No Mystery at All.

"Speaking of strange and unaccountable experiences," remarked the man with the bulbous nose, "I am reminded of one that happened to a friend of mine in the summer of '93, while he was at the Columbian exposition. He was in the Fine Arts building, looking at the picture they called 'Breaking Home Ties,' when he heard a voice behind him say distinctly, 'That's what is happening at your house, over on the west side.' He turned and looked to see who it was that spoke, and there was nobody near him."

"Is that all?" asked the man with the fishy eye.

"No; the strangest part is to come. When he went home in the evening he found that his youngest brother had eloped with the hired girl and gone to St. Louis. It had taken place, too, at the exact moment when he heard the voice. How do you explain that, I'd like to know? Was it telepathy? Or what was it?"

"H'umph! Who tells that story?"

"The man himself—Ike Stringham."

"O, Stringham tells it, does he? Why, you gourdhead, that's the explanation."—Chicago Tribune.

B-r-r-r!

In summer garb, and with new straw hat,
The commuter fared forth from his flat,
As chipper as you please.
Swiftly the "dummy" bore him to town—
But swifter dropped the mercury down
Some 25 degrees.

Uncle Allen.

"My boy," counseled Uncle Allen Sparks, "it is a mighty serious thing to be a young man these days, and to have to make your choice between Opportunity and Responsibility. That's where a lot of you go wrong."

Shedding More Information.

Mrs. Chugwater—Josiah, what is a pronunciamento?

Mr. Chugwater—Pronouncing amen to anything you want to indorse. I should think you could tell that by looking at the word itself.

His Idea of a Joke.

"Jones has a queer sense of humor."

"Huh?"

"He married his dead wife's sister, you know. And now he refers to the deceased as his sister-in-law."—Cleveland Leader.

The Rome newspapers comment favorably on the scheme for the erection in that city of a monument to Shakspeare.

The dowager Duchess of Abercorn, aged 92, has 150 descendants.

Too Slow.

Sir John Franklin had made up his mind to discover the northwest passage.

"I can't wait forever for the Panama canal," he said.

Glancing at the latest dispatches from Washington and ascertaining, to his disgust, that there was another deadlock as to the question of the type of canal to be adopted, and that Senator Morgan was about to make another speech, he gave orders for the immediate fitting out of the expedition.

In the Sweet Subsequent.

Reporter—It's to be a quiet wedding, isn't it?

Prospective Bridegroom (prominent ward heeler)—Yes, sir; de weddin' 'll be quiet enough, but we're goin' to have de gol-whoppinest shivaree dat ever was pulled off in de precin't!"

Single Thought.

"I think," remarked Growells the other morning at breakfast, "I'll get a divorce."

"Good!" exclaimed Mrs. G, "and I wish you would get one for me while you are at it."

Reasonable Enough.

"And what are you going to do when you're a man?" asked the visitor.

"I've been thinking," replied the bright boy, "of starting an elephant farm in Virginia."

"An elephant farm?"

"Certainly. Why not? They raise peanuts there."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XIII.

Easton laughed reassuringly. He was not afraid of clever women. Miss Winter must almost have heard the laugh, while there was still a smile on his face as he bowed before her.

"I have never," he said, as he seated himself, "been at an entertainment of this description before. I am only a beginner. In our country we manage things differently; and I cannot yet understand how much talking and so little action can benefit any cause."

"But," said Miss Winter, "you are not new to England. There is nothing about you to lead one to that conclusion."

"Thank you," he replied, gravely. "My claw-hammer coat was made in Piccadilly, so I suppose it is all right."

He looked down at the garment in question, and dusted the sleeves lightly with a perfectly gloved hand.

"Do you like it?" he inquired simply.

Miss Winter was becoming interested. She therefore quelled a sudden desire to laugh, and answered:

"Yes; it is a very nice coat."

"I am not," he said, after a pause, "new to England, but I have not moved much in London society. I suppose the men do all the moving in your society?—they seem to. The women sit mostly still and wait till the men come to them. With us it is different."

"The women," replied this womanly lady, "are beginning to move with us, and from what I have seen of the result, I rather incline toward the old policy of sitting still."

He turned and looked at her with a little nod. There was in his queer, restless eyes a distinct glance of approval.

"Yes," he said, "yes. So I should surmise. Our ladies are very fascinating, and very clever, and all that, but—but the young men do not seem to make such a pretty show of loving them as we read of in olden times. At all events, they do not continue to show them that regard which, I remember, my father showed toward my mother."

"I myself am an humble admirer of the womanly school."

"And I," added Easton. "Now," he continued, after a pause, "do tell me, what do all these good people think they are doing here to-night?"

"They think firstly," replied Miss Winter, "that they are getting their names into the fashionable society papers. Secondly, that their natural or arificial adornment is creating a distinct impression. Thirdly, and lastly, that they are assisting in some indefinite way toward the solution of a problem of which the rudiments are entirely unknown."

"Then in England, as well as in my own country, charity is a recognized plaything of society," suggested Easton.

"Yes. We take it up in late autumn and winter, when there are no races, no regattas, nor lawn tennis parties."

"Ah! then," said the American, "society is very much the same here as elsewhere."

At this moment Oswin Grace passed within earshot of them. He heard the remark, and recognized the voice. When he turned, his surprise at seeing Miss Winter and Easton together was so marked as to cause a little frown to pass across the queer, wistful face of the American. He returned the young Englishman's comprehensive bow, however, with perfect equanimity.

"You know Oswin Grace?" inquired Miss Winter.

"Oh, yes," was the cool reply; "Tyars brought him to my rooms one evening."

Miss Winter skillfully concealed eagerness.

"They are great friends," she said, lightly.

"Ye-es. Yes, Tyars constantly talks of him."

"I suppose," continued Miss Winter, in the same indifferently conversational way, "that they have many interests in common; both being sailors. At least, I believe Claud Tyars considers himself a sailor now."

This was clever, and the wary little man paused. He felt convinced that Miss Winter knew less of the past life of Tyars than she would have him believe. Moreover, he suspected that she had never hitherto called him Claud Tyars. The implied familiarity was a trap, womanly, clever and subtle; but Easton avoided it with equal skill. He maintained an easy silence. Immediately afterward, however, he made a blunder.

"Oswin," said Miss Winter, "is a great friend of mine, and I think Helen is my greatest friend."

"A sister?" inquired Easton, rashly.

"Yes. Mr. Tyars has not spoken of her, then?"

"No. Tyars did not tell me that Grace had a sister."

There was a short pause. Perhaps the American heard the little sigh of relief given by his companion, marking, as it were, the relaxation of an effort; such a sigh as an athlete gives when he has scored a success and his weary muscles fall into repose. He became instantly conscious of his blunder. He had been outwitted by this pleasant woman. He—Matthew Mark Easton—a born intriguer, a man with real genius for conspiracy.

"Ah!" reflected Miss Winter, "why has Mr. Tyars omitted to make mention of Helen's existence?" And with feminine intuition she made a hasty mental note of this important item.

"So," mused Easton, during the same pause, "there is a Miss Grace, and Tyars never mentioned her. I must be very careful. Seems to me that there are two men at stake here, not one; and I cannot afford to lose two sailors such as these."

Miss Winter was now drawn into a vortex of light-hearted idlers bent upon a systematic inspection of the pictures, and from their ranks Easton took the first opportunity of dropping away unobserved. They did not speak again during the evening; but the little seed was sown—the little seed of mutual esteem or mutual dislike, as the case may be, which under either circumstance seems to draw some people together here in life—to spread its subtle tendrils, intertwined and knit together, until their united strength is a thing undreamed of.

"I seem," reflected Easton, subsequently, "to have met that little English lady somewhere before. Her ways of speaking, and her method of expressing herself in a cheery way, as if nothing mattered very much, are familiar to me. I certainly have not seen her before in this vale of sorrow, as the lady writers call it. I wonder where I have met her."

It happened to fall to the lot of Claud Tyars to shut the door of Miss Winter's comfortable brougham; while Grace, who had helped her in, stood back and nodded a good-night.

The lady leaned back against the soft cushions, and drew her cloak more snugly round her. The flashing light of street lamp or carriage showed her face to be grave and thoughtful. She was realizing that Claud Tyars was something more than a mere lover of intrigue, making a mystery out of a very ordinary love affair. She was recognizing now that matters were more serious than she had at first considered them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Miss Winter sometimes fell a victim to a longing for labor. She sometimes felt useless, and looked beyond the work that lay at hand for heavier labor. When she heard of good works done by women, she longed to do something also.

But it was only at times that Miss Winter gave way to this weakness, and she was very quiet about it. When the paroxysm was upon her, she put on a thick veil, her quietest dress, and took the omnibus to Tower Hill.

She was too well acquainted with the world to go empty-handed and to make those trivial mistakes by which many well-meaning women reduce charity to the ludicrous. She had an old bag specially devoted to this secret vice, for one cannot carry half pounds of butter, packets of tea, and pounds of raw sausages in one's best handbag.

The recipients of her charity were a race of men overlooked by charity organizations, ignored by those bland distributors of leaflet literature who call themselves the Sailors' Friend. Very few people find themselves by accident in the London Dock or the St. Katherine's Dock; in fact, both these basins are rather difficult to find.

The shipkeeper is a strange, amphibious creature. His calling is afloat, his business on the waters, and yet he is no sailor. In busier times he rarely spent more than two months on board of one ship; now there are men living week after week, month after month, year after year on the same vessel. Many of them never set foot outside the dock gates; some there are who remain afloat always.

Miss Winter had heard of these ships, and from different sources she gradually learned that there were men living on board of them; men whose lives were almost as solitary as that of a sailor cast upon some desert island. It seems strange that within the roar of city life, almost within stone's throw of the crowded streets, there should be men living day after day without speaking a word to their fellow creatures. For if they do not choose to come ashore, certainly no one will trouble to go on board and see them.

In course of time she evolved the idea of going to the docks to see if it was difficult to get on board these ships, and there she discovered that there was nothing easier. It was merely a matter of paying, as it is in every other part of the world.

At first her advances caused consternation, but, woman like, she gradually made her way, never being guilty of one retrograde step. A few distrusted her motives, some thought she was merely a fool, others concluded she had "got religion." These latter were the first to welcome her. The explanation was so simple, and it had served to account for stranger conduct than this.

One and all appreciated the butter and the sausages. Some made use of the soap, and a few read the newspapers she brought them.

Soon Miss Winter found that her advent was looked for. The responsibilities of beneficence began to make themselves felt. She commenced to know personally these quaint old hermits, and found that there were sincere and insincere shipkeepers—shipkeepers who were interesting and othrs who were mere nonentities. On the whole, she gave preference to those who took the butter and the sausages and left the soap. These latter were old fellows who had never washed, and did not see the good of changing their habits in old age. This conservatism indicated a character worthy of admiration, and superior to that of such as asked for more soap and hinted at tracts.

She became more and more interested in this work, and lapsed into the habit of going to the docks once a week, at least. As Claud Tyars frequented the same spot with an equal regularity, their meeting was only a question of time.

They had missed each other several times by the merest chance, but at last they came face to face in a most undeniable manner. The morning was rather foggy, and in consequence the dock was more silent and sleepier than usual. Miss Winter having just left a boat, was mounting the steep wet steps from the edge of the slimy water, when a tall man, emerging from the fog, came to the top of the stairs and hailed the boat.

"Wait a minute," he said; "I want you."

He came down a step or two and stood to one side to let Miss Winter pass. In doing so, he looked at her, and she, glancing up to thank him, gave a little start.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "You—here—Mr. Tyars?"

He raised his hat without betraying any surprise.

"Yes," he answered, "of course. The docks have a natural attraction for me—a sailor."

"I forgot," she said, looking calmly at him, "that you were a sailor."

She had been betrayed into surprise, but in a moment her usual alertness returned to her. She passed on, and he followed her.

"Are you alone?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes," she replied, lightly. "I am quite at home here. I come nearly every week and interrupt the meditations of the ship keepers. I look after their temporal welfare. It is quite my own idea, I assure you, that I have no connection with any philanthropic society."

"Tracts?" he inquired, shortly.

"No; no tracts," she replied. "Sausages, butter and soap—essentially of this world."

He was walking beside her, suiting his step with an implied sense of protection, almost of approbation, which annoyed her.

"There may be," he suggested, half ironically, "a hidden motive in the soap."

"But there is not," she replied, sharply. "I advocate cleanliness only. Personally, I prefer the dirty ones."

"Probably," he said, "you do a great deal of good. These poor fellows lead a very lonely life. You must seem to them like a being from another world."

"So I am, Mr. Tyars," she said, still upholding her work. "Quite another world."

Then she suddenly laid aside her gravity with that strange inconsequence which is one of the many important differences between the male and female mind.

"You speak feelingly," she continued, in thinly veiled mockery. "Perhaps you have been a ship keeper yourself. You seem to have been a good many things."

"Yes," was the calm reply. "I have. I was once a ship keeper in the Southern Atlantic."

She was silenced. The details of his terrible experience on board the fever-stricken merchantman had never been vouchsafed, but it was not difficult to imagine them from the official account he had been forced to publish.

Suddenly this cheerful little lady had realized the pettiness of her own existence, the futility of her own small caprice. She glanced up at him, almost meditating an apology. Observant and analytical as she was, she had not yet noticed a fact of which Tyars was fully aware; she had not noticed that in her intercourse with Claud Tyars she invariably began in an antagonistic vein, and that with equal monotony this antagonism melted after a few moments.

In one respect Tyars was a commonplace man. He possessed the genius of command, which is the genius most often encountered in the world. It is merely a genius of adaptation, not of creation. Its chief characteristic is a close but unconscious observation of human nature. He understood all who came in contact with him much better than any one of them understood him. Miss Winter was conscious of a reserve in this man's mind which was irrevocably closed to her. He casually glanced into her character in passing; if there was an inner motive beyond his fathom, he remained indifferent to its presence. When their paths crossed he was pleased to meet her, but she never flattered herself that he would go far out of his way to hear her opinion upon any subject..

"If," she said, 'I cared for horrors, I should ask you some day to tell me about—about those days—your ship-keeping days; but I hate horrors."

"I am glad," he said, with evident relief. "I hate horrors, too, and should not make a picturesque story of it."

They walked on in silence, feeling rather more friendly toward each other every moment. It was necessary to pass beneath a crane of which the greasy chain hung loosely right across their path. Tyars stepped forward, and with a quick turn of the winch-handle, drew the chain taut, and consequently out of her way. It was a mere incident, trivial in its way; but women note these trivialities nad piece them together with a skill and sequence which men cannot rival or even imitate. Tyar's action showed an intimate knowledge with the smallest details of the calling he had chosen to follow.

(To be continued.)

Willing to Return Part.

Bicker—I hear your confidential clerk has skipped out with your daughter and $10,000 of your coin.

Easyun—Yes, that's right—but I guess he isn't such a bad sort of chap after all. I had a letter from him this morning saying that he was willing to send my daughter back if I'd pay her railway fare.

His Awful Fate.

Giles—According to the coroner's verdict a mob composed entirely of women was responsible for Green's demise.

Miles—How did it happen?

Giles—He accidentally got near a bargain counter where $1 shirt waists were being sold at 98 cents and was trampled underfoot.

Puzzled Him.

Citizen—I see there is a great deal of agitation about the smoke problem these days. Does it worry you?

Ex-Alderman—I should say so! Since I lost my office it keeps me busy thinking how I can make a stogie smell like a Havana.