

CHAPTER XVIII. THE SAUSAGE CHAPPIE

The personality that wins cost Archie two dollars in cash and a lot of embarrassment when he asked for it at the store. To buy a treatise of that name would automatically seem to argue that you haven't a winning personality already, and Archie was at some pains to explain to the girl behind the counter that he wanted it for a friend. The girl seemed more interested in his English accent than in his explanation, and Archie was uncomfortably aware, as he receded, that she was practising it in an undertone for the benefit of her colleagues and fellow-workers. However, what is a little discomfort, if endured in friendship's name?

He was proceeding up Broadway after leaving the store when he encountered Reggie van Tuyl, who was drifting along in somnambulistic fashion near Thirty-Ninth Street.

"Hullo, Reggie old thing!" said Archie.

"Hullo!" said Reggie, a man of few words.

"I've just been buying a book for Bill Brewster," went on Archie. "It appears that old Bill--What's the matter?"

He broke off his recital abruptly. A sort of spasm had passed across his companion's features. The hand holding Archie's arm had tightened

convulsively. One would have said that Reginald had received a shock.

"It's nothing," said Reggie. "I'm all right now. I caught sight of that fellow's clothes rather suddenly. They shook me a bit. I'm all right now," he said, bravely.

Archie, following his friend's gaze, understood. Reggie van Tuyl was never at his strongest in the morning, and he had a sensitive eye for clothes. He had been known to resign from clubs because members exceeded the bounds in the matter of soft shirts with dinner-jackets. And the short, thick-set man who was standing just in front of them in attitude of restful immobility was certainly no dandy. His best friend could not have called him dapper. Take him for all in all and on the hoof, he might have been posing as a model for a sketch of What the Well-Dressed Man Should Not Wear.

In costume, as in most other things, it is best to take a definite line and stick to it. This man had obviously vacillated. His neck was swathed in a green scarf; he wore an evening-dress coat; and his lower limbs were draped in a pair of tweed trousers built for a larger man. To the north he was bounded by a straw hat, to the south by brown shoes.

Archie surveyed the man's back carefully.

"Bit thick!" he said, sympathetically. "But of course Broadway isn't Fifth Avenue. What I mean to say is, Bohemian licence and what not.

Broadway's crammed with deuced brainy devils who don't care how they look. Probably this bird is a master-mind of some species."

"All the same, man's no right to wear evening-dress coat with tweed trousers."

"Absolutely not! I see what you mean."

At this point the sartorial offender turned. Seen from the front, he was even more unnerving. He appeared to possess no shirt, though this defect was offset by the fact that the tweed trousers fitted snugly under the arms. He was not a handsome man. At his best he could never have been that, and in the recent past he had managed to acquire a scar that ran from the corner of his mouth half-way across his cheek. Even when his face was in repose he had an odd expression; and when, as he chanced to do now, he smiled, odd became a mild adjective, quite inadequate for purposes of description. It was not an unpleasant face, however. Unquestionably genial, indeed. There was something in it that had a quality of humorous appeal.

Archie started. He stared at the man, Memory stirred.

"Great Scot!" he cried. "It's the Sausage Chappie!"

Reginald van Tuyl gave a little moan. He was not used to this sort of thing. A sensitive young man as regarded scenes, Archie's behaviour

unmanned him. For Archie, releasing his arm, had bounded forward and was shaking the other's hand warmly.

"Well, well, well! My dear old chap! You must remember me, what? No? Yes?"

The man with the scar seemed puzzled. He shuffled the brown shoes, patted the straw hat, and eyed Archie questioningly.

"I don't seem to place you," he said.

Archie slapped the back of the evening-dress coat. He linked his arm affectionately with that of the dress-reformer.

"We met outside St Mihiel in the war. You gave me a bit of sausage. One of the most sporting events in history. Nobody but a real sportsman would have parted with a bit of sausage at that moment to a stranger. Never forgotten it, by Jove. Saved my life, absolutely. Hadn't chewed a morse for eight hours. Well, have you got anything on? I mean to say, you aren't booked for lunch or any rot of that species, are you? Fine! Then I move we all toddle off and get a bite somewhere." He squeezed the other's arm fondly. "Fancy meeting you again like this! I've often wondered what became of you. But, by Jove, I was forgetting. Dashed rude of me. My friend, Mr. van Tuyl."

Reggie gulped. The longer he looked at it, the harder this man's costume

was to bear. His eye passed shudderingly from the brown shoes to the tweed trousers, to the green scarf, from the green scarf to the straw hat.

"Sorry," he mumbled. "Just remembered. Important date. Late already. Er--see you some time--"

He melted away, a broken man. Archie was not sorry to see him go. Reggie was a good chap, but he would undoubtedly have been de trop at this reunion.

"I vote we go to the Cosmopolis," he said, steering his newly-found friend through the crowd. "The browsing and sluicing isn't bad there, and I can sign the bill which is no small consideration nowadays."

The Sausage Chappie chuckled amusedly.

"I can't go to a place like the Cosmopolis looking like this."

Archie, was a little embarrassed.

"Oh, I don't know, you know, don't you know!" he said. "Still, since you have brought the topic up, you DID get the good old wardrobe a bit mixed this morning what? I mean to say, you seem absent-mindedly, as it were, to have got hold of samples from a good number of your various suitings."

"Suitings? How do you mean, suitings? I haven't any suitings! Who do you think I am? Vincent Astor? All I have is what I stand up in."

Archie was shocked. This tragedy touched him. He himself had never had any money in his life, but somehow he had always seemed to manage to have plenty of clothes. How this was he could not say. He had always had a vague sort of idea that tailors were kindly birds who never failed to have a pair of trousers or something up their sleeve to present to the deserving. There was the drawback, of course, that once they had given you things they were apt to write you rather a lot of letters about it; but you soon managed to recognise their handwriting, and then it was a simple task to extract their communications from your morning mail and drop them in the waste-paper basket. This was the first case he had encountered of a man who was really short of clothes.

"My dear old lad," he said, briskly, "this must be remedied! Oh, positively! This must be remedied at once! I suppose my things wouldn't fit you? No. Well, I tell you what. We'll wangle something from my father-in-law. Old Brewster, you know, the fellow who runs the Cosmopolis. His'll fit you like the paper on the wall, because he's a tubby little blighter, too. What I mean to say is, he's also one of those sturdy, square, fine-looking chappies of about the middle height. By the way, where are you stopping these days?"

"Nowhere just at present. I thought of taking one of those

self-contained Park benches."

"Are you broke?"

"Am I!"

Archie was concerned.

"You ought to get a job."

"I ought. But somehow I don't seem able to."

"What did you do before the war?"

"I've forgotten."

"Forgotten!"

"Forgotten."

"How do you mean--forgotten? You can't mean--FORGOTTEN?"

"Yes. It's quite gone."

"But I mean to say. You can't have forgotten a thing like that."

"Can't I! I've forgotten all sorts of things. Where I was born. How old I am. Whether I'm married or single. What my name is--"

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Archie, staggered. "But you remembered about giving me a bit of sausage outside St. Mihiel?"

"No, I didn't. I'm taking your word for it. For all I know you may be luring me into some den to rob me of my straw hat. I don't know you from Adam. But I like your conversation--especially the part about eating--and I'm taking a chance."

Archie was concerned.

"Listen, old bean. Make an effort. You must remember that sausage episode? It was just outside St. Mihiel, about five in the evening. Your little lot were lying next to my little lot, and we happened to meet, and I said 'What ho!' and you said 'Halloa!' and I said 'What ho! What ho!' and you said 'Have a bit of sausage?' and I said 'What ho! What ho! What HO!'"

"The dialogue seems to have been darned sparkling but I don't remember it. It must have been after that that I stopped one. I don't seem quite to have caught up with myself since I got hit."

"Oh! That's how you got that scar?"

"No. I got that jumping through a plate-glass window in London on Armistice night."

"What on earth did you do that for?"

"Oh, I don't know. It seemed a good idea at the time."

"But if you can remember a thing like that, why can't you remember your name?"

"I remember everything that happened after I came out of hospital. It's the part before that's gone."

Archie patted him on the shoulder.

"I know just what you want. You need a bit of quiet and repose, to think things over and so forth. You mustn't go sleeping on Park benches. Won't do at all. Not a bit like it. You must shift to the Cosmopolis. It isn't half a bad spot, the old Cosmop. I didn't like it much the first night I was there, because there was a dashed tap that went drip-drip-drip all night and kept me awake, but the place has its points."

"Is the Cosmopolis giving free board and lodging these days?"

"Rather! That'll be all right. Well, this is the spot. We'll start by trickling up to the old boy's suite and looking over his reach-me-downs.

I know the waiter on his floor. A very sound chappie. He'll let us in with his pass-key."

And so it came about that Mr. Daniel Brewster, returning to his suite in the middle of lunch in order to find a paper dealing with the subject he was discussing with his guest, the architect of his new hotel, was aware of a murmur of voices behind the closed door of his bedroom. Recognising the accents of his son-in-law, he breathed an oath and charged in. He objected to Archie wandering at large about his suite.

The sight that met his eyes when he opened the door did nothing to soothe him. The floor was a sea of clothes. There were coats on the chairs, trousers on the bed, shirts on the bookshelf. And in the middle of his welter stood Archie, with a man who, to Mr. Brewster's heated eye, looked like a tramp comedian out of a burlesque show.

"Great Godfrey!" ejaculated Mr. Brewster.

Archie looked up with a friendly smile.

"Oh, halloa-halloa!" he said, affably, "We were just glancing through your spare scenery to see if we couldn't find something for my pal here. This is Mr. Brewster, my father-in-law, old man."

Archie scanned his relative's twisted features. Something in his expression seemed not altogether encouraging. He decided that the

negotiations had better be conducted in private. "One moment, old lad," he said to his new friend. "I just want to have a little talk with my father-in-law in the other room. Just a little friendly business chat. You stay here."

In the other room Mr. Brewster turned on Archie like a wounded lion of the desert.

"What the--!"

Archie secured one of his coat-buttons and began to massage it affectionately.

"Ought to have explained!" said Archie, "only didn't want to interrupt your lunch. The sportsman on the horizon is a dear old pal of mine--"

Mr. Brewster wrenched himself free.

"What the devil do you mean, you worm, by bringing tramps into my bedroom and messing about with my clothes?"

"That's just what I'm trying to explain, if you'll only listen. This bird is a bird I met in France during the war. He gave me a bit of sausage outside St. Mihiel--"

"Damn you and him and the sausage!"

"Absolutely. But listen. He can't remember who he is or where he was born or what his name is, and he's broke; so, dash it, I must look after him. You see, he gave me a bit of sausage."

Mr. Brewster's frenzy gave way to an ominous calm.

"I'll give him two seconds to clear out of here. If he isn't gone by then I'll have him thrown out."

Archie was shocked.

"You don't mean that?"

"I do mean that."

"But where is he to go?"

"Outside."

"But you don't understand. This chappie has lost his memory because he was wounded in the war. Keep that fact firmly fixed in the old bean. He fought for you. Fought and bled for you. Bled profusely, by Jove. AND he saved my life!"

"If I'd got nothing else against him, that would be enough."

"But you can't sling a chappie out into the cold hard world who bled in gallons to make the world safe for the Hotel Cosmopolis."

Mr. Brewster looked ostentatiously at his watch.

"Two seconds!" he said.

There was a silence. Archie appeared to be thinking. "Right-o!" he said at last. "No need to get the wind up. I know where he can go. It's just occurred to me I'll put him up at my little shop."

The purple ebbed from Mr. Brewster's face. Such was his emotion that he had forgotten that infernal shop. He sat down. There was more silence.

"Oh, gosh!" said Mr. Brewster.

"I knew you would be reasonable about it," said Archie, approvingly.

"Now, honestly, as man to man, how do we go?"

"What do you want me to do?" growled Mr. Brewster.

"I thought you might put the chappie up for a while, and give him a chance to look round and nose about a bit."

"I absolutely refuse to give any more loafers free board and lodging."

"Any MORE?"

"Well, he would be the second, wouldn't he?"

Archie looked pained.

"It's true," he said, "that when I first came here I was temporarily resting, so to speak; but didn't I go right out and grab the managership of your new hotel? Positively!"

"I will NOT adopt this tramp."

"Well, find him a job, then."

"What sort of a job?"

"Oh, any old sort"

"He can be a waiter if he likes."

"All right; I'll put the matter before him."

He returned to the bedroom. The Sausage Chappie was gazing fondly into the mirror with a spotted tie draped round his neck.

"I say, old top," said Archie, apologetically, "the Emperor of the Blighters out yonder says you can have a job here as waiter, and he won't do another dashed thing for you. How about it?"

"Do waiters eat?"

"I suppose so. Though, by Jove, come to think of it, I've never seen one at it."

"That's good enough for me!" said the Sausage Chappie. "When do I begin?"