

it's not needed. Did you ever see anything like the intelligence of that dog, Jim?" he continued, as the animal resumed its former position before the fire.

"Oh, yes, lots of things," Somers languidly replied. "I think the brute wanted a bone just then."

"That's right; go on and abuse the dumb creature. He can't answer you."

"You can, and will. I'm not going to be drawn into a discussion regarding that animal's merits, or rather want of merits. Better give him the bone. He'll enjoy it much more than he will being a bone of contention between us."

"I suppose you consider that last remark of yours a joke?"

"It evidently is not as far as you are concerned. That cigar of yours doesn't smell badly. I'll try one, if you don't mind. We can smoke to her memory."

He took a cigar, and after lighting it noticed that his companion had fallen into another reverie. "Poor fellow," he thought to himself; "he appears to be hard hit. I know that he thought an awful lot of that girl." He enquired aloud: "There's no other feeling besides surprise connected with that marriage notice, is there, Tom?" and added hurriedly: "Of course, I shouldn't ask you, and it's none of my business, and all that sort of thing, but, hang it all, I've got a reputation to live up to."

"Meddling in other people's business?" suggested Bradwathie. Somers gravely nodded assent.

"Yes, that's it," he replied. "I am afraid the minding of other people's business is about the only occupation I have. Of course, I have to spend a little time in eating, sleeping and drinking."

"You have forgotten your liking for *debutantes*."

"Oh, yes, but that rather comes under the heading of meddling in other people's affairs. You see, the mothers object to my attentions, because they know that I don't mean business. I was not aware that they had sized up the situation so correctly, until Mrs. Blake (that woman will persist in talking to me like a mother) told me so."

"I suppose you had just been making yourself very attentive to Tilly?"

"Yes, that's where the trouble started. I wandered out into the conservatory at old Brown's the other night just in time to prevent Captain Forrester—he of the lanky jaw—from throwing himself at Tilly's feet. I couldn't help it; I wanted to see Tilly badly just at that moment. The result was that Tilly told her mother all about it, and the old lady came to me in her parental disguise, and made me promise to keep away from Tilly until the other fellow was safely hooked. There was absolutely no other way out of it, and so I promised. Happily, the restriction didn't last long, as he came to time next day. Really, I don't see why people like me as well as they do."

"It is rather mysterious."

"I didn't think you would say that. I merely made the remark, in order to give you an opportunity of suggesting that people like me because I am generally such a good-hearted fellow."

"Humph!" grunted Bradwathie. He got up and stood on the rug, from which he kicked the dog, without a word of explanation or apology to that much beloved animal.

"I suppose I might as well tell you all about it," he said finally. "You'll see that the only correct version gets abroad as quickly as anyone I know."

"Oh, come now, Tom!" Somers protested. "I'm not an old maid."

"I did not say that you were. I merely intimated that you would do it as well as anyone."

Somers shrugged his shoulders. "You may see the difference, but it is beyond me. Go on with your story, anyway."

"Well, there never was anything serious between Helen and myself."

"Great Scott!" groaned Somers. "Is that all you have got to tell after exciting my curiosity?"

"Yes, that's all. Our friendship was purely platonic. We simply enjoyed each other's society more than we did that of other people. Of course, we discussed the matrimonial problem in all its branches; but I believe all young people who become intimately acquainted do that."

"I suppose they do," said Somers. "It always comes that way with me. As a matter of fact, I generally contrive to