

"My husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Multiple, starting up, with an excellent appearance of horror and amazement.

"I thought you said he was out," said Mr. Choke, uneasily.

"But he has returned. It is his knock. Gracious heavens! what shall I do?" cried Mrs. Multiple, rushing frantically to the window and wringing her hands.

"My dear lady, there is no cause for alarm," said Mr. Choke, recovering his presence of mind. "You have only to introduce me as a friend whom you knew before your marriage."

"This is dreadful! Horrible!" cried Mrs. Multiple, in a frantic state, too frightened, apparently, to listen to reason. "He will not be deceived, and has evidently watched me. He saw you from the window yesterday and told me who you were."

"Pray calm yourself, madam. You will betray yourself and me too if you go on in that fashion," said Mr. Choke, getting alarmed at the state of affairs; while the sound of the knocker reverberated a second time through the house.

"There! The man is opening the street door," cried Mrs. Multiple, who had worked herself into a perfect frenzy. "He is coming in. Here! You must hide instantly," she added, suddenly throwing open the door of a small boudoir adjoining, as though by an afterthought.

"I assure you, dear madam, there is no occasion," protested Mr. Choke.

"There is! My—reputation is at stake," cried Mrs. Multiple, vehemently.

"But the servant who opens the door?"

"He will hold his tongue. If my husband does not see you his suspicions will be allayed," said Mrs. Multiple. "I will lock you in and give the key to the butler. You shall be released as soon as you can safely leave."

There was no time for further parley, and Mr. Choke somewhat reluctantly yielded to the lady's urgent entreaties and stepped into the boudoir. The door had no sooner closed upon him than Sam Multiple burst into the room and confronted his wife with a terrible aspect. The scene that ensued had been carefully rehearsed, and was well calculated to deceive the anxious listener. Sam vowed and declared that he had seen a man enter the house, and, in spite of his wife's eager denial, he continued to upbraid her fiercely. His rage and jealousy were so great that he swore he would strangle the intruder; and he certainly succeeded in impressing Mr. Choke with a wholesome dread of meeting him in his present mood. Fortunately, Mrs. Multiple's indignant protestations of innocence seem to disarm him, and he gradually grew calmer, though it was evident that he was still angrily suspicious. With considerable ingenuity his wife at length prevailed upon him to accompany her into an adjoining apartment, and poor Mr. Choke felt unspeakably grateful to her for providing for his escape.

"Well, Loo, how did I do it?" inquired Sam, with a grin, as soon as they were out of ear-shot of their prisoner.

"Very well, indeed, Sam. I believe you would make a good actor, my dear," said his wife, sinking into a chair from sheer exhaustion.

"By Jove! Loo, you were first rate," said Sam, admiringly, mopping his forehead. "I shouldn't care, though, to play the jealous husband every day in the week. It's infernally fatiguing. Thanks, my love. I think I will take a B and S."

"What is to happen next?" inquired Mrs. Multiple, as she handed the grateful draught to her husband.

"I think we can now proceed," said Sam, after imbibing the refreshment he needed. "Hi! Simmonds!" he roared in a voice of thunder, audible all over the premises.

"You will frighten poor Mr. Choke out of his wits, Sam," said Mrs. Multiple, putting her hands to her ears.

"Serve him right," said Sam, spitefully.

"Simmonds! Bring me my revolver!" he shouted with increased vigor.

The butler made his appearance, bearing no weapon, but carrying over his arm a suit of livery. The twinkle in his eye plainly showed that he appreciated the serio-comic drama that was being enacted.

"Now, Simmonds, do you recollect what you have to do?" inquired Sam.

"Yes, sir," answered the butler, promptly; "I'm to say that you've locked the street door and put the key in your pocket."

"Exactly. I'm still raging with jealousy, remember, and wouldn't hesitate to kill any one I found on the premises," said Sam, impressively. "You must look agitated and frightened yourself, you know."

"Bear in mind, Simmonds, that you are risking your place in order to assist him to escape," interposed Mrs. Multiple.

"Yes, and the only plan you can think of is to pass him off for a friend of yours, who has stepped in to have a chat," added Sam.

"Don't overdo the part," said Mrs. Multiple, earnestly.

"No! and you must be realistic; a £5 note wouldn't be too much to ask for the service you are rendering him," said Sam, with a wink.

"I'll make a point of that, sir," returned the butler.

"He surely won't consent to disguise himself in a livery!" said Mrs. Multiple, incredulously, when the butler had departed on his errand.

"He will if Simmonds carries out my instructions," answered Sam, with confidence. "It will be explained to him that otherwise he will have to remain where he is all night, with the risk of detection."

"And you propose to turn him out into the street dressed like a lacquey?" exclaimed Mrs. Multiple.

"Not only so, but I shall take care that his wife sees him," said Sam, complacently.

"His wife! Is he a married man?" cried Mrs. Multiple, in amazement.

"Very much so; and from all accounts Mrs. Choke curls his venerable whiskers for him," answered Sam.