His Best Room.

BY DAVID B. WRIGHT.

Of course it was not the major's fault. If Carroll Mason was his oldest and dearest friend, he should have chosen a better and another time for his visit than now, when the house was already filled with guests. Indeed, Miss Hathaway had suggested that they write to Mr. Mason, stating the truth and intimating that he would enjoy himself and that they would enjoy him very much more if he would come at a time when they could have him more to themselves. But the major would not consent, and Mason was now about to come, and there was nothing else to do but make ready for him as best they could, and upon Major Hathaway himself devolved the preparation of their only vacant room, his sister being very much occupied with her own friends. The room was really the best in the house, but the major had good reason for not placing in it any one for whom he had regard. At least he had reason that he always maintained was not a good one, but which had weight with him. Now, with his own man, Peter, he was engaged in making final arrangements for Mason's comfort. Peter complained half aloud to himself that any one should be given such a place to sleep.

"Stop your muttering, Peter," growled the major. "There is nothing to mutter about. Get that fire going better and let everything be bright and cheerful."

At this moment there was noise of an arrival below and Major Hathaway hurried away to meet his expected guest. Peter followed close upon his heels. Presently the major and Mason entered the room, and in a few minutes Peter brought the luggage.

"I hope you will be comfortable here, Mason, old boy." The major tried to speak heartily. "Its the best I can do for you to-night."

"I'd like to know what could be better. You don't mean to say that you can do any better than this for such an old tramp as I have become, do you? I've had too much roughing of it not to be alive to the warmth of a fire like that and the comfort of a room like this."

"Go get some liquor," said the major to Peter, and then, turning to Mason, he went on, "How well you do look, now that I have time to see what you do look like."

"Oh, yes!" answered Mason. "A little good shooting in all sorts of bad countries and a lot of assorted weather are not bad for a fellow's complexion. They tell me you have a big house party on. Have you?"

"Yes. That is the reason I cannot give you another room to-night."

"What is the matter with the room? I tell you it is better than I need, or deserve either for that matter."

"Nothing—nothing is the matter with it, my dear Mason, but—I was afraid—it is not quite so good a room as I would like you to have."

"Rubbish!" Mason exclaimed good humoredly. "I am afraid you wish to do the magnificent with me. Show your house to me to-morrow."

"Then you won't go down to-night."

"No, if you will excuse me. I am not very fit to-night. By Jove!" Mason went on as he looked closer at two framed photographs hanging on the wall. "These are the pictures we went together to have taken so long ago."

"It was not so very long ago."

"We were very youthful however. The world seemed very full of cakes and ale, and the future had in it for us much glory and renown."

"Oh, the world is not so very bad a place, and you have won some glory and renown."

"And you the cakes and ale—some of them," Mason rejoined, laughing. Well, who is here?"

"Your old sweetheart for one—Margaret."

In the meantime they had filled their glasses, and Mason, before replying, lifted his glass, looked critically at its contents and then drank slowly.

"Indeed! Is the old duffer with her?"

"No. The old duffer died a year ago. Margaret is a widow."

"Naturally," Mason responded. "What does she look like?"

"Who? Oh, Margaret — Mrs. Vance. She is more beautiful than ever."

"I think I had better go. If you don't mind, I will. I hope you will sleep well."

"I shall not be able to help myself. Don't let me keep you, I beg."

"I think you have everything you need. I am within call, you know."

"What do you expect to be troubled with — nightmare?" Mason asked laughingly.

Again seeking to be assured that Mason would probably sleep well, the major stood for a minute or so by the open door.

"Don't lock yourself in," he said at length. "Remember I am on this corridor."

Mason looked after the major in some astonishment. He laughed, as though he found some reflection amusing. Then he removed his coat and waistcoat and put on a smoking jacket. He turned the lamp down low, and, placing a screen behind his chair, sat down before the fire and surrendered himself to his fancies for awhile.

"Poor old chap!" he said half aloud to himself. "He must be rattled. His sister has coddled him until he is soft—simply soft. I can remember easily enough when he would have laughed at any apology for such a room as this. I hope prosperity has not spoiled him."

Then Mason proceeded with his undressing. At least he took off his shoes and flung them carelessly on the floor. The lamp flickered and then went out. "The firelight is good enough for me," he said, and his fancy took another turn. "And Margaret! What a stunning girl she was! What mischief there was in her eyes! What a laugh she had! I was fool enough to feel hurt when she married. I tried to persuade myself that I had been jilted in a way. And there was so little. When she sent me that dried, pressed flower from the grave of Abelard and Eloise, I was vain enough to think that there was some significance in that little message from the tomb of those famous lovers. Pshaw! What a young fool I was! She must be very rich now. Well, what is that to me?" He must have dozed then. At all events, sitting there before the fire he was silent and very quiet until he was aroused presently by the careful opening of his door and the filling of his room with the gentle light of a candle. He did not move except to look around the edge of his screen as the woman who carried the candle walked to the wall where the photographs of himself and the major were hanging.

"There he is," Margaret Vance said aloud. "I could not resist the temptation to look at himself again." And Carroll Mason would have given an arm to know whether she meant himself or the major. "Just the honestest eyes in the world, and the same firm mouth. But he was so dense," Margaret continued. "There is no harm in confessing it now. I did love him."

She turned to go at this, but as she walked towards the door her foot struck one of Mason's shoes. She was startled, but she looked about her, and as she saw the evidence that the room was occupied she nearly screamed aloud. She did drop her candle and a bracelet, but Mason arose and with a reassuring word struck a match and relighted the lamp.

"Is it you?" she asked.

"Yes, very much at your service."

"Oh, I am so glad it is nothing worse! But where did you come from? What an adventure! Of course I did not know that any one was here."

"Of course not."

"I must go at once. Please give me my candle. This is too shocking. Promise me you will forget all about it."

"I don't know that I shall forget, but I shall never tell. Whose picture were you looking at and apostrophizing?"

"You heard me—you listened—Major Hathaway's of course."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mason pretending enlightenment. When was he so dense?"

The major? Never."

Mason advanced toward her with the proper word upon his lips but at this minute there was a knock at the door, and Margaret Vance hurried behind the curtains of the old-fashioned bed. Mason opened the door and Major Hathaway entered the room.

"I thought I heard voices," he said.

"I like to talk to myself," Mason replied.

"I think I will sit here a little while with you," Major Hatheway said as he seated himself. "What is that candle doing here?"

Mason walked towards the mantel, where Margaret's candle was burning. As he passed the table he saw her bracelet which he had before rescued from the floor. Uttering a smothered exclamation, he put that in his trousers pocket.

"Just at present the candle is trying to outshine the lamp. Perhaps Peter thought one could not have too much light in a strange room. It is very convenient to light cigars with. Do have a cigar."

"Thank, you," the major responded, as he took the proffered cigar and lighted it. "You will forgive me, I trust."

"There is nothing to forgive, old fellow. You did the best possible thing for me when you put me here."

The major puffed away at his cigar silently while Mason looked at him curiously and Margaret Vance, behind the curtains, was in a tremor because she could not escape without discovery.

"You seem to have something on your mind," Mason said at length.

"I have," answered the major. "It is a lady. I think of marrying, my boy."

"Indeed! Who is she?"

"Oh—er—of course I have no reason to think that I may even hope to win her."

"You are too modest. Who is she?"

"Well, to you I may as well confess. It is Margaret Vance."

This was something of a blow to Mason. It certainly was unexpected. For a moment he looked helplessly at the major. Presently he recovered, however, and went on. "So Margaret Vance was the something on your mind. Surely you cannot mean it? Marry Margaret Vance."

"How could I do better? I know that you admire her."

"Oh, yes, I admire her," Mason returned carelessly, "but you spoke of marrying her."

"Why not? She is lovely, charming and beautiful."

"Certainly, but she rather runs to lines, don't you think?"

"Lovely lines."

"Long, straight ones, I mean. I'll admit she is charming, or used to be—but—but—"

"But what?"

"Wouldn't it be better if she were a little more exclusive?"

"You mean she flirts?"

"She will flirt until she dies, and such women don't die easily—and they never reform."

"You are severe," the major responded, and then he asked slyly, "Did she not once give you the mitten?"

"Yes, in a heartless, cold blooded, thoroughly womanlike way. Beware! —"

"Well, as you are out of the running I mean to ask her for myself. I shall do it tomorrow."

"If you don't change your mind in the cold, clear light of day, I wish you luck. Of course no man's judgment is very reliable at this time of night."

"You must forgive me. I forgot it was so late. Don't fail to call me if you are disturbed."

"What could disturb me? I will call if I need you, never fear."

The major left the room and Margaret Vance came from behind her hiding place. She was very indignant.

"Of course Hathaway did not know you were here," Mason said mischievously.

"Don't speak to me," Margaret rejoined.

"I would not be too hard on him if I were you."

"He is an angel," Margaret answered, with enthusiasm, and continued scornfully, "but you— He won't change his mind in the cold, clear light of day." She mimicked him now. "'Oh, yes, I admire her, but you spoke of marrying her; runs to lines—long straight lines,' Lines, indeed."

"I adore lines," Mason managed to say as she paused to breathe.

"Oh, you cannot mend matters that way. See what you have done. You get me here in your room where I cannot escape. You say all sorts of unpleasant things about me."

"But, if you remember, you came into my room."

"How dare you say so? You know I did not know that you were here. Besides, I never jilted you in a heartless, cold blooded way or any other. You know I did not."

"And never will, I trust."

"How could you be so cruel when I could not defend myself? I could not get out."

"But it was my room, and you came into it to look at my picture."

"Nonsense! Why should I wish to look at your picture?"

"Interest in me, I trust. Now look here, Margaret. You must not go on rowing me because I said such things to the major. Of course I was not willing to let him go on praising you and getting more interested every minute. It would not have been fair."

"Why not, pray?"

"I had other plans. I could not listen to his words of praise. I will not until I am sure of you."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean love, marriage, everything. You never jilted me before. You will not do so now."

Mason tried to approach Margaret, but she avoided him. In moving about the room she was unfortunate enough to knock from the table a glass. Its fall made a noise that disturbed the major. Margaret heard him coming.

"Let me go," she said in unfeigned alarm.

"When you say 'Yes,'" Mason returned.

Before Margaret could reply there was a knock at the door, and almost without delay Major Hathaway entered again. Margaret sprang away toward the window, and as the major saw her he threw up his hands and fell a-trembling. Mason ran to him and caught him by the arm. "What is the matter?" he cried.

"See it! See it!" Major Hathaway called. "Don't you see it?"

"See what?"

"The ghost—there by the window."

Mason laughed, and Margaret Vance came forward slowly.

"So the room is haunted!" Mason exclaimed.

"Yes," the major returned sheepishly. "A well authenticated haunted room—came with the house. I hoped you would be asleep before the ghost should show itself. But what are you doing here?" he went on, turning to Margaret.

"Oh. I—I thought the room was empty and I came in just for a whim, that is all, and you came in and I have not been able to get out."

"And you heard all that I said?" the major asked, with a new fear.

"Oh, yes!" Margaret answered demurely.

"Of course I could not betray her," Mason broke in, "and stop your confidences."

"Of course not," Major Hathaway rejoined. "Well?"

"The fact is, dear old major, just as you came in Margaret was about to tell me when she would marry me."

"Oh, Carroll!" Margaret protested.

"You know you were, Margaret," Mason said confidentially, and he advanced to kiss her, but she retreated toward the door and raised her hand forbiddingly.

"Maybe, Carroll," she responded laugingly; "maybe in the morning—in the cold, clear light of day."

Not at all Now.

"How absurd it is to speak of the bicycle as a modern invention."

"Isn't it comparatively modern?"

"Not at all, not at all. Why Richard Gifford, a poet of the latter part of the last century, speaks of a girl who 'revolves the sad vicissitude of things' as 'she turns the giddy wheel.' To what under the sun can those vicissitudes refer if not to the bicycle? I'll bet if I had all he ever wrote here I could find some reference to bloomers. And he's not the only one, either.

"No?"

"Well, I should say not. You can go clear back to the Old Testament and find the case of a man whose tire was punctured in some way while he was trying to cool his brow with the contents of the old oaken bucket. It's in Ecclesiastes xii, 6, that you will find the mention of the 'wheel broken at the cistern.' And Pope knew of them too."

"How do you know?"

"By his prologue to the satires, in which he asks:

"Satire or sence, alas, can Sporus feel!
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?

"Of course it's a fool question, because no one breaks anything upon a wheel if he can help it. They are too hard to clean. But it shows that you couldn't fool him on the subject of bicycles anyway. Then the Old Testament bobs up again with a mention of 'a wheel in the midst of a wheel,' which is so clearly a reference to the sprocket wheel that it seems almost like a waste of time to explain it. There is also a line about a bicycle that needed oiling."

"In what?"

"In 'The Brookside,' a poem by Lord Houghton. He writes of wandering along by the brook and then intimates that he had a squeaky wheel and that something went wrong with it in the words, 'The noisy wheel was still.' Even Disraeli compared the world to a wheel, and Milton spoke of the wheels of Phœbus, who was evidently the first person to start a bicycle livery. Why, it makes me tired to have people acting and talking as if no one previous to this generation knew anything."—Chicago Post.

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Whereas Warren C. Winslow, one of the Executors of the last will and testament of George A. Blair, late of Chatham in the said County, deceased, hath filed an account of the Administration of the estate and hath prayed that the same may be passed and allowed, you are therefore required to cite the said heirs and next of kin of said George A. Blair, deceased, the creditors, and all others interested in his said estate to appear before me at a Court of Probate to be held at my office at Newcastle, within and for the said County on Tuesday, the eleventh day of January next, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon to attend the passing and allowing of the said account of administration,

Given under my hand and the seal of the said Court, this nineteenth day of November, 1897.

(Sgd) SAM. THOMSON,
Judge of Probates, Northumberland.

(L. S.)

(Sgd) G. B. FRASER,
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6 50		3 05	Marysville,	12 00 3 10
8 20		4 07	Cross Creek,	10 47 1 20
9 40		5 05	Boiestown,	9 35 11 45
10 40 ar		5 50 ar	Doaktown,	8 50 { 10 45 / 10 40
10 45 lv		6 05 lv		
12 05 p m		7 10	Blackville,	7 40 9 10
1 00 ar		8 03	Chatham Jct.	6 45 { 7 50 / ar 7 30
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GOING NORTH.

	EXPRESS.	MIXED
lv. Chatham,	9.40 p.m.	1.40 p. m.
Nelson	10.00 "	2.05 "
Ar. Chatham June.,	10.30 "	2.30 "
Lv. " "	10.45 "	2.40 "
Nelson	11.00 "	3.00
Ar. Chatham,	11.30 "	3.30

GOING SOUTH.

	EXPRESS.	MIXED
Lv. Chatham,	3.35 a. m.	10.10 a. m.
Nelson	3.45 "	10.30 "
Ar. Chatham Junction,	4.05 "	10.50 "
Lv. " "	4.20 "	10.55 "
Nelson	4.40 "	11.10 "
Ar. Chatham	5.00 "	11.30 p.m.

The above Table is made up on Eastern standard time.

The trains between Chatham and Fredericton will also stop when signalled at the following flag Stations— Derby Siding, Upper Nelson Boom, Chelmsford, Grey Rapids, Upper Blackville, Blissfield Carrol's, McKamee's, Ludlow, Astle Crossing, Clearwater, Portage Road, Forbes' Siding, Upper Cross Creek, Covered Bridge, Zionville, Durham, Nashwaak, Manser's Siding, Penniac.

Express Trains on I. C. R. run through to destinations on Sunday. Express trains run Sunday mornings but not Monday mornings.

CONNECTIONS are made at Chatham Junction with the I. C. RAILWAY for all points East and West, and at Fredericton with the C. P. RAILWAY for Montreal and all points in the upper provinces and with the C. P. RAILWAY for St John and all points West, and at Gibson for Woodstock, Houlton, Grand Falls Edmundston and Presque Isle, and at Cross Creek with Stage for Stanley.

THOS. HOBEN, Supt. ALEX. GIBSON, Gen'l Manager