

R. B. STYIL.

Styil was in love. There was no mistake about that. Styil himself said so; and when Styil himself said so, you may be sure that the admission contributed no additional air of fact to the matter.

As a *matter* of fact, everybody knew it; and some had even forgotten all about it before Styil himself realized his position. You could see it in his eyes and in his countenance generally; you could see it in his actions and detect it in his conversation. In fact, Styil's whole man bespoke the state of his mind with such unmistakable thoroughness as left no need, nor even room, for other testimony. But had you told Styil a month ago, or even a week ago, that he, Roger Brutus Styil, jr., son of Roger Brutus Styil, sr., and grandson, great-grandson, and so on of a dozen other Roger Brutuses, that he, Styil!—the best-looking fellow in the general freight office of the great Phrogplate & Goblup Railroad—would, within that period, fall head over heels in love, he would no more have believed you—no, nor listened to you—than he would have cut his own throat with his own razor—not a bit. *He* fall in love! Why, it was absurd. He had always said it was absurd. A little anecdote of Styil's earlier life, which all the fellows in the office could repeat over and over again, went to show that when his nurse, on their first becoming acquainted, had kissed him on his brow and declared, solemnly, in the presence of his relatives, her firm belief that he had been born for no other purpose than to fall in love, the anecdote went to show, I say, that young Styil had then and there indignantly uttered the word "absurd." So much for that. And so much for the paltry envy of an acquaintance who achieved a despicable notoriety, through a statement which, to deprive it of none of its boorish vulgarity, insinuated that it were equally absurd to imagine anybody falling in love with Styil.

Styil had a squint in one eye, a mole on his nose, and a very bad temper.

On the other hand, he was invariably attired in the very latest fashion and a silk hat, carried a perfect gem of a cane, with dear only knows how much gold on the top, and smoked—cigars, and none but the best.

This being the case, it follows that Styil had enemies, and these enemies—these petty calumniators—even went so far as to assert that he paid for his button-hole bouquets in hard cash.

Styil consorted much with the young men about town—jolly dogs they were: talked delightfully loud, and haw-hawed a great deal; sometimes gave, and always attended, champagne suppers—quite splendid fellows. I say that Styil consorted much with these lively companions. But his pleasures outside of that were few—very few. Nothing could have induced him to spend his time in a continual round of fuss and bustle as some people did; and never was he happier than when standing round cigar shops and street-corners on a Sunday morning, smoking innumerable cigars, and watching the pretty girls and the people going to church—simple amusement, you would say. But, ah! you did not know Styil.

"Brown," he would say to his very intimate friend, "I want you to spruce up this morning—spruce up, and lively, too. Do I look 'taking,' Brown? You've no idea of the importance of looking well on occasions like this, Brown. Aldermen and publicans happen along—judges and other influential men, too—start and remark to their friends: 'There's a deserving young man; look at his cut! Should like to help him along.' That's it, Brown—'cut.' How's this coat, Brown? Crease in the back, eh? All right! Mark me, Brown! I've often promised to drop that rascally tailor, and now I'll do it."

Brown says *he'll* do it too, and there you have it.

Styil will drop that tailor, and so will Brown. So will all Styil and Brown's friends, and all on account of the street corner parade. That makes the tailor look after his business.

Well, Styil was no sooner in love, than he wanted to get out of it, body and soul; and it is not surprising that, with a vision to the accom-

plishment of that object, he became morose and unsociable, flung his havanas to the dogs, paid his honest debts, and committed sundry other ridiculous and extravagant acts—not at all. And what was the result? You may know, when one day even old Butts (the boys called him Butts)—when old Butts, the caretaker, whose duty it was, the first thing in the morning, to gather from the office floor, and dispose of, all of the previous day's cigars (and a good thing he made of it, too)—when old Butts said that his course of action was entirely wrong; that the affection should be developed, and that, provided he entertained hopes of the betterment of his position, he ought to go to work and bring the thing to a focus—to a focus: old Butts' very words!

Now, whether old Butts knew what he was talking about, is his own secret, and you or I can have only an opinion; but if he didn't, he gave Styil to understand that he did; and having decided that important question in a manner satisfactory to both Styil and himself, he proceeded to repeat and embellish his advice in the following remarkable manner:

"An affair of this kind, young feller," said old Butts, "is manifestly, as you might say, an affair of the pocket. Some parties there is, I'll give in, which thinks some considerations to the heart is of paramount importance; but such view is erroneous, and the parties before-mentioned is fast dyin' off, never to come to life again. Now, persumin' as I do, that your views on this subject is, in a manner, particler identical to mine—and I wouldn't do you no disfavour in the way of doubtin' it—and persumin' likewise that the considerations with reference to the gal's persition is in the main calculated not to go against them views—or, to make it plainer to you, as between one gentleman and another, persumin' you do not know the gal's got money—what then? Why, find out! Find out at once; that's the idea."

Old Butts thereupon questioned Skyil pretty closely on this point, and Skyil made answer that he had unfortunately met the young lady only once, and that he did not know. He further stated, however, that he should make it his particular business to ascertain.

"Just so," said old Butts, triumphantly; "you are on the right track now. Whenever my gal tells me a young snoozer's after her, I tell *her* not to allow the transaction to proceed 'till she finds out all about the money question. I don't take no stock in the propersition that it's just as well to be hard up with a wife as hard up without one. I've been in both situations, and I otter know. Take my word for it, young feller, it's the practical that does it. Them sentimental folks is all right in their way, but their way is narrer. For every blessed word you say to that gal, mark down a dollar. Do that, Styil, and don't be a fool no longer."

It was a fault—a great fault—in old Butts that, however excellent might be his advice regarding certain matters, his manner of affording it tended in exactly the same degree to the offensive; so that, were his remarks ever so instructive, you experienced at their termination nothing but a proportionate amount of the most supreme disgust. He was such a dogmatic old rascal too; and I do not know whether it was this, or the disrespect I have mentioned, which Styil resented the more. At any rate, it is certain that he felt very much like kicking old Butts. But as he was very grateful to him, and as, of course, it would never have done to say so, old Butts can thank his stars to this day for that gratitude of Styil's, and that Styil very magnanimously resolved on the adoption of a spirit of the broadest tolerance toward him: as between Styil, the assistant chief clerk, and old Butts, the caretaker; Styil the gentleman and old Butts the bully.

But the idea of Styil's having placed himself in such a position as called for a stimulant in the way of old Butts' familiar remarks! The idea of his having permitted old Butts to dictate to him on an affair which, to say the least of it, was purely his own! And it is really astonishing that so astute a fellow as Styil had neglected to inform himself precisely as to the financial status of

the young lady. There had been means open to him for that discovery—any amount of them; and Styil was not the man to allow anything to stand between himself and knowledge. It is probable, however, that Styil had had other thoughts. It is probable that, previous to that officious participation of old Butts in the matter, Styil's feelings had been rather of the nature of the very sentiment which old Butts had denounced, than of personal aggrandizement; and this view is the more acceptable, that there was undoubtedly a savour of it in his former actions. But old Butts had seen to that, and Styil did not allow old Butts' precepts to become stagnant. Not he! He acted upon them that very night—a trifle meekly, it is true, but in a magnificent tweedy blaze: the production of his much abused, but really incomparable, tailor. And why not? There was nothing debasing in his endeavour to appear at his best before his adored (Washingtonia was her name)—absolutely nothing. Besides, it was in reality only a little innocent surprise he had arranged for his friends. He looked so well, too, as he strode up to her—(by the very same spot at which they had met before)—his cigar held gracefully between the first and second fingers of his left hand, and his cane well out in his right—inclining at the bottom somewhat to his feet, and forming with the arm the most enchanting right angle it were possible to imagine. They walked along in a very slow, deferring manner—both in their young hearts wishing for the illimitable prolongation of time and space. And what more natural to actions in "love's young dream?" What more natural than the wish that the few fleeting minutes could be lengthened out to hours, days, or even weeks? And how many married persons, looking back on the irrevocable past and dwelling on the present, regret that when *they* were so situated, a step had not been a mile, and a mile a hundred?

They conversed pleasantly for a time, and more pleasantly as the time grew shorter—Styil telling her, in that low, melodious tone he knew to be the proper thing, how his father was a large and influential man and he the only son; how his prospects, bright from the beginning, were every day becoming brighter, and how her advent in his gladsome heart had made them brighter still. In short, Styil managed the business in such a masterly way as speedily brought about the capitulation of the fair enemy. He found himself an engaged man. Then Washingtonia proposed a visit to her home. Styil was delighted, and he said so. He also said that nothing could possibly be productive of greater pleasure to him than an interview with his darling's parents. And an aunt or two and a couple of brothers-in-law would make no difference—not the slightest. He should love and confide in them all. He was gazing into her deep black eyes—supremely lovely eyes they seemed to Styil (but, pshaw! what lover does not think the same?)—and she was saying, with charming innocence:

"You will think none the less of me, Roger, that papa was merely a bank clerk?"

For the life of him Styil could not help pausing before he replied. A bank clerk! That was serious when considered in juxtaposition with his financial expectations. But *was*, i.e., *had been*, a bank clerk—probably a cashier! That was a different matter—an entirely different matter. There was nothing dispiriting in that. Could Washingtonia's father be supposed to have been among that portion of the banking community with which, Styil had heard, somebody or something had been at variance? He had no doubt of it. Think less of her! He should hope not. Intense devotion illumined his features as at last he finally answered:

"A bank clerk! Why, I am only a railroad clerk; and besides, my Washingtonia, were you but the child of an humble cottager, yet should you still have the same charms for me."

Ah! To think of Styil coming out with that! And Washingtonia—she laughingly retorted that since papa, who was very seldom at home, had decided on a very simple summer residence, she was, to all appearance, an humble cottager's daughter.