

He found Nurse Elsie almost desperate. Her patient was writhing on the bed, declaring that he was dying—dying of hydrophobia, as he had known for two years he would most surely die. Nurse Elsie was trying to persuade him that he was getting better.

This was really a fact. He had worn himself out. Nature—in his case—declined, to bear any more strain for that day.

Before Foote had time to close the door, the old gentleman was asking for a drink of water. His throat was parched, he said. And small wonder, considering the use he had been putting it to.

Foote went over and wrung the old chap's hand.

"Sir, I congratulate you!" he exclaimed heartily. "The worst has passed. You feel you can drink water without wanting to break the decanter. I told you Nurse Elsie would save your life, and she has done so. She is the most capable little woman I know."

Old Smitherson, very red in the face, sat up on the bed.

"Is it over?" he asked pathetically.

"I fancy so," answered Foote.

"You don't want to try any more symptoms, do you, sir?"

He could hardly keep from exploding, the old chap looked so woe-begone, so disappointed that the terrible thing had ended so easily.

He swallowed the contents of a water jug, then whispered sadly that he thought he could sleep. He would see the little woman who had saved his life when he woke up, and try his best to thank her.

He slept for three hours. They were spent by the lovers in sweet contentment. Foote spent them kicking his toes against the library fender. The ungrateful couple for whom he had worked so hard had quite forgotten him.

At last the patient was awake.

Foote went to him first. He felt his pulse, took his temperature.

"Most satisfactory," he murmured.

"Mr. Smitherson, you are indeed to be congratulated. You have had it very lightly—I may say phenomenally lightly—and you can never have it again. You have lived in mortal dread of it for two years. Your life must have been a misery, sir, and now, I am thankful to say, it has passed away for ever. Take my advice, and get a nice dog who will be a companion to you. In fact, a man cannot have too many of them about. Try bloodhounds."

He thanked Dr. Foote most deeply for all he had done; but he seemed so anxious for the presence of pretty Nurse Elsie that Foote soon cleared out.

Smitherson junior thought his uncle must have swallowed the girl up, she was with him so long. She came at last, a happy beam upon her face.

"I have told him all," she said; "all our story, I mean. George, he wants to see you."

They went away together. Half-an-hour later George returned alone.

"Foote, old man, wish me luck," he cried. "We can be married as soon as we like. Thanks to you, old fellow; thanks to you. There's something awfully funny about it, though."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, deuced funny, I can tell you. Elsie is Nora Johnstone. She knew about her father's dying wish for her to marry me; hated the idea for the same reasons that I did; hid her identity; went into a hospital; met me accidentally; determined not to tell me; fell in love with me, I with her, and—"

"Hang you!" interrupted Foote. "So the hydrophobia business wasn't necessary after all!"

"Yes it was, old chap, to bring out the whole story; to cure uncle; to—"

He was addressing thin air.

Foote had fled.

A year later they met.

"Look here, Foote," said young Smitherson, "you might as well own up. You thoroughly enjoyed that hydrophobia affair?"

"Well, suppose I did?"

"Come down to our place to-night and pick a bone with us. The missus will be delighted."

Foote went.

"Uncle is frightfully fond of dogs now," remarked young Mrs. Smitherson, when they were half-way through the course.

"Doctor, we absolutely cured him between us. He gets younger every day. And he has the weirdest assortment of dogs you ever saw in your life. They all worship him."

A STEPMOTHER TO THE RESCUE

(By Evelyn Glover.)

"I won't," said Pamela, "so there! Haven't I told you heaps of times that I don't intend to marry?"

"Oh, I know that, dear. But Hugh is a good fellow. I, his stepmother, say so. Is it possible you are going to be so—so pig-headed as not to let me tell Hugh that there's nothing between you and this Mr. Darwell?"

"Yes I am!" said Pamela. "If I come to stay with you and I'm taken to a dance, and I meet a friend there, and your stepson chooses to imagine things because I sit out two dances—"

"Two? When I asked Frank how you'd got on he mentioned four or five."

"Well, I never was good at figures. Moreover, I don't mind telling you—only it mustn't go further—that Leonard Darwell's just engaged to a girl at home; but it isn't out because they're so poor. She was to come yesterday to stay with some people here, and I was giving him the latest news of her."

"Oh, Pamela! And you won't even let me say that—"

"No, I won't; it's too silly! And if you bother me any more, Molly, I shall just tell them to wire for me from home."

Now, considering that my guest had sought me out with an indignant inquiry as to why my eldest stepson was "going on like an idiot," and I, seeing further than either individual concerned, had essayed explanation, I felt injured.

I didn't like it, especially as I was certain that Pamela's indifference was a brave, neat little piece of feigning.

"You come to tea, and don't be a goose!" I said.

"I'm going for a tramp," said Pamela firmly—"to walk things off."

When I went to tea it was to find Hugh staring at the fire disconsolately.

"Where's Pam—Miss Holt?"

"She's out. Gone for a long walk."

Hugh stood at my side in silence, while I supplied his material wants from a tea-table.

Then he said: "Do you know, Molly, I—I sometimes think I'll volunteer."

I bit my lip. "Why, dear?"

"I don't know. I'm a bit sick of things."

And then we fell into a cheery half-hour's conversation about useless lives, and people who weren't wanted, and soldiers' graves. Till at last I jumped up in desperation.

"Well, I want to go down to Frog-nall's to change my book. Come with me if you've nothing better to do."

Now our shortest way into the town lay through a small public park, laid out with banks and gravel walks, and neat, regimental flower-beds.

As we were hurrying in the gathering twilight along one of its lower paths, I looked up suddenly at the sound of footsteps above. A tall, thin young man was walking in our direction on a raised edition of our own gravelled thoroughfare. Hugh had glanced up too.

"There's that chuckle-headed ass Darwell!" he exclaimed, as if in spite of himself.

Then he added hastily: "As I was saying, Molly, if I were lucky enough to sail next month—"

Suddenly I felt that the figure above us had come to a standstill and was peering down through the leafless trees. And with the realisation Pamela's description came back to me with a flash. "Your double. Member my telling you I'd rushed upon a girl in a bootshop?"

"Hugh, dear, don't get!" I said very audibly. And I bent forward and kissed him.

I heard the quick cracking of a dry branch above.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Hugh.

"Oh, nothing's the matter," I said. "I'm tired and worried, and you haven't been particularly enlivening this afternoon. I think, after all, I won't go on to Frog-nall's. If you want to be an angel you might change this book for me, and I'll walk slowly home. Ask for 'The Comments of a Countess.'"

I pressed the book into his hand and waited. For a moment there was no sound from the bank behind us. But as Hugh turned and left me I saw Leonard Darwell swing round and set off at a brisk pace in the same direction.

It was some hours later, and I sat before my looking glass, my hair down my back, and waving irons in my hand. Suddenly a hammering upon my door nearly made me jump out of my chair.

With one rush Hugh was behind me and a hasty, awkward kiss was shot, so to speak, on to my forehead.

"Look here!" I said, springing to my feet and turning round before he had time to speak, "I don't mean to be rude, but you know I can't stand gush, Hugh!"

"You—you fraud!" gasped Hugh, incoherent with laughter and excitement. "Do you know what's happened?"

"I can't think," I said.

"Why, that ass Darwell!"—Hugh grasped both my hands and tumbled into explanation—"he's a really good sort, after all! He—he thought when he saw you kiss me the other day that you were his girl; and he's not engaged to Pamela!"

"Oh, dear me, no!" I said. "He's not engaged to Pamela."

"Well, but I thought they were! And he was going to meet his girl—she's staying with some people here—at the park gates this very afternoon, and when he saw us he thought you were her—don't you see?—because you're her very double, and he came after me, and offered to brain me like a gentleman, and I only waited to shake hands with him, and then I bolted home and met Pamela half way, and it's all right, and we're engaged!"

"Hurrah!" I said, brandishing the wavers.

"And, Molly—tell me—Pamela says you knew I was down in the mouth, and you knew she was awfully like

you—Darrell's girl, I mean—and she'd forbidden you to name the subject to me. Pamela, I—was that why—I mean did you?"

"Of course I did!"

"You thought of it all in a minute?"

"In the twinkling of an eye," I said, solemnly. "I didn't know who he was till you recognised him."

Hugh raised my hand suddenly to his lip.

"It was just uncommonly clever! I never, never should have—"

"No," said a sudden voice behind us, "you wouldn't. You'd just have hugged conclusions of your own, and taken boat for South Africa, and little things like that, wouldn't you?"

And Pamela—a blushing, mirthful, repentant Pamela—found her way into my arms.



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