

CASE OF BLACKMAIL.

Mr. Blest, of Blest, Cust & Co., solicitors, sat contemplating a name upon a piece of paper, with a puzzled expression.

"She's a ripper, uncle," said his nephew and articled clerk, who had brought it to him, "but she will only see you."

"Then I suppose I must," said Mr. Blest. "Show her up." He took a piece of paper that looked like a theatrical programme and seemed to give an air of frivolity to the papers on his table, and dropped it into the waste paper basket; his nephew saw him do it, and said in a tone of remonstrance:

"Uncle, can't you come?"

"Can't you see I'm busy?" said Mr. Blest. "Show the woman up, and tell her to be quick if she can."

A minute later a young lady came in smiling, with a very small hand held out, incensed apparently in a still smaller glove.

"You have forgotten me," she laughed, as she bowed stiffly. "Mrs. Smythe—Maude Utterson."

"Dear me," said Mr. Blest, "so it is."

The small hand rose and hovered somewhere above his shoulder as he caught its finger-tips in his bony old claw.

"Well," she exclaimed, "it's three years since you've seen me, and then I had just come of age, and you only saw me when you gave me away; of course, no one looks on her wedding day like she does afterward."

"You are looking very well," said Mr. Blest.

"Thank you; I was afraid I was growing thin," she said, pinching her arm critically. "I am very unhappy; that is why I came to see you."

"Indeed," said Mr. Blest. "You pain me extremely—your husband?"

"It's not quite come to that; but it will soon, if you can't help me. Look here, Mr. Blest, I feel I have known you a long time, and I am a little girl, because you used to send me postoffice orders for pocket money, with yperstition letters, to ask if they were kind to me at school, just as if I should have dared to say they were not!"

"Ah, I never thought of that," said Mr. Blest.

"And then you tied up my wretched little £5,000 in a marriage settlement, so that I get nothing a year and have to buy all my clothes out of it—and now if you will only not interrupt me I think I can tell you everything."

He bowed silently as she settled herself in the battered easy chair, extending a pair of pointed little patent leather boots to the gas fire in the grate.

"Not bad for a country person's wife, eh?" she said, following the direction of his eyes. "It's my hats, though, that they talk about most down there; you can't show your boots very well in a pew."

As he had been asked not to interrupt he said nothing, while she arranged her left sleeve and pulled down the right hand corner of her veil.

"It's hard on me," she went on, with a sigh, "because I truly don't deserve it; but it is like this. Years ago before I married I knew a captain—his name does not matter, call him 'X'."

"Does," suggested Mr. Blest.

"Sounds rather like a baker; well, never mind. Captain X and I were great pals; friends, you know, nothing more. And he went away to India, and I wrote him letters—naturally."

"Mr. Blest bowed.

"I thought myself rather more than just a pal, then, you know; I was only eighteen, and my letters said a good deal, I fancy. I should not write like that now to any one. However, I suppose he liked them, and kept them. Never keep a letter from a woman, Mr. Blest; perhaps you never did, lawyers are so careful. Well, he is dead now, poor fellow! He died in India, and his servant, or somebody, must have stolen all my poor little scraps, and just listen to the letter I received a fortnight ago; I'll read it to you."

"Madam. We are instructed by a client to offer you for sale certain letters written by you to Captain X (Dough) late of the 4th Cavalry (the regiment). Kindly let us know if you would care to purchase them for a thousand pounds cash, or whether your husband would possibly be likely to desire them. It seems a pity that documents so interesting to your family should fall into other hands. Faithfully yours,

JAMES HEDGETER."

"He calls himself an autograph dealer. There's a thousand pounds."

"Dear me," said Mr. Blest. "How many letters are there?"

"Only four that matter. I wrote one afterward to say that I was engaged, and another after I was married, and another after I was married, and another after I was married."

"Then," said Mr. Blest, "if what you tell me is correct (he coughed apologetically as the phrase slipped from his lips), 'I cannot see how your husband can reasonably be made jealous.'"

"Of course; just what I thought," said Mr. Blest, tapping her foot on the fender impatiently. "And I wrote and said so, and they wrote back to say that if I wanted particulars of the letters, they were undated—just as if I went poking about in almanacs before writing letters—and that if I wanted extracts they would inclose them. They did, and I burned them, and I haven't slept since."

"You scoundrel!" said Mr. Blest.

"Let me introduce Mr. Smythe," said Mr. Blest, who seemed to have recovered his nerve; "and let me remark that Detective-Sergeant Drewitt, of the Metropolitan Police, is waiting downstairs till I ring again."

Mr. Hedgeter's face turned a dirty yellow. Only his nose retained any redness, and that adopted a bluer tint that made it almost purple.

and see me, and—thaw sort of thing. This will be the last straw; you see, I have never said a word about Captain X."

"Doe," said the old solicitor, quickly. "That seems a pity, and the letters are very—"

"No," she said, shortly, getting a little pink about the cheeks. "They are not very—anything. In the extract they state I—I well, he used to kiss me sometimes—her cheeks got pinker still for a moment—and I reminded him of it."

Mr. Blest shook his head. "If we only confront the scoundrel with you both, and tell him you are determined to fight him—to prosecute him if necessary."

"But we can't," she said, "and you must think of something else."

"I will do what I can," he said, taking her by the hand. "At any rate, I will get into communication with this man Hedgeter, and gain time."

When she had gone, he rang his bell, and sent for the articled clerk who had brought in Mrs. Smythe.

"Yes, uncle," he said. He was a healthy-looking youth. The glow that had adorned his cheeks when he rowed seven in his college eight at Henley had not had time to fade from them in London, and nothing seemed to weigh on his mind except his increasing weight. "Well, uncle," he went on, "are you coming to 'Dandy Dick'?"

"Eh," said his uncle, sharply, "will you never be serious?"

"But it's for such a splendid charity, uncle. The Imbecile Law Clerks' Seaside Fund, and I'm simply ripping as the Dean! And you've gone and thrown the programme into the waste-paper basket!"

Mr. Blest looked very stern. "I disapprove of any one, much more a member of a learned profession like ours, holding up a clergyman to the ridicule of the ribald upon the stage, and I was going to give you an opportunity of being useful to me. Please make inquiries about Mr. James Hedgeter, an autograph dealer. Here is his present address, and when you can tell me something about him perhaps I shall be able to impart to you in confidence the details of a case that will be a wholesome warning to you."

"Yes," murmured Mr. Blest decidedly, as the door closed behind his nephew. "The husband must know all."

A week later, Mr. James Hedgeter, who was stout, red-faced, and with a few grey plimpies, met a man who was tall and a little threadbare, and whose red-facedness was concentrated in and around his nose, and walked with him from St. James's Park toward Holborn. The other man shied visibly at the recruiting sergeants in Trafalgar Square, and crossed hurriedly to the pavement by St. Martin's church.

"You're sure it's all serene?" asked the tall man. "This Blest ain't going to cut up rough?"

"Not he," answered Mr. Hedgeter. "He's a regular mild old family solor, if you know what that is. If they'd meant fighting he'd have turned the job over to somebody else, and then I should have fought shy of it. None of your George Lawless for me. I've seen Blest, and asked him up, and you've done the same for the parson's wife."

"I've, and the parson, too," said his companion, expectorating contentedly. "E's a daisy; big as a house, smooth, red-faced, an' oily in the pulpit; an' didn't 'give 'er beans walking 'ome! I 'eard 'im."

The tall man stopped and looked into a shop-window in Great Turnstile. Mr. Hedgeter went on to Bedford Row, and asked for Mr. Blest with a somewhat exaggerated air of confidence and pomposity.

Mr. Blest stood on the hearthrug, looking very hot and nervous. Mr. Hedgeter held out his hand, but he waved him back.

"You've brought letters?" he asked briefly.

"An' you have the notes?" said the other, doggedly. "I came here, as you wouldn't come where I wanted you to, trusting to your honor."

"Did you?" said Mr. Blest dryly. "Then, as I put no trust in your honor, Mrs. Smythe will identify the letters."

He touched the bell, and with a rapidity rarely seen off the stage when bells are rung Mrs. Smythe appeared through a door behind Mr. Hedgeter. He held them up to her one by one, battered, worn strips of foreign newspaper, that she looked at mournfully.

Still she had wonderful nerve; her voice hardly shook as she said simply, "There are two more, the two that were in these envelopes."

"There ain't," said Mr. Hedgeter.

"There are," said Mr. Blest, interposing, "and if they are not produced, this matter cannot proceed."

"Then it's no deal," said Mr. Hedgeter, folding up the battered pieces of paper.

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Blest. "do you know that what you are doing means penal servitude?"

"If she likes to tell her husband, it might mean something of the sort," replied Mr. Hedgeter, coolly.

"But she has," exclaimed Mrs. Smythe, and Mr. Blest touched his bell again.

"Drop it!" exclaimed Mr. Hedgeter, turning a little pale. "You don't bluff me."

He heard a step behind him, and a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"You scoundrel!" said a deep, mellow voice.

"Let me introduce Mr. Smythe," said Mr. Blest, who seemed to have recovered his nerve; "and let me remark that Detective-Sergeant Drewitt, of the Metropolitan Police, is waiting downstairs till I ring again."

Mr. Hedgeter's face turned a dirty yellow. Only his nose retained any redness, and that adopted a bluer tint that made it almost purple.

"You just read these," he said viciously, holding out the letters. Mr. Smythe was tall, stout, and his hair was tinged with gray; but his fingers must have been very strong, for Mr. Hedgeter writhed in his grasp without his seeming to exert himself.

"Don't," said Mr. Smythe, "murmured Mrs. Smythe warningly. Her voice seemed to recall to her husband the necessity for doing calm."

"Yes, on the table," he said in

his booming deep voice; and then, as Mr. Hedgeter mechanically obeyed, he looked his hold upon him and went and stood by Mrs. Smythe with his arm around her. "We defy you," he said. "I know all, and I believe my wife; dearest," he added, drawing her toward him, "do not tremble."

Mr. Blest intervened in incisive tones.

"What is more, Mr. and Mrs. Smythe have decided to prosecute; whether on the surrender of the remaining letters they might in any way vary that decision I am not in a position to say."

Mr. Hedgeter looked at them. The clergyman was gazing into his wife's eyes, bending over her. She was looking very pretty. Then they both turned and faced him.

"Sergeant Drewitt can accompany you to fetch the others," said Mr. Blest, shifting his position impatiently.

"Here they are," said Mr. Hedgeter, sullenly, laying two more slips of paper on the table. Mrs. Smythe stepped forward and nodded. Mr. Blest took them all up, swung open the door of his safe, threw them in, and let the door clang upon them. "And there they will remain," he remarked in his most acid tones.

"And now," said Mr. Smythe to his wife, "we will go and have luncheon together."

She smiled a little embarrassed smile. "You know I have to go to my dressmaker's," she said, "and you have to talk to Mr. Blest." He looked a little disappointed as she hurried from the room.

Mr. Hedgeter, almost forgotten, broke in. "And ain't I to have anything? Not even a fiver for my services in recovering your papers?" he asked, almost weeping.

"Sergeant Drewitt is still downstairs," remarked Mr. Blest, stretching his hand toward his bell; but Mr. Hedgeter was already vanishing through the door. Five minutes later he was being cursed in Lincoln's Inn Fields by a tall man who listened to his story, and until he had heard all the details twice over refused to believe him. And around Mr. Blest's room a stout gentleman in clerical dress danced three times, while Mr. Blest beamed through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Didn't I do it well, uncle, and oughtn't you to give me the credit of it?" he shouted. "And won't you come and see 'Dandy Dick,' and isn't all this padding hot, just? I say," he added thoughtfully, "I was all right, wasn't I, just as I should be, eh? I mean I couldn't have done any more, could I?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Blest, decisively; "and now you had better finish that abstract."

"Confound abstracts," said his nephew. "She ought to have let me stand her luncheon, eh? Fancy me in this rig at the Savoy!"

A PRISONER OF WAR.

"No rest again this month? This is the third time it has happened within the half year. I'll go there myself and get the money, or I'll know the reason why!"

Mr. Matthew Deane was in particularly bad humor this raw December morning. Everything had gone wrong. Stocks had fallen when they ought to have risen—his clerk had tipped over the inkstand on his special and peculiar heap of paper—the fire obstinately refused to burn in the grate—in short, nothing went right, and Mr. Deane was consequently and correspondingly cross.

"Jenkins!"

"Go to the Widow Clarkson's, and tell her I shall be there in half an hour, and expect confidently—mind, Jenkins, confidently to receive that rent money. Or else I shall feel myself obliged to resort to extreme measures. You understand, Jenkins?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then don't stand there starin' like an idiot," snarled Mr. Deane, in a sudden burst of irritation; and Jenkins disappeared like a shot.

Just half an hour afterwards, Mr. Matthew Deane brushed the brown hair just sprinkled with gray away from his forehead, yet not unkindly brow; putting on his fur-lined overcoat, he walked forth into the chilly winter air fully determined, figuratively, to annihilate the defaulting Widow Clarkson.

It was a dwarfish little red brick house which appeared originally to have aspired to two-storyhood lot, but cramped by circumstances had settled down into a story and a half; but the windows shone like Brazilian pebbles, and the doorsteps were worn by much scouring. Neither of these circumstances, however, did Mr. Deane remark as he pulled the glittering brass door knob, and strode into Mrs. Clarkson's neat parlor.

There was a small fire—very small, as if every lump of anthracite was as if it were a lump of iron, and a table hoarded in the stove, and a table with writing implements before her sat a young lady whom Mr. Deane at once recognized as Mrs. Clarkson's niece, Miss Olive Mellen. She was not disagreeable to look upon, though you would never have thought of classing her among the beauties, with shining black hair, blue, long-lashed eyes, and a very pretty mouth, hiding teeth like rice kernels, so white were they.

Miss Mellen rose with a polite nod, which was grimly reciprocated by Mr. Deane.

"I have called to see your aunt, Miss Mellen."

"I know it, sir, but as I am aware of her timid temperament, I sent her away. I prefer to deal with you myself."

Mr. Deane started—the cool audacity of this damsel in gray, with scarlet ribbons in her hair, rather astonished him.

"I suppose the money is ready?"

"No, sir, it is not."

"Then, Miss Olive, pardon me, I must speak plainly. I shall send an officer here this afternoon to put a valuation on the furniture, and—"

"You will do nothing of the kind, sir."

Olive's cheek had reddened and her eyes flashed passionately. Mr. Deane stared toward the door, but ere he knew what she was doing, Olive had walked quietly across the room, locked

the door, and taken out the key—then she resumed her seat.

"What does this mean?" ejaculated the astonished "prisoner of war."

"It means, sir, that you will now be obliged to reconsider the question."

"Obliged?"

"Yes—you will hardly jump out of the window, and there is no other method of egress unless you choose to go up the chimney. Now, then, Mr. Deane, will you tell me if you—a Christian man in the nineteenth century—intend to sell a poor widow's furniture, because she is not able to pay your rent? Listen, sir!"

Mr. Deane had opened his mouth to remonstrate, but Olive enforced her words with a very emphatic little stamp of the foot, and he was, as it were, stricken dumb.

"You are what the world calls a rich man, Mr. Deane. You own rows of houses, piles of bank stock, railroad shares, bonds and mortgages—who knows what? My aunt has nothing—I support her by copying. Now, if this case be carried into a court of law, my poor ailing aunt will be a sufferer—you would emerge unscathed and profiting. You are not a bad man, Mr. Deane; you have a great many noble qualities, and I like you for them."

She paused an instant, and looked intently and gravely at Mr. Deane. The color rose to his cheek—it was not disagreeable to be told by a pretty young girl that she liked him, on any terms, yet she had indulged in pretty plain speaking.

"I have heard," she went on, "of your doing kind actions when you were in the humor of it. You can do them, and you shall in this instance. You are cross this morning, you know you are! Hush, no excuse; you are selfish and irritable and overbearing! If I were your mother, and you a little boy, I should certainly put you in a corner until you promised to be good."

Mr. Deane smiled, although he was getting angry. Olive went on with the utmost composure.

"But as it is, I shall only keep you here a prisoner until you have behaved, and given me your word not to annoy my aunt again for rent, until she is able to pay you. Then, and not until then, will you receive your money. Do you promise? Yes or no?"

"I certainly shall agree to no such terms," said Mr. Deane, tartly.

"Very well, sir, I can wait."

Miss Mellen deposited the key in the pocket of her grey dress, and sat down to her copying. Had she been a man, Mr. Deane would probably have knocked her down—as it was, she wore an invisible armor of power in the very fact that she was a fragile, slight woman, and she knew it.

"Miss Olive," he said, sternly, "let us terminate this mummery. Unlock that door!"

"Mr. Deane, I will not."

"I shall shout and alarm the neighborhood, then, or call a policeman."

"Very well, Mr. Deane, do so, if you please."

She dipped her pen in the ink and began on a fresh page. Matthew sat down puzzled and discomfited, and watched the long-lashed eyes and faintly tinted cheek of his keeper. She was very pretty—what a pity she was so obstinate.

"Miss Olive!"

"The clock has just struck twelve."

"I heard it."

"I should like to go out to get some lunch."

"I am sorry that that luxury is out of your power."

"But I'm confounded hungry."

"Are you?"

"And I'm not going to stand this sort of thing any longer."

"No?"

"How provokingly nonchalant she was. Mr. Deane eyed the pocket of the grey dress greedily, and walked up and down the room pettishly.

"I have an appointment at one."

"Indeed! What a pity you will be unable to keep it."

He took another turn across the room. Olive looked up with a smile.

"Well, are you ready to promise?"

"Hang it, yes! What else can I do?"

"You promise?"

"I do, because I can't help myself."

Olive drew the key from her pocket, with softened eyes.

LUNATIC INGENUITY.

TOOLS AND WEAPONS MADE FROM SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE MEANS.

A Harmless Patient Who Took Pleasure in Frighening Those Who Thought Him Dangerous—Some Remarkable Instances of Mechanical Ability.

Many insane people are possessed of the delusion that they are the objects of some special persecution, and in order to protect themselves against their supposed persecutor or in order to be prepared to attack him when they chance to meet him, they work in secret and prepare for themselves some very unique weapons. More commonly their efforts are expended in making tools for purposes of escape. The materials which they have at hand for this purpose being very limited, they are compelled to use whatever they can find, and the greatest ingenuity is often exercised by men that to the casual

observer would seem quite incompetent. The collection of these primitive weapons and tools is quite comprehensive in its line, and each article in it carries with it a thrilling story of escape or attempted escape.

There is a screwdriver made from a spoon which a patient at an opportune moment smuggled to his room from the dining table. He broke off the spoon just above the bowl and under cover of the noise which prevailed at times ground down the handle on his stone window sill until it assumed the form of a screwdriver. With this he removed the screws which held the sash at the side of his window and made his escape in this manner. This man was a harmless patient, who was troubled with recurrent attacks of excitement and who took pleasure at such times in witnessing the fright which he inspired in those who thought him dangerous.

The next article in the collection is an improved dagger and sheath, the dagger made from a nail with a piece of rag for a handle and a sheath made from a chicken bone. The weapon was found on the person of the maker and was taken before he had time to complete the dagger by filing down the point on the nail.

Another improvised weapon is a dirk made from a long nail with the end well sharpened and a rag wrapped around the other end to serve as a handle. This instrument was as sharp as an ordinary knife and would be a formidable weapon in the hands of a crazy man.

Perhaps the most unique article in the collection is a key made from a piece of orange peel. This apparently harmless tool was made by a female patient and was discovered before she had an opportunity to test its efficiency. The prison officials found on trial that this key made from dried orange peel would unlock readily almost any old and worn lock.

The doctor has also a key made from wood and one made from wood and a piece of orange peel, and others made from the handle of a blacking box, from a small staple, etc., all of which will unlock old locks with more or less ease. Screwdrivers seem to be the instrument which the inmates consider most useful, and there are several strange varieties of this tool in the doctor's collection. They are made from nails, button hooks, springs, from the heel of a woman's shoe and heel plates and clothes hooks.

A Good Disinfectant.

The very best disinfectant and deodorizer known is copperas. A double handful dissolved in a bucket of water and used to wash drain pipes and receptacles of waste material, will keep such places above suspicion. The water in pithers and flower holders should be changed every day. On attention to such seemingly trivial details may hang a human life.

Ingredients of the Potato.

On the average 75 per cent. of the potato's weight is water, 20 per cent. is starch and 5 per cent. is nitrogenous matter, but the proportions vary so greatly that the food value of the best table potatoes may be three times that of the poorest.

The Sun's Motions.

The sun has three motions—a rotation about its axis; a motion about the center of gravity of the whole solar system, which points always within the sun's volume; and a motion round some bigger fixed star.

Decrease in the Speed of a Ship.

As a rule, six months' cruise decreases the speed of a ship 15 knots in every 100. This is caused by the barnacles which form on a ship's hull.

Real Friendship.

Chateaubriand—That two men may be real friends they must have opposite opinions, similar principles and different loves and hatreds.

Ostrich Feathers.

Ostrich feathers are plucked first when the bird is about seven months old. About a dozen feathers are taken from the wings and tail at one time.

Low Pillows.

A well-known physician says that better sleep can be obtained with a low pillow than with a high pillow.

JAN MAZEPPA'S CAREER.

Recapitulation of the Career of the Ukrainian Hero of the Ukraine.

Jan Mazeppa was born about the year 1645, being the son of a poor nobleman of Podolia. For some time the youth served as page at the Court of John Casimir, King of Poland. On his return to his native province he carried on an intrigue with the wife of one of his neighbors. Being surprised by the offended husband, he was bound by his orders to one of the wild horses which roam about the Ukraine, and the terrified animal, being turned loose, ran with his burden till it reached the country of the Cossacks, where Mazeppa, half dead, was released by the peasants.

Being tenderly nursed by the peasants, Mazeppa was restored to health and rose to such favor with their Hetman that he was chosen as his successor. As chief of the Cossacks, he rendered many services to Peter the Great, and, being strongly attached to the liberties of his adopted country, is said to have made earnest but unavailing remonstrances to that monarch when he had resolved to violate them.

Created Prince of the Ukraine, Mazeppa became tired of his dependence on the Emperor and entered into a secret league with Charles XII. of Sweden. His scheme being discovered, and his capital, Baturin, having been taken by the Russians, he joined the Swedish King. The battle of Poltava was the result of his counsel, and after that disastrous engagement Mazeppa took refuge at Bender, where he poisoned himself September 22, 1709.

Marriage in the Philippines.

In no respect will the domination, or even the influence, of the United States in the Philippines work for good more than the social life of the people. An American minister who has recently returned from the islands is the authority for the statement that the priests have for many years charged the natives no less than \$30 for performing the marriage service. As the average native under Spanish rule was able to earn about \$5 a month "when times were good" and he had regular employment, it is easy to see why common law marriages have always been the rule rather than the exception. It is safe to say that among the first reforms introduced in the islands is one that will have direct bearing upon the sanctity of the marriage relation.

Memory of Hotel Clerks.

The memory of a hotel clerk is cultivated along peculiar lines. Hundreds of names and faces have to be accurately memorized, and he must be able at a minute's notice to tell the number of the room in which any of the hotel visitors is quartered. If asked the number of the room occupied by John Smith a good clerk can, without hesitation, put his hand in the proper pigeon-hole and extract the key. The curious part of the operation is that he can rarely make it work backward. If asked who is in a given room he almost invariably has to consult his books before responding.

Galloping Steeds on the Stage.

The audience listening breathlessly to the hoofbeats of a galloping steed on whose exertions the fate of several people depend would experience a painful shock if it knew that a grinning propertyman was wearily beating out the noise. This man holds in his hands a pair of real horseshoes mounted

on wooden handles, and with these he vigorously pounds a piece of granite suspended before him by four ropes. Man, stone and horseshoes are confined in a small sentry-box, the door of which is gradually closed, to suggest that the noise is dying away in the distance.

Odd Signs in Havana.

A Havana correspondent writes: One sees here everywhere the sign, "Barrato"—that is to say, "Cheap," or "A Bargain," and a big ready-made clothing shop here is decorated by its proprietor with the announcement in huge letters, "Mas barrato que yo—nada!" which, being freely interpreted, means "I am the best thing in the world; hiding me along," or, literally, "Cheaper than I—nobody."

No Beef for