

Harkins is the happiest. He wrote a novel on the case which—well, in fact, this is it.

And Leland read it, which is more surprising that the writing of it could ever have been.

THE END.

MRS. ROHRER'S RECEPTION.

BY FRANK N. STRATTON.

How the entertainment at the home of a selfish husband came to be a great success.

FROM behind the newspaper clutched in Mr. Rohrer's fat hands issued a sonorous grunt, followed a few sound-waves later by a growling voice:

"Country Club opens its new golf ground on the 20th, and my sticks haven't arrived yet. I'll blow Manson up as I go to the office in the morning; he's had my order two weeks."

"The 20th," repeated little Mrs. Rohrer timidly, as she poured the tea. "That's the date I've decided on for my—my reception."

A grunt of double strength hailed this announcement. The long silence that followed was broken only at intervals by the rustling of the newspaper and the nervous clinking of Mrs. Rohrer's spoon.

Finally, a florid and whisker-fringed countenance rose from behind its screen and assaulted the evening meal with almost ferocious energy.

"I suppose that means that you want a check," it grumbled between mouthfuls. "What's this blow-out of yours going to cost?"

"I think I can make forty dollars do. I've figured everything down as low as——"

"You don't mean to tell me it'll cost forty dollars to shake hands with a few dozen women," Mr. Rohrer interrupted, poising a loaded fork half-way to his frowning and interrogative face.

"Why, Felix, that's *very* reasonable, I'm sure. Mrs. Austen's reception cost more than a hundred, and we owe it to——"

"We don't owe anything to anybody," growled the master of the house. "And no merchant in this town dares to leave anything in this house without the cash. You'll remember that, Jane."

"I was only trying to say, Felix," continued Mrs. Rohrer nervously, "that because of your late business success and our present social position we owe it to ourselves to make this reception an event that will cause favorable comment. Really, it can't be done with forty dollars, but if you think——"

"I think it's a piece of tomfoolery. You stand grinning at a line of smirking women on dress parade who pump your arm almost off, criticize everything in the house, gorge themselves on free lunch, and depart, vowing they've had 'a perfectly lovely time,' to pick the whole affair to pieces. It's an absurdity—a grotesque absurdity."

"But it's the custom, Felix; and it's expected of us. People have been very kind to us since we came here, you know."

"It's not us, Jane; it's my money. They know I'm the wealthiest man in their little old burg—unless it's Miller. By the way, I took the wire edge off Miller to the tune of two thousand dollars in a little deal last week."

"Indeed?" observed Mrs. Rohrer absently. "I've heard he's a very shrewd trader."

"Yes; but when he went after yours truly he found he was up against the real article. I tell you, Jane, the man—or woman, either—who can fool Felix Rohrer is welcome to all he gets."

"But—my reception, Felix," Mrs. Rohrer urged. "The cards of invitation should be printed at once, and——"

"Invitations? Cards? 'Phone 'em. 'Phone 'em, Jane."

"Felix, you know that wouldn't——"

"Write 'em out, then. Save the printer's bill."

"Now, my dear——"

"You'll write 'em, Jane—or no check. We can't sling money right and left. You must economize."

Mrs. Rohrer hid her face behind the tea-pot and made a quick, furtive dab at each eye with her handkerchief.

"Very well, Felix," she murmured.

"Let me see your estimate of expenditures, my dear," the master of the house demanded when he had finished eating. "A penny saved is a penny earned, you know, and we've saved the printer's bill already. I've no doubt I can cut your estimate down to thirty dollars."

He did; he cut it down to twenty-five dollars. Mr. Rohrer was an excellent man of business.

"Now bring on your stationery, my dear," he said, pulling a large, dark Havana from his vest pocket.

Mrs. Rohrer's tearful eyes opened wide.

"The stationery, Felix?"

"Sure! You write out those invitations, and I'll sign 'em now—along with you."

"You'll sign them!" Mrs. Rohrer's weak voice rose to almost a shriek.

"Certainly. Both sign 'em. Why not?"

"Felix!" Mrs. Rohrer expostulated desperately. "Such a thing was never heard of!"

"Well, it's going to be. We'll set a new fashion. Aren't we both in this? Who's putting up the cash, eh? Bring on that stationery, Jane."

His eyes followed the departing form of his spouse with grim satisfaction.

"I believe she meant to have 'em printed in spite of me," he muttered, shaking the ashes from his cigar. "I'll spoil that. Guess she'll not want to give another reception very soon."

As Mrs. Rohrer returned with the box of cheap stationery, she suddenly halted as if struck with an idea. A hopeful light flashed in her blue eyes, and her tightly closed lips parted in a quick smile.

"I'll do it!" she soliloquized spiritedly, and the lips closed again with a little pucker.

"How many, Jane?" asked Mr. Rohrer, adjusting his fountain pen.

"I've forty-two on my list now," Mrs.

Rohrer answered demurely, "and I think I'll have as many more. I'm not quite sure. Let me see; there's Mrs. Evans, I think I should ask her; and the Misses Burson; and Miss Stalker—no, I don't think I'll have her, either. I——"

"Great Scott, do you expect me to sit here all night while you think out forty more—and write eighty invitations? I've a most important business engagement at seven."

A merry twinkle mounted to Mrs. Rohrer's eyes.

"You might merely sign the sheets, then," she suggested, "and I'll fill them out and sign them afterwards."

Mr. Rohrer nodded, and set hurriedly to work with the fountain pen.

"You'll send them all off to-morrow, eh, Jane?" he asked as he finished the last signature with a flourish and reached for his hat.

"As many as I need, Felix," replied Mrs. Rohrer reassuringly, as her lord departed to fill the important business engagement—the opening game of the amateur billiard contest at the club. He had a hundred dollars up on Wilkins.

* * * *

Mrs. Rohrer's reception was a success. In fact, so the newspapers declared, the affair marked an epoch in the social annals of the city, and the society columns dilated upon the magnificent display of rare hot-house plants, the profusion of delicious viands, the band of professional musicians, and the elaborate and expensive gown of the charming hostess.

Mr. Rohrer had departed the day before the event on "a business matter of importance"—a three days' trip on a steam yacht for which he was negotiating. Returning, he stopped at the office on his way home, and smiled complacently as he glanced rapidly over the morning papers.

"Those reporters," he commented as he opened his accumulation of mail, "surely have nerve. I asked them to give the affair a good send-off, and they certainly have spread it on thick. Wonder what the public would think if it knew the whole business only cost me twenty-five. 'Elaborate and expensive gown,' eh? Well, hardly! 'Magnificent

display of hot'—what's this? G-r-e-a-t Scott!"

Mr. Rohrer sprang from his chair, dropped limply back again, and stared in a dazed way at the two slips he had just drawn from an envelope.

One of them was a bill from Stone & Jenkins, florists, for one hundred and fifty dollars. The other, a small sheet of cheap stationery, bore a chirography that Mr. Rohrer hadn't seen often since the days of his courtship:

MESSRS. STONE & JENKINS:

You will please honor any order Mrs. Rohrer may place with you, and present your bill promptly at my office, accompanied by this sheet.

Respectfully,
FELIX ROHRER.

A light broke upon Mr. Rohrer's bewildered brain as he closely scrutinized the signature.

"Those invitation blanks!" he gasped.

Savagely he sorted out the suspicious looking envelopes, ripped them open, and stacked them in a little heap—florists, grocer, musician, caterer, con-

fectioner, and all the others—an appalling array. The very last one—the dressmaker's—was the cruelest.

"And I've got to pay 'em all to save my credit," he almost bellowed. "Oh, Jane, Jane, how dare you?"

He grabbed the pile of bills in one pudgy hand and rushed home breathless. Mrs. Rohrer gazed up at him calmly as he stood shaking the documents in mid-air, too greatly overcome to speak.

"Yes, Felix," she said pleasantly; "the man—or woman—who can fool Felix Rohrer is welcome to all he gets, you'll please remember."

Mr. Rohrer glared down at her blankly, stammered, and grinned foolishly. Mrs. Rohrer smiled up at him sweetly.

Then the master of the house did something that he hadn't done for years; he stooped ponderously and kissed his wife. And when Mrs. Rohrer laid her head on the great shoulder the master of the house imagined that she was crying for joy.

She wasn't; she was shaking with suppressed laughter.

ALONG THE INDIAN TRAIL.

I CLAMBERED up a dark ravine,
Almost too steep to scale,
And just as strength and courage drooped
I found the Indian trail;
From ridge to ridge, from peak to peak,
The path unbroken lay,
And looking far below I saw
The bay of Monterey.

From one grand height, a noble crest
With two tall redwoods crowned,
I fancied that perchance I stood
Upon the very ground
Where some lone, startled Indian paused
To look with dread dismay
Upon the first of Spanish ships
At anchor in the bay.

Clarence Urmy.

When the Show Failed **BEGINS IN
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