Higby's Last Cure

It Was the Successful One

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Mr. Higby threw aside the evening newspaper and folded his arms across his breast. "Anastasia," he said resolutely, "I've struck the very thing at last!"

His wife looked up from her needlework. "What is it now, Henry?"

"A cure for my rheumatism," he announced triumphantly.

"I didn't know you had rheumatism, Henry."

"I have had it lately; a stiffening of the joints and a general disinclination to move around much."

"Humph!" ejaculated his wife skeptically. "You've been jumping up and down all the evening, Henry, and this is the first grunt I've heard out of you. Maybe it's growing pains."

Mr. Higby arose painfully from his chair and with bent back proceeded to limp slowly from the room. Anastasia's kind eyes followed his progress with mingled tears and laughter in their depths. At last pity and love triumphed, and she arose and went to him.

"Forgive me, Henry, for being so cross! Do come back and tell me what I can do to relieve you," she said with her cheek against his.

Sunny hearted Henry Higby turned a beaming face to hers and forgivingly kissed her on the brow. He permitted her to lead him back to his comfortable morris chair and to pile several pillows at his back.

"Now, tell me what new cure you have found, dear?" she said, sitting down to her embroidery once more.

"I've just read about it in this paper," explained Mr. Higby enthusiastically, forgetting to groan as he crossed his legs comfortably. "It's a simple cure, and that is what appeals to me. It costs absolutely nothing save a few pine boards and half a day's work. Living in the suburbs as we do, the trees are already provided for the purpose."

"What trees?" asked Anastasia curiously.

"The trees for the cure. You see it is this way: Some scientist has figured that the outer air is the natural atmosphere for man to breathe. He says if animals can sleep in the open—that is, if some can make their homes in damp and oozy spots without contracting rheumatism and kindred diseases; if others can sleep in cold caves on rocky floors without dire results; if birds can nest in the trees without catching cold from the rains that beat in, why should not man who was made to live and breathe the pure air of out of doors, why should not rheumatic man sleep out in the open and cure his ills? Great idea, isn't it?"

"Grand!" agreed Anastasia without enthusiasm.

"I'm going to try it."

"What are you going to be, an animal in an oozy swamp or a bird in a tree?" she asked.

"I suppose you've heard of the German mud baths for rheumatism?"

"Yes."

"Then the idea of the oozy swamp is not farfetched. I expect to try the tree cure."

"You're going to build a nest?" she asked, incredulity struggling with amusement.

"Of course not. One has to exercise common sense in such matters. I shall modify the idea, of course. I shall build a platform between those four tall chestnuts—say about forty feet above ground. I shall have a strong wire fence all about it and place a cot there."

"You will not only lose your rheumatism, but all your other ills, Henry, and you will sleep thereafter in the cemetery on the hillside," asserted his wife dryly.

"Fiddlesticks!" laughed Mr. Higby, with great good humor. "You said the same thing when I tried the fish diet for nervousness. You thought I would develop fins and get to swimming in the bay until somebody caught me with a mummy chub and made me into a chowder. Why, you had the table all set for a chowder dinner, with me as the chief ingredient. Eh, Anastasia?" He tweaked his wife's ear playfully and made for the door. "I guess I'll telephone down to Flake's house an' ask him to send up some lumber from the mill in the morning."

Quite forgetful of his rheumatism, Mr. Higby went into the hall and shut himself into the telephone booth.

Anastasia laid aside her needlework and closed her eyes. She was tired of her husband's many fancied illnesses, and she was startled at the rapidity with which one disease followed another. And yet, and yet, as an actual fact Henry Higby had never had a day's real sickness in the twelve years they had been married.

As for his imaginary ailments—well, there had always been for a standby the grip, then neuralgia of head and heart, asthma, bronchitis, tuberculosis, insomnia, pains and sprains, symptoms of whatever disease was the fad of the moment, and he had had more attacks of appendicitis than all the other citizens of his suburban town put together.

He had just recovered from an attack of appendicitis and had only spent two days at his often neglected business when rheumatism stared him in the face.

Anastasia sighed as she thought of the fuss and bother that must attend Henry's adoption of a new sleeping place. He had slept all over the house in the past. From attic to cellar every room had known his restless slumbers, and last summer he had slept on the front piazza until he was startled one night by awakening to discover a tall, gaunt framed woman standing over him with a small lantern held close to his face.

"It's only you, is it?" she had said contemptuously and passed into the house. The next morning Mr. Higby discharged Bridget for impertinence and the following day found a new domestic installed in the kitchen, one who was not given to nocturnal wanderings.

The next few days witnessed a busy period in Mr. Higby's existence. Assisted by a carpenter he constructed a square platform between the four chestnuts in the large back yard. When it was all completed and a comfortable cot bed within the wire inclosure, Mr. Higby invited his neighbors to inspect the innovation.

Of course it wasn't right. Captain Fletcher said that the platform should have been lashed to the trees, not nailed. "First strong breeze we have will wrench your timbers apart," he warned.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Higby jovially. "Fiddlesticks," he said to somebody else, and "Piffle," he remarked to a third critic. Then he went into the house and made preparations for his ascent to his nest.

Mrs. Higby tearfully prepared a basket of extra bedclothing. "You will catch your death of cold, Henry," she murmured. "And suppose you should fall out, why, you'd be killed. At any rate, you'd break every bone in your body."

"Fiddlesticks," was Mr. Higby's hackneyed response.

"You're tempting Providence," finished Anastasia at last. "There isn't a thing the matter with you, Henry, but there will be before you get through with this business. I wish you wouldn't go."

"Never mind, my dear," assured Mr. Higby with the gentle patience of one who knows he is right. "You will understand some day how it is with me."

Behind closed blinds many curious eyes watched Mr. Higby's lantern as it slowly ascended the long ladder that led up to his lofty perch. The lantern swung in his hand as he steadied himself on the ladder. A strong wind was rising and the trees were swaying with a low musical creak of boughs. Up on the dizzy height of the platform he pulled manfully on the rope to which the basket of extra bedding was fastened and presently the basket loomed over the railing and was deposited on the floor.

Before long Henry Higby had taken the second step in his projected cure for rheumatism. He had slipped out of his bathrobe and slippers and jumped into the little cot, which was clamped down to the platform. For a long time he lay awake looking up at the stars, which shone down through the young foliage of the trees, for it was early spring. He saw the white clouds go drifting across the face of the moon. He felt the rhythmical swing of the trees as they bent to the freshening wind, and finally he fell asleep.

He slumbered, only to awaken to a moment of supreme terror when it seemed that the bottom had dropped out of the universe and he was being propelled through nothingness to oblivion. He was conscious that he struck the soft branches of trees in his downward passage, and then something hard arose to meet him and blot out his sense of pain.

When he awoke from this second sleep he was not swinging in his nest among the treetops, with the stars roofed over his head. He was in his own stationary bed on the second floor of his home. Two physicians regarded him speculatively, while Anastasia hung, pale and anxious eyed, close to his pillow.

"What happened?" he asked feebly.

"The wind was so strong that the trees pulled the platform apart, and you fell to the ground," said Dr. Brown cheerily. "We'll have you up and around in a few months."

"A few months!" gasped Higby. "Why, what's the matter with me? I can't move."

"Of course you can't," said Dr. Jones bluffly. "You've only broken three ribs, fractured your left leg, broken your right wrist and wrenched your back. What in thunderation were you doing up there, eh?"

"It was a cure for rheumatism," said Mr. Higby, with diffidence.

"Well, you cured the rheumatism, all right," assured the doctor; "but, man alive, you've got enough now to take care of for awhile! No need to warn you to keep quiet."

When they were alone Higby exchanged a look with his wife, and his own eyes were repentant.

"I'm an idiot, Anastasia!" he blurted out. "It's too bad I didn't break my fool neck as well as the other bones!"

But Anastasia assured him that the enforced rest would benefit him and that when his broken parts had been knit together he would probably enjoy perfect health. "I hope you will, dear," said Anastasia slowly. "Life is too short to fuss over imaginary ills"—

"I know, I know," put in Henry Higby hastily. "I had to break every bone in my body to cure myself. But I'm cured now, Anastasia. Where's that 'Family Doctor?'"

"It is burning in the kitchen stove this very moment," said Anastasia firmly.

"Good!" said Higby, turning his face to the wall.

A Blue Ribbon

It Served For a Shoestring, and Thereby Hangs the Tale

By F. A. MITCHEL

Harry Spangler, a light hearted young man of twenty, opened the front door and went out for a walk. He was immaculately clad—a silk hat, a light spring overcoat, gloved and carried a cane. There is always a weak spot somewhere about us, and the weak spot in Mr. Spangler's attire was one frayed shoestring. He had not gone far before it was dangling under his heels. He stopped near a stone stoop and, putting his foot upon a lower step, was about to tie it when he discovered that it was broken. Not only was it broken, but broken in the middle, and in order to right it he must take it out, readjust one half of it and throw the other half away.

To do this necessitated sitting down on the stone step and taking off his shoe. Looking about him to see that no one was near to see him in such an undignified position he dusted off the step with his snow white handkerchief, seated himself and went to work. Having withdrawn the string in endeavoring to get it back in place he discovered that the metal tip had been flattened and would not go into the holes. The cut end would not go in without the skill of a needle threader. He succeeded, however, in doing the job when he discovered that the string could not be tied, one end being made shorter than the other.

Mr. Spangler was sitting there looking at the shoe when along came a young lady a couple of years his junior, dressed as immaculately as he and withal very pretty. She endeavored to repress a smile at the situation, which she took in at once, then in the kindness of her heart began to feel over her corsage, her shoulders, for something with which to replace the broken string. Finding a narrow ribbon she detached it and handed it to the handicapped man, but the look of despair in his face at being able to introduce it into his shoe so affected her that, taking off her gloves, she introduced the ribbon with her own deft fingers. Harry put on the shoe, tied the ends of the ribbon, then rising shook the leg of his trousers down over it. He was profuse in his thanks, lifted his hat with a bow he had often practiced before the glass, and the girl who had succored him passed on. All that was left of her was a blue ribbon a quarter of an inch wide and about sixteen inches long.

When Spangler returned to his home he took the ribbon out of his shoe, smoothed out the kinks and contemplated it as a valued memento of the girl whose charming person it had decorated and whose fingers had placed it in his shoe. Then folding it two or three times, he ran it through the buttonhole of his coat, tied it in a bowknot and vowed he would leave it there till he should meet the donor again.

Mr. Spangler's mind was not so full of important subjects but that there was room for a pretty girl who had given him a smile for himself and a ribbon for his boot. Whenever he looked at the ribbon, remembering where it had been, he was distressed to think that it had descended from its position in the neighborhood of violets to rubbing against malodorous shoe blacking. It kept fresh in his mind that pink and white complexion, those eyes of the heaven's own blue, those coils of blond shining in the sunlight, that dainty figure, displayed by a fashionably cut costume.

Spangler never went out on to the street without wearing the ribbon tied in a butterfly knot in his buttonhole. Several months passed without his meeting the donor again, when one day, turning a corner, he came suddenly upon her. She passed him without any sign of recognition whatever, though he caught her gaze momentarily fastened on the ribbon in his buttonhole. Notwithstanding that it would not have been etiquette for her to notice a stranger, even though she had succored him in distress, he felt hurt that she had not shown some evidence of having met him before. But she passed on in among the throng, and he did not know that he should ever meet her again.

But, hopeful, he continued to wear the ribbon. Every day for a year he turned the corner where he had met her, fancying that she might have occasion at times to pass that way; yet saw her there no more. But one gala day while standing on a curb where a crowd had gathered to see a procession pass he turned, and there in a window with others was the girl who was haunting him. He stood looking up at her for some time, but whether she saw him or whether she was ignorant of his presence he could not tell. At any rate, she ignored him. Loath as he was to leave her without learning something by which he might trace her, he felt obliged to move on lest she consider his stare an impertinence.

Spangler felt that the girl had an advantage over him and was holding on to it. A man who wishes the acquaintance of a lady must find the means for an introduction. There is among refined women that gateway which must be passed before the two can have anything in common. If the lady is about to sail for the other side of the world and the man she would like to know stands beside her, it is a point of honor, or pride, or coquetry with her to leave it to him to break the barrier between them.

Such was the present case. Spangler, could he have learned who the lady was or where she lived, would have moved heaven and earth to find a mutual friend to introduce him. But he could not attach himself long enough to her to get any information about her. Once while chatting with a friend on the street she passed him, and he asked the friend if he knew her. Had the reply been definitely in the negative Spangler would have accepted the inevitable. It is not the inevitable that troubles us; we recover from it very soon. It is the might have been—the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. Spangler's companion gave him excruciating agony by saying that he had met the lady, but for his life he could not tell when or where, what was her name or where she lived.

"Think," said Spangler.

His friend thought, but with no result.

"You're stupid as an owl," snapped Spangler. "If I had met a girl anywhere I would surely be able to recall something by which she might be identified."

It seemed as if fate were determined to tantalize Spangler. He saw the girl he wished to know on a trolley car. He tried to board the car, but it was going at a breakneck speed. One day he was sitting in a railway car, just leaving a station, when an incoming train passed him. At a window he saw her just long enough for her to lower her eyes from his to the ribbon in his buttonhole. Then again she was gone. On another occasion, while on a ferryboat, he saw her standing on the deck of another boat going the other way. Yet never in any of these meetings did she show the slightest recognition of ever having seen him before.

Spangler had a bosom friend, to whom he told his story, mentioning the fact that, though the girl on passing him never failed to cast a momentary glance on the ribbon in his buttonhole, she also failed to show the slightest recognition of him, not even permitting herself an amused smile.

"I'll tell you what you do," said his companion. "The next time you pass her pull the ribbon from your buttonhole and wave it about your head ecstatically. Try her on that, and if it doesn't break the ice the next time kiss it and weep over it."

Spangler was much comforted by this idea; but, lover-like, he despaired of ever meeting the girl again. And he didn't—that is, he didn't pass her on the street or in a railroad car or an automobile. But fate was waiting to give him a far better opportunity than any of these. One evening, being invited to a dance, he donned his spike-tail coat, his low cut white vest, with eighteen carat gold buttons, and appeared on the scene, quite ready for any conquest that might present itself. He had no sooner appeared at the door of the dancing hall, his thumbs in his trousers pockets and his neck stretched to one, over his inordinately high shirt collar, than he espied the object of his adoration careering with her head over her partner's shoulders in the two step.

He had his ribbon in his pocket—he never wore it where it would attract attention, though he always carried it with him—and on seeing his inamorata he whipped it out and tied it in his buttonhole. Choosing a partner, he sailed into the dance, whirled her up with the lily he desired to impress and gave the satisfaction to see the eyes fixed on the ribbon as she passed him; but, as at the other meetings, her face was as impassive as a marble statue.

"I'll break through that if I have to disgrace myself to do it," said Spangler. And, going into the gentlemen's dressing room, he took the string from one of his low patent leather shoes and tied the ribbon in it in a butterfly knot of great beauty. On re-entering the hall he found the revelers forming for a square dance. Finding his partner, he led her to the set in which the girl whose attention he wished to attract had taken position and established himself as her vis-a-vis. She ignored him as completely as ever. While standing still his trousers covered his blue ribbon shoestring.

The music struck up, and the head couples moved forward and back. Spangler on advancing raised his beribboned foot and swung it in graceful curves. The young lady opposite stood her ground, but the rigidity of her face showed signs of giving way. As Spangler receded he left the decorated shoe as far forward as possible. On turning corners he held it high, hopping around on the other foot.

The goal was won! The lady who had furnished the ribbon and laced his shoe burst into laughter.

There were more explosions during the dance, and when it was finished and Spangler led his partner to a seat near that of the girl whose reserve he had conquered the latter gave him a smile that said plainly, "Come and speak to me." He approached, saying, "I beg of you to suggest some one to introduce me." To which she replied, "A man needs no introduction to a girl who has tied his shoe," and straightway made room for him beside her.

Spangler in telling the story, which he does on every possible occasion, always ends with the words, "It isn't much of a yarn, but it illustrates what obstinate creatures girls are." Whereupon his wife adds: "Girls are queer, I suppose, and I daresay I was at that time as singular as the rest of them. I admit I greatly enjoyed throwing Harry off, but when he did the shoestring act with my blue ribbon in a ballroom it was too much for me."

A Practical Joke

It Turned Out Seriously in Two Respects

By ARTHUR B. PURDY

Sue Gwinne was known as the biggest little devil in R. We were all young then and were inclined to be frolicsome. I was, so far as I know, the only serious one in the lot. I suppose that this was the reason I fell in love with Sue. Opposites take to each other, and by good rights Sue should have returned my proffered affection, but she did not. At any rate, I couldn't be sure for more than half an hour at a time that she did. She would say something very sweet to me, raising me to the pinnacle of ecstasy, then cast me down by cold treatment.

It seemed to delight her to make me miserable, and why I couldn't understand. I wondered why she didn't play her pranks on the rest of the boys. I couldn't see that they had any especial advantages over me. Nor was I considered stupid. Why, then, had she picked me out to torment?

Sue had kept me in a changing state of fret during the fall and winter, but when the season was about to close seemed inclined to let up somewhat in her endeavors to make me miserable. Our set agreed to end the winter's festivities by a fancy dress ball. Deciding upon or getting up a costume was entirely out of my line, for I had no inventive faculty in such matters. In my dilemma Sue kindly came to my assistance. "Leave it to me," she said, "and I guarantee that you shall have one of the most striking costumes at the ball."

This was not only a great relief to me, but set me up with regard to her preference for me. Had she not picked me out among all the fellows for an act of kindness? And when she told me that she would make my costume with her own hands I was proud as a peacock. All she wanted was a few measurements. As to material, she said it would cost little or nothing. I asked her what the costume was to be, but she wouldn't tell me, declaring that I would be much pleased with it. I really cared very little what I represented, whether it was Louis XIV, Oliver Cromwell or George Washington. I was quite content to leave the whole matter to Sue, believing that she would provide a costume in keeping with my dignity.

The afternoon of the day on which the ball was to take place Sue telephoned me that I had better come to her house and try on my costume. I did so and met with a surprise. There was not the least doubt [illegible] a sensation in it or that it would be considered the most striking costume at the ball. I was to represent a bird of paradise.

On a light framework was the body of the bird, its feathers made of tissue paper. Space was left in the center for my body, and stockings of a proper color were provided for my legs. The tail was a wonder. [illegible] out in the [illegible] tail of a bird of paradise or a rainbow, whichever the beholder chose.

I confess I was very crestfallen. The prospect of disporting myself in this gaudy apparel was [illegible] agreeable to me. I refused to [illegible] Sue had two or three of [illegible] friends with her, who at once manifested great astonishment that I did not appreciate it, and Sue herself looked very much put out that all her trouble should have been for nothing. Between them they succeeded in persuading me to put it on. I did so and was no sooner decorated with it than they all cried at once: "Splendid! Beautiful! It will be the finest thing in the room! What an original idea!"

Well, I simply yielded my consent to make a fool of myself, because four girls set themselves to the task of forcing me to do so. Each one of them promised to make it easy for me by their support, giving me the most of their time and dances at the ball, though how I was to sweep that three yards of tail around in a dance I did not know, and they failed to explain.

We are any of us liable to do something and afterward cannot understand how we were silly enough to have done it, and this was a case in point with me. I knew all the while that I should refuse to wear such a costume, but I didn't have the stamina in me to withstand these girls. Besides, I feared that if I failed to appear in it after the pains Sue had taken in designing and making it I would break the thread that bound her to me.

On the night of the ball I was obliged to carry my costume to the building where it took place and put it on there. Had I gone through the streets with it on I should have been mobbed. The moment I entered the ballroom every eye was fixed upon me. The girls who had persuaded me to wear the bird stood by their promise to support me, and all clustered about me, each claiming the honor of the first dance with me, though they all at last gave way to Sue.

I shall never forget that dance. Had I been the kind of a fellow to make a guy of myself in order to afford amusement for others I [illegible] being a quiet, serious minded, dignified person, I was in an agony. Every [illegible]

[illegible]

By the time [illegible]

Very young person [illegible]

It was not the burns that [illegible] forgiveness, but the [illegible] —as I considered—had been [illegible]

Finally my chum Dan W[illegible] opinions had great weight [illegible] told me, that while Sue's act [illegible] considered as foolish and [illegible] ble in the extreme, the [illegible] had been conceived in a spirit of mischief, and had no bearing [illegible] on her feelings toward me, [illegible] might be construed to [illegible] she was favorably inclined [illegible] He represented that the poor girl was suffering intensely in consequence of her act and my treatment of her was little short of cruel.

So I wrote Sue that I had come to the conclusion she had meant no harm nor disrespect in providing me with a bird of paradise suit and [illegible] the tail feathers, and begged that she would not distress herself [illegible] about it, especially since my [illegible] were nearly healed.

This brought her to see me [illegible] ing beside me, she took my [illegible] wet it with her tears. I [illegible] hand for the purpose of [illegible] face and made bold to [illegible] tears.

Any contemptible [illegible] enough to bring about an [illegible] ing between lovers [illegible] the tail feathers of my [illegible] suit caused fire [illegible] into flame [illegible] Sue's. For [illegible] had the advantage [illegible] this occasion [illegible] been married [illegible]