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"A bookkeeper—a seamstress!" she ejaculated. "Oh, Harvey, you could not have done worse!"

"A penniless girl!" said his father, solemnly; "and after all we have hoped for you. No; it could not be worse."

"A common working-girl," said Kitty, in a choking voice; "and everybody will know it; oh, Harvey, it could not be worse."

"We will not talk of it," said Mrs. Seely, holding up a restraining hand. "Discussion will not mend matters. And are you to be married next month?"

"On the ninth," Harvey rejoined. "Of course, you will all be there,"

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he added, rather dubiously.

"By no means," said his father, shortly.

"You can hardly expect it," said Mrs. Seely, reproachfully.

"Very well; 'if Mohammed won't come'—you've heard the observation. We shall pay you a visit immediately

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on our return from our wedding tour, with your kind permission. I should like you to know Dora."

When he left the house an hour later, he had the required permission.

His mother and the girls had even kissed him good-bye, in an injured and reproachful way, and his father had shaken hands coolly.

But his ears still rang with that odious assertion, "It could not be worse!" and he was thoughtful all the way back to the city.

The Seelys were in a subdued state of excitement.

Harvey's wedding tour was completed; and they had received a telegram that afternoon to the effect that he would be "on hand" to-night with his new wife.

There was a roll of wheels and the twinkle of the carriage lamp at the door, and the bell rang sharply.

Kitty and Margery clasped hands in sympathetic agitation; Mr. Seely dropped his paper and rose; and Mrs. Seely advanced towards the hall door with dignity.

It opened wide before she reached it, and Harvey entered, his face suffused with genial, blissful smiles.

"This is my wife," he said proudly; "my mother, Dora; my father, my sister, Kitty and Margery."

And with a caressing touch, he took by the hand, and led forward among them—

What?

Mr. Seely gazed at the apparition with startled eyes; Mrs. Seely dropped the hand she had begun to hold out, with her face growing ashy; and Kitty and Margery gasped.

For what they saw was a woman of apparently forty years, with a face powdered and painted in the most unblushing manner, with thin grey hair crimped over a wrinkled forehead in a sickening affectation of youthfulness, and with a diminutive gaily-trimmed bonnet perched thereon; with an affected, mincing gait, and a simpering smile

"This is my wife," Harvey repeated; "have you no welcome for her?"

The bride tittered.

"Mebbe they think I ain't good enough for 'em, dear?" she observed, tartly.

Poor Mrs. Seely, sick at heart, made her way to the bell and rang it, and dinner being ready they sat down presently.

"Turtle soup!" the bride observed, looking round the table with a girlish smile; "ain't nothing I admire so! Just pass that celery, father-in-law. Delicious! ain't it, darling?"

"Extremely, my dear," said the bridegroom, complacently.

Ignorant and vulgar! What dreadful thing would they discover next?

It was an evening they never forgot. The unfortunate parents sat with pale faces and unsteady hands, staring into their empty plates, or looking at each other with fresh horror at each simpering, senseless, ungrammatical remark of their terrible daughter-in-law.

Kitty and Margery excused themselves during the second course, and flew to their rooms to cry themselves to sleep, in an agony of dismay and mortification.

"I shan't think of setting up," said the bride, rising from the table with an apologetic giggle, and bowing herself toward the door. "I'm too wore out. If anybody calls—of course, everybody will—just tell 'em I'll see 'em to-morrow. Come on, dear."

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And she tripped upstairs with a juvenile nod over her shoulder, and with her beaming young husband following.

Mrs. Seely wrung her hands despairingly.

"We said it could not be worse," she said, faintly. "But this! How shall we endure it?"

"I shall not endure it!" said her husband; his face had grown almost careworn during the last two hours. "I shall send them packing to-morrow, and if ever he enters my house again—"



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He brought his hand down on the table threateningly.

"But that will not help matters," said his wife miserably. "He is ruined; we are disgraced; and everybody will know it."

There was a silence.

"I had pictured her to myself," said Mrs. Seely, beginning to sob, "as a young girl—a person of suitable age for my poor misguided boy, decently educated, and at least a lady. And even then, when I did not doubt that it was such a one he had chosen, I thought myself the most unhappy creature in the world—because she had not wealth and an old name. Surely it is a judgment upon us. Oh, was there ever so dreadful a thing?"

"Probably not," said her husband, grimly.

It was a solemn group which waited in the dining-room, next morning, for the appearance of the newly-wedded couple.

(To be continued.)

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