

Another day she examined the collar. "How can they have changed?" she murmured.

"Lissa, you are nervous over these shirts, my dear," I said. "Please let me enjoy them, and don't worry."

I would have you know I was now to deal with the fine perceptions of a woman who wanted to be convinced, yet not against her will.

"But the collars are not rounding; and I made the collars rounding."

"They probably ironed them out," I said, "Besides, all my other shirts are just like this."

"Yes, I know: and I didn't like it; so I changed the collars just the least bit little."

"You did!" I said aghast.

"Yes, I did. I don't see how they *could* have ironed out; but maybe they pulled them."

"Yes, maybe they did.—Lord forgive me!" I thought to myself.

I came home one day, and found her poring over the shirts, and looking wonderfully perplexed.

"At those shirts again!" I cried, thinking of Nemesis.

"They do act so strange, these shirts! they must be witch-work. I have been looking for a little mark I made. I'm sure I made it in every one of them. Jo hunted too: she told me how to make the mark."

"Haven't they washed out?" I faltered, with a cowardly smile.

"They could not wash out," she said with decision.

"Well, then, if they could not, they did not, of course," was my response.

She put them aside, with a worried air.

"I have just found out something," she said, on another occasion.

"Well, what is it, my wise woman?"

"I never made those shirts, I don't believe," she replied; with deliberation and emphasis.

"Who did, then?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"Could they have been changed at the laundry?"

Should I be tormented intomaking a clean breast of it? How far could I white-lie it over, and preserve my own self-respect?

It was only an hour or so after that, when that persistent wife of mine returned to the subject.

"O Charlie! what do you think?"

"Well, about what particular matter?" I asked.

"Jo and I have just found out that I cut those shirts out by one of Conrad's after all."

"No!" I said, springing to my feet.

"Yes, I did. His initials are very much

like yours; and the old English R looks like an H, especially as it is faded. It must have got among your shirts by mistake; and being a little more worn than the others, chose it to cut by."

"As Tiddy says, bless the good Lord, then," I ejaculated fervently. "My conscience has been dancing about pretty lively during the last forty-eight hours."

"Twixt truth and error there's this difference known:

Error is fruitful: truth is only one."

I am a new man from this moment. The shirts are Conrad's."

"But, my dear Charlie, if they fit you, they can't fit him. Impossible."

"Wait, my dear wife: you shall a wonder see. The shirts you made were never worn by me. Harman's Comedy of Errors, canto nine, stanza four."

I ran up stairs, unearthed the precious bundle, and brought it back untouched.

"I did it all for the love of you," I said, as, placing it before her astonished eyes, I also threw the burden from my spirit, and felt free once more. "They didn't fit, my dear. I couldn't make them fit. I knew you had worked so hard, and I pitied you so! Forthwith I studied how to be an honourable deceiver; but it wouldn't do. I did my best, however, to keep you from the knowledge of the disappointment. There you have the truth in a nutshell; and here you have the shirts. Take them, give them to Conrad with my blessing: you have my hearty consent. I know they will fit him: they gave me several fits. Call him down. I'll do the honours."

Lissa had heard with her head lifted, after her own peculiar fashion.

"And you think it was better to do that?" she asked.

"No: I think it was a coward's trick," I said.

"You shall not. I say it was good and noble and kind, and there's only one man in the world would so have done. Never a German man would have done that, and no one who did not love me. O Charlie!" and you can guess where her head was by this time, and how foolish I felt at her praise, for I had been condemning myself heartily. Then she raised her cheerful face from my shoulder.

"Come down stairs; I have a little feast," she said. I followed her down. In a few moments she had spread the table with a white cloth, placed upon it fruit, cake, and jellies, and, knowing my inordinate fondness for it, a Charlotte Russe.

"Now ring for the rest," she cried; "ring loud!" I followed her instructions, and presently in came Jo, Conrad, and Miss