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the summer. I've just now come from the agent who said someone had the key out, so I came up to see if I could happen to run across the individual—and here I find someone in possession. Well, whoever you are, you had better step out mighty quick."

Larry felt the floor slipping away from him. For a second—but only a second, he was nonplussed.

"Look out there! What are you trying to do?" as the man attempted unsuccessfully to pass him and enter the house. "You must be off your head, man? Who are you anyway? I happen to be Pinkerton."

"Ho, ho! You are, are you?" The stranger's voice was growing unnecessarily and even unpleasantly noisy. "Well, I happen to know Mr. Pinkerton, and he is on the ocean just now you—"

"Look here," thundered Larry, as loudly as he dared, "if you know my brother that doesn't say you know me. And I have the privilege of using his house this summer. And what's more, as an inspiration seized him, 'if you don't want to get smallpox you had better clear out.' With a terrified ejaculation, the would-be tenant was down the steps and glaring at Larry from a safe distance.

"Smallpox!" he shrieked. "Then why didn't you tell me sooner, and how dare you keep the disease here in the city? I'll report this at once to the health office—I'll go down to Hudson's office at once and find out about this."

"All right, do! and you'll be quarantined with us," laughed Larry, who now had the game in his own hands. "That will be fine! I'll just ring up Hudson and put him on, and he'll see that you are detained there. Or you might come right in here now. The doctor is inside and we've all got to leave here to-night."

With a white face the stranger stammered his regrets and quickly walked away with trembling steps.

"Oh, Jemima!" exclaimed Larry, as he re-entered the house and weakly flopped on a hall seat while he mopped his forehead.

"Sylvia, do you know that this is an isolation hospital and we are all suddenly taken down with diphtheria—no, smallpox?" and with a satisfied grin on his face, he described the encounter.

"Well, I expect we are through with that chap anyway. But how about Patrick—good heavens," looking at his watch, "do you know, it is six o'clock?"

"Yes," whispered Sylvia. "You go and ask him and Tom to stay for tea. Because I knew something like this would happen and I brought along a basket of provisions from home, and it's all ready now."

"Sylvia," in a tone of unbounded admiration, "you are an angel, and I'd kiss you if I weren't a married man," and with a beaming countenance Larry returned to the drawing-room where Doris in an agony of suspense was nobly struggling to be entertaining.

"Well, now," said Larry cheerfully, "I'm rid of the plumber, and the maid says dinner is ready. You'll join us, of course, Mr. Lawless? We will consider it an honour, won't we, Dor?"

"Oh yes—why, of course," was the confused acknowledgement from Doris, as with wondering eyes, half resentful and half dying-to-know, she looked into Larry's eyes.

"Look here, Dor," in an undertone while Tom and Mr. Lawless were finishing a discussion. "If you look at me like that—Good Heavens, girl, I'll kiss you—and I

can, too, because you see a man may legally kiss his wife."

"Larry, if you dare!" and her eyes spoke volumes. Doris hurried from the room presumably filled with housewifely anxieties for the dinner, and after the shock of seeing Sylvia in cap and apron, she gave vent to her pent-up feelings.

"Sylvia Bryan, if he doesn't go the very minute dinner is over—I'll—I'll scream. Oh, but you are a dear. Sylvia, what would we have done without you?"

The dinner, albeit a cold one, proved a great success. It was difficult for the conspirators to keep their faces under control, for the crisis now being past, the bottled-up nerves were rebelling at the continued suppression. All went well until after the coffee-cups had been passed around. The conversation had been general when suddenly Mr. Lawless pulled out his watch.

"By Jove, Mr. Staunton," he exclaimed, "do you know, you and your wife have made things so exceedingly pleasant for me that I quite forgot I was going to take that 8.30 train. I'll have to stay in town all night. I wonder now," looking doubtfully from one to the other, "if you could possibly put me up over night. I do so abominate strange hotels."

There was a second's ominous silence. Sylvia, who had been demurely waiting on the table, with unseemly haste retired to the kitchen.

"Why—why—certainly—why, yes, of course, delighted to put you up—eh, Dor?" floundered Larry in a dazed voice.

But Doris was ignominiously choking over her coffee and suddenly bolted from the room.

"Well, sir, the fact is," began Larry desperately, "that—"

"Hold on, Larry!" and Tom, exploding with his laughter, made his exit by the door which was swallowing the confederates one by one.

Larry eyed the door-knob longingly while Mr. Lawless looked in amazement after the retreating figure, and then glanced at Larry for an explanation.

"The fact is, sir," blurted out Larry, "I guess you might as well fire me right away. I—oh, I don't know how to tell you, but I've played a beastly joke on you. You see—" and in a confusion of words, the confession from start to finish was out.

At first there was an ominous frown on the forehead of Mr. Patrick Lawless. But as the story continued and Larry frankly owned up to his misdeeds, the frown disappeared and a very, very kind and amused light kindled in the deep-set grey eyes. Larry shamefacedly eyeing the table-cloth suddenly looked Patrick straight in the eyes, and was amazed to see a smile fluttering about the broad, good-natured mouth.

"And you mean to tell me, sir," in a severe tone, "that that little girl is not your wife?"

"No, sir!"

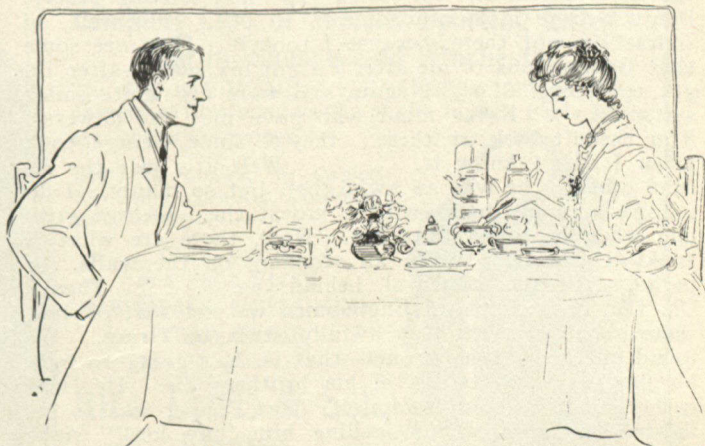
"Then by gad, my boy," with a thump on the table to emphasise his remarks, "you are a bigger fool than I took you for, and if you take my advice you'll not waste an hour before you make her promise she soon will be your wife."

"Why—why—I've been trying for months, sir!"

"Trying, man? Make her! Tell her she has got to, and if necessary, tie her hand and foot and carry her off to the parson."

"And," he continued, "you—you stole this house? Oh Larry, my boy," with a reminiscent chuckle, "you are a worthy son of your father."

"My father?" in a tone of surprise, for there had been no mention of any former acquaintance.



"Larry and a bona fide Mrs. Larry installed in the rose-covered cottage."