

# OUR STORY TELLER



## A SERIOUS AFFAIR.

It is always an inscrutable mystery to everybody why other people quarrel. For our own little arguments there is always, of course, good sound and sufficient reason; for the disputes of other folks the excuse appears ever absurdly inadequate. Why, for instance, young Greig and Miss Elsie Norman, both returning from India on the Bengal, should break off with amazing suddenness their engagement just as the Bengal was nearing the Bay of Biscay it was not easy to see.

But they did. "And I suppose," said young Greig, with a face that looked less bronzed than usual, "that nothing I can say will alter your decision? Your mind is quite made up?"

"It always is," declared Miss Norman. She held tightly to the brass rail and looked away at the spot in the distance which represented Spain. It is best when quarrelling with anyone you have cared for not to look at that person's eyes.

"I particularly wish that, for the time that we shall have to travel together, we shall see as little of each other as possible. We can easily say 'good-by' at Plymouth."

"It will not be easy for me," said young Greig. "I am not used to saying good-by to anyone that I—that I have—"

"You should be glad of a new experience, Mr. Greig. It's a precious thing nowadays."

"You're not yourself this morning, Elsie."

"I wish I were not!" she exclaimed, with a sudden change of manner. "If I were some one else I wouldn't be so unhappy. Here is Mrs. Renton. She mustn't see my eyes. This is the last time we shall speak to each other. Good-by!"

"But, I say, isn't there some means—"

Elsie Norman held out her hand. Greig pressed it and she turned and went below. Mrs. Renton sank into her deck-chair carefully, as stout ladies do, and seemed gratified when the deck chair only creaked complacently and did not give way.

"Mr. Greig, pray come here at once. Miss Norman monopolizes your time to such an extent that my poor women see nothing of you. Sit down here at once and tell me all about yourself."

"It is an uninteresting subject," said Greig, pulling another deck chair to the side of Mrs. Renton.

"Tell me a secret, then. I'm exceedingly fond of secrets. When are you going to marry Miss Norman?"

"Never."

"Never? Of course you're both young, but that seems a long time to wait, doesn't it? Mr. Van Straaten said—"

"Were is the captain?" he screamed. "I insist. Pring me all at once the captain."

The captain of the Bengal hurried up. In a few words of mangled English Mr. Van Straaten explained. A group of interested passengers stood around.

"I talk to Miss Norman for leedle time," cried Mr. Van Straaten. "I go then to my cabin; I find there my precious diamonds—vanished."

"They can't have gone far, sir," said the captain.

"They have no need to go at all. Eight thousand pounds' worth all gone. I must know how quickly who has stole them, alretty."

"Any suspicion?" asked the captain.

"I am not so sure. I am not so sure."

"Any person on board see them?"

"You person only, Mr. Greig, if you please, come here. I show you my precious diamonds, ain't it, two days after we leave Calcutta?"

"That's so," said Greig, cheerfully. "And very magnificent diamonds they were. I remember telling you that I wished one or two were mine, so that I might give them to—"

"I suppose we shall have to search the cabins," said the captain of the Bengal. "It's a fearful nuisance, ladies and gentlemen; but it can't be helped. May we begin with yours, Mr. Greig?"

"I really don't know," protested Greig, "why I should have my cabin upset and turned out just because—"

"I desire that Mr. Greig's cabin should be searched," said Mr. Van Straaten, insistently.

"That settles it, then," said Henry Greig, carelessly. "Fire away. I'll come down with you."

The crowd went below and stood in the corner while the examination was progressing. Elsie Norman, hearing the noise, left her aunt, and, rather red at eyes, came forward. The captain, Mr. Van Straaten, the chief steward and Henry Greig reappeared at the door of the cabin. The old German bore a leather case very carefully in his arms.

"The diamonds have been found," announced the captain of the Bengal, seriously. "We shall not have to trouble you, ladies and gentlemen."

two must stand together now, whatever happens."

"Elsie, hadn't you better let me fight it out alone? The truth is nearly sure to come out sooner or later, and—"

"In the meantime, dear, you will have to forget our stupid quarrel of this morning. I was quite wrong."

"So was I," said Greig, promptly. "A man has no business to kiss a girl as she is ascending the gangway of a P. and O. steamship. It has been done, no doubt, on more than one occasion, but it is nearly always an act to be condemned by right thinking people who have not had the chance of committing the crime. Nevertheless, if it is at any time to be pardoned, it was in the instance at present in question."

"But," said the astonished Mrs. Renton to her companion, "I thought you said, my dear, that their engagement was all off."

"She certainly said so. Why should she be so affectionate with him now, after this scandalous affair, goodness only knows."

"Ah, my dear! Girls are queer creatures."

There were a few hours of mixed feelings for Mr. Greig of the Eastern bank. It was terrible to feel this suspicion hanging over him, to watch the looks cast at him by the passengers, to observe Mr. Van Straaten's almost comic appearance of injury. On the other hand, it was delightful to feel that close to him in this time of stress, as he sat on deck or strolled up and down, was a cheerful young person in her very best spirits. The boy meanwhile sympathetically behaved in a manner quite exemplary.

"I am astonished, my dear," said Mr. Van Straaten, severely, "that you should be friendly with Mr. Greig after what has happened alretty. I strongly advise you to gif him up. You told me you had decided—"

"I've changed my mind," she said definitely. "Women folks are not good at a lot of things, but we do know how to change our minds."

Mr. Van Straaten lifted his hat and turned away. The old gentleman, when he was a few paces off, seemed agitated—so much so that he had to pat his eyes gently with his scarlet handkerchief. He called to one of the sailors: "Dell my man Hans to come up instantly."

Much commotion after the appearance of the stolid-faced Hans. A rush toward that part of the ship by all the passengers on deck. Swift talking in German. Considerable temper on the part of Van Straaten; pent-up words from Hans.

"Mr. Greig," cried the old German, "come here directly. And Miss Norman. Listen to this horreable man of mine. I haf lost also my hatbox. I ask him where it is, and he replies that he think he place it by mistake in Mr. Greig's cabin. Is it not so, Hans?"

Sorrowful acknowledgment from the profusely repentent Hans. Mr. Van Straaten raised his voice: "Then I say to him: 'Is it possible that you careless scoundrel you placed also by mistake the diamond box in Mr. Greig's cabin?' And he say, 'Yes.'"

Quite a noisy cheering from the assembled passengers. A pressing forward to congratulate Greig. He, delighted beyond question, turned to Elsie Norman: "You don't regret being counsel for my defense, young Portia?"

"You are just the client I like."

"And respecting this morning?"

"Sir! I do not respect this morning. Let's look forward."

"Dot was a good drick of mine," said Mr. Van Straaten, as he watched them. He wiped his glasses carefully. "I knew it would answer. I was once, a long time ago, in love myself."—St. James Budget.

**Beyond His Means.**  
The Chicago Herald tells an amusing bit of experience which one of that city's benevolent men had with a beggar. The gentleman has a regular staff of "visitors," to whom he gives alms according to their needs and his ability. There is one old fellow whose calls are as punctual as the sun.

On a recent occasion this man accosted Mr. G., as usual, and received from him a half-dollar.



CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)  
Marsden had braced himself up for a stormy interview with his sister.

After carefully reviewing his position, and assuring himself there was no flaw in his armor, that the accounts of his trusteeship were in perfect order, he determined to announce his intended marriage to the world.

The first person to be informed was Lady Dorrington. That done, there was nothing more to fear.

He did not reach Chedworth till just in time to dress for dinner. There were one or two country neighbors to share that repast, and the conversation Lady Dorrington wished to have with her brother was postponed till the next morning.

Marsden observed that his sister looked very grave and portentous; but that in no way dampened his spirits or lessened his efforts to amuse and interest his sister's guests, which were peculiarly successful.

He listened with lively attention to the details Lady Dorrington poured forth respecting Mrs. Ruthven's sufferings and tedious recovery. She feared that the poor invalid would scarcely be able to see him. Marsden begged he might not be asked to do anything not quite agreeable to her.

"It is no question of what is agreeable," said Lady Dorrington severely. "It is of what will be safest for Mrs. Ruthven. You cannot imagine the weakness to which she is reduced. Any relapse now would be fatal. She is anxious to go away to the south of France, or the Riviera, but I trust she will not go alone."

"No; she had much better get some pleasant companion. You will find her one, I dare say. You always have such a supply of admirable persons on hand fitted to fill every possible position."

Lady Dorrington darted an angry, warning glance at her brother, and addressed him no more that evening.

When breakfast was over next morning, Marsden entered into the billiard room, and was knocking the billiard balls about by himself, when the inevitable message reached him:

"My lady would be glad to see you, sir, in the boudoir."

"I have been waiting for you this half hour, Clifford."

"So sorry; I did not like to intrude on you till you sent for me," he returned, coming up to the fireplace, and leaning easily against the mantelpiece. "Do you know you are looking wonderfully well, in spite of your nursing worries?"

"My looks are of small consequence," said Lady Dorrington, sternly. "I want some serious conversation with you, Clifford; your conduct is very unaccountable and unfeeling. What, may I ask, is your motive for staying in town all this time?"

"Oh, because I love you like I like it."

"There is something more than that—or rather there is some strong attraction—which I do not understand, to keep you in London? Pray, has it anything to do with Mrs. L'Estrange and Nora?"

"They are very agreeable relatives and I see a good deal of them," returned Marsden, in a lazy, indifferent way, most irritating to his sister.

"Why, Clifford, you surely would not be so unprincipled as to delude Nora, your own cousin, with the notion that you are in love with her, and you could not be so insane as to think of marrying her? I shall certainly warn Mrs. L'Estrange against you; you are too regardless of everything except your own amusement."

# WOMAN'S WORLD

"Believe me, we only care to see you well. There is not the slightest need to hurry away."

"I know you are all goodness, but there are matters to be attended to that no one can do for me. I have been scribbling a few lines to my lawyer. Will you write for me to Sir Harley?"

"Certainly. But you know when he was here last he said—"

"Yes, yes, that I could not move for three weeks. But one has passed, and if he sees what progress I have made I am sure he will let me go on Wednesday or Thursday next. Wherever I go ultimately, I must take London on the way."

"All I beg, dear Mrs. Ruthven, is that you will not hasten your departure on our account. You know we are to spend our Christmas with Aunt Ilminster, so there will be no party here! I am sure you are not equal to write, you look so weary."

Mrs. Ruthven lay back in her chair, and let her mind unfasten and remove the desk. When they were alone she said, as she lay back, her eyes closed, her figure very still:

"I had a message from Mr. Marsden just now."

"Indeed?" cried Lady Dorrington, feeling exceedingly uncomfortable. "He had no business to disturb you."

"He did not disturb me. I would not be disturbed. He asked to see me. There was a silence of nearly two minutes, while Lady Dorrington sought in vain for some wise and cautious words with which to reply before she found them. Mrs. Ruthven resumed very languidly, but opening her eyes and settling them on her hostess:

"I suppose he wished to announce his engagement to Miss L'Estrange, if it is true. Is it true, Lady Dorrington?"

What a question! What would she have given to be able to deny the fact with scorn and indignation? As it was, ought she not to be thankful the ice was broken?"

"Why, my dear Mrs. Ruthven, who in the world told you?"

"Some one mentioned it in one of the letters I have been reading."

"Shirley," thought Lady Dorrington. "Viper!"

"But is it true?" persisted Mrs. Ruthven.

"Oh! I don't know what to think; I am afraid there is something in it. Indeed, I have been infinitely annoyed," Lady Dorrington paused abruptly, feeling indescribably awkward.

"You are not inclined for this marriage, then?" said Mrs. Ruthven, a peculiar and not very amiable smile passing over her face.

"Inclined for it! Why, it is the bitterest disappointment to me! You must know that, my dear Mrs. Ruthven!"

"Ah! Miss L'Estrange has but a small fortune, and it will take more than an ordinary one to put your brother's affairs in order."

"Besides that," cried Lady Dorrington, "there are other considerations. Nora L'Estrange is quite unfit to be Clifford's wife. He will tire of her in six months."

"That is very probable. He is not wise."

"And he actually talks of letting Eveleigh on a lease for years, and sinking into a continentalized dilettant Englishman."

Mrs. Ruthven compressed her lips, and her pale cheeks flushed as she answered in a low, clear tone:

"Your brother is changeable and impulsive. After all, it is quite probable the marriage may never take place."

"He appears to have committed himself fully," said Lady Dorrington, who, now that the ice was broken, found it a relief to talk on this vexatious subject. Mrs. Ruthven was silent, leaning her elbows on the arms of her chair, and pressing her finger tips together, while her face, which had grown deadly white again, expressed cold, implacable displeasure.

(To be continued.)

**ROUGH ON THE CYCLIST.**

How a Practical Joker Made a Mess of Trouble.

An elaborate practical joke has been played on a Belgian cyclist. While taking his usual afternoon ride along the central boulevard of Brussels he entered one of the cafes for some refreshments, leaving his machine against a lamp-post.

A joker seated outside on a terrace pinned his trousers in the orthodox cyclist's style, as if he were a genuine bicyclist, and taking hold of the machine as if he had just dismounted, halted one of those long white-bibbed street commissioners to be met with at nearly every street corner in Brussels.

"My man, just you look well after my bicycle, and see that no one takes it during my absence, for there are so many bicycle thieves about the city you cannot be too careful, so keep a sharp lookout, and here's a franc for your trouble."

The joker then crossed the road, taking up his post at a cafe opposite to enjoy the result of the franc's investment. Out came the unsuspecting victim, and, taking the machine, was about to start.

"Hold, there, old chappie, we know your measure, so off with you," said the white-bibbed one, at the same time gently forcing the astonished cyclist back.

At first he thought the man was drunk, and expostulated quietly with him, but all to no purpose, the trusy guardian simply replying that "he knew what he was about." Finding persuasion useless, Mr. X— lost his temper, and the discussion soon grew to angry menaces on both sides.

Meanwhile a large crowd had assembled, highly amused at the prospect of a pugilistic encounter. The appearance of a policeman put a stop to any fighting, and he took both the belligerents to the station, escorted by an immense crowd of spectators.

The unfortunate bicyclist soon recollected that he had in his pocket his license on which was recorded the number of his machine. In consideration of this testimony the machine was handed over to the rightful owner.

The movements of air commonly called winds are due to the heat of the sun. The warm air, being lighter, rises, and the colder air flows in to take its place. This principle is beautifully illustrated at the seashore in summer, where the daily sea breeze are due to the air over the heated land being displaced by a current of cooler air from the sea.