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FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1877.

THE REAL APRIL FOOL.

WHAT CAME OF A PRACTICAL JOKE.

There lived in a village not far from New York City, a gentleman, by name Benjamin Top, who thought there was nothing in life to equal a good joke. He owned a small store and kept all every article of domestic and agricultural use, and was thereby pretty well acquainted with all the townspeople, as they were likewise well acquainted with him. Mr. Top had played so many pranks on the people around him that he would have made enemies but for his constant good humor and his ability to soothe the parties he had irritated almost beyond the point of endurance.

The 1st of April was Mr. Top's special delight, and that was a smart child who could enter his store on that day without being made the victim of some trick; so that from morn to night of the 1st day of April his face was one broad grin, and it happened that all those who sought to catch him had the laugh turned on themselves. A few years ago, as the first of April approached, our merry friend looked around to see who would be a fitting subject for a joke. "I must have a first-rate one this time," said he to himself. "Who shall it be? Let me think; ah! I have it—Dr. Scroggins; yes, it shall be he. What shall I send—a love letter? No, he looks too woe-begone for that."

After considering a while Top drew the pen and ink near him and wrote as follows:

"Dr. Scroggins—Dear Sir: Please call as early as possible at Messrs. S. & B.—No. 1, Wall street, New York, where you will hear something to your advantage."

Then, folding and directing the letter, he snapped his fingers with childish delight.

"I'll send him to New York on a fool's errand," said he, "and have a good laugh at his expense."

Dr. Scroggins, the subject of this heartless joke, was a bachelor about forty years of age; he had been living in the village only six months, and had thus far gotten a very small practice; not that he lacked ability, but he was awkward in his person, and in his manner not very prepossessing, and being shy and reserved in his disposition, was but little fitted to push his way into society. He seemed to be very poor, for he rented a small office, supplied himself with the simplest fare, and his lounge acted as his bed at night.

The first day of April rose bright and clear; Dr. Scroggins, who was an early riser, prepared his simple breakfast and after partaking of it and arranging his office, took his seat to await expected calls for consultation, or to request his attendance on some suffering invalid. But no such calls were made, and the doctor sighed heavily under the pressure of disappointment.

"What can hinder my progress?" I understand my profession," he said; "in not a single instance have I failed to give relief when called to the bed of suffering. Ah, me! if I had only myself to care for, I would be content to live on bread and water till I could gain the confidence of the people. But you my poor sister, who have already drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow, must have more added to it. And what can I do? Nothing?"

The doctor pulled a letter out of his pocket and read:

"I would not trouble you, my dear, kind brother," wrote his sister, "knowing as I do how poor your prospects are, and how patiently you are trying to wait for practice, did not want press on me and my child. If you can spare me a little—ever so little—it will come as a blessing, for my extremity is very great."

Just at this time the letter-carrier stopped and handed the doctor a letter; he opened and looked at it in perfect amazement, then read it over the second time.

"Something to my advantage! What can it be?" said he. "Dear sister, should there be anything good in store for me, how freely will I share it with you and your darling Emma! Surely the good God has heard and answered my prayer."

The doctor, who had little preparation to make, started for the city, and Top, who was on the lookout for him, could scarcely hide his exultation at sending off an inoffensive man who could safely support himself on a needless errand of expense and trouble.

The doctor, as he wound his way to the city, was so fully possessed with the idea that some old relative (for he had several) had died and left him a fortune, that he had, in imagination, made various dispositions of it before he arrived at the end of his journey.

"Can I see one of the gentlemen belonging to the firm?" asked the doctor, entering the store of S. & B.

"There is Mr. S." said the individual addressed, referring him to a middle-aged but benevolent looking man.

The doctor bowed to Mr. S., and said: "My name is Dr. Scroggins."

Mr. S. bowed in return, and said: "Will you walk in and take a chair, sir?"

Both gentlemen sat down. About Mr. S. there was an air of expectancy which the doctor did not fail to notice.

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