

TRYING TRICKS.

A HALLOWEEN STORY.

"Well this is a pretty fix for a man like me!" said Silas Hammersmith, straightened up and glared at the mirror in his bachelor apartment as if he considered it in some way responsible for the present deplorable state of his affairs. "Oh, it's no use talking! This is a good one on me! To think that at my time of life, and he waved his hand in disgust at the mirror, "I should go and fall in love! I thought when in my calow state of twenty I got through with that sweet little affair of Mary Kelly (bless her bright eyes! It was a nice little episode, too, but she married another man, who had the money to keep her), I thought then that I had got through with the tender passion; but that to this was like milk to champagne. It is preposterous, and of course I have no chance beside the young fellow; but I am only thirty-five. I am not bad looking either—that is not very bad looking. I don't squint nor wear glasses, nor—but I've forgotten what will please the girls, though she doesn't seem like the ordinary run of girls. Ah, my sweet Dora! What have I to offer in exchange for your young fresh face and care-free heart? Nothing but the will and the power to keep you care-free and happy throughout all life. But I think Jack Liston has the inside track, though he's a jackanapes, a dude! but he's young and stylish, and that's what takes with the girls. Yes, I'm almost sure she cares for him most, but I can't wait very long to see! I must do something—this unrest is unfitting me for business, and if I don't attend to that I may as well shut up shop. But how am I to find out? Oh, there is too much at stake! If I ask her, she is the straightaway way out, and she says no, even in that gentle voice of hers, I can never look her in the face again; and if I don't ask her I will see her, talk to her—but that is misery, the worst consolation possible, a privilege open to every civil young man of her acquaintance. Dora! Dora! No! I must put an end to it. I must—Ah!"—for a sound of feet and loud voices announced company, and two young men made a noisy entrance. The foremost one exclaimed:

"Hello, Hammersmith! are you making your will that you look so lugubrious?" And he exchanged sly winks with his companion.

But Hammersmith smiled quietly as he remarked—

"You are rather noisy cubs. What's afoot now?"

"O, we are going to have some fun, and we want you to join us."

"What kind of fun do you mean to have?"

"Well, you see, Halloween is coming and that night people always 'try tricks,' to see whom their future husband or wife is going to be."

"And do you expect me to engage in any such nonsense?" Hammersmith asked good humoredly.

"Well, no," said young Liston, who had spoken first. "Of course such a grave old bach as you don't care much about women and all the tricks we intend to try are on some girls who are going to try tricks."

"And who may the girls be? Any friends of mine?"

"Yes, indeed, but I will not tell you their names unless you promise to be one of the party."

"Well, I promise, then, provided there is no harm intended. Who are the girls, and what are the tricks?"

"The girls are Carleton's sister here, and mine, and Dora Vane. They are to spend the evening at our house, and I overheard their plot, quite unknown to any of their friends, just by themselves, and try tricks to see who their future husbands will be. Now what I propose is for us to lie in wait; and when they get to the point where the future husbands are to come in, for us to personate those gentlemen."

"But this is taking a very unfair advantage of the girls."

"O, nonsense! It is all in fun, and will be a bargain no one need consider as binding if that's what you are afraid of."

"I am not afraid of that," said Hammersmith slowly, in whose mind an idea was beginning to dawn which was likely to prove engaging. "You are sure we can enter and it be arranged without any consequences?"

"O, yes," said Liston eagerly. "There is a bedroom off the parlour which they intend to occupy, which also opens from another room, and the door into the parlour is always kept locked. I'll see that it can be unlocked at short notice that night, and with care, and by wearing light boots we can enter unperceived, and the rest will be easy. Halloween is next Saturday night, and this—"

"Is Wednesday. They may change their plans before that."

"Well, I can easily discover if it is they do, and we will change ours accordingly."

"Then we will consider it a settled thing," said Carleton, speaking for the first time. "It will only be a little fun. That is all the girls mean by trying their tricks, and that is all we mean by ours."

"Well, I leave it all to you fellows," said Hammersmith. "You make your arrangements, and I'll help you all I can."

"Thank you, old fellow. I knew you would. You're a boss old boy, Ta, ta."

And the two young fellows passed out, but once out of earshot they laughed heartily. "How easily he fell into the trap!" they said. "It will be the best joke out."

But Hammersmith gave himself up to reflections like the following: "I shall be certain to find out then. It's hardly fair to the girls, though they say 'all's fair in love or war'; but, oh, my Dora, if I may ever call you mine, if it cause you one pang, I will make it up to you a hundred-fold!"

Before going further we must explain the remark of the boys to one another after leaving Hammersmith. Both these young fellows having fallen in love with Dora Vane, or imagined themselves so, which is the next best thing, had, with the conceit usually attendant on youth and good looks, also imagined each one that he himself was

Miss Dora's favourite. Poor Silas Hammersmith, who imagined that Dora could not possibly care for him, was plainly perceived by everyone to be madly in love with Dora. The sisters of these young men, each with the wish to do what was possible in her brother's cause, and prompted by the brothers, had concocted the little scheme to draw Dora out, and if possible to find out whether preference really lay, something of which as yet Miss Dora had given no hint, and at the same time to have a little fun with Hammersmith, for whom either girl would willingly have sacrificed her maiden name.

The night came, clear and cold, as Halloween generally is in Canada. Everything had gone well with the plotters. They sat before the wood fire piled high on polished brass and iron in the quiet old fireplace, and burned hazel nuts tied in leaves and named for their true loves and themselves. They had "turned the key," and found the first letters of his name, in fact had gone through with the whole routine of tricks laid down by their grandmothers in the days when Halloween was as much of an institution as Christmas or New Year. But the crowning trick of all was to be the last. Each in turn was to be blindfolded and led by the other two to a locked door, there to stand alone and call thrice for the future husband, and the one whom they were fated to have would unlock the door and kiss them. Everything had gone well so far, and the girls were in high glee, but Dora objected.

"What if somebody would really come?" she said.

"Nonsense!" said the other two. "Of course it's all fun."

"Buy what if he should?"

"Why nothing could come except some person, and he would know it to be a joke."

"Well, one of you go first."

"No," they insisted. Dora must go first.

"We'll draw lots," said Dora firmly. "If it falls on me I will go first, but not else." To this they were obliged to agree, and as fate would have it the lot fell on Dora; so it must be confessed with a good deal of trepidation she let them adjust the handkerchief blinding her, and she was led to the hitherto locked bedroom door.

Of course the boys on the other side of the door had heard all the conversation and knew that Dora was coming to try her fate. So, as before agreed upon, Hammersmith was deputed to unlock the door and kiss the waiting beauty. Poor fellow, his knees shook under him, and his heart beat so loud and so fast that he thought it would choke him; but remembering all that was at stake, he noisily turned the key, and before they were hardly aware of it, had folded Dora in his arms, who, half-frantic with fear, forgot to struggle and lay quite still. While he whispered: "Dora, it is I, Silas Hammersmith, I love you, dear! Will you be my wife?"

But by that time Dora had recovered speech, and in a measure composure. She torn the handkerchief from her eyes, and looked up saucily, saying:

"Oh, you are the one, are you? But you did not do it right. The trick said you were to kiss me."

And she put up her rosebud mouth with apparent nonchalance. Diffident Silas could hardly comply with her request, while the rest of the company were exploding with laughter which they took no pains to disguise; but the look of entreaty in her eyes decided him, and he laid on her lips, the lightest, tenderest of kisses. Then she engaged herself, and slipping her hand through his arm, faced the rest of the group, who now seemed rather astonished at the added dignity of her manner, as she said in the clearest of voices and without a quiver—

"Ladies and gentlemen, to me this looks like a made-up plot, to have a joke either on me, or on Mr. Hammersmith, who is my promised husband."

The four jaws dropped, the four pair of eyes grew saucer-like with amazement. Dora gave a little squeeze to the arm she held, and continued:

"I doubt if you have found the joke to be as good as you intended; but as all tricks tried at Halloween come true, I invite you now to my wedding. Of course, I will issue formal cards of invitation, but I wish you to consider yourselves invited now. Mr. Hammersmith, I will be ready for home in ten minutes. Please to excuse me for the length of time." And she quietly left the room, followed by the two girls who were dumb with amazement. The two young fellows came forward and Carleton spoke:

"You have taken us rather by surprise, Hammersmith. How was it that nobody knew anything about your engagements?"

"Only a whim of Miss Vane's," smiled Hammersmith, on whom Dora's spirited little explanation had had a most soothing effect.

"Well, we must congratulate you at any rate," said Liston, a little shortly. "You have won the best girl in the town."

"I believe you, gentlemen, and thank you," said Hammersmith, shaking the proffered hands warmly. "I am the happiest man alive!"

By this time Dora had returned with her wraps on; and taking his arm they bade their friends good night. Once fairly in the street and alone, Hammersmith turned to his companion:

"My love," he said gravely. "Did you mean it?"

"Did you know anything of this affair before?" asked Dora.

Then he told her all the story of the boys' requests, all his own hopes and fears, and ended at last with:

"Tell me, Dora, that you do not blame me."

"I blame you for nothing but—"

"But what? Speak, my darling; I will atone for everything. Why do you blame me?"

"If I had spoken before, they would have had no room for their joke."

"But they will never know that it was all arranged before," he said delightedly. And he detailed the conversation after the girls had left the room. Dora was delighted that the bitters had been so cleverly bitten. They reached the Vane residence, and as they stood together for a last

moment, Dora said softly:—

"We will remember this Halloween, Silas!"

And Silas answered stoutly: "This one, and every one as long as we both shall live. I like 'trying tricks' at Halloween!"—*Toronto Globe.*

CHAPTER II.

"Malden, Mass., Feb. 1, 1885. Gentlemen—

I suffered with attacks of sick headache.

Neuralgia, female trouble, for years in the most terrible and excruciating manner. No medicine or doctor could give me relief or cure until I used Hop Bitters.

"The first bottle nearly cured me—"

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"And I have been so to this day."

My husband was an invalid for twenty years with a serious

"Kidney, liver and urinary complaint."

"Pronounced by Boston's best physicians—"

"Incurable."

Seven bottles of your bitters cured him and I know of the

"Lives of eight persons"

"In my neighborhood that have been saved by your bitters."

"And many more are using them with great benefit."

"They almost do miracles?"—*Mrs. E. D. Slack.*

"Little Sweethearts."

BY

JOHN READE, F. R. S. C.

I hear there is a wonderful little picture coming out that will be admired all over the continent, it is entitled "Little Sweethearts."

To me it is one of those charming creations with which one cannot help falling in love at first sight; nor does the impression depart on closer acquaintance. With simple directness, in language that all the world can understand, the artist has told his story—a story of a young romance which, nevertheless, is as old as humanity itself. He has depended on effect on no accessories of luxury or ornament. All this creative thought and sympathetic insight and magic skill of craft have been centred on two youthful figures which give the picture its name. What charming "little sweethearts" they are! The handsome boy, with his peachlike skin in one brown hand, while the other rests caressingly on the shoulder of the little maid, on whose face he gazes so fondly; and the little maid herself, with her wealth of amber hair, the eyes half arch, half tender, and the sweetly smiling lips, conscious of the just uttered assurance of the old rhyme:—

"If I love you as I love you, nothing shall ever part us two."

The whole conception is admirable, and not less so in the execution in reproduction as in the original. There is nothing artificial, nothing adventitious. The manly beauty of the boy, the lovely wistfulness of the girl's face, manner and expression, are set off by no alien finery. His dress is that of the peasant class to which he belongs. Her sole ornament is a small cross pendant from a ribbon round her neck. Gesture, look, tone, combine most effectively to impart the meaning of the scene. Nothing trivial or far-fetched diverts attention from the main motive. The sombre background of cloudy sky, seen through interlacing branches, makes more emphatic the bright joyousness of the young forms and faces. Though there is no doubt of the boy's affection or of the girl's love and faith, neither of them have as yet begun to take his on serious. The reflection may suggest a touch of pathos in connection with a love-making that takes no thought of tomorrow, as the possibilities of that morrow obscure themselves on the mind of the experienced beholder. To those who have passed the season of "love's young dream," it is like a glimpse of a far off world long since left behind; the world which they knew before the years of wild romantic worship, of passion and conflict with life's stern realities. It brings back the guilelessness of an age too candid either to willfully deceive or to fear deceit—an age when everything, animate and inanimate, still bore the seal of the Creator's sanction and was seen to be good; when at each turning down the road, the traveler would say: "How good is man's life—the more living! how fit to employ!

All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!"

Joy in its association with love—the true romantic association—is what to me the picture suggests. To be sure, every picture, like every word, has a distinct message for each individual. No two persons look at it from the same point of view. There are some pictures, notwithstanding, that appeal to the general heart of mankind and can hardly be interpreted amiss. The "Little Sweethearts" is one of them; it speaks to the world in a language that would be quite intelligible in Babel itself. That fastidious sensibility or rather sensitiveness which special culture is expected to confer is, fortunately, not needed for its appreciation. All normally constituted persons of fair education and delicacy of thought have sufficiently developed the instincts of art and taste to enable them to seize its significance and rejoice in its beauty. This artistic wonder can be secured only by subscribers to the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, Montreal. It is not for sale. Send a postal card for particulars.

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