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### BENEATH THE FIGURE EIGHT

Fieri, the clown, turned a triple flip-flop, made a whirling wagon-wheel of himself, bowed mockingly at the huzzing crowd on the benches, and, bearing his tiny pink parasol aloft, escorted the mayor's embarrassed daughter to the reserved seat section, where the blushing young lady underwent much chaffing and banter. Then Fieri allowed the exaggerated smile to fade from his red-striped face, while he turned to look at the giddy iron tower in the middle of the big canvas tent. Beneath his paint-smeared and zebra-striped tongs, Fieri, the buffoon, had a soul; and without doubt the new "Figure Eight" act of Mile. Florette Dupree was a dangerous, hair-raising thing. And Fieri and Florette, in such confidences as life with the Twenty Biggest Shows on Earth allowed, admitted that they loved.

Prof. Stradella's World-Renowned Band struck up a rattling, inspiring gallop, the canvas-flaps of the dressing room entrance were shoved back, and Mile. Florette made dazzling, triumphant entry. On a snow-white, prancing horse she came, standing airily on one foot, in the glory of pink tights and dainty white ballet-skirting. The audience cheered at the very sight, and mademoiselle acknowledged the applause with graceful nods of her pretty head. Fieri, the clown, floundered over a hurdle, stole the ringmaster's whip, running half-way around the tent with it; then turned and watched mademoiselle climb the dizzy iron stairway.

"Oh, be careful, little Florette!" he murmured, under his breath; and whirled about to toss peanuts at the ropewalking raccoons.

Mile. Florette reached the top of the very high tower. The Stradella musicians ceased their rollicking clamor and began to play soft, low, tremolo stuff. The audience craned necks, and Fieri, the clown, almost ceased being funny, looking solemnly at the pink lady as he saw her with Jocko, the trained baboon. The "Figure Eight" was a new act, having been put on but four times. Once there had almost been an accident, when one of the filmy invisible wires had broken, but they claimed that was all right now. Fieri knew that there were wires and wires other than the filmy one which the lady held in her teeth and which the audience believed to be her only support; but Fieri did not feel safe at that. So he nearly tumbled Jocko from the other end of the plank and ambled nervously toward the perch of mademoiselle.

"Here, you get back over there and do your monkey act!" the ringmaster ordered; and Fieri grinned and shuffled back. Presently, though, he ceased

to mention, when he really does come in, bumping your head against the wall in ducking down, and not being able to rub the bump, much less say a word.

"All that evening Jimmy sat there in a agony. 'Er couldn't make up 'is mind which was worse—to stoop where 'e was, or not to.

"Since that night, too, 'e's 'ater the piano. When you're at the other end of the room talking, you don't notice it much, and therefore it don't annoy you. When it's got you jammed in the corner, 'owever, it's more worrying than you probably imagine. Also 'e was 'ungry and thirsty, and that made 'im pretty bad—not that 'e wanted any food.

"'Er did 'ope 'e'd 'ave a chance to escape while they was at supper; but, early because the kitchen wasn't large enough for nine people, an' partly for other reasons—which nearly drove Jim crazy when 'e guessed 'em—Elsie and 'er Cousin Bob 'ac their supper in the front room.

"When they started making love Jimmy shut 'is eyes and tried to persuade 'imself 'e was dreaming; but 'e couldn't—it was too real.

"'Will you 'ave a little more 'am Elsie?' says Bob presently, very ten derlike.

"'Well, I'm not really 'ungry,' says Elsie, very friendly-like, 'but I think I will.'

"As soon as Bob left the room up jumped Jimmy.

"'Mr. Higgins!' says Elsie, 'you'll be seen.'

"'Mr. Higgins!' repeats Jimmy surlyly. 'It was Jimmy this afternoon! Gimme that beer!'

"Elsie gave 'im the beer, and 'e drunk it at a gulp.

"'That's better!' 'e says. "'And over the other one!'

"'But it's not mine!' says Elsie. 'It's Bob's!'

"'I wasn't asking 'oo's it was!' says Jimmy. 'You pass it over, before I come after it!'

"Elsie just gave it to 'im a second afore Bob came back.

"'Allo!' says Bob. 'Drunk all your beer?'

"'Yes,' says Elsie. 'I—I was a bit thirsty.'

"'Oh!' says Bob. Then 'e noticed 'is was gone, too—glass and all. 'Oh!' 'e says again. 'I reckon you was thirsty! What's come of the glass?'

"'I don't know,' says Elsie. 'I must 'ave lost it.'

"Bob looked at 'er suspiciously, 'cos you can't very well lose a glass in that way; but 'e didn't say noth ing, because 'e knew she'd only 'ad one glass of beer up to then.

"Then, while Bob was making love to Jimmy's girl, Jimmy sat behind the piano drinking Bob's beer. Which—so I think, any'ow—levelled things up a bit.

"'About two in the morning the party broke up. When Jimmy 'eard old Martin arranging for 'im and Bob to sleep in the front room 'e began to feel desperate and wonder if 'e ever would be able to escape alive. 'E thought wot a shock it would be for the pore servant-girl to come across a skeleton when she went to dust behind the piano.

"'Well,' says old Martin. 'I'm glad you all came. We've 'ad a 'appy time. One thing I can say—nobody's ever been to a party at my 'ouse without enjoying themselves.'

"This absolutely settled Jimmy.

"'You're a liar?' 'e says, standing up and glaring at 'em all over the

top of the piano.

"They was all too flabbergasted to speak, except Elsie, 'oo didn't want to.

"'I've been to your miserable party,' goes on Jimmy, as bit or as any thing, 'and I've never 'ad such a rotten time in my life!'

"'Wot d'you mean by entering my 'ouse?' roars old Martin.

"'I'll tell 'ou wot I didn't mean,' retorts Jimmy, 'and that was to spend ten hours behind your tinpotty piano!'

"'Did you drink my beer?' asks Bob, beginning to see light.

"'No,' says Jimmy sulkily; 'I didn't I split it, and I've been sitting in it for the last three hours.'

"'Leave my 'ouse!' says the old man. 'Bob, you 'elp me to—'

"'You won't want any 'elp to get me out of your 'ouse!' interrupts Jimmy. 'It'd take the lot of you to keep me in! I've 'ad quite enough of it!'

"'With that 'e climbs over the piano and makes for the door.

"'Goodby, Miss Martin,' 'e says, very sarcastic. 'Take my advice, and find a different 'iding place for your next sweetheart!'

"'E won't be such a coward as to want a 'iding place!' she says, with a sneer.

"'Coward!' says Jimmy, flaring up. 'I did it all for you! 'Oo 'id me!'

"'Don't let's 'ave any recriminations,' says Bob, 'oo was 'olding Elsie's 'and. 'It's all for the best.'

"'I 'ope you'll always think so!' says Jimmy, friendly, but not wot you might call 'opeful. And then 'e went.

"'About a month later 'e got married to a girl in the next village, and they're much 'appier than you would 'ave expected—seeing she's got money.'

"Bob and Elsie are also 'appily married. Bob always keeps the piano set against the wall.—Harris Deans

having lost their mainmast and much of the rigging. They saw a boat put out, but 'e was soon engulfed, for the waves were enormous. Then there came a great gust of wind with blinding rain and spray, and when they could see anything again the Stella Mary had disappeared. Spar and fragments of wreckage have been seen by passing vessels, but nothing will, I am afraid, ever be heard of the Stella Mary.'

"'My poor Harry!' sobbed Mrs. Wilbur, burying her face in her handkerchief.

"There remains nothing for us but to resign ourselves to the will of an inscrutable Providence. It is not for us to dispute its decrees, however hardy they may press upon us—'

"'Oh, sir!' cried Mrs. Wilbur suddenly, 'how can I forgive myself! Here I am, in the selfishness of my great sorrow, forgetting entirely your terrible loss—'

"'Our loss? Oh, you mean the ship—the money? It is not worth mentioning, Mrs. Wilbur. What is the loss of a few paltry thousands compared with that of such an excellent man as your husband?'

Mrs. Wilbur was staring at him strangely.

"'It wasn't the money I was thinking of, sir, but your son—your only son. Gracious heavens! Is it possible that you don't know—'

Mrs. Wilbur rose from her seat trembling all over.

"'But sir, sir! He was on board the Stella Mary—'

"Nothing of the sort, Mrs. Wilbur. Heaven be thanked, there is no fear of that. I can't think what put this idea into your head. He had no intention of coming to England before the spring. I heard from him by post mail—no, not last mail, but that was because he was going for a little cruise round the coast—'

"I am heartbroken to have to tell you, sir, but here it is in my husband's handwriting—the last letter he ever wrote—sent off by the pilot after he had left Brisbane.'

She fumbled in a hand-bag and finally took out a letter.

The utter incredulity in Richard Oxters's face had given place to a horrible doubt. "Give it to me," he said hoarsely.

He rose, and, stretching across the table, snatched the letter from her. He held it first in one light, and then in another, then handed it to Debenham. "The lines dance about so strangely . . . read it to me, William." As Debenham started to read the letter he leaned forward over the table in an agony of doubt.

"My dearest wife," Debenham read, "I am keeping back the pilot for five minutes while I write these few lines to tell you an astounding piece of news that may have some influence on our future. Young Mr. Oxters has come on board, wanting a passage to Southampton on this boat. Of course, I shall be glad enough to have him, fine, pleasant-spoken young chap as he is, and if I can win his friendship he might speak to his father about giving me a better berth. He told me he wanted to take his father by surprise and lest any of Oxters or Debenham's people in Brisbane should send home the news he has given out that he was going on a little yachting cruise—'

Richard Oxters groaned.

"I don't think I had better go on," said Debenham, glancing down the few next lines.

"Go on, Debenham!" said Oxters, "I insist!'

His face has gone a strange sort of ashen gray and he leaned heavily on the table in front of him.

Debenham obeyed, but even his voice faltered a little.

"I thought it my duty to represent to him that this was a bad old boat and that I had told his father my doubts as to her being seaworthy. But then he must needs ask, "What did my father say?" So I had Mr. Oxters had assured me he had said her thoroughly overhauled and that all was now perfectly right. And then he says, with his frank smile, "If my father says it's all right, right it will be, and—"

Oxters tried to pull himself erect, but he tottered and clung with his hands to the table.

Debenham and Mrs. Wilbur ran up to him.

"Oh, sir! Oh, sir!" cried Mrs. Wilbur, and put out a hand timidly to help him.

Oxters warded her off. "Don't touch me!" he cried wildly. "I—I murdered your husband—and—heaven help me—my Dick!"

He tottered a minute and swayed from side to side, gasping for air. Then something seemed to give way that held him together and he fell and lay in a huddled heap on the floor.—Gilbert Stanhope.

Brainless.

"Would you marry for money?" asked one girl of another. "Not I; I want brains!" was the reply. "Yes, I should think so," said the first speaker, "if you don't want to marry for money!"—Philadelphia Inquirer.

### THE WORD OF A COWARD.

When Evan Bancroft, a young Virginian, went to study at the University of Heidelberg he promised his mother that he would never fight a duel. But Bancroft did not consider it necessary to refrain from joining the fighting corps and engaging in harmless encounters. Indeed, there was plenty of fighting material in him inherited from his progenitors, and this was why his mother had exacted the promise. Her father had been killed in a duel, one of her brothers through reckless exposure in the civil war, while another had been shot attempting to defend a prisoner from a mob. These shafts of death, striking so near her, caused her to brood and induced a fear that her only son should fall through a similar cause.

Bancroft at Heidelberg proved so handy with all sorts of weapons as to distance all competitors save one, a young Englishman named Horcut. The two held the record for being the best swordsmen at the university, and there was a desire among the students that they should fight for the championship.

When the terms of the fight for the championship came to be arranged Horcut insisted on certain innovations rendering the affair dangerous. It was suspected by a few that he considered Bancroft the better swordsman and, judging him to be timid, wished to force him to decline the combat. This would give Horcut the championship without fighting for it or risking to lose it. He would then return to England to enjoy his honors.

Whether or no this was his object, it was accomplished. Bancroft declined to fight except under the rules for friendly contests. Horcut accused him of cowardice, and there was now nothing for him to do but challenge the Britisher to an "unprotected" fight or be cut by the members of his corps. He declined to fight either for the championship or to vindicate his courage, but he wrote his mother the facts and begged her to release him. She declined to do so. Besides, thoughts at home assured him that she was in a critical physical condition, and if anything happened to him it would kill her.

Bancroft neither cared to give his true reason for not fighting nor believed that it would be accepted. It would have been accepted and he would have been respected for it if he could have satisfied the students of his truth. In no country in the world are parents more beloved and respected than in Germany. But to convince a couple of thousand of young men that he was not hiding behind his mother's skirts was out of the question.

So Bancroft finished his university career a cut man, though he was burning to meet his adversary. When he went home to Virginia, finding that the story had preceded him and prejudiced some people against him, he went to the farther west and engaged in sheep raising. Soon after this his mother died.

Several years passed. One day Bancroft was treading his way on a path barely a foot wide around the side of a precipice. While doing so he saw a party of tourists coming. Persons meeting on the path must pass carefully, the one taking the outside, the other the inside. Bancroft was expecting to take the outside when suddenly he recognized in the leading man in the line of tourists his old enemy at the university. He was also recognized.

"You pass outside, I say," growled Horcut, remembering that Bancroft was a coward.

"Are you armed?" asked Bancroft quietly.

"No."

Bancroft took a revolver from his hip pocket and flung it over the precipice. It struck 500 feet below.

"What do you propose?" asked Horcut, blanching.

"To settle a feud of long standing. We are about the same build. Let one of us throw the other over. If I am victorious I will pass inside the rest of your party."

Horcut stood aghast. "My God, man that would be certain death for both of us."

"It would prove us both brave men."

"But—"

"We are keeping your friends waiting."

The friends were as terrified as the principals. They begged Horcut not to accept such a fearful challenge.

"Do—do I understand," faltered Horcut, "that you will pass inside those behind me?"

"That is my intention."

"And you will permit me to pass you on the outside in safety?"

"You have only the word of a coward for that."

Horcut consented with a hanging head, and the passage was made. Some of the tourists—one had been a student at Heidelberg during Bancroft's disgrace—returned to Europa, and the story got to the university. Bancroft was invited there and when he went was enthusiastically greeted. When he told of his pledge to his mother he received an ovation.—Harold Otis.

### HELD FOR STORING LIQUOR

Aiken, Dec. 7.—Sunday Constables Holley and Samuels went down to Johnston, a suburb of Langley, and arrested Lonnie Arthur and placed him in jail on a charge of violating the dispensary law. The constables had received information that whiskey was being sold there, and Sunday they went to Arthur's house. As they entered Arthur ran out of the back door carrying several bottles in his arms. The constables followed and caught him a short distance from the house. He was informed that he could not have had illicit whiskey there, and he might as well get out of there with it. He refused to do so, and he will plead guilty.

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