

## DISENTANGLING OLD DUGGIE

Doesn't some poet or philosopher fellow say that it's when our intentions are best that we always make the worst breaks? I can't put my hand on the passage, but you'll find it in Shakespeare or somewhere, I'm pretty certain.

At any rate, it's always that way with me. And the affair of Douglas Craye is a case in point.

I had dined with Duggie (a dear old pal of mine) one night at his club, and as he was seeing me out he said: "Reggie, old top"--my name's Reggie Pepper--"Reggie, old top, I'm rather worried."

"Are you, Duggie, old pal?" I said.

"Yes, Reggie, old fellow," he said, "I am. It's like this. The Booles have asked me down to their place for the week-end, and I don't know whether to go or not. You see, they have early breakfast, and besides that there's a frightful risk of music after dinner. On the other hand, young Roderick Boole thinks he can play piquet."

"I should go," I said.

"But I'm not sure Roderick's going to be there this time."

It was a problem, and I didn't wonder poor old Dug had looked pale and tired at dinner.

Then I had the idea which really started all the trouble.

"Why don't you consult a palmist?" I said.

"That sounds a good idea," said Duggie.

"Go and see Dorothea in Forty-second Street. She's a wonder. She'll settle it for you in a second. She'll see from your lines that you are thinking of making a journey, and she'll either tell you to get a move on, which will mean that Roderick will be there, or else to keep away because she sees disaster."

"You seem to be next to the game all right."

"I've been to a good many of them. You'll like Dorothea."

"What did you say her name was--Dorothea? What do I do? Do I just walk in? Shan't I feel a fearful chump? How much do I give her?"

"Five bucks. You'd better write and make a date."

"All right," said Duggie. "But I know I shall look a frightful fool."

About a week later I ran into him between the acts at the Knickerbocker. The old boy was beaming.

"Reggie," he said, "you did me the best turn anyone's ever done me, sending me to Mrs. Darrell."

"Mrs. Darrell?"

"You know. Dorothea. Her real name's Darrell. She's a widow. Her husband was in some regiment, and left her without a penny. It's a frightfully pathetic story. Haven't time to tell you now. My boy, she's a marvel. She had hardly looked at my hand, when she said: 'You will prosper in any venture you undertake.' And next day, by George, I went down to the Booles' and separated young Roderick from seventy dollars. She's a wonderful woman. Did you ever see just that shade of hair?"

"I didn't notice her hair."

He gaped at me in a sort of petrified astonishment.

"You--didn't--notice--her--hair!" he gasped.

I can't fix the dates exactly, but it must have been about three weeks

after this that I got a telegram:

"Call Madison Avenue immediately--Florence Craye."

She needn't have signed her name. I should have known who it was from by the wording. Ever since I was a kid, Duggie's sister Florence has oppressed me to the most fearful extent. Not that I'm the only one. Her brothers live in terror of her, I know. Especially Edwin. He's never been able to get away from her and it's absolutely broken his spirit. He's a mild, hopeless sort of chump who spends all his time at home--they live near Philadelphia--and has never been known to come to New York. He's writing a history of the family, or something, I believe.

You see, events have conspired, so to speak, to let Florence do pretty much as she likes with them. Originally there was old man Craye, Duggie's father, who made a fortune out of the Soup Trust; Duggie's elder brother Edwin; Florence; and Duggie. Mrs. Craye has been dead some years. Then came the smash. It happened through the old man. Most people, if you ask them, will tell you that he ought to be in Bloomingdale; and I'm not sure they're not right. At any rate, one morning he came down to breakfast, lifted the first cover on the sideboard, said in a sort of despairing way, "Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Curse all eggs!" and walked out of the room. Nobody thought much of it till about an hour afterward, when they found that he had packed a grip, left the house, and caught the train to New York. Next day they got a

letter from him, saying that he was off to Europe, never to return, and that all communications were to be addressed to his lawyers. And from that day on none of them had seen him. He wrote occasionally, generally from Paris; and that was all.

Well, directly news of this got about, down swooped a series of aunts to grab the helm. They didn't stay long. Florence had them out, one after the other, in no time. If any lingering doubt remained in their minds, don't you know, as to who was going to be boss at home, it wasn't her fault. Since then she has run the show.

I went to Madison Avenue. It was one of the aunts' houses. There was no sign of the aunt when I called--she had probably climbed a tree and pulled it up after her--but Florence was there.

She is a tall woman with what, I believe, is called "a presence." Her eyes are bright and black, and have a way of getting right inside you, don't you know, and running up and down your spine. She has a deep voice. She is about ten years older than Duggie's brother Edwin, who is six years older than Duggie.

"Good afternoon," she said. "Sit down."

I poured myself into a chair.

"Reginald," she said, "what is this I hear about Douglas?"

I said I didn't know.

"He says that you introduced him."

"Eh?"

"To this woman--this Mrs. Darrell."

"Mrs. Darrell?"

My memory's pretty rocky, and the name conveyed nothing to me.

She pulled out a letter.

"Yes," she said, "Mrs. Dorothy Darrell."

"Great Scott! Dorothea!"

Her eyes resumed their spine drill.

"Who is she?"

"Only a palmist."

"Only a palmist!" Her voice absolutely boomed. "Well, my brother

Douglas is engaged to be married to her."

"Many happy returns of the day," I said.

I don't know why I said it. It wasn't what I meant to say. I'm not sure I meant to say anything.

She glared at me. By this time I was pure jelly. I simply flowed about the chair.

"You are facetious, Reginald," she said.

"No, no, no," I shouted. "It slipped out. I wouldn't be facetious for worlds."

"I am glad. It is no laughing matter. Have you any suggestions?"

"Suggestions?"

"You don't imagine it can be allowed to go on? The engagement must be broken, of course. But how?"

"Why don't you tell him he mustn't?"

"I shall naturally express my strong disapproval, but it may not be effective. When out of the reach of my personal influence, my wretched

brother is self-willed to a degree."

I saw what she meant. Good old Duggie wasn't going to have those eyes patrolling his spine if he knew it. He meant to keep away and conduct this business by letter. There was going to be no personal interview with sister, if he had to dodge about America like a snipe.

We sat for a long time without speaking. Then I became rather subtle. I had a brain-wave and saw my way to making things right for Dug and at the same time squaring myself with Florence. After all, I thought, the old boy couldn't keep away from home for the rest of his life. He would have to go there sooner or later. And my scheme made it pleasant and easy for him.

"I'll tell you what I should do if I were you," I said. "I'm not sure I didn't read some book or see some play somewhere or other where they tried it on, and it worked all right. Fellow got engaged to a girl, and the family didn't like it, but, instead of kicking, they pretended to be tickled to pieces, and had the fellow and the girl down to visit them. And then, after the fellow had seen the girl with the home circle as a background, don't you know, he came to the conclusion that it wouldn't do, and broke off the engagement."

It seemed to strike her.

"I hardly expected so sensible a suggestion from you, Reginald," she



said. "It is a very good plan. It shows that you really have a definite substratum of intelligence; and it is all the more deplorable that you should idle your way through the world as you do, when you might be performing some really useful work."

That was Florence all over. Even when she patted you on the head, she had to do it with her knuckles.

"I will invite them down next week," she went on. "You had better come, too."

"It's awfully kind of you, but the fact is----"

"Next Wednesday. Take the three-forty-seven."

I met Duggie next day. He was looking happy, but puzzled, like a man who has found a dime on the street and is wondering if there's a string tied to it. I congratulated him on his engagement.

"Reggie," he said, "a queer thing has happened. I feel as if I'd trodden on the last step when it wasn't there. I've just had a letter from my sister Florence asking me to bring Dorothy home on Wednesday. Florence doesn't seem to object to the idea of the engagement at all; and I'd expected that I'd have to call out the police reserves when she heard of it. I believe there's a catch somewhere."

I tapped him on the breastbone.

"There is, Dug," I said, "and I'll tell you what it is. I saw her yesterday, and I can put you next to the game. She thinks that if you see Mrs. Darrell mingling with the home circle, you'll see flaws in her which you don't see when you don't see her mingling with the home circle, don't you see? Do you see now?"

He laughed--heroically, don't you know.

"I'm afraid she'll be disappointed. Love like mine is not dependent on environment."

Which wasn't bad, I thought, if it was his own.

I said good-by to him, and toddled along rather pleased with myself. It seemed to me that I had handled his affairs in a pretty masterly manner for a chap who's supposed to be one of the biggest chumps in New York.

Well, of course, the thing was an absolute fliver, as I ought to have guessed it would be. Whatever could have induced me to think that a fellow like poor old Dug stood a dog's chance against a determined female like his sister Florence, I can't imagine. It was like expecting a rabbit to put up a show with a python. From the very start there was only one possible end to the thing. To a woman like

Florence, who had trained herself as tough as whalebone by years of scrapping with her father and occasional by-battles with aunts, it was as easy as killing rats with a stick.

I was sorry for Mrs. Darrell. She was a really good sort and, as a matter of fact, just the kind of wife who would have done old Duggie a bit of good. And on her own ground I shouldn't wonder if she might not have made a fight for it. But now she hadn't a chance. Poor old Duggie was just like so much putty in Florence's hands when he couldn't get away from her. You could see the sawdust trickling out of Love's Young Dream in a steady flow.

I took Mrs. Darrell for a walk one afternoon, to see if I couldn't cheer her up a bit, but it wasn't much good. She hardly spoke a word till we were on our way home. Then she said with a sort of jerk: "I'm going back to New York tomorrow, Mr. Pepper."

I suppose I ought to have pretended to be surprised, but I couldn't work it.

"I'm afraid you've had a bad time," I said. "I'm very sorry."

She laughed.

"Thank you," she said. "It's nice of you to be sympathetic instead of tactful. You're rather a dear, Mr. Pepper."

I hadn't any remarks to make. I whacked at a nettle with my stick.

"I shall break off my engagement after dinner, so that Douglas can have a good night's rest. I'm afraid he has been brooding on the future a good deal. It will be a great relief to him."

"Oh, no," I said.

"Oh, yes. I know exactly how he feels. He thought he could carry me off, but he finds he overestimated his powers. He has remembered that he is a Craye. I imagine that the fact has been pointed out to him."

"If you ask my opinion," I said--I was feeling pretty sore about it--"that woman Florence is an absolute cat."

"My dear Mr. Pepper, I wouldn't have dreamed of asking your opinion on such a delicate subject. But I'm glad to have it. Thank you very much. Do I strike you as a vindictive woman, Mr. Pepper?"

"I don't think you do," I said.

"By nature I don't think I am. But I'm feeling a little vindictive just at present."

She stopped suddenly.

"I don't know why I'm boring you like this, Mr. Pepper," she said.

"For goodness' sake let's be cheerful. Say something bright."

I was going to take a whirl at it, but she started in to talk, and talked all the rest of the way. She seemed to have cheered up a whole lot.

She left next day. I gather she fired Duggie as per schedule, for the old boy looked distinctly brighter, and Florence wore an off-duty expression and was quite decently civil. Mrs. Darrell bore up all right. She avoided Duggie, of course, and put in most of the time talking to Edwin. He evidently appreciated it, for I had never seen him look so nearly happy before.

I went back to New York directly afterward, and I hadn't been there much more than a week when a most remarkably queer thing happened. Turning in at Hammerstein's for half an hour one evening, whom should I meet but brother Edwin, quite fairly festive, with a fat cigar in his mouth. "Hello, Reggie," he said.

"What are you doing here?" I said.

"I had to come up to New York to look up a life of Hilary de Craye at the library. I believe Mister Man was a sort of ancestor."

"This isn't the library."

"I was beginning to guess as much. The difference is subtle but well marked."

It struck me that there was another difference that was subtle but well marked, and that was the difference between the Edwin I'd left messing about over his family history a week before and the jovial rounder who was blowing smoke in my face now.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "the library would be all the better for a little of this sort of thing. It's too conservative. That's what's the trouble with the library. What's the matter with having a cross-talk team and a few performing dogs there? It would brighten the place up and attract custom. Reggie, you're looking fatigued. I've heard there's a place somewhere in this city, if you can only find it, expressly designed for supplying first-aid to the fatigued. Let's go and look for it."

I'm not given to thinking much as a rule, but I couldn't help pondering over this meeting with Edwin. It's hard to make you see the remarkableness of the whole thing, for, of course, if you look at it, in one way, there's nothing so record-breaking in smoking a cigar and drinking a highball. But then you have never seen Edwin. There are degrees in everything, don't you know. For Edwin to behave as he did with me that night was simply nothing more nor less than a frightful

outburst, and it disturbed me. Not that I cared what Edwin did, as a rule, but I couldn't help feeling a sort of what-d'you-call-it--a presentiment, that somehow, in some way I didn't understand, I was mixed up in it, or was soon going to be. I think the whole fearful family had got on my nerves to such an extent that the mere sight of any of them made me jumpy.

And, by George, I was perfectly right, don't you know. In a day or two along came the usual telegram from Florence, telling me to come to Madison Avenue.

The mere idea of Madison Avenue was beginning to give me that tired feeling, and I made up my mind I wouldn't go near the place. But of course I did. When it came to the point, I simply hadn't the common manly courage to keep away.

Florence was there as before.

"Reginald," she said, "I think I shall go raving mad."

This struck me as a mighty happy solution of everybody's troubles, but I felt it was too good to be true.

"Over a week ago," she went on, "my brother Edwin came up to New York to consult a book at the library. I anticipated that this would occupy perhaps an afternoon, and was expecting him back by an early train

next day. He did not arrive. He sent an incoherent telegram. But even then I suspected nothing." She paused. "Yesterday morning," she said, "I had a letter from my aunt Augusta."

She paused again. She seemed to think I ought to be impressed.

Her eyes tied a bowknot in my spine.

"Let me read you her letter. No, I will tell you its contents. Aunt Augusta had seen Edwin lunching at the Waldorf with a creature."

"A what?"

"My aunt described her. Her hair was of a curious dull bronze tint."

"Your aunt's?"

"The woman's. It was then that I began to suspect. How many women with dull bronze hair does Edwin know?"

"Great Scott! Why ask me?"

I had got used to being treated as a sort of "Hey, Bill!" by Florence, but I was darned if I was going to be expected to be an encyclopedia as well.



"One," she said. "That appalling Darrell woman."

She drew a deep breath.

"Yesterday evening," she said, "I saw them together in a taximeter cab. They were obviously on their way to some theatre."

She fixed me with her eye.

"Reginald," she said, "you must go and see her the first thing to-morrow."

"What!" I cried. "Me? Why? Why me?"

"Because you are responsible for the whole affair. You introduced Douglas to her. You suggested that he should bring her home. Go to her to-morrow and ascertain her intentions."

"But----"

"The very first thing."

"But wouldn't it be better to have a talk with Edwin?"

"I have made every endeavour to see Edwin, but he deliberately avoids me. His answers to my telegrams are willfully evasive."

There was no doubt that Edwin had effected a thorough bolt. He was having quite a pleasant little vacation: Two Weeks in Sunny New York. And from what I'd seen of him, he seemed to be thriving on it. I didn't wonder Florence had got rather anxious. She'd have been more anxious if she had seen him when I did. He'd got a sort of "New-York-is-so-bracing" look about him, which meant a whole heap of trouble before he trotted back to the fold.

Well, I started off to interview Mrs. Darrell, and, believe me, I didn't like the prospect. I think they ought to train A. D. T. messengers to do this sort of thing. I found her alone. The rush hour of clients hadn't begun.

"How do you do, Mr. Pepper?" she said. "How nice of you to call."

Very friendly, and all that. It made the situation darned difficult for a fellow, if you see what I mean.

"Say," I said. "What about it, don't you know?"

"I certainly don't," she said. "What ought I to know about what?"

"Well, about Edwin--Edwin Craye," I said.

She smiled.

"Oh! So you're an ambassador, Mr. Pepper?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I did come to see if I could find out how things were running. What's going to happen?"

"Are you consulting me professionally? If so, you must show me your hand. Or perhaps you would rather I showed you mine?"

It was subtle, but I got on to it after a bit.

"Yes," I said, "I wish you would."

"Very well. Do you remember a conversation we had, Mr. Pepper, my last afternoon at the Crayes'? We came to the conclusion that I was rather a vindictive woman."

"By George! You're stringing old Edwin so as to put one over on Florence?"

She flushed a little.

"How very direct you are, Mr. Pepper! How do you know I'm not very fond of Mr. Craye? At any rate, I'm very sorry for him."

"He's such a chump."

"But he's improving every day. Have you seen him? You must notice the difference?"

"There is a difference."

"He only wanted taking out of himself. I think he found his sister Florence's influence a little oppressive sometimes."

"No, but see here," I said, "are you going to marry him?"

"I'm only a palmist. I don't pretend to be a clairvoyant. A marriage may be indicated in Mr. Craye's hand, but I couldn't say without looking at it."

"But I shall have to tell her something definite, or she won't give me a moment's peace."

"Tell her her brother is of age. Surely that's definite enough?"

And I couldn't get any more out of her. I went back to Florence and reported. She got pretty excited about it.

"Oh, if I were a man!" she said.

I didn't see how that would have helped. I said so.

"I'd go straight to Edwin and drag him away. He is staying at his club. If I were a man I could go in and find him----"

"Not if you weren't a member," I said.

"--And tell him what I thought of his conduct. As I'm only a woman, I have to wait in the hall while a deceitful small boy pretends to go and look for him."

It had never struck me before what a splendid institution a club was. Only a few days back I'd been thinking that the subscription to mine was a bit steep. But now I saw that the place earned every cent of the money.

"Have you no influence with him, Reginald?"

I said I didn't think I had. She called me something. Invertebrate, or something. I didn't catch it.

"Then there's only one thing to do. You must find my father and tell him all. Perhaps you may rouse him to a sense of what is right. You may make him remember that he has duties as a parent."

I thought it far more likely that I should make him remember that he had a foot. I hadn't a very vivid recollection of old man Craye. I was

quite a kid when he made his great speech on the Egg Question and beat it for Europe--but what I did recollect didn't encourage me to go and chat with him about the duties of a parent.

As I remember him, he was a rather large man with elephantiasis of the temper. I distinctly recalled one occasion when I was spending a school vacation at his home, and he found me trying to shave old Duggie, then a kid of fourteen, with his razor.

"I shouldn't be able to find him," I said.

"You can get his address from his lawyers."

"He may be at the North Pole."

"Then you must go to the North Pole."

"But say----!"

"Reginald!"

"Oh, all right."

I knew just what would happen. Parbury and Stevens, the lawyers, simply looked at me as if I had been caught snatching bags. At least, Stevens did. And Parbury would have done it, too, only he had been

dead a good time. Finally, after drinking me in for about a quarter of an hour, Stevens said that if I desired to address a communication to his client, care of this office, it would be duly forwarded. Good morning. Good morning. Anything further? No, thanks. Good morning. Good morning.

I handed the glad news on to Florence and left her to do what she liked about it. She went down and interviewed Stevens. I suppose he'd had experience of her. At any rate, he didn't argue. He yielded up the address in level time. Old man Craye was living in Paris, but was to arrive in New York that night, and would doubtless be at his club.

It was the same club where Edwin was hiding from Florence. I pointed this out to her.

"There's no need for me to butt in after all," I said. "He'll meet Edwin there, and they can fight it out in the smoking room. You've only to drop him a line explaining the facts."

"I shall certainly communicate with him in writing, but, nevertheless, you must see him. I cannot explain everything in a letter."

"But doesn't it strike you that he may think it pretty bad gall-impertinence, don't you know, for a comparative stranger like me to be tackling a delicate family affair like this?"

"You will explain that you are acting for me."

"It wouldn't be better if old Duggie went along instead?"

"I wish you to go, Reginald."

Well, of course, it was all right, don't you know, but I was losing several pounds a day over the business. I was getting so light that I felt that, when the old man kicked me, I should just soar up to the ceiling like an air balloon.

The club was one of those large clubs that look like prisons. I used to go there to lunch with my uncle, the one who left me his money, and I always hated the place. It was one of those clubs that are all red leather and hushed whispers.

I'm bound to say, though, there wasn't much hushed whispering when I started my interview with old man Craye. His voice was one of my childhood's recollections.

He was most extraordinarily like Florence. He had just the same eyes. I felt boneless from the start.

"Good morning," I said.

"What?" he said. "Speak up. Don't mumble."



I hadn't known he was deaf. The last time we'd had any conversation--on the subject of razors--he had done all the talking. This seemed to me to put the lid on it.

"I only said 'Good morning,'" I shouted.

"Good what? Speak up. I believe you're sucking candy. Oh, good morning? I remember you now. You're the boy who spoiled my razor."

I didn't half like this reopening of old wounds. I hurried on.

"I came about Edwin," I said.

"Who?"

"Edwin. Your son."

"What about him?"

"Florence told me to see you."

"Who?"

"Florence. Your daughter."

"What about her?"

All this vaudeville team business, mind you, as if we were bellowing at each other across the street. All round the room you could see old gentlemen shooting out of their chairs like rockets and dashing off at a gallop to write to the governing board about it. Thousands of waiters had appeared from nowhere, and were hanging about, dusting table legs. If ever a business wanted to be discussed privately, this seemed to me to be it. And it was just about as private as a conversation through megaphones in Longacre Square.

"Didn't she write to you?"

"I got a letter from her. I tore it up. I didn't read it."

Pleasant, was it not? It was not. I began to understand what a shipwrecked sailor must feel when he finds there's something gone wrong with the life belt.

I thought I might as well get to the point and get it over.

"Edwin's going to marry a palmist," I said.

"Who the devil's Harry?"

"Not Harry. Marry. He's going to marry a palmist."

About four hundred waiters noticed a speck of dust on an ash tray at the table next to ours, and swooped down on it.

"Edwin is going to marry a palmist?"

"Yes."

"She must be mad. Hasn't she seen Edwin?"

And just then who should stroll in but Edwin himself. I sighted him and gave him a hail.

He curveted up to us. It was amazing the way the fellow had altered. He looked like a two-year-old. Flower in his button-hole and a six-inch grin, and all that. The old man seemed surprised, too. I didn't wonder. The Edwin he remembered was a pretty different kind of a fellow.

"Hullo, dad," he said. "Fancy meeting you here. Have a cigarette?"

He shoved out his case. Old man Craye helped himself in a sort of dazed way.

"You are Edwin?" he said slowly.

I began to sidle out. They didn't notice me. They had moved to a settee, and Edwin seemed to be telling his father a funny story.

At least, he was talking and grinning, and the old man was making a noise like distant thunder, which I supposed was his way of chuckling. I slid out and left them.

Some days later Duggie called on me. The old boy was looking scared.

"Reggie," he said, "what do doctors call it when you think you see things when you don't? Hal-something. I've got it, whatever it is. It's sometimes caused by overwork. But it can't be that with me, because I've not been doing any work. You don't think my brain's going or anything like that, do you?"

"What do you mean? What's been happening?"

"It's like being haunted. I read a story somewhere of a fellow who kept thinking he saw a battleship bearing down on him. I've got it, too. Four times in the last three days I could have sworn I saw my father and Edwin. I saw them as plainly as I see you. And, of course, Edwin's at home and father's in Europe somewhere. Do you think it's some sort of a warning? Do you think I'm going to die?"

"It's all right, old top," I said. "As a matter of fact, they are both in New York just now."

"You don't mean that? Great Scot, what a relief! But, Reggie, old fox, it couldn't have been them really. The last time was at Louis Martin's, and the fellow I mistook for Edwin was dancing all by himself in the middle of the floor."

I admitted it was pretty queer.

I was away for a few days after that in the country. When I got back I found a pile of telegrams waiting for me. They were all from Florence, and they all wanted me to go to Madison Avenue. The last of the batch, which had arrived that morning, was so peremptory that I felt as if something had bitten me when I read it.

For a moment I admit I hung back. Then I rallied. There are times in a man's life when he has got to show a flash of the old bulldog pluck, don't you know, if he wants to preserve his self-respect. I did then. My grip was still unpacked. I told my man to put it on a cab. And in about two ticks I was bowling off to the club. I left for England next day by the Lusitania.

About three weeks later I fetched up at Nice. You can't walk far at Nice without bumping into a casino. The one I hit my first evening was the Casino Municipale in the Place Masséna. It looked more or less of a Home From Home, so I strolled in.

There was quite a crowd round the boule tables, and I squashed in. And when I'd worked through into the front rank I happened to look down the table, and there was Edwin, with a green Tyrolese hat hanging over one ear, clutching out for a lot of five-franc pieces which the croupier was steering toward him at the end of a rake.

I was feeling lonesome, for I knew no one in the place, so I edged round in his direction.

Halfway there I heard my name called, and there was Mrs. Darrell.

I saw the whole thing in a flash. Old man Craye hadn't done a thing to prevent it--apart from being eccentric, he was probably glad that Edwin had had the sense to pick out anybody half as good a sort--and the marriage had taken place. And here they were on their honeymoon.

I wondered what Florence was thinking of it.

"Well, well, well, here we all are," I said. "I've just seen Edwin. He seems to be winning."

"Dear boy!" she said. "He does enjoy it so. I think he gets so much more out of life than he used to, don't you?"

"Sure thing. May I wish you happiness? Why didn't you let me know and collect the silver fish-slice?"

"Thank you so much, Mr. Pepper. I did write to you, but I suppose you never got the letter."

"Mr. Craye didn't make any objections, then?"

"On the contrary. He was more in favor of the marriage than anyone."

"And I'll tell you why," I said. "I'm rather a chump, you know, but I observe things. I bet he was most frightfully grateful to you for taking Edwin in hand and making him human."

"Why, you're wonderful, Mr. Pepper. That is exactly what he said himself. It was that that first made us friends."

"And--er--Florence?"

She sighed.

"I'm afraid Florence has taken the thing a little badly. But I hope to win her over in time. I want all my children to love me."

"All your what?"

"I think of them as my children, you see, Mr. Pepper. I adopted them as my own when I married their father. Did you think I had married

Edwin? What a funny mistake. I am very fond of Edwin, but not in that way. No, I married Mr. Craye. We left him at our villa tonight, as he had some letters to get off. You must come and see us, Mr. Pepper. I always feel that it was you who brought us together, you know. I wonder if you will be seeing Florence when you get back? Will you give her my very best love?"