

JILTED!

HER VERSION.

"Who is Ned? Why I thought that you knew we were once engaged for a year! Oh, but that was before I knew you—That was ages ago, my dear."
 "Over cordial!" Now, hubby, for shame! Such nonsense! Yes, that was his wife—Demure little thing—and so tame—Men do make such blunders in life. Ned was such a good-hearted fellow—
 "Devoted!" of course he was then! Oh, you need not frown and turn yellow. I could have had a dozen men. One thing I will say, however. He's unhappy, that I can see; Poor fellow! he probably never. Quite conquered his passion for me. "Too poor!" yes, but proud as a lord—When you came. Well, you know the rest—Dear, you said you would take me abroad! Yes! of course, I loved you the best!

HIS VERSION.

Ned, who is that overdressed lady? You greeted so warmly to-day? What is it you're keeping so shady? What is she to you anyway?
 "That lady?—the wife of a banker (Thought her toilet remarkably fine). By the way, you ought to thank her. She was once an old flame of mine. I offered my 'congratulation.' Nothing more—to tell you the truth. Our affair—more infatuation. In the days of my callow youth."
 "Was she fond of me?" Well, she said so. "Did I love her?" We spooned for a year. "Why didn't we marry?" Why, you know. I met you, and loved you, my dear. Of course, we all knew that he bought her—Youth and beauty exchanged for pelf! What? "If you weren't a rich man's daughter?" My dear! I loved you for yourself!

THE TRUTH ABOUT IT.

'Twas the old, old story repeated:
 Two young hearts that once beat as one;
 Their twin aspirations defeated:
 Two young lives for ever undone.
 You think so? You're sadly mistaken!
 They each had a—something to sell.
 Each fancied the other forsaken,
 And both, yes they both "Married Well!"

THE COLONEL.

I met the Colonel one fine autumn evening mid-way across St. George's Channel. We were on board the 'Adriatic,' one of the marine hotels which form the White Star Fleet, and were steaming swiftly but quietly towards Queenstown. The multitude of passengers had been shaken down into their respective berths, and had had their places at the dinner-table appointed for them by the purser, a big burly good-natured fellow, who in an earlier development of being had been a Newfoundland dog. Dinner was over, and the men had come on deck, illuminating the still darkness with the ruddy points of fragrant cigars. Many of the ladies had returned to their berths whilst yet all was safe. Others had come on deck muffled up in shawls, for there was a cool breeze on the face of the water. There was no moon, nor any light save that of the stars. It was passing strange, in these first hours of an Atlantic voyage, to feel your way swiftly through the darkness. Here and then lights from passing vessels shone like stars, and with the lamps burning in the saloon there was just sufficient light to grope about the deck without stumbling up against the muffled figures in shawls.

At dinner the engrossing subject of conversation had been 'one of the richest men in the world,' who, we learned with a thrill of satisfaction, was on board this very steamer. It was distinctly and emphatically asserted that he was 'worth a pound a minute.' I don't know who first put forth this assertion, or, indeed, who made the statement in general terms that we had on board with us 'the richest man in the world.' That was the formula before dessert was put on the table. With the soup our fellow-passenger had been 'one of the richest men in the world.' Now he had reached the highest rank, and was inaccessible by any single member of the Rothschild family. He was 'the richest man in the world.'

I think it was in course of dinner that the precise estimate which fixed his income at one pound a minute was reached. It was very difficult to trace the original authority, though, when the investigation had been carried back through a dozen people, the Purser was confidently named. The Purser had mentioned it when allotting seats at the table, evidently dropping the remark with intent to imply that this was the table at which one of the richest men in the world was to sit.

On comparing notes in the smoke-room, it was discovered that various persons, seated at divers tables, had had their complaint of undesirable situation softened by this remark. As it was clear that, how rich soever a man might be, he could sit only at one table at a time, some doubt as to the Purser's bona fides began to circulate. The richest man in the world might after all be a myth, part of the stock-in-trade of the exceptionally well-equipped White Star Line. Perhaps there was one of the richest men in the world for every ship, and passengers just now sailing out of Sandy Hook, and disliking the position assigned to them at the dinner table, might be deluded by this whisper that they would have for companion 'the richest man in the world'—income a pound a minute.

Only think of it! Fifteen pounds richer whilst you are swallowing your soup; ten pounds whilst plates are changed; another fif-

teen pounds whilst you eat the cod fish; a five-pound note whilst you are looking for an oyster in the sauce; and, to sum up, at least ninety pounds richer whilst you have been idling over your dinner, and have even incurred certain responsibilities in the matter of wine.

A feeling of gloom fell upon the smoke-room at this discovery of reckless statement on the part of the Purser. A sentiment of general distrust was generated, and on the whole the place got so uncomfortable that I left it, and went out on deck.

Watching the ghostly figures moving to and fro in the twilight of the upper deck, I noticed one that would have attracted attention wherever met. The stranger was over six feet in height. He was dressed in black clothes, save for an enormous white felt hat which covered his head. I could not then see his face, but as I had many opportunities of looking into it subsequently, I may say here that it was singularly handsome. His eyes were dark brown, looking from beneath arched eyebrows with grave, sad, questioning gaze. His complexion was olive-tinted, nose aquiline, cheeks slightly sunken. Perhaps his face was something of the Spanish cast, and in his deliberate movements, and slow grave courtesy, there was much else to call to mind the Spanish grandee.

After walking up and down two or three times, he sat down by me on the bench, and made some remark on the fineness of the night. There was nothing startling in the observation, but there was something notable in the manner in which it was uttered. The stranger spoke in a decided American accent, doling out his words as if he were literally weighing them, or were in search of a contraband monosyllable which he had reason to believe was somewhere near the tip of his tongue with design to escape. This customary prelude led to a conversation into which the stranger threw the charm of high-bred courtesy, quaint expression, and a quite unusual wealth of original thought. He was evidently a man of birth and culture, but what was most remarkable was the curious and unadulterated poetry of his speech. He illustrated every idea with the imagery of common things. If you could imagine a little child suddenly brought to man's estate, having been to college, read everything, seen everything, and yet preserved the freshness of the child-mind, its wonderful delight in nature, and its unconventional view of all things, you might get some idea of the kind of man the stranger was.

The ice broken, he talked with a frankness and a friendliness that knew no bounds. He was evidently a surpassingly keen observer. Nothing passed within range of those dark, grave eyes that was not instantly detected—seen right through, as Mr. Scrooge saw through Marley's ghost, recognising the brass button at the back of its coat. As we sat at dinner eating and drinking, and calculating the growing income of the richest man in the world, this tall, grave stranger, speaking to no one, and none presuming to speak to him, had been studying the company, as he informed me he always did. His memory was as retentive as his eyes were keen. He told me more than ever I knew about some people sitting at the table where I dined, and with whose peculiarities I had previously thought myself pretty well acquainted.

I never heard a man talk like this one, more particularly when his interlocutor was a stranger whose face could not be seen in this solemn twilight. Yet he frankly discussed people, laying bare all their weaknesses and prejudices as if he were operating upon dead bodies. Moreover, there was an indescribable contrast between his unconventional speech and the evident restraint of his manner. It did not seem natural to him to speak thus slowly, weighing his monosyllables and paying out the polysyllables bit by bit, as if he were by no means sure of them.

Once, when he warmed a little with his subject—he was describing the effect of dolphins gambolling in the phosphorescent sea—I was startled to hear interpolated a horrible oath. There was no particular call for the expletive. It was not needed as an emphasis, but was just dropped in as, during his more slow enunciations, he had used an ordinary adjective. The oath having slipped out, the stranger stopped, and, bowing his head with grave courtesy, said, 'Excuse; kotation,' and then went on describing the sultry night, the still sea, and the rainbow flash of the dolphins, in words as simple as are found in the Old Testament, and with scarcely less graphic force. He had not got far when out came another oath of the lowest and vulgarest kind, used, as in the former case, not with any intention to emphasize; but as if it were an ordinary and acceptable part of speech. Again stopping and bowing his head, the stranger said as before, with drawing delivery of the syllables, 'Excuse; kotation,' and continued in the same level grave voice. As far as I could see in the dim light, there was not the quiver of a smile on his countenance. There certainly was no laughter in his voice. He was thinking of nothing but the scene he had witnessed, and was glad to find some one who had not seen it to whom he might tell how beautiful a thing it was.

Presently the 'kotations' became more numerous, flashing into the conversation as the dolphins' fins had burst above the sultry summer sea, though with quite a different effect. There was a considerable variety of oath, but no variance in the manner of their introduction, or of solemn formal apology which interrupted the narrative. Presently the stranger

rose, and, raising his hat with stately courtesy, bade me good night and went to his berth.

It was now eleven o'clock, and the lamps were put out in the saloon. The passengers had all turned in, thankful to have got thus far on their journey in comfort. The deck was silent and tenantless, save for a solitary figure walking up and down on the port side. When the stranger left, I perceived a red light moving along the deck at the height of about six feet. As it came nearer I became conscious of a large figure looming immediately behind it, and when hailed by a hearty voice, knew that this was the Purser with a cigar in his mouth.

'Well,' said he, 'you're in luck. He has not spoken to a soul since he came on board. Sat at dinner mite as a marling-spike, and then you get him all to yourself, chatting with him by the hour, as if he had known you all his life and had named you in his will.'

'What's all this about?'

'Why, the richest man in the world! A pound a minute, sixty pounds an hour, two hundred and forty pounds a watch on deck, and the same sum per watch below!'

'Was that him?' I asked, feeling quite a new interest in my strange companion.

'That's him, and no other,' said the Purser, 'and a strange fish he is. He neither drinks nor smokes, and, until he came alongside you, didn't seem to talk. You are in luck, I tell you. Have a cigar!'

I certainly was in luck, and this was the beginning of it. I was not the rose, but I had lived near it, and here was the Purser already offering homage in the shape of a cigar—a real cigar, not one of those dried-up things we smoke in England, but a regular green one, fresh from Havannah, good for three-quarters of an hour's steady and sedative enjoyment.

I smoked it all before I went to bed, walking up and down the deck, thinking of my new friend with a pound a minute, and his oath every tenth sentence, for in the closer companionship of our protracted conversation he had gone even to this length. I saw him at breakfast the next morning, sitting bolt upright, eating prodigiously and drinking water. He recognised me with a bend of grave courtesy, which had the most remarkable effect, not only upon the guests, but upon the stewards. Everyone knew now that this taciturn stranger was the richest man in the world. He had not readily been found, because the particular table at which he sat was obscure and in ill favour. The Purser had seated him at the captain's table, as befitted his chronologically swelling affluence. But coming in at the sound of the dinner-gong, and looking round the tables, he had sat himself down there at the lower end, where the swell was greatest and the swells fewest.

But he was known now, and having recognised me, I became an object of embarrassing attentions. The steward whipped off my chop before I had fairly commenced it, protesting that it was cold and that I must have a hot one. The portion of the table before me was covered with relays of the choicest delicacies. The head steward, who had made advances towards the stranger, and had been warned off courteously, but with unmistakable decision, began to look after me. I was 'the man whom the king delighted to honour,' and Mordecai the Jew had not quite such a good time in the reign of King Ahasuerus as I had on the passage between Liverpool and Queenstown.

The dear old Colonel! I came to know him better by-and-by, and understood how these things pained and embarrassed him; how his simple nature, pure and true as gold, revolted from forms and ceremonies, and how he shrunk from the consequences which gossip brought buzzing about his ears. I call him 'the Colonel,' as other people on board called him 'the richest man in the world,' probably because he was neither. He certainly was very rich, and he had during the American War raised a ragged cavalry regiment, which he equipped and trained himself, and with which he did memorable service after an irregular fashion. To himself, and for those who would accept his style from him, he was plain John Bradshaw, a ranchman from Texas, where his flocks and herds covered the prairie for hundreds of miles.

He told me all his history in simple graphic language, that, I am grieved to say, increasingly abounded with strange oaths. He had been over to Europe on a business enterprise, not without national interest in this country. Away in Texas the herds, ever multiplying, had become to him an embarrassment of riches. He did an enormous trade through St. Louis, and the market could not be said to be overstocked. Still, the demand lagged languid behind the supply, with the natural result of keeping down the prices. Communications had reached the Colonel from England on the part of some enterprising capitalists who wished to consider how this surplus cattle might be got over to this country, and whether the Great Eastern steamship could not be turned to account in that direction. The Colonel had at their invitation come over to England to go into the matter. But since his arrival a telegram received from Kansas had caused him to throw the whole thing up and rush back as fast as train and steamboat could take him. He had the telegram with him, carefully wrapped up in his pocket-book. It was worn with folding and refolding, and had, I had reason to know, been wet with tears. It only said:—

'The boy is dead; Kitty ill.'

But that was enough to shake this iron frame, and make this grave, resolute face tremble, and

flush as if it were a maiden's. An infinite tenderness came into the Colonel's voice as he spoke the word 'Kitty.' Kitty was his life, his light, his fullest realisation of what angels in heaven are like. Yet she was, or had been, only a poor schoolmistress, riding fifteen miles a day over the Texan prairie to teach hopeless little half-breeds, and the scarcely less improvable progeny of ranchmen, the scum of population that settled in these outskirts of civilization.

Kitty had dropped into the Colonel's life in the oddest possible way. He had, of course, not always been the richest man in the world, had, on the contrary, been one of the poorest and most ill-kempt of its waifs and strays. He had had a father and mother, doubtless; but beyond this elementary fact, all was dark. He had commenced life very early as herd boy to a ranchman. For companion he had had a lad of his own age and equal raggedness, whose name was Organ. Why Organ, he was no more able to say than was David Copperfield's mother prepared to answer when Miss Betsy Trotwood, hearing the name of her husband's residence, asked, 'Why Rookery?' One lad was Organ and the other Bradshaw, and probably, for any connection this nomenclature might have had with their parentage, it would have been just as well if the one had been Bradshaw and the other Organ. They were very smart youths; though, so far from knowing how to read, they were not even aware of the existence of the alphabet—a fact which in later years dawned upon the Colonel with strange, sad interest.

I don't know at what period they entered service. But the Colonel had not yet reached the mature age of twelve when it occurred to him that he was doing a great deal of work chiefly for the benefit of another man. Why should not he and Organ go into business for themselves, and set up, if not as ranchmen, then as ranchboys? They had carefully hoarded their slender incomes, and had between them sufficient to buy a few cattle. This was not much in Texas, but one advantage of having commenced young was, that they could afford to wait. They waited till their stock increased, and by the time they had begun to grow beards they were already comfortably established. They did their work with their own hands, spending long days in the saddle and caring for their herds as no hireling cares.

It was during one of those long rides that Organ fell sick. This was quite a new experience to the young ranchmen, who had never had an hour's illness during their lives. They did not quite know what it was, only grasping the fact that Organ swayed to and fro when he got up in the morning and sat in his saddle, and that he presently fell off when he stubbornly insisted on going about his business. The Colonel rigged up a tent for his comrade, got a cow-boy to look after him, and appointed him a dog as his body-guard. These arrangements scarcely fulfil the prescriptions that a European doctor might give in a bad case of fever. It was all the Colonel could do, and having done it he set out on the ride on which Organ should have accompanied him. It was strange that Organ should be struck down in this way, and should lie helpless in a tent, when he ought to be on horseback. Probably the Colonel would have sent for a doctor had there been one handy. But the next street was at least five hundred miles away, which of course limited the doctor's custom. So the Colonel made the tent all snug, left his sick comrade in charge of the cow-boy and the dog, and rode off to look after the cattle, believing that Organ would follow him on the next day.

His round took him three or four weeks, and when he came back he found the tent, the dog, and the patient in the place where he left them, only the cow-boy being missing. Externally nothing was changed, but matters inside the tent mystified the Colonel. The appearance of the little room was entirely changed. It had a new and strange neatness. The tin cup which served Organ and himself in common at breakfast, dinner, and tea, was filled with flowers, and the more graceful stems of prairie grass. Also, there was a thing lying on the table that looked like a box, only the Colonel discovered on taking it up that it had no sides. In fact, it was a book, an article which the Colonel beheld for the first time in a pilgrimage already twenty-eight years long.

All this was odd, but it was nothing to the metamorphosis that had come over Organ. The fever had left him, and he was far advanced on the way to convalescence. Prostration of body might in some manner account for his unwonted quietness and comparative repose of manner. But beyond all that might reasonably be expected from this source, he was gentle and subdued to a bewildering degree. After much cogitation and observation, the Colonel came to the conclusion that he was mad, 'and,' he added, with a solemn gravity that gave a touch of the ludicrous to much that he said, 'I was going to tie him up.' You see, at this time all the Colonel's notions were derived from the business that engrossed his attention throughout the day. If a bull or a cow showed signs of a disordered imagination, it was lassoed and tied up till the paroxysms were over. I have not the slightest doubt that the Colonel would have tied up his unfortunate companion, with a dim notion that by-and-by he would come round as the cows did. Probably he had openly made preparations for the friendly act when the explanation was forthcoming.

Organ was mad, truly. He was madly in love. Whilst the Colonel had been away