

A Mean Trick.

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London, Dec. 5, 1918.

I am sorry, my dear daughter, that you have entered into a movement to obtain the vote for women. Ten years ago I took part in a movement with that object in view, and it turned out a lamentable failure.

I will give you a brief account of how our organization was broken up with a view to inducing you to abandon your attempt, foreseeing some such outcome for the present movement. Our society grew rapidly, far more rapidly than one could have expected. We had meetings in Hyde park, gathering thousands of women with appropriate banners and much enthusiasm. We stormed the house of commons and forced the members to listen to us. Our enemies, the men, arrested us and kept us in jail.

Finally, when the house of commons was in despair of being able to defeat us by open methods it must needs go about undermining our society. In secret session a committee was appointed to find and execute some method to break us up. This committee consisted of old bachelors—rather, old curmudgeons—all of them confessed woman haters and mean enough to take advantage of those weaknesses peculiar to our sex.

They began by laying a plan to get rid of our admirable officers and put in such women as would wreck the society. Our annual election and appointment of committees came off shortly after these men began their work, and they took advantage of the opportunity. Just before the election we were surprised at a large accession to our membership. Then on the day of the election, while we were preparing for the ballot, handbills were scattered about the hall in which we met stating that at a store on Piccadilly certain standard goods that all women must have were offered at less than half the usual price. A silk dress that would ordinarily cost £50 might be had for £20. Hats in the latest style that were selling for £5 were offered at £2 6s. Cloaks worth £10 were to be had for £4. These are but a few examples to show you what bargains were to be obtained. The sale was to take place during the afternoon of our election, but all women know that to secure what they want at such sales they must be on hand when the sale opens.

Well, no sooner were the handbills read than there began a gradual disappearance of the members, just as water leaves a bathtub without one's seeing where it goes. One by one our women slipped out, but it was noticeable that all the new members remained. At that time, my child, your father was not doing at all well at his business, and I was wearing a hat that had been long out of fashion. It was impossible for me to appear in any gathering in such frightful headgear. Satisfying myself that there was a quorum of the society without me, I went to seize the opportunity.

Now, our hall was on the opposite side of London from the place of the sale. I took a bus to get there and on arriving at the store asked where the sale was going on. What sale? The sale announced in the handbills! No one knew of any handbills or any sale. Then I saw that something had gone wrong. Taking another bus, I went back to the hall in company with others of our members. I found that the election was over, a new set of officers had been put in and new committees appointed. What do you think? These mean, contemptible men—villains had hired the new members to join, had produced the handbills, and while we bona fide members of the society were going to and coming from the bogus sale the busses had elected a ticket given them by the men.

This was not the worst of our misfortunes. The new officers and committee women had been selected (by the men) for the violence of their tempers and the volubility of their tongues. The very first meeting after their installation showed that we had met with a quietus. One of the committee said something that made the president mad, and she threw her gavel at the offending woman. The secretary rose to her feet and began a steady stream of talk. Other members strove in vain to get the floor, but the shrill voice of the secretary, sounding like a steam whistle, drowned them out. At one time there were a dozen women gesticulating and shrieking like a storm wind in the rigging of a ship. Then the chairwoman of the committee of ways and means, a perfect Hercules, seizing a table used by the secretary, went through the hall for the purpose of clearing it. In five minutes there was not a member left.

By such contemptible process did these mean, vile, ignoble, base, sneaking, rascally, scurvy, unfair creatures to whom has been given the name man thwart the noble work we had in hand. That was the last of the suffragette movement of the first decade of the present century, and members of parliament have since been despicable enough to boast that by a political maneuver only worthy of an American old fashioned primary they had secured peace and comfort.

It isn't, my dear, that women are not fitted for suffrage and to occupy any sphere that man can occupy. It is that men will descend to such pusillanimous tricks to beat us out of our rights. Woman has the nobler nature, and man—

By the by, I hear the new hats are mortarboard in shape and ostrich feathers quite the thing. What hideous shapes! Your loving mother.

ANNA BENTLEY.

The Fall of the Empire

[Copyright, 1908, by American Press Association.]

The young soldier-king's ambition was towering. At thirty he found himself the first general of his age. Not content with being master of his own kingdom, he sought to make himself master of all kingdoms within his reach.

While the king's traits were Napoleonic, there was one trait that was not Napoleonic. Napoleon, while he was a gallant, never permitted any woman to influence him in matters of government. He was not afraid of the fair sex and took no precautions against women. The soldier-king, on the contrary, feared their seductions. He was aware that they governed the world and considered that it would be impossible for him to build up the empire he intended if he were himself governed by a woman. A bachelor, he proposed to remain a bachelor. And for fear that he would be captured he permitted only the homeliest women to come near him. On one occasion when he was told that a young girl had come to his tent to beg for protection from his soldiers he asked, "Is she comely?" When answered in the affirmative he replied, "Then let her be veiled."

There was one petty duchy, Histeria, still unconquered which was important to the soldier-king. From its geographical position it was the main link in the states from which the empire was to be formed. Though small, its conquest would be difficult, for its territory constituted an elevated plateau whose only approaches were through mountain defiles. The king sent a demand for its submission. A reply was returned that the duke would yield to the inevitable if the king would grant certain conditions. If not he would defend his dukedom till every man in it had been killed.

The king then sent a messenger to ask the conditions. A reply came that they would only be presented at a meeting to take place between the two sovereigns. Midway up a defile leading to the duchy was a pocket well adapted for a place of conference. The duke proposed that he and the king meet there and discuss the terms by which his domain should pass under the king's rule. The king might bring all the guard he wished. The duke pledged himself to go alone.

The king, unwilling to be outdone in an exhibition of confidence, declared that he, too, would go alone and unarmed. All these matters having been adjusted, the king rode, with a small guard, to the mouth of the defile, where he left them and proceeded to the rendezvous. The duke was seen coming down the mountain, an old man with a flowing white beard and hair.

The sovereigns met at the door of a pavilion that had been erected for the conference. The duke produced a golden key, unlocked the door and motioned the king to enter. When inside the duke relocked the door. This startled the king, but he said nothing. Surely if treachery were intended he was a match for this feeble old man. Then the duke led the way into a handsomely furnished room, in the center of which were a table and writing materials. At one end of the apartment blazed an open fire. The duke threw the golden key in among the burning logs. It immediately ignited. For a moment the king stood in wonder at seeing gold burn, then rushed forward to rescue the key. He was too late.

"It was of wood, your majesty," said the duke, "and gilded. We are shut up here together for this conference. Neither can depart, for there is no opening except the door which is locked and no key with which to unlock it. Let us proceed to business."

As the duke spoke the last words he threw his hat on the floor, pulled off a white wig and false beard, divested himself of his ducal robes and stood before the king in superb dress, a woman of transcendent beauty.

"I—I was to meet the duke," stammered the king, drawing back.

"I am the sovereign of Histeria. My father has abdicated in my favor." The king put his hand before his face to shut out the vision of loveliness.

"These are my terms," continued the duchess, "the only terms on which I shall surrender. I will pay your majesty 500 pieces of gold annually as tribute for ten years."

The king made no reply, but, dropping his hands, stared at the symmetrical creature. Her features were those of a cameo, her complexion that of white and red roses, and her eyes were a marvel of loveliness.

"Your grace," he said, dropping on his knee, "I am at your mercy."

The duchess pointed to the writing materials. The king wrote:

The independence of the duchy of Histeria is acknowledged and guaranteed.

The duchess read and turned her great eyes, lit by a heavenly smile, on the monarch. Then, touching a spring in the table, a drawer flew open. She seized a key and started for the door.

The king followed and caught her in his arms. She looked back, and her lips were pressed by his.

When the king rejoined his attendants he was a changed man. He knew that the lands he had conquered would always be liable to be wrested from him without the duchy of Histeria. One by one they received back their sovereignty, and when the last was made independent it was announced that the king was about to be married.

The soldier-king made the Duchess of Histeria his queen, and he did not get her till every country he had conquered had been made free.

HAROLD OTIS.

A Smoked Ham Diet.

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Bill Scott, as he was familiarly called, was lazy and shiftless.

Like all lazy men, Bill Scott had an appetite. His appetite also had a preference. He loved oysters, chicken, porterhouse steak and clam chowder, but what he loved above all was smoked ham. He liked it fried or boiled or baked, and he could never get enough of it. The only way he could get ham was to steal it, and many of the villagers and farmers objected to his midnight visits to their smokehouses. Among the objectors was the Widow Glenn, who had a farm a mile away. She was also one of those interested in seeking to save Bill from himself. Perhaps she was the only woman in the world who would have thought of combining ham with reform. The idea came to her in a dim, undefined way, but she kept at it until she worked it out. One day after being told by her hired man that he had seen Bill Scott scouting about the smokehouse the evening previous she entered into a little conspiracy. The door was left unlocked, the hired man hidden near by, and next night as Bill was taking a ham off its roost the door was slammed shut, and he found himself a prisoner. When morning came the widow drove to town to see Mrs. Glenn, and upon her return she visited the house of hams and said to the captive:

"Of course you have nothing to say, except that you were walking in your sleep last night, but now that you are wide awake I have something to say to you. You like smoked ham. I am going to give you all you want of it. Today you will eat it uncooked. Tomorrow you shall have it fried."

A chair and a jug of water were brought in, he was furnished with a knife and the door locked on him, and he proceeded to enjoy himself. He ate and he loafed and he slept. There were twenty smoked hams hanging above him and giving out their delicious odor, and why should he weary his brain trying to solve national problems? He didn't. Next morning the widow appeared and asked him how he would like his ham cooked for breakfast. He said he would take it fried, and he got it that way and a jug of fresh water with it. At noon he had it boiled, and at night it was fried again. The amount was not stinted. There was more ham than he had ever sat down to in his life. The next day and the next it was the same. On the morning of the fourth day, however, the prisoner said to his jailer:

"Widder Glenn, if you don't mind I'll have taters and fried eggs for breakfast."

"But I do mind," was her reply. "Here are twenty smoked hams going to waste for the want of eating. You dote on ham. Pitch right in."

"But my wife must be anxious about me, and I want to be going home."

"Your wife knows just where you are and is not at all worried. She hopes you will have your fill of ham."

Bill had raw ham, boiled ham, baked and fried ham, and he should have reveled in the occasion. It is human nature to never be satisfied, and after the fifth day he demanded a radical change of diet, even if only to raw sausage. He had not tasted of the last two meals.

"Oh, but you must go ahead with ham," replied the widow. "You have not quite finished one yet, and there are nineteen others waiting to be eaten. Your second appetite may come back to you any minute."

"I'd like to live on old crusts of bread for a change, ma'am."

"But I couldn't think of it. You are a visitor, you know, and I should be ashamed of myself to offer you crusts."

At supper that night Bill begged for raw turnips instead of smoked ham. At breakfast next morning he offered to eat potato peelings. The widow was firm.

"Mr. Scott," she replied, "I don't think you are at all grateful. I am furnishing you the nicest and sweetest smoked ham in all Herkimer county, and yet you klick at it."

"But smoked ham for five days, ma'am," he protested.

"But I'm giving you the chance of your lifetime. Think of being surrounded with eighteen and a half hams!"

"Hams and water, ma'am!"

"Yes, but I'm giving you a chance to get acquainted with water—to acquire a taste for it."

Ham on the sixth day, the seventh and the eighth. The widow was bringing more ham when Bill Scott broke down and said:

"I'll sign the temperance pledge, ma'am, and if I don't keep it this time may I be sent to prison for the remainder of my days?"

"And about people's chickens and garden stuff, Mr. Scott?"

"May I be struck dead if I ever meddle with them again!"

"And work, Mr. Scott—what about work?"

"I'll work like a nigger. Only try me."

"You have only been shut up eight days, and there's eighteen hams still left," mused the widow. "Can a man reform on two smoked hams?"

"He can, ma'am—he can. Give me a show, and if I disappoint you they may tar and feather me."

And through the aid of smoked ham there was accomplished such a change and reformation in Bill Scott as men had deemed impossible, and today his shortcomings are remembered only as legends. He has worked hard and prospered, and aside from his antipathy for smoked ham there is nothing to distinguish him from the other villagers.

M. QUAD.

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