

# THE GOLLIWOG



BY

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**H**ILDA GARLAND came in through the French window, singing the opening phrase of the *Sapphic Ode* of Brahms. There was something in the broad, open notes of what Mr. Parkyn the organist called her "lower register" that gave Henry goose-flesh all down his back. She had a big bunch of roses in her hand, and, with the conclusion of the phrase, she thrust the dew-drenched, velvety, tea-scented blooms into his face and said:

"There, little man."

Her husband was at least her own height. Not quite recovered from his cold bath, he stood on the rug before the lilies on the hearth, with his hands behind his back. He winced a little as the prickles touched his newly shaved chin, sniffed perfunctorily, and said:

"Yes, they're very nice."

Hilda glanced at him sidelong, said "Oh, did 'ums?" on a deep, caressing note, and began to arrange the roses in a copper bowl in the middle of the breakfast-table. As she leaned over he observed, to the aggravation of his general sense of grievance, that she was bare-legged, having thrust her feet into an old pair of dancing

slippers. He moved rather stiffly to his place at the table, with his back to the garden, sat down, and unfolded his napkin. Hilda kicked her slippers, one at a time and with careful aim, at the fox-terrier on the rug, and sat down behind the coffee tray. For a few seconds the only sounds in the sunny, fragrant room were the chink of cups and saucers, and the subdued "Gar-r-rn-owch-owch-owch!" of the fox-terrier, as he dutifully worried the slippers he was too grown-up and too lazy to enjoy.

Less dutifully responsive than the dog to his wife's morning mood, Henry ate his bacon in very small pieces and sipped his coffee with prim deliberation. With his elbows rather close to his sides, he might have been giving a child an object lesson in good manners. His wife, leaning gracefully in her chair against a background of lilies, at the other end of the table, kept up a continual murmur of delight, of quick sighs and chuckles, and little dovelike moans, over the perfection of June, the joy of hot coffee, the bestness of everything in the bestest of worlds—as she told the fox-terrier.

There was nothing, as one would say,

the matter with her. She was big and blonde, full-throated and amber-eyed ; not pink, but goldily clear-skinned. Subtle squarenesses in the drawing of her eyelids, in the contour of her jaw, and in the outline of her rather large and pale-carnation mouth saved her from looking too soft and round. Her honey-coloured hair was loosely knotted, and she wore what Henry would have called "a sort of a tea-gown thing" of old rose, revealing a firmly modelled neck and arms of alluring whiteness. As she sat there in her dewy freshness, crunching buttered toast with her strong white teeth, she was a living contradiction to the platitude that a woman never looks well first thing in the morning.

It was not merely the sense of contrast that made Henry—who wasn't usually quite himself till after breakfast—feel injured by her look of well-being. Her look of well-being, her seductiveness, indeed, were factors in the thought which was troubling him, which had troubled him all night. He almost wished his wife wasn't so good-looking. He himself was a good-looking man of about thirty-five, a little too neat-featured, with the parting of his dark, wavy hair a trifle too exactly centred. Instead of disappearing, the slight acidity of his expression deepened with the progress of the meal. His very nose looked pinched. His wife, who, for all her nonchalant ease, was very observant, was aware that something was wrong, but she didn't say, "What's the matter with you this morning?" as many women would have done. At last, with stammering and hesitation and qualifications, to make it sound as reasonable as possible, he out with the thought which was troubling him, and said :

"I think, you know, that it would be as well, perhaps, if you didn't see—make quite so much of young Layland."

Qualified and moderate as it was, the moment he had said it he knew he had said too much. Years ago Henry had slapped a young nephew—who wasn't used to being slapped—for some exasperating naughtiness. He would remember the look in the child's eyes as it said "Oh!"—the look, not of anger or physical pain, but of broken-hearted incredulity—until his dying day. Henry was a kindly man, and he had made a vow then never to slap a child again. The startled eyes of his wife reminded him of the startled

eyes of the child. The piteous, wounded look went from them in a moment, however, and the "Oh!" she uttered wasn't a bit like the child's "Oh!" It was the slightly questioning "Oh!" of a person willing to be reasonable.

Disarmed by her reasonableness, Henry became fluent, though confused. He had felt sure, he said, with a nervous dig at the marmalade, that it would only be necessary for him to drop a word in season. He knew that it was mere thoughtlessness on her part. It was a horrid thing to have to say, of course, but it was better—wasn't it?—to say it now, before things had gone too far.

"Too far?" she murmured, opening her eyes a little wider.

"I mean, for him," said Henry doggedly at the first hint of resistance. "He's young and impressionable. It's so easy for a romantic young man to mistake the kind of interest a woman takes in him. Of course, my dear girl, I don't mean to say that you need drop him altogether—that would be silly; but only—oh! hang it all, Hilda, it isn't necessary for me to tell you how to keep young Layland in his place."

"It isn't," she said; "but what is his place?"

"Well, his place isn't at your feet, anyhow," said Henry snappily, "with his head almost against your knees, or putting flowers in your hair, or reading Rossetti and thing-a-my-jig out of one book in the dark. One positively falls over him. It's ridiculous, that's what it is. But, as I said, though it's ridiculous now, it might easily become serious. Particularly with a man of that sort."

"What sort?" she said, eyeing him gravely, with her chin on her hand.

"Oh, young Layland is all right, of course," he said hastily. "I've nothing against young Layland. Still, all that talk about souls is a bit unhealthy. And, after all, we don't really know anything about young Layland."

"You don't," she said.

"Well, isn't that enough?" he said, exasperated by her coolness. "That's just what they're saying. They blame me, you know; they say I ought to be more careful."

"Ah," she said with quiet amusement, "they're talking. They put it into your head to speak."

"No, indeed they didn't," he said,

flushing angrily. "I shouldn't have cared what anybody said. I may be a bit of a stick, but the long and short of it is I don't like it, and, having said so, that ought to be quite enough for you."

"It is, quite enough," said Hilda mildly. "Then, do you mean," she went on, "that you don't like me to have men friends?"

"I never said that," he declared hotly. "That's absurd. I've never objected to your having men friends. What about Renwick and Cave? They come here often enough, and I'm always glad to see them."

"Renwick and Cave," she said, "are old women."

"Well, Hilda," he said with dignity, "you needn't be vulgar. As I said, I regret very much having had to speak, but I only did my duty as a husband. However, I've said what I had to say, and I shan't mention it again."

Having said what he had to say, he almost visibly dismissed the subject, and began to talk to Bob, the terrier, with unusual sprightliness, as if he had only deferred his response to his wife's morning mood until he had got rid of a disagreeable duty. Hilda seemed to bear him no ill-feeling. She chimed in to the conversation with Bob quite gaily—almost too gaily.

When it was time for Henry to go to the station she wasn't immediately to be found, and he couldn't stop to look for her. During the two years they had been married she had never missed walking

with him down the garden, and kissing him at the gate with the ever-new abandonment which made Henry feel that he was living in a fairy-tale.

She was hurt, he recognised, and he



"She had a big bunch of roses in her hand."

felt sorry for her, but it had been necessary to hurt her. He had spoken for her good. He didn't suppose that she was in the slightest degree disloyal to him, but she was rather inclined to be too impulsive, and a sentimental young fellow like Layland might easily misunderstand her.

Young Layland happened to be at the station. He came up to Henry, with the frank friendliness and at the same time deference for an older man which made him so charming, and said that he would take that opportunity to say good-bye. He must put in some time with his people in London before he sailed. No, he wasn't going by that train; he was merely seeing about having his luggage fetched. Did Garland think that Mrs. Garland would mind his dropping-in in the middle of the morning to say good-bye to her?

Henry said that of course she wouldn't, and devoutly hoped that Hilda wouldn't have the bad taste to hint to young Layland that there had been a difference of opinion on his account. Henry felt sorry, now, that he had spoken—though he wouldn't admit that he hadn't been justified—and he had a sneaking sense of relief that this attractive and morbidly sentimental young man was going away. With his boyish good looks, his bright intelligence, his quick sympathy and engaging manners, he was a young man that any woman might fall in love with.

To do Henry justice, it was partly a fair-minded recognition of the comparative disadvantages Hilda had to put up with, which had led him to speak. According to the story-books—and Henry unconsciously put great faith in story-books—she had some excuse for seeking a distraction which perfect propriety would not approve: a husband eight years older than herself, no children, and little congenial society. From the very first she hadn't fitted into the Roehurst circle. Roehurst was one of the "residential" suburbs, three miles out of Camberton, where Henry spent his working days, as junior partner in the banking firm of Raby & Garland. Henry's friends and relations—he had two aunts and a married sister living in Roehurst—were too well-bred to be hostile to his wife; but they accepted her with a mental reservation. They thought he ought to have married a Roehurst girl. At first their non-

committal attitude had rather pleased Henry. Like most conventional and sober-minded men he liked seeing people startled—providing he didn't have to do the startling himself—and it had been amusing to see the little flutter his wife made in Roehurst.

To begin with, she was almost improperly good-looking. As they said, every man wants a pretty wife, but there's a limit. They said she would make him live beyond his means. She didn't. Comparing notes with his aunts, he found that she kept house on a smaller sum than they suggested as proper for his position. But, unlike most of the good housekeepers of Henry's acquaintance, she wasn't swallowed up in house-keeping. She seemed to have short cuts of her own, and consequently a good deal of leisure. Yet she was never idle; she read, she played and sang, and she gardened, doing everything with a whole-hearted enjoyment and thoroughness, as if she were learning a new game.

For though, as Henry admitted, she had a good deal to put up with, she never seemed unhappy. She was much too positive to mope. When she didn't like a thing, she said so, and got it altered. She had, for example, laid ruthless hands upon the house he inherited from his parents; had turned out heavy furniture and dull pictures, and let in light and air and the magic of Art, so far as it might be attained by reproductions of the works of Leonardo and Botticelli and Rossetti and Watts and Whistler. Henry didn't understand all these works, but he saw that her enjoyment of them was as immediate as her enjoyment of chocolates, or dancing, or roses, and they seemed, with the chocolates and the dancing and the roses, to enter in some mysterious way into the sinfully poignant thrill which, after two years, he still received from the touch of her lips or the caress of her hand.

When they married everybody said that, as under-mistress of a girls' high school, she had of course done very well for herself. When it came out by a side wind that she had refused better chances than Henry, everybody said that of course she wanted a manageable husband. Their courtship had been short and wonderful. Lately Henry had begun to suspect that it had been a little too wonderful. He had met her in the most commonplace

way, at a tennis dance on the other side of Camberton. He danced two dances with her, and sat out a third. Then he got an introduction to her mother, and called. Hilda hadn't behaved a bit like the coy maidens—and particularly the maidens engaged in scholastic work—of the story-books. After her first half-amused hesitation, when he stammeringly began to make love to her, she had responded with a rush that carried him off his feet. The first time he kissed her—she was the first girl he had ever kissed—he was almost frightened at the result. It made him think of the pagan loves of the people in the poems of Mr. Swinburne. At the time it had seemed to Henry the most beautiful thing in the world to be loved like that. Lately he hadn't been quite so sure. The silly fool must needs try to find a reason in himself for being loved like that, and, as there wasn't any obvious reason, he questioned the reality of the love. He wanted justification by works, so to speak. He didn't understand the divine insanity of love: that she loved him like that because she did; that he was a singularly lucky dog, and there was an end of it.

Then, six weeks ago, young Layland had turned up in Roehurst. As Henry said, nobody knew much about him. He was understood to be going tea-planting in Ceylon; but he seemed to spend most of his time loafing about the country, and his only apparent occupations were playing the fiddle and sketching in water-colour. Henry took to him at once, and was one of the first people in Roehurst to ask him to dinner. Young Layland made no secret of his admiration of Hilda. On his first introduction to her, he blushed up to the roots of his fair hair, and gazed at her, open-mouthed, with a startled expression of "I say!" There was nothing in the least offensive in his admiration, which at first pleased Henry. He asked young Layland to drop in whenever he liked—and he liked very often. Still Henry didn't object: young Layland brought out another set of Hilda's apparently inexhaustible store of attractions, and her delight at getting somebody to play the fiddle to her accompaniment reacted in a still more bewitching fondness to Henry. Then people began to talk, and their talking unfortunately encouraged Henry in his

disastrous quest of what Hilda could "see" in himself. There was plenty for any woman to "see" in young Layland. With his clean-cut features, slim, athletic frame, and brilliant youth, he resembled Henry's conception of the "Greek God" of the novelists. He might, indeed, have been one of the people out of Mr. Swinburne's poetry.

As Henry sat in the train on his way to business he thought over all this, and though he felt that he had been rather an ass to speak to Hilda—particularly since young Layland was going away—he wouldn't admit that he had no cause to speak. The friendship with young Layland was innocent enough, but one never knew how that sort of thing was going to end. She had been indiscreet, to say the least of it. It was only natural, he supposed, that she wouldn't admit that she had been indiscreet.

It was because she must feel that she had been in the wrong that he felt sorry for her. During the day it occurred to him that, having for the first time since their marriage had to correct her, it would be rather nice to do something special to make it up. So he went to a bookshop, and, with a subtlety remarkable for him, bought her a new edition of "Omar Khayyám," with pretty illustrations on vellum. He hoped that she would understand, from the nature of the gift, that his criticism of her unguarded familiarity with young Layland wasn't due to puritanical narrowness. Choosing the book made him lose his train, and he had to wait nearly an hour for another. Consequently, when he got home, Ann, the house-parlourmaid, with, he thought, an odd look of constraint, told him that Hilda had already begun dinner.

He went quietly into the dining-room, with the book in his pocket, intending—and even after two years he thrilled in anticipation—to put his hands over Hilda's eyes, draw back her head, and kiss her on the mouth before he dropped the gift into her lap. Hilda sat in her usual place, but on her right was what he first thought to be an uncommonly gaily-dressed child, but then perceived to be a large doll. It was of the kind known as Golliwogs. It was a Golliwog of the very largest size.

"What the—" he began, forgetting all about his intention.

"Isn't he too sweet?" said Hilda cheerfully: "I got him at Burkinshaw's for four and elevenpence-halfpenny."

Henry, feeling rather uncomfortable, went round to his place and sat down before he said coldly: "What's the idea?"

"The idea? Oh, one must have somebody to pet, don't you know."

Henry recognised that this was the moment to say, "I was an awful ass this morning, and I want you to forget it," but his pride of logic wouldn't admit that he hadn't been justified. He contrived a weak smile, however, and said: "I suppose this is your get-back on me for this morning."

"That," she said, "is my Golliwog. Oh, Henry, mayn't I have a Golliwog? Of course," she continued, with an abominably clever assumption of disappointment, "if I'd thought that your objection to my men friends extended to a poor harmless Golliwog, I——"

She was interrupted by the entrance of Ann to take away the soup. At the back of his head Henry had been thinking about Ann. She and the cook were Hilda's adoring slaves, but they were only human. Ann came in without turning a hair. She was a little redder than usual, and she held her head stiffly, so that she shouldn't look at the Golliwog, and Henry could hear her s'ays creaking with suppressed breathing. The difficult moment passed; the soup went out, the lamb came in, and Ann closed the door, upon what explosion Henry could only guess.

"I say," he said in a conciliatory tone, "a joke's a joke, but don't you think it has gone far enough?"

"Joke? What joke?"

"That silly thing."

She said: "I don't think it's very good taste to point at your guests with the carving-knife, or to criticise them in their presence."

"I wonder you care to make me ridiculous before the servants," said Henry severely.

"You ridiculous? But he isn't your Golliwog. He's my Golliwog—bless him. Unless, of course——"

Her lips quivered, but she maintained an innocent gravity. She was in white, this evening, foamy and delicious. A copper-coloured rose at her breast emphasised the strange beauty of her eyes.

Henry controlled his temper, but he was determined to make her see his point, that he was technically in the right, and he said: "I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings this morning, but I still maintain——"

"Really, Henry," she said, wilfully misunderstanding him, "you're making an absurd fuss about a Golliwog."

"It isn't the Golliwog," he said, raising his voice a little; "it's your having it, and the reason."

"But I *like* my Golliwog," she said purringly, and tucking in the silk at her breast.

"Well, I don't," snapped Henry.

"No," she said. "I think, you know," she went on reflectively, "that you're very unreasonable, Henry. I shouldn't have said that Golly was 'the sort of man' that any husband could object to. You remember what Gérard de Nerval said to the police, when they objected to his leading a lobster about the boulevards by a blue ribbon? 'He's a beautiful colour, he knows the sea's secret, and he doesn't bark.'"

This was gratuitous; Henry's acquaintance with the French language was rudimentary, and Hilda and young Layland had unintentionally annoyed him by quoting French poets to each other.

"Well," she continued, "Golly isn't nearly so good-looking as you are, he doesn't talk about music or poetry, and I promise you that you'll never fall over him in the dark. It seems to me that you're difficult to please in the matter of my men friends."

Henry gave it up. It was a feeble joke, anyhow, he thought, and perhaps the best way was to let her carry it on until she recognised its feebleness. They finished their meal in silence, and then she said:

"We're going to have our coffee in the garden, by the syringas. Will you join us?"

"Augh!" he said.

"Come along then, Golly," she said, lifting the absurd creature from its chair; "the little husband seems cross. Mind, Henry," she said, catching an evil glance from the tail of his eye as she passed him, "if you destroy him I shall get another. You'll find it expensive." He heard her jödelling in her clear voice, as she went down the garden, "And ano—o—ther, and ano—o—ther, and ano—o—ther!"

Henry spent a miserable evening. It was absurd, he argued, to take the thing seriously, and yet—there it was. He couldn't bring himself to try to make it up with his wife, with that creature between them. When they parted for the night—the Golliwog was beside her on the sofa—he tried not to seem sulky, and she hoped, considerately, that he would

watering his asters. The homely figure in the torn flannel trousers, the burnt pipe, the familiar smell of hot, wet earth, all made Henry's mission more difficult. He followed Nevinson from plant to plant, talking disjointedly, and finally said :

"I say, Nevinson, I want to talk to you about my wife."



"'You're making an absurd fuss about a Golliwog.'"

sleep well. By morning, he thought, she would have got tired of the joke.

But in the morning the Golliwog was there to breakfast. It was there to dinner. Hilda was in her usual spirits, and quite unembarrassed. Henry began to be alarmed. Supposing it wasn't a joke after all? For all her joyous sanity there was a queer strain in Hilda—indeed it was part of her agitating charm. After dinner Henry strolled round to see his friend, Dr. Nevinson. He found him

"Oh?" said Nevinson, straightening his back, with a rising accent of concern, "isn't she well?"

"She seems all right, but——"

Nevinson tactfully stooped to loosen the crust of earth round a seedling.

"She's all right—physically," said Henry with an effort, "but, to tell you the truth, I'm worried about her mind."

"Oh, my dear chap!" said the doctor incredulously.

"Fact of the matter is she's taken up

with a Golliwog," Henry blurted out in desperation.

"With a what!" cried Nevinson, putting down his watering-can.

"With one of those dam' Golliwog things. You know—black, woolly dolls," said Henry, in a quick, earnest murmur.

Nevinson made a noble effort to preserve his gravity, but finally went off into a howl of laughter.

"Ssh! you fool, your wife will hear us," said Henry, scowling at him. "It's all very well to laugh, but it's serious, I can tell you. Of course, if you like to treat your patients as a joke——" He half-turned to go.

"No, no, no!" said Nevinson, still spluttering, but with a hand on Henry's arm.

He soothed the injured man, and asked him a question that caused him to say impatiently: "No, no; it isn't that. Wish it was."

"Well, doesn't she give any reason?" said Nevinson, whose scientific curiosity was aroused.

"Not exactly," said Henry, after a moment's hesitation. "We had a little difference about—oh, about a small matter, and this seems to be her way of showing her resentment."

Nevinson made a queer, strangled noise, and asked if Henry would like him to look in.

"Not while I'm at home," said Henry hastily, and then it was agreed that Nevinson should make an opportunity to beg some of Hilda's carnations.

With what Henry could not help feeling was indecent alacrity, he did so the next day.

"One of the sanest people I've ever met," he reported to Henry in the evening. "I didn't see—your friend," he added, with unconcealed disappointment; "but it can't be anything more than a girlish freak. She'll get tired of it—if you don't play into her hands!" He went on to say that he'd often remarked to his wife that though they would be sorry to lose the Garlands, he wondered Henry didn't move over to the other side of Camberton, where there was more and livelier society.

"Mrs. Garland is wasted here," he said, with a doctor's liberty. "We're a stuffy lot in Roehurst."

The next evening, at dinner, the inevitable happened. Ann, coming into the room with melted butter, let fall an

unguarded look upon the Golliwog, and all her loyal service went to pieces. Hastily setting the butter-boat on the table, she dropped upon a chair, legs extended, heels hammering the floor, cap awry, and to the "whang whang" of the falling tray she "hoo-hoo-hooed!" like a woodpecker.

"Oh, Missis; oh, Master; oh, Master; oh, Missis; I can't help it!" she cried.

"Oh, the Gug-gug-gug-golliwog!"

Henry got up with an oath, marched out of the room and slammed the door. Rhythmical repetitions of "Oh-ee-ee! The gug-gug-golliwog!" pursued him to his den.

Hilda soothed the rocking girl, who seemed likely to be dangerously affected by her long-suppressed outburst.

"I can't stop another hour. I'll sacrifice my wages," she moaned through her apron. Hilda said that Ann had better take a month's holiday, and she left the house that evening. When Henry had recovered his temper so far as to be able to think coherently, he said to himself, "Now she's beaten; she'll have to give in." He didn't know Hilda. The next morning she went to a servants' registry office in Camberton and asked for what, I believe, is known as a "supply." In an incredibly short time four candidates came out to Roehurst. Three she dismissed after examination as unsuitable; but the fourth, a tall, painfully thin, expressionless middle-aged woman, she engaged "for her looks." When Hilda had explained her duties and arranged her two evenings a week to go to chapel, she said:

"Oh, by the way, you'll find your master very considerate, but he has one peculiarity. He has an extraordinary affection for a—a sort of doll, a Golliwog. You know what a Golliwog is?"

"Yes'm. A black, woolly doll. Same as children play with."

"Exactly. Well, your master doesn't play with it, but he likes it near him at meals. It was given him," said Hilda with downcast eyes, "by a very dear friend."

"Yes 'm. I understand 'm. I knew a gentleman——"

"Never mind the gentleman—Caroline, I think you said your name was? At breakfast, then, and dinner you are to lay a place for the Golliwog, just as you do for us—on your master's right. Not



at luncheon—unless he happens to be at home. Nor when we have company. Your master only needs it when he is lonely."

"Very well 'm. Is that all 'm?"

"That is all, Caroline, thank you."

At the door the gaunt figure hesitated. "Please 'm. How do I speak of it—'im? As Master Golly?"

"As Master Golly," said Hilda firmly.

As soon as the door closed Hilda flung herself on the sofa, stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth, and drummed with her heels in a silent convulsion.

Caroline was colossal. She might have been brought up with a family of Golliwogs. She didn't, like Ann, try not to see the Golliwog, but, with a perfectly expressionless face—though, evidently, as Hilda saw, with the intention of pleasing the master—gave it an almost motherly care. When, in passing, Caroline stopped to straighten the black, smiling figure on the chair, Hilda nearly choked. She got through the meal without an explosion; though, later, when Caroline came into the drawing-room with whisky and glasses she again nearly broke down.

"Please 'm," said Caroline, with decently folded hands, "do Master Golly sleep in the master's room, or have he a cot?"

"Oh, I'll see about that, Caroline," said Hilda through her teeth, in a wild murmur.

Henry saw that it was going to be a fight to a finish. In the security

which came from a loyally dumb cook and a house-parlourmaid absolutely wanting in a sense of the ridiculous, Hilda gave loose rein to her imagination and began to embroider the joke. She affected to assume that Henry shared the affection she pretended for the Golliwog, and talked solemn nonsense about the "Place of the Golliwog in Well-ordered Homes." At last, she said, the question of the Tertium



"Well, you'll know better another time."

Quid had been solved satisfactorily. She sketched out an advertisement for the fancy goods trade:—"A relief to jealous husbands, a boon to the *femme incomprise*, without fear of scandal. Always good-tempered, never *de trop*. Can be kept with equal propriety in the boudoir or the bedroom." Every evening, when Henry came home to dinner, she had some fresh development of the "Golliwog idea" to

discuss with him; and by-and-by, to his alarm, Henry found that he was getting interested, and unconsciously thinking of little clever contributions to the idea on his own account. As he once unguardedly admitted, in a weakly conciliatory moment, the Golliwog was "such a cheerful little beast."

It ceased to be an active annoyance, but instead became a measure of all he was losing. For, with a heartless depravity, of which he could not have believed her capable, Hilda rehearsed upon the Golliwog in his presence all the adorable fondness which had been his due—the curdling tones of the voice, the caressing movements of the hand—until the poor fool writhed in his chair with the sense of deprivation. Short of actually kissing the brute, she ran through the whole range of her witcheries.

Henry had the meagre satisfaction of knowing that his absurd punishment was kept from his neighbours. Nevinson, so far as he knew, had been professionally discreet, and he could not help admiring the diabolical ingenuity with which Hilda got rid of the Golliwog if anybody came in. But he was always in dread that she would be tempted to play to a wider audience.

One evening she said reflectively: "His morals are perfect, and his education in manners is so complete that he never makes a *faux pas*; but don't you think, perhaps, the *spiritual* side of his nature—? I was thinking this afternoon," she went on, with a sanctimonious drawl, "when our dear vicar called—"

Henry turned pale.

"Hilda," he said hoarsely, "if you show that thing to the vicar—or anybody—I'll leave you. I swear I will. You've got to chose between—"

"Yes? Between you and the Golliwog?" she murmured, as he stopped in confusion.

"Damn it all, yes, if you like," he said,

recklessly—"between me and the Golliwog."

"I was afraid it would come to that," said Hilda, with a sigh. "You're such a jealous husband. But, Henry, I don't think even a British jury would give you your freedom on account of a Golliwog."

"Oh, for heaven's sake let it drop!" he cried. "I've had enough of it. I'll admit I was a fool about young Layland."

"You were," she agreed.

"'Pon my soul!" he said miserably, "I wish he'd come back."

"Well," said Hilda judiciously, "I must say he was better company than you've been for the last ten days. But I don't think he'll come back," she added with a meaning smile; "he's much too happy where he is."

"What do you mean?" said Henry.

She took a letter from her pocket, and sat on the arm of his chair as he read:

"DEAR MRS. GARLAND,

"It's all right, and I owe it all to you. We are to be married the week before I sail. Violet—"

"Who's Violet?" said Henry.

"She was one of my pupils," said Hilda, gently repulsing his eager arm. "She's isn't good enough for him, but she's rather a sweet girl. They've been engaged for months, but she funk'd going out to Ceylon with him, and wanted to wait. However, I seem to have persuaded her that being married was—well, was worth some risks—although, of course, if I'd known" (she affected a whine) "how horrid husbands could be—"

"Oh, Hilda, what a beast I've been!" said Henry penitently.

She caught his head up to her breast with the crook of her arm, and gave him the first kiss he'd had for ten days.

"Aw, did 'ums!" she said. "Well, you'll know better another time."