



The Alternative

"Yes. Don't you expect to dress for dinner, sir?"

"Oh, I can't put you to the trouble of —"

"You are to stop here — in this house, Mr. Van Pycke. Your room is all ready for you. I was compelled to turn you out in the cold the other night and I was so sorry. Now you are in my own home, you must stay — to make up for the other time. My father expects you to stay."

"Over night?" he said unbelievably.

"Unless, of course, you've something else you'd rather do," she said quickly.

"Why — why," he stammered, his head swimming with delight, "there's nothing in the world I'd rather do than to stay here. It seems incredible."

"There's a train up at eight in the morning," she announced calmly. "You'll be called at six-thirty. Breakfast at seven. Bacon and eggs and popovers. Is that all right?"

"There's only one thing lacking," he cried, his heart leaping. They were standing quite close to each other at the head of the stairs.

"If our home is n't —"

"If you'll promise to come down to breakfast, I'll never get over the joy of this visit," he said.

"I always have breakfast with the children." He looked askance. "At seven o'clock," she vouchsafed.

"By Jove!" was all he could gasp in his delirium.

"That's father's door at the end of the hall. Come in there when you are ready. I'll be with him. Don't be long. Your room is here."