

A Vision of Whist.

BEING THE MEDITATIONS OF A MARRIED MAN
—IN LOVE—WITH HIS WIFE.

We had not been married long—Constance and I. She had come to visit our neighbor—Mrs. Dr. Henderson I mean—three years before. Henderson and his cousin, McVicker, are habitual card shufflers and with Lawyer Hopeworthy and myself we had played many an exciting rubber. But at the time of Constance's arrival we had not met for many a week on account of the loss of the lawyer. Hopeworthy had moved further west where divorces are more frequent. One night as I was lounging over the evening paper with a long Meerschaum pipe in my mouth, Henderson's office boy came in and asked me to go over, "Just to fill out a whist hand," he said. I did not have the least idea that I would be expected to play with a woman. If such a thought had entered my head this tale would never have been written. "What! a woman play whist! Preposterous!" would have been my exclamation. "What man can play whist with a woman? I've tried it, I guess I know. First it is 'Well now, what is trumps? Oh, yes, clubs: I forgot.' Then, 'Well, isn't it jolly to truly be playing whist?' Then, 'Is it really my turn so quick?' Then, 'Did you honestly play that? How funny!' Then, 'Why, did I trump your king? Really, I thought she might hold the ace. 'Pon my word it is too bad.'"

Yes, I had played whist with ladies and my decision was formulated: *Women can't play cards.* What fools we men are! I settled down for a dry and tedious evening. I soon discovered that pleasure was in store for me. My, but couldn't she play. Who? Constance, you idiot, of course, didn't I say that she was my partner? Ah, how beautiful she looked sitting there in the parlor! How her eyes gleamed when her hand was full of trumps! How she schemed when her suit was good that she might get it in! How doggedly we worked when we had neither rumps nor suit!

Often of an evening did I while away the time in this friendly manner. We nearly always won. Dr. Henderson declared our cards fitted together. A thought—our cards fit together. Why not our lives? Why not our lives? Happy, blessed thought! That night hearts were trumps five times in succession. I couldn't help noticing it. I glanced across the table. Our eyes met—a moment that was all. She blushed. Oh, ye saints, how my blood boiled that night! I trumped her ace; I played king on her queen—I, well——

As I said before, we had not been married long—Constance and I. Often since the wedding march—our wedding march—had reverberated through the little, ivy-grown church, had we amused ourselves with our favorite game. That Constance loved me I had abundant proof in the manner she provided for my comfort. A poor struggling lawyer, when through my own bungling, I lost the Mead case, she railed about the stupidity of the average juror. When I won the Franklin suit, she vowed I was the prince of speakers. And foolish fellow that I was I believed her. In short, Constance was no misnomer. She was constant always.

But tonight I was sad and disheartened. This morning I noticed that Constance was somewhat feverish. She put on her gloves, then took them off, then put them on again. I had observed her closely. The wedding ring was lying on the dresser. Why had she taken it off? Did she scorn my gift? Had she forgotten her plighted troth? I asked if her if she felt ill? "No, only a little nervous." "Let's not go to church then." "Yes, I want to go." Never before had Constance opposed my slightest wish. Somewhat surprised at her perversity I assented. Who can contend against a pouting woman? During the entire service I watched her closely. I thought she smiled at some one on the other side of the aisle while the priest was opening the sacred ritual: "The Lord is in his Holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." Constance was more feverish than before. She