

## Mr. Morris' Hat.

(Continued from last week).

It was exactly a quarter to three when Gladys' father was again brought forcibly before my mind.

Wilberforce, the second cashier, then came to me with a letter bearing the business stamp of Morris Limited. It was addressed to me, in Mr. Morris' handwriting, and was as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Hartley: Pray oblige me by cashing the inclosed check for £10,000 (ten thousand) in £100 notes, and sealing the parcel for bearer. Yours faithfully,

"Abiathar Morris."

I feel rather ashamed to confess that my first impulse on reading this common-place epistle was one of joy. The little affair of the hat and my part in it were obviously not disclosed to him. But the very necessary instinct of professional caution then rose uppermost.

"Who brought this?" I asked.

"One of Mr. Morris' lads—young Bowers, I think," was the reply.

The unfortunate Tom had a young son in the office from which he had fallen. Mr. Morris' clerks often brought checks to be credited to his account or to be cashed—the latter sometimes for considerable sums.

I gave the letter to Wilberforce, who raised his eyebrows when he read it.

"Ten thousand!" he exclaimed.

But the earlier exhilaration in reaction returned upon me.

"You must cash it, of course, and obey his instructions," I said. "Mr. Morris may be imprudent, but we mustn't risk offending him. Besides," I added, "I was aware that he was sending or coming for some such purpose."

It did not occur to me to ask why he had not driven up in the cab that had been kept for him at the club. One's engagements often get interfered with. Some engagements, indeed, seem made only to be broken.

"Very well, sir," said Wilberforce. He left the room and duly delivered the sealed parcel to the boy.

Probably I should have thought no more about the check had not Mr. Evans by and by made a point of mentioning it. He came to me, in fact, to discuss it.

"Rather strange of Mr. Morris to send for such an amount?" he observed, as he scrutinized the signature of the check.

"Perhaps so," I assented.

"It is undoubtedly in his handwriting," Mr. Evans proceeded, with what appeared to be reluctance. "I suppose you didn't see him by chance at the club to-day?"

"I did happen to do so," I said. "We exchanged no words, however. We had not the opportunity."

Then I also examined the check again. I felt no inclination to tell my colleague that I had only seen Mr. Morris asleep. But an idea flashed to me. The check would be a highly precious pretext for calling at Wellington House that evening after Mr. Morris' dinner hour. He would appreciate the prudence which prompted the inquiry, and I should see Gladys.

We both lived at Brondesbury, and although, as a rule, I preferred to stay in more lively parts of the metropolis until a time most unsuitable for social calls in the suburbs, this evening I would not do so.

"I'll see Mr. Morris himself to-night," I said, ending the colloquy.

The hours that intervened before I found myself at the rather stately door of Wellington House, Mr. Morris' lavish residence, were on the whole comfortable hours. I had hit upon a hopeful vein in my temperament, and I worked it for all it was worth. Why should Gladys' father continue to "hum" and "ha" if this very evening I pressed my desires upon him? The manager of a branch of the Bank of England might surely regard himself as no contemptible candidate for the hand of a rich merchant's daughter, assuming, as I knew I might assume, that the lady herself favored him.

Another thing. Mr. Morris, in that letter accompanying his check, had addressed me as "Dear Mr. Hartley." The agreeable change from the stereotyped "Dear Sir" had not made its proper mark on

me at the time. Now, the more I reflected about it the more I liked it.

I rang the bell with a sense of invigorating confidence.

"Mr. Morris finished dinner?" I asked, with a calmness that would have delighted me if I could have viewed it impersonally.

"My master is—much hupset, sir," replied the man, dolefully.

"Upset! Why, what's the matter?" Was it possible that he had discovered the change of hats?

"He came home early, sir—not quite himself; and—Perhaps you would like to see Miss Morris?"

Should I or should I not? My heart again made a coward of me. I turned to go, with some ordinary expressions of sympathy; then hesitated; and—saw Gladys herself cross the hall.

"Who is it, Benson?" she called out, and the next moment her hand was toward me, there was the welcome I loved in her eyes, and she was saying, "Oh, I am so glad! Papa does so want to see you."

"See—me?" I stammered, holding the dear hand as if it were already one of the anchors of my life.

"Yes. Come into the drawing-room, and I will tell you about it. I was so terrified at first, but the doctor says his constitution is one not likely to be disturbed violently by small fanciful causes. It was a kind of stroke, David. You must do your very best to soothe him."

My brow became dewy with horror. Even Gladys seemed concerned about my appearance. The one faint wrinkle of anxiety which I had already noticed on her sweet face took to itself a partner.

"It is not serious yet," she said. "I think I will go and tell him you are here first of all, David. I'm sure he is worrying all the time."

She moved to the door.

"Stop, Gladys!" I cried; "just one moment. It isn't all about a trumpery hat, is it?"

She looked at me gravely, with reproach in her dear eyes.

"How could you know?" she said. "Yes, it is all because of papa's curious habit of carrying things in his hat."

"Habit of carrying things in his hat!" What did she mean?

She seemed surprised at my consternation, as before at my reference to the hat.

"Sit down for a minute or two," she said, suddenly, "and you shall hear about it. Perhaps it would be wisest that I should tell you, and not poor papa. Then you could start right away at consoling him. Do you see, dear?"

I saw nothing except that Gladys was her own beautiful self, and that I might be on the threshold of something dreadful. I sat down to listen, with a sad and forboding heart. My forbodings soon had justification.

"It is about a check, David," said Gladys, "and I want you to assure papa that you will stop payment and that sort of thing, immediately. David, what is the matter?"

Well might she ask and look at me with a face which bore at least one more wrinkle added to the other two!

I am not a fainting man, nor timorous save as regards my ambitions upon Gladys herself; but when I heard these words I knew instantly what was to follow. Doubtless my eyes stood well out of their sockets in the approved melodramatic way. Nevertheless, I attempted to smile.

"Go on, dear," I said, with difficulty. "Let me hear the whole story."

"But you look so horribly frightened." "Professional instinct, Gladys," I murmured. "Well, what about this check?"

"It was for ten thousand pounds, dear," she continued, softly, as if out of consideration for my nerves. "Papa wrote it at the office in order to get it cashed at the bank after luncheon. It was to pay those German Heinsen people, I think he said. Well, he put it in the lining of his hat."

Idiot that I was! Had I not often chuckled to myself at this eccentricity of Mr. Morris? He would enter the bank, remove his hat, place it on the counter, and take from it the bills or checks he wished to deposit or cash. Once he

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had condescended to explain that he considered his hat the safest of pockets in the London streets. Thieves do not think of picking hats.

"He put it in the lining of his hat, you were saying?"

With these words I encouraged Gladys to continue, for she had stopped at my exclamation of dismay.

"Yes, and he took it with him, of course, like that to the club. There he had a little nap after his luncheon, and it was when he woke up and looked for the check that he found it was gone. The man who brought him here in the cab said all he could say was, 'Get me home at once!' There was a doctor in the dining-room, and he said it was a paralytic seizure; but Dr. Richardson doesn't think it was quite that, for he can talk quite plainly now. It was the shock, no doubt, for the check was payable to bearer. He has been working hard for years, poor papa, and you must go up to him, David, and convince him that there is nothing to worry about, for, of course, you will stop payment and that kind of thing. Oh, David, if you knew what a relief it was to me just now to hear your voice! He talked of you a good deal the last day or two."

"He has, dear?" I asked, through the mist of my misery.

"Yes, David. He has such a very high opinion of you as a man of business."

The bitterness of it! And the simplicity of the dear girl in smiling a bright, responsive smile to mine! Well, it was something that I could wear that deceitful cloak to such advantage.

"Now you will go to him, David?" she said.

I nodded. It would depend entirely upon his state of health whether or not I told him the whole calamitous history of the check. I followed Gladys like a man in a dream. She was lost to me, that seemed certain; but I was too stunned just then to realize what that melancholy fact would mean.

I was still a man in a dream when I stood before Mr. Morris, took his trembling hand and hoped he was better.

He looked very statuesque in the old-fashioned, screened armchair in front of the fire. His voice had none of its usual steely ring, and though his profile was severe his eyes were not.

"This is very kind of you," he said, gently. "I have been inexcusably foolish."

Gladys intervened to explain that I knew the circumstances.

"He has only come up, dear papa, to tell you that there is not the slightest reason for anxiety, because, of course, no one would think of cashing such a check as that except for yourself. Would they?"

She appealed to me. Her father's eyes were upon me.

"No one but a madman," I replied. "You—wrote no letter, then, nor sent the check—by hand?"

"No, no," said Gladys. "It was missing from his hat in the club."

"Old fool!" murmured Mr. Morris, with a sigh that seemed to have the effect of letting his head sink upon his breast. He gazed at the fire instead of at me.

(To be continued.)

NEWMAN'S FRIEND.

John Hungerford Pollen, formerly a proctor of Oxford University, England, and consequently in Anglican orders, died December 1 at the age of 82 years. Mr. Pollen was connected with the South Ken-



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