

JOANNA'S BRACELET.

The Burton Smiths are tolerably well known in London. Burton Smith himself is a barrister, with money and many relations—Irish landlords, Scotch members, Indian Judges, and the like. His wife is young, gracious, and fond of society. Their drawing rooms on the topmost flat of Onslow Mansions—rooms with sloping ceilings and a dozen quaint nooks and corners—are seldom empty during the regulation hours. A dinner party had been planned with some care.

"Lady Linacre will come, no doubt," Mrs. Burton Smith had said one day at breakfast, coming a list she had in her hand, "and Mr. May."

But Burton Smith objected to May. "He will talk about nothing but India," he protested, "and the superiority of Calcutta over London. A little of these Bombay ducks goes a long way, my dear."

"Well, James," Mrs. Burton Smith replied placidly—the Hon. Vereker May is a son of Lord Hawthorn—"he will take me in, and I do not mind. Only I must have Mr. Ernest Wibberley on the other side to make conversation and keep me alive. Let me see—that will be three. And Joanna Burton—she comes that afternoon—four. Do you know, James, when we were at Temple Rowley for Christmas I thought there was something between your cousin and Mr. Wibberley?"

"Then, for goodness' sake, do not let them sit together!" Burton Smith cried, "or they will talk to one another and to no one else."

"Very well," Mrs. Smith assented. "They shall sit opposite to one another, and Mr. Wibberley shall take in Mrs. Galantine. She will be sure to flirt with him, and we can watch Joanna's face. I shall soon see if there is anything between them."

Mr. Wibberley was a young man of some importance, if only in his capacity of private secretary to a Minister. He had a thousand acquaintances, and certainly two friends—perhaps three. He might be something some day—was bound to be. He dressed well, looked well, and talked well. He was a little presumptuous, perhaps even a trifle conceited; but women like these things in young men, and he had infinite tact. At any rate, he had never yet found himself in a place too strait for him.

This evening as he dressed for dinner—as he brushed his hair vigorously or passed to smile at some reflection—his own, but not in the glass—he was in his happiest mood. Everything seemed to be going well with him. He had no presentiment of evil. He was going to a house where he was appreciated. Mrs. Burton Smith was a great ally of his. And then there would be, as we know, some one else. Happy man!

"Lady Linacre," said his hostess as she introduced him to a stout personage with white hair, a double chin, and diamonds. Wibberley bowed, making up his mind that the dowager was one of those ladies with strong prejudices, who draw their skirts together if you prove a Home Ruler, and leave the room if you mention Sir Charles Dilke.

"Mrs. Smith continued, "and you know Miss Burton, I think?"

He murmured assent, while she—Joanna shook hands with him frankly and quietly with the ghost of a smile, perhaps. He played his part well, too, for a moment, but halted in his sentence as it flashed across his mind that this was their first meeting since she had said "Yes." He recovered from his momentary embarrassment, however, before even Mrs. Burton Smith could note it, and promptly offered Mrs. Galantine his arm.

She was an old friend of his—as friends go in society. He had taken her in to dinner, that is, half a dozen times. "Who is that girl?" she asked, when they were seated; and she raised her glasses and stared through them at her *ris-a-vis*. "I declare she would be pretty if her nose were not so short."

He seized the excuse to put up his glass too, and take a look. "It is rather short," he admitted, gazing with a whimsical sense of property at the deficient organ. "But some people like short noses, you know, Mrs. Galantine."

"Ah! And theatres in August!" she replied incredulously. "And drawing-room games! And conundrums! But, seriously, she would be pretty if it were not for that."

"Would she?" he questioned gravely.

"Well, I think she would, do you know?" And certainly Joanna was pretty, though her forehead was too large, and her nose too small, and her lips too full. For her eyes were bright and her complexion perfect, and her face told of wit, and good temper and freshness. She had beautiful arms, too, for a chit of nineteen. Mrs. Galantine said nothing about the arms—not of modesty, but because her own did not form one of her strong points. Wibberley, however, was thinking of them, and whether a certain bracelet he had by him would fit them. He saw Joanna wore a bracelet—a sketchy gold thing. He wondered whether he should beg it for a pattern, or whether it might not be more pleasant to measure the wrist for himself.

which the returned civilian had seen much and thought little, and the private secretary had read more and thought not at all. They were therefore, about on a par as to information, and what the younger man lacked of obstinacy he made up by readiness. It was in vain the nabob blustered, asserted, contradicted—finally grew sulky, silent, stertorous. Wibberley pushed his little triumph, and soon, as we shall see, paid dearly for it.

It happened that he was the last to enter the drawing room. The evening was chilly. The ladies had grouped themselves about the fire, protected from assault, so to speak, by a couple of gypsy tables bearing shaded lamps. The incomers, one by one, passed through these outworks—all but Wibberley. He cast a glance of comic despair at Joanna, who was by the fireplace in the heart of the citadel; and then, resigning himself to separation, he took a low chair by one of the tables, and began idly to turn over the books which lay on the latter. There were but half a dozen. He scanned them all, and then his eyes fell on a bracelet lying by them on the olive-green plush; a sketchy gold bracelet, with one big boss—Joanna's.

He looked up at the party—himself sitting a little aside, as we have said—with a stealthy glance. There were none of them facing his way. They were discussing a photograph of the over-mantel, a photograph of children by Mendelssohn. He stretched his hand out softly and covered the bracelet. He would take it for a pattern, and to-morrow Joanna should ransom it. He tried as his fingers closed on it, to catch her eye. He would have liked to see her face change and her colour rise. It would have added to the faint charm he felt in the boyish, foolish act he was committing if she had been privy to it yet unable to prevent it.

But she would not look, and he was obliged to be content with his plunder. He slid the gold trifle deftly under the fringe of the table, and clasped it round his arm—not a very lusty one—thrusting it as high as it would go, that no movement of his shirt-cuff might disclose it. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he would not for all the world that any one besides Joanna should know of the act; that clodding old fossil May, for instance, who, however, was safe enough—standing on the rug with his back turned, and his slow mind forming an opinion on the photograph.

Then—or within a few minutes, at any rate—Wibberley began to find the party dull. He saw small chance of a private word with Joanna. Lady Linacre, his nearest neighbor, was prosing on to Mrs. Burton Smith, his next nearest. And he himself, after shining at dinner, had fallen into the background. Hang it, he would go! It was ten o'clock.

He rose, and was stooping across the table, murmuring his excuses to Mrs. Burton Smith, when Lady Linacre uttered an exclamation. He was leaning across her between her head and the lamp at the moment, and he fancied he had touched her head-dress. "Pray pardon me, Lady Linacre," he cried gayly. "I am just going—I have to leave early—the encroachment will be but for a moment."

"It is not that, the old lady replied. "But where is my bracelet?" She was feeling about the table as she spoke, shifting with her white, podgy hands the half dozen volumes that lay on it.

No one on the instant, however, took in the situation; Mrs. Burton Smith had risen and was listening to Wibberley. The others were talking. But Lady Linacre was used to attention; and when she spoke again her voice was shrill, and almost indecently loud. "Where is my bracelet?" she repeated. "The one with the Agra diamond that I was showing you, Mrs. Burton Smith. It was here a moment ago, and it is gone! It is gone!"

Wibberley was still speaking to his hostess. He heard the old lady's words, but did not clearly apply them. He finished his leave-taking almost at his leisure, and only as he turned recollected himself, and said, with polite solicitude: "What is it, Lady Linacre? Have you dropped something? Can I find it for you?"

He stooped as she spoke, and she drew her skirt aside, and both peered at the floor while there was quite a chorus from those sitting nearest of "What is it, Lady Linacre?" "Dear Lady Linacre, what have you lost?"

"My Agra diamond!" she replied fustily, her head quivering, her fingers groping about her dress.

"No!" some one said in surprise. "Why, it was here a moment ago. I saw it in your hand."

The old lady held out her wrists. "See!" she said feebly. "I have not got it!"

"But are you sure it is not in your lap?" suggested Burton Smith. Lady Linacre had rather an ample lap. By this time the attention of the whole party had been drawn to the loss, and one or two of the most prudent were looking slightly uncomfortable.

"No," she answered; "I am quite sure that I placed it on the table by my side. I am sure I saw it there. I was going to put it on when the gentlemen came in, and I laid it down just for a minute, and—it is gone!"

She was quite clear about it, and looked mildly at Wibberley for confirmation. The table had stood between them. She thought, he must have seen it lying there, Mrs. Burton Smith being the only person close to the table.

Burton Smith saw that look. "I say, Wibberley," he said, appealing to him, half in fun, half in earnest, "you have not hidden it for a joke, old fellow, have you?"

"I? Certainly not."

To this day Ernest Wibberley wonders when he first made the disagreeable discovery of what he had done—that he had taken the wrong bracelet! It was not early. It was not until the aggrieved owner had twice proclaimed her loss that he felt himself reddened, and awake to the consciousness that the bracelet was on his own arm. Even then, if he had had instant presence of mind he might have extricated himself. He might have said at once, "By Jove! I think I slipped it on my wrist in pure absence of mind," or made some other excuse for his possession of it which would have passed muster, though one or two might have thought him odd. But time was everything; such excuses to avail must be made at once and he hesitated. He hated to seem odd even to one or two, and he thought that presently he might find a chance of restoring the bracelet without being detected. So he hesitated, peering at the carpet, and the golden opportunity passed him by. Then each moment made the avowal more difficult and less possible, until, when his host appealed to him, "If you have hidden it for a joke, old fellow, out with it!" he

had no choice—or so it seemed to his uneasy conscience that he had no chance—but to answer as he did.

He looked up indeed with admirably acted surprise, and said his "I? Certainly not!" somewhat imperiously.

Half a dozen of the guests were peering stupidly about as if they expected to find the lost article in a flower vase or within the globe of a lamp. Presently their hostess stayed these explorations. "Wait a moment!" she cried abruptly, raising her head. "I have it!"

"Well?" eagerly from several.

"John must have moved it when he brought in the tea. That must be it. Ring the bell, James, and we will ask him."

So it was done. John came in, and the question was put to him.

"Yes, Sir," he said readily; "I saw a bracelet on this table, by the lamp." He indicated the table near Lady Linacre.

"Did you move it?"

"Move it, Sir?" the man repeated, surprised by the question, the fence, and the strained faces turned to him. "No, Sir; certainly not. I only saw it when I was handing the tea to Mr. Wibberley, I think it was."

"Ah, very well," his master answered. "That is all. You may go."

It was not possible, indeed, to doubt the man's face and manner. But when he had left the room an uncomfortable silence ensued. "It is very strange," Burton Smith said at last, looking from one to another, and then, for the twentieth time, groping under the table.

"It is very strange," Wibberley murmured. He felt bound to say something. He could not free himself from an idea that the others, and particularly the Indian Civilian, were casting special looks at him. He appeared calm enough, but he could not be sure of this. He felt rather as if he were each instant changing color and betraying himself to every eye. His very voice sounded forced to his ear as he repeated fustily, "It is very odd—very odd! Where can it be?"

"It cost," Lady Linacre quavered—irrelevantly, but by no means impertinently—"it cost fourteen thousand out there. Indeed it did. And that was before it was set."

A hush as of awe fell upon the room. "Fourteen thousand pounds!" Burton Smith said softly, his hair rising on end.

"No, no," said the old lady, who had not intended this mystification. "Not pounds; rupees."

"I understand," he replied, rubbing his head. "But that is a good sum."

"It is over a thousand pounds," the Indian Civilian put in stonily, "at the present rate of exchange."

"But, good gracious, James!" Mrs. Burton Smith said impatiently, "why are you valuing Lady Linacre's jewelry—instead of finding it for her? The question is, 'Where is it?' It must be here. It was on this table fifteen minutes ago. It cannot have been spirited away."

"If any one," her husband began seriously, "is doing this for a joke, I do hope—"

"For a joke!" the hostess cried sharply. "Impossible!"

"I say, my dear," he persisted, "if any one is doing this for a joke I hope he will own up. It seems to me that it has been carried far enough." There was a chorus of assent, half indignant, half exculpatory. But no one owned to the joke. No one produced the bracelet.

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Burton Smith exclaimed. And as the company looked at one another it seemed as if they also had never known anything quite so extraordinary as this.

"Really, Lady Linacre, I think that it must be somewhere about you," said the host at last. "Would you mind giving yourself a good shake?"

She rose and was solemnly preparing to agitate her skirts when a guest interferred. It was the Hon. Vereker May. "You need not trouble yourself, Lady Linacre," he said, with a curious dryness. He was still standing by the fireplace. "It is not about you."

"Then where in the world is it?" retorted Mrs. Galantine. "Do you know it?"

"If you do, for goodness sake speak out," Mrs. Burton Smith added indignantly; while every one turned and stared at the Civilian.

"You had better," he said, "ask Mr. Wibberley!"

That was all. But something in his tone produced an electrical effect on every one. Joanna, in her corner—remote like the Indian, from the centre of the disturbance turned red and pale and flashed angry glances round her. For the rest, they wish ed themselves away. It was impossible to misunderstand the insinuation. The words, simple as they were, had in a moment put a graver complexion on the matter. Even Mrs. Burton Smith was silenced, looking to her husband. He looked artfully at Wibberley.

And Wibberley? Up to this moment he had merely "sit himself in an unpleasant fix, from which he must escape as best he could, at the expense of a little embarrassment, a slight loss of self-respect. Even the latter he might regain to-morrow if he saw fit by telling the truth to Mrs. Burton Smith; and in time he would be whole again, and become a subject for laughter, a stock dinner-party anecdote. But now! now at the first sound of the Indian's voice he recognized his danger and saw clearly in the hundredth part of a second that ruin, social damnation, perhaps worse, threatened him. His presence of mind seemed to fail him suddenly at sight of the pit opening at his feet. He felt himself reeling, choking, his head surcharged with blood. The room, the expectant faces all turned to him, all with that strange expression on them, swam round before him. He had to lay his hand on a chair to steady himself.

But he did steady himself, so far that those who marked his agitation did not know whether it proceeded from anger or fear. He drew himself up and looked straight at his accuser, holding the chair suspended in his hands. "What do you mean?" he said hoarsely.

"I should not have spoken," the Civilian continued, returning his gaze and speaking in cool, measured accents, "if Mr. Burton Smith had not twice appealed to us—if any joke was being played—to confess to it."

"Well?"

"Well, only this," the old gentleman replied; "that I saw you yourself take Lady Linacre's bracelet from that table a few moments before it was missed, Mr. Wibberley."

"You saw me?" cried Wibberley. This time there was the ring of honest defiance, or indignation in his tone. For: if he felt certain of one thing it was that no one had been looking at him when the unlucky deed was done.

"I did," replied the Civilian dispassionately. "My back was toward you. But my eyes were on this mirror"—he touched an oval glass in a Venetian frame which stood on the mantelpiece—"and I saw clearly. I am bound to say that, judging from the expression of your face, I was assured at the time that it was a trick you were playing—a jest only."

Ernest Wibberley tried to frame the words "And now?"—tried to force a smile. But he could not. The perspiration sprang out in great beads on his face. He shook all over. He felt himself—and this time it was no fancy—growing livid.

"To the best of my belief," added the Civilian quietly, "The bracelet is on your left arm now."

Wibberley tried to master but could not the impulse—the traitor impulse—which urged him to glance down at his wrist. The idea that the bracelet might be visible—that the damning evidence might be plain to every eye—overcame him. He looked down. Of course there was nothing to be seen: he might have known it, for he felt the hot clasp of the horrible thing burning his arm inches higher. But when he looked up again, fleeing as had been his glance, he found that something dreadful had happened to him. He altered, and the chair dropped from his hands. He had never met looks like these—specious or condemnation. Thief and liar!

He read the words in their eyes, the eyes of his quondam friends! Yet he would, he must, brazen it out; and though he could not utter a word he looked from them to Joanna.

The girl's face was pale and scared. But her eyes—they answered his right eagerly—were ablaze with indignation. They held doubt, no suspicion. The moment his look fell on her she spoke, "Show them your arm!" she cried impulsively. "Show them you have not got it, Ernest!" with such scorn, such generous passion in her voice, that it did not need the name which fell too glibly from her lips to betray her secret—at least to every woman in the room.

"Show them your arm!" Ah but that was just what he could not do! And as he comprehended this he gnashed his teeth. He saw himself netted and entrapped, and his rage and misery were so written in his face that the best and most merciful of those about him turned from him in shame and pity. Even the girl who loved him shrank back, clutching the mantelpiece in the first spasms of doubt and fear and anguish. Her words, her suggestion, had taken from him his last chance. He saw it was so. He felt the Nemesis he had met so bitterly on that account; and with a wild gesture, and some wider word, he turned abruptly and hurried from the room, blindly seized his hat, and went down to the street.

His feelings when he found himself outside were such as it is impossible to describe in smooth, passionless sentences. He had wrecked his honor and happiness in an hour. He had lost his place among men through a chance word. We talk and read of a thunderbolt from the blue; but still the thing is so unnatural. Some law-abiding citizen whom a moment's passion has made a murderer, some strong man whom a stunning blow has left crushed and writhing on the ground, a twisted cripple—only these could fitly describe his misery and despair as he traversed the streets. It was misery he had brought on himself, and get how far the punishment exceeded the offense! How immensely the shame and exposure exceeded the guilt? He had lied, and the lie had made him a thief!

He went up to his rooms like one in a dream, and scarcely knowing what he did, tore the bauble from his arm and flung it on the mantel shelf. By his last act of bringing it away he had made his position a hundred times more serious, but he did not at once remember this. After he had sat awhile, however, with his head between his hands, wondering if this really were himself—if this really had happened to himself—his hands really began to see things more clearly. Still, he could not at once make up his mind what to do. Beyond some hazy idea of returning the bracelet by the first post, and resigning his employment—he had settled nothing, when a step outside made him start to his feet. Some one knocked at the door of his chambers. He stood pallid and listening, struck by a sudden fear.

"The police," he said to himself.

But a moment's thought satisfied him that it was improbable, if not impossible, that this summons should be theirs; and he went to the door listlessly and threw it open. On the mat stood Burton Smith, in a soft slouched hat, his hands thrust into the pockets of his overcoat. Wibberley just glanced at him, and saw that he was alone; and then, leaving him to shut the door, returned to his chair, and sat down in his old attitude, with his head between his hands. He looked already a broken man.

Burton Smith followed him in, and stood a moment looking down at him uncomfortably enough. It is hard to have had such a scene as has been described at your house, but it is worse, if a man be a man, to face a fellow-creature in his time of shame. At any rate, Burton Smith felt it so. Look here, Wibberley," he said at length, as much embarrassed as if he had been the thief, "Look here, it will be better to hush this up. Give me this confounded bracelet to hand back to Lady Linacre, and the thing shall go no further."

His tone was curiously suggestive of old friendship and present contempt and pity. But when he had to repeat his question, when Wibberley gave him no answer, his voice grew harsher. Even then the man with the hidden face did not speak, but pointed with an impatient gesture to be the mantel shelf.

Burton Smith stepped briskly to the place indicated and looked. He was anxious to spare the culprit as far as possible. Yes, there was the bracelet. He seized it, anxious, if the truth be known, to escape from the place with all speed. But he laid it down the next instant as quickly as he had taken it up, and his brows came together as he turned sternly upon his companion.

"This is not the bracelet!" he said. There was no snook of old affection in his tone now: it was wholly hostile. His patience was exhausted. "Lady Linacre's was a diamond bracelet of great value, as you know. This is a plain gold thing worth two or three pounds. For heaven's sake man!" he added, with sudden vehemence, "for your own sake, do not play the fool now! Where is the bracelet?"

No doubt despair had partially benumbed Wibberley's mind, for still he did not speak, and Burton Smith had to put his question

Yankee Enterprise in Egypt.

If the scheme contemplated by a company of Worcester, Massachusetts, capitalists should not turn out a miserable fiasco, eyes that look out from under grey brows may yet see the immemorial caravan of eastern lands displaced by the iron horse, that symbol of western energy and enterprise. The word has gone abroad that some hundred citizens of Massachusetts have formed themselves into a corporation to be known as the New England Land Company of Egypt. The company, which has a paid up capital of \$2,000,000, proposes to purchase a large tract of land in the vicinity of Alexandria, Port Said, and Damascus, connecting the two latter ones by an air-line, broad-gauge railroad on the American pattern. The company will then go into a general oriental notion and produce business, with a tourist annex. It is understood that they will go into the cultivation and exportation in a wholesale way of the natural products of the region, such as cotton, flax, dates, figs, olives, stone and building material, horses and cattle, with relics, excursionists, and numismatists, as possible adjuncts. The incorporators, who count among their number such men as General Benj. Butler, Mr. Frank Jones, President of the Boston and Maine railroad; Geo. Goddell, of New Hampshire; Senator Frye, of Maine; Hon. Joseph G. Healer, of New Jersey, &c., are said to be serious, and believe that the regions which were once the gardens of the earth and supported nations can by judicious cultivation be reclaimed to their ancient productiveness. Many will watch this new venture with deep interest. Should it succeed it will not unlikely prove the dawn of a better day for those historic lands which have for generations been under the paralyzing yoke of their Mohammedan rulers.

The extradition treaty between Great Britain and the United States, which has been under consideration for several months past, received final confirmation in Washington on the 18th inst. The correspondent in announcing the fact of its ratification adds: Hereafter gentlemen who desire to lift the cash out of another person's cash drawer will have to buy tickets in some other direction than Canada. The scope of the treaty, while not as extensive as some might like it to be, is comprehensive enough to practically unite Canada and the United States in the matter of criminal jurisdiction over a class of thieves which has grown to great proportions in the past few years. Honest men in both countries have nothing but words of approval of the new arrangements.