

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 1902.

Billy's Mysterious Ranch

Of course it wasn't a real ranch. It was an apartment house within a few doors of Fifth avenue, and Billy had inherited it together with an amount of coin, stocks, bonds and other responsibilities, to add to his comfortable fortune.

Billy had taken up his abode in the apartment because he said it was the best he had ever owned, although he had at various times been the proprietor of a theatre, an island and a ranch. But besides this, Billy said he was tired of the club life and he had lived at his club for some twenty years and had become part of the club family.

It rather piqued them that Billy should leave and they asked him if he was going to set up a personal apartment at his age or if he contemplated matrimony. Billy said he wanted a change at all events and he told them that they must regard his new home as a sort of club annex where they would always be welcome.

There were some who hinted that Billy was going into some deep-laid business scheme and wanted to carry on his transactions over private telegraph and telephone wires. They suggested big deals in Wall Street and other ventures connected with the new fortune that had come to Billy from an uncle who though very rich was still deep in money-making enterprises, many of them theatrical.

Every once in a while you would hear of Billy's uncle opening an American roof garden in a cellar in Vienna or a Berlin underground restaurant on a roof in New York. Whatever it was, it was sure to be bold and startling and to have money in it, for Billy's uncle was a sure winner in business matters. But the idea of quiet, lazy old Billy Balafour inheriting any of his uncle's money and desire to accumulate wealth seemed wildly humorous to his friends.

Up to this time nothing improper had ever been hinted at in regard to Billy's conduct. So quietly had he lived that when he deserted the club and went to live in the new flat with an ornate entrance, liveried boys, palms, tiled halls and stained glass effects, suggesting a Turkish bath, vague rumors spread as to Billy's real intentions.

Billy's place was on the first floor, and one afternoon Tormley, who really missed Billy from 5 o'clock meets in the club window, strolled toward the deserter's new home. He met Billy on his way to the club and clasped him warmly by the hand.

"I'll tell you what," said Billy; "come on back to my house and see how homelike it is."

So they went back and while the oxeye and the palms seemed a little queer to Tormley, he had to admit that, once you were inside, Billy's place was delightful. He had all the family silver and the paintings and a few portraits and some rugs and plenty of books and there was no armor and not too many cushions in the big bay window, which was a capital place to lounge with a before-dinner cigarette.

"Come back and have dinner with me at the club," said Tormley.

Billy made a face.

"Not at the club," he protested. "That's just what I've escaped. You must dine with me."

"But you have no dinner," said Tormley.

"I have a sort of an arrangement," said Billy with an evasive blush.

"Ah, a caterer I suppose?" said Tormley. "Or what?"

"The fact is," said Billy, "a lady."

Tormley whistled.

"A lady—upstairs," went on Billy, "provides me with the most delightful dinners and my friends are always welcome."

Naturally, Tormley wondered, but Billy insisted and finally they went up in the elevator to apartment B. Here Billy presented Tormley to Mme. Le Roux, a most charming French woman. The tiny apartment seemed as though it had been transplanted from Paris, it had such an atmosphere and the welcome was so cordial.

Mme. Le Roux chatted to them in French and in a few moments a French servant had spread a little dinner so typical of her country and so perfect in its preparation that Tormley, who appreciated such things, opened his eyes in astonishment. There was a consommé au celeri, then a sole farcie au four with parsley, tarragon and chives in the favoring that was simply superb. After this they had perdreaux aux champignons with pommes orettes, the partridges being cooked with wine and stuffed with mushrooms.

As for the potatoes they were idealized croquettes tasting of nutmeg. The petits pois a la paysanne were exquisite, and then came a salad of tomatoes stuffed with olives

and anchovy butter. The dessert was a mousse and there was a bottle of good Burgundy and one of champagne.

There are some men who will rave over a woman and some over a horse while others are daft on the subject of rugs and china, but Tormley was a man to whom a good dinner appealed strongly, and when Mme. Le Roux told him that she evolved the repast with the aid of one servant he was paralyzed with admiration.

Mme. Le Roux was delightfully entertaining, but there was, nevertheless, an air of business like solicitude in her manner as to the excellence of her dinner and she seemed to enjoy the rather over-enthusiastic enjoyment of Billy and Tormley. As they smoked their cigars in the big window, exactly like Billy's on the floor below, she sat at the piano and sang a gay little French song and when they left finally, Tormley was in a dream of delight.

Billy walked back with him to the club and while he didn't exactly ask Tormley not to blab about his new pad for getting table board, he made him appreciate the fact that it was something that might not be understood properly at the club. He asked Tormley to come again and when they separated Tormley went to bed to dream of domesticity black eyes and partridges singing chansons.

Tormley found himself rather fishing for invitations whenever Billy came to the club. He pushed highballs on him and tried to corner Billy into taking him round again.

But Billy was good naturedly evasive and it annoyed Tormley immensely. One day as Billy jumped into a cab Scott Hoyt, who was something of a club granny, came into the reading room and joined Tormley.

"I say," he said, "you'd never think that Billy Balafour was a sly dog, now would you?"

"Can't say that I would," said Tormley, rather crossly.

"Well, I always thought him a rather quiet sort of chap, but they're always the ones, don't you think so?"

"Can't say that I do," said Tormley, with a yawn.

"Have you heard of his joint round in Thirty-third street?"

"Can't say that I have," said Tormley.

"Well, he has a Japanese nightingale in a kimono who makes 5 o'clock tea sitting on a cushion on the floor and gives you frizzled bamboo and lychees and things. Then she plays tunes on a little what-do-you-call-it?"

Tormley opened his eyes and looked at Scott Hoyt.

"What beastly rot you are talking," he said.

"No rot at all," said Hoyt. "I went round to Billy's place the other day in the afternoon. You know what a fend I am for tea. I asked Billy for some, and he said he'd give me some tea the like of which I had never tasted."

"Then he yanked me up a lift, and I thought he was taking me to a restaurant, but suddenly he popped me into the most Japanese place and introduced me to Miss Flowering Almond—wish I may die—a little Jap girl that looked as if she had stepped out of a fan."

"She talks broken English in the most lovely way, and a Japanese boy served the tea and sweets. It was the most unique thing. You needn't mention it, you know Billy seemed a bit quiet about any particulars. But isn't he a bird? What?"

Tormley went around next day to call on Billy, but found him out. Then he stopped at a florist's and sent a box of roses to Mme. Le Roux with his card.

If Billy was up to any queer game it might be just as well to let him know that he'd be sure to be found out. Especially as he had chosen to trust such a fellow as Hoyt with his affairs.

Little Bobby Bigelow was the next one to drop a dynamite bomb into Tormley's Scotch and soda one afternoon when he asked in a half whisper if he, Tormley, had had one of Billy's Spanish luncheons? Tormley's lower jaw dropped and he looked at Bobby with a glassy eye.

"Wh-a-a-t?" he gasped.

He had been rather cold to Billy of late. He hadn't heard from him for some time. He had about made up his mind that he couldn't afford to keep any of Billy's disgraceful secrets.

The place was beginning to be talked about on the quiet. At the club they called it "Balafour's ranch."

"Why it's the greatest ever!" said Bobby. "He's got one of his flats rigged out in Spanish-Mexican style with a monkey and all sorts of Spanish swords on the wall."

"But above all the luncheon! Hot

tamales! Chill con carne! Spanish wines and cobwebs on them and the Senorita Mia! Whew! Simpatica! Belleza!" drooled Bobby twanging an imaginary guitar and wagging his head as he hummed a Spanish air.

"Yes—yes!" said Tormley and ordered two more drinks.

It was Van Style who told him a few days later that there was no spaghetti to be had in town like that he had tasted at Billy's Italian dining room in Flat R on the eighth floor of the ranch. There was soup, he said, with Parmesan that beat anything he had ever had and Mme. Palovini could have him any time she wanted. Her voice, he said, was only equalled by her salad dressing with just a clove of garlic rubbed inside the bowl.

It was Scott Hoyt that brought the news of Billy's rathskeller on the top floor with Wurzburger served in steins on wooden tables by a pretty German girl with yellow hair who yodeled and did a dance in sabots. Then the club simply buzzed and inquiries began to come in over the phone from the newspapers and the detective bureau called up the president of the club for a secret confab later on.

There was no use trying to keep the thing quiet any longer and worse still, it threatened to be a club scandal. But Billy happened to be one of the richest and most influential men in the club.

Up to this his conduct had been beyond reproach. There was a hurried conference and at its end the members who had enjoyed Billy's hospitality drove to the ranch in hansoms.

They found him reading a magazine in a big chair near the gas log. He welcomed them warmly. They looked about them curiously, amazed at Billy's nerve and when they had been provided for from his sideboard, Bigelow said with a wink at the others:

"We want to take you out to dinner, old man?"

Billy demured good-naturedly.

"Say a French dinner," said Scott Hoyt. "Or perhaps you'd like some rice and chopsticks?" suggested Tormley.

"I always like sausage and some beer myself?" said Van Style.

"With a yodel or two."

"Give me the spaghetti, with a little garlic on the side," said Hoyt.

"It's me for the olla podrida," said Bobby Bigelow, from his seat at the piano, breaking into a fandango.

Billy sat through it all looking goodnaturedly from one to the other with a gaze that even a child could diagnose as perfect innocence. Just then Billy's telephone bell rang furiously and somebody on one of the morning papers wanted to know if he had anything to say about an article they were going to publish about him with photographs and the story of his life.

Then Billy broke down and explained what really was a very simple matter. When his uncle died he had been deep in the organization of an international vaudeville opera company and had made contracts with some of the best known artists abroad, the singers that, refused to be tempted by American gold, but may be heard singing in Berlin, Vienna, Madrid and Paris.

They were on the ship coming over when Billy fell heir, but everything had been kept quiet, and Billy's lawyer had told him the best thing he could do was to treat them very generously and settle with them in order to avoid litigation. But first of all he was to make them his friends, put them up at the best hotels and make them understand the situation.

Billy never did things by halves, and as he found himself owner of the new and handsomely furnished apartment house that had also been one of his uncle's, fads he invited them to become his guests until satisfactory arrangements were concluded.

Billy was princely in his dealings with them and in a week or two they adored him, for they were really simple and artistic souls uneducated in operatic haughtiness and with names not known outside of their own countries. They delighted to entertain him and the differences in their homes and their dinners resulted from the well known antipathy which foreign singers feel for the foods different from their own.

Billy was wine and dined in state at his club that night after the papers had been informed that he had gone South on his yacht. There was a great deal of secrecy preserved about the matter, for every one of his friends felt that the affair could have been distorted into a dreadful club scandal without much difficulty.

The house is now a distinctively bachelor apartment, with Tormley as a cynical star tenant in Flat B. It is called the Pyramid by those not in the know, but in one club it is always referred to as "Billy Balafour's ranch."—New York Sun.

Sloan Applies for License. London, March 25.—In connection with the refusal of the stewards of the Jockey Club to issue a license to Jockey Otto Madden because of his association with persons of evil repute, the Sporting Times tells this story: "It is a custom at Newmarket Heath for the jockey heading the season's winning list to give a dinner to his brethren. On the last occasion, when Madden headed the list and gave the dinner, the bookmaker, F. T. Kelly, who was recently sentenced to two years' imprisonment for his connection with the Liverpool bank frauds, was present by invitation of a jockey friend of Madden. Kelly also presented Madden with £100, when he won on his (Kelly's) horse."

The Sporting Times says that while Madden's dealings with Kelly were consistent with perfect honesty and fair dealing, his punishment should be a warning to jockeys to beware of the company they keep. The withdrawal of Madden's license will probably not be permanent.

Sloan has applied for a license. If he succeeds in obtaining it he will ride Sir Waldie Griffith's Veles in the Lincoln Handicap. The paper says it is impossible to deny that Sloan violated the Jockey Club rules but never has his honesty been questioned. It argues that Sloan was severely punished and was practically fined £10,000, which he would have earned. The Times adds that Sloan's breach having been an irregularity rather than a crime it would not be sorry to see his license restored, the more so as Sloan, in other respects, has rendered great service to the British turf.

The Long Skirt.

Few women have the least idea how to hold up their skirts, and, as fashion demands long skirts on some occasions, it is most disastrous not only for the skirts, but for the appearance of the wearers. A woman who can manage her skirts gracefully and easily has a decided advantage over her less gainly sister, and the onlooker knows that the ugly backs of the large majority of women are due to the way in which they hold their skirts.

Skirts for dressy wear are worn resting on the ground, both in front, at the sides and with a long train behind, and they promise to be in vogue for some time to come. A few remarks as to how to manage them may not be unwelcome to those who wear them.

Of course a long dress should not be worn in wet weather. Then common sense demands a skirt not longer than a couple of inches from the ground all around, but in dry weather the long skirt is still worn by many women out of doors, and it is in nine instances out of ten held up by grasping the back of the skirt about midway down and drawing it as much as possible toward the side, thereby outlining the figure. How a woman can hold her skirt in this manner after she has seen how other women look when so doing is a mystery. It is ugly and vulgar, and it spoils her walk as well as her entire appearance.

To hold the skirt gracefully it should be grasped in the center of the back as far down as the hand can comfortably reach, and with the hand still exactly in the center the skirt should be raised just sufficiently to raise it from the ground. By this means the sides of the skirt will remain full and not dragged in with it, as we so often see. It will also be found much easier to walk in. A little shake should be given to the skirt after it has been gathered up. This lets the folds or flounces at the bottom fall into their natural positions and so frees the train from any dust that may have adhered to the edges previous to its being gathered up. The train should never be allowed to rest on the ground except indoors.—Edith Scott in American Queen.

Judge Retires.

Washington, April 5.—Judge John L. McAtee, Associate Judge of the Eighth Circuit Court in Oklahoma, has offered his resignation to the president and it has been accepted. Charges have been preferred against Judge McAtee.

Carter is Convalescent.

Leavenworth, Kan., April 5.—The condition of ex-Suptain O. M. Carter who is ill at the Fort Leavenworth Military Prison with typhoid fever, showed a marked improvement today. The physicians now say he will soon recover.

Senator Dies

Special to the Daily Nugget. Des Moines, April 23.—State Senator Clark of Iowa is dead. He was prominent in the crusade which drove open saloons out of the state.

Big Fire

Special to the Daily Nugget. North Tonawanda, N. Y., April 23.—A seventy-five thousand dollar fire at North Tonawanda is believed to be of incendiary origin.

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