

VINCENT'S MISFORTUNE.

I'd rather not tell the story, but I suppose I must, because you heard a garbled account of it, so I've got to tell it in self-defence. I assure you there was no row of any sort. People said all sorts of things, as they always do, and there was a scandal, and a fuss, and the thing was a nine days' wonder. You needn't grin like that, Pumper; I came out of it with clean hands. Oh, you've heard several versions of the story, have you? I don't believe a word of it; you merely say that to draw me. You will have it. Well, then, here goes.

Harry Vincent belonged to a fast set. There was nothing particularly bad about them, but they had more money than was good for them; it had not been for that I think I would have seen more of Harry Vincent. We came from the same part of the country, you know; and had known each other all our lives; we were both Magdalen men, and when I came up to Oxford for the first time as a freshman, Vincent was already in his fourth term, and, of course, that made a considerable gulf between us. Vincent owed any amount of money at Oxford; the tradesmen were only too glad to get his name upon their books. It did not matter very much, for Vincent's father was a rich man, and, as everybody knew, the chairman of the Great Wangooodle gold mine.

Then came the crash. The Wangooodle gold mine turned out to be a swindle. Old Vincent fled to what is commonly known as "foreign parts," and then, to put it shortly, the Assyrion came down. Vincent did not come back to Magdalen; how could he, poor fellow?

I lost sight of Vincent for eight years; and, to tell you the truth, though once upon a time he had been as thick as thieves, he had dropped out of my mind altogether. But I went to the Fortico theatre one night, and whom should I see but Vincent. And where do you think I saw him? Why, of all places in the world, upon the stage. I could hardly believe my eyes. I looked at Vincent. I stared at him through my opera glass; then I consulted my play book. This is what I read: "Capt. Jack Strongheart, Mr. Vincent Malet." That settled it. Of course, Vincent Malet; there could not be a shadow of doubt. I had heard of Mr. Vincent Malet before, as a young actor who had had a great success, principally owing to his good looks. He was supposed to be an Antinous, a beauty-man; one's sisters and one's cousins and one's aunts always raved about him—particularly one's aunt. There could not be a doubt about it; it was Harry Vincent.

I was delighted to see him. I nodded, I winked; but he took not the slightest notice of me. So, directly the curtain fell, I marched round to the stage door, and sent my card in to Mr. Vincent Malet. "Down in two minutes, sir," said the stage door-keeper—who lived in little box which resembled a Punch and Judy show—after calling up the speaking tube and receiving his answer.

There was a big swing door covered with oilcloth, above which was nailed a rusty horseshoe. It did not look very inviting, that "fairy portal"; every now and again the door would swing open and some one or other would hurry out. With one exception, they all spoke to the door-keeper. The remark was always the same, "Any letters, Boulton?" And he replied punctiliously, addressing them as Sir or Miss or Madame. Most of the people who passed out were shabbily and roughly dressed. I saw the popular favorite, Miss Lotte Titterly. I did not think much of Miss Lotte Titterly in private life; she was pale, not to say flabby looking; and her mouth was—well, it was not exactly a rosebud, and she must have left that arch smile of hers, which we all so much admire, upstairs in her dressing room. Then a tremendous vision appeared. It wore a tremendous fur coat, which was flung open to display its huge shirt front, its diamond solitaire and its gigantic ebert; it wore dress shoes and dove-colored silk socks, its wristbands reached to its knuckles. On its fingers sparkled valuable gems. Its hair was scanty, and its nose was aquiline. The doorkeeper bowed very low, as that glorious vision passed out. "At last I have seen him," I thought; "this is the man I have read about, the 'patron of the drama'—probably a belted earl."

"Who is that?" I asked the doorkeeper. "Him?" said the man. "Why, that's the 'guy'; that's Mr. Belshazzar, our manager."

Just then Harry Vincent came down. He seized me by the hand and told me he was uncommonly glad to see me. "Let's go and have some supper at Spagnoletti's, old man," he said. We went to Spagnoletti's, and over that supper we got as thick as thieves once more. I congratulated him on his success.

"I didn't think you had it in you, Harry," I said.

And then he told me that he had drifted into the theatrical profession because there was absolutely nothing else he could turn his hand to—partly that, and partly because he was in love with a very pretty girl. "I married her," said Harry Vincent with a sigh; "and we got £3 a week between the pair of us. We earned that £3 a week, and we had to work uncommonly hard for it. Now I get my £16, and I don't let Hetty work now. She has her hands full with the children—five of them and my boy. You remember Hetty Summerleigh, Jack?"

Of course I did. I had seen her play Cordelia when Boanerges Bawler had come down to "star" as King Lear at our little theatre at Bury St. Edmunds.

"It's hard work to make both ends meet," said Harry Vincent; "but I've saved a little money in case of a rainy day, and now I think we are all right. Come and look us up at Balham next Sunday, Jack," said Harry Vincent; and he gave me a card—"Mr. Vincent Malet, Palmerino cottage, Lath-and-plaster road, Balham."

I did go down to Balham. Harry introduced me to his pretty wife, his four small children and his prize baby. Harry Vincent and his wife were evidently very fond of each other, and pretty Mrs. Vincent was evidently very proud of her husband. "Harry has got the ball at his foot now, you see," she said, "and all he has got to do is to go on kicking."

I did not see anything more of Harry Vincent for three years. That was not my fault, but because my governor sent me out to our Lisbon house under the pretext that I ought to learn the business. When I got

back to England I felt particularly bored one morning. It was a very fine day. "I can't do better than look up old Harry Vincent," I said to myself. So I hailed a hansom and drove off to Balham, and pulled up at the door of Palmerino cottage.

I knocked, and Harry Vincent let me in himself. A blight seemed to have come over the place. The once pretty, though cheap, furniture now looked worn and ratty, the carpets were threadbare, the children looked pale and were shabbily clothed, the prize baby had grown into a weedy little boy of four, whose head seemed too big for his body. Poor little Mrs. Vincent had become a wreck, and there were great dark rings round her eyes. Harry, who used to be so particular about his dress, wore a shabby old tweed suit which was shiny at the elbows, and he was baggy at the knees, and he had on a pair of slippers which were down at heel. I regret to say that he also smelled of cheap tobacco. We had cold public house dinner and beer from the public house. During the dinner I noticed two very strange things. The first was that when Vincent answered me he seemed to do so haphazard. I also observed that whenever Mr. Vincent addressed him she did so at the full pitch of her voice. After dinner Harry and I went into the garden to smoke a pipe.

"I'm out of an engagement, old man," said poor Harry, with a dreadful smile; "Mr. Vincent Malet is 'resting,' and I shall never get another engagement, Jack—I have become as deaf as a post. It is a terrible misfortune," he added, with a groan, "and the doctors tell me I shall never get better—in fact, that I shall probably lose my hearing altogether."

Of course I sympathized. I offered to help him. I could not do less.

"It's no use, old man," he said; "it's no good my sponging on you. I've one comfort left, though, and one comfort only. Thank God Hetty and the children are provided for." That thought seemed to give the poor fellow intense satisfaction.

Just then Mrs. Vincent and her children came trooping out into the garden. Then Harry Vincent did a very strange thing. He kissed all the children, one after the other. Then he took his little girl upon his knee and kissed her again. "She's very like her mother, isn't she, Jack," said the poor fellow. She was a very pretty little girl of 7, and she was very like her mother. He kissed the child again with strange solemnity; and as he did so the tears stood in his eyes. "I mustn't leave you out in the cold, Hetty," he said, "or you'll be jealous." Then he rose and took his wife in his arms and kissed her repeatedly before my eyes.

"Now be off, all of you," he said; "I want to have a good, long talk with old Jack here."

Then he began to speak to me very solemnly. "Jack," he said, "I want to ask your forgiveness; some day you'll know why. I can't say any more now, old man; but I want you to say you'll forgive me, and that whatever happens, Jack, you'll try and think kindly of me."

He said the words in a broken voice, which was well nigh choked with emotion. Then he held out his hand. "Poor fellow," I thought, "this awful affliction has unhinged his mind; it's no use arguing with a man in his condition." I made up my mind to speak to Mrs. Vincent about her husband, and, of course, I shook hands with the poor fellow, and said that I would forgive him.

Then we began to talk about old times and the old Magdalen days; but it is hard work talking to a man who is as deaf as a post.

He saw that, too, poor fellow. "Jack," he said, briskly. "I'm a bad companion; let's have a turn with the foils." He went into the house; and he came back bringing a pair of masks and a couple of foils. We took off our coats and waistcoats and we set to with a will.

I was no good against Vincent; he did pretty well as he liked with me; I could not even touch him. After a while I began to lose my temper, like a fool; Harry Vincent only laughed, and forcing my foil from my hand, disarmed me, to my intense disgust. He picked up my foil. "Jack," he said, "you had the sun in your eyes; that put you to a disadvantage."

I got my handkerchief from my coat pocket to wipe my face, for I was out of training. As I did so, and turned my head on him for an instant, I fancied I heard something snap, though I hardly noticed it at the time.

"Have at you, Jack!" he cried, as he thrust the foil into my hand and attacked me with great vigor.

I was excited, and my blood was up. I made a tremendous lunge in second; he did not attempt to parry it, but advanced a step, and I ran him right through the left breast in an instant.

"Forgive me, old man," cried Harry Vincent with an awful smile; "it wasn't your fault, I planned it."

Then he fell back upon the turf, and without another word died almost instantly. When I had turned to get my handkerchief he had broken the button from the foil with his foot.

The jury brought in a verdict of "accidental death." Vincent had insured his life the week before for £5000, paying away the last farthing he had in the world as the first instalment of the premium. At first the Indisputable life office refused to pay. I attended his funeral. I went to the actuary of the Indisputable, and I made a clean breast of the whole matter.

Acting on the advice of their solicitors, the Indisputable life office paid up.

That's the story. What do you think of it, Pumper?

"Your friend was very fond of his wife and children." I said dryly.—*St. James Gazette.*

The Kid and the Wolf.

THE OLD SETTLER

Tells a Startling Story of a Sheep and a Wolf and a Wolf and a Sheep.

"Do you ever remember a cat that raised squirrels, gran' pop?" asked Peleg.

The Old Settler filled his pipe and lit it, and, lying back in his chair, beamed on Peleg and said: "No, sonny, I don't!"

Peleg was disappointed, and as the Old Settler puffed away in silence, hope died within him. He was about to take up the paper again when the Old Settler said:

"No, sonny, I don't member no cat th' ever rat-a-family o' squirrels. I don't member no cat-squirrels, but I member a member-wheat, b'gosh, 'n' a sheep-wolf, 'n' I know w'at I'm a talkin' about!"

The Old Settler knocked some ashes out of his pipe. Peleg rested his elbows on the kitchen table and his chin in his hands, and with his eyes fixed on his grandfather, waited.

"When I were a boy, in the Sugar Swamp deestric, Peleg," the Old Settler, began, "wols was pooty nigh ez plenty in the woods ez chipmunks is now. I've had to get up many a night 'fore I were ez old ez you yet, 'n' go out 'n' shoot half a dozen wols or so in our yard 'fore I'd get to sleep, they hollered 'n' yelled 'n' fit so. My pap, which 'd be your great-gran'pap now if he were on this side o' Jordan, sonny, but he ain't, though you'll see him one of these days if y' behave yourself, 'n' hear him playin' on a harp, w'ich 'd be worth yer wile, b'gosh 'n' he handles it any way nigh like he usety handle his fiddle!"

"Will, he kep' a good many sheep fer them days, my ol' pap 'd, 'n' to keep 'em safe w'en they was pasturin' somebody had to stan' around 'em with a gun to plug wols ez they kin sneak in the woods on the lookout for mutton. But for all the watchin' o' the sheep, ev'ry wunst in a wile some rampagin' ol' wolf 'd git in 'n' grab a lamb or tear open a sheep."

"One day pap were on the trail of a wolf nigh our clearin', but she were a cunning' ol' she one, 'n' she give him the slip. He run ag'in her nest, though, 'n' foun' a suckin' cub thar ez hadn't got its eyes open yet. Pap picks up the little wulf 'n' lugs it 'hum. He were gontier drown'd it, but I took a sort o' hanker'n' fer it, 'n' pap let me hev it to see w'at I'd do to 'ards raisin' of it by hand."

"The day afore pap gathered in the wulf cub o' our ol' ewes had a lamb. The lamb were ez black ez the ace o' spades, all 'cept a band ez wide ez yer hand right around the middle of its body, 'n' thar were ez white ez a new snowbank. Wull, sonny, the day after pap lugged the wulf cub hum that lamb turned up missin'."

"Nobody hadn't seen it git away, but it were gone. I bellerd wuss 'n' a weanin' call w'en I heerd the porty lamb were gone, but that didn't go fur 'ard gittin' it back. We couldn't git no trace of it, 'n' nat'urly consider 't th' some sly ol' wulf had gobbled it."

"Now w'at d'y' s'pose struck me, sonny, pooty soon arter that lamb turned up missin'?" Wull, I w'at'n' havin' su'prisin' good luck a raisin' o' my wulf cub by hand, 'n' the chances was th't it were on the high road to kickin' the bucket, w'en I happened to think 't the mammy o' thar missin' lamb moxt jist ez well be helpin' me out with the cub ez to be a blattin' all day fer the lamb."

So I run the sheep in from pastur' 'n' sot her to nussin' the young wulf. She objected like all possessed, 'long at first, but bimby she got used to the 'nug-ery little cuss, 'n' took keer of him, b'gosh, ez if he'd ben her own baby. W'at d'go w'ink o' thar, Peleg? A sheep suckin' 'n' milk! Cats nussin' squirrels 'n' ain't much 'longside o' thar, b'gosh! mightly!"

"Wull, sir, sonny, that ol' ewe riz that wulf the slickest kind, 'n' no two turkle doves never thort so much o' one another ez they did. W'en the wulf were a year old, he were the biggest un th' anybody ever see in the Sugar Swamp deestric."

He were ez gentle ez any lamb, 'n' took to runnin' the churnin' machine ez nat'ral 'n' ez willin' ez any ol' sheep ever did. W'en he wa'n't busy 'round the house he staid with the sheep in the pastur', 'n' many a prowin' wulf he necked 'n' shook the daylight out of. W'en Brungup were 'mongst the sheep we didn't hev no fear fer 'em. Thar were the name I give the wulf—Brungup—'cause if I hadn't 'n' brung him up, b'gosh, he woul'd'n't never 'a got up at all!"

"About the time Brungup got to makin' hisself so useful 'round our clearin', folks got to tellin' of a curious sort o' animal th' were bein' seen here 'n' thar 'bout the deestric. It were alluz travellin' with wols, but it wa'n't no more like a wulf th'n it were like a tagger. Fact o' the matter were, it were 'ez'ly like a big buck sheep, 'cept th't it had glarin' eyes, 'n' were fiercer 'n' a wulf, 'cept it were black ez the ace o' spades, 'cept a band around its body."

Folks had worried 'n' stewed over that wild buck sheep, keepin' comp'y with wols, 'n' couldn't 'n' stan' it, but the minute I heard it spoke of I says: "That's our lamb, b'gosh, th't turned up missin'!"

"Course it were, Peleg! 'Twere plain enough th't the mammy o' the wulf cub my pap lugged hum had jist slipped 'n' lugged away that lamb to take her cub's place. She nursed the lamb 'n' riz it, 'n' the lamb nussed the wulf natur' same ez the cub had took in the natur' o' the sheep. 'N' thar were the curious circumstance, sonny, of a wulf standin' guard 'n' pecterin' sheep ag'in its kind, 'n' a sheep prowin' with wols th' were luggin' away 'n' eatin' of its kind! 'Twan't long 'fore it were discovered th't the wild buck sheep wa'n't only travellin' with the wols, but were wuss th'n any wulf in cleanin' out sheep pastur's. The fierce wild buck 'd come a-rearin' 'n' a-tearin' inter a pastur', 'n' in less time th'n it takes to tell it 'd butt half the flock to death 'n' skeer the watchers away, 'n' then the wols 'd slide in 'n' carry off the dead. People got so they didn't keer fer wols no more. It were the terrible wulf-sheep th't sot 'em crazy. They hunted him 'n' they hunted him, but he ripped from pastur' to pastur', 'n' nobody k'd git nigh him. He hadn't never tackled our pastur', yit, 'n' it 'd 'n' be better fer him if he never had. One mornin' I went out to see how Brungup had got through the night. I didn't see nuthin' of him, but over at one corner o' the lot I see the ol' ewe th' had riz him actin' kinder queer. I stent over, 'n' thar laid Brungup dead 'n' a wulf, 'n' the ol' ewe a lickin' him 'n' blattin' over him the pitifullest kind. But my poor Brungup wa'n't the only thing th't were dead. He had his teeth sot clean to the gums in the throat o' the terrible black

wild buck with the wite band around his body, 'n' the wild buck were dyin'. Layin' 'n' thar were a big she wulf, dyin', with her throat all tore, 'n' whinin' over the dead buck, 'n' lickin' ol' him same ez our ol' ewe were lickin' poor Brungup 'n' mournin' over him! The fierce wild buck had come in the pastur' with the she wulf to kill 'n' steal 'n' mebbly help eat his own mammy, but Brungup were thar 'n' he pertected the ewe, 'n' killed his own mammy 'n' the ewe's own son, 'n' were killed himself a doin' of it!"

"Natur' is queer, Peleg," concluded the Old Settler, "but the queerest thing she does, b'gosh, ain't the settin' of an ol' cat to nussin' 'n' pass o' gray squirrels, not by a durn sight!"—*Ed. Mott*

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Intercolonial Railway. 1891—Summer Arrangement—1891

ON and after MONDAY, 22nd JUNE, 1891, the trains of this Railway will run (daily Sunday excepted) as follows:—

TRAINS WILL LEAVE ST. JOHN. Night Express for Halifax and Campbellton..... 7.00 Accommodation for Point du Chene..... 14.00 Fast Express for Halifax..... 14.00 Fast Express for Quebec, Montreal, and Chicago..... 16.25 Night Express for Halifax..... 22.30

A Parlor Car runs each way on Express train leaving St. John at 7.00 o'clock and Halifax at 6.45 o'clock. Passengers from St. John for Quebec, Montreal and