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## A Clever Ruse

But It Was Very Unexpectedly  
 Thwarted.

By WILLARD BLAKEMAN

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 Association.

On coming home from business I  
 found my wife in the dumps.  
 "What's the matter, dear?" I asked.  
 "It's all up with us."  
 "Bottom dropped out of the uni-  
 verse?"  
 "Worse. Aunt Abigail will have to  
 live with us. She's written that her  
 friend with whom she has had a home  
 is to give up her house the 1st of May,  
 and that she throws her out. I am her  
 only relative, and of course she ex-  
 pects me to take her in."  
 "She's a bit cranky, isn't she?"  
 "Cranky is no name for it."  
 "Well, we'll have to make the best of  
 it."

Aunt Abigail arrived. We had previ-  
 ously considered our home entirely our  
 own. With the coming of our relative  
 we saw at once that all this was  
 changed. She settled herself down  
 with an appearance of permanency  
 that made my blood run cold.

"Well," she exclaimed, looking about  
 her, "how did you ever come to build  
 this house down in a hollow—it must  
 have been a swamp once—when you  
 could as well have put it up on that  
 hill, where you could see something?"  
 "We live here winter and summer,"  
 Aunt Abigail. Up there we would  
 freeze in cold weather."

"Freeze! Nonsense! Some people are  
 always afraid they'll breathe a little  
 fresh air. I'm not. I sleep with my  
 window open, and I like to have a gale  
 blowing in right on me. You should  
 have fronted your house to the south."

"I can't stand this. We must get rid  
 of her, I said to my wife."

"To turn her out would be awful."  
 "We needn't do that. We can fix it  
 so that she will go of her own accord."

"For heaven's sake explain."  
 "You know the homeopathic princi-  
 ple—like cures like. Well, my Uncle  
 Robert is more disagreeable, if that is  
 possible, than your Aunt Abigail. He  
 is a dictatorial old curmudgeon, with  
 no respect for any one's opinion but  
 his own. He is as poor as a church  
 mouse, living in a miserable room in a  
 rookery by himself. He amuses him-  
 self abusing his neighbors from his  
 window and shying anything he can  
 get his hands on at the cats. Now, it  
 has occurred to me to bring him here  
 as a foil for your aunt. She can't pos-  
 sibly endure to stay in the house with  
 such a man, and when she's gone I'll  
 find a way to get rid of Uncle Robert.  
 Perhaps they may both go to get rid  
 of each other."

"Your plan seems rather impractica-  
 ble to me, Billy, but I have a good deal  
 of confidence in those roundabout ways  
 of yours. Suppose we try it?"

So I wrote Uncle Robert offering a  
 home temporarily and, if he liked it,  
 as long as he lived. He accepted eager-  
 ly, and it was not long before he was  
 down upon us bag and baggage.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, pat-  
 ting me on the back, "how you do re-  
 mind me of your father! He and I  
 were inseparable as boys, and I've car-  
 ried you on my shoulder often. And  
 to think that I'm to have a home with  
 you! Put me anywhere. A garret is  
 good enough for a broken down old  
 codger like me. Phew! Somebody's  
 been smoking here. Do you smoke?  
 How I hate tobacco! It makes me  
 sick."

"I won't smoke any more in the  
 house since you've come, uncle," I said.  
 "Oh, don't mind me. I can stand  
 anything; got to stand it. I've made  
 a dead failure of life and don't deserve  
 anything else. You don't mind my  
 opening the window, do you—just to  
 let the odor out?"

"Fanny has a bad cold, you know."  
 "Just the thing to cure her. Let her  
 breathe the cool air of heaven."

Up went the window and out of the  
 room went Fanny. Half an hour after  
 my uncle arrived dinner was announc-  
 ed. I was watching our guests when  
 they entered the dining room. It was  
 like a dog and a cat at first catching  
 sight of each other. Both seemed to  
 crouch for an encounter. Neither  
 spoke to the other for some time after  
 taking seats at table. Then a remark  
 of Uncle Robert's ruffled Aunt Abigail.

"This women's voting craze"—he  
 was beginning.

"Voting what, sir?"  
 "Craze, madam," raising his voice.

"I'm not deaf. I heard you well  
 enough. I object to you calling wom-  
 an's suffrage a craze."

"Are you an advocate of woman's  
 suffrage, madam?"

"I most assuredly am."

"I believe in any one who advocates  
 a principle standing by that principle  
 and not attempting to straddle—"

"Sir!"

"That is, to equivocate or knuckle  
 down, defending the cause with all  
 his or her strength. Per contra, I re-  
 serve the same privilege for myself.  
 Woman's suffrage I consider the most  
 abominable, diabolical, illogical rot  
 that was ever sprung on a Christian  
 people."

"And I consider it one of the holiest  
 causes—"

"Aunt Abigail," interposed my wife,  
 "do let me help you to this little bit  
 of wing. You're not eating enough to  
 feed a sparrow."

"I'm inclined to think," remarked  
 Uncle Robert, "that there's a good deal  
 in this new idea of diet. This man

want's-his-name who is proving that  
 the less we eat the more work we can  
 do is going to create a revolution."

"Have you adopted his idea?" asked  
 Aunt Abigail spitefully.

Considering that I had just filled Un-  
 cle Robert's plate for the second time  
 this was unkind.

"I have not, madam, for the reason  
 that I am not yet satisfied that his  
 views are correct. I'm nothing if not  
 scientific. I must see a thing proved  
 before I adopt it."

"Would you prove woman's suffrage  
 before adopting it?"

This was quite bright of Aunt Ab-  
 igail.

"I admit," replied Uncle Robert,  
 "that to prove it before adopting it  
 would be impossible. It isn't neces-  
 sary to prove it. Any fool can see  
 that the idea is ridiculous."

"Uncle," I interrupted for the pur-  
 pose of calling a truce and preventing  
 Aunt Abigail from firing a return shot,  
 "let me fill your glass."

"No, sir," putting his hand over it—  
 "not at all, sir. I drink just one glass  
 of wine with my dinner. And that's  
 enough for any man."

"Quite right," I replied and filled my  
 own for the third time.

"One is too much for any man, espe-  
 cially an old man," snapped the aunt.  
 "Nothing is so disgusting to me as an  
 old toper."

The shot, while it applied partly to  
 me, was fired at Uncle Robert.

"Not at all," he replied. "One glass  
 is good for the system. You know  
 what St. Paul says, 'Take a little wine  
 for the stomach's sake.'"

"Yes," retorted Aunt Abigail, "and  
 I know that the devil can quote Scrip-  
 ture."

This was so well turned that I felt  
 like patting the old lady on the back.  
 But it did not squire Uncle Robert  
 for the simple reason that he was un-  
 squelchable. The skirmishing went  
 on, getting hotter and hotter, till at  
 last, to prevent an open rupture, my  
 wife arose from the table. She, poor  
 woman, was dreading a fracas, and I  
 was not anxious to have a break occur  
 so early in the game.

As soon as Fanny and I were alone  
 together we sat down and laughed.

"Did you ever see anything work  
 more beautifully?" I said, slapping my  
 leg.

"Never."

"Let them go their own gait. My  
 opinion is that one or the other will  
 get out within a week."

Every day my uncle came to me and  
 said that he couldn't live in the same  
 house with a cat and was going to-  
 morrow. Every day Aunt Abigail went  
 to Fanny and said she could not possi-  
 bly endure that opinionated old heath-  
 en and she was casting about for an-  
 other home, but it was dreadful that  
 she should be alone in the world, with  
 no one to love but Fanny, and Fanny  
 must needs be incumbered by all her  
 husband's relatives. I told my uncle  
 that if I were deprived of the comfort  
 of caring for my father's brother in  
 his old age it would break my heart.  
 Fanny made faint hearted attempts to  
 quiet her aunt and agreed with her  
 that my uncle was a trifle hard to get  
 on with, regretting at the same time  
 that he had the same claim on me that  
 her aunt had on her. It is true that  
 occasionally there would be a lull in  
 the hostilities and we would find the  
 two chatting quite amicably. But this  
 was when they happened to strike  
 some subject which was a pet with  
 both. As soon as they drifted into  
 topics on which they disagreed the  
 roar of battle recommenced.

Several weeks passed in this way,  
 and Fanny and I were getting impa-  
 tient for the denouement, when one  
 day uncle came to me and said that  
 he would like to have a few words  
 with me and Fanny alone. He looked  
 very serious, and I felt quite sure he  
 would announce his departure. He  
 was a born gentleman, and nothing  
 would be further from his nature than  
 to hurt one's feelings, and to appear  
 ungrateful would break his heart. I  
 called Fanny into the library, shut the  
 door and waited for the old man to  
 speak.

"My dear boy," he began, taking my  
 hand, "and my dear little girl," taking  
 Fanny's hand, "I have something to  
 announce which will surprise you. I  
 am going to leave you!"

"Oh, uncle," we both exclaimed, try-  
 ing hard to appear much disappointed,  
 even shocked.

"Yes, I am going away, and your  
 aunt is also going."

This was indeed a surprise.

"Your kindness has brought about a  
 great change in two lonely lives. For  
 a time it seemed to both of us that we  
 must thwart your plans for the happi-  
 ness of both of us. It has not seemed  
 that we can live under the same roof  
 together."

He paused, and I thought he was go-  
 ing to shed tears. Then he added ab-  
 ruptly:

"We are both going to leave you to-  
 morrow."

"Both?"

"Yes, both. We are to be quietly  
 married at 9 o'clock and leave on a  
 short wedding trip on the 10 o'clock  
 train."

"Goodness gracious!" from Fanny.

"Great Scott!" from me.

"But we shall be gone only a few  
 days."

"And then," exclaimed Fanny and I  
 breathlessly.

"And then," resumed the old man,  
 putting a hand on each of our heads,  
 "we return to spend the rest of our  
 lives with our dear niece and nephew."

Heaven helps those who help them-  
 selves. At any rate, heaven came to  
 our relief. I inherited \$20,000 from a  
 maternal uncle. Of this I put \$5,000  
 in a house for the old couple and in-  
 vested the rest in an annuity for them.  
 Strangely enough, they are quite con-  
 tented together.



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