IN A TERRIBLE FIX

By WILLIAM BLOSS.



Without question I felt like that unhappy principal in one of the fables of Aesop—that long-eared and four-footed ass, who starved to death between two luscious and succulent bales of hay, unable resolutely to declare himself upon which one first he would regale his appetite. It is true I have but two feet. As to the length of my ears I am beginning to entertain disquieting apprehensions.

And yet, and yet, there are decisions even more difficult to make than those confronting an umpire in a world's championship pennant battle.

Of course as to the main point, I have known for three months it is necessary for me either to marry some dear girl with plenty of money of her own, or—horrible alternative!—go to work. I have a cultivated disinclination to go to work for the mere base purpose of being paid for it. Wages is a word abhorrent to my breeding. It smacks of the proletariat, of the sordid, the lowly, the unbaked and soggy undercrust of the social pie.

Father worked, naturally. Most fathers of any account do. I understand. Good old dad! He locked me out of the loaves and fishes cupboard all right and tight enough when he quit, but I hold no grudge. In his day and in his way he was good to me. Here's to him. This is beastly cheap sherry, but what can one drink, fit to drink, on $3,600 a year? Marjorie has $36,000. If she were my fiance instead of my sister that would be an income not half bad, for two people.

I'm to have my $36,000 per when I'm forty. Lord! Ten years to wait. What an age! That is the reason this marriage matter perplexes me. We must admit the nuptial necessity as a conditional and not a theoretic confrontation.

The trouble lies in this—there are two of them. I stand between them even as the Aesopian ass, unknowing where to browse. Charlotte is fond of me, I know. She has more than as much as told me so. If only Grace Dalzelle had Charlotte's money! I am not quite sure how many millions Charlotte will have some day. It's something quite incredible. Old man Flaxhaver is still piling them up, they say. He's a grouchy old beast and has "views." Thinks men ought to work. Last time I dined at his house he quizzed me about my "career." Said every American worth his salt ought to have an aim in life. Said dad was one of the best men he ever knew.

Mind you, I can marry Charlotte right enough, any old day, or night. She'll elope as fast as I'll let her. But I'm in doubt; I'm in debt. Old Flaxhaver stickles for his paternal and parental authority. If I've got his back up about thinkless Gwendolyn-ild he might not get it down till after sackcloth and ashes had done their awful worst to Charlotte and poor Charley Lavender.

My predicament is really no less than sickening. Grace hasn't a cent, worth speaking of. Maybe $20,000 life insurance Dalzelle left her out of his wreck, after he had blown his brains out the day they sky-highed U. P. to 1,000.

It's when I'm with Grace that I fully determine to tell Charlotte "there are insuperable obstacles which must forever forbid our union"—I have it written out, along those lines, and it isn't bad. And then, after I leave Grace, and my hot blood cools and the sweet sting of her kisses no longer burns in my mouth, I have to come down to earth and remember my duty to myself and my family, if I should ever have one. It can't be expected it is a man's social duty to rear a lot of paupers.

And this is Decision Day. Marjorie said she would give me until tonight to quit being a fool. Grace and Marjorie are chums, you see. Sis says she will lend me $3,600 a year on my prospects if I marry "right." I know what that means. I might do worse than "right." If there's a prettier girl in the world than Marjorie Lavender it's Grace Dalzelle.

And, then, I love her. Though I am a loafer, she, too, loves me.

She Expected It.

The steamship moved slowly up the Narrows, abreast of Quarantine. There was a tremendous rattle and clank and splash. Aunt Drusilla called a steward.

"What was that, steward?" she asked.

"Nothin' lady—only dropped the anchor, ma'am."

"I thought they would," answered Aunt Drusilla disapprovingly. "They've been very careless with it. I've seen it hanging over the side all day."

The Doctor's Calculation.

Foozle—Doc Woozle wants ter sell his auter.

Biff—What's the reason?

Foozle—He figgers that the one that buys it will be a steady patient ever after.

GET ALL MIXED UP

Have First Quarrel When Turnips Instead of Sweet Alyssum Comes Up.

By FRANK FILSON.

"We'll be as happy as birds in their nest," said Alice joyfully, as she and her husband returned from their honeymoon and surveyed the old colonial farmhouse, standing in its two acres of ground. It was the ideal of a country home—such a home as Alice and Jim had always dreamed of, now come to fulfillment.

"And we'll grow our own vegetables," said Jim blithely.

"And flowers, dear," said Alice, smiling.

"But who'll take care of them?"

"Why, that's easy," Alice answered. "I'll take charge of the flowers, Jim, and you can mind the vegetables. And—listen, Jim! Let's each raise our own plots secretly, and mind, the other is not to come into that part of the garden or look at it until everything is blooming. Then the one that has the finest display gets the prize."

"Which is?"

"A kiss," said Alice, smiling.

"I'll take mine now," said Jim—and he did.

They had only been married a month and their experience of homemaking was delightful. Their gardens were their pride, and each rigorously observed the conditions. Jim did, indeed, grumble a little at not being allowed to have any flowers in his part of the territory assigned, and Alice relented so far as to permit him to grow just a few. "Only round the edges, though, dearest," she said. "You know, we must have as much space as possible for those old vegetables. Just think, next fall I'm going to put up tomatoes and onions and—well, all sorts of things!"

And all sorts of things were planted and actually began to sprout. Neither of them considered it anything but



Alice Had Hit Upon His Own Design.

magic when the first green sprouts appeared. And after a while a tiny bloom made its appearance in the flower garden.

"Now, Jim, no looking," said Alice mischievously.

"But—hang it, Alice, you're not going to keep me out of the garden the whole summer, are you?" he asked.

"But Jim, you can look from afar. And you can walk on the lawn. Only, you must not come up to the flower beds. Because I have a big surprise for you in preparation."

It must be confessed that Jim did look. And as the flowers bloomed and the whole garden became one riotous mass of blossoms, he began importuning Alice more and more frequently to be allowed to see his surprise. At last she fixed upon the following Saturday.

Meanwhile Jim had not been idle. He, too, had prepared a little surprise for Alice. He had taken advantage of her permission to plant flowers, and, with great dexterity, had placed a bed of sweet alyssum, as a compliment to her, setting it out in such a way that the arrangement of the flowers spelled out the letters of her name. When the green leaves appeared and actually grew true his delight was unbounded.

One of the hardest things he had to do was to remember the various vegetables. He had hit upon an ingenious method of overcoming this difficulty—he had planted them alphabetically. Beginning at the tool shed were artichokes; then came the asparagus—not to bloom till the second year; beans, beets, Brussels sprouts, and cabbages, ranging all the way down to turnips and watermelons. There was no vegetable listed on the catalogue after watermelons, so he concluded that that growth was alphabetically the last that was known to science.

This method proved highly satisfactory, too, for it would have been impossible for him, city-bred as he was, to have distinguished the succulent turnip from the radish or peanut, unless he could have pulled it out by the roots and examine it.

Saturday came. Jim was in a ferment of excitement when his wife led him into the garden. He sniffed the breeze, laden with fragrant odors, and it smelled very good to him. Alice led him to a corner where some delicately tinted flowers were pricking their way up through the mud.

Jim looked and stared. Alice had hit upon his own design. The flowers were growing in a rather straggly but unmistakable letter J.

"Sweet Williams," whispered Alice, looking at him triumphantly.

"Yes—but—" stammered her husband.

"That's a compliment to you, dearest," she said. "You see, there isn't any Sweet James, so I pretended that your name was William instead. Aren't you pleased?"

"Pleased? I'm delighted," he cried. "But Alice, dear, do you know I have thought of just the same thing for you?"

"For me?"

"Yes. You know you said that I could plant some flowers, so I have planted some sweet alyssum—alyssum—that means Alice, you know."

"Show me at once, Jim," commanded his wife delightedly. And so he led her through the little rustic wicket gate and into the forbidden vegetable garden, where, near the tool shed, he triumphantly displayed his precious secret.

Alice looked at the growth in perplexity.

"But Jim, where are the flowers?" she asked.

"Flowers? I didn't know sweet alyssum had any flowers. You are my flower," he added diplomatically, for the expression on his wife's face had become quite curious.

She stooped over the growth and suddenly reached out her hand and pulled a handful from the ground. And then she sat down upon the path and burst into tears.

"Alice! Dearest! What's the matter?" cried Jim, hurrying toward her, pale with anxiety. "Don't you like them? Why, I planted them because I wanted them to remind me always of you."

"Yes, that's it," she sobbed. "I always knew you didn't really love me, but I never thought you would show it in such a cowardly, mean way as this. It's—it's turnip tops. And you said they reminded you of me."

Jim stared in horror at the uprooted plants. Undoubtedly the roots had formed into the small but unmistakable configuration of the turnip. And even Jim knew that a turnip is nothing but a turnip.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed in horror. "Alice! I planted them alphabetically and I—I began at the wrong end. Come over here. Here—here they are!"

Alice cast one glance at his new find and began weeping anew.

"Brute!" she sobbed. "Those are cabbage heads."

They made up two minutes later but now they have a hired man to tend the vegetable garden. Jim helps Alice with the flowers and they have some real sweet alyssum blooming round the sweet williams.

(Copyright, 1913, by W. G. Chapman.)

Middle Names Taboo.

People have not always been allowed the pleasure of having as many names as they wish; indeed, 400 years ago not even a middle name was allowed in England. It was illegal. The old English law was definite and admitted of no infraction of its ruling. The only exception made to this iron-clad regulation was in the case of persons of royal rank. If they really wished it they could boast a middle name but woe to the person of ordinary rank who was sufficiently unwise or obstinate to insist on having more than two appellations.

For the first offense he would very likely be tied to a whipping post and severely lashed. For a second offense he would endure some more lasting punishment, perhaps the removal of his thumbs or his ears. And if he still persisted in his stubbornness he would be hanged.

There is a case on record of a poor man—in all probability half demented—who insisted on signing four names every time he wrote his signature to any paper. Of course he passed through all the legal stages of punishment until he was finally hanged.

Newton's "Observatory."

There is an interesting mystery associated with 35 St. Martin's street, once the home of Sir Isaac Newton, which is now in the property market. On the roof there used to be a curious structure made almost entirely of glass, and for many years this was confidently believed to have been Sir Isaac Newton's observatory. Fanny Burney, whose father, the noted musician, Dr. Charles Burney, was at one time an occupier of the house, occasionally used the erection as a study, and in her memoirs of her father she refers to it as Newton's observatory. In 1855 doubt was cast upon the story by John Timbs in his "Curiosities of London." He asserts that the observatory was built by a subsequent tenant, a Frenchman. It has been further declared that the Frenchman not only built the room, but also equipped it with various instruments, and then, claiming that it was the observatory of Newton, charged a fee for admission to view.—Westminster Gazette.

Wilde's Last Epigram.

Oscar Wilde's last epigram, before his reputation suffered so profound an eclipse, was uttered in a London Turkish bath. "It is strange," he remarked, "how, as one grows older, his philosophy of life becomes so simple as to be capable of reduction to three or four elementary principles. Now, my philosophy, for instance, is all summed up in three fundamental axioms." "And what are they?" he was asked. "Well," said Wilde, musingly, "the first of them is: 'Never go to see a play by Henry Arthur Jones.'" "And the other two?" "Oh, the other two don't really matter if you observe the first."

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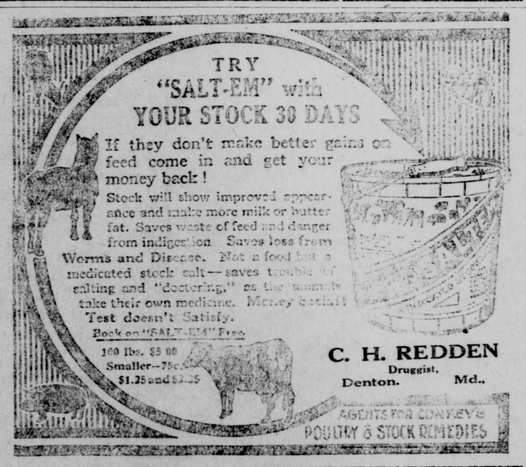
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