

AGAFYA

Honestly, this choosing business is so difficult. If there were just one or two, but four! Take your pick. Mr. Anuchkin isn't bad-looking, but he's a bit skinny, of course. And Mr. Podkolyosin isn't too bad, either. And truth to tell, though he's rather stout, Mr. Omelet's still a fine figure of a man. So what am I to do, if you please? Mr. Zhevakin's also a man of distinction. It really is difficult to decide, you can't begin to describe it. Now, if you could attach Mr. Anuchkin's lips to Mr. Podkolyosin's nose, and take some of Mr. Zhevakin's easy manner, and perhaps add Mr. Omelet's solid build, I could decide on the spot.

But now I've got to rack my brains! And it's giving me a fearsome headache. I think it'd be best to draw lots. Turn the whole matter over to God's will, and whichever one comes out, that'll be my husband. I'll write all their names on a bit of paper, roll them up tight, then so be it. Life's so trying for a girl, especially when she's in love. It's something no man will ever understand, and anyway they just don't want to.

Now, that's them ready! All that remains is to put them in my purse, shut my eyes, and that's it – what will be, will be.

This is dreadful... oh God, please make it Anuchkin! No, why him? Better Mr. Podkolyosin. But why Mr. Podkolyosin?

In what way are the others worse? No, no, I won't... whichever comes out, so be it.

Oh! All of them! They've all come out!

BOBBIE

You've made me determine one thing, and that is that henceforth I honestly mean to cut women out of my life forever. I know it's a hackneyed thing to say, but I mean it. I ought to have taken a lesson from other fellows' experiences, but of course I didn't. The one girl whom I cared for and trusted has gaily thrown me over the first moment she hears that I am not going to have as much money as she thought. I'm losing my temper now, and I'm glad of it. I shall probably repent every word I say afterwards, but that won't stop me telling you exactly what I think of you. I don't suppose you've ever been in love at all—except to the extent of having signed photographs of Owen Nares and Henry Ainley stuck all over your bedroom, but when you do, I hope you get it really badly, you deserve to be absolutely utterly wretched, as wretched as you've made me, and I hope when you do marry that you get a rotten old Scotch marmalade maker who says "Hoots!" and spills haggis all down his waistcoat.

Oh, Faith darling, forgive me, I didn't mean a word of it—I swear I didn't....

DANIEL

What is the use of idling through life, frittering away your youth, I repeat, frittering away your youth, when you might be working to achieve some great and noble end? You, Oliver, you might in time be a great inventor, and know all about the insides of the most complicated machines. You, Evangeline might develop into a great poetess; your mother tells me that you already write verses about the moonlight. They all start like that, only unfortunately some of them stay like it. You, Bobbie, you are artistic, too, you might without undue strain become a world famed composer, artist, actor. Sylvia, for you I foresee a marvelous career as a decorative designer. You already arrange flowers and jumble sales—and last, but not by any means least, little Joyce, now on the very threshold of life. What are you going to do with yourself? Sit at home and wait for a nice husband with mediocre prospects and perhaps an over-developed Adam's apple? Never, never! You too must rise and go forth—the world is calling to you. Do what you will. I can't think of a career for you at the moment, but no matter. I only want to impress upon you all the necessity of making good at something—make good, make good, make good! And the one I consider has done best for himself and the family name, to him—or her—I will bequeath every penny I possess.

DORIAN

It was Romeo and Juliet. I must admit that I was rather annoyed at the idea of seeing Shakespeare done in such a wretched hole of a place. There was a dreadful orchestra that nearly drove me away, but at last the drop-scene was drawn up, and the play began. Romeo was a stout elderly gentleman, with corked eyebrows, a husky tragedy voice, and a figure like a beer-barrel. Mercutio was almost as bad. They were both as grotesque as the scenery, and that looked as if it had come out of a country booth.

But Juliet! Harry, imagine a girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little flower-like face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose. She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Harry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me. Why should I not love her? She is everything to me in life. Night after night I go to see her play. One evening she is Rosalind, and the next evening she is Imogen. I have seen her die in the gloom of an Italian tomb, sucking the poison from her lover's lips. I have seen her in every age and in every costume.

Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. There is no mystery in any of them. But an actress! How different an actress is! Harry! why didn't you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?

## DUCHESS OF BERWICK

He goes to see her continually, and stops for hours at a time, and while he is there she is not at home to anyone. Not that many ladies call on her, dear, but she has a great many disreputable men friends--my own brother particularly, as I told you--and that is what makes it so dreadful about Windermere. We looked upon him as being such a model husband, but I am afraid there is no doubt about it. My dear nieces--you know the Saville girls, don't you?--such nice domestic creatures--plain, dreadfully plain,--but so good--well, they're always at the window doing fancy work, and making ugly things for the poor, which I think so useful of them in these dreadful socialistic days, and this terrible woman has taken a house in Curzon Street, right opposite them--such a respectable street, too! I don't know what we're coming to! And they tell me that Windermere goes there four and five times a week--they see him. They can't help it. And the worst of it all is that I have been told that this woman has got a great deal of money out of somebody, for it seems that she came to London six months ago without anything at all to speak of, and now she has this charming house in Mayfair, drives her ponies in the Park every afternoon and all--well, all--since she has known poor dear Windermere. It's quite true, my dear. The whole of London knows about it.

MABEL

Well, Tommy has proposed to me again. Tommy really does nothing but propose to me. He proposed to me last night in the music-room, when I was quite unprotected, as there was an elaborate trio going on. I didn't dare to make the smallest repartee, I need hardly tell you. If I had, it would have stopped the music at once. Musical people are so absurdly unreasonable. They always want one to be perfectly dumb at the very moment when one is longing to be absolutely deaf. Then he proposed to me in broad daylight this morning, in front of that dreadful statue of Achilles. Really, the things that go on in front of that work of art are quite appalling. The police should interfere. At luncheon I saw by the glare in his eye that he was going to propose again, and I just managed to check him in time by assuring him that I was a bimetallist. Fortunately, I don't know what bimetallism means. And I don't believe anybody else does either. But the observation crushed Tommy for ten minutes. He looked quite shocked. And then Tommy is so annoying in the way he proposes. If he proposed at the top of his voice, I should not mind so much. That might produce some effect on the public. But he does it in a horrid confidential way. When Tommy wants to be romantic, he talks to one just like a doctor. I am very fond of Tommy, but his methods of proposing are quite out of date. I wish, Gertrude, you would speak to him, and tell him that once a week is quite often enough to propose to anyone, and that it should always be done in a manner that attracts some attention.

## LEONARD

My wife is dumb. Quite dumb. I admit, I noticed it before we were married. I couldn't help noticing it, of course, but it didn't seem to make so much difference to me then as it does now. I considered her beauty, and her property, and thought of nothing but the advantages of the match and the happiness I should have with her. But now these matters seem less important, and I do wish she could talk; that would be a real intellectual pleasure for me, and, what's more, a practical advantage for the household. What does a judge need most in his house? Why, a good-looking wife, to receive the suitors pleasantly, and, by subtle suggestions, gently bring them to the point of making proper presents, so that their cases may receive-- more careful attention. People need to be encouraged to make proper presents. A woman, by clever speech and prudent action, can get a good ham from one, and a roll of cloth from another; and make still another give poultry or wine. But this poor dumb thing Catherine gets nothing at all. While my fellow judges have their kitchens and cellars and stables and storerooms running over with good things, all thanks to their wives, I hardly get wherewithal to keep the pot boiling.