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A BELATED PRESENT.

"Lassie, my dear," said Mr. Smith one day to his pretty daughter, "I cannot see what there is that attracts you in Dr. Carlous. The more I see of him the less I like the prospect of having him for a son-in-law."

"Oh, he's just as good as any other man, papa, and besides that he's got a very good practice."

"That's quite beside the mark, Lassie. You know very well that I am rich enough and willing to give you and my husband of yours sufficient to live upon, and what you want with a twenty-guinea-fee-man I can't make out. I tell you what it is, if you would only marry your cousin as I wish, I would undertake to give you a better income than you will ever get with Carlous."

Mr. Smith had married a huge fortune in New Zealand, whither he had been shipped off as a young man forty years ago.

"What is the good, papa, of going on worrying about it? I've promised to marry Charlie Carlous, and I mean to keep my promise, and there's an end of it." And Miss Lassie Smith flung herself out of the room, rather more out of temper than the otherwise sweet lassie had been, because she was beginning to feel that her choice of a husband had not been a very wise one. However, she was an honest, straightforward sort of a girl, and was determined not to wrle her fault on the innocent head of her lover. Her heart was entwined, and the only looked upon marriage as a means of freeing herself from the restraints of home, and doubtless Charlie Carlous would make as good a husband as anybody else.

Scarcely had she left her father when he was joined by her cousin, Michael Carolus, for whom Mr. Smith had the greatest affection and whom, for want of a son, he would gladly have made his heir. He had always heard of Michael, who was the son of a favorite sister, as being a very pensioning lad, and he had secretly determined, if he should prove as satisfactory as he hoped, to bring about a match between him and Lassie. A year ago Michael Carolus had made his first visit to England from Canada, both his parents being dead, and in every respect he had come up to his uncle's most sanguine expectations. But his visit was short lived. Only six weeks before his arrival his pretty cousin Lassie had engaged herself to Dr. Charles Carlous.

"Well, uncle," said Michael as he entered the room, "there doesn't seem much chance for me. I think I had better be getting back to the land of the kangaroo."

"Upon my word, Michael, I am inclined to think your are right. I've just been speaking to Lassie again, and she seems as immovable, if not more determined, than ever. By the by, did you chat with Carlous when you were in town?"

"Oh, yes; I thought it was the civil thing to do, and, besides, I've no right to quarrel with him. He came and saw and conquered before I was ever in the field at all. I can't say that I like him, though doubtless he is clever at his profession. By the by, did he ever show you his father's collection of curiosities?"

"No, I never heard of it."

"Well, it appears that Dr. John Carlous was a well known professor of forensic medicine, and had a retainer for which received fees the public prosecutor of forty years ago. In that capacity many curious pieces do convalesce, as they call them, I think, in France, passed through his hands. Some of them were returned to the police, while others remained in his possession, and these, with everything else having reference to his profession as a doctor, he left to my son of his who should adopt medicine as a calling. Oh, yes, Carlous has a splendid laboratory and library, besides the most fascinating little museum of rather ghastly curiosities. But to return to Lassie, uncle; do you really think she cares for the lover?"

"No, candidly, Michael, between you and me and the post, I don't think she does a rap, but still there's no chance of her throwing him over. She's made up her mind to that, and she'll stick to it. I wish to goodness he would give herself her, but I'm afraid he knows which side his bread's buttered too well for that."

After this there was a pause, and the two men lit cigars and sat silent.

All of a sudden Michael broke out with—

"I suppose all's fair in love, uncle, isn't it?"

"But Mr. Smith had fallen into a gentle sleep, and took no heed.

A week later, in response to an invitation from his prospective father-in-law, Dr. Charles Carlous ran down for a week's shooting to Richard Manor. Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Lassie would be away at Bournemouth, the butler-in had said, but Michael Carolus would be there to do the honors. He it was that the amorous author and his friend found themselves upon a fine cool breakfast on an early day in October. There had been plenty of rain, and Michael enjoyed upon the foggy state of the ground which they were destined to traverse that morning. He proposed an early start, and breakfast was no sooner over than they retired to get into gaiters and shooting boots. But Michael, alone in his room, seemed in no hurry to get ready. He had left his door ajar, and was eagerly listening. After a few minutes he heard the doctor's bell ring violently, and this was hastily followed by animated conversation with the footman who answered the summons.

"Anything the matter, Carlous?" he called across the passage.

"Why, yes; it's a most extraordinary thing. I could have sworn I packed some shooting boots, and what's more extraordinary, John Jones says he would have sworn that he unpacked some; but devil a pair to be found. I suppose they won't have got with yours?"

"Come and see," said Michael, but search through they did high and low, Dr. Carlous' boots could not be found.

"And I am afraid mine would be rather tight for you," finally said Michael. "I'll tell you what, though," as a happy thought seemed to strike him, "there are two spare pairs of boots of all kinds in my uncle's dressing room; suppose we see if his will fit you."

No sooner said than done, and in another minute two pairs of stout boots had been selected, and Michael stood by while the doctor sat down to try them on. The left foot was comfortably accommodated and he forthwith set himself to equitate the right boot. But here he was doomed to meet with disappointment. When half way on his toes were baffled of their expected lodging.

"Hoth," he cried, "this boot's got something in it. It's blocked up at the end."

"By Jove," cried Michael, "how totally stupid of me. I forgot all about that."

"Forgot all about what?" said the doctor quickly.

"Why, about my uncle's son, of course. Surely you know he has some on his right foot?"

"No one on his right foot! Why, what's become of them?"

"Well, there, you ask me what a good many people would like to know. I'm sure I don't."

"Do you mean to say, seriously, that all your uncle's right boots are padded like this because he's got no toes?"

"Well, you can go and see for yourself. He's supposed to have lost them just before he went to New Zealand, about forty years ago, but, of course, nobody ever asks him to it."

"Now you mention it, of course Mr. Smith does walk a bit lame. I always assumed that the old gentleman was gouty. Indeed, he's said as much more than once."

"That's what the lawyers call a legal fiction," said Michael laughing, as he led the way back into his uncle's room.

A further examination showed that the boots and shoes for the right foot were one and all blocked up inside for about one third of their length from the toes.

During the whole of that day Dr. Carlous' mind kept reverting to the subject, and, do what he would, Michael could not prevent him from constantly dwelling on the mystery.

The next morning at breakfast the doctor announced his intention of returning forthwith to town. He had, he said, received news which made it impossible for him to tarry longer on Mr. Smith's hospitality. He was in a jolly in a perturbed state of mind, and, when Michael hoped he had slept well, he answered shortly that, on the contrary, he had passed a very disturbed night indeed.

The following day Miss Lassie Smith received this letter:

Harley Street, W., 184, 6.

Dear Miss Smith—In an extraordinary combination of circumstances I have been the depositary of a most original secret having very intimate relation with your family. It is a secret which from its very nature I should be ashamed of as a man, which, if you saw it, would be ashamed of as a woman, and which, if you were aware of it, would inevitably inflict your estimate, but which it is a matter of life and death to me to keep secret. I have been sworn to secrecy, and the being unacquainted with you will be much more.

As I have more than once said to you, I consider that persons who are married to be one flesh should be perfectly open with each other. You will, therefore, I am sure, forgive me for not mentioning to you that I was engaged under circumstances under particular impossible. I pray you, and I ask now for the last time, to release me from my engagement which the strange circumstances under particular impossible. I pray you, and I ask now for the last time, to release me from my engagement which the strange circumstances under particular impossible. I would only regretted the most stringent consequences that I could be induced to divulge what I have to tell you, and which, as I have now to say, I am, your most sincerely, Charles Carlous.

Lassie promptly handed the letter to her father and watched his face.

"Why, what the blazes is the fellow referring to?" roared Mr. Smith, when he read it. "'With his consideration of circumstances,' and his 'original secret,' which would inflicter your estimate if you were between aware of it,' and his 'not being induced to divulge it but under the most stringent consequences.' Why, I suppose the fellow thinks we shall bring an action against him for breach of promise of marriage and have him in the witness box to give his reasons for jilting you. What did I tell you, Lassie? This Stockbroker isn't the man for you, and you're damned well rid of him."

"Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, please remember your manners before ladies!" cried his better half.

"Hem, Smith," said her husband, who was somewhat perturbed by what he had read, "ladies, or no ladies, I repeat, Lassie's damned well rid of him; and I think she'll agree with me that I've been perfectly right all along, and that I've justified in acting as."

The story and short of the matter was that Dr. Smith understood, with Lassie's consent, to write a reply to Dr. Carlous, which reply, as may be imagined, was dictated in language rather more strong than courteous, and in which he told him that nothing could exceed his regret that he had ever been engaged to his daughter except his joy that he had now ceased to be so.

A few months later Dr. Carlous read the announcement in The Times of a marriage between Michael Carolus, of Montreal, Canada, and Lassie, daughter of Joseph Smith, Esq., of Richard Manor, Cheapshire. He at once sat down and dispatched a small, confidentially perfumed parcel to the bridegroom.

* * * * *

"Why, Michael, here's a belated wedding present, like before," cried Lassie the morning after their return from their honeymoon to her father's house. "It's addressed to you, and I do believe it's handwriting is Dr. Carlous'."

"Let's see it," said Carolus, and hastily he possessed to open the parcel. Under the paper was a wooden box with a sliding lid. As he pulled this away a piece of paper fluttered to the ground. Lassie picked it up and read aloud the following extraordinary note:

"Inclosed I send you what commonness may be to others, but your husband will know it. You will, no doubt, as a man, see in it some interesting item, after so long a separation, to their so good sense. I am yours faithfully, C. C.

While Lassie was reading this letter aloud Michael was pale, with a bead sweat upon his face, as a small bottle which he held in his hand and which contained in spirits of wine a very remarkable object. This object was the toe, piece of a stout boot with a fair sole containing five frozen toes and the fragments of a thick woollen sock, not so closely off a booted foot as though it was a piece of a foot was some enough. Pasted on the bottle was a fragment of newspaper dated just forty years ago. Michael unknowingly to read it aloud.

It contained a partial description of what had evidently been a ghastly tragedy. Among other things it stated that the wreck in which perished the ship of plunder had been now pitted was in a state of terrible confusion, which evidenced that a desperate struggle had taken place, and that the deceased had evidently at one time during the encounter been in possession of a large axe with which lay on the floor, where the only toe of the number left behind was the toe piece of his boot cut clean off, with the few toes remaining in it.

These last words were underlined in red ink, and the writing was added, evidently by Mr. Carlous' father.

"Lassie, I've got the pair of boots, and now your boot shoe number was exactly right!—John Carlous."

"And what the dickens does it all mean?" cried Mr. Smith.

"Well," said Michael, rather shamefacedly, for he was somewhat afraid of a reception his story would receive, "I'm afraid I've let this property in Dr. Carlous' museum the night I dined with him, and when he came down to shoot with me I took the liberty of blocking up all the toes of your right boots, and—and—he chose to draw the inevitable inference."

"You mean that you chose to make him believe, to forward your own purposes, a lie, you dog!" roared Mr. Smith, "and I what your uncle—that his future relative—was a sodden murderer at large" and what between indignation and laughter, Lassie's father was within measurable distance of a fit of apoplexy.—Robert Cowlier.

Ants on the Rock.

We have now outside the first smoke of red ants for two weeks but only days back, i. e., they would take two and a half days passing a given spot. During the day the ants would be browsing, every one searching at his very best; toward night they would huddle up in a nothing mass, and I disturbed neither to all directions. The width of the mass of ants would be about two inches generally. On the flanks of this were the soldiers, fully twice the length of the workers. On our approach these big chaps would run out and up our legs like lightning. So little but of one sort seemed to trouble them; there were little flies about as big as specimens and of a dull gray color.—Blue South Country.

Omnibus and sundrigs tool not be more than two or three inches apart and the same in depth. Planting in clumps is an effective way to arrange them.

Putting the contents the seeds of cured alcohol, camphor, kerosene, lemon, turpentine, petroleum, etc., may be tried. These will start up earlier in the spring, and will flower more freely than will spring extra cuts.

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Here is something from Mr. Frank A. Hale, proprietor of the De Witt House, Lewiston, and the Tourtelle Hotel, Brunswick, Me. Hotel men meet the world as it comes and goes, and are not slow in sizing people and things up for what they are worth. He says that he has lost his father and several brothers and sisters from Pulmonary Consumption, and is himself frequently troubled with colds, and he often coughs enough to make him sick at the stomach. He says however he has taken a cold of this kind he uses Boschee's German Syrup, and it cures him every time. Here is a man who knows the full danger of lung troubles, and would therefore be most particular as to the medicine he used. What is his opinion? Listen! "I use nothing but Boschee's German Syrup and have advised, I presume, more than a hundred different persons to take it. They agree with me that it is the best cough syrup in the market."

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