

His Mother-in-law

"You've come, have you," said my mother-in-law, in a deep voice as she looked on the threshold grimly surveying me with eyes that shone like hard, greenish-blue gooseberries, behind her spectacles. For such modern trifles as eyeglasses were as unsuited to my mother-in-law's fine Roman nose, as a white-face collar would be to the Venus de Milo. I could feel her glance penetrate to the very marrow of my bones, and yet I contrived to keep a bold, defiant as I stood facing her. It was rather a curious complication. My mother-in-law had not the least idea who I was. I had cheerfully intended to take her by surprise; but now that the eventful moment had arrived, my courage, like that of Bob Acres, was oozing out at the ends of my fingers. My name is Richard Dalton. I was then just twenty-one, with a face that was not absolutely ugly, a sublime audacity, and pockets not particularly well lined, and I had just distinguished myself by running away with a pretty girl from boarding-school. "But, Dick," she had remonstrated, "we have nothing to live on." "Don't be a goose, darling," had been my reply. "What do people need to live on? All the wants of this world, more or less, are fictitious. A crust of bread and a glass of water three times a day, and now and then a suit of clothes—we must be poor, indeed, if we can't manage to compass that." Nettie had looked favorably upon me and acquiesced to my argument. We had taken board at the Angel Hill Hotel, and began our honeymoon royally. At the end of a month mine host had become a little importunate on the subject of his bill, and Nettie's mother had written a letter to her signifying that she wanted nothing whatever to do with us. We had made our own bed, she signified, and now we might lie on it. "Oh, Dick!" cried Nettie, clasping her hands, "what are we to do?" "Hanged if I know!" was the rather blank response. "But don't cry darling, I'll go and see her myself." "You, Dick?" "I myself!" "She'll have nothing to say to you!" "She can't help herself." "She'll turn you out of doors." "We'll see about that." "But, Dick, you don't know—you can't have any idea how terrible she is!" sighed Nettie. "St. George conquered the dragon, my love," I asserted cheerfully, "and I mean to conquer your mother. So pack my valise, there's a darling, and I'll be off before the landlord comes back." "But, Dick, if he's troublesome what can I say to him?" appealed poor little frightened Nettie. "Tell him I've gone out of town and shall be back in a few days," said I confidently. But valiantly as I spoke, my mental sensations by no means corresponded with this bold part. I was beginning dimly to realize what a very unwise step I had taken and also persuaded poor Nettie to take. And I was secretly making up my mind that if Nettie's mother refused to receive us, I would ship myself off to sea as second mate, third purser, or something of that sort, send my advanced wages to my poor little wife, and commence the world over again in this irregular fashion. But when I walked resolutely up to my mother-in-law's door she greeted me as if I had been expected for the last week. "You've come, have you," was the salutation. "Well, yes," I admitted. "I've come." "What on earth detained you," said she. In my mind I cast about what to say, and settled on the first convenient excuse that came into my head. "The train was delayed at Bogletown," said I. "Well, come in, now that you're here," said she, "and get warm. It's awful cold weather for this time of year, isn't it?" "Yes," said I, with an assenting nod. "Let me see," said my mother-in-law, as she took a steaming platter of ham and eggs out of the oven and lifted a shining coffee-pot from the stove. "How old are you?" "One-and-twenty," said I. "Do you think," said she, pensively feeling of her chin, "that you are able to take care of the place? There's a great deal to do, you know, on a farm like this. Do you think you're up to the work?" "Of course I think so," said I, wondering what on earth my mother-in-law meant. "You are married, I suppose," said she. "Oh, yes," said I, swallowing the hot coffee and winking my eyes very hard. "I'm married!" "Can your wife make herself generally useful about the place?" sharply demanded the old lady. "Certainly she can," said I, beginning vaguely to see my way through the mists of perplexity that had heretofore obscured my brain. "How old is she?" asked Mrs. Martin. "Eighteen," I answered. Mrs. Martin frowned. "What does possess girls to get married nowadays," said she, "before they're left off dolls and patchwork?" I looked thoughtfully down at the pattern of my plate—a pink Chinaman crossing a carmine bridge with two very red willows drooping at the far end of it, and some impossible streaks of water below—and made no direct answer. My mother-in-law was doubtlessly laboring under a misapprehension, but

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making the wood into cuttings at this time will largely influence the percentage of cuttings which will root. The wood at the proper time is made up into cuttings, which are placed in beds of sand over hotbeds out of doors, and in the course of a few weeks should be well rooted, when they are taken out, potted into small pots and placed in the greenhouses to grow. This is the summer propagating of the rose. Later in the season, in the fall, propagating is generally done in the greenhouses, when hybrid perpetual varieties often do better than in the hotbeds. Cuttings of soft-wooded plants, such as geraniums, coleus and heliotropes, are made from plants bedded out in the open ground during the summer, or from large stock plants in pots in the greenhouses in winter, and are rooted in a propagating bed in the greenhouse. The saucer system of propagating is best adapted to the need of the amateur, and consists in putting about two inches of sand in a pan about three inches deep, placing the cuttings in the sand, which should be kept thoroughly soaked with water all the time during the process of rooting. That part of the wood which is inclined to be brittle and break rather than bend and appear tough and stringy should be selected for making into cuttings. While on the subject of propagating it may be interesting to note that many of the flowering shrubs, such as lilacs, privet, forsythias, weigelas, &c., may be grown from the young wood. These should be made after the wood has matured, and be placed about two inches apart in rows in a bed prepared much after the manner as for onions. An eye should always be provided at the top of the cutting, which should be about two thirds in the ground. Cover the bed with eight or ten inches of leaves, and place a few evergreen boughs on top to keep them in place. By spring the cuttings will have made root. This cutting bed is to be made out of doors in a well drained location and made a little higher than the surrounding ground. It is not always an easy matter to determine just what plants to select for the window garden within the house during the winter, and one is often tempted to include some plants rather difficult to manage, their beauty seeming almost irresistible. It is not wise, however, to use any that are not by nature able to withstand considerable abuse, for to lose several good specimens during the winter is rather discouraging. We should depend very considerably on forced bulbous plants for our supply of early winter flowers, and with narcissus, crocus, hyacinths, tulips, callas, amaryllis, &c., a pleasing diversity of color and form can be had. In addition to these the fragrant and pretty Chinese primrose, also the dainty flowers of the baby primrose, Primula Forbesi, with its continuous supply of blossoms, will do much toward brightening the windows. Cyclamen Persicum and Giganteum in white, pink and crimson are exceedingly attractive late winter flowers and not difficult to grow. A few begonias in various sorts add considerable luxuriance in the way of foliage and some flower. We would suggest as good sorts such as the Festsil, the beautiful notched-leaf Manicata Aurea, the glossy-leaved Thurstoni and the old stand-by, Rubra, all of which are strong growers and of easy management. A pot of the German parlor ivy, with the vines hanging down or twining upward, has a very refreshing effect in any window. The Sansevieria Zeylanica, with stiff, upright, mottled leaves, is useful as a house plant on account of being not at all disturbed by dust, gas and a moderate amount of abuse. One of the prettiest of plants for table decoration is the Farfugium Grande, bearing large, round, dark green, leathery leaves, mottled and blotched with yellow. A specimen of some size in a suitable jardiniere is exceedingly attractive. A few such plants as those mentioned above used in connection with a half dozen larger ornamental foliage plants, such as a Latania a Kentia and Areca or a Pheax palm, a good clump of Aspidistra or Cyperus, or perhaps a large Ficus Elastica will do much toward making the home very attractive.

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