

at the house, you know. Here comes my friend. I'll introduce him."

Jane said "No," but her gallant insisted, and so a young man of nineteen or twenty, bearing the air of a commercial traveller, was forthwith presented.

"My friend, Mr. John Smith. Mr. John Smith, the young lady whom you've heard me so often speak of."

Jane inverted her broom, struck an attitude like a funeral mate, and then curtsied. John Smith raised his hat, and said he was delighted to make her acquaintance.

"And now," said Jane's young man, addressing his friend, "you may go and make yourself agreeable next door, while I say something private and confidential here."

Without another word, John Smith struck up to Twenty-one, and soon both appeared to be engaged in a very pleasant conversation.

"When do your people go out of town?" asked Jane's beau.

"This very day," she replied, "and the people next door are going also."

"What, where that young woman lives?"

"Yes."

"Then, I suppose you will be able to take a little pleasure together?"

"Oh, yes! I hope so, I am sure."

"Right you are; and I'll take you. You shall see all the sights of London—plays, panoramas, the rope conjurers, the waxwork—whatever you like. But there," pulling out a watch—a gold watch it looked like, and quite dazzled Jane's eyes—"we must be off. I suppose, if I call to-night, you'll be able to let me in?"

"Yes, I expect they'll be gone; but you had better not come till dusk, and then, don't knock at the door. Run your heel along the railings; I shall hear you."

"All right. Good-bye. Come along, John."

And with shakes of the hands they parted.

True to his promise, George White, for such was the name of Jane's admirer, came down at dusk, and struck with the heel of his boot so dexterously upon the iron railing of 22, Snowdon Terrace, N., that the street-door responsively fell back, and he was admitted almost on the instant. Both families having departed, Mary was presently apprised over the wall of the arrival of George, and invited to make a third at a hand of cards. Come, of course, she would. Ah, and a very pleasant evening they spent together. George had travelled through the greater part of England as buyer for a skinner and furrier, and told funny stories, and knew lots of comic songs, and could do sleight-of-hand tricks, and make any card you liked to mention walk out of the pack of itself in the most mysterious manner. So that, what with one thing and the other, it was eleven o'clock before they knew where they were. At the mention of the hour, George started up, and said that he should catch it for being so late out; that late hours were very bad for young men, and that his people would be wondering whatever had become of him. After he had gone, Jane and Mary were both of opinion that he was a very nice young man, indeed, and deserved encouragement. Mary, in the course of conversation, intimated that it would not be at all disagreeable if John Smith were one of the party the next time she should be invited. Two nights afterward all four were assembled at Twenty-two, enjoyed a round of merriment, and when the men had taken their departure, Mary was fain to confess to Jane that John Smith had very favourably impressed her. Two or three days afterwards, at a banquet of cold boiled beef and half-and-half, given by Mary, matrimony was made the theme of conversation, when both young men intimated that single blessedness was "all gammon," and that they hoped to be husbands ere many months had gone over their heads. Before they left, it was proposed by George that they should all go to the play the next night, and see "Lord Dundreary." Jane at once accepted, but Mary for a long time stood out. However, the arguments of the three proved too much for her, and, in the end, she consented also. The next evening came, and with it a Clarence cab and the young gallants. Jane was soon ready, but, to the surprise and annoy-

ance of the others, Mary declared she had altered her mind, and could not think of going, and leaving the house to take care of itself.

"But you promised," said John; "you know, Mary, you promised, and we can't do without you. Why, we shall be like a pig upon three legs. Come, don't be foolish."

"I know I promised, but you made me promise," replied Mary, "and, therefore, it's as much your fault as mine."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" chimed in Jane; "we shall come away as soon as the first piece is over, and be home by—"

"Half after ten to a minute," said George.

"No; do what they could, Mary was not to be moved. She could not be brought to believe that there was no harm in deserting the house which had been left in her charge by a master and mistress who had unbounded faith in her integrity. The line must be drawn somewhere. They had already, she considered, gone far enough.

"Oh, very well," said Jane, "you can do as you like; and a good deal the better you'll be thought of, no doubt. I mean to go to the play and enjoy myself, now I've got the chance; and, perhaps, as you're determined to stay at home, you'll just cast an eye now and then at our house?"

Mary agreed; and so off they went. About three quarters of an hour afterwards John Smith returned.

"Why, whatever has happened?" asked Mary.

"Nothing particular," he replied. "I left the others at the door of the theatre. I couldn't enjoy myself as you hadn't come, and so I made up my mind to return and spend the evening with you."

"Oh, how foolish of you to deny yourself on my account," said Mary. "But there, I take it as very kind; come in."

Having the house to themselves, John proposed that they should adjourn to the drawing-room. Arriving thither, he pulled a couch up to the window, flung himself upon it at full length, lit up a cigar, and made himself quite at home. After telling some very entertaining anecdotes, he said, raising himself on one hand—

"I suppose, Mary dear, you haven't such a thing as a glass of wine you could give a fellow?"

Mary said she had not, but he could have a glass of ale, if he chose. He returned a "No, thank'ee," and continued—

"Now, if you wouldn't mind running out and getting a half-pint of port or sherry, whichever you like best, my dear, it would be very nice. I can't smoke a dry cigar, and ale doesn't agree with me."

He threw down a half-crown

"I'm afraid of going myself, as I'm known about here, and shouldn't like to be seen coming out of a public-house. They might hear of it at the office, and that would do me no good."

Mary readily consented to fetch the wine—not that she cared for any herself.

"Let it be port, then, if you please, and the best," said John, puffing out a cloud of smoke like a sputtering coal.

Mary was soon round the corner, and into the bottle and jug department of the "Fleece." She had not taken more than a dozen steps upon the return journey, when a young man stepped after her on tiptoe, and touched her lightly upon the left shoulder, and as she turned to look round, tripped the other side, and gave her a hearty kiss on the cheek. She started angrily back, and was about to say something very severe, when as suddenly her manner became entirely changed, and all her dimples showed at their fullest and best.

"La, brother Tom! now, who'd have thought of seeing you?"

"Well," replied Tom, giving her a kiss upon the other cheek, "you see, being off duty, and not having heard anything of you for some little time, I thought that I'd slip on my private clothes and come and look you up. You know you told me in your last letter that you expected the family would be going out of town to-day, and so I thought most likely I should be able to come in, and have a good long gossip. What have you been to the public-house for?"

Mary turned very pale. In her pleasure at meeting with her brother, the sweetheart had for a moment been forgotten. Tom's question, however, had brought John Smith back to her memory; and, if the truth much be told, she was not quite so glad to meet her brother as she ought to have been.

"Well, Tom," returned Mary, hesitatingly, "the fact is—You know, Tom, I never was any hand at story telling. The fact is, a young man has lately been paying his addresses to me, and he's come to see me to-night, and I've been to get some wine for him, because he's afraid of being seen in a public-house. He's such a nice fellow, Tom—quite a gentleman. I'm sure you'll like him."

Tom muttered something to the effect that he thought he might as well run upon his own errands; but in a minute turned off into a laugh, and said, jokingly, "I don't see what business a fellow who isn't a policeman has to make love to the pretty servants. It's a privilege of the Force, Polly; and if we do sometimes make free with the victuals, our business is to take good care nobody else does—so, you see, the governor gains in the long run, but let's go and have a look at my brother-in-law that is to be."

"Lor, Tom, how you go on!" said Mary, laughing, however, and blushing a little."

John Smith started up in astonishment, and did not look particularly well pleased when he saw one of the same gender as himself return in company of the object of his affections; but Mary calmed him at once by saying—

"It's all right: it isn't master; it's my brother."

The men shook hands, and wine-glasses having been procured, all three were soon on the best of terms and in the best of humours. Mary told her brother that the maid of all work next door had gone to the theatre with John's friend, but that she (Mary) wouldn't make one of the party, on account of a sense of duty. Thereupon the brother laughed heartily, and said, knowingly, perhaps she liked to stay at home best.

In about an hour Tom arose and intimated that he should go, as he knew, by his own experience, that in all cases of love-making two were company when three were none. Just as the clock struck ten a ring came at the bell, and on Mary going to the door, she was astonished to find her brother had returned, in company with two other men.

"Hush!" said Tom, and instantly hurried upstairs.

"Halloa!" exclaimed John Smith, "why, what's brought you back?"

"You, you scoundrel! I'm a police officer, and you are a thief!"

Without replying one word, the amiable John dashed to the door, leaped clean over the balustrade, and was affectionately received into the arms of detective Crab on the door-mat. Mary was dumb with astonishment and alarm.

"Polly," said Tom, while slipping a pair of handcuffs on the wrists of her admirer, "you've had a narrow escape. Your young man is a convicted thief; that's just about it. He wanted you to go to the play, that his associates might rob this house. I knew him directly I saw him, and guessed what would soon be going on next door, and left here just in time, with the assistance of others, to arrest three gentlemen, who had got all the valuables packed up and ready to carry off. They are now safely lodged in the station-house, and we have a cab waiting, that this Mr. John Smith, *alias* Charley White, *alias* Richard Swills, also known as the Nobbler, may, as soon as possible, be taken there too."

And to the station-house John Smith was taken, and on being searched, it was discovered that he had not been wholly idle during Mary's temporary absence, as several articles of jewellery, &c., the property of Mary's master, were found in his possession. Poor misguided Jane did not return until the next day, and then only to be sent about her business by her employer, who had been telegraphed for by the police. Her story has a sad finish. Within a year of the date of her discharge, she was herself sent to prison for a theft committed in the company of her old admirer, George White, and he at the same