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# IN A COMPROMISING

SITUATION By T. W. McKAIL

\*\*\*\*\* "I am sure," said Mrs. Railton, fixing me with her eagle glance, before which even bishops have been known to quail—"I am sure you will like to

be the first to congratulate Sylvia on her engagement to Mr. Oswald Fitz-gerald."

gerald."
"But Mr. Fitzgerald"— I began.
"Is suitable in every way." continued
Mrs. Railton, heedless of my attempted
remark. "He is just the man to make remark. The is just the half of the Sylvia a capital husband."
"He has, I am aware, \$50,000 a year,"
I said bitterly "but he is old enough to be her father."

"My dear Gerald," remonstrated Mrs.

"My dear Gerald," remonstrated Mrs. Bailton in her most bland tone, "how can you say such things! Mr. Fitzgerald is quite a young inan still, and by many people he is considered extremely handsome. Pray don't put such notions into Sylvia's head."

Lined my people and after studying I held my peace, and after studying

Theld my peace, and after studying my countenance carefully for a few moments Mrs. Raliton continued: "I have told you this because I have thought—although, of course, I may be mistaken—that your affection for Sylvia has been becoming a little more than cousinly. I should be sorry if"— "My dear aunt," I broke in impetu-ously, "what is the use of your trying to blink facts? You know quite well that I have been making desperate love to Sylvia ever since she was ten years

"A mere boy and girl flirtation," said

Mrs. Railton.
"Perhaps," I said, trying to speak nonchalantly; "but, at any rate, I do not mean to congratulate Sylvia on her engagement to an old man with dyed hair and false teeth. If it had been a young man, it would have been different. I don't believe she cares for him any more than she cares for-the man

My tirade fizzled out rather ineffectively, but I was feeling genuinely savtively, but I was feeling genuinely savage, and the necessity of keeping up a calm exterior before my aunt oppressed me. I wanted to go out and hit somebody. So I made a somewhat hasty departure without waiting to see Sylvia. On the way back to my rooms in the Metropolitan club I brooded over my wrongs. There could be no doubt that Sylvia had treated me very badly. I recalled numerous sentimental little passages between us. Besides, I had passages between us. Besides, I had proposed to her regularly every week for the last two years without any definite result, it is true, but still with no decided negative.

I sat down in my room dejectedly and pondered over the ways of women in general and of Svivia in particular.

and pondered over the ways of women in general and of Sylvia in particular. Then I went to a drawer and took out a box wherein lay a miniature por-trait of Sylvia, some letters from her. a trinket off a bangle, a handkerchief and some few other unconsidered tri-

fles. The sight of these strengthened my sense of righteous indignation, and while it was still upon me I seized a pen and dashed off a furious letter to Sylvia. But a moment later I tore it to pieces. After all, I thought, sarcasm will be much more effective and at the same time more dignified. Acting upon the second impulse, I constructed a brief letter full of irony congratulating Sylvia upon her engagement and in-forming her of the pleasure I felt in receiving the announcement. This I dispatched at once by express messenger and then settled down for a quiet

It was Saturday, and there was an air of peace within and without that soothed my wounded feelings. I lit a cigarette and lounged in an easy chair before the open window. The sound of Looking out of my window, I saw that it contained Sylvia. As she stepped out of the cab at my door, looking more bewitching even than usual, I noticed that she carried a letter in her hand.

Thus forewarned I answered her hurried knock at the door with a matter of fact "Come in" and evinced none of the surprise she evidently expected me to feel at her appearance. "You are perfectly horrid"— she be-

"You are perfectly horrid — she began.

"Why?" I asked innocently.

"To write me a letter like this," holding out the offending document. "I was just going out shopping with mother when it arrived, but I felt as if I must come and talk to you first. Poor mother! She will wonder where on earth I have gone."

"So you did care what I thought?"

"Oh, Jerry," she said quite earneatly, and I fancied I detected a tear in her left eye, "how could you write me so

left eye, "how could you write me so cruelly? I thought you would be heart-

broken."
"Is it not a little indiscreet of you,"
"Is it not a little my advantage, "to I went on, realizing my advantage, "to come here alone to a bachelor's rooms

come here alone to a bachelor's rooms without a chaperou?"
She sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing and her cheeks flushing in a manner that I could not help confessing was eminently becoming to her.
"Do you think I care about stupid conventionalities," she said, "when it is a question of justice between you and me? Do you imagine I am going to remain at a decorous distance from you when my happiness is at stake? Do you"—
But I interrupted her.
"It is not so much a question of what I think or imagine as it is of what Mr. Fitzgerald"—

"How dare you mention him to me?" she damed out. "It is the worst taste on your part. If I had refused you and accepted him"—
"That is exactly what you have done," I interposed.
"Indeed?" she howed haughtily. "You



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know more of my affairs than I do my-

"Sylvia," I said, taking her hands in mine, "your mother told me you were engaged to him."

"And you believed it and wrote me this—this unpardonable letter. I came to tell you that I am not engaged to any one and that I never shall be."
"Not even to me?" I pleaded.

"You deserve the worst punishment you could possibly have," she said, with a hint of relenting in her voice. At this moment we heard a carriage drive up to my door, and a moment later we recognized my aunt's inquiry.
"Gerald," gasped Sylvia, "it's mother! Hide me, for goodness' sake!"
There was only one hiding place in

the room, a cupboard disguised by the name of pantry. As I closed the door on her Mrs. Railton knecked and entered. I saw her glance wander round tered. I saw her giandly: "So glad the room as she said blandly: "So glad you are in, my dear Gerald. Have you seen Sylvia this afternoon?" "Sylvia!" I exclaimed in amazed

"I managed to lose sight of her just now in Fifth avenue, and it occurred to me that perhaps she had met some one she knew, possibly yourself. But if you have been in all the afternoon If you have been in all the afternoon of course my surmise is incorrect. She has probably gone home. Will you see me down to the carriage? What charming chambers!" She raised her eyeglasses. "What is this? A letter addressed to Sylvia? Shall I take it to her?" She was about to pick it up when there was a terrific crash and a faint scream. unmistakably in Sylvia's faint scream, unmistakably in Sylvia's voice. "Sylvia!" she exclaimed in ma-

olice. Sylvia: she exclaimed in majestic accents as Sylvia emerged, disclosing a vista of broken crockery.
"I am sorry, auat," I said gravely, "that Sylvia should be found in such compromising situation; but, all, there is a very good way out of it."

Mrs. Railton's horrified gaze removed itself from Sylvia's face to me and

demanded my meaning.

"She can always as a last resource become engaged to me," I continued hardily. "Of course I am a very bad match for her, but we are very much

and"—
"And it's the least I can do after breaking his tea service," said Sylvia,

taking my arm.

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#### THE SOCIETY SPY.

New Profession For the Idle Man In

The out of work man in the smart set who formerly lent himself for a consideration as a "guinea pig" direct-or, "touted" for tradesmen on commission or sold furniture, country houses or motor cars has found a new profesion. It is that of "society spy."

According to a correspondent of Truth who signs himself "A Shopkeeper and a Gentleman," the "society spy" is invaluable. If a west end man is in difficulties or his wife has over-rated his patience, the "society spy"

informs the trade at once.

If a west end man who has been for years on the brink of bankrutcy wins a large sum at the card table, there are intimate friends who profit by making the good fortune known. At a time when there are so many who are rich or appear to be rich whose names are unfamiliar the shopkeeper might make serious mistake were it not for the information which s so given.

The tradesman is only too happy to pay for information which enables him to avoid a severe loss.

Tradesmen in former days seldom ventured to ask such questions, and their customers, as a rule, supported each other. New, says Truth's informant, the difficulty shepkeepers have to contend against is that most of their customers, especially if they are inti-mate friends, have not a good word to say for each other. Modern English society is today an "association of ene-mies who profess to be friends."— London Leader.

Wages of English Hangmen.

The many executions taking place these days would give the lie to the story had it not already been contradicted that the hangman suffers poverty. But the court of aldermen really does pessess the record of an appeal for increase of the hangman's salary. Jack Ketch wrote that as executioner he could get ne other employment; that he had to keep an assistant, but that hangings were so rare as to make it impossible for him to live. He must have compared his own lot with that of the French hangman in the palmy days of that officer before the guillo-tine killed his profession. "The post is sacred here," wrote a diarist in Paris, "and approaches the noblesse in the right of using a sword and the priesthood in being proscribed entry at all spectacles but that of the profession. If blood unsullied can ennoble, then I know of none so pure, for a French hangman can marry none but a French hangman's daughter." Far different was it from the Ketches of old time, as the following record shows: "Executioner's fees, 7s. 6d.; stripping the body, 4s. 6d.; use of shell, 2s. 6d."—St. James Gazette.

The Rich Man and the Doctor. "The life of a rich man is worth fore than the life of a poor man, and more than the life of a poor man, and the physician has a right to charge the millionaire more for his services than he does the laborer," is the opinion re-cently handed down by a Philadelphia

"The physician is unlike the mer-chant, who has goods of different qual-ity to sell at various prices. He mast give his best service in every case. But it does not follow that the service is

worth the same in every case. "Human life has a pecuniary value of variable quantity, greater in the millionaire than in the laborer. Thus the practitioner of common sense makes out his bills to suit the pecuniary circumstances of his patients."

Draft Hunter to Edward VII. the court whose calling were it classithe court whose canning were it classified in the directory would come under the heading of "draft hunter." His sole duty is to precede the king and search for drafty places in the hall or room in which the ceremony particiroom in which the ceremony participated in by his majesty is to be held. If, for instance, King Edward attends a banquet the "draft hunter" visits the room and sees that every precaution is taken for shielding his majesty from the slightest draft.

The Cost of War. A prominent Frenchman who has given much study to the subject says that were his country to be drawn into a great war in present conditions into a great war in present conditions it must be prepared to meet an expenditure of 30,000,000 francs a day. So stupendous is the absolutely unavoidable outlay when a mighty nation in these days becomes involved is a conflict of the largest proportions that taxpayers are afrighted and appalled at the mere thought of the thunder of the guns.

der of the guns. A Lucknow Heroine.

There died recently in England at the age of seventy-one Lady Inglia, who was one of the heroines of Lucknow. Her imband, Sir John E. W. Inglis, was the commander of the garrison during the famous siege which was raised by General Havelock and Lord Clyde. As if this was not sufficient trial for her, on her way home after the siege she was shipwrecked on the coast of Ceylon.

"La Kermesse." which hangs in the Louvre, was badly injured recently. It had been taken ont on a terrace to be photographed. A gust of wind threw it down from the stand on which it was placed, causing some very serious cracks to appear. These have been repaired to a certain extent, but the painting is not what it was.



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