

Mrs. Timson-Smith's Lion.

BY TOM GALLON.

IT ain't what *you* think," said Mrs. Timson-Smith, sharply. "Come to that, we might as well go back to Camberwell Green and keep one general."

"But it seems such a bold thing to do," urged Mr. Timson-Smith, meekly. "We don't even know the gentleman; I'm sure I've never even seen him act."

"Well, don't tell anybody else so. I only saw him myself once, when I went in the Jacksons' box; and I'd had such a hearty dinner I fell asleep till the middle of the last act, and the poor man had been stabbed, or poisoned, or something, the act before. But I enjoyed myself immensely."

"Do you really mean, Maria——"

"Marie, if *you* please, Mr. S.," broke in his wife, chillingly. "At my time of life a letter more or less doesn't matter; and the other's more delicate-like. What I mean is that I intend to ask this man down here; I mean to let some of these people round about understand that we're in with the best of them and know what to do. With all your money they haven't hesitated to snub you; they only call when they want something for a charity. I tell you, Tim, that if we once get the great Mr. Leopold Wakerley down here, over a week-end, they'll come flocking round us like the pigeons used to when we threw out crumbs and corn in the old back garden at Camberwell Green. Besides, it's done every day; these actors expect it."

"Well, my dear—Marie," said Mr. Timson-Smith, with a gulp, "I suppose you'll have your own way."

"Of course I shall," replied the lady, calmly. "And I tell you, Tim, it'll be the easiest thing in the world. These sort of people are only too grateful to be asked to sit down with the nobs; he'll jump at it. And we might get him to speak a piece, or anything of that kind, in the drawing-room. Come to that, I wouldn't mind if he blacked himself and gave us a bit of that gent who smothered somebody in the Tower of London."

"Would the drawing-room hold him?" innocently asked Mr. Timson-Smith.

"You leave details to me," said his wife. "As he'll be play-acting on Saturday night we might get him down by the last train, or

even on Sunday morning. And I'll send out the biggest lot of invitations I can; I'll send a private note with each, letting 'em know who's coming. Gracious!—we'll pack the place!"

Let it be explained that Mr. Timson-Smith—late of the City and of Camberwell Green—had suddenly come into money. Mr. Timson-Smith (known to his intimates as Timothy Smith; the change of name and the hyphen were an inspiration on the part of Mrs. Timson-Smith) had been a very happy and contented little man during the years he had taken the early train from Camberwell every morning (Sundays excepted) and the late train back at night, to and from the City. He had not been quite so happy since this change of fortune. Mrs. Timson-Smith—a large lady, with certain large social aspirations—had seen the dream of her life fulfilled, had taken an estate within reasonable distance of London, and had patiently waited for the county to call upon her. The patience with which she had waited had grown into impatience as time went on. Now, at last, she saw a chance to capture them and to get her name into the papers in one breathless hour.

The house of the Timson-Smiths was all that it should be; gorgeous flunkeys got in each other's way, with nothing particular to do; splendid horses drew the equally splendid carriage of little Mr. Timson-Smith and large Mrs. Timson-Smith about the country lanes. Mr. Timson-Smith told himself, at times, that he was "getting used to it"; if the truth be told, he was a little afraid of the gorgeous flunkeys, and was not quite sure if he could find his way about his own house. Having a sublime belief in Mrs. Timson-Smith, however, he felt that it would be all right in time.

A certain young and fashionable actor had recently gone into management on his own account; had played difficult parts in an eccentric way, and yet with some distinction; had, in a word, been taken up by Society. Mrs. Timson-Smith saw here her chance; to get this man down to her beautiful house, and make much of him, and have obscure country people to meet him, would give her at once that position to which she had aspired. So she wrote to him—addressing the letter to the theatre.

Gushingly she expressed a desire to meet

him; said how much pleasure it would afford Mr. Timson-Smith and herself if Mr. Leopold Wakerley would give them the pleasure of his company at the Hall on Saturday evening next, to stay until the Monday following. Every arrangement should be made for the comfort of the great Wakerley—and so on and so forth.

"I'm sure I hope it'll be all right," said little Mr. Timson-Smith, feebly, to his son Jack that night in the smoking-room. "You see, my boy, your mother has a way with her that sweeps you along"—the little man made a movement with his hands indicative of that sweeping process—"and you've got to be swept. What am I to say to this gentleman if he comes down?"

Jack was a young man who had seen, perhaps, even in his limited twenty years of existence, something more of the world than his father had done. He laughed, and spoke confidently enough.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry, dad," he said. "They're rum fellows, these actors, but jolly sociable, I've heard;

making her voice heard, for the benefit of the "general," at a very early hour of the morning; in these later times Mrs. Timson-Smith stopped in bed and read the fashionable intelligence before getting up.

"My love, is anything the matter?" asked Mr. Timson-Smith.

Without a word, but with her lips pursed in a triumphant way, his wife laid an open letter before him. "Now, what did I tell you?" she asked.

The little man read the letter. The handwriting was a scrawl, going here, there, and everywhere; but it announced that Mr. Leopold Wakerley would be delighted to accept Mrs. Timson-Smith's invitation. He would leave London by the afternoon train on Sunday (it was quite impossible for him to get away before that time) and would arrive at about six o'clock on that Sunday



"OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY, DAD," HE SAID. "THEY'RE RUM FELLOWS, THESE ACTORS."

be nice to 'em and don't make a fuss about 'em, and you'll find they're ripping. A bit eccentric, mind you; but that's all the better fun."

Mr. Timson-Smith, partially reassured, passed the next day or two in wondering what was going to happen. Sitting alone, after breakfast, with two embarrassing servants looking coldly at him, he was surprised by the sudden appearance of Mrs. Timson-Smith. In the old days of Camberwell Green the lady had been in the habit of

evening. The last clause of his letter was a curious one.

"Let me beg of you," he wrote, "not to lionize me. It is repugnant to that finer sensitiveness which characterizes me. Let me join you as one of yourselves; think of me as being a friend. The many photographs, in my varied characters, you have seen in the papers, and the flattering notices which have invariably accompanied their insertion, will probably have led you to a false impression of me. I desire to

be a mere private individual in your household."

"It's all right," said Mrs. Timson-Smith, a little doubtfully, "but it ain't quite what I wanted. However, we'll draw him out when he gets down here; and we've got him, anyway."

Those artful little notes accompanying the invitations had their effect; out of quite a large number there were only two "regrets."

Sunday though it was, the name of Mr. Leopold Wakerley acted like magic; there was to be a big dinner-party, and after it one of those indefinable functions destined to crowd the rooms and make the guests generally hot and uncomfortable.

Mrs. Timson-Smith was confident of success; at last she had achieved her ambition. It was a far cry that night from Camberwell Green; perhaps Mr. Timson-Smith wished it might have been a smaller cry back again. However, the ordeal had to be faced; he knew that he would have to be pushed into corners, and dragged forth to meet people, and pushed back again; he only hoped he might manage to slip away to his own private sanctum for a smoke occasionally.

"Halloa, dad, you're looking rather chippy!" exclaimed Mr. Jack Timson-Smith, coming upon his father suddenly in a corridor. "What's wrong?"

"N-nothing," said Mr. Timson-Smith, with a little sigh. "Only I do hope the man will be all that your mother anticipates. You see, Jack, this is not my way of living at all. I wasn't brought up to it, and I haven't dropped into it, so to speak, as your mother has. However, we'll hope for the best."

It becomes necessary that we should leave the Timson-Smiths for a while and take two flying leaps. The first we take is to the flat of Mr. Leopold Wakerley on the afternoon of Sunday. Mr. Leopold Wakerley—tired out after a *matinée* and an evening performance on the previous day—had risen late; then someone had dropped in to lunch and someone else to tea. Only at about six o'clock did Mr. Wakerley remember, with a start, that he should at that time have been miles away in the country, near the home of the Timson-Smiths. It was a raw and blustering night—not inviting, by any means, though it was early summer. Mr. Wakerley had to think of his health. More than that, what was he to do? It was Sunday; there was no possibility of sending a telegram. Finally, he thrust the matter aside, telling himself that he did not know these people and that a

letter of apology would be sufficient to excuse his absence. Let it be said that, with the carelessness which is supposed to belong to the artistic temperament, Mr. Leopold Wakerley forgot the letter of apology and never wrote at all. With that our first flying leap is over, and we will leave the young actor-manager going out to dinner, cosily enough, not a mile from his flat.

Our second leap takes us back again to that country wherein the home of the Timson-Smiths was situated. A bleak country part it was, on this night at least—wind-swept and rain-swept—a bad night for a man to be out in. And there was a man out on this night, and in curious language he cursed the fate that had placed him in such a position. He stood just within the gates of the grounds of the Timson-Smiths' mansion; with one hand thrust within the breast of his frock-coat, and with his legs planted a little way apart, he shook his head at the lighted windows and spoke:—

"Methinks yonder is the boyhood home of what might once have been—no, no; all that is past." Then, coming down very suddenly from his heights, he said in a smaller voice, "I wonder if there might be a chance here?"

He was a small man, yet with a presence. There was an indefinable air about him, as of one used to doing everything in public; although he was quite alone at this moment, he actually paused now and again in the midst of a speech as though waiting for the applause which should inevitably follow before he could go on again. His boots were soddened with rain and mud; he had no overcoat; and an old and very shiny hat was perched on one side of his grey head. His face was clean shaven—or might have been, had it seen a razor during the past two days.

Truth to tell, the man was in a sorry plight. One of that great company who "live to please," he had been stranded, with other members of a small touring company, in bad weather and in a bad part of the country. The manager had bolted; the "ghost" resolutely refused to take the most ordinary exercise; and Mr. Ramsey Porter, together with some eight or nine other individuals, was left lamenting.

Some of the others had friends—some had not. At all events, the little company separated, and Mr. Ramsey Porter set out to walk to London. Too proud to beg, he had supported himself for some days by reciting the immortal bard, in sections, in public-houses and other places. The game had

not paid ; and on this Sunday night Ramsey Porter was, to use his own expression, "on his uppers."

Behold him, then, with his courage screwed to the sticking-place, marching on the home of the Timson-Smiths.

What his idea was, Heaven only knows ; perhaps he hoped, if he spouted the lines of the immortal one badly enough, he might get a shilling to pass on. But whatever the reason, it must be recorded here that in sheer desperation he walked up to the principal entrance and loudly rang the bell.

" 'Tis not in mortals to command success' — but we'll do more ; we'll get in, my boy, if the gods are kind," he murmured to himself, as he gave a second tug at the bell.

Ramsey Porter got in. The door was opened by a gorgeous footman, who stared at him in perplexity ; Ramsey Porter waved the menial aside, advanced into the hall, and looked about him critically. It happened that Mrs. Timson-Smith—impatient, and wondering what had become of her lion—was crossing the hall at that very moment. Ramsey Porter saw, in the big, richly-dressed woman, wealth and luxury and all that was desirable. Removing his hat with a flourish and beaming upon her genially, he burst forth.

"Madam, I am an ac-tor," he began, in a sonorous voice ; and Mrs. Timson-Smith gave a violent start and looked at him rather nervously. "An unkind fate has cast me, at this dead hour, within the walls of one with whom time stands hesitant, and on whom love and luxury attend as willing slaves. Madam, I implore you to pardon——"

"Oh, please don't mention it," said Mrs. Timson-Smith, hurriedly, with a nervous glance behind her towards the drawing-room, where her guests were assembled. "You see, Mr. What-d'you-call-it—you took me a bit by surprise. I didn't quite expect—I didn't exactly know—you look so different in the pictures."

Of course, Mrs. Timson-Smith was convinced that this was the great Leopold Wakerley, and she was a little disappointed and a little shocked. Remembering the guests who had been invited specially to meet the great man, she began to feel that she had made a hideous blunder. On the other hand, Mr. Ramsey Porter, after that one reference to his pictures, positively blushed, and held out his hand cordially to the lady.

"My dear lady, you have noticed them, then?" he exclaimed. "'Twas said they were not unlike—the last ones, I mean—what time I played heavy lead for Fostick's Combination of Talent. But—pooh!—that was nothing ; I have had them twelve feet in length and on every hoarding."

"Yes, yes—quite so," murmured Mrs. Timson-Smith. She

turned to the footman. "Will you take this gentleman to his room?"

Mr. Ramsey Porter staggered, passed his hand over his bald forehead, and wondered if the world had come to an end. But Mrs. Timson-Smith had turned away, and only came back for an instant to murmur sweetly, "You will be quick, won't you? The first bell has gone, and we dine in twenty minutes."

Then she was gone. Ramsey Porter



"IN SHEER DESPERATION HE WALKED UP TO THE PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE."

looked at the big footman and the big footman looked back at him. The big footman, being used to surprises in that household, was not greatly upset by this one. Being a conscientious man, however, he determined to warn the butler to keep an eye upon the silver.

"This way, if you please, sir," said the man.

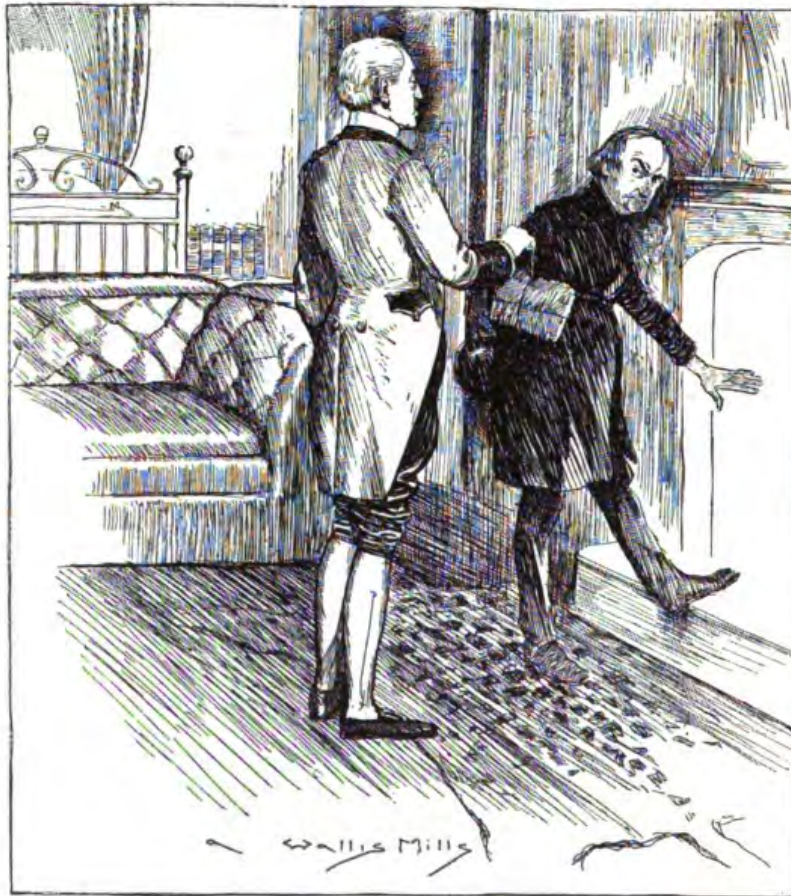
As they went up the stairs, the footman leading, Ramsey Porter took two stairs at a jump and linked his arm confidentially through that of the footman.

"Tell me, me friend," he said, in a stage whisper, "what is their intention regarding

Ramsey Porter nodded his head slowly, as he was shown into the beautifully furnished, well-lighted room, with a cheerful fire burning in the grate. "I see—I see," he muttered to himself. "I have fallen by the wayside; I am dying, in that attitude suggestive of flights of angels hovering; I shall be found in the morning, probably with a leaf or two placed upon my person, by the thoughtful wanderers of the air. This is a vision, a taunting dream of luxury, from which I shall awake."

"Is this—all your luggage, sir?"

The footman was holding up gingerly a small, rain-soaked brown-paper parcel, tied



"IS THIS—ALL YOUR LUGGAGE, SIR?"

me? What part do I play here to-night—or is this but a trap?"

"The trap went to fetch you, sir," said the man, in some astonishment. "By the look of you, you might have walked."

"Walked?" cried Ramsey Porter, stopping still on the stairs. "You may well say walked, me friend; I seem never to have ceased walking lately. But, come—where are you taking me?"

"To your room, sir."

about clumsily with string. In a moment Mr. Ramsey Porter had snatched it from him.

"Young man, you know not what you do!" he exclaimed. "'Who steals my—wardrobe—steals trash,' I fully admit; nevertheless, I may, in some more fortunate hour, need a change. Me friend," he added, a little pitifully, "I would eat. Now, do you think you could manage—say, even a crust of bread and a morsel of cheese?"

"Dinner will be served in a few minutes," replied the footman, and went away to tell his fellow-servants what an astonishing lot these actors were, when you came to know 'em intimate!

"Now, I wonder what it means?" asked poor Ramsey Porter, standing thoughtfully before the fire and drying his soddened boots. "They all seem to say that dinner will be served in a few minutes, and I seem to be expected. Can it be possible that my name—and eke my fame—has travelled so far? One never knows; a mere whisper—a breath—will go a long way at times. And that Juno-like creature in the diamonds certainly seemed to recognise me; spoke of my pictures!"

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room below, Mrs. Timson-Smith had gone in great agitation to her son Jack; hurriedly she whispered him:—

"Jack, I am in such trouble. That man—that play-actor—has come."

"That's all right, mater," said the young man. "Now we're all complete."

"You don't understand. He's not at all the sort of person I expected," she whispered. "He—he isn't exactly clean; and he doesn't seem to have much luggage. I do hope it will be all right; but I wish, Jack, you'd just run up and—and see that he's got all he wants."

So young Timson-Smith nodded cheerfully and ran upstairs. To say that he was surprised when he entered the room and saw the apparition before him would be to put it very mildly indeed. He closed the door quickly and went in, with a blank look on his face. Recovering, however, he held out his hand, in his own genial fashion, to Ramsey Porter.

It was the first friendly hand that had been extended to that poor mummer for quite a long time; he grasped it fervently.

"I say, you'll be awfully late, you know," said young Timson-Smith; "they're all waiting for you in the drawing-room."

"For—for me?" asked Ramsey Porter, faintly.

"Rather! I say, aren't you going to get dressed?"

Dimly Ramsey Porter understood that he was in a tight place. He could not know how the mistake had arisen; he only knew that certain smartly-dressed people were waiting for him in the room below, while he stood, unkempt, unshaven—a mere wastrel out of the darkness—to fill someone else's place.

"I—I regret that I am not quite the figure to appear——"

"Oh, don't you worry about that," said young Timson-Smith. "I heard something about there being a little accident. Missed your luggage, I suppose?"

"I miss it more every hour," murmured Ramsey Porter to himself. Aloud he said: "Yes; I missed it somehow, on—on the road."

"I should think dad's things would about fit you," said Jack, looking him over critically. "But you'll have to jump, you know; we're dreadfully late."

"Jump, young man? Let me tell you that I have ere now changed to the skin in two minutes and a quarter. Jump, indeed!"

He was so quick about it that he got down—hurriedly shaved, and with Mr. Timson-Smith's spare dress-suit upon him—just as the guests were rustling across the hall. The getting into that dress-suit was a miracle, for Timson-Smith was small and lean, while Ramsey Porter, although small, was yet a little bigger than his host, and was, above all things, considerably more rotund. The waistcoat, after being buttoned, creaked ominously; while the coat had already given way in one place across the shoulders, owing to tightness. Ramsey Porter fervently hoped that he might get through his scene without further accident.

The worst of the business was that everyone looked at him, and, having looked at him, began to talk about things and plays of which he knew nothing. They all knew him to be an actor, and he felt that his fame had travelled farther than he had imagined; but they spoke of parts of which he had never heard. Fortunately for him the great Mr. Leopold Wakerley had sprung into fame quite in a hurry, and so was practically unknown, save in these later months. More than that, his portraits had never appeared except in character, and the world outside knew nothing of his every-day appearance.

"Will you sit here?" asked Mrs. Timson-Smith, beaming upon him and waving a jewelled hand to the place at her right. "We were so late, and"—lowering her voice a little—"people get so impatient that I could not wait any longer. I will introduce you gradually."

"Madam, there are no words upon my tongue to thank you," said Ramsey Porter, placing one hand upon his breast and bowing low. Immediately afterwards, however, he started upright, with a somewhat shocked expression; the dress-suit was tighter than

he had anticipated, and he was not quite sure which part had given way this time.

It was a fearful and a wonderful sight to see this man, who knew only the backwaters of his profession, playing his part in that great house for all that that part was worth. His stiff collar rasped his newly-shaved chin ; he was in agonies about the waist ; yet with what an air he carried himself ! This was no ordinary feast ; he had been called upon, at a moment's notice, to "gag" for someone else, and he gagged magnificently. The only thing that troubled him was that the courses came so slowly, and that the people about him would talk of things he did not understand. A simpering, elderly lady on the opposite side of the table first set the ball rolling.

"I really must thank you personally for the great pleasure you gave me in that last part of yours," she gushed. "At the moment when you entered there in the moonlight——"

"Madam," said Ramsey Porter, feeling that at last he had been recognised ; "indeed, you mistake. My last performance—wherein I enacted three rôles in one evening—was not in the moonlight. You are confusing me with some lesser man who probably played in a mere farce. I entered, it is true, but through the burning mill. I had myself fired that mill and perished nobly, smoking my trusty cigarette to the last before a slow curtain."

People began to look puzzled and to whisper ; then a callow youth broke in from the end of the table :—

"I say, don't you find it awfully funny, don't you know, putting that stuff on your face ?"

Ramsey Porter swelled so much with indignation that another seam went. "Stuff, sir ?" he cried. "'Tis the glorious livery of the profession in which I was cradled. Let me tell you, sir, that I was born in a tent, and was, at the early age of four, an infant phenomenon, and playing, sir, to good money !"

"You have had a very wide experience," ventured Mr. Timson-Smith.

Ramsey Porter tossed off a glass of champagne with the air of one drinking out of a stage goblet, smacked his lips, and smiled. "Sir, I have been, as one might say, everything by turns and nothing long. Heavy lead has been my line, and other things have come to me on occasion. My Othello has been the talk of provincial audiences ; I am told that my Mother Crusoe rocked

the house with foolish laughter ; I once reached Newcastle as one of the Three Witches. Experience ? Heaven forgive me ! I have played clown in a circus—and was rolled in a carpet for my pains. And the carpet was dusty !"

"I had no idea that it was necessary for one to go through so much," said Mrs. Timson-Smith.

"We go through everything, madam," said Ramsey Porter, with something of a sigh. "If one would succeed, one must be prepared not only to be an actor but an author. The authors upon whose work I in my time have improved are countless ; there is no work, however noble, that will not bear improvement."

"Is there really a prompter who stands in the flies ?" asked the gushing lady again.

"Not in the flies, madam—perchance at the wings," said Ramsey Porter. "For my part I know not a prompter—we prompt ourselves ; no actor of standing needs a prompter. If the line won't come another will serve, and probably better."

"It must be interesting to play so many parts," suggested another guest at the farther end of the table.

"Parts, sir ? I remem-bar, on one occasion"—Ramsey Porter leaned back in his chair and held a glass of champagne between one half-closed eye and the light—"in a drama, not unknown, perchance, to some of you, 'A Dream of Gold, or Shall She Speak ?' it was my fate to play six parts. At first I was the grey-haired butler, with a soliloquy into which one could, so to speak, set one's teeth ; I perished, defending to the last the family plate. Next I was a giddy youth returned from abroad and falsely accused of the murder of a rich aunt. While the scene was set I danced a hornpipe as a comic sailor, who came from Heaven-knows-where for the occasion. I was tried for my life in the next act, but escaped ; I was a sentry outside the prison, and made love (in a red wig and whiskers) to a singing chambermaid ; I was the inspector of police, in a fireman's helmet, who arrested the real murderer of the butler ; and I had a topical song, as the village inn-keeper in the last act, before changing again to the persecuted hero returning to the home of his ancestors."

It was, of course, impossible for Ramsey Porter to avoid making blunders. More than that, the strange life he had led had given him that curious view of things, and that easy familiarity with people, which was not all that could be desired at the aristo-

cratic board of the Timson-Smiths. He addressed one elderly lady, to her horror, as "my dear"; drank, perhaps, rather more champagne than was good for him; and capped his performances by rising, somewhat unsteadily, to address the company.

"Friends—fellow-citizens—men of Rome—to say nothing of the ladies," he began, kissing his finger-tips and beaming upon Mrs. Timson-Smith; "it is meet that I

ing; she hurriedly rose and gave the signal for the ladies to depart. At the same moment young Timson-Smith came down the room and took the arm of Ramsey Porter.

"I say, old chap, I want you a moment," said the young man.

"I come with you straight," said Ramsey Porter, making an elaborate bow to the rest of the men.



"'FRIENDS—FELLOW-CITIZENS—MEN OF ROME—TO SAY NOTHING OF THE LADIES,' HE BEGAN."

should return some thanks to you for all that I have enjoyed this evening. I could have been happier, perchance, had my borrowed garments clung to me less closely; but I have worn many things in my time. It is good to think that I, who have delighted thousands (quite setting aside certain benighted audiences who have flung undesirable things at me; I forgive them all)—I say that it is meet that I should be recognised and taken to your hearts as I have been taken to-night. I do not understand why the merits I possess should have entitled me to this—but let it pass. As some slight return for a feast I had not expected I will—while, as someone whose name has slipped my mind for the moment once said, I am 'full of meat'—I will recite to you, at length, 'The Dream of Eugene Aram.' If, by chance, under the influence of the rosy god, I should omit a line or should forget any part, I will give you a specimen of my powers in the art of gagging."

He had actually got through the first two lines, at a slow and ponderous pace, before Mrs. Timson-Smith realized what was happen-

"Or as straight as you can, eh?" laughed Jack.

They went upstairs to the room in which Ramsey Porter had changed. Jack shut the door and then looked at the other man with a whimsical expression of face.

"I say, who are you, really?"

"Don't you know?" asked Ramsey Porter.

"I know who you're supposed to be," said Jack. "The mater thinks you're Leopold Wakerley, the London actor."

"Do you mean to tell me that I, Ramsey Porter, who once was billed twelve feet high and who played on a certain notable occasion in Newcastle (where jealous spite kept my name out of the bill)—do you mean to tell me that I have been mistaken for another?"

"Well, it looks like it," said Jack, quietly. "How did you come here?"

"A harsh world would have naught of me; I"—the poor mummer's voice broke a little and he turned away his head—"I was starving; I had tramped for nearly three days and slept at nights—well, Heaven knows how!"

"Poor beggar!"

"Poor no longer!" cried Ramsey Porter, with a sudden change of manner. "I have been, for one night at least, playing lead; for one night at least I have tasted of the best; for one night in all his strolling life Ramsey Porter has stood out among men and has been looked upon by the eyes of beauty." He kissed his finger-tips. "Call me not poor after that!"

"Well, in return for that, will you do me a favour?" asked Jack.

"Ask of me what you will; it is granted."

"I wouldn't care to let the mater know that any mistake had been made," said young Timson-Smith. "You see, she expected this man from London to come down, and you turned up in his place. Don't you think you might slip away—quietly, you know—without making any explanation?"

in a low voice. "But tell me, young sir, how did I play my part?"

"You were deuced funny," said Jack, with a laugh.

"Ah! I had not desired to be funny," said Ramsey Porter, with a sigh. "If you would assist me to—to remove my garments, I would be ready to go the sooner," he added.

So young Timson-Smith stripped him with care, and Ramsey Porter put on again his own old garments. At the last moment Jack said, delicately enough:—

"I say, I'd be awfully glad if you'd accept—"

"Sir!" exclaimed Ramsey Porter, with dignity; "I am no beggar!"

"Oh, you quite misunderstand me; I was only suggesting a loan—a small matter between gentlemen, surely."

The face of Ramsey Porter cleared; he shook the hand of his young friend and accepted a sovereign—very gravely writing down in an old pocket-book the amount of the debt and the name and address of young Timson-Smith.

"It shall be repaid," he said, gravely. "Now I will dissemble, as before suggested. Having played my part—dressed for it, too, by George! I will go off without the usual slow music. Farewell; you shall hear from me."

Young Timson-Smith has never heard from him; perhaps it was hardly to be expected that poor Ramsey Porter should have had the opportunity to scrape together again so large a sum of money. Mrs. Timson-Smith, for her part, has never been undeceived; but she was a little relieved, perhaps, at the sudden disappearance of the man she thought she had invited to her dinner-party.

"Never again!" she murmured to herself, with a decided shake of the head. "They are much too eccentric, these really great men!"



"YOU WOULD HAVE ME DISSEMBLE?—GO FORTH INTO THE DARKNESS?"

"You would have me dissemble?—go forth into the darkness, as it were?"

"If you wouldn't mind," said Jack.

"It shall be done," said Ramsey Porter,