; she had many a word and smile for him, and pointed out the children to him as they drew near. Thereupon he lay down his oars, and while the boat glided smoothly onward she began to tune her harp, and at the sound the birds flocked around and flitted from bough to bough, listening with their little heads on one side for the voice of the one singer who alone among the children of men almost surpassed themselves in the sweetness and inexhaustible variety of her songs.

And now the boat touched shore and the children formed a circle on the grass, while song after song poured from the singer's throat, a stirring and lifting up their little hearts. She sang of the knights of old, and how they fought; she sang of elves and fairies, of lordly castles and fair damsels dwelling therein, of terrible monsters, of the seas and the woods and the bees and the birds; she sang, too, of all that passes in the minds of little children, till her small hearers glanced at one another in astonishment, wondering where Carma could have learned all these things, of which they had never spoken to any grown-up person.

But then Carma was just like a child herself—little taller than themselves, that was all. She felt as a little child feels; she only knew that she had come into the world to make others happy—she knew nothing more. That was all that had ever been told her. She thought she could remember still how an angel had carried her down from heaven in his arms, only not like other children to a good home and loving parents, but to a rosebush, under which she was found by the good folk who brought her up. They were very poor, this good couple, and often had enough to do to earn their daily bread, but they could not find it in their hearts to leave this poor little thing to perish with cold and hunger under the rosebush, especially as they thought that it could not have been without a purpose that the angel placed it in their path. They were much amazed to find that the little thing could already speak, and told them how the angel had flown down with it, and had comforted it on the way by telling it that it was coming down there to help make the world more beautiful; that it was for this reason that it was sent by God.

She was to make the world more beautiful. The good couple wondered greatly what that could mean. They saw well enough that she was very beautiful, but then there are many beautiful children in the world for whom, it seemed to them, the world is not always so much the better. But they soon perceived that this child was as lovable as she was beautiful; not only had she a voice like a silver flute and a temperament as joyous as that of the young skylark, but her soul was as pure as a dewdrop through which the sun shines, and she could neither say nor hear an unkind word said of any one. Everything that was said to her she thought was meant in kindness, and this trusting disposition won all hearts, so that folks vied with each other in showering upon her all that she might stand in need of—fruit and flowers and pence. And she often brought home to her foster parents more than she could ever have hoped for.

"Where do you learn all those songs?" people would sometimes ask her.

"The angel teaches me them."

"What angel?"

"The angel who brought me here; he sings to me in my sleep and when I wake I know them."

And people shook their heads and went on wondering. Only the children felt no surprise. They thought it quite natural that Carma should sing, just as the birds do, to whom the angels also teach their songs, else how should they learn them? She told how all the children are brought down here by angels; she was quite sure of that, and if only children would pay heed to them the angels would teach them many things while they are asleep.

She had a harp that had been given her by an old man who showed her how to play it—as much as he knew himself; the rest she learned from the angel, and her foster-parents were often astonished to hear her playing in the night and then to see her next day apparently in no wise tired, but on the contrary as bright and lively as if she had slept the whole night long.

It was an unfailing source of amusement to the children to sail the little boats Carma made for them out of the broad coltsfoot leaves skillfully bound together with sedges; and she made little harps of rushes, with strings of gossamer and spider's web, and placed them in the boats; and the little harps began of themselves to play so sweetly as they floated away on the stream that the children were wild with delight and stretched out their hands to catch the boats, but they slipped away between their fingers, or if ever one was caught the harp in it stopped playing instantly. * * * All this made the children take such pleasure in beautiful things that one never heard of naughtiness in the whole village; they were so happy it never occurred to them to get in mischief. They knew it would distress Carma and for nothing in the world would they do that.

In the very hot weather they made Carma a bower of green branches to sit under in her boat. They were always very curious to know where she lived, for they had never seen her home; and one day she told them she slept among the squirrels in the wood. And the very next day when she came there were five or six squirrels running up and down her harp. They rushed down among the children and were quite friendly, playing with them and then pretending to tease them by suddenly darting away into the trees, swinging themselves from bough to bough and peeping out as though to say, "Catch me if you can." In the midst of the wildest merriment Carma clapped her hands and said, "Away!" and they were off like the wind. * * *

On another occasion when Carma arrived the bottom of the boat looked as green as if it were strewn with forest leaves, but when she tuned her harp and began to sing all the leaves stirred and moved and they turned out to be countless tiny little tree frogs that lifted up their heads and prepared to sing, too. But frogs have only the one tune; they always sing, "Brekekekex, koax-koax! Brekekekex, koax-koax!" But these little tree frogs sang with such good will, the croaking grew louder every minute, and at last made such a din and clatter it was like the sound of an enormous rattle. The children laughed till the whole wood re-echoed, and the hares and the deer started and took flight, thinking the shooting season must have begun.

But now came the great treat Carma had in store for all the children: she gave each of them one of the dear little frogs, explaining that they are great weather prophets and will always tell when it is going to rain, and also that they can be made as tame as any other animal if one is really fond of them. The children must feed them well with flies and make them very happy and comfortable, and they would soon see what true and faithful little friends they would have in the frogs. Soon a little frog was seen to be sitting on the dinner table in every cottage catching all the flies and swallowing them down as fast as it could stuff them into its great big mouth. And each child had much to tell of the wonderful doings of his own special frog; and every one of the little creatures had a glass filled with fresh water and with nice green leaves in it to go in and out of as it liked. They were so happy that they never thought of running away, but stayed quite contentedly in the homes Carma had found for them. They all had the loveliest names, Leaflet, and Wryface, and Jumper, and Croaker, and Spindleshanks, and Bandylegs, and Humpback, and Goggleeyes, and Leapfrog, and Highjinks, and Jack-in-the-box, and Will-o'-the-wisp, and ever so many more that had never been thought of. But sometimes in a mild night in springtime the frogs all disappeared. They trooped off to attend the great frog congress in the wood, and the younger and stronger ones carried on their backs all those who were too feeble to walk.

And when they were assembled they began to talk at once in frog language—that is to say, they croaked the whole night long—telling how happy they were in their new homes, and each one praising the good behavior of his own boy friends. One little frog, who was rather lame, told how his leg had been crushed one day by something falling on it, and how the child he lived with cried on seeing this, and tied up the little limb so gently and attended to him so well that he was able now to walk about again a little, and hoped to be quite recovered by next spring. Then all the frogs sang one more grand chorus as a finale, and the meeting broke up, so that they were all home again before the children awake. * * *

Then the story goes on to relate how Carma was one day seen by a king who was traveling through the wood. The king fell in love with her and induced her to accompany him to his palace by telling Carma that she could cheer his sick mother with her songs. Carma could never refuse to administer comfort, so she went to the queen, only to find that her presence was not desired. The queen wished her son to marry a rich princess, and feared that he might marry Carma instead. Carma in sadness tried to escape to her home, but found herself a prisoner in the palace. When she implored the king to set her free he became angry and losing control of himself in his rage stabbed her. Carma, however, recovered from her wound and was finally restored to her friends.

She went home with the old people, who tended her lovingly till she was well and strong again, and when for the first time she reappeared among the children in their woodland haunt there was a great rejoicing. They brought with them to bid her welcome all the little tree frogs she had once given them, and each little frog clasped with its foreleg a tiny sunshade (the sunshades were mushrooms, some round, some flat, some broad, some long), and the effect was so irresistibly comic that Carma laughed along, and that was the first time she had laughed since she came from the palace.

"Since we are all so happy again I will make something beautiful for you," she said; and, lifting her fingers in the air, she called out: "Come! Come! Come! Come!"

In a moment the whole wood was brilliant with fireflies—she caught them in her hand and placed them in the children's hair and in her own, till they all looked as if they were crowns of stars.

Then in all that dazzling light they formed a circle round her and began to sing their songs again as in old days. They sang them all from beginning to end; as fast as one was finished they remembered another—it was a glorious evening.

But suddenly Carma grew deathly pale and the frightened children gathered close around her, for there, looking so sad, and with tears in his eyes, stood the King. He fell on one knee before Carma and implored her to forgive him—he had been ill or he would have come sooner. She must take pity on him and return and be his Queen.

But Carma shook her head and said: "You stabbed me for love and you deceived me with your falsehoods. Never will I go with you again! I will stay here with the children who love me and who cannot do without me. The Queen-mother told me you should wed a fair princess with broad lands and rich jewels. Marry her, then, and forget me and leave me here in peace, where I am so happy that I will remain forever!"

And as he still persisted in his entreaties, that was more than the children could stand, and they pulled him and pushed him and hustled him and pelted him with flowers till they had driven him from the wood. Then they came back contented, and all unknowing that it was a little revolution that they had just made, for such things had not been heard of then; to them it was merely childish justice. How could they let that man carry off Carma when he had hurt her and made her unhappy? No, he did not deserve her; he could obey his mother and marry the other one, but their Carma should never be his; he had lost her through his own fault. She was born for singing, not for marriage. She was their Carma, only theirs. They would make her so happy that she would never be able to think of any one else.

It was only strange that she did not hate the King; but whenever she saw the mark which the dagger had left, then she sighed softly to herself, that the children might not notice it.

But the dagger itself she planted in the earth and it took root and grew, and a splendid rose tree sprang forth from it, as tall as a beech, so that they could sit in its shade and inhale the perfume of hundreds of roses.

The book closes with an article entitled "Carmen Sylva," in which the Queen gives a short sketch of the influences in her life which have led her to do what it has been given to no other queen besides herself to do—to write stories which have stretched for her the boundaries of her kingdom until she numbers among her admirers children—and grown people, too—who live in lands so far from her own that to them Roumania is little more than an empty sounding name.

The fairy tales are preceded by an introduction written by George L. B. Davis. In it Mr. Davis has given a very charming picture of the German princess who became Queen of Roumania. An idea of the life led by Carmen Sylva, which in many respects differs so wide[illegible] the popular conception of what a queen's life must be, may be gained from the following selections from Mr. Davis' introduction:

The beautiful and brilliant Queen of Roumania is one of the most remarkable women of modern times, and the story of her life is as strange and wonderful as an Oriental legend.

She is almost a fairy creature by birth, for she was born a princess in a romantic castle on the Rhine, just four days after Christmas. In the same castle her ancestors had lived for nearly a thousand years. They were the heroic Princes of Weid, famous alike in scholarship, war and religion. Surrounding the castle on three sides was a great forest, and as the Princess grew to girlhood it was her chief delight to roam about under the giant trees, accompanied only by two large Danish dogs.

The Princess proved to possess a mind worthy of her noble ancestry. At 9 she composed verses; at 11 she attempted to write a novel; at 14 she composed dramas and acted them with the aid of her companions and dolls; at 15 she studied three newspapers daily and took a keen interest in politics; at 18 she had the reputation of being the best educated Princess in Europe. Throughout her teens she was called "The Princess of the Wild Rose" because of her rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes and love of forest roaming.

Just when Elizabeth was entering womanhood a young German Prince was exciting the admiration of all Europe by his military courage and skill. He was Prince Charles of Hohenzollern, whom the great powers of Europe had just rewarded by placing upon the throne of Roumania, which was then vacant as the first ruler of a new dynasty.

Now, Prince Charming, having become possessed of a throne, naturally began looking about to find the Princess Beautiful to help him govern the country. What more fitting and more in accordance with all the laws of fairyland and romance than that he should ask the most accomplished and vivacious Princess in Europe to be his bride? Such, indeed, was the case, and they were shortly married, and entered Bucharest, the capital of Roumania, amid such rejoicings and splendid fetes as had rarely if ever been seen in the land.

Immediately the young bride plunged into her new duties with all the energy that made her remarkable as a girl and young woman. She quickly learned the Roumanian language, and by her overflowing love and sympathy, and by hard work, had soon completely won the hearts of her subjects. And to-day, after over thirty years on the throne, she is the idol of all her people.

Her first book was written in a peculiar manner. One day the National Superintendent of Schools came to her and said he wanted a book to offer as a prize at the end of the year to certain Roumanian schoolchildren, and suggested that her Majesty write one. The Queen entered into the plan with enthusiasm, and in three weeks had written a book of fairy tales, taking old Roumanian legends as a foundation for her stories.

The volume was such a success and creating it gave the Queen such pleasure that she turned to writing in earnest, and volume after volume has appeared bearing the name "Carmen Sylva" on its title page. One day in each month is now devoted to reading the Queen's books in the public schools of Roumania and they have been translated and retranslated into diverse tongues until her pen has exceeded her scepter in power and her fame as a writer has passed above her fame as a Queen.

Her literary work is by no means confined to fairy tales, but includes a number of novels, several volumes of poems, numerous dramas, a book of proverbs, a philosophical treatise and an opera libretto. However, the Queen finds her greatest delight and inspiration in writing fairy tales and it is worthy of note as a proof her world-wide popularity that the present volume of tales will be published simultaneously in six or eight different countries.

The Queen's capacity for work seems boundless. It is her daily custom while residing in the royal palace in Bucharest during the winter months to rise at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. A little later she enters the great writing-room—which, with its large palms and towering ferns of various kinds set in urns, its profusion of flowers and its murmuring fountain resembles a garden more than a room—where, seated at a small desk, she works at some new poem or tale as earnestly as might an author in a garret. (Published by Davis & Co., Chicago. Price $1 50.)

Some Calendars.

Among the calendars for 1902 there appear several favorites which seem to have won for themselves a place in public regard. Conspicuous among these is "The Western Girl Calendar," by Gertrude Partington. This is "The California Girl" of several past seasons, who appears again in characteristic poses—as an equestrienne in outing attire, a tennis player and last as a dark-eyed senorita of the Southwest. (Price $1; in board, 50c.)

A calendar for lovers of dogs is one printed on dark gray paper and ornamented with dogs of various kinds, from the handsome pointer to naughty puppies who make a great deal of mischief. (Price 50c.)

"The California Wild Flower Calendar" is one of the handsomest offered this year. It consists of copies of color sketches made by Edith White. Our representative flower, the poppy, opens the collection. This is followed by the wild pansy, the brodaea, baby blue eyes, the Mariposa lily, the Indian paint brush. The lithographing of the flower sketches has been very well done. The choice of subjects and the workmanship make this calendar just the gift for absent Californians, or for Eastern friends who do not know our representative flowers. It more nearly approaches a work of art than any other calendar that has been called to our attention; for each leaflet has been so carefully done that it resembles a delicately executed painting in oil. (Price $1 50.)

The little Squirrel Calendar that made such a hit last year is out again and looking about as pert as ever. Each calendar has a squirrel skin for decoration—fur, tail and all. It seems to make a great hit with the small folk. (Price 50c.)

All of the above are published exclusively by the Dodge Publishing Company of San Francisco.

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Christmas Story of Real Worth.

A STORY of special interest at this season of the year is "The Man Who Knew Better," by T. Gallon. It relates the adventures which befell a man named Andrew Judkin during several days preceding Christmas. Judkin, so the story goes, is a rich bachelor, who lives in solitary state in a handsome house in London. Years of hard work and a devotion to business have made him a power in that part of the business world where his interests lie. Judkin cares nothing whatever for anything in life which does not contribute directly to his own personal comfort or to his material interests. In his scheme of existence there is no place for the exercise of loving kindness toward his fellow creatures.

Ever since he has been a lad he has denied the claims of any one upon his bounty. Even his only brother he has tried to cast out of his remembrance because this brother, Bob Judkin, has been unfortunate; and, in Andrew's sight, to be poor is to be deserving of no pity whatever. Only those who succeed in the struggle for wealth have an excuse for existence, according to his creed. Such a man can see no beauty in expenditure of time and money like that which goes on at Christmas time, if this has no other object in view but just to make people happy. On the opening of the story we find Andrew Judkin at home, filled with anger at the enforced idleness which he is compelled to undergo because the slackness of business attendant upon holiday time has affected even his own interests.

In the room where Judkin is seated there is a portrait of him, painted when he was a little lad. It shows a boy with laughing, merry face, who promises to become a man just the opposite of the one Judkin is. While Judkin is sitting at leisure his confidential clerk comes in to remind him that he has an appointment to keep the next day at a town some distance from London. Judkin decides to leave town on a night train. When he is comfortably settled in the train he falls to dreaming. He imagines himself back again at home, in the room containing the portrait of himself as a child. For some reason he feels impelled to take up a candle and look at the picture. He finds the frame there, but the picture gone. At the same moment he hears a voice behind him calling, and he turns to see confronting him the figure of his childish self, apparently alive.

The child upbraids Andrew for the hardness and selfishness of his life and tells him that he is soon to learn the true worth of the love and unselfishness which he has derided for so many years. The child beckons Andrew, who, drawn by a force greater than he can combat, follows the vision out of the train to the platform of a railway station at which the train has stopped.

The train rushes on, and leaves Andrew alone in the darkness. He is soon met by a ruffian, who knocks him insensible, robs him and leaves him for dead in a deserted place. The thief has exchanged Judkin's clothes for rags, so that the body may be taken for that of an unknown tramp. Judkin, however, is not dead. After a while he wakes from stupor into semi-consciousness. The blow he has received has destroyed his memory of past events, so that he does not remember his name, though he is left with enough sense to enable him to act in a partially rational manner.

Without money, in rags and not knowing where to go for aid, the rich Andrew Judkin sets out to learn the lesson which the vision has said is before him. To his half-crazy brain it seems as if the child appeared to him at intervals to guide him along the way he must go.

Judkin undergoes great privation and suffering. Still, in the midst of his sorrows he learns slowly of the great good that exists in the world in spite of the efforts which men like his former self make to destroy it. Some of those who have suffered the greatest wrongs at his hands come forward readily to help him in his dire extremity.

Slowly reason returns to Judkin, and with it comes the memory of his identity and of his past life. But he has learned well the lesson which the spirit of his childhood pointed out to him. His recent experience, in reality short, has been so terrible in its intensity that it has molded him into a man who sees under all the sin and misery of life the good which lies at its foundation.

"The Man Who Knew Better" is at times reminiscent of "A Christmas Carol," but not to its detriment. If Mr. Gallon has, perhaps unconsciously, imitated some parts of Dickens' story, he has worked after a good model and has infused even into those parts enough originality to produce a creditable and satisfactory result. On the whole, the story is a good one, and can be recommended to those who take pleasure, as most do, in associating themselves for a little season with the spirit of good will which works to make the whole world kin.

Breaking out from under all the solemnity of the leading incidents of the book are flashes of real humor. Quite amusing is the description of a Christmas party held in a traveling theater booth, at which gather people whose normal life is passed amid sordid surroundings, which at first sight would seem calculated to crush out of existence lightness of heart and sentiment. The expenses of this festivity are defrayed by Bob Judkin, who from being a member of the traveling troupe has, by inheritance, come to be a man of wealth. The moving spirit of the party is Mr. Tolderoy, who has long worshiped a member of the troupe, Mrs. Giddings.

By the time Bob and his daughter got to Barking it was quite dark and the fair was in full swing. Only the old booth was doing no business, save on its own private and personal account. Mr. Tolderoy—as solemn and melancholy in appearance as ever—was assisting manfully to get the place in order for the entertainment of the evening—fitting up tables and piling benches which were not wanted up in corners, and only desisting from his efforts to launch sarcastic remarks at those of his helpers who did not appear properly to appreciate the necessity of hurry. The appearance of Bob Judkin, tenderly assisting to carry on the wine, caused even the face of Mr. Tolderoy to relax. He cannot be said to have smiled; Mr. Tolderoy seldom did that; it would be more appropriate to say that his features slid into a gentle expression and his lips twitched appreciatively for a moment and then were still.

"I've run 'round since I got 'ere," whispered Mr. Tolderoy, taking Bob aside, "an' they're all comin'—at least all of them as we know. There's the injyrubber man, an' Saggers, the giant, an' Mrs. S., the fat lady, an' the 'uman ostrich (as 'as consented to take his vittles unperfession'ly), an' the Boundin' Brothers. Also the owner of the learned pig; the pig stops at home. I think that's all."

"When are they coming?" asked Bob, who was all impatience.

"They closes early and comes as soon as they've dressed," replied Mr. Tolderoy. Then lowering his voice he added impressively. "The party as begins with G is now a prepari' of 'erself in a noo character."

"Indeed?" said Bob, with deep interest.

"Yes, guv'nor—that of a 'eart-breaker. She 'as played it before, sir—but never, believe me, as she'll play it this night. I 'ope," added Mr. Tolderoy, darkly, "I 'ope nothink won't 'appen—I 'ope so, indeed!"

"Does she still resist you, Tolderoy?" asked Bob, feelingly.

"Resist, guv'nor. She won't so much as look at me—save perfession'ly. I suppose it ain't to be wondered at; she is that superior that she 'ad 'er doubts as ta whether it was right and proper to invite Mrs. Saggers, the fat lady. I respect 'er for it, guv'nor, but I 'ad to point out that a perfessional is a perfessional, after all, an' the drama is the drama; so she give way."

"She is a good-hearted woman, Tolderoy," said Bob.

"Guv'nor, she is all 'eart; she bubbles with it. I 'ave 'oped that it might bubble my way, but it don't. The things that woman makes me contemplate would shock yer, gov'nor—they would, indeed. I've even 'ad a mind"—the face of Mr. Tolderoy was more lengthened and solemn than ever at this point—"I've 'ad a mind to turn to the comic line—to see if that would move 'er."

"Don't do it, Tolderoy; don't do it," urged Bob, earnestly. "She respects you as it is, Tolderoy; but if you——"

"I know—I know," murmured Mr. Tolderoy. "I don't say as I should so far lower meself, unless she drove me to it; but I might. 'Ere she comes."

Here they all come. With much laughter and jollity, and many innocent jokes, those hardworking folks, who lived their lives so far away from the public they sought to amuse; and who yet, despite all their oddities, were very simple and very ordinary people after all—had cast aside, for an hour or two their strange, unreal life—had come out from the odor of sawdust and naphtha, and had fully made up their minds to enjoy themselves. At first, of course, as might have been expected, Mrs. Giddings carried herself with a certain stiffness to Mrs. Saggers, the fat lady; showed her, in fact, that even though they might be part of the same great profession one had to draw the line somewhere. But when once they got fairly settled at table, with Bob at the head and Mr. Tolderoy at the foot, and when once the first bottles of champagne had gone down the table and up again, even Mrs. Giddings unbent. And then it was that a dark scheme entered into the brain of Mr. Tolderoy.

He began to make eyes at the fat lady. There was no mistake about it, and it was not mere politeness—deliberately, and with malice, he began to make eyes at the fat lady. Love and wine may have made him reckless, and he may have lost sight of the fact that the fat lady's husband was a giant alike by nature and by profession. In a word Tolderoy was desperate. He drank the first toast to the fat lady in a loud voice:

"Mrs. Saggers, ma'am, 'eres full shows to you, an' may yer figger be as 'eavy as the takings."

Mrs. Saggers blushed and giggled, and Mr. Saggers (a very mild-eyed young giant was he and weak in the knees) looked pleased. Mrs. Giddings looked at Tolderoy and half-raised her glass, but the reckless Tolderoy kept his eyes firmly fixed on the ample charms of Mrs. Saggers. Even when Bob proposed the health of the old show and all who belonged to it Tolderoy might never have met Mrs. Giddings before for any look he gave her.

"Tolderoy," whispered Bob Judkin in some alarm when the tables had been cleared away and all the speeches made and they were ready for dancing, "Tolderoy, you're going too far!"

"I can't 'elp it, guv'nor," replied Mr. Tolderoy. "I 'ate meself for it—but I'm bein' soured. It's been pent up for a long time—an' I think that wine must 'ave brought it out. If the party as begins with G dances with any one else, if it's so much as a 'Sir Roger,' there'll be murder. To see a arm 'round that waist would be too much for me."

Perhaps Mrs. Giddings knew the danger she faced; perhaps her heart was softer even than Mr. Tolderoy gave her credit for. Be that as it may, presently, when the dance was at its height, and the oil lamps were rattling under the sturdy steps of Mrs. Saggers, who had one of the Bounding Brothers for a partner, Mrs. Giddings seated herself in a corner, away from the others, and gazed pensively at Mr. Tolderoy, who was drinking champagne in gulps at a side table. After a little hesitation Mr. Tolderoy put down his glass, and, by stages—coming a little way, and going back again, and then coming further—got at last to Mrs. Giddings, and sat down, within about three feet of her.

"It's a 'ot night," said Mr. Tolderoy, staring straight in front of him.

"It is, indeed, Mr. Tolderoy," replied the lady, in a faint voice.

"You make it 'otter, Mrs. G," said Tolderoy, in the same tone.

"Mr. Tolderoy!" remonstrated the lady, glancing round at him.

"You do, mum," said Tolderoy, desperately. "I don't know what it is, but you 'ave an effect on me, mum, like a Turkish bath. Fust I'm 'ot—as if love was bringing out a rash on me; then I'm cold, as if I was in a draught. It may not be romantic, Mrs. G, but it's the truth. At the present moment I can feel a rash all over me."

"It's the champagne," said Mrs. Giddings, looking at him, slyly.

"It ain't, mum," retorted Tolderoy. "I may be 'eated—I may 'ave looked on the sparklin' goblet slightly more than usual; but it's love, Mrs. G, that's movin' me at this moment—an' movin' me nearer to yer." Indeed, this was so far true that Mr. Tolderoy was sliding along the bench and rapidly decreasing the space which divided him from Mrs. Giddings. "It ain't me legs, Mrs. G—it's love wot's movin' me."

"Well, I hope it won't move you any further," said Mrs. Giddings. "We shall have every one talking about it."

"I don't mind," said Mr. Tolderoy. "They may 'ave summink else to talk about before long; I feel it in me bones that I'm like the beasts that perish."

"Don't call yourself names, Tolderoy," said Mrs. Giddings. "It's the easiest thing in the world for a man to talk about love—but unless he—Mr. Tolderoy—what are you doing?"

Mr. Tolderoy, whether impelled by love or by his legs it is impossible to say, had slid along the remaining part of the form which divided him from Mrs. Giddings, and had also slid his arm about her waist. Happily for him, too, she did not seem greatly to mind; and a few minutes later Mr. Tolderoy had plunged into the dance himself with Mrs. Giddings in his arms. And, wonderful to relate, when presently he passed Bob Judkin, he winked solemnly at that gentleman.

A little later, coming to Bob alone, he whispered hoarsely in his ear:

"There was a party as begun with a G."

"Yes, I remember," said Bob, looking at him wonderingly.

"There's a summink about G as that party 'as got tired of; she wants to go a bit further down the alphabet. She's goin' to make it T." With another solemn wink Mr. Tolderoy glided away in search of "the party."

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