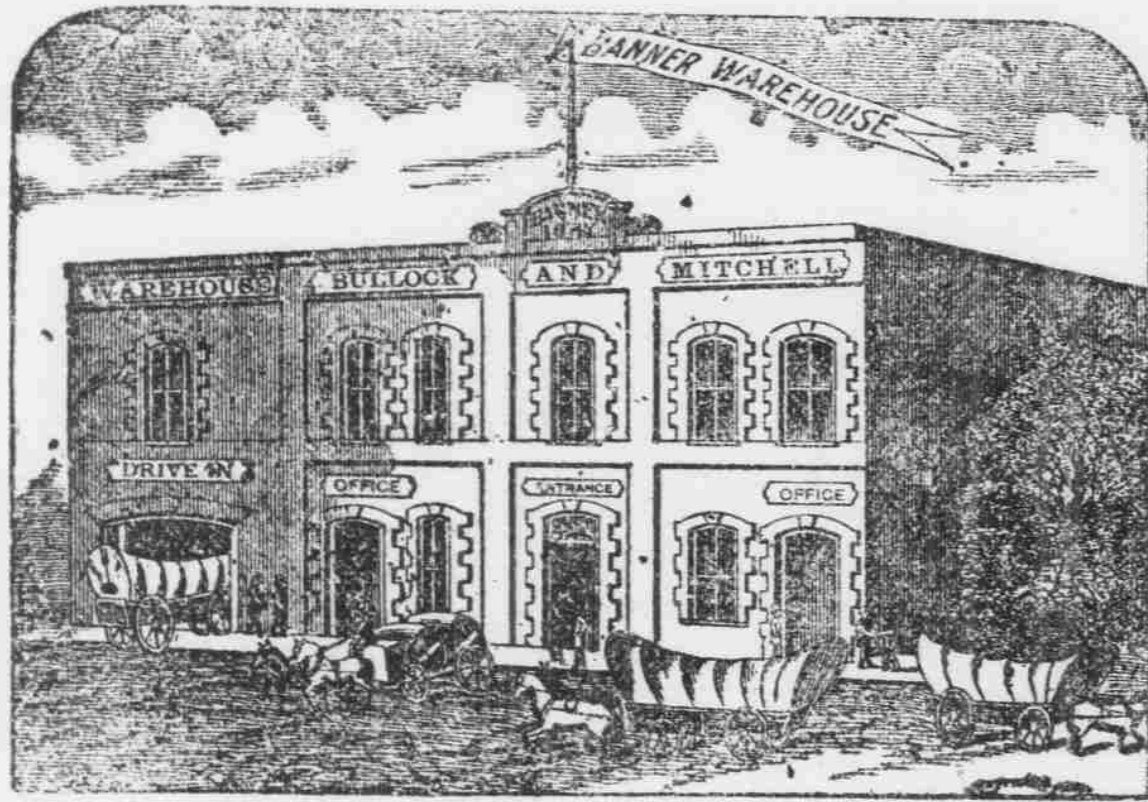


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feet as a mouchoir?" "And," went on Ralph, with a flash of transient enjoyment over the past, "that when a man goes to bed he wraps up the meat in a cloth; that to call a man a canary bird, is an unpardonable insult; if you drink absinthe, it is 'strangling the parrot'; if you take Clicquot, you 'make eyes at the widow'; if you are guillotined, you have 'sneezed in the basket'; if you accept flattery, you 'drink milk'; if you buy things on credit, you get them 'on your eye.' That's not the worst of it," the cheerfulness evaporating. "What will he do when he knows the truth? He will think me a first class scoundrel, go back at once to France and take Marie from me forever."

"And what will he think of us?" demanded Evvy. "We are in as much of a scrape as you are, and through you. Well, the only thing I can see for us to do is for all of us to talk as they will." "You can imagine mother using slang, can't you?" sarcastically remarked Ralph. "We might coach her," cheerfully suggested his sister. "I myself have frequently said 'chestnuts' over some of your stock college stories, you know. And as for Tom—" "Oh, Tom Jardine," interrupted he, "he's all right."

"Thank you, sir; Tom does not indulge in the patois of the streets." "Everybody does nowadays." "Not the way you do." "The way I used to," he corrected. "Evy, I will never use slang again as long as I live." "But you have burned your ships," she said consolingly. At that moment the portieres were agitated, and Tom Jardine came in with a gleaming shirt front.

"Hi, Evvy!" cried he; "who built your gown? You are stunning in that ball dress." "Oh, Tom," she said, distressedly flying to him, "the marquis and Marie have arrived." "Tom," asseverated Ralph, "I've put my foot in it." "Tom," insisted Evvy, "Ralph's in such a way! He has confessed to me, and I don't know what's too bad for him."

"I wish somebody would confess a little to me," said Jardine in a puzzled tone. "What do you two mean?" "Tom," impressively replied nervous Ralph, "you talk slang, don't you?" "I can," returned Jardine, "but I never do." "Wouldn't you do it for me?" asked Evvy. "Talk slang for you!" said Jardine, looking at her as at a hieroglyphic. Ralph stopped in his feverish walk. "Evy's going to do it," he said. "I'd talked it for you as well, Tom," she said. "But I don't want you to talk slang for me," cried Jardine. She looked at him winningly. "No," she said, "I want you to do it for me." Jardine telescoped his opera hat. "Evy," he said sternly, "are you crazy? Tell me this instant what all this idiocy means." "Tell him," groaned Ralph, "I can't. I believe I'm losing my mind." Jardine could not resist the opportunity of saying that the lost article would be returned to its owner without a reward and no questions asked. "Don't Tom!" said Evvy at this levity. "Don't you think you might respect the woman you have asked to marry you? This is no time for silly jests."

"Evy," said Ralph, "take him into the conservatory and tell him all about it. The marquis or Marie might come here in the middle of it." Miss Cathcart, with an injured air, led the way. Jardine, with his chin elevated, but looking suspiciously at Ralph, followed her out of the room.

Left to himself, Ralph plunged his hands into his pockets, as woebegone a specimen as had accepted an invitation to a ball that evening. "What an ass a fellow may be when he wants to!" was his cogitation. "I'll never commit another joke as long as I live. Live! I'll die if Marie is taken away from me." He put his hands up before his face and stood for a minute motionless. A movement in the room startled him. There was the haughty old marquis in his French idea of evening dress, a coat on his back which may have been made for him twenty years back. But the marquis was one of the ancien regime for all that. He stuck his eyeglass up, the merriment of a child in his face. "Oh, my boy," he said in his new English, "how it goes, eh? How is ze royal nibs?—as Benjamin Franklin say." Ralph, with a ghastly smile, faced him. "Monsieur," he returned, "I see you are ready for the ball." "In ze togs," replied the marquis. "Oui—yes, I am ze dandy dresser. as

Emerson remark." "And Marie?" "She will be here presentment," answered the father. "She vill ze town paint red. And vare is ze old lady, madame, ze mere—your mozer?" His eyes were on his expectant son-in-law, who could do no more than say he was expecting the advent of his mother at any minute.

The marquis, every well made tooth showing, tapped him on the arm. "Ze young man look onwell," he laughed. "Mon cher, I have myself been zere. It is ze dinner, ze vin—you razzle dazzle, eh? Let up on ze vin, dear boy, or ze leetle rams you vill have—vat you call ze snakes. Brace up—brace up! Ah!"

For here Mrs. Cathcart, in sweeping velvet and jewels, sailed in. "Marquis," she cried, "j'ai bien de la joie de vous voir." "E-english, E-english!" cried he, shaking his head negatively. "Je ne puis parlez pas Francais."

"Que voulez-vous dire?" she insisted. "Parlez Anglais!" returned he sententiously. "Parlez Anglais!" "Ah," she said, as he raised her fingers to his lips, "I see. But, my dear monsieur, this pleasure, after twenty-five years interruption of our old acquaintance, is indeed appreciated. How much we have to talk over, the changes of time, old friends in France and all that. And you will surely forgive me for not welcoming you when you arrived?" "You knock me silly, madame, as Washington say at Trenton," interrupted the marquis. "I comprendez—it vas ze toilette zat detain you. I catch on."

"What is that?" sharply asked his hostess. "I—ah, Marie! Where is she?" "In ze boudoir," responded he. "Ze last vord she say, 'Old man, give me not away,' she refer to ze costume." "Give away her costume!" said Mrs. Cathcart, in a stunned sort of way. "I do not understand." Ralph had been on tenter hooks all this time; he feared an explosion was at hand. With a smothered exclamation he ran out of the room to seek Jardine and Evvy.

His mother looked after him. "It is nozzings," said the marquis happily. "It is ze razzle dazzle, ze skates, as Hawzorn call it." Mrs. Cathcart edged away from him. "Really," she began, when he broke in: "You astonish wiz my fluency in ze Anglais? Ralph he teach me, I teach Marie." Mrs. Cathcart caught her breath; she knew her son of old. "Ralph taught you English?" she said, a crimson flood spreading across her face, a light breaking in upon her. "Mais oui," answered the smiling marquis. "I vill speak no ozer tong—it is ravishment. You must hear Marie; she climb all over me, as zey say in ze school at Concord."

She had not a word to say. What could she have said? But her anger for Ralph was something more than normal. "Oui," her guest was volubly going on, "Marie she work ze Anglais for all it is vorth." And then Tom Jardine was with them, his face a match for hers. "Tom," said she, "have you heard that Ralph is responsible for the English of the marquis and his daughter?" "It is simply outrageous," returned that young man. "And Evvy wishes us all to talk this way in order to screen Ralph. I've just had a tiff with her regarding the matter."

"Tiff!" cried the marquis. "Zat is ze same as scrap, eh?" "Pardon me, monsieur," said Mrs. Cathcart; "allow me—Mr. Tom Jardine." The marquis grasped Jardine's hand. "Ah," he murmured, "Ralph he tell me you vill be ze mari—ze husband of Mees Cathcart. I congratulate you, sair. Mees Cathcart is too sweet for any use. Madame, je lui en ai fait mon compliment."

Jardine was a thoroughly angry man. The happy frame of mind of Ralph's victim did not tend to placate him. He heard a sound out in the hall, and he thought it was Ralph come to see how he would disport himself. He did not care what happened, the marquis should not be made a jest of any further. "Monsieur," he said, "I regret to say that a miserable practical joke—" He got no further, for it had not been Ralph in the hall; instead, there stood a vision of youth and beauty, one of the fairest of the lilies of France, and arrayed in the Solomon glory of Felix. Mrs. Cathcart went toward her with outstretched arms. "Marie," she said, my dear child, est-ce bien vous? is it really you?" and Marie, standing there bashfully, her beautiful eyes raised gently, merely answered: "Ah, zere!" Mrs. Cathcart fell back. "Marie," called her father, "salute madame!" Marie raised her coral lips to the elder lady, and wondered at the chasteness of the salute she received. "Marie," said the marquis, "behold ze fiance of Mees Cathcart, Mistair Tommy Garden. Ah, you must hear Marie's E-english." Marie, bowing low to Jardine, modestly said: "Papa, you make me tired, go take ze walk and get ze hair cut."

ily sorry"—when her heart failed her the girl seemed so happy—"I mean, you are looking lovely." "Oh," returned Marie in a low voice, her eyes downcast, "vat are you giving us, taffy?" "I mean," Mrs. Cathcart went on heroically, "that your gown is vastly becoming."

Even a modest girl takes courage when her dress is praised. "Oh, ze bal Americain," lisped Marie. "I shall go to ze bal. I shall have ze daisy time. I shall get ze vork in. Papa, he is not in it—he is vat you say on ze shelf, played. Yet papa he is ze trump," and she kissed the marquis filially; "but I have ze drop on ze Anglais." "You see," the marquis fairly beamed, "Marie speak ze E-english like ze lument. You tumbles, as ze poet, John L., ask."

"Ah," said Marie, with a sweet girlish laugh, "I nevair get left. I get zere all ze same." Jardine had been fairly boiling; speech was a safety valve. "This is more than shocking," he said. "I am ready to faint," poor Mrs. Cathcart managed to whisper.

Jardine raised his shoulders. "Monsieur," he said, "there is—ah—considerable of a mistake. The garden is not unpleasantly cool; if you will go there with me I will explain." Marie looked kindly at him. "Ze jardin," she said. "Go, papa, and chin wiz Tommy; I would be wiz madame. Scoot! Get ze move on you! Light out! Skip! Dust! Ah, vat I see?" What she saw was a photograph of Ralph on a table. She went there with her father and examined the picture.

"Oh, Tom!" gasped Mrs. Cathcart. "Come, monsieur," called Tom, his nostrils expanded. "Not a word, Tom," said a voice, and Evvy had quietly entered the room. "Ralph is nearly beside himself." But Jardine was not in a state of mind to bear contradiction. "I certainly shall tell this man the truth," he said. "Then everything is over between us," returned Evvy in his own manner. Her mother wrung her gloved hands. "Be still, mamma," said Evvy, herself on the verge of desperation. "There will certainly be a way out of it. Ralph is nearly frantic."

"Come, monsieur," said Jardine. "Explain to him," whispered Evvy to her lover, a heightened color in her face, "and we are strangers from this night on." But Jardine paid no attention to her. "Monsieur," he called peremptorily. The marquis ambled away from the table. "I am wiz you, moncher," he said. Then gallantly to Evvy, "Mees, I congratulate you; you are Mistair Tommy's best girl," and with a profusion of bows and apologetic gestures he followed after Jardine, who carried himself like a ramrod. Only then did Marie put down the picture of Ralph.

"Good," said she. "Now, I wiz ze mama and ze sistair of ze man zat teach papa ze beautiful E-english. I love my Ralph first because he teach papa ze beautiful E-english. You catch on? I may make ze mistake ten times out of nine, but if madame or mees vill tip me ze vink I vill make ze regular circus every time. See? I am ze talker from Talkerville. See?" Mrs. Cathcart sat heavily down. "Was there ever such a horror?" she asked of space.

"Marie"—said Evvy, then stopped, for what had she to say? Marie looked timidly at her. "But my E-english is beautiful?" she asked deprecatingly. "It is not passee? It is moderne?" "Very modern," answered Evvy, with meaning; "very, very modern." "Ah!" cried Marie gleefully, "I like ze mode—my costume du bal is ze mode. I am ze stuff. I vill paint ze town." Evvy caught her arm. "My poor Marie!" she said. "Oh," viciously, "if I had my will of Ralph!" "Vill!" echoed Marie, "Vill of Ralph! Vill—zat means ze testment of ze man vat pass in ze checks, kicks ze bucket and leave ze boodle. Ralph—Ralph is not ill!"

"I should like to make him so," replied Evvy. Marie jerked herself away from her and drew herself up. "Mademoiselle," she said, with considerable hauteur, "you must not sit on Ralph—ze person zat give my Ralph ze cold shake is N. G. You hear me?" Mrs. Cathcart had split one of her gloves in pieces. "Marie," she said with hysterical determination, "come with me; I must explain this awfulness to you." But she had her daughter to contend with. "Mamma," said Evvy, "remember! Ralph loves her. Separate them and I do not know what will happen." "I will not allow this to go on," returned her mother. "Marie!" "But ze bal!" demurred Marie; "do we not attend ze bal, vare I shoot off my E-english?" "I must speak with you," said the excited matron. "Ralph has not been kind to you." Marie started, but looked incredulous. "Not kind!" she repeated. "Vy he teach papa ze E-english. Well, I vill listen, but Ralph you cannot make not kind. Zat is ze size of it. Ta, ta, Mees Evvy! So long!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

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