tion, 1 understand), and don't sak the girl for more than she can be expected to promise at present. Unless I am much mistaken, she may be expected to accept you, and before you have been married a month she will be as devoted to you as you can desire. It is a mere question of not being too proud or too humble—whichever you like to call it—this evening."

proud or too humble—whichever you like to call it—this evening." "I am afraid I must be one or the other, for I don't feel at all tempted to take your advice," said Jack. "Then the impossible Austrian will somehow or other be converted into possibility, that's all. I have known Mary Hamilton for many years and I can gauge the length of her foot to a nicety. She will give in, not because she believes that it will be for her daughter's happiness—which it won't —to marry a foreigner whose people are pretty certain to object to the match, but because she has never been able to deny the girl anything without providing some equivalent. You are more than an equivalent. You know you are, and so does she, and so, in due season, will Daphne. Only I sus-pect that there is no time to be lost. You had better, as I told you just now, assume that this is your last chance. If you let it slip I believe, upon my honour and conscience, that you will be selfish as well as foolish. These are words of wisdom and truth. Ponder them during dinner."

The provide the second second

"I shouldn't wonder if you knew," he began, "why your mother asked me to dine to-night."

to dine to-night." She laughed apologetically. "I am afraid I do. Poor mother! It is rather ridiculous, isn't it? Kindly meant, though." Rather ridiculous! Well, yes; inas-much as she pronounced it ridiculous, it inevitably became so. Nevertheless. he could not, now that he had made a start, choose but persevere.

"Whatever it may be," said he, "it is a thing to be taken seriously. You don't know, but I want you to know, that I should have asked you to marry wasn't the faintest hope of your ac-cepting me. What I want to say now is that here I am, and here—in a metaphorical sense—I shall always be. There is no need to tell me that you don't care for me as I care for you: I am very well aware of that, und Mrs Ningtham is of opinion that it doesn't matter. Personally, I should have thought that it did; but—""

thought that it did; but—" "Oh, but you know it does!" ex-claimed Daphne. "I quite understand why you are making me this offer, and I am grateful to you for your gener-osity, and it is possible—I don't say it is likely, still it is just possible—that I might hesitate, but for the one abso-lutely fatal objection that you know of—which is that I care for somebody else."

"To whom also there are certain ob-jections. Not necessarily fatal ones, I admit."

I admit." "Oh, they are fatal. I have been thinking them over, and I see that they must be, and ought to be, fatal, not-withstanding my poor dear mother's reluctant wavering, which was quite as evident to me as it was to you and him yesterday. That only means that she can't bear to break my heart. But

she won't break my heart, and I should never forgive myself if I were to break here by marrying the son of a man whom she is persuaded that my father mondered."

nurdered." The survival of Herr von **Pardowitz** remained a secret to Daphne, then. This did not surprise Jack, who was cognizant of reasons for her having been kept in ignorance; but he deemed himself entitled to may:

cognizant of resions for her having been kept in ignorance; but he deemed himself entitled to say:
"Setting that aside, other objections exist. The difference of nationality and religion, for one; the not improbable hostility of old Count von Kablenburg, for another."
Daphne dismissed these with a wave of her hand. "They are nothing! they don't count!"
"As little, I suppose, as my love for you; though perhaps that might count, some day, for what it is worth. It has, thild, a sort of value as a pis-aller. At any rate, as I told you just now, here it will always be, ready for you to fall back upon, and entirely, unreservedly, at your service."
"Captain Clough," said Daphne gravely. "I don't like you to make such statements. It sounds odious of me to say that they are not true, when you are making them, as I finally believe you are, out of pure kindness and a wish to spare me other troubles which you foresee; but don't you understand that I should be much more unhappy than I am if I thought that they were true?"
"Bidwitt I tell you sol" cried the girl triumphantly. "Of course you only explained." Let us assume that they are false then. From the moment that they make you unhappy, they lose their raison d'erte."
"Didn't I tell you sol" cried the girl triumphantly. "Of course you only wanted to provide me with a loophole, and though it stands to reason you extraordinary disinterestedness my the less. But for a ninute you really frightened me!"
"Did Y Well, at the risk of frightening you again, I must repeat that if ever you again, I must repeat that if ever you should feel the need of such a person as a devoted husbend, who labours under the disadvantage of not being Otto you Kablenburg, you will

if ever you should feel the need of such a person as a devoted husband, who labours under the disadvantage of not being Otto von Kahlenburg, you will find him in my skin. That, at all events, is a true statement, and I don't see why it should be considered either an alarming or a disinterested one."

an alarming or a disinterested one." "Thank you," answered Daphne hesi-tatingly; "but you see—I shall never feel the need of such a person." "Who knows? It is most unlikely that you ever will, though. And as for your mother's wavering, let me just say that, in my humble opinion, she does well to waver. No same hu-man being could suppose that your father was really a murderer; so it is to be hoped, and I believe it may be expected, that she will shake off that delusion." If Mrs Hamilton had believed or e-

delinsion." If Mrs Hamilton had believed or ex-pected that Jack Clough would suc-ceed in the forlorn hope which he had been invited to undertake, his precipi-tate departure must at least have en-abled her to shake off that delusion. "And a good thing too!" he mut-tered to himself, as he left the house. "Now that I am finally and irrevocably out of it, the way is clear, and we may proceed to the concluding act of the

proceed to the concluding act of the comedy,"

(To be continued.)



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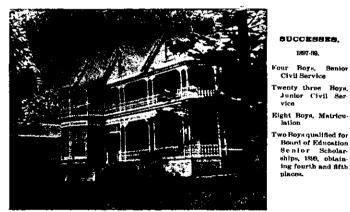
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