

## HIS MASTER'S VOICE.

“SOOMIN’ the Channel—ay! they’re at it again—soomin’ the Channel!”

The remark was uttered in a most contemptuous way to the occupants of the tramcar without respect of persons; the speaker, a gentleman who had evidently made a few indiscreet halts between the getting of his pay and the taking of his journey home. He carried a parcel the string of which had become loose. It was a wayward string, so wayward that the gentleman, finally abandoning all effort to capture it, resumed his marine observations.

“Soomin’ the Channel!” he repeated—“an’ a wumman tae—it’s like them—whit’ll they be daein’ next?—following men like sheep—no’ even like sheep, like nanny-goats. Captain Webb swam the Channel a hunner years ago—well, no’ exactly a hunner, but comin’ on for it. But I wad like to ask them this—wad they staun up to Carneery? Naw!—or Sharkey? Naw! They wad be frichtened tae get some o’ the pent knocked aff their faces. Pent and poother! I ken. That’s weemen noo-a-days. If there’s wan thing mair than anither that’s been the curse o’ men, it’s weemen. Soomin’ the Channel! Floatin’ the Channel’s liker it! They couldna sink if they tried. Blawn-up blethers! Nae wunner they can soom. They’re a’ gas thegither. There’s something manly about a man—but a wumman! Ye never ken when ye’ve got ’er; an’ when ye hiv got ’er, ye hivna got ’er at a’; an’ that’s

simple enough. Oh, I ken them. But they canna get their glams owre me; I wad watch it. Aye tak' the bull by the horns that's whit I say!"

"A wumman's no' a bull."

This entirely inappropriate observation was made by a newcomer, a lady to boot, who after depositing a basket at her feet turned round and faced our loquacious friend. He looked at her critically, his eye wandering from a pair of elastic-sided boots, past a faded black skirt and on over a skimpy kind of jacket until it reached what ten years ago might have been a stylist hat. "An' wha was speakin' to you, micht I ask?" he queried.

"I thocht ye were speakin' to me," she replied in an acidulated stairhead tone.

"Well, I wasna speakin' to you, and whit's mair I'm no' speakin' to ye the noo—d'ye hear that?"

"I thocht ye were speakin' to me," she repeated, with provocative calm.

"Well, ye thocht wrang, an' it's jist like a wumman to think wrang; that is if a wumman can be said to be capable o' thinkin' at a'."

"Ye're lukkin' at me onywey."

"Mebbe I am and mebbe I'm no'."

"Well, if ye're no', a' I have to say is that ye hae skelly een."

"There ye are!" he retorted fiercely, turning again to the other passengers—"did I no' tell ye whit they were—a carnaptious, ill-natured, domineerin' crew—an' they've been that since the Garden o' Eden, an' ye'll never cure them; its chronic—chronic like brooncaitis. But I'm wan owre mony for them—I am. I can pit them in their place. The wumman that wad play the

randy owre me 's no' born. Aye tak' the bull by the horns—that's ma motto!"

"A wumman's no' a bull, I tell ye."

"You."

"Me?"

"Ay, you!"

"Me!" He pushed his face close to that of his fair companion.

"Here! Tak' yer dirty auld face oot o' that! I'm no' exactly what ye wad ca' a spittoon."

"Govan Cross!" the conductor shouted.

Our outraged friend gathered his parcel together; "It's a guid thing for you, my wumman, that I'm gaun aff," he remarked wearily—"for ither five meenits an' there wadna hae been as much left o' ye as wad fill a spittoon!"

"I'm awfu' feart—dae I luk it?" she snapped out.

"Ach you!" he retorted—"ye're durt beneath my feet—durt I tell ye—durt!—weemen are a' the same—soomin' the Channel; that's a' they're guid for."

I alighted behind our friend. He turned a knowing eye towards me and spoke—"That's a sample o' them; they wad drive ye aff yer lati if ye let them."

And then he straightened up and seemed to become sober all at once. A wiry little woman approached. He saw her and took one step in an opposite direction—only one. She caught him by the coat—"Here!" she shouted—"ya guid-for-nithing sully big lump—dae ye no' ken the road to yer ain hoose?"

He turned meekly, not a word escaped his lips. They proceeded in the direction of a side street and there they disappeared into the silence of the night.