

took his leave. The twins insisted on driving him home to his apartment on Riverside Drive. When they had said good night for the twentieth time, always with increasing etiquette, the champagne continued its conversation; it was impossible, absurd, and immoral to go home; there was only one thing to be done, and that was to do what politeness urged, to pay a visit of thanks to the Old Man of the Peepul-Tree.

The blizzard of the earlier day had died down to utter stillness; the full moon westering slowly, the twins huddled together in the automobile, babbling a thousand phrases of delight over and over. When they came to the Park, they thought it better to walk; Sieglinda knew the way. So they left the chauffeur, and ran hand in hand over the snow, the champagne and the success fighting in their young blood for mastery in the sublime art of being mad. Soon they came to the stream, its current frozen, its banks aflour with wind-blown blossoms of snow. They came to the Peepul-Tree. "Oh you dear darling Uncle Tree," shouted Sieglinda, "how happy you have made us! And I've brought your nephew to see you!" She clasped the trunk, and kissed it madly in sheer delirium of pleasure. Siegmund followed her example, and broke into a flood of song from his last opera.

At that moment they realized that they were very drunk. Sieglinda slid to the snow, swooning; her brother bent above her to revive her. He must have lost his senses at the same

moment; for what followed is neither reasonable nor natural. They could both hear (or so they always swear) the chuckling of the sacred tree.

Bye-and-bye the chuckling became articulate. "Very pretty and very thoughtful of you!" said the little cracked old voice; "this has been a very pleasant visit; I haven't enjoyed myself so much for years. Still, it's very cold for humans; I think you'd better be running off to the car. But come and see me often. Good-bye, my dear children, for the present; and remember, Sieglinda, your first son must be called Gautama as well as Siegfried, in honor of the man who attained emancipation under the boughs of my great-grandfather." So they must have been unwise in the matter of champagne; for the most garrulous old trees never talk like that to people who are sober.

Sieglinda was indeed what philosophers have called "suspiciously sober" when they reached the car; her "Back to 63d street!" was portentously precise.

But they never forgot the peepul-tree; and they planted shoots from him in the courtyard of the old Schloss, which they bought back from the new-comers on the proceeds of Siegmund's first opera, so that the Oak of the von Eichens might have worthy company. It is, however, a shocking circumstance that the younger generations of the peepul-tree, like those of the great apes, have a deplorable tendency to small talk, and even to scandal.

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## THE IDEAL IDOL.

(Two stories in one, but with only one moral.)

By CYRIL CUSTANCE.

Reggie Van Rensselaer was 42 and a bachelor. For just half his life he had been looking for a wife, and he had turned down a thousand promising opportunities, just because he was Particular. He was handsome and distinguished above all men; he had a nice little fortune in copper and the control of one of the biggest banks in New York. His manners were superfine triple X, formed in the best universities, and later in those foreign courts whither he had gone as a diplomatist. He was crazy to marry, and had had his pick of Europe and America. But he had not found his ideal. He wished a woman of birth, breeding, and fortune comparable to his own; she must be beautiful and brilliant, yet modest and domesticated; and there were various other points, hardly worth discussion on this page, yet vitally important to the happiness of our gay and gallant hero. There had been several near-engagements; but sooner or later something had always turned up to prevent the wedding bells from ringing. It was by pure accident that Reggie discovered that the Marquise de Vaudeville had a bunion on the third toe of her left foot; the Gräfin von Solingen was barred by an unfortunate habit of lisping; the Princess Politzsky had once smoked a cigarette; Lady Viola Vere de Vere failed to laugh at one of Reggie's puns; Señorita de Sota had a question mark on part of her escutcheon in the earlier half of the twelfth century — there was always something.

But in the winter of 1916 the ideal idol came to Washing-

ton. This time there could be no doubt. Flossie Russell was of the most aristocratic of all the families that came over in the Mayflower; through her mother she was allied with the royal families of half the countries of Europe; her father controlled most of the railroads and shipping and mines in the United States, owned two of the largest packing houses in Chicago, and was one of the biggest men in the Corn Trust. Incidentally, he had used his leisure hours in making an immense fortune in munitions. It would endanger the reason of the printer were I to describe her beauty; and as for her manners, it would endanger my own reason to attempt the task in detail. I will only say, in a word, they were American manners.

It was at White Sulphur that she and Reggie met. Swift but thorough investigation on his part assured him that at last he had found his destined bride. To avoid precipitation, he determined to take a long motor ride by moonlight — alone. Absorbed in his own thoughts, he failed to notice an old woman who was crossing the road with a bundle of sticks in her arm. He knocked her down and broke her leg. The automobile swerved violently, and he was obliged to pull up in order to avoid running into a tree which might have damaged the machine. It struck him that his number might have been seen, and with admirable prudence got out of the car and returned to where the old woman was lying, intending to compensate her for her crushed limb with some small change which he was