

# How Charley Won His Wife.

By H. CRESPIGNY.

*Illustrated by H. E. Taylor.*

**W**HEN young, I was considered a very pretty boy, and was always told that I was meant to be a girl. When about twenty-one years old, I was staying one long vacation with some military friends, then quartered in Ireland. In the regiment there was a certain Captain Dundee, a heavy, stupid fellow, who prided himself upon being very sharp, and used to boast that nobody could take him in, and that he could recognise a person in any conceivable disguise. I was very intimate with Captain Dundee, and so far from thinking him very sharp, I was always chaffing him for his stupidity.

One evening at mess, when Dundee was not present, bets were made that I could not pass an evening in his company, dressed as a lady, without his discovering the trick. I betted that I could. My particular chum took my side, and it ended in very heavy wagers being laid, and I felt that their losing or gaining a fortune depended entirely on me. As the day drew near, these bets were doubled, and I trembled for the result. I may mention that, though I did not know it, almost all these bets were fictitious, and only proclaimed for the sake of keeping me up to the mark. In fact, those concerned had made up their minds to have what they called a jolly lark, regardless of consequences, and were afraid of my backing out. As it was, I felt that about fifteen thousand pounds in bets depended on my getting through my character as a young lady.

Captain Dundee had married a larky, devil-may-care Irish girl, whose worst faults rose from thoughtlessness and some slight lack of refinement, the sort of girl to rush into a scrape, little thinking or caring

about how she would get out of it successfully.

The bet was to the effect that the first evening Mr. Fenwick could get an invitation for himself and an imaginary niece, Miss Fenwick, to dine with the Dundees, I was to personate, or attempt to personate, the niece, and successfully deceive Captain Dundee till the party separated, however late the hour might be.

Without my knowledge, Mrs. Dundee was let into the secret; hence all my trouble. She, in her wild Irish way, entered heartily into the joke, and at once determined to make confusion worse confounded.

In a few days Fenwick received a note, stating that Captain and Mrs. Dundee requested the pleasure of the company of Mr. and Miss Fenwick to dinner in a quiet way on the 10th inst. Only one or two brother officers were coming.

The fatal day arrived, and I was still under the impression that thousands depended on the result, and that Mrs. Dundee was as ignorant as her husband of my intended appearance.

Imagine me with a profusion of false, black curls, a flower or two stuck here and there, no end of lady's jewellery—rings, brooches, etc., a thin muslin dress, with high body (I made a point of that), and my face daintily painted. In fact, I was altogether very skillfully made up by a professional specially obtained for the purpose. Partly to keep my courage up to the sticking point, and partly because I knew that in my assumed character I must not drink much wine, I imbibed a considerable quantity before I started. Moreover, in a secret pocket I concealed a small flask of brandy, which I hoped to be able to consult on the sly.

At table I played my part well. I talked