

replied Arthur, smiling. "I believe you got the best of the bargain to-day."

"I generally do, and I think you are right," said Joker, breaking into a laugh. Then, more soberly, he said: "But I'm glad it's over with, and we are married. There's a lot of fuss and worry about getting married, too. I never thought there would be so much when I struck out for it. When a man asks his girl, taking all the chances of a refusal (but I was pretty sure of Minnie), and then asks her mother and father (and that's harder yet); and lastly, goes to ask the preacher to come and perform the ceremony—why, it's all asking, and really, Arthur, it's rather exhausting. I had an awful time getting Minnie's mother to understand what I was after. You would have thought she had never seen me before; couldn't catch on with a hint; no, not for anything! I tell you a man would need to find married life much better to be compensated for all his trouble. By the way, Arthur, when is your own case coming up?"

Arthur had stretched his hands upward over his head, and was leaning back in his chair laughing with all the might of him at Joker.

"I suppose you are in a good position to keep a wife now, Joker?" he replied, evading the question.

"Well, I ought to be," replied Joker. "My position as leader in St. Margaret's brings me eight hundred a year, besides all the income from my pupils, concerts, etc., which is good for eight hundred more. But that is not answering my question about your affairs."

"Oh, I am young yet, Joker," answered Arthur.