

slight illness and to return to the more bracing air of Akron for a brief visit. At home he embroidered still more the tissue of his prevarications, though he sternly reminded his mother how she herself had told him how much easier it was for a young man alone to get acquainted, and convinced her that her own opportunity was not yet ripe. The day of final reckoning being thus postponed till the following winter, Johnny, who was, as has been hinted, of a volatile and optimistic nature, returned to New York care-free, and was soon again, if his letters were to be trusted, at Mrs. Morpout's side.

A week or so later, quite casually, his mother wrote that in a way it seemed a pity (though of course she had herself always hated publicity) that, since Johnny went to all these smart parties, his name never got into the papers as "among those present." The Topical Tattler, for instance, printed very full lists; it was queer in a way, etc., etc. At the time, Johnny felt nothing sinister in the suggestion. A fortnight later, the desire to see her son's name in print had become a kind of mania with Mrs. Fairchild.

It is probable that Satan had found some work for Mrs. James Calkins' idle hands to do. Akron readers will not need to be reminded that the two ladies have never been friends since the chapter of Colonial Dames was organized, when Mrs. Calkins said, more or less publicly, that Mrs. Fairchild's only colonial ancestor appeared to be a hostler at the inn at Weatherfield, who had given Washington's horse "a hot mash" when the great man was on his way to Boston; whereas the Calkinses, as any one who knew Virginia families at all must realize, were, etc., etc. Mrs. Calkins is quite viperish enough to have suggested that our hero was not really in New York society so much as he pretended to be.

His mother's letters grew almost pathetic on the advisability of some little newspaper notice. It was "due his position," she said, and he "must not shrink from it." He thought almost for the first time to what lengths maternal pride must have led his mother in conversation in Akron, and realized what bitter humiliation for her the discovery of the truth might be. Before this the whole thing had been for him only a joke—exposure would, for him individually, have been only another and a better one. Now, in common decency to his mother and to himself, he saw he must be not only in the newspapers, but in society, too, and that with no delay. It is in such fiery crises that men's souls are tested! Our agreeable and light-hearted hero formed a plan.

II.

It is with regret that we have already presented a hero deviating from the truth. We must now picture him behav-

ing, against all his natural instincts (and ours), harshly to a woman.

Miss Estelle Tompkins, the society and chit-chat editor of the Daily New Yorker sat in her office one afternoon about this time, somewhat frayed and worn by the cares of her exalted calling, irritable, one might almost have said, when the office-boy brought a card to her announcing Mr. John Fairchild. Miss Tompkins, being from the East (Tompkins is one of those old Long Island names), could not be expected to know about Johnny, Akron, nor Wheatonlette; still, she had him fetched up.

He entered, dressed more carefully, almost more richly, than are princes of the blood, and with an air of languid ostentation that was quite different from his ordinary unaffected liveliness. He looked at Miss Estelle Tompkins with a vague air.

"Oh, I say," he began, "I hoped I should find the society editor was a man."

"Very few men could hold the job down," retorted Miss Tompkins. "I'm sorry to disappoint you."

"Oh, you're all right—"

"Thanks," she snapped. "Only," Johnny continued, "when I've come to make a sort of row, to complain about this rotten paper, I'd naturally just a little rather that—"

"I guess I can take any compliments that are coming. Are they in my department?"

"Yes!"

"Well—"

"Well, I don't see any reason why my name has got to be put in all these society notices."

"I don't know—" began Miss Tompkins, but Johnny paid no attention to her.

"Why can't I go to dine at Jack Walters', or to the opera with Mrs. Reggie Gifford, or to a dance at the Hallings', without its being supposed to be a fact of public interest?"

"I should say—" Miss Tompkins' got no farther.

"Just because my father is prominent out West and is supposed to have become pretty rich over this new consolidation, doesn't seem to me any reason why I can't go to Mrs. Morpout's to-night without having all sorts of things about Westerners in New York society put into the papers. Perhaps you think it odd that any one should protest, but really the whole thing is so distasteful to me that I feel I must take a stand."

Miss Tompkins' face was set. "Will you allow me just one word?" she asked with sinister coldness. Johnny had paused for breath. "So far as I know your name has never appeared once in the society column of the New Yorker."

Astonishment then radiant joy seemed to sweep over our young man's countenance.

"Really!" he cried, and rushing forward, seized the astonished Miss Tompkins by both hands. "Thanks. You see I've quite given up reading the rotten stuff myself, but my mother is always writing me to complain about my name being in the papers, and I supposed that if my movements were in this strange way considered news, the New Yorker would have had an account of them as soon as anybody."

"I don't even know who your father is," Miss Tompkins spoke with unnatural calm.

Johnny very gently explained to her, though with becoming modesty, how important his father had become through the consolidation of "Wheatonlette" with "Uornino" and "Crispanuts."

There succeeded a pause which might have been thought ominous. Then the silence was broken by Johnny, who spoke in a voice almost tenderly sympathetic.

"I'm sorry for you, Miss Tompkins—I hope you won't be offended by my saying so. I see that you are above your job. You'll pardon me—but in the beginning, you are so obviously incompetent. Of course, I'm personally glad that you are so, that you didn't know about my father or about my having friends in New York. But frankly, as man to man, you know, if you were worth your salt you would have known it, wouldn't you?"

"Well, I know it now," replied Miss Tompkins, grimly.

"And I understand how distasteful to you such a vulgar occupation as that of society editor must be."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do. I know how you must hate forcing people into publicity. Well, to take the case in hand, you



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