



THE VICTIM OF HIS CLOTHES. FREDERICK R. BURTON.

At all seasons the streets of New Haven are full of pretty girls. They are merry girls, too, who like to laugh when there is any thing funny in sight.

Dr. Sanford Drano, the genuine, was the first to break the silence which had fallen upon the party.

"I beg your pardon," said he to Rev. Mr. Knowles, "but I really do not see why we have all invaded your house. Has this unhappy young man," pointing to Lawrence, "had any dealings with you during his recent wanderings? I should tell you that I am his uncle, and that I have come to take him home with me, where I trust that rest and medical treatment will restore him to the full command of his faculties."

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"There was a painful ambiguity about her words which perplexed Drano to such an extent that a servant had ushered them handily into the good pastor's study before he recovered his self-possession.

"You remember me, don't you?" said the girl, before Drano could open his mouth. "I'm Nellie Blake, or I was before you married me to Mr. Drano, last Tuesday."

"She snipped in a most distressing way and looked up at Drano. He felt his hair sitting at the roots, for he saw now that beauty was the only explanation of the girl's conduct.

"I ought to explain," he began. "But the minister stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"No explanation is required, Mr. Drano," said he. "I remember you perfectly, and I do trust that nothing has happened in this short space to mar the happiness which I sincerely wished you when I made you one."

"But my dear sir," cried Drano, in horror. "Nellie interrupted him with a giggle.

"My dear sir, you are wholly mistaken in this matter. I am not the man who married this young woman, and I have never had the pleasure of seeing either her or yourself before today."

"Do you mean to say that she doesn't know her own husband?" asked the reverend gentleman, with great surprise. "This is preposterous."

"She knows perfectly well that I am not her husband," said Drano. "For some purpose of her own, she has forced me here, and has claimed me before you, and you have pretended to recognize me. But for the honesty that I read in your face, sir, I should be tempted to say that this was all a great conspiracy to entrap me."

"Young man," said Rev. Mr. Knowles, with deep severity, "I never forget a face. I know you by your necktie!"

It was the one article of conspicuous apparel which he had retained since the first exchange of the tramp in the Turkish bath. He cursed it in his soul.

"But look at me more closely; look into my face!" he exclaimed.

Rev. Mr. Knowles pulled a pair of spectacles down from his forehead and approached Drano with a grim determination to make sure of him with all eyes. Drano lifted up his head and looked straight at the glittering gold tips of the glasses. He felt certain that he should not fail of an acquittal if once he was properly inspected.

But Rev. Mr. Knowles made an error which is alarmingly common in cases where personal identity is at issue. He fixed his gaze rigidly on the one thing which had previously misled him—the eyes—and to all intents and purposes his scrutiny went no further. And oh, how he did identify that necktie! How doubtful certain, how immovably, unalterably positive he was, when he raised his eyes from it and pushed up his glasses again, that that was the veritable necktie with which he had for ever united the fate of Miss Nellie Blake. Then he glanced at Drano's face with his unassisted eyes, saw simply a physiognomy with the customary number of features on it, and was convinced.

"I was not mistaken," said he, "and I am at a loss to understand your conduct."

It takes a really good man to be fixed in error; but doubt is the eternal portion of the unregenerate. The Rev. Mr. Knowles was more certain that he had married Drano, than Drano was that he hadn't.

"Why," continued Mr. Knowles, "if it was your intention to cast this woman off did you bring her here where your inquiry was almost certain to transpire?"

"I didn't bring her here," said Drano, indignantly, "she brought me."

"So I supposed, so I supposed, young man," and the Rev. Mr. Knowles frowned in great disapprobation, "but now that you are here let me exhort you to do your whole duty. What reason have you for denying your wife? I do not know. Have you any thing to say against her character?"

shifted his spectacles from his forehead to the end of his nose, and he seemed more leniently over them than under their influence.

"I am an old man," said he, "and you must pardon my interference in the affairs of the young. I am not yet clear as to what has brought you to this second time; but let us say it is Providence—and he glanced reverently upward, for one direction in which the good man's sight had never failed him.

"I entreat you, my son, be a man," he continued, "and leave this strange and evil course for the better way."

Drano was torn by many conflicting emotions. The old clergyman's manner was so kind that Drano could have kissed his venerable hand, and his error was so amazing that Drano longed to break his venerable neck.

"My dear sir," he was going to say "my dear sir," but Mr. Knowles let him get no further than the adjective. He spread his hands over the pair, in the familiar attitude, and Nellie, taking the hint, fell upon Drano's neck. His utter inability to struggle against circumstances led him absolutely to tears, and the Rev. Mr. Knowles, taking out a large handkerchief, cried softly in unison.

"They were all so much occupied that they did not hear the door-bell, nor had their attitudes changed by a hair's breadth when the door opened and Mrs. Bessie Harland, of Buffalo, N. Y., walked in. Drano saw her out of the corners of his eyes, and he tried hastily to shake Nellie's arms from around his neck, but they were clasped hard and fast, and nothing could loosen them. Bessie gave a little sigh which was almost a sob, and sank upon the sofa. There were frigate prospects of a genuine faint now, and Drano's agony was proportionately increased.

At the sound of her late mistress's sob, Nellie turned her head, and when she saw who had entered her dismay was so plainly written on her face that even the faint-sighted old pastor saw it. He misinterpreted it, of course, and cast a look of disapproval upon Bessie.

"Young woman," said he, "are you the unhappy cause of difference between these two?"

But Bessie paid little attention to his question. She rose unsteadily from the sofa, threw up her head with a pitiful little attempt at dignity and said:

"Mr. Drano, I came to this city because I believed that you were ill and in trouble, and I hoped to help you as you once helped me. A young man, whom I believe to be a representative of the press, directed me to this house. That explains my presence; but, of course, I can stay no longer. I must say good bye."

"There, sir, didn't I tell you your name was Drano?" exclaimed Rev. Mr. Knowles, who had been fairly bursting with a desire to say it since Bessie's first word had been uttered.

"Bessie—Mrs. Harland!" cried Drano, choking with love, rage and other emotions which afflict the young. "I assure you that this is all a kid's conceit. I have never seen this woman before to-day, and I don't care to see her again till the day of judgment, on which occasion may she escape her doctery! She was hanging round my neck for some insane purpose of her own, and this gentleman—and Drano softened his voice and bowed to Mr. Knowles—"permitted that he be married."

"Married!" cried Bessie, and she sank back again upon the sofa.

"But he didn't, you know," cried Drano, hastening toward her. "He's misapprehended or something, and she really married my necktie—oh, give my word, I don't know what I'm saying, but I—Bessie, I love you, I do, I know, and every beat of my heart has been faithful to you since my eyes first rested on your face. May—"

"Suff!" cried Rev. Mr. Knowles, in a voice of thunder. "This is more than I can permit. Will you make love to another woman before your wife's eyes, you young villain?"

Just one ray of joy shone against the dark background of Mr. Drano's prospect in this dispatch—the tramp, improperly confined as insane at his instance, had been released. Thinking of that as of one sin which had been forgiven, Lawrence bowed his head and accompanied the policemen out of doors. An officer was at either elbow and Jimmie pranced along behind. As Mr. Drano was very quiet no special attention was attracted until they came to the door of the Beaver House. There a man was slowly descending the steps, looking vastly worried and out of sorts. It was the tramp. He had Mr. Drano's clothes on, and he appeared to be in bad luck. When he saw the officers and their conveyance sailing down the street he stopped suddenly and looked hard at the prisoner with a wildly angered expression on his face. It was but a moment that the tramp stood thus, but in that moment his reasoning faculties went through a tremendous operation. This was about the substance of it:

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name, and how the unmentionable food did you get into a tramp's life?"

"My name," responded the other, "is plain Johnson, baptised Richard J. I was at one time a country schoolmaster, which may account for my lapses into fairly correct English when I talk. Schoolmastering, I found, did not pay for a man who had acquired champagne tastes on a low income, and so I determined to travel. Experience of an unusually severe nature undermined my convictions respecting means of fun, and I therefore descended to theft. It is only fair to explain that this descent in morality came from the fact that even after I gave up school-teaching I went into politics."

"I was an alderman," continued the tramp, "and I voted various franchises to railroad corporations and escaped indictment I never knew how. Then, having my hands in the public treasury, otherwise the people's pockets, for two or three years, I lost all sense of decorum and honesty."

"You are to be pitied, not condemned," said Mr. Drano.

"No," continued the tramp, "I am not altogether bad. That, with your kindness, you seem to see; but the fact is that if I had always worn as good clothes as these of yours, I would not have been tempted to commit the crimes that have brought trouble upon you."

"That is a doubtful truth," answered Mr. Drano, dubiously recalling his peculiar adventures; "but it was very wrong of you to take away not only my garments but my name and credit as well."

"Ah, sir," replied Mr. Johnson, smiling. "It is an old saw that 'necessity knows no law.' But let us not waste time in argument. I came here to seek my wife, and when I have found her you shall be fully repaid in money for the misery which I have caused you."

"They had been walking along indefinitely, and here Mr. Drano stopped. "Johnson," he said, "you are in a bad fix. Your wife is not only poor financially, but so badly off that she wants to chain me for a husband."

Johnson opened his mouth wide with amazement, and as he knew it was not what he had expected, he said nothing to Mr. Drano.

"What ever claim she had to riches she attracted from another person, as you took my clothes. I have seen her this morning. She claims to be Mrs. Drano, and—"

"You infernal scoundrel!" exclaimed Johnson, and he seized Mr. Drano by the collar. "Rich or poor, she is my wife, and if you have gone and got her away from me I'll break your back and put you in the asylum again to boot."

Mr. Drano shook off his antagonist easily.

"Don't you call me names," he cried, "or I'll have you arrested for theft!" Johnson could do nothing.

"Where's my wife?" he asked presently.

"Come with me," said Mr. Drano, "and I'll show you," and he forthwith led the way to the parson's house. Just as they arrived at the door two men hurried up who greeted Lawrence effusively. They were relatives of his from Kansas City, arrived by a way train from New York, Johnson having caught an express at the same hour. The relatives looked at Lawrence sharply and seemed to wonder whether he was all right or not, but he refrained from explaining himself until they had come again into the parson's study.

tried to attract his attention; to call him to her side, and ask him whether it was true that his unfortunate kinsman was unbalanced.

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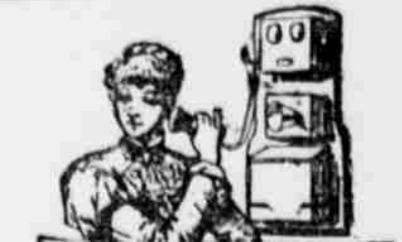
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"You see, sir, it isn't really much of any thing, it is said, 'and perhaps we ought not to have bothered you about it; but the truth is I've lost the certificate you gave me. I'm just as stupid as I can be, but I can't help it."

"Oh! it is all—"

"But it isn't all. It isn't half of it," Drano exclaimed. "The truth is—"



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