

my Pip still!

CAPT. G. (Very clearly.) 'False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl!

MRS. H. (Rising.) Then it was true! They said--but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A girl! I was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her, Pip. I daresay she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

CAPT. G. Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done? (Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.) What have I done?

WITH ANY AMAZEMENT

And are not afraid with any amazement.

--Marriage service.

SCENE.-A bachelor's bedroom--toilet-table arranged with unnatural neatness. CAPTAIN GADSBY asleep and snoring heavily. Time, 10.30 A. M.--a glorious autumn day at Simla. Enter delicately CAPTAIN

MAFFLIM of GADSBY'S regiment. Looks at sleeper, and shakes his head murmuring 'Poor Gaddy.' Performs violent fantasia with hair-brushes on chair-back.

CAPT. M. Wake up, my sleeping beauty! (Roars.)

'Uprouse ye, then, my merry merry men!

It is our opening day!

It is our opening da-ay!

Gaddy, the little dicky-birds have been billing and cooing for ever so long; and I'm here!

CAPT. G. (Sitting up and yawning.) 'Mornin'. This is awf'ly good of you, old fellow. Most awf'ly good of you. 'Don't know what I should do without you. On my soul, I don't. 'Haven't slept a wink all night.

CAPT. M. I didn't get in till half-past eleven. 'Had a look at you then, and you seemed to be sleeping as soundly as a condemned criminal.

CAPT. G. Jack, if you want to make those disgustingly worn-out jokes, you'd better go away. (With portentous gravity.) It's the happiest day in my life.

CAPT. M. (Chuckling grimly.) Not by a very long chalk, my son. You're going through some of the most refined torture you've ever known. But be calm. I am with you. 'Shun! Dress!

CAPT. G. Eh! Wha-at?

CAPT. M. DO you suppose that you are your own master for the next twelve hours? If you do, of course--- (Makes for the door.)

CAPT. G. No! For Goodness' sake, old man, don't do that! You'll see me through, won't you? I've been mugging up that beastly drill, and can't remember a line of it.

CAPT. M. (Overhauling G's uniform.) Go and tub. Don't bother me. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in.

Interval, filled by the noise as of one splashing in the bath-room.

CAPT. G. (Emerging from dressing-room.) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Nearly eleven.

CAPT. G. Five hours more. O Lord!

CAPT. M. (Aside.) 'First sign of funk, that. 'Wonder if it's going to spread. (Aloud.) Come along to breakfast.

CAPT. G. I can't eat anything. I don't want any breakfast.

CAPT. M. (Aside.) So early! (Aloud.) Captain Gadsby, I order you

to eat breakfast, and a dashed good breakfast, too. None of your bridal
airs and graces with me!

Leads G. downstairs, and stands over him while he eats two chops.

CAPT. G. (Who has looked at his watch thrice in the last five
minutes.) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Time to come for a walk. Light up.

CAPT. G. I haven't smoked for ten days, and I won't now. (Takes
cheroot which M. has cut for him, and blows smoke through his nose
luxuriously.) We aren't going down the Mall, are we?

CAPT. M. (Aside.) They're all alike in these stages. (Aloud.) No,
my Vestal. We're going along the quietest road we can find.

CAPT. G. Any chance of seeing Her?

CAPT. M. Innocent! No! Come along, and, if you want me for the final
obsequies, don't cut my eye out with your stick.

CAPT. G. (Spinning round.) I say, isn't She the dearest creature
that ever walked? What's the time? What comes after 'wilt thou take
this woman'?

CAPT. M. You go for the ring. R'clect it'll be on the top of my

right-hand little ringer, and just be careful how you draw it off, because I shall have the Verger's fees somewhere in my glove.

CAPT. G. (Walking forward hastily.) D---the Verger! Come along! It's past twelve and I haven't seen Her since yesterday evening. (Spinning round again.) She's an absolute angel, Jack, and She's a dashed deal too good for me. Look here, does She come up the aisle on my arm, or how?

CAPT. M. If I thought that there was the least chance of your remembering anything for two consecutive minutes, I'd tell you. Stop passaging about like that!

CAPT. G. (Halting in the middle of the road.) I say, Jack.

CAPT. M. Keep quiet for another ten minutes if you can, you lunatic; and walk!

The two tramp at five miles an hour for fifteen minutes.

CAPT. G. What's the time? How about that cursed wedding-cake and the slippers? They don't throw 'em about in church, do they?

CAPT. M. In-variably. The Padre leads off with his boots.

CAPT. G. Confound your silly soul! Don't make fun of me. I can't stand it, and I won't!

CAPT. M. (Untroubled.) So-ooo, old horse! You'll have to sleep for a couple of hours this afternoon.

CAPT. G. (Spinning round) I'm not going to be treated like a dashed child. Understand that!

CAPT. M. (Aside) Nerves gone to fiddle-strings. What a day we're having! (Tenderly putting his hand on G's. shoulder) My David, how long have you known this Jonathan? Would I come up here to make a fool of you-after all these years?

CAPT. G. (Penitently.) I know, I know, Jack--but I'm as upset as I can be. Don't mind what I say. Just hear me run through the drill and see if I've got it all right:---

'To have and to hold for better or worse, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, so help me God. Amen.'

CAPT. M. (Suffocating with suppressed laughter) Yes. That's about the gist of it. I'll prompt if you get into a hat.

CAPT. G. (Earnestly) Yes, you'll stick by me, Jack, won't you? I'm awf'ly happy, but I don't mind telling YOU that I'm in a blue funk!

CAPT. M. (Gravely) Are you? I should never have noticed it. You don't LOOK like it.

CAPT. G. Don't I? That's all right. (Spinning round.) On my soul and honour, Jack, She's the sweetest little angel that ever came down from the sky. There isn't a woman on earth fit to speak to Her.

CAPT. M. (Aside.) And this is old Gaddy! (Aloud.) Go on if it relieves you.

CAPT. G. You can laugh! That's all you wild asses of bachelors are fit for.

CAPT. M. (Drawling.) You never WOULD wait for the troop to come up. You aren't quite married yet, y' know.

CAPT. G. Ugh! That reminds me. I don't believe I shall be able to get into my boots. Let's go home and try 'em on! (Hurries forward.)

CAPT. M. 'Wouldn't be in your shoes for anything that Asia has to offer.

CAPT. G. (Spinning round.) That just shows your hideous blackness of soul-your dense stupidity-your brutal narrow-mindedness. There's only one fault about you. You're the best of good fellows, and I don't know what I should have done without you, but-you aren't married. (Wags his head gravely.) Take a wife, Jack.

CAPT. M. (With a face like a wall.) Ya-as. Whose for choice?

CAPT. G. If you're going to be a blackguard, I'm going on--What's the time?

CAPT. M. (Hums.)---

'An' since 'twas very clear we drank only ginger-beer,
Faith, there must ha'been some stingo in the ginger.'

Come back, you maniac. I'm going to take you home, and you're going to lie down.

CAPT. G. What on earth do I want to lie down for?

CAPT. M. Give me a light from your cheroot and see.

CAPT. G. (Watching cheroot-butt quiver like a tuning-fork.) Sweet state I'm in!

CAPT. M. You are. I'll get you a peg and you'll go to sleep.

They return and M. compounds a four-finger peg.

CAPT. G. O bus! bus! It'll make me as drunk as an owl.

CAPT. M. Curious thing, 'twon't have the slightest effect on you. Drink it off, chuck yourself down there, and go to bye-bye.

CAPT. G. It's absurd. I shan't sleep. I know I shan't!

Falls into heavy doze at end of seven minutes. CAPT. M.
watches him tenderly.

CAPT. M. Poor old Gaddy! I've seen a few turned off before, but never one who went to the gallows in this condition. 'Can't tell how it affects 'em, though. It's the thoroughbreds that sweat when they're backed into double-harness.-And that's the man who went through the guns at Amdheran like a devil possessed of devils. (Leans over G.) But this is worse than the guns, old pal--worse than the guns, isn't it? (G. turns in his sleep, and M. touches him clumsily on the forehead.) Poor, dear old Gaddy! Going like the rest of 'em-going like the rest of 'em---Friend that sticketh closer than a brother---eight years. Dashed bit of a slip of a girl-eight weeks! And-where's your friend? (Smokes disconsolately till church clock strikes three.)

CAPT. M. Up with you! Get into your kit.

CAPT. G. Already? Isn't it too soon? Hadn't I better have a shave?

CAPT. M. NO! You're all right. (Aside.) He'd chip his chin to pieces.

CAPT. G. What's the hurry?

CAPT. M. You've got to be there first.

CAPT. G. To be stared at?

CAPT. M. Exactly. You're part of the show. Where's the burnisher? Your spurs are in a shameful state.

CAPT. G. (Gruffly) Jack, I be damned if you shall do that for me.

CAPT. M. (More gruffly.) Dry up and get dressed! If I choose to clean your spurs, you're under my orders.

CAPT. G. dresses. M. follows suit.

CAPT. M. (Critically, walking round.) M'yes, you'll do. Only don't look so like a criminal. Ring, gloves, fees--that's all right for me. Let your moustache alone. Now, if the ponies are ready, we'll go.

CAPT. G. (Nervously.) It's much too soon. Let's light up! Let's have a peg! Let's--

CAPT. M. Let's make bally asses of ourselves!

BELLS. (Without.)--

'Good--peo--ple--all
To prayers--we call."

CAPT. M. There go the bells! Come on--unless you'd rather not. (They ride off.)

BELLS.--

'We honour the King
And Brides joy do bring--
Good tidings we tell,
And ring the Dead's knell.'

CAPT. G. (Dismounting at the door of the Church.) I say, aren't we much too soon? There are no end of people inside. I say, aren't we much too late? Stick by me, Jack! What the devil do I do?

CAPT. M. Strike an attitude at the head of the aisle and wait for Her. (G. groans as M. wheels him into position before three hundred eyes.)

CAPT. M. (Imploringly.) Gaddy, if you love me, for pity's sake, for the Honour of the Regiment, stand up! Chuck yourself into your uniform! Look like a man! I've got to speak to the Padre a minute. (G. breaks into a gentle perspiration.) If you wipe your face I'll never be your best man again. Stand up! (G. trembles visibly.)

CAPT. M. (Returning.) She's coming now. Look out when the music starts. There's the organ beginning to clack.

Bride steps out of 'rickshaw at Church door. G. catches a glimpse of her and takes heart.

ORGAN.--

'The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest marriage day,
The primal marriage-blessing,
It hath not passed away.'

CAPT. M. (Watching G.) By Jove! He is looking well. 'Didn't think he had it in him.

CAPT. G. How long does this hymn go on for?

CAPT. M. It will be over directly. (Anxiously.) Beginning to bleach and gulp? Hold on, Gaddy, and think o' the Regiment.

CAPT. G. (Measuredly.) I say, there's a big brown lizard crawling up that wall.

CAPT. M. My Sainted Mother! The last stage of collapse!

Bride comes up to left of altar, lifts her eyes once to G. who is suddenly smitten mad.

CAPT. G. (To himself again and again.) Little Featherweight's a

woman--a woman! And I thought she was a little girl.

CAPT. M. (In a whisper.) Form the halt--inward wheel.

CAPT. G. obeys mechanically and the ceremony proceeds.

PADRE. . . . only unto her as long as ye both shall live?

CAPT. G. (His throat useless.) Ha-hmmm!

CAPT. M. Say you will or you won't. There's no second deal here.

Bride gives response with perfect coolness, and is given away by the father.

CAPT. G. (Thinking to show his learning.) Jack, give me away now, quick!

CAPT. M. You're given yourself away quite enough. Her right hand, man! Repeat! Repeat! 'Theodore Philip.' Have you forgotten your own name?

CAPT. G. stumbles through Affirmation, which Bride repeats without a tremor.

CAPT. M. Now the ring! Follow the Padre! Don't pull off my glove! Here it is! Great Cupid, he's found his voice!

G. repeats Troth in a voice to be heard to the end of the Church and turns on his heel.

CAPT. M. (Desperately.) Rein back! Back to your troop! 'Tisn't half legal yet.

PADRE. . . . joined together let no man put asunder.

CAPT. G. paralysed with fear jibs after Blessing.

CAPT. M. (Quickly.) On your own front--one length. Take her with you. I don't come. You've nothing to say. (CAPT. G. jingles up to altar.)

CAPT. M. (In a piercing rattle meant to be a whisper.)

Kneel, you stiff-necked ruffian! Kneel!

PADRE. . . . whose daughters are ye so long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.

CAPT. M. Dismiss! Break off! Left wheel!

All troop to vestry. They sign.

CAPT. M. Kiss Her, Gaddy.

CAPT. G. (Rubbing the ink into his glove.) Eh! Wha--at?

CAPT. M. (Taking one pace to Bride.) If you don't, I shall.

CAPT. G. (Interposing an arm.) Not this journey!

General kissing, in which CAPT. G. is pursued by
unknown female.

CAPT. G. (Faintly to M.) This is Hades! Can I wipe my face now?

CAPT. M. My responsibility has ended. Better ask Missis Gadsby.

CAPT. G. winces as though shot and procession is
Mendelssohned out of Church to house, where usual
tortures take place over the wedding-cake.

CAPT. M. (At table.) Up with you, Gaddy. They expect a speech.

CAPT. G. (After three minutes' agony.) Ha-hmmm. (Thunders of
applause.)

CAPT. M. Doooid good, for a first attempt. Now go and change your kit
while Mamma is weeping over--'the Missus.' (CAPT. G. disappears.

CAPT. M. starts up tearing his hair.) It's not half legal. Where
are the shoes? Get an ayah.

AYAHA. Missie Captain Sahib done gone band karo all the jutis.

CAPT. M. (Brandishing scabbarded sword.) Woman, produce those shoes!
Some one lend me a bread-knife. We mustn't crack Gaddy's head more
than it is. (Slices heel off white satin slipper and puts slipper up
his sleeve.) Where is the Bride? (To the company at large.) Be
tender with that rice. It's a heathen custom. Give me the big bag.

Bride slips out quietly into 'rickshaw and departs
towards the sunset.

CAPT. M. (In the open.) Stole away, by Jove! So much, the worse for
Gaddy! Here he is. Now Gaddy, this'll be livelier than Amdheran! Where's
your horse?

CAPT. G. (Furiously, seeing that the women are out of earshot.) Where
the ---- is my Wife?

CAPT. M. Half-way to Mahasu by this time. You'll have to ride like
Young Lochinvar.

Horse comes round on his hind legs; refuses to let G. handle him.

CAPT. G. Oh you will, will you? Get round, you brute-you hog-you beast!
Get round!

Wrenches horse's head over, nearly breaking lower jaw; swings himself
into saddle, and sends home both spurs in the midst of a spattering

gale of Best Patna.

CAPT. M. For your life and your love--ride, Gaddy!--And God bless you!

Throws half a pound of rice at G., who disappears, bowed forward on the saddle, in a cloud of sunlit dust.

CAPT. M. I've lost old Gaddy. (Lights cigarette and strolls off, singing absently):--

'You may carve it on his tombstone, you may cut it on his card,
That a young man married is a young man marred!'

MISS DEERCOURT. (From her horse.) Really, Captain Mafflin! You are more plain spoken than polite!

CAPT. M. (Aside.) They say marriage is like cholera. 'Wonder who'll be the next victim.

White satin slipper slides from his sleeve and falls at his feet.
Left wondering.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN