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A. went in for little flyers of that sort." "Because she never happened to take you for an outing in the country, Dickie? Heavens, what a lot you have to learn!"

"Shut up, Basil, I'm no innocent, and you know it, but I don't suspect all the women I know of indiscretions."

"Never mind Basil's cynicisms, old boy," the fourth man said, soothingly. "You're a good sort, Dickie, and this yarn of yours was an amusing experience for you. People who play games must expect an audience."

Dickie was somewhat mollified, and resumed the story.

"Luck being my way, and not theirs, I sat facing them, which was awkward, but I only bowed formally and made no attempt to speak to them."

"That was nice of you," Basil said politely. He wished Dickie would wind up his tale; he wanted to go to Doris. The husband of the bride was getting restless, too; he had scarcely been married three weeks.

Dickie had no very keen intuitions, but he had about finished.

"When my interesting friends passed my table, on their way out, Mrs. A. stopped a moment and looked me full in the face. 'If I had known you were to be over here so long, I should have asked you to lunch with me,' she said. 'I have accomplished my business most satisfactorily.' And then she passed out. She looked calm enough, but I'll bet you a fiver she was cussing her luck inside."

The men rose simultaneously. Dickie, who was by nature a quiet man, felt flushed from so much talking. He had drunk rather heavily of John Dewar's Scotch whiskey at dinner, too, which loosened his tongue and made him rather excitable. He thought the men had not shown sufficient interest in his story—it might be a startling finale if he disclosed the woman's name. He felt irritated and grieved at not making a sensation.

"Say, you fellows, hold on a minute!" he cried out. "As it was only a game you say I got on to, and as Basil knows the type collectively and the woman individually so well, I don't mind telling you it was" — the husband of the bride, all his sense of honor roused, sprang forward to put his hand over Dickie's mouth, but the words came through his fingers—"our hostess!" Dickie gasped.

Basil felt the cords about his neck swell with rage and indignation, but he shut his teeth tight together and checked the impulse to throttle Dickie. The other men laughed carelessly; the affair was nothing to them. The husband of the bride was the first to speak.

"Dickie's half seas over," he said, apologetically. "I'll call a cab and send him home. You two men go in to the women; they will think we are settling the affairs of the nation. Make any excuse for Dickie; explanations are not necessary in this house, fortunately."

But Dickie rebelled. Having made his sensation, he felt more amiable and quite capable of taking care of himself. He was terribly ashamed, too, if the truth were known, at having proved a traitor in the house of a woman who

was entertaining him. His head swam sickeningly, but he pulled himself together.

"It's all a damned lie, Basil," he said, defiantly, "a damned lie from beginning to end. Open the window and give me a blast of cold air. Brain work would certainly be the death of me."

Basil, roused out of his wonted complacency, threw up the window and pushed Dickie down into a seat by it. The other men stood by awaiting developments.

Dickie mopped his brow, but he felt better already.

"I never saw any clandestine meeting," he said, the words tripping over each other in his hurry to impress the men with this part of his story. "And I never went to Brooklyn—never in my life; and I just made the thing up out of whole cloth. You see, I went over to Boston last week," he continued, with a hang dog air, "and there they dragged me to a lecture." Dickie's whole figure drooped dejectedly at the mere recollection of it. "The spook got up and drivelled about cultivating the imaginative faculties, and, and—things like that."

Dickie was getting into pretty deep water, but he floundered on, determined to save Doris' reputation.

"Well, I took in some of the rot," he said—the attention of the men encouraged him—"and you know what a beastly quiet chap I am, no sort of a diner-out, so I thought the first opportunity I got I would work my imagination—see what I could do if I tried, don't you know—and gad, I think I'm a howling success."

He stopped breathlessly; never had he been in such a perilous mess before.

"I got so warmed up to my subject a while ago that I felt chagrined when you fellows took it all so calmly, scarcely lifting your eyebrows, so I thought I would give you a denouement that would amount to something, you poor innocents!" Dickie chuckled. He felt that he could even afford to be condescending under the circumstances.

Basil came around and pulled Dickie out of his chair in much the same fashion that he had pushed him in. The relief that Dickie's explanation afforded him was intense. Not that he would believe Doris capable of intrigue, but he could not hear any bandying about of her name.

"Dickie"—and Basil spoke deliberately, as a man who had been under a great strain—"Dickie, you're a fool, but I am not so sure but that it's the kind of foolishness that might be turned to account. Give us your hand, old boy, and be your own quiet self after this. Plenty of people can talk; silence is a gift of the gods. In the meantime, when all else fails, you go on to Boston and help out that lecturer. Why, you could give him points that would carry him and you and the audience beyond the bounds of possibility."

And leisurely, after the manner of men who have wine and dined and smoked together, the four passed into the drawing room, the husband of the bride leading the way.—The Chronicler.

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