

THE STORY TELLER

JIM.

Jim was a chap who was in hard luck; he was always unfortunate, always stuck. It wasn't his fault he was out of work; he wasn't the sort of a chap to shirk; and there was the summer coming on. While his little savings were almost gone, and these words rang in his ear each day: "No, no, we've nothing that's in your way."

Till the chance of a job looked mighty slim.

To poor old Jim.

That's how it was when the war broke out.

Jim saw them enlisting all about, and heard the call of the drum and fife. Then he kissed his baby, and kissed his wife.

"It's thirteen dollars a month, you know, Little woman," he said, "and I'd better go."

So with the baby she watched one day The gallant regiments march away, And murmured o'er, while her eyes grew dim:

"God keep you, Jim!"

Down at San Juan when that charge was made Right into the Spaniards' ambuscade. In a deadly shower of shot and shell, A soldier—one of the bravest—fell. Face downward he lay till the Red Cross came, And they heard him whisper some loved one's name.

"It's no use, boys," with a groan cried he; "Look after the others, and don't mind me!"

And they said, as they lifted his hat's frayed rim:

"Why, it's poor Jim!"

That's about all, for poor Jim died far from his wife and baby's side, In Cuba there, and the grasses wave Over a soldier's lonely grave. And it's just as certain to me as fate, When Jim's soul got to the heavenly gate, And asked this question, in hope and fear:

"Is there a chance for a failure here?"

"Why, yes!" good Peter called out to him:

"Come right in, Jim!"

—Malcolm Douglas, in Farm and Home.

Lucy's Engagement

"YOU don't look very amiable to-night, Mr. Dalton," observed Miss Wyldie.

When Miss Wyldie first brightened the dull city warehouse with her presence, all observed with joy that the lady's left hand was adorned with jewelry of any description, and the general jealousy that arose in the matter of paying her attentions must have been highly gratifying to the lady's vanity. She accepted them all, but favored no one in particular.

Then she walked through the counting-house one morning, unblinking, and holding her left hand in a manner calculated to display to best advantage an engagement-ring, which glittered and twinkled cheerfully on the correct finger.

Therefore Henry Dalton gazed at it sorrowfully on the evening in question.

"It's quite a quarter of an hour since we met, Mr. Dalton," she remarked, with an amused smile at his troubled face, "yet you've scarcely spoken a word."

Mr. Dalton fidgeted uneasily on the end of his seat, and pulled out his handkerchief. Not being sure what he wanted it for, he put it back in his pocket, and coughed apologetically.

"That's encouraging," she laughed. "At all events, it proves that you have a voice."

"Yes," he admitted limply, with another furtive glance at the offending ring.

"I wish you'd say something," she observed plaintively. "If I'd thought that you were going to be so moody and sulky and disagreeable as this I would never have consented to see you, much less favor you with my company to-night."

"You look upon it as a favor?" hinted Dalton.

"Of course I do," she said. "I know lots of other young fellows who do, too. You ought to feel flattered, instead of moping there like an owl!"

"Yes," agreed Dalton absently. "Then why do you do it?" she demanded. "Why don't you say something pleasant?"

Mr. Dalton was silent. He wanted to say something very badly, but the ring kept him back.

"Nice evening, isn't it?" she remarked, with veiled sarcasm, to force the conversation.

"Splendid!" he replied. "How is—er—your mother, Miss Wyldie?"

"Very well, thank you," she nodded smilingly. "It's awfully good of you to inquire about her. She and I living together alone don't make many friends. We're quite alone in the world."

"How so?" he commented sympathetically.

She looked at him in surprise.

"Do you know, Mr. Dalton, that I'm getting sick of office life?"

"Are you?"

"Yes," she looked him full in the face as she spoke, and colored slightly. "I shan't be sorry when I give it up."

"Are you thinking of giving it up then, Miss Wyldie?" he asked.

"I—I don't know exactly. It all depends."

"On him, I suppose," thought Dalton. Then he said, with a nervous laugh: "I hardly see why young la-

die should go in for a commercial life at all. If they're pretty, like—er—pardon me—you, they're married and out of it before they've time to wear out a pen-nib!"

"Some prefer it to marriage," she laughed.

"Do you?" he questioned eagerly. "I—I don't know," she replied jerkily, poking up the gravel with her sunshade. "I've—er—only tried one side of the question, and I don't like it. As for the other side, I—"

"What?" he interrupted, picking up courage, and edging along the seat towards her.

"Might try it some day," she said presently, by way of rounding off her previous sentence.

"You'll have no difficulty about that," observed Mr. Dalton, with another glance at the ring.

"No," she agreed listlessly. "I suppose my turn will come some day."

Mr. Dalton opened his mouth to ask a question, but shut it promptly as the enormity of his presumption struck him. Then he opened it again determined to know the worst, and hinted:

"Er—I hope he's in a—er—good position, Miss Wyldie."

She looked at him quizzically, a faint smile curving the corners of her mouth.

"Yes," she said slowly, "he's in a good position—good enough for me; but he's so awfully dense!"

"Dense!" echoed Mr. Dalton.

"Yes, woefully dense and stupid. I've encouraged him for a long time now, but he's too—er— He won't do as I want him to. I believe if I asked him to he'd run away."

"Some fellows don't know when they're lucky," he observed.

"Well, it's not for me to say whether he's lucky or not," she replied. "I know that I've encouraged him, and he's too dense to see it. Don't you think so, Mr. Dalton?"

"I—er—really I don't know the chap," he confessed, somewhat surprisedly.

She looked at him, with her eyebrows wrinkled perplexedly, and nodded her pretty head.

"Oh, yes, you do," she stated emphatically. "You know him very well indeed."

"Do I?"

"Yes. He is employed—er—" she laughed a little confusedly as she stopped in obvious hesitation; then, lowering her voice, she continued "in the counting-house with you."

"Oh!" Mr. Dalton's face first expressed blank amazement, then utter disgust. He said something under his breath that Miss Wyldie did not hear—something he would have been very sorry for if she had heard.

"What's his name?" he demanded.

She pursed up her lips and shook her head.

"I don't feel at liberty to disclose it at present," she said naively.

"But I must know!" Dalton burst out. "I have a right to—"

He stopped abruptly, and felt utterly disgusted as she burst into a musical peal of laughter.

"Oh, dear," she gasped, "this is killing!"

"It will in the end," said Dalton mournfully, looking at her joyous features, and thinking of his own sad fate. His doleful face only stimulated Miss Wyldie's laughter, and her pretty shoulders heaved convulsively.

"I never saw anybody look as sorrowful as you!" she jerked out. "Your face is funny."

"Funny, eh?" he repeated. "You go and play the deuce with a chap's feelings, and then tell him that his face is funny!"

Miss Wyldie nodded feebly, and her laughter increased.

"Yes," she said weakly, "your face is funny—awfully funny!"

Dalton watched her for a moment in disgust.

"I shall hate you soon!" he observed vindictively, "if you don't stop that sniggering!"

"You could never do that," she said, rising from her seat, and nodding her pretty head confidently as she stood before him. "A man never hates a pretty girl. He thinks he does—that's all."

Dalton gazed at the ring he hated on the finger he loved, and felt that his case was hopeless.

"When a fellow hints at his affection to a girl," he argued within himself, "and she laughs at him, it's time to chuck up the sponge." Therefore he determined to be nasty.

"You're not at all devoid of self-conceit," he sneered as he rose, too. "Who told you that you were pretty? I didn't."

"No; but lots of other fellows have," she asserted, with a pert nod. "You have, too, in your own way. You haven't told me to my face that you think me pretty; but you've unconsciously hinted the fact in more ways than one."

"Then I emphatically retract all my late hints," he said gruffly.

"Yes," she replied calmly, "it's the way with you men. I suppose you think me anything but pretty now. You can't find a word in your mind wicked enough for application to me, can you?"

She smiled tantalizingly into his face, but Dalton sat down again without a word; and after regarding him for a moment with an irritating smile, she sat down also.

"When I met you to-night, Mr. Dalton," she said quietly, "I had no idea that we should quarrel. I always thought you a nice fellow, but now I firmly believe that you are nasty tempered."

"And I always thought you'd have more pity for a chap's affections than to laugh at them," he observed.

"Why did you encourage me?"

"Something in his voice and man-

ner tickled her again, and she once more indulged in a burst of laughter.

"You're nothing more than a heartless flirt!" he burst out angrily. "You, being engaged to another fellow, have deliberately encouraged me to love you, and now you're laughing at me. Hang it all, it's too bad!"

"Too-oo funny, you— Oh, dear, dear me!" she laughed. "You—you're too ridiculous!"

Dalton rose in disgust, and stood looking down on her wrathfully.

"I'll leave you to finish your laughter in solitude," he remarked, with angry sarcasm. "And—and I'm hanged if I don't find out the chap that you are engaged to, and get him the sack!"

This awful threat appeared to have the very opposite result to what Mr. Dalton anticipated, for she laughed more than ever, nodding her head feebly. Dalton stood for a moment in angry indecision, and seized her left hand.

"Who put that ring on there?" he demanded. "I'm going to know before we part to-night!"

Miss Wyldie struggled with her mirth for a while, and became suddenly serious.

"If you'll promise not to fulfill your threat of getting the person dismissed, I'll tell you."

"I promise. I didn't mean it," he pleaded anxiously. "I wouldn't play you such a trick!"

"Then," she said slowly, "the person who put that ring on my finger was—"

"Yes," he queried eagerly, as she paused, and seemed on the point of laughing again.

"My—oh, dear—myself!" she gasped.

"You put that on yourself?" he repeated. "Why?"

It was some time before she was able to speak at all coherently, and Dalton waited impatiently.

"Come, tell me why you engaged yourself to marry yourself?" he demanded eagerly.

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Among ancient relics at present on exhibition at Chicago, is a sheet of papyrus bearing a complaint to a chief of police who held office just 2,092 years ago, that the premises of the writer had been robbed. Whether the work was done by a porch climber, a duplicate key man, or an ordinary hall sneak is not recorded, but the antique document is suggestive that in some ways a score of centuries has not greatly changed the world. One can imagine that old-time chief threatening his dusky Egyptian force with the terrors of a "shake-up."—Buffalo Courier.

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