

## A Result of Interference With A Natural Law

By JOHN Y. LARNED

Having received word that my grandfather, the late Professor Donnenshaumer, had died in Germany and had made me his heir, I went to his home in Heidelberg, where he had always lived, to settle his estate. In overhauling his effects I came upon the following curious manuscript, written and signed by the deceased:

I see this morning by advices from America that an eminent scientific investigator claims to have discovered a serum for destroying the destructive element that produces decay, or, in other words, old age. I have concluded to place my grandson, to whom I bequeath my effects, in possession of facts to show that the discovery which this American now claims as original was made by me some years ago. I shall not give the process by which I preserved youth. The reason for my not doing so will appear from the experience I am about to narrate. I shall simply give the only case which I accomplished.

After having succeeded with the lower animals I naturally sought an opportunity to apply my process to mankind. I happened about that time to fall in with a lady who was desirous of marrying a man much younger than herself. She was Fraulein Bishoff, forty years old, and the man was Adolf Beutner, aged twenty. They were cousins and heirs to adjoining estates, which would be much enhanced in value if they could be united. Besides this fact, Fraulein Bishoff seemed to love the young man.

I told her that I had discovered a serum by which I could keep her young while Beutner was growing old. It would be a long process, for it would require twenty years for him to arrive at the same age as herself. Beutner, realizing that a match with his elderly cousin would be to his interest, would have gladly married her if she had been of a suitable age for him. The fraulein asked me to propose my plan to him, which I did, and he agreed to marry her, trusting to me to keep her young till he had caught up with her.

The marriage was delayed at my suggestion till I felt assured that my serum was producing on the lady the effect I expected, but as soon as I had evidence of this the wedding took place. The groom immediately after the ceremony set out to spend a good deal of time in travel, being desirous of getting rid of the interval which separated him from his wife without seeing her. He was gone five years,

but when he returned was still too young to make a companion of a woman so much older than himself. He went away again for another five years, when he returned with the same result.

Meanwhile the lady, in the matter of age, stood stock still. I had no fear that I might not keep her from growing older, but there was one trouble in the way that I had not thought of in the beginning. A man of forty is not likely to be satisfied with a woman of forty. He prefers a young girl.

The matter between Herr Beutner and his wife went on very much in the same way till he was thirty-nine years old; then he wrote her from South Africa that he had become interested in diamond mining there and was growing rich. He in time wrote that he was tired of a nomadic life and on the day he was forty would return to her and settle down.

Feeling responsible for the relative conditions existing between these two persons, I viewed the approach of their real nuptials with solicitude, fearing something might occur to mar the result. The lady who had waited twenty years for a husband was also getting a trifle anxious. I did what I could to encourage her, but she seemed to have a presentiment that what she had been hoping for would not be realized.

Three months before the time set for the return of her husband she had got herself into such a state of worry that I found my serum was not acting properly. I told her that if she did not throw off her despondency we should have a bad failure. This had a counter effect from what I had expected. It frightened her, and she lost control of herself. The result was a hysterical condition, which rendered my hypodermic injection absolutely ineffective.

Within a week from a woman of forty she had become one of sixty, and, not being used to the presence of the youth-destroying animalculae in her system, she had deteriorated far more than she would have done under ordinary circumstances. Indeed, she was shriveled far beyond her years.

Then came the most distressing feature in the affair. Herr Beutner arrived suddenly, full of anticipation of settling down with a companionable woman as well preserved as himself, and stumbled into the very room where she was. Seeing an old crone, he asked her where he would find his wife. The poor woman, realizing the situation, pointed to a room across the hall and as soon as he had left her locked the door. She never saw him again.

As for my discovery, I have kept it a secret all my life, as I kept it for those twenty years that I treated Frau Beutner.

Had I proceeded with my experiments perhaps I would have achieved far more wonderful results than in this case, but I preferred not to do so.

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