

## STORIES

### WHEN PAPA SWORE IN HINDUSTANI

"Sylvia!"

"Yes, papa."

"That infernal dog of yours----"

"Oh, papa!"

"Yes, that infernal dog of yours has been at my carnations again!"

Colonel Reynolds, V.C., glared sternly across the table at Miss Sylvia Reynolds, and Miss Sylvia Reynolds looked in a deprecatory manner back at Colonel Reynolds, V.C.; while the dog in question--a foppish pug--happening to meet the colonel's eye in transit, crawled unostentatiously under the sideboard, and began to wrestle with a bad conscience.

"Oh, naughty Tommy!" said Miss Reynolds mildly, in the direction of the sideboard.

"Yes, my dear," assented the colonel; "and if you could convey to him the information that if he does it once more--yes, just once more!--I shall shoot him on the spot you would be doing him a kindness." And the colonel bit a large crescent out of his toast, with all the energy and conviction of a man who has thoroughly made up his mind. "At six o'clock this morning," continued he, in a voice of gentle melancholy, "I happened to look out of my bedroom window, and saw him. He had then destroyed two of my best plants, and was commencing on a third, with every appearance of self-satisfaction. I threw two large brushes and a boot at him."

"Oh, papa! They didn't hit him?"

"No, my dear, they did not. The brushes missed him by several yards, and the boot smashed a fourth carnation. However, I was so fortunate as to attract his attention, and he left off."

"I can't think what makes him do it. I suppose it's bones. He's got bones buried all over the garden."

"Well, if he does it again, you'll find that there will be a few more bones buried in the garden!" said the colonel grimly; and he subsided

into his paper.

Sylvia loved the dog partly for its own sake, but principally for that of the giver, one Reginald Dallas, whom it had struck at an early period of their acquaintance that he and Miss Sylvia Reynolds were made for one another. On communicating this discovery to Sylvia herself he had found that her views upon the subject were identical with his own; and all would have gone well had it not been for a melancholy accident.

One day while out shooting with the colonel, with whom he was doing his best to ingratiate himself, with a view to obtaining his consent to the match, he had allowed his sporting instincts to carry him away to such a degree that, in sporting parlance, he wiped his eye badly. Now, the colonel prided himself with justice on his powers as a shot; but on this particular day he had a touch of liver, which resulted in his shooting over the birds, and under the birds, and on each side of the birds, but very rarely at the birds. Dallas being in especially good form, it was found, when the bag came to be counted, that, while he had shot seventy brace, the colonel had only managed to secure five and a half!

His bad marksmanship destroyed the last remnant of his temper. He swore for half an hour in Hindustani, and for another half-hour in English. After that he felt better. And when, at the end of dinner, Sylvia came to him with the absurd request that she might marry Mr.

Reginald Dallas he did not have a fit, but merely signified in fairly moderate terms his entire and absolute refusal to think of such a thing.

This had happened a month before, and the pug, which had changed hands in the earlier days of the friendship, still remained, at the imminent risk of its life, to soothe Sylvia and madden her father.

It was generally felt that the way to find favour in the eyes of Sylvia--which were a charming blue, and well worth finding favour in--was to show an intelligent and affectionate interest in her dog. This was so up to a certain point; but no farther, for the mournful recollection of Mr. Dallas prevented her from meeting their advances in quite the spirit they could have wished.

However, they persevered, and scarcely a week went by in which Thomas was not rescued from an artfully arranged horrible fate by somebody.

But all their energy was in reality wasted, for Sylvia remembered her faithful Reggie, who corresponded vigorously every day, and refused to be put off with worthless imitations. The lovesick swains, however, could not be expected to know of this, and the rescuing of Tommy proceeded briskly, now one, now another, playing the rôle of hero.

The very day after the conversation above recorded had taken place a terrible tragedy occurred.

The colonel, returning from a poor day's shooting, observed through the mist that was beginning to rise a small form busily engaged in excavating in the precious carnation-bed. Slipping in a cartridge, he fired; and the skill which had deserted him during the day came back to him. There was a yelp; then silence. And Sylvia, rushing out from the house, found the luckless Thomas breathing his last on a heap of uprooted carnations.

The news was not long in spreading. The cook told the postman, and the postman thoughtfully handed it on to the servants at the rest of the houses on his round. By noon it was public property; and in the afternoon, at various times from two to five, nineteen young men were struck, quite independently of one another, with a brilliant idea.

The results of this idea were apparent on the following day.

"Is this all?" asked the colonel of the servant, as she brought in a couple of letters at breakfast-time.

"There's a hamper for Miss Sylvia, sir."

"A hamper, is there? Well, bring it in."

"If you please, sir, there's several of them."

"What? Several? How many are there?"

"Nineteen, sir," said Mary, restraining with some difficulty an inclination to giggle.

"Eh? What? Nineteen? Nonsense! Where are they?"

"We've put them in the coachhouse for the present, sir. And if you please, sir, cook says she thinks there's something alive in them."

"Something alive?"

"Yes, sir. And John says he thinks it's dogs, sir!"

The colonel uttered a sound that was almost a bark, and, followed by Sylvia, rushed to the coachhouse. There, sure enough, as far as the eye could reach, were the hampers; and, as they looked, a sound proceeded from one of them that was unmistakably the plaintive note of a dog that has been shut up, and is getting tired of it.

Instantly the other eighteen hampers joined in, until the whole coachhouse rang with the noise.

The colonel subsided against a wall, and began to express himself softly in Hindustani.

"Poor dears!" said Sylvia. "How stuffy they must be feeling!"

She ran to the house, and returned with a basin of water.

"Poor dears!" she said again. "You'll soon have something to drink."

She knelt down by the nearest hamper, and cut the cord that fastened it. A pug jumped out like a jack-in-the-box, and rushed to the water. Sylvia continued her work of mercy, and by the time the colonel had recovered sufficiently to be able to express his views in English, eighteen more pugs had joined their companion.

"Get out, you brute!" shouted the colonel, as a dog insinuated itself between his legs. "Sylvia, put them back again this minute! You had no business to let them out. Put them back!"

"But I can't, papa. I can't catch them."

She looked helplessly from him to the seething mass of dogs, and back again.

"Where's my gun?" began the colonel.

"Papa, don't! You couldn't be so cruel! They aren't doing any harm, poor things!"

"If I knew who sent them----"

"Perhaps there's something to show. Yes; here's a visiting-card in this hamper."

"Whose is it?" bellowed the colonel through the din.

"J. D'Arcy Henderson, The Firs," read Sylvia, at the top of her voice.

"Young blackguard!" bawled the colonel.

"I expect there's one in each of the hampers. Yes; here's another. W. K. Ross, The Elms."

The colonel came across, and began to examine the hampers with his own hand. Each hamper contained a visiting-card, and each card bore the name of a neighbour. The colonel returned to the breakfast-room, and laid the nineteen cards out in a row on the table.

"H'm!" he said, at last. "Mr. Reginald Dallas does not seem to be represented."

Sylvia said nothing.

"No; he seems not to be represented. I did not give him credit for so much sense." Then he dropped the subject, and breakfast proceeded in

silence.

A young gentleman met the colonel on his walk that morning.

"Morning, colonel!" said he.

"Good-morning!" said the colonel grimly.

"Er--colonel, I--er--suppose Miss Reynolds got that dog all right?"

"To which dog do you refer?"

"It was a pug, you know. It ought to have arrived by this time."

"Yes. I am inclined to think it has. Had it any special characteristics?"

"No, I don't think so. Just an ordinary pug."

"Well, young man, if you will go to my coachhouse, you will find nineteen ordinary pugs; and if you would kindly select your beast, and shoot it, I should be much obliged."

"Nineteen?" said the other, in astonishment. "Why, are you setting up as a dog-fancier in your old age, colonel?"

This was too much for the colonel. He exploded.

"Old age! Confound your impudence! Dog-fancier! No, sir! I have not become a dog-fancier in what you are pleased to call my old age! But while there is no law to prevent a lot of dashed young puppies like yourself, sir--like yourself--sending your confounded pug-dogs to my daughter, who ought to have known better than to have let them out of their dashed hampers, I have no defence.

"Dog-fancier! Gad! Unless those dogs are removed by this time to-morrow, sir, they will go straight to the Battersea Home, where I devoutly trust they will poison them. Here are the cards of the other gentlemen who were kind enough to think that I might wish to set up for a dog-fancier in my old age. Perhaps you will kindly return them to their owners, and tell them what I have just said." And he strode off, leaving the young man in a species of trance.

"Sylvia!" said the colonel, on arriving home.

"Yes, papa."

"Do you still want to marry that Dallas fellow? Now, for Heaven's sake, don't start crying! Goodness knows I've been worried enough this morning without that. Please answer a plain question in a fairly sane manner. Do you, or do you not?"

"Of course I do, papa."

"Then you may. He's the furthest from being a fool of any of the young puppies who live about here, and he knows one end of a gun from the other. I'll write to him now."

"Dear Dallas" (wrote the colonel),--"I find, on consideration, that you are the only sensible person in the neighbourhood. I hope you will come to lunch to-day. And if you still want to marry my daughter, you may."

To which Dallas replied by return of messenger:

"Thanks for both invitations. I will."

An hour later he arrived in person, and the course of true love pulled itself together, and began to run smooth again.