

## THE CONTROLLER.

He was dressed in complete mourning with an unusually deep, broad band round his hat; he looked bitter and weary. The rain swished steadily against the windows of the railway carriage.

"Nice, refreshing rain, isn't it?" it he said presently.

"Yes," I said, "and much wanted in the country."

"The country may thank me for it," he continued almost vindictively. "I made that rain. I control things, I do. I control the world wherever I come in touch with it."

I said nothing. I was trying to make up my mind whether this was an excess of the funeral sherry or a mind distraught with grief. He seemed to read my thoughts.

"I am not speaking wildly. I am speaking from a long and painful experience. I've realized that Destiny has made up its mind to put me in the wrong, whatever I do, and whatever it may cost other people to put me in the wrong. As long as I'm in the wrong, that's all that's wanted, and other people don't matter. This time other people are profiting by me. Last night I watered my tennis-lawn. I've not got a hose, and I carried the water in cans until my back was nearly broken. This morning I started out without an umbrella and with a new hat. To make it more certain, I'm going up to London for a day's pleasure and amusement. It'll clear up while I'm in the theater this afternoon, and begin to rain again as I come out. It's lucky the country wants rain; we've got it because I didn't."

He hardly looked like a man on a spree, and I suppose I was rude enough to let my eyes rest on his obtrusive mourning.

"You're looking at my clothes. Yes, I know, it does seem queer. I'm in mourning for my uncle. He's not dead, mind you; he's as well as ever he was. He owes his life to me, and yet he'll never speak to me again, and he has cut me out of his will. He was very ill and I knew the doctors had given up all hope, and that it was only a question of hours. Consequently I was not surprised to get a telegram to say that he was dying, and I must come at once if I wished to see him alive again. I went off at once, and, knowing how busy I should be the next few days with the funeral arrangements and so on, I ordered a suit of mourning on the way. My tailor lives close to the station, and I had a few minutes to wait for my train. Any other man would have done the same. My uncle got better, of course; there's never been such a wonderful case before, and the doctors who were attending him have written to the medical papers to make excuses for themselves, because, by all the rules, the man ought to have died. Of course, he only lived because I had bought mourning for his death. He found out that I had bought that mourning before he was dead, and he has never forgiven me and he never will, and there's a quarter of a million hanging to it. The tailor refused to take the clothes back, and I don't mean to lose them as well. I'm wearing them, and I'm going on wearing them; and," he added reluctantly, "I don't care a damn!"

I sympathized with him, and asked him if he enjoyed the theater.

"Yes," he said, "as well as a man can enjoy it who never sees the particular actress or actor that he has gone to see. Whenever I go I get an understudy with a cough in the principal part. There is a whole theater audience disappointed just in order that I may be put in the wrong. I've given ten shillings for my seat today, and if they knew the sort of a man I was, they'd pay me ten pounds not to go in."

"You say you saved your uncle's life,

owing to your peculiar destiny; tell me, did you ever kill a man in the same way?"

"Very possibly, but if so it was indirectly and I never got to hear of it. I killed a horse, though. I backed Holo-caust for a pound each way. You remember that Derby? I've never made a bet since. What right have I to kill other people's horses? But it's some sort of a consolation to me to recall the good I've done. I've saved a man's life; I've brought this rain that's so much wanted; I've saved the poor man from starvation, and given him bread to eat."

"Bread to eat? You haven't told me about that?"

"You remember at the beginning of the Spanish-American war that the price of flour went up, and everybody said it was going higher, very much higher?"

"Well, no; I don't know much about flour; I'll take your word for it."

"It was so. I was fool enough to forget that I have got to be in the wrong, and I bought flour for the rise. It fell; it went bumping down like a carload of bricks going down a coal shaft. It nearly broke me, but was a boon to the poor man. I try to look at it in that way," he said with a sigh.

"And are you going to do anything with regard to coal?" I asked. "Unless you interfere coal will be at famine prices this winter. Don't you think it's your duty to get in a couple of truck-loads at present prices and oblige the poor again?"

"No," he said; "if I bought coal with a philanthropic motive, with an idea of making it cheaper, the price would rush up even higher than if I had left it alone. I should be prevented from making any profit out of it, because my coal would either be stolen or catch fire. You can't play about in that way. If your destiny means you to be wrong, you will be wrong. It's of no use to struggle."

"He glanced at his watch. 'I can't make this out,' he said. 'The train is quite punctual, and yet I have an appointment in town which I should miss if we were more than a quarter of an hour late.'"

He had hardly spoken before the train pulled up short. People put their heads out of the windows and asked questions of railroad officials who did not answer them. At last they broke the news to us that a goods train had gone off the rails just ahead of us and blocked both lines. We should get on again in twenty minutes or half an hour, they hoped.—Black and White.

## WHAT WOMEN ADMIRE IN MEN.

What we admire most in them is a loving appreciation of ourselves. The most admirable man is he who makes a comfortable home for the woman who loves him and who delights to make that home bright and cheery for his sake. For after all it matters little what we admire in men; it is what we love in them that is the important factor in the well-being of the world.

Pall Mall Gazette.

## So It Will.

"They say that this year's wheat crop can't be beat," said Hojack.

"But it will have to be thrashed," added Tomdik.

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