

The Revolt of the —

A page from the domestic history of the Twentieth Century.

BY ROBERT BARR.

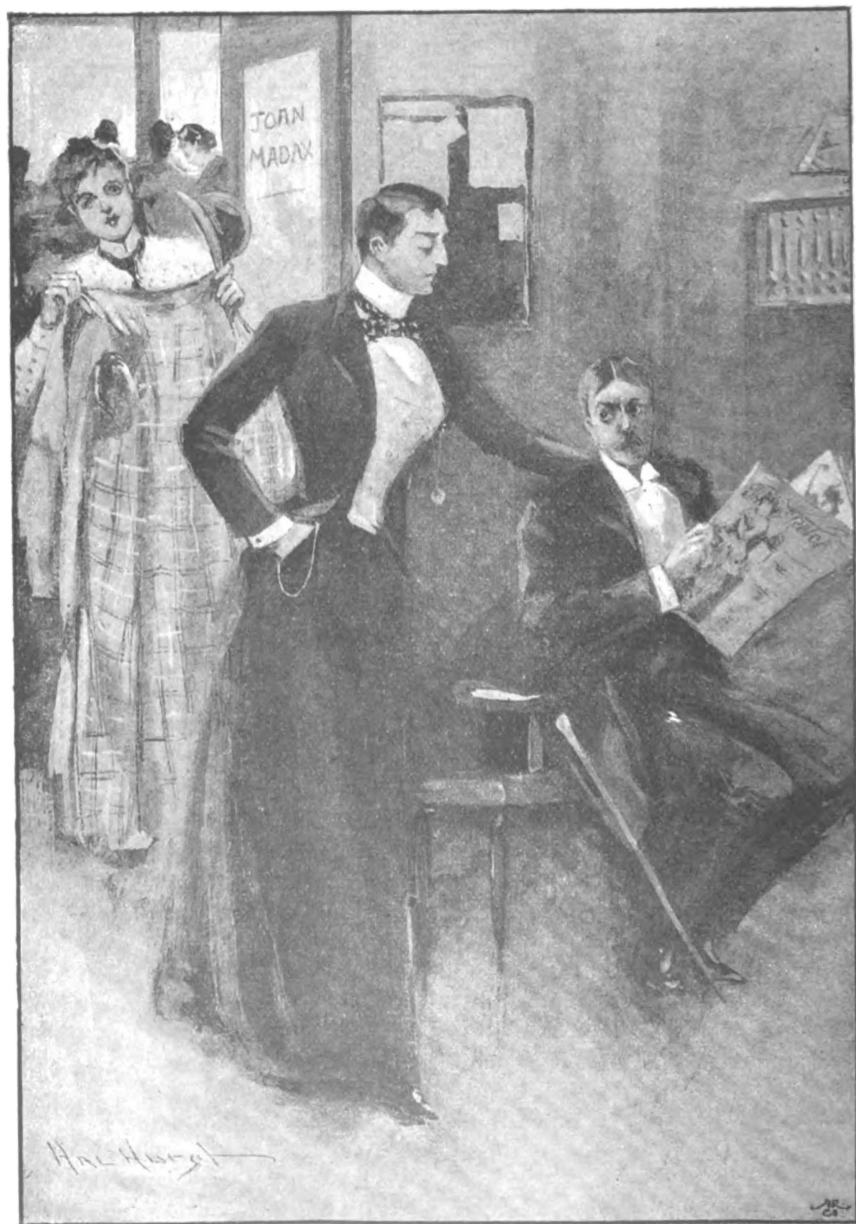
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAL HURST.

MR. MADAX sat before his desk in a most despondent attitude, his head in his hands, and his hands in his hair. Things were going badly in the City, as, alas! they often do. Mr. Madax was alone in his office in Old Gold Alley. He wanted time to think, and had given orders that he was not to be disturbed. All the thinking he appeared able to do did not seem to help matters, so at last he pulled himself together and paced up and down the room. Finally, he stopped and said to himself, "That seems the only thing to do. I shall consult with my wife. I wish she came home more frequently, and then we could talk over these matters."

He seized a telegraph blank and wrote: "Mrs. John Madax, 20, Bullion Court, City. Can you run over to Old Gold Alley for a few minutes? I wish to consult you on business.—MADAX."

He rang the bell for a telegraph boy, and sent the message; then paced up and down his room again, waiting for his wife to appear. Instead, there came a prompt answer, which he tore open and read feverishly: "Sorry I can't come this forenoon. Too busy. Call on me at one o'clock, and I will take you to the club, where we can lunch and have a quiet talk.—JOAN MADAX."

The worried man consulted his watch. It was not yet eleven. It would be more than two hours before he could see his wife. He sat down at his desk and devoted himself for those two hours to what business there was in hand. Then he brushed himself up a bit, took his walking-stick, and drove in a hansom to his wife's offices in Bullion Court. After having sent in his name, a neat little girl showed him into a room and told him that Mrs. Madax would be with him presently. She was sorry to keep him waiting, but she sent a copy of *The Sketch* for him to look over during the interval. *The Sketch* was a paper started in the nineteenth century, and was at that time considered to be rather in advance of other slow-going weeklies. Now, however, it was thought to be the correct paper for a man to read, although the women paid little attention to it. In the reception room two or



" SHE WAS DRESSED ALMOST LIKE A MAN."

three other men were waiting, nursing their hats. Presently the office-girl came in, and told them all, except Madax, that Mrs. Madax couldn't possibly see them until later in the day, as she had an appointment; and would they be good enough to call about four o'clock. So the men took their departure, and Madax was left alone with his paper, although his wife entered very soon after. She was a tall woman, with fine, clear-cut decided features. As far as the upper part of her was concerned she was dressed almost like a man. She wore a somewhat glaring necktie and a stand-up collar. Her brown hair was cut short and parted at the side, while the hair of her husband, dark and streaked with grey, seemed to part naturally in the middle. The neat tailor-made skirt which Mrs. Madax wore had pockets at each side, high up, and very similar in cut to a man's pockets. Her right hand was thrust into one of these pockets, and she jingled some coins and keys as she entered the room where her husband was waiting.

"Well, John," she cried, "excuse me for keeping you, but we have had a very busy morning. However, if you are ready now, I am. We will go to the Pine Ear Club and have lunch." She approached her husband as she spoke, and patted him with some affection on the shoulder. He looked up at her, and smiled. Somehow her influence had a soothing, protective air about it, which made the man feel he was not battling with the world alone. One of the numerous girl clerks came in with a long ulster, which Mrs. Madax put on, thrusting one hand in the armhole, and then the other, while the girl held the garment by the collar. When Mrs. Madax had buttoned up the ulster and put a jaunty round hard hat on her head, she looked more like a man than ever, and Madax himself seemed almost effeminate beside her.

"Is my brougham at the door?" she asked the girl.

"Yes, madam."

"Come along, John, we have no time to lose," said Mrs. Madax, decidedly, and, leading the way, she opened the carriage door, whereupon he stepped inside.

"To the Pine Ear Club," said the lady to the coachman.

She took her seat beside her husband, and the carriage drove off toward the West End. In a short time it drew up before a palatial building standing where the Hotel Metropole once stood. This, as everyone knows, is the Pine Ear Club, the sumptuous resort of women engaged in business in the City. It is higher priced than the Carlton or Reform, but is much more luxurious than either of these old-fashioned men clubs.

"Call for me at half-past three," said the lady.

The stately doors of the club were opened by two girl porters, and the couple entered. The lady wrote her husband's name in a book which was on a stand in the hall, and together they entered the large dining-room, where they took their places at



"'WE WILL TAKE THE REGULAR CLUB LUNCH,' SHE SAID."

one of the small tables set for two near one of the large front windows.

"We will take the regular club lunch," she said to one of the waiters. "And bring a bottle of '84 champagne—a large bottle."

"I-I don't think I care for champagne," said Madax, hesitatingly; "it gives me a headache."

"Nonsense," cried his wife; "a glass or two will do you good. You look worried."

"I am worried, and that is what I wished to see you about."

"Well, we won't talk business during lunch, if you please"—adding, as she leaned back in her chair, "it's a habit I never indulge in. It's bad for one. We can have a talk in the smoking-room afterwards. How are the children?"

"Very well, thank you. The girl is a little hard on the boy, and knocks him about a bit, but they are getting on very well."

"Poor little fellow," said Mrs. Madax. "Boys are such a worry to their parents, when one thinks that they have to encounter this world alone. I must run down and see them next week, if I can."

"I wish you would," said Madax; "the children miss you very much. Why don't you come home oftener?"

"Well, very soon I expect to be able to do so," she replied; "but, like you, I have a great deal on my mind at present, and the market requires close watching."

"Can't you come home with me to-night?" he asked. "The children would be so pleased to see you."

"No," she answered, "I have to take Sir Cæsar Camp out to dinner to-night."

"To-morrow night, then?" he suggested, deprecatingly.

"No," said the lady, shaking her head, "it's worse still to-morrow night. I have a lot of stockbrokers dining with me at the Holborn."

"It must cost you a lot of money, these dinners on every night."

"Yes, it does," said Mrs. Madax; "but my experience is, if you want to make a good business deal with a man, you must first feed him well. I always see that the wines are irreproachable. I will say one thing for the men, that they always know good wine when they taste it."

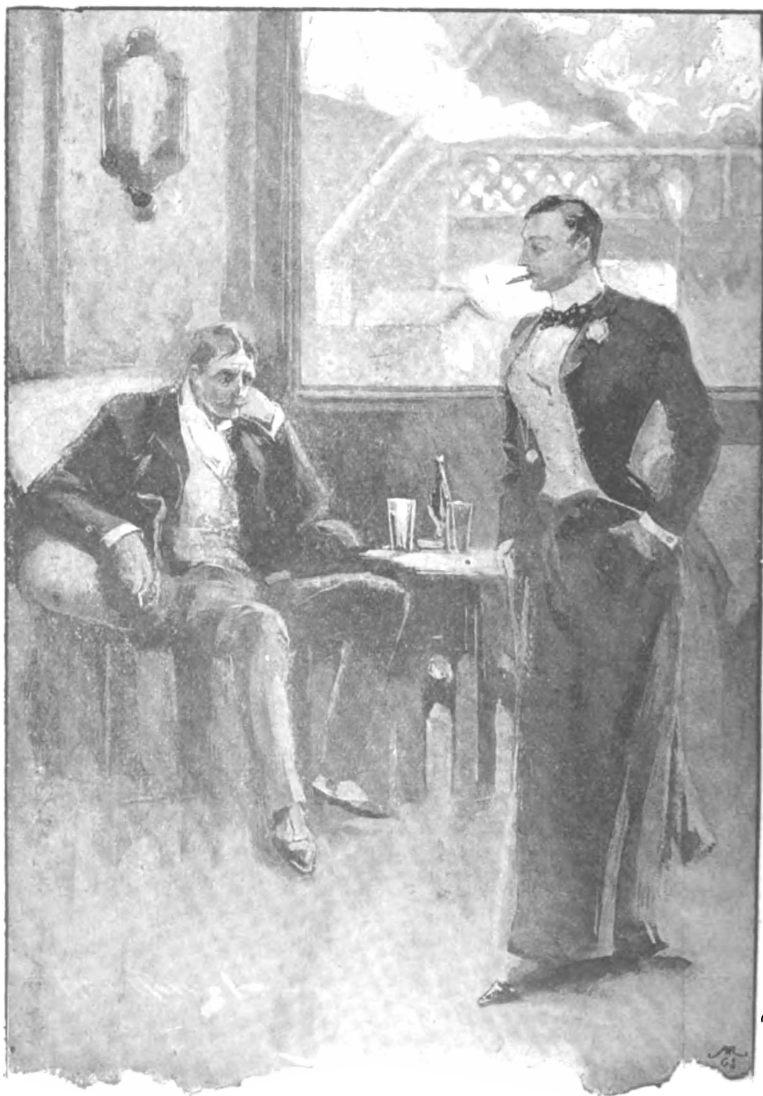
"Well," said Madax, "I will tell the children that you send your love to them, but I think, you know, that a woman shouldn't lose sight of her children, even though business is absorbing."

She urged him to take his share of the champagne, but Madax declined, saying, "A man must keep his head clear for business now-a-days."

"Yes," said his wife, "I suppose a *man* must."

There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in her voice, and she put unnecessary emphasis on the noun. Madax looked grieved, but

said nothing. How often do women in their thoughtless rudeness cause pain to the tender hearts of those who love them !



"'NOW, JOHN,' SHE CRIED, 'WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?'"

After lunch was over, Mrs. Madax led the way upstairs to the private smoking-room which she had reserved for their use. It

was in a corner of the club building, overlooking a bit of the river, and commanding a view of Charing Cross railway bridge.

"We will be quite undisturbed here," she said, "and can talk business."

Ringing a bell to give an order, she asked her husband—

"What will you drink?"

"Nothing, thank you," he replied, but added afterwards, "I will have a glass of milk and soda, if you can get it."

"You will smoke, of course," said his wife.

"A cigarette," answered Madax.

When the waiter appeared, Mrs. Madax said, "Bring a glass of milk and soda, some of the best Egyptian cigarettes, two Havana cigars, and a glass of special Scotch with Seltzer."

When these materials were brought and the waiter had disappeared, Mrs. Madax walked to the door and turned the key in it. Her husband lit his cigarette from the match she held out to him, and then, biting the end from her own cigar, she began to smoke. She thrust her two hands deep down in her pockets, and began to pace up and down the room.

"Now, John," she cried, "what's the trouble?"

Mr. Madax's name was Billy, but everybody called him John because his wife's name was Joan. Mr. John Madax was the name he was known by.

"Some months ago," began Mr. Madax, "I went into a wheat deal, and I don't quite see my way out."

Mrs. Madax stopped in her pacing, and faced her husband in surprise.

"A wheat deal?" she cried. "Which side of the market are you on?"

"Oh, I'm on for a rise."

His wife made a gesture of despair, and began walking up and down the room again.

"What, in heaven's name, did you buy for a rise for?"

"Well," said Madax, very humbly, "you see, the American wheat crop had practically failed, and I thought I was pretty sure of a rise."

"Why didn't you speak to me about it?" she cried.

Her husband flushed uneasily.

"I wanted to do something off my own bat," he said. "Of course, I had no idea at that time there would be a corner in wheat."

"Corner!" she cried, contemptuously, "there's always a corner,

there's bound to be a corner. Don't you know enough not to look to the United States any more for indications of the wheat market? India and the Baltic hold the key to the situation."

"Yes, I know; at least, I know now," he said; "but there is no use in upbraiding me for what I have done. I am up to the neck in wheat, and the signs to-day are that it is going lower than ever. Now, what would you advise me to do, Joan?"

"Oh, advise you!" she cried. "What's the use of coming to me when it is too late. I advise you to get out of it as cheaply as you can."

Her husband groaned.

"I am afraid," he said, "that will mean practical ruin now."

"Well, my opinion is that wheat is going lower still."

"Then it is utter ruin for me," said Madax, dejectedly.

Mrs. Madax stopped once more in her pacing the room, and confronted her husband. "John," she said, "why don't you give up your office in the City, and go home and take care of the children."

A spark of resentment appeared in the man's eyes as he gazed at his wife.

"I don't want to be entirely dependent on you," he said at last.

"Pooh," said his wife, and then she added, "I will make you a handsome allowance for housekeeping, and as much as you want besides. You are worrying yourself to death about business. You ought to take a run to Brighton, or go off to Monte Carlo, and give up bothering about City affairs."

The man sighed.

"That's all very well, but you don't see that I want to make some money for myself."

"But you are not making it, you're losing it. You say you are up to the neck; how much does that mean?"

"Twenty-five thousand pounds," he said with a sigh.

"Dear, dear," she said, "and I suppose that is all the money you have."

"It is more than all the money I have," he answered.

"I wish you had spoken to me before, it is too late now. Don't you see that?"

"Yes, but I had something to propose. You spoke of taking Sir Cæsar Camp to dinner. Now, I don't know what you want to get him in on, but I do know that I could get him on my side of the wheat deal, and he would bring in others. Then we might be able to stop the break in the market."

Mrs. Madax's eyes sparkled as she looked down at her husband.

"Can you really do all that?" she asked, almost breathlessly.

"Yes, if I had any assurance that we would get out with a little profit. It seems to me that all their influence thrown in on our side of the market would give us rise enough to get out of the hole at least."

"Oh!" said his wife, "that is a different matter. I didn't know you had any plans. Yes," she added, after thinking a moment with knitted brows, "that's a first-rate idea. How much money do you think it would all total up to?"

"About a million," said Madax, pleased to see that he was getting more attention than censure.

"A million," said his wife, more to herself than to him. "Are you certain you could get all that amount on your side of the market?"

"Quite certain."

Mrs. Madax, as she continued her pacing up and down, seemed to be making some mental calculation. She finally asked:

"Who are you running against? Who is at the head of the corner?"

"Oh, that," said Madax, "none of us knows. The business is done through the Tokio and Jamboree Bank, but we don't know who is behind it."

"Now, doesn't it strike you that the first thing for you to do is to find out who you are butting against? If it's a stone wall the sooner you know it the better, so that you can stop before your head gets hurt. If it's a hedge you might manage to get through. It would have been my first work to find out who was against me."

"But," said her husband, "don't I tell you that I didn't know there was anybody on the other side of the market."

"Oh!" said his wife, impatiently, "you can always count on somebody being on the other side of the market. So you can't find out who it is?"

"We can't," said her husband.

"Very well," she said. "Now listen to me. You have got twenty-five thousand pounds in this, and if you can get all the money of Sir Cæsar and his friends to help you, I will guarantee that you will come out with double—that is, fifty thousand pounds."

"Do you mean it?" cried her husband, eagerly.

"I mean it," said his wife, solemnly.

"And may I tell Sir Cæsar that you said so?" he asked.

"No, whatever information I wish Sir Cæsar to have I will give him myself. You will tell him that you have had private information, and are not allowed to mention the dealer's name."



"LET HERSELF INTO THE HOUSE WITH HER LATCH-KEY."

"Very good," said Madax, with an intense relief in his face.

"Do not let it get out," continued his wife. "Use all your force and see if you can raise the market, and as soon as the price gets up, sell out at once. Have all your plans made for selling out. Promptness is the thing in these matters. Now I must go. I will drop you down at your office."

Mr. Madax knew what his wife said about the markets generally came true, so he, in great jubilation, telegraphed Sir Cæsar Camp and others to meet him at his office, and they did so. He told him that he had private information about the market, and, after some slight hesitation, they all went in. He arranged with them that the sale would be made at once after the rise.

Next day it was announced that a million of money was put against the corner, and wheat sprang up a few points, but not as much as they had expected it would. Madax could have sold out without loss, but saw that he would not double his money, for the corner was stronger than any of them had thought. But after the slight rise, down went the price of wheat again. The very bottom seemed to have dropped out of the market. Madax's twenty-five thousand pounds were swept out of sight, and so was the million that his deluded friends had put in with him. All confidence that Madax had put in his wife had now departed, so he merely telegraphed to her that he was ruined, and went home a broken man.

About eight o'clock that night a carriage drove up to the door, and his wife sprang out and let herself into the house with her latch-key. When she entered the room, her husband never looked up, but she crossed to where he sat, and patted him gleefully on the back.

"Come, come, my poor infant. Cheer up!" she said.

Madax's only answer was a groan of anguish.

"And so your little twenty-five thousand has gone with the rest?" she said.

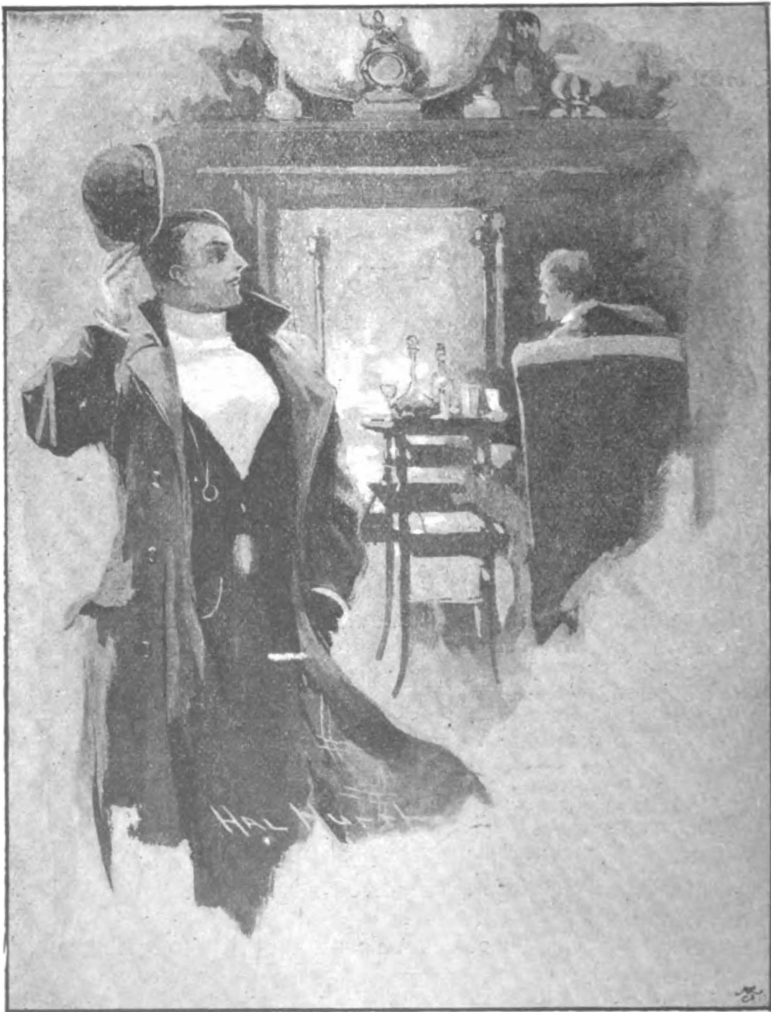
"You told me I would double my money," he said, "and I believed you."

"Of course you believed me, and here it is," she said, taking a cheque from her purse. "There's my cheque for fifty thousand pounds, so you have doubled your money."

"What do you mean by that?" said her husband, looking up.

"Mean? You poor child! I mean that I am the head of the corner. It doesn't matter now who knows it. That was the

reason that I had Sir Cæsar and the others dining with me. I had no idea that you were in on the other side, and when you



"TA-TA. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF."

told me that you could get them to assist, it seemed too good to be true; for I did want that million. Husbands are of some use after all. Now, my boy, you take that cheque, and go down to

Monte Carlo. I may be able to go after all this work is over. I am very much obliged to you for the million you threw in my way, and consider it cheap at fifty thousand pounds. Draw on me for all your expenses while you are at Monte Carlo. I am sure you will find the tables much less expensive than the London wheat market. I am sorry that I can't stay with you, but I am on for a dinner in the City. Those who were with me in the wheat corner are giving me a dinner to-night, and I am due there at nine o'clock. I am sorry I can't wait to see the children. Give them my love, and tell them I will run down in a few days and pay them a visit—that is, unless you take them with you to Monte Carlo. It must be lovely down there just now. Well, ta-ta. Take care of yourself, and your cheque. I may see you at Monte Carlo."

And with that she left the room, and was waving good-bye from the carriage window, as the dazed man stood watching her through the open door, before he had quite realised the situation.

