

He Laughs Best Who Laughs Last

By SADIE OLCOTT

Dan Eversham entered a railway station, bought his ticket and, satchel in hand, climbed the steps of a parlor car. His seat was next to a very pretty girl.

Outside on the platform was a party of youngsters who had been seeing off a newly married couple. Passing by Dan Eversham's window, where he sat near the pretty girl, one of the party threw a handful of rice against his windowpane. Then all of them waved goodbys and laughingly passed on.

This bit of fun did not trouble Dan much; but, seeing the pretty girl beside him blush a deep red, he felt sorry for her.

"I suppose," he said to her, "that those persons think that they perpetrated a very good joke."

"It was horrid of them."

This was the beginning of a conversation that lasted till long after the train started. Meanwhile those in the car who had seen the rice throwing did not doubt that they had a bride and groom aboard. Dan was got up with sufficient resplendence for a groom, and the neat traveling dress of the girl was appropriate for a bride. Then, too, Dan was altogether too polite and attentive to have been long married, and since they were traveling together they were not supposed to be bachelor and spinster.

In the seat opposite the girl sat a woman from New England. There is nothing more interesting to a woman than a bride, and this person was a motherly creature who felt her heart go out to the young thing who had but just embarked in the sea of matrimony, a sea that the Yankee had found a troubled one. She entered into conversation with the supposed bride.

"Nice day," was her entering wedge.

"Quite so," was the laconic reply.

"Going far?"

"I shall travel all day."

"You must be tired?"

"Why do you think so?"

"Oh, there's a lot to be done in preparation for a wedding."

The girl saw at once that the party who had thrown the rice had given a wrong impression. But instead of correcting it, which would be embarrassing, she looked down at an open novel in her lap and said nothing. The woman was not to be put off.

"You're the image of a girl I knew in Salem. I wonder if you're any relation to her. Your name ain't Twitchell, is it?"

"No, it isn't Twitchell."

"Or Saulsbury?"

"No," and to shut off further inquiry the girl told her her name was Effie Trobridge.

"I guess it's got somep'n else to it now."

"Something else! What else can it need?"

"Wall, I guess it don't need nothin' else, but our laws, made for men, force us women to give up our own names and take on a man's—that is, when we tie ourselves up to one of 'em. If I was you I wouldn't do it. You've got a nice name, and I wouldn't take on any more. What's your married name?"

"I'm not married."

The woman looked at her surprised, then said in a low voice:

"I know that brides the first day of married life don't like to own up to it. They think nobody spots 'em fur bein' jist married. But, laws, any one would know that you two was jist married."

Dan, who heard this dialogue, was

trying to keep from laughing and was now obliged to swing his chair to face the window, presenting his back to the inquirer. The supposed bride, seeing a number of persons who sat near her enjoying her discomfort, blushed to the roots of her hair and said sternly to her tormentor:

"Madam, you have made a mistake. The gentleman is a stranger to me. I never saw him before he took his chair in this car."

"Oh, land!" exclaimed the Yankee, throwing up her hands. "I've known lots o' lyin' done by brides to hide that they are brides, but I never heard any-thing like that."

The girl turned to Dan as much as to say, "Help me out of this."

"I regret," he said gallantly, "to confirm the young lady's statement."

A dozen persons sitting near laughed outright.

Dan lost his equanimity, making matters worse. "I'll bet any one here," he said, "that I'm a single man and that I never saw this young lady before today."

He drew forth a fat pocketbook and began to count out ten dollar bills. Not a person interested but thought he was a bridegroom determined to stave off being recognized as such. They laughed all the louder. It was very amusing. Dan looked at the girl, and the girl looked at Dan. He tipped the wink and said to the others:

"I suppose we'll have to own up. Now for a wedding present."

Taking off his hat, he passed through the car receiving contributions. By this time so many persons had become interested in what was going on that a goodly sum was collected, which Dan poured into the girl's lap.

"If you don't want it," he said, "give it to charity."

"I'll give it to charity," was the sharp reply.

A few minutes later Dan's station was called, and, saying goodby to his bride, he got out of the car, leaving her to pursue her journey alone.

Then the contributors laughed again, but a different laugh from before.

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