

THREE TON BOYS.

BY W. R. NORRIS.

Lady Bracknell did not appear at the funeral. It is believed—or at all events it was stated—that she felt unable to face so cruel an ordeal; but the truth, as I afterward heard on excellent authority, was that she was afraid to venture with the rest of her husband, who had ordered her away from him immediately after the boy's death, assuring her that he was not master of himself, and that she would do well to keep out of his sight for some time to come. So she took him at his word and fled down to the country, to the house of I forget what friend, who undertook to comfort her in her affliction. Bracknell remained in London, and, as I was told, continued to go to his club every day, to gamble heavily and to drink hard.

I called upon him several times, but he was always out; and one day when I chanced upon him in the street, he told me roughly that I need not trouble to look him up again.

"Kindly meant, I've no doubt," he said; "but I should be very much obliged to my friends if they wouldn't be so—etc., etc.—officious. When I want to be consoled with I'll let them know."

After that I could only leave him to himself. Even if he had been willing to listen to me, I should have been puzzled to discover any plausible form of consolation; and certainly I should not have hit upon that selected by my mother, who in the overflowing kindness of her heart wrote him a long letter, in which she reminded him that among other blessings he still possessed his wife. I believe she was afterward a little ashamed of having taken this hold step, and would never have let me know of it had she been able to resist showing me Bracknell's reply, which was brief and pithy:

"Dear Mrs. Maynard: I told your son the other day that I didn't wish to be consoled with, and I don't. But I must say that I hardly expected to be congratulated. Lady Bracknell is not with me just now, or she would, I am sure, desire me to thank you for speaking of her as a blessing. It is probably the first time in her life that she has been called by that name, and I should think it would be the last. Sincerely yours, BRACKNELL."

My mother shook her head at this. "He ought not to speak so of his wife," she said. And when I brought forward certain excuses on Bracknell's behalf (I would not shock her by mentioning all those that might have been mentioned, nor would she have believed in them if I had) she only shook her head the more, telling me that I had no realising sense of the sacredness of marriage.

Whether I deserved that rebuke or not is of small consequence, but I might fairly have retorted that my dear mother, for her part, was a little too sublimely indifferent to the worldly side of that contract, and that by her present conduct she was in danger, not only of making two people more unhappy than there was any occasion for, but of getting herself into serious trouble as well. However, I doubt whether anything that I could have said would have prevented her from asking Lady Mildred to come in to tea every other day, and then casually getting Jim to meet her. She had made up her mind that this couple ought to be married, and even that she was the will of heaven that they should be married. It would have been too much to expect that the will of heaven should be set aside to please Lord Staines or Mr. Beauchamp, the latter of whom, as my mother pointed out, might have proposed long ago, if he had chosen, but had preferred to go off to Norway and catch salmon.

And so, during the summer, our house was made the scene of what, to a commonplace person like myself, were very much the appearance of clandestine love making.

Lord Staines' suspicions were at length aroused, and he sent for me to pour them into my ear. It was on a fine autumn day that, in obedience to his summons, I walked up to Staines Court and was shown into the library, where he now sat from morning to night, and where, in spite of the warmth of the weather, a fire was burning. He looked very feeble and broken, bending forward in his chair and

boiling up a thin, trembling hand to his face.

"Maynard," he said, "I want you, like a good fellow, to speak a word of warning to your friend Leigh. I would rather not speak myself, because, as you know, he has been caused trouble and disappointment by our family already, and I should be sorry to seem unfriendly to him. So will you just tell him as kindly as you can that it won't do! I see more than perhaps you young folks suppose, and of course you know what I allude to. It won't do, my dear Maynard. I am sorry for it; but it won't do."

"Lord Staines," I answered boldly, "I am not going to undertake any such commission. I can quite understand your anxiety to keep the Beauchamp property in the family, and if you can get the persons principally concerned to do as you wish, I dare say it will be in some respects a good thing; but I don't choose to be a party to any scheme of that kind. My point of view is not the same as yours. What may become of the Beauchamp property is nothing to me; whereas it is a good deal to me that Jim Leigh should have what he wishes for. I believe that Lady Mildred and he are attached to each other, and, that being so, I hope they will stand up for themselves and marry."

I fully expected that this audacious harangue would call forth an explosion of wrath; but my expectations were not fulfilled. Lord Staines only sighed wearily and said: "God knows I care little enough for money or lands now! My time is almost up, and I suppose Bracknell will be the last of our name. Against Leigh I haven't a word to say; only, as I told you before, it won't do. Mildred must marry Beauchamp. I am under obligations to him which can't be discharged in any other way; and he will be a kind husband to her. We won't argue the point, if you please."

"He will not be a husband of her choosing," I made so bold as to observe, despite his prohibition.

"You don't know what you are talking

about," returned the old man, fretfully. "The thing must be, and there's no use in discussing it. If you don't see your way to speaking to your friend, I must speak to Mildred, that's all."

I said nothing about this conversation to those whom it concerned, and whether Lord Staines carried out his intention of reconstrating with Lady Mildred or not I cannot tell. Very likely he did not, for I fancy that he shrank from distressing her, and he may have thought it needless to take active steps before Beauchamp's return from Norway.

No news with regard to that event reached my ears, and it was not until late in the autumn that I was made aware of its having taken place, by encountering Beauchamp himself at a country house in the north of England, where I had been invited to spend a few days. It struck me that our meeting was not a source of unalloyed satisfaction to him. There was even a sort of shamefacedness in his demeanor which I could not at first account for, but which explained itself at dinner time, when Lord and Lady Bracknell made their appearance among several other guests who had arrived late in the afternoon, and when her ladyship exchanged meaningful glances with my young friend, after affording him a conventionally polite greeting.

The Bracknell ménage, which for a time had been threatened with disruption, had been set agoing once more (by the kindly intervention of friends, as I was informed), and was, to all appearances, being conducted upon much the same principles as heretofore. At all events, Bracknell seemed to look with absolute indifference upon the renewal of the flirtation which he once professed himself determined to check. The past few months had worked a very perceptible change in him; he had grown stouter; his complexion had become pasty and his eyelids heavy, and a few gray hairs had appeared about his temples. His manners, too, had distinctly deteriorated. He was bored, and did not attempt to disguise the fact; moreover, he displayed a contradictory and quarrelsome tendency which evidently caused some anxiety to our hostess.

As for Lady Bracknell, she was brilliant and radiant. Her black dress and jet ornaments threw up the dazzling whiteness of her skin; she looked as if she had not a care in the world; and if, as I suspect, the other ladies were whispering to each other what a heartless wretch the woman was, I can only say that in my humble opinion they had a very good right to do so.

Probably neither their remarks nor my opinion were matters of much moment to her. She was a cold-hearted and calculating woman, but she was capable, no doubt, of enjoying herself after her own fashion, and few things can be more pleasant than to indulge in your favorite pastime, while making it subservient to a definite, practical end. This, for the time being, appeared to be Lady Bracknell's enviable lot. The subjugation of Beauchamp was complete. He remained by her side the whole evening through; he scarcely took his eyes off her for a moment; and it may be assumed that he had no idea of the sorry spectacle that he presented to lookers on.

Hilda had a second string to her bow, in the shape of a certain Comte de Vienzac, a French attaché, whom I had met several times in Wilton place. De Vienzac was one of those semi-Anglicized Gauls who get their clothes made in London, whose talk is of horses and shooting, and who discuss sport with a solemnity far exceeding that of their models. Being young, by no means bad looking, and full of that confidence in the irresistible nature of his charms, which is the very last thing that his countrymen can bring themselves to part with, he most likely flattered himself that he had made a conquest of Lady Bracknell, and it was easy to see that he found Beauchamp a good deal in the way. That Beauchamp reciprocated his sentiments with interest was not less obvious; and while one of the young men assumed an aggravatingly supercilious mien and the other scowled savagely, Hilda, arbitress of the contest, sat between them, displaying her white teeth and gently swaying a black ostrich feather fan.

Somehow or other the night of that smiling, contented, selfish woman, playing off her admirers one against the other, infuriated me. I could not get the memory of poor little Summing out of my head while I watched her; it seemed to me that of all forms of depravity the most odious is that which obliterates the natural, animal instinct of maternal love. And my soul being stirred within me by the spectacle of the power possessed and exercised by that woman, who if she had had her deserts would have been picking oakum in Millbank penitentiary, I could at last count myself no longer, but, rising from my sequestered corner, crossed the room with the intent to do a truly silly thing.

I made straight for the sofa on which Bracknell was sitting apart with his hands in his pockets, and asked him whether he didn't want to smoke.

"Of course I do," he growled. "Why the dickens don't these people go to bed?"

"We will give them the slip," said I; for I was bent upon having a few words in private with him. "Now is our time, while nobody is looking."

So I got him away to the smoking room, and, as soon as we had lighted our cigars, plunged head first into the middle of my subject. "Bracknell," said I, "do you or do you not intend Beauchamp to marry your sister?"

I have mentioned already that Bracknell's manners had deteriorated. He frowned heavily and asked me what the devil that was to me.

"I will tell you," I answered. "You must admit, I think, that you haven't behaved very well to Jim Leigh."

"Good Lord!" interrupted Bracknell, "are you going back to that old story again? Why, man, I made him an apology when he reappeared in London last summer! What more would you have? I can assure you that I repent from the bottom of my heart of having deprived him of Miss Hilda Turner."

"I don't doubt it," I replied; "I only meant to remind you that you owe him a good turn. I can't go into particulars, because we shall have the other men in here presently, but the long and the short of it is that Lady Mildred and he are in love with each other."

"Oh, indeed!" said Bracknell. "Well,

really, I don't care." "Does that mean," I inquired, "that you won't oppose their marriage?" "It means," answered he, "that I shall not bother myself about the matter, one way or the other. Jim had better fight it out with the governor."

I ought, I suppose, to have been contented with that. I had not behaved with my usual circumspection in introducing the subject at all, and I had received an assurance, which, so far as it went, should have been entirely satisfactory to me. But, being so exasperated with Hilda, and being also curious to learn how far Hilda's absolute lack of principle was shared by her husband, I must needs proceed to remark:

"You once told Lady Bracknell in my presence that you would not permit her to entice Beauchamp away from your sister. You have changed your mind as to that, it appears."

Bracknell rose slowly from his chair, advanced to that in which I was seated, and placed a heavy hand on each of my shoulders, looking straight into my eyes. "Maynard," said he, "you aren't a bad sort of fellow, taking you all round, but you're just as cheeky now as you used to be at Eton, and I may as well tell you at once that I'm not in the humor to put up with cheek. Do you remember my giving you a licking once in Kente's lane?"

"No," I replied, "I do not. I remember your hitting me and I remember kicking you on the shins, and I remember old Jim Leigh coming between us."

"Well," said Bracknell, "I dare say it was no bad thing for you that Jim Leigh happened to be handy. I didn't want to thrash you then and I don't want to thrash you now; but if you take upon yourself to interfere with my private affairs a second time, by the Lord, I'll knock your head off your shoulders!"

This threat, which was embellished by certain expressions which I prefer not to transcribe, caused me to reflect. I do not suppose that Bracknell could have knocked my head off my shoulders, but it is quite possible that he might have managed to give me a black eye; and really I cannot afford to be seen going about with a black eye. Therefore I resolved to abstain from further provocation; and at this opportune moment our interview was interrupted by the entrance of our host, accompanied by a large detachment of his guests.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the following morning I descended to the dining room to find there Lady Bracknell, attended by her brace of devoted admirers, and I perceived at once that Hilda had resumed the game of the previous evening. It was a game of which, as I knew, she never wearied. She had the appearance of being well satisfied with it now; which was more than could be said for either of the other players.

"After all," she was remarking, as I entered, "I can't see why we should give ourselves airs because we ride and shoot better than most other nations. That is something, of course; but there are so many other ways in which the French, for instance, are our superiors. They are a great deal more amusing to talk to, and they are more artistic, and they write better novels. Mr. Maynard, aren't French novels much better than ours?"

I said I must decline to deliver judgment upon that point; it was a matter of taste.

"Well, but," broke in Beauchamp, who was looking decidedly cross, "I never denied it. I'm sure I don't know whether your novels are better than ours, and, to tell you the truth, I don't much care either. All I said was that they are not a sporting people."

There is more variety of sport in France than in England," said De Vienzac boldly. "We have, for example, the wolf and the wild boar."

"And you gallop after 'em in green and gold coats, with horns twisted round and round your bodies," interrupted Beauchamp, not over courteously.

"You have perhaps derived your ideas of French sport from the pictures in 'Punch,'" observed De Vienzac, without losing his temper. "They are funny, those pictures, they are very funny; but I do not think that the artists have drawn them from life."

"I have been in France," returned the other doggedly, "and I've seen a lot of chassours, as you call them, shooting cock sparrows on Sunday afternoons."

De Vienzac shrugged his shoulders. "You will come to it, my good friend," said he. "What would you have? We are a little in advance of you; we made our revolution a hundred years ago. When your game laws are abolished, when your great estates are broken up, when your country squires can no more live upon their rents—then you will see what you will see. For the rest, the persons who, as you say, shoot sparrows on Sundays are not of the rank who would shoot partridges if they were Englishmen; and you must not ask of a man that he should be a good game shot when he has never the occasion to shoot at game."

"At any rate," observed Hilda, rising and bestowing a gracious smile upon the speaker, "we all know that Monsieur de Vienzac can shoot as well as anybody. And isn't it time for you to go out shooting now?"

Beauchamp held the door open for her. "We are to have a ride this afternoon, are we not?" I heard him ask eagerly.

"Of course we are," she answered. "Didn't you promise to take me out?"

And then, turning to the other, "Monsieur de Vienzac, I am going to be very selfish, and make you join us. You will have to tear yourself away from the partridges and be in time for luncheon."

The Frenchman raised his eyebrows slightly and bowed, murmuring something about Lady Bracknell's wishes being law. Possibly he thought that a ride in company with his rival would not be very good fun.

As for Beauchamp, he did not attempt to conceal his disgust. "Perhaps you will ride with me some other day. If I'm not wanted I'd just as soon shoot this afternoon," he was beginning; but the closing of the door deprived me of the remainder of his sentence, as well as of Hilda's reply. However, it was pretty certain that he would do what she ordered him, whether he liked it or not.

THE SUMMER COTTAGE.

Its Growth in Size and in Importance During Recent Years.

There have been signs that the institution known as the summer hotel has reached the height of its popularity and power in this country, and that its continued progress is more likely to slant down than up. The reason is not that city families are learning to spend their summers at home, for they flock to the lakes, the mountains and the seashore in greater numbers than ever, but a smaller proportion of them live in hotels and a considerably greater proportion in cottages. At Bar Harbor several of the largest hotels have remained closed, not because the yugos of Mount Desert has waned, for it was never so much the fashion, but chiefly because the island is full of cottages and the "best people" live in them, thereby damaging the hotels directly by the loss of their own patronage, and indirectly by ceasing to serve them as bait.

The tendency which is illustrated in an exceptional degree at Bar Harbor is generally noticeable in the majority of the summer places, and a natural and commendable tendency it is. The part of the population to which it is most essential to get out of town are the women and children, and for them hotel life even in the summer is decidedly a second best expedient. The American hotel bred infant, with whom Mr. Henry James in the earlier years of his literary industry helped to make the world familiar, is a type which it is as well should not survive outside of the fiction of the last decade. Without admitting that it ever was a very prevalent type, it is safe enough to assume that the more American children are enabled to substitute the atmosphere of a summer home for the garish delights of a summer hotel the better it will be for the manners of the rising generation.

Of course it is by no means a new thing for rich Americans to have summer homes. The growth of moss and ivy on scores of the Newport houses attest that. Of course, too, a summer cottage is a luxury, and luxuries are ever prone to make their first bows to the people with the most money. Nevertheless there are cottages and cottages, and whenever families that have been used to taking refuge in summer hotels once make up their minds that they would like a cottage better there is no sound financial reason why they should not eventually have one. The main difficulties are to decide where it shall be, and to bring the family's mind to the point of giving hostages to return to the same place several summers in succession. For of course, unless one is rich enough to have an assortment of scattered dwellings, it is an extravagance to build a house unless he is going to occupy it or can rent it.

No doubt the possibilities of vagrancy in the summer hotel method constituted originally one of its chief charms. It enabled people to try at least one new place every year, and ascertain finally where they preferred to go. But this very quality in it has helped the development of cottages, since, after a due series of vagrant seasons, the family is able out of its sufficient experience to declare a settled preference for some particular spot. There, the spirit of adventure having given place to the desire for assured comfort, the cottage begins its growth and finally develops into a true home, with its accompanying possibilities of hospitality and of continuous accretions of grace and strength.

The observer who watches the progress of American civilization must be both interested and edified at the spread of the summer cottage. He finds in it another sign of the settling population which is in process, and which makes the land constantly pleasanter and more habitable as it goes on.—Harper's Weekly.

An Improved Shuttle.

A shuttle manufacturer in Massachusetts has effected an improvement in that mechanism which promises to be of considerable practical value in the operations of woolen mills. In lieu of the ordinary hinged spindle for receiving and holding the bobbin of yarn, a short rigid spindle is employed in combination with two holding jaws, one above and the other below the head of the bobbin; the latter they clasp and securely hold in a central position, a single spiral spring being arranged in the base of the shuttle so as to exert an equal pressure on the bobbin holding jaws, between which it is placed. As a result of this unique construction all splitting of the bobbins arising from the use of the long pointed hinged spindle is obviated, with a consequent saving of waste yarn. The trouble from the breaking of this yarn by the canting of the spindle point in the weaving operation is also overcome.—New York Sun.

He Followed the Advice.

A little jobbing carpenter, unable to get his account for work done paid by his late employer, had at last taken action against him. The case came on for trial, defendant not appearing, and the plaintiff was briefly narrating the facts.

"And did you then call at his house and demand payment?" asked the magistrate.

"I did!"

"What did he say?"

"He turned me out of doors and told me to go to my grandmother."

"Oh! And what did you do then?"

"I came on here for a summons."

A VESPER HYMN.

Draw near, draw near and praise him,
This King all kings above!
Thy love alone repays him,
Whose dearest name is Love.
Draw near, draw near and bless him,
If life be glad and free,
With grateful hearts confess him,
Who gave that life to thee.

Draw near, draw near unto him,
I sorrow bow thee down,
None, sorrowing, vainly sue him—
He hath worn Sorrow's crown.
Draw near, draw near with weeping,
O bruised and mourning heart!
Comment thee to his keeping,
Whose wandering child thou art.

Draw near, draw near imploring,
I staid with guilt and sin,
He, pitying and restoring,
Shall heal thy wounds within.
Draw near, draw near his altar,
Though faith itself be fled;
Dism't thou his love can falter,
Though thine be cold and dead!

Brother, or friend, or stranger,
O child of God! draw near,
Whate'er thy need, thy danger,
Behold a refuge here!
Draw near, kneel low before him,
Lift, lift thy heart above,
And reverently adore him—
Thy God, whose name is Love!
—Grace E. Channing in Youth's Companion.

Real Sea Serpents.

The seas from Madagascar to Panama and from Japan to New Zealand are thickly infested with marine snakes. Dr. Steinger, the reptilian expert of the Smithsonian institution, says they are among the most poisonous of all known serpents, their venom being no less deadly than that of the cobra and rattlesnake. Furthermore, they are very fierce and aggressive, and will commonly attack human beings if they get a chance. They do not frequent the shallows unless possibly for breeding, but live in the open ocean. When full grown they are from six to eight feet long.

Fishermen in the waters where they are found are greatly afraid of them. Their bodies are flat and the inside of them is almost wholly filled by the lungs, which are large in order that they may be enabled to stay beneath the surface for a long time without coming up to breathe. They have eyes modified for seeing in the water, so that when they are taken out of their native element they seem blinded and strike wildly. Their fangs, like those of the cobra, are always erect.—Chicago News.

Rats and Mice and Large Animals.

How many people are there who know that elephants, rhinoceroses and other large thick skinned animals have formidable enemies in rats and mice? These small, rascally rodents have found that the feet of the elephant are excellent eating, and have no hesitation in gnawing at them when the animal lies down, which, owing to its confined condition, is not very well able to defend itself against the puny enemies. To protect these vast creatures it is found necessary in most menageries to keep terriers about the cages. These little fellows very soon dispose of the pachyderm's tiny adversaries. It was recently discovered in a well known menagerie that the mice and rats had been very busy with the hide of a rhinoceros. A Scotch terrier, Panny, was put into the cage of the huge beast, and in the first night she had killed no fewer than twenty-seven rats. In a few days there were no rats left to nibble the hide of the poor rhinoceros.—London Tit-Bits.

About African Snakes.

The African cobra is regarded somewhat reverently by the natives of that country, who once a year kill a cobra de capello and hang its skin to the branch of a tree, tall downward. Then all the children born during the last year are brought out and made to touch the skin. This the parents think puts them under the serpent's protection. The cobra de capello divides with the horned viper of Africa the questionable honor of being the "worm of the Nile," to whose venomous tooth Cleopatra's death was due.

The Kaffirs use the venom of this snake's cousin—the puff adder—to poison their arrows, and when they have any small quantity left they swallow it, having a theory that it will protect them from the bad effects of future bites. The snake tribe of the Punjab say that the bites of snakes do not hurt them, and if they find a dead serpent they dress it in clothes and give it a superb funeral.—St. Nicholas.

Nothing in It.

J. M. Barrie, popular as he is on this side the ocean, is not likely to suffer from excess of praise from the villagers of the now famous Thrums. One old lady, with energetic but quaint criticism, says of his "Little Minister": "It's of rare truth, but there's naething in't—mere havers about things that's gone on like day—and wha wants to waste their time readin' about sic like. Besides, what kens he about the sojers in Kinie. He's just been makin' up bits here and there out o' fat he's heard fiver founk tellin'. He's no old cunuch, o' hae any mind o' sic things."—New York Sun.

She Had Experience.

Mrs. Lenox Hill—I wish you would let me have ten dollars today. I want to do a little shopping.

Mr. Lenox Hill—You are the most extravagant woman in New York. If I were to die before you you would have to beg for a living.

Mrs. Lenox Hill—Humph! I have to do that now.—Texas Siftings.

Woke Him Up.

Wife (midnight)—Ooo! Wool Wake up! There's a man trying to get in.

Husband (drowsily)—Nonsense! Go to sleep.

Wife (as a last resort)—Maybe he's got a bill.

Husband—Whoop! Where's my gun.—New York Weekly.

Out of 50,000 guesses on a big cake of soap on exhibition in Berlin only two were correct. The cake was a soapmaker's advertisement and it weighed 1,123 pounds.

A new cure for hydrophobia was successfully tried in the Pasteur Institute, Milan. It consisted of a substance injection of the virus in its "fixed fo