

of her four millions when she died."

"Well, have you any plan to suggest, Jack?" asked His Grace.

"The Timbuctoo might be late."

"Rubbish! not at this season of the year," said the Duke.

"Then she might be run down!" continued the imperturbable Jack.

"No such lu—I mean, my dear"—and Alton turned to the Duchess—"no such dreadful catastrophe is to be feared."

The Duchess had started off again to cry, and Alton was consoling her when Jack thus interrupted his soothing career:

"My dear young people, I have always been a friend in distress. Never have I failed to succor those I have found in the woes of despair. Trust to me and I will get you out of this hole. I will save you both from incurring the displeasure of a 'most august personage,' and from losing your share of Aunt Mary's four millions."

"How are you going to do it?" exclaimed the Duke.

"How?" asked the Duchess.

"I haven't the slightest idea," answered Jack, "but I'll do it. Only trust to me, and twenty-four hours hence I feel sure I shall have devised some plan. If I haven't, I will tell you so, and we can discuss the matter again. You can't at any rate, be worse off than you are now, even if I fail. But I won't."

After some discussion over pros and cons, it was decided that the matter should be left in Jack's hands. At luncheon that day, Jack, usually so talkative, was noticeable for his silence.

"I've got it!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"Got what?" asked the Duke, next to whom Jack sat.

"A scheme to prevent Aunt Mary meeting the 'most august,'" whispered Jack.

"What is it?"

Mr. John Repton is just at present keeping his mouth shut, and if you want him to succeed, Your Grace had better do the same," and Jack got up and rang the bell. A footman answered. "Telephone to the stables to have the Nipper saddled and brought round at half past two."

"Where are you going, Jack?" asked the Duchess. "I was about to ask you to drive me over to the Huntingdons."

"Sorry I can't accommodate Your Grace, but I have most important business to attend to in Warminster."

At half past three the Nipper, with Jack Repton on his back, stopped opposite a house in Warminster, a plate on the front door of which showed it was occupied by "William Brown, M.D." Two seasons before Jack had broken his collarbone and a couple of ribs in the hunting field. Young Doctor Brown had skillfully set them, and the two men had become chums. Half an hour later Jack came out of the house and tossed a silver coin to the boy who held the Nipper. As he was about to ride off Doctor Brown, who stood at the door, called out to him, "Be very careful, Repton! Not more than three drops at the most!" On his way through the town Jack stopped at a chemist's shop, presented Doctor Brown's prescription, received an ounce bottle labeled "Sulphate of Atropine," and returned to Farley Towers.

Needless to say, before the evening was over the Duchess had wormed out of the Duke the fact that Jack had hit on a plan to rescue them from their dilemma, and that Her Grace had found a confidante—her pretty sister-in-law, whom she longed to call cousin as well. Jack admired the girl, but then, he admired so many others, and was such an incorrigible flirt that, in spite of his youth, match-makers had almost given him up in despair.

The two women in the secret "cornered" Jack in the drawing-room after dinner.

"Now, Mr. Repton, do tell us what you are going to do," pleaded Lady Hermione.

"Yes, Jack, tell us, that's a dear," chimed in the Duchess.

But no amount of cajolery could worm out of Jack the scheme he had devised. He assured the Duchesses no harm would befall her mother, and that if she would only keep quiet and not make any more confidantes, Mrs. Von Donop would never know the true reason of her not meeting the 'most august personage.'

Jack Repton was very thoughtful the next day—his animal spirits had disappeared; he was almost rude in his brusqueness; he might have been a mathematician wrestling with a great problem. Suddenly, when he was dressing for dinner, he dropped his hair brushes, shouted out at the top of his voice, "Eureka! I've got it at last!" performed an impromptu pas seul and left the impression on the valet that his master had either been drinking or had suddenly gone crazy.

Jack was the life and soul of the party that night. The next morning as soon as breakfast was over, he was off to Warminster on the Nipper. He stopped at a linen-draper's shop, and, going to the counter, asked a young woman for some "cotton or thread, or whatever you call it, the same color as this," pointing to a button on his fancy waist coat. The thread was produced. He then asked for a needle to sew buttons on with. "But I only want one," he said, when the girl brought out a packet. "We don't sell them singly," she replied, laughingly. When Jack was told the price of the packet of needles he laughed too, and blushed at the same time.

A large party of eminent persons arrived at Farley Towers the evening before the day on which the "most august personage" was expected to arrive. There was the Prime Minister and his wife and daughter, a couple of Dukes and their Duchesses, a celebrated beauty, the wife of a foreign Prince, the Ambassador from the Duchess of Alton's native country, a noted poet and some lesser fry. Mrs. Von Donop, with two maids and a secretary, came very late, by special train. She was at once shown to her apartments, which, as had been arranged between Jack and the Duchess, looked out on the same corridor as his room did. When the Prime Minister's wife was going to bed her maid told her of Mrs. Von Donop's arrival. "What, the Duchess's mother? She will ruin her position if she attempts to force that woman on the 'most august personage!'"

Jack Repton was up bright and early the next morning, and, before he was half dressed, dismissed his valet. He stood in his shirt sleeves at the half opened door of his bedroom, watching the staircase. A long acquaintance with his aunt's habits had taught him that in a short time her maid, Martha, who had been with Mrs. Von Donop ever since that lady married the Duchess's father and had known Jack since he was a child, would come up that staircase with his aunt's morning cafe au lait. He had not long to wait. As the maid approached his door he threw it wide open.

"Why, hullo, Martha! How are you?" "Oh, Master Jack, you did give me such a start!"

"Martha, I want you to sew a button on a waistcoat for me."

"Well, wait a minute, Master Jack, till I've taken the coffee to your aunt."

"No; I can't wait I'm in a deuce of a hurry! It will only take you a second, and the coffee won't get cold," and he pushed the woman through the open door. "Put the tray down there!" he said, pointing to a table. "Now come here!" He led Martha into the dressing room, deposited her in a chair and handed her the garment and button.

"What's happened to your man, Master Jack, that he ain't looking after your clothes?" inquired Martha.

"Oh, he's been suddenly taken ill."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Martha, examining the waistcoat; "if this ain't been done malicious-like! Why, somebody cut that button off with a knife."

"I don't know how it happened," said Jack. "Here's a needle and cotton."

"Why, sakes alive! Master Jack; what's come over you? You never used to be like that, having needles and thread about you. They've made a regular old bachelor of you in this country."

"Hurry up, Martha!" Jack passed into the bedroom, partially closed the dressing room door, picked up a bottle of atropine and went up to the table on which stood the coffee tray. He lifted the lid of the small silver coffee pot, that held about enough for one cup, and with a rather shaky hand let three drops fall into it.

Mrs. Von Donop had read in the papers on her way from the landing place to Farley that her daughter was to entertain the "most august personage" the next day. Was there ever such a piece of good luck? The "most august personage" could not possibly refuse to receive Mrs. Von Donop in her daughter's house. She would have her secretary cable the story to the news agencies in her own country, and her position in society would no longer be equivocal.

"I'm rather tired, Martha," said Mrs. Von Donop, as she finished her cup of coffee. "I'll try and get another hour's sleep and ring for you when I want you."

An hour or so later Martha was startled by the furious ringing of her mistress' bell. She rushed up to Mrs. Von Donop's apartments and found that lady in the greatest state of agitation. "Pull up the blinds, Martha! Something dreadful has happened to me," she exclaimed, breathing rapidly. "I'm feverish! I've a dreadful headache! My throat's dry, and—haven't I a rash on me?"

When Martha had pulled up the blinds she discovered that her mistress was as red as a lobster.

"This is horrible!" cried Mrs. Von Donop. "And to think it should happen just at this time!" and tears of vexation poured down Mrs. Von Donop's cheeks. "Send for a doctor at once, Martha, but don't let Her Grace know. It may be some contagious fever, and the babies—The poor woman buried her head in the pillows and sobbed.

Jack happened to come out of his bedroom as Martha hurried past.

"What's the matter, Martha?"

"Your aunt's taken very sick, and I'm going to send for the doctor. But don't tell Miss Blanche—I mean Her Grace—Master Jack."

"Send for Dr. Brown, Martha. Mind Dr. Brown," called Jack, as the maid disappeared.

The doctor arrived at the Towers. He thought it was a case of Rotheln, or German measles, but would not be able to tell for certain until the next day. Meanwhile, there was not the slightest danger. He put up some medicine for the patient and advised that her room should be kept dark and quiet. The Duchess—who by this time had heard of her mother's sudden attack—he advised to keep away from the sick-room. When Her Grace told the guests what had happened, none of them believed her, but admired the tact she had shown.

The visit of the "most august personage," who was very gracious to the young Duchess of Alton, was a great success. Dr. Brown discovered that he had made a wrong diagnosis of Mrs. Von Donop's case, that the rash had been caused by a disordered digestion, and she was as well as ever the next morning. That evening the Duke came into Jack's room as he was dressing for dinner, to ask him some question. As they were chatting he carelessly picked up a small bottle from the dressing table. "Give me that, Alton!" exclaimed Jack, snatching the bottle from the Duke's hand and hastily putting it into his pocket. But Alton had read on the label "Sulphate of Atropine." He went to the library and, taking from the shelves a medical dictionary, turned to the word "Atropine." He read: "The most prominent effects from small remedial doses are dryness and stricture of the throat, frontal headache and a scarlet rash."

"It was rather risky," whispered the Duke to Jack, as the guests were assembled for dinner. "For goodness sake, don't ever let Blanche know!"

"Not I," replied Jack. "Swear you will not give me away."

"I swear!" answered the Duke.

And when dinner was over the Duchess and Lady Hermione got hold of Jack and begged him to tell them what he would have done had Mrs. Von Donop not been taken so suddenly ill. He refused to answer, and has kept his counsel to this day.—Town Topics.

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