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An Evening Idyl.

BY DE P. F.

A lake lay dreaming of the stars
With robe of woven moonbeams soft,
While snowy clouds their flight forsook,
To view her beauty long and oft.

A fairy zephyr lowly teat
His airy form with love bedight,
And kissed her bosom's yielding grace,
Then reeled with rapture thro' the night

But back his yearning pinions swept,
To drink again Elysian bliss,
And, swooning from his passion deep,
Sank drowned within her moistened kiss.

Sad friends in dew-drop cars recline,
To shower tributes, sorrow born,
And watch their tears with diamond
To ripples change in sparkling scorn.

The Man in Possession.

BY F. S. H.

"I won't pay a farthing—no, that I won't—not if I have to go to prison for it!" and down comes my father's clenched hand on the table with such a thump that it makes the reels in my basket jump as if suddenly attacked with St. Vitus's dance.

Yesterday my father had made his first acquaintance with the County Court, having been summoned by a tradesman for the balance of an account which my father had declined to pay, as he firmly believed it to be a gross overcharge; but facts went against him, and he was ordered to pay. My father vowed that he would do no such thing. He called the judgment "iniquitous and one-sided," and ultimately expressed his determination to emulate dear old Mr. Pickwick, and go to prison if necessary, rather than submit to such an injustice.

"But father," I ask, in an awe-struck tone, "what will they do if you don't pay? Shall we all have to go to prison?"

"No, my dear," replies my father, calming down—"not exactly. The court will issue what is called an execution, and try to put a man in possession; but I think I shall prove more than a match for a County Court bailiff."

Father smiles while saying this, as if the latter person were a very contemptible and insignificant thing. "Execution! Man in possession! What do they mean? I am afraid to ask my father, he looks so cross, so I go on quietly with my work, waiting until the frown shall have left his brow."

"Mary," at last exclaims my father, "I have to go to Bardmoor to-morrow, and I was thinking that it might be a wise thing to consult young Barton; he has just come from a large office in London to help his uncle. I don't know much about him, but old Barton has always been considered a good lawyer, and perhaps the nephew may be following in his uncle's steps. At any rate, I will make the attempt, and see if he can't save me from this atrocious swindle. I wrote yesterday, asking him to call here, if passing, as I wanted to see him about those leases; but I suppose he has been too busy, or perhaps my letter has not reached him."

My father does not volunteer any more information, so I wish him "good night," and retire to rest, to dream of executions at Newgate; and that the murderers expiating their crimes are the "men in possession."

The next morning on coming down to breakfast, I find that my father has started by the early train for Bardmoor, and has left positive orders that during his absence the gate is to be kept locked and no one admitted under any pretence whatever.

"But tell me why, Jane?" I ask our old cook, who has been with us longer than I can remember, and to whom the orders have been given.

"To keep out the bailiffs, miss," replies Jane. "Not that it will be any good, for they are as sharp as needles, and nothing can keep them out if they've a mind to get in."

"What is an 'execution,' or a 'man in possession'?" I ask. "Did you ever see one?"

"Only one, miss, and that was quite enough. A bailiff is the man in possession, and when he or his men get into a house they sell all the furniture and everything they can lay their hands on—and that is what they call an execution."

"But, Jane," I argue, "if we keep the doors locked, how can they get in?"

"Lor, miss," answers Jane, "you don't know how awful they are! If they want to get into a house very much, they will disguise themselves like play-actors do. I remember when my uncle John had the bailiffs in. He

had kept them out for nigh three weeks, when one day an old cart broke down just outside his door, and the driver was thrown off his seat and fell into the road, where he lay as if he was too much hurt to move. Uncle had a kind heart, so he ran into the road and helped the driver on to his feet. 'Oh!' groans the man. 'Come in and rest a bit,' says uncle, 'and let's see where you are hurt; and with that he helps him to limp into the house. 'Sit down and rest yourself—make yourself at home; and uncle brings out his own arm chair. 'Thankee, I will,' grinned the old rascal, plumping his ugly self into the chair. 'I'm the man in possession,' says he, and pulls the warrant out of his pocket, 'so fork out my good Samaritan, or else I sell every blessed stick you've got.'"

And so Jane rattles on with anecdotes of the sharpness and unscrupulousness of men in possession until I begin to regard them as something more than mortal. After the breakfast things have been removed I perform my usual household duties—for I have been papa's housekeeper since dear mamma died—and then, taking a book with me, I go to the verandah to have a quiet read before luncheon. The reading has not advanced very far when I am startled by an agonized yelping and barking just outside the gate.

"I am sure that is Tiny's bark," I say to myself. "She must have crept under the gate and is now fighting with some other dog. Naughty, quarrelsome little thing! She will be killed!"

Starting from my seat, I seize the key of the gate and a large garden broom which happens to be standing near, and, heedless of 'executions' and 'men in possession,' I open the gate and rush out into the road, there to see my poor little Tiny in the grip of a most disreputable looking cur. My efforts to part them are at first fruitless; but at last, after one or two vigorous pushes with the broom, I succeed, Tiny is rescued, but at my expense, for the angry cur directs his wrath against me. Terribly afraid, I turn to run, but my opponent is too quick. He seizes hold of my dress and shakes it as if it were a rat. I scream to Jane for assistance, but relief is at hand. A gentleman rushes forward, and with one or two smart raps of his stick drives the dog away. I snatch up my Tiny and make a start for the garden before the attack is renewed. Fate however is against me. The horrid little dog has torn my dress and of course I must put my foot through the hole and awkwardly stumble. A strong arm, outstretched in time, just saves me from measuring my length in the dust.

"Don't be frightened," I hear a pleasant, cheerful voice exclaim; "there is no danger. The little dog has beaten a retreat."

"Bow-wow-wow!" yelps the little monster in contradiction, as, executing a cautious side movement, he renews the attack. There is nothing for it but to run; and run I do, not stopping till I reach the other side of the garden gate, the little dog at full speed after me. But my deliverer is equal to the occasion. He makes a rapid plunge and seizes the dog by the back of its neck—which unexpected attack so alarms the animal that it suffers itself, without a snap or bite, to be ignominiously expelled from the garden and the gate closed upon it.

"Oh, thank you!" I hurriedly exclaim. "I hope you are not hurt!"

For the first time I look at my preserver, and meet a pair of merry brown eyes looking at me with an amused twinkle.

"Stupid fellow!" I say to myself. "I wish he would not stare so. I don't know what to say to him."

To add to my discomfort, I feel my cheeks getting crimson—I have such a tiresome habit of blushing—and a truant lock of hair will keep blowing about my forehead, I wish that he was a little awkward or bashful. I always have plenty of self-possession when talking to a shy person; their diffidence gives me courage. I push the hair from my forehead with an impatient hand, and, raising my eyes to his as he is assuring me that he is quite unhurt, I catch a glimpse of a blue, official looking paper which has partially worked its way out of his pocket. All at once it flashes across my mind—the 'man in possession'!

He must be a bailiff, and I have let him in, and papa will come back to find his home devoid of furniture—everything seized. I have no doubt that he has plenty of assistants waiting outside.

"I am very much obliged to you"—I try to say it willingly, but fear and indignation drive all softness from my voice—"I won't trouble you any longer," I continue. "I am not at all afraid."

And I hasten to the gate to open it

for his departure; but that wretched animal, with revived courage, is waiting outside, and as soon as my hand touches the latch, 'bow-wow!' it yelps, springing savagely at the gate.

I jump back with a start, and the impudent bailiff actually smiles; I suppose I must have looked very funny. Seeing my look of annoyance, he takes no notice of my discomfiture.

Pardon me," he says, politely raising his hat—and I wonder to myself how it is that a bailiff can look and behave so much like a gentleman—is not this Holmfeld, Mr. Morton's place?"

"Yes," I reply with as much dignity as I can scrape together, "this is Holmfeld, Mr. Morton's place; but papa is out, and I do not know when he will be back, so I do not think it will do any good for you to wait. Perhaps you had better call again."

I wait, hoping that he will go. But no, he hesitates; and then, slowly taking some papers from his pocket, he says:

"I should be very sorry to miss seeing him. I have come some distance. It is about some legal business. I think he has been expecting me; and he looks at me inquiringly; but I make no response, so he continues: 'With your permission I will wait for him: I can amuse myself very well strolling round these nice gardens, if you will allow me to do so. But may I hand you my card?'"

And he takes one from a card case. I persistently refuse to see it, for I feel certain that he must be a bailiff. His reference to papa's expecting him and the legal business have removed my last doubt. Notwithstanding his politeness, I determine not to take the card, which I firmly believe to be what Jane described as the warrant.

"As you please," I answer curtly, and, with a stiff inclination of my head I hurry into the house in a great state of terror lest he should hurry after me and force his way in.

I fasten the door and peep out of the side window. There he stands where I left him. He is actually lighting a cigar. What impertinence! I feel a trifle softened as my nose informs me that the cigar is a good one. I like the aroma of a good cigar about a place. It makes it so masculine. I am obliged to admit to myself that if this one is a specimen of his class, bailiffs must be very handsome men. How well his shooting suit fits him! It is so neat in pattern and color—a quiet gray, the pattern so small as to be almost invisible—not a gigantic check like walking window panes. He takes off his 'deer stalker' to shade the fuzee from the wind, and I notice that he has beautiful brown hair, very thick and curly. 'What a pity,' I sigh to myself, "that such a nice looking fellow should be a horrible bailiff!"

What am I to do? I feel sure that the stroll about the grounds is only pretense. No, he must be concocting some ruse by which to gain an entrance into the house. I resolve to prevent him. 'Is not a woman a match in wit and resource for any man?' I argue to myself. 'A bailiff' after all is only a man. I commence cogitating over all kinds of plans until I give myself a headache. I am just about to confess that I am defeated, when the idea so long fought for comes. I see it all in a moment. The game is my own, if I have nerve enough to take me through it, and I think I have. 'I will lure him to the 'Wilderness,' and lock him up in the ruin till father comes home! He will most likely bring young Mr. Barton with him, and then we shall be all right.' I think that a real lawyer must prove more than my bailiff can withstand.

The 'Wilderness' is a wild deserted spot at one end of the grounds, and far from the road. It has been allowed to run wild on account of its picturesque. A broad, fussy stream falls over some rocks to a depth of six or seven feet, making a terrible noise, and widening into a small lake on the bank of which stands a mock ruin, covered with ivy. It consists of a solitary tower with two or three narrow slits for windows, and rejoices in the name of the Keep. I remember with joy that it has a stout oak door with a very strong lock.

I creep out softly through the conservatory, locking the door after me, and dodge between the shrubs until I have placed a safe distance between myself and the flower garden, where I hear my victim walking. In a breathless state of excitement I reach the Keep. I push the door open and enter. Ugh! What a nasty, damp, miserable place it is—just like a dungeon in some old castle. There is nothing inside but a spade and a rake and an old garden stool—these I carefully remove. I hesitate over the stool, but compassion is overcome. 'No,' I say to myself, 'out you must go! If he is tired he must sit on the ground. You

would be too handy as a battering ram—and I throw it out after the spade and rake. My next proceeding is to carefully examine the lock. This nearly foils me—it is so stiff that I can hardly turn it. I am at a loss what to do, when I catch sight of a small bottle of oil and a feather standing on a little ledge. I joyfully seize them. 'Just the thing!' I cry. The bottle is very dirty and sticky, but I am too excited to heed such petty discomforts so I pull out the feather and begin to oil the lock. I make myself in an awful mess, and it is such slow work getting the oil into the lock through the key hole.

"Oh, you nasty, tiresome thing!" I cry, passionately stamping the ground. "Who—I or the lock?" And, turning round, I beheld my victim regarding me with a slightly astonished yet amused look. I am too much non-plussed to reply.

"Can I assist you?" he inquires; and, without waiting for my permission, the bottle and feather are taken from me, and my voluntary assistant, heedless of the dirty moss-covered step, is on his knees busily working away as if he had been a smith all his life. He goes on quietly for a little time without uttering a word, while I stand by confusedly trying to think of some means by which I can trap my game. There is the prison, and there is the prisoner; but how is he to be put inside it?—'What a strong door this is! I should not care to be behind it without a crowbar,' he says.

I answer nothing, but am ready to cry for vexation. I wish that I was as strong as an elephant, so that I might push him in *volens volens*.

"You will find it all right now. It is still a little stiff, but you will be able to turn it."

And, rising, the victim faces me with a grave face, which all at once assumes an irrepressible smile of amusement that he vainly strives to conceal.

I flush angrily at his impertinence. Afterward, when I see myself in the glass, my wonder is removed—my dress all tumbled and creased, is smudged all down the front with green moss and rust, while on my forehead is a great splotch of dirty oil. I suppose I must have used my greasy hand as an impromptu hair brush without an idea of the improvement it was adding to my beauty. My voluntary assistant stoops to clean his hands, and as he is wiping them, I notice a very handsome antique ring on the little finger of his right hand. Seeing me notice it, he said:

"I am rather proud of this ring; it has been in our family for generations. It is very much admired by connoisseurs; and he holds it out to me for inspection.

I decline to look at it, coldly observing that I was no antiquary; and smile to myself at the idea of a bailiff talking of 'generations,' as if he had an ancestry. He turns away as if to return to the garden.

'Now or never!' is the word; and with a rapidly beating heart I begin; 'Ahem! Will you not inspect our ruin?'"

I try to articulate in an insinuating tone, while my stupid heart thumps so that the wonder is he does not hear it.

"Is it really a ruin?" he asks. I am obliged to admit that it is only an imitation one; and then confusedly mutter something about people liking to see such things.

"Thank you all the same," he says, "but an outside view will suffice; no doubt it is full of earwigs and spiders, very unpleasant things to have tumbling about one—are they not?"

'Yes,' is my slow assent, adding quickly, as I am seized with an idea. "Oh, yes! I am so terribly afraid of them; and papa will insist on my storing my gardening tools in there, so that I am always prevented from gardening unless William is here to get them for me. I wanted to do a little gardening now; glancing at him timidly; but suppose I must wait till William comes, and try the effect of a little sigh."

Success! My fish nibbles! Now to land him!

'Allow me to act as William's substitute!'"

And, without waiting for my permission, the unfortunate bailiff braves the earwigs and spiders and enters the trap.

"Thank you!" I cry excitedly. "You will find them in the recess behind the door."

Hastily following him, I pull the door to, turn the key with a desperate wrench, and, covering my ears with my hands, fly toward the house.

Poor Jane's wits are nearly scared away when my adventures are related to her. She declares that bailiffs always hunt in couples, and that there is sure to be another lurking about the place. So, to prevent a surprise, we carefully bolt all the doors, and

notwithstanding that it is early in the afternoon, close and fasten the shutters to all the windows on the ground floor.

How slowly the time passes! Three o'clock—four o'clock—no father! Suppose he does not catch the four p. m. express from Bardmoor, he will not reach home till seven.

Another hour before he can arrive! To read is impossible. Equally useless to work. I torture myself with all manner of horrible thoughts, but at last it is half past five. He must be here soon; so away to my bed room window, and await his coming, and then rush to the door, and, opening it on the chain, cautiously whisper to him:

"Be careful, father, and come in as quiet as you can; but see if any one is watching, as the bailiffs are here, and have been trying to get in."

Then cautiously unhook the chain, and open the door so gingerly that father has to give it quite a push before he can get in.

"Oh, dad, dear," crying and hugging him, 'am so glad that you have come. The bailiff has been here and would have got into the house but that your pet was too clever for him.'

And clapping my hands and laughing gleefully, relate to my father the exciting events of the day; and he calls me his 'brave little girl,' and 'a heroine,' but only laughs when assured that the bailiff 'appeared quite as a gentleman.'

'Well, dear,' my father begins, as we sit down to dinner, 'old Mr. Barton has advised me to pay, and settle the matter at once—in fact, he candidly told me that he thought I was in the wrong—so after dinner we will release your friend. Something warm for his inside and some golden ointment for the palm of his hand will soon put matters right. Old Barton is ageing very much,' my father continues, as he reflectively sips his wine. 'He was very pleased to see me. We had quite a long chat. He says that his nephew, whom he intends to succeed him, is very clever. He is a handsome fellow, judging from his photograph. His uncle gave me one.'

And, after searching for some time, my father pulls out of a packet of papers a small sized carte-de-visite, which he hands to me. One glance is sufficient. I dash it from me, and burying my face in my hands, cry out:

"Oh, dad, the bailiff!" "Where, where, girl?" says my father, springing from his seat, and upsetting his wine as he eagerly peers about the room, as if expecting an ambuscade of county court myrmidons.

"Oh, what shall I do?" Tell me, do, father, that is not Mr. Barton's likeness! You are only fooling me—are you not?" glancing at him piteously.

"Fooling, girl!" he repeats. "What do you mean? Whose do you imagine it to be?"

"The bailiff's—the man shut up in the ruin!"

"Whew!" whistles my father. "That's it, is it? Here's a pretty kettle of fish! You've shut up the young lawyer from London! Gentlemenly bailiff indeed! Action for false imprisonment—damages ten thousand pounds! Well, you are a nice young lady—quite a heroine!"

My father's eyes laugh merrily as he fires off his squibs at my expense. I do not mind his chaff, but believe it is too bad that he should insist on my going with him to release my prisoner, as he insists on calling him. Out into the night we go. I linger behind, hoping that my father will arrive at the ruin first. Alas, he has no such intention, for, calling me to him, he places my hand under his arm and compels me to stay beside him, while he indulges in dismal forebodings as to the condition in which my prisoner will be found. He rings the changes on suicide and melancholy madness. The ruin is at last reached. The delicate aroma of a fragrant cigar which salutes our nostrils tends to remove our anxiety as to the prisoner's being totally destitute of comfort. My father pushes me toward the door.

"Open it girl!" he says with melodramatic sternness.

I am trembling all over, but with a great effort manage to turn the key and give the door a feeble push and feel it pulled open. My eyes are cast on the ground, and my cheeks are on fire as, in a scarcely audible voice I say: "I am so sorry, Mr. Barton. Did not mean to—thought you were a—"

"Tis too much. And faltering, and, ignominiously bursting into tears, run to my father and bury my face on his shoulder.

"There, there, my girl!" cries my father soothingly. He holds me to him, and, softly patting me with one hand, he turns to Mr. Barton, and says: "We must ask your forgiveness, Mr. Barton; and feel sure you will give it when I explain how my little

girl has made a great blunder. She thought you were a County Court bailiff!" and my father explains everything to him.

When he has finished, I raise my head and, glancing shyly at Mr. Barton, say—

"I am sorry to have made such a blunder. It was so foolish; but fright is my excuse!"

There is no use to relate the many things Mr. Barton said. He made so many excuses for me, and was so good natured, that by the time we had reached the house my self-possession had returned sufficiently for me to be able to laugh at an amusing anecdote he related to us.

Fortunately dinner had not advanced very far when my blunder was discovered. We made a very merry party that night. My father brought out some of his cherished port that saw the light only on very great occasions; and, as he insisted on Mr. Barton staying all night, and the next morning in saying 'good bye' gave him a very pressing invitation to come and see us often, I am justified in believing that my prisoner had created a very favorable impression on that adamant structure—a father's heart.

Three months later. A sharp Winter has set in, and the stream is still. The lake is frozen over, and I am sitting on the bank while Mr. Barton is assisting me to remove my skates. My first lesson in skating has just been received. And it was so pleasant! My teacher's arm was so strong and he held my hands so tight!

"Do you remember the afternoon when I locked you up?" I ask as we carry our skates into the ruin.

"Remember?" he cries, looking me full in the face. "I should think so! It was the happiest day of my existence."

Stupid little goose that I am, I begin to tremble, and my foolish cheeks flash the tell tale color. The skates fall to the ground as my hands are softly grasped and my prisoner makes me captive. I try to release myself, but my efforts cease as my captor, in almost breathless words, tells me he loves me. I do not know whether he gets an answer, but in a moment he has drawn me to him. And with my head pillowed on his breast, and his arms folded around me I know that I am his and that he is mine!

"Hey-day!" exclaims a voice, as my father suddenly appears on the scene. "What does this mean?"

"Only the man in possession!" replies Mr. Barton, grasping my father's readily outstretched hand.

A Spacious Apartment.

The nephew was the typical nephew of the comedies and novels; the uncle, the typical uncle. The former got himself into debt; the latter had to help him out of debt.

But the most long-suffering of men must at last lose patience, and one fine day the uncle writes to his dear nephew that all is over between them. Not another penny.

The nephew flies down to his uncle's country seat and falls at his venerable relative's gony feet.

"Uncle Peter, dear Uncle Peter, just this once. Aid me to straighten out this snarl in my finances, and I will never, never come to you again."

"Oh, Roland, I know you too well. My sister's son—my only sister's son," says the old man, wiping away a furtive tear.

"Ah, your heart is touched; you will assist me once more?" says the young man.

"Listen," said his aged relative; have you a rule?"

"A which?"

"A rule—a foot rule?"

"Why should I have one? I ain't a carpenter."

"Go and find one immediately."

The young man, puzzled but hopeful, goes, and at the end of half an hour returns and says: "Uncle dear, here is the foot rule."

"Very well; measure this room, length, breadth and height, so as to ascertain its cubic dimensions."

The young man, more puzzled than ever, sets about his task, and at last makes his report.

"Uncle, the room the room contains 3,040 cubic feet."

"You are sure of that?"

"Absolutely."

"Very well," says the old gentleman, rising to his feet and speaking in a tone of thunder, "and now, sir, if this room which contains 3,040 cubic feet, were filled with double eagles packed so tightly that you couldn't ram, jam or cram a three-cent piece into it, I would not give you a penny."