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THE STATION WAS CROWDED WHEN THE DOCTOR AND HIS YOUNG WIFE ARRIVED.

For the Favorite.

HARD TO BEAT.

A DRAMATIC TALK, IN FIVE ACTS, AND A PROLOGUE.

BY J. A. PHILLIPS,
OF MONTREAL.

Author of "From Bad to Worse," "Out of the Snow," "A Perfect Fraud," &c.

ACT IV.

SCENE IV.

MISS HOWSON GETS MARRIED.

Miss Howson set about her arrangements for her elopement in a more business-like manner than would, generally, have been expected from a girl of her temper and disposition. She had given up all hope of gaining her father's consent to her marriage with Dr. Griffith; she knew him well enough to know that once he had "put his foot down," as

he expressed it, it required considerable power to get that foot up again; but, she knew also his natural kindness of heart, and, she wisely concluded that, altho' he would not consent to her marrying the doctor, she would most probably be forgiven if she ran away without leave, and asked forgiveness afterwards. She did not try the plan Dr. Griffith proposed; she was a little bit afraid of Miss Moxton, and, therefore, did not like to give her the slightest opportunity of being able to interfere with the elopement. She had a sort of undefined idea that her aunt might catch her at the depot, at the last moment, and spoil all her hopes by causing her arrest, or the doctor's arrest, the train's arrest, or somebody's arrest, and so prevent the consummation of her hopes. She was not at all clear about this arresting business; but, she had got it in her head, somehow, that any two persons trying to elope, may be arrested by any person who pleased to do so. She could not exactly settle in her mind whether it was burglary or manslaughter she could be arrested for; but, she settled it definitely that they should not be arrested at all. She laid a very careful plot. In the first place, she took an opportunity, after breakfast, to see her father; and, with one small effort, to influence his consent to her marriage, appear to acquiesce to his desire. Next she confided her plans to Julia—who entered into them warmly—and then the two sisters went out to make a call. Now, amongst Miss Howson's most intimate

friends was a Mrs. Sloper, an old schoolmate who had eloped off with Sloper about two years ago; and who, having been forgiven by her father, had been impressed with the idea that eloping was a very fine thing. To Mrs. Sloper Miss Howson and Julia went, and she was told of Mr. Howson's objection to Annie's marrying the doctor, and the determination of both parties most intimately concerned to elope; and her kind offices were solicited. "My dear child," said Mrs. Sloper, "I have not heard of anything so delightful since I ran away with dear Frank; and a terrible time I had. You know how mother went on about my marrying him, and how she persuaded father to order him out of the house. I did not care so much for him, but, I did not like the way mother went on about it, and so I determined to have him at any price. But mother was too smart for me for awhile. Twice she spoiled our plans by going out with me when I wanted to go out alone so that I could meet Frank, and we could be off, until I began to suspect that John the coachman—who carried my letters to Frank and brought me his in return—was playing us both false. And so it proved to be; the mean old thing used to open both letters and read them, and then tell mother the contents. He was making money by it, for, of course Frank and I both paid him, and mother also gave him money; so, he liked it very well. "When I was sure he was playing me false I did not know what to do; but, at last, I thought of Bridget, the cook, who had always

been very kind to me; and I determined to confide in her. "Shure an' faith," she said, "ye's needn't want any favors of that nasty old John. I'll fix it all right for ye, honey. You jist write a note to Mither Frank telling him to meet ye at the corner the night after to-morrow, and I'll show ye how to git off without anybody suspectin' ye." "And then she advised me to try a disguise. Oh, girls, you ought to have seen me after I had put on a suit of Bridget's clothes, and blacked my face, and had on a pair of father's cast-off boots, and wore a wig of curled horse-hair! I was a sight." The recollection of the "sight" seemed to come so vividly before Mrs. Sloper that she threw herself back in her chair and laughed heartily. At last she continued: "I dressed in the kitchen, and, just as I had finished, mother came down stairs. I was frightened I can tell you; but I was determined to get away if possible, so, I faced her out. She looked at me suspiciously when she entered, and asked Bridget who I was. Bridget answered at once that I was a friend of hers, one who had been kind to her in the South, and that seemed to satisfy her. "Bridget," she asked, "have you seen Jennie within half an hour." She is not up in her room, and I can't find her anywhere." "Bridget hesitated for a moment, and then answered, "Shure, mum, I never goes up to her (Continued on page 100.)