

"I'm sure it must," I agreed.  
 "I have modeled it," pursued the vicar, holding out the piece of paper to him and regarding it lovingly—  
 "I have modeled the form of it on"—  
 "On the Thirty-nine Articles," I suggested thoughtlessly.  
 "Not at all," said the vicar sharply.  
 "On parliamentary apologies."  
 As may be supposed, Sylvia and I spent a day of feverish suspense, mitigated only by one another's company. The vicar rode first to Sir Matthew's. He reached there at 12:30 and remained to luncheon. Starting again at 3 (evidently Sir Matthew had been hard to move), he reached my father's at 4:30 and was closeted with him until 7 o'clock. I had parted with Sylvia about 6 and came to dinner. My father was then alone. I looked at him, but had not the nerve to ask him any questions. Presently he came and patted me on the shoulder.

"I have made a great sacrifice for your sake, my boy," said he. "Sir Matthew Marston and his daughter will dine here tomorrow." And he flung himself into a chair.

"Hurrah!" I cried, springing to my feet.

"The vicar is coming also," pursued my father, with a sigh, and he looked up at Uncle John's portrait, which hung over the mantelpiece. "I hope I have not done wrong," he added, seeming to ask the colonel's pardon in case any slight had been put upon his hallowed memory. The colonel smiled down upon us peacefully, seeming to enjoy the prospect of the glass of wine which he held between his fingers and was represented as being about to drink.

"It's a wonderfully characteristic portrait of dear old Uncle John," said my father, sighing again.

Now, reconciliations are extremely wholesome and desirable things. In this case, indeed, a reconciliation was an absolutely essential and necessary thing, since the happiness of Sylvia and myself entirely depended upon it, but it cannot, in my opinion, be maintained that they are in themselves cheerful functions. After all, they are funerals of quarrels, and men love their quarrels. The dinner held to seal the peace between Sir Matthew and my father was not enjoyable, considered purely as an entertainment. Both gentlemen were stiff and distant, Sylvia was shy, I embarrassed. The vicar bore the whole brunt of conversation. In fact, there were great difficulties. It was impossible to touch on the subject of the maharajah's rubies, and yet we were all thinking of the rubies and of nothing else. At last my father, in despair, took the bull by the horns. He was always in favor of a bold course, as Uncle John had been, he said.

"Over the mantelpiece," said he, turning to his guest, with a rather forced smile, "you will observe, Sir Matthew, a portrait of the late Colonel Merridew. It is considered an extremely good likeness."

Sir Matthew examined the colonel through his eyeglasses with a critical stare.

"It looks," said he, "very like what I have always supposed Colonel Merridew to have been—indeed exactly like."

My father frowned heavily. Sir Matthew's speech was open to unfavorable interpretation.

"You mean," interposed the vicar, "a man of courage and decision? Yes, yes, indeed, the face looks like the face of just such a man."

"Poor Uncle John!" sighed my father. "His last years were embittered by the unfounded aspersions"—

"I beg your pardon," said Sir Mat-

thew politely, but very stiffly.

"By the unfounded but very natural



"I think I have managed it this time," accusations," suggested the vicar hastily.

"To which he was subjected," pursued my father.

"Or—er—may we not say, exposed himself?" asked Sir Matthew.

"In fact, which were brought against him—wrongly, but most naturally," suggested the vicar.

Matters looked as unpromising as they well could. Sylvia was on the point of bursting into tears, and my thoughts had again turned to an elopement. My father rose suddenly and held out his hand to Sir Matthew. Again he had decided on the bold course.

"Let us say no more about it," he cried generously.

"With all my heart!" cried Sir Matthew, springing up and gripping his hand.

The vicar's eyes beamed through his spectacles. I believe that I touched Sylvia's foot under the table.

"We will," pursued my father, "remember only one thing about the colonel, and that is that one bottle remains of the famous old pipe of port that he laid down. In that, Sir Matthew, let us bury all unkindness."

"My dear sir, I ask no better," cried Sir Matthew.

The heavens brightened, or was it Sylvia's eyes? The butler alone looked perturbed. Three butlers had lost their situations in our household for handling the colonel's port in a manner that lacked heart and tenderness. "I cannot bear a callous butler," my father used to say.

"Fetch," said my father, "the last bottle of the colonel's port, a decanter, a corkscrew, a funnel, a piece of muslin and a napkin. I will decant Sir Matthew's wine myself."

"Sir Matthew's wine!" Could there have been a more delicate compliment?

"The colonel," my father continued, "purchased this wine himself, brought it home himself and, I believe, bottled a large portion of it with his own hands."

"He could not have been better employed," said Sir Matthew cordially. But I think there was a latent hint that the colonel had sometimes been much worse employed.

Dawson appeared with the bottle. He carried it as though it had been a baby, combining the love of a mother, the pride of a nurse and the uneasy care of a bachelor.

(To be continued)

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