

# THE LOCK OF YELLOW HAIR.

By W. HERT FOSTER.

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**C**ERTAINLY there was nothing about Abram Smollett to suggest the gay Lothario. He was the most commonplace, not to say plodding, looking of mortals, a respected member of the board of trade and a thorough business man. I don't suppose any woman excepting Smollett's wife ever looked twice at him, and yet Mrs. Smollett was inordinately jealous.

Smollett's marriage, rather late in life, was a quite unexpected one. He was 42 if he was a day when the papers announced the surprising event. The sky rained for the first time in 100 years, and the very day of the ceremony he should have "pinched" Johnson and Joe and Ed Latelle in C. R. and Q. clearing enough to pay the expenses of his wedding journey.

Only there wasn't any journey. No, sir. They settled down in Smollett's up town house like an old married pair. It was Smollett's closest friend, so I knew something about the match. It was purely a marriage of love if ever there was one, and the bride, who was one of the daintiest, prettiest little creatures you ever saw—she was 20 years Smollett's junior—began at once to enjoy herself by being wildly jealous of her homely husband.

If the bridegroom had been jealous of the bride, there might have been some apparent sense in it. But poor old Smollett! Why, he was as homely as a hedge fence.

Lydia, however, never seemed to see this incongruity. She had loved Smollett ever since her school days, when he used to carry her wonderful French dolls and snuggle pounds and pounds of candy into the boarding school to her, and now she thought that of course every other woman the poor fellow had ever spoken with must have loved him too.

A long while ago Smollett had a partner, who died and left his daughter, a child of 10, to Smollett's care. This daughter was Lydia, and it was long before her guardian had even dared think of marrying her. It is one of the mysteries of the decade how she ever managed to show the perverse fellow that she cared for him.

Well, they got along delightfully for two years, excepting when Lydia got it into her foolish little head that Abram was spending more time in his office than he ought and became fruitfully jealous of the typewriter, whom she pictured in her mind as a strenuous unimpaired power over the other sex.

When she made an unexpected descent upon the office, however, she found a long legged, redheaded boy battering the keys of the machine, and the only woman on the premises was the scrubwoman, of whom even Lydia could not be jealous.

Smollett is as methodical in his habits as a well regulated town clock. On a certain day every spring he leaves off hannels, and on a certain day in the fall he puts on overboots. Once in every two years he has his watch cleaned at the jeweler's. The time for renovating his chronometer came around lately, and Smollett left it with a jeweler in the shopping district.

Stocks were rather slinky about that time, and he had to be at his desk early and late to watch matters. He could not find time to go around after his timepiece, and its absence was always bothering him, for he had to depend upon church clocks, a French mantel clock that was never known to be right half a day at a time or his wife's chateleine and was always missing cars and being late at appointments.

So dear Lydia, with the best of intentions, found the jeweler's ticket and went herself after the watch, saying nothing to Smollett about it. When she presented the ticket to the jeweler, he looked at it and then at her.

"This is a gentleman's watch, miss. Lydia blushed prettily. "Oh, yes; it's my husband's," she said.

He brought it from the safe and said, "I think it's all right, ma'am." He snapped the case and opened the back of the watch to look at the works. As he did so a tiny lock of hair slipped out upon the slowcase.

The jeweler glanced at it and then at Lydia. Her hair is a golden brown. The lock which had dropped out of the watch was yellow.

The jeweler was a wise man; he was married himself. He glanced slyly at Lydia. Her eyes were flashing, and a red spot burned in either cheek. She had seen the lock of hair, but he, out of the goodness of his heart, tried to shield the victim. He closed the watch and started to put the lock back in a box.

"You have forgotten something," said Lydia in a hard voice.

"I beg pardon."

"You have forgotten something," she repeated, pointing to the yellow lock, which he had sought to hide with his coat sleeve.

"Oh, that?" said this blessed Ananias. "I guess you're wrong, ma'am. That's a bit of hair a customer of mine wanted me to put in a lock for him."

"I saw it drop," said Lydia, with a calmness thatquetted the jeweler's glib tongue. "Put it back in the watch."

He obeyed. She paid the bill and swept regally from the store. That is why Smollett, going home that night after a particularly vexing day and longing to forget business for a few hours in the society of his charming little wife, found in her place an ice-berg.

She did not meet him in the hall as usual. The maid opened the door. When he went up to her room, she had locked herself in and would not answer. At dinner she came down late and brought into the room with her an atmosphere that positively gave Smollett a chill, turned the butler's nose blue and cooled the coffee in the urn.

Smollett was puzzled, but made no comment. With women, as in business, Smollett was a waiting game. He always went on the theory that if he waited long enough the other fellow would show his hand. So after dinner he retired to the library with his paper.

His theory was again proved correct. The maid soon appeared, but a glance at her

looked all you know it all," growled Smollett. "That lock of hair was—"

"Yes," said Lydia, with interest. "Was Lydia's. Her hair has grown a good bit darker than it was when she was a child of 6. Her father gave me that lock, and I've carried it—well, a good many years. Now are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said the lawyer slowly. "But was Lydia?"

And then he barely escaped with his life to tell the rest of us of Smollett's detection in the character of "a gay Lothario."

**Best Way to "Break" a Boy.**

I had overheard a conversation between Karl and his mother. She had worked for him to do which interfered with some of his plans of enjoyment, and though Karl obeyed her, it was not without a great deal of grumbling. He had much to say about never being allowed to do as he pleased, that it would be time enough for him to settle down to work when he was older. While the sense of injury was strong upon him I came out on the piazza beside him and said:

"Karl, why do you try to break that old dog?"

The boy looked up in surprise. "Why, I want him to be good for something."

"But he likes his own way," I objected. "Why shouldn't he have it?"

By this time Karl was staring at me in perplexity. "I'd like to know the good of a horse that always has his own way?" he said, as if rather indignant at my lack of sense.

"And, as for working?" I went on. "I should think there was time enough for that when he gets to be an old horse."

"Why, don't you see, if he doesn't learn when he's a colt?" Karl began. Then he stopped, blushed and looked at me rather appealingly. I heard no more complaints from him that day—Church Record.

**The Fan Saves Talking in Japan.**

There are many curious uses for fans in Japan. The art of wrestling and fencing matches uses a heavy, fan-shaped like a huge butterfly, the handle being the body and rendered imposing by heavy cords of silk. The various motions of the fan constitute a language which the wrestlers fully understand and appreciate. Formerly in time of war the Japanese commander used a large fan, having a frame of iron covered with thick paper. In case of danger it could be shut, and a blow from its iron bones was no light affair. One notable variety of fan is made of waterproof paper, which can be dipped in water and creates great coolness by evaporation without wetting the clothes.

The flat fan made of rough paper is often used as a rain window, to blow the charcoal fire, and as a dustpan. The Japanese gentleman of the old school who never wears a hat uses his fan to shield his eyes from the sun. His head, bare from childhood, hardly needs shade, and when it does he spreads an umbrella, and with his fan he directs his servants and saves talking.

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What a Woman's Society Has Accomplished in a New York Town.

In a town in central New York the Ladies' Village Improvement society has purchased opera chairs for the village theater and a street sprinkler. Five of the women have been designated "firemen's relief," and they make coffee and provide refreshments for the firemen at fires. The society has exercised its influence against the prevalent habit of the male population of expectorating tobacco juice on the sidewalk and has had a gratifying measure of success. It also brought about the enactment of a village ordinance which provides for the arrest of tramps if found within the limits of the village, and notices to this effect are posted along the highways near the town and on the trees in town.

The society fosters town pride and public spirit, and through its untiring efforts the village stands out as a model to be followed. Since its organization the society has completely changed the aspect of the town, and where neglect and carelessness were formerly the rule neatness and tidiness now prevail. Fences and sidewalks are kept in repair, lawns laid out, the streets cleared of rubbish, and flowers and shrubbery have taken the place of weeds. The women's influence has extended to the neighboring farmers, who, patterning after what they have seen in the village, have their lawns and make their cottages and fences neat. The society, it should be added, religiously abstains from politics.

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