

# FERRYBOATS HAVE EARS

## Public Confession of Revenge and Its Consequences.

### Happy Bridegroom Tells How He Stopped Evil-minded Boy's Taunts

#### —The Father's Reply.

"It only goes to show," said the oracular-looking man, "what a little place this Greater City of New York is."

"It does?" queried several acquaintances, who were busily selecting their lunch from the bar of a down-town "dairy" restaurant.

"Yes," said the oracular-looking man, meditatively dropping four lumps of sugar in his black coffee.

The groups of acquaintances knew that with the oracular-looking man a generalization always preceded a story, so they picked up their trays, followed him to a table, and ranged themselves expectantly.

"Yes," repeated the oracular-looking man, "ours is a little town, a little town. I sat between two men on the 5:40 o'clock ferry last night. The man to my right was middle-aged, sour-browed, impatient. His clothes hung at aggressive angles. He was plainly a man of petty family worries. The man on my left was young, smooth-faced, and round. He exuded good-humor. He grinned at the ceiling and chuckled toward the homegoers seated opposite, until some one caught his eye. Then he straightened himself with an effort at indifferent dignity. It was useless. I smiled in irresistible sympathy. My sour-faced neighbor twitched impatiently.

"Finally the young man gave it up. He put down his paper and laughed. He grew red in his effort to prevent an explosion, but it was no use. The outburst came, and half the people in the cabin, who had been interestedly watching his struggles, joined his guffaw in a ripple of titters.

"Now, I'm not an inquisitive person, as you know, but I did feel rather an interest in the cause of the young fellow's merriment. I turned and made some remark to the effect that he seemed in good spirits.

"'Good spirits!' he echoed. 'Well, I should say so! I never knew the wisdom of the old saw about the delights of revenge until last night.'

"The bad-tempered man on my right groaned in disgust.

"'Yes,' continued the chuckling young man, 'revenge is really sweet. You see it was this way. I have only been married three weeks,' he interjected apologetically. 'About ten days ago my wife and I went to housekeeping in a little flat up in Harlem. My mother-in-law had it all fixed up in readiness for us when we got back from our wedding trip. The first day we spent there we were as tickled as two children. The second day, Sunday, it was just the same. Monday I had to return to work down town. I thought all day of the little flat in Harlem. But that night when I burst into our doll's parlor I found my wife in tears. Between her sobs she told me the trouble.

"'At lunch time there had been a shrill whistle at the speaking tube. My wife fluttered over to answer the call in great excitement. She didn't know whether it was the butcher, the baker, or the grocer's boy.

"'What is it?' she called.

"'Is it lonesome without its little hubby?' came an answering voice. A giggle chased the insult up the tube.

"'How dare you? Who are you?' demanded my wife. A jeer was the only answer.

"'Who are you?' my wife repeated. Another catcall and a chuckle came up the tube.

"'Never mind. He'll come home to his birdie,' sang the jeering voice.

"'Late in the afternoon the same thing happened, with a slight variation in the taunts.

"'The explanation was very simple. Some fiendish youngsters in the block heard that we were bride and bridegroom. It was exasperating.

"'The next day I told my wife not to answer the tube whistle if the little brutes repeated their game. She followed my instructions until noon. At noon she remembered that I had left orders for the grocer and delicatessen man to call for orders. The next time the whistle blew—she fairly flew to the tube. This time it was the same shrill, mocking voice of the day before at the other end. I'll not repeat the words that brat used. They were too infernally silly.

"'The upshot of the whole matter was that yesterday I sent my wife home to her mother, at Montclair, while I looked for another flat and a quiet, childless neighborhood.'

"The young man paused to chuckle to himself," continued the oracular man, "and I leaned back in my seat. In doing so, I bumped into my sour-visaged neighbor, who had apparently been leaning over my shoulder to catch the happy man's story.

"'Last night,' continued the young man, 'I hustled around and looked at a half dozen flats. It was too late to go out to Montclair when I got through, so I staid all night at our Harlem flat. It was 8:30 when I woke up this morning. Then I was awakened by the fiendish whistling of that tube. It roused me in an instant. The little beast's whistlings were now rising up in long siren-like wails. An idea struck me that fairly made me dance with joy. Among the equipments of our flat was a beautiful bottle of purple indelible ink which my mother-in-law had provided. If ever ink deserved the name indelible that ink did. I filled the cologne bottle with that beautiful purple ink. I unscrewed the spray tip of the syringe. Then I opened the hall door slightly, so that I could hear the brat's yell, and inserted the end of the syringe in the mouth of the tube. I gave the syringe a mighty squeeze.

"'The next instant a shriek pierced the corridor and smote unutterable joy in my breast. I heard the vestibule door slammed, and I rushed to the front window in time to see the author of our troubles run screaming across the street to the house opposite. He was a little lad about nine years old, togged out in a light gray sailor suit. That is, it was still gray in the rear. He turned around two or three times in his frightened flight, and then my soul was happy. That beautiful purple ink!'

"The young man leaned back and shook. 'Nellie, that's my wife, will be tickled to death when I tell her about it to-night.'

"'Tell her the rest of it,' roared the sour-faced man, jumping up and shaking his newspaper. 'Tell her how that blamed kid had to have his insides pumped out by a doctor. Tell her how my wife went into hysterics and had to be sent to her sister's in Jersey. Tell her all this—and I don't doubt she'll laugh herself to death.'

"By the way," concluded the oracle, rising from the table. "Did you ever try to dodge a creditor? Try it, if you haven't. This is a mighty little town."