

pass, dear, as all shadows do, and you will come out with the sunshine again, you and your boy lover. Only have patience and courage."

"It was the remembrance of his—his face when he said good-night which upset me," sobbed Enid. "It looked so hopeless, and as if his mind were miles away from us; it is almost as if the shock had turned his brain."

"It is not to be wondered at, darling," said her father reassuringly, "when you think what the poor lad has gone through; the awful suddenness of the catastrophe was enough to make any man's brain reel, and Dick was evidently very much attached to his father."

"But why should his sorrow make him turn from those who love him?" sobbed Enid. "As I hear his step above I can see his face still plainly before me; and it seems to me as if suddenly a great gulf had yawned between us, and that, stretch out my arms as I may, I cannot reach him."

"You are overwrought, my pet, and that makes you fanciful. The fact is, we are all overdone, and shall be the better for a few hours' rest. Take her to our room, mother," he continued, turning to his wife. "I will make shift for to-night on the dressing room sofa. Good-night, childie—to-morrow you will be able to show a brave face again to Dick. You must remember no one can comfort him but you, so keep strong for his sake. He will gradually return to his sane, normal self—never fear!"

But although the Colonel thus strove to comfort his little daughter, he was but half convinced by his own arguments. He shook his head dubiously when he passed into his dressing room and closed the communicating door between him and the women, murmuring under his breath—

"There's something I don't understand about this; something more than natural grief behind the lad's strange manner, or I am much mistaken. What can it be?"

It is probable that no one slept very soundly that night at "The Lindens." Pollard had found time on his arrival to whisper his tale in the ear of the pretty parlour maid, who had carried it down to her fellow-servants. They had talked it over until long past their usual hour for retiring, and until the women were so nervous that they were afraid to go upstairs by themselves. Each wanted a masculine arm as a protection—against what was not quite clear; and, as there were three of them, and only the Colonel's groom and body servant to represent the bolder sex, the position had its difficulties. One thing was certain, with the best will in the world he could not oblige them all at the same time. His first suggestion that he should escort two up and return for the third was received with screams of dismay. Who did he think was going to stop downstairs alone to be murdered? His second that he should proceed upstairs with one and come back for the other two, met with no better reception; the dangers lurking in the attic seemed to be quite as great as those in the basement. It was a flattering but embarrassing position for the groom—a good-looking fellow of about twenty-five who had served under Colonel Anerley out in India.

"Arrange it between you—please yourselves, and you will please me," he said at last, and seating himself in resigned fashion whistled a slow and reflective air.

The younger women cast scornful glances back at him over their shoulders—each thinking he ought to give her the preference; whilst the cook, an elderly woman of round and comfortable proportions, breathed hard, and mentally vowed that if he took one of those hussies before her, she, as chief of the commissariat department, would make him rue it.

Suddenly the groom had an idea. "Toss for it, my dears," he said in lordly fashion; "the first one who loses must be content to follow behind and hang on to my belt."

The idea was received with acclamation—the situation was saved. A few minutes later Yates gallantly offered an arm to the two winners, the cook and parlour-maid, and marched upstairs with them, whilst the housemaid in the rear hung on so convulsively to his belt that he had some difficulty in making headway against her.

(To be continued.)

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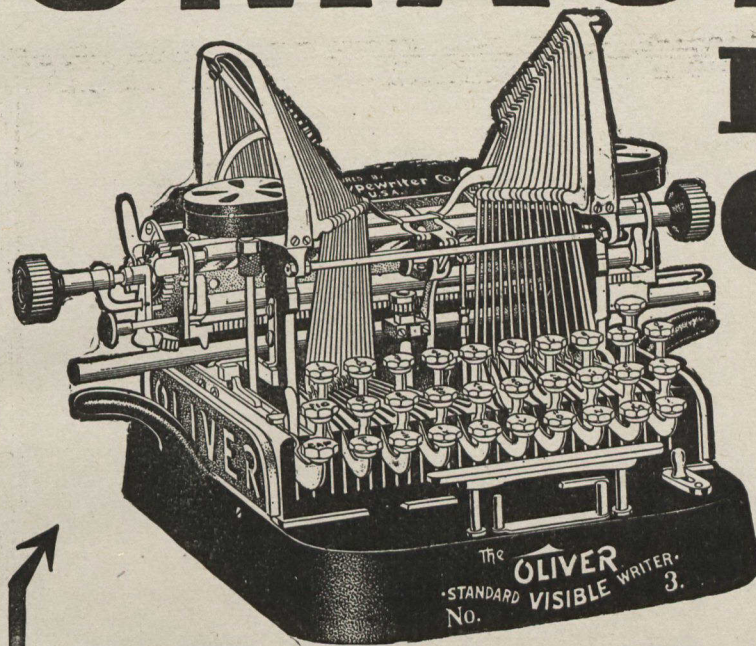
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