

Idiot! As if that were not just the way to make you eminently desirable in her eyes!

"Of course, we love having her here. Mother, being a sentimentalist, permits her eyes to fill with tears as she speaks of her 'two girls.' You'd think, by the way, to hear mother talk, that she was the only woman with a son adventuring gaily a thousand miles to the westward. I do my duty by her strenuously. I ask her if she isn't aware that Mr. Wharton has a mother in the East, and that it may be stated as a general fact that none of the men in the troop spend the evenings by their own firesides, so to speak. But she's incorrigible. She only looks the moister and kinder and says, 'Does it make you cheerful, Frances, to think that there are a great many of us lonely old women in the land?'

"That's all the sentiment you shall have in this letter, Tommy boy. All the rest of it shall be about me and my clothes and my doings and my intentions; that my drive in golf is no longer a disgrace to the family name; that I wore a black and yellow frock to the Hinton's dinner party the other night, and that it wasn't a disgrace to the family name, either; that I am to have three new pupils this summer to coach for college preparatory exams—which will try my temper, maybe, but which will replenish my purse.

"There isn't any other news of importance. Indeed, what news could Sedley ever scare up that would seem important to a valiant captain who is on terms of uneasy intimacy with the Indian and the Gila monster? Sometimes I should be frightened for you, Tom, if I didn't remember that there are lots of you men all together out there. Besides, I can't afford to be frightened, for it's the traditional duty of a mere sister to be a tower of strength to an absent soldier's mother and his sweetheart.

"And you just ask mother and Marion if I'm not! Yet—oh, Tom, Tom, we are frightened and trembling beneath everything! We think of you—such a little band of you in the big, desolate land that is grim with dangers. We are so lonesome—and the thought that we may be lonesome for always stalks in to keep us dreary company sometimes in the evenings. Dear old Tom, I am crying here like an imbecile, but the tears aren't just for us three lonely women—they are for all the lonely women, and for all you lonely men out there watching the sun go down. Don't laugh at me, but do, do be careful!

"My compliments to the troop.

"Your devoted sister,

"FRANCES."

As the last word died away in the stillness of the desert night, Thornton folded the letter and looked towards the men. Not one had stirred since he began, and now they sat gazing into the dying fires, immovable as graven stone.

A long time they sat so, and then a gaunt, tall fellow, one of the most desperate daredevils in the troop, rose slowly, and, seeking his saddle, unrolled his blanket, and, without a word, wrapped it about him and lay down among the rocks. One by one the men

followed him, until Wharton alone remained. A minute more, and he stood beside his officer, and held out his hand. Thornton took it silently.

At midnight the silvery moon shone down on the forms of twoscore men lying among the rocks of Antelope Canyon.

J. W. Church.

The Proposal of Burk.

IT began with a discussion between Burk and the typewriter girl. The typewriter girl was subject to headache, and when the malady came upon her she shot off opinions like a Gatling gun. Most of the employees in the Rudy Prudy offices knew this, and ignored her until she felt better; but Burk, who was different from the others, stood up bravely and drew her fire.

"Now, see here, Miss Hammars," said he, speaking with the slight brogue common to Irishmen three generations removed from the old sod, "you must not excite yourself over all these little questions of moral law; 'tis not at all necessary that you do it, and it drags on your nerves. What odds does it make whether this abstract question or that abstracter one is held in a different light by some people than you hold it yourself? Not a bit, I think. And yet you go at them as if they were pickles, and you were starving! 'Tis a profitless business."

"That is simply your opinion, Mr. Burk," said the typewriter girl, "and your opinion—or that of any man—is not held in the highest of esteem by me."

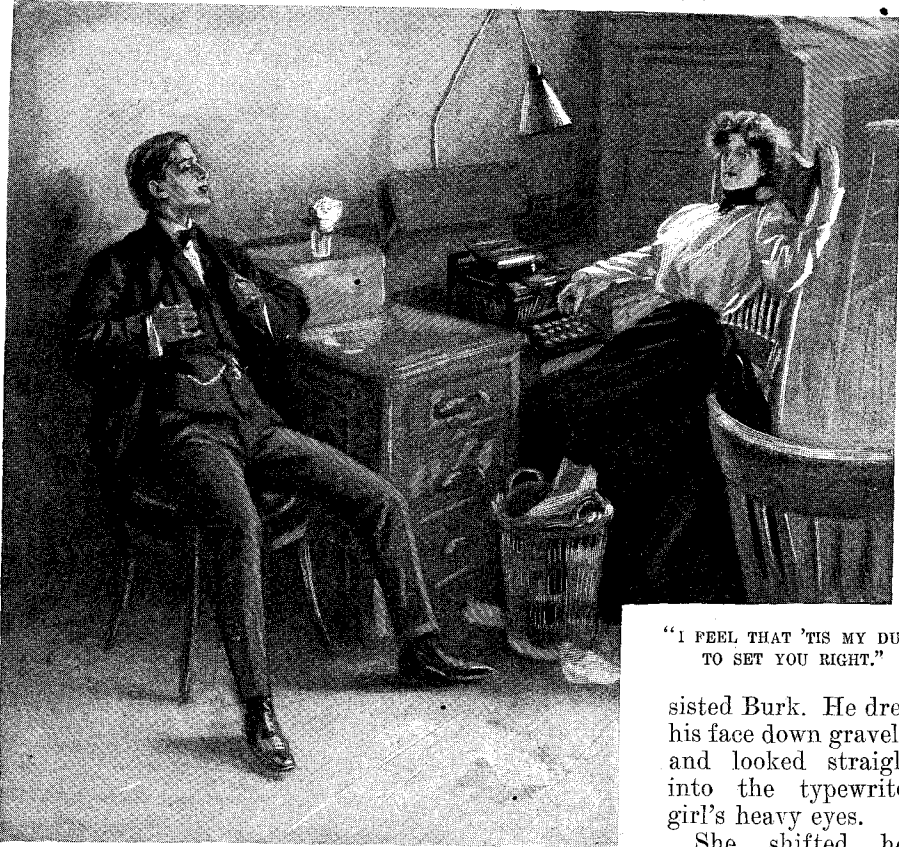
"I am pained to hear you say it," returned Burk, "for it indicates that you hold an unhealthy view of life, and 'tis liable to strike in, like the measles. I am afraid you have been reading something you shouldn't, Miss Hammars—poetry or something like that. All poets are either crazy or melancholy, and you shouldn't do it. There was one once whose landlord changed his mind about waiting forever for the rent. Did you ever hear of that one? He reeled back to his garret room, when the interview with the landlord was over, and tore his hair in fine despair, and threw himself

into a chair, and dashed off one solitary line. He'd have dashed off more, for it was in him to do it, if he'd had enough ink; but that line was enough. 'Men are deceivers ever,' is what the line was, and he meant the landlord and no one else at all. I think I heard you use the expression yourself a bit ago, and you thought it applied to men in their rela-

than women, only their deceit is sometimes of a different sort—lower, more earthy. Now, the poet of whom——"

"Please do not utter more falsehoods about that great man," said the typewriter girl; "he is a friend of mine, and he is dead."

"Won't you listen to one or two more if I'll swear that they're true?" per-



"I FEEL THAT 'TIS MY DUTY
TO SET YOU RIGHT."

sisted Burk. He drew his face down gravely, and looked straight into the typewriter girl's heavy eyes.

She shifted her gaze suddenly and her

tions with women, instead of with landlords; now, didn't you?"

The typewriter girl ignored the question. "Mr. Burk," said she with dignity, "I wish you would do me the favor of remaining out of the office at noon until the other bookkeepers return. I am compelled to eat my lunch here, and you annoy me."

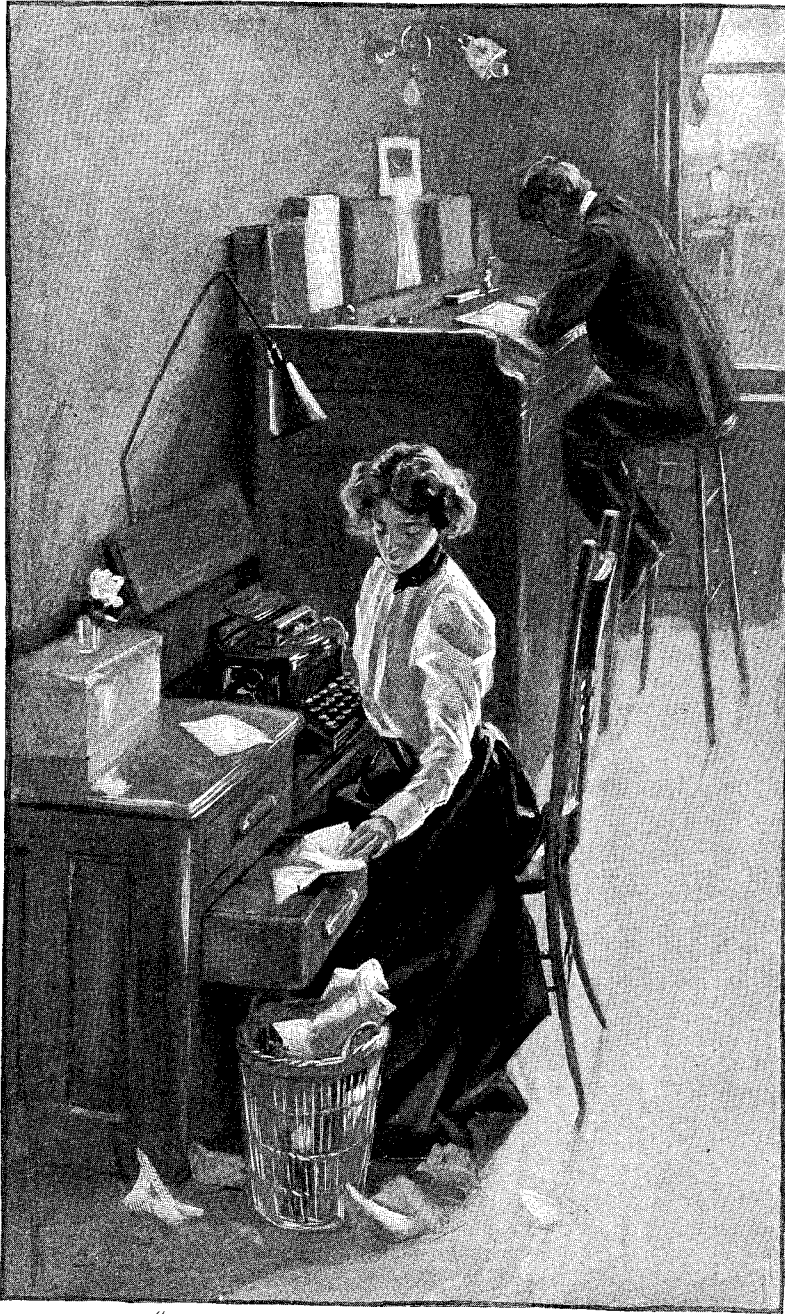
Burk laughed. "I wouldn't annoy you for the world," he said, seating himself and putting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest; "but I feel that 'tis my duty to set you right on some matters. Men aren't any more deceitful

lip quivered in premonition of hysterics—the harmless sort of hysterics that comes during office hours. "No," said she; "not even if you were to swear that they were true—which is ridiculous. Men *are* deceivers. We who read the daily papers know that, even had we no eyes to see or ears to hear. I do not say that men are burdened with the responsibility of deceit—the women assume that; but I do say that it is wrong that women should bear the punishment invariably."

"Then, why do women do it?" asked Burk.

"The world throws it upon them; they cannot choose," replied the typewriter girl bitterly.

you a bit of a story about a man I knew once, and a woman. Maybe you can help me to understand it—for it is a black



"BLESS HER POOR TIRED EYES AND ACHING BACK!"

Burk glanced at the desks on the other side of the room, then from the window into the street. "Miss Hammars," said he softly, "I'd like to tell

mystery to me, nothing less. Will you listen?"

The typewriter girl passed her hand wearily across her forehead, and a smile

fitted across her face. "I suppose so," she said rather ungraciously.

"Tomorrow night, when we walk to your boarding place together?" he queried, with some show of eagerness.

He spoke as if it were a regular occurrence for them to walk to her boarding place together, whereas in truth they had never done so.

The smile upon the typewriter girl's face ceased flitting and became an effulgence. "Yes," said she.

"Very well," said Burk.

A moment later he was upon his high stool, driving his pen at a prodigious pace, while his mind—to use his own expression—kept pace with it in another direction.

"Sure," he told himself, "I can afford to, and she's deserving of me. Bless her poor tired eyes and aching back! What if she is a trifle high strung? That's the thoroughbred in her. Yes, yes!"

He chuckled audibly, and conjured up pictures of a cottage in the suburbs—a humble spot where happiness should dwell and prunes should be tabooed. Glory be!

He was at the door waiting on the following day when the typewriter girl appeared. Her head was not aching now, and her eyes were bright. She greeted him pleasantly, quite as if she had not passed him by with a curt nod in the office less than half an hour before, and they walked down the street side by side.

"How shall I begin?" he asked, leaning forward to strike a lump of mud from the pavement with his cane.

"As the fairy tales begin," said she; "once upon a time, if you please. I am ravenously hungry for a fairy tale."

"Once upon a time, then, in a foreign land—which means New Jersey—there dwelt a man."

"Only one?" inquired the typewriter girl mischievously.

"He thought so—thought so for a long time, and then he got over it. There dwelt also in this land a girl—a poor girl, whose parents were dead. She was dependent upon herself, and she tackled the monster courageously."

"The monster? It is really a fairy tale, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is a fairy tale, as such things go in these days. The monster was necessity, you understand. We must provide ourselves with food, raiment, and warmth by some means, and it is a ticklish proposition, for the easiest methods are those upon which honor and self respect frown. The girl took up typewriting. She worked hard—cruelly hard—and got barely enough to prevent body and soul from parting company. She acquired the headache habit. There were times when she was discouraged clear down to her feet. Sometimes she seriously contemplated suicide, and then laughed at herself. 'For,' said she, 'wouldn't I be a great goose to do that when my method of living is accomplishing the same purpose?' Then one day the man saw her, and was much impressed by the beauty of her face and form, and said he to himself, said he, 'She must be mine.' And no sooner had the thought entered his head than the girl looked up and blushed, and—and it was a foregone conclusion from that instant."

"And they were married?" inquired the typewriter girl.

"Yes, they were married, and their pathway was strewn with roses for two years. Then reverses came, and they walked on thorns. The man lost his grip; he wasn't such an important factor as he had considered himself. The firm he'd been working for turned him down. He tried to get in at some other place, but no one wanted him. He got sloppy in spirits, and toyed with anarchistical sentiments, but that did him no good. Finally he broke down. He became that humble you couldn't imagine it. He was sick. The doctor said he was threatened with death."

"Yes?" The typewriter girl impulsively placed her hand upon Burk's arm, but withdrew it instantly. "Did—did he die?" she asked.

"No, he did not die—dead. He went into chronic invalidism, and his wife hustled for bread. She picked up her typewriting again, and made a fair thing at it. She arose in the morning with the birds, and prepared the breakfast and made the house ready for the day; she fixed her own lunch and a lunch for the man; then she went to her slaving.

At night she came home again, and got the supper and jollied the man up with funny little stories that she had picked up in the office; and through it all—and that's the wonderful part of it—she waxed fat, and her spirits were as the spirits of the running brooks. She did this for years. And one day the man called her to him, and said he, 'Darling,' said he, 'I want you to tell me something. Why did you marry me? I know you did not love me. Confess the truth, now,' said he. 'Do you really want the truth?' said she, putting her arm about his neck. 'I do,' said he. 'Then,' said she, and she gently brushed back the hair from his white forehead with her other hand, 'I'll confess; I married you for no other reason than that I wanted a home

and some one to support me.' 'And you got neither, poor girl,' said the man, almost weeping, for he was not strong at all. 'What!' cried she, astonished. 'What put that idea into your head, now? I got both. I have been, and am, very happy, dear.' And she stuck to it."

"And is that all?" asked the typewriter girl.

"Yes, that's all," said Burk. "I wish now that you'd tell me what you



"HOW DID YOU LEARN MY NAME, TERRY?"

think of that girl. I can't understand it. Wasn't she a humbug—a greater humbug than any man could ever be?"

"I—I don't quite know——" The typewriter girl hesitated. "I think I can see—can understand——"

"Suppose you had been in her place?" said Burk, interrupting. "Suppose a man with a small salary and a mighty longing for a home should ask you to do as the man in the story asked

the other girl to do? Suppose he should—I should——”

“I—I think—think I would——” The typewriter girl was looking hard at the pavement.

“You would?” There was a note of gladness in Burk’s tone. “Do you mean it, Molly?”

“How did you learn my name, Terry?” asked the typewriter girl like a flash.

“How did you learn mine?” counter-flashed Burk.

Then their eyes met, and they laughed. They were quite oblivious of the crowds about them. At the first crossing he laid hold of her arm, and did not relinquish it. Their elbows were linked, and her hand was in his.

David H. Talmadge.

By Force of Precedent.

THE child had been reading for more than an hour, conscientiously avoiding the big words, and drinking in the story like a thirsty bee in the heart of a honeysuckle.

She read the last lines aloud, her high pitched voice sounding strangely through the deserted studio:

Love immortal and young, in the endless procession of lovers.

So through the Plymouth woods passed onward the bridal procession.

“The Courtship of Miles Standish” slid from her hand, and her brown head sank back in its nest of yellow cushions. The window was open and the May breeze rioted gently with the curtains. A great bar of sunshine fell obliquely across the room. Below, in the street, the city cries blended with the strident music of a barrel organ. The child sighed luxuriously.

“I like to visit Cousin Molly, even when she isn’t here,” she thought. “I wish I didn’t have to go home ever. I hope when I go back I shall have the measles again and Cousin Molly will bring me here for another change. I wonder how I can get it!”

She ran her slim fingers through her tousled hair and sighed. A maid stepped over the threshold with a bowl of Japanese lilies in her hand—their delicate odor preceding her like a

whisper. She nodded kindly to the child as she placed them on the table.

“Don’t get lonesome, Miss Augusta,” she said. “Miss Molly’ll be in presently. Ain’t these pretty? Mr. Harding sent ’em up. His window sill is full of ’em, he says.”

“Yes,” said the child gravely. “They smell nice. I never saw any before I came here.”

She raised herself from her cushions and uncoiled her thin legs.

“Bessie,” she said, “did you ever have people tell you what you must do or mustn’t do?”

“Lor’, yes, miss,” said Bessie lightly. “They all does. Nowadays a girl has to wait until she gets a husband to do as she pleases.”

The child regarded her intently. “That doesn’t do me much good,” she said. “I’ve got to go home Thursday, and I don’t want to—and I don’t know any one to marry—except——” she added after a moment’s reflection—“except Mr. Harding.”

Bessie giggled delightedly. “To be sure, miss,” she laughed. “Mr. Harding, of course.”

After the maid had gone Augusta pondered gravely over her new project, and in ten minutes’ time realized that it was good. She would marry Mr. Harding and prolong her stay indefinitely in this delicious place, where an embryo bookworm might find such good burrowing, where lessons were a quantity unknown, and Cousin Molly reigned supreme and absolute in her paint daubed linen gown. “If I only knew just how to go about it,” she reflected. “There must be a way for a person to ask another to get married. I wonder if I can find it in any of the books. There is the one where Cousin Molly found how to make the rarebit!”

She rose from the cushions in much the same fashion a long legged colt might choose, and stooped to pick up the book at her feet. She ruffled the pages tenderly. “The Courtship of Miles Standish” had given her the first peep into the world of poesy, and she was grateful. Suddenly her face flushed. She turned to a certain page. “Why, of course,” she said. “I might have remembered. How easy!”