

## The Old Way and the New.

By W. Crawford Sherlock.

"What's the matter, Brown? You look like you're down in the mouth after all the fun we've had tonight. Afraid of trouble when you get home, eh?"

"That's just it, Hopkins. Mrs. Brown is the best little woman in the world, but she can't help raising a scene when I stay out a trifle late. I don't do it often, but now and then the spell comes on me to have a turn with the boys, and I can't resist the temptation. I'll hear about the faults and failings of men in general, and of myself in particular, for the next two hours and it will take a new hat at least to restore the usual peace and quiet to our happy home."

The all-night car had been delayed somewhere uptown and the two friends had decided, after waiting a half an hour, to walk home.

"You didn't begin right, Brown," laughed Hopkins, as they sauntered along. "The first time I stayed out late my wife began a curtain lecture. I walked out of the house and stayed away all the rest of the night and she never tried it again. Try that, Dick."

"It wouldn't work in my case," replied Brown, gloomily. "Anyway, I wouldn't try that plan. I suppose it's her nerves and I guess it isn't right, only I can't help it. Here's my house; good night."

Brown slipped the key into the nightlatch and noiselessly opened the front door, then removed his shoes to avoid making any unnecessary sound. These precautions had never availed him in the effort to elude the vigilance of his wife, but he did so from mere force of habit. As he stole up the stairs a light in the dining-room, visible through the crack under the door, attracted his attention and he came down again to investigate.

To his surprise he saw that the table was set for two and through the outer door his wife busily engaged in preparing something that was undoubtedly appetizing, judging from the odor that was wafted to his nostrils. Mrs. Brown, as soon as she became aware of his presence, dropped her oyster fork and ran to meet him, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him affectionately. Then drawing him to a chair, she brought his slippers and placed them on his feet.

"Just sit still, Dick," she said cheerily. "You are tired, I know, and our little midnight repast will be ready in a few moments."

By this time Brown was entirely

incapable of doing anything else. With mouth wide open and eyes fairly bulging out of his head from pure amazement, he sat where he had been placed. He tried to speak, but his voice failed him. A few minutes later Mrs. Brown reappeared with a dish of fried oysters, another of chicken salad, a plate of hot biscuits and a pot of delicious coffee. She then invited her husband to join in the lunch. Brown arose and tremblingly walked to the place where his wife indicated. His plate was filled bountifully and he strove to eat, but somehow he could not manage to swallow the food.

"What does it all mean, Mary?" he gasped, dropping his knife and fork and staring hard at his wife. "I expected—"

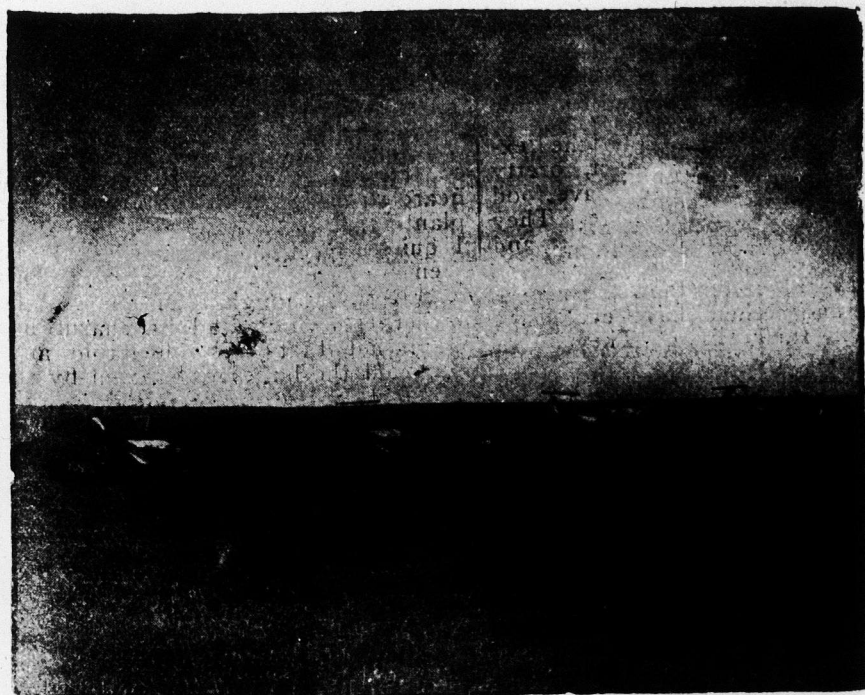
"Yes, I know what you expected, Dick," returned his wife, smiling at her husband's perplexity, "but I have been thinking over things lately and I came to the conclusion that it wasn't right to be so disagreeable when you stay out late. It came to me like a flash that I had all day to have a chat with my old girl friends while you have to be at the office and only have the evenings. You don't go out often and it was real mean of me to be so horrid about it. Just look at this," and Mrs. Brown took a little frame from the mantelpiece containing a card upon which was written: "I am going to try to make home happy for my husband, even if he does stay out late every now and then.—Mary Brown."

"Now, Dick," continued his wife, "just tell me when you are going to stay out late and I will have a nice little lunch ready for you when you come home. That is, if you will eat it. You are just staring at the food and not touching it, and—" reproachfully "I tried so hard to make it appetizing."

Brown didn't say a word for fully fifteen minutes, but he was doing a deal of hard thinking.

"Mary," he said at last, when the oysters and salad had disappeared from view, "it's mighty nice of you to act this way after I came home at two o'clock in the morning. Not only that, but to tell me that you'll do this every time I come in late, is a strong temptation to repeat the offense. I'll make a bargain with you, though. If you'll have something like this once a week, I'll promise not to stay out late again. Is it a go?"

"Of course I will, dear," replied Mrs. Brown, joyfully, and added in an undertone, which Brown did not hear, "The old way didn't work, but the new is a decided success."



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