

## AN OLD HERO.

"I—I—oh, dear! I don't want to go to Henley at all," sobbed Maud Withington, miserably.

"Come, come, old sis, you'll like it when you're there. You'll see him rowing, you know," answered Mabel, in a consoling tone.

"But I don't want to see him rowing. I never want to see him under any circumstances again. It—it—only makes it harder to bear, now that—that—everything is over between us."

"I'm sorry for you, Maud, dear," exclaimed Mabel, placing her arm around her sister's waist and trying to kiss away some of the tears which were coursing down her cheek. "But you must try to take a more cheerful view. Perhaps papa will relent."

"Papa will never relent. He can't relent. You—you—know as well as I do that—that—his circumstances make that impossible. Besides, I'm engaged to—to—Old Scratch. That is why papa insists on my going today, because Old Scratch is coming. I—I—hate Old Scratch! And I wish I was dead!" finished up Maud, with energy.

"I am sure," said Mabel, with confidence, "that Mr. Spilshank is a gentleman, and that if he were to learn the state of your feelings he would immediately release you from your engagement. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Y-y-es, I think he would. But—but—I can't tell him. I—I promised papa; and—and—I'm in honor bound to keep the secret. Besides, it—it—I were to tell him, and we were to break off the engagement, papa would—would—at once bring down one of his horrid Stock Exchange friends—somebody much worse than Old Scratch—and insist upon my accepting him. Oh, it's cruel—it's a shame—to be placed in this position. I—I—wish I was the ugliest and most unattractive girl in the three kingdoms."

Mabel sighed. She would have been quite contented to relieve Maud of her burden of good looks had such a relief been possible. Perhaps, also, she did not think it any great hardship to be engaged to Old Scratch—a jolly, well preserved gentleman, who was not yet past the prime of his life, and had some £15,000 per annum to his fortune. It was not as though he were a man of objectionable or tyrannical character. Quite the reverse. He was a kind-hearted, courteous, considerate gentleman, against whom nobody could find a word to say.

The nickname "Old Scratch" which had stuck to him ever since his young manhood, had arisen in reference to his reputation as a sculler. For four successive years he was champion of the Thames; and in every handicap for which he entered he was always placed on the scratch mark. He had along ago given up these aquatic contests, except in the character of spectator and mentor to young aspirants.

Maud's engagement to this amiable gentleman came about in the following way: Her father a stock broker in a large way of business, about a year previously had met with a run of unlucky speculations, which crippled him considerably. Instead of giving up his large house and his expensive way of living, he embarked on some highly risky financial operations in the hope of bringing off a coup. The usual results followed. He landed himself in worse difficulties.

About this time a wealthy stock jobber of his acquaintance—Fladby by name—began to evince a partiality for Withington's younger daughter, Maud. The girl had already given her affection to Charles Milligan, the famous Oxonian, whose prowess as a sculler had already made him a public character. He was a handsome, manly young fellow, twenty-three years of age, but unfortunately the possessor of a diminutive income. While things went well with him Withington permitted the little affair between these two young persons to continue; but when he became hard hit and it was a matter of serious moment to him to introduce money into his family, he at once put a stop on Charlie Milligan's visits.

Maud protested with tears. Her father took her into his study and "talked to" her. He confided to her his precise position (or as much of it as suited his purpose), painted in harrowing colors the consequences of her refusal to comply with his wishes—that was to encourage Fladby—and finally appealed to her better feelings, as his child, to save his own gray hairs and his family name from irretrievable disgrace.

Fladby was a gilded vulgarian, a pompous, consequential buck, rising fifty, but spicing the dross and manners of thirty. She hated his sensual face and his affected airs. His coarse and fulsome compliments disgusted her. When he attempted love making he simply moved her to loathing. What might have occurred had matters in this direction reached a critical point, it is impossible to say. Before Fladby had actually proposed for Maud's hand another admirer turned up. He was a man whose acquaintance Withington made one day at the club, and whom having learned that he was wealthy, he took care to cultivate by asking him to his house.

This man, whose name was Spilshank, had not been at Withington's for a dozen times before his admiration for Maud grew apparent. He was in every way an improvement on Fladby. The upshot of it all was that Fladby—to his huge chagrin—received a peremptory conge, and Maud in her thankfulness to escape from that atrocious monster, made less difficulty than her father expected about accepting Spilshank's offer.

Withington was greatly annoyed when Old Scratch announced his intention of taking them all down to Henley to see the races for the diamond sculls.

"Wouldn't he prefer to go on one of the other days?" suggested the stock broker.

"Oh, no," said Spilshank, "Not the same thing at all." He especially wanted to see the famous Charles Milligan—the man who held the same position in aquatic as he himself had done twenty-five years back. Therefore, if it was all the same to Mr. Withington, he would much prefer to make the excursion on that one particular day.

It was not till the race for the diamond sculls drew near that the poor girl's lethargic manner brightened up, Maud will not easily forget that race. How eagerly she waited for the shells to come in sight! How her heart jumped when they appeared around the bend; how it thrilled when she heard clapping and cheering and loud shouts of "Milligan—Milligan!" They

came abreast, the two competitors. Milligan was lead by a length. His manly frame looked superb in rowing costume. How beautifully and with what ease he sculled. The other man, a Cantab, was now in distress. Milligan went as fresh as paint. He simply had the race in hand. But he spurred just for the finish and passed the winning post three lengths in front.

"Well sculled—well sculled, indeed, Charles Milligan!" thundered a hearty voice at her elbow, and two powerful hands began to clap with a noise resembling the report of a pistol.

Maud started around, like one awakening from a blissful dream. There stood Old Scratch. He was watching her face. No doubt he wondered why her cheeks were so flushed and her face so strained and eager.

Next morning, shortly after breakfast, Maud was summoned from the girl's boudoir by her father to an interview in his study. She went downstairs with a beating heart, expecting to be scathingly reproved for her conduct at Henley yesterday. But she was agreeably mistaken, for he did not utter a word of rebuke. He did, however, appear to be slightly annoyed, although he found no fault, merely saying with a rather cold intonation, "Maud, Mr. Spilshank has called to see you privately. He is in the drawing room now. You had better go to him at once."

"Yes, papa," said the girl, turning upon him a look half frightened, half imploring, of her large black eyes.

Her father took no notice of the look. He turned away and busied himself with some letters. Maud opened her lips as it about to speak. But no words came, and without further attempt to unobscure herself she left her father's presence and went to the drawing room.

Old Scratch stood on the hearth rug awaiting her.

"Sit down, my dear," he said to her, wheeling forward an armchair. "I have a little something to say to you, which will take time."

"It's a little story," said Old Scratch at length, smiling gravely. "Once upon a time, my dear, there lived a fine young fellow and a pretty charming girl. But the young man had no money, and his sweetheart's father, being in difficulties, urged her, compelled her, I may say, to give up her poor lover and to accept the attentions of a rich old scoundrel. She was a dear, good girl. She acted for the best. She responded to her father's appeal."

"I—I—I!" ejaculated Maud, gasping, and with rosy cheeks. "I—I—I—"

"Wait a bit, my dear," Old Scratch stopped her gently. "I have not finished yet. This young fellow, in absolute despair at the fate which threatened his love, came to an old friend—and implored his assistance to save the girl. This old friend was a queer, whimsical old fellow. He could have made his fortune, Charles, a present of a plum on the spot, in which the young lady's father would readily have received him. But he chose to do things in his own whimsical way. He loved Charles, my dear, and knew him to be the best youngster in the world, but he didn't know the young lady, and he wanted to be quite sure, my dear, that he was worthy of his favorite. So this curious, roundabout old fogey, knowing that his great wealth would open a certain house to him at will, obtained an introduction to a certain young lady's father, and soon appeared himself in the light of that young lady's elderly suitor. The young lady, having made a promise to her father, was too good a girl to betray a certain little matter to the old fogey, and (for her father's sake) she accepted his proposal—stay, stay, my dear, I haven't quite finished yet."

"Well, this old gentleman soon saw that Charles' sweetheart was a dear, sweet girl, in every way worthy of him, and it he—the old gentleman—was in any doubt that the girl loved Charles with all her warm little heart, the doubt was dispelled as he stood beside her at Henley yesterday, and watched her charming face when Charles won the diamond sculls."

"So now, my dear, he has given Charles the intended plum; he has made it all right with the young lady's father, and, in short, Charles is waiting for her in the library."

Maud sprung from her chair. She wreathed her arms around the neck of Old Scratch. She kissed him again and again. Tenderly he released those entwining arms.

"My dear," he said, playfully, "do not make it harder than it already is by this whimsical old fellow to give up his charming betrothed. He does not like doing it—he doesn't, indeed. But he recognizes Nature's law, my dear," concluded Old Scratch, a little wistfully, "and has the sense to know that, sooner or later, the youngsters are bound to win."—London Truth.

## STRANGE STORY OF A SNAKE.

How It Found Opportunity to Reward Its Human Benefactor.

I once knew a case, wherein a snake displayed not only an unusual amount of affection, but a great deal of courage. It appears that some years ago a professor of natural history from an Eastern university was sent to the southern part of Yucatan to investigate the snakes of that section. I might state that he was a very humane man, and frequently displayed it. One afternoon while walking over a desert, thinking of little but the time he would arrive at camp, he heard a peculiar rattling sound that seemed to come from under a pile of rocks. He at once made an investigation, and was rewarded by the discovery of a mastodon rattlesnake, which he was on the point of dispatching so as to put it out of misery, as the rocks had so fallen that a portion of the snake's body was badly mangled and torn.

In the matter of taking the reptile's life he hesitated, owing to the pathetic and pleading expression in the wounded creature's eyes. It quite unnerved him to commit murder, so he rolled the rocks off and awaited results, which came in the shape of very pronounced gratitude. The delighted and thankful creature wriggled over to him and rubbed his leg with a grateful air that was bound to last. The professor was moved by this exhibition

and, having some cotton in his valise, he bound up the wounded part and left the snake as comfortable as possible. The next day he left Yucatan for Guatemala, and was gone over five years. On his return to Yucatan he again had the occasion to pass over the desert, and, greatly to his surprise, encountered the same reptile a few miles from where the previous accident occurred. The recognition was mutual, and the joyful rattler coiled about his leg, licked his hand with a friendly tongue, and showed marked and industrious appreciation. When the professor took up his march again the snake followed him, and even insisted upon getting in the wagon and becoming a regular occupant.

"Look here, Edgar, ain't you going a little too far with that yarn?" inquired a friend.

"Not as far as the snake is going. To continue: He finally got back East, and had for a traveling companion the snake, which was allowed to wander at will. As a natural consequence the professor and his dumb companion became the best of chums, and it was a common thing to see the naturalist walking out in the road with his snake gliding along beside him. Well—now here comes the real point of the story—one night after the professor had retired and left the snake down stairs in the dining-room he was suddenly awakened by the crash of glass, followed by the falling of a heavy body. He rose up in his bed only to hear a groan and the crushing of bones. In a flash he bounded into his dressing gown and repaired to the room whence came the sounds of strife. Imagine his horror on striking a light to see his pet snake coiled around a man's bleeding body, which it had lashed to the stove and was hugging violently. On the floor was a burglar's dark lantern and a kit of tools, while the snake, in order to display its presence of mind, had its tail out of the window."

"What for?" inquired a listener in breathless excitement.

"Rattling for a policeman."—San Francisco Call.

## THE MONKEY GOT THERE.

Had a Tussle With a Venomous Reptile and Rubbed Its Head Off.

The wilds of jungle life are full of interesting experiences and afford the curious traveller many strange and peculiar incidents. The only weapons of animal defence and protection are sagacity and instinct.

The bright, sunny plains of India, as well as the low mountain ranges, afford suitable climate conditions for the haunts of numerous herds of monkeys of many different varieties. They need no training to manifest the mischievous cunning peculiar to their species. I have often watched them for hours, and laughed many times at their playful pranks as they gambled together on the grounds and among the trees.

One day I was much disturbed by the unusual chattering of a troop of these animals a short distance from my bungalow. I proceeded to the scene of their uproar, when they had in wild disorder, with their young clinging to the females by the neck. I looked around to find, if possible, the cause of their trouble.

In a small tree I soon found a good-sized male specimen left behind, gazing intently towards the roots of the tree. Following the direction of its eyes, I was astonished to see a large cobra, rolled and apparently asleep. Here was the cause of their annoyance. This monkey seemed more daring than his fellows and did not appear the least disturbed at my presence.

My first impulse was to dispatch the serpent with a stout cane. On second thought I concluded to watch the monkey and see what it would do. I never witnessed anything more interesting than the actions of that beast.

He slowly left his perch in the forks of the tree and quietly, with great caution, moved downwards towards the serpent until he had approached within about two feet of the reptile. He looked like a solemn old man, curiously moving his head from side to side as if closely inspecting the object before him. Then he took a firmer hold of the tree with one arm and wrapped his tail closely around the trunk. He reached forth his hand until it was within six inches of the serpent and quickly withdrew it again. I was much excited, and wondered if he knew the dangerous character of his adversary. Was he playing unknowingly with death? I could scarcely refrain from rushing to the rescue, but resolved to await the issue and watch the strange proceedings.

The hand of the monkey again moved toward the venomous reptile. Is he going to seize the creature? Thoughts of his danger came and go thick and fast, as almost riveted to the ground I watch with deep emotion. Suddenly, with the quickness of lightning, the monkey grasped the serpent around the neck, close to the head, in such a manner as to render it impossible to inflict its deadly bite, while its body encircled his arm.

The astonishing scene is indescribable. There was loud hissing, mingled with chattering and almost screechings, as the monkey danced and leaped in frenzied delight. With many odd grimaces and queer writhing of the brow, the monkey seemed almost frantic. He would stop his wild contortions and seriously examine the head, and eyes and protruding tongue, again grin and dance about. But strange movements soon followed.

After a short time of this display of glee, he apparently became tired, and stooping down on three legs, he commenced to rub the head of the serpent on the hard ground. He would rub awhile, then, with much seriousness, examine the head. Then rub it again. Blood began to drip over his hand. This rubbing and examining he repeated again and again, until he had completely rubbed off the head of the cobra. Then, with much chattering and apparent glee, he dropped the writhing body to the ground

and scampered off to join his companion in a neighboring grove.—Baltimore American.

## SAGACITY OF THE FROG.

He Knew Enough to Fit Himself Out With an Altitude for Snakes.

Milton Lake is a good sized body of water at the extreme northwestern section of this city, says a Newark, New Jersey, paper. It is famous for its black bass, turtles, and water pilots; and its wooded picturesque shores are a great resort for fishing and picnic parties. At the eastern extremity of the lake is a large dam over which superfluous water empties into the Robinson branch of the Rahway River. Thousands of huge rocks and boulders support this dam, and during a dry spell, when very little or no water is running over the dam, scores of huge, ugly looking, brown-colored water snakes use the rocks for sun baths.

It was at this point that Nick White witnessed a singular scene Monday. He was watching the snakes and had his eye on an old fellow, who, he declares, "had scales on him like a Salamander," when his attention was drawn from the pilot to a frog that was hopping along on the bare ground between the rocks and the river. The frog was nearing the snake, apparently unmindful of his peril, for snakes love frogs and toads. But this frog had evidently "been to school," as subsequent events proved.

"I guess the old snake had one eye open," said Nick, "for as soon as the frog came in reach he sprung for him. The frog, seeing him, essayed to get away, making a high leap toward the water. But the snake was too quick for him and got between him and the water. It was then that the frog manifested his schooling. He picked up a twig about four inches long and held it in its mouth like a bit. I wondered what for, and when I ascertained 'aid I to myself: 'Nick, that is the smartest frog in the United States.' The snake seized the frog by the fore leg, and, lengthening out, opened his jaws and wriggled forward."

"In went the frog's leg and then, after many efforts, the snake got the frog's nose and part of his head in until he came to the twig, which, extending an inch beyond his own jaws, quivered him and saved the frog. The snake writhed and wriggled frantically. He relaxed the muscles of his jaws, as does a ducky just after he cuts a watermelon, but all in vain. I laughed so hard and so long that I became weak in my knees and had to sit down and rest before I looked for a club to help the frog out of difficulty. Then I got a big stick and moved quickly down upon the snake, who was too busy to hear me."

"With one strong, well-delivered blow I broke his spine and paralyzed him, and as his jaws relaxed the frog backed out, dropped the twig, looked up at me and gave a croak of thanks. Before I could reach him he gave two leaps and was in his element."

## Gold-Lined Rats.

It is said to be a common practice for the boys in watch and jewelry factories to kill the rats that infest the buildings and burn their bodies to obtain the gold. Many oiled rats are used in burnishing watch cases, and in time they become impregnated with gold. The rats eagerly devour these rags, and a few months of this kind of diet fills the interior mechanism of the rat with gold plating. Twice a year the boys have a grand crenation. The rats are caught by the hundred and burned in a crucible. The intense heat drives off all animal substances and leaves the gold in the shape of a button. The amount of the precious metal obtained in this way is not large, but it gives the ingenious youngsters considerable pocket money. In some factories, young napoleons of finance buy up in advance the shares of their fellow-workers in the rat colony.

## Canned Literature.

A sealed tin case, which on being opened was found to contain a copy of Milton's "Paradise Lost," was picked up in the lower part of the Panobscot River, Maine, a few days ago. Enquiry disclosed the fact that in a small town upon the river lives an old innkeeper of literary tastes and some odd ideas, and that it is his custom to enclose all sorts of excellent books in tin cans, tightly soldered, and so constructed as to float easily, and to set them adrift on the river in the hope that they will be picked up by residents of the many islands at the mouth of the river, who are not kept in close touch with culture, or else by sailors. He thinks the peculiarity of the way in which the books reach the readers helps to secure for them a reading.

## An Alternative Remedy.

Doctor Manseman, a notable physician of the last century, once published a work entitled "The Physical and Mental Treatment of the Human Body," in which he gave the following cure for mental worry: "Let the sufferer think of the person whom he or she loves best; dwell upon their charms and graces; cogitate deeply upon the affection they bear the one for the other. If this does not have a soothing effect, then let the patient try a small draught of strongly brewed tea, with a lump of ginger in it. The efficacy of this is wonderful."

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