FOR ME?"

She was ready to sleep, and she lay on my In her little frilled cap so fine,

With her golden hair falling out at the Like a circle of moon sunshine,

And I humm'd the old tune of "Banbury Cross, And "Three Men Who Put Out to Sea,"

When she sleepily said, as she closed her blue eyes, "Papa, what would you take for me?"

And I answered, "A dollar, dear little heart. And she slept, baby weary with play.

But I held her warm in my love-strong And I rocked her and rocked away. Oh, the dollar meant all the world to me-

The land and the sea and the sky. The lowest depth of the lowest place, The highest of all that's high! All the cities with streets and palaces, With their people and stores of art,

I would not take for one low, soft throb Of my little one's loving heart. Nor all of the gold that was ever found In the busy wealth-finding past Would I take for one smile of my darl-

ing's face, Did I know it must be the last.

So I rocked my baby and rocked away, And I felt such a sweet content, For the words of the song expressed more

Than they ever before had meant And the night crept on, and I slept and dreamed

Of things far too gladsome to be, And I waken'd with lips saying close in "Papa, what would you take for me?"

-EUGENE FIELD.

### The Match for the Ursino Stakes.

The scene was in the office of the well known West End usurer, who is known to the public as William Congreve, and the dramatis personae was the said Mr. Congreve and the lady Agatha Ribstone. Her ladyship, as you may easily find in "Debrett" or "Burke," is younger daughter of the Rt. Hon, the Earl of Margill, of 200 Berkeley Square, and Pippin Court, Northants, a nobleman of old family, spotless reputation and respectable abilities, which-owing to agricultural depression and extravagant wife-he is very thankful to place at the disposal of his country at a salary of £1,200 per annum.

Lady Agatha "favors" her mamma, as the nurses say. Her reputation is not exactly spotless. Mind, I do not endorse all that is said in society, or all that is hinted in newspapers, about either of their ladyships' characters. I am inclined to believe that extravagance, frivolity, and a certain by no means uncommon feminine unscrupulcusness are the worst things that can be truthfully predicted of mother or daughter. And, coming to particulars, I would even lay 2 to 1 that the Countess' little affair with Sir Rupert X., which aroused such a scandal at the time as also Lady Agatha's much-talked-of escapade with a certain singer of Convent Garden celebrity, in neither case went to worse length than those of reckless imprudence.

With her ladyship, the countess. we are not further concerned. But as we shall see something more of Lady Agatha, a detailed description of her may not be out of place. She was a tall, striking gir', very pretty, in the blond style, with a natural pink and white complexion, fine blue eyes and rich golden hair. Her conversation was witty and vivacious; her manner-when she pleased-extremely sweet and winning. It was so now. She was evidently doing all she knew to make an impression on William Congieve.

How far she was succeeding was not yet apparent. The money lender sat back in his chair listening to her silvery, coaxing voice, with a polite smile on his face that might mean anything. Mr. Congreve was a connoisseur of beauty and s.yle. He liked being appealed to by pretty, well-bred women, of whom, however-such, at least, as he did business with-he knew enough not to believe too much for what they told him, nor to set undue value on their sweet smiles and blandishments.

"The fact is, my dear Mr. Congreve," Lady Agatha was saying, with the prettiest pleading air possible. "that I simply must have the money. You see, I have accepted the Duchess of Porchester's invitation to make one of her nouse party for Ascot. But I cannot possibly go withont cash, to say nothing of the four or five new frocks that are quite indispensable. And my dressmaker-the mercenary wretch!-has refused point blank to put any work in hand for me unless she has cash down with the order."

"That is very inconsiderate of her." remarked Congreve, with his frigid, polite smile. "But presumably she has reason. I daresay your ladyship's account with her is somewhat overdue."

"I owe her a goodish bit, it is quite true. But still under the circumstances, it would have been to her own interests to oblige me. Only she is so suspicious, - Mr. Congreve, I believe I can rely upon your discretion?" she said, with an air of one who has taken a sudden re-

"Your ladyship may rest assured that I

"Well, to put it plainly, the truth is this: Mr. Ursino-the Mr Ursino, you know-is to be of the duchess' party. And-and," continued Lady Agatha, with some hesitation. "I-I-that is-you may possibly have heard rumors in which his-his-name and mine are connected, Mr. Congreve?"

understand that there is anything in them?" he enquired, eyeing her shrewd- like that entangle him."

Her ladyship colored slightly.

"Ye-e-s!" she replied, "I may truthfully say there is. We are not engaged yet. I do not pretend that. But-but- Mr. Ursino has indicated his feelings-mind, this is all in confidence—enough to make me sure that he would propose if only I gave him encouragement."

",Ah!" Congreve ejaculated. "And if he proposes, I presume your ladyship will

accept him?" Lady Agatha nodded affirmatively.

Then she said: "This will explain to you why I am so anxious to go to Ascot, and to be adequately gowned for the occasion. You know what opportunities these house parties afford for-for-anything of the kind, and--and-"

"Quite so!" assented the money lender thoughtfully. "Mr. Ursino is enormously rich, I understand?"

"They say he is worth five millions." "Umph! I always divide a millionaire's reputed income by four. Still, even so, the quotient in this case works out at a

very handsome figure." "Well, you see how important it is that I should have the money, Mr. Congreve. Only a hundred-just one hundred. And then I shall be able to pay you off the thousand I already owe you, and-"

"Your ladyship is very good to remember me," interposed Congreve with polite sarcasm. "I must think about it. Will you call again in an hour's time?"

"Very well," replied Lady Agatha, rising. "But do make up your mind to oblige me, there's a dear man! I will loan."

consideration. You shall have my answer | this little event a bit too speculative to when you return," said the money lender | lend money upon; unless-unless, inas he bowed her out.

Then he resumed his seat, and surrendered himself to his reflections. For ouce in a way he attached some credit to what Lady Agatha had told him-not because she has assured him of it, for he knew she would say anything to get money-but because he had already heard something of the kind from independent sources. Still, these rumors-what did they amount to? Names were often thus coupled together without adequate grounds. And even if the engagement stage was reached, that was hardly equivalent to the matrimonial. Look in the Morning Post any day of the six, and you may find at least one announcement that "the marriage arranged, etc., will not take place." The fact was, during the period of courtship, people got to know one another "a devilish sight too well." And Ursino, who had the name of being an honorable, high-minded, scrupulous man might easily get to know more of Lady Agatha than he would complacently stomach. Yet there was the chance. And if only he (Mr. Congreve) could get her ladyship under his thumb! How fir would she go in her present straits for cash?

At the end of the hour she came back. When she was seated Mr. Congreve began. He spoke with great deliberation, as though he were carefully weighing every word before he uttered it.

"I have been thinking over your ladyship's application for an advance of £100, and-"

"I hope you have decided to let me have it," she interrupted anxiously.

"Well, the truth is, your ladyship, my business is an extremely risky one. I make a great many bad debts, and when your liability to myself reached the large figure of £1,000 I decided that this was the limit, and that I could not let you increase it. To that decision I am afraid I must adhere."

"But surely!" cried Lady Agatha, in evident disappointment and dismay. "Under the circumstances,-with-with-

such a splendid prospect in view-" "Splendid but extremely speculative," interposed the money lender. "I do not

think I can undertake the risk." "Oh! but it is not speculative, really!

dead cert," pleaded Lady Agatha. "We know these dead certs-both on

the turf and elsewhere!" replied Mr. Congreve, dryly.

"Oh, but I beg you. You will notyou cannot-be so unkind, so unbelieving as to refuse," she entreated, putting her lace handkerchief to her eyes in the prettiest gesture of distressed innocence.

"I have no wish to be unkind, Lady Agatha, but this is a matter of business, into which beniguity or the reverse do not enter," answered Congreve. "And as for being unbelieving, I do not, of course, doubt that your ladyship's statements have been made in perfect good faith. only I think it is not improbable that you were wearing rose-colored spectacles when from any other source was impossible. you made them. It is true, I know, that She had long since disposed of her jewels; sickened, infuriated, impotent, while her Mr. Ursino's name had been mentioned a in fact, she had been wearing paste these good deal lately in connection with your | two years. Her credit was blown upon.

\*PAPA, WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE as strictly confidential," said the money tion of a Miss De Tracy," he added, looking at her keenly.

Lady Agatha flushed angrily, and tapped her neat little shoe on the carpet in evident annovance.

"Oh, that creature," she cried. "Of course we all know that she has run after Mr Ursino in the most shameless manner. Everybody is simply disgusted with her. But she has no chance with him-not she! "I have heard some rumors. Am I to Mr. Ursino has too much sense and selfrespect to let a low-born, designing thing

She laugned scornfully-spitefully. The money lender saw that he had put his finger on a sore spot. His expression betokened a certain quiet, malicious amusement.

"Low born?" he enquired, raising his eyebrows in polite surprise. "I understood that Miss De Tracy was nearly related to the Marchioness of X."

"Related? Well, if it is so, it is not in a way that can be acknowledged. You may remember what a character Lady X's brother bore, and how he was always running after barmaids and ballet girls. Perhaps that circumstance may throw some light upon this—this De Tracy creature's existence," exclaimed Lady Agatha, with considerable venom. "Or perhaps which is equally likely-she is the daughter of some impossible nouveau enrichi who has bribed the marchioness (who is notoriously hard up) to chaperon her into society. In either case she is not the sort of person that a refined gentleman like Mr. Ursino could consider seriously for a moment, even if she had the requisite personal attractions which she has not."

"She is reported to be very beautiful," said William Congreve with his quiet

"Beautiful? Goodness me! Does anybody say that?" scoffed her ladyship. "Well! There is no accounting for some people's taste."

"Just so," answered the money lender. "And Mr. Ursino, for ought I know, may be one of these people for whose taste there is no accounting. At any rate, his name is mentioned in connection with pay you any interest you like for the Miss De Tracy's as often as with your own. And altogether I consider the con-"I will give the matter very careful tingency of your ladyship's bringing off deed-"

"Unless what?" cried Lady Agatha,

"Unless you can get me another

"If that is all, I believe I could get you another name," she replied.

"Ah! But any name will not do. was thinking of one particular name." "Whose?" she demanded quickly.

"That of your prospective fiance, Mr. Ursino." Lady Agatha gave a petulant, mortified

gesture. "Absurd-impossible! You cannot surely be serious in expecting anything so absolutely preposterous. How could I

ask Mr. Ursino to put his name to a promissary note for me?" William Congreve shrugged his shoulders; then, leaning back in his chair, stared fixedly at the ceiling.

"How the gentleman's name is obtained does not concern me," he said. 'I must leave this part of it to your ladyship."

"But it is out of the question, I tell you. It is not to be considered for a mo-

"Other ladies in the same predicament as yourself have managed to do it," replied Congreve, "when they found they could not get the money from me or any other terms."

"How did you manage it?"

"I did not ask them," said the usurer

There was an intention in his words, as well as in his look, and even a less acute personage than Lady Agatha could scarcely have mistaken.

"You mean," she exclaimed, changing color slightly, "that they-brought you the bill with somebody's name upon it, and that-well, I suppose you took it without asking any questions?"

"I am not the man to insult a lady by impertinent enquires," he said, with a queer smile. "I am satisfied with the name. The bills were met on maturity. What else could I want?"

"But surely that was f-f-forgery," stammered Lady Agatha, quite horrorstricken.

He shrugged his shoulders, laughing. "Really," he told her, "I did not trou-In the language of the turf it is simply a ble to enquire whether they committed a technical offence or not. All I aimed at was to oblige these ladies, while at the same time securing myself. I know that if the names I asked for were on the bills, the bills would be duly met. They were met. My clients were satisfied. So was I. There was no more to be said."

> Then, after a pause, he added: "If you get Mr. Ursino's name, I will

willingly increase the advance from one hundred to five."

She sat looking at him irresolutely. money very badly indeed; not only to go to Ascot with, but to meet other very pressing claims. Five hundred pounds shall regard anything you may tell me own. But there has also been some men- The patience of her friends were exhaust-

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ed. The suggestion was very tempting. Yet to commit a felony-to put herself in this man's power! Was it a felony, in view of the money lender's collusion? It was a deadly, dangerous thing to do, anyhow. And yet-and yet-

While she was thus trying to make up her mind, Congreve did something which showed conclusively that he knew his Lady Agatha. Unlocking his desk he took therefrom a stamped bill slip and his checkbook. On the former he quickly scribbled a few lines, and then he proceeded to fill in and sign a check, which he tore out of the book and pushed across the table, with the bill-slip, toward Lady

"There," he said, "is an open check for five hundred and promissory note at six months for seven-fifty. I've dated the check to-morrow. And I'll give your ladyship till 9.30 in the morning to make up her mind. If you want the cash, come round here to-morrow before that hour, bringing the promissory note signed by yourself and countersigned by Mr. Ur. sino. Otherwise, I shall conclude that you do not propose to carry the matter further, and I shall telephone to the bank to stop the check."

"I -it-I-I-do not think I can do it," said Lady Agatha. But she leaned forward and picked up the check and the promissory note. "Pay to bearer £500." Five hundred in hard cash! It was certainly a tremendous temptation.

"Well, I'm not going to persuade your ladyship," remarked Mr. Congreve, with an offhand air. "Any other lender would try to rush you by insisting on an smmediate decision. But that's not my way. It's quite immaterial to me whether your ladyship borrows the money from me or not. I simply wish to oblige you, so far as is consistent with securing myself. The note will not fall due, you observe, for six months and three days. During that period it will remain securely locked up in my safe. At the end of the time I am sure it will be duly taken up," he added, "without anyone but you and me being aware of its existence."

"I-I must think it over," murmured Lady Agatha, slipping the check and the promissory note into her dainty little

purse bag. She did think it over. The result of her reflections was that early next morning William Congreve received back the stamped paper, signed and countersigned respectively by Agatha Ribstone and Thomas Ursino.

Whether her ladyship would have dared after all, to venture on this dangerous, not to say dishonest step, had it not been for certain further circumstance, we cannot say. But in the interval it came to her knowledge that the Marchioness of X. and Miss De Tracy were also to be of the Duchess of Porchester's Ascot party. That settled it. She knew well enough -though it had suited her book to make it out otherwise to Congreve-that "Tommy" Ursino was dividing his attentions nearly equally between the De Tracy girl and herself. Given level chances, she believed she carried heavy enough guns to win the day. But the position was still critical. And if that De Tracy creature had the monopoly of Tommy during four whole days in a country house it was quite possible she might manage to rush him? No, come what might, she must go to Ascot, properly equipped with bewitching costumes and an adequate supply of cash. The De Tracy must he baffled and Tommy must be made to toe the

And that was how Lady Agatha came to form one of the Duchess of Porchester's party for Ascot week. She started on the campaign armed—in addition to her own natural weapons-with all the lethal instruments that art and a modiste could supply. She set out in high spirits, confident of conquest.

The campaign had been a disastrous Five hundred pounds! She did want the failure. From the first day the perfidious Ursino had avoided her. He had simply thrown himself into the arms-the extremely wide open arms-of the De will just tide her over. To get money Tracy. Nothing Lady Agatha did had any efficacy. She could only look on hated rival carried all before her.

(Continued on Page 5.)

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