

THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD

OR, ADVENTURES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

BY J. M. BARRIE

I

DAVID AND I SET FORTH UPON A
JOURNEY



SOMETIMES the little boy who calls me father brings me an invitation from his mother: "I shall be so pleased if you will come and see me," and I always reply in some such words as these: "Dear madam, I decline." And if David asks why I decline, I explain that it is because I have no desire to meet the woman.

"Come this time, father," he urged lately, "for it is her birthday, and she is twenty-six," which is so great an age to David, that I think he fears she cannot last much longer.

"Twenty-six, is she, David?" I replied. "Tell her I said she looks more."

I had my delicious dream that night. I dreamt that I too was twenty-six, which was a long time ago, and that I took train to a place called my home, whose whereabouts I see not in my waking hours, and when I alighted at the station a dear lost love was waiting for me, and we went away together. She met me in no ecstasy of emotion, nor was I surprised to find her there; it was as if we had been married for years and parted for a day. I like to think that I gave her some of the things to carry.

Were I to tell my delightful dream to David's mother, to whom I have never in my life addressed one word, she would droop her head and raise it bravely, to imply that I make her very sad but very proud, and she would be wishful to lend me her absurd little pocket handkerchief.

And then, had I the heart, I might make a disclosure that would startle her, for it is not the face of David's mother that I see in my dreams.

Has it ever been your lot, reader, to be persecuted by a pretty woman who thinks, without a tittle of reason, that you are bowed down under a hopeless partiality for her? It is thus that I have been pursued for several years now by the unwelcome sympathy of the tender-hearted and virtuous Mary A——. When we pass in the street the poor deluded soul subdues her buoyancy, as if it were shame to walk happy before one she has lamed, and at such times the rustle of her gown is whispered words of comfort to me, and her arms are kindly wings that wish I was a little boy like David. I also detect in her a fearful elation, which I am unaware of until she has passed, when it comes back to me like a faint note of challenge. This note, I remember, sits airily on her least estimable and indeed slightly tilted feature, to which, nevertheless, I feel the greatest drawing. Eyes that say you never must, nose that says why don't you? and a mouth that says I rather wish you could—that is the portrait of Mary A—— as she and I pass by.

Once she dared to address me, so that she could boast to David that I had spoken to her. I was in the Kensington Gardens, and she asked would I tell her the time please, just as children ask, and forget as they run back with it to their nurse. But I was prepared even for this, and raising my hat I pointed with my staff to a clock in the distance. She should have been overwhelmed, but as I walked on listening intently, I thought with displeasure that I heard her laughing.

Her laugh is very like David's, whom I could punch all day in order to hear him laugh. I dare say she put this laugh into him. She has been putting qualities into David, altering him, turning him forever on a lathe since the day she first knew him, and indeed long before, and all so deftly that he is still called a child of nature. When you release David's hand he is immediately lost like an arrow from the bow. No sooner do you cast eyes on him than you are thinking of birds. It is difficult to believe that he walks to the Kensington Gardens; he always seems to have alighted there: and were I to scatter crumbs I opine he would come and peck. This is not what he set out to be; it is all the doing of that timid-looking lady who affects to be greatly surprised by it. He strikes a hundred gallant poses in a day; when he tumbles, which is often, he comes to the ground like a Greek god; so Mary A—— has willed it. But how she suffers that he may achieve! I have seen him climbing a tree while she stood beneath in unutterable anguish; she had to let him climb, for boys must be brave, but I am sure that, as she watched him, she fell from every branch.

David admires her prodigiously; he thinks her so good that she will be able to get him into heaven, however naughty he is. Otherwise he would trespass less light-heartedly. Perhaps she has discovered this; for, as I learn from him, she warned him lately that she is not such a dear as he thinks her.

"I am very sure of it," I replied.

"Is she such a dear as you think her?" he asked me.

"Heaven help her," I said, "if she be not dearer than that."

Heaven help all mothers if they be not really dears, for their boy will certainly know it in that strange short hour of the day when every mother stands revealed before her little son. That dread hour ticks between six and seven; when children go to bed later the revelation has ceased to come. He is lapt in for the night now and lies quietly there, madam, with great, mysterious eyes fixed upon his mother. He is summing up your day. Nothing in the revelations that kept you together and yet apart in play time can save you now; you two are of no age, no ex-

perience of life separates you; it is the boy's hour, and you have come up for judgment. "Have I done well to-day, my son?" You have got to say it, and nothing may you hide from him; he knows all. How like your voice has grown to his, but more tremulous, and both so solemn, so unlike the voice of either of you by day.

"You were a little unjust to me to-day about the apple. Were you not, mother?"

Stand there, woman, by the foot of the bed and cross your hands and answer him.

"Yes, my son, I was. I thought——"

But what you thought will not affect the verdict.

"Was it fair, mother, to say that I could stay out till six, and then pretend it was six before it was quite six?"

"No, it was very unfair. I thought——"

"Would it have been a lie if I had said it was quite six?"

"Oh, my son, my son! I shall never tell you a lie again."

"No, mother, please don't."

"My boy, have I done well to-day on the whole?"

Suppose he were unable to say yes.

These are the merest peccadilloes, you may say. Is it then a little thing to be false to the agreement you signed when you got the boy? There are mothers who avoid their children in that hour, but this will not save them. Why is it that so many women are afraid to be left alone with their thoughts between six and seven? I am not asking this of you, Mary. I believe that when you close David's door softly there is a gladness in your eyes, and the awe of one who knows that the God to whom little boys say their prayers has a face very like their mother's.

I may mention here that David is a stout believer in prayer, and has had his first fight with another young Christian who challenged him to the jump and prayed for victory, which David thought was taking an unfair advantage.

"So Mary is twenty-six! I say, David, she is getting on. Tell her that I am coming in to kiss her when she is fifty-two."

He told her, and I understand that she pretended to be indignant. When I pass her in the street now she pouts. Clearly

preparing for our meeting. She has also said, I learn, that I shall not think so much of her when she is fifty-two, meaning that she will not be so pretty then. So little does the sex know of beauty. Surely a spirited old lady may be the prettiest sight in the world. For my part, I confess that it is they, and not the young ones, who have ever been my undoing. Just as I was about to fall in love I suddenly found that I preferred the mother. Indeed, I cannot see a likely young creature without impatiently considering her chances for, say, fifty-two. Oh, you mysterious girls, when you are fifty-two we shall find you out; you must come into the open then. If the mouth has fallen sourly yours the blame: all the meannesses your youth concealed have been gathering in your face. But the pretty thoughts and sweet ways and dear, forgotten kindnesses linger there also, to bloom in your twilight like evening primroses.

Is it not strange that, though I talk thus plainly to David about his mother, he still seems to think me fond of her? How now, I reflect, what sort of bumpkin is this, and perhaps I say to him cruelly: "Boy, you are uncommonly like your mother."

To which David: "Is that why you are so kind to me?"

I suppose I am kind to him, but if so it is not for love of his mother, but because he sometimes calls me father. On my honor as a soldier, there is nothing more in it than that. I must not let him know this, for it would make him conscious, and so break the spell that binds him and me together. Oftenest I am but Captain W—— to him, and for the best of reasons. He addresses me as father when he is in a hurry only, and never have I dared ask him to use the name. He says, "Come, father," with an accursed beautiful carelessness. So let it be, David, for a little while longer.

I like to hear him say it before others, as in shops. When in shops he asks the salesman how much money he makes in a day, and which drawer he keeps it in, and why his hair is red, and does he like Achilles, of whom David has lately heard, and is so enamoured that he wants to die to meet him. At such times the shopkeepers accept me as his father, and I

cannot explain the peculiar pleasure this gives me. I am always in two minds then, to linger that we may have more of it, and to snatch him away before he volunteers the information, "He is not really my father."

When David meets Achilles I know what will happen. The little boy will take the hero by the hand, call him father, and drag him away to some Round Pond.

One day, when David was about five, I sent him the following letter: "Dear David: If you really want to know how it began, will you come and have a chop with me to-day at the club?"

Mary, who, I have found out, opens all his letters, gave her consent, and, I doubt not, instructed him to pay heed to what happened so that he might repeat it to her, for despite her curiosity she knows not how it began herself. I chuckled, guessing that she expected something romantic.

He came to me arrayed as for a mighty journey, and looking unusually solemn, as little boys always do look when they are wearing a great coat. There was a shawl round his neck. "You can take some of them off," I said, "when we come to summer."

"Shall we come to summer?" he asked, properly awed.

"To many summers," I replied, "for we are going away back, David, to see your mother as she was in the days before there was you."

We hailed a hansom. "Drive back six years," I said to the cabby, "and stop at the Junior Old Fogies' Club."

He was a stupid fellow, and I had to guide him with my umbrella.

The streets were not quite as they had been in the morning. For instance, the bookshop at the corner was now selling fish. I dropped David a hint of what was going on.

"It doesn't make me littler, does it?" he asked, anxiously; and then, with a terrible misgiving: "It won't make me too little, will it, father?" by which he meant that he hoped it would not do for him altogether. He slipped his hand nervously into mine, and I put it in my pocket.

You can't think how little David looked as we entered the portals of the club.

II

THE LITTLE NURSERY GOVERNESS



AS I enter the club smoking-room you are to conceive David vanishing into nothingness, and that it is any day six years ago at two in the afternoon. I ring for coffee, cigarette, and cherry brandy, and take my chair by the window, just as the absurd little nursery governess comes tripping into the street. I always feel that I have rung for her.

While I am lifting the coffee-pot cautiously lest the lid fall into the cup, she is crossing to the post-office; as I select the one suitable lump of sugar she is taking six last looks at the letter; with the aid of William I light my cigarette, and now she is re-reading the delicious address. I lie back in my chair, and by this time she has dropped the letter down the slit. I toy with my liqueur, and she is listening to hear whether the postal authorities have come for her letter. I scowl at a fellow-member who has disturbed me by entering the smoking-room, and her two little charges are pulling her away from the post-office. When I look out at the window again she is gone, but I shall ring for her to-morrow at two sharp.

She must have passed the window many times before I noticed her. I know not where she lives, though I suppose it to be hard by. She is taking the little boy and girl, who bully her, to the St. James's Park, as their hoops tell me, and she ought to look crushed and faded. No doubt her mistress overworks her. It must enrage the other servants to see her deporting herself as if she were quite the lady.

I noticed that she had sometimes other letters to post, but that the posting of the one only was a process. They shot down the slit, plebeians all, but it followed pompously like royalty. I have even seen her blow a kiss after it.

Then there was her ring, of which she was as conscious as if it rather than she was what came gayly down the street. She felt it through her glove to make sure that it was still there. She took off the glove and raised the ring to her lips, though I doubt not it was the cheapest trinket. She

viewed it from afar by stretching out her hand; she stooped to see how it looked near the ground; she considered its effect on the right of her and on the left of her and through one eye at a time. Even when you saw that she had made up her mind to think hard of something else, the little silly would take another look.

I give anyone three chances to guess why Mary was so happy.

No and no and no. The reason was simply this, that a lot of a young man loved her. And so, instead of crying because she was the merest nobody, she must, forsooth, sail jauntily down Pall Mall, very trim as to her tackle and ticketed with the insufferable air of an engaged woman. At first her complacency disturbed me, but gradually it became part of my life at two o'clock with the coffee, the cigarette, and the liqueur. Then comes the tragedy.

Thursday is her great day. She has from two to three every Thursday for her very own; just think of it, this girl, who is probably paid several pounds a year, gets a whole hour to herself once a week. And what does she with it? Attend classes for making her a more accomplished person? Not she. This is what she does: sets sail for Pall Mall, wearing all her pretty things, including the blue feathers, and with such a sparkle of expectation on her face that I stir my coffee quite fiercely. On ordinary days she at least tries to look demure, but on a Thursday she has had the assurance to use the glass door of the club as a mirror in which to see how she likes her engaging trifle of a figure to-day.

In the meantime a long-legged oaf is waiting for her outside the post-office, where they meet every Thursday, a fellow who always wears the same suit of clothes, but has a face that must always make him free of the company of gentlemen. He is one of your lean, clean Englishmen, who strip so well, and I fear me he is handsome—I say fear, for your handsome men have always annoyed me, and had I lived in the duelling days I swear I would have called every one of them out. He seems to be quite unaware that he is a pretty fellow, but Lord, how obviously Mary knows it. I conclude that he belongs to the artistic classes, he is so easily elated and depressed; and because he

carries his left thumb curiously, as if it were feeling for the hole of a palette, I have entered his name among the painters. I find pleasure in deciding that they are shocking bad pictures, for obviously no one buys them. I feel sure Mary says they are splendid, she is that sort of woman. Hence the rapture with which he greets her. Her first effect upon him is to make him shout with laughter. He laughs suddenly *haw* from an eager exulting face, then *haw* again, and then, when you are thanking heaven that it is at last over, comes a final *haw*, louder than the others. I take them to be roars of joy because Mary is his, and they have a ring of youth about them that is hard to bear. I could forgive him everything save his youth, but it is so aggressive that I have sometimes to order William testily to close the window.

How much more deceitful than her lover is the little nursery governess. The moment she comes into sight she looks at the post-office and sees him. Then she looks straight before her, and now she is observed, and he rushes across to her in a glory, and she starts—positively starts—as if he had taken her by surprise. Observe her hand rising suddenly to her wicked little heart. This is the moment when I stir my coffee violently. He gazes down at her in such rapture that he is in everybody's way, and as she takes his arm she gives it a little squeeze, and then away they strut, Mary doing nine-tenths of the talking. I fall to wondering what they will look like when they grow up.

What a ludicrous difference do these two nobodies make to each other. You can see that they are to be married when he has twopence.

Thus I have not an atom of sympathy with this girl, to whom London is famous only as the residence of a young man who mistakes her for someone else, but her happiness had become part of my repast at two P. M., and when one day she walked down Pall Mall without gradually posting a letter I was most indignant. It was as if William had disobeyed orders. Her two charges were as surprised as I, and pointed questioningly to the slit, at which she shook her head. She put her finger to her eyes, exactly like a sad baby, and so passed from the street.

Next day the same thing happened, and I was so furious that I bit through my cigarette. Thursday came, when I prayed that there might be an end of this annoyance, but no, neither of them appeared on that acquainted ground. Had they changed their post-office? No, for her eyes were red every day, and heavy was her foolish little heart. Love had put out his lights, and the little nursery governess walked in darkness.

I felt I could complain to the committee.

Oh, you selfish young zany of a man, after all you have said to her, won't you make it up and let me return to my coffee? Not he.

Little nursery governess, I appeal to you. Annoying girl, be joyous as of old during the five minutes of the day when you are anything to me, and for the rest of the time, so far as I am concerned, you may be as wretched as you list. Show some courage. I assure you he must be a very bad painter; only the other day I saw him looking longingly into the window of a cheap Italian restaurant, and in the end he had to crush down his aspirations with two penny scones.

You can do better than that. Come, Mary.

All in vain. She wants to be loved; can't do without love from morning till night; never knew how little a woman needs till she lost that little. They are all like this.

Zounds, madam, if you are resolved to be a drooping little figure till you die, you might at least do it in another street.

Not only does she maliciously depress me by walking past on ordinary days, but I have discovered that every Thursday from two to three she stands afar off, gazing hopelessly at the romantic post-office where she and he shall meet no more. In these windy days she is like a homeless leaf blown about by passers-by.

There is nothing I can do except thunder at William.

At last she accomplished her unworthy ambition. It was a wet Thursday, and from the window where I was writing letters I saw the forlorn soul taking up her position at the top of the street: in a blast of fury I rose with the one letter I had completed, meaning to write the others in my chambers. She had driven me from the club.

I had turned out of Pall Mall into a side street, when whom should I strike against but her false swain ! It was my fault, but I hit out at him savagely, as I always do when I run into anyone in the street.. Then I looked at him. He was hollow-eyed ; he was muddy ; there was not a *haw* left in him. I never saw a more abject young man ; he had not even the spirit to resent the testy stab I had given him with my umbrella. But this is the important thing : he was glaring wistfully at the post-office and thus in a twink I saw that he still adored my little nursery governess. Whatever had been their quarrel he was as anxious to make it up as she, and perhaps he had been here every Thursday while she was round the corner in Pall Mall, each watching the post-office for an apparition. But from where they hovered neither could see the other.

I think what I did was quite clever. I dropped my letter unseen at his feet, and sauntered back to the club. Of course, a gentleman who finds a letter on the pavement feels bound to post it, and I presumed that he would naturally go to the nearest office.

With my hat on I strolled to the smoking-room window, and was just in time to see him posting my letter across the way. Then I looked for the little nursery governess. I saw her as woe-begone as ever ; then, suddenly—oh, you poor little soul, and has it really been as bad as that !

She was crying outright, and he was holding both her hands. It was a disgraceful exhibition. The young painter would evidently explode if he could not make use of his arms. She must die if she could not lay her head upon his breast. I must admit that he rose to the occasion ; he hailed a hansom.

"William," said I gayly, "coffee, cigarette, and cherry brandy."

As I sat there watching that old play David plucked my sleeve to ask what I was looking at so deedily ; and when I told him he ran eagerly to the window, but he reached it just too late to see the lady who was to become his mother. What I told him of her doings, however, interested him greatly ; and he intimated rather shyly that he was acquainted with the man who said, "*Haw-haw-haw.*" On the other

hand, he irritated me by betraying an idiotic interest in the two children, whom he seemed to regard as the hero and heroine of the story. What were their names ? How old were they ? Had they both hoops ? Were they iron hoops, or just wooden hoops ? Who gave them their hoops ?

"You don't seem to understand, my boy," I said tartly, "that had I not dropped that letter, there would never have been a little boy called David A——." But instead of being appalled by this he asked, sparkling, whether I meant that he would still be a bird flying about in the Kensington Gardens.

David knows that all children in our part of London were once birds in the Kensington Gardens ; and that the reason there are bars on nursery windows and a tall fender by the fire is because very little people sometimes forget that they have no longer wings, and try to fly away through the window or up the chimney.

Children in the bird stage are difficult to catch. David knows that many people have none, and his delight on a summer afternoon is to go with me to some spot in the Gardens where these unfortunates may be seen trying to catch one with small pieces of bun.

That the birds know what would happen if they were caught, and are even a little undecided about which is the better life, is obvious to every student of them. Thus, if you leave your empty perambulator under the trees and watch from a distance, you will see the birds boarding it and hopping about from pillow to blanket in a twitter of excitement ; they are trying to find out how babyhood would suit them.

Quite the prettiest sight in the Gardens is when the babies stray from the tree where the nurse is sitting and are seen feeding the birds, not a grown-up near them. It is first a bit to me and then a bit to you, and all the time such a jabbering and laughing from both sides of the railing. They are comparing notes and inquiring for old friends, and so on ; but what they say I cannot determine, for when I approach they all fly away.

The first time I ever saw David was on the sward behind the Baby's Walk. He was a missel-thrush, attracted thither that hot day by a hose which lay on the ground sending forth a gay trickle of

water, and David was on his back in the water, kicking up his legs. He used to enjoy being told of this, having forgotten all about it, and gradually it all came back to him, with a number of other incidents that had escaped my memory, though I remember that he was eventually caught by the leg with a long string and a cunning arrangement of twigs near the Round Pond. He never tires of this story, but I notice that it is now he who tells it to me rather than I to him, and when we come to the string he rubs his little leg as if it still smarted.

So when David saw his chance of being a missel-thrush again he called out to me quickly: "Don't drop the letter!" and there were tree-tops in his eyes.

"Think of your mother," I said, severely.

He said he would often fly in to see her. The first thing he would do would be to hug her. No, he would alight on the water-jug first, and have a drink.

"Tell her, father," he said with horrid heartlessness, "always to have plenty of water in it, 'cos if I had to lean down too far I might fall in and be drowned."

"Am I not to drop the letter, David? Think of your poor mother without her boy!"

It affected him, but he bore up. When she was asleep, he said, he would hop on to the frilly things of her night-gown and peck at her mouth.

"And then she would wake up, David, and find that she had only a bird instead of a boy."

This shock to Mary was more than he could endure. "You can drop it," he said with a sigh. So I dropped the letter, as I think I have already mentioned, and that is how it all began.

III

HER MARRIAGE, HER CLOTHES, HER APETITE, AND AN INVENTORY OF HER FURNITURE



WEEK or two after I dropped the letter I was in a hansom on my way to certain barracks when loud above the city's roar I heard that accursed haw-haw-haw, and there they were, the two of them, just coming out of a shop where

you may obtain pianos on the hire system. I had the merest glimpse of them, but there was an extraordinary rapture on her face, and his head was thrown proudly back, and all because they had been ordering a piano on the hire system.

So they were to be married directly. It was all rather contemptible, but I passed on tolerantly, for it is only when she is unhappy that this woman disturbs me, owing to a clever way she has at such times of looking more fragile than she really is.

When next I saw them, they were gazing greedily into the window of the sixpenny-halfpenny shop, which is one of the most deliciously dramatic spots in London. Mary was taking notes feverishly on a slip of paper while he did the adding up, and in the end they went away gloomily without buying anything. I was in high feather. "Match abandoned, ma'am," I said to myself; "outlook hopeless; another visit to the Governesses' Agency inevitable; can't marry for want of a kitchen shovel."

But I was imperfectly acquainted with the lady.

A few days afterwards I found myself walking behind her. There is something artful about her skirts by which I always know her, though I can't say what it is. She was carrying an enormous parcel that might have been a bird-cage wrapped in brown paper, and she took it into a bric-a-brac shop and came out without it. She then ran rather than walked in the direction of the sixpenny-halfpenny shop. Now mystery of any kind is detestable to me, and I went into the bric-a-brac shop, ostensibly to look at the cracked china; and there, still on the counter, with the wrapping torn off it, was the article Mary had sold in order to furnish on the proceeds. What do you think it was? It was a wonderful doll's house, with dolls at tea downstairs and dolls going to bed upstairs, and a doll showing a doll out at the front door. Loving lips had long ago licked most of the paint off, but otherwise the thing was in admirable preservation; obviously the joy of Mary's childhood, it had now been sold by her that she might get married.

"Lately purchased by us," said the shopwoman, seeing me look at the toy,

"from a lady who has no further use for it."

I think I have seldom been more indignant with Mary. I bought the doll's house, and as they knew the lady's address (it was at this shop that I first learned her name) I instructed them to send it back to her with the following letter, which I wrote in the shop: "Dear madam, don't be ridiculous. You will certainly have further use for this. I am, etc., the Man Who Dropped the Letter."

It pained me afterward, but too late to rescind the order, to reflect that I had sent her a wedding present; and when next I saw her she had been married for some months. The time was nine o'clock of a November evening, and we were in a street of shops that has not in twenty years decided whether to be genteel or frankly vulgar; here it minces in the fashion, but take a step onward and its tongue is in the cup of the ice-cream man. I usually rush this street, which is not far from my rooms, with the glass down, but to-night I was walking. Mary was in front of me, leaning in a somewhat foolish way on the haw-er, and they were chatting excitedly. She seemed to be remonstrating with him for going forward, yet more than half admiring him for not turning back, and I wondered why.

And after all what was it that Mary and her painter had come out to do? To buy two pork chops. On my honor. She had been trying to persuade him, I decided, that they were living too lavishly. That was why she sought to draw him back. But in her heart she loves audacity, and that is why she admired him for pressing forward.

No sooner had they bought the chops than they scurried away like two gleeful children to cook them. I followed, hoping to trace them to their home, but they soon out-distanced me, and that night I composed the following aphorism: It is idle to attempt to overtake a pretty young woman carrying pork chops. I was now determined to be done with her. First, however, to find out their abode, which was probably within easy distance of the shop. I even conceived them lured into taking their house by the advertisement, "Conveniently situated for the Pork Emporium."

Well, one day—now this really is romantic and I am rather proud of it. My chambers are on the second floor, and are backed by an anxiously polite street between which and mine are little yards called, I think, gardens. They are so small that if you have the tree your neighbor has the shade from it. I was looking out at my back window on the day we have come to when whom did I see but the whilom nursery governess sitting on a chair in one of these gardens. I put up my eye-glass to make sure, and undoubtedly it was she. But she sat there doing nothing, which was by no means my conception of the jade, so I brought a field-glass to bear and discovered that the object was merely a lady's jacket. It hung on the back of a kitchen chair, seemed to be a furry thing, and, I must suppose, was suspended there for an airing.

I was chagrined, and then I insisted stoutly with myself that, as it was not Mary, it must be Mary's jacket. I had never seen her wear such a jacket, mind you, yet I was confident, I can't tell why. Do clothes absorb a little of the character of their wearer, so that I recognized this jacket by a certain coquetry? If she has a way with her skirts that always advertises me of her presence, quite possibly she is as cunning with jackets. Or perhaps she is her own seamstress, and puts in little tucks of herself.

Figure it what you please; but I beg to inform you that I put on my hat and five minutes afterward saw Mary and her husband emerge from the house to which I had calculated that garden belonged. Now am I clever, or am I not?

When they had left the street I examined the house leisurely, and a droll house it is. Seen from the front it appears to consist of a door and a window, though above them the trained eye may detect another window, the air-hole of some apartment which it would be just like Mary's grandiloquence to call her bedroom. The houses on each side of this bandbox are tall, and I discovered later that it had once been an open passage to the back gardens. The story and a half of which it consists had been knocked up cheaply, by carpenters I should say rather than masons, and the general effect is of a brightly colored van that has

stuck for ever on its way through the passage.

The low houses of London look so much more homely than the tall ones that I never pass them without dropping a blessing on their builders, but this house was ridiculous ; indeed it did not call itself a house, for over the door was a board with the inscription "This space to be sold," and I remembered, as I rang the bell, that this notice had been up for years. On avowing that I wanted a space, I was admitted by an elderly, somewhat dejected looking female, whose fine figure was not on scale with her surroundings. Perhaps my face said so, for her first remark was explanatory.

"They get me cheap," she said, "because I drink."

I bowed, and we passed on to the drawing-room. I forget whether I have described Mary's personal appearance, but if so you have a picture of that sunny drawing-room. My first reflection was, How can she have found the money to pay for it all ! which is always your first reflection when you see Mary herself a-tripping down the street.

I have no space (in that little room) to catalogue all the whim-whams with which she had made it beautiful, from the hand-sewn bell-rope which pulled no bell to the hand-painted cigar-box that contained no cigars. The floor was of a delicious green with exquisite oriental rugs, green and white, I think, was the lady's scheme of color, something cool, you observe, to keep the sun under. The window-curtains were of some rare material and the color of the purple clematis ; they swept the floor grandly and suggested a picture of Mary receiving visitors. The piano we may ignore, for I knew it to be hired, but there were many dainty pieces, mostly in green wood, a sofa, a corner cupboard, and a most captivating desk, which was so like its owner that it could have sat down at her and dashed off a note. The writing paper on this desk had the word Mary printed on it, implying that if there were other Marys they didn't count. There were many oil-paintings on the walls, mostly without frames, and I must mention the chandelier, which was obviously of fabulous worth, for she had encased it in a holland bag.

"I perceive, ma'am," said I to the stout maid, "that your master is in affluent circumstances."

She shook her head emphatically, and said something that I failed to catch.

"You wish to indicate," I hazarded, "that he married a fortune."

This time I caught the words. They were "Tinned meats," and having uttered them she lapsed into gloomy silence.

"Nevertheless," I said, "this room must have cost a pretty penny."

"She done it all herself," replied my new friend, with concentrated scorn.

"But this green floor, so beautifully stained——"

"Boiling oil," said she, with a flush of honest shame, "and a shillingworth o' paint."

"Those rugs——"

"Remnants," she sighed, and showed me how artfully they had been pieced together.

"The curtains——"

"Remnants."

"At all events the sofa——"

She raised its drapery, and I saw that the sofa was built of packing cases.

"The desk——"

I really thought that I was safe this time, for could I not see the drawers with their brass handles, the charming shelf for books, the pigeon-holes with their coverings of silk ?

"She made it out of three orange boxes," said the lady, at last a little awed herself.

I looked around me despairingly, and my eye alighted on the holland covering. "There is a fine chandelier in that holland bag," I said coaxingly.

She sniffed and was raising an untender hand, when I checked her. "Forbear, ma'am," I cried with authority, "I prefer to believe in that bag. How much to be pitied, ma'am, are those who have lost faith in everything." I think all the pretty things that the little nursery governess had made out of nothing squeezed my hand for letting the chandelier off. They had been crying : "We thought ourselves so smart until you lifted the covers and showed us our ribs."

"But, good God, ma'am," said I to madam, "what an exposure."

She intimated that there were other exposures upstairs.

"So there is a stair," said I, and then, suspiciously, "did she make it?"

No, but how she had altered it.

The stair led to Mary's bedroom, and I said I would not look at that, nor at the studio, which was a shed in the garden.

"Did she build the studio with her own hands?"

No, but how she had altered it.

"How she alters everything," I said.

"Do you think you are safe, ma'am?"

She thawed a little under my obvious sympathy and honored me with some of her views and confidences. The rental paid by Mary and her husband was not, it appeared, one on which any self-respecting domestic could reflect with pride. They got the house very cheap on the understanding that they were to vacate it promptly if anyone bought it for building purposes, and because they paid so little they had to submit to the indignity of the notice-board. Mary A—— detested the words "This space to be sold," and had been known to shake her fist at them. She was as elated about her house as if it were a real house, and always trembled when any possible purchaser of spaces called.

As I have told you my own aphorism I feel I ought in fairness to record that of this aggrieved servant. It was on the subject of art. "The difficulty," she said, "is not to paint pictures, but to get frames for them." A home thrust this.

She could not honestly say that she thought much of her master's work. Nor, apparently, did any other person. Result, tinned meats.

Yes, one person thought a deal of it, or pretended to do so; was constantly flinging up her hands in delight over it; had even been caught whispering fiercely to a friend, "Praise it, praise it, praise it!" This was when the painter was sunk in gloom. Never, as I could well believe, was such a one as Mary for luring a man back to cheerfulness.

"A dangerous woman," I said, with a shudder, and fell to examining a painting over the mantelshelf. It was a portrait of a man, and had impressed me favorably because it was framed.

"A friend of hers," my guide informed me, "but I never seed him."

I would have turned away from it, had

not an inscription on the picture drawn me nearer. It was in a lady's handwriting, and these were the words: "Fancy portrait of our dear unknown." Could it be meant for me? I cannot tell you how interested I suddenly became.

It represented a very fine-looking fellow, indeed, and not a day more than thirty.

"A friend of hers, ma'am, did you say?" I asked quite shakily. "How do you know that, if you have never seen him?"

"When master was painting of it," she said, "in the studio, he used to come running in here to say to her such like as, 'What color would you make his eyes?'"

"And her reply, ma'am?" I asked eagerly.

"She said, 'Beautiful blue eyes.' And he said, 'You wouldn't make it a handsome face, would you?' and she says, 'A very handsome face.' And says he, 'Middle-aged?' and says she, 'Twenty-nine.' And I mind him saying, 'A little bald on the top?' and she says, says she, 'Not at all.'"

The dear, grateful girl, not to make me bald on the top.

"I have seed her kiss her hand to that picture," said the maid.

Fancy Mary kissing her hand to me! Oh, the pretty love!

Pooh!

I was staring at the picture, cogitating what insulting message I could write on it, when I heard the woman's voice again. "I think she has known him since she were a babby," she was saying, "for this here was a present he give her."

She was on her knees drawing the doll's house from beneath the sofa, where it had been hidden away; and immediately I thought, "I shall slip the insulting message into this." But I did not, and I shall tell you why. It was because the engaging toy had been redecorated by loving hands; there were fresh gowns for all the inhabitants, and the paint on the furniture was scarcely dry. The little doll's house was almost ready for further use.

I looked at the maid, but her face was expressionless. "Put it back," I said, ashamed to have surprised Mary's pretty secret, and I left the house dejectedly, with a profound conviction that the little nursery governess had hooked on to me again.

IV

A NIGHT-PIECE



HERE came a night when the husband was alone in that street waiting. He can do nothing for you now, little nursery governess, you must fight it out by yourself; when there are great things to do in the house the man must leave. Oh, man, selfish, indelicate, coarse-grained at the best, thy woman's hour has come; get thee gone.

He slouches from the house, always her true lover I do believe, chivalrous, brave, a boy until to-night; but was he ever unkind to her? It is the unpardonable sin now; is there the memory of an unkindness to stalk the street with him to-night? And if not an unkindness, still might he not sometimes have been a little kinder?

Shall we make a new rule of life from to-night: always to try to be a little kinder than is necessary?

Poor youth, she would come to the window if she were able, I am sure, to sign that the one little unkindness is long forgotten, to send you a reassuring smile till you and she meet again; and, if you are not to meet again, still to send you a reassuring, trembling smile.

Ah, no, that was for yesterday; it is too late now. He wanders the street thinking of her to-night, but she has forgotten him. In her great hour the man is nothing to the woman; their love is trivial now.

He and I were on opposite sides of the street, now become familiar ground to both of us, and divers pictures rose before me in which Mary A—— walked. Here was the morning after my only entry into her house. The agent had promised me to have the obnoxious notice-board removed, but I apprehended that as soon as the letter announcing his intention reached her she would remove it herself, and when I passed by in the morning there she was on a chair and a foot-stool pounding lustily at it with a hammer. When it fell she gave it such a vicious little kick.

There were the nights when her husband came out to watch for the postman. I suppose he was awaiting some letter big

with the fate of a picture. He dogged the postman from door to door like an assassin or a guardian angel; never had he the courage to ask if there was a letter for him, but almost as it fell into the box he had it out and tore it open, and then if the door closed despairingly the woman who had been at the window all this time pressed her hand to her heart. But if the news was good they might emerge presently and strut off arm in arm in the direction of the pork emporium.

One last picture. On summer evenings I had caught glimpses of them through the open window, when she sat at the piano singing and playing to him. Or while she played with one hand, she flung out the other for him to grasp. She was so joyously happy, and she had such a romantic mind. I conceived her so sympathetic that she always laughed before he came to the joke, and I am sure she had filmy eyes from the very start of a pathetic story.

And so, laughing and crying, and haunted by whispers, the little nursery governess had gradually become another woman, glorified, mysterious. I suppose a man soon becomes used to the great change, and cannot recall a time when there were no babes sprawling in his Mary's face.

I am trying to conceive what were the thoughts of the young husband on the other side of the street. "If the barrier is to be crossed to-night may I not go with her? She is not so brave as you think her. When she talked so gayly a few hours ago, O my God, did she deceive even you?"

Plain questions to-night. "Why should it all fall on her? What is the man that he should be flung out into the street in this terrible hour? You have not been fair to the man."

Poor boy, his wife has quite forgotten him and his trumpery love. If she lives she will come back to him, but if she dies she will die triumphant and serene. Life and death, the child and the mother, are ever meeting as the one draws into harbor and the other sets sail. They exchange a bright "All's well" and pass on.

But afterwards?

The only ghosts, I believe, who creep into this world, are dead young mothers, returned to see how their children fare.

There is no other inducement great enough to bring the departed back. They glide into the acquainted room when day and night, their jailers, are in the grip, and whisper, "How is it with you, my child?" but always, lest a strange face should frighten him, they whisper it so low that he may not hear. They bend over him to see that he sleeps peacefully, and replace his sweet arm beneath the coverlet, and they open the drawers to count how many little vests he has. They love to do these things.

What is saddest about ghosts is that they may not know their child. They expect him to be just as he was when they left him, and they are easily bewildered, and search for him from room to room, and hate the unknown boy he has become. Poor, passionate souls, they may even do him an injury. These are the ghosts that go wailing about old houses, and foolish wild stories are invented to explain what is all so pathetic and simple. I know of a man who, after wandering far, returned to his early home to pass the evening of his days in it, and sometimes from his chair by the fire he saw the door open softly and a woman's face appear. She always looked at him very vindictively, and then vanished. Strange things happened in this house. Windows were opened in the night. The curtains of his bed were set fire to. A step on the stair was loosened. The covering of an old well in a corridor where he walked was cunningly removed. And when he fell ill the wrong potion was put in the glass by his bedside, and he died. How could the pretty young mother know that this grizzled interloper was the child of whom she was in search?

All our notions about ghosts are wrong. It is nothing so petty as lost wills or deeds of violence that brings them back, and we are not nearly so afraid of them as they are of us.

One by one the lights of the street went out, but still a lamp burned steadily in the little window across the way. I know not how it happened, whether I had crossed first to him or he to me, but, after being for a long time as the echo of each other's steps, we were together now. I can have had no desire to deceive him, but some reason was needed to account

for my vigil, and I may have said something that he misconstrued, for above my words he was always listening for other sounds. But however it came about he had conceived the idea that I was an outcast for a reason similar to his own, and I let his mistake pass, it seemed to matter so little and to draw us together so naturally. We talked together of many things, of worldly ambition. For long ambition has been like an ancient memory to me, some glorious day recalled from my springtime, so much a thing of the past that I must make a railway journey to revisit it as to look upon the pleasant fields in which that scene was laid. But he had been ambitious yesterday.

I mentioned worldly ambition. "Good God!" he said with a shudder.

There was a clock hard by that struck the quarters, and one o'clock passed and two. What time is it now? Twenty past two. And now? It is still twenty past two.

I asked him about his relatives, and neither he nor she had any. "We have a friend—" he began and paused, and then rambled into a not very understandable story about a letter and a doll's house and some unknown man who had bought one of his pictures, or was supposed to have done so, in a curiously clandestine manner. I could not quite follow the story.

"It is she who insists that it is always the same person," he said. "She thinks he will make himself known to me if anything happens to her." His voice suddenly went husky. "She told me," he said, "if she died and I discovered him, to give him her love."

At this we parted abruptly, as we did at intervals throughout the night, to drift together again presently. He tried to tell me of some things she had asked him to do should she not get over this, but what they were I know not, for they engulfed him at the first step. He would draw back from them as ill-omened things, and next moment he was going over them to himself like a child at lessons. A child! In that short year she had made him entirely dependent on her. It is ever thus with women: their first deliberate act is to make their husband helpless. There are few men happily married who can knock in a nail.

But it was not of this that I was thinking. I was wishing I had not degenerated so much.

Well, as you know, the little nursery governess did not die. At eighteen minutes to four we heard the rustle of David's wings. He boasts about it to this day, and has the hour to a syllable as if the first thing he ever did was to look at the clock.

An oldish gentleman had opened the door and waved congratulations to my companion, who immediately butted at me, drove me against a wall, hesitated for a second with his head down as if in doubt whether to toss me, and then rushed away. I followed slowly. I shook him by the hand, but by this time he was haw-haw-hawing so abominably that a disgust of him swelled up within me, and with it a passionate desire to jeer once more at Mary A——.

"It is little she will care for you now," I said to the fellow; "I know the sort of woman; her intellectuals (which are all she has to distinguish her from the brutes) are so imperfectly developed that she will be a crazy thing about that boy for the next three years. She has no longer occasion for you, my dear sir; you are like a picture painted out."

But I question whether he heard me. I returned to my home. Home! As if one alone can build a nest. How often as I have ascended the stairs that lead to my lonely, sumptuous rooms, have I paused to listen to the hilarity of the servants below. That morning I could not rest: I wandered from chamber to chamber, followed by my great dog, and all were alike empty and desolate. I had nearly finished a cigar when I thought I heard a pebble strike the window, and looking out I saw David's father standing beneath. I had told him that I lived in this street, and I suppose my lights had guided him to my window.

"I could not lie down," he called up hoarsely, "until I heard your news. Is it all right?"

For a moment I failed to understand him. Then I said sourly: "Yes, all is right."

"Both doing well?" he inquired.

"Both," I answered, and all the time I was trying to shut the window. It was

undoubtedly a kindly impulse that had brought him out, but I was nevertheless in a passion with him.

"Boy or girl?" persisted the dodderer with ungentlemanlike curiosity.

"Boy," I said, very furiously.

"Splendid," he called out, and I think he added something else, but by that time I had closed the window with a slam.

V

THE FIGHT FOR TIMOTHY



MARY'S poor pretentious babe screamed continually, with a note of exultation in his din, as if he thought he was devoting himself to a life of pleasure, and often the last sound I heard as I got me out of the street was his haw-haw-haw, delivered triumphantly as if it were some entirely new thing, though he must have learned it like a parrot. I had not one tear for the woman, but Poor father, thought I; to know that every time your son is happy you are betrayed. Phew, a nauseous draught.

I have the acquaintance of a deliciously pretty girl, who is always sulky, and the thoughtless beseech her to be bright, not witting wherein lies her heroism. She was born the merriest of maids, but, being a student of her face, learned anon that sulkiness best becomes it, and so she has struggled and prevailed. A woman's history. Brave Margaret, when night falls and thy hair is down, dost thou return, I wonder, to thy natural state, or, dreading the shadow of indulgence, sleepest thou even sulkily?

But will a male child do as much for his father? This remains to be seen, and so, after waiting several months, I decided to buy David a rocking-horse. My St. Bernard dog accompanied me, though I have always been diffident of taking him to toy-shops, which over-excite him. Hitherto the toys I had bought had always been for him, and as we durst not admit this to the saleswoman we were both horribly self-conscious when in the shop. A score of times I have told him that he had much better not come, I have

announced fiercely that he is not to come. He then lets go of his legs, which is how a St. Bernard sits down, making the noise of a sack of coals suddenly deposited, and, laying his head between his front paws, stares at me through the red haws that make his eyes so mournful. He will do this for an hour without blinking, for he knows that in time it will unman me. My dog knows very little, but what little he does know he knows extraordinarily well. One can get out of my chambers by a back way, and I sometimes steal softly—but I can't help looking back, and there he is, and there are those haws asking sorrowfully, "Is this worthy of you?" "Curse you," I say, "get your hat," or words to that effect.

He has even been to the club, where he waddles up the stairs so exactly like some respected member that he makes everybody most uncomfortable. I forget how I became possessor of him. I think I cut him out of an old number of *Punch*. He costs me as much as an eight-roomed cottage in the country.

He was a full-grown dog when I first, most foolishly, introduced him to toys. I had bought a toy in the street for my own amusement. It represented a woman, a young mother, flinging her little son over her head with one hand and catching him in the other, and I was entertaining myself on my hearth-rug with this pretty domestic scene when I heard an unwonted sound from Porthos, and, looking up, I saw that noble and melancholic countenance on the broad grin. I shuddered and was for putting the toy away at once, but he sternly struck down my arm with his, and signed that I was to continue. The unmanly chuckle always came, I found, when the poor lady dropped her babe, but the whole thing entranced him; he tried to keep his excitement down by taking huge draughts of water; he forgot all his niceties of conduct; he sat in holy rapture with the toy between his paws, took it to bed with him, ate it in the night, and searched for it so longingly next day that I had to go out and buy him the man with the scythe. After that we had everything of note, the bootblack boy, the toper with bottle, the woolly rabbit that squeaks when you hold it in your mouth; they all vanished as in-

explicably as the lady, but I dared not tell him my suspicions, for he suspected also and his gentle heart would have mourned had I confirmed his fears.

The dame in the temple of toys which we frequent thinks I want them for a little boy and calls him "the precious" and "the lamb," the while Porthos is standing gravely by my side. She is a motherly soul, but over-talkative.

"And how is the dear lamb to-day?" she begins, beaming.

"Well, ma'am, well," I say, keeping tight grip of his collar.

"This blighty weather is not affecting his darling appetite?"

"No, ma'am, not at all." (She would be considerably surprised if informed that he dined to-day on a sheephead, a loaf, and three cabbages, and is suspected of a leg of mutton.)

"I hope he loves his toys?"

"He carries them about with him everywhere, ma'am." (Has the one we bought yesterday with him now, though you might not think it to look at him.)

"What do you say to a box of tools this time?"

"I think not, ma'am."

"Is the deary fond of digging?"

"Very partial to digging." (We shall find the leg of mutton some day.)

"Then perhaps a weeny spade and a pail?"

She got me to buy a model of Canterbury Cathedral once, she was so insistent, and Porthos gave me his mind about it when we got home. He detests the Kindergarten system, and as she is absurdly prejudiced in its favor we have had to try other shops. We went to the Lowther Arcade for the rocking horse. Dear Lowther Arcade! Ofttimes have we wandered agape among thy enchanted palaces, Porthos and I, David and I, David and Porthos and I. I have heard that thou art vulgar, but I cannot see how, unless it be that tattered children haunt thy portals, those awful yet smiling entrances to so much joy. To the Arcade there are two entrances, and with much to be sung in laudation of that which opens from the Strand I yet on the whole prefer the other as the more truly romantic, because it is there the tattered ones congregate, waiting to see the Davids emerge with the

magic lamp. We have always a penny for them, and I have known them, before entering the Arcade with it, retire (but whither ?) to wash ; surely the prettiest of all the compliments that are paid to the home of toys.

And now, O Arcade, so much fairer than thy West End brother, we are told that thou art doomed, anon to be turned into an eatinghouse or a hive for usurers, something rankly useful. All thy delights are under notice to quit. The Noah's arks are packed one within another, with clockwork horses harnessed to them ; the soldiers, knapsack on back, are kissing their hands to the dear foolish girls, who, however, will not be left behind them ; all the four-footed things gather round the elephant, who is overful of drawing-room furniture ; the birds flutter their wings ; the man with the scythe mows his way through the crowd ; the balloons tug at their strings ; the ships rock under a swell of sail, everything is getting ready for the mighty exodus into the Strand. Tears will be shed.

So we bought the horse in the Lowther Arcade, Porthos, who thought it was for him, looking proud but uneasy, and it was sent to the bandbox house anonymously. About a week afterward I had the ill-luck to meet Mary's husband in Kensington, so I asked him what he had called his little girl.

"It is a boy," he replied, with intolerable good-humor, "we call him David."

And then with a singular lack of taste he wanted the name of my boy.

I flicked my glove. "Timothy," said I.

I saw a suppressed smile on his face, and said hotly that Timothy was as good a name as David. "I like it," he assured me, and expressed a hope that they would become friends. I boiled to say that I really could not allow Timothy to mix with boys of the David class, but I refrained, and listened coldly while he told me what David did when you said his toes were pigs going to market or returning from it, I forget which. He also boasted of David's weight (a subject about which we are uncommonly touchy at the club), as if children were for throwing forth for a wager.

But no more about Timothy. Gradually this vexed me. I felt what a for-

lorn little chap Timothy was, with no one to say a word for him, and I became his champion and hinted something about teething, but withdrew it when it seemed too surprising, and tried to get on to safer ground, such as bibs and general intelligence, but the painter fellow was so willing to let me have my say, and knew so much more about babies than is fitting for men to know, that I paled before him and wondered why the deuce he was listening to me so attentively.

You may remember a story he had told me about some anonymous friend. "His latest," said he now, "is to send David a rocking-horse !"

I must say I could see no reason for his mirth. "Picture it," said he, "a rocking-horse for a child not three months old !"

I was about to say fiercely : "The stirrups are adjustable," but thought it best to laugh with him. But I was pained to hear that Mary had laughed, though heaven knows I have often laughed at her.

"But women are odd," he said unexpectedly, and explained. It appears that in the middle of her merriment Mary had become grave and said to him quite haughtily, "I see nothing to laugh at." Then she had kissed the horse solemnly on the nose and said, "I wish he was here to see me do it." There are moments when one cannot help liking Mary.

But moments only, for the next thing he said put her in a particularly odious light. He informed me that she had sworn to hunt Mr. Anon down.

"She won't succeed," I said, sneering, but nervous.

"Then it will be her first failure," said he.

"But she knows nothing about the man."

"You would not say that if you heard her talking of him. She says he is a gentle, whimsical, lonely old bachelor."

"Old ?" I cried.

"Well, what she says is that he will soon be old if he doesn't take care. He is a bachelor at all events, and is very fond of children, but has never had one to play with."

"Could not play with a child though there was one," I said brusquely ; "has forgotten the way ; could stand and stare only."

"Yes, if the parents were present. But he thinks that if he were alone with the child he could come out strong."

"How the deuce——" I began.

"That is what she says," he explained, apologetically. "I think she will prove to be too clever for him."

"Pooh," I said, but undoubtedly I felt a dizziness, and the next time I met him he quite frightened me. "Do you happen to know any one," he said, "who has a St. Bernard dog?"

"No," said I, picking up my stick.

"He has a St. Bernard dog."

"How have you found that out?"

"She has found it out."

"But how?"

"I don't know."

I left him at once, for Porthos was but a little way behind me. The mystery of it scared me, but I armed promptly for battle. I engaged a boy to walk Porthos in Kensington Gardens, and gave him these instructions: "Should you find yourself followed by a young woman wheeling a second-hand perambulator, instantly hand her over to the police on the charge of attempting to steal the dog."

Now then, Mary.

"By the way," her husband said at our next meeting, "that rocking horse I told you of cost three guineas."

"She has gone to the shop to ask?"

"No, not to ask that, but for a description of the purchaser's appearance."

Oh, Mary, Mary.

Here is the appearance of purchaser, as supplied at the Arcade:—looked like a military gentleman; tall, dark, and rather dressy; fine Roman nose (quite so), carefully trimmed mustache going gray (not at all); hair thin and thoughtfully distributed over the head like fiddlestrings, as if to make the most of it (pah!); dusted chair with handkerchief before sitting down on it, and had other old-maidish ways (I should like to know what they are); tediously polite, but no talker;

bored face; age forty-five if a day (a lie); was accompanied by an enormous yellow dog with sore eyes. (They always think the haws are sore eyes.)

"Do you know anyone who is like that?" Mary's husband asked me innocently.

"My dear man," I said, "I know almost no one who is not like that," and it was true, so like each other do we grow at the club. I was pleased, on the whole, with this talk, for it at least showed me how she had come to know of the St. Bernard, but anxiety returned when one day from behind my curtains I saw Mary in my street with an inquiring eye on the windows. She stopped a nurse who was carrying a baby and went into pretended ecstasies over it. I was sure she also asked whether by any chance it was called Timothy. And if not, whether that nurse knew any other nurse who had charge of a Timothy.

Obviously Mary suspected me, but nevertheless, I clung to Timothy, though I wished fervently that I knew more about him; for I still met that other father occasionally, and he always stopped to compare notes about the boys. And the questions he asked were so intimate, how Timothy slept, how he woke up, how he fell off again, what we put in his bath. It is well that dogs and little boys have so much in common, for it was really of Porthos I told him; how he slept (peacefully), how he woke up (supposed to be subject to dreams), how he fell off again (with one little hand on his nose), but I glided past what we put in his bath (carbolic and a mop).

The man had not the least suspicion of me, and I thought it reasonable to hope that Mary would prove as generous. Yet was I straitened in my mind. For it might be that she was only biding her time to strike suddenly, and this attached me the more to Timothy, as if I feared she might soon snatch him from me. As was indeed to be the case.

(To be continued.)

A BREAK IN TRAINING

By Arthur Ruhl

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY



THE Elder Holloway was speaking fast, and looking very hard at a white figure sweeping down the straightaway across the field.

"But, my dear Sherwood," he snapped, turning squarely at the trainer, "it's the only thing! If you don't——"

The Elder Holloway had held the record for his distance for seven years after he left college, and though he was old enough to see a young Holloway try in vain to get nearer than a second and two-fifths to his father's time, yet he still cared just as much as though at any moment he could throw off some thirty years as easily as he might his clothes, and jump again into the running. He was the sort of man who saw nothing to smile about when each spring he buckled about his straw hat his old track-team band. He could size up a flat-footed freshman just as a horseman sizes up a bandy-legged colt, and he knew more in a minute about the connotative and denotative significance of the word "fit" than this particular trainer would know in a lifetime.

The Elder Holloway was very enthusiastic and effervescent, and when he stopped talking it meant that he was perplexed. When he twirled his watch-chain it meant that he was worried. On this occasion, as the figure rounded the lower turn, so that the moving limbs were thrown out clean and sharp against the dark green of the trees, the Elder Holloway stopped talking, took his watch from the outside pocket of his Norfolk jacket, and, with much vigor, yet quite abstractedly, began to whirl the chain round and round his right forefinger. The cause of the Elder Holloway's agitation was young Mr. Davis, who ran the half-mile.

Davis was rounding the lower turn of a "three-eighths" trial, and performing badly. For a youth who had occasion-

ally been known as the "Great," who had a faded initial on his shirt, and the prospect of running, within four days, what was to be, in all human likelihood, the last race of his life, he was doing very badly indeed. Every eye was on him. He could see the fielders, on the green inside the cinder-path, pause, and he noticed that the crack of the cricket-bat from the practice-crease over beneath the Willows ceased as he swept by. Away up at the finish-line he could see the trainer standing, watch in hand; near him a pole-vaulter leaned on his pole, his clothing a chalk-white in the sunlight; and all about, the half-dressed men, who had run or were waiting for their trials, stared down toward him with the same critical and deferential gaze that they would have bestowed on the action of a coach-horse, or the wake of a racing yacht. Most of this he saw out of the corner of his eye, and the rest he felt, because he had been there so many times before; yet, though he went through the motions of his beautiful stride, young Mr. Davis knew—and gritted his teeth at the horrid truth of it—that he hated that track, hated his task, and had in him that moment no more of the spirit of the race than a mule in a dusty treadmill.

The spring and lift were all gone out of him. Even the turn, with his body leaning inward and his legs eating up twenty-three feet of the track a second, thrilled him no more than the lazy gait of a two-mile jog. He couldn't get his back into it. Running only from his legs down, he seemed to be carrying his body as he would an over-loaded knapsack. As he bore down to the finish of the quarter, and knew that from where the trainer stood, on to the last "two-twenty," he must spurt, he shrank inwardly, as a tired man shrinks from bracing up to an ice-cold plunge.

The apathetic "Move up a little, now!"