

Mr. Growler's Awakening

One evening, just prior to tea, Joseph Growler, Esquire, sat poring over the financial columns of his evening paper. There was a smile of grim satisfaction on his thin, hard face, for only that morning he had dealt the death-blow to an industrial firm that had long been a source of annoyance to the great syndicate of which he was virtual head. Besides, the doing of it had brought a comfortable feeling of gratified personal revenge—or rather the squaring of a long-standing account. These two things, and another, made Mr. Growler feel almost gay.

Suddenly he cast the sheet from him with a contemptuous gesture. "Pshaw! let 'em talk!" he sneered. "They're all dying to call me 'scoundrel,' I know they are; and all the while they're pawing their very coats to buy Growler stock. I am on the boom, sirs; but what of that? I snap my fingers at 'em all. I've lived to bring Leesome and Co. to the wall, and I feel that the years so spent have not been wasted—by no means; quite the reverse, indeed. I've had enough of finance now, though; and I shall henceforth devote myself to the tenderer things of life. Aha! People wonder why I, who am richer than even they dream of, am content to inhabit this couple of poor apartments. But then they don't know my dear little Miss Dale—my darling Agatha!"

A softer light came into his keen eyes. His hand strayed to his vest pocket, from which he produced a small morocco-bound case. This he surveyed with a pleased chuckle, then he pressed a spring, and the flashing of many tinted fires made him wink. "Fifty pounds' worth. Well, it certainly is showy; but I wonder now whether I ought to have made it a hundred? But it's too late now." He closed the case with a snap, replaced it in his pocket, and gave a drag at the bell-pull. Then he resumed his musing.

"They don't know—how can they?—that I'm going to marry her; and neither does she, the innocent little darling. I shall tell her so after tea, and"—he chuckled audibly—"how she will stare, to be sure. He, he! But the deuce! What's become of that girl? This delay is monstrous!"

He gave another and fiercer pull at the cord. The jingle of the bell came to his ears from the kitchen; then, after an aggravating pause, he heard the maid humming her cheerful way along the passage.

"Did you ring, sir?" she inquired, innocently, as she opened the door.

"Tea!" said Mr. Growler, coldly; "and when that's set I'll have something to say to you."

"Indeed," said Mary Ann. "Now that's real interesting. I've been setting your meals for more'n a year and it's the first time—"

"Tea!" thundered Mr. Growler, with a menacing flash.

The girl blanched, and fled headlong. But when she reappeared with the tea-things there was a flush on her face, and a combative look in her eyes, which told that her courage had returned.

With much deliberation she proceeded to arrange the table, and when everything had been accomplished to her satisfaction she looked at Mr. Growler with a saucy upturning of her nose. "Now," she said, acidly, "I'm ready to listen, and for heaven's sake try to be perlitte to a lady."

Mr. Growler's glance became a glare, and his face slowly crimsoned. Such a display was unheard of. "Girl, you're mad! stark, staring mad!" he gasped.

Mary Ann dropped a mocking curtsy. "It's very kind of you to mention it, I'm sure; but that's neither here nor there. Anyhow," meaningly, "I ain't a cold-hearted wretch as goes about the world—a-robbin' the widow and orphan like some folks I know as ought to be ashamed of selves."

Mr. Growler's glare became absolutely tigerish, and he raised his teacup as if about to launch it at the head of the daring maid. But Mary Ann was not to be daunted.

"Do it; oh, yes, do it," she cried, recklessly. "I know you're a brute, and worse than that if all were known, I do believe. Do it! I'd go cheerfully to hospital with a broken 'ead if I knew you'd be cooling your heels in prison over it."

Mr. Growler replaced the cup on the table. "Woman," he said, harshly, "you are a disgrace to your sex. I shall insist that Miss Dale dismiss you from her service at once. Meanwhile, I demand to know the meaning of this extraordinary outburst."

"Hextraordinary, you call it?" panted the maid, hotly. "I say it's a wonder I don't take my ten fingers to you. You've as good as turned me out of a situation; and more'n that, you've gone like a decouring crocodile and stung the 'and of an angel in disguise, if ever there was one—I mean my poor missis, and no other. I—"

"Hold," interrupted Mr. Growler, sternly. "If you will talk, do try to make yourself intelligible, and be as brief as possible."

"As I was about to remark when you interrupted me so rudely—but it's just what I expected—I'm going away to-morrow, and I'll speak my mind, which I've wanted to do this many a long day, if you kill me for

it. Five 'undred pounds, every penny gone, and you've the downright impudence to sit there a-toasting your toes at the fire you grudge to pay for, and her you've robbed—yes, cruelly robbed!—crying her dear eyes out this whole blessed day."

"Look here, my girl," said Mr. Growler, coldly, when the irate maid paused for breath, "I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about, and as my tea is growing cold you might have the goodness to retire."

"It'll have to freeze solid before it's as cold as your 'eart, anyhow," snorted Mary Ann. "Bringing the dear thing to the workus door, or at least making her a penniless hexile across the stormy ocean to her brother in Australy. It's my humble opinion the poor soul's so frightened of you that she dussn't open her mouth about it. If the house were mine I'd show you. Out you'd go this blessed minit! There; I said I'd do it, and I have." And with a whisk of her skirts and defiant scorn in her eyes Mary Ann sailed from the room.

The outbreak had a disturbing effect on Mr. Growler's usually healthy appetite. As he toyed with his tea he felt himself becoming a prey to vague alarms. An awful something had happened to somebody, but who? His brain refused to steady itself. For the moment the angry maid's torrent of eloquence had quite scrambled his reasoning powers. It was clear, though, that she had lost her place, and that she put the blame of it on him. How absurd! He never interfered in the management of the household. But why had the girl lost her place? Ah! she mentioned five hundred pounds. Was it possible she meant that Miss Dale had lost that sum? And someone was going to Australy. Could she have been referring to Miss Dale again? Ruined! Going abroad! Mr. Growler sprang impetuously to his feet. "I don't believe it; and, what's more, I sha'n't have it," he cried. "I shall tell her so at once."

But the next instant he dropped back limply into his chair. It had occurred to him that he was powerless, as yet, to prevent Miss Dale going anywhere she chose. She was her own mistress, while he was only there on sufferance, as it were. He had trampled rough-shod over hundreds of hapless mortals in his gold-coining career, thinking naught of the ruin and misery that strewed his track. He had been remorseless as a sledge-hammer in all his dealings with his fellows, taking his due to the uttermost farthing, accepted adverse blows with stoical fortitude. Now he knew that love, not gold, was life, and he shook as with ague at the bare possibility of losing Miss Dale. But he would—he must—see her at once. Again he gave an insistent jerk to the bell-cord.

It seemed an age ere Mary Ann appeared, and when she beheld the condition of the tea-table she favored Mr. Growler with a pleased nod. "Well, sir," she said, brightly. "Mr. Growler repressed his agitation by a powerful effort."

"Will you please give my compliments to your mistress, and ask her to grant me an interview, now?" he said.

"Missis is out and won't be home for an hour," replied the girl; "but to be sure I'll tell her; I thought as how you'd come to see what a monster you've been. But I wonder at your cheek. If I'd done what you have I'd go straight down to the river and walk in. It 'ud do you good, and the world wouldn't be a penny the worse!"

Mr. Growler stood with the handle of Miss Dale's sitting-room door in his hand, his hard face screwed into an apologetic smile. Now that he was face to face with his heart's desire his courage was quickly oozing away under the scrutiny of a pair of blue eyes—beautiful, timid eyes usually, now glowing with a light he had never seen there before. His own glance wavered and strayed, and he strove to get rid of a lump that would rise in his throat. And yet Miss Dale did not look formidable. A slight, pale-faced, small and plain lady of no particular style of beauty, whose dark hair was plentifully streaked with grey.

"You wish to speak with me, Mr. Growler. Pray sit down."

"Er—not at all—I mean yes, certainly. By the way, the weather is rather warm for the season. Don't you think so?" he said.

A slight smile flitted across the lady's face. "I don't find it particularly so," she said.

A pause. Mr. Growler cleared his throat.

"As I think I said, Miss Dale, a few words in private—"

"I am at your service, sir; no one can hear us here," said Miss Dale, in a tone that bespoke mingled impatience and curiosity.

Mr. Growler gulped. "Your maid—a clever girl that, Miss Dale, but just a little—er—impetuous—mentioned to-night that you are parting with her. Is it true? It isn't mere idle curiosity that prompts the question."

A shadow of pain appeared in Miss Dale's face. "It is," she said.

"Humph! She also mentioned another thing that filled me with amazement and incredulity, namely, that you are seriously contemplating going abroad. I told her—did I, though? I'm not quite sure—that she was talking a lot of confounded nonsense; no doubt about it—confounded humbug! The idea is too ridiculous."

"On the contrary, Mr. Growler, she spoke only the truth," Mr. Growler grasped the arms of his chair for support.

"And—and may I ask why?" he said, faintly.

Miss Dale was beginning to labor under an agitation that was painfully apparent in the nervous clasp and unclasping of her hands and the quick flushing and paling of her cheeks. "Oh, why do you ask? You know only too well," she burst forth, tremulously.

"Upon my word, I don't," said Mr. Growler. "But," eagerly, "surely you are open to reconsider your resolve. My dear Miss Dale, I am about to ask a very great favor of you; the greatest, indeed, that is in your power to confer. I'm not good at talking sentimental rubbish," he proceeded, "but—I say, Miss Dale, will you marry me?"

The lady gasped, covered her face with her hands, and shrank back his lips quivering. "Perhaps I've been hasty, Miss Dale," he said; "but I assure you I didn't mean to hurt you—I love you so, my dear, that I can't find words to express the feeling; and—"

"Please stop. I can't bear it!" interrupted Miss Dale, in deep distress. Then she burst forth passionately: "Why do you insult me like that? Until to-day I thought you an honorable man, but what am I to think now?"

"What, indeed?" echoed the bewildered suitor, feebly.

"My own poor savings I care nothing for, although they were a ward between me and poverty. But to have you so far forget yourself as to ask me to wed you—you! who have this day brought poor Arthur Leesome, his wife, and children to beggary—oh, it is too much! Please go away."

But Mr. Growler sat as if suddenly petrified, his face blanched and drawn. The grim irony of the business had blighted his faculties for the moment as effectually as if lightning had struck him. Slowly the naked horror of it stirred him into action, and he rose unsteadily to his feet. He took one step towards the door, paused, and turned. "As Heaven is my judge I didn't know you were interested in Leesome," he said, hoarsely.

"And knowing, would you have cared? It is doubtful," said Miss Dale, bitterly.

"You wrong me; indeed you do," cried Growler. "If I'd known I'd have cut my right hand off rather than have done what I have. But every penny of it will be returned at once. See, I shall give you my cheque for it now." He drew out his cheque-book as he spoke, but she stopped him imperiously.

"I sha'n't take it, sir," she said. "My little fortune is gone, and there's an end to it. I suppose I shall manage to live without it. But my heart is sore for my friends, the Leesomes, fallen from comfort to penury at one dire stroke! Go!"

Mr. Growler staggered rather than walked from the room, looking ten years older in one short minute; then Miss Dale collapsed into a chair and wept. If she was sorry for the Leesomes, she was, strangely enough, almost more sorry for Growler. No sooner had he gone than her gentle heart began upbraiding her for her harshness. Perhaps he had never thought of the harm he was doing. Besides, he loved her, and no woman is insensible to a compliment of that sort.

Mr. Growler's love for his gentle landlady, if deep, had hitherto been a sort of easy-going feeling that she was there for the taking the moment it occurred to him to claim her. Now that she was irrevocably lost to him through what a grotesquely terrible cause—she appeared infinitely more desirable than ever. He was shaken, humbled to the dust, and after half an hour's torturing thought he realized how impossible it was that he could live longer under that roof.

He sat down and wrote a short letter to Arthur Leesome, in which he expressed his regret that their respective firms had ever become embroiled through him, how he had discovered he was in the wrong, and would Mr. Leesome make an estimate of his losses, jotting the amount on the enclosed blank cheque? Would he care to undertake the management of Growler's on his own terms, as he (Growler) had finally resolved to have done with it, and knew no one more capable, etc.?

Then he wrote to Miss Dale, and after that letter was finished he laid it prominently on the table, took the other in his pocket, and slipped out noiselessly. He had a vague idea of going to some hotel for the night, leaving his goods behind until the morning, but, indeed, these details were of little account in his then frame of mind. He made for the pillar-box at the crossing, and with a great sigh of relief he dropped his message of contrition in, and stepped back directly into the path of an approaching hansom. There was a shout, a crash; and Mr. Growler fell right in front of the plunging horse.

In the morning Miss Dale sat weeping softly, with Mr. Growler's farewell note on her lap. "He never knew the harm he was doing," she murmured. "Oh, I think—I'm sure he is truly repentant, and—and he loves me. I ought not to have sent him away."

Just then the door opened and Mary Ann ushered in a fine, alert-looking man. He was Arthur Leesome. Miss Dale forgot her grief in a rush of amazement. Last night she had seen him crushed to the earth; now he was buoyant with cheerful expectancy.

"Where is Mr. Growler?" he asked,

excitedly. "Where is he, Agatha? I am like to go mad with joy. By Heaven! he has done me a noble turn."

Miss Dale hurriedly mopped her eyes. "He has gone, Arthur," she said, faintly. "But what—"

"Gone? How—why—where?" Miss Dale explained in a few halting sentences, and Leesome's eyes grew wide as he listened; but ere she finished the maid burst impetuously upon them.

"Oh, miss, a telegram for you! I'm sure it's from him."

Miss Dale's fingers trembled as she opened the envelope and spread out the enclosure; then she screamed loudly and fell back in a dead faint.

A ghastly object looked Mr. Growler as he reclined on a bed in the ward of the hospital to which he had been conveyed after his accident. His head was bandaged, one arm was in splints, his face pinched with pain. Miss Dale knelt beside the bed holding his hand; and Arthur Leesome stood by looking on the pair of them with a curious lump in his throat. Hate of the man had gone; sorrow and compassion were in his heart now.

"The doctors say I won't live, and I think it's as well," said the injured man, slowly.

"No, no," sobbed Miss Dale. "Yes, it's better so. My life has been utterly selfish and despicable, as I know now; but I'm not without hope that you will say that you forgive me for what I've—"

"Oh, Mr. Growler, indeed, indeed I do!"

"Thank you, Agatha—you will allow me to call you that this once—and now I'm content. I've seen my lawyer, and you will find when I'm gone that I've done all I could to make reparation. But, oh, Heaven! if only I had lived, and you had loved me!"

"Oh, Mr. Growler, I do—love you," she whispered, burying her face in the coverlet.

It was the merest whisper, but he heard, and a wonderful light came into his face. "You do—you do! Say it again, my dear."

She looked up and tried to speak, but he read her answer in her eyes. Then he gave a pitiful, forced laugh. "Then I shall make a fight of it," he said, grimly, "and by Heaven's help will live."

A stubborn fight it proved, but he won in the end.—London Tit-Bits.

HIS FATE FOUND HIM.

A Cannon-ball Blew the Pilot to Atoms.

Capt. Robert Faulknor, a commander in the British navy in 1794, was a man of unusual courage. During an encounter close under the walls of Fort Royal he noticed that the pilot did not seem to be himself. The man, he thought, seemed to hesitate when he gave his orders. In "Famous Fighters of the Fleet," Mr. Fraser gives the story:

Captain Faulknor turned aside to one of his officers.

"I think Mr. Dash seems confused, as if he doesn't know what he is about. Has he been in action before?"

"Many times, sir," was the reply. "He has been twenty-four years in the service."

But Faulknor was not satisfied. He eyed the pilot closely, and then stepping up to him, asked him a trifling question. The pilot's agitation was such as to render him incapable of a reply. Recovering himself to some extent a moment later the wretched man, keeping his eyes on the deck, in a low voice addressed Faulknor, who was bending over him, with this startling admission:

"I see your honor knows me. I am unfit to guide her. I don't know what is come over me. I dreamt last night I should be killed, and I am so afraid I don't know what I am about. I never in all my life felt afraid before."

Without for an instant losing his presence of mind, Captain Faulknor replied to the man in a still lower tone:

"The fate of this expedition depends on the man at the helm. Give it to me, and go and hide your head in whatever you fancy the safest part of the ship. But mind, fears are catching. If I hear you tell yours to one of your messmates, your life shall answer for it to-morrow."

The poor fellow, panic-stricken, went away, and overcome with shame sat down upon the arm-chest, while Captain Faulknor seized the helm and with his own hand laid the Zebra close to the walls of the fort; but before he could land at the head of his gallant followers, a cannon-ball struck the arm-chest and blew the pilot to atoms. He was the only man killed of all the Zebra's crew that day.

FRENCH WOODEN SHOES.

Wooden shoes in France are produced to the extent of about 4,000,000 pairs yearly. They are made in Alsace and Flanders by machinery and in Lozere by hand. In the last named province 1,700 persons are engaged in this manufacture, and the yearly product is more than half a million pairs. The best are made of maple. In the provinces, nearly every lady possesses a pair of the finer sabots, for wearing out in damp weather. These have monograms and other designs carved on the vamps, and they are kept on the foot by ornamented leather pieces over the instep. The manufacture of these pieces of leather is a regular business in France.

MARCONI, THE MAGICIAN

ROMANTIC LIFE STORY OF THE GREAT INVENTOR.

Not Yet Thirty Years Old and Famous the World Over.

To become famous in five continents at twenty-four, and to crown this rare feat by winning for his wife the charming daughter of a peer, is such good fortune as falls to the lot of few men in a generation. And yet this is but part of the wonderful achievement of Guglielmo Marconi, who recently led one of Lord Inchiquin's fair sisters to the altar, says London Tit-Bits.

If ever a man was justified in counting himself the favored child of fortune, surely it is this young Italian, who leaped in four short years from obscurity to a fame wider than even Pitt enjoyed, and who, while still in the twenties, has made his name a "household word" all the world over. And, perhaps, an equally remarkable thing, he remains as unspoiled as when he was an obscure student at Bologna and spent his spare hours

DABBLING IN CHEMISTRY

in the laboratory in his father's house at Griffone. In those days—and they are only ten years removed from now—he was deeply interested in electricity, but only as a hobby.

"I had fitted up a rude laboratory, or workshop," he says, "in my father's house near Bologna, where I had begun to work with primary batteries and thermopiles, grappling with the problem of transforming heat directly into electricity. I had also experimented with the utilization of steam in engines, and had likewise been deeply interested in chemistry." But he had then no more idea of fame or of the direction in which it would come to him than the man in the moon.

It was the reading, in 1894, in an Italian journal of the work of Professor Hertz that first suggested the idea of sending messages through space by means of etheric waves; but, as he says, "the idea seemed so simple and evident to me that at first I had no thought of attempting practical experiments to demonstrate its possibility, because I knew there were many clever men in the world experimenting with etheric waves, and I thought some one would quickly work out the problem."

It is characteristic of the unselfishness and modesty of the man that he actually waited nearly a year

TO GIVE OTHERS A CHANCE

of taking the palm which he knew he had but to stretch out his hand to make his own; and it was only when there was no sign of its being appropriated that he began to make his experiments, and quickly succeeded in sending aerial messages a couple of miles across his father's estate. What has happened since those 'prentice days—how he has since sent winged messages across the wide Atlantic, has made it possible for ships to hold converse a thousand miles apart, and how, in fact, he has, with almost a wizard's magic, annihilated space—the world knows.

And what kind of a man is this magician who has still to see his thirtieth birthday? This is how he is described by one who knows him well: "A slight young man of medium height, but who scarcely looks it, with brown hair, cut short and parted at the side, a light brown moustache, deep-set blue eyes, and a look of boyishness which he never seems to outgrow. Just the kind of neat, well-groomed young man you see by the thousands in the streets of London."

In fact, few men of fame ever "looked the part" less than this wonderful young Italian. His modesty, too, amounts almost to diffidence; he will talk charmingly on any subject but himself, and is ready to take to his heels at the mere mention of

THE WORD "INTERVIEWER."

And yet he is sufficiently human to confess that "it is nice to be famous," and to enjoy the fruits of his genius and industry. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about him is his voice, which is soft and low and musical—the voice, in fact, of his native Italy; and the contrast between his slow, deliberate method of talking and his restless, tireless energy when at work is as marked as that between his modesty and his achievement.

He has none of the usual qualities which seem to be the essential accompaniment of genius. When he was once asked whether, like Edison, he was ever so absorbed in his work that he forgot to eat, he answered, "I think never. You see, my stomach always cries out at the proper moment, and I always hasten to obey its call"; and to the question, "You wouldn't have starved for wireless telegraphy?" he replied, with a smile, "No, indeed; I have too good a digestion."

A farmer recently paid a visit to a neighbor, and as he passed along by the side of the fields he made a mental note of the fact that no scarecrows were visible. Meeting his neighbor almost immediately, he opened conversation as follows:—"Good morning, Mr. Oates. I see you have no scarecrows in your fields. How do you manage to do without them?" "Oh, well enough," was the innocent reply. "You see, I don't need 'em, for I'm in the field all day myself."