

Money is the wheels on which this world rolls, and Jeannette Dotterell had plenty of money, or she never could have purchased such a handsome commodity as Paul Rylander by way of husband.

"Of course not, darling, if you object to it!"

Mr. Rylander threw his cigar into the grate, smoothing with a smile the indignant wrinkles on the brow of his bride.

"I won't have it!" said Jeannette; "so there!"

"I've smoked all my life, dear," said Mr. Rylander, in accents of gentle, self-commiseration, "but I'd give up life itself to save that little heart a pang."

Mrs. Rylander was somewhat mollified.

"It's such a horrid habit!" said she.

"You shall have no further occasion to complain of it, dearest," said the amiable bridegroom.

Mrs. Rylander's gracious smiles came back once more. She had anticipated a regular campaign battle with her Paul, knowing as she did, how tenderly wedded he was to the noxious Virginian weed—but here he was astonishing her by yielding up the point without so much as a remonstrance.

"You're a duck, Paul!" said she radiantly.

"I should have supposed myself to be a good deal more like another domestic bird!" Paul answered, with the gravity which so often puzzled his bride as to whether he was in earnest or not.

"And you won't smoke any more? *really*, truly?"

"Not a whiff, if it displeases my darling wife!"

Mrs. Rylander went away rejoicing, and Paul stretched himself on the sofa to read a French novel.

The next day Paul looked delightfully pallid and declined to partake of the broiled bones, and stewed kidneys which the cook had provided for breakfast.

"You're not well, Paul," cried the bride, apprehensively. But Mr. Rylander waved his hand with a deprecating air.

"Do not trouble yourself about me, Jeannette," said he mildly, "I am well enough; only I feel no appetite."

"Try a muffin, dear!" coaxed Mrs. Rylander, "or one of these oysters."

"I could not eat, love!" said Mr. Rylander.

At dinner his appetite was equally delicate; at tea he ate only a square inch of dry toast. Mrs. Rylander began to be seriously alarmed.

"Dear, dear!" she thought, "I hope there isn't consumption, or anything of that sort, in dear Paul's family. He certainly looks very delicate at times."

Day after day went by, and apparently Mr. Rylander ate less and less. He took to slippers and an easy chair; continued, in the process of time, to introduce a very effective looking pillow at his back, and developed a sudden taste for composing melancholy poetry, the chief burden of which was, "When I am gone—when I am gone!" Mrs. Rylander—who found these interesting effusions totally by accident of course—scattered round the house, grew hysterical.

"Dear Paul," she sobbed, "you must certainly consult a physician."

"I will die first," Mr. Rylander asserted.

"Why, dearest?"

"I could not conscientiously comply with his prescriptions."

"But why not?"

That was a question that Mr. Rylander declined to answer.

Jones, a stout middle-aged friend, came to call. He assumed a countenance of painful solicitude, and came clear from the parlour on tip-toe.

"Ah—h," said Jones, "I thought how it would be."

"Mr. Jones, what do you mean?" gasped Mrs. Rylander.

"It's leaving off smoking," said Mr. Jones, in a mysterious whisper. "Dilkins left off just so—to please Mrs. Dilkins. Dilkins died!"

"My goodness gracious!" said Mrs. Rylander, clasping her hands together. "If I thought—but of course it can't be possible. It must have been something else that was the matter."

"That's what's the matter," said Jones; "depend upon it, Mrs. Rylander."

And Jones departed.

Robinson came in next. Robinson shook his head, and felt his chin solemnly.

"Do you think it's a decline?" said Mrs. Rylander, when Robinson had bidden his friend adieu.

"He'll never be better," said Robinson.

"Oh, Mr. Robinson!" shrieked Jeannette.

"You didn't let me finish my sentence, ma'am," said Robinson—"Until he takes to his cigars again."

Captain Parks came the same evening. Jeannette appealed wistfully to him:

"Oh, it often happens!" said the captain."