

A Benefit Match

P. G. Wodehouse

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If I have one fault—which I am not prepared to admit—it is that I am too good-natured. I remember on one occasion, when staying in the country with a lady who had known me from boyhood, protesting in a restrained, gentlemanly manner when her youthful son began to claw me at breakfast. At breakfast, I'll trouble you, and an early one at that! "Well, James," she said, "I always thought that you were goodnatured, whatever else you were!" A remark which, besides containing a nasty innuendo in the latter half of it, struck me as passing all existing records in Cool Cheek. And it stood as a record till the day that Jervis rang me up on the telephone and broached the matter of Mr. Morley-Davenport. It is no use to grumble, I suppose. One cannot alter one's nature. There it is, and there's an end of it. But personally I have always found it a minor curse. People ask me to do things, and expect me to oblige them, when they would not dream of making the same request of most of the men I know. And they thrive on it. Do a man a good turn once, as somebody says, and after that he thinks he has a right to come and sit on your lap and help himself out of your pockets. Looking back over the episodes which have arisen from this abuse of my angelic temperament, I recall the Adventure of a Ribbon I tried to match for an Aunt of Mine, the Curious Affair of the Vicar's Garden- Party, and a host of Others, prominent among which is the Dark and Sinister Case of the BrOthers Barlow, the most recent of all my ordeals. It occurred only last summer. I was having tea at my club when the thing may be said to have begun. The club is described in Whitaker as "social and political," and at that time it seemed to me to overdo both qualities. The political atmosphere at the moment was disturbed by a series of by-elections, and members, whom I did not know by sight, were developing a habit of sitting down beside me and saying: "Interesting contest, that at ——," wherever the place might be. In this case it was at Stapleton, in Surrey. The Stapleton election, I gathered from an old gentleman who had cornered me and was giving me his views on the crisis, was in a most interesting condition. If Morley-Davenport—who was, I gathered, "our man"—could pull it off, it would be a most valuable thing for the party. On the Other hand, if he could not pull it off, as was not at all unlikely, it would be an equally damaging blow for the party



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