

at," Mr. Westlake retorted, "but it has the slight drawback of being at first sight quite unintelligible. I defy you to tell which are o's or a's or e's, or again which are m's or u's or w's. There is some slight possibility of making out the i's, because they are dotted—usually at long and irregular distances—but if it were not for that and an occasional easy capital letter, or perhaps an s, you could never tell what he was writing about."

"I could," said Mrs. Westlake; "his letters when he was away were my greatest treasure."

"I'm afraid they didn't come very often, mother dear," said Ronald. "My father is quite right, my writing is vile. It comes, I suppose, of being educated at a public school where nothing so common as handwriting (which affects the comfort and convenience of hundreds of people you come in contact with), was of any consequence. Well, anyhow, I have engaged a typist; she is coming to-morrow."

"Who is she?"

"A Miss Williams; a lady. Now my inner office isn't furnished. That is to say there may be a bare table and chair in it, but they won't do. Can you spare me a little furniture from the house, or shall I buy it in Plymouth?"

"Don't buy anything," his father replied. "We have more here than we know what to do with. Haven't we, mother?"

"Yes. Go round the house, my dear boy and take whatever you want."

"That is just what my mother said to me when I was furnishing my cabin," said Haselfoot, "and I astonished her by taking some of her best things. But she did not grudge them to me."

"And I have often urged Ronald to make his office more comfortable, but he won't," said Mr. Westlake.

"How can I have carpets and luxuries when mill hands are in and out. But perhaps if you make the inner office comfortable I might go and sit there sometimes when I am tired, if the typist will let me. I am awfully afraid of her; I am really."

"You afraid of anyone?" exclaimed his mother. "Oh, don't have her then."

In her own mind she conjured up a vision of a stern-featured, grim, spectacled female, who would make things very unpleasant for her darling boy. But a light dawned on Haselfoot, and the historian regrets to say that he gave a quiet wink behind everyone's back.

"I must have her because I have engaged her," said Ronald. "I must try to behave well, and then perhaps she will be kind to me. I will choose the things this evening, and take them in."

"The servants will, of course, take them for you."

"I would rather do it myself."

"Let me help you," said Haselfoot. "I am a first-rate hand at furnishing. I have chosen no end of things before now for cabins."

AFTER a moment's hesitation Ronald accepted the offer. When work was over the young men went the round of the house.

"Miss Williams?" asked the lieutenant.

"Miss Williams," replied Ronald briefly.

"I'm awfully glad of it. It made me miserable to see that exceptional girl among the hands, and I felt like a fool because I didn't know whether I ought to recognize her or not. I would have done it in a moment only I was afraid that she might not like it. You'll introduce me, won't you?"

"That I cannot do. She is most particular, and declines even my society except purely as a matter of business. But I shall get my mother to call on her, and perhaps she may be induced to visit at our house. Then you may know her."

"I don't know that I had better. That girl could bowl any man over in no time, and I have little besides my pay," said the lieutenant laughing.

"She has certainly bowled me over," thought Ronald.

"We must set to work," said he aloud. "There isn't too much time."

The room had been cleaned by his orders in the afternoon. The young men selected a square of the richest

carpet from the study, two easy chairs from the drawing-room, two chairs for work, a table and various other things, carrying them in at dusk with great satisfaction. The lieutenant was invaluable; he vied with Ronald in thinking of Mary's comforts.

"She must have a bookcase, with new books in it," he said.

"My dear fellow, that is a first-rate suggestion. She certainly shall. I will select the books myself when we have finished."

"And handsome curtains."

"Yes. And pictures."

And he ruthlessly denuded some of the rooms of a few choice gems.

Having started with the firm belief that Ronald was desperately in love with the pretty typist, and would probably marry her in time (for any dishonourable thought in connection with her had never entered his mind), Haselfoot saw nothing incongruous in the proceedings, and entered into them with the heartiest good-will.

THE work table for the machine was of course bare, except for business stationery.

"The only blot in the elegance of the furniture," said the naval officer at length, as he surveyed their work with pride.

"Except that it is the entire reason for the presence of everything else," replied Ronald, laughing.

"Don't you think you might put a few sweet biscuits and chocolate, and so on, in tins in that cabinet? Girls like sweet things," said Haselfoot at the conclusion of the proceedings.

"I will. She might not always be home in good time if there is much work to do. Preserved fruits and things like that always come in."

"And," he thought, "if her meals are scanty or badly cooked, as I very much fear they may at that farm, she can supplement them here."

Another brilliant idea came into his mind, but he kept silence about this. It was eleven o'clock before the young men went away, both very much pleased with the result of their work.

"I don't grudge you anything, my dear boy," said his mother the next morning, "as you very well know, but don't you think that carpet is a little too good for an office. It was very expensive."

"Never mind, mother. I will buy you another for the study out of my hard earnings."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said his father; "office furniture is supplied by the firm; it is a necessary."

Mr. Haselfoot thought that the senior partner of the firm would open his eyes if he saw what was included under the head of "necessaries," but he was not at all likely to see it. He never entered the office.

"It was all my fault, Mrs. Westlake," said the lieutenant. "I recommended the carpet, and put him up to all sorts of extravagances. He must propitiate the typist, you know, so I advised him, when he was about it, to do the thing handsomely."

"Yes," returned Ronald, "you are responsible for a good deal. And when I have to dictate a letter I shall enter in fear and trembling."

"I am sorry she is so disagreeable," said Mrs. Westlake. "Do have some one else."

As soon as they were alone he informed her that Miss Williams was only formidable, not disagreeable, and he should be much obliged if she would call on her.

"She is quite a lady," he said, "and living as she does alone, in an uncomfortable farm-house, she might be glad to see you. And," he added, with some hesitation, "don't you think you might beg her, as a favour, to lunch with us of a day. You know I may want her at any time, and it is a long way for her to go home."

"Of course I will," replied good Mrs. Westlake. "And I daresay she doesn't get very good meals, poor thing! She will make our lunch her dinner, no doubt."

"If you put it on any other ground than a favour to us—which it is—she won't come."

"I will take care of that."

It was with some anxiety that Ron-



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