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Better a Peasant Than a Peer.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
TRUE LOVE NEVER RUNS SMOOTH

"What can a fellow do?" Hal says, with an aggrieved air. "If, instead of flying into a passion, as you expect him, a man snivels and grins like a figure on a twist-b-cake, and is more polite than usual—I say, what can you do?"

And Hal stops short before Jeanne, and extends his strong arm in despair.

It is the morning after the count's discovery of the princess and Hal in the conservatory, and Hal has sought Jeanne in her own boudoir to tell her what happened, having had no opportunity of doing so the preceding evening.

To say that Jeanne is astounded at Hal's audacity, is to say, faintly describe her sensations during the recital of the interview.

"But how did you find courage to make love to her?" she says. "How could you say such things?—and wasn't she frightened? I never meant you to go so far."

"What did you mean by throwing us together, then?" says Hal, impatiently. "Did you think that it was going to talk about the weather, and such stupidity as that? Besides—well, I didn't mean to—to say all I did; but who could help it, loving her as I do, and seeing her so beautiful and helpless? And in the midst of it, while I had her in my arms, that old skin of parchment came in! I thought there would have been a fight. I was longing to chuck him through the conservatory windows if he said two words, but he didn't; and he simply smiled more vilely than ever, and carried her off."

"But," says Jeanne, "he must take some notice—he cannot let it pass like that. If the princess had treated you coldly, as you deserve—but in your arms! Oh, Hal!"

And Jeanne's face becomes a fiery red, then turns pale.

"Yes," he murmurs, half to himself, "I had her in my arms once, if for the first time. Let him say so to de likes, Jeanne," he exclaims, as a sudden idea strikes him. "They fight duels here, and perhaps"—and an eager look comes into his eyes—"perhaps he will send me a challenge!"

"Hal!" cries Jeanne, springing to her feet, "don't be so absurd! Oh, Hal, promise me—promise me you

low, whom Vane engaged at Newton Regis, has a, perhaps natural regard for Hal "my lady, the matchless brother," and is never tired of recounting Hal's feats of strength and deeds of daring. George will leave his work to follow Master Hal about from stall to stall, lingering in his footsteps, and listening with rapt attention to words that fall from his young master's lips. For Jeanne or Hal, George would willingly risk his life.

Now no one will be surprised to hear George had noticed the change which had come over his idol. There is not a more observant class than servants. There is not a thing, my dear sir and madam, that goes on in your house, not a tiff or a calamity of any kind, however secret you may think you keep it, but the servants know it. And sometimes little as you respect it, they sympathize with you. George has noticed the grave and disturbed look about Hal's usually careless and light-hearted face, has noticed that the fishing-rod, the gun, and even the horses are neglected, and Hal is moody and absorbed, and George at once jumps to the proper conclusion, that his young master is in love.

"And what on earth he's got to be down in the mouth about," says George to himself, "seeing that there ain't a young lady in the land as wouldn't be glad to jump into his arms the moment he asked her, I can't tell. Who is it, I wonder? Any of the ladies about the house? No, he'll walk a mile to get out of their way!"

George hadn't to puzzle long; he happened to see Hal walking with the princess in the shrubbery, and the problem was solved.

"Whew!" whistled George; "a princess? Well, and why not? There ain't a princess, going too good for him, and if she don't take to him she's an idiot!"

But George, being a quick fellow, soon saw that the princess was anything but an idiot; soon, also, saw that the count was the stumbling block in the way, and would at once, if Hal had given the slightest hint, have ducked the count in the most with the greatest pleasure.

"I wouldn't give much for that old man's chance, if there's fair play," he thought; "and if there ain't fair play, well, then Mr. Hal ought to take him at his own game."

As Hal comes into the yard with his hands in his pockets, and his old light gait displaced by a listless air, George looks up, and, touching his hat, gives him good-morning.

"Good-morning, George," says Hal, moodily.

"What is it this morning, sir? The pair o' bays or the chestnuts?"

Hal sinks down on an upturned barrow, and stares moodily about him.

"I don't know that I'm going out, George."

"Fine morning for a ride, sir, and the chestnut is eating his head off."

Hal shook his head.

"Don't care about it, George; take him yourself."

George sighs, and looks wistfully; then he says, carelessly:

"That's a fine animal of the Princess Verona's, sir—that Florida."

Hal starts.

"Yes," he says, staring at George, "and the young lady rides well, on as fine a seat as I've seen since I left England."

"Very fond o' horses is the princess, sir."

"How the—how do you know?" asks Hal.

George smiles and touches his cap.

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"Oh, I know her man, sir, and he speaks English a little, and we get into a confab. Lor' bless you, sir. I spends most of my leisure time up at the villa."

"You do?" says Hal, with interest.

George nods slowly.

"Yes, sir, and sees a great deal of the princess. Often in the stable, and the garden alongside. A sweet young lady, sir, begging your pardon for being so free. There ain't one on 'em as don't give her a good name in the servant's hall, sir. But they ain't so fond of the count, Mr. Hal, for all his pleasing ways; seems that his smiles ain't more than skin deep. He's older than he looks, too, Mr. Hal—"

"What the dev—confound your impudence!" exclaims Hal. "What do you mean by talking about your betters?"

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BOYS' BOMPERS.

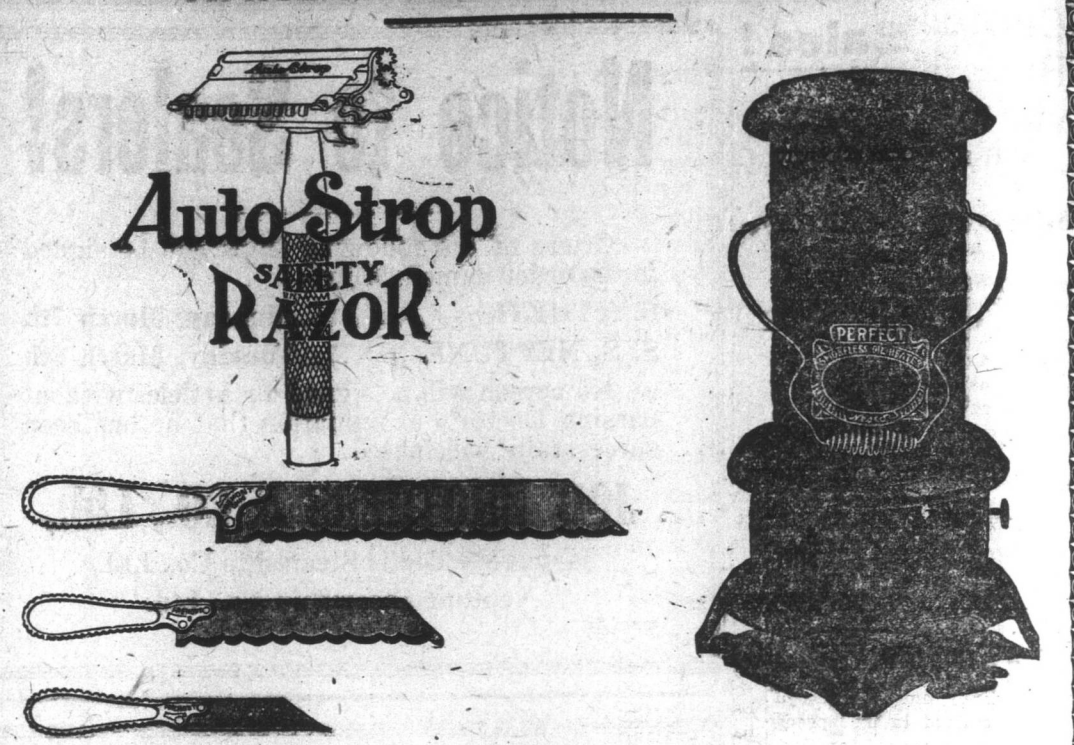


Pattern 2494 is shown in this design. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 2, 3, 4 and 5 years. A 4 year size will require 3 yards of 27 inch material.

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George comes closer.

"I can fetch and carry, sir," he says, "and the time will come when I can help you—and that'll be a happy time for me, Master Hal!" and he catches up the harness and walks off as Jeanne's voice is heard calling Hal.

Hal's face fades as he turns.

"I told you so!" he says; "they wouldn't let you in!"

"You are wrong," says Jeanne, but not very cheerfully; "they did let me in. The count was out, but I saw—"

"Not her—not Verona?"

Jeanne shakes her head.

"No, the companion. She was very sorry, but the princess was confined to her room with a bad headache. I could see, by the way the woman eyed me, that she knew of your doings last night, and that she was playing a part. What could I do? I left a message for the princess, and came away."

Hal walked up and down, muttering and biting his lips.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I believe they'll make a prisoner of her!"

Jeanne started, but could not admit the possibility of the conjecture.

"That man and woman are capable of anything!" said poor Hal. "Now, you will see; we have seen the last of her, if they can manage it."

"What can we do?" mused Jeanne, anxiously. "She is under the protection of her father, and her future husband, and you, my poor boy, have no right or claim to interfere."

(To be continued.)

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