ECLIPSED.

"Why has your ladyship done away with your splendid saddle horse?"

"Because it's beauty was so much admired that I was quite thrown into the shade."—Humoristische Blatter.

See Missing Word Offer, this issue

SMILES.

Of this tiny raven ringlet
He was both proud and fond,
Until he called on her one day
And found she was a blonde.

"Frank, who was that delightful person who just left? I know he wanted to do something for you?"

Frank—Yes, he wanted to owe me $10.

"The poor man was dying. His breath was becoming weaker and weaker every minute when I saw him."

"And what did you do?"

"I gave him an onion."

He—I aspire to be a good man.

She—Yes, it is the common lot to yearn for the unattainable.

An article on how to sit down gracefully, which is now being run to a considerable extent by the papers, is particularly timely.

See Missing Word Offer, this issue

AUDACITY—A bet well won

(From London Hawk.)

"The cab is here, Jack, so I shall be off. Do you think I look nice?"

Mrs. Seymour stood before her husband as she spoke, and letting her cloak slip from her shoulders, appeared in all the glory of a deliciously apoetic gown of shimmering white satin, shrouded in lace and filmy chiffon.

"Of course you do, darling, prettier than ever."

"That's all right. Now put my cloak on again, like a good boy. Thanks! Any messages for the Delmares?"

"Tell them how awfully sorry I am that I can't dine with them to-night, but say that I really must read over these briefs and get up my opening speech."

He gave the large bundles of papers lying before him an impatient push. "Shall you be very late, Sylvia?"

"Oh, no!" answered his wife, as she stooped to kiss him. "But you know Mrs. Delmare always has music after dinner, and generally asks a few people to come in, so don't expect me much before twelve. However, if you are tired, mind you go to bed; I've got my latch-key with me. I've told the servants to put out the drinks, and not to wait up." And then Mrs. Seymour blew her husband a kiss and vanished through the door.

Half-past twelve was booming out from a neighboring steeple when Mrs. Seymour returned home to her house in Belgravia. She sprang lightly from her hansom, paid the driver his fare, and then leisurely turned to mount the steps, feeling for her latch-key as she did so. She had just inserted the key in the door, shivering a little the while, the night was chilly, when she heard a footstep close behind her.

Thinking it was the cabman, she cried out sharply, "I shall give you no more. The fare is only a shilling, and I gave you eighteen pence. I—"

Then she became aware that the tall well-dressed figure standing, hat in hand, by her side, was no common cabman. She drew back a little, at the same time giving the latch-key an impatient jerk, in a vain endeavor to open the front door more quickly.

"Pray do not be alarmed, Mrs. Seymour," said the stranger, bowing. "Although I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, I am an old friend of your husband's, and it is the fact of being charged with a message from him for you that makes me introduce myself. My name is Messiter—Cyril Messiter. Perhaps you have heard him mention me?"

Mrs. Seymour shook her head doubtfully, although at the same time a vague feeling crept over her that she had heard Jack speak of such a person.

"Your husband asked me to tell you—" began Mr. Messiter; but Mrs. Seymour interrupted him.

"Where have you seen my husband? Is he not at home?"

"He is not, and that is what I am commissioned by him to explain to you, though I fancy you will find a letter from him inside; but pardon me, is it not rather rash of you to stand here on such a cold night, in your evening gown and thin satin shoes? And really, if I had not been afraid of frightening the servants, who would have taken me for a burglar, I should have attempted to get them to let me in."

"How long have you been waiting?"

"Oh, only about half-an-hour; but to be honest, it has been cold."

"You must be frozen! Won't you come in?"

Mrs. Seymour, feeling conscious that her uplifted skirts showed a good deal of those same satin shoes, and growing colder every moment, metaphorically took the bull by the horns. She turned the key sharply, then flinging the door wide open, repeated, with a courage born of intense curiosity and the knowledge that a bell rang from the library to where the butler slept, downstairs, "Do come in?"

"With much pleasure," answered Mr. Messiter, bowing once more, then following Mrs. Seymour through the dimly-lit hall to the library at the back of the house. Here a blazing fire and a couple of softly-shaded lamps made a brilliant illumination, and each took stock of the other.

Mrs. Seymour saw before her a tall, well-built man of about thirty-five. Dark blue eyes, eyes with a smile in their depths, lit up a clear-skinned, handsome face. The hair was closely cut to the well-shaped head, and as he unbuttoned his overcoat Sylvia Seymour noticed that he was in faultless evening dress. His whole appearacen, voice, and manner betokened such a thorough gentleman that her last feelings of nervousness left her as she flung herself into a low chair before the crackling blaze and asked him for the message.

Mr. Messiter paused one instant before answering her. He was too absorbed for the moment in taking in the beauty of the golden head, and the sweet lines of the fair face upturned to him, to answer her question at once. Alarm had paled her cheeks, but now the color was slowly creeping back to them, and when, with a charming smile, she repeated her request, her mysterious visitor thought her the prettiest creature he had ever seen.

"And now get close to the fire and tell me all about it."

"Well, to begin at the beginning, I was almost alone at the club, and just finishing my dinner, when your husband rushed in, looked round the room, and, seeing me, came right over, saying, as though he were going to ask instead of to confer the greatest compliment in the world"—here they both smiled at the compliment—"'I want you to go and see my wife. She will return about twelve; introduce yourself, she has often heard me speak of you, and explain that I have received a wire saying my sister is dangerously ill.'"

"Lady Hunter?"

"Yes, I fancy that was the name—lives out Watford way—but he was in such a hurry I can hardly be sure."

"What is the matter with her?"

"He didn't say exactly. It seems he got a telegram about ten, from her husband. I think he said, saying that she was very ill, that a dog-cart would call for him, and that he was to start at once."

"Lisa is his favorite sister."

"So I gathered, as he seemed dreadfully cut up."

"But why did he send you instead of coming on to tell me?"

"Well, it seems it would have been out of the way, whereas he must pass the club, and he trusted to find somebody he knew there—I was the fortunate man—and so he asked me if I would mind coming on to say that on no account were you to await his return, and I have promised him to remain here till there is a chance of his getting back. Until half-past two, in fact. If he is not in by then, I am to know that he is detained. You see, he thought I could explain matters better than the letter which I understood he had left for you."

"What letter?"

"The one I told you of. See, here it is, I dare say," he picked up an addressed envelope on the chimney-piece, and handed it to her.

Mrs. Seymour burst open the letter, saying, "Yes; and here is the telegram inclosed."

She read it aloud to her companion:

"Come at once. Lisa seriously ill. Am sending dog-cart to fetch you as too late for trains. Should Lisa improve, will stop you by messenger on the road.—Robert Hunter."

Sylvia let the piece of pink paper flutter to the floor, while she read through her husband's hastily-scribbled note.

"Dearest Sylvia:—Inclosed explains itself. Of course I must go. If I am stopped on the road by good news, I shall drive straight back to town If I have to go, however, I shall telegraph to you first thing in the morning. Do not wait up for me, as my chances of returning are very slight. Dog-cart just arrived. In greatest haste. "Jack."

She handed the note to Mr. Messiter.

"It's awfully sad," he said kindly, seeing how distressed she looked. "But perhaps you'll hear better news in the morning."