

coldly, but the innocent Mr. Kemp, charmed by his manner, paid him great attention.

"He's just like what I was at his age," he said. "Lively."

"I'm not a patch on you," said Mr. Hills, edging his way by slow degrees into the parlour. "I don't take young ladies to the Empire. Were you telling me you came over here to get married, or did I dream it?"

"Ark at him," said the blushing Mr. Kemp, as Mrs. Bradshaw shook her head at the offender and told him to behave himself.

"He's a man any woman might be happy with," said Mr. Hills. "He never knows how much there is in his trousers-pocket. Fancy sewing on buttons for a man like that. Gold-mining ain't in it."

Mrs. Bradshaw shook her head at him again, and Mr. Hills, after apologizing to her for revealing her innermost thoughts before the most guileless of men, began to question Mr. Kemp as to the prospects of

a

bright and energetic young man, with a distaste for work, in New Zealand.

The audience listened with keen attention to the replies, the only disturbing factor being a cough of Mr. Wright's, which became more and

more troublesome as the evening wore on. By the time uncle and nephew

rose to depart the latter was so hoarse that he could scarcely speak.

"Why didn't you tell 'em you had got a letter calling you home, as I told

you?" he vociferated, as soon as they were clear of the shop.

"I--I forgot it," said the old man.

"Forgot it!" repeated the incensed Mr. Wright.

"What did you think I was coughing like that for--fun?"

"I forgot it," said the old man, doggedly. "Besides, if you take my advice, you'd better let me stay a little longer to make sure of things."

Mr. Wright laughed disagreeably. "I dare say," he said; "but I am managing this affair, not you. Now, you go round to-morrow afternoon and

tell them you're off. D'ye hear? D'ye think I'm made of money? And what do you mean by making such a fuss of that fool, Charlie Hills? You know he is after Bella."

He walked the rest of the way home in indignant silence, and, after giving minute instructions to Mr. Kemp next morning at breakfast, went off to work in a more cheerful frame of mind. Mr. Kemp was out when he returned, and after making his toilet he followed him to Mrs. Bradshaw's.

To his annoyance, he found Mr. Hills there again; and, moreover, it soon became clear to him that Mr. Kemp had said nothing about his approaching departure. Coughs and scowls passed unheeded, and at last in a hesitating voice, he broached the subject himself. There was a general chorus of lamentation.

"I hadn't got the heart to tell you," said Mr. Kemp. "I don't know when I've been so happy."

"But you haven't got to go back immediate," said Mrs. Bradshaw.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Wright, before the old man could reply.

"Business."

"Must you go," said Mrs. Bradshaw.

Mr. Kemp smiled feebly. "I suppose I ought to," he replied, in a hesitating voice.

"Take my tip and give yourself a bit of a holiday before you go back," urged Mr. Hills.

"Just for a few days," pleaded Bella.

"To please us," said Mrs. Bradshaw. "Think 'ow George'll miss you."

"Lay hold of him and don't let him go," said Mr. Hills.

He took Mr. Kemp round the waist, and the laughing Bella and her mother

each secured an arm. An appeal to Mr. Wright to secure his legs passed

unheeded.

"We don't let you go till you promise," said Mrs. Bradshaw.

Mr. Kemp smiled and shook his head. "Promise?" said Bella.

"Well, well," said Mr. Kemp; "p'r'aps--"

"He must go back," shouted the alarmed Mr. Wright.

"Let him speak for himself," exclaimed Bella, indignantly.

"Just another week then," said Mr. Kemp. "It's no good having money if I can't please myself."

"A week!" shouted Mr. Wright, almost beside himself with rage and dismay.

"A week! Another week! Why, you told me----"

"Oh, don't listen to him," said Mrs. Bradshaw. "Croaker! It's his own business, ain't it? And he knows best, don't he? What's it got to do with you?"

An elderly man and a young woman are surrounded by a group of people, including a man coughing uncontrollably and another man with a scowl on his face, as they attempt to persuade the old man to stay longer in their company.

