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alone, he went

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six dances she
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He apologized
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th since child-

"Any of the little Rowens?"

"No, sir."

"The nurse, perhaps?"

"No, sir."

"Ah."

"Shall I say you called, sir?"

"Oh, no; I'm expected. Didn't they tell you?"

"Very good, sir." With difficulty the footman repressed a smile. As Bertie showed no signs of going he was puzzled. The situation was new. What does a well-trained servant do when a popular guest, not a tramp, refuses to leave the doorstep?

"Don't keep the door open," said Bertie, "there's a draught."

"Very good, sir." The footman put his hand over his mouth and was about to close the door.

"Oh, by the way, John!"

"Yes, sir."

"You might just mention that I'm here."

"Very good, sir." And he went to the drawing-room. It was Mrs. Rowen's at-home day, a fact which Bertie knew. Eva was entertaining two early arrivals. At least, it wasn't really entertaining, but that is what it is called. Solemnly John announced: "Mr. Bertie Pilkington is on the doorstep."

Eva bit her lip. "You told him Mr. Rowen was not at home?"

"Yes, miss."

"That will do." John retired solemnly and Eva congratulated herself on her happy idea of pretending that he came to see her father. It saved awkward explanations. Bertie stood outside and studied the beautiful brass knocker. A carriage drove up and two ladies got out. He knew them, shook hands and rang the bell. John appeared. The elder of the two asked if Mrs. Rowen was at home. John looked at Bertie, hesitated for a fraction of a second and said, "Yes, ma'am."

The two stepped inside, expecting Bertie to follow. But he only said: "Is Mrs. Rowen at home?"

John coughed, and said: "No, sir."

"Miss Rowen?"

"No, sir."

"Mr. Rowen?"

"No, sir."

"Any of the little Rowens?"

"No, sir."

"The nurse, perhaps?"

"No, sir."

"Very well; shut the door, there's a draught," he sighed.

And in the drawing-room Eva had to invent elaborate explanations on the spur of the moment of the unhappy position of dear Mr. Pilkington. "He came to see papa," was no good at all, for they had distinctly heard him ask for everybody, including the nurse. Eva was very hot and red, and changed the subject.

John announced Mrs. Wardlaw and Miss Wardlaw.

"How do you do, my dear?" said Mrs. Wardlaw. "Why on earth is poor Mr. Pilkington sitting on the doorstep? Such a funny thing to do on the Avenue."

Eva began all over again and they all helped to explain, and Mrs. Rowen joined in and there was general rejoicing at having something to discuss. The poor girl was furious, and after repeated and violent efforts had just succeeded in turning the conversation when John announced Lord Bobby Dalmainham (pronounced "Dam") a recent importation of Bertie's. "How do you do?" said Lord Bobby. "I say, you know, Miss Rowen, what have you been doing to your young man? I had to step over him, and he only wagged his head and said: 'This is what they do in Shakespeare.' Do they?"

So Eva, feeling an almost irresistible impulse to hurl things about, began again the same poor, threadbare explanation, and glancing by chance out of the window she saw small boys collecting and a policeman looking on suspiciously from the opposite side of the road. It was a most uncomfortable afternoon. The next visitor who arrived looked deeply concerned, and wanted to know if Mr. Pilkington, having lost his fortune, had become a gentleman cab-runner; and yet another who, with much delicacy, had said nothing, openly retired with a cup of tea into a corner and inquired of a friend whether Eva's cruelty had driven the poor young man out of his mind. It was obvious to all that the subject was a sore one, so they discussed it under their breath in little groups.

There was a general impression that Eva had no doubt been behaving badly, an

anxiety to discover whether the engagement was at an end and who was to blame, and wherever Eva came the conversation changed suddenly and became commonplace and strained.

"You had better let him in," whispered her mother hurriedly.

"Never!" she said, clenching her fists and with difficulty keeping back tears of rage.

And through it all she had to smile and be cheerful and witty. Oh why didn't those awful people go?

John came in. She looked at him with apprehension. This time he carried a teatray. It ought to be mentioned that he had just been presented with a five dollar bill and a promise of immediate employment in case of dismissal. He came up to the tea table and held out the tray.

"Well?" asked Eva. He replied audibly, "Mr. Pilkington says, miss, that he will have his tea very nicely on the doorstep."

There was a pause in the conversation and all eyes were turned on her with interest. She gulped down her wrath, tried to laugh lightly and with trembling hands poured out a cup of tea for him. It would look too absurd to say "No," or tell the man to send him away, and he certainly should never, never, never be allowed to come in.

"Two lumps, he usually takes, miss."

She put the sugar in and John went out with the tray and a cake basket. As he reached the door he turned and said, "And I was to say, miss, that as it is just beginning to rain, have you got such a thing as an awning?"

"Take him—take him—an umbrella," she stammered, too miserable now even to care what all the people were thinking. Oh, wouldn't she like to have a firm grip of that young man by the ears! It was some little time before the conversation broke out freely again.

"Shall I take him some hot toast?" asked Lord Bobby mischievously. She pretended not to have heard the question so he went out. He was back in a minute and the plate he carried was empty.

"He says they don't have hot toast in Shakespeare," he remarked solemnly, "so he was grateful but gave it all to the policeman, who put some in his pocket for the little ones at home."

Eva tried to say something about the affectionate nature of the police, and somebody else suggested that car conductors ran them close. But nobody knew much about car conductors except from what appeared in the newspapers. There was some desultory criticism of lightning conductors and somebody rose to go. Eva sighed with relief, but it was a long time yet before the trial was over. Each visitor on departing found a most elegant young man, beautifully dressed, sitting, with legs crossed, under an umbrella just outside the door. He was cheerful but would give no explanations. He promised to call soon on all those he knew, provided they would let him in.

"I wouldn't care to do this sort of thing often you know. Excuse my not getting up, won't you? I've got a nice dry paving stone at present and it will get wet if I do. Wet paving stones are so uncomfortable, aren't they? Yes indeed. Good-bye."

"Feeling comfy, old chap?" said Lord Bobby. "Glad to see you've taken a little nourishment. Been sitting on a volcano inside all the afternoon. How's old Shakespeare?"

"You run away," said Bertie, "there's a police force watching you. Ta, ta!"

As a matter of fact that poor policeman had been in difficulty, too. There was a rapidly growing crowd of errand boys gazing at a respectful distance, and the situation was so unprecedented. How could he move on a loafer who was on such intimate terms with everybody in the house and had tea brought out to him by the footman? He had indeed suggested that he might be creating an obstruction, but Bertie was so genial about it and the hot buttered toast was so uncommonly good.

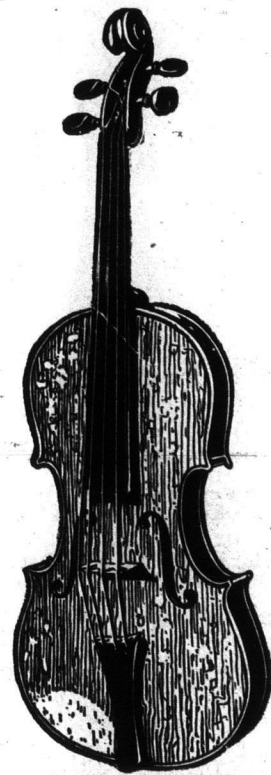
As the last guest went John was hastily summoned to the drawing-room, where Eva was looking out of the window in fury after an outburst of tears.

"Why do you allow that person to annoy us like this all the afternoon?" she said angrily, turning round.

"He wouldn't go, miss. I told him you were all out every time anybody came. It didn't seem to make no difference."

"Why don't you send him away?" She stamped her foot.

"He don't seem to listen to what I say, miss. I thought you wouldn't be wanting



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