How Did We Get Into This Mess

Life's Handicap/The Man Who Was

he'd see him damned first,' chorused the mess. 'Poor chap! I suppose he never had the chance afterwards. How did he come here?' said the colonel. ?The dingy

Plain Tales from the Hills/His Wedded Wife

"Come into the Mess. We must sift this clear somehow," and he sighed to himself, for he believed in his "Shikarris," did the Colonel. We trooped into the

Ballads and Barrack-Room Ballads/The Widow's Party

half my comp'ny's lying still Where the Widow give the party. 'How did you get away—away, Johnnie, Johnnie?'On the broad o' my back at the end

Layout 2

Harper's Magazine/What the Donkey Did

the girl's face slid into an irresponsible, irrepressible smile. She broke the silence. "Graham!" she demanded, "how in the world did you trap me?" And Graham

THE international question would have been less poignant had the Admiral been gifted with a sense of humor. But he had none, and Lieutenant Graham Peace, R.N., knew that he had none, and knew that the situation must go forever unexplained, his English respect for rank forbade him to consider, as Violet Eliot considered, that this fact was a witticism. The bump of reverence in Violet's head was a hollow.

Nevertheless—and none the less that her point of view dazed him afresh every hour—each hair of that golden head was dear to Graham Peace, and that their engagement should be broken was a black nightmare. Reflecting upon it night and day, he could not decide why it was broken, unless because he was an Englishman, and because all Englishmen were born—according to Violet—with a predisposition, amounting to a craving, to bully women. He certainly had been sore that the girl should have made a fool of him before the Admiral, and sorer perhaps that she should have seen fit to take it as a howling joke; he certainly was startled at the unconventionality of the scene—but Violet had startled him before. He certainly might have been judicially regarded as a trifle cross, yet never for a second did he suspect her of lying, as she claimed; never for a second had he been "ashamed of her." As his mind reviewed the catastrophe it resolved itself into three phases: Violet's note; his walk with the Admiral, climaxed with the beach scene; the interview next day wherein the world ended. First was Violet's note, sent out to the ship:

"Graham dear,—This isn't a letter, just a wave of the hand to tell you I'm thinking about you. I seldom do it, but I happen to, this minute. As you can't come ashore to-morrow and break the Sabbath with me, I'm going to run up a balance of piety for us both by going to church all day. Picture me morning and afternoon on my knees with that holy cast in my eye which you know so well. Can't you see how stained-glass I shall look? Pity you won't really have the vision. Good-by, you swash-buckling Britisher. Would you like me better if I were not stiff-starched with propriety, the I way I am?"

Now Peace was a quiet, proper person, and Violet a scarcely redeemed barbarian. He smiled. The note was the first act of the play.

Next came his unexpected leave to go off the ship; his landing at the Princess Hotel, to find Miss Eliot gone; his decision to go up to Admiralty House and pay his respects to Sir Robert, just arrived, and Lady Barrows. Sir Robert, his father's old friend, suggested that the young man should take a walk with him. As they walked, the Admiral talked most kindly to him of his engagement, and Graham was moved to be expansive, and to tell his lord how uncommon was the prize which he had won. The great man listened with keen interest—it seemed—while in unused effusiveness Peace opened his soul, as never before he had opened it to man, concerning the gentleness of Violet, her straightforward honesty, her sweet reserve, her adaptability to English conventionalities. If he felt a bit shaky as he mentioned reserve and conventionality, he but insisted more on the qualities, knowing what the Admiral approved—knowing also that the girl's beauty would win him, and that her tact would see his standard and steer clear of reefs. One could trust Violet to charm a man, admiral or lieutenant. After she had him charmed and chained she would probably shock him, but he would not escape the shackles for that—no one ever did. So Graham wandered on, as afterwards he blushed to remember, drawing a fancy picture of a lady endowed richly with feminine virtues, strong in truthfulness, delicacy, modesty,—meek and lamblike in spirit. He did not use quite such words, but such was the impression his words gave. He mentioned also that she had written him that she was to be in church this afternoon—as well as this morning, he added with quiet pride. He very much wanted the Admiral to admire his fiancée. And the Admiral responded cordially.

"It's evident you've found a treasure, Graham—the genuine old-fashioned style of woman," he said.

With that they turned a corner of a lane that led to the sea and came upon two horses tied, one with a side-saddle. From behind the trees sounded a shout of man's laughter and a girl's voice expostulating. With two steps more they were looking at the back of a young fellow in riding-clothes, who watched, with roars of joy, Violet Eliot. Violet Eliot, who—hatless, with the sleeves of her blouse rolled up, with a good bit of russet riding-boots showing sportily—hung from a limb and tried to chin herself.

"I could do it if you'd stop laughing, Dickie. I know I could. I used to do it like a streak. There!"

"Bully!" applauded the man. The slim arms bent double, the chin rose squarely to the branch, and the small boots clapped triumphantly on the ground. As they clapped, her eyes lighted on the arrivals, and at the swift blankness of her look the man wheeled; Graham's side-glance saw a stranger, a handsome youngster, an American. Slowly the consternation on the girl's face slid into an irresponsible, irrepressible smile. She broke the silence.

"Graham!" she demanded, "how in the world did you trap me?"

And Graham pulled himself together and presented the stiff and solemn Admiral to Miss Eliot, and they had the pleasure in return of meeting the gentleman addressed as Dickie, a Mr. Stevens, of New York, not otherwise explained. Graham's bitterest memory of act second, perhaps, was the sympathetic manner of Sir Robert as they walked home together.

Act third began with a conversational minuet between the lovers; stately and formal, it lacked, however, the smiling serenity ascribed to minuets. It ended in a whirlwind. Peace introduced the amenities by asking in a formal manner why Violet had wished to deceive him about going to church; who the man with her might be; if she thought it good form to be riding about hatless with strangers on Sundays and doing track athletics on the beach? He finished with a grieved account of his interview with the Admiral, which he was unaware, in the fervor of his feeling, was funny. That Violet responded to this oration with gentle laughter hurt his feelings. He repeated his questions with accelerated movement. With evident effort to keep time to the dignified pace set, she then explained. She had not tried to deceive him; Dickie Stevens was not a stranger, but Tim's friend—her brother's friend. He had come down on the boat Thursday, not knowing they were there. He was sailing back to-morrow, and Tim, having an engagement Sunday, had asked her to give up church and ride with him. He was a delightful boy, and she was glad she had done it. Yes, certainly, it was entirely good form to do all that she did, and more, with Dickie, whom she had known all her life. As for the

Admiral—there was a pause here as if powerful words were strangled—she must say she did not care what the Admiral thought or did not think.

Graham broke the gait slightly. The Admiral was important to him; one would think she might care to have her fiancé proud of her with his friends. No hat, and sleeves rolled up!

At this point set in the whirlwind. The words of it were but flotsam on the tide, yet Peace was aware of being accused of a number of crimes, all plausible—of the final, irrefutable charge of being an Englishman; of an indignant goddess, five feet in height and weighing ninety pounds, who poured hot lava from a voice whose softness, even at this juncture, was noticeable. Aware, too, he was of noticing in the stress of the tempest that no one had such hair as Violet—such pale gold with black shadows—and that it was curious and admirable how her eyes in anger matched her name. A condemned criminal, they say, remarks the polka-dots in the executioner's neck-tie. After this he remembered only falling over a chair as he tried to extract himself from the Presence with dignity.

Since then there had been a week filled with a growing wonder as to what men did with their time who were not engaged to Violet Eliot. He had to prod himself to the things that had once been a joy, in those good old times a week ago. This afternoon, for instance, he would go on his bicycle to Devonshire Fort, the lonely spot on the South Shore where the tragedy had happened. He started out, melancholy, solitary.

And meanwhile Fate had whispered into the ear of Violet, who, repeating, unknowing, the words of Fate, had ordered Tiny Tim, her brother, to find for her instantly a horse to ride or a trap to drive, because she must get away from this dreadful hotel and the disgusting people, now—in a minute—in half an hour at most. Tim, grasping dimly the argument, regarded her scornfully, for he had no patience with this broken engagement. A pliant future brother on H. M. S. Terrible had been a convenience to Tim. He remonstrated.

"Now, Vi—that's just like a girl—why didn't you say so this morning? Everything's taken up for the garden-party at Lady Barrows'. I probably can't get a trained cow as late as this."

"Fortunately I don't want a trained cow," his sister responded, pertly. "You

get me a horse to ride, Timmy—anyway get me something that goes—any sort of a gee-gee—but I'd like something big and lively that will keep my hands full. Hurry—don't be inefficient—just go and get it."

And Tim, with the slavishness of truly good men, went and got it.

It waited in the back courtyard of the Princess as Violet, garnished in white from throat to toes, came out of the hotel. She halted in her tracks and stared. In an attitude of profound melancholy a small rat of a donkey

drooped in his shafts. His large head sank towards the white coral of the pavement; his curtains of ears hung limp; he suffered, by the proclamation of every line, from a broken heart. Tiny Tim towered cheerfully over him, six feet three inches in air, and thumped him with an encouraging hand.

"Cheer up, old man!" urged Tim. "We all know you're the scum of the earth, but don't rub it in—makes me feel bad. Lots of other donkeys loose—can't all of us be birds of paradise—necessary to keep up variety in the flora and fauna,—savez? Don't you care—brace!"

A herculean pat sent the small body staggering sidewise, but could not budge the grief-stricken soul. The dejected pose remained; the gray rat might not be comforted.

"What—that! Tim!" Violet's tone was dismayed.

"Uh-huh! Them's um," Tim answered, classically. "Said you wanted something big and lively. Best and only to be had in these islands—take him or leave him, but you won't get another. Besides, what's the matter with

him? He's a peach. Wait till you hear him bray and you'll be stuck on him—he brays lovely. Doesn't he, sonny?" He appealed to the black boy proprietor. "Didn't he bray like an angel coming down? Oh, he's a corker, Vi—he's the pickles all right—in fact, he's got pickle-pockets all over him," he assured her, firmly, and considered the question settled.

"Well, he may have pickle-pockets," his sister agreed, doubtfully, "but he hasn't much hair. He's the skinniest, baldest little scrap I ever saw. Can he go? Is he tired out?" she demanded of the listless proprietor.

"Yas'm," the lad drawled. "He kin go. No'm. He ain't tired. Tha's jes th' way he's got o' restin'. Sometimes he goes right smart," he added, in a silky voice, and grinned.

"It seems like cruelty to make him," Violet reflected aloud. "But I might as well try. Poor lamb!" and she patted the ribby side. "Poor, meek gray rat! Would it be asking too much of you to trot around the country with me? I'm not very heavy. Will you be a kind rat to me?" she murmured, lovingly, and a sudden hind leg shot up with a sharp flick and just missed her hand.

"Vicious brute! Better not be too sure of his meekness," advised Tim. "The jackass tribe is deceitful and desperately wicked. Shall I get your hat?" he offered, with marked civility.

"No, thanks—not going to wear one." The girl was in the cart.

Tiny Tim frowned down at her. "Oh, for cat's sake, Vi," he broke forth, with that elegance of diction which is learned at our large universities, "don't make a holy show of yourself! It's bad form and you know it. I suppose you think you're a winner, with that lemon-colored croquette on your topknot," he suggested, pleasantly, and Violet laughed, having heard her golden hair admired too often to be sensitive.

The laugh irritated Tim. "You're awfully American since—" her glance stopped the sentence. The boy went on, however. " A little pig-headed, yellow-headed, picked chicken like you to throw down that corking athlete—the best tennis-player on the island—" and again Violet laughed, but the sound was a chastened one.

"Timmy, don't badger me," she begged. "What's that got to do with my hat? I'd better go now." She picked up the reins, but the big youngster stood with his hand on the bridle and made oration.

"You'll never get another such chance. You! To throw down Graham Peace! Smarty! Tearing around the country with your hat off, hoping you'll meet him and shock him. Smarty!"

At this juncture Violet turned her face up, and there were tears in her eyes. At nineteen one is perhaps severer against wrong-doers than later, and Tim felt a brotherly responsibility, yet he was softened.

"Shall I go with you?" he inquired, sternly, and the girl shook her head with a sorrowful smile of tenderness.

"Timmy! And give up the garden-party at Admiralty House—and the tennis you've planned for a week! You're a lamb! Not much! But thank you, you dear thing!"

Being caught in unselfishness naturally plunged Tiny Tim into severity again. "Once more I ask, shall I get your hat?" he inquired, grimly.

"Once more I answer, you shall not," responded his sister. "Let the donkey's

head go. I want to get off."

Tim held tight for a moment more while he delivered this last thunder: "Very well, then—all I ask is, keep clear of Admiralty House. I'd be awfully ashamed of you—you look like a house-maid out for a glass of beer."

"You needn't worry. The one thing I'm trying to avoid is Lady Barrows's garden-party—I see myself going to it in a donkey-cart!" the girl threw back hotly.

It was a pleasure to Tim to see her lips close hard, and to know that the quotation from Graham Peace had struck home, as he watched the cart turn down the narrow lane which runs between oleanders and vine-grown walls past the cottage to the road.

The afternoon sun shone hotly over white and green Bermuda. Every leaf of the rustling millions, every red flower, every delicate rose and lily, stood up in the breeze and said: "This is a new thought; I have only just noticed how delicious is the sunlight; to-day is by far the best day ever made; this is a real party—so let everything and everybody play it's a holiday." Which is what all the leaves and flowers and waves of the sea say each day that comes, in Bermuda. And all the people there laugh and agree: "Yes, it is true; it is the best day yet; it is and shall be a holiday." And therefore it is, in Bermuda, a holiday every day—or one thinks so, which is much the same.

As Violet drove, white houses, white-roofed, winked at her shyly from behind veils of black-green cedars; banks of scarlet geraniums flaunted color in her eyes; roses hung over the roadside and bobbed pink salutations; fields of lilies ran from her in a white flight back to tall hedges of oleanders; and everywhere the insistent gay ocean pushed in a twinkling finger of purple or emerald or blue water to point at the charms of the islands it held in its arms. It was all brightness and holiday; Violet felt herself the one note out of tune in the lively air. The donkey's thin little legs pattered along with great decorum, and his driver repeated with righteous indignation the epithet Tim had used towards the guiltless creature.

"Vicious brute indeed! If all the world were as kind as you, you sad little gray rat, life would be simple," she remarked aloud, and fell to thinking from that text.

Certainly it was a gentle beast, though a misfit as to looks to carry about the tragedy of her soul. A plunging, snorting steed, a puller, a borer, and herself in the saddle, controlling him with calm, sad fearlessness—such a picture as that came to her mind as appropriate. Or a smart high trap, dangerously adapted to tip over, drawn by a bad-tempered brute, with her slight figure alone on the box, holding the reins, courting destruction with a careless smile—and Graham Peace watching perhaps, horror-struck, her headlong career—this was another snap-shot grateful to the imagination. Yet. after all, it did not matter, and the rat would jog without attention and let her think.

She had thought it all over many times in the last week, yet the situation seemed as impossible as ever. Do what she would, she could not adjust herself to the mechanism of a world with the mainspring left out. The more she considered, the more certain she felt that it was all the Admiral's fault. It was difficult to put into reasoning, but the feeling was convincing. All might have been well if only the Admiral had laughed with gayety and gotten off a well-chosen sentence or two, such as:

"Very well done, Miss Eliot—it's quite a trick to chin yourself;" and then,

"What a sensible American custom it is to leave off the hat in warm weather!" followed by,

"Any athletic effort is easier when one's arms are free, is it not?"

It seemed to Violet she could name a dozen American old gentlemen who would have relieved the strain with words to that effect. But instead he had treated it like an international question, and looked so like a horrified owl with his bristling gray beard and his solemn manner that she had laughed, which made things shades blacker. Just the least touch of a sense of humor on the Admiral's part would have saved the situation. Graham of course had turned his heavy guns on poor little Dickie Stevens ridiculously, but that was all due to Sir Robert. She had to resent it; she had to break the engagement in self-respect; but it was the Admiral whom she resented, not Graham. Not Graham, who turned at the door next day, as he left her, to say once again for the last time, "I love you, Violet"; Graham, who, after letting the Admiral embarrass him and

prejudice him and make him cross to her, had recanted nobly, and told her that the Admiral counted not one "bally whoop"; who had assured her earnestly that the Admiral was "an old granny"; Graham, who had explained and retracted and apologized infinitely. Certainly she was not resentful at Graham any more; moreover, she still loved him—she expected to go on loving him through a long, lonely, colorless life. But the engagement had to be broken, because he had plainly looked down upon Americans and American customs, which was not to be borne, and because he had taken sides with the Admiral against her, and because—possibly because—she was pig-headed. At all events, Englishmen all bullied their wives. She had heard it often, and it was just as well not to put herself in the list—she would not take kindly to bullying. She sighed a heart-broken sigh—yes, it was a glorious thing that her engagement was broken.

The gray rat during these musings had progressed with docility and tinkling hoof-beats down the street by the Royal Palms; around Crow Lane, at the end of the sparkling bay; through shadowy Springfield Avenue, to the white thread of the South Shore road. A morbid desire drew her to revisit Devonshire Fort, the scene of her life's undoing. Meanwhile she followed, all unknowing, a solitary bicycle-rider who, just out of sight around each turn, shaped his course also, and also with a heavy heart, to that same port. As he rode, he too resentfully considered the Admiral, how he was thick-headed.

"Fussy old granny!" the man growled to himself. "It was all his fault. My poor little Violet, who has never known anything but love and admiration—how could she be expected to put up with his stiffness? If he'd had the least sense of humor in his old bones, he would have known that the American point of view explained it all. What's more, she didn't fancy any one was about. Why the devil should Sir Robert insist on seeing Devonshire Fort—what is there to see? And why should the old duffer set up to criticise if a girl plays a bit with an old friend—picturesque I call it, that scene. And amusing, most uncommonly amusing— Oh, hang it all! It's his fault, but why did I let him come it over me? Why should I have taken it out of Violet because the old prig looked solemn? I was a beast next day, and now she's down on the nation. The Admiral managed to make an international question of it, and she'll not touch an Englishman now with a pair of tongs—and I'm the goat—blast the Admiral!"

To this tune the bicycle progressed. And behind it, unseen, progressed the donkey-cart, and from both vehicles rose in the air a still blue smoke of invective towards the Admiral.

The shore road was deserted, and from over a rise of land came a dim sound of the sea, rolling up unbroken from the south pole to fall on the reefs. A sandy lane, golden with ruts, emerald with grasses, branched to it, and the rider got off his wheel and pushed it along the heavy ascent, unconscious that thereby he was saying his lines as they were written in the book, and playing the card that Fate had marked for the trick.

The donkey-cart gained—gained rapidly. Through sparse cedars, etched black on tawny sand, man and bicycle wound up-hill, and now he heard over the cliffs the boom of the breakers as he had heard it on Sunday when he came up with the Admiral. A quick "Ah!" that was like the answer to a thrust got away from the man's throat. The narrow road ran here between high walls, twisting upward—the entrance to the abandoned fort. Peace wheeled his bicycle slowly along the grassy way, through the tunnel-like approach, dreaming sadly of happier days, and behind him, closer and closer, unheard and unseen, pattered Fate in the form of a gray donkey. There was but one turn now between them; the rat took it.

Peace, with his hand on the machine, stopped and looked back, and at that, with one accord, donkey and cart and bicycle and man sped at each other. In an ornate zigzag with fancy steps they sped as if planning the dance from the foundation of the world. No one can dodge a shying donkey successfully unless it is known which way the donkey shies next. This shy was a woven motion with unexpected figures, and Peace met it at every jump. The ruin was rapid yet thorough, and it was not over two minutes from its incipience that the rat took a sudden jolt into infinite stillness, and dropped his head with the resignation which seemed his most saintly characteristic, and withdrew his soul into contemplation.

Graham Peace slowly arose from under his heels. He pushed his arm through the front wheel of the bicycle, which arose with him, and stared pallidly. There was a rent in his white-flannelled knee, he held one wrist in the other as if it hurt, and down his left eyebrow trickled red. Over the collapsed gray back and sinking head Violet stared at this speechless vision, and then she saw the blood.

"Oh, you're hurt!" she cried, and a drop promptly crawled into his eye.

"Bother!" he answered, briefly, and mopped it away, and saw his Panama hat lying on the ground. A man will interrupt choirs of angels or his own love-making to put his hat on, and Peace by instinct took a step towards it, and winced and stood helplessly looking down at his foot, and the girl followed his eye. Under the torn stocking the ankle was swelling to a lump already visible.

"Oh, I'm so sorry—I'm so sorry!" she stammered in agony. "It's all my

fault—but I didn't dream it was you." That she had planned to kill somebody

seemed evident. "It's such a good little donkey—"

"Oh, ripping!" Graham agreed, enthusiastically, but she went on:

"He was frightened at the sight of you, that's all, and—"

"Oh, that often happens," Peace hurried to say, helpfully, but she paid no attention to his interjections. Her eyes had alighted on the limp wrist held carefully in the other fist.

"Your hand is hurt, too— Oh, you're all broken to pieces, aren't you?" she cried, in distress.

"Rather," Graham acknowledged, and devoured her with his eyes. It was good to be looking at her again, even with everything in a mess.

"You can't walk home," she reflected, and went scarlet. She and Graham and their tragedy lumped into a donkey-cart!

"I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you to give me a lift," he answered, apologetically. "It's quite too bad, but"—he glanced down—"I seem to have knocked up my foot a bit. The wheel's done." He threw a regretful glance at the ruin, from which by now he had separated himself. "I'll send my man up for it; but"—he took a trial step and caught at the shaft—"I seem not to be able to walk particularly. My ankle—I'll have to trouble you. It's quite too bad," he repeated, and gazed at her wistfully.

As the two remembered it later, the civilities which followed were such as would have graced a government-house function and were more than adequate, distinctly pleonastic, for the situation. Under cover of much politeness on both sides the large young man, minus a foot and with a hand gone wrong, hitched himself somehow into the small vehicle and sat with his knees half-way to his chin, as dejected as the donkey. The ambulance train so threaded its way down the lane but lately ascended in another order.

As they reached the turn to the South Shore road something clattering was approaching, something which looked like odds and ends of boards and wheels casually thrown together. A heap of rags, singing, lay across the medley; and drawing the job lot, trimmed with bits of rope and leather, was a brown replica of the gray rat.

warbled the rag-bundle, in a mellow yell, and the clatter of wheels and boards banged an interlude.

Bump! Rattle! The brown cousin halted with a fusillade of loose sounds, the rich voice stopped, and a cheerful black face lifted inquiringly. The cousin's ears were erect, his nostrils twitching, his eyes gleaming—his pose intimated that he was astonished and insulted to discover the presence, on his own

peculiar earth, of the gray rat. And the gray rat, with his fore legs set, returned the compliment, ears, nose, and glare. Violet hurriedly gave her steed a smart cut with the whip, but with no result; the rat's attention was elsewhere. A low whine expressed his impatience of the other donkey's existence. And the other whined back, and at that, without further prelude, the rat threw up his head and sent to the skies such a bray as shook the cart; and the brown cousin caught it somewhere in the middle with a stentorian reply, and the world quivered to horrid sound. Violet rained blows on her beast's thin sides with eager brutality, but she might as well have beaten a gray iron statue. Bray after bray rose antiphonally, and neither animal noticed by a sign the exhortations of its driver.

"Quaint brute!" murmured Graham, and made a quick movement to get out of the trap—forgetting his foot—and saved himself from falling; he sat still, helpless, and looked at Violet.

"Be quiet," she spoke. "You can't do it—I'll go and drag him."

With that she was at the donkey's head, gripping the bridle, and with her feet planted to match his, she pulled till her face was scarlet. The rat did not even shake her off, but simply, without moving a muscle, he brayed. And the enemy brayed. And the ragged negro kicked his heels, as he lay across the dray, in joy, and in the intervals of the braying one heard a high squeal of laughter, of excellent musical quality. Violet walked over to him.

"Here, you," she ordered, indignantly, "get up and make your donkey go along."

The man threw out his arms and legs in an ecstasy of irresponsibility and laughed like a happy baby.

"Yaas, missis," he drawled. And as the girl mounted into her cart and took the reins he drew from some crack an old tomato-can with stones in it. Like an African incantation he shook it at the belligerents, and like successful magic was the result. The deadlock broke. What happened to the brown cousin is not known, but the rat bolted.

Bolted and ran, scurrying up the white road like a leaf in a cyclone. Banana-fields, stone walls, white houses, flew by backwards as he turned up-hill to the "Middle Road" and dashed past old Devonshire Church, flower-sweet and serene in its graveyard—but not for beauty of holiness or of landscape halted the mad gray rat. Violet's arms, strong with tennis and rowing, strained their last ounce on the reins with as much effect as if she pulled on Smith's parish church, rising now, white-spired, among the hills. Graham Peace sat with his teeth set, considering how easily he could stop the brute if he had two hands—how he probably could do it with one hand if he dared insult his proud lady-love by taking the reins. And the brute ran. Three miles he ran straight through the island, till at last he bolted full into a grocery-shop, standing flush with the North Shore road, and stopped short with his nose on the counter, and collapsed, relaxed, as one who had reached a goal.

"Two pounds of brown sugar, please," Violet gasped to the apparent emptiness of the interior, and out of the shadows arose a large man.

With no apparent surprise, seriously and sadly, he slouched forward and took the intruder by the bridle and began backing him, as calmly as if all his customers always drove inside. Violet, recovering her breath, showered apologies, but R. M. Outerbridge, as the sign over the door announced him to be, said nothing—only backed the donkey. As the trap reached the roadway the big man lifted the small beast bodily and held him suspended for a second.

"Which way shall I set him down, miss?" he inquired.

" 'Quaint brute!' " Violet Eliot quoted five minutes later, as the late maniac trotted meekly towards home. "What a word—'quaint'! Wouldn't it take an Englishman to apply that in the middle of a braying contest to an insane tornado of a skeleton of a donkey! 'Quaint'!"

Graham Peace did not cavil at the American assortment of language which clothed the sarcasm. "Violet," he asked, in a hopeful yet hesitant tone, "don't you think that after going through this we ought—we might—I move we'd better— Oh, hang! Violet dearest, won't you forgive me?"

Violet's eyes and mouth were veering towards a smile. "It certainly is a bond of union to be made idiots of together," she acknowledged, and she looked yielding, but that was only one of her sides.

Another had whirled around before Peace was sure of the first. Under all of the sides were a good thing and a bad thing. The bad thing was plain pigheadedness; the good thing was a sound core that was uneasy at living with resentment and distrust and such feelings and wanted to have it out and clear the atmosphere. It seemed possible that if one large explosion could blow away the débris of a quarrel, comfort, not to say rapture, might follow. Quite deliberately Violet set to work at exploding.

"Graham," she began, "it's not a mood, or a fit of temper; it's a—it's a—international question." Graham laughed. " That probably was funny," she

admitted, with candor. "But it's a whole lot besides funny. The way it looks to me is that either I'd have to give up being myself and let you bully me into a rag doll of your selection, or else you would go through life being ashamed of me. And I have to be myself."

"I love yourself," Graham murmured.

"Oh, you do now, because you can't have me. That's always a charm. But you were nasty before the Admiral. I won't be engaged to a man who's ashamed of me."

"Ashamed! I'm prouder than—"

"Nonsense!" Violet stopped his impassioned flow of words. You're English, with an English standard, and I'm American, with an American one. And neither of us is a jellyfish, and—what are you going to do about it?"

"It's not the first experiment of the sort," Graham pointed out. "The Jamesons are happy, and the Potters, and the Harringtons, and the—"

"That's true," Violet agreed, thoughtfully. "I wonder how they arrange. But some of them are jellyfish."

"Leaving invertebrates out of it, what's the impossibility with us? You didn't seem to find any a while ago."

"Well—" she considered deeply. And then, "Of course I know it's the Admiral's fault—horrid old Admiral!"

"Disgusting old brute!" Graham agreed, cordially.

"But, after all, he was just an instrument of fate to show you up." Peace looked bewildered. "I saw your attitude towards me and America by the way you sided with him. I realized how all the little things were wrong between us. Our points of view—they'd never get together. I have to go hatless, and play with my old friends, if that seems fit to me. I have to. And I couldn't stand having you look horrified at me forty years on end. I must be taken as I am, for I am fatally that way. If—if you could do that, I wouldn't—maybe—mind the silly things about you." When Violet was abusive her voice was soft

and her manner caressing, so that it came to one with a compliment.

"Silly things?" Graham inquired, rather flattered.

"Yes, silly. You like English dancing better than American. You must know yourself that's silly. Dance better! The idea! It's a joke. And you pretend you think our way of checking luggage isn't as good as your

way of personally conducting every blessed hat-box. That's dishonest besides silly, for you can't possibly think so. And—this makes me dizzy it's so ridiculous—you actually hold up your head and say you like a round tin bath-tub better than a nice long porcelain one. How can I respect a person whose prejudices blind and brutalize him? We would get on each other's nerves. I couldn't possibly believe that you were square about the bath-tub. You'd be irritated if I didn't put on a hat for breakfast—and I'd be irritated because you were irritated, and— and—and don't you see?"

Graham Peace shook his head. "It's got rather a nasty look as you put it," he agreed, sorrowfully. Then he turned towards her as well as he could, being compressed into less space than he rightly needed. "You've forgotten one thing—you've forgotten that I love you very badly. That's a middling big count. I can't get on without you, don't you know. I could worry along somehow with the brasses and I'd try to get your slide on dancing, and if you're keen about the tub, I'll take my—soup in a porcelain one to please you—but the one luxury I can't do without isn't English. It's American—it's you. What's the good of letting a lot of rubbish interfere with the only thing that's worth considering? I'm willing to chuck my prejudices—aren't you willing just to accept my apologies? Come, dearest."

"Take your arm away, Graham—I can't drive. Then I'm—I'm afraid. You'd—you'd try to bully me—they say Englishmen—" The defence was getting weak.

"Rot!" said Graham, firmly. "Look at me." The blue eyes lifted meekly. "Can you fancy me bullying you? You know well enough who would do the bullying."

But her head shook obstinately. "I—I don't feel satisfied. I can see you developing into just such an old fuss as the Admiral—I couldn't stand you, Graham. Besides—how weak-minded it would look to announce our engagement

one week and break it the next and announce it again the— What's the donkey trying to do?"

The gray rat had arrested himself in the midst of a worthy progress and was making attempts on his ear with his left hind foot.

"Fly," explained Graham, and took the whip and nicked it off. On pattered the rat. "Quaint brute," Peace repeated, reflectively. "He's quite done his

best for us. Wonder what's his next move. Wonder if he's planning to go off his chump again before he gets us home. Must be a bit balmy in his crumpet."

"Graham! That's English slang, I suppose. Too bad Americans can't speak the language in its purity!"

But the sarcasm was wasted. "Yes, isn't it?" he agreed, absent-mindedly. "But that's all rot about not changing our minds for the look of it. What do you care? You're not coward enough to throw away happiness for the sake of the blithering idiots who'd talk? Come, Violet—come, dearest—won't you let the little things go and live for the one big thing, for—love? Answer me, dear—answer me."

Violet, clinging to the last shred of her cherished obstinacy, murmured weakly words about "the Admiral."

"The Admiral! Rot! Hang the Admiral, the bally old brute! Answer my question, Violet. Answer me, dearest."

But on that occasion Violet did not answer, for opportunity and breath were at once wrested from her. The gray rat, unregarded by the lovers, had arrived, at this psychological moment, at the stately gateway which led into the grounds of Admiralty House. The gate stood wide, the garden-party was in full blast. And the rat turned in.

"Goodness—the thing's crazy! Here! Come! Turn around!" Violet ejaculated in horrified accents, and tugged with her might.

But the rat's heart knew its own bitterness, and the rat was about to satisfy Graham Peace's curiosity as to his ultimate plans. Up the gravelled drive he held his way with a pace only slightly accelerated, but with a firmness of step and of jaw not to be shaken by anything short of earthquakes and volcanoes.

"Oh, Graham!" gasped the girl. "He can't—he mustn't! He's going to the garden-party!"

And he went. Up the driveway the tiny, thin donkey bore the cart, rattling a song of triumph, with the bareheaded girl and the big huddled officer crouched in it, helpless—straight into the midst of the function. About the stately lawn stood groups of women in gay gowns; and the great men of the land, and the gilded youth, in and out of uniform, waited upon their words. Through this impressive assemblage the donkey-cart held its determined way towards the tennis-court beyond, green and velvety and framed in a gay audience.

Tiny Tim was putting up the game of his life against the strong serve of the Colonial Secretary. The Admiral's pretty daughter was his partner. The wife of the flag-ship's Captain played with the Secretary. It was a smart as well as a sharp set of tennis. Into it, over the chalk-lines and on to the shaven service-court, turned the gray rat, as if keeping an appointment, and came to a jolting full stop, and emitted one bray, and lay down.

For a few minutes it was as if a bomb had been thrown at a royal wedding; and when the girl, the color of a red rose, had descended from the trap, and brother officers had helped out the mangled Peace, a sympathetic and distinguished circle stood about. The Admiral himself hung over them garrulously. The scene of the Sunday quite gone from his volatile memory, he was all good feeling and interest for this particularly pretty girl and his favorite young officer. Lady Barrows's kind hand patted the girl's shoulder.

"Poor dear!" she said, gently. "You lost your hat, too, did you not?"

And Violet needed to answer nothing, for Tiny Tim took up the tale.

"Why—for cat's sake!" burst out the unconscious youth at the top of his young lungs. "The engagement's on again, isn't it, Vi?" his big fresh tones demanded, straight from the shoulder, out of a startled silence.

The question had occurred to every one, and every one caught his breath and rejoiced that it was asked, and waited eagerly for the answer. Graham Peace, nursing his wrist, looked down with a swift interrogation in his eyes, and the girl, going a shade redder, smiled.

"Certainly yes," said Graham, firmly and loudly.

And then everybody smiled also. But there was a second of nervous, embarrassing silence, and feeling this, with an instinct to fill it, the fortunate lover put out his hand and pulled a long, gray, furry ear.

"Quaint brute!" said Graham Peace. "Quaint brute! he's balmy in his crumpet, but he did the trick—the donkey did."

Stirring Science Stories/March 1942/The Goblins Will Get You

Wollheim The Goblins Will Get You by John Blythe Michel 4072301Stirring Science Stories, March 1942 — The Goblins Will Get YouDonald Allen WollheimJohn

Departmental Ditties and Ballads and Barrack-Room Ballads/The Widow's Party

For half my comp'ny's lying still Where the Widow give the party. "How did you get away—away, Johnnie, Johnnie?" On the broad o' my back at the end o'

History of the 305th Field Artillery/The Ages of Getting Ready

of Getting Ready 3698561History of the 305th Field Artillery — The Ages of Getting ReadyCharles Wadsworth Camp ? VI THE AGES OF GETTING READY We failed

The whole proceedings of Jockey and Maggy (1839)

getting o't. Mess John. And did not you do the like to her? ?Jock. A what needed I do the like, when she an my mither did it a' but the wean getting,

Fighting in Cuban Waters/Chapter 8

boiler-makers, and so on; and three or four other messes besides, including that to which you will belong. We gunners dine with the boatswain, sail-maker,

History of the 305th Field Artillery/And Becomes Acquainted With Paper Work

our perpetual companion. Neither by night nor by day did he leave us lonely. He strutted at mess. He paraded across the drill ground. He sat by one's