

**A CONSUMMATE IDYL.**  
The string that tied the dog fastened loose,  
The dog was howling on;  
That misadventure cooked his goose,  
His cup of joy was spilt.  
Said the dog, "I'm sorry I've spilt it, but I  
Swallows skin the plain;  
Two inches scald the dog has had;  
But I'm sorry I've spilt it."  
Bright eyes were passing on the street,  
Soft voices laughed in glee.  
And merry thoughts from happy hearts  
He reached the fence, he strove to climb  
With sudden, mighty strain;  
Says the dog, "I'm sorry I've spilt it; he was time;  
He never smiled again."

There ent, like robes in the spring,  
His sweethearts voice he heard,  
He heard her sister's accent ring  
The laugh, the merry jest;  
He lived for life may long be borne,  
But he died for love, he died for love;  
But that dog chewed all his lorn;  
He never smiled again.  
—*Burlington Hawke.*

## THE WEDDING MARCH.

"No. 329—A Wedding March." Such was the number and name of a picture in the Academy of a certain year which, still, for politic and personal reasons, was left undesignated. The picture was one of my painting; and I, Reginald Tracy, had been forthwith engaged to paint another, to supersede and stand by its production. Firstly, it was deemed excellent enough by the Hanging Committee to be placed on the line, and it faced you in a very prominent manner as you entered Room No. 5. Secondly, this prominent position secured for my picture a large share of attention which resulted in its finding a purchaser almost as soon as the exhibition was opened. But, as it seemed to me, the picture for which I painted it, and which I chose to my subject. That purpose involved just the least bit of romance; and although the clever critics praised the picture, and even hinted that, "Mr. Tracy had been singularly fortunate in his treatment of a somewhat unusual and difficult theme," etc., not one of them with a purpose, as I have seen, has ever said, "that purpose sprang from and ended in my mind."

It was a charming day, that on which I went to Rockhampton to sketch the water meadows, and to see my old friend, Dr. James Brooke—Jim, I generally called him—who had settled as a practitioner in that town. The whole place was steeped in mud, and the old "Joneses" in the narrow streets by the waterside reminded one of nothing so much as the blackness of the shades in some old Dutch town, where Rembrandt must have learned the special art that beats the impress of his genius to-day. The old church of Rockhampton is a fine bit of Norman architecture. Rising architects of that style, or better preserved arches, with their queer faces squeezed into the corners thereof, and which seem to impress the Rockhampton juveniles on Sundays quite as much as the service. Passing through the churchyard, I found myself at last at the church. With little hope of finding the door open I lifted the latch, when at once it yielded to my touch, and I entered. The door was but a buzzard down within the porch. I heard the sound of the organ; so stealing quietly into the grateful shade and coolness of the church, I ensconced myself in the biggest pew I could find and listened.

How soothed was the effect of the music and surroundings on that glorious day! I could not see the player, who was concealed by the curtains in front of the organ, but I knew I guessed it was a lady who played, for I imagined that only a woman's delicate touch could have made that "Kyre" speak in these tones; and there was more gentleness than power in the "Stabat Mater" into which the player glided. Then I remember the "Wedding March" succeeded; and after half an hour's private hearing of the masters, I quitted the door of church, once again into the glad sunlight that played around the gravestones, and made the world so fair to ee.

After having at my hotel, the Red Lion, I went to see Dr. Jim. It appeared that the fair player of the church was a Miss Spalding, and the only daughter of a well-to-do and retired merchant who had settled at Rockhampton some eighteen months before; and Jim, I found, had been paying his addresses to the young lady. Her father had married for the first time, and thus gave Miss Spalding a stepmother.

The old gentleman, I called him, was an easy-going man, kind-hearted in every way, generous to fault, and looked kindly enough on Dr. Jim's suit. But as to Mrs. Spalding, Jim pronounced a decidedly unfavorable opinion. She was an ambitious, and as he was, a very poor, young woman, who thought that Nelly should look something like Dr. Brooks of Rockhampton and that she should at least marry money—with which latter concern, by no means overburdened. Without any discouraging Jim's attentions, Mrs. Spalding made things difficult for him, and he was compelled to give up his suit.

Mr. Spalding was especially cut up by the parting sting of Josiah, as it was he who had manured the master thus.

Mr. Spalding, poor, easy man, was completely under the dominion of his wife. Hence Jim confessed, he was in a somewhat unsettled state of mind.

"You see, Regy," said Jim, "Nelly will not disobey her parents in any way.

That she cares for me she has confessed to me more than once. But when I press her to consent to be married at once, and to make me happy, she won't listen to me."

"My dear Jim," I responded, in my new-found capacity of guide, counsellor and friend, "she is not the first girl who has had to struggle between love and duty, or least what she conceives to be duty."

"She is so thoroughly conscientious," replied Jim, "that I fear even to press her to take the step which would make me a happy man for life. When I ask her in my despair whether she will ever choose between her step-mother's wishes and my love, she implores me not to tempt her; and so," added Jim, "I have given up the struggle."

All this interested me exceedingly. She was evidently a girl of sterling worth, and with a high sense of the duty she believed she owed to her parents' wishes. I thought over Master Jim's love affair in my mind, and the experience of human nature goes, there seems nothing like putting love, of all human emotions, to some rigid test. But how the test could be applied to the case in which I had thus been led to feel a special interest I knew not.

I confessed to her rolled over to sleep that I had no more to do than to let them. Little did I think that the sorrow was to bring the man and the man. The man was Josiah Blagden, Esquire, iron founder, of the firm of Blagden & Co., of Birmingham and elsewhere; the means was—my humble self.

The day after my arrival at Rockhampton Jim sent me over to sleep with him on his morning round, and added he: "We'll call at Mount Grove on our way home." Mount Grove was the residence of Mr. Spalding; and two o'clock found us at the gate of a very nice villa residence, overlooking the river, and standing within its own nicely kept grounds.

We were ushered into the drawing-room, where we found assembled certain persons whom Jim had not expected to see. Mr. Spalding was seated, contentedly, as also was Mrs. Spalding. Miss Nelly greeted me most cordially, adding the name of Dr. Brooke's old friend of whom he so often spoke. In addition to the family circle of three, it was clear there were strangers present. These latter were Mr. Josiah Blagden and his sister. Mr. Blagden did not look favorably. He was a stout, florid-complexioned man, remarkable for the extreme breadth of his white waistcoat and for the profusion of jewelry displayed thereon.

"A safe man, my dear sir; a very safe man," said Mr. Spalding to me at lunch. "Why, I suppose his turn-over is about half a million a year—the iron trade, you know," added the old gentleman by way of explaining that Mr. Blagden was one of the men of the world. "Safe man too," said Mr. Spalding, "I mean like a foundry-boy."

From what I saw of Mr. Blagden within the next few weeks, his origin could have been pretty accurately guessed from the manner in which he imparted the "foundry-boy's" manners into the sphere in which his industry and success had led him. He was essentially a vulgar man, who bullied his sister, a most silent little woman, with a good heart and a kindly nature, as I discovered later on.

As we drove home from lunch that day Jim was strangely depressed. I guessed his thoughts pretty accurately, for his burst out into a tirade against Mrs. Spalding on our arrival at home.

"I shouldn't wonder," Rogy," said he, "if Nelly now Blagden has been invited down here as a suitor for Nelly. He's a friend of Mrs. Spalding's, I know, because she herself comes from the 'Black Country.'

Jim's state of mind, from the moment he broached this theory, may be better imagined than described. For the next three weeks I am bound to say that his temper was well nigh uncontrollable. Every evening at Mount Grove, I felt half afraid he was going to inflict personal chastisement upon Mr. Blagden; a fear I should have much rejoiced to have been skillfully performed, after the iron master's coarse invectives against the medical profession, which had been called forth during some argument concerning doctors' fees. Nelly's attitude to him, however, had been pretty accurately guessed from the manner in which he imparted the "foundry-boy's" manners into the sphere in which his industry and success had led him. He was essentially a vulgar man, who bullied his sister, a most silent little woman, with a good heart and a kindly nature, as I discovered later on.

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