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"Well, anyway, I've kept you long enough. You'll have to clear out and go into business."

"All right," said Winnie, biting her lip. "And wot's goin' to 'appen to you?"

"I ain't thinkin' o' myself. I'm only considerin' of you. Good 'ousekeepers is plentiful, and cheap."

"Very well, if I ain't wanted, I'll go. Millinery would be the best thing, I should think. I've 'ad a lot o' practice making smart hats out of old bits. I could start in a small way on fifty pounds."

Mr. Gudge gasped.

"I'll think it over," he said; and moved to the open window for a little fresh air. "Ulloa," he added, as the gate clicked, "ere comes young Porter! Wonder what 'e wants?"

"Well, don't keep him long," said Winnie. "I'll be back in half an hour." "Fifty pounds!" ejaculated Mr. Gudge mentally, as his daughter retreated to the back premises. "Ow much cheaper it 'ud be if she'd only git married, too!"

And he smiled artfully as he responded to the timid knock on his front door.

"Good-evenin'!" said the visitor, with some hesitation. "You—you don't 'appen to be engaged, I suppose?"

"Engaged?" said Mr. Gudge, starting self-consciously. "Er—oh, why, no o' course not! Come in, Ralph, my boy; pleased to see you."

Mr. Porter had called to solicit a job on a new house that Mr. Gudge was endeavoring to erect with the assistance of a few friends on the local council; and Mr. Gudge, declaring that he could

"Maybe, Ralph, maybe! I've been father and mother to 'er for near twenty years, so you can reckon she's been well brought up," said Mr. Gudge, swelling with paternal pride. "She's a credit to me, and I'm proud of 'er!"

He paused, and closely regarded the other. Ralph, thoughtfully sipping his liquor, remained silent, and Mr. Gudge proceeded:

"She's bin a comfort to me, and I lean on 'er. But I mustn't be selfish, Ralph, and let 'er waster 'er young life on me. I want to see 'er happily married and settled afore the time comes when I shan't be 'ere to look after 'er myself. It makes a father think when he's gettin' into years—I was fifty-three last birthday."

"You don't mean it!"

"Fact!" admitted Mr. Gudge, with a gratified smile.

"Why, you look a good ten years older," said the other.

"Well, I don't feel it, anyway!" snapped Mr. Gudge. "Whether I look ten years younger or ten years older don't signify; the fact remains I'm fifty-two, and 'ave to face the future. Well, I'm a poor man, Ralph, and 'ave to work 'ard for a livin'." But, pore as I am, the chap that marries my gal will 'ave five bob a week to 'elp with the 'ouse-keepin'. 'Tain't every father as values his son-in-law so 'igh. Eh? What do you think?"

"Very generous, I'm sure," said Ralph. "Scarcely ever heard of such a thing!" "Five bob a week!" repeated Mr. Gudge, with slow impressive emphasis. "Think wot that mean— It's on con-



The awakening of China. The teacher at work with Western Methods

always find work for such a thorough workman as Mr. Porter, requested him to be seated. Opening the cupboard, he produced a couple of glasses and a bottle of ale, and proceeded with great care to equally divide the contents of the latter.

"Seen much o' Winnie lately?" he asked casually, handing the other his glass.

"Not for over a month," replied Ralph, with some surprise. "Why?"

"Um! Um!" exclaimed Mr. Gudge, playfully jabbing him in the waistcoat. "That won't go down with me, my boy! Why, your name is on 'er lips every day o' the week."

"Really?" said Ralph, with indifference.

"Fact," said Mr. Gudge. "And I can't say I'm surprised, either. She's a sensible gal, my Winnie is, and knows a good-hearted, fine, strapping young fellow when she sees 'im!"

Ralph un'ent slightly, and Mr. Gudge eagerly followed up the advantage.

"She won't look at none o' them dandified young cubs," he continued, "wot come about my place, 'alf choked in 'igh collars, and talkin' stuff wot they read of in them library books. She knows wot fine feathers and fine words is worth. Give me a chap, she ses, wot 'as straight legs and broad shoulders, and never mind about 'is 'ead!"

"She ses that, does she?" said Ralph.

"Well, she don't exactly say it," hedged Mr. Gudge, "but them's roughly 'er ideas. Sterling worth—that's wot she reckenises and sets store by. Sterling worth! It's on 'er lips every day o' the week."

"I expect she's learnt them ideas from you."

ditions, though, mind you—conditions wot shall be nameless."

He took a couple of turns up and down the room in an irresolute manner, then stopped suddenly in front of his visitor.

"Well, dunno, Ralph," he said. "Arter fifty years' experience (I mean forty years) in the building line, I reckon a plumber whose job'll stand mor'n six months is a man to be trusted. But between ourselves, o' c urse, and the door-post—you understand? Well, I'm 'alf disposed—disposed, mind you—to marry ag'in myself! Does that surprise you?"

"Rather!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Gudge airily. "Why should it?"

"I mean," replied Ralph, more cautiously, "it surprises me you ain't bin snapped up years ago."

"Well, you see, my boy, I'm a bit difficult where wimmin is concerned. A old fish—I mean a fish wot 'as bin hooked afore—don't shap so greedily at the bait, eh? But it gits a bit lonely, Ralph, swimmin' about alone, and the party wot I'm feeling disposed to is lonely as well—a widow. Nice, pleasant woman, good-lookin', and comfortable 'orf; and that last is where them conditions comes in."

"Well, good luck to you, Mr. Gudge," said Ralph, getting up and looking about for his hat. "I reckon the chap who's fortunate enough to marry your daughter will think himself lucky enough, without wantin' the five bob a week with 'er."

"Spoke like a man!" exclaimed Mr. Gudge, eagerly seizing the other's hand, and shaking it warmly. "Spoke like a man! But you'll stay a bit longer, won't

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