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A FAMILY AFFAIR

BY HUGH CONWAY.

Author of "Called Back" and "Dark Days."

CHAPTER X.

THE FRACTIONAL COUSIN.

Miss Claussen showed very little interest in the approaching visit.

She was almost apathetic, young woman as she seemed as if all young men were alike, and that she had never seen a firework manufacturer.

"Well, they ran this and that into the empty cases. So do I. Salpêtre—Latin. Sulphur—Greek. Charcoal—history. Balls of colored fire—various information, razz and ram. The case is full and in place. The examiner applies the match and looks for the result. They burst in the wrong place," said Beatrice.

"You're right," she was amused. "You're many of them—burst and scatter the unburned charge to the winds in a ludicrous manner. Some, of course, fly straight and only come down like sticks after fulfilling their appointed tasks."

"But some succeed like yourself," said Horace.

"My dear Horace!" Frank fell into the Christian name arrangement with the greatest ease. "The more so of undergarments the humbler I grow. I was successful, but if my competitors were like those I coach it's nothing to be proud of."

"Yet your learning brings these pupils to you."

"Not a bit of it. I have a knack of bringing dull fellows on, that's all."

"And perhaps the reason why you get all the dull fellows," said Beatrice.

"You read Latin," said Frank, suddenly turning to Beatrice.

"Yes, how could you tell?"

"He laughed and gave her one of his quick glances. 'There is a little line between your brows—'

"a very little one. Young ladies always knit their brows when they study hard. Latin for a lady is hard study."

"Oh, things besides study bring lines," said Beatrice, rather coldly.

"Yes—trouble. But you can have had none. Pride may bring them. You are proud, but not severely proud. So I am proud."

"Certainly this young man was presuming. Beatrice, half displeased, said nothing.

"You've had some more champagne, Frank?"

"No, thank you. I drink very little, although your wine is enough to shake the sternness of an anchorite."

"Byron misquoted," said Beatrice quietly. "Frank gave her a quick glance.

"Are you sure?" he said.

"Certainly. I looked it up last week. It is 'Satanstoeke'."

"I looked it up some months ago, and I remember it very well. It is 'Satanstoeke'."

"Homer sometimes nods," said Horace.

"Beatrice was looking rather inquisitively at the speaker. "What did you want the quotation last week?"

"Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, you wrote the paper," continued Beatrice.

"You are provokingly acute, Miss Claussen."

"What did Frank write?" asked Horace.

Beatrice smiled. She felt she was now going to take her revenge for Mr. Carruthers' comment on her article.

"That paragraph in The Letter-day Review on landowners' responsibilities," she said demurely.

"Nonsense, Beatrice! Frank couldn't have written it. Did you?" continued Horace, more doubtfully, seeing his guest manifested no horror at the accusation.

"Young ladies should not read The Letter-day," said Frank.

"Anonymous writers should not misquote," retorted Beatrice.

"But did you write it, Frank?" asked Herbert.

The two brothers looked the picture of anxiety. Frank looked especially so.

"Frank is horribly acute," he said.

"Therefore they all understood that Mr. Carruthers was the author of the article in question, an article which, from the bold and original views it ventilated, had attracted a great deal of attention. Horace and Herbert looked aghast.

"Frank," said the former in a solemn voice, "you must be a radical."

"You must," said Herbert sorrowfully.

"Even the respected Theobald, who had listened to the conversation, pulled a long face, and seemed to say to himself, 'he must be a radical.' That his masters' cousin should so disgrace the family was very distressing.

"You must thank my uncles. I am only a visitor like yourself, Mr. Carruthers."

"And both very welcome," said Horace, courteously.

"Exactly so," said Herbert.

"Thank you," said Frank, turning to Horace. "Let me tell you what I shall call you and your brother. Mr. Talbert seems to me—Horace and Herbert too familiar. I could, like Miss Claussen, call you uncles, if you liked, but you are not old enough."

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supreme effort. Did you ever see a firework manufacturer?"

"Here's George the First," he cut on the bread again. "Here's George the Second," cutting again. "Here's George the Third," cutting again. "Here's George the Fourth," cutting again. "Here's the Queen, God bless her," cutting again. "Here's the Albert Edward, heaven preserve him!" He cut the bread for the last time, and sticking the tiny morsel that remained on a fork, gravely handed it to Beatrice.

"It's a mortifying state of things, isn't it," he said, "for those who are so thoroughly English as ourselves? Don't you sympathize with the Jacobites, Miss Claussen?"

"I think you are talking rank treason," said Beatrice. She scarcely knew whether he was in jest or earnest. Perhaps he didn't know himself.

The noisome paper was just over. He whittled came in with the crumb brush and swept away James I. and his descendants through the female side. As soon as the wine was placed on the table the door was opened and a maid in a white apron and cap appeared for a few minutes at this time whenever there was no company. The Talberts, remembering their theory, put up their eyes to the table the paternal instinct that governs night display.

"Halloo!" he cried, "another pleasant surprise." No doubt he meant to imply that Miss Claussen's presence at Hazelwood House was the first.

"Is this a bid?" he asked as the boy ran to Beatrice's side. "Will he come to me I am really fond of children."

Tempered by the irresistible bribe of grapes the boy trotted round the table. Frank picked him up, kissed him, held him, and he was so glad to see him that he almost forgot to be glad to see the other guests.

"In fact, the way in which he met the boy removed their base suspicions entirely. They were right, although it plunged them back into darkness. They felt very friendly disposed towards their cousin and were glad to be able to think him as honorable a man as themselves. Probably they never really doubted this."

Now, in reply to his question as to whose child this merry, laughing boy was, they told him the history of his appearance, and how Beatrice had begged that he might be kept at Hazelwood House.

"I don't wonder at it," said Frank. "I wish some one would send me another just like him."

Beatrice gave him a look of gratitude. They were glad to see him, although it plunged them back into darkness. They felt very friendly disposed towards their cousin and were glad to be able to think him as honorable a man as themselves. Probably they never really doubted this."

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