

The Unknown Bridegroom.

"That is more than I can tell you, old man, for he was closely enveloped in his mackintosh, with the collar up to his ears; besides, the place was so dimly lighted, it seemed like a tomb, and I could get only a very imperfect idea of his features. I was not suspicious. I would never have discovered my mistake if he had not resented I said about the girl, and shut me up with a clap on the cheek that was like a blow from a sledge-hammer. Then, for a moment, you might have knocked me down with a straw. I had thought, from the bridegroom's first appearance upon the scene, that you did not act like yourself; but I laid it to the excitement of the moment, because you were late, and eager to get the matter over," the young man explained.

"Didn't he speak? Couldn't you detect the difference in voices?" queried Leighton, sullenly. "Yes," I spoke up as he came into sight, and he answered me; but the rain and wind and thunder made such a noisy racket, I couldn't have recognized my own father's voice. Then I hurried to the chapel, and straight to the altar, for those girls were nearly frightened out of their senses, and just ready to back out and go home, and—here the fellow shot a sly smile at his companion—'I had no notion of losing the snug little amount you had pledged me. See?" "Yes—I see," bitterly retorted Leighton. "But," I went on, "I think you were very short-sighted to allow an utter stranger to play such an abominable trick upon you." "Well, if you hadn't been so afraid to have lighted on the fellow, I might have detected the fraud; but the sexton said you had given orders to have only one light, because the marriage was to be private, and you did not wish to excite the curiosity of the villagers; and, as I said before, the place was like a tomb. The fellow was about your height, too, though, perhaps—now I think of it—a broader across the shoulders, and a broader way of carrying himself." "Who in thunder would he have been?" impatiently exclaimed the disappointed bridegroom. "Where did he come from? How did he know what was going on, and what could have been his object in personating me?" "It is all a mystery," replied his friend, "and, what may strike you as a stranger still, he doesn't even know to whom he was married—" "Fshaw! That was no marriage!" interrupted Leighton, angrily. "Such a farce would not stand, Ted." "Well, perhaps not," was the musing response. "Of course, it won't stand," retorted the other; "but the very idea is absurd to be considered for a moment; all the same, it is a devilish plight to be in."

"That is a fact, Miss Richardson doubtless finds it so," Ted dryly replied. "That makes you think that fellow did not know her name?" Leighton inquired, after a moment of silence. "Because he asked me who she was, and, of course, I replied to lighten him; consequently, he is as much in the dark regarding her identity as we are of his." "Good for you, Ted; but I'd give a good deal to ferret his name out." "He demanded the certificate of learning whom he had married. He would have had it, too, if I hadn't dodged him, for he observed the 'best man,' as he recalled the clutch of that strong hand upon his shoulder. 'By the way,' he added, drawing an envelope from a pocket and tossing it upon the altar, 'here is that document now. It is all properly signed, and you may as well take care of it—it may prove useful to you, some time in the future.' The young man drew the paper forth, and studied it intently for a few minutes. 'Was there ever such a devilish piece of luck?' he demanded, irascibly. 'Had he added with a violent start, 'do you imagine it possible that old Seaver could have discovered our secret, and followed us to stop the marriage, and when I sought me to prevent a scene before the rector and a scandal about Florence?" "No, Seaver is a little shorter than you, and is a thick-set man; he never could have fooled us all like that." "Well, I only hope he is still in the dock, for Florence's sake, as well as my own, for I may be able to carry my point and marry her yet." You say she seemed fully recovered when you left her last night?" inquired Leighton, with some anxiety. "Yes, she and the maid hustled quite lively in getting back to the house after leaving the carriage," said the young man, laughing. "I wonder what she thinks of me! If I were able to move, I would take the next train for New York, and see her on the steamer. I suppose they will sail in about three hours," said the disappointed lover, with a sigh, as he glanced at the clock, which was just upon the point of striking nine. "Say, Ted," he continued, with sudden energy, "why can't you go for me? I'll scribble a note for you to hand to her, and you can explain what I mean in a few lines." "All right; I'll go," was the obliging reply; "only you will have to hustle, for there isn't such a great deal of time before the train will be due."

"Hand me that writing pad, then," said Leighton, pointing to one upon the table; and, a moment later, his pen was flying over a sheet of paper, as he briefly accounted for his non-appearance at Rosedale the previous night. He entreated Florence to preserve their secret, be brave, and loyal to him, and he would follow her abroad at the next steamer, when he would be would see to it that nothing should interrupt a second attempt to make her his wife. Hastily folding and addressing his letter, he passed it to his friend, and charged him to deliver it into her hands, but Florence's hands. The young man hastened from the house, while the disappointed lover sank wearily back upon his pillows, for the interview had sadly taxed his strength. He was just upon the point of falling into a doze, when his door opened again, and his accomplice reappeared. "Well, what now?" he excitedly demanded, and starting to a sitting posture, with a groan of pain. "They are not going to sail to-day," said his friend, "I met Seaver just at the head of the street—" "You don't mean it! Can anything have happened?" breathlessly questioned Leighton. "Yes, I stopped him, and expressed my surprise to find him in town, when he informed me that their trip had been indefinitely postponed, owing to the sudden illness of Miss Richardson." "Ah! That affair of last night was too much for her! Did he speak of her as being very ill?" "He says she has taken a sudden and severe cold, has a high fever, and is delirious—" "Delirious?" interposed Leighton, in alarm. "Zounds! Ted, I hope she won't die; my dish would be dough if she should!" "An involuntary sneeze curled his companion's lips at this supremely selfish speech, which contained not one word of regret for the suffering of the lovely girl for whose condition he alone was responsible. "However," Leighton continued, "she's young, has a naturally strong constitution, and this enforced postponement of her trip may result in her favor. Your news has done me more good than medicine. Ted, if she has some painful bruises that make me squirm, I wish I was sure that horse has not come to grief. Would you mind stopping around to Cooley's stable, tell him the scrape I got into last night, and get him to send someone in quest of the animal had buggy? Of course, I'll make it all right with him, whatever has happened." "Certainly, old man; anything I can do for you, I'll be glad to do," returned his friend, good-naturedly, and at once started out on his mission. Fortunately, the horse and buggy had already been returned to the owner—the man's name having been stamped upon the carriage robe—and a farce would not stand, Ted. "Well, perhaps not," was the musing response. "Of course, it won't stand," retorted the other; "but the very idea is absurd to be considered for a moment; all the same, it is a devilish plight to be in."

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and finally the most mysterious thing happened—a stranger appeared and personated you, and I only discovered the impostor after the ceremony was over, when I fainted—" "Fay, for Heaven's sake, what are you talking about? Describe me, and I'll remove my mackintosh and regard you with an appearance of anxiety. 'I—I—really am afraid that your illness has not left your mind quite perfectly clear. Listen, I was late—I was detained by an accident to a train, and on reaching home had to hurry to meet you; then my horse was frightened by the street, and balked and kept me still longer; but I arrived at last, when my friend, angry at the delay, dragged me to the altar without even giving me time to remove my mackintosh, and the ceremony was as if intensely eager to have it over. It was a terribly bungled affair, I must admit, and the excitement and fear produced by the storm. My accident occurred on my way home from Rosedale." Florence had sat watching him with wide eyes and piling cheeks, writing the above explanation, her heart burdened with a terrible fear. Could it be possible, she asked herself, that she had really been deceived after all?—that the excitement, the confusion and haste, together with the 'rightful storm' had wrought upon her mind, and made her believe that a stranger had appeared and personated Walter during that ceremony? Could it be that, in spite of the recent revulsion in her feelings, she was really his wife and bound to him irrevocably?—that she would have readily from his 'come positively wrong' to her? (To be continued.)

A RIVAL FOR THE WINTER FAIR.

The arrangements already made for the provincial fruit, flower and honey show, which will be held in Toronto during the second week in November, indicate that it is likely to prove as important an event in its line as the winter fair held yearly at Guelph. No effort is being spared to make each feature of the show of the greatest of the kind that has ever been held in Canada. The Ontario Fruit Growers' Association has drawn up a liberal prize list and will pay the transportation charges one way on all exhibits of fruit sent to the show. Special prizes will be offered for the best exhibit of fruit made by any agricultural society. It is expected many of the societies in the province will send their total exhibits from their fall crops to this show. Arrangements have been completed to keep this fruit in cold storage. In this way, it is hoped to have representative exhibits of fruit from all parts of the province. Demonstrations in packing fruit will be given and bulletins will be issued describing the special qualities of each variety of fruit, and stating whether it is best for cooking or eating purposes. In this way householders will be enabled to secure the best varieties of fruits for their purposes. On the last day of the exhibition, a big auction sale of fruit will take place. The money offered for flowers is over 100 per cent. more than has ever before been offered in Toronto. About \$1,500 will be given in prizes in this section alone. The arrangements are in charge of a floral committee of which Mr. Edward Tyrrel, president of the Toronto Horticultural Society is chairman. The money prize list is also a liberal one. Several prizes are offered for commercial packages. Amongst the important gatherings that will take place at the time of the show will be the annual meeting of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association and the Ontario Bee Keepers' Association, while a meeting of delegates from the various horticultural societies of the province will also be held. The Ontario Government has made a grant of \$1,000 to aid the exhibition, which has been supplemented by a grant of \$200 from the City of Toronto. Particulars regarding the show may be had by writing to the Secretary, Superintendent H. B. Cowan, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

A Word to Ministers of the Gospel.

By Rev. Thomas B. Gregory in Detroit Times. Certain things have happened of late which would seem to make it necessary that some one having the cause of religion at heart, should speak a few plain words to the ministers. It is thoroughly realized that many ministers do not need these words, but it is very evident, if reports are true, that there are clergymen who do need them, and need them badly. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaking of his calling as a preacher, said, "I magnify mine office," that is, he believed that certain preachers in the land who, instead of magnifying their office, are doing their level best to belittle and degrade it. For example, it is said that not long ago a Newark clergyman invited the men of his congregation to attend the church services in their shirt sleeves, assuring them that he himself should go into his pulpit and preach in the same easy costume. And there is the case of the New Jersey pastor who notified his flock that he intended to hold his church, on Sunday morning, during the hot weather, special services, at which smoking was to be allowed during the sermon. Finally, we have the case of the Wisconsin minister who has made arrangements with the business men of his town whereby, in return for donations, they are to have advertising privileges in his church, and now on the way of the church in return for so much cash. If it is said of these ministers in true, it is quite apparent that they have a very inadequate conception of the value, dignity and sacredness of their office. If they are guilty of the alleged indiscretions, they are manifestly out of place in the pulpit. At heart they may be good men, but they don't know what it means to be a minister of the gospel. They have missed their calling. Of course, a man sitting in church in his shirt sleeves, with a pipe in his mouth, looking through the clouds of tobacco smoke, now at business ads. on the walls and now at the coatless minister at the desk, can hear what the preacher may have to say as well as though he were differently attired and in the midst of a different environment. But there are very few people who, if questioned upon the subject, would not give it as their candid opinion that the conditions referred to are not those under which the gospel should be preached or heard. Down at the bottom religion is an appeal to the hearer's reverence, and the conditions that are the most favorable to the promotion of that sentiment are those above all others, which the minister is in duty bound to encourage. If he lowers the standard of service, he permits any other idea than the one of reverence to dominate, or even perceptibly to color the hour of worship, he may as well shut up his church. There is an atmosphere of worship and with that atmosphere shirt sleeves and tobacco smoke, billboards and business advertisements cannot be made to harmonize. There is a place in this great world for the man who wants to sit in his shirt sleeves and smoke, and a place there is, too, for the bulletin boards of trade; but that place is not the house of God. The minister who imagines that he is going to make men better by lowering his office to the level of their weaknesses is laboring under a tremendous mistake. For a clergyman who should attempt to lure me into going to his church with the assurance that while in the sacred edifice I might sit in my shirt sleeves and smoke, I could have no particle of respect. And the overwhelming majority of men would, I have no doubt, express themselves to the same effect. It is about time that this belittling and degrading of religion by its own ministers had ceased. It is about time that right-minded clergymen and these are overwhelmed upon the type of minister I am speaking of—the minister who, sadly misunderstanding the nature of his calling, is in the name of religion, doing what he can to make religion the butt of ridicule and contempt. Back to St. Paul! And let the word of every minister be, "I magnify mine office."

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