

## II - Mr. and Mrs. S. F. Ukridge

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But if you search among the U's for UKRIDGE, Stanley Featherstonehaugh, details of whose tempestuous career would make really interesting reading, you find no mention of him. It seems unfair, though I imagine Ukridge bears it with fortitude. That much-enduring man has had a lifetime's training in bearing things with fortitude.

He seemed in his customary jovial spirits now, as he dashed into the room, clinging on to the pince-nez which even ginger-beer wire rarely kept stable for two minutes together.

“My dear old man,” he shouted, springing at me and seizing my hand in the grip like the bite of a horse. “How are you, old buck? This is good. By Jove, this is fine, what?”

He dashed to the door and looked out.

“Come on Millie! Pick up the waukeesis. Here's old Garnet, looking just the same as ever. Devilish handsome fellow! You'll be glad you came when you see him. Beats the Zoo hollow!”

There appeared round the corner of Ukridge a young woman. She paused in the doorway and smiled pleasantly.

“Garny, old horse,” said Ukridge with some pride, “this is her! The pride of the home. Companion of joys and sor-

rows and all the rest of it. In fact," in a burst of confidence, "my wife."

I bowed awkwardly. The idea of Ukridge married was something too overpowering to be readily assimilated.

"Buck up, old horse," said Ukridge encouragingly. He had a painful habit of addressing all and sundry by that title. In his school-master days— at one period of his vivid career he and I had been colleagues on the staff of a private school— he had made use of it interviewing the parents of new pupils, and the latter had gone away, as a rule, with a feeling that this must be either the easy manner of Genius or due to alcohol, and hoping for the best. He also used it to perfect strangers in the streets, and on one occasion had been heard to address a bishop by that title, rendering that dignitary, as Mr. Baboo Jaberjee would put it, sotto voce with gratification. "Surprised to find me married, what? Garry, old boy,"— sinking his voice to a whisper almost inaudible on the other side of the street—"take my tip. Go and jump off the dock yourself. You'll feel another man. Give up this bachelor business. It's a mug's game. I look on you bachelors as excrescences on the social system. I regard you, old man, purely and simply as a wart. Go and get married, laddie, go and get married. By gad, I've forgotten to pay the cabby. Lend me a couple of bob, Garry old chap."

He was out of the door and on his way downstairs before the echoes of his last remark had ceased to shake the window. I was left to entertain Mrs. Ukridge.

So far her share in the conversation had been confined to the pleasant smile which was apparently her chief form of expression. Nobody talked very much when Ukridge was present. She sat on the edge of the armchair, looking very small and quiet. I was conscious of feeling a benevolent pity for her. If I had been a girl, I would have preferred to marry a volcano. A little of Ukridge, as his former head

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“Yes. Oh, yes. Several years. We were masters at the same