

"I say ten, or nothing!" maintained the housekeeper, firmly.

"Seven!" he breathed, insinuatingly. "Seven is a nice round sum, Miss Smith."

"For anything under a ten-pound note I won't stir a hand in the matter," returned she, decisively, picking up her fruit, and preparing to go.

"Very well, then," said he, meekly; "we will agree to ten."

Miss Smith was certainly a woman prepared for any emergency. She sat promptly down upon the stool she had just vacated, and drawing out a portable ink-bottle and paper from beneath it, began to write a few lines.

"Just sign that, will you?" She handed the paper to her master. "It only states that in the event of my rendering you such a service, you make me a free present of ten pounds over and above all salary I can in any way demand from you. Just sign it, please, dear!"

The unexpected term of endearment, and the speechful, irresistible glance accompanying it, knocked old Wills metaphorically flat. Helplessly, he took the pen and paper held out to him, and inscribed upon the latter, "Henry Wills."

"You are an obliging old darling!" the housekeeper said, emphatically; and, leaning over to pick up a stray currant, she left a tiny kiss upon his hand; but before he had time to take advantage of such weakness, she had gone, flitting away, currants and all, and leaving him to soliloquize.

"I shall have to marry her—I shall, indeed, for, upon my word, she is getting awfully attached to me; and then, too, there will be such a feeling of rest when I know she can't upset my house at any moment by a month's notice. And yet, and yet"—he pondered, starting on another train of thought—"marriage is a lottery and a plunge, and oftentimes a snare. Perfect housekeeper as she is, there are traits about Miss Smith I could wish absent in a wife—that flippancy now and again discernible, and a certain decision too marked for a woman. If there were but any means of binding her to Teston Court without binding myself in hymeneal bonds! But she won't take a yearly engagement, and the idea of that month's notice in her power is agony to me."

Acting on Miss Smith's advice, Mr. Wills forebore to mention the subject of that untoward engagement to Everest until he should have received answers to letters he had written at his housekeeper's suggestion to Mrs. Wills and her daughter, asking them in a friendly way to give up the young man they had so adroitly caught, as he, Mr. Wills, disapproved of their retaining him.

By return of post these two scheming women acknowledged his sovereignty. They both wrote in the meekest, most commendable way, to his surprise, asking pardon for having entangled Everest Beaulere, and releasing him forthwith, wholly and unequivocally.

Gertrude went on to say that she had written a similar letter to her lover, and that, unless he was resolute in adhering to it, her engagement with Beaulere was at an end.

"Did not I tell you so?" asked a silvery voice behind the old man, as he folded up the pleasing letter, with a smile.

"Eh! what?" started he, turning quickly.

Leaning over his chair, and quietly reading over his shoulder, stood Miss Smith, smiling, and cool and composed, as usual.

Miss Smith was one of those rare women who look their best in a morning and in domestic occupation. Though evidently just emerging from the kitchen, her head was as sleek and smooth, her cuffs and collar as dazzling, her dress as spotless as that of any lady fresh from the hands of her maid.

Wills regarded her admiringly.

"I can't stop a minute," said she, briskly, "for I have some pastry in the oven; but I saw the post coming in, so just ran round to know if you had had an answer to your letters to the Willses. Now, is this not splendid?" taking his sister-in-law's writing unceremoniously out of his hands. "Have not I managed it perfectly for you? You see the girl gives him up without a struggle."

"You are a wonderful woman!"

His small, green eyes took a tender expression as he turned to survey her, and he put one of his large, flabby hands caressingly over her small, firm one, resting upon his chair.

But she destroyed all the sentiment of the situation by inquiring, brusquely, "Would it be convenient to you to pay me now, sir? Here is your signed promise, if you would like just to look at it—ten pounds, prompt cash, as soon as you received Gertrude's renunciation."

She drew a paper from her pocket.

Into Wills' face came a look of disgust. Among other valuable papers, there reposed at that moment a crisp bank-note for ten pounds in his breast pocket; but parting from any of his abundant money was never his idea of convenience.

Pressing the hand he held, said he, "Would not you rather talk about that at another time, my dear, or have the money by instalments, perhaps—a few pounds this month, and a few more next—just when you may be requiring it, you know, for a new bonnet, my dear?"

"No time like the present; and I require it now—the ten pounds in a lump, if you please," said the housekeeper.

"She would be almost too self-willed for a perfect wife," Wills thought at that moment.

But she was so decided in mien, tone and word, that he drew forth his pocket-book from

his breast pocket, and, with a sigh, slipped the crisp ten-pound note into her hand.

Five minutes later Beaulere, with a somewhat moody expression, and with hands plunged deep into his pockets, strolled past the open study window.

"Come in, my boy!" invited Wills, raising his still complacent visage. "I am much gratified," he proceeded, clearing his throat as the young man lightly swung himself in over the sill,—

"I am much gratified by communications I have received from my sister-in-law and her daughter, Gertrude. You, perhaps, imagined me unaware of the iniquitous engagement you and the latter had entered into. How—bless my head, boy—how you got trapped"—excitedly—"beats my imagination to discover; but those scheming women are equal to anything. However, let that pass"—recovering his wonted pedantic calmness. "I was aware of your movements, but hesitated to interfere with you until certain influence I was bringing to bear upon the women who had entangled you should have due effect. I hold now letters from Mrs. Wills and her daughter, Gertrude, releasing you from all the promises of constancy and marriage you had made to the latter. Boy, I have got you out of the scrape you had so wildly got yourself into, but it has not been without cost to myself. Ten pounds is ten pounds in these days, and ten pounds has passed from my pocket to obtain your release,"—sighing, and touching regretfully the place where that crisp bank-note had reposed.

"You had better have kept it in your pocket," returned the other, taking the letters held out to him, and sinking into an easy chair. "What made you think I wanted releasing? I don't want releasing; and, what is more, it takes two people to break an engagement, and I swear I will hold Gertrude to hers, if I have to sue her for breach of promise! The foolish girl writes to me in precisely the same tone"—tossing the letters back scornfully—"says that on account of your dislike to our engagement she gives it up. Why, what has your dislike got to do with our engagement, I should like to know! Nothing at all, of course!"

Has not it?" gasped old Wills, whose countenance, gradually reddening and inflating during his cousin's careless sentences, now burned upon him, purple, and puffed with fury. "If you keep your precious engagement you lose me, that is all!"

"There are losses supportable and insupportable," moralized the young man, languidly leaning back in his chair. "The loss you mention would not be of the latter order, I think. Now, the loss of Gertrude would."

"If you don't give her up, you shall never have a penny of mine!" thundered the other, foaming and glaring.

"Never! Oh, that sounds bad! Never mind! I must earn some pennies, then, or live upon my wife's. She will have plenty."

Old Wills sat up erect, and returned to his natural colour.

"Have those lying women been gulling you into the belief that this girl has money?" asked he.

"Not has it, but will have it some day; is entitled to it—about ten thousand pounds, I fancy!"

"Falsehood!" thundered Wills. "I know every turn and twist of those women's affairs as I know my own. There is no one of them entitled to ten thousand pence."

"I did not say pence, I said pounds!" returned Beaulere. "It is all right, cousin. She can certainly claim it from some relation."

"If she has any relation worth half as much I'll eat him. If she can prove the smallest genuine claim to—what absurd sum do you choose—ten thousand pounds, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Give your consent to our engagement," suggested Everest, just to fill up the pause.

"I will, indeed, I swear."

"Don't give way to rash oaths," the young man recommended, lazily, from his easy chair.

"It is so easy to forget at your age, or make mistakes about other people's affairs—so awfully easy. I know Gertrude will have the money; it is all right, really."

"I forget! I make mistakes!" beginning to get excited again. "If your head is half as clear as mine at my age, forsooth, you will be a finer fellow by a lot than you are now. If that woman has ten thousand pounds, or the faintest claim to it, you shall marry her with my fullest, freest consent. I can't say more than that. Bless me, man, I know every inch of their poverty-stricken affairs. I am no weak, credulous, stupid boy to be taken in by their deceitful games. I know they have not a farthing."

Into Beaulere's quiet face stole a smile; into his half-closed eyes came a gleam of part amusement, part triumph, as he said, in his slowest way, "If I may trouble you to touch that bell next you (thanks), I think we can soon settle this little discussion." Then to the servant opening the door, "Ask Miss Smith to be so good as to step this way."

Miss Smith stepped so instantly through the door that she might have been accused of waiting outside for her summons.

She glanced from one to the other of the two men, took a seat without being invited and asked quietly, "Which of you wanted me?"

"We both want you," said Beaulere, promptly, sitting up, and getting almost animated.

"Wills, do you stick to that rash oath? If I can prove to you and Miss Smith's satisfaction

this ten thousand pounds business, you'll give your free, unqualified consent and approval to my engagement to Mrs. Wills' daughter?"

"If you can prove, poor lunatic, that the moon is green cheese—in other words, that any child of that Wills woman has any claim, or right to, or likelihood of getting ten thousand pounds, you shall have my consent and approval, and everything else you want to make the marriage go off gaily," said old Wills with a fine mixture of scorn and wit in his tones.

"Miss Smith, you shall be witness."

"It is very noble of you—uncommonly generous and kind of you, old fellow!" said Everest, tapping him commendingly on the shoulder, as he passed round to Miss Smith. "Gertrude, dear,"—and a softness in the tone in which those words were uttered, even more than that startling name, made old Wills stare round with a gulp,—Gertrude, dear, just tell him all about it."

Miss Smith hesitated, and for the first time Wills saw her turn very crimson. She got up slowly, and went round to the critically-watching old man, and then suddenly she burst out laughing, put both arms round his neck, and hugged him tight, with Everest looking approvingly on.

"Oh, uncle, dear, forgive me!" she said.

An awful light was stealing into Wills' mind, a light he would not have at any price, but fought ferociously against, as he shook off Miss Smith's entwining arms.

"If you have a tongue in your head, and you are no woman if you have not," he said, roughly, "explain yourself without this foolery, madam!"

"How ungrateful!" she said, still keeping one hand on his shoulder. "It is just this, uncle—you will let me call you uncle, won't you, though I am only a niece by marriage as it were—it is just this about the ten thousand pounds. In your own writing, and signed with your own name, I hold a declaration from you"—she brought it from her pocket and waved it before him—"that if any creature belonging to your sister-in-law, Mrs. Wills, ever gets ten pounds from you she shall have ten thousand."

I, as Mrs. Wills' daughter by her first husband, must legally be considered a creature belonging to her, and I have just received from your own hands—as a free gift mind—this ten-pound note."

She also brought that forth and fluttered it before him. "Consequently, I maintain that I am entitled to ten thousand pounds, don't you see? But I don't want to press my claim; I only want to prove it, dear, just to win your promise or consent to my marriage with Everest here."

Coaxingly the soft arms began to steal round his neck again, and he thought it useless to resist. "Everest and I are so fond of each other. Miss Sinclair would never make him half the wife I should, and she has so much money she will have dozens of other lovers, while he is my only one. Everest and you and I will all live happily together here, and I'll keep house for you splendidly. What! are you murmuring, darling! False pretences! No, indeed; I always said my name was Smith, and it is Smith; and if it is such a common name that my identity never struck you, well, I can't be blamed for that. Oh, yes, I own I came to try and make you like me! Well, and I have done it, have not I? Now, what do you say? All those other relations of mine sponging upon you, too? They shall never come near this house, dear, unless you grant me invitations for them as a favour. Of course I shall help them a little; oh, yes; but that can be done at a distance. Now do you give your pardon and consent, don't you? Very well, then, I shall just kiss you till you do. Now are you giving in!—now are you giving in! Now?"

And the end of it was that in self-preservation he gave in, and said to Everest still lazily smiling, "She is too clever a strategist for me. Take your wife, boy, and make the best of her!"

THE END.

HEARTH AND HOME.

Does it, after all, pay to be honest? a disappointed young man writes. No, my son, not if you're honest for pay, it doesn't. Not if you are honest merely because you think it will pay; not if you are honest only because you are afraid to be a rogue; indeed, my dear boy, it does not pay to be honest that way. If you can't be honest because you hate a lie and scorn a mean action, if you can't be honest from principle, be a rascal; that's what you are intended for, and you'll probably succeed at it. But you can't make anyone believe in honesty that is bought and sold like merchandise.

WOMAN'S MARRIAGE.—When a woman marries, she realizes that, in order to reach lofty heights in wife and motherhood, she must sacrifice lesser aims. She must be willing to lay aside the delightful occupations which have made her girlhood pleasant; she must know from the hour when her baby is laid in the little cradle, dressed with loving forethought, to that darker hour when the mature man lies down in his last sleep, that she will give full meaning to the words "constant care," that her mind, once fettered, will be at liberty no more, but is bound by ties stronger than life or death to those who have come to her from out the great unknown.

A SMILE.—Nothing on earth can smile but the face of man. Gems may flash reflected light, but what is a diamond-flash compared with an eye-flash and mirth-flash! Flowers cannot smile. This is a charm which even they cannot claim.

Birds cannot smile; nor can any living thing. It is the prerogative of man. It is the colour which love wears, and cheerfulness and joy—these three. It is the light in the window of the face, by which the heart signifies to father, husband, and friend that it is at home and waiting. A face that cannot smile is like a bud that cannot blossom and dries up on the stalk. Laughter is day, and sobriety is night; and a smile is the twilight that hovers gently between both, and is more bewitching than either.

RESPECT DUE TO WIVES.—Do not jest with your wife upon a subject in which there is danger of wounding her feelings. Remember that she treasures every word you utter. Do not speak of some virtue in another man's wife to remind your own of a fault. Do not reproach your wife with personal defects, for, if she has sensibility, you inflict a wound difficult to heal. Do not treat your wife with inattention in company; it touches her pride, and she will not respect you more or love you better for it. Do not upbraid your wife in the presence of a third person; the sense of your disregard for her feelings will prevent her acknowledging her fault. Do not entertain your wife by praising the beauty and accomplishments of other women. If you would have a pleasant home and a cheerful wife, pass your evenings under your own roof. Do not be stern and silent in your own house and remarkable for sociability elsewhere.

A GOOD WIFE.—A good wife is to a bad man wisdom, strength, and courage; a bad one is confusion, weakness, and despair. No condition is hopeless to a man where the wife possesses firmness, decision, and economy. There is no outward propriety which can counteract indolence, extravagance, and folly at home. No spirit can long endure bad influences. Man is strong, but his heart is not adamant. He needs a tranquil home, and especially if he is an intelligent man, with a whole head, he needs its moral force in the conflict of life. To recover his composure, home must be a place of peace and comfort. There his soul renews its strength, and goes forth with renewed vigour to encourage the labour and troubles of life. But if at home he finds no rest, and there is met with bad temper, jealousy and gloom, or assailed with complaints and censure, hope vanishes, and he sinks into despair.

RISE IN THE WORLD.—You should bear constantly in mind that nine-tenths of us are from the very nature and necessities of the world, born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of our brow. What reason have we then to presume that our children are not to do the same? If they be, as now and then one will be, endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, those powers may have an opportunity of developing themselves; and if they never have that opportunity, the harm is not very great to us or to them. Nor does it hence follow that the descendants of labourers are always to be labourers. The path upward is steep and long, to be sure. Industry, care, skill, excellence, in the present parent, lay the foundation of a rise under more favourable circumstances for the children. The children of these take another rise, and by-and-by the descendants of the present labourer become gentlemen. This is the natural progress. It is by attempting to reach the top at a single leap that so much misery is produced in the world. The education which I speak of consists in bringing children up to labour with steadiness, with care, and with skill; to show them how to do as many useful things as possible; to teach them to do them all in the best manner; to set them an example in industry, sobriety, cleanliness, and neatness; to make all these habitual to them, so that they never shall be liable to fall into the contrary; to let them always see a good living proceeding from labour, and thus to remove from them the temptations to get at the goods of others by violent or fraudulent means.—William Cobbett.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

THERE are at present twenty-five places of theatrical amusement open in New York.

"PATIENCE," Gilbert and Sullivan's latest, is still running at the Standard Theatre, New York.

Mlle. Rhea will begin her American engagement on Nov. 14 at the Park Theatre, Brooklyn.

HENRY IRVING has been requested to deliver the opening address of the season at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, his subject being "The Drama."

His Excellency the Governor-General has consented to become the honorary patron of the Ottawa Choral Society, and has made a handsome donation to its funds.

ONE noticeable effect of the experiment of lighting up the new Savoy Theatre with the electric light is the coolness of the atmosphere.

MR. EDGAR BRUCE has been presented by the Prince of Wales with a scarf-pin, as a memento of the recent performance of the "Colonel" at Abergeldie Castle.

A SERIES of original papers on the course of musical training and general arrangements for students at the various foreign Conservatoires, will shortly appear in *Musical Education*, under the editorship of Sir Julius Benedict.

AN offer has been made by the management of the Globe Theatre to Mr. G. R. Sims and Mr. Ebenezer Prout to write an original English comic opera for that theatre when the run of "Les Cloches de Corneville" has ended.

ORGAN FOR SALE.

From one of the best manufactories of the Dominion. New, and an excellent instrument. Will be sold cheap. Apply at this office.