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THE PARLOR MATCH.

Showing That One and One Make Two.

It is about half-past eight on a June evening, and the dusk is beginning to gather thickly about the Mott country house, the dense trees which overshadow the place increasing the gloom. Miss Ethel, who has been for half an hour entertaining Bob Tracy on the broad piazza, the opportune absence of the family on a drive having thrust that duty upon her, suddenly starts up exclaiming:

"Did you think you saw a light hat going by the syringa bush then?"

"No, I didn't think anything of the kind," Bob retorted, with rather unnecessary severity, "who'd you expect?"

"Oh, nobody. Do you like those very light hats they wear now?"

"No, I hate 'em."

"I don't think I should express so strong an opinion just about a hat."

"Humph! It isn't the hat so much as it is the dudes that wear them."

"I don't see why you need call a man a dude just because he dresses better than other fellows and happens to have a dog-cart."

"Oh, that was the light hat you expected, was it?"

"I don't know what you are talking about. Who said I expected anybody."

The young man replied by a comprehensive exclamation, half a snort of contempt and half a sneer of incredulity. There follows a silence of some minutes, broken only by the mellow croaking of the distant frogs and the nearer, shriller and far less soothing hum of the mosquitoes.

"How cross you are to-night," Miss Ethel observes at length, feeling that the duties of hospitality require her to reopen the conversation, but by no means prepared to descend at once to amiability; "perhaps it is the mosquitoes."

"Yes, I think it may be," Tracy responds with great dignity, "I won't keep you out here any longer to suffer martyrdom."

He rises with a stateliness the effect of which is unfortunately lost in the darkness, and stands glaring in the direction where he knows pretty Miss Ethel to be sitting.

"Don't be a goose; come into the house. Perhaps your temper 'll be better in there. It's worth trying anyway."

"With such an example I'll own it ought to be," Bob returns with crushing sarcasm. "But you couldn't watch for light hats if you went in."

"How hard you do try to get up a quarrel when I'd just made up my mind to be very amiable."

"How long after you've made up your mind shall I have to wait for the resolution to take effect?"

"Come in. Music hath charms, you know. What shall I play to you?"

"Can you play in the dark?"

"I can, but on the whole I think I won't; because Mamma's off to ride, and I doubt if its proper anyway."

"Since when were you so particular?"

"Well, if I play, you see, Mrs. Hunt would know we were here in the dark; she's such a spy."

"Don't play then. We can sit in the dark and talk, can't we?"

"No, thank you, I'd rather be proper. Shall I ring or have you a match."

"I ought to have one. Bother!"

The exclamation was caused by a stumble over one of those minor pieces of furniture the whole object of whose existence is to get under unwary feet and to render otherwise tranquil lives a burden. He regains his equilibrium, swallows his wrath and feels in his pocket for his match-safe. Finding to his disappointment, that it is well nigh full, he recklessly tosses the contents out of the window by which he has just entered, and calmly remarks:

"My match-safe is as empty as a fool's head. There isn't a single stick in it."

"There's a new kind of matches," Ethel observes in a tone of disinterested instructiveness. "Jim was explaining them to me; a patent kind, you know. There's something comes down like a cap——"

"A cap doesn't come down," Bob interrupts, stumbling over more furniture in a fresh attempt to follow his hostess, who, more familiar with the arrangements of the room, has safely crossed to a distant corner, dexterously avoiding obstacles. "Jehu! How many foot-stools are there in this room?"

"If you don't want to know about the matches——'

"Oh, I do."

"Then don't interrupt. There's a kind of cap comes down——"

"Comes down from where?"

"I shall positively *not* tell you about those matches."

"But I'm dying to know!"

"Did you think somebody came up the walk then?"

"Is there any connection between matches and somebody's coming up the walk?"

"There might be!"

"Humph! You'd better go on about your patent match. 'A light hat comes down,' I think you said; over a fool's head, I suppose. Go on."

He has by this time made his way to the sofa upon which Miss Mott is seated, and without apology takes a place by her side.

"Bob, this positively is not proper. If you can't be agreeable, we will at least be proper."

"You seem to intimate a strange and vicious familiarity with the delights of impropriety."

"Bob Tracy! You know if mother were here, you wouldn't dare to speak in that way."

"If your mother were here there wouldn't be any occasion."

"Somehow, Robert, going into the navy seems to have spoiled you, just as Aunt Jane said it would."

"Your Aunt Jane is an old prude."

"My Aunt Jane is my father's sister."

"Indeed! How singular! You're sure she isn't his cousin."

"I never like you less than when you try to be funny. You'll find a parlor match on the mantle-piece."

"Wouldn't you get it for me? I shall break my neck over this furniture."

"If I thought you were in earnest——!"

"Why, I am; you seem to get about with great facility."

"I certainly shall not get it for you."

"Well, do just as you please; I'd just as lief sit in the dark."

"If you don't get a match I shall go out on the piazza again."

"I dare say you're pining too. Was it an appointment?"

This insinuation is more than Miss Ethel is able to bear with equanimity. She rises and moves away in the darkness.

"You are not angry, I hope, he calls after her.

"I am going for a match," she replies with marked emphasis.

"One of the patent kind, where a cap comes down and a dog-cart carries off the ashes?"

"I shall go up stairs and ask Aunt Jane to sit with us."

"Then I'll say good night now. You won't find me when you bring her down."

"Perhaps it would be as well."

"Come, Ethel, get me a match, and I'll behave like an angel."

"All right; here it is then. Let's talk about China."

"All right; what shall we say?"

"It seems very far to China," she returns rather sentimentally. "Bob, you never will know——"

"Never will know how far it is to China? I do know that already, thank you. This confounded match won't light."

"You will never know," she continues, with a dignified ignoring of his interpolation, "how lonesome it was while you were gone for——'

"Did you really miss me, Ethel?" he queries, becoming in his turn somewhat inclined to spooniness, and in some mysterious way possessing himself of her hand as she stands before him.

"For you mother," concludes Miss Mott in a matter-of-fact tone. "She missed you dreadfully; though, as Aunt Jane said, very likely her worry was chiefly over the scrapes you were likely to get into."

"Your Aunt Jane is a nasty old cat; and she isn't the only disagreeable one in the family by any means," Bob mutters irately, dropping the soft, warm hand he had seized.

"What did you say?" queried Ethel with marvelous sweetness. "I didn't catch the last."

Where the young man begins most annoyingly and impolitely to whistle "False Is the Sex," throwing himself back into the corner of the sofa in a position which would have expressed nothing short of insolence had there been light enough for it to express anything. Miss Ethel is intuitively aware of his attitude and still more conscious of the defiance conveyed in his musical performance.

"You never could catch a tune, could you, Bob," she remarks with an assumption of sympathy intended to crush the offender utterly.

Master Bob ignores this observance entirely save for changing his whistle to "The Shrew of Ballycannon," into which he infuses a shrillness which pierces Miss Mott's ears and her armor of indifference at the same time. If there is one song in the world she does despise, it is "The Shrew of Ballycannon."

"How can you sit there and whistle, Bob Tracy?" she demands, "just as if you don't care at all. I gave you credit before this for good breeding at least."

"I only adapt myself to the company I'm with," Bob says indifferently, and he goes on with "The Shrew of Ballycannon."

"I wish you would kindly light that match," Miss Mott remarks icily. "You better strike it on the under side of the mantel shelf."

"You'd better try it yourself," says Bob, with indifference, "the old match isn't any good."

"It would occur to some gentlemen to try another, then," Ethel retorts, moving away in the darkness and seating herself in an arm-chair on the other side of the room.

"I shall only break my neck over the furniture if I try to navigate about in the dark. I don't know where the matches are. If you'll bring me one I'll light the gas."

This transparent ruse on the part of Mr. Tracy to make her return to him is utterly futile. Ethel remains where she is, replying with great scorn:

"You know perfectly well, where the match-box is." She laughs contemptuously and continues: "They've stood in the same corner of that mantlepiece ever since that Fourth of July when you climbed up and stole them and set fire to the lace curtains."

"At your suggestion."

"Because I was afraid of Aunt Jane and you weren't, or said you weren't."

"Didn't I prove it?"

"I don't know how you proved it."

"There are some people who can't see the most obvious things."

And once more, with the most obstreperous rudeness, he relapsed into the shrill strains of "The Shrew of Ballycannon.

"Here," cries Ethel in desperation, seizing a match and carrying it to him, "take your match, but for mercy's sake do stop that detestable tune."

Bob receives hand and match together, pulling Ethel down into a seat by his side.

"If there is any tune you like better," he observes, "I am at your service."

"Bob, I certainly shall not sit over here unless you light the gas."

"Why not? I surely can't flatter myself you want to look at me."

"I might."

"It's more likely you want me to look at you."

"It's possible."

"I assure you that your image is so engraved on my heart that I don't need the gas."

"That reminds me, Bob, what did you ever do with that horrid picture of me you took to China?"

"I gave it to my washerwoman for a joss," although it is in his pocket at that minute.

"At least I'm glad you didn't keep it. I don't think I ever had a picture of you."

"No," returns Bob calmly, fully aware that the picture he gave Ethel when he went to China is at that moment in the locket hanging at her chatelaine, "I never was in the habit of distributing my pictures promiscuously."

"You know, Mr. Tracy," Ethel observes, with dignity, attempting to rise, "that you never gave my picture away, and I wish you to return it to me this moment."

"Well, to tell the truth, Miss Mott," he answers restraining her, "I didn't give it away. I must have lost it or thrown it away sometime without noticing. You know you always said it was horrid."

"Yes, it was," she retorts, releasing herself and going off again into the darkness, "but you were so dreadfully spoony you wouldn't have known the difference if it had looked like the head of Medusa as long as it was a picture of me."

"Strange how one recovers from his youthful follies."

"More strange than admirable when it is by falling into follies a thousand times worse."

"Such as what?"

"Coming home from China an illbred, disagreeable boor,"

"That is at least strong language."

"Like yourself, I adapt my conversation to my company."

A moment's pause follows this volcanic outburst. Then once more Ethel brings the talk back to the parlor match by remarking in a less acrimonious voice:

"Must I ask you again to light the gas?"

"Just as you please."

"I can light it myself."

"Oh, don't trouble. I'll light it if you really want it lighted."

"How many times is it necessary to tell you a thing before you are convinced of it?"

"There are some things one never can become convinced of. However, I'll light the match if I can find anything to strike it on."

"Strike it on the carpet."

"I've tried the carpet; I've tried the mantel-piece, and I've tried my boot."

"There are people who don't know enough to go in when it rains," Ethel remarks with a sigh of long-suffering but well-nigh exhausted patience, "but I supposed everybody knew how to light a match."

"If it's so easy you might come and do it."

"Oh, if you are ready to give it up."

She rises from whatever point of vantage she has occupied in the darkness and comes once more to the sofa, to be once more seized and seated at his side.

"Bob Tracy!" she exclaims, although without leaving him. "What are you thinking of? I never knew you to behave so. It's horribly rude and horribly improper. Nobody ever treated me so before."

"Well, I should hope not."

"Oh, you should? Well, sir, since when had you the right to take more liberties than anybody else?"

"Than Tom Shaw, for instance?"

"Yes, than Tom Shaw, if you like. I'm going to ride in his dog-cart tomorrow."

"I bet you are not!"

"Bet all you please, but I shall go just the same."

The effect of this announcement is to demoralize Lieutenant Bob altogether. He drops his hold of his companion's hand and begins fruitlessly to scratch the match he holds upon anything and everything within reach, while she breaks into a little ripple of laughter.

"Why, if you please," she demands, "shouldn't I go to ride with Tom Shaw?"

"Great fat thing!" ejaculates Tracy, flinging the match in the direction of the fire-place. "I must say I admire your taste."

"Oh, he isn't as yellow as an orange from living in China, it's true; but then it isn't everybody that admires mandarins."

"There is nothing but sputter to a parlor match, anyway," remarked Bob, spitefully. "As that pretty Annie June said last night when I was sitting in the dark with her, 'A match is so disagreeable where the light won't come till after there's been a grand explosion.'"

"Oh, there's where you were last night, is it. Annie June is pretty for a girl that's over thirty."

"I never was fond of bread and butter misses; I leave them for Tom Shaw."

"Tom Shaw's engaged to one."

"That's a matter of indifference to me."

"It wouldn't be if you knew the girl."

"Oh, I know it isn't Annie June, and beyond that I don't care."

"It's that absurd little Baby Norwood that you and I had our first quarrel about when we were five years old."

As a reply to this information, the gallant lieutenant lawlessly and recklessly flings his arms about Ethel and kisses her with great fervor.

"Why, Bob Tracy, you let me go this minute! I know Aunt Jane's coming."

"Nonsense! She isn't either. I wan't to tell you of another new engagement."

"I don't think I'm interested."

"You would be if you knew who it is."

"I can guess."

"Well, guess then."

"I guess you."

"Correct," he replies, "here's a reward for your cleverness."

And he kisses her again.

"Bob, you're behaving abominably, and you must stop this minute."

"Who do you think I'm engaged to?"

"Miss June, and I don't think she'd like your acting this way at all."

"Wrong; and here's a punishment for your dullness."

"I give it up, then."

"It's a girl who's carried my picture on her chatelaine ever since I went to China."

"She must be a sentimental piece." She is, awfully."

"She's probably making believe. I don't believe she really cares a fig for you."

"Oh, she adores me. She can't help it."

"If she cares for you the least little bit in the world, it's all for your mother's sake."

"There, I knew——"

The sound of approaching wheels interrupted him.

"Heavens!" cries Ethel, springing up in great dismay. "There come the family. Light the gas, quick!"

He rushes to the mantel and procures a match. Just as he strikes it she says breathlessly:

"It's a safety match; it'll only light on the box!"

Then with the same breath, seeing that he has anticipated her, she adds:

"Why, you knew all the time!"

The gleam of the burning match shows a broad grin upon Bob's flushed face as he retorts:

"And so did you!"

He lights the gas while Ethel, with true feminine instinct, smooths her hair and dress upon the possibility that they may have become ruffled. At that instant the ample form of Mrs. Mott appears in the doorway.

"Were you here in the dark?" she asks. "I didn't see any light as we drove up."

We were on the piazza a long time," Ethel murmurs confusedly.

But Lieutenant Tracy takes her hand in his and leads her towards his future mother-in-law.

"We couldn't light the gas," he says, "until we had made a parlor match."

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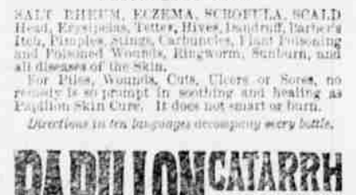

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Passengers by this line go through to Eastern points without any delay caused by Sunday intervening. The Saturday after noon train from Cairo arrives in New York Monday morning at 10:35. Thirty-six hours in advance of any other route.

☞ For through tickets and further information apply at Illinois Central Railroad Depot, Cairo.

J. H. JONES, Ticket Agent.
A. H. HANSON, Gen. Pass. Agent, Chicago

R. R. TIME CARD AT CAIRO.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL R. R.

Trains depart.	Trains arrive.
†Mail..... 2:20 a.m.	†Mail..... 4:05 a.m.
Express..... 3:45 p.m.	†Express..... 11:45 a.m.
†St Louis Ex 12:25 p.m.	†St Louis Ex 2:15 p.m.

I. C. R. R (Southern Division)

†Mail..... 4:45 a.m.	†N. O. Ex.. 1:10 a.m.
†Express..... 10:30 a.m.	†N. O. Ex.... 11:10 a.m.
†Accom..... 3:45 p.m.	†N. O. Ex..... 4:30 p.m.

ST. L. & I. M. R. R.

†Express..... 10:30 p.m.	†Express..... 2:30 p.m.
†St L. Mail.... 7:45 p.m.	†St. L. Mail.... 6:30 a.m.
†St. L. Ex..... 9:30 a.m.	†St. L. Ex.... 5:00 p.m.

W., ST. L. & P. R. R.

*Mail & Ex..... 4:00 a.m.	*Mail & Ex.. 9:20 p.m.
*Accom..... 4:00 p.m.	*Accom..... 10:30 a.m.
Freight..... 7:45 a.m.	Freight..... 6:45 p.m.

MOBILE & OHIO R. R.

Mail..... 5:55 a.m.	Mail..... 9:10 p.m

* Daily except Sunday. † Daily.

TIME CARD

OF

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF MAILS.

	Arr at P. O.	Dep're f'm PO
I. C. R. R (through lock mail).	5 a. m.	.....
" "	11:30 a m	3 p m
" (way mail).....	4:30 p.m.	9 p. m.
" (Southern Div.	5 p. m.	9 p. m.
Iron Mountain R. R.....	2:30 p.m.	9 p. m
Wabash R. R.....	10 p. m.	9 p. m.
Texas & St. Louis R. R.....	7 p. m.	6 a. m.
St. Louis & Cairo R. R.....	5 p. m.	9:30 am
Ohio River.....	2 p. m.	4 p. m.
Miss River arrives Wed., Sat. & Mon.		
" departs Wed., Fri. & Sun.		

P. O. gen. del. open from..... 7:30 am to 7:30 pm
P. O. box del. open from..... 6 a. m. to 9 p. m.
Sundays gen. del. open from... 8 a. m. to 10 a. m.
Sundays box del. open from.... 6 a. m. to 10:30 am

☞ NOTE.—Changes will be published from time to time in city papers. Change your cards accordingly. WM. M. MURPHY, P. M

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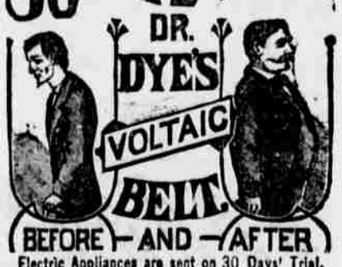

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