

THE PRAIRIE WIFE

terested in polo ponies, which, he explained to me, are not a particular breed but just come along by accident—for he'd bred and sold mounts to the Coronado and San Mateo Clubs and the Philadelphia City Cavalry boys. And he loved the game. He was so genuine and sincere and *human*, as we sat there side by side, that I wasn't a bit afraid of him and knew we could be chums and didn't mind his lapses into silence or his extension-sole English shoes and crazy London cravat.

And I was happy, until the school-bell rang—which took the form of Theobald's telephone message to the Ritz reminding me of our dinner engagement. It was an awful dinner, for intuitively I knew what was coming, and quite as intuitively he knew what was coming, and even the waiter knew when it came,—for I flung Theobald's ring right against his stately German chest. There'd be no good in telling you, Matilda Anne, what led up to that most unlady-like action. I don't intend to burn incense in front of myself. It may have looked wrong. But I know you'll take my word when I say