

THE CAPTAIN'S BRIDE

"It's awkward! Shiver my timbers! I've spiked my own guns." Captain Fairbreeze, late owner and skipper of the Nancy Lucy, but now retired, did not exactly tear his hair. He had little to spare, and merely went through the pantomime of weeping it.

And really the position was awkward, not to say ludicrous. For months past, he had been trying to convince his son, Frank, that to marry Madge Thornton, a mere farmer's daughter, and her very small fortune, would be the act of a fool.

Captain Fairbreeze was not a poor man, but he rarely gave anything away. He considered that he had worked hard for what he possessed, and he let Frank know with considerable emphasis, that he would "walk the plank" before he would share his savings with a couple of cooling and starving turtles.

"Would you compel me to marry for money, sir?" Frank had asked. "No!" was the blunt reply. "But I'd bet you a battleship to a belaying pin you don't marry on mine."

Then—how he could kick himself for it now!—Captain Fairbreeze had introduced the name of the Widow Lavelle.

Mrs. Lavelle had lately come to reside in the village, and had jumped into popularity at once.

"More, my boy," the old salt had added, "I've heard from a reliable source that she has two thousand pounds of her own! Now, Frank, go and find a quiet corner—and think!"

And Frank, like a dutiful son, obeyed. For days he seemed to do nothing else but think!

Then the result was seen. He talked less of Madge and more of the widow. Captain Fairbreeze had just begun to fatter himself that he had at last succeeded in "driving sense into the boy's head," when he made a startling discovery—a discovery that simply took his breath away!

He had studied the lady so closely and had sounded her praises so constantly, that now he could not bear the idea of parting with her, even to his own son!

With something more than a shock Captain Fairbreeze discovered that he loved her! And now he had a rival—a serious rival of his own making!

"I've a surprise for you my boy—a great surprise!"

Captain Fairbreeze had been to the village, and had come back looking ten years younger.

"Perhaps it isn't such a surprise as you think, sir!" returned Frank. "I might guess its nature."

"Can you?"

"You are going to marry Mrs. Lavelle."

breeze, gripping his son's hand and wringing it warmly. "You'll rub along now."

III. Captain Fairbreeze had the reputation of being a man of the world. He was wont to boast of the fact. But—4,000 pounds! It was a big sum and one not to be lost without an effort.

On the day before the wedding, which at Mrs. Lavelle's suggestion was to be a double one, Captain Fairbreeze favored the son with a little lecture, frugality being the text.

And on the following day Captain Fairbreeze kept his eyes open for Aunt Mary.

The double ceremony was over and they had returned for the wedding breakfast, and still the captain's curiosity was left unsatisfied.

"I say, Frank!" he blurted out at length, "this is my serious Aunt Mary! Where is she? I've seen nothing of her!"

"Nonsense, dad!" laughed Frank. "You married the lady an hour ago!"

Captain Fairbreeze could not dispute it. He was reading the truth in the laughing eyes of his bride.

"Yes, John, it is perfectly true," she said. "Madge is my niece. Hearing how matters stood between the young lovers, I came down quietly, determining to bring about one wedding, though I did not expect to become involved in another."

"Frank told me of your generous resolve to double what Madge brought him, and I determined that between us we could give them a right good send-off. And I think we have done so. What do you think, John?"

John thought a great deal more than he ventured to say at the moment. Indeed, he was in a thoughtful mood for an hour or two.

Among other things he thought of was the proposed wager, "a battleship to a belaying pin," that Frank didn't marry on his father's money.

Captain Fairbreeze soon got over it, however, for he had found a treasure in his domestic bride.

These Petty Expenses. Speaking of starting things and not finishing them," said a business man, "did I ever tell you of the curious habit that an uncle of mine had? He used to carry a memorandum book around with him and whenever he spent any money he would jot down the figures. We always looked upon him as a model in keeping accounts. One day I got talking to him about it and he pulled the book out of his pocket to show me. What was my amazement on looking at it to discover that not one of the pages was totaled up. I asked him, naturally, whether he never added the columns to find out how much he was spending. He told me that he did not and never had; the practice was too discouraging. A sense of duty impelled him to put down the items, but there he stopped. An interesting man, my uncle, although a trifle eccentric."

"Not so very unlike the majority of humankind," said the business man's friend, "unless perhaps in his honesty of avowal. I think there are a mighty few people who keep the record of their personal expenses in shipshape fashion. Lots of us start out with the best of intentions, say at the beginning of a year, but as a good deal like keeping up a diary. And just where nine out of ten fall down is the matter of totaling. It takes but an infinitesimal amount of time to run up a column, but somehow we don't like the operation; it's too much like bringing a charge against ourselves. So we save our consciences by jotting down items—when we think of them—and let them go at that. Pretty soon the account or memorandum book becomes hopelessly in arrears and it is put away where it will not be an irritation. The next January another beginning may be made, but unless the conscience is in very good working order there will be the same result."

Here's a Simile. What would our language be without a simile? No one can forget George Aubrey's remark that an acquaintance had invested about every thing he had in an ochre mine. "You've got about as much use for that mine as a cow has for a side pocket." Dr. Smolzer was trying to tell the Merry Sixty Club about a certain prominent financier who is noted for his longness and leanness. "Is he so very thin?" asked a listener. "Thin! Why, he looks as if he could go an excursion up a gas pipe."

Water Wagon Note. A rain of make-believe snakes intended to throw a scare into the dear girls was one of the features of the Philadelphia bachelors' ball. The scare was probably confined, however, to some of the bachelors.—Pittsburg Press.

Doctor Bills in France. Physicians and druggists in France cannot collect their bills if they allow them to stand over two years.

HAMMERED

BY Herbert Maxwell

The Stock Exchange functionaries were seen approaching the stands from which the announcement of failure is made, and the usual wail instantly fell upon the turmoil of the markets.

"It is my duty to announce that George Mansfield Hamilton has failed to meet his engagements."

George Hamilton was sitting in his one-room office making out his statement of accounts for the committee. He was quite alone, for he had already known his failure to be inevitable before, and had promptly paid off and dismissed his clerk and office boy.

He had written Miss Baagard Penton, informing her of the impending catastrophe, and suggested that she and he should consider their engagement at an end.

While he was poring over his accounts and trying to draw up a clear statement of his position the door opened and Margaret came in.

"Am I bothering you, George? I expect I am, because we are not engaged any more, apparently. Yes, I've had your horrid letter. No, I don't want to discuss it. If I'm released, I'm released, and there's nothing more to be said."

"No, you're not bothering me, Margaret, because I should like you to understand exactly what's happened. I have not been cheating or defrauding people and I think I may fairly claim to be considered the victim of undeserved misfortune. I have been let in by one of my clients."

"Explain to me exactly what that means," George.

"It means that my client has bought shares he can't pay for."

"Then how very silly of you not to have had the money from him before you bought the shares!"

"Quite so; I can see that now. But that is not the way one usually does business on the Stock Exchange. One has to trust one's clients."

"You ought to know them very well before you trust them I should think. Did you know this one very well?"

"His name is Robert Anderson and he lives in rooms at 90 Russell Square."

"How did you get to know him?"

"He was introduced to me by another client."

"Who was that?"

"Hargreave Fenner."

She found a man seated at a table on which his elbows rested. His head was bowed forward and supported on his hands. At his side was a black bottle which was three-quarters empty. Obviously, Mr. Robert Anderson had been tipping.

"Ah, Mr. Anderson," she said, with her usual directness, "you have been trying to drown your qualms of conscience in drink, and you haven't succeeded. You are at this moment suffering poignant remorse for having aided Mr. Hargreave Fenner to ruin Mr. Hamilton. You've been genuinely crying, haven't you, now?"

"Now, please tell me all about it. Did he tell you why he wanted to ruin him? I don't suppose so, but I'll tell you. He wanted to marry me, and knowing that I am already engaged to Mr. Hamilton, he thought by ruining him he would prevent the match and so get a chance of marrying me himself. Wasn't it mean?"

"I regret, madam—I regret extremely, that you should have found me in this disarray," he said, with an indistinct assumption of some of his old dignity, "for there were times not long ago, when I should have been able to receive you in a manner worthy of your beauty and your social position. I am not what I was, madam."

"You have already helped me a great deal," cried Margaret gayly. "And now about our business. You know you bought certain shares on the Stock Exchange through Mr. Hamilton, don't you, at a cost of nearly ten thousand pounds? I am certain you can remember if you try."

"I remember perfectly, madam—perfectly," said Anderson, after a successful struggle at recollection. "Hargreave Fenner advised me to buy them. He said they were a sure thing. He said I should be able to buy out of the profits more than I could use in a hundred years. I remember it distinctly."

"But there are no profits, Mr. Anderson and you haven't paid for the shares, and you owe Mr. Hamilton ten thousand pounds, which he has had to pay and it has ruined him."

"Dear me! Ten thousand pounds! And Hargreave Fenner told me—"

"Yes, that's it. Hargreave Fenner used you as a catspaw to ruin Mr. Hamilton because he wanted to prevent my marrying him in order that he might marry me himself. And it was a horribly mean trick, and I hate him, and you must help me to make him pay the money. I am sure you understand," cried Margaret breathlessly.

And Robert Anderson did understand. "We will go to Hargreave Fenner and talk to him, madam," he said, with extraordinary dignity, and Margaret thought it was the most touching thing she had ever witnessed in her life to see the tragic efforts he made to smarten himself up and render himself fit to accompany her.

Then he offered her his arm and escorted her downstairs with the air of a courtier escorting a queen, and helped her into the brougham, and so they were quickly whisked away to Mr. Hargreave Fenner's luxuriously appointed flat.

"Hargreave Fenner, I regret to have to state that you are a low blackguard. You are even a lower blackguard than I am, and I can think of nothing worse to say about you than that. This lady has made me understand why you recommended me to buy certain shares from Mr. Hamilton and why you told Mr. Hamilton that I was all right for payment."

"So now you've got the option of 'And Whirled the Poker having your head broken with a poker, and your dirty, mean trick exposed to your own and this lady's friends, or of writing a check for ten thousand pounds in favor of Mr. Hamilton, and handing it over to this lady to give to him. Choose!"

Robert Anderson advanced upon Hargreave Fenner, and whirled the poker aloft.

And Hargreave Fenner seemed to realize that this was no time for temporizing. He produced his check book and wrote his check, and Margaret and Robert Anderson fled with it in the motor brougham, and gave it to George Hamilton who was still worrying over the statement of accounts he was drawing up for the committee.

And George Hamilton flew around to the various firms who were his creditors and paid them in full, and the creditors in their turn rushed into the house and reported the facts to the committee.

And the result of all this flying and rushing was that George Hamilton's case constituted a record, for while many men are hammered and subsequently reinstated, he enjoyed the unique distinction of being hammered and reinstated on the same day.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hamilton are the happiest of happy couples, and not least happy in the knowledge that they have weaned their friend Robert Anderson from his besetting weakness and converted him into a useful member of society.

A Grain of Hope

By Heron-Maxwell

It began at an afternoon party, where, as usual, people were feeling more or less bored, and were getting on one another's nerves.

"The rooms were too warm, to begin with, and everyone would congregate in the corner by the ices, so that the music-room was almost deserted, and the artists were distinctly annoyed at finding themselves warbling to a few stragglers."

"I am so sorry for Lady Dunstan," said Mary Beresford to the man who had just been introduced to her. "I am afraid we are not treating her well. Don't you think we had better go and listen to a song?"

"I would rather not," he answered, "but I am at your command. Only, will you do me a favor afterward?"

She looked surprised. "Certainly, if it is in my power," she assented civilly. "What is it?"

She was looking very comely and cool in a green and white dress of some diaphanous fabric; and there was an atmosphere of pleasant repose about Miss Beresford that people appreciated without analyzing it.

It had never occurred to her to marry anyone. She was well off, she had no near relations, and she had reached the age of thirty-three while still possessing the charm which was hers at twenty-six.

"I am the victim, or, rather, I suppose I should say the hero, of a romance," confessed she.

"And so you are married?" asked Mary, man, "and I have an intense yearning to tell someone about it. Will you let me confide in you?"

"You must let me know your name," she said. "If you are going to tell me the story of your life, I didn't catch what Lady Dunstan said."

"Lawrence Home," he replied, "and I have just met my fate."

"Really?" Mary's amused glance swept over the crowd around them, and rested on a girl with straight, clear-cut profile and dark hair, to whom she transiently remembered Mr. Home had been talking when their hostess divided them.

"I see you are trying to guess who is the doer machina," he said, "but I want to begin from the beginning. Won't you let me off the song, Miss Beresford, and come to the balcony over there?"

"It is very unprincipled," said Mary, waveringly. "Lady Dunstan asked us to go to the drawing room."

"Principles can be carried too far," he argued. "Let us be selfish for once and choose the balcony."

"And so you are romantic?" asked Mary, when they were ensconced in a shady corner.

"Not at all by temperament," he assured her; "but I have become so lately. I saw a lady at a concert, and felt so attracted by her that I paid no attention to the music. Since then Chance has willed that we should often be within speaking distance of each other—in the street, in a room, at an entertainment—and the attraction has grown with every meeting; so that when I have received an invitation lately, I have said to myself, 'I wonder if she will be there?' She with a capital letter!

rising diplomat—indeed, one might say that he was a rich one—and he talked even better than usual, because he was anxious to please Miss Beresford.

Ethel Matthews who was accustomed to demand and receive admiration with a coolness that is characteristic of the latter-day young woman, accepted Mr. Home's attempts to be agreeable graciously, and they were quite friendly by the time that they arrived at the Grafton Galleries.

Mary Beresford, watching the progress of the little romance with a thrill at her heart that was half pleasant, and yet had a touch of odd sadness in it, decided to see the thing through, and later, she invited both Ethel and Mr. Home to dine with her the following week and do a play.

It was very nice and civil of Mr. Home, she thought, to manage a call on her in between the two festivities, and she received him with gracious cordiality.

They drifted into talk about themselves, and she learned many interesting things concerning him, so that they seemed like old and intimate friends when they parted.

The theatre party promised well at the commencement; for the fourth man was a steady-going, middle-aged Member of Parliament, a widower, with pronounced views, and Mary monopolized him in order to give the romance freedom to develop itself.

Yet presently it seemed as if something had gone wrong. Ethel Matthews was distinctly initiating the widower in the early stages of the art of flirtation; while Lawrence—plucked no doubt—betrayed a desire to take refuge from her neglect with Mary.

She was surprised to find that she was full of indignant sympathy for Lawrence—for, after all, love disappointments are very usual occurrences, and that she was actually, taking a dislike to Ethel because that fickle young person had deserted Mr. Home for the widower.

"It is alarming of you to take it so well," she murmured to Lawrence, when he begged the privilege of driving home with her. "but, of course, you must not let it become a real quarrel. You must insist on seeing Miss Matthews to Eaton Terrace."

"But she has already arranged," he said, "that our honorable and worthy friend should be her escort. I should not like to intervene."

And a moment later Miss Matthews settled the point herself by departing with the widower, and taking a very brief and chilly farewell of Mr. Home.

As Mary drove with him toward Mayfair Mansions, she was trying to think of appropriate words wherewith to console this blighted lover; but she found it so difficult that when they had reached the flat she had said nothing, and could only endeavor to convey her sympathy by a lingering hand-clasp.

"May I not come in for a moment," he said. "I have something important to say to you."

She gave a gracious assent. "I have been looking forward to this evening more than I can say," Lawrence began. "Will I bore you if I refer to my romance?"

She turned to him with tears of earnestness shining in her eyes. "Of course it will not bore me," she assured him. "I cannot express to you how sorry I feel, how sincerely I sympathize with you. But I think that Miss Matthews—"

He interrupted by taking her hand. "Need we talk about Miss Matthews?" he said, while the smile twinkled in his eye transformed his face. "It is such absolute waste of time. I would so much rather talk about you, Mary."

She was so astonished for a moment she could not say a word. "He's read something that speaks, and encouraged him in the drew her eyes," a little nearer to him by the passive hand he held.

"I cannot wait any longer," he said. "I very nearly told you that I loved you on that first day on Lady Dunstan's balcony, but I did not venture to for fear of being banished and losing my chance. It has seemed an eternity since then, and, to tell the truth, I was getting so bored with Miss Matthews that I am afraid I showed it. Mary, I have loved you from the first moment that I saw you, don't send me away."

