

I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.
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(Continued from Yesterday.)

In a short scuffle of wills more than bodies, he seized her two hands and was bending over them, peering up at her face. "Mary, Mary! There's just one thing for it, don't you see? Marry me, and you can have all that, and make me damnably happy into the bargain. I've got much more than I know what to do with—it would be such a joy to give you things. You can dance all night and play Schumann divinely all the morning. It would be so nice! For both of us! And—what the..."

She was laughing, on a low note, but semi-hysterically. "Oh, confound it! Can't a woman ever talk frankly without running up against a proposal of marriage—or am I just a plain fool? ... Yes, that's it, Kit, you're a dear good boy. You've acted perfectly. Now let's drive home."

"Marry, see here, I'm serious—"

"Don't be! I warn you, don't be!"

"I will! I want you to marry me! What's the matter with that?"

"Oh, don't, Kit! Don't you see that the more serious you are the worse it makes it?"

"No! What on earth—"

"You had a chivalrous impulse to ward a ridiculous, self-pitying woman. You made the right move. But you don't suppose I'm going to seriously consider marrying you for your money? After practically asking you to ask me?"

"You didn't! And what's the money got to do with it, anyway?"

"Well, a good deal, I should say! Dancing all night and Schumann all the morning—"

She was laughing again, not hysterically now, but with amusement, and in full control of herself. She leaned forward and patted his knee. Her control made Kit angry.

"See here, Mary! Marry, see here. Stop that confounded laughing! Damn it all, it isn't every night I ask a woman to marry me. Well, then, what's so absurd about it? I need you and you need me. I'm able to give you certain things you want—need. I'm only too glad to give them to you. I assure you, I want to see you happy. I'm not entirely selfish..."

Mary let him talk on in this vein for some time. But when at last he paused all he could get out of her was:

Kit, it's this: I'm a poor cheap creature, but there are some things I stick at. One of them is selling myself. Even to a man I like—much less to a man I like me."

"But if you do like me—"

"Like? Stop and think, man!"

This took him aback. He went on arguing for a moment, but jerkily, arguing with long pauses. Mary merely sat there, her hands crossed on her lap.

staring down the street. They might have stayed there for hours but that a prayer meeting broke up in a noisy church, flooding the street with pedestrians. This was one thing too much to argue against, so he started the car and turned homeward.

He drove without speaking, but he thought hard. Yet there was rightness in her way; yet there was rightness on his side also. It was hard to do what he respected the rightness; he gave it up for the moment and fell to wondering what it would be like for him here with Mary in Cleveland.

Well, it wouldn't be like much! He hauled the car up with a jerk. They happened to be on the Viaduct, under bright lights, but it was late now and there were few people about. Not that he would have cared, in any case.

"Marry," he said quietly, "I see it now. I see my mistake. I asked you the right thing for the wrong reason. The reason—what could it possibly have been but one thing? I want you. Not for what I can do for you, but for yourself. You do."

There's nothing else."

Her face under its small black hat was drawn and expressionless in the electric light. He wondered if women usually looked so at this juncture.

"You've been so much to me these last weeks. That terrible home-coming, losing all I expected to find. You've been the one bright saving thing about it, from the very first evening. I felt it, but I didn't realize it consciously. That other night, with Boon and Cora and the others, I think I did then. I ought to have. But I do now, anyway. Heaven knows, a little sigh, or gasp, and looked away from him.

"Marry, don't go and leave me now. I simply can't think of life without you. There'd be nothing left—no good, no hope, no faith. You mean all those things to me now, and you simply can't take them away from me. You must see, Marry, you must."

She looked at him again. She saw the smooth skin drawn tightly over the cheek bones, the sunken, staring eyes, the broad, sensitive mouth; she felt the appeal there, the appeal of so much that was fine and beautiful and in need. She put out her hand.

"I think I do see, Kit..."

He did not move, but smiled. "Well, you silly girl!"

"It's—it's all so damnable. I hate to see you suffer. You're so good—so—pathetic..."

She slowly put his arms around her; her cheek fell on his like dew on hot fields and rested there, in peace and sweetness.

A step sounded on the sidewalk. It was a policeman; Kit was just conscious of brass buttons and then a shrug, as the man passed on, grandly indifferent.

"It's all right," he called, turning his head. "We're engaged!"

CHAPTER XIII.

I.

They were married on the 22d of June, in Grace Church. The wedding was small, and "from" Aunt Emma's house; one case of champagne sufficed for the breakfast.

Mary's parents, together with a younger daughter of twelve, came on from Cleveland; they turned out to be inconspicuous, well-dressed, well-bred people, not unpleasant to be spared the fuss and expense of a wedding in their own home. Kit liked Dr. Vane, who wore a short beard and a frock coat and looked like a figure out of the nineties. He said nothing whatever about money, and Kit told him, almost apologetically, that he had made a will leaving everything to Mary, and was settling five thousand dollars a year on her at once, to dress on. "She's dressed on less than five hundred all her life," said Dr. Vane, his eyes on the ceiling, "but I doubt if she'll be able to do it on five thousand."

Mrs. Vane Kit liked even better; a stoutish matron, impeccable in gray chamoisee, with a look in her eyes of having risen to answer many nocturnal telephone calls. She was quietly effective with young Alicia, a leggy, ubiquitous child, noisily pleased with her position as one attendant of the bride.

"You must come and visit us," Kit told her, as she ran up to her mother with some loud exclamations over nothing. He saw Mary and himself going "bring her out," six years hence, expensively and expansively.

Alicia fidgeted and blushed, had to be told to thank him, and backed awkwardly off. Mrs. Vane turned from "saw" to Kit with a rather lovely smile. "She shan't bother you," she said. Four days after the wedding they sailed for Europe on the Carmania.

II.

In a religiously planned interview about Ona and Naoua, Mary exhibited herself as quite calm. Her chief criticism was that they had but three

THE NEBBES



DID I LAUGH?

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess
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Barney Google and Spark Plug

GOUT ISN'T GETTING BARNEY'S GOAT.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck
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BRINGING UP FATHER

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Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus
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JERRY ON THE JOB

TOO MUCH SPEED.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban
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New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. MINTYRE.

New York, Nov. 27.—Thoughts while strolling around New York: A row of old book shops. With piles of dusty, dog-eared books. A boy, a Danish girl in tight. A coffee stand in a back street doorway. What aret in a back street doorway. What ever became of Lottie Gilson. And the Della Fox curl.

The beat of kettle drums. Prowling girls with come-hither looks. Wonder if the Eskimo pie man still gets his huge royalties. There's Zoo Beckley. A sob sister beauty. The superb indifference of the Russian wolfhound.

A blank club—the Lido-Venice. Always the noise of street drilling. Ocean liner employees seeing the town. Always in groups. This week New York—next week London or Paris. What a life. A silver of a moon. A hunchback muttering to himself.

A famous Broadway "steal pigeon." Ruins a hole in the wall jewelry shop on the side. Eddie Dunn—George M. Cohan's man Friday. A coffee parlor diffusing a benign domestic glow. Wicker chairs. Chaise longue. And crystal chandeliers.

Vaudeville agents chasing about to catch the last act on the bill. More horrible little French plays from the Grand Guignol. Busses that have to go around the block to turn around. Military school dudes. Diamond buckles on a burlesque queen.

Men who live and perish by their wits. Old Second Hand like. One attends firsts nights. And owns a brown stone in the 80s. The tramp of home-covers. A million patrons of restless humanity. Wish I could sing, boss.

Where did the word "bunk" originate? James Oliver Curwood. Just in from the great open spaces. A gay little coupe of orchid hue. Owned by the wife of a handsome and disolute actor. Coffee and steak odors. Business of wolfing a meal.

In one of the university clubs the other night a prankish group gave a fresh young sprig a gentle hazing. He had been invited for dinner and from the start became overbearing. He was finally invited up to a room. And under the prodding he was forced to stick his head out the window and shout: "Help! help! help! Don't shoot, I'll marry the woman." He left subdued and thoughtful.

In my gangly youth days I was rather cocksure of myself on a picnic party. I wore immaculate white duck pants and a scarlet tie. My ego wilted, however, when one of the ruffians in overalls pushed me down in a blackberry tart. In such trying moments a fidgeting gizzle is the most futile thing in the world.

One of the best-known American essayists has given up writing letters for the prosaic business of writing advertising copy. He says there is more skill in the writing of an advertisement than an entire page of the essay. He tells of working for five days on a six line blurb.

Pietro sold chalk statues from a huge basket he carried on his head. He traveled the well-beaten paths of the East Side tenements, always shouting his wares from the curb. Rings were in his ears and his coat was the black velvet of Montmartre. The other day he died. When the coroner came and looked about for the name of some relative he found under the mattress \$17,000 in currency. Pietro had been in America 12 years.

Such instances give an air of dubiety and inconsequence to the life. But one might have enjoyed life a little more. Certainly there was nothing romantic about his work—just dull days of skimping and self-denial.

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consonants between them, and one of these were repeated.

"But you've got only four consonants in your own two names," Kit pointed out.

Mary replied that her middle name was Japon. "And, anyway, do you suppose I hadn't taken all that into account, from the very moment you came home?"

"Really?" said Kit. "What that pretty little name?"

"Entirely grandmother. There may be men who—"

This was a week before the wedding; the two were in Mary's studio

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It Happens in the Best Regulated Families

By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield
The Real Test of Success.

