

put it onto her head, an' kind o' smiled an' turned round slow so 't I c'd git a gen'ral view on't.

"Style all right?" I says.

"The very best of its kind," she says.

"How 'bout the *kind*?" I says.

"The very best of its style," she says."

John laughed outright. David looked at him for a moment with a doubtful grin.

"She *was* a slick one, wa'n't she?" he said.

"What a hoss trader she would 'a' made. I didn't ketch on at the time, but I rec'lected afterward. Wa'al," he resumed, after this brief digression, "'how much is it?' I says.

"Fifteen dollars," she says.

"What?" I says. "Scat my ——! I c'd buy head rigging enough to last me ten years fer that."

"We couldn't sell it for less," she says.

"S'posin' the lady 't I'm buyin' it fer don't jest like it," I says, "can you alter it or swap somethin' else for it?"

"Cert'nly, within a reasonable time," she says.

"Wa'al, all right," I says, "do her up." An' so she wrapped the thing 'round with soft paper an' put it in a box, an' I paid for't an' moseyed along up home, feelin' that ev'ry man, woman, an' child had their eyes on my parcel, but thinkin' how tickled my wife would be."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE road they were on was a favorite drive with the two men, and at the point where they had now arrived David always halted for a look back and down upon the scene below them—to the south, beyond the intervening fields, bright with maturing crops, lay the village; to the west the blue lake, winding its length like a broad river, and the river itself a silver ribbon, till it was lost beneath the southern hills.

Neither spoke. For a few minutes John took in the scene with the pleasure it always afforded him, and then glanced at his companion, who usually had some comment to make upon anything which stirred his admiration or interest. He was gazing, not at the landscape, but apparently at the top of the dashboard. "Ho, hum," he said, straightening the reins, with a "clk" to the horses, and they drove along for a while in silence—so long, in fact, that our friend, while aware that the elder man did not usually abandon a topic until he had "had his say out," was moved to suggest a continuance of the narrative which had been rather abruptly broken off, and in which he had become considerably interested.

"Was your wife pleased?" he asked at last.

"Where was I?" asked the other in return.

"You were on your way home with your purchase," was the reply.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Harum resumed. "It was a little after tea time when I got to the house, an' I thought prob'ly I'd find her in the settin' room waitin' fer me; but she wa'n't, an' I went up to the bedroom to find her, feelin' a little less sure o' things. She was settin' lookin' out o' winder when I come in, an' when I spoke to her she didn't give me no answer except to say, lookin' up at the clock, 'What's kept ye like this?'"

"'Little matter o' bus'nis,' I says, lookin' as smilin' 's I knew how, an' holdin' the box behind me.

"'What you got there?' she says, slewin' her head 'round to git a sight at it.

"'Little matter o' bus'nis,' I says agin, bringin' the box to the front an' feelin' my face straighten out 's if you'd run a flat iron over it. She seen the name on the paper.

"'You ben spendin' your time there, have ye?' she says, settin' up in her chair an' pointin' with her finger at the box. 'That's where you ben the last half hour, hangin' 'round with them minxes in Mis' Shoolbred's. What's in that box?' she says, with her face a-blazin'.

"'Now, Lizy,' I says, 'I wa'n't there ten minutes if I was that, an' I ben buyin' you a bunnit.'

"'You—ben—buyin'—me—a—bunnit?' she says, stif'nin' up stiffer 'n a stake.

"'Yes,' I says, 'I heard you say somethin' 'bout a spring bunnit, an' I thought, seein' how economicle you was, that I'd buy you a nicer one 'n mebbe you'd feel like yourself. I thought it would please ye,' I says, tryin' to rub her the right way.

"'Let me see it,' she says, in a voice dryer 'n a lime-burner's hat, pressin' her lips together an' reachin' out fer the box. Wa'al, sir, she snapped the string with a jerk an' sent the cover skimmin' across the room, an' then, as she hauled the parcel out of the box, she got up onto her feet. Then she tore the paper off on't an' looked at it a minute, an' then took it 'tween her thumb an' finger, like you hold up a dead rat by the tail, an' held it off at the end of her reach, an' looked it all over, with her face gettin' even redder if it could. Fin'ly she says, in a voice 'tween a whisper 'n a choke:

"'What'd you pay fer the thing?'"

"'Fifteen dollars,' I says.

"'Fifteen dollars?' she says.

"'Yes,' I says, 'don't ye like it?' Wa'al," said David, "she never said a word. She drewed in her arm an' took holt of the bunnit with her left hand, an' fust she pulled off one thing an' dropped it on the floor, fur off as she c'd reach, an' then another, an' then another, an' then, by gum! she went at it with both hands jest as fast as she could work 'em, an' in less time 'n I'm tellin' it to ye she picked the thing cleaner 'n any chicken you ever see, an' when she got down to the carkis she squeezed it up between her two hands, give it a wring an' a twist like it was a wet dish towel, an' flung it slap in my face. Then she made a half turn, throwin' back her head an' grabbin' into her hair, an' give the awfulest screechin' laugh—one screech after another that you c'd 'a' heard a mile—an' then throwed herself face down on the bed, screamin' an' kickin'. Wa'al, sir, if I wa'n't at my wits' end, you c'n have my watch an' chain.

"She wouldn't let me touch her no way, but, as luck had it, it was one o' the times when we had a hired girl, an' hearin' the noise she come gallopin' up the stairs. She wa'n't a young girl, an' she had a face humbly 'nough to keep her awake nights, but she had some sense, an'— 'You'd bether run fer the docther,' she says, when she see the state my wife was in. You better believe I done the heat of my life," said David, "an' more luck, the doctor was home an' jest finishin' his tea. His house an' office wa'n't but two three blocks off, an' in about a few minutes me an' him an' his bag was leggin' it fer my house, though I noticed he didn't seem to be 'n as much of a twitter 's I was. He ast me more or less questions, an' jest as we got to the house he says:

"Has your wife had anythin' to 'larm or shock her this evenin'?"

"Nothin' 't I know on,' I says, 'cept I bought her a new bunnit that didn't seem to come quite up to her idees.' At that," remarked Mr. Harum, "he give me a funny look, an' we went in an' upstairs.

"The hired girl," he proceeded, "had got her quieted down some, but when we went in she looked up, an' seein' me, set up another screech, an' he told me to go downstairs an' he'd come down putty soon, an' after a while he did.

"Wa'al?" I says.

"She's quiet fer the present," he says, takin' a pad o' paper out o' his pocket, an' writin' on it.

"Do you know Mis' Jones, your next-door neighbor?" he says. I allowed 't I had a speak-in' acquaintance with her.

"Wa'al," he says, 'fust, you step in an' tell

her I'm here an' want to see her, and ast her if she won't come right along; an' then you go down to my office an' have these things sent up; an' then," he says, 'you go down town an' send this'—handin' me a note that he'd wrote an' put in an envelope—'up to the hospital—better send it up with a hack, or, better yet, go yourself,' he says, 'an' hurry. You can't be no use here,' he says. 'I'll stay, but I want a nurse here in an hour, an' less if possible.' I was putty well scared," said David, "by all that, an' I says, 'Lord,' I says, 'is she as bad off as that? What is it ails her?"

"Don't you know?" says the doc, givin' me a queer look.

"No," I says, 'she hain't ben fust rate fer a spell back, but I couldn't git nothin' out of her what was the matter, an' don't know what per-tic'ler thing ails her now, unless it's that dum'd bunnit,' I says.

"At that the doctor laughed a little, kind as if he couldn't help it.

"I don't think that was hully to blame," he says; 'may have hurried matters up a little—somethin' that was liable to happen any time in the next two months.'

"You don't mean it?" I says.

"Yes," he says. 'Now you git out as fast as you can. Wait a minute,' he says. 'How old is your wife?"

"F'm what she told me 'fore we was married," I says, 'she's thirty-one.'

"Oh!" he says, raisin' his eyebrows. 'All right; hurry up, now.'

"I dusted around putty lively, an' inside of an hour was back with the nurse, an' jest

after we got inside the door——” David paused thoughtfully for a moment and then, lowering his tone a little, “jest as we got inside the front door, a door upstairs opened an’ I heard a little ‘Waa! waa!’ like it was the leetlist kind of a new lamb—an’ I tell you,” said David, with a little quaver in his voice, and looking straight over the off horse’s ears, “nothin’ ’t I ever heard before nor since ever fetched me, right where I *lived*, as that did. The nurse, she made a dive fer the stairs, wavin’ me back with her hand, an’ I—wa’al—I went into the settin’ room, an—wa’al—ne’ mind.

“I dunno how long I set there list’nin’ to ’em movin’ ’round overhead, an’ wonderin’ what was goin’ on; but fin’ly I heard a step on the stair an’ I went out into the entry, an’ it was Mis’ Jones. ‘How be they?’ I says.

“‘We don’t quite know yet,’ she says. ‘The little boy is a nice formed little feller,’ she says, ‘an’ them childern very often grow up, but he is *very little*,’ she says.

“‘An’ how ’bout my wife?’ I says.

“‘Wa’al,’ she says, ‘we don’t know jest yet, but she is quiet now, an’ we’ll hope fer the best. If you want me,’ she says, ‘I’ll come any time, night or day, but I must go now. The doctor will stay all night, an’ the nurse will stay till you c’n git some one to take her place,’ an’ she went home, an’,” declared David, “you’ve hearn tell of the ‘salt of the earth,’ an’ if that woman wa’n’t more on’t than a hoss c’n draw down hill, the’ ain’t no such thing.”

“Did they live?” asked John after a brief silence, conscious of the bluntness of his question, but curious as to the sequel.

“The child did,” replied David; “not to grow up, but till he was ‘twixt six an’ seven; but my wife never left her bed, though she lived three four weeks. She never seemed to take no in-trist in the little feller, nor nothin’ else much; but one day—it was Sunday, long to the last—she seemed a little more chipper ’n usual. I was settin’ with her, an’ I said to her how much better she seemed to be, tryin’ to chirk her up.

“‘No,’ she says, ‘I ain’t goin’ to live.’

“‘Don’t ye say that,’ I says.

“‘No,’ she says, ‘I ain’t, an’ I don’t care.’

“I didn’t know jest what to say, an’ she spoke agin:

“‘I want to tell you, Dave,’ she says, ‘that you’ve ben good an’ kind to me.’

“‘I’ve tried to,’ I says, ‘an’ Lizzy,’ I says, ‘I’ll never fergive myself about that bunnit, long ’s I live.’

“‘That hadn’t really nothin’ to do with it,’ she says, ‘an’ you meant all right, though,’ she says, almost in a whisper, an’ the’ came across her face, not a smile exac’ly, but somethin’ like a little ruffle on a piece o’ still water, ‘that bunnit *was* enough to kill most anybody.’”