

FLOUNDER'S GUEST.

Mr. Flounder was a young gentleman of esthetic temperament. He was always in love with some object or other. Sometimes it was a lady that enslaved his affections; and other times a picture or piece of sculpture; and yet another time, perhaps, some teapot or fanciful design, or other piece of delf or rare pattern, would adsorb all emotional faculties. At times, however, he would get muddled, and could not always tell who or what he was in love with; and in this state he would remain until some circumstance arose which exposed to him the error or absurdity of his situation. He adored the ladies who petted and coaxed him. But it never came to anything. The girls soon found out the evanescent nature of his professions, and broke him in time to prevent talk. This did not matter very much, however, and he had a large and varied stock to select from. And so he would fall in and out of love in the most serene way imaginable.

Mr. Flounder's education had been neglected. He knew next to nothing. In short he was a perfect chaos of ignorance. His only occupation was following the ladies and other things referred to. This, to be sure, was not very remunerative, but as he had a clear £30000 a year it did not occasion him any uneasiness.

But things could not go on forever in this way. So Mr. Flounder thought one evening as he laid down an article he had been reading—the subject was marriage. In it the writer had clearly proved that it was the bounded duty of a man, if he had the means, to search out a woman whom he could love best and marry her, always providing that she were willing to have him.

The great question now before him was: Whom should he marry? If among his own female acquaintance he was unable to find one with whom he could mate, then it was his duty to extend his search until he came across one who would suit.

He now proceeded to bring the whole force of his mind to bear on the knotty problem. As he slowly and solemnly sucked the end of his stick, preparatory to bringing his mind to a focus, he felt delicious influences stealing over him, while the muscles of his neck relaxed and with his head gracefully inclined to his shoulder, Mr. Flounder yielded to the soft embrace, and, falling asleep, passed into the fair land of dreams.

The sound of the clock in the hall striking nine reminded him that he had accepted an invitation to Mrs. Brown's party that very evening. Hastily putting on his dress things he was soon on his way to his destination. Mrs. Brown was famous for collecting all the pretty and fascinating girls at her parties, and Mr. Flounder had ample scope in which to exercise his discrimination. But being on his mettle now, he became extremely fastidious, with the result that he returned to his lodgings with the conviction that Mrs. Brown was not able to produce a woman worthy of his love.

The next night found him at the theater. While the audience attended to the performance, Mr. Flounder scanned the sea of faces about him in the hope that he would find the object of his desire. From his position in the pitstalls he carefully scrutinized each individual lady in the boxes. But she was not there. Then his eyes swept the different circles with like avail. The dress circle absorbed the greater share of his attention. Feeling that he should leave no stone unturned, his gaze soared even to the "gods" in case the one flower he sought might be perched so high. But no! He then relieved the strain on his neck by examining the females in his immediate vicinity, but none came to the mark. His love put in no appearance and Mr. Flounder at last let his eye-glass fall just as the curtain fell on the final scene, and he returned to his lodgings, his future wife still to be discovered. Nothing daunted however, he pursued his search day after day, but with like results. He tried all the houses at which he was acquainted, but no girl of his acquaintance came up to his ideal, and he saw that he must extend the search outside his own circle, as the writer had stated in the pamphlet. At the time he came to this conclusion he was seated, as usual, before the fire in his arm chair. He had no intention of giving up the search without first trying every available means in his power. He began to revolve in his mind what plans he ought to pursue in order to compass his ends, when he heard a timid knock at the door. In response to his "come in," the door slowly opened, and to his great sur-

prise he beheld a lady, richly but but quaintly dressed, advancing slowly but gracefully towards him. Mr. Flounder was quite taken aback for an instant by this very unexpected visit. Ladies had never before visited him at his lodgings. But his natural gallantry and ease of manner returned at once. Removing the crook from his mouth he got up and advancing to meet his visitor, courteously requested her to be seated, placing a chair for that purpose.

As the lady sat down she slowly raised her veil, exposing to Mr. Flounder's enraptured gaze a face of such unrivaled beauty, and an expression so mournfully sweet, as deprived him of all power of motion. Fixing her beautiful eyes upon him, she said, in tones that thrilled his every nerve, "Mr. Flounder, I am your true love." Then—he knew not how—the lady was gone, and Mr. Flounder awoke.

He could scarcely believe that he had been dreaming. Everything—the party at Mrs. Brown's, the theater, other places and last of all, the beautiful lady—had seemed so vivid and lifelike. Lore such an impress of reality that he felt almost inclined to regard them as so many solid facts, and not as an outcome of an overwrought imagination.

Dream or no dream, on one point he was certain, that he had seen his beautiful visitor before at some period of his life, but when or where and under what conditions his memory failed to answer. He was also equally certain on another point which was that he was violently in love with her. She said she was his true love and he believed her. What greater proof could he have that she was the woman he sought? As he picked up the pamphlet from the floor and went to bed—it was long after midnight now—he vowed to seek her out, or else perish in the attempt.

Full of resolution, Mr. Flounder arose betimes in the morning, and after breakfast commenced to think what course he ought to pursue in his investigations. What if he should insert an advertisement in the agony columns of the Times something like this:

"If the lady who appeared last night in a dream to Mr. Flounder at his lodgings at ———, will communicate with that gentleman either personally or by letter, an arrangement may be effected."

No, that would never do. It might only bring all the girls down to his lodgings in a body, and there they would remain blocking up the street until he gave satisfaction. He must try some other way. Why not apply to Scotland Yard for help? Detectives were up to that sort of thing. Worse again, Mr. Flounder gave up that idea also. Such a course might involve the lady appearing in the Hue and Cry among a list of others "wanted" or a drawing of her, taken from his description might embellish the police and the newspapers, with his own portrait alongside. The idea gave Mr. Flounder a turn. He broached several other plans, but they fell to the ground. Finally he came to the conclusion that the responsibility rested entirely with himself and that he must only prosecute his inquiries in person. Stupendous as the undertaking may seem it afforded him the unalloyed satisfaction of being the sole repository of his own secret.

Lighting a cigarette, he sallied forth to get a little fresh air before commencing operations. He felt a bit muddled with the unusual strain on his mental faculties, and required an interval to restore his normal condition. But as he vended his way along the streets he could not keep his mind off his lovely visitor. She fixed his entire attention, making him totally oblivious of the noisy hum around him. He did not even return the salutes accorded to him by many lady friends, who passed him on foot or in carriages, but steadily held his way, avoiding all obstacles and dangers of traffic by a species of inner consciousness. The accidental knocking of his stick, however, against some projection roused him from his reverie. Looking up he found himself in front of the National Portrait Gallery.

The rain was commencing to fall and, partly because he didn't exactly know what to do, Mr. Flounder entered the building and wandered from room to room in an aimless manner.

A little knot of people standing round one particular picture attracted his attention. Crossing over, Mr. Flounder looked.

It was a painting of some beautiful lady, quaintly clad—"perhaps a fancy-dress ball costume," he thought. But it was the face which absorbed all his faculties. So beautifully calm, but oh, how sad were those divine features! There was a stateliness blended with a softness that charmed him. Spell-bound he gazed, and as he looked, strange memories drifted through his brain. As the lady's eyes looked down on him with a sad, mournful expres-

sion, her lips seemed to part as if about to speak, and Mr. Flounder, entranced like, waited for the music of her words. And, while he waited, his visitor of last night once more took shape, and, slowly unfolding on the canvas before him, merged into and became one with the beautiful lady painted thereon. Once more there fell on the enraptured listener's ears the words: "Mr. Flounder, I am your true love."

Not until the last echoes of those thrilling notes died away in his ears did Mr. Flounder rouse from his trance, and he looked about him with a bewildered air.

All the people had gone away from the picture, and were scattered about. It was some time, however, before he realized how matters stood. At last a look of relief and triumph passed over his face. He had discovered the portrait of his true love. He was on the track at last. He could find out whose the portrait was, and then all he had to do was to find her address and go and throw himself down at her feet. A few simple questions and it was done. His bosom heaved at the thought.

Looking around he espied the official of the place. Crossing over to him, Mr. Flounder asked with bated breath whose portrait that was yonder.

"Mary, Queen of Scots," was the reply.

A thrill of pride and happiness combined pervaded Mr. Flounder. His aspirations had not soared to the majesty of a crown. Visions of himself and his love seated on the throne rose up before him as he inquired where she lived.

"Live!" echoed the official, now thoroughly aroused from his apathy; "she doesn't live at all! She's dead, man!"

"Dead!" It seemed to Mr. Flounder as if he had heard his own death knell, and his visage perceptibly lengthened as he asked when she died.

"Let me see," said the other in a lackadaisical voice, and referring to a book which he held in his hand, he said, "on the 8th of February, 1587."

Mr. Flounder's eyes filled to overflowing as he next inquired in tones husky from emotion, what she died of.

"She didn't die of anything," said the official, looking hard at him; "at least not exactly. Her head was cut off."

"What for?" was the next question, more huskily than ever. He could scarcely speak now.

"I can't tell you that," said the other. "I ain't up in those things. I suppose whoever cut it off thought it had been on long enough anyhow. That's all I know about the lady, sir."

Thanking the official for his information in a voice that was barely audible, Mr. Flounder moved slowly away.

As he crossed over and gazed on the picture for the last time he realized the gulf between him and his decapitated adored. But he could not help thinking how different things might have been but for that obstacle. And as he sadly retraced his steps homeward he felt aggrieved. He felt that his ancestors were to blame; that they had done him an irreparable injury in not having hurried him into existence three centuries earlier in the world's history.—From *Belgravia*.

The czar of Russia has become interested in the American game of poker. He was always fond of sitting up late o' nights, and now puts up his ante like a little man until the morning light drives him and his fellow-roisterers to bed. He is apt to have a royal flush when he arises in the afternoon.

Queer Things in Pawn.

Passing along Third avenue yesterday I saw a well known pawnbroker, whom we will call Mr. X, smiling as if something very droll and pleasant had occurred. "What are you smiling about, Mr. X," I asked. "Is your business so very brisk?"

"Oh, business is about as usual, but do you see that fashionably-dressed young man just turning the corner? Well, he has just left with me half a dozen quart bottles of champagne for which I gave him \$10. It is as good almost as money."

"Why did he pawn the champagne?"

"I give it up. Perhaps his father has lots of wine in his cellar, but will not give him pocket money. Oh, we take in curious things. An actress left me her child one time, and I gave her \$25 for it. She redeemed the little one in an hour. On another occasion I got in a thirty-two pound salmon, alive. What do you think of that? And at another time a lovely Newfoundland pup, which I have now, grown up to a dog, which I would not part with for \$100, cash down."—New York World.

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria.

Modjeska Admits It.

"Yes, I smoke! Now what have you to say to it?" and Mme. Modjeska's soft brown eyes flashed defiantly as she faced a party of ladies in Mrs. Simmons' drawing room. I am not a bit angry, ladies; on the contrary, I am amused. I cannot understand why the fact that I choose to smoke a package of cigarettes every week should be regarded as such a heinous vice. As I say, I do smoke, but I am not a smoker. My clothes never suggest the smell of tobacco. I know my breath is not tainted, my teeth are certainly well kept, and you can see there is not a trace of nicotine on my fingers. The American girl chews gum; so do her married sisters, and you are a nation of candy-eaters. I do not know the taste of gum, and I think far too much of my system to de-range it with sweets. I do not shop, nor gossip; I am neither a tea-drinker nor a wine-drinker. I work very hard. I am as punctual at rehearsal as at the performances. My nervous system is very easily shocked. I require some stimulant, and selecting the least injurious, I use tobacco. If it gives me the rest and relaxation I require, why shouldn't I resort to it? I can readily see how I might give great offense to my friends, but I have never yet done so, and I have never been in any private home as a guest where I did not have the privilege of doing just what I wanted to.

"Ladies who would not dream of smoking a cigarette themselves have sent their servants to get them for me, have allowed me to smoke in the library or wherever the family sat, and have even handed me a burning match to light the little roll of tobacco. In a country as democratic as America I cannot understand the expressions of surprise constantly passed on my harmless habit. To say the least, though they never come from cosmopolitans—from those people who have never been in France and Russia and Austria, who know the variations of custom. I am not surprised that the American women care so little for tobacco. It is not good—that is to say the native plant is too coarse and unpleasant in flavor, and the Turkish tobacco is not only expensive, but hard to get at any price. If I cared to tell tales out of school, I could give you some interesting facts about the American cigarette and the dainty smoking services I have seen, compared to which my silver tray and dragon candle are clumsy almost to a mannish degree."

Dom Pedro, ex-Emperor of Brazil once called on Victor Hugo and asked the privilege of dining with him. The two men talked until 3 o'clock in the morning. Hugo asked the Emperor what countries in Europe struck him as being the happiest. "Switzerland, France and Scotland," was the answer.

"What reason do you assign for this?" continued the poet. "The fact that Switzerland is an old Republic, that France has accomplished a Republican evolution, and that Scotland has a republican form of church government," explained Dom Pedro. "The church has given a moral strength to Scotland which is unique, and her climate has imposed hardy habits on the Scotch people."

Of all royal personages the prince of Wales is most noted for the enormous quantity of luggage which he causes to be sent with him on most all his journeys. He takes whole boxes of hats and huge trunks of dress suits, morning coats and other changes. He makes a point when visiting anywhere of not being seen twice in the same coat and the variety of his garments is as astonishing as the tailor's bill for them must be long.

It certainly cannot be Mary Anderson's health now that is keeping her off the stage. She tramped along the chalk cliffs at Dover last week, looking as hale and hearty as she ever did in her life, and she crossed the channel to Paris without the faintest symptom of *mal de mer*. To an inquirer she said that her stepfather's illness occupied her attention for the present moment.

Lord Tennyson is very hospitable in his old age and likes to entertain young people. Mary Anderson is a great favorite with him, and he prefers a handsome woman as a guest to one who has no claims to beauty. In fact he is very sensitive to beauty in man or woman, and has a poet's love for symmetry of form and feature.

The death of Shelley's son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, takes the title out of the poet's direct line and it now goes to a cousin. The late Sir Percy was a portly, jovial country squire, having no trace of genius from either his father or mother, though he derived a love for outdoor life from the former.

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