

His Money and His Wife

"I say, Phil," suddenly demanded Jack Vinyard, from the deepest recesses of the most comfortable armchair in the smoking room, "you are a judge of things—"

"What things?"
"Oh, things that happen. Tell me, which does a man feel most, the loss of his wife or the loss of his money?"

"My dear fellow," began Philip Monterey, reprovingly, "It depends upon—"

"Oh, I can give you the circumstances. Figure to yourself a man, the possessor of a wife he adores, a diminishing income and inexpensive tastes. Imagine also a woman—"

"The possessor of an ideal husband and expensive tastes—who is probably the cause of the diminishing income aforesaid."

"Right, oh intelligent anticipator of events!"

"Well?"

"She has gone."
"How gone? Not dead?"

"Oh, dear no! Not dead, but gone before—that is, before the income diminished to vanishing point."

Monterey joined his finger tips.

"That was very considerate of her. She has probably saved an impasse."

"Which is French for workhouse?"

"Well, yes. I suppose we both sympathize with the woman because the man will laugh last. But I wander from the subject. Wives and incomes, my dear fellow, are both perishable commodities, incomes especially so. The former are comparatively easy to replace. With the latter it is different. One can live with an income, yet without a wife. One can live with both, but—well, you see what I mean when I say that the woman has, in all probability, saved the situation. In such a menage as you have pictured, the onus of maintaining a mutual happiness would rest heavily upon the man—poor chap!"

"Poor chap, indeed! You don't understand."
"More circumstances?"

Vinyard leant forward.
"The man was desperately in love with his wife; worshipped the ground she walked on and all that sort of thing. They never quarreled."

"Her demands were made exclusively upon his purse and his affections?"

"Yes; and they were invariably honored. In other matters she allowed him a superior knowledge and bowed religiously before it. Told the poor devil he was a man and knew best, while she had thought that such and such a thing might possibly be correct, but was evidently mistaken, since he, her wise husband, knew otherwise."

"Which means that she always got what she wanted?"

"She played upon him as a swell pianist plays upon a second-rate instrument; got every ounce of music out of him. Now she's playing the 'Danse Macabre!' You know—Pom! Pom! Pom!—oh, those thumps!"

There was a pause; and Vinyard sank back in his chair.
"Yes, it's all over now," he went on.

"While it lasted it was good to see; only one cloud—the diminishing income, which he didn't worry about then, of which she knew nothing."

"No, nothing," echoed Monterey.
"There was not a family jar amongst all their domestic crockery. Had they entered for the Dunmow Fitch, they would have started the hottest favorites known for years and won comfortably. That marriage, my boy, was made in Heaven."

"But like most things celestial, it has been spoiled by terrestrial contact. And the end?"

"About a month ago, the man had a long and unpleasant interview with the keeper of his money bags, who resides in a dusty office near Lincoln's Inn. He was informed that if he didn't pull up sharp, he would drive his cart over the precipice—that old, familiar precipice. So he went home and shaped a speech embodying his reasons for a policy of 'peace, retrenchment and reform.'"

He delivered it at what he deemed a favorable moment. This programme (having turned a Radical, he mentally spelt it with one 'm') speedily created an opposition. He carried the retrenchment part of it, for he meant business and held the purse strings. The reform he shelved, for a time. But the peace motion, despite his readiness to accept any reasonable amendment, was carried

to a division and lost. Here, however, this parliamentary simile gets a little mixed. He didn't resign; so the opposition has allied itself to a third party, sought the Chiltern Hundreds (which means, I suppose, the Continent) and the victory rests with the government. Now, Phil, which is it, his money or his wife?"

The light had entered Monterey's brain; and his hand flew to the other's shoulder.

"Good heavens, Jack! You cannot mean that Agnes has—"
"Yes, old man, she has—"

"Jack, what have I been saying? Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes, it's the regulation roman a trois, with all its hackneyed accompaniments. I have her few last words on paper. I don't know who he is. I've made out a list; but I can't decide on a single starter. Even after the event, I can't prophesy. I only knew of it an hour ago; and I came round here to see if you were missing. In such a case, does not one always fly to one's best friend?"

"And after this—?"
"Nothing! Am I bound to scour the earth for them? Have they not put me to inconvenience enough already? If I chance upon them, I suppose I must shoot him, or, better still, horsewhip him. A man looks a bigger fool after a thrashing than he does upon a marble slab. At present I suppose I look a fool. The companion picture in the matrimonial farce to the rampant mother-in-law is the deceived husband. And she—she has two lords; one spells his name with a capital, I'm the other. Oh, Agnes, Agnes! I wonder what your patron saint, the Virgin and Martyr, thinks of you now! Yet, Phil, I'll do something. I'll—I'll have a drink, here and now, in mine own club. For behold, I am once more a bachelor—or, the next best thing to it. Drink with me, Phil; and confess that, for a newly-deserted husband, I'm the deuce of a cool hand."

"Oh, stop that, Jack!"
"Don't Phil, please; don't say I'm sorrier than I look. It's a damned commonplace remark; and it will deprive me of the consolation I derive from imagining that I'm taking it philosophically."

"And you are ruined?"
"Oh dear, no! From one point of view, that's the most galling part of it. I only ask for moderation. The question is, will my income continue to diminish. Upon my word, Phil, I'm afraid it will."

There was a long pause. Presently, Jack Vinyard spoke through a sickly smile.

"There are two things, Phil, in this unsavory business that positively give me pleasure."

"One is—"
"That she didn't bolt with you!"

"And the other—"
"That she leaves me no souvenir of our companionship which I should be forced to keep as an index to her dishonor. Theatrical, isn't it? But, Phil, you haven't answered my question. Which do you think a fellow fancies the least, the divorce court or that set aside for the examination of bankrupts?"

"Would you rather face the judge or the official receiver?"
"Well, Jack, if I must answer, one looks a better kind of idiot before the one than he does before the other. And yet—but you know what I mean, Jack, I'm heastly sorry."

A tear rolled down Vinyard's cheek; but he answered gaily:
"Well, old man, if you're beastly sorry, I have my fill of sympathy."

"I say, Jack, I'm running over to Ostend tomorrow—come along."
"That's a hackneyed way of forgetting things. But I'll come. Meanwhile, let us go out and kill something; time for choice—or a co-respondent."

And a few minutes later they left the club arm-in-arm.—The Critic.

Values.
"How much will you rent this place for?"
"Eleven hundred dollars," was the prompt answer.

"I didn't expect to pay more than about \$900 a year."
"Oh, you want it by the year. You can have it for \$750."

"I thought you wanted to rent a window to see the parade."
Spiteful.

"Mabel seems to take a deep interest in yachting, doesn't she?"
"Yes, she is quite carried away with it."

"And she knows all those nautical terms, too."
"Well, why shouldn't she? Her father started in life as a deckhand, you know."

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VOLUNTEERS.

The signals flash from sea to sea,
The dogs of war unleashed are free;
Come Volunteers, Volunteers all,
When was the time when Britain's sons
Feared the fight, forsook the guns?
Eager for battle, ready for brawl,
Quickly they respond to the call,
Volunteers, Volunteers all.

Who spoke of danger?
Who spoke of death?
Must 'a been a woman
Under her breath?
Victoria's lads answer,
Quickly to the call,
"Here!" and "here!" and "here,"
sir!"
Volunteers—all.

Though all the wide veldt were armed,
And rocks spout lead, we're not alarmed,
Volunteers, Volunteers all,
When Britain's war-drums' throbs were heard
From land to land around the world,
Each man stepped out—the whole world
knew

Britain's sons to the flag were true;
The army volunteered—all.

None feared the danger,
None feared to die,
Not one among them
Rank 'ow or high;
Each man was ready,
When came the call—
"Britain requires you,
Volunteers—all!"

We don't forget Majuba's fight
When bullets sang to the left and right
"Mongst Volunteers, Volunteers all,
And we long to hear cannons roar,
To seek the laagers of the Boer,
Though nations scowl grimly as we go,
There's a Power behind us they know—
Some legions at our call.

Volunteers all,
Men of the Land,
Sons of the Widow,
On to the Rand;
Follow the colors
On through Laing's Nek,
On the Boer Trek,
Volunteers—all.

Odds will we face on the Boer Trek,
We ken it, but at duty's beck
We're Volunteers, Volunteers all,
We've come and we'll die at the call
To uphold the flag or to fall,
To fight for the rights of the Sons,
For the right of the Race abroad,
We're Saxon Volunteers all.

Who follow the flag,
Some to the death,
On with the Empire
To the last breath;
On to the struggle,
On to the fight,
Over the Vaal,
Volunteers—all.

—J. G. S.

To Retrench.

"Home is the dearest place on earth," remarked Bilkins to Wilkins, "that's why we quit housekeeping and went to boarding."

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And back to Potchefstroom;
From Swaziland to Pietersburg
Is heard the burger drum.
From Wakkerstrum to Ermelo,
From Hoopstad to Dundee,
They're marching down to Rustenburg
And up from Kimberlee.
From Heidelberg and Lydenburg,
Johannesburg and all,
From Standerton and Barbeton
They answer to the call,
And Ermelo is at agog,
And Ventersdorp is wuss,
And latest news from Haetnertaburg
All indicates a fuss.
—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Do You Know Him?

"Why are you putting all those stories of Dewey in a scrapbook?" asked the visitor.
"So that I'll have them at hand when I want to tell some stories about the next hero who comes along," answered the young man who makes a business of writing anecdotes of famous men."
—Chicago Post.

In the Rockies.

Easterner—I'm sorry now that I didn't take that train ahead of us.
Native—Why?
Easterner—Why, I would get into Denver sooner.
Native—Oh, no, you wouldn't—that's the rear end of our train.—Ohio State Journal.

A New Exercise.

"I'm sorry we got Willie a ticket to that new gymnasium."
"Why so?"
"When I came down stairs this morning, he was turning panegyrics all over the parlor floor."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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