

began to buzz with an odd expression.

"Do you know, Miss Ellison—"

A short cough immediately behind him made him look round. His voice trailed off. His eyeglass fell with a jerk and bounded on the end of its cord. He sprang to his feet.

"Come here, Reuben," said Aline. "What have you been doing to your nose? It's all muddy. Aren't you fond of dogs, Lord Herbert? I love them."

"Eh? I beg your pardon?" said his lordship, revolving warily on his own axis, as the animal lumbered past him. "Oh, yes. Yes. That is to say—oh, yes. Very."

ALINE was removing the mud from Reuben's nose with the corner of her pocket-handkerchief.

"Don't you think you can generally tell a man's character by whether dogs take to him or not? They have such wonderful instinct."

"Wonderful," agreed his lordship, meeting Reuben's rolling eye and looking hastily away.

"Mr. Barton was going to take Reuben with him, but that would have been silly for such a short while, wouldn't it?"

"Yes. Oh, yes," said Lord Bertie. "I suppose," he went on, "he will spend most of his time in the stables and so on, don't you know? Not in the house, I mean, don't you know, what?"

"The idea!" cried Aline, indignantly. "Reuben's not a stable dog. I'm never going to let him out of my sight."

"No?" said Lord Bertie, a little feverishly. "No? Oh, no. Quite so."

"There," said Aline, giving Reuben a push, "now you're tidy. What were you saying, Lord Herbert?"

Reuben moved a step forward and wheezed slightly.

"Saying?" said his lordship, backing. "Oh, yes. Yes, I was saying—good dog! Good old fellow! I was saying—would you excuse me, Miss Ellison—good dog, then!—I have just recollected an important—there's a good boy!—an important letter I meant to have written."

The announcement of his proposed departure may have been somewhat abrupt, but at any rate no fault could be found with his manner of leaving. It was ceremonious in the extreme. He moved out of her presence backwards, as if she had been royalty.

Aline saw him depart with a slightly aggrieved feeling. She had been in the mood for company. For some reason which she could not define she was conscious of quite a sensation of loneliness. It was absurd to think that John's departure could have caused this. And yet somehow it did leave a blank. Perhaps it was because he was so big and silent. You grew used to his being there just as you grew used to the scenery, and you missed him when he was gone. That was all. If the Metropolitan tower were removed, one would feel lonely in Madison Square.

LORD BERTIE, meanwhile, having reached the smoking room, where he proposed to brood over the situation with the assistance of a series of cigarettes, found Keggs there, arranging the New York morning papers on a side table. He flung himself into an armchair, and, with a scowl at the butler's back, struck a match.

"I 'ope your lordship is suffering no ill effects from the adventure?" said Keggs, finishing the disposal of the papers.

"What?" said Lord Bertie, coldly. He disliked Keggs.

"I was hallucinating to your lordship's encounter with the dog Reuben this morning."

Lord Bertie started.

"What do you mean?"

"I observed that your lordship 'ad climbed a tree to elude the hanimal."

"You saw it?"

Keggs bowed.

"Then why the devil, you silly old idiot," demanded his lordship, explosively, "didn't you come and take the brute away?"

It had been the practice in the old days both of Lord Bertie and of his father to address the butler in moments of agitation with a certain aristocratic vigour.

"I 'ardly liked to interfere, your lordship, beyond informing Mr. Barton. The hanimal being 'is."

Lord Bertie flung his cigarette out of the window and kicked a footstool. Keggs regarded these evidences of an overwrought soul sympathetically.

"I can appreciate your lordship's emotion," he said, "knowing 'ow haverse to dogs your lordship 'as always been. It seems only yesterday," he continued, reminiscently, "that your lordship, then a boy at Heton, 'ome for the 'olidays, 'anded me a package of Rough on Rats, and instructed me to poison 'er ladyship your mother's toy Pomeranian with it."

Lord Bertie started for the second time since he had entered the room. He screwed his eyeglass firmly into his eye, and looked keenly at the butler. Keggs' face was expressionless. Lord Bertie coughed. He looked round at the door. It was closed.

"You didn't do it," he said.

"The honorarium which your lordship offered," said the butler, deprecatingly, "was only six postage stamps and a 'arf share in a white rat. I did not consider it hadequate in view of the undoubted riskiness of the proposed hact."



"Run!" she panted. "Can't hold him. Run! Run!"

"You'd have done it if I had offered more?"

"That, your lordship, it is impossible to say after this lapse of time."

The Earl of Stockleigh had at one time the idea of attaching his son and heir to the diplomatic service. Lord Bertie's next speech may supply some clue to his father's reasons for abandoning that scheme.

"Keggs," he said, leaning forward, "what will you take to poison that damned dog, Reuben?"

The butler raised a hand in pained protest.

"Your lordship, reely!"

"Fifty dollars."

"Your lordship!"

"A hundred."

Keggs seemed to waver.

"I'll give you a hundred and fifty," said his lordship.

Before the butler could reply, the door opened and Mr. Keith entered.

"The New York papers, sir," said Keggs, deferentially, and passed out of the room.

It was a few days later that he presented himself again before Lord Bertie. His lordship was in low spirits. He was not in love with Aline—he would have considered it rather bad form to be in love with anyone—but he found her possessed of attractions and wealth sufficient to qualify her for an alliance with a Stockleigh; and he had concentrated his mind, as far as it was capable of being concentrated on anything, upon bringing the alliance about. And up to a point everything had seemed to progress admirably. Then Reuben had come to the fore and wrecked the campaign. How could a fellow keep up an easy flow of conversation with one eye on a bally savage

bulldog all the time? And the brute never left her. Wherever she went, he went, lumbering along like a cart horse, with a nasty look out of the corner of his eye whenever a fellow came up and tried to say a word. The whole bally situation, decided his lordship, was getting dashed impossible, and if something didn't happen to change it he would get out of the place and go back to New York.

"Might I 'ave a word, your lordship?" said Keggs.

"Well?"

"I 'ave been thinking over your lordship's offer—"

"Yes?" said Lord Bertie, eagerly.

"Ham I to understand that it 'olds good irrespective of the manner in which the hobject is achieved?"

"What do you mean?"

"The method of helminating the hanimal which your lordship indicated would 'ardly do, I fear. Hawkward questions would be asked, and a public hexpose would inevitably ensue. Hif your lordship would permit me to make a halternative suggestion—?"

"Well?"

"I was reading a article in the newspaper, your lordship, on 'ow sparrows an' such is painted up to represent bullfinches, canaries, hand so on, hand I says to myself 'Why not?'"

"Why not what?" demanded his lordship, irritably.

"Why not substitoot for Reuben hanother dog painted to appear hidetically similar?"

His lordship looked fixedly at him. "Do you know what you are, Keggs?" he said. "A blithering idiot."

"Your lordship halways 'ad a spirited manner of speech," said Keggs, deprecatingly.

"You and your sparrows and canaries and bullfinches! Do you think Reuben's a bally bird?"

"I see no flaw hin the idea, your lordship. 'Orses and such is frequent treated that way. I was talking the matter hover with Roberts, the chauffeur—"

"**W**HAT! And how many more people have you discussed my affairs with?"

"Honly Roberts, your lordship. It was hunavoidable. Roberts being the owner of a dog which could be painted up to be the living spit of Reuben, your lordship."

"What!"

"For a hedaquate honorarium, your lordship."

Lord Bertie's manner became excited.

"Where is he? No, not Roberts. I don't want to see Roberts. This dog, I mean."

"Hat Roberts' cottage, your lordship. 'E is a great favourite with the children."

"Is he, by Jove? Good-tempered animal, eh?"

eh?"

"Hextremely so, your lordship."

"Show him to me, then. There might be something in this."

Keggs coughed.

"And the honorarium, your lordship?"

"Oh, that. Oh, I'll remember Roberts all right."

"I was not thinking hexclusively of Roberts, your lordship."

"Oh, I'll remember you, too."

"Thank you, your lordship. About 'ow hextensively, your lordship?"

"I'll see that you get ten dollars apiece. That'll be all right."

"I fear," said Keggs, shaking his head, "it could 'ardly be done at the price. Hin a hearlier conversation your lordship mentioned a 'undred and fifty."

"A hundred and fifty!"

"That was the hexact figure your lordship mentioned. That, 'owever, was for the comparatively simple task of poisoning the hanimal. The substitootion would be more hexpensive, owing to the nature of the process. I was thinking of five 'undred, your lordship."

"Don't be a fool, Keggs."

"I fear Roberts could not be induced to do it for less. The process bein' hexpensive."

"Five hundred! No, it's dashed absurd. I won't do it."

"Very good, your lordship."

"Here, stop. Don't go. Look here, I'll give you two hundred and fifty."

"I fear it could not be done, your lordship."

"Three hundred. Four—. Here, don't go. Oh,