His Best Room.

BY DAVID B. WRIGHT.

oldest and dearest friend, he should ber easily enough when he would have chosen a better and another have laughed at any apology for time for his visit than now, when such a room as this. I hope prosthe house was already filled with perity has not spoiled him. guests. Indeed, Miss Hathaway Then Mason proceeded with his had suggested that they write to undressing. At least he took off his shoes and flung them carelessly intimating that he would enjoy on the floor. The lamp flickered himself and that they would enjoy and then went out. "The firelight him very much more if he would is good enough for me," he said, and come at a time when they could his fancy took another turn. "And have him more to themselves. But Margaret! What a stunning girl the major would not consent, and she was! What mischief there was Mason was now about to come, and in her eyes! What a laugh she there was nothing else to do but had! I was fool enough to feel make ready for him as best they hurt when she married. I tried to could, and upon Major Hathaway persuade myself that I had been himself devolved the preparation of little in a way. And there was so their only vacant room, his sister little. When she sent me that being very much occupied with her dried, pressed flower from the own friends. The room was really grave of Abelard and Eloise, I was the best in the house, but the major vain enough to think that there had good reason for not placing in was some significance in that little it any one for whom he had regard. message from the tomb of those At least he had reason that he al- famous lovers. Pshaw! What a ways maintained was not a good young fool I was! She must be rejoined. one, but which had weight with very rich now. Well, what is that him. Now, with his own man, to me?" He must have dozed then. Peter, he was engaged in making At all events, sitting there before comfort. Peter complained half until he was aroused presently by aloud to himself that any one should be given such a place to the filling of his room with the clear light of day." She mimicked "Stop your muttering, Peter," not move except to look around but you spoke of marrying her;

growled the major. "There is noth- the edge of his screen as the woman runs to lines—long straight lines." bright and cheerful."

At this moment there was noise | ing. brought the luggage.

best I can do for you to-night."

better. You don't mean to say she walked towards the door her that you can do any better than foot struck one of Mason's shoes. this for such an old tramp as I She was startled, but she looked have become, do you? I've had about her, and as she saw the evitoo much roughing of it not to be dence that the room was occupied alive to the warmth of a fire like she nearly screamed aloud. She that and the comfort of a room | did drop her candle and a bracelet,

major to Peter, and then, turning relighted the lamp. to Mason, he went on, "How well you do look, now that I have time to see what you do look like."

"Oh, yes!' answered Mason. "A worse! But where did you come little good shooting in all sorts of from? What an adventure! Of go on praising you and getting bad countries and a lot of assorted | course I did not know that any weather are not bad for a fellow's one was here." complexion. They tell me you have a big house party on. Have

"Yes. That is the reason I can- ing. Promise me you will forget not give you another room to- all about it.

room? I tell you it is better than ture were you looking at and apos-I need, or deserve either for that trophizing?

a room as I would like you to so dense?"

have." "Rubbish!" Mason exclaimed

"No, if you will excuse me. am not very fit to-night. By Jove!"

Mason went on as he looked closer at two framed photographs hanging on the wall. "These are the pictures we went together to have taken so long ago." "It was not so very long ago."

"We were very youthful however. The world seemed very full of cakes and ale, and the future had in it for us much glory and renown.

"Oh, the world is no so very bad a place, and you have won some glory and renown."

"And you the cakes and alesome of them," Mason rejoined, laughing. Well, who is here?" "Your old sweetheart for one-

Margaret.' In the meantime they had filled their glasses, and Mason, before replying, lifted his glass, looked

critically at its contents and then drank slowly. "Indeed! Is the old duffer with

"No. The old duffer died a year ago. Margaret is a widow."

"Naturally," Mason responded. "What does she look like?" "Who? Oh, Margaret - Mrs.

"I think I had better go. If you don t mind, I will. I hope you will

Vance. She is more beautiful than

sleep well." "I shall not be able to help myself. Don't let me keep you, I

beg."
"I think you have everything within call, you you need. I am within call, you

know. "What do you expect to be troubled with - nightmare?" Mason

asked laughingly. Again seeking to be assured that

Mason would probably sleep well, the major stood for a minute or so by the open door.

"Don't lock yourself in," he said at length. "Remember I am on

this corridor.' some astonishment. He laughed, on. "So Margaret Vance was the as though he found some reflection something on your mind. Surely amusing. Then he removed his you cannot mean it? Marry Marcoat and waistcoat and put on a garet Vance." lamp down low, and, placing a "How could I do better? I know screen behind his chair, sat down that you admire her.' before the fire and surrendered himself to his fancies for awhile. returned carelessly, "but you spoke not to the bicycle? I'll bet if I had all he ever wrote here I could find "Poor old chap!" he said half aloud of marrying her." to himself. "He must be rattled, "Why not? She is lovely, charm- some reference to bloomers. And

Of course it was not the major's His sister has coddled him until he fault. If Carroll Mason was his is soft—simply soft. I can remem-

arrangements for Mason's the fire he was silent and very quiet gentle light of a candle. He did him now. "Oh, yes, I admire her,

ing to mutter about. Get that fire | who carried the candle walked to | Lines, indeed. going better and let everything be the wall where the photographs of himself and the major were hang- to say as she paused to breathe. of an arrival below and Major! "There he is," Margaret Vance Hathaway hurried away to meet | said aloud. "I could not resist the

his expected guest. Peter followed close upon his heels. Presently the major and Mason entered the have given an arm to know whethroom, and in a few minutes Peter er she meant himself or the major. "Just the honestest eyes in the "I hope you will be comfortable world, and the same firm mouth. here, Mason, old boy." The major But he was so dense," Margaret tried to speak heartily. "Its the continued. "There is no harm in confessing it now. I did love him."

"I'd like to know what could be | She turned to go at this, but as but Mason arose and with a reas-"Go get some liquor," said the suring word struck a match and

> "Is it you?" she asked. "Yes, very much at your service." "Oh, I am so glad it is nothing

"Of course not." "I must go at once. Please give me my candle. This is too shock-

"I don't know that I shall forget, "What is the matter with the but I shall never tell. Whose pic-

"You heard me-you listened-"Nothing-nothing is the matter | Major Hathaway's of course."

with it, my dear Mason, but-I "Oh!" exclaimed Mason pretendwas afraid—it is not quite so good | ing enlightenment. When was he

The major? Never."

Mason advanced toward her with feigned alarm. good humoredly. "I am afraid you wish to do the magnificent with me. Show your house to me tome. Show your house to me to- at the door, and Margaret Vance hurried behind the curtains of the there was a knock at the door, and "Then you won't go down to- old-fashioned bed. Mason opened almost without delay Major Hathathe door and Major Hathaway en- way entered again. Margaret tered the room.

> "I thought I heard voices," he and as the major saw her he threw "I like to talk to myself," Mason Mason ran to him and caught him

"I think I will sit here a little he cried. while with you," Major Hatheway

said as he seated himself. "What way called. "Don't you see it?" is that candle doing here?" Mason walked towards the mantel, where Margaret's candle was dow.

burning. As he passed the table he saw her bracelet which he had before rescued from the floor. Uttering a smothered exclamation, he put that in his trousers pocket.

"Just at present the candle is ishly. "A well authenticated haunttrying to outshine the lamp. Per- ed room-came with the house. haps Peter thought one could not I hoped you would be asleep behave too much light in a strange fore the ghost should show itself. room. It is very convenient to But what are you doing here?" he light cigars with. Do have a went on, turning to Margaret,

"Thank, you," the major responded, as he took the proffered cigar and lighted it. "You will forgive

me, I trust." "There is nothing to forgive, old

fellow. You did the best possible thing for me when you put me The major puffed away at his

cigar silently while Mason looked at him curiously and Margaret your confidences." Vance, behind the curtains, was in a tremor because she could not escape without discovery.

"You seem to have something on about to tell me when she would your mind," Mason said at length. marry me. "I have," answered the major. "It is a lady. I think of marrying, ed.

"Indeed! Who is she?"

Mason said confidentially, and he simply astonish you, A good Ulster for \$4.00 and cur \$8.00 Ulsters are regular \$12 Coats.

Call at once and get fitted up for X'mas. reason to think that I may even treated toward the door and raised

hope to win her." "You are too modest. Who is

"Well, to you I may as well con- -in the cold, clear light of day."

fess. It is Margaret Vance." This was something of a blow to Mason. It certainly was unexpected. For a moment he looked Mason looked after the major in he recovered, however, and went helplessly at the major. Presently

"Oh, yes, I admire her," Mason sun can those vicissitudes refer if

ing and beautiful." "Certainly, but she rather runs to lines, don't you think?"

Did she not once give you the

thoroughly womanlike way. Be-

they never reform."

I shall do it tomorrow."

me if you are disturbed."

call if I need you, never fear."

"Oh, you cannot mend matters

that way. See what you have

done. You get me here in your

"But, if you remember, you came

"How dare you say so? You

know I did not know that you

were here. Besides, I never jilted

way or any other. You know I did not."

"How could you be so cruel

"But it was my room, and you

"Nonsense! Why should I wish

such things to the major. Of

more interested every minute. It would not have been fair."

"Why not, pray?"
"I had other plans. I could not

listen to his words of praise. I

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean love, marriage, every-

thing. You never jilted me before.

You will not do so now."

Margaret heard him coming.

"Let me go," she said in un-

Before Margaret could reply

sprang away toward the window,

by the arm. "What is the matter?"

"The ghost—there by the win-

"So the room is haunted!" Mason

"Oh. I-I thought the room was

empty and I came in just for a

whim, that is all, and you came in

and I have not been able to get

"And you heard all that I said?"

"Oh, yes!" Margaret answered

"Of course I could not betray

her," Mason broke in, "and stop

"Of course not," Major Hatha-

as you came in Margaret was

"Oh, Carroll!" Margaret protest-

"You know you were, Margaret,

way rejoined. "Well?"

the major asked, with a new fear.

Vance came forward slowly.

"See what?"

exclaimed

will not until I am sure of you."

when I could not defend myself?

came into it to look at my picture."

"And never will, I trust."

I could not get out."

to look at your picture?'

time of night."

if I were you."

into my room.

"Well, I should say not. You can go clear back to the Old Testa "Lovely lines." "Long, straight ones, I mean. ment and find the case of a man I'll admit she is charming, or used whose tire was punctured in some to be-but-butway while he was trying to cool "But what?" his brow with the contents of the "Wouldn't it be better if she old oaken bucket. It's in Ecclesiaswere a little more exclusive?" tes xii, 6, that you will find the mention of the 'wheel broken at "You mean the flirts?"

"She will flirt until she dies, and the cistern.' And Pope knew of

such women don't die easily-and them too.' "How do you know?" "You are severe," the major re-"By his prologue to the satires, sponded, and then he asked slyly, in which he asks:

he's not the only one, either.

"Satire or sense, alas, can Sporus feel! Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? "Yes, in a heartless, cold blooded, "Of course it's a fool question, because no one breaks anything upon a wheel if he can help it. "Well, as you are out of the run- They are too hard to clean. But ning I mean to ask her for myself. it shows that you couldn't fool him on the subject of bicycles anyway. "If you don't change your mind Then the Old Testament bobs up in the cold, clear light of day, I again with a mention of 'a wheel wish you luck. Of course no man's in the midst of a wheel,' which is judgment is very reliable at this so clearly a reference to the sprocket wheel that it seems almost like a "You must forgive me. I forgot waste of time to explain it. There it was so late. Don't fail to call is also a line about a bicycle that needed oiling."

"What could disturb me? I will "In what?" "In 'The Brookside,' a poem by The major left the room and Lord Houghton. He writes of Margaret Vance came from behind wandering along by the brook and her hiding place. She was very then intimates that he had a squeaky wheel and that something "Of course Hathaway did not went wrong with it in the words, know you were here," Mason said The noisy wheel was still.' Even Disraeli compared the world to a "Don't speak to me," Margaret wheel, and Milton spoke of the wheels of Phœbus, who was evi-"I would not be too hard on him dently the first person to start a bicycle livery. Why, it makes me "He is an angel," Margaret an- tired to have people acting and swered, with enthusiasm, and con- talking as if no one previous to tinued scornfully, "but you - He this generation knew anything."-

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Lines, indeed."

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hatham, 29th Nov. 1993.

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up his hands and fell a-trembling. BATH GLOVES

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her hand forbiddingly. "Maybe, Carroll," she responded laugingly; "may be in the morning IMPROVED PREMISES

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(Sgd) SAM, THOMSON, (L. S.) Judge of Probates, Northumberland.

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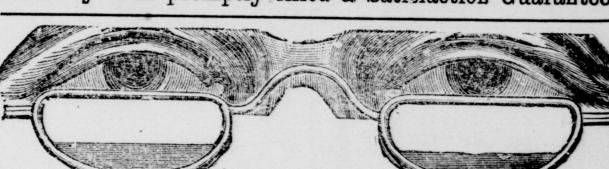
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