

THE CANDIDATE.

"Father, who travels the road so late?"
 "Hush, my child; 'tis the candidate."
 'Tis example of human woes—
 Early he comes and late he goes;
 He greets the women with courtly grace,
 He kisses the baby's dirty face,
 He calls to the fence the farmer at work,
 He bores the merchant, he bores the clerk.
 The blacksmith, while his anvil rings,
 He greets, and this is the song he sings:

"Howdy, howdy, howdy do?
 How is your wife, and how are you?
 Ah! it fits my fist as no other can,
 The horny hand of the workingman."

"Husband, who is that man at the gate?"
 "Hush, my love; 'tis the candidate."
 "Husband, why can't he work like you?
 Has he nothing at home to do?"
 "My dear, whenever a man is down,
 No cash at home, no money in town,
 Too stupid to preach, too proud to beg,
 Too timid to rob and too lazy to dig,
 Then over his horse his legs he flings,
 And to the dear people this song he sings:

"Howdy, howdy, howdy do?
 How is your wife, and how are you?
 Ah! it fits my fist as no other can,
 The horny hand of the workingman."

Brothers, who labour early and late,
 Ask these things of the candidate:
 What's his record? How does he stand
 At home? No matter about his hand,
 Be it hard or soft, so it be not prone
 To close over money not his own.
 Has he in view no thieving plan?
 Is he honest and capable?—he is our man.
 Cheer such an one till the welkin rings,
 Join in the chorus when thus he sings:

"Howdy, howdy, howdy do?
 How is your wife, and how are you?
 Ah! it fits my fist as no other can,
 The horny hand of the workingman."

BY CABLE.

"I was never so surprised in my life, never! as when I heard that your father had given his consent," said Aunt Jane, with one of her provokingly righteous sighs. "I wouldn't trust the happiness of a cat with such a man."

"Well, they say that reformed rakes make good husbands, and so let us hope for the best," said Godpapa. I dare say he meant to be kind, but he laid a stress upon the "hope" which took all the curl out of it.

Emily Dood, who gives herself airs because she is six months younger than I am and was married last September, was perfectly hateful with her "Keep a tight hand over him, my dear," as though she were a grandmother, and her wretched little husband had never boxed her ears. He did box her ears before their honeymoon was over, as I happen to know.

Even dear gran' had tears in her sweet old eyes as she kissed me, and all she said was, "God bless you both," with a sigh.

And I was so happy, so triumphant. I had had such a long, hard fight for my own way; had won it. Had come out with a "see the conquering hero" air all over me; and, instead of having congratulations and pretty compliments showered at my feet, every one of the family whips out his or her wet blanket, and throws it over my head.

People I did not care for, were civil enough, but there was no heartiness about what they said. Lots of the men were jealous of him and lots of the girls of me, and I dare say some of them grumbled behind their gush at having to get me a wedding present, and asked themselves what old thing they could furnish up for the occasion. The only one who was really nice was Willie Diamond, and it was awfully hard lines on Willie; that I must admit. It was he who brought Gerald to the house and introduced him to me at our first party last spring. Poor Willie! If it had not been for that, I might have been Lady Diamond long ago; for I liked him ever so much better than any one else, till I saw my fate. I shouldn't have had to fight for Willie. Papa was willing enough about him, and to spare; but I wasn't going to be caught by the glint, an empty title. I do think that, of all the cheap things in the world, a poor baronet is the cheapest but one, and his wife the very cheapest of all. With my twelve thousand pounds, we should have scraped together about a thousand a year to begin with, and have lived on the scrape, or in it—ever afterward. Gerald and I started with eight hundred, but see what he has made of it!—about a month's income now, and if—but that isn't telling you what Willie said.

He began in the ordinary way, and as he went on his dear old face softened, and his voice fell. "Don't let him, any of them," he said, "put their con—put their tongues between you; and remember, Mabel, that Gerald was my friend, and is my friend, and be sure, always, that I will be his friend if ever he wants one, and will let me." It wasn't so much what he said as the way which he said it, after all their wet blanketting. I threw my arms round his neck and kissed him; I did! and I told Gerald about it, and he kissed me. Of course, no one told me one tenth part of what was said about us, but I heard enough to know this—the idea of Gerald's being seriously in love with any one was considered a joke; and the idea of my marrying him a bad one. And all because he was a little wild, has lovely eyes, and a soft, slow voice, and looks at you pleadingly. I have noticed him myself looking into women's faces with that worshipping expression, and seen them bend down their ear to catch that thrilling voice, and oh! how it hurt—me. But he could not help it. It was his way. He didn't mean any-

thing beyond making himself agreeable. When he did mean something, and really wanted to make love, he was such a stupid. I really thought he would never get the words out, and when they came they were addressed to a bow on my gown, not to me.

Well, he was forbidden the house, and I was sent into Yorkshire, though it was May, and I had only worn one of three lovely ball-dresses I had bought and paid for out of my very own. Every one was set at me to write things of Gerald, his idleness, his extravagance, his flirtations, and lots of stuff which no girl ought to hear about from any one; and I was so unhappy, you cannot think. Girls, it was the greatest mistake they could have committed. They only made me more determined to marry him. They worried me, and so I worried back. That's the way. Sighing like patience on a monument isn't a bit of use. I was too healthy to go into a consumption, like little stupid in books. I ate and laughed, and was disagreeable; I made myself perfectly hateful, oh I did! and I—I got my way. Still, a good deal of it stuck and rankled, and I wasn't sure but that after all Emily was right, and he would require a tight hand over him.

Long before we were married, he gave up all his old ways, and his old haunts, and went into business; astonishing every one (but me) with the ability and determination he brought into his new career. If he had been a prince in a fairy tale, with these magic gifts, he could not have got on better. He had three magic gifts—love for me, and more love for me, and more again. So he said looking me in the face this time—that happy day when papa could stand it no longer, and had his consent worried—yes I admit there is no other word for it—worried out of him.

The first six months of our married life passed like a dream. Imagine a husband who is a lover, and a dear friend who is both; and that would be my Gerald. I was so happy; till one miserable Wednesday when he came home at two o'clock and said he must start at five to catch the steamer which was to sail the next morning from Liverpool for New York! "Take me with you," I cried. Man-like, his first thought was packing up; and he told me I could not be ready in time. Then he gave another reason (which has just now gone out for a ride on her pony—bless her!) and I had to give in to this, for it was November, when the sea is always awfully rough. He looked pale and worried, and left me full half an hour before there was any necessity to go. And he would not let me see him off. He hated to be seen off, he said, and was almost cross about it. "A month will soon pass," he said. "A month, I almost screamed; "why you told me just now your business would only take a few days." "No more it will," he answered, "but the voyage out and home will take twenty." "Oh, Gerald," I pleaded, "why can't you write or telegraph—what's the use of the Atlantic cable they make so much fuss about, if you must go all that way yourself?" "I have written, and I have cabled," he replied a little gloomily, "and it's no use, Dimples,"—that was his pet name for me; wasn't it a pretty one—"I must go myself," and he went.

He went away for a month, and he stayed away three. Business was going wrong. What business? He never told me. That's the way with men. Suppose we want money and say it's for dress; they'd ask directly. "What dress? what do you want it for? what color will it be?" and all sorts of other foolish questions about what they never can understand; but let us ask "what business?" and they laugh or get gloomy.

He returned at last looking old and care-worn and from that moment his habits changed. Time was when he would often rush home in a hansom and come at three o'clock, and call up-stairs, "Holloa, Dimples! Nothing to do; get on your things and come out for a drive." Now it was six or seven before he showed his face, and then he would have a horrid black bag full of papers, over which he sat half the night. And he turned so stingy, though every one said he was coining money. When baby came he brightened up, and I must say was very tender and thoughtful until I was about again. Then he went back to his old bad ways. Always at the office—always thinking business. Ah me! I remember once how he put down that Emily Dood. She had found us sitting alone in the conservatory at Lady Varsovianna's ball, and said in her sneering way, "Oh dear! here's Gerald Carruthers making love to his wife!" "Why not?" he replied, not moving his arm; "I love my wife much more dearly than ever I loved Mabel Mostyn, and I loved her dearly." I was so proud! He never made love to me now. He left me alone to think, and I thought of other things Emily had said. Among others she told me when I was fretting about him during that voyage, that he was sure to have a splendid time of it on board, because somebody's blondes—I don't remember whose; a lot of painted burlesque creatures—were his fellow passengers; she had seen their names in the newspapers; Kitty this, and Polly that, and Susie some one else, who had been talked of in connection with him before we were engaged. I did not mind first, but when he altered so, and would not say why he went to America, or what sort of business kept him there, I accused him point black. He got red and white, and asked me how I dared; and got so angry. It is not wise to ask a wife how she dares, when affection is at the bottom of her daring, and so I let him know.

Jealous? Of course I was! I was horribly jealous. I know all you can say about jealousy. Papa preached, mamma scolded. Aunt Jane

sighed, and Emily had her little say, of course. It was wicked, it was foolish, it was undignified. Pride ought to conquer it, self respect to ignore it, religion to root it out. The old story! Let a woman swallow a table-spoonful of salt and argue her out of being thirsty; and then you may go and persuade one who has loved not to be jealous. They all had their remedies, as though it were a cold in the head. I was to be more loving to him; I was to treat him coldly; I was to mope, and show him how it grieved me; I was to flirt, and prove that I did not care; I was to insist upon an explanation; I was on no account to allude to the subject; I was to bear it; I was to resent it; I was to blow hot; I was to blow cold; I was to blow up—and so on. Papa and the rest sided with Gerald, when they saw how right I had been about his steady going down; and yet they sided against me when I showed how he was relapsing! If I was right as a young, innocent, inexperienced girl, why should they contradict me when I was a wretched but experienced wife? There was no common sense or logic about them.

My dears, we went on from bad to worse, till one horrid day, about a year after his trip to America and back—shall I ever forget it!—when I returned from a walk with baby, and found that he had been home, and packed up his bag, leaving a message—not a note, but a message if you please, with a servant—that he would not be back for two days. I went up to his room, by instinct I suppose, and there in the fire-place, crumpled up, I saw one of those horrid yellow telegram papers. Something told me that it would be the clue to his sin and my disgrace. I opened it and my head swam as I read this—
 "Susie, Baby, Immediately, Liverpool."

Could fair words tell the tale of horror more plainly? Susie and her baby would be at Liverpool, where his presence was required immediately; at Liverpool, where the steamers from New York arrive! on a Monday, when most of them are due—I knew that, for how I had counted the hours for him!

It was half-past 4. The express would leave Euston at 5. If I could catch it, and face him on the threshold of his infamy! I stopped a hansom and promised the driver a half-sovereign if he took me there in time. You know how cabmen will go through horrid dirty, narrow streets for short cuts.

Well, as bad luck would have it, we got grounded somewhere near Tottenham Court-road, and when I rushed on the platform the train had started. In a smoking carriage, leaving back so intent over another telegram that he did not notice me, I saw my gentleman with a smile on his face. Thinking how nicely he had escaped me—no doubt.

Again my once loving anxiety about him stood me in good service. I dashed off to Lloyd's and asked about the American steamers. The fastest had only reached Queenstown. I had sixteen hours to spare. I took the next morning's train and reached St. George's landing stage just in time to see the Tender with the "Britannia's" passengers arrive. There were only about forty of them, and they looked as though they had had a dreadful passage. I was very glad of it. This seems unkind to the thirty-nine. If she arrived looking limp, and miserable, it would be some comfort. I had taken care to appear as nice as I could be.

The thirty-nine, mostly bagmen, I think, came on shore, went fussing after their baggage, and there was a pause. I saw a good many gold-laced blue caps bobbing about some one who was yet on board, and then there tripped down the gangway a woman, followed by a *bonne* and a baby—a young woman looking disgustingly fresh and well, as fair as I am, and dressed—my dears, the wretch was dressed simply to perfection! The only comfort I found was that she appeared scared and sad. She evidently had expected some one to meet her, and he was not there. No, I had looked about carefully, and my gentleman was—not there. I soon saw why. As she passed along the plank, the purser or some such creature hurried up with a letter, which she took with a smile—I believe she had been flirting with him all the way across. She opened the note with a little sob. Then the expression of her face changed. It was all right. He was too cunning to meet her there in public. He had given her the rendez-vous somewhere else.

I followed her. The Custom-house officers were most remiss in their duty. They passed her things without so much as looking into them. The Chief Examiner, who ought to be dismissed, kissed the baby. Then she drove to the North-western Hotel, and I after her. She must have a sitting-room and bed-room on the first floor, and must be told the moment that the 4:35 train was signalled at Edge Hill. I arranged to be told, too, and was ready for her—and him. Well, my loves, in came the train, a local one, and before it had stopped that woman was being hugged in a brown ulster which did not belong to Gerald Carruthers.

I never was so crestfallen! Here had I been wasting precious time on the wrong scent, while he might have been on the landing stage at the right moment, and have carried his Susie away almost under my nose.

I went back to the river as fast as I could, and found that I had missed the Inman passengers. Still there was a chance. The steady-going but old foggy Cunarder was not expected till the next morning. I took a room at the hotel, telegraphed home that I was detained, and waited. Would you believe it! That night I picked up a sort of acquaintance—through the baby, I think—with that woman I had taken for "Susie." She was the wife of a Captain in the Navy, and had been living at Halifax, Nova Scotia, so as to be near

him. He had come home on private affairs and quite unexpectedly, had got promoted to a command in the Mediterranean. So she had to come back and join him alone. "I noticed you on the landing place," she said, and "sympathized with you so much. I had arrived and there was no one to meet me. You were there to meet some one who had not arrived. We were both disappointed. Never mind; he will come tomorrow." Of course I let her think that it was my husband I was expecting, and of course I declined their offer to go with me to the landing stage in the morning.

There was nothing in the least resembling a "Susie," and absolutely no baby, on board the "Russia." I could have sat down on one of those dumpy posts and cried. What was I to do? I had started full of confidence that I should catch Gerald out, and had not thought of making any plans to cover a retreat, or excuse a failure. How—if Gerald arrived home before me—was I to account for being nearly two days away from his roof—alone? He had covered up his tracks, as the Americans say—it was impossible to obliterate mine. His escapade had succeeded—mine had failed. I should have stopped at home and confronted him on his return with that cablegram. He might have sworn till now, and no rational woman would have expected me to believe him. Now he had simply to say, "There's nothing in it, my dear: you went yourself to see, and know it is so."

It won't do to look back now and say this idea was absurd, or that event didn't happen after all. I am taking things just as they happened, and as I felt them at the time they were happening. I was at my wits' ends. The more I thought of what I had done, the more difficult did it seem to get out of it. I built up elaborate excuses, brick by brick—so to speak—spending time and trouble upon an edifice which collapsed before the thought, "What would I say if he had made it?" Only one thing was certain, I must get home as quickly as possible. If I got back before he did, he might not ask any questions. He might so commit himself when taxed with that cablegram as to shut off all questioning on his part. By the time we reached Rugby, I had ceased to think of excuses, and was much happier. What had I done? Followed my husband to save him from re-embarking in a career of wickedness. Was there any harm in that? Was it my fault that he—a crafty man of the world—had outwitted poor me? Not at all. As I thought it over in this light, I became reassured, defiant, and hungry.

The train stopped, the people rushed off to the refreshment rooms, and as the guard (who had been very civil heretofore) did not come to see if I wanted anything, I leaned out of the window to ask some one to call him. There was a group of three passengers standing close by, and I had got as far as, "Oh, would you mind—" when one of them cannoned through the other two, and before you could say "trap stick!" Gerald was sitting opposite me, and all my appetite gone.

"Why, Dim—" he began, but checked himself. "Where have you been? why—what has happened? Is anything wrong? Where are you going?"

"I really cannot undertake to answer so many questions all at once," I replied with what I knew was a vulgar snigger.

"It is all one question," he said gravely; "what are you doing?"

"Business, my dear," said I. The imitation of his tone and gesture was perfect, and I put one of my own mocking smiles at the tail end of it for a sting.

"I think upon reflection you will consider that hardly a proper manner of replying to your husband, Mabel," getting graver and graver.

"It is one which my husband has so often used to me that I suppose I have adopted it unconsciously. Imitation is said to be the severest sort of flattery," said I.

"You know perfectly well that you are talking nonsense," he answered. "As you do not appear to have sufficient respect for me to answer a simple question, I shall show you that I have some respect for myself by not repeating it."

He was looking so well, so bright and handsome, and, with all his wickedness, spoke so like a gentleman! I almost began to relent, but he thought, "what has brightened him up!" set my teeth, and hardened my heart.

"Rather a cheap way of buying off inquiry from your doings," I snapped.

"Would you like an account of my doings?" he asked. There was a twinkle in the corner of his eye, and a twitch at the corner of his lip that angered me.

"I should, indeed," I replied; "only I am not prepared to take your version of them."

"Meaning that, in your opinion, I would stoop to a falsehood?" said he.

"Stoop? Oh, no," I sneered. "A man does not think that he stoops to tell a lie when it is to protect a woman, even though it deceives a wife."

"Mabel," he began, "there is not an act of my married life—" but I stopped him there. It is bad enough to know that one's husband has deceit in his heart: it makes it worse to stand by and see the foul thing dragged out of its den.

"Stop!" I interrupted, taking the cablegram from the pocket of my travelling-bag; "read that, before you go on."

"Where did you find this?" he asked in a quick sharp voice, as though he were speaking to a clerk.

"In your room, under the fireplace. You