

She patted Mr. Kemp's hand; Mr. Kemp patted back, and with his disengaged hand helped himself to a glass of beer--the fourth--and beamed in a friendly fashion upon the company.

"George!" he said, suddenly.

"Yes," said Mr. Wright, in a harsh voice.

"Did you think to bring my pocket-book along with you?"

"No," said Mr. Wright, sharply; "I didn't."

"Tt-tt," said the old man, with a gesture of annoyance. "Well, lend me a couple of pounds, then, or else run back and fetch my pocket-book," he added, with a sly grin.

Mr. Wright's face worked with impotent fury. "What--what--do you--want it for?" he gasped.

Mrs. Bradshaw's "Well! Well!" seemed to sum up the general feeling; Mr.

Kemp, shaking his head, eyed him with gentle reproach.

"Me and Mrs. Bradshaw are going to gave another evening out," he said,
quietly. "I've only got a few more days, and I must make hay while the
sun shines."

To Mr. Wright the room seemed to revolve slowly on its axis, but, regaining his self-possession by a supreme effort, he took out his purse
and produced the amount. Mrs. Bradshaw, after a few feminine protestations, went upstairs to put her bonnet on.

"And you can go and fetch a hansom-cab, George, while she's a-doing of
it," said Mr. Kemp. "Pick out a good 'orse--spotted-grey, if you can."

Mr. Wright arose and, departing with a suddenness that was almost startling, exploded harmlessly in front of the barber's, next door but one. Then with lagging steps he went in search of the shabbiest cab and
oldest horse he could find.

"Thankee, my boy," said Mr. Kemp, bluffly, as he helped Mrs. Bradshaw in

and stood with his foot on the step. "By the way, you had better go back and lock my pocket-book up. I left it on the washstand, and there's best part of a thousand pounds in it. You can take fifty for yourself to buy smokes with."

There was a murmur of admiration, and Mr. Wright, with a frantic attempt to keep up appearances, tried to thank him, but in vain. Long after the cab had rolled away he stood on the pavement trying to think out a position which was rapidly becoming unendurable. Still keeping up appearances, he had to pretend to go home to look after the pocket-book, leaving the jubilant Mr. Hills to improve the shining hour with Miss Bradshaw.

Mr. Kemp, returning home at midnight--in a cab--found the young man waiting up for him, and, taking a seat on the edge of the table, listened unmoved to a word-picture of himself which seemed interminable. He was only moved to speech when Mr. Wright described him as a white-whiskered

jezebel who was a disgrace to his sex, and then merely in the interests of natural science.

"Don't you worry," he said, as the other paused from exhaustion. "It won't be for long now."

"Long?" said Mr. Wright, panting. "First thing to-morrow morning you have a telegram calling you back--a telegram that must be minded. D'ye see?"

"No, I don't," said Mr. Kemp, plainly. "I'm not going back, never no more--never! I'm going to stop here and court Mrs. Bradshaw."

Mr. Wright fought for breath. "You--you can't!" he gasped.

"I'm going to have a try," said the old man. "I'm sick of going to sea, and it'll be a nice comfortable home for my old age. You marry Bella, and I'll marry her mother. Happy family!"

Mr. Wright, trembling with rage, sat down to recover, and, regaining his composure after a time, pointed out almost calmly the various difficulties in the way.

"I've thought it all out," said Mr. Kemp, nodding. "She mustn't know I'm not rich till after we're married; then I 'ave a letter from New Zealand saying I've lost all my money. It's just as easy to have that letter as the one you spoke of."

"And I'm to find you money to play the rich uncle with till you're married, I suppose," said Mr. Wright, in a grating voice, "and then lose Bella when Mrs. Bradshaw finds you've lost your money?"

Mr. Kemp scratched his ear. "That's your lookout," he said, at last.

An elderly man with a bushy white beard and a twinkle in his eye is shown leaning on a cane and gesturing dramatically while addressing a younger man with a mixture of mischief and determination in his expression.

