

'Gojo' the black velvet kitten, and Jollikins, and all the army of gadgets and netsukis crowding Margot's toilette table and *secrétaire*, down to 'Pat-Pat,' the bog-oak pig, and 'Ti-ti,' the jade tree-frog, were so many insurances against the Menace of Maternity. By Jove! women were regular children . . . And Margot . . . Nothing but a baby this poor little Margot—going, in spite of Jollikins and Gojo, to have a baby of her own.

"What is one to believe? Whom is one to trust in?"

"Trust in . . . My best child, you don't mean that you believed those women when they told you that such two-penny gadgets could work charms of—that or any other kind?"

"Indeed, indeed they do! Tota Stannus was *perfectly serious* when she came to my boudoir one night at the club, about a week before our—the wedding. . . . She said—I can hear her now: *Well, old child, you're to be married on Wednesday, and of course you know the ropes well enough not to want any tips from me. . . . Still—*

"That wasn't overwhelmingly flattering," Franky commented, 'from a woman twice your age. What else did she say?'

"She said I must be aware," went on Margot, 'that a woman who wanted to keep her friends and her figure, simply couldn't afford to have kids!'

"And you—"

"Franky no longer battled with the grin that would have infuriated Margot. Something had wiped it from his face."

More revelations from Margot, till at length Franky said: "Look here, this is—strict Bridge. Do you loathe 'em—the kiddies—so horribly that the idea of having any is distasteful to you? Or is it—not only the—the veto it puts on larking and kickabout and—the temporary disfigurement—you're afraid of—but the—the—the inevitable pain. . . . Tell me frankly." He waited an instant and then said in an urgent whisper: "Answer me! . . . For God's sake, tell me the frozen truth, Margot!"

Poor Margot—thoughtless, irresponsible little humming bird—faced with the realities of life, confessed to her dread of the ugliness of the thing and her fear of the pain—the awful pain. "And besides—my mother died when I was born!" Margot's voice was a fluttering, appealing whisper; her great eyes were dilated and wild with terror."

Franky, out of his love for his wife, able to understand something of her mental outlook, agreed that he was frightfully sorry for her. "All the more so because I can't help being thundering glad." Then he explained, "It's got to do with the Peerage . . . naturally enough—I want a boy to take the Viscounty when I succeed my father, and have the Earldom when I've absquatulated, just as the kiddy'll want one when his own time comes."

Later, at the sight of a mother and her babe in the public park, "a dimness came before his vision, and it was as though dimpled hands

plucked at his heart. He suffered a sudden revulsion strange in a young man, so modern, so up-to-date and beautifully tailored. He knew that he longed for a son most desperately. And the devil of it was—Margot did not."

Fate decreed that Franky and Margot should witness the trial ascent with a French pilot of a British monoplane (the Bird of War), fitted with an invention which the French experts were there to test with a view to purchase. The inventor was on the ground, for, as a French officer politely explained, "despite the Entente Cordiale, it would hardly be *convenable* or discreet to permit even an Englishman to fly over Paris or any other fortified City of France."

Franky, as he watched the Bird of War through his pocket field glass, was sensible of a thrill behind his immaculate waistcoat.

"If the English inventor had not solved the baffling Problem of Stability, he had come uncommonly near it, by the Great Brass Hat. And the dud heads at Whitehall had shown the door to him and his invention. 'Good Christmas! how like 'em!' reflected Franky, lowering the glasses to chuckle and looking round for Margot."

We first make the acquaintance of Count von Herrnung, who is to play a prominent part in the story, at a dinner at the Hôtel Spitz in the Place Vendôme, where he had the insolence to propose that the guests—some of whom had been "rotting" him—should drink a toast "to show there is no ill will. . . . It would be amusing if you would all join me in drinking to The Day."

"Lord Norwater (Franky), lobster red and rather flurried, turned to von Herrnung, and said not loudly, yet clearly enough to be heard by every guest at the table—

"Stop! Sorry to swipe in, Count, but you'd better not order that wine, I think!"

"You think not?" asked von Herrnung with coolest insolence.

"I—don't think, so? I'm dead sure!" said Franky, getting redder. "We Britons laugh at brag and bluffing; and the gassy patriotism shown by some foreigners we're apt to call bad form. We abuse our Institutions and rag our Governments; we've done that since the year One—far as I can make out. And when other people do it we generally sit tight and smile. We've no use for heroics. But when the pinch comes—it ain't so much that we're loyal, we're Loyalty; we're IT!—We're ready to make allowances—too rottenly ready sometimes. But I read off the iddy-umties to Full Stop, a minute back. Count von Herrnung, when you ask English ladies and Englishmen—two of 'em in the Service—to drink that toast with you, you must know you're putting your foot in your hat!"

That night the Assassinations at Sarajevo were announced in the papers. Berlin had had the story with its breakfast rolls and hot creamed coffee.

So the basis of the story; and the principal *dramatis personæ*—Lord Norwater and Kittums, Sherbrand (the aviator who proves to be Franky's

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