

A MATRIMONIAL MISHAP

By R. NORMAN SILVER,
Author of "Wonders of the Deep."

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"Dear sir: Having seen and liked a copy of your paper, The Golden Circle, I venture to trespass a little upon your attention. I am young, only 22—"

Thaddeus Field smiled when he came to the statement just quoted. He had never in the whole course of his experience as a matrimonial agent met a would-be bride who owned to more than 20 summers. Hardly had the stulle dawned upon his lips than it vanished; the letter had become interesting.

"And have inherited some money from an aunt, with whom I had lived since childhood, and who has just died. Thanks to her, I have been fairly well-educated, and I believe I am naturally either stupid or awkward. Yet I am not altogether alone, and am very, very unhappy. If you could see me, you would know why; I am just the ugliest woman in the world. Yet I think if some one could know me, he would love me. Can you help me? I enclose \$25. I am sure it would never be worth your while to attend to my case at your ordinary rates. I am so very, very ugly. Believe me to be yours very truly, Stella Garner."

A few days after Thaddeus Field's receipt of "Stella Garner's" letter he received an important visit. The tall footman opened the double doors, and loomed in a handsome man of middle age—a man with blue eyes, crisp, iron-gray hair and beard, and dazzling white teeth. Thaddeus Field was impressed, and rose frantically as Pierre, the footman, retired.

The newcomer held out his hand. "Mr. Thaddeus Field?" he said. "I am Mr. Thaddeus Field," approved that gentleman, assuming his official dignity.

"His visitor bowed. "I am Stephen Osborne," he explained. "Stephen Montgomery Osborne, at your service."

"Pray be seated," said Thaddeus, offering a chair.

Mr. Osborne sat down, and crossed his legs.

"In what way," demanded Thaddeus, "can I have the pleasure of serving you?"

Stephen Osborne laughed out heartily.

"I want a wife," he answered. "That should not be difficult to find—for you," replied Thaddeus, with gentle flattery.

"It may not prove as easy as you expect," said the other; "I'll wager ten dollars you don't keep the kind of a wife I want as long as I do."

"What kind of a wife do you want, Mr. Osborne?" he asked, blandly.

Stephen Osborne seemed embarrassed.

"To be quite honest, Mr.—Mr. Field," he replied, "it isn't so much the kind of a wife I want, as the kind of wife I've got to have."

"Indeed?" said Thaddeus, puzzled.

"Yes," said his client, irritably; "I haven't a great deal of cash. You see when I was a bit younger I was fool enough to tell my papa, who had married again—I was the only child of the first marriage—the I would never marry if I couldn't get someone one a little better looking than my new step-mama. So we quarreled and parted, and when the old boy died last winter—there were no more children, and step-mama died some time ago—I left me my money on condition that she married a girl uglier than she was, and gave me 12 months to make up my mind. I didn't expect ever to need the money, and she took it away. But some of my speculations have done decently bad, and I must have some cash before long or go bust. That's why I'm here."

Thaddeus Field's eyes shone—it was just the kind of case he liked.

"If you will call to-morrow about this time, Mr. Osborne," he said, "I think I shall have something to say. Good-day."

With this comforting assurance he rang the bell, and Mr. Osborne departed.

That afternoon Mrs. Christina Field left for Boston. Her instructions were not to return without Miss "Stella Garner."

On the succeeding morning Christina, accompanied by a closely-veiled lady, entered the anteroom. Christina left her charge and went into her husband's study. Thaddeus was standing on the hearth-rug, chewing his moustaches with impatience.

"Will she do?" he asked. Christina grinned.

"As ugly as sin," she said; "but smart."

"That's all right," concluded Thaddeus; "bring her in."

Christina opened the door and called. The veiled lady rose and entered.

Field, Mr. Osborne laughed and chattered and looked so merry and handsome that the lady behind the carved screen lost her heart to him, and when Mr. Field escorted Mr. Osborne out, and the door closing behind them, the ladies were at liberty to come forth again. Miss Stella Garner laughed herself, and chatted, and looked not so ugly after all. And Mr. Stephen Osborne, who with Thaddeus had gone round another way into the hidden cupboard, that the former might spy upon Miss Garner as she had spied upon him, drew a deep breath, and whispered to the matrimonial agent, "I suppose I can't do better—she seems a decent sort."

"Quite the lady, I assure you, Mr. Osborne," murmured the wily Thaddeus in his ear; "any amount of accomplishments—young, and a little bit of money in the bank. Will you come up to my house to-night? I'll ask her round too."

"No, thanks," said Stephen Osborne, "let it be to-morrow. I've something else on to-night."

"To-morrow, then," replied Thaddeus, "you will make the acquaintance of the future Mrs. Osborne."

Now, there was one thing in the world for which Christina Field lived and moved and had her being, and that was jewelry. In her bedroom at the little upstairs house she had a small strong safe built into the wall, and the key of that safe never left her possession. Her diamonds were not imperial, still they were valuable, and had been mounted to her own instructions, and she had a ruby bracelet for which many a fairly honest woman would have risked her soul. When an opportunity arose for Madame Christina to don her glittering treasures she was happy; when there were women present to envy them she became positively radiant.

In obedience to this ruling passion, Christina—dressing for the party dinner at which Stephen Osborne was to meet Miss Stella Garner, and which was to be followed by a visit to the theater—clasped about her white throat and dainty arms some five thousand dollars' worth of precious stones. Very well she looked, too. Did Christina, when she took her place at the head of the table and beamed on the right Miss Garner, the admiring Stephen Osborne and the complacent Thaddeus.

It was a wonderfully merry little party; each seemed to vie with each in brilliancy. If Christina was gay, Thaddeus was not less so.



It Was a Wonderfully Merry Little Party.

Miss Garner was brilliant; if Thaddeus was overflowing with good humor, Stephen Osborne proved a prince of entertainers.

Suddenly upon the mirth of the party there descended an astonishing quiet. Thaddeus, strange to say, fell asleep in his chair, and Christina, after a gallant struggle to keep awake followed his example.

Then Mr. Stephen Osborne and Miss Stella Garner indulged in a very remarkable proceeding. They rose from their places and calmly proceeded to strip their sleeping hosts of her jewelry. Miss Stella's light silken unclasping Christina's necklace and bracelets, and removing her rings, Stephen Osborne the white delft concealing the jewels about his person. When Christina's shoulders, wrists and fingers were bared of their glittering load, the pair turned their attention to the slumbering Thaddeus, relieving him of a diamond stud and ring worth together a hundred dollars or so. Then they paused and, looking at one another, laughed silently.

"It's a fair haul, Polle," said the man who had called himself "Stephen Osborne."

Miss Stella Garner nodded.

"Are you sure that stuff'll only make them sleep?" she asked, anxiously.

"Certain sure," said the other. "Do you think I want to swing? Not much. Come on, look slippy, now; this way out."

And with that Mr. "Stephen Osborne" and Miss "Stella Garner" and about five thousand dollars' worth of "swag" disappeared through the French window of Mr. Thaddeus Field's dining room.

Mr. Thaddeus did never find a sufficiently ugly partner for Mrs. Stephen Osborne, in fact he never saw Mr. Osborne again. Nor did he ever see eyes on Miss Stella Garner, nor find her some one to love. They had walked out to the unknown through that French window, and Christina still mourns her diamonds.

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Related Valor. General Rensenkamp, the Russian cavalry leader, who never made any good stroke during the campaign in Manchuria, although he seemed to have every advantage over the poorly mounted Japs, said recently that the war would have to be fought over, in order that Russia may have revenge. Every great conflict of arms develops this sort of warrior, full of fight after peace is declared. In this country there were men who insisted for twenty years after Appomattox that the war must be fought once more. In the south the most bitter of the unconquered and in the north the wavers of the "iron shirt" were the ones who had shirked the battle when it was on.

"Of course it is impossible for Russia to get revenge out of the Japs for that licking in this generation. No one knows that better than Rensenkamp if he is anything of a soldier. It is natural for a general who has been unfortunate to wish another try of luck. But Russia and her army have positively no chance to redeem themselves on the battlefield, and the sooner this talk of getting square is dropped the better it will be for the Russian people, who have troubles enough right at home.

Slowly, as it always the case with the Germans, but at the same time actually, the people of the fatherland are coming to realize the importance of caring for the teeth. Twenty-five years ago dentistry was almost unknown in the interior of Germany, and there was a demand for American practitioners. The field is still open for good dentists with American diplomas, according to the United States consul at Magdeburg.

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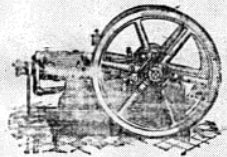
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