

the raw, bare thorns. In the highest heaven of his newly-found bliss, Tom is suddenly recalled to earth and its miseries by a question from Laura which falls like a plummet into the unrippled sea of the young man's happiness, and fathoms it depths in the shallowest place. "Has her own Tom"—as distinguished from countless other Toms, unclaimed Toms, to all intents and purposes swamp lands on the public matrimonial domain—"Has her own Tom said anything to pa?" "Oh, yes! pa;" Tom says, "To be sure; yes." Grim, heavy browed, austere pa. The living embodiment of business. Wiry, shrewd, the life and mainspring of the house of Tare and Tret. "M. Well. N'no." Tom had not exactly, as you might say, poured out his heart to pa. Somehow or other he had a rose-coloured idea that the thing was going to go right along in this way forever. Tom had an idea that the programme was all arranged, printed and distributed, rose-coloured, gilt-edged, and perfumed. He was going to sit and hold Laura's hands, pa was to stay down at the office, and ma was to make her visits to the parlour as much like angels', for their rarity and brevity, as possible. But he sees, now that the matter has been referred to, that it is a grim necessity. And Laura doesn't like to see such a spasm of terror pass over Tom's face; and her coral lips quiver a little as she hides her flushed face out of sight on Tom's shoulder, and tells him how kind and tender pa has always been with her, until Tom feels positively jealous of pa. And she tells him that he must not dread going to see him, for pa will be oh so glad to know how happy, happy, happy he can make his little girl. And as she talks of him, the hard working, old-fashioned, tender-hearted old man, who loves his girls as though he were yet only a big boy, her heart grows tenderer, and she speaks so earnestly and eloquently that Tom, at first savagely jealous of him, is persuaded to fall in love with the old gentleman—he calls him "Pa," too, now—himself.

But by the following afternoon this feeling is very faint. And when he enters the counting room of Tare & Tret, and stands before pa—Oh, land of love, how could Laura ever talk so about such a man. Stubby little pa; with a fringe of the most obstinate and wiry gray hair standing all around his bald, bald head; the wiriest, grizzliest mustache bristling under his nose; a tuft of tangled beard under the sharp chin, and a raspy undergrowth of a week's run on the thin jaws; business, business, business, in every line of the hard, seamed face, and profit and loss, barter and trade, dicker and bargain, in every movement of the nervous hands. Pa; old business! He puts down the newspaper

a little way, and looks over the top of it as Tom announces himself, glancing at the young man with a pair of blue eyes that peer through old-fashioned iron-bowed spectacles, that look as though they had known these eyes and done business with them ever since they wept over their A B C's or peeped into the tall stone jar Sunday afternoon to look for the doughnuts.

Tom, who had felt all along there could be no inspiration on his part in this scene, has come prepared. At least he had his last true statement at his tongue's end when he entered the counting room. But now, it seems to him that if he had been brought up in a circus, and cradled inside of a sawdust ring, and all his life trained to twirl his hat, he couldn't do it better, nor faster, nor be more utterly incapable of doing anything else. At last he swallows a lump in his throat as big as a ballot box, and faintly gasps, "Good morning." Mr. Tret hastens to recognize him. "Eh? oh; yes; yes; yes; I see; young Bostwick, from Dope & Middelrib's. Oh yes. Well—?" "I have come, sir," gasps Tom, thinking all around the world from Cook's explorations to "Captain Riley's Narrative," for the first line of that speech that Tare & Tret have just scared out of him so completely that he doesn't believe he ever knew a word of it. "I have come—" and he thinks if his lips didn't get so dry and hot they make his teeth ache, that he could get along with it: "I have, sir—come, Mr. Tret; Mr. Tret, sir—I have come—I am come—" "Yes, ye-es," says Mr. Tret, in the wildest bewilderment, but in no very encouraging tones, thinking the young man probably wants to borrow money; "Ye-es; I see you've come. Well; that's all right; glad to see you. Yes, you've come?" Tom's hat is now making about nine hundred and eighty revolutions per minute, and apparently not running up to half its full capacity. "Sir; Mr. Tret," he resumes, "I have come, sir; Mr. Tret—I am here to—sue—to sue, Mr. Tret—I am here to sue—" "Sue, eh!" the old man echoes sharply, with a belligerent rustle of the newspaper; "sue Tare & Tret, eh? Well, that's right, young man; that's right. Sue, and get damages. We'll give you all the law you want." Tom's head is so hot, and his heart is so cold, that he thinks they must be about a thousand miles apart. "Sir," he explains, "that isn't it. It isn't that. I only want to ask—I have long known—Sir," he adds, as the opening lines of his speech come to him like a message from heaven, "Sir, you have a flower, a tender lovely blossom; chaste as the snow that crowns the mountain's brow; fresh as the breath of morn; lovelier than the rosy-fingered hours that fly

before. A by dew. your pate care and wear it in it—and i the old that Tom don't know wife and windows Winter an house pla up to the carry aw "No, no, poor Tom that Tom that, Sir. to marry at last, as it into a g Tret does seconds. it was two opened hi yes, yes, And then yes. We about tha Jennie al gasps, see " "No, sir, isn't Jul well, Son you pleas Minnie, s well, I de faster th in the di As the each oth with the corner, v furnishing breaking like an o and the nearly re so nearly and the conceit o to run an can tell And the through heart th the you down a years, and br