

of your difficulties and it's sure to come back sooner or later. Isn't memory a wonderful thing! There's that little impression in regard to that man buried away under millions of other little impressions but just as perfect as the day it was made and one of these times it will flash up to the surface of my mind and—I'll remember."

"When you do, will you promise to tell me?"

"Yes, of course—at least, I suppose so." Peter flushed a little.

"Oh, I don't suppose it will be too bad to be tellable," she said calmly. "Look, do you see that stone house on the next hill, that is where we are going, and you must be prepared to make yourself agreeable. I hope supper's ready for I'm as hungry as I can be—and, Mr. Rutherford, don't be beguiled into changing partners for the ride home, will you?"

"Why is that customary?" asked Rutherford, a little startled.

"Oh, it's quite permissible and happens often."

"Well, it won't happen to me if there has to be a fight."

"Look out, Mr. Klein can be very determined." But as he helped her, laughing, from the sleigh it was far from the minds of either of them just how determined Mr. Klein could be.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CUP OF COFFEE.

In order to assist the effort of remembering, Peter had determined to secure a chat with Klein in the hope that some trick of tone or manner would

give the clue he sought. He was prepared to resort to diplomacy in the accomplishment of what would probably be a difficult task—Klein, presumably, being in no mood for chatting. But here again he had mistaken his man, for Klein, far from showing any further annoyance, was affable at supper and distinctly friendly afterward. Peter found himself wondering if he had been imagining things. It seemed hardly possible that this genial, hearty fellow, the life of a lively party, could have frozen him at their first meeting and looked murder at him at their second. Miss Manners, however, did not seem to share his surprise and said in answer to his questioning glance in Klein's direction:

"This is his natural manner. Your glimpses of him have been exceptional. He is considered great fun and is a great favourite with everybody."

"Not quite everybody. He gives Mrs. Leverage the creeps."

"Does he? Mrs. Leverage is a discerning woman. The majority of those he meets never give him a serious thought. He is amusing and no one cares to look beneath; why should they?"

"You think he is acting, then?"

"He must be. He has told me often that he hates this kind of thing and from what I know of him I imagine he does hate it."

"Well, I'm going to brave that smile of his right now. I want him to help me to remember—what do you think will happen to me?"

"You will probably like him tremendously. The smile is not dangerous—if it were I wouldn't allow you to talk to him at all."

"If you commanded I should obey, of course." Margaret coloured. "I would not presume," she said, "but there are other ways. Mr. Klein is very obliging."

"Is he?"

"Yes, only he spoils it by always giving the impression that he is making an investment on which he expects some day to realise handsomely. He is always looking for investments."

"So are other people," said Peter calmly, as he walked away.

Seeing Margaret alone, their hostess, who had been waiting for the opportunity, came over and dropped into the vacant chair beside her.

"My dear," she said, "that young man you brought with you seems really very nice. He will be quite an acquisition. Do I understand that he is going to settle in Banbridge?"

Margaret suppressed a smile. She was too used to the old lady's frank curiosity to feel resentful.

"He lives in Montreal," she said carelessly. "Rutherford—Peter Rutherford is his name."

"My dear! Not the rich Peter Rutherford?"

"He is wealthy, I believe," said Margaret guardedly.

"You don't say? How nice! He is really such a fine young man. Have you known him long?"

"Not long, but we have mutual friends. He is engaged, or about to be engaged, to a friend of mine, a Miss Sayles of Montreal."

The old lady's face fell.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE COURT OPERA COUP

By J. S. WILLOX

SHE was the greatest singer of this or any other age. They generally are, of course, but it was her manager who said so, and as he was really her husband and took the name of Blanc when Cavalo became famous—well, who better than he should know?

Fortunately, the critics agreed with him, and what one calls the "music-loving public" flocked to the opera and yelled "Encore" or "Bravo" or "Bis," according to the state of their musical education. By the middle of the season, Cavalo had become "the fashion," and she refused to appear at charity *matinees* unless Royalty asked her after the charming manner of Royalty in such matters.

One may safely say, therefore, that Madame Cavalo had London and the Court Opera management at her feet, and on the whole, she treated them very well, for she only kicked when she caught the management playing tricks over her final appearance for the season.

THE story begins really with two other people at the Cri. They had gone there for tea at a shilling a head because, as Betty explained, you always knew the worst before you began.

"And Henry is so frightfully hard up, poor dear! You know, I always have a guilty suspicion that his eyes are watching me with frozen horror when I take a fourth eclair. I've never dared to look, for I do love them so."

For though Henry was poor—and it was his financial disability that Betty's father objected to—his natural honesty insisted on the paying of the bill. Betty had nothing to boast about in the way of honesty; her fancy rioted in all sorts of ingenious ways for slipping out when no one was looking. But, at the Cri, they could make a leisurely tea and Betty could eat eclairs to her heart's content and without violence to her conscience.

As was to be expected when there were gathered together the daughter of the Court Opera's manager and the junior partner in a concert agency, they talked music.

Betty skewered an eclair thoughtfully.

"Cavalo is singing again on Thursday week."

Henry looked up with a surprised air.

"But I thought last night was 'billed' as her final performance this season."

"It was—until this morning. Dad wired asking her to sing once more, and at lunch he got her reply agreeing to sing on Thursday; the nineteenth, I think it is."

Henry put down his cup with an excited clatter.

"It's not public, is it?" he asked eagerly.

"No; at least, I don't expect it will be before to-morrow morning. Why?"

"I have an idea," he said briefly. Then, after a pause, "You're quite sure about Cavalo?"

Betty nodded vigorously.

"What is it? Do tell me."

"You know that when Cavalo sings at the Court

they double the prices to all parts of the house?" Betty nodded again. "Very well, then, if I can take up all the seats that are left for Thursday week and pay for them at the usual rates, I look like clearing a fair profit."

"Of course, I know it's not right," Betty conceded, "but if you think you could make enough to take me to tea at Rumpelmeyer's, then I'll help."

"I must think it over," said Henry.

Betty rose in a flutter, leaving an eclair half-eaten—sure sign of agitation.

"Come along! Let's go and think together."

After much hesitation, Henry raked together all the money he could lay his hands on. They worked through every agent in London, and in an hour or so they owned all the available seats in the opera for Thursday, the nineteenth.

"I shall come a fearful cropper if I don't pull it off," Henry remarked nervously. But Betty's confidence was not to be shaken, and she returned home radiant.

It was not until late in the afternoon that the agencies woke up to the fact that there was a run on Court Opera seats for the nineteenth, although no performances had been announced beyond the fourteenth. For half an hour the box office at the Opera stood the strain of continuous telephoning; then the clerk sent hurriedly for the manager.

"Have you decided on what we are putting up on Thursday week, Mr. Watson?" he wanted to know.

"*Tosca*, with Cavalo. It was settled to-day."

"Good Lord! For the last half-hour I've been selling steadily for Thursday week at the usual rates!"

Mr. Watson took oaths on his fair lips.

"But I knew nothing about it!" the clerk protested. "We haven't put up the prices for anybody else, and I understood Cavalo finished last night."

"It hasn't been announced!" Mr. Watson stormed. "Nobody knows but Cavalo and myself."

"Then, why this rush for seats?" The telephone bell rang furiously. "Look at that." He took up the receiver and spoke in that tired way peculiar to people who use the telephone frequently. "Well? . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . The nineteenth. . . . Hold the line a minute." He put his hand over the mouthpiece. "There's another! What am I to do?"

The manager thought furiously for several seconds. It was clear that someone had got wind of the extra Cavalo performance and was quietly cornering the house.

"Hold on a bit!" he said briskly, and crossed the hall to his office. He picked up his private telephone.

"Hello! . . . Hello, give me O4573 West." There was an interval of blank silence; then, "Hello! I'm Watson, Court Opera. Is that Madame Cavalo's? Oh, it's you, Blanc. I say, the Emperor of Caucasia

—he's here incog., you know—wants to hear Madame sing in *Tosca*, but he is leaving on the nineteenth. Do you think she would like to sing on the eighteenth instead? . . . Thanks, yes, if you don't mind."

There was another silence, and Mr. Watson played abstractedly with his paper-knife. Then he sprang suddenly to attention. "Is that you, Madame? I was charmed to get your telegram. Indeed, you surpassed yourself last night. I heard the Princess say so myself. . . . That is so; yes. . . . Has Monsieur Blanc explained? . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Oh, no, not at all; only too glad, I'm sure. . . . Well, it will alter things a little, but the inconvenience is nothing, I assure you. . . . Thank you, thank you. . . . Yes; *au revoir*, Madame!"

"Good old girl," he murmured on his way back to the box office. "It's all right, Andrews; sell everything they'll buy at the usual rates. I've queered their pitch."

Mr. Watson went home to dinner with his mind full of the wickedness of ticket speculators, and, of course, he talked about it for the moral improvement of the family. And also as an object lesson on his own cleverness.

"Funny thing happened to-day. Somebody tried to corner the house for the extra Cavalo night."

"And did they?" Betty asked all innocence.

Her father chuckled. "Well, I let 'em have all they wanted for the nineteenth—when Cavalo was to have sung. But I made fresh arrangements with her. She'll sing on the eighteenth instead."

Betty gripped the edge of the table and hung on to it desperately. Fortunately, her father did not notice; he was too busy patting himself on the back. She managed to get through the evening somehow, and, pleading a headache—even her father remarked on her pallor—she went early to bed. At least, she went to her bedroom. All through that hateful night she sat amidst the debris of her house of cards.

What was to be done? She simply couldn't tell Henry. She must find some way out herself. It was she who had got him into the scrape. What was to be done? What was—? About opera tickets and their manipulation and the wiles of the agents she had picked up a fair knowledge from her father. She considered every possible and impossible way out of the difficulty, but every path she took in her hurried search led to another *impasse*, and she had to start afresh.

GREY morning crept stealthily out of the east. The sun found her still staring in blank despair at a high wooden hoarding that screened the beginnings of a new block of flats across the road. Her father had done his work quickly, for already some men were fixing up a large poster that

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