

You must have suffered greatly in the last week, Tony!"

"I lost seven dollars and sixty-five cents," said Mr. Webster gloomily, "if that will serve as a guarantee of a troubled mind. I usually win." Then he rose and bent over her. "Dearest," he said softly, "don't let us be two obstinate, jealous, exacting fools again. Don't let us undo all that our highwayman has done for us—at such cost to himself!"

Her lips relaxed into a smile.

"Poor highwayman!" she murmured. "He was our good angel, wasn't he? I'd like to do something for him; wouldn't you, Tony?"

"Do something? I'd like to make him my best man!" replied Mr. Webster enthusiastically. "Tell me, dearest, how soon shall I need a best man? It must be soon. You've proved yourself notoriously incapable of taking care of yourself. How soon, how soon?"

"Well," said Clorinda meditatively, "before his term is up, I'm afraid—if they sentence him for more than a month, Tony!"

*Katherine Hoffman.*



"YOU KNOW WHAT I TOLD YOU BOTH THE OTHER TIME YOU FOUGHT."

and gorgeous tie, ruthlessly crushed under massive feet the golden yellow apples in his path.

"And Jim Stivers!" murmured Molly. "'Tisn't his evenin' to call, neither. There'll be fun when they meet!"

Swinging around the cabin toward its closed front door, Mr. Miller's oleaginous boots came to a sudden standstill as their owner stared dumbly at the perspiring Mr. Stivers emerging from the shadows of the spreading lilac-bush.

"Little off in yer dates, ain't ye, Josh?" Mr. Stivers growled, halting abruptly and nervously fingering the resplendent necktie.

"Been lookin' at the calendar upside down yerself, strikes me," rejoined Mr. Miller, tugging at the torturing collar.

Mr. Stivers advanced slowly from the shadows.

"Looky here, Josh," he said amicably, "I've come on important business, and I won't be long. You back out and pull in again in about thirty minutes."

"If there's any backin' out you'll do it," Mr. Miller responded pugnaciously. "I didn't rig up and tramp over here fer fun, neither!"

The significant accent called symptoms of alarm to the broad face of Mr. Stivers.

"Draw cuts who stays," he suggested. "Ye'll draw nothin'," answered the implacable Miller. "Ye couldn't draw to a bobtail with that face of yourn."

## The Courting of Molly McCrea.

FROM the corners of her roguish black eyes, pretty Molly McCrea, busy among pans and crocks in the milk-house at the foot of the winding path, glanced at the eastward and then at the westward slope of the cabin-crowned hill.

Striding vigorously up the westward slope, a long and lanky man, his head surmounted by a derby hat one size too large, his neck gripped firmly by a lofty collar, swept belated bees from the honey-laden clover with his well-oiled cowhide boots.

"Josh Miller! Comin' of a We'n'sday evenin'!" Molly McCrea exclaimed.

Toiling upward through the orchard on the eastern slope, a short and corpulent man, founting a long-tailed coat

Mr. Stivers took one step forward.

"If I was afflicted with the hatchet-faced mug you carry, I'd take a course of treatment," he asserted in a highly aggressive tone.

Mr. Miller took two steps forward and dexterously shed his coat.

"Ye're goin' to take coarse treatment right now, Jim Stivers," he muttered,



"NOW, LOOKY HERE, JOSH!"

with a furtive glance toward the closed door. "You've been tryin' to cut the grass from under my feet jest as long as I——"

His further discourse was precluded by the impetuous onrush of Mr. Stivers. Gripped in each other's embrace, the two crashed through the lilac-bush and waltzed over the bed of sweet peas. Then something caused a breakaway as sudden as the clinch. Mr. Stivers hurriedly recovered his hat, and Mr. Miller hastily slid into his coat as Molly McCrea came up the path.

"Evenin', Molly," Mr. Stivers panted sheepishly. "Fine evenin', ain't it?"

"Me and Jim was jest a scufflin' around a little to pass the time," ventured Mr. Miller, with an abashed glance at Molly's disdainful face.

"Oh, of course; you both tramped a mile to get to wrastle in this yard, and smash down mother's sweet peas," Molly remarked sarcastically. "You know

what I told you both the other time you fought about me. Now, git!"

"I'm ready to 'pologize, Molly," stammered Mr. Stivers. "Fact is, Josh threatened——"

"I don't want to hear a word from neither of you," Molly interrupted, turning in the cabin door. "Not now!"

"Some other time, then, Molly!" suggested Mr. Miller hopefully.

"I'm makin' no promises," Molly snapped. "I'm waitin' for you to git."

Mr. Miller bestowed one more fierce scowl upon Mr. Stivers, and shambled away toward the setting sun. Mr. Stivers hesitated, coughed feebly, stole another look at Molly's unrelenting face, and sneaked eastward. Half a mile he tramped, steadily and in silence. Then he dropped wearily upon a fallen beech at the roadside, removed his hat, mopped his brow, and meditated.

"By gosh, I'll try it!" he finally ejaculated. "She wasn't half as mad as she looked, and I miss my guess if she don't thaw out when I tell her about my heirin' them eighty acres. Josh'll be sneakin' back about to-morry to tell her about his good luck with them mining sheers, and there's no knowin' what might happen. Girls is mighty funny critters. I'll try it, by gosh!"

Hurriedly retracing his steps, Mr. Stivers once more toiled through the orchard and rounded the lilac-bush, to halt, dumfounded, at the sight of Mr. Miller bent almost double at the key-hole of the cabin door.

"Now, looky here, Josh!" he managed to begin, when Mr. Miller lifted a warning and beckoning arm.

"Sh-sh-sh! Don't make no noise, Jim. Jest slide up here and take a look."

Mr. Stivers stole to the door, applied a curious eye and then an ear to the key-hole, stepped back, and stared up into Mr. Miller's lugubrious countenance. The querulous tones of an old woman, followed by a deep, bass voice and the merry laughter of Molly McCrea, came through the door. Mr. Miller gulped at something in his lengthy throat.

"Jim," he remarked hoarsely, "I'm dry!"

"Me, too," murmured Mr. Stivers. "Thirsty as a tramp—and I hain't carried a drop fer six months, 'count of Molly bein' agin it!"

"That's my fix. Let's go to the milk-house, Jim. We'll have to put up with spring water till we can git to the store."

Arm in arm the two meandered down the path. Having partially assuaged

their thirst, they found lowly seats upon upturned crocks, and gazed mournfully into each other's faces. "Did—did he have his arm around her yet when you looked, Jim?" inquired Mr. Miller pathetically.

Mr. Stivers nodded.

"And was a kissin' her—right before the old woman," he added.

"It's all up with us, Jim," said Mr. Miller decisively. "He owns the biggest stock-ranch in ten counties. I've kind o' suspicioned somethin' ever sence he was here last Christmas. Must have got in on that last train."

"S'pose we catch him, down in the woods, when he leaves, and lick him," Mr. Stivers suggested.

"Not me! Them Texas fellers 'll shoot in a minute!"

"Ye orter have heard what she was sayin' about you," observed Mr. Stivers, after a long silence.

"Couldn't have been no worse than I heard her sayin' 'bout you," remarked Mr. Miller reminiscently.

"You can't never bank on a woman, nohow," said Mr. Stivers.

"Ain't never goin' to try again," responded Mr. Miller. "It's a waste of time. I'm goin' to 'tend to business."

"That's me!" exclaimed Mr. Stivers earnestly as he rose to his feet.

"Where ye goin', Jim?"

"Down to the store. Darn water fer drinkin' purposes, anyhow!"

"My sentiments, to a dot," said Mr. Miller, hooking his arm within that of Mr. Stivers.

At the lower boundary of the orchard Mr. Miller halted.

"Jim," he remarked thoughtfully, "strikes me the song that clown sung at the circus last week jest fits our case. Can ye start it?"

"I can; but I disremember most of the words."



"ONLY ONE GIRL IN  
THIS WORLD FOR ME!"

"Let her go; I'll jine in."

A loud, rasping roar reverberated through the woods, evoking an alarmed response from a startled owl. A nasal, shrieking voice chimed in at the second word:

Only one girl in this world for me—e—e—  
Her face is on the dollar, and her name is Libertee—e—e!

Frank N. Stratton.

### Chub's Chance.

As Ballard, entering the court-room, reached to push the swinging door, he turned his head to see what had suddenly obscured the sunlight streaming through the Gothic window far behind him. His upward-sweeping glance discovered successively a pair of ample cowhide shoes, a gigantic form enveloped by a faded calico gown, and a frowning face with steel-trap jaws and glittering eyes, shaded by a conglomerate bonnet that defied even Ballard's power of analysis.

The presence advanced; the jaws opened; a voice rumbled forth:

"You're Mr. Ballard, I reckon!"

"Madam, I am," the State's attorney confessed. "What can I do for you?"

"I want you to give Chub a chance; he's never been up before."

"And who is Chub, madam?"

The bony finger of the giantess pointed through the glass partition.

"Chub Garrity; that's him in there with the dep'ty sheriff. Give him a chance!"

Ballard frowned. To prosecuting attorneys, requests for clemency come with irritating frequency.

"He's your son, I suppose?"

"Stepson, he is," grumbled the voice; "an' sorry the day I married his dad, fourteen year ago! But the cub needs a chance."

"I think not," said Ballard, pushing the door open. "He has been the cause of altogether too much complaint from