

"Your clever jug," piped up Mrs. Faith shrilly from out the dark. "How absurd it sounds. I'd like one clever enough to bring forth cream when you had filled it with milk. It is usually the other way, milk when you'd like cream! Oh! I say, Solomon," she walked backwards as she spoke, nearly running down two young men who regarded her with astonishment as they turned towards the doorway where stood 'Solomon' obviously flurried and distraught, "I am not allowed to make puns at home, but, I thought that was rather good about McGillicuddyreeks! It was a delicate allusion to the vague elusive aroma of tobacco smoke that pervaded your den!" Then triumphantly to the chagrined Mary, who had vainly tried to check her eloquence and make her move on, "I think I have had my revenge for 'By-the-way, how is Faith?'. "You know our late host never seemed to know that a girl existed until he met **you**, and those two men who have just gone in are the other wild beasts, and they will chaff his life out." And they did. They plied him with stimulants, patted his back, felt his pulse, and finally laid him out on a sofa, and departing, left him, as he hoped, in peace. A moment later, however, a head reappeared at the door, and a sympathetic voice exclaimed, "I wish you luck, old chap. She is handsome, but rather corpulent and flamboyant for me. All right for a steady goer like you, though."

The "old chap" started to his feet, and was on the point of repudiating the corpulent flamboyant one, but merely changed his mind, and replied instead in a slightly constrained tone, "You express an unsolicited opinion very frankly, but I suppose something must be allowed to friendship. I cannot argue on such a subject but you must remember that these things are entirely a matter of taste." Then smiled complacently, saying to himself, "There, I have completely taken him in," and the Stupid Man really thought he had.

Wednesday came at last, with "shining morning face" and, with further resemblance to Shakespeare's schoolboy "creeping like snail unwillingly" to the appointed goal, which in this case was the hour of five in the afternoon. It arrived at last, and with it punctually, the Stupid Man, from whom all doubt and diffidence seemed to flee away, and cover as with a garment the blushing damsel who gave him greeting. Ringing in her ears were the words, "You know, he never seemed to realize the existence of a girl until he saw you." And that he realized her existence keenly and with satisfaction was plainly felt in the firm lingering handshake and seen in the tender glance that steadily met her own. A crisis had come, but, as usual with crises, passed unnoted at the moment.

The tea table was set, the water bubbled in the urn, and the most bourgeois of cream pitchers stood upon the tray. But none of these things moved him, for the Stupid Man had actually forgotten why he had come, or rather the reason why he had been asked, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, the osten-