

Surprising Semple.

By WILLIAM F. BRYAN.

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"Mrs. Greer will look after the canary, but you will surely look after the plants, won't you?" pleaded Mrs. Semple. "Those plants are such beauties it would be a pity to have them die."

"They won't," assured Semple. "One pint to each plant, I remember."

"You're a dear!" she exclaimed. "It's awfully good of you, Ned, to let me go when you won't even have a teeny vacation yourself. I feel almost ashamed of myself leaving you all alone in the hot city."

"You have the time of your life," ordered Semple. "I'll be all right. Don't you worry about me."

"I have such a surprise for you," she said, smiling through the tears that glistened in her eyes. "I want you to write and tell me just how you like it."

"What's the surprise? I'll bet it's a cat."

"Better than that and not half the trouble," she declared.

"There's my train being called. It's a shame they will not let you pass the gate. Kiss me again, dear, and do be careful of yourself."

Ned Semple kissed her not once, but half a dozen times. He worshipped this dainty little woman who had lifted him out of bachelorhood and boarding houses and had made home a bit of paradise on earth. He hated to give her up for a whole six weeks, but he could not get away from town himself, and she needed the rest and change.

He waited until the train pulled out of the station and went back to the hot and stuffy office. It was no hardship to work when he worked for her, and there were certain deals that could not be neglected. If these deals went through they would both go to Europe next year, and the occasional problem of where the money for bills was to be found would be solved.

He remained at the office later than usual to make up for the time he had lost over their last lunch together. The occasional charwoman only made the desolation of the huge office building seem more pronounced. The elevators stopped at 8, and it was after 9 when he descended interminable flights of steps, and the sense of depression grew upon him.

In the street the open cars whizzed past crowded with tired workers who found in the speeding trolleys the breeze that could not be coaxed into their stuffy rooms. Whole families filled some of the cross benches, and Semple thought regretfully of how only two nights before he and Alida had taken a ride in the cool of the evening, going clear to the end of the run and stopping at the restaurant for a bite to eat.

He did not feel hungry tonight, though he had had no dinner. He left the car at his corner and crept up the stairs to his apartment.

By this time he was thoroughly blue, and the darkness of the place crowned his misery. As he opened the hall door he seemed to hear her voice call a cheery "Good evening, dear. I hope you had an easy day. Did you?"

Could it be possible, he asked himself, that Alida had come back? She might be hiding in one of the closets. He lighted the gas in every room, but he could find no trace of her save in the orderly neatness which worked all for his comfort.

He went back to the parlor and puffed thoughtfully at his pipe. In his low nervous state but one explanation of the phenomenon was suggested. Alida was dead, and in her love she had come to greet him. So thoroughly wrought up did he become that he telephoned the railroad company to ask if the train had been wrecked.

The response did not seem to soothe his ruffled feelings if it did reassure his anxiety, and at last he went to bed, only to toss restlessly. Sleep did not come until absolute physical exhaustion closed his eyes.

It seemed scarcely five minutes before the alarm clock rang, and he dragged himself out of bed. Alida had left coffee and crackers and condensed milk in the house, and he sipped a cup of coffee while he searched the morning paper for news of a wreck.

He could find nothing of the sort, and at last he started for the office. As he opened the door Alida's voice rang in his ears again: "Goodby, dear. I hope you have luck today."

It was what she always said, and, although it did not sound exactly like her voice, there was no mistaking certain tricks of speech. He hastily closed the door and hurried down the steps.

There was a telegraph office at the corner, and he sent a telegram asking her to wire her safe arrival. In the office building was the booth of another company, and he sent a second dispatch. She was not due at her destination for a full two hours yet, and he could not hope to receive a message before noon, but he paced the office impatiently, unable to concentrate his attention upon anything except the lagging hands of the clock.

At last the blue uniformed boy appeared with a yellow envelope and departed richer by a half dollar tip. He was back in an hour with another message that ran: "Both telegrams received. Telegraphed upon arrival. Of course nothing is the matter."

The assurance brought contentment, and that afternoon Semple put through an important deal. In his elation he dined at their favorite restaurant, and

it was late when he reached home. The same ghostly voice greeted him and dashed his pleasure. He moodily smoked his pipe until late, and the unusual allowance of tobacco wrought further havoc upon his tired nerves.

The natural result was a dream in which he vividly saw Alida swathed in bandages, alternately calling to him and begging the attendants not to let him know her peril lest it interfere with the consummation of his plans.

It was clear that in her longing for him her spirit projected itself through space and that same self denial which had led her to keep back the news of her danger led her to give the old familiar greeting and farewell. Her spirit must be in the room.

On the way to the office he telegraphed her that he knew something must be wrong and that unless he received definite information at once he would leave on the next train.

The answer was a dual one. In addition to a long telegram his chum Ben Bradley put in an appearance. Bradley fenced for awhile with small talk, but at last he came to the point.

"Do you feel all right, old man?" he asked anxiously. "I had a wire from your wife. She seemed to think something was wrong."

"I am all right," said Semple wearily. "I've been nervous and dispirited and I got imagining things, I guess."

He could not tell even Bradley what he feared, but he was at last convinced that all was well with Alida, and he was content.

Bradley turned up after office hours that evening and carried him off to dinner. "Mrs. Bradley is visiting friends in the country today," he explained, "and I need company. I'll come around to your apartments afterward, and we'll have a good old time chat."

Semple brightened visibly at the suggestion, and when at last they reached home he opened the door confidently. His face went ghastly white as the voice floated out upon the air. He turned to see if Bradley had heard.

Bradley stood there with a smile upon his face. "That's a great idea, isn't it?" was his surprising comment.

"What's an idea?" asked Semple vaguely.

"Why, that phonograph," explained Bradley. "It's a German invention to be used in stores. When the door opens the phonograph announces the bargains of the day. A little alteration fixed this one so that the two messages could be given, one in the morning and the other when you came home. I was telling Mrs. Semple about it the night she was over to see my wife, and she had it fixed up as a surprise for you. I bet it was a stunner, wasn't it?"

"It was," said Semple dryly, wondering how near to insanity he had been. "It was a decided surprise." Then he added to himself, "Now that I know it's going to be a comfort too."

The Dry Falls of Lodore.

Southey's description of Lodore has given to that charming friend of holiday days a reputation which is a little unfortunate. It has brought to its course worshippers from afar, when there has not been a cupful of water to perform as much as the meanness of feasts which the poet describes. One such visitor was an American. He had seen Niagara again and again. He read Southey on the wonders of Lodore and once more visited the vast cataract of his native land. Then, feeling that, after all, Niagara must be very small potatoes compared with the falls of which the poet had sung, he came to England in quest of Lodore, resolved to consecrate his holiday to the contemplation of its beauties and grandeur. He set out the moment he reached Keswick and long walked and toiled over rocks and boulders. He could not find the falls. He rested and asked a native, "Can you direct me to the falls of Lodore?" "Why, you're a-settin' on 'em," was the heartbreaking answer. The falls of all the adjectives were dry!—St. James' Gazette.

Our Flight Through Space.

Vega is the star toward which our sun is ceaselessly rushing through the infinite regions of space, carrying the earth and all of the other planets with him. Though we are pursuing this journey at the speed of eleven miles a second, so that at the end of each day we are almost 1,000,000 miles nearer the star than we were at the beginning, yet at least 1,000,000 years will elapse before we overtake and drift past this great sun. Were the life of man on earth not so short, how wonderfully would he see the face of the heavens change as he passed through our universe of stars. The Great Dipper, the Northern Cross and even the Milky Way itself would appear to take new forms as he passed on and viewed them from a different direction, and as he drew near the blue star Vega, a sun enormously larger and hotter than our own, it would shine out with extraordinary brilliancy.

To the Point.

In a Tennessee court an old colored woman was put on the witness stand to tell what she knew about the annihilation of a bog by a railway train.

Being sworn, she was asked if she had seen the train kill the bog in question.

"Yes, sah, I seed it."

"Then," said counsel, "tell the court in as few words as possible just how it occurred."

"Yo' honor," responded the old lady, "I shore kin tell yo' in a few words. It jes' tooted an' tuck him."—Cleveland Leader.

Virtue Unrewarded.

"Oh, hang it! Here I come home sober and my wife's so fast asleep she doesn't notice it at all!"—Magnum-Joseph Blatter.

HONEY GUIDES.

African Birds That Lead Men to the Nests of Bees.

"For many ages," says a writer, "the small birds which are known in Africa as honey guides have been in the habit of leading human beings to the nests of bees. The first notice of the kind of which I have knowledge is in 'Lobo's Travels in Abyssinia,' published by Le Grand in 1728. The moroc or honey bird," says this author, "is endowed with a peculiar instinct or faculty of discovering honey. When the moroc has discovered any honey he repairs immediately to the roadside and when he sees a traveler sings and claps his wings, making many motions to invite him to follow him, and when he perceives his coming flies before him from tree to tree till he comes to the place where the bees have stored their treasure and then begins to sing melodiously. The Abyssinian takes the honey without failing to leave part of it for the bird to reward him for his information." Sparrman, who traveled at the Cape in 1775-76, gives also a very good description of the bird as observed in the southern part of the continent.

"The honey guides lead human beings to the nests of wild bees not so much for the honey as for the grubs or larvae found within the comb. The natives are for the most part well aware of this fact, and if they reward the honey guide, which they usually do to some grudging extent, break off for it a piece of the comb in which the grubs are hatching. Sparrman has a curious note upon this detail. He says, 'I was informed by my bushmen (bushmen), as well as by the colonists, that a man who makes it his constant business to go after the bees should not at first be too grateful and generous to the officious bird, but leave for it only just as much as will serve to stimulate its appetite, by which means it will be induced in hopes of obtaining a more liberal reward to discover another swarm of bees.'

"When it desires to feed upon some comb which it has discovered it makes its way to a human being, flutters about restlessly and hops from branch to branch or from bush to bush or from one ant hill to another until it succeeds in attracting the man's attention. During this time it utters a shrill cry of 'cherr, cherr' frequently repeated. If the man is a native who understands its habits and is willing to follow it he often gives a soft, soothing whistle and, taking with him a hatchet, accepts the restless little creature's guidance. The honey guide now goes on ahead, never keeping very far away and always jealously noting whether the man is really following. At length the honey nest is reached and the bird's object accomplished. While the native or natives attack the nest and rife the comb the bird still flutters about, chirping. When the business is concluded and the men depart the honey guide descends from its perch and helps itself to as much of the larvae as it can find.

"When thus following a honey guide the native goes, as a rule, very quietly, taking care not to frighten his small adviser. If the man by reason of bush

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