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BELFORD'S MAGAZINE.

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No. 8.

WICKED LEGISLATION.

The patience with which mankind submits to the demands of tyrants has been the wonder of each succeeding age, and heroes are made of those who break one yoke only to bow with servility to a greater. The Roman soldier, returning from wars in which his valor had won wealth and empire for his rulers, was easily content to become first a tenant, and then a serf, upon the very lands he had tilled as owner before his voluntary exile as his country's defender, kissing the hand that oppressed, so long as it dispensed, as charity, a portion of his tithes and rentals in sports and food. And now, after ages of wonder and criticism, the soldiers of our nineteenth-century civilization outvie their Roman prototypes in submitting to exactions and injustice of which Nero was incapable either of imagining or executing, bowing subserviently to the more ingenious tyrant of an advanced civilization, if but his hand drop farthings of pensions in return for talents of extortion. It may not be that the soldiers and citizens of America shall become so thoroughly debauched and degraded, nor that the consequences of their revolt shall be a burning capitol and a terrified monopolist; but if these evils are to be averted, it will be only because fearless hands tear the mask from our modern Neros, and tireless arms hold up to popular view the naked picture of national disgrace.

Twenty-eight years ago the first step had been taken towards the final overthrow of the objective form of human slavery. There were, even in those days, cranks who were dreaming of new harmonies in the songs of liberty; and when tyranny opposed force to the righteous demands of constitutional government, ploughshares rusted in the neglected fields, workshops looked to alien lands for toilers, while patriots answered the bugle-call, and a nation was freed from an eating cancer. But what was the return for such sacrifices? Surely, if ever were soldiers entitled to fair and full reward, it was those who responded to the repeated call of Lincoln for aid in suppressing the most gigantic rebellion of history—not in the form of dribblets of charity, doled with cunning arts to secure their submission to extortions, not offered as a bribe to unblushing perjury and denied to honest suffering, but simple and exact justice, involving a full performance of national obligation in return for the stipulated discharge of the duty of citizenship. The simple statement of facts of history will serve to expose the methods of those who pose as *par excellence* the soldiers' friends and the defenders of national faith.

The soldiers who enlisted in the war of the rebellion were promised by the government, in addition to varying bounties, a stipulated sum of money per month. It requires no argument to prove that the faith of the government was as much pledged to the citizen who risked his life, as to him who merely risked a portion of his wealth in a secured loan to the government. But the record shows that the pay of the former was reduced by nearly sixty per cent, while the returns of the latter were doubled, trebled, and quadrupled; that in many cases government obligations were closed by the erection of a cheap cast-iron tablet over a dead hero, while the descendants

of bondholders were guarded in an undisturbed enjoyment of the fruits of their ancestors' greed. For, after the armies were in the field, the same legislative enactment that reduced the value of the soldier's pay increased that of the creditor's bond, by providing that the money of the soldier should be rapidly depreciated in value, while the interest upon bonds should be payable in coin; and then, after the war was over, another and more valuable bond was prepared, that should relieve the favored creditor of all fear of losing his hold upon the treasury by the payment of his debt. That the purpose of the lawmakers was deliberate, was exposed in a speech by Senator Sherman, who was Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Senate while the soldiers in the trenches were being robbed in the interest of the creditors at home. In reviewing the financial policy of his party during the war, Mr. Sherman said, in a speech in the Senate, July 14th, 1868 [Footnote: Congressional Record, page 4044]:

"It was, then, our policy during the war, to depreciate the value of United States notes, so that they would come into the Treasury more freely for our bonds. Why, sir, we did a very natural thing for us to do, we increased the amount to \$300,000,000, then to \$450,000,000, and we took away the important privilege of converting them into bonds on the ground that, while this privilege remained, the people would not subscribe for the bonds, and the notes would not be converted; that the right a man might exercise at any time, he would not exercise at all."

No page of our national history contains a more damning record of injustice than this. Mr. Sherman recognizes and admits that the notes, as issued and paid to the soldiers and producers of the country, were fundable at the holder's option in a government interest-bearing bond. He confesses to the foreknowledge that in nullifying this right the value of the notes would be decreased and to that extent the soldiers' pay be diminished. No organ of public opinion raised the cry of breaking the plighted faith of the nation. The soldier had no organ then; but years after the wrong had been perpetrated, there appeared in Spaulding's "History of the Currency" the naïve statement, "It never seemed quite right to take away this important privilege while the notes were outstanding with this endorsement upon them." By a law, passed against the protests of the wisest and most patriotic members of the popular branch of Congress, it had been provided that these government notes, so soon to be further depreciated in value, should be a full legal tender to the nation's defenders, but only rags in the hands of the fortunate holder of interest-bearing obligations of the government, upon which they were based, and into which they were fundable at the option of the holder. In one of his reports while Secretary of the Treasury, Hon. Hugh McCulloch showed that fully thirty per cent of the cost of supplies furnished the government was due to the depreciation of the currency, the initial step in such depreciation being the placing of the words "Except duties on imports and interest on the public debt" in the law and upon the back of the notes. But, having provided that one class of the government creditors should be secured against the evil effects of a depreciated currency, those friends of the soldiers and defenders of the nation's honor proceeded to a systematic course of depreciation of the currency, while the soldiers were too busy fighting, and the citizens too earnest in their support of the government, to criticize its acts. During the war the sentiment was carefully inculcated, that opposition to the Republican party or its acts was disloyalty to the government, copperheadism, treason; and protests against any of its legislation were answered with an epithet. It so happened that very little contemporary criticism was indulged in, from a wholesome fear of social or business ostracism, or the frowning portals of Fort Lafayette.

But from the very commencement of the war there had been felt at Washington a strong controlling influence emanating from the money centres. The issue of the demand notes of the government during the first year had furnished a portion of the revenues required, and had served to recall the teachings of the earlier statesmen and the demonstrations of history—that paper money bottomed on taxes would prove a great blessing to the people, and a just exercise of governmental functions. This was only too evident to those controlling financial operations at the great money centres. The nation was alive to the necessities of the government; the people answered the calls for troops with such promptness as to block the channels of transportation, often drilling in camp, without arms, awaiting production from the constantly running armories. Those camps represented the people. From them all eyes were bound to the source of supply of the munitions of war; in them all hearts burned for the time for action, even though that meant danger and death. There were other camps from which gray-eyed greed looked with far different motives. The issue of their own promissory notes, based upon a possibility of substituting confidence for coin, had proven in the past of vast profit to the note-issuers of the great money centres. The exercise of that power by the government would inevitably destroy one great source of their profits, and transfer it to the people. Sixty millions of the people's own notes, circulating among them as money, withstanding the effect of the suspension of specie payments by both the banks and the national Treasury, was a forceful object-lesson to all classes. To the people, it brought a strong ray of hope to brighten the darkness of the war cloud. To some among the metropolitan bankers who in after years prated so loudly of their patriotism and financial sagacity, it brought to view only the danger of curtailed profits. The government Treasury was empty; troops in the field were unpaid and uncomplaining; merchants furnishing supplies, seriously embarrassed for the lack of money in the channels of trade. The sixty millions of demand notes were absorbed by the nation's commerce like a summer storm on parched soil. Under such circumstances, at the urgent request of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives framed a bill authorizing the issue of one hundred and fifty millions of bonds, and the same amount of Treasury notes, the latter to be a full legal tender, and fundable in an interest-bearing bond at the option of the holder. The contest between the popular branch of the government and the Senate, upon this measure, forms one of the most interesting and instructive lessons of the financial legislation of the

nation. In the Senate, a bitter and determined opposition to the legal-tender clause was developed. The associated banks of New York had adopted a resolution that the Treasury notes of the government should only be received by the different banks from their customers as "a special deposit to be paid in kind;" and it was one of the lessons of the war, that notices containing the announcement above quoted remained posted in the New York banks until a high premium on those very notes, over the dishonored greenbacks, caused a shrewd depositor to demand of the bank his deposits in kind. The demand was settled by a delivery of greenbacks, which were a full legal tender for the purpose, and the notices suddenly disappeared. The compromise effected between the two Houses resulted in the issue of the emasculated greenback, and it also led the way to the establishment of the National Banking system, and the issue of the promissory notes of the banks to be used as money.

Much of the force of all criticism of the system so devised has been weakened by the fact that the attack has been aimed at the banks themselves, and not against one special feature of the system. In explanation, though not in excuse for this, should be stated the fact that every issue of the annual finance report of the government contained the special pleadings of the comptrollers of the currency, concealing some facts, misstating others, and creating thereby the impression that they were endeavoring to win the favor of the banking institutions. Added to this were the efforts of those controlling the national bank in the great money centres to secure a permanency of the note-issuing feature of their system, after a very general public sentiment against it had been aroused, and even after its evil effects had been felt by smaller banks located among, and supported more directly by, the producing classes. But now, when the discussion is removed from the arena of politics, when the volume of the bank-note system is rapidly disappearing, and when many of the best and strongest banks are seeking to be relieved from the burden of note-issuance, it is opportune to discuss calmly and without prejudice the wisdom of the original acts and their effects upon the country.

It has been claimed that by the organization of the national banks the government was enabled to dispose of its bonds and aided in carrying on the war. Do the facts warrant the claim? All national bank notes have been redeemable solely in Treasury notes. They do not possess the legal-tender qualification equal to the Treasury note, and cannot therefore be considered any better than the currency in which they are alone redeemable, and in comparison with which they have less uses. These are truths that were just as palpable twenty-five years ago as to-day. It follows that the issue of the bank notes did not furnish any better form of currency than that which came directly from the government to the people. Every dollar of such notes issued contributed just as much towards an inflation of the currency as the issue of an equal amount of Treasury notes. With these facts in mind, a review of the organization of the banks and their issue of notes will reveal the effect of such acts.

In 1864 the notes of the government had been depreciated to such an extent that coin was quoted at a premium ranging from 80 per cent to 150 per cent. The record of a single bank organized and issuing notes under such circumstances is illustrative of the whole system.

Take a bank with one hundred thousand dollars to invest in government bonds as a basis for its issuance of currency. The bonds were bought with the depreciated Treasury notes. Deposited with the Comptroller of the Currency at Washington, the bank received ninety thousand dollars of notes to issue as money. It also received six thousand dollars in coin as one year's advance interest upon its deposited bonds, under the law of March 17, 1884. This coin, not being available for use as money, was sold or converted into Treasury notes at a ratio of from two to two and a half for one. The bank, therefore, had received, as a working cash capital, a sum in excess of the money invested in its bonds. The transaction stands as follows:

Invested in bonds	\$100,000
Received notes to issue	\$90,000
Received coin equal to, say	<u>12,000 - - 102,000</u>
Bank gains by transaction	\$2,000

From this it will appear that the bank has the use, as currency, of more than the amount of its bonds, while the government is to pay, in addition, six per cent per annum on the full amount of bonds so long as the relations thus created continue. Surely no argument is needed to prove that, if the government had issued the \$90,000 in the form of Treasury notes, and had paid out the interest money for its current obligations, there would have been no greater inflation of the currency, a more uniform currency would have been maintained, and a saving effected of the entire amount of interest paid on bonds held for security of national bank notes, which at this date would amount to a sum nearly representing the total bonded debt of the country.

But there remains a still more serious charge to be made against this system. Defended as a war measure by which the banks were to aid the government in conquering the rebellion, the fact remains that at the date of Lee's surrender only about \$100,000,000 of bonds had been accepted by the banks, even though they received a bonus for the act. But, after the war had closed, and the government was with one hand contracting the volume of its own circulating notes by funding them into interest-bearing bonds, the banks were allowed to inflate the currency by the further issue of over \$200,000,000 of their notes. Time may produce a sophist cunning enough to devise an adequate defence or apology for such legislation. His work will only be saved from public indignation and rebuke when a continued series of outrages shall have dulled the national intelligence and destroyed the national honor.

But there came a time when the policy of the government was radically changed. The soldiers

had conquered a peace,—or thought they had,—and, as they marched in review before their commander-in-chief, had been paid off in crisp notes of the government—legal tender to the soldier, but not to the bondholder; the time for government to pay the soldiers had ceased; the national banks had been allowed to show their patriotism and their willingness to aid the government overthrow a rebellion already conquered, by the issuance of their notes to add to an inflated and depreciated currency; the soldiers had returned to the arts of peace, and had taken their places as producers of the nation's wealth and taxpayers to the national Treasury. Then Mr. Sherman, with his brother patriots and statesmen, discovered that the country (meaning, of course, the bondholders) was suffering under the evils of a depreciated currency. Their tender consciences had never suffered a twinge while the soldiers were receiving from the government a currency depreciated in value as the result of its own acts. But when the soldier became the taxpayer, and from his toil was to be obliged to pay the bondholder, then the patriotic hearts of Mr. Sherman and his co-conspirators in the dominant political party trembled at the thought of a soldier being allowed to discharge his obligations in the same kind of money he had received for his services. As a recipient of the government dole, paper money, purposely depreciated, was quite sufficient. From the citizen by the product of whose toil a bonded interest-bearing debt was to be paid, "honest money" was to be demanded. It required no argument to convince the government creditor that this was a step in his interest, and public clamor was hushed with the catchwords of "honest money" and "national honor," while dribbles of pensions were allowed to trickle from rivers of revenue. The Nero of Rome had been excelled by his Christian successor, and the dumb submission of ancient slaves became manly independence in contrast with modern stupidity.

By the passage of the so-called "Credit-strengthening Act," in March, 1869, it was provided that all bonds of the government, except in cases where the law authorizing the issue of any such obligation has expressly provided that the same may be paid in lawful money, or other currency than gold and silver, should be payable in coin. This act was denounced by both Morton and Stevens, as a fraud upon the people, in that it made a new contract for the benefit of the bondholder. The injustice of the act could have been determined upon the plainest principles of equity: if the bonds were payable in coin, there was no need for its passage; if they were not so payable, there could be no excuse for it. If there existed a doubt sufficiently strong to require such an act, it was clearly an injustice to ignore the rights of the many in the interests of the few. But the men who had not scrupled to send rag-money to the soldiers in the trenches, and coin to the plotters in the rear, had no consciences to be troubled. They had dared to pay to the soldiers the money of the nation, and then rob them of two-thirds of it under color of law, and now needed only to search for methods, not for excuses. Political exigencies must be guarded against. The public must be hoodwinked, the soldier element placated with pension doles.

The first essential was to stifle public discussion. Some fool-friends of the money power had introduced and pressed the bill early in 1868. There were still a few Representatives in Congress who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and they raised a vigorous protest against the iniquitous proposal. Discussion then might be fatal to both the scheme and the party, and Simon Cameron supplemented an already inodorous career by warning the Senate that this bill would seriously injure the Republican party, and that it should be laid aside until the excitement of a political campaign had subsided, and it could be discussed with the calmness with which we should view all great financial questions.

Here was the art of the demagogue, blinding the eyes of the people with sophistry and false pretences in order to secure by indirection that which could not be obtained by fair discussion. A Presidential election was approaching. An honest Chief Executive had rebelled against the attempt to nullify the results of the war by converting the Southern States into conquered territories, in order that party supremacy should be secured, even at the expense of national unity and harmony. Any discussion of a proposition to burden the victorious soldier with greater debt, in the interest of a class of stay-at-homes, would have caused vigorous protests from the men whose aid was necessary for party success. Thaddeus Stevens had announced that if he thought "that the Republican party would vote to pay, in coin, bonds that were payable in greenbacks, thus making a new contract for the benefit of the bondholders, he would vote for Frank Blair, even if a worse man than Horatio Seymour was at the head of the ticket." Oliver P. Morton, the war-Governor of Indiana, had been equally vigorous in his language; and practical politicians foresaw that even Pennsylvania and Indiana might be lost to the Republican party with these men arrayed against it. Therefore the cunning proposal to postpone this discussion "until after the excitement of a Presidential election was over, and we could discuss this with the calmness with which we should view all great financial questions." The hint was taken, the contest of 1868 was fought under a seeming acquiescence in the views of Stevens and Morton; the dear people were hoodwinked with catch-phrases coined to deceive, and a new lease of power was secured by false pretence. But when the excitement of the election had passed, and there was no longer any danger of "injuring the Republican party," all discussion was stifled; and the first act signed by the newly elected President was that which had been laid aside for that season of "calmness with which we should view all great financial questions."

The next step in the conspiracy was a logical sequence to all that had preceded. Having secured coin payment of interest and principal of all bonds, it was now in order to still further increase the value of the one and to perpetuate the payment of the other. To this end, silver was demonetized by a trick in the revision of the Statutes, reducing the volume of coin one-half, and decreasing the probability of rapid bond payments. Then the volume of the paper currency was contracted by a systematic course of substituting interest-bearing bonds for non-interest-bearing currency, and the first chapter of financial blunders and crimes of the Wall Street

servants ended in a panic, revealing, in its first wild terror, the disgraceful connection of high public officials with the worst elements of stock-jobbery.

It is possible that a direct proposition in 1865, to double the amount of the public debt as a free gift to the creditor-class, might have caused such a clamor as would have forever driven from power its authors, and have silenced the claims of modern Republicans that they were the sole friends of the soldier, and defenders of national honor. But the financial legislation of the Republican party has done more and worse than this. Its every act has been in the interest of a favored class, and a direct and flagrant robbery of the producing masses. It has won the support of corporate monopoly by blind submission to its demands, and, with brazen audacity, sought and obtained the co-operation of the survivors of the army by doling out pensions and promises. And yet, with a record that would have crimsoned the cheek of a Nero or Caligula, its leaders are posing as critics of honest statesmen, and the only friends and defenders of the soldier and laborer. The leaders of its earlier and better days have been ostracised and silenced in party councils, while audacious demagogues have used its places of trust as a means of casting anchors to windward for personal profit. Its party conventions are controlled by notorious lobbyists and railroad attorneys, and the agricultural population appealed to for support. Truly the world is governed more by prejudice than by reason, and American politics of the present day offer but slight rewards to manliness or patriotism.

CLINTON FURBISH.

THE HONOR OF AN ELECTION.

(PRESIDENT CLEVELAND'S DEFEAT, 1888.)

Whose is the honor? Once again
The million-drifted shower is spent
Of votes that into power have whirled two men:—
One man, defeated; one, made President.

Whose is the honor? His who wins
The people's wreath of favor, cast
At venture?—Lo, his thralldom just begins!—
Or is it his who, losing, yet stands fast?

The first takes power, in mockery grave
Of freedom—made, by writ unsigned,
The people's servant, whom a few enslave.
The other is master of an honest mind.

From venom'd spite that stung and ceased,
From slander's petty craft set free,
This man—the bonds of formal power released—
Moves higher, dowered with large integrity.

Though stabs of cynic hypocrites
And festering malice of false friends
Have won their noisome way, unmoved he fits
His patriot purpose still to lofty ends.

Whose is the honor? Freemen—yours,
Who found him faithful to the right,
Clean-handed, true, yet turned him from your doors
And bartered daybreak for corruption's night?

Weak-shouldered nation, that endures
So painfully an upright sway,
Four little years, then yields to lies and lures,
And slips back into greed's familiar way!

For now the light bank-note outweighs
The ballot of the unbought mind;
And all the air is filled with falsehood's praise—
Shams, for sham victory artfully designed.

Is theirs the honor, then, who roared
Against our leader's wise-laid plan,
Yet now have seized his plan, his flag, his sword,
And stolen all of him—except the man?

No! His the honor, for he keeps
His manhood firm, intact, unsoiled
By base deceit.—Not dead, the nation sleeps:
Pray Heaven it waken ere it be despoiled!

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

NOVEMBER, 1888.

ANDY'S GIFT.

HOW HE GOT IN AND HOW HE WAS GOTTEN OUT.

An Episode of Any Day.

I.

"Well, Age *is* beautiful!"

"Then *she* is a joy forever!"

"Wonderful staying power for a filly of her age, anyhow!"

From a typical, if not very remarkable, group of alleged men of the world, surrounding the quaint and capacious punch-bowl at a brilliant society event, came this small-shot of repartee. None of the speakers had been very long out of their teens; all of them were familiar ingredients of that cream-nougat compound, called society.

Mr. de Silva Street was of the harmless blonde and immaculate linen type. He was invited everywhere for his present boots, and well-received for his expectant bonds; his sole and responsible ancestor having "fought in his corner" with success, in more than one of the market battles for the belt.

Mr. Wetherly Gage had glory enough with very young belles and tenacious marriageable possibilities, in being society editor of *Our Planet*; while Mr. Trotter Upton had owned more horses and been more of a boon to sharp traders than any man of his years in the metropolis. A brief young man, with ruddy, if adolescent, moustache apparently essaying the ascent of a nose turned up in sympathetic hue, his red hair was cut in aggressive erectile fashion, which emphasized the *soubriquet* of "Indian Summer," given him by the present unconscious subject of the critical trilogy.

"But remember, Trotter, she is my pet partner," simpered Mr. Street at the shapely back disappearing down the hallway; and he caressed where his blond moustache was to be.

"And might have been of your—mother's," added Mr. Gage, with the lonesome titter that illustrated all of his acidulous jokelets.

"Remember she is a lady, and a guest of your host besides," chimed in a tall, dark man, as he joined the group. The voice was perfectly quiet; but there seemed discomforting magnetism in the glance he rested on one after the other, as he filled a glass and raised it to handsome, but firm-set lips.

The three typical beaux of an abnormal civilization shifted position uneasily. Trotter Upton pulled down his cuffs, and laboriously admired the horse-shoe and snaffle ornamenting their buttons, as he answered:

"Sorry we shocked you, Van. Forgot it was your lecture season! But I'll taut the curb on the boys, so socket your whip, old fel!"

"If your tact kept pace with your slang, Upton, what a success you'd be!" Van Morris answered, carelessly. "'Tis a real pity you let the stable monopolize so much of the time that would make you an ornament to society." Then he set down his unfinished glass, sauntered into the hall, and approached the subject of discussion.

Miss Rose Wood was scarcely a beauty; nor was she the youngest belle of that ball by perhaps fifteen seasons of German cotillion. But she had tact to her manicured finger-tips, delicate acid on her tongue's tip, and that dangerous erudition, a brief biography of every girl in the set, was handily stored in her capacious memory. She had, moreover, a staunch following of gilt-plated youths who, being really afraid of her, made her a belle as a sort of social Peter's pence.

Miss Wood had just finished a rapid "glide," when she came under fire of the punch-room light-fighters; but, though Mr. Upton had once judged her "a trifle touched in the wind," her complexion and her tasteful drapery had come equally smooth out of that trying ordeal. Even that critic finished with a nod towards her as their mentor moved away:

"She *does* keep her pace well! Hasn't turned a hair." And he was right in the fact so peculiarly stated; for it was less the warmth of the dancing-room than of her partner's urgency, that brought Miss Rose Wood into the hall, for what Mr. Upton called "a breather."

The visible members of the Wood family were two, Miss Rose and her father, Colonel Westchester Wood. "The Colonel" was an equally familiar figure at the clubs and on the quarter-stretch; nor was he chary of acceptance of the cards to dinners, balls, and opera-boxes, which his daughter's facile management brought to the twain in showers. He had a certain military air, and a nebulous military history; boasted of his Virginia-Kentucky origin, and more than hinted at his Blue Grass stock-farm. Late at night, he would mistily mention "My regiment at Shiloh, sah!" But, as he was reputed even more expert with the pistol than most knew him to be with cards, geography and chronology were never insisted on in detail. But the Colonel was undisputed possessor of a thirst, marvellous in its depth and continuity; and he had also a cast-iron head that turned the flanks of the most direct assaults of alcohol, and scattered them to flaunt the red flag on his pendulous nose, or to skirmish over his scrupulously shaven cheeks.

Of the invisible members of "the Colonel's" household, fleecy rumors only pervaded society at intervals. The social Stanleys and Livingstons who had essayed the sources of the Wood family stream in its dark continent of brown-faced brick, on a quiet avenue, sent back vague stories of a lovely and patient invalid, and a more lovely and equally patient young girl, mother and sister to Miss Rose. There was a misty legend sometimes floating around the clubs, that "the Colonel," after the method of Cleopatra, had dissolved his wife's fortune in a posset, and swallowed it years before. But again the reputation of a dead shot cramped curiosity.

And a similar mist sometimes pervaded five o'clock teas and reunions *chez la modiste*, to the effect that the younger sister was but as a Midianite to the elder, while the mother was dying of neglect. But as neither subject of this gossip was in society, the mist never condensed into direction.

Society found Miss Rose Wood a peculiarly useful and pleasant person; and it took her—as "the Colonel" took many of his pleasures—on trust.

II.

The ball was a crowded one; but was, perhaps, the most brilliant and select of that season, combining a Christmas-eve festivity with the *début* party of the acknowledged beauty and prize-heiress of the entire set.

Blanche Allmand had been finally finishing abroad for some years, after having won her blue-ribboned diploma from Mde. de Cancanière, on Murray Hill. Rumors of her perfections of face and form and character had come across the seas, in those thousand-and-one letters, for which a fostering government makes postal unions. And ever mingled with these rumors, came praises of those thousand-and-one accomplishments, which society is equally apt to admire as to envy, even while it does not appreciate.

But what most inspired with noble ambition the gilded youth of that particular *coterie*, was the universally accepted fact that old Jack Allmand was master of the warmest fortune that any papa thereabouts might add to the blessing he bestowed upon his son-in-law.

And, like Jephtha of old, he "had one fair daughter and no more." A widower—not only "warm," but very safe—he had weathered all the shoals and quicksands of "the street," and had brought his golden argosy safe into the port of investment. Then he had retired from business, which theretofore had engrossed his whole heart and soul, and lavished both upon the fair young girl, to bring whom from final finishing at the *Sacre Cœur*, he had just made himself so hideously sea-sick.

It was very late in the season when the delayed return of the pair was announced, with numerous adjectives, in the society columns; but Mr. Allmand's impatience to expose his golden fleece to the expectant Jasons would brook no delay. Blanche was allowed scarcely time to unpack her many trunks; to exhibit her goodly share of the *chefs d'œuvres* of Pengat and Worth to the admiring elect; and to receive gushing embraces, only measured by their envy, when the *début* ball was announced for Christmas-eve.

His best Christmas gift had come to the doting father; and what more fitting season to show his joy and pride in it, and to have their little world share both?

When Blanche, backed by Miss Rose Wood, had hinted that it was rather an unusual occasion, he had promptly settled that by declaring that she was a peculiarly unusual sort of girl. So the invitations went forth; the Allmand mansion was first turned inside out, and then illuminated, and flower-hidden for the *début* ball.

That it would be *the* affair of the season none doubted. Already, many a paternal pocket had twinged responsive to extra appeals from marketable daughters; and as to beaux, they had responded *nem. con.*, when bidden to the event promising so much in present feast, and which might possibly so tend to prevent future famine. For already the clubs had discounted the chances of one favorite or another for winning the marital prize of the year.

Foremost among those who had hastened to welcome Blanche back to her new home was Miss Rose Wood. She had the mysterious knack of "coming out" gracefully with every fresh set; of perfectly adapting herself to its fads, and especially to its beaux. Set might come and set might go, but she came out forever; and some nameless tact implied to every *débutante*, what Micawber forced upon Copperfield with the brutality of words, that she was the "friend of her youth."

So, already, Miss Wood was prime favorite and prime minister at the home-court of the confiding Blanche, who, spite of brave heart and strong will of her own, fluttered not unnaturally in the unwonted buzz and glare of her new life. But most particularly had Rose Wood warned her against the flirts and "unsafe men" of their set; including, of course, Vanderbilt Morris and her present partner of the ball in the ranks of both.

That partner, Andrew Browne, was avowedly the best *parti* of the entire set. Handsome, fun-loving, and well-cultivated, he was that *rara avis* among society beaux, a thorough gentleman by instinct; but he was lazily given to self-indulgence, and had the prime weakness of being utterly incapable of saying "no," to man or woman. The intimate friend and room-mate of Van Morris for many years, Browne had never lost a sort of reverence for the superior force and decision of the other's character; and, though but a few years his junior, in all serious social matters he literally sat at his feet.

And Morris had always grown restive when Miss Rose Wood made one of her "dead sets" at Andy's face and fortune; for a far-away experience of his own, in that quarter, had taught him how small an objection to that maiden would be a fortune with the man whom she blessed with her affection.

"And *that* brand of the wine of the heart," he had once cautioned Andy, "does not improve with age."

Doubtful of that young gentleman's confident response, that "*he* was not to be caught with chaff," Van still kept watch and ward. So, leaving the elegant book-room of the elegant avenue mansion—converted, for the nonce, into an elegant bar-room for Mr. Trotter Upton and his friends—Morris sauntered through knots of pretty women and of pretty vacuous-looking men, resting on seats half-hidden in potted plants, and approached the pair interesting him most.

Neither glowed with delight at his advent, although Andy seemed only to be rattling off common-places, in peculiarly voluble style. Morris asked for the next waltz; Miss Wood glanced shyly up at her companion, dropped her eyes demurely, and believed she would rest until the *cotillon*. Then, after a few more small necessities of social life about the beauty of the girls, the heat of the rooms, and the elegance of the flowers, she permitted Andy to drift easily towards the door that opened on the dim-lit coolness of the conservatory.

As they turned away, Rose Wood sent one sharp glance of her gray eyes glinting into Morris's; then hers fell, and even he could find only bare common-place in her words:

"So many little dangers, you know, Mr. Morris—at a ball. One cannot be *too* prudent."

He did not answer; but the look that followed her graceful figure had very little of flattery in it.

"Curse that *Chambertin!*" he muttered in his moustache. "I warned him against the second pint at dinner. Andy *couldn't* be fool enough, though," he added, with a shrug, and moved slowly towards the dancing-room.

The critical group, still around the big punch-bowl, looked after him curiously.

"*He's* not soft on the old girl, is he?" queried Mr. de Silva Street.

"Never!" chuckled Mr. Wetherly Gage. "Morris is too well up in Bible lore to marry his grandmother!"

"And he don't have to," put in Mr. Trotter Upton, with a sage wink. "I'd back Van against the field to win the Allmand purse, hands down, if he'd only enter. But he *won't*; so you're safe, Silvey, if you've got the go in you. But Lord! Van's too smart to carry weight for age! Why, you may land me over the tail-board, if the woman that hitches *him* double won't have to throw him down and sit on him, Rarey fashion!"

And the speaker, remarking *sotto voce*, that here was luck to the winner, drained his glass with a smack, set it down, and lounged into the smoking-room. There he lazily lit one of Mr. Allmand's full-flavored Havanas, and thoughtfully stored his breast pocket with several more.

III.

Meanwhile, the horsey pundit's offered odds seemed not so wisely laid.

In the great room a crowded waltz was in progress; and Morris saw Blanche Allmand standing on the opposite edge of the whirling circle. Her head and her dainty slipper were keeping time to the softly accented music; while a comical expression—half anger, half mischief—emphasized the nothing she was saying to her companion.

Van caught her eye and, adept that he was in the social signal-service, took in the situation at a glance. He slightly raised his eyebrows and barely moved his lips; she assented with the smallest of nods and a happy flush; and, a moment later, he had edged around the masses of bumping humanity and offered his arm.

"My waltz, I believe," he said, with the ease of the heir-apparent of Ananias. "I was unlucky enough, in losing the first turn, not to grudge Major Bouncey the rest."

"You deserve to lose the whole for coming late," the girl answered, drawing her arm from her partner's with that pretty reluctance which makes society's stage-business seem born in woman. "It was just too good of Major Bouncey to take your place and save my being a wall-flower." And, not pausing for that gallant soldier's labored disclaimer, the graceful pair glided

away to the graceful time of 'La Gitana' waltz.

"Horrid bore, that Bouncey," Blanche panted in the first pause. "Don't stop near him! He does all his dancing on my insteps; and I dare not stop for fear of his still more dreadful spooning."

"You would not have *me* blame him? A better balanced brain might well lose its poise, with *such* temptation!" And the man looked down on her with very eloquent eyes.

There was a pause. Then Van Morris bent his head, and the eyes still more strongly emphasized the words:

"Blanche, do you know how dangerously lovely you are?"

The girl's frank eyes dropped beneath the strong light in his; but there was not a shade of consciousness in the soft laugh that prefaced her reply:

"Ah! I've a cheval-glass and this is my first ball. So I suppose I know how 'dangerous' I am! Then, too, that awful Bouncey called me a lily of the valley!"

"It is the purest flower made by God's hand," were Morris's simple words; but the vibrant tone came from deeper than the lips, now close pressed together.

"But I *know* I'm not," Blanche retorted, merrily, "for *they* drink only dew, and I am quite wild for Regent's punch!"

They were at the refreshment room, now nearly deserted. Once more the man's eyes grew darker and deeper, as they met the girl's frank blue ones.

"And yet, not purer," he said, unheeding the interruption, "than the heart you, little girl, will soon give to some——"

He stopped abruptly; but the eyes added more than the words left unsaid.

Again Blanche dropped her eyes quickly; but her color never heightened, nor did the soft laces nestling over the graceful bust move at all quicker than the waltz might warrant. Van's face still bent over her with earnest expression, as she sipped the glass of punch he handed her; but neither spoke until they had crossed the corridor and passed another door into the conservatory.

IV.

The soft, warm air, heavy with the breath of the "Grand Duke" and of orange blossoms; the tremulous half-light from colored lamps hung amid the leaves; the dead stillness of the place, broken only by the splash of the fountain falling back into its moss-covered basin, all contrasted deliciously with the hot, dusty atmosphere and giddy buzzing under the flaring gas-jets left behind.

They strolled slowly down the gravelled walk, between rows of huge tubs, moist and flower-laden with the products of almost every clime. Here gleamed the glossy leaves of the Southern *grandiflora*; the rare wax plant crept along the wall beyond, its pink, starry blooms gleaming delicately among the thick, artificial-seeming leaves; while, as though in honor of the happily-timed birthnight of the fair young mistress of all, a gorgeous century plant had opened its bud in a glory of form and color, magnificent as rare.

"Blanche, do you remember how long I have known you?" Morris asked, suddenly breaking the silence. "Ever since you were like *this*; a close, callow bud, giving but vague promise of the glorious flowering of your womanhood! I watched the opening of every petal of your mind and tried to peer through them into the heart of the flower. But they sent you away; and now your return dazzles me with the brilliance and beauty of the full bloom. This was the past—*this* is the present!"

And reaching up, the man suddenly snapped off the glowing blossom from the cactus and held it before the girl, close to the pale camellia bud he had plucked before.

She raised her beautiful face, crowned with its halo-like glory of hair, full to him; and the expression it took was graver and more womanly than before. But still no agitation reflected in the candid eyes that looked steadily into his, and the voice, more softly pitched, had no tremor in it, as she answered:

"*Please* think of me, then, as the child you used to know; never as the *débutante* who must be fed, *à la* Bouncey, on the sweets of sentiment."

"Take sentiment—I mean the higher sentiment, that lifts us sometimes above our baser worldly nature—out of life, and it is not worth the living," Morris said earnestly. "That man could not understand it any more than he could understand you!"

"Perhaps you are right," she answered, quietly. "*We* are too old friends to talk society at each other; and you are *so* different from him."

Perhaps Morris was luckier for not replying.

It may be that the Destiny, which, we are told, shapes our ends, did not leave his so rough-hewn as it might have.

He himself could scarcely have told what thoughts were framing themselves in his mind; what words had almost formed themselves on his tongue. There are moments in life, when we live at

the rate of hours; and Van Morris was certainly going the pace, mentally, for those ten seconds of silence, before the echo of the girl's voice ceased vibrating on his ear. He was vaguely conscious, some ten seconds later still, that rarely had a calm, well-posed man of the world found himself quite so dizzy, from combined effects of a quick waltz, a flower-laden atmosphere, and a rounded arm pressing only restfully upon his own.

Suddenly that pressure grew sharp and decided. They stopped abruptly at a sharp turn of the walk.

On a somewhat too small rustic seat, under the fruit-laden boughs of an orange tree, and comfortably screened thereby from the gleam of the tinted lantern, sat Miss Rose Wood and Mr. Andrew Browne.

Their two heads were rather close together; their two hands were suspiciously distant, as though by sudden movement; and the lady's fan had fallen at her feet, most *à propos* to the crunch of the gravel, under approaching feet.

But only Blanche—less preoccupied with her thoughts than her companion—had caught the words, "Dismiss carriage—escort home," before Miss Wood's fan had happened to drop at her feet.

What there might be in those words to drop the color out of rosy cheeks, or to clench white little teeth hard together, it might well puzzle one to guess. But the face that had not changed under the strong music of Van Morris's voice, now grew deadly white an instant; then flooded again with surging rush of color.

But very quickly, though with perfect self-possession, Miss Wood had risen and advanced one step, to arrange Blanche's lace, with the words:

"Your *berthé* is loose, darling!"

Then, as she inserted the harmless, unnecessary pin, she whispered in the shell-like ear:

"Don't scold me, loved one! Indeed, I was *not* flirting. I only came out here to keep him from the —*champagne punch!*"

Blanche made no reply to this whispered confidence; nor did she seem especially grateful for the grace done to her toilette. She never so much as glanced at Andy Browne. He, also, had risen, after picking up the dropped fan, with not effortless grace; and now stood smiling, with rather meaningless, if measureless, good nature upon the invaders.

And Van Morris was all pose and *savoir faire* once more. He might have been examining Blanche on her progress in algebra, for all the consciousness in his manner as he complimented Miss Wood on her peculiarly deft management of that dangerous weapon, the pin. But there was no little annoyance in the whispered aside to his friend:

"Don't drink any more to-night, Andy. *Don't!*"

"All right, Van; I promise," responded the other, with the most beaming of smiles. "Tell you the truth, don't think I need it. Heat of the room, you know—"

"And the second pint of *Chambertin* at dinner," finished Morris, as Miss Wood—the toilette and *her* confidence both completed—slipped her perfectly gloved hand into Andy's arm again.

Precisely, then, three sharp notes of the cornet cut through the stillness under the flowers. It was followed by the indescribable sound, made only by the rush of many female trains towards one spot. Like the chronicled war-horse, Andy shook his mane at the first note; Miss Wood nodded beamingly over her shoulder at the second; and the pair were hastening off by the time the third died away.

Blanche showed no disposition to take the vacated seat.

"The German is forming," she said, "and I am engaged to that colt-like Mr. Upton."

Only at the door of the conservatory she paused.

"Does Mr. Browne ever drink too much wine?" she asked abruptly.

Van never hesitated one second. He lied loyally. "Why, *never*, of course," he deprecated, in the most natural tone. "With rare exceptions. But what deucedly sharp eyes she has," he added, mentally, as Mr. Upton informed them that "the bell had tapped," and took Blanche off.

Almost at the same moment, a waiter rushed by with a wine-cooler and glasses; and he heard the pompous butler direct:

"Set it by Mr. Browne's chair. He leads in *ler curtillyun!*"

Morris half started to countermand the order. Then he reconsidered and leaned against the doorway.

"He can't mean to drink it, after his promise to me," he thought. "Anyway, he might get something worse. Besides, I am not his guardian; and," he added very slowly, a strange smile hovering about his lips, "I can scarcely keep my own head to-night."

Somehow he, best dancer in town as he was, had no partner to-night. The sight before him had no novelty; and Mr. Trotter Upton's vivacious prancing somewhat irritated him, in spite of the amusement at himself he felt at the sensation.

"Didn't think I was so far gone as to be jealous of Trotter," he muttered.

Then he slipped into the hat-room and was quickly capped and cloaked for that precious boon to the bored, the exit *sans adieu*.

V.

It was a raw, searching Christmas morning into which Van Morris stepped, as he softly closed the door of the Allmand mansion and turned up his fur collar against "a nipping and an eager air."

Even in that fashionable section the streets already showed somewhat of the bustle of the busy to-morrow. Belated caterers' carts spun by; early butchers' and milk-wagons rumbled along, making their best speed towards distant patrons. Here and there, gleams from gas-lit windows slanted athwart the frosty darkness, punctuated by ever-recurrent flaring of street lamps. Not infrequent groups of muffled men—some jovial with reminiscent scenes of pleasure left behind, and some hilarious from what they brought along with them—passed him, as he strode rapidly along the echoing flags, too intent on his own thoughts to notice any of them.

Suddenly, from beneath one of the gloom punctuators opposite, a woman's voice cut the air sharply:

"Please let me pass!"

Morris, alert in a second, had crossed the street and joined the group of four intuitively, before he knew it himself. Three young men, whose evening dress told that they were of society, and whose unsteady hold of their own legs, that they had had just a little too much of it, barred the way of a young girl. Tall, slight, and with a mass of blonde hair escaping from the rough shawl she drew closer about her head as she shrank back, there was something showing through her womanly terror that spoke convincingly the gentlewoman. The trio chuckled inanely, making elaborate bows; and the girl shivered as she shrank further into the shadow, and repeated piteously:

"Do, please, let me pass! *won't* you?"

"Certainly they will," Van answered, stepping up on the pavement and taking her in at a glance. "Am I not right, gentlemen?" he added urbanely to the unsteady trio.

"Not by a damned sight!"

"Who the devil are you?" were the prompt and simultaneous rejoinders.

"That doesn't matter," Van answered quietly; "but you are obstructing the public streets and frightening this evident stranger."

"We don't know any stranger at two o'clock in the morning," was the illogical rejoinder of the third youth, who clung to the lamp-post.

"What about it, anyway?" said the stoutest of the three, advancing towards Morris. "Do *you* know her?"

"*You* evidently do not," Van replied; then he turned to the girl with the deference he would scarce have used to the leader of his set. "If you will take my arm, I will see you safely to the nearest policeman."

The girl hesitated and shrank back a second; then, with that instinctive trust which—fortunately, perhaps—is peculiarly feminine, slipped her red, ungloved little hand into his arm.

The leader of the trio staggered a step nearer. "You're a nice masher," he said thickly; "but if it's a row you're looking for, you can find one pretty quick!"

Morris glanced at the man with genuine pity.

"You look as though you might be a gentlemen when you are sober," he said. "*I* am not looking for a row; and if you boys make one, you'll only be more ashamed of yourselves on Christmas day than you should be already. And now I wish to pass."

"I'll give you a pass," the other answered; and, with a lurch, he fronted Morris and put up his hands in most approved fighting form. At the same moment, the girl—with the inopportune logic of all girls in such cases—clung heavily to Morris's arm and cried piteously:

"Oh, no! You mustn't! Not for me!" and, as she did so the man lunged a vicious blow with his right hand, full at Morris's face.

But, though like J. Fitz-James, "taught abroad his arms to wield," Van Morris had likewise used his legs to wrestle in England, and had moreover seen *la savatte* in France. With a quick turn of his head, the blow passed heavily, but harmlessly, by his cheek. At the same instant his foot shot swiftly out, close to the ground, and with a sharp sweep from right to left, cut his opponent's heels from under him, as a sickle cuts weeds, sprawling him backwards upon the pavement.

Drawing the girl swiftly through the breach thus made, Morris placed her behind him and turned to face the men again. They made no rush, as he had expected; so he spoke quickly:

"You'd better pick up your friend and be off. You don't look like boys who would care to sleep in the station," he said, "and here comes the patrol wagon."

They needed no second warning, nor stood upon the order of their going. The downed man was on his feet; and it was devil take the hind-most to the first corner. For the rumbling of heavy

wheels and the clang of heavy hoofs upon the Belgian blocks were drawing nearer.

To Van's relief, for he hated a scene, it proved to be only a "night-liner" cab, though with rattle enough for a field battery; but to his tipsy antagonists it had more terror than a park of Parrot guns.

"Can I do anything more for you?" he asked the girl; then suddenly: "You're not the sort to be out alone at this hour of the night. Are you in trouble?"

"Oh, indeed I am!" she answered, with a sob; again illogical, and breaking down when the danger was over. "What *must* you think of me? But mother was suddenly *so* ill, and father and sister were at a ball, and the servants slipped away, too. I dared not wait, so I ran out alone to fetch Doctor Mordant. *Please* believe me, for—"

"Hello, Cab!" broke in Van. "Certainly I believe you," he answered the girl, as the cab pulled up with that eager jerk of the driver's elbows, eloquent of fare scented afar off. "I'll go with you for Doctor Mordant, and then see you home."

"Why, is that *you*, Mr. Morris?" cried Cabby, with a salute of his whip *à la militaire*; but he muttered to himself, "Well, I *never!*" as he jumped from the box and held the door wide.

"That's enough, Murphy," Van said shortly. "Now, jump in, Miss, and I'll—" But the girl shrank back, and drew the shawl closer round her face. "No, I won't either. Pardon my thoughtlessness; for it isn't exactly the hour to be driving alone with a fellow, I know. But you can trust Murphy perfectly. Dennis, drive this lady to Dr. Mordant's and then home again, just as fast as your team can carry her!" And he half lifted the girl into the carriage.

"That I will, Mr. Van," Murphy replied cheerily, as he clambered to his seat.

The girl stretched out two cold, red little hands, and clasped his fur-gloved one frankly.

"Oh! thank you a thousand times," she said. "I *knew* you were a gentleman at the first word to those cowards; but I never dreamed you were Mr. Van Morris. I've heard sister speak of you *so* often!"

"*Your* sister?" Van stared at the cheaply-clad night wanderer, as though *he* had had too much Regent's punch.

"Yes, sister Rose—Rose Wood," she said, with the confidence of acquaintance. "I'm her sister, you know—Blanche."

"Blanche? Your name is Blanche? I cannot tell you how happy I am to have chanced along just now, Miss Wood;" and Van bared his head in the cutting night wind to the blanket-shawled girl in the night-liner, as he would not have done at high noon to a duchess in her chariot. "But I'm wasting your time from your mother; so good-morning; and may your Christmas be happier than its eve."

"Good-by! And oh, *how* I thank you!" the girl said, again extending her hand over the cab door. "I'll tell Rose, and *she* shall thank you, better than I can!"

"Good-night! But don't trouble *her*," Van said, releasing the girl's hand. "One minute, Murphy," he added aside to the driver; "here's your Christmas-gift!"

A bright gold piece glinted in the dirty fur glove, in which Dennis Murphy looked to find a shilling under the next gas-lamp.

"Blanche! and the same golden hair, too!" Van muttered to himself, as the cab rocked and ricketted down the street. "Well, I suppose that is what the poet means by 'the magic of a name!'" and he suddenly recalled that he was still standing bareheaded in the blast. "And Rose Wood's sister looks like that! Well, verily one half the world does *not* know how the other half lives!"

Then he turned and strode rapidly homeward; pulling hard, as he thought many strange thoughts, on the dead cigar between his lips.

Once in his own parlor, Van Morris walked straight to the mirror over the mantel, and looked long and steadily at himself. Then he tossed Mr. Allmand's half-smoked cigar contemptuously into the grate, lit one he selected carefully from the carved stand near, and threw himself into a smoking-chair before the ruddy glow of coals.

"I must be getting old," he soliloquized. "I didn't use to get bored so easily by these things. Either balls are not what they were, or *I* am not. Now, 'there's no place like home!' Not much of a box to call home, either!" And he glanced round the really elegant apartment in half-disgust. "There's *something* lacking! Andy's the best fellow in the world, but he's so wanting in order. Poor old boy! Wonder if he *will* drink anything more? I surely must blow him up to-morrow morning. How deucedly sharp *she* is!" and he smiled to himself. "She saw through Rose Wood's game at a glance. Wonder if she saw through *me*?"

He looked steadily into the glowing coals, as though castles were building there. Once or twice his lips moved soundlessly; and suddenly he reached over to the escritoire near by, and taking an oval case from it, opened it, and gazed long and earnestly at the picture in it. The face was the average one of a young girl, with stiff plaits of hair stiffly tossed over the shoulder, in futile chase after grace; but the wide blue eyes were a glory of purity and trust, and they were the eyes of Blanche Allmand.

Then he rose abruptly, walked to the sideboard, and filled a glass with water. Then he placed carefully in it the cactus flower and camelia bud, which had never left his hand since he plucked

them in the conservatory. As he did so, Morris' face grew serious, and looked down wistfully into the fire.

When he raised his eyes they were full of hopeful light, and they rested long and steadily upon the flowers.

"Yes! It *is* better!" he exclaimed aloud, as though continuing a train of thought. "Some of *that* family bloom only once in a century. I cannot look for miracles, and many a hand may reach for *my* flower. Yes, to-morrow shall settle it! The Italian was even more philosopher than poet when he said, '*Amare e no essere amato e tempo perduto*'!"

VI.

When Mr. Andrew Browne tumbled into the cosy parlor of that bachelor's box at 4 A.M. on Christmas morning, he was by all odds the happiest man of his acquaintance, even if he knew himself, which was more than doubtful.

He slammed the door, slung his fur-lined overcoat across the sofa, turned up the gas until it whistled merrily, and poked the fire until it roared again. Then he hunted the boot-jack, and drew off one boot; changed his mind, and flung himself into the smoking-chair, and stretched booted and unbooted foot to the blaze. Thus posed, he trolled out, "*Il segreto per esser felice*," in a rich baritone; only interrupting his *tempo* to spit out superfluous ends, bitten from his cigar, in the effort to phrase neatly and smoke at the same time.

"Why the deuce don't you get to bed?" growled Van Morris from the next room. He was aroused from dreams of Blanche Allmand, music, diamond solitaires, and orange-blossoms, mixed into one sweet confusion. "Stop your row, can't you? and go to bed!"

"You go to bed yo'sef!" responded the illogical Andy, rising, not too steadily, on his one boot, and throwing wide the folding-door. "Who wants to go to bed? *I sha'n't*."

"You're an idiot!" muttered Mr. Morris; and he turned his face to the wall.

"Guess am an idiot," responded Andy, blandly. "But I ain't tight,—only happy! I'm the happiest idiot—*Il segreto per ess*—Say, Van! I'm so *devilish* happy, ol' boy!"

Morris turned over with a groan, and pulled the covering over his head. The strong, small word he uttered as he did so is not to be found in the church service. But Andy was not to be snubbed in that style. He stepped forward; attempted to sit on the bed's edge; miscalculated his momentum, and succeeded in landing plump on the centre of his friend's person.

"Confound you!" gasped the latter, breathless. "You're as drunk as—as a fool!"

"No, I ain't," chuckled Andy, imperturbably happy. Then he laughed till the bed shook; composing himself suddenly into gravity, with a fierce snort—"No, I ain't: you're sober!"

"And when *she* asked, I said you never drank," reproached the irate and still gasping Morris. "I *lied* for you!"

"Tha's nothing. I'll lie for you; lie for you to-morrow—see'f I don't! Say, Van, ol' boy, I ain't tight; only happy—*so* happy! Van! *Van!*" and he shook the pretended sleeper heavily. "I'm goin' to reform! I'm goin' to be married!"

"*What? Rose Wood?*"

Van Morris sat bolt upright in bed now. The tone of voice in which he invoked Miss Wood might have brought response from that wise virgin, disrobing for triumphant rest full ten blocks away.

But he found it vain to argue with Andy's mixed Burgundy and champagne punch. Contradiction but made him insist more strongly that he *was* engaged to the old campaigner, whom Morris had so manoeuvred to outflank. Finally, in a miscellaneous outfit of evening pants, night-gown, and smoking-cap, he succeeded in getting the jubilant groom *in futuro* into bed, where he still hummed at the much-sought secret of happiness, until he collapsed with a sudden snore, and slept like the Swiss.

Then Morris walked the floor rapidly, wrapped in thought and a cloud of fragrant cigar-smoke. Then he threw himself once more into the smoking-chair, and gazed long and earnestly into the coals, a heavy frown resting on his face. Suddenly it cleared off; the sunshine of a broad smile took its place; and Van tossed the end of his cigar exultingly into the fire. Then he rose and stretched himself like a veritable son of Anak, when

"Stalwart they court the rapture of the fight."

"I have it, by George!" he cried. "I'll get the poor fellow out of this box, if the old girl did induce him to pop, and accepted him out of hand! Andy! I say, Andy, wake up!" and he ran into his chum's room, dragged him out of bed, and had him at the fire, before he was well awake.

Mr. Andrew Browne was no longer in a mood even approaching the jubilant. He had utterly forgotten the secret *per esser felice*, during his two hours' nap. He confessed to a consuming desire for Congress-water, and made use of improper words upon finding only empty bottles, aggravating in reminiscence of it, in the carved ebony sideboard.

Finally he sat down, with his head in his hands, and told his story dismally enough.

Miss Rose Wood's carriage had been dismissed, as per programme. Andy had led the German

with her, and a bottle of champagne at his side. He had walked home with her; had told her—in what wild words he knew not—that he loved her; and had been, as Van had surmised, “accepted out of hand.”

“And, Van, I’m bound, as a man of honor, to marry her!” finished the now thoroughly dejected *fiancé*. “Yes, I know what you’d say; it *is* a pretty rum thing to do; but then she mustn’t suffer for my cursed folly!”

“Suffer? Rose Wood *suffer* for missing fire one time more?”

Surprise struggled with contempt in the exclamation Morris shot out by impulse.

“But, if she loves me well enough to engage—” Andy began, rather faintly; but his mentor cut him short.

“Love the d—*deuce!*” he retorted. “Why, she’s a beggar and a husband-trap!”

“But her family? What will *they* think?” pleaded Andy, but with very little soul in the plea.

“Poor little Blanche!” muttered Morris, half to himself. “Bah! the girl *has* no heart!”

“Blanche?” echoed Van, in a dazed sort of way. “Why, you don’t suppose Blanche will know it! I never thought of *her!*” and he rose feebly, and stood shivering in his ghostly attire.

“Why, of course, Rose Wood couldn’t keep such great news. Why, man, you’re the capital prize in the matrimonial lottery; but hang me if Miss Wood shan’t draw another blank this time!”

There was a compound of deadly nausea and effortful dignity in the elbows Mr. Andrew Browne leaned upon the mantel, which hinted volumes for what his face might have said, had it been visible through the fingers latticed over it.

“I am a gentleman,” he half gasped. “It *may* be a trap; but I’ll keep my word, and—*marry* her, unless—unless, Van, you get me out of it!”

“Go to bed, you spoon!” laughed his friend. “I have the whole plan cut and dried. I’ll teach you your lesson as soon as you sleep yourself sober.”

Morris stood many minutes by the bedside of his quickly-sleeping friend; but, when he turned into the parlor again, his face was pale and stern.

“The way of the world, always,” he said aloud. “One inanely eager, another stupidly backward. ‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!’ Poor boy! he’d give as much to-morrow to unsay his words as I would to have spoken those I nearly said last night!”

The chill gray dawn outside was wrestling at the windows for entrance with the sickly glaring gas-light within. Morris drew aside the heavy curtains and pressed his forehead against the frost-laced pane. Long he looked out into the gray haze with eyes that saw nothing beyond his own thoughts. Then he turned to the fire again. The gray ash was hiding the glow of the spent coals. Then he took up the glass once more and looked earnestly at the contrasted flowers it held. He replaced it almost tenderly, and walked slowly to his own room.

“Yes, I know *myself*,” he said; “I think I know *her*. I’ll hesitate no longer; some fool may ‘rush in.’ To-morrow shall settle it. The tough old Scotchman was right:

‘He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all!’”

VII.

That same afternoon, at two o’clock, Mr. Vanderbilt Morris’s stylish dog-cart, drawn by his high-spirited bays, drew up at Miss Rose Wood’s domicile. Holding the reins sat Mr. Andrew Browne, beaming as though *Chambertin* had never been pressed from the grape; seemingly as fresh as though headache had never slipped with the rest out of Pandora’s box.

But it may have been only seemingly; for, faultlessly attired from scarf-pin to glove tips, Andy was still a trifle more uneasy than the dancing of his restless team might warrant in so noted a whip as he. A queer expression swept over his handsome face from time to time; and, as he came to a halt, he glanced furtively over his shoulder, as though fearing something in pursuit.

“Ask Miss Rose if she will drive with me,” he said hurriedly to the servant. “Say I can’t get down to come in; the horses are too fresh.”

Then the off-horse danced a polka in space, responsive to deft tickling with the whip.

Miss Wood did not stand upon ceremony, nor upon the order of her going, but went at once to get her wraps.

“Better late than never,” she said to herself, as she dived into a drawer and upset her mouchoir case in search for a particular handkerchief. “I really couldn’t comprehend his absence and silence all day—but, poor boy! he’s *so* young!” And then Miss Rose, as she tied a becoming cardinal bow under her chin, hummed two bars of “The Wedding March” through the pins in her mouth.

Two minutes later saw her seated on the high box beside her future lord *in posse*; the bays

plunging like mad and Andy swinging to the reins as if for life. For, before she could speak one word—and for no reason to her apparent—he had let the limber lash drop stingingly across their backs.

Very keen was the winter wind that swept by her tingling ears; and Miss Wood raised her seal-skin muff and hid her modest blushes from it. For that gentle virgin had ever a familiar demon at her elbow. His name was Experience; and now he whispered to her: “A red nose never reflects sentiment!”

“And *he* is so particular how one looks,” Miss Rose whispered back to the familiar; and her tip-tilted feature sought deeper protection in the furs.

At length, when well off the paved streets, the mad rush of the brutes cooled down to a swinging trot—ten miles an hour; Browne’s tense arms relaxed a trifle; and he drew a long, deep breath—whether of relief, or anxiety, no listener could have guessed. But he kept his eyes still rooted to that off-horse’s right ear as though destiny herself sat upon its tip.

Then, for the first time, he spoke; and he spoke with unpunctuated rapidity, in a hard, mechanical tone, as though he were a bad model of Edison’s latest triumph, and some tyro hand was grinding at the cylinder.

“Miss Rose,” he began, “we are old friends—never so old; but I can never sufficiently regret—last night!”

He felt, rather than saw, the muff come sharply down and the face turn full to him; regardless now of the biting wind.

“No! don’t interrupt me,” he went on, straight at the off-horse’s right ear. “I *know* your goodness of heart; *know* how it pained you; but you could have done nothing else but—*refuse me!*”

Miss Rose Wood’s mouth opened quickly; but a providential gutter jolted her nearly from the seat; and the wind drove her first word back into her throat like a sob.

The inexorable machine beside her ground on relentless.

“Yes, I understand what you would say: that you refused me *firmly* and *finally* because I—*deserved it!*” Had Andy Browne’s soul really been the tin-foil of the phonograph, it could not have shown more utter disregard of moral responsibility. “You knew I was under the influence of wine; that I would never have dared to address you had I been myself! I repeat, I deserve my—*decisive rejection!* It was proper and just in you to say ‘*No!*’”

Woman’s will conquered for one brief second. Spite of wind and spite of him, Miss Wood began:

“‘*No?* I—”

“Yes, ‘*no!*’” broke in the relentless machinery. It ground on implacable, though great beads stood on Andy’s brow from sheer terror lest he run down before the end. “*No!* as firmly, as emphatically as you said it to me last night. Indeed, I honor you the more for flatly refusing the man who, in forgetting his self-respect, forgot his respect—*for you!* But, Miss Rose, while I pledge you my honor never, *never* to speak to you again *of love*, I may still be—*your friend!*”

The bays were bowling down the street again by this time; when another *kismet*, in small and ugly canine form, flew at their heads with yelp and snarl. Rearing with one impulse, the spirited pair lunged forward and flew past the now twinkling lamps in a wild gallop. Andy pulled them down at last; their swinging trot replacing the dangerous rush. The Wood mansion was almost in sight; but the Ancient Mariner was a tyro to Andy Browne in the way he fixed that off-horse’s right ear with stony stare.

He might have looked round in perfect safety. The lithe figure by him sat gracefully erect. The face a trifle pale; the lips set tight against each other, with the blood pressed out of them, were not unnatural in that cutting wind. The eyes, fixed straight ahead, as his own, gleamed gray and cold; only a half-closing of the lids, once or twice, hiding an ugly light reflecting through them from the busy brain behind. But Andy never turned once until he brought up the bays stock still and leaped down to offer his hand to the lady at her own door.

She took it, naturally; springing to the ground as lightly as any *débutante* of the season. Not one trace of annoyance, even, showed on that best educated face.

“Andy, we *are* old friends,” she said, offering her hand frankly.

He took it mechanically, with a dazed soft of feeling that he must be even a bigger fool than he felt himself.

“Real friends,” Miss Wood went on, pleasantly, “and I’ll prove it to you now. *You* have acted like a man of honor to me; *I* will betray one little confidence, and make two people happy!”

The man still stood dumb; and his eye furtively wandered to the pawing off-horse, as if to take *his* confidence as to what it meant. The woman’s next words came slowly, and she smiled; a strange smile the lips alone made, but in which the glinting gray eyes took no share.

“For Van Morris is your best friend, after all. He will remember that I told him, last night, ‘One cannot be too careful!’”

She rose on tiptoe, whispered three words, and was gone before he could frame one in reply.

Once more those ill-used bays got the whip fiercely; and they turned the corner so short that Mr. Trotter Upton looked over his shoulder with a grin, and remarked to the blaze-faced

companion in his sulky shafts:

"Nine hundred dollars' worth of horse risked with nine dollars' worth of man! Van Morris better drive his own stock. G'long!"

VIII.

It was two o'clock when Mr. Andrew Browne had ridden forth to recapture his plighted troth.

The shades of Christmas evening had now wrapped the city completely, and the gilt clock upon his parlor mantel now pointed to six. Still he had not returned; and still Van Morris's eagerness to test the issue of his own tactics was too keen to let him leave their rooms. He had even resisted the temptations of a gossip at the club, and was smoking his fifth cigar—a thought-amused smile wreathing his lips—when the chime of six startled him suddenly to his feet.

"How time flies!" he exclaimed. "And we are to dine at the Allmand's at seven."

He tossed away his cigar, turned into his own apartment, and made an unusually careful toilet. Then he looked into Browne's still vacant room once more.

"Where *can* he be?" he muttered. "By George! he must have bungled fearfully if he did not pull through. He certainly had his lesson by heart! But *she* must not be kept waiting," and his face softened greatly, and the deep, strong light came back into his eyes. "How ceaselessly that old verse comes back to me! And now 'to put it to the test' myself."

He turned to his escritoire, and took a small Russia case from the drawer; then to the mantel, and carefully shook the dampness from the two flowers he had placed there that morning. Putting case and flowers carefully in his vest pocket, Van paused at the door, gave a long, sweeping glance—with a sort of farewell in it—to the rooms; then shut himself outside, still repeating *sotto voce*,

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small."

Metropolitan Christmas was abroad in the streets. Young and old, grandsire and maiden, beggar and parvenu jostled one another on the pavements. Rough men, laden with loosely-wrapped, brown-papered packages, strode happily homeward; wan women skurried along leading eager children from unwonted shopping for dainties; carriages rolled by, with the gas-light glimpsing on occupants in evening dress, driven Christmas dinnerward.

Van Morris recked little of all this, as he strode rapidly over the very spot where his coolness had saved an ugly misadventure twelve hours before. His brain was going faster than his body; one goal only had he in view; one refrain ever sounded in his memory: "To gain, or lose, it all!"

A quick turn of the corner, and he stood at the door he had quietly escaped from during the ball. The servant replied to his inquiry that Miss Blanche was in the library; and thither he turned, with the freedom of long intimacy.

Only the warm glow of fire-light filled the room; there was a rustle, as of a retreating silk dress. There was also a man's figure, backed by the fire, with that not infrequent expression all over it that tells he would really be at his ease if he only knew how.

"Why, Andy! And in your driving suit!"

"Van, dearest old boy," cried the other, irrelevantly, "congratulate me! I'm the luckiest dog alive!"

"With all my heart," Van answered, shaking the proffered hand heartily. "I was sure it would come out all right."

"You were?" Andy fairly beamed. "She said so!"

"What? *she* said so? Did Rose Wood expect you to break off, then?"

"No, no! Not *that*. She said she knew you'd be glad of the match."

"Glad of—the match!" Van stared at his friend, with growing suspicion in his mind.

"Yes, you dear old Van! I'm engaged, and just the happiest of—"

"*Engaged?*" and Van seized Andy by the shoulders with both hands.

"Yes, all fixed! And Rose Wood is just the dearest, best girl after all! I'd never have known happiness but for her!"

Van Morris turned the speaker full to the firelight, and stared hard in his face.

"I wouldn't have believed it, Andy," he said, contemptuously. "You have come *here* drunk again!"

"No, indeed! I have pledged my word to *her* never to touch a drop!" protested Andy, with imperturbable good nature. "And, Van, *she has accepted me.*"

"*She?*"

"Yes. Rose said, 'Morris has his heart set on the match;' I went straight on that hint, and Blanche Allmand will be Mrs. Andrew Browne next Easter."

Morris answered no word.

With a deep, hard breath, he turned abruptly, strode to the alcove window, and peered through the curtains into the black night beyond. A great surge of regret swept over him that shook the strong man with pain pitiful to see. He pressed his forehead against the cold glass; and the contrast, so strong, to the hope with which he had looked out thus at the gray dawn, sickened him with its weight. There was a boom in his ears, as of the distant surf; and his brain mechanically groped after a lost refrain, finding only the fragment: "To lose it all! *lose it all!*"

But heart-sickness, like sea-sickness, is never mortal, and it has the inestimable call over the latter of being far less tenacious. And Van Morris was mentally as healthy as he was physically sound. He made a strong effort of a strong will; and turned to face his friend and his—fate. In his hand he held a wilted camellia bud and a crushed cactus flower.

Moving quickly to the fire, he tossed them on the glowing coals; watching as they curled, shrivelled, and disappeared in the heat's maw. Then he moved quietly to the window and looked into the night once more.

Wholly wrapped up in his new-found joy, Andy Browne saw nothing odd in his friend's manner or actions. He moved softly about the room, and once more hummed, "*Il segreto per esser felice;*" very low and very tenderly this time.

Suddenly the rustle of silk again sounded on Morris's ear.

He turned quickly, and looked long, but steadily, into the beautiful face. It was very quiet and gentle; glorified by the deeper content in the eyes and the modest flush upon the cheek. His face, too, was very quiet; but it was pale and grave. His manner was gentle; but he retained the little hand Blanche held out to him, in fingers that were steadier than her own.

"I reminded you last night," he said, very gravely, "how long we had been friends, Blanche. It is meet, then, that I should be the first to wish you that perfect happiness which only a pure girl's heart may know."

Then, without a pause, he turned to Andy, and placed the little Russia case in his hand. As it opened, the eye of a dazzling solitaire flashed from its satin pillow.

"Andy, old friend," he added, "Rose Wood told you only the truth. I *had* set my heart on Blanche's happiness; and only this morning I got that for her engagement ring. Put it on her finger with the feeling that Van Morris loves you both—better than a nature like Rose Wood's can ever comprehend."

T. C. DE LEON.

FROM THE WINDOWS OF A GREAT LIBRARY.

"The dead alive and busy."—HENRY VAUGHAN.

Without, wind-lifted, lo! a little rose
(From the great Summer's heart its life-blood flows),
For some fond spirit to reach and kiss and bless,
Climbs to the casement, brings the joyous wraith
Of the sun's quick world, without, of joyousness
Into this still world of enchanted breath.
And, far away, behold the dust arise,
From streets white-hot, into the sunny skies!
The city murmurs: in the sunshine beats,
Through all its giant veins of throbbing streets,
The heart of Business, on whose sweltering brow
The dew shall sleep to-night (forgotten now).
There rush the many, toiling as but one;
There swarm the living myriads in the sun;
There all the mighty troubled day is loud
(Business, the god whose voice is of the crowd).
And, far above the sea-horizon blue,
Like sea-birds, sails are hovering into view:
There move the living; here the dead that move:
Within the book-world rests the noiseless lever
That moves the noisy, thronged world forever.
Below the living move, the dead above.

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

"GOING, GOING, GONE."

I.

"Take it to Rumble. He will give you twice as much on it as any other pawnbroker."

The speaker was a seedy actor, and the person he addressed was also a follower of the histrionic muses. The latter held before him an ulster which he surveyed with a rueful countenance.

It was not the thought of having to go to the pawnbroker's that made him rueful, for he would have parted with a watch, if he had possessed one, with indifference; but the wind that whistled without and the snow that beat against the window-pane made him shiver at the thought of surrendering his ulster. However, he had to do it. Both he and his friend were without money, and it was New Year's eve, which they did not mean to let pass without a little jollification. Therefore they had drawn lots to determine which should hypothecate his overcoat in order to raise funds. The victim was preparing to go to the sacrifice.

"Yes," continued his friend, "take it to Rumble. He is the Prince of Pawnbrokers. Last week I took a set of gold shirt studs to him. He asked me at what I valued them. I named a slightly larger sum than I paid for them, and the old man gave me fully what they cost me."

"Let us go at once to Rumble's," said the other, seizing his hat, and the two sallied forth into the night and the storm.

Down the street they went before the wind-driven snow. Fortunately they did not have far to go.

When they opened the door of Rumble's shop, the old pawnbroker looked up in surprise. The tempest seemed to have blown his visitors in. The windows rattled; the lights flared; fantastic garments, made in the style of by-gone centuries, swayed to and fro where they hung, as though the shapes that might have worn them haunted the place; a set of armor, that stood in one corner, clanked as though the spirit of some dead paladin had entered it and was striving to stalk forth and do battle with the demons of the storm; while the gust that had occasioned all this commotion in the little shop went careering through the rooms at the rear, causing papers to fly, doors to slam, and a sweet voice to exclaim:

"Why, father, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear, it is only the wind," answered the old man, as he advanced to receive his visitors.

The one with whom he was acquainted nodded familiarly to the pawnbroker, while he of the rueful countenance pulled off his ulster and threw it on the counter, saying:

"How much will you give me on that?"

Rumble, who was a large man, rather fleshy and slow of movement, started toward the back of the shop with a lazy roll, like a ship under half sail. He made a tack around the end of the counter and hove to behind it, opposite the men who had just come in. He pulled his spectacles down from the top of his bald head, where they had been resting, drew the coat toward him, looked at it for an instant, then raised his eyes till they met those of his customer.

"How much do you think it is worth?" he said, uttering the words slowly and casting a commiserating glance at the thinly-clad form of the man before him.

"I paid twenty dollars for it," said the young man. "It is worth ten dollars, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes!" returned the pawnbroker. "Shall I loan you ten dollars on it?"

"If you please," answered his customer, whose face brightened when he heard the pawnbroker's words. He had thought he might get five dollars on the ulster. The prospect of getting ten made him feel like a man of affluence.

The pawnbroker opened a book and began to fill the blanks in one of the many printed slips it contained. One of the blanks he filled with his customer's name, James Teague. That was his real name, not the one by which he was known to the stage and to fame. That was far more aristocratical.

As Rumble handed Teague the ticket and the ten dollars, he took a stealthy survey of his slender and poorly-clad form, then glanced toward the window on which great flakes of snow were constantly beating, driven against it by the wind that howled fiendishly as it went through the street, playing havoc with shutters and making the swinging sign-boards creak uncannily.

"Mr. Dixon," said the pawnbroker, turning to Teague's companion, "will not you and your friend wait awhile until the storm slackens? It is pleasanter here by the fire than it is outside."

His visitors agreed with him and accepted his invitation. They seated themselves beside the stove which stood in the center of the room, and from which, through little plates of isinglass, shone cheerful light from a bed of fiery coals. Both leaned back in their chairs; both turned the palms of their hands toward the stove, to receive the grateful heat; and when the old pawnbroker joined them, smiling genially as he sank into his great arm-chair, which seemed to have been made expressly for his capacious form, the same thought came to both of his guests. To this thought Dixon gave expression.

"Mr. Rumble," he asked, "how happened it that you became a pawnbroker?"

"Well, I might say that it was by chance," replied Rumble. "I was not bred to the business."

"I thought not," answered Dixon, as he and his friend exchanged knowing glances.

"I was a weaver by trade," continued Rumble, "and until two years ago worked at that calling in England, where I was born. But I made little money at it, and when an aunt, at her death, left me five hundred pounds, I decided to come to this country and go into a new business."

"But what put it into your head to choose that of a pawnbroker?" asked Dixon.

"Because everybody told me that larger profits were made in it than in any other. You see I am getting on in years, and I have a daughter for whom I must provide. When I die I want to leave her enough to make her comfortable."

The street door was opened and for a moment the room was made decidedly uncomfortable by a cold blast accompanied by driving snow. Again the windows rattled, the armor clanked, and the hanging suits swung and shook their armless sleeves in the air.

A tall, slight young man, clad in well-worn black clothes, stood by the door. Although his beardless pale face was the face of youth, it was not free from the marks of care, and in his large lustrous dark eyes there was a yearning look that spoke, as plainly as words, of desires unfulfilled.

Dixon and Teague exchanged glances which as much as said, "here's another customer for the pawnbroker."

"Is Miss Rumble in?" said the newcomer in a hesitating manner, as he turned toward the old pawnbroker.

"You wouldn't have her out on such a night, would you, Mr. Maxwell?" said Rumble, laughing. "She is in the sitting-room," he added, pointing to the rear; "go right in."

But Maxwell did not go right in. He knocked lightly at the door, which in a moment was opened by a young woman, whose girlish face and willowy figure presented a vision of loveliness to those in the outer room.

As Maxwell disappeared in the sitting-room, Dixon and his friend again exchanged glances which showed that they had changed their opinion in regard to the newcomer's relations with the pawnbroker.

"Well," asked Teague, "have the profits in this business met your expectations?"

"I have not been in it long enough to tell, for I have not had an auction," replied Rumble. "In one respect, however, I have been disappointed. Very few articles on which I have loaned money have been redeemed. I don't understand it."

"Perhaps you are too liberal with your customers," said Dixon.

"You would not have me be mean with them, would you?" answered Rumble. "Why, you know they must be in very straitened circumstances to come to me. If I took advantage of people's poverty, I would expect that after their death all the old women who have pawned their shawls with me would send their ghosts back to haunt me."

"Well, I never thought of that," murmured Dixon. "If their ghosts do come back what very lively times some pawnbrokers must have!"

"But if your customers do not redeem their goods, how do you expect to get your money back?" asked Teague.

"From auctions," replied the pawnbroker.

"Oh!" was Teague's response.

"You should have a good auctioneer," said Dixon.

"The goods will bring a fair return," replied Rumble quietly.

Although it was apparent that the pawnbroker had begun to mistrust his methods of doing business, it was also evident that he had great faith in auctions. He had attended auctions in his time and had bid on articles, only to see them go beyond the length of his modest purse. Now, he said to himself, the auctioneer would be on his side. The bidding would go up and up and up, and every bid would bring just so much more money into his pocket. Altogether he was well satisfied.

The faces of his guests showed that they at once admired and pitied the old man. They admired his generosity and his faith in human nature, and wished that other pawnbrokers with whom they had dealt had been like him; they pitied him, for they knew that he would have a rude awakening from his dream when the hammer of the auctioneer knocked down his goods and his hopes of getting back the money he had loaned on them.

"It is time we were going," said Dixon, at last, as his eyes fell on a tall hall clock that stood in a corner, quietly marking the flight of time.

"Well, then let us go," answered Teague, as he cast a dismal look at the windows, against which the snow was still driven in volleys by the wind that howled as loudly as ever.

It was the pawnbroker's turn to pity his visitors.

"I am afraid you will take cold going from this warm room out into the storm," he said to

Teague. "Let me lend you an overcoat. You see I have more here than I have any use for," he added jocosely.

"Oh, I could not think of letting you lend me one!" exclaimed Teague, blushing probably for the first time in his life.

Dixon laughed quietly as he enjoyed his friend's confusion, while the pawnbroker looked among his stock for a coat that would fit Teague. Presently he advanced with one which he held out with both hands, as he said:

"Let me help you put it on."

Teague protested.

"Why, you can bring it back to-morrow when you come this way," added Rumble.

"But how do you know I will bring it back?" said Teague. "I am a stranger to you."

"Oh, your friend is good surety for you," replied the pawnbroker. "He is one of my few customers who have redeemed their pledges."

A thundering blast struck the house. The wind beat at the windows as though it meant to smash them.

The sound of the tempest persuaded Teague to accept the pawnbroker's offer. Without another word he caught the edge of either sleeve with his fingers and put his arms out behind, while Rumble put the overcoat on him. His arms, however, never found the ends of its capacious sleeves. It was almost large enough for a man of twice Teague's size. Dixon had a fit of laughter at his friend's expense, and even the pawnbroker could not forbear a smile.

"It is rather large for you, isn't it?" said Rumble. "Let us try another." And then he added: "Why, your own fits you best, of course."

Then seizing Teague's ulster, which still lay on his counter, he threw it over its owner's shoulders, and bade the two men a hearty good-night as they went forth into the storm.

When he had succeeded in closing the door in the face of the tempest, he turned the key in the lock, and then, with a shiver, returned to the fire. As he stood before the stove he smiled and seemed to be chuckling over the thought that he had made Teague wear his own coat. His face wore a happy look. He had a clear conscience. He knew that he was a philanthropist in a small way, and had helped many a poor soul when the light of hope was burning dimly. But he took no credit to himself for this. The opportunity of doing a little good had come in his way, and he had not let it pass; that was all. Besides, as he often said, he expected to make money in his business. He simply conducted it on more liberal principles than most pawnbrokers. When he went into it he was told that a large proportion of pawnbrokers' customers never redeemed their pledges, and that by advancing on goods pawned only a small percentage of their value, a great deal of money was made in the sale of unredeemed articles. He thought, therefore, that it was only just to loan on whatever was brought to him nearly as much money as he deemed it would bring at auction. To do anything less would, in his opinion, have been to cheat his customers. Besides, if he loaned more money on goods, in proportion to their value, than other pawnbrokers, his return in interest was also greater when the goods were redeemed. This was the peculiar principle on which he did business, and it is needless to say that he did a very large business, much to the disgust of all other pawnbrokers having shops in his neighborhood.

It was not strange, therefore, that, as he stood before the fire on that New Year's eve, the face of old John Rumble wore a contented smile. The knowledge of having done good brings content, if it brings nothing else; and the pawnbroker knew that he had done well by his customers, and he thought, also, that his customers had done well by him, as he surveyed his full shelves.

While he stood there musing, the door of the sitting-room was opened and his daughter appeared.

"Come, father," said the girl. "If you don't hurry you will not have the punch ready by midnight."

The old man's face assumed an anxious expression, and he started with a roll for the sitting-room.

Not to have the punch ready to drink in the New Year at the stroke of midnight, would indeed be a calamity. He had never failed to welcome the New Year with a brimming cup. His father had done so before him, his daughter had done so with him, and he hoped his grandchildren would do so after him.

"Bring the punch-bowl, Fanny," he said, as he went to a cupboard and took out a big black bottle.

His daughter brought him an old-fashioned blue china bowl and hot water, and while he made the punch, Maxwell told him of his plans for the coming year, about which he had been talking with Fanny.

Arthur Maxwell, who was a civil-engineer, had been followed by ill-fortune for some time. Indeed, he made Rumble's acquaintance in a purely business way; but he called it good fortune that had led him to the pawnbroker's door, for otherwise he would not have known Fanny. And now fortune seemed really to smile on him. He had secured a position with a railroad company, and was going to Colorado as an assistant of its chief engineer, who had charge of the construction of a railway there.

And then, hesitating, he told the old man that Fanny had promised to be his wife as soon as he

could provide a home for her.

The pleasure which Rumble had expressed, as Maxwell told of his good fortune, was a little dashed by this last bit of information. Of course he had expected that his daughter would leave him sometime, and he had not been blind to the fact that Maxwell had gained a place in her affections; nevertheless, he was not quite prepared for this news, and it left a shadow on his kindly face.

"But, father," said Fanny, advancing quickly, and placing her arm about his neck and her head on his shoulder, "Arthur and I hope that we shall all be together. He may return to New York; but if we have a home in the West you might live with us there."

It was a loving, tender look which Rumble gave his daughter as she uttered these words.

At that moment the clock began to strike, horns were heard in the street, bells were rung, and in a lull in the storm the musical notes of a chime fell on their ears.

Rumble filled the cups, and then, raising his, he said:

"Here's to the New Year, and here's to your success, Arthur, and to Fanny's happiness."

And while the clock was still striking, the three drank in the New Year.

II.

That year, however, was not a fortunate one for Rumble. His little fund had dwindled. He had, as he thought, barely enough to conduct his business to the time when he could legally have an auction. But how was he to do this and pay his rent? That problem troubled him. It was finally solved by the consent of his landlord, in consideration of a high rate of interest, to wait for his rent until Rumble had his auction. When this arrangement was made, the pawnbroker, who had been gloomy for some time, again wore a cheerful look. His daughter had advised him to pay his rent and curtail his business for the time being; but that, he said, would never do; and when he had tidied over the crisis in his affairs, he went on distributing his money among the people who brought him their old clothes and their all but worthless jewellery.

From time to time pawnbrokers called on him and tried to persuade him that his method of doing business was a mistake; that it was not only hurting their business, but was ruining himself. Rumble was not convinced. If his way of doing business took from the profits of other pawnbrokers, they were only meeting with justice, he said; they had made money enough out of the poor; he meant to treat his customers better. He admitted that he might not get his money back from some of his investments, but then the auction would make it all right; what he lost in one way he would get back in another. He looked to the auction as to a sort of Day of Judgment, when there would be a grand evening of accounts.

At last the great day came—the day of the auction. Rumble was full of the importance of the event, and had donned his best clothes in honor of the occasion. He had advertised the auction in several newspapers, and he expected a large attendance. He was somewhat disappointed when, a little while before the time set for the sale, it began to rain; but he hoped for the best.

When the auctioneer rapped on his desk and announced that he was about to open the sale, there were not more than a dozen people in the room. Among them Rumble recognized several pawnbrokers, and the others looked as though they might belong to the same guild. He wondered why they were there. Had they come to bid—to bid at his auction, on goods on which he had loaned more money than they would have loaned? He did not understand it.

When the sale began Rumble took a seat near the auctioneer and watched the proceedings. He soon understood why the pawnbrokers were there. The prices obtained were absurdly small. There was very little competition, and the sale had not gone far before it dawned on Rumble's mind that the pawnbrokers had a tacit understanding that they would not bid against one another, but would divide the stock among them.

The poor old man's heart sank, and great beads of perspiration appeared on his brow, as lot after lot went for almost nothing. All his worldly possessions were melting away before his eyes, and he had not the power to put out his hand and save them. Was he dreaming? No, for he could hear the auctioneer's voice, loud and clear, crying:

"Going—going—gone!"

He turned his head and saw his daughter standing in the sitting-room, near the open doorway, with her eyes fixed upon him. Her face was white, white as the 'kerchief about her neck. She understood it all. Yes, it was all too real.

"Going—going—gone!"

Again those terrible words rang like a knell in his ears, and every time he heard them he knew that he was a poorer man; he knew that more of his little stock had gone at a sacrifice.

At last he scarcely heeded the words of the auctioneer, but sat staring before him like one spell-bound. The buzz of conversation about him seemed like a sound coming from afar, like the roll of waves on the seashore; and through it all, at intervals, like the faint note of a bell warning seamen of danger, came those words telling of his own wreck:

"Going—going—gone!"

When the auction was over Fanny went to her father's side. He was apparently dazed. She helped him to rise. He leaned heavily upon her as she led him into the sitting-room, where he sank back into a chair, and did not utter a word for a long time. At last, when he found voice, he said:

"Going—going—gone! It's all gone, Fanny, all gone! We are ruined!"

The sale on which Rumble had built so many hopes, realized but little more than enough to pay the rent he owed. He did not have money enough to continue his business, and a few days after the auction his pawnshop was closed.

In the meantime, to add to their distress, Fanny had received a letter from Arthur Maxwell, informing her that the railroad company with which he had found employment had failed, owing him several hundred dollars—all his savings. He wrote that there was a prospect that a labor-saving invention of his would be put in use in one of the mines. This was the only gleam of hope in the letter. Fanny answered it, giving Arthur an account of the misfortune which had befallen her father. Although she gave him the number of the new lodging into which they moved when her father's shop was closed, she received no reply. She had hoped soon to have some cheering word from him, but none came. She could not understand his silence. This, in addition to her other troubles, seemed more than she could bear.

Since the auction Rumble had not been a well man. His nerves at that time had received a shock from which he had not recovered.

Between nursing her father, and earning what little she could by sewing, Fanny had a hard time. The pittance she got for her work did not go far toward meeting their expenses. Rumble had given up his shop in the early autumn, and the little money he had saved from the wreck had disappeared when winter set in. At last it became necessary to pawn some of their household goods. Fanny would not let her father go the pawnbroker's, but went herself. When she returned, and showed him the little money she had obtained on the articles she had pledged, he said:

"Why, I would have given twice as much."

"Yes, father," answered Fanny, "but all pawnbrokers are not like you."

"No, no," muttered the old man. "If they were they would be poor like me."

Although Rumble was not able to work, he was always talking of what he would do when he felt a little stronger. He worried continually because he was dependent upon his daughter, and every time she went to the pawnbroker's he had a fit of melancholy.

At last, just before Christmas, he became seriously ill. The doctor, whom Fanny called in, said he had brain fever, and gave her little hope of his recovery. His mind wandered, and seemed to go back to the auction, of which he spoke almost constantly. Many times he repeated the words of the auctioneer, that had made such a deep impression on him: "Going—going—gone!"

It was a gloomy Christmas for Fanny, and when New Year's eve came she was still watching by the bedside of her father, whose fever had reached its crisis.

Her thoughts went back to another New Year's eve, when Arthur Maxwell had told her of his plans for the future. And it had been so long since she had heard from him!

She had to get some medicine which the doctor had ordered, and while her father slept, asking an acquaintance who lodged on the same floor to watch over him, she went out, taking with her a gold locket which she meant to pawn.

Although she knew that a pawnbroker had opened a shop where her father had kept his, she had never gone to it. But something seemed to lead her there that evening. When she reached the place her heart almost failed her; but, summoning courage, she entered the shop, and presented the locket to the pawnbroker. While he was examining it two men entered. The pawnbroker's clerk waited on them. She seemed to feel their eyes on her.

When she gave the pawnbroker her name, he said:

"Rumble? Frances Rumble? Why, a young man was here to-day inquiring for Mr. Rumble, and some time ago the carrier brought two letters here for you. I could not tell him where you lived, and he took them away."

Fanny's heart beat wildly. She was sure that the letters were from Arthur, and that it was he who had inquired for her father.

"Is this Miss Rumble?" said one of the men who had followed her into the shop.

She turned and recognized Dixon. The person with him was Teague. Dixon had just pawned a watch, and had remarked that he wished Rumble still kept the shop.

When Fanny told them of her father's illness and of his misfortune, Dixon and Teague insisted on going home with her, meaning to lend assistance in some way.

When they reached Fanny's humble lodging, and followed her into her father's room, they found Maxwell at Rumble's bedside.

A cry of joy escaped Fanny as her lover folded her in his arms. She soon learned from him that he had never received the letter in which she wrote him about her father's trouble and their removal from the old shop. It had missed him while he was moving about in the West. And then he told her of the success of his invention.

Rumble, whose mind was lucid for the moment, said:

"You will be happy at last, Fanny. Arthur has come for you."

"And you, too, will be happy with us, father," replied Fanny, taking his hands in hers.

The old man smiled faintly, and rolled his head to and fro on his pillow, as if he thought differently.

The clock began to strike; it was midnight, and the New Year was at hand. The sound of bells came to their ears, and a distant chime was heard.

Rumble's mind once more began to wander; again he talked about the auction; again he muttered the words that had troubled him so much:

"Going—going—gone!"

They were his last words. The old man's life went out with the old year.

ALBERT ROLAND HAVEN.

THE ROOT OF THE SPOILS SYSTEM.

What is known as the spoils system of politics, in a measure common to all times and all forms of government, seems to have reached its highest development in our Republic. This fact justifies the suspicion that something in our form of administration is favorable to such development; and whether we regard the spoils system as praiseworthy or reprehensible, it will be instructive to inquire why it has prevailed in this country as among no other free people.

Most persons who deplore the spoils system urge as one of its greatest evils that it substitutes for the discussion of principles a mere scramble for office; that it teaches men to value the material prizes incident to government above political truth. Such reasoners have strangely mistaken cause for effect. The rarity of ideas in our political discussions is not an effect, but the immediate cause of the spoils system; and behind both, as the direct cause of the latter and the remote cause of the former, lies the difficulty of expressing the popular will in legislative enactment. In other words, we have substituted the pursuit of place for the discussion of principles, because the relations of the people to the law-making body are not sufficiently close.

No reader of this periodical needs to be reminded that when our present constitution was written the mass of freemen had not, as now, come to believe that a constitutional government should include a legislature promptly obedient to the popular will; a ministry dependent upon the support of a majority in the popular branch of the law-making body; and an executive powerless to interfere in legislation. It was natural, then, that our forefathers, imperfectly acquainted with this modern device of free peoples, should have believed that they had secured the prompt and certain efficacy of the popular will in government by placing no restriction as to national elections upon the wide suffrage already prevailing in most of the States, and providing that the chief magistrate and both branches of the national legislature should be elective and chosen for short terms. They could not foresee that in course of time a constitutional monarch would come to have less power than the executive head of the Republic; that an hereditary House of Lords less often than an elective Senate would dare to cross the will of the popular legislative body; that the popular branch of the legislature in a constitutional monarchy would, in effect, change at will the administrative head of the government, while in the new Republic premiers would retain power despite the adverse verdict of the people as expressed in legislative majorities; and, finally, that the enfranchised portion of a people dwelling under a constitutional monarchy would determine at the ballot-box every great question arising in their politics, and drive from power all men who should dissent from the popular decision, while the whole people of the Republic might be balked not only of their will in matters upon which they had distinctly made up their minds, but even of bringing questions thus potentially decided to the practical test of the ballot-box, and of introducing other important issues into the realm of popular discussion.

The difficulty of procuring from the people of the United States an unequivocal decision upon any political question, and of expressing that decision in legislative enactment, is familiar to every student of our history. The questions that occupy Congress now are in large part the same that were debated there forty years ago, save that the issue of slavery and the extreme States' rights theory have disappeared. But even in these cases the exceptions prove the rule; for it is grimly significant of our legislative immobility that the two great questions of a century should finally have been settled by the sword. If the people declared for anything at the general election of 1884, they may be supposed to have declared for a revision of the tariff, since the platform of principles adopted by each great party at its National Convention affirmed the necessity of such revision; yet Congress not only failed to legislate for that object, but actually at one time refused to discuss a measure designed to meet the issue in question, and at another stopped in the midst of such legislation to test the popular will upon the very same matter. Furthermore, while it will be assumed by most persons that whatever the significance of the election four years ago, the contest just ended sets the seal of disapproval upon the recent effort

of the House of Representatives to revise the tariff; yet we hear already that the LI. Congress can hardly escape some such legislation as has just been attempted. The truth is, that the election of 1884, as all our elections, was in the main a struggle for spoils. The question at issue was not tariff revision or any other great economic idea, but which party should administer during the next four years the great patronage of the Federal Government. In the contest of November last the people for the first time in twenty years had a living issue presented, but so unused were they to the discussion of economic principles that it may be questioned whether the verdict just delivered with so much apparent emphasis was really the expression of a well-ascertained public opinion. It is worthy of note, too, that believers in the spoils system of politics are already taunting the vanquished with the folly of presenting a political idea to the American people, and prophesying a more rigid exclusion of principles from politics in all time to come.

Such difficulties have beset us throughout all our history. Let men wince as they would under galling injustice and false economics, they could not work their will upon the body whose duty it is to express in legislation the political desires of the people. A mocking fate seemed to balk the accomplishment of our most earnest purposes, and men whose interests were adverse to the public good constantly took it upon themselves to declare that the people had not spoken upon whatever vital question was uppermost, or that their words had meant something other than they seemed to mean. The result of all this was what we see. A self-governing people must have some sort of political activity, and since it was early discovered that the discussion of principles was little better than a vain occupation, the pursuit of place soon became almost the sole object of political organization. If it was almost impossible to carry a question from the stage of popular discussion to that of legislative enactment, it was a very simple matter to elect presidents and congressmen who should see to a proper distribution of places. Since men could not accomplish the rational object of political endeavor, they strove for what was easily attainable. If they could not make the laws they could at least fill the offices. Then came the easy descent to Avernus. Politics having become a mere struggle for place, public affairs were left more and more in the hands of men who found such work congenial, and the mass of the people, to whom the hope of office is but a shadowy illusion, became less and less interested in a struggle that held for most voters neither the promise of gain nor the incentive of high purpose. The spoils system having thus been established, the causes that bred it were in their turn intensified by its reaction, and the evil round was complete. To make matters worse, the struggle for wealth, stimulated by the marvellous richness of a part of the country, claimed the attention of thousands to the exclusion of politics, and those who would naturally have led in affairs of State adopted the evil philosophy that it is cheaper to be robbed by professional politicians than to neglect private business for the sake of public duty.

Having sought thus to trace the steps by which our form of administration has begotten the spoils system, let us endeavor to prove the conclusion by another process of reasoning. Were our government a parliamentary system, such as exists among the free peoples of the Old World, we should have a legislature promptly responsive to movements of the popular will, a ministry sitting in one or the other house of Congress, and dependent for continuance in power upon the support of a majority in the Lower House, and an executive disarmed in whole or in part of the power to negative legislative enactments. The result would be to concentrate interest not as now upon the election of a president whose chief function is to distribute places, and whose part in legislation is almost purely negative, but upon the choice of the legislative body whose majority should determine the political complexion of the president's advisers and the general policy of the administration. At each general election for members of the Lower House the issue would be some well-defined question then under hot discussion, and in most instances Congress would have been dissolved for the express purpose of taking the sense of the people upon the matter at issue. Public interest in political discussion would return, because great principles, such as have an important bearing upon the lives of all men, would be under debate, and the mass of voters would have such an incentive to activity as the shadowy hope of place could never furnish. The knowledge that the popular will would find prompt expression through the law-making power would render it impossible for the people to be turned from their purpose by the jugglery of place-hunters.

With a whole people interested in political discussion no conceivable abuse of patronage could balk them of their will, and the spoils system would disappear because the factitious importance of office-holders and office-seekers, favored by the defects of our present form of administration, could no longer obscure the vastly greater question of the public weal. This change in the popular attitude toward politics would be sufficient of itself to seal the doom of the spoils system; but if other influences were needed they would be found in the new relations of the ministry to the legislature and the people, since a cabinet bound to take the initiative in great lines of policy and required to give an account of itself to a hostile minority in Congress would have little time and less stomach for the nice apportionment of political rewards to partizan deserts. Finally, should we adopt the principle of a ministry dependent upon the support of a majority in the Lower House, the possibility of two changes of administration within a single year would make the spoils system, as we now have it, unendurable and unworkable. Indeed, it may be questioned whether a rigid application of the spoils system by the administration coming into office in March 1889 would not place the evils of that system in a peculiarly glaring light, when it is remembered that a very large number of those who would be asked to make places for party workers unversed in the routine of public office have exercised their official functions for barely four years, and but recently acquired the skill so necessary to the efficient transaction of business.

The attentive reader will have noted that it has been argued, first that the spoils system is the

natural and inevitable outcome of the rigidity that seems unseparable from our form of administration; and second, that such a system, in its grossest development, is almost impossible under a parliamentary government. The latter line of argument has been taken less for its own sake than for the purpose of strengthening the conclusions reached by the former; and the writer would not be understood as insisting that to eliminate the spoils system we must adopt exactly such a parliamentary form as now exists among the free peoples of Europe. Any system that should make it easy to ascertain the popular will, and should insure the prompt and certain expression of that will in legislation, would accomplish the object of substituting principles for spoils in our politics. To suggest a plausible plan for grafting upon our system this far more democratic scheme of administration would be a stupendous work, calling for the highest exercise of trained political sagacity; but it is not difficult to indicate some of the things that need not be done. It is not necessary that the president should be reduced to any such mere figure-head as is the monarch in the half-dozen parliamentary governments of Europe. Perhaps the principle of a ministry sitting in the houses of Congress might be omitted; and it is not clear that the president's veto would have to be altogether sacrificed. It is not positive, indeed, that a formal amendment of the constitution would be necessary to obtain the essentials of the reform under consideration. We have amended the spirit of the constitution in one highly important feature without changing the letter of that instrument. Perhaps the nearest way to the object in view lies through a more intimate relation between the cabinet and the committees of the Lower House.

Finally, the consideration presents itself that if the conclusions reached here are correct, those persons who have sought by statutory restriction and appeals to public conscience to abolish the spoils system have not employed the wholesome policy of attacking the evil at its source. They seem to be mowing rather than uprooting the weeds. Doubtless our political garden has been tidied, but the roots of the evil growth and the aptitudes of the soil remain. The reform system, as applied to the great body of minor clerical offices, will probably prevail from now on; but we can scarcely hope that the broad spirit of civil service reform can reign in this land until the people shall have made themselves immediate masters of the legislative power.

EDWARD V. VALLANDIGHAM.

UNCLE SCIPIO.

Once more the wizard of the Christmas-time lifts his wand in our homes, brightening young eyes that look forward, dimming old ones that look backward. Thou hast prisms of hope for the young; prisms of tears for the old, but shining always in our souls with a light all thine own. We hail thee, lovely spirit of this matchless festival!

Would that words could paint to you a picture which I carry in my heart! I see it through a light brilliant, yet tender, that Christmas morning long ago in the old Georgia home. Those were dark days of war which I remember, and the shadow of death had already fallen on our house: but there was one day in the year when we did not feel its chill. What shadows can withstand the light of the Christmas fire in the heart of a child?

We had grown to be pretty thorough Bohemians, my little brother and I, in those war days, and were ready to take any stray bit of sport, asking no questions whatever for conscience' sake. But the outlook was rather bad for us, one dreary December. The holidays were very near, and we saw no preparations for rendering the big dining-room royal with holly and cedar, as usual, for King Cole's reception. We had already ceased to press our grievances in the "big house," for we felt, through a child's instinct, that we were standing in the presence of griefs greater than our own.

We began to fear that Santa Claus had been killed in the war, or that maybe he would not care to come to us now since the fire had grown so small in the huge fire-place, where it used to roar and flash around the back-log, until the polished floor was flooded in light, and the candelabra's lights shone cold and pale as stars through a conflagration. Even the crimson rugs and hangings, that used to brighten up the dark old floor and furniture, had disappeared, one by one, to be transformed into haversacks and warm garments for our poor boys at the front, whose hearts were stouter and courage more lasting than their regimentals. And so, we thought, poor little infants! that perhaps our deity would desert the altars on which the fires burned so low, and would go, with all his wonderful store, to the happy children away in the North. There, we were told, the cities blazed with light and merriment for weeks before his coming; there the snow sometimes fell whole days at a time, until it lay like a white carpet along the streets, where children could walk without fear, and which never echoed to the tramp of foes; for there the heavy booming cannon never sounded to drown the chiming bells, and blanch the children's laughing lips with terror. Why, we argued, should he not go there instead of driving his reindeer across bloody fields and deserted highways, to bring gifts to two poor little children? Truly we would have been comfortless in that sad time but for one old standby, who had never yet failed us. Dear old Uncle Scipio—his ebony face shines in the light of memory as it used to shine in the light of the kitchen fire. To him we turned in our trouble. We did not know all his worth then, but we knew him for the sympathizer in all our childish griefs. Oh, those

preposterous old stories he used to tell us! but they could raise the sheeted dead then in every corner of the old kitchen, as we sat in awed silence on his knee, and watched the supper fire die out.

And not to us only, was Uncle Scipio the stay and comfort in those dark days, but to our mother also. He had been the guardian, playmate, and tyrant of two eager boys, my brothers, through infancy, and through the sunny college days, when, with the school boy's profanation of the classics, they had stumbled on the story of his great prototype, and laughingly called him "Scipio Africanus." Through tear-dimmed spectacles he watched them march away, two boy soldiers, with no premonition of misfortune on their faces, and minds full of great Shakespearian thoughts of "all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." And last of all, he stood by my father's stirrup when he mounted to ride on his last journey, and took his final orders concerning us.

About this time, I remember, there was quite a disturbance among the negroes; some were for following in the wake of the first Union troops that should pass, as the only sure means of gaining their promised freedom. These, we knew, had been trying to persuade Uncle Scipio to join them. To us this was a thing too preposterous to think of; but I think that mother and grandmother really had some doubts on the subject. So one day the latter asked him what he should do if the opportunity should be offered him to go. I was balancing on the rockers of her chair at the time, and I shall never forget the look he gave her in reply.

"I can't go, ole missus," he said, shaking his gray head, as he rose from emptying an armful of lightwood knots into the wood box, and dusted the splinters from his sleeve. "I can't go, nohow, and leave young missus and de chillun in dese yere times. Mars Ben he done die, and lef' me to take care o' dese yere darlins o' hisen, and no kind o' proclamation, dis side de Jordan o' def, gwine to free ole Scipio from dat charge."

"But don't you want to be free if the rest are?"

"Yes, ole missus, but ef de Lord mean to bring freedom to dis ole nigger, he kin fin' him here. Ef He mean to fetch our people dry shod tru dis Red Sea o' blood, ouden de house o' bondage, den when I hears de soun' o' dem timbrels, and de dancin', an' de shoutin', I praise Him too; but I don't tink He gwine to be angry kase one ole man love his home so much 'til he got to stay behind and weep wid dem in de house where de eldest born am slain."

And faithfully he kept his promise to the slain. But see! I began to tell you the story of that memorable Christmas-time, and am letting the shadows of the intervening years crowd between me and the Yule-log. Avaunt! ye ghosts of bitter days of want, of hatred and contention; the spirit of peace and good-will exorcise ye from the hearth of Christmas memories!

I was going to tell you how Uncle Scipio undertook to save us from despair in that terrible time.

We, the much abused community of infants, had submitted with tolerable fortitude to taking our rye substitute for coffee, sweetened with sorghum, and similar hardships; but now, as the holidays approached, and we saw no signs of festivity, we began to feel great apprehensions.

We resolved to confide our fears to Scipio.

"Do you think," I asked him one evening, as we sat in our usual evening attitudes before the fire, "that old 'Santy' will forget us this year because it is so cold and dark, and because everybody is so sad, and?—"

Here my griefs overcame utterance: I could say no more.

"Now, Lawd o' messy!" cried the dear old creature, taking a closer look at my tearful face. "What dat yer sayin', chile? Ole Santy Claus forgit yer, honey? What make yer tink he gwine to forgit yer? Well, well! You's a funny little chile, sho'—yer makes me laugh 'til I cries; sho' yer do."

I noticed that he did take off his "specs" and wipe them with his yellow bandana, but I didn't see anything to laugh at. He gazed sadly enough, I thought, into the embers for awhile, and smoothed my hair in a thoughtful way. Then an inspiration seized him; he saw his way through the dilemma. He straightened himself in his chair, and readjusted his glittering ornaments across his nose. He assumed the air which all the country 'round knew as the precursor of something oracular, for he was "not 'zactly a preacher, no sah! but sort of a 'zorter 'mongst de breren."

"Now, my dear little chillun," he began, "I dunno who tuk an' turned in an' put dat funny notion in yer heads 'bout ole Santa Claus forgotten yer, but pay 'tickler extension to what I'se gwine to say to yer. You mustn't go to kalklatin' on none o' dem high-falutin' tings what he used to fotch here fo' de wah sot in, fur de times is mighty hard, and de ole feller'll have to run de blockade to git yere t'all—sho' he will. But ef you sez you'll be powerful good til' dat time, an' don't go to pesterin' yer ma 'bout it, I'll promise yer dat he aint gwine to forgit yer altogedder."

This was surely consolation; but it required all our faith in Uncle Scipio to keep our courage alive until the great day. It drew near and nearer, and still we saw no unusual stir in the house, and our hearts began to sink a little. At last it wanted but one day, and I shall never forget that Christmas eve.

Uncle Scipio was very much preoccupied, and could not be disturbed by any means, that day; so we betook ourselves to the society of our elders. But there matters were worse. There was little of privation and bad news that we had not become pretty familiar with by this time, and war, I remember, seemed to me the normal condition of things. But it soon became clear to me that

something a little worse than usual was apprehended that day.

There were whispered conversations going on above our heads, but we caught enough of it to know that a piece of terrible news had arrived. A party of refugees had passed through our town in the early morning. They were a company of fragile women and children, with a few faithful negroes, fleeing from their homes as from a pestilence. They told us that a large company of Yankees had made their appearance a few miles above us, and if they followed the most direct route to the railroad, would, in all probability, reach us that night or the following day. Our little town being on the line of the railroad, rarely escaped the military visitations. Besides, it was at this time the depository of a great deal of cotton, which it was feared might be the occasion of its being burned.

I have heard mother say that this day before Christmas there were just three able-bodied men in the town—the hospital doctor, the miller, and the conscript officer; not a very formidable defence against a hostile invasion. But I suppose those two lonely women, my mother and grandmother, must have looked for help in this extremity, towards the everlasting hills where the twelve legions of angels lay encamped, for they bore their anxiety like Spartans.

The day dragged through, however, and the last sun rays showed us no blue coats on the western road towards which aching eyes had turned through the heavy hours. Things began to look a little more hopeful. We began to feel that reaction from anxiety which is almost sure to come when the candles are lighted.

We sat close together in the sitting-room, and took our very frugal supper there in quite a hysterical sort of cheerfulness.

The day had passed without disaster, and we had been told that in case the “Yankees” should make their appearance during the night, and our garrison of three be obliged to evacuate the town, the village church-bell would be rung to apprise the citizens of the situation.

No, we felt sure the enemy *could* not come on Christmas eve. We even ventured to hang up our stockings in the accustomed place.

We knelt, my brother and I, by dear old grandmother’s knee, and said our prayers to Him who, she told us, knew what it was to spend His first Christmas days here under the shadow of the sword, and would not that one of His little ones should perish. Then tossed by hope and fear, we slept.

It was a notable fact, but one which escaped comment in the general anxiety of that night, that Uncle Scipio had not appeared as usual, after his out-of-door tasks were finished. It had gone pretty hard with us all not to be able to confide everything to this faithful old friend; but the strictest injunctions had been laid upon us to keep the whole matter a secret from the negroes, for many reasons. So he knew nothing, and went about his tasks all day, singing his most dirge-like tunes, which meant some pleasant preoccupation of mind. We had learned that. We knew soon after what it was that occupied his heart and head that day.

I do not know how long we had slept in our trundle bed, but I know I had travelled in my dreams over many leagues of fairy land, walking under endless avenues of lighted Christmas trees, when suddenly, I thought, from some unseen source, the deep tones of a bell struck discord on the radiant air. It seemed so out of place in that enchanted region; and at the sound all the lights on the trees flickered and went out, and we were lost in the dark. Louder and nearer the bell still sounded; and then we awoke and our hearts stood still with terror.

We knew it was the village church-bell, proclaiming its story to the sleeping town. The enemy were upon us, and our Christmas fires would be the light of blazing homes. Oh, such awakening after such dreams! So eloquent was every face, of horrible certainty, that scarcely a word was spoken. It was only about midnight, but I was dressed by trembling hands—mother had not been undressed at all. And then we waited—for what? We could not have told precisely. But after a little the bell ceased to ring, and then we listened for the tramp of horses and the quick Northern voices speaking words of command to the men. We had heard it before, and knew the sound well. Once before I had awakened from sleep and seen the distorted shadows of horsemen chase one another across the strip of moonlight just over my bed, and looked from my window to see the moonlight glittering on the sabres and gun barrels of an armed host surrounding our house. That is not a sight to be forgotten, let me tell you, children who are born and reared in the lap of peace and plenty.

For quite a while—it seemed ages to me—we sat in silence looking at one another. But though the lights twinkled in all the neighboring windows, telling of other anxious watchers, no unusual sound disturbed the air.

What could it mean? Surprise began to succeed to alarm. It occurred to some one to call up Uncle Scipio, and get him to investigate. But it was wonder on top of wonder—he was not to be found; neither had his bed been disturbed during the night. Had he deserted us and gone over to the enemy, then? No, we could not really doubt him, even yet; but his absence was too significant; there must be some plot hatching somewhere in the dark.

There was nothing for us to do but wait. But we had not to wait much longer; for presently in walked the absentee, clothed in his most majestic air, but a little non-plussed to see us all up and dressed.

“Oh, Scipio! where have you been?” we exclaimed indignantly. “How could you leave us at such a time and the town full of soldiers? Which way are they coming? What shall we do?”

"Well, I clar," he answered, in a bewildered sort of way, "dis yere proceedin' clean tops my cotton! Is you all clar outen yer minds, or what's de matter wid yer? I aint seed nary a Yankee dis night, and I jes bin way up to de Mef'dis chache, ringing de Christmas chimes fur to cheer you up a little. Did'n ole Scip tell you, honeys, dat dis was gwine to be de boss Christmas? And he done kep his word. I met ole Santy out yonder, sittin' on de pump and he sez he's comin' here soon's iver he kin; so you better git to bed 'mejity, ef not sooner; ef you don't he'll be here and ketch you 'Christmas gif' fust, sho' he will."

And so this was the end of it all. The dear old soul had taken it into his funny old head to give us a surprise and ring the Christmas chimes as in the old times.

Well, we tried to soften the blow, when we told him what a blunder he had made; but we knew it would be a long time ere he would recover from his chagrin. He had long been a terror to the idle young darkies about town, and they were only too glad to get something to use against him. Of course there was general indignation among the citizens when they learned that they had suffered a false alarm; but when they considered the beautiful motive that prompted the action, the tide of reproach was turned aside, and it all ended in a general laugh at Uncle Scipio's expense.

It still wanted several hours till day, when our fears were relieved by his appearance, and we went to bed again.

With the first streak of light, however, we were up with bare feet and frowzy heads to find Uncle Scipio's promise had not failed us. The Christmas saint had been upon our hearthstone and left his footprints there. The stockings were as fantastically distended as ever in the palmiest times.

I suppose the children of the present day would not covet the wonderful objects that we hauled forth from heel and toe. Yet I have spent many Christmas holidays amid the gayeties of the metropolis since then, and its richest gifts wax poor when I remember that morning. What did it matter to us that both toys and confections bore the stamp of home manufacture—little wooden dolls, like Chinese deities, carved out of wood by Uncle Scipio's jack knife—strange people baked in sweet bread with coffee grains for eyes? What did it matter that the war cloud hovered around us; that to-morrow might renew the scenes of yesterday? We were happy in our treasures. We know, now, what the charm was that made them precious, for we know that

"The painted vellum hallows not the prayer,
Nor ivory and gold the crucifix."

Ah! that will ever be the day of days to me. And with it are enshrined in fadeless green, the names of many whose eyes have long been closed upon the wars and joys of this earth. Not the least dear among these will ever be old Scipio, who loved us better than his own freedom; who stood by us in the day of trial, and was faithful till death to the charge of a master who could never return to take account of his stewardship.

He was grandiloquent, insisted on spectacles, though he generally read the hymns upside down; wore a collar on Sundays that would put our modern dudes to naught; but he was a prophet, for all that, and saw farther than most men into the future.

We trust he has honor now in his own country; while in our hearts his memory will yearly ring the chimes of Christmas bells.

CELINE McCAY.

THE RESULT.

(November 6th, 1888.)

We have no longer Uncle Sam,
Nor yet our Yankee-doodle;
The first is but an Uncle Sham,
The last is Yankee-boodle.

JAMES MCCARROLL.

SILK CULTURE.

"There are so many persons thirsting for information," I says to Mrs. Wigglesniff, "let's tell them all about it." It was always my way to stir in something useful with what was agreeable; and here was an opportunity, while pursuing an avocation that was at once pleasant and lucrative, to bring forward at the same time, an illustration of those great economic and

philosophic principles, that lie at the foundation of all government and are the ground-work of the social fabric. The tariff, although an intricate subject, I felt was one that could be elucidated by simple exemplification in practical life; and so I opened up to her one day, by remarking upon the great importance of fostering our "infant industries." That most efficient mother was nursing the baby at the time. The baby was four weeks old, weighed sixteen pounds, and could partake of more nourishment at nature's fountain, than any two ordinary pair of twins.

"Infant industry! here's one now," observed Mrs. W., gazing with maternal fondness upon the lusty native American in her lap, who was tugging away with a zeal quite amazing.

You should first understand, however, that Mrs. W. is a superior woman "as has got intellect into her," as her uncle John Fetherly Brown was wont to say. Her father's second cousin was a half-brother to Noah Webster, and she has, therefore, inherited some of the qualities of that distinguished philosopher. I proposed the subject to her one day, in a genial sort of a way, and she said, "W.," says she, "You're a fool! Silk indeed!" She always calls me "W.," as the whole of it makes it too long, and being a practical woman, she is aware that life is short. I could not help admiring the promptness with which Mrs. W. arrived at her conclusions; and as she is a most excellent judge of human nature, I changed the subject, not wishing to exasperate her.

The way it came about was this. I had read all about it in the papers and books and things, and was thinking over it one day and all of a sudden I spoke up, and says I:

"Mrs. W., let's have worms."

She looked at me just that way for a minute, I thought there was going to be a funeral. So I said, says I, "We can get the eggs from Washington for nothing; then we can have the stands in the attic, and there's the osage-orange hedge, that does nothing in the world but keep the boys from stealing apples, and we have no apples to steal; the children can feed them, so that the total cost will be nothing. We can sell the cocoons at \$1.50 a pound; and suppose we raise five hundred pounds only the first season; there's \$750, which is absolutely clear profit, the whole of it. We can then buy a carriage, and we will give a ball, and 'ye shall walk in silk attire.'"

Mrs. W. turned up her nose. In using that expression, I do not mean that she actually inverted that feature of her countenance, but the expression of her face indicated the idea which usually finds utterance in the word 'Rats.' At this point I took occasion to explain to Mrs. W. the relations of this most beautiful and fascinating industry to the principles of political economy. My amiable lady had frequently said it was all "bosh;" that to try to raise silk in this country was mere gammon. I explained to her that her position, as a philosophical proposition, would be true, were it not for the fostering care of a paternal government, which had inaugurated the American system of protection. That this great principle of protection was the source of our national wealth, that the tariff on silk was sixty per cent, and—

"Tariff!" inquired Mrs. W., "what is tariff?"

"Tariff, my dear," said I, "I am surprised. I had supposed that such an intellect as yours would have familiarized itself with the great economic questions of the day." But I did not wish to be too severe with her, as I remembered that the sphere of woman did not bring her into contact with these rugged issues that are the theme of philosophers and statesmen; so I explained briefly, but still kindly:

"My dear, a tariff is a tax paid by the importer."

To this she made the very singular reply: "But how is taxing a people going to make them rich, and be the source of national wealth? I know when tax day comes around, you are always groaning and saying that it keeps your nose flat on the grindstone, to raise money enough to pay your taxes." I told her she still failed to see the point, as she was referring to mere state taxes, while I, upon a higher plane, was viewing the comprehensive bearings of national institutions.

"W.," she said, "you don't know any more about it than Horace Greeley did." Such a reference to the great apostle of American protection, I confess, shocked me; but I suppressed my feelings in consideration of her sex.

I have said that Mrs. W. is a woman of intellect; but she has no enthusiasm. With me it is different. I am all enthusiasm and no—I was about to say no intellect; but I mean no such intellect as has Mrs. W.

So she says: "That's the way you're always doing, W.; going into something you don't know anything about, throwing away your money; and that's about all you're fit for."

"But, my love!" I exclaimed, "there's no chance to lose money in silk worms. You get them for nothing, feed them for nothing; and how is it possible to lose money on them, with the tariff at sixty per cent ad valorem?"

"W.," she interrupted, "when you talk Latin to me, please explain yourself."

Some people have thought that there was an asperity in Mrs. W.'s nature, that occasionally found expression in words, but it is not so. She is of most amiable disposition, and I never knew her to—if I may coin a word—to asperse. I, therefore, said that in the tariff laws, duties were levied upon the value of articles, as stated in the importer's invoice.

"But," said she, "won't the importers value too low?"

"Oh, my dear," I said, "that would be dishonest, and importers are never dishonest; indeed it is upon the virtue and integrity of the people that the welfare of our institutions depends." As I was about to expand upon this theme, my wife checked me with the remark that we would take

the American eagle and the rest of it, at another time, but just now we would hear about the silk worms. I told her I had made all necessary arrangements, and would that day write to the "Department" at Washington, and secure the necessary supply of eggs to commence a flourishing business. I did so and in due time I received from the capital of the nation, a nice little wooden box, and inside of that another little tin box, and inside of that were the eggs. They were about as big as pin's heads and it looked as though there were millions, but I don't suppose there were that many.

I exhibited them with pride to the partner of my bosom, exclaiming, "Such is the fostering care of a paternal government, it raises these eggs at vast expense, and bestows them liberally upon those who ask." I then explained to Mrs. W. how it was that our glorious republic nursed those infant industries that were so delicate they could not stand alone; supporting them with great assiduity, inasmuch as they could not support themselves. I showed her how employment was thus furnished to thousands of persons, who would otherwise be idle, or engaged in some other occupation that was able to take care of itself; of course, therefore, making wages lower. I contrasted the condition of the American laborer, with that of the European serf, trodden under the iron heel of despotism, at ten cents a day, and satisfied her that the laboring man in the United States was the best paid, and therefore the happiest and most contented being on earth, owing to the fact of a protective tariff, ever since 1789.

"W.," exclaimed that angelic creature, "why is it, then, that the workingmen are always striking and marching around town with brass bands? First shoemakers, then carpenters and railroad men, and stone-masons, and iron-molders, and hod-carriers—all wanting higher wages. Where does the happiness and content come in? I heard you say, yourself, the other day, that the disorganized system of labor was such in this country, that it was degenerating into socialism and anarchy and was ruining every branch of business."

I hated to do it, but I crushed her with the reply: "Ah! my dear, that is begging the question."

But that sweet creature, unruffled as a summer sea, preserved an equanimity that astounded me, as she said: "Why is it, W., that whenever a woman corners a man in argument, he simply ends the discussion by telling her she is 'begging the question?'" Seeing that she did not exactly catch the drift of my logic, I adroitly turned the subject to silk-worms again, and how we should proceed in our enterprise.

"Now," said I to Mrs. W., "I will procure the necessary lumber, at usual market rates, and make a stand on which to lay the frames."

She observed: "You know, W., you never made anything in your life and can't do it. Go up to the carpenter and he will do what you want for fifty cents, and you can't buy the lumber for that."

"Mrs. W.," I replied, "I scorn your words. I propose that this undertaking shall be absolutely inexpensive, except, perhaps, the outlay for the raw material."

"Very well," she observed, "try it." My! what a head that woman has. I took a book that had a picture of the stand I wanted, and took the dimensions carefully down; went to the lumber yard, selected the pieces, and they cost only \$1.25; went home, measured, planned, and figured, and found that I had ordered the upright cut the length of the cross pieces, and *vice-versa*, so that the whole was useless. My disposition, however, is to take cheerful views of things, and I explained to Mrs. W. that I could still use the stuff for pickets on the front fence, some of which were missing. Mrs. W. quietly observed: "How are you going to use four-foot pickets on a six-foot fence?"

When I purchased the second lot I was very careful to proceed deliberately. I am a good deal of a carpenter, if things would only come out square when finished: but they never will. When I saw a board, somehow the saw runs off to one side, and when I try to nail it to the other board, the two won't fit; and by the time I get around to the fourth side, one end of the concern is up in the air, and I have to sit on it to keep it down. I have often gazed with admiration on a real carpenter, to see him run his saw along, straight as a string and true as a die, and then put the pieces all together and have them fit, nice as a cotton hat. This is true genius.

Sensible of the danger and liability to mistake in putting the pieces together, I told Mrs. W., who was superintending the operation, that we would not use nails, but screws, so that in case of error—and all human judgment is fallible—we could take the screws out and take the pieces apart, which could not be done with nails. Mrs. W. conceded the suggestion to be a valuable one. So we went to work, she kindly lending her assistance. I measured all the pieces, got them the exact length, and for the greater certainty, stood them up on the floor to see if they would all fit. They certainly seemed to do so, as far as mortal vision could determine. As all this required a great deal of deliberation, a great deal of measuring, a great deal of sawing, some chiselling, etc., the hour of sunset was approaching when I had put in the last screw, and triumphantly called Mrs. W. from her afternoon nap to witness the success of my mechanical endeavors. I stood the blamed thing up on its four legs, and three of 'em were on the floor, and the fourth wasn't. It was impossible for me to discover the defect in my workmanship. I could make any three of the legs stand on the floor, but the fourth could not be prevailed upon for any consideration. The cross-pieces, which should have been horizontal, and which, to that end, had been measured with mathematical precision, slanted up on one side and slanted down on the other. I was in despair, until Mrs. W. brought her intellect to bear upon my difficulties; when it appeared that three of the uprights were four feet six inches high, and the fourth was four feet seven inches. How it happened no one could explain.

"Now, W.," says Mrs. W., "send for the carpenter." I did so. He came—a rough, totally

uncultured man. He could barely write his name and his clothes were principally suspenders. But that uneducated man just took these pieces of wood, and knocked them here, and knocked them there, and, by aid of some disreputable shingle nails, in twenty minutes had as neat looking a stand made as ever you saw come out of a cabinet maker's shop. I was abashed and paid him twenty-five cents. Mrs. W. said nothing, but smiled.

We had some frames, about two feet square, covered with brown paper. These we placed on the stand and spread out the eggs. I was a little uneasy about what kind of a hen to get to hatch them, as I could find nothing in the books on the subject; but Mrs. W. called me my usual pet name, and said that the first warm day was all the hen needed. Wonderful woman that! Just as she predicted! In a few days the brown paper was covered with little dark specks in a state of agitation. Mrs. W. spoke of them contemptuously as "nasty black worms."

They grew at a prodigious rate. I explained to the children that all they had to do was to go down to the osage-orange hedge, cut off the twigs and branches, and feed them to the worms; that in a few weeks the product would be ready for market, and if the Mills bill didn't interfere with protection to American industry, the profits would be large, and should be equally divided between themselves and their mother. The children were highly elated and were soon discussing what should be the color of the carriage horses. One wanted black, the other blue; and the excitement ran so high that parental intervention became necessary and some spanking ensued. The next morning our early dreams were disturbed by fearful outcries from the direction of the front fence. The smallest of the children had tumbled head first into the osage-orange hedge, and could not get out. Anyone who knows the infernal, brutal intensity with which the thorns of the osage-orange sting, can understand the predicament of that child. We extracted her in a fearfully lacerated condition. She was punctured all over. Having read in a book entitled "Three Thousand Valuable Receipts, for Twenty-five Cents," that ammonia was good for stings, I applied ammonia liberally to that bleeding child, until she became absolutely frantic. Her screams attracted Mrs. W. to the scene, and she exclaimed:

"Have you no more sense than to put ammonia on raw flesh like that?" I pointed to the "Three Thousand Valuable Receipts, for Twenty-five Cents," which she immediately picked up and threw out of the window. The child ultimately recovered, but from that day abhorred silk culture in all its branches. Still the industry went on. The children were so stung by the thorns that the work devolved on me, and it was a task most fearful. There is a poison in the thorn of the osage-orange that not only makes the pain exquisite, but swells one up as though he had been stung all over by bees, or had chronic dropsy. My hands and arms were puffed up, and my face looked as though I had been in a prize-fight. As I observed to Mrs. W., however, these were minor difficulties, and we could put up with them in consideration of the large profits which would ensue. One day one of the servants—they are always going around and turning things up side down—left one of the frames on the floor, and all the worms, to the number of several hundred, scattered themselves profusely about the house, and without any reference to the comfort or convenience of the family. If you opened the flour barrel, there was a silk worm. They pervaded the sugar and crawled into the cream. You found them in bed and the mash was awful. How many were trodden into the parlor carpet can never be known. This, too, was but an episode; and as the worms grew in size and began to spin their cocoons, the process was quite interesting, and even Mrs. W. overcame her repugnance to the crawling little wretches.

I was startled one day, as I was feeding my silk-worms, who were consuming the osage-orange leaves at the rate of a bushel a day, making two bushels of litter, to hear Mrs. W. abruptly ask:

"W., what is a consumer?" The unexpectedness of the interrogation found me at fault for a moment; but reflecting a little while and looking at the silk-worms, I concluded the best way to put it was: "A consumer, my dear, is—well, a consumer in this country is one who consumes." Thinking that no exception could be taken to such a definition, I was triumphant.

"W.," said that pertinacious person, "you don't hang together well, if any. You said the other day that this tariff thing was for the benefit of the producer, etc."

"My dear," I replied, "I seize the occasion. 'My foot is on my native heath, and my name is McGregor.' When our industries were in their infancy, it was found impossible to compete with foreign productions. Labor was so cheap abroad that they could undersell us in our own markets. We had laid the foundation of a broad, comprehensive manufacturing interest; we had taken men from agricultural and other pursuits, where they earned a livelihood, and put them in new and strange employments, about which they knew nothing, where they expected to earn more than a livelihood. But this could not be done on account of prices. So government imposed high duties, and the producer sold his articles for a higher price. In this way he was benefited and enabled to make money. The tariff added just so much to the price of the article sold, and the producer was happy."

"But who paid this extra price?" queried Mrs. W.

"Well," I replied, "it is a principle of political economy, I believe, that all taxes are paid ultimately by the consumer, so that in a case of this kind—"

"The consumer is the American people," interrupted Mrs. W.

"My dear," I cried, "once more I am compelled to observe, you are begging the question."

"Mendicant again," was her arch reply, and a cry from the nursery ended the discussion.

In about six weeks we had the cocoons. Of course, during that time the house was littered with dirt, dried leaves, and all sorts of unclean things; and if you ran about the premises in the dark,

barefooted, you were sure to step on an osage-orange twig; and I am satisfied, from the amount of squalling done, that if the season had lasted six months most of the children would have been exterminated.

I corresponded with some concern in one of the eastern cities, stating that I had a large amount of fine cocoons, and wanting to know what they would pay. I observed to Mrs. W. that I was confident of receiving a reply to the effect that I should ship the cocoons, draw at sight for five hundred dollars, leaving the balance to be paid as per account sales.

The reply was, to send on half-a-pound as a sample, and they would see if they could take them. When we came to weigh out half-a-pound, both Mrs. W. and I were appalled. It took about two bushels—nearly, if not quite, half of the entire crop. However, they were sent, and Mrs. W. snickered as she did up the package.

In the course of several weeks I received a specimen, say about a skein, of the most beautiful silk I had ever beheld, with an order to forward the balance of the cocoons per Adams Express, which I did at the expense of one dollar. Waited several months for acknowledgement of receipt, wrote various letters, the postage on which was two cents each. As considerable time elapsed while we were “waiting for the returns,” and as I was determined that Mrs. W. should understand this great subject of the tariff, as I knew she could if she gave her mind to it, I proceeded to eviscerate the whole matter. Said I, “When a tariff is laid upon a manufactured article, it enables the manufacturer in this country to pay his workmen higher wages.”

“And does he always do it?” said Mrs. W.

“Always,” I replied. “Statistics show that when the tariff on iron was increased twenty per cent the manufacturers of iron immediately raised the wages of all their employés twenty per cent.”

“I see,” said that clear-headed woman, “what excellent persons these iron men are. They do not hire their men for as little as they can, but pay them more than they want.”

“Exactly so,” I replied; “the general rule I admit to be that a man pays as little as he can for labor; but under the protective system, the tariff increases the price of the manufactured article, so that the manufacturer is enabled to sell his goods for that higher price, and the workman thus gets the benefit of it.”

This argument seemed to have great weight with her, as it gave her new light on things, for she said it was contrary to experience; but I explained to her that unless some flaw could be found in the syllogism, the conclusion was irresistible, all experience to the contrary notwithstanding. I then showed her how entirely disinterested the manufacturers were; that all their efforts were solely for the benefit of the workmen; that, personally, the tariff made no difference to them; that they never besought Congress to lay high tariffs; that no one ever knew of the iron men, or the sugar men, or the copper men, besieging the legislators at Washington to impose duties upon articles they made; that it was the workmen who always did it.

I do not know exactly how long it was that we waited to receive our fortune from those cocoons, but one day a postal card came to hand from the parties to whom I had sent my wealth, stating that they had received so many cocoons they could not tell which mine were. Inasmuch as mine were the only ones that had ever been shipped from the town wherein I reside, it occurred to me that this remark might be considered in the nature of a joke. Then there followed another voluminous correspondence. I appealed to Adams Express Company, who said they would send out a “tracer”; I did not like to betray my ignorance by showing that I did not know what a tracer was, but, frankly, I should not have known one had I met it on the street. But with the infinite knowledge of affairs that Mrs. W. has, that remarkable woman signified to me that a tracer was something that goes up and down and to and fro upon the face of the earth, like a roaring lion, seeking something, and not generally finding it. It is an immense consolation, however, to railroad men and others; for it appears that after a “tracer” has been “sent out,” nothing more can, by any possibility, be done by anybody. Whether or not the tracer had anything to do with the final result I never knew. But about six months after I had transmitted my cocoons to that large silk manufacturing house that paid such large wages to American workmen for the purpose of fostering American industry, I received a note sending a balance-sheet, and enclosing a check for eighty-eight cents.

When I received this portentous paper, I observed to Mrs. W.: “My dear, how much do you suppose we got for our cocoons?” “About seventy-five cents,” was the reply. The mind that woman has for detail is simply wonderful.

The check I have had framed, and hung up in the parlor, but when I balanced the books, I still found the profit large, thus:

DR.		<i>W. in Acc't with Silk Worms.</i>		CR.	
1887.			1888.		
Jan. 1,	Cash p'd lumber	\$2 00	Feb.	By acc't sales	\$0 88
	Cash p'd carpenter	25		By amt. experience gained	500 00
Sept. 1,	Cash p'd express	50			
Nov.	Cash p'd express	1 00			
1888.					
Feb.	Cash p'd postage	20			
	Profit	496 93			
		<u>\$500 88</u>			<u>\$500 88</u>

IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

How like the ague is this boon
Of matrimonial strife!
The fever ends in one short moon,
The chill runs on through life.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

THE COMMUNISM OF CAPITAL.

The President in his late and last message to Congress calls attention, in his incisive and felicitous style, to a condition of our people that must strike all intelligent minds with alarm. The corner-stone in the foundation of communism is that agency of the government which makes of the sovereign power that legal process which controls all private affairs for the good of the people. In popular phrase, it upholds the paternal form which enters every man's house and regulates by law all his transactions. This is the foundation, while the holding of property in common is rather a consequence than a cause. If there are no rights pertaining to the citizen but those derived from government, to give practical effect to the scheme all property owned by the government must be held in its care in common by its dependents.

Heretofore this theory has been advocated by the poor and oppressed, and stoutly resisted by the rich. We are treated to a reversal of position in the parties, and the rich are practically pressing the scheme upon the poor.

Jefferson, the father of modern democracy, taught that the government, a mere form of expression, in the way of rule, by the people, who held the sovereignty was only a trust of power, instituted for the sole purpose of keeping the peace between the citizens. To use a popular phrase, it was nothing but the intervention of the constable.

Our central government, not being built altogether upon this broad yet simple proposition, opened in its mixed nature the door to communism found in the paternal form. Indeed, it would have been entirely divested of the Jeffersonian theory had it not been for the necessity under which the framers found themselves of conciliating the States, that then jealously fought every proposition looking to a deprivation of their sovereign rights. All that we so happily gained then came from a regard to the several States and not to any thought of popular rights.

This fact gave us a Constitution under which, we have managed to live, comparatively prosperous, for a century. Had it been otherwise, our Constitution would have gone to pieces in the first twenty-five years of its existence. A constitution is a legal recognition of certain general rules of conduct that are ever the same under all circumstances. Legislation is the adaptation of those rules to individual cases; and as these vary and change with continuously new conditions, a fixed application in a constitution is impossible. For this restriction, as far as it goes, we have to thank the States and not the sagacity of the fathers.

The Constitution was scarcely enacted before the communism of a paternal form began to manifest itself. The Federal party was of this sort. It sneered at and fought the sovereignty of the people, and found its governing element in a class that was supposed to hold in itself the intelligence and virtue of the people. It has departed and been done to death, not by the people, who failed to comprehend or feel the situation, but by the same cause that created the Constitution,—and that was the jealous opposition of the States to a centralization of power at Washington.

After the death of the Federal party the Whig organization was formed, on the same line and for the same purpose as those of its Federal predecessor. Henry Clay, its author, an eloquent but ignorant man, formulated his American system, that was a small affair in the beginning, but had deadly seeds of evil in its composition. Mr. Clay saw the necessity for manufactures in the United States; and as capital necessary to their existence in private hands could not be obtained, he proposed that the government should intervene through a misuse of the taxing power and supply the want. It was a modest want at first. "Let us aid these infant industries," he said, "until they are strong enough to stand alone, and then the government may withdraw and leave competition to regulate prices." It was a plausible but insidious proposition.

This was fought bitterly by the South, not altogether from a high ground of principle, although

the argument was made that the government at Washington had no such power under the Constitution, but the main motive was self-interest. The South was an agricultural region, and found in cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco staples that had their better, indeed their only, market in Europe, and saw no sense in trammelling it with laws to benefit Eastern capital. The American system was having a rough time and bidding fair to die out, when the sectional issue between the North and South culminated in war, and driving not only the South but the democracy from the government, left the paternal party in power.

This organization was made up mainly of Whigs. The abrupt dissolution of that party threw in the newly formed Republican organization the majority that from the first until now has governed its movements. How patriotic a party founded on property is, we learn from its first act after securing control of Congress. In the terrible war that followed secession, the greatest of dangers that threatened success was in European interference. Common sense, to say nothing of patriotism, dictated that Congress should at least abstain from measures likely to offend the governments abroad, if it did not do all in its power to conciliate. Greed recognized no such duty. Almost the first measure of any importance introduced and passed to a law was the Morrill tariff, that slapped the greatest war powers of Europe in the face. Under pretence of raising a war revenue, they made a deadly attack on resource from that source, for they well knew that as they increased the duties they lessened the income.

The panic and distress that followed this measure in all the markets of the world can well account for the deadly hostility to our government felt abroad. Small wonder that while arms were furnished the South in the greatest abundance, cruisers were fitted out in English ports to prey upon our helpless commerce. The greater danger of official recognition was only averted by the stubborn stand taken by Great Britain; and as it was, we now know that had the South been able to continue the war ninety days longer that intervention would have come. A French army, sent there for that purpose, would have invaded our lands from Mexico, while the fleets of allied France and England would have dissipated our so-called blockade, lifted the Confederacy's financial credit to par, and we would have been called on to make terms of peace at Philadelphia.

All this gathered evil was shattered at Nashville by the gallant Thomas and his noble Army of the Cumberland, when he not only defeated the fifty thousand veterans under Hood, but annihilated an army.

This was the birth of the communism of wealth that is to govern our country for the next four years. Of course it is absurd to charge nearly a half of our people with corrupt motives and unpatriotic conduct. We have no such intent. We are only striving to show that the success of the Republican policy is fatal to the Republic. This party, as we have said, is in no sense a political organization. It is a great combination of private interests that seek to use the government to further their own selfish ends. Governments through all the ages have been the deadly enemies of the people they governed. Ours, controlled by the Republican party, makes no exception to the rule. The gigantic trusts, or combinations, are eating the substance out of honest toil, and back of them stands the awful shadow of a powerful organization making those trusts possible, and doing to the people precisely the cruel wrong it was created to prevent. Palaces multiply as hovels increase; and while millionaires are common, the million sink back to that hopeless poverty of destitution that has the name of freedom, as a mockery to their serfdom.

THE INFAMY OF IT.

For years past it has become more and more patent to the people of the United States that the ballot has come to be a commercial affair, and instead of serving its original purpose of a process through which to express the popular will, represents only the money expended in its use. For a long time it was abused through stuffing, false counts, repeating, and switching tickets. In the late Presidential election we seemed to have passed from that stage to open and shameless bribery.

This is simply appalling to those who love their country and believe in our great Republic. The old system of roguery that attacked the integrity of the ballot was that of a few low villains, who could be met by an improved box and other stringent, legalized guards that would make the vile practices difficult, and punishment easily secured. But this open purchase of votes indicates a poison in the spring head itself, and a consent found in the apathy of the public.

What good would be the Australian system, that seeks to shield the secret ballot, where the official agents themselves would of course be corrupt and purchasable? Under this system the voter entering a stall by himself finds an official to give him such ticket as he may demand. What will be the good of this when that agent can be purchased? We really simply give the corruption into the hands of the corruptionists through the very enactment called in to protect us.

Our unhappy condition is recognized. There is not a man, woman, or child in our country possessed of any brain but knows that Benjamin Harrison was elected President by open, wholesale bribery. Mr. Foster advertised this in his well-known circulars wherein he called for funds, and quoted Senator Plumb as saying that the manufacturers ought to be squeezed. And why should they be squeezed?—because, he said, they are the sole beneficiaries of the one measure at issue in the canvass. This was followed by Senator Ingalls' famous advice to the

delegate at the Chicago convention, which said, "Nominate some such fellow as Phelps, who can tap Wall Street." This was followed by the Dudley circular directing the purchase of "floaters in blocks of five or more," and assuring those dishonest agents that the funds would not be wanting to close the purchase.

Under this exhibit of evidence the fact cannot be denied; but to make it conclusive, the New York *World* has gathered from all parts of the country clear, unmistakable proof of wide-spread, clearly planned, and openly executed purchase of voters.

The chair of the Chief Executive has followed the seats of Senators to the market, and that highest gift of the citizen has been sold to the highest bidder. The great political fabric of the fathers, built from woful expenditure of patriotic effort and blood, is honeycombed with rot, and remains, a mere sham, to shame us before the world.

Of course we are not so silly as to attach blame only to one party. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the one had more money than the other, and a stronger motive for its use. The Republicans being a "combine" of property interests, depending upon the government to make those interests profitable, were impelled to exertion far beyond the Democrats, who were struggling for the power only that a possession of the government brings. But we are forced to remember that the votes purchased came from the Democratic party. Said a prominent Democrat of Indiana to the writer of this: "We had enough money to purchase the State had we known the nature of the market, and possessed agents upon whom we could rely. The agents of our opponents were preachers, deacons, elders, class-leaders, and teachers in Sunday-schools, and could be relied on to use their swag as directed. Our fellows put our money in their pockets, and left the voting to care for itself. And then, again, while we were on the lookout for repeaters, pipe-layers, and ballot-box stuffers, they were in open market purchasing votes. We learned the nature of the business when too late to meet it, had we even had the means to make our knowledge available."

No doubt this gentleman told the truth. The sums subscribed, that counted in the millions, came from men not only of means, but of high social positions, who, not being altogether idiots, well knew the purpose for which their ample means were assessed. That able and honorable gentleman, Judge Gresham, whose well-known courage and integrity rendered him unavailable as a candidate for the Presidency at Chicago, points openly to these respectable corruptionists as the real wrong doers. It is more than probable that such may escape the penitentiary, and it is poor comfort to know that when such die lamented, their souls, in the great hereafter, will have to be searched for with a microscope.

The pretence offered for such assessments is too thin to cover the corrupt design. Says a prominent editor of the political criminals:

"The legitimate expenses of a national political canvass have come to be enormous. There is a great educational work to be done; a vast literature to be created and circulated; an army of speakers to be brought into the field; various organizations to be made and mobilized; machinery to be perfected for getting out the full vote; safeguards to be provided against fraud: all the immense enginery for persuading and marshalling at every fighting point the last score among six million voters."

The comments upon this made by the New York *Evening Post* are so to the point, and conclusive, that we quote them in full. The *Post* says:

"Well, now, this being so, why did Wanamaker and Quay, when they had finished their noble work, burn their books and accounts? Missionary, tract, and Bible societies for mutual improvement and for aid to home study, lyceums and lecturing associations, not to speak of charitable and philanthropic associations, do not, after six months of unusual activity, commit all their papers, vouchers, and books of accounts to the flames. No such thing is ever thought of in Wanamaker's Bethel Sunday-school. Why, then, was it done by the Advisory Committee? Religious and educational organizations, such as the Advisory Committee seems to have been, on the contrary, when they have raised a large sum of money and spent it in worthy ways are usually eager to preserve and spread the record of it, that others coming after them may be encouraged to do likewise. In fact, the more one reflects on the Wanamaker-Quay holocaust, the more mysterious it seems."

This election of a chief magistrate, that shook the great republic from centre to circumference, was but a continuation of the corrupt system that began some years since, and is known to the public as that of "addition, division, and silence."

This condition of the polls is no menace to our government. That period is gone. It is a loss of all. The ballot is the foundation corner-stone of the entire political fabric. Its passage to the hands of corrupt dealers is simply ruin. We may not realize this, but we do realize the contempt into which it has fallen. When the new President swings along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol to be inaugurated, upon the side of his carriage should be printed what history with its cold, unbiased fingers will put to record:

"BO'T FOR TWO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS."

THE PULPIT CULT.

In the days of our Saviour the rich man of Jerusalem would, on a Sabbath morning, bathe and

anoint his body, and putting on fine linen and wearing-apparel, move in a dignified fashion to the synagogue, feeling that he was serving God by making God respectable in the eyes of men.

The proneness of poor human nature to lose in the mere form that for which the form was created to serve is the same throughout the world, and through all the ages, evolution to the contrary notwithstanding. As our physical being is, and has been, and will ever be about the same, our spiritual suffers little change. When Adam and Eve, leaving the garden of Eden, encountered the typhoid fever, that dread disease had the same symptoms, made the same progress to death or recovery, that puzzles the physicians to-day. That horrible but curious growth we call cancer was the same six thousand years ago that it is in this nineteenth century. The sicknesses of the soul are the same in all climes and in the presence of all creeds.

Said a witty ordained infidel who preached the salvation of unbelief many years at London, on visiting a business men's prayer meeting: "Our merchants may not be Jews in their dealings, but they are certainly Hebrews in their prayers."

The form has survived the substance. We have retained the customs and phraseology, while losing the meaning. As the rich men of Jerusalem who on the Sabbath thronged the Temple and were solemnly earnest in their prayers, returned to their cheating the day after, so we give unto God one-seventh part of our time and devote the rest to the practices of Satan. We are full of wrath and disgust at the Sunday-school cashier who appropriates the money of other people and, unable longer to conceal his thefts, flees to Canada. This is unjust. The poor man was not less pious than his president or his directors who neglected their duties and in many cases shared in the luxury. His crime was not in what he did, but in being caught at it before he could carry out his intent to replace the funds from his successful speculations. He saw in the leaders of his little congregation in the Lord, millionaires who had made all they possessed through fraud, and why should he, with the best intentions, not accumulate a modest competence through the same means? He heard nothing to the contrary from the pulpit. The eloquent divine told, in winning words, of the righteousness of right and the sinfulness of sin, but the illustrations were all, or nearly all, two thousand years old, and the words were the words of Isaiah and the prophets. To denounce the sins of to-day in "the vulgar tongue" would be to offend the millionaires of the congregation and lessen the salary of the worthy divine.

The late Chief Justice Chase once startled the writer of this by saying: "The wicked men are not in the penitentiary, they are in the churches. The criminals we convict are not wicked, they are simply weak—weak in character and weak in intellect. The men from whom society suffers are the cold, selfish, calculating creatures who not only keep clear of the courts but seek the churches, and deceive others as they deceive themselves and hope to deceive the Almighty."

Sin is never so dangerous as when it gets to be respectable. The sanction of law, whether it gets to be such through custom or legal enactment, so nearly resembles the order of God that we accept it as such, and if it furthers our selfish greed we take it gladly.

The moral code, like that of municipal law, is made up of a few simple rules, easily understood, and the trouble comes in on the practice of the one and the application of the other. That church is divine which subordinates the rule to the practice, and has works as well as faith to testify to its commission. That is the true religion which leaves the sanctuary with the believer, and is with him at all hours, eats at his table, sleeps in his bed, and accompanies him to his labor. It never leaves him alone.

How we have separated the two, the precept from practice, this pulpit cult bears evidence. The high-toned infidel and lofty agnostic sneer at the humble Catholic who, in deepest contrition, confesses his sins to his spiritual adviser and goes forth relieved, probably to fall again. How much better it is to attend divine worship one day in seven, put on a grave countenance, and listen to eloquent discourses, more eloquent prayers, and heavenly music, and then go out with no thought of religion until the next Sunday returns for a like performance!

Two thirds of what comes under the head of moral conduct in one is pure selfishness. A man may be honest in his dealing, honorable in his conduct, a good citizen, a loving husband, and an affectionate father, and yet be without kindness, charity, faith, hope—in a word, all that brought Christ upon earth in His mission of peace.

One summer and autumn we lived at a mountain resort on the line of a great railroad. We saw, day after day, long lines of cattle-cars crowded with their living freight in a three-hundred-mile pull of intensest agony. The poor beasts were jammed against each other, unable to lie down,—to get under the hoofs of the others was death,—fighting, hungry, in the last stages of thirst, panting with tongues protruded, and their beautiful eyes staring with that expression of wild despair which the scent of blood brings to them, they rolled on to their far-off slaughter-houses with moans that were heart-breaking.

It was our fortune that same autumn to meet one of the cattle-merchants at church. He was there with his family. A stout, middle-aged man of eminent respectability, he was a church-member, and looked up to as a model citizen. We saw him listening to the eloquent sermon, and wondered if there were not a low, deep undertone of agony running through the discourse. When the prayers were offered up he knelt humbly, and covered his face with his hands. Did they shut out the wild, despairing eyes of those suffering beasts?

Yet how amazed would that estimable citizen have been had his minister said to him: "You are railroading your soul to hell. Every moan of those tortured animals goes up to God for record. You are freighting disease to great cities, and the fevers and death are yet to be answered for by you—wretched sinner!"

There is not a fashionable church in any city of our land that has not within gunshot of its door great masses of starving, sinful, poverty-stricken humanity. Crowded into tenement-houses, from the damp cellars to the hot garrets, they make one wonder, not that they die, but that they live. No eloquent discourse on the righteousness of right and the sinfulness of sin; no well-balanced sentences of prayers, sent up on perfumed air to our heavenly Father; no deep-toned thunder set to music in hymns, ever reach their ears, or could, if they did, carry consolation to the sorrowful, or curing to the sick. And yet, from marble pulpits to velvet-cushioned pews, the work goes on.

We beg pardon: it does not go on. The well-meaning divines complain of non-attendance. They are startled by the fact that not one-tenth of our population of sixty millions are really attending church-members. What can be done to popularize the pulpit? There is but one way, and that is to make the people desire to attend. Time was when the great truths of Christianity were new to the human race. The multitudes were eager to hear of the revelation, and the Church sent out its missionaries to preach and teach mankind. So far as a knowledge of these truths is concerned, the civilized people have been taught. There is not a criminal in jail to-day but knows more theology than St. Paul. The people are weary of this everlasting thrash of theological chaff. The civilized world is fairly saturated with preaching, which has come to be stale, flat, and in every sense unprofitable.

Instead of asking the people to come to the church, let the church go to the people. This is the secret of the sneers attending the Catholic faith. There is, with it, very little preaching, but a great deal of practice. Its orphan asylums, its homes for the aged poor, its hospitals, to say nothing of its great body of devoted priests and holy sisters of charity, tell why it is that its temples are thronged, and its conversions almost miraculous.

It is a grave error to suppose that true religion is to be advanced through the intellect. It makes its appeal to the heart. If it is not a refuge to the woful wayfarers of earth, it is nothing. If the sorrowful may not find comfort; they who are in pain, patience and hope; if the poor may not get sympathy and aid, and the dying consolation, it is of doubtful good.

As for the preaching, all that we can say is, that when one produces evidence and proceeds to argue, he admits a doubt that neither evidence nor argument is of avail. God's truths call for no evidence. If they are not self-evident, no process of poor human reason can make them visible. An argument in behalf of such is a confession and a defeat. The man who undertakes to prove that the sun shines is insane and a bore.

The pulpit work of worthy divines who think aloud upon their legs has lost its attraction in losing its novelty. They imitate the late Henry Ward Beecher. And these immediate divines are filling their churches as merely platform-lecturers indulging in certain mental gymnastics that glitter and glisten like a winter's sun on fields of ice. It is all brilliant and amusing to a few, but it is not religion.

A BEAUTIFUL LIFE.

"Died at New York, 28th of November, 1888, Mrs. Eleanor Boyle Sherman."

The above simple announcement of a sad event was read through more tears than usually fall to the lot of one whose unassuming, quiet life was passed in the privacy of a purely domestic existence. This not because she was the wife of a noted officer, nor the daughter of one of Ohio's most famous statesmen, but for the excellence of her character and the Christian spirit of her retired career, that made her life one long, continuous deed of goodness. If ever an angel walked on earth administering to the sorrows and sickness of those about her, that angel was Mrs. Sherman. Inheriting much of her great father's fine intellect, she added a heart full to overflowing with the sweetest sympathy for affliction in others. Self-sacrifice was to her a second nature. She not only carried in patient humility the cares imposed upon her by our Saviour, but cheerfully took up the woful burdens of those whose failing spirits left them fainting on their way. Her exalted social position was no bar to the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed. Her hand like her heart was ever open.

The heroism of private life is little noted among us. Acting out great deeds of self-sacrifice in the silent, unseen walks of domestic existence, it lacks the sustaining plaudits of a thoughtless public, and has no incentive to effort other than that found in the conscious presence of an approving God, and no hope of recompense beyond the promised approval of the hereafter when our heavenly Father shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

No man, however exalted his position may be, or distinguished his services, is ever followed to his tomb by more real mourners than one carriage can convey. The crape-canopied hearse, the nodding plumes of woe, the wailing music of the hired bands, the long procession of slow-moving coaches, the tramp of hundreds, tell only of human vanity: we make our show of sorrow. One vehicle only holds hearts breaking in an agony of grief—hearts that know nothing in their woe of the dear one's greatness; know only that he has gone from their household that his presence had made so happy. In his death the dear walls of that home were shattered, the fire upon the hearth is dead, and the hard world darkened down to desolation's nakedness. Could all who were favored in knowing this beautiful character, and blessed by her very presence, been called to form the funeral cortege, real heart-felt grief would have lived along the entire procession, and sobs, not strains of mournful music, would have broken on the ear. And in this procession would have been found not only the rich and well-born, clad in costly silks and furs,

who had received from this gracious lady the divine influences of the Christian spirit, but the thinly clad poor, the dependent orphans, and helpless age. It is such a procession that does not disperse and disappear at the cemetery, but follows in prayer the mourned-for spirit to its home in heaven.

It is not for us to invade the sacred privacy of this lovely life. We owe an apology to her blessed memory for even this mention of her name. We know how she shrank from such while among us, and it is only as a duty to the living that we venture on this tribute to her excellence.

What we feel, and what must be felt by all, a pagan poet imbued unknowingly with the truest Christian impulses has sung in immortal verse:

"But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams;—ah, thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius! Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty earth,
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not!

* * * * *

"Art and eloquence,
And all the shows of the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe 'too deep for tears' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope,
But pale despair and cold tranquillity—
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were."

As a low, sweet echo to the music of those words, we add a tribute to the memory of this noble woman from the gifted pen of Helen Grace Smith:

Ah! Death hath passed us by—hath passed us near;
The swift, keen arrow cutting the light air,
And falling where she stood
In perfect motherhood,
With silver crown of years upon her hair.

The many years—the glorious full years,
All shining with her charity and truth—
How tenderly we trace
Their silent work of grace,
Fulfilling the sweet promise of her youth!

A life complete, yet lived not all in sun,
But following sometimes through shadowed ways,
Where sorrow and distress
Cried loud that she might bless
With her pure light the darkness of their days.

Resplendent mission, beautiful as his
Who fought for her in fighting for his land—
Who heard the loud acclaim
That gave his honored name
To live wherever deeds of heroes stand.

And she, the wife, the mother—ah! her tears
Fell for the wounded sufferers and the dead—
Fell for the poor bereaved,
The helpless ones who grieved
Where ruin and despair lay thickly spread.

Now peace—God's peace—is brooding o'er the land,
And peacefully she sleeps, her life-work done.
We would not break that sleep,

That rest so calm, so deep,
That sweet reward by faithful service won.

Only we kneel, as often she hath knelt,
Where Heaven's love lights up the quiet aisle,
And, praying as she prayed,
Our sorrow is allayed—
Our grieving changed to gladness in God's smile.

THE PASSING SHOW.

The political season is over, and popular fancy lightly turns to thoughts of the drama. New York's gay winter festivities are opening, and the theatres are nightly crowded with appreciative audiences. It would be strange indeed if, with upwards of twenty-five comfortable resorts for popular amusement in the metropolis, and a weekly change of attractions drawn from the best American and European sources, the most fastidious taste should fail to be pleased.

Probably the most successful of this year's dramatic ventures is "The Yeomen of the Guard" at the Casino. The managers of that theatre have been wise to replace their variety-shows with this excellent comic opera. It steadily holds its own in spite of the critics, and after a three-months' run continues as popular as ever. Mr. Aronson says it may remain at the Casino until the end of April. Gilbert and Sullivan's productions are always new, always attractive. Each has a character of its own, yet no one could fail to detect the humor of Gilbert and the merry melodies of Sullivan in them all. If one may venture to compare their beauties, we should say that "Pinafore" excelled in vivacity—that peculiar sprightliness which the French call *verve*; "The Pirates" in humor; "Patience" and "Iolanthe" in satire—the one of a social craze, the other of political flunkeyism; and "The Yeomen of the Guard" in quaintness. The patter songs of the first are lacking in the last, hence its airs are not so dinned into one's ears by the whistling youth of every street-corner, but the music is of a distinctly higher order. It is unfortunate that there is no change of scenery between the two acts. The dingy background of the Tower is not relieved by brilliance of costume, and the eye of the ordinary theatre-goer, accustomed to look for altered scenic effects, is disappointed at the repetition, only relieved by moonlight in the second act.

Some of the incidents of the play resemble "Don Cæsar de Bazan," and are similarly worked out. Colonel Fairfax, imprisoned as a sorcerer, marries a young ballad-singer, who receives a hundred crowns, with the assurance that within an hour she will be a widow through her husband's execution. He escapes, and is disguised as one of the Yeomen of the Guard, with whom, in spite of her vows, the young girl falls in love. A pardon for Fairfax arrives, his identity is established, the singer learns that the man she loves is already her husband, and all ends happily. In this transmutation of character, from the imprisoned sorcerer to one of the prison-keepers, we recognize the topsyturvydom of Gilbert, which is the distinguishing mark of his genius, from the Bab Ballads all through his later productions. In catchwords the present opera is lacking, and in the puns which never failed to draw out the "ohs" of the audience. But there is the same genial undercurrent of innocent humor which for years has amused the whole English-speaking public, and for which Mr. Gilbert deserves the lasting gratitude of a world too much given to life-sadness and mental worry. If "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine," it is safe to say that the prescriptions of this most ingenious dramatic author have effected more widespread good than those of the most celebrated followers of Æsculapius.

It is especially to its music that the operetta owes its success. In this production Sullivan has excelled his former efforts. The first chorus is very fine, and in orchestration Sir Arthur shows himself to be without a rival. Its pure melodies form a valuable addition to English music, and mark the growth of a new school of which he is the leader. The influence of Wagner is clearly seen in some of its majestic marches, but the English composer escapes the metaphysical and unintelligible harmonies of the German school. Sir Arthur has evidently aimed at producing a more classical composition than any of his previous works, and he has done this perhaps at some slight sacrifice of immediate popularity. The jingle of "Pinafore" and "The Pirates" is replaced by a more sober style, which is likely to produce a lasting impression on English music.

Mary Anderson captured the town, as usual, on her return from England early in November. Palmer's theatre was so crowded that it was difficult to get a seat even four weeks in advance, and the audiences were so enthusiastic that their enthusiasm constituted quite an interruption to the play. She chose "The Winter's Tale" as her opening piece, taking the parts both of Hermione the queen and of her daughter Perdita. Miss Anderson is the first actress who has ever dared to so interpret the play. She tried it at the London Lyceum, to the horror of the critics, but it proved a great success. The resemblance between Hermione and her daughter, which Shakespeare insists on so strongly, gave Miss Anderson the idea of trying both parts. This plan had the additional advantage, that the leading lady is not suppressed by being cut out of the act in which Hermione does not appear. Her studies abroad have undoubtedly improved "Our Mary." The coldness and statuesqueness with which she has been reproached could not

now be discovered by the most adverse critic. She is more womanly, softer, less angular, and more graceful. The programme at Palmer's should have been varied so as to give the public opportunity to see her in the old *rôles* that used to charm all beholders. One must not forget the exquisite scenery with which this piece has been set. It was used at the Lyceum, and, although it has been considerably cut down to fit the smaller stage of Palmer's theatre, it is one of the best settings ever seen in this country.

Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett have been doing fairly with their Shakespearean revivals at the Fifth Avenue. There is no truth in the report that any difference has occurred between them. They will appear together at the Broadway Theatre next season, with better support, it is to be hoped, than they have recently had. Miss Mina Gale, who plays the leading female parts, however, is a promising young actress.

Agnes Booth has scored a great triumph as Mrs. Seabrook in "Captain Swift" at the Madison Square. For painstaking attention to detail, nicety of intonation, and powerful expression, Agnes Booth is in the front rank of leading ladies. We have seen her in many society dramas, and in each she has shown a charming appreciation of all the requirements. At the Madison Square, with its cosy stage, the visitor forgets that he is one of the audience, and feels almost like an intruder upon a scene in a private drawing-room. The situations in "Captain Swift" are striking. The hero, an illegitimate son of Mrs. Seabrook, goes away in his youth to Australia, cracks a bank, and returns after many years, unconsciously to become a rival to the legitimate son for the affections of his cousin. The mother discovers his identity, and discloses it to him in order to prevent the ill-starred marriage. The mingled expression of shame, suffering, and maternal love in Agnes Booth's face during this scene is one not soon to be forgotten. The audience remains spellbound for a moment, then a burst of enthusiastic applause crowns her effort. In the original play, as written by Mr. Haddon Chambers, the hero, being followed by an Australian detective, commits suicide. As altered for the American stage—by Mr. Boucicault, it is said,—Captain Swift, to relieve the Seabrook family from embarrassment, gives himself up to the officers of justice. In either case the *morale* of the play—the portrayal of an absconding bank-burglar and horse-thief as polished, brave, generous, gentle—is to be regretted, as every apotheosis of vice should be. Mr. Barrymore, as Captain Swift, exhibits some capital acting, and Annie Russell makes a very graceful Mabel Seabrook.

Mrs. Burnett's dramatization of her well-known story, "Little Lord Fauntleroy," is attracting large crowds at the Broadway Theatre. It is peculiar in that it depends entirely for its success on the acting of a child, or rather children, Elsie Leslie and Tommy Russell alternating in the title *rôle*. This arrangement has been adopted because the part is so long that it would be too fatiguing for a young child to play it night after night. Both the children show a delightful unconsciousness in the recitation of their lines, but Tommy's natural boyishness fits the character rather better than Elsie's assumed character, although her gracefulness charms the audience. The motive of the play, as in the story, is the love of a boy for his mother; and this makes it a great attraction for the ladies.

A pretty play is "Sweet Lavender" at the Lyceum. Its plot is simple. A young lawyer falls in love with his housekeeper's gentle little daughter, but family pride prevents their union until, by the opportune failure of a bank, his fortunes are reduced to a level with hers. Its clever details and quiet humor make it well worth seeing. Pinero, the author, is a playwright skilled in the mechanical arrangement of his situations, and everything runs smoothly. Miss Louise Dillon as Lavender, fits the part exactly.

Thompson and Ryer's play of "The Two Sisters" at Niblo's made many friends, in spite of its somewhat threadbare theme. There was the typical dissolute young man who seduces one of the sisters, and the benevolent hotel-keeper who befriends and marries the other. The villain murders his father, is arrested, and dies, while the betrayed girl is given a home by her sister's husband. Some good singing is scattered throughout the play.

A similar drama, full of love and murder, was "The Fugitive," by Tom Craven, which had a very brief run at the Windsor.

Vivacious Nelly Farren and the London Gaiety Company, which recently held the boards of the Standard Theatre in "Monte Christo, jr.," gave New Yorkers an enlivening taste of English burlesque. The play is nothing, the dancing everything.

The German opera season is well under way. The Metropolitan Opera House opened with "The Huguenots," which was followed by "William Tell" and "Fidelio." Herr Anton Seidl, with his unrivalled orchestra, makes these productions of the great German and Italian composers a yearly treat to lovers of music, which is looked forward to with eagerness and parted from with regret.

"The Old Homestead" holds its own at the Academy of Music; the "Brass Monkey" at the Bijou has had a longer run than it deserves; Clara Morris has been appearing in Brooklyn; Louis James and Marie Wainwright are beginning their New York engagement. "She" was pronounced a great success in Boston, over \$1600 being taken in at one performance. Mr. Boucicault is conducting his Madison Square theatre-school of acting with patience and confidence, although the results thus far are not very promising. Of the eighty pupils, the men are awkward and the women lack talent. However, as Mr. Boucicault said, if but three or even one out of the eighty should come to dramatic eminence, it would be well worth all the trouble.

Our German fellow-citizens are to be congratulated on the opening of Mr. Amberg's new theatre in Fifteenth Street. The location is central, the house is well built, the company good, and the

repertory includes drama, comedy, farce, and comic opera.

There have not been many dramatic events abroad this season. The new Shaftesbury Theatre in London is possessed of such a wonderful fire-proof curtain that a few weeks ago the audience had to be dismissed because they could not raise it. "Captain Swift" proved a great success, financially, at the Haymarket, and "Nadjy" is attracting crowds at the Avenue Theatre. At Terry's, "Dream Faces," a one-act play, and "The Policeman," a three-act farce, had good houses. Grace Hawthorne has just had to pay a hundred pounds to the owners of some lions. She was seeking to produce an English version of "Theodora," and engaged a den of lions twelve months in advance of the time she wanted them. She demurred to paying for the animals that she had not used, but the case went against her. On the Continent there is not much doing. P. A. Morin, the dean of Holland's dramatists and actors, recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his first appearance, his golden jubilee, at Amsterdam. It is announced that Patti will sing in "Romeo and Juliet," at the Grand Opera House, Paris, giving three performances for one thousand dollars each.

More attention than usual is being paid just now to the development of musical taste on both sides of the water. Mr. Walter Damrosch has been lecturing in New York on Symphony. The Liederkrantz and the Symphony Society have been giving enjoyable concerts; and Herr Moriz Rosenthal, the pianist, has met with a success that has only been rivalled in late years by Joseffy.

REVIEWS.

When the late George Butler, quite regardless of fact, and for the fun of the thing, telegraphed from Long Branch to Dion Boucicault at New York, that Billy Florence and Jack Raymond had been saved from a watery grave by a huge Newfoundland, Boucicault responded, "God is good to the Irish." This sentence, so often quoted, passed, without its point, among the masses. What Dion caught on the nib of his pen and wired to the world was the fact that these two famous comedians, with their English names, were Irish by birth, instincts, and blunders. The people that present to the earth the only race that has wit for its national trait never had two more striking illustrations of the fact than in these stage delineators of genius. Raymond is in his grave, and the inevitable dust of forgetfulness is gathering upon his tomb. But Florence, so kindly known throughout the land as Billy Florence, is yet alive, and very much alive. The evidence of this fact is before us in a book entitled *Florence Fables* (Belford, Clarke & Co.). Those so-called fables are not fables, but fiction without morals, but full of interest, which is much better, and come to the reader in the shape of love-stories, odd adventures, and strange incidents at home and in foreign lands.

The book is sure of a wide sale, for the multitudes that have seen Florence in his merry performances, and learned to love as well as enjoy this finished comedian behind the footlights, will be curious to learn how he appears as an author. But they "who come to scoff" will hold on to enjoy. The name is enough to attract; the book itself is sufficiently charming to entrance the reader.

In the last issue of BELFORD'S we gave a specimen of the humor: to find the pathos and the true love the reader must consult the volume.

Divided Lives, a novel, by Edgar Fawcett (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—There is no more charming writer of English fiction than Edgar Fawcett, and the volume before us is one of his best. He builds upon the English method, animated by the French motive, and deepens the shallow affection of the first to the unfathomable depths of human passion to be found in the last. His dramatic ability holds one to the interest of his book whether it has plot or not. Of course he has his faults. His characters are known to us mostly by name, labelled, as it were, and he will at any time sacrifice one or a dozen to work up a dramatic effect. Then he has affectations, not precisely of style, but of phraseology, that irritate; and he cannot resist putting smart speeches into the mouths of everybody. Here is an example:

"Indeed, no," Angela replied, "there never was a more devoted friend than Alva is. To leave her charming home, and all her gay town life, for weeks, just that she may be near me! It is something to vibrate through one's entire lifetime."

This is said by a little girl to her lover, and the lover responds:

"It teaches me a lesson. What is easier than to misjudge our fellow-creatures, and how wantonly we're forever doing it! We are all like a lot of mountebanks behind an illuminated sheet. The uncouth shadows we cast there are the world's misrepresentation of us."

As these young people were desperately in love with each other, but then just engaged, this sort of talk, however clever, is as much out of place and jarring on one as would be the murder scene from Macbeth.

Edgar Fawcett is given to a delineation of social life in New York. This is a wide and varied field,

and the author makes it intensely interesting. We have called attention, however, to the fact that he is not altogether correct. The English motive, of turning the interest upon social caste, is not true when applied to our mixed condition. We have no aristocratic class, as recognized in England; and the assumption of such in real life is too ludicrous and unreal for the purpose of the novelist. Mere wealth without culture, and culture without wealth, contend in a mixed condition with each other, without supplying the interest to be found in earnest endeavor to overcome unjust distinctions and power. When Mr. Fawcett does deal with a class he is not always just. In his *Miriam Balestier*, published in the November number of BELFORD'S, by far the most artistically beautiful work from the pen of our author, he by implication attacks an entire profession that has held through generations not only the admiration but love of the public. There is absolutely nothing in the vocation of an actor that either degrades or demoralizes. On the contrary, there is much to elevate and refine—the work sustained by art found in painting and music, the thought and feelings of the poets; and while this is meant to amuse, the stage has been the most potent factor in not only furthering civilization and culture in the masses, but awaking in the hearts of the many the loftiest patriotism known to humanity. It has awakened a deeper feeling for the home, a firmer trust in the law of right, and a stronger faith in virtue than aught else of human origin. That taints, stains, and abuses have attached is no fault of the drama. One could as well attack the bar or the pulpit because a few unworthy members have disgraced themselves, as to hold the stage responsible for the recognized evils that have fastened themselves to a part. That we have senseless burlesques and lascivious exhibits of nakedness at a majority of our theatres is the fault of the patrons, not the stage. The manager, like any other dealer in commercial wares, caters to the taste of his customers, and the stage is no more responsible for their productions than the street is for the wretched street-walker.

So long as citizens take their wives and children to witness the shameless productions, so long will the managers produce them, and when remonstrated with, shrug their shoulders, and ask, "Well, what would you?" The pulpit denounces the drama, but leaves untouched their congregations in their patronage of its abuse. The great city of New York, for example, lately entertained a convocation of Protestant clergymen, met to consider the sad fact that they were preaching to empty churches, and to devise means through which to awaken the religious conscience of the multitude. They went to their meetings along streets where every other house was a saloon, where the beastly American practice of "treating" makes each a door to ruin; and they passed corners where the walls were aflame with pictured advertisements of naked legs, bare bosoms, and faces fairly enamelled with sin. One reads their debates with amazement. Their clerical minds were troubled with what? The doings of "papists," as Catholics were designated.

Our pen has carried us from our author. Of course Mr. Fawcett will say—and say with truth—that his strictures were aimed at the abuse and not the legitimate use of the drama. But his fault was that he does not make this clear, and by intimation he leaves himself open to the charge.

Aside from this, his work is a work of genius; and his story of the little girl who struggled with such vain endeavor against her environment will live among the noblest productions of fiction given us.

The Professor's Sister, by Julian Hawthorne (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—This is the most successful work of a successful novelist, and holds the reader entranced from the first page till nearly the last. We say reader, but not all readers. Mr. Hawthorne is as peculiar in his work as his eminent father was, with a more select audience. He is at home in the wild, weird production of humanity, touched and marked by a spiritualism that is far above and beyond the average readers of romance. If it calls for as much culture, in its way, to enjoy a work of art as its creation called for in the artist, Mr. Hawthorne's fictions demand the same tastes and thought the author indulges in. The little girl who craves love-stories, or the traveller upon the cars who picks up a book to lose in its pages the wearisome sense of travel, will scarcely select the *Professor's Sister*, and if he or she does, will wonder what in the name of Heaven it is all about.

There is another class, however, that will read with avidity and interest every page of this book, and this class grows wider in our midst every day. One meets at every turn a man or woman who will tell, in a matter-of-fact way generally, that is positively comical, of some experience he or she has had with spooks. This, not the old-fashioned experience with ghosts. All that has long since been relegated to the half-forgotten limbo of superstitious things. One hears of communions with the dead, told off as one would tell of any ordinary occurrence common to our daily life. This is the natural reaction of the human mind against the scientific materialism of the day, that seeks to poison and destroy all religious faith. Religion is as necessary to health of mind as pure air is to that of body, and when deprived of either, we struggle for loop-holes of light and breath with instinctive desperation. Shut out the light of heaven from the soul, be it in library or laboratory, and one sickens and resists.

Mr. Hawthorne wisely lays the scene of his story in Germany. The rarefied condition of the German mind is recognized the world over, and through the everlasting smoke of philosophers' and students' pipes one is prepared for all sorts of fantastic shapes moving through the mist. The author opens with a talk on occult subjects that sounds like voices heard in a fog-bank. With the reader thus prepared, he plunges him into a drama where substantial men and women mingle with spirits, and the strange story does overcome us like a summer's cloud, without our special wonder.

We have said the story holds one spellbound till near the end. The *dénoûment* is not good.

"Calling spirits from the vasty deep" is much easier than disposing of them after they come. To give a satisfactory explanation of the mystery, and to exorcise the spirit back to rest, make no easy task, and Mr. Hawthorne is not to blame for finding it difficult.

We cannot drop the book without calling attention to the author's happy use of English, in depicting character. Here is a specimen:

"Madame Hertrugge was white, red, and black. Her skin was white, her cheeks and lips red, her hair, eyes, and eyebrows black. Her mouth was beautifully formed, and firm, with a firm chin. Her eyes were rather full, imperious, and ardent. She was overflowing with vitality. The hand which she extended to one in greeting was soft but strong, with long fingers. She was dressed in black, as became her recent widowhood; but she had not the air of mourning much. She was sensuous, voluptuous, but there was strength behind the voluptuousness. You received from her a powerful impression of sex. Every line of her, every movement, every look, was woman. And she made you feel that she valued you just so far as you were man. You might be as nearly Caliban as a man can be, but if you were a man she would consider you. You might court her successfully with a horsewhip, but if she felt the master in you, and were convinced that you were captivated by her, she would accept you. It was ludicrous to think of the senile old merchant having married such a creature. In fact, marriage, viewed in connection with this woman, seemed an absurdity. There was nothing holy about her, nothing reserved, nothing sacred. I don't mean that she was not ladylike, as the phrase is. She knew the society catechism, and practised it to a nicety, but like a clever actress, rather than by instinct or sympathy. It was obvious that she didn't value respectability and propriety the snap of her white fingers, save as a means to an end; and if she were in the company of one whom she trusted intimately, she would laugh those popular virtues to scorn with her warm, insolent breath. As it was, all the forms and ceremonies in the world could not disguise her. Her very dress suggested rather than concealed what was beneath it. She was a naked goddess—a pagan goddess—and there was no help for it. She made you realize how powerless our nice institutions are in the presence of a genuine, rank human temperament.

"And be it here observed that I am here writing of her as a temperament, and nothing more. I knew nothing of her former life and experience. I had no reason to think that her conduct has ever been less than unexceptionable. But the facts about her were insignificant compared with her latent possibilities. Circumstances might hitherto have been adverse to her development; but opportunity—rosy, golden, audacious opportunity—was all she needed. She certainly bore no signs of satiety; she had nothing of the *blasé* air. She was thirsty for life, and she would appreciate every draught of it. She was impatient to begin. And, contemplating her abounding, triumphant, delicious well-being, it seemed as if she might maintain the high-tide of enjoyment until she was a hundred. It really inclined one to paganism to look at her."

What Dreams May Come, by Frank Lin (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—This is a cleverly constructed story of English life by an American pen, and the average reader is kept in doubt as to the sex of the author. There is a clear, incisive style of the masculine sort on one page that indicates the man; there is a treatment of female wearing apparel on another that gives proof of the feminine. With us there is one feature that solves the doubt. The pages abound in convictions. Now the female mind, as a general thing, is not given to doubt. When a woman believes anything she believes it, and her faith is as firm as the solid rock. She stands "on hardpan," to use a phrase common to the Pacific slope. Although the book is built on dreams, the theory of heredity it is written to promulgate is no dream in the mind of this fair author. We have called attention to the fact that the use of the novel to illustrate some doctrine, philosophical or religious, is really an abuse. One takes up such form of fiction to be amused, and one feels put upon and abused to find it an essay more or less learned on life and things. If a little information can be injected in the story unbeknownst, like the parson's liquor told of by President Lincoln, well and good; but it is rarely done successfully. If philosophy is indulged in, one quickly detects the bald head and wrinkled brow; if it is religion, the cloven hoof or wicked tail of Satan betrays the author.

When it was once proposed by a staff officer to drive an obnoxious guest from headquarters by a liberal use of burnt brimstone, General Sherman said, "That is high strategy in its way, but it is not war." "When one goes a turkey-hunting one does not care to be killed by bears," said an old hunter; and when a seeker after amusement, to be found in a love-story, opens what purports to be a novel, it is shocking to find it a learned treatise on some abstruse subject.

The book before us is another illustration of this defect. It opens with an exquisite picture of Constantinople a hundred years since. In this prologue some wicked conduct is rather hinted at than told. After this the story opens and moves on pleasantly enough, until the fact is developed that the hero and heroine are reproductions of the sinful grandfather and grandmother long since lost to the census-taker of the British empire. What was evil in the ancestors is an innocent love in the descendants; and the fair author exhibits considerable power by preserving the sanity of her characters, to say nothing of that of the reader, in the complications and situations that follow.

The book is of interest to us, not so much for what it accomplishes, as the promise of better things. It exhibits all the qualities necessary to a successful writer of fiction. There is a keen appreciation of character, a love of nature, and a clear, incisive style that make a combination which if properly directed insures success.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR.

Like some triumphal Orient pageantry
Beheld afar in slow and stately march,
Glittering with gold and crimson blazonry,
Till lost at length through many a dusky arch—
I saw the day's last clustering spears of light
Enter the cloudy portals of the night.

The wind, whose brazen clarions had blown
Imperious fanfarons before the sun
All the brief winter afternoon, died down,
And in the hush of twilight, one by one,
Like maidens leaning from high balconies,
The early stars looked forth with lustrous eyes.

Then came the moon like a deserted queen,
In blanchèd weed and pensive loneliness;
Not as she rises in midsummer green,
Hailed by a festal world in gala dress,
With thin sweet incense swung from buds and leaves,
And strident minstrelsy of August eves;

But treading in cold calm the frozen plain,
With bare white feet and argent torch aloft,
Unheralded through all her drear domain,
Save where the cricket sang in sheltered croft,
And, faintly heard in fitful monotone,
A solitary owl made shuddering moan.

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

THE LION'S SHARE.

BY MRS. CLARK WARING.

CHAPTER I.

SUKEY IN THE MEADOW.

"Where's that cow?"

The speaker was old Farmer Creecy. He was coming up the back steps, and his words were addressed to his wife, who was manipulating an archaic churn on the back porch.

"What cow?" sharply retorted Mrs. Creecy, startled out of all knowledge of four-footed beasts by the unexpectedness of the question.

"*What cow!* Look here, now, Alvirey, have you got any sense at all? How many cows have we got? Can't you count that far? Don't you know how many?"

Alvirey did. Looking like a sheep being led to the slaughter, and feeling worse than two sheep under such circumstances, she hung her head low, and answered, meekly:

"One cow."

"Then I ask you, again, where is that cow?"

"And why do you ask me that, Jacob Creecy? You know as well as I do where she is. She's down in the meadow."

"And where's Mell?"

"Down there, too. They ain't nobody else to keep Sukey out the corn."

"Ain't, hey? Ha! ha! ha! That's all you know about it! Where does you keep your senses, anyhow, Alvirey? Out o' doors? Because, I ain't never had the good luck to find any of 'em at home, yet, as often as I've called! This very minute there's somebody else down in the meadow long side o' Mell."

"Why, who, Jacob? Who can it be?"

"You wouldn't guess in a month o' Sundays, Alvirey. Not you! Guessing to the point ain't in your

line. It's that chap what's staying over at the Guv'nor's, who looks like he had the title-deeds of the American continent stuffed loose in his vest-pocket."

"You don't say so! Lor'! Jacob, what does he want down there with Mell?"

"What does he want? If you had a single grain of sense, Alvirey, you'd know without any telling. He wants to make a fool of her! That's what a man generally has in view when he runs after a woman. But, I am a thinking, that chap won't make no fool out of Mell, for Mell's got a long head, like her old daddy, and a tongue of learning to back it! Just you keep on a saying nothing. You never missed getting things into a mess yet, as I knows on, 'cept when you let 'em alone. I'll shut down on him right away, and then I'll be *blarsted* if Mell can't take care of herself! Don't be nowise uneasy, Alvirey. Mell takes after her old dad."

Alvirey did not return immediately to her churning. She craned her neck and got on her tiptoes, and gazed curiously after her husband as his stout figure rolled heavily to the edge of the breezy woodland, and thence beyond to the newly cleared grounds, and onward still to that narrow path among the pines, whose turf-margined and daisy-dotted track was a covert way to the meadow. Presently, through its mazy windings and the medium of a hazy summer atmosphere, Mr. Creecy came in sight of a youthful Jersey, sedately cropping some tender blades of grass on the enticing borderland of a promising cornfield, and a young girl not far away seated on an old stump in a shady nook under a clump of trees. Her costume consisted principally of an airy muslin frock, nebulous in figure, and falling about her in simple folds, and a white sun-bonnet, which was a bonnet and something more—to be explicit, an artistic elaboration of tucks and puffs and piled-on embroideries, beneath which peeped forth a face as prodigal of blooming sweets as a basket heaped with spring flowers.

At her feet lounged in careless fashion a young man. He was lithe and straight, and had that striking cast of countenance which catches the observant eye on first sight. This look of distinction, which in him was as marked in form as in feature, has been called, not inaptly, thoroughbredness. A self-made man never has it. All that a man may do will not put it upon himself, but his son possesses it as an heritage.

Looking upon such persons, we know intuitively that they have always had the best of everything, beginning from their cradle, the best of *its* kind.

Not always strong, these thoroughbred faces are generally attractive. The one before us possesses both strength and beauty. We may consider it foremost among his first-rate advantages.

Seeing this huge monster of humanity bearing down upon them, slow-wabbling, like a proboscidian mammal, fast-puffing, like a steam locomotive, the young man lifted himself to a sitting posture, and without any suspicion as to the true state of the case, remarked to his companion:

"Here comes a doughty old customer, upon my word! 'What tempest, I trow, threw this whale with so many tons of oil'—"

The young lady cleared her throat—she cleared it point-blankly.

"Excuse me, but, perhaps you do not know, that is—is—my father."

Stammering forth these words, she at the same time turned very red in the face.

This was slightly awkward, or would have been to another. As for this young man, he did not mind a little thing like that.

"I did not know it," he told the girl, unruffled; "I crave your pardon. The fact is, it is an habitual failing of mine to make sport of fat people. The lubberly clumsiness of a huge corporation of human flesh is to me so irresistibly comic! My mother tells me a dreadful day of retribution is coming—a day, wherein I shall be fifty and fat, and a fit subject for the ridicule of others."

"I cannot discern the foreshadows of such a day," replied the girl, glancing with unconscious approbation at the admirable outlines of a figure whose proportions were well-nigh faultless. She fingered nervously at her bonnet-strings, smiled a panic-stricken little smile, broke out into a cold sweat of fearful expectation, and through all the horrors of the situation, tried her best to emulate the young man's inimitable air of cultured composure. He got up at this juncture from the ground, not hastily, not awkwardly, but in his own time and at his own pleasure, and standing there, entirely at his ease, looked every inch the living exemplar of that expressive little phrase—"don't-care."

Some persons object to being interrupted, he did not.

The girl stood up, too, but stood with such a difference! More and more disconcerted she became with every passing second, so ashamed was she of her unsightly old father, in his blue cotton farm clothes, dirty and baggy, and his red cotton handkerchief—no redder than his face—so ashamed, and with such a sense of guilt in her shame! Truth to tell, the contrast between the two men thus confronted, was almost startling; the bloated ungainliness of the one, the sinewy shapeliness of the other; the misshapen grotesqueness of the one, and the sculpturesque comeliness of the other. It was a contrast painful to any intelligent observer, and for the poor girl before us, about to introduce a lover of such mold to a father of such aspect, it was like being put to the rack.

"Mr. Devonhough, father."

"Mr. *Who?*" gasped a big voice, struggling out from smothered depths of grossness.

"Mr. Devonhough," repeated the daughter, looking all manner of ways, "a friend of the Rutlands."

"How does ye, Mr. Deviloh?" inquired the old farmer, in his exceedingly countrified, agonizingly familiar manner; extending a big, rough, red, and very filthy hand to be shaken by this exquisite sprig of refined gentility. Mr. Devonhough, needless to mention, touched it as gingerly as if it had been a glaringly wide awake and aggressively disposed Cobra de Capello. He endured the ceremony in silence, however; about as much as could be reasonably expected from one so superbly self-controlled.

"What will father do next?" wondered the perturbed young lady, in burning suspense. What he did was to stare unmercifully into the young man's face, as if every separate feature was a distinct and incomprehensible phenomenon, and, afterward, inspect him with due carefulness, and at his very deliberate leisure, from the hat on his head to the shoes on his feet.

Mr. Devonhough did not flinch. Some persons object to being stared at; he did not. It is very foolish to mind such things. And besides, he had eyes as well as this old Brobdingnagian, and knew how to use them to quite as good a purpose. While the bellicose Creecy took in slowly the outward manifestations of this bland young stranger, the young stranger himself, in about two seconds and a half, had cross-examined every constituent element in the old man's body, and thoroughly analyzed even the marrow in his bones.

We have intimated that the old man's figure was bad; his face was a dreadful climax to a bad figure, so marred it was by worry, so battered by time, so travel-stained on life's rough journey, so battle-scarred in life's hard strife. Behind this forbidding frontage, the old man kept in store a good, sound heart; but what availed that to his present inquisitor? A good, sound heart in an ugly body, is the last thing a young man looks for in this world, or cares to find.

From the inspection of so much ugliness, Mr. Devonhough glanced towards the daughter; it was merely a glance, for with a delicate sense of feeling, he quickly looked away in an opposite direction. Flushed she was with shame, ill at ease, ready to cry out with a bitter cry, accusingly towards heaven, unspeakably humiliated; but, withal, a winsome lass, so fresh and fair, so pretty. Such a father! Such a girl! In heaven's name how do such things come about?

Satisfied with his investigations, Mr. Creecy now remarked, quite cheerfully:

"I s'pose, sir, you air a drover?"

"A drover? No, sir; as far as I am able to judge, I am not. More, I cannot say, as I do not know what you mean."

"Den I reckon, sir, you air er furiner inter the bargain."

"No, sir; not a foreigner either, though I was educated abroad—partly."

"Dat's it," ejaculated the old man, triumphantly. "Eddicashun is the thing what plays the Ole Harry wid the onderstan'in'. Dar is my little Mell, dar, when she war er chit of er gal, an' knowed nuthin' 'bout the things writ down in books, she war er mighty smart gal. She had a onderstan'in' of plain English, mity near es good es mine, an' she could keep house, an' make butter, an' look arter farm bizniss in gin'ral, not ter say nuthin' 'bout sowin' her own cloes; an' now, bless God! arter gittin' er fine eddicashun, she don't know the diffrance 'tween er hoss an' er mule, or er bull an' er heifer; an' she'd no mo' let yer ketch 'er wid er broom in her han', or er common word on her lips dan steal er chicken! Es fur es my experance goes, nuthin' spiles er gal like high schoolin'. I purt myself ter a heap er trouble, young man, ter edicate my only darter, but I'd purt myself ter er long site mo', ter onedicate 'er, ef I know'd how!"

This speech amused Mr. Devonhough to such an extent that he reluctantly displayed a set of very white teeth, and Mell's rather strained gayety found an agreeable echo in his pleasant-sounding laughter. Even the old farmer's features relaxed. He was "consid'ble hefted up" at the undisguised effect of his own facetiousness.

"The reason I axed ef yer wuz er cattle dealer," he proceeded, "is dis. You 'pears ter be in the habit er comin' hur every mornin' ter see our fine Jersey. She's er regular beauty, ain't she?"

"She is—worth coming to see; but since you press the point, I feel called upon to disavow coming here for any such purpose."

Here Mr. Devonhough turned his contemplative glance from the direction of Suke's charms, and fixed it mischievously upon Mell who, having already, since the beginning of this interview, looked into the four quarters of the globe, now dropped her eyes in search of the mysteries beneath it.

"To be honest wid ye," admitted old Creecy, "I didn't 'low ye wuz arter Suke, ezzactly, but I sorter reckon'd ef yer'd come ter see Mell, it's the front do' yer'd er knockt at, es I ust ter do when I went er courtin' my gal—Mell's mammy—an' had it out comferterble in the parler. We has er very nice home up dar on the hill, with er whole lot er fine furnisher in the front room, which Mell never rested 'till I went in debt ter buy. Now its mos' paid fur, an' I kinder 'low Mell 'ud be glad ter see yer mos' enny time."

"Thank you," responded Mr. Devonhough, with frigidity.

"He mought go now, Mell, ef yer'd ax him."

"Not to-day, thank you," turning to Mell, with more graciousness of manner. "In fact, I have not yet breakfasted;" and he abruptly bowed adieu, and made his escape.

He was quite out of sight before father or daughter addressed a word to each other. At length the old farmer demanded roughly of the girl "What in thearnation she wuz er blubberin' erbout?"

"What, indeed!" sobbed Mell, in a frenzy of passion, and with eyes of storm. "I have good cause to cry. What else can I do? I can't say *Damn!*"

"Can't yer? Why not? 'Tain't the cuss what's so bad; it's the feelin'. Ef the devil's in yer, turn him out, I say. I ain't no advercate er bad language, but ef er man feels like cussin' all the time, he mought as well cuss! Dat's my opinion. An' ef it will help yer to cool down er bit, my darter, I'll express them sentiments, which ain't too bad for a young lady ter feel, but only to utter. So here goes—but remember, Lord! 'tain't me, it's Mell—damn! damn! damn! Sich er koncited, stiff-starched, buckram-backed, puppified popinjay, as this Mr. Devil—"

"Hush your mouth," screamed the daughter, beside herself with rage; "I don't want *him* damned!"

"You don't! Then who?"

Mell, wrought up to the highest pitch of exasperation, made no reply beyond looking daggers and gnashing her teeth.

"Not your old dad, Mell?"

"No, father; I don't want you damned either. But what did you come down here for? What did you call him a cattle dealer for? What did you talk about such horrid, nasty, disgusting things, for? Oh! I am mortified almost to death."

"I sorter reckon'd yer'd hate it worsen'n pisen," chuckled the old farmer; "but er good dose of pisen is jess what some folks needs bad. Come, come, Mell, hold your horses! It's your eddicashun what's er botherin' of yer!"

"I wish to God I had no education!" exclaimed Mell, passionately. "It's turned out to be the worst thing I ever did do, to get an education! It has made me unhappy ever since I came home and found things so different from what they ought to be. How poor and mean a home it is! How lowly its surroundings, how rude its ways and how I am degraded and fettered and hampered and looked down upon for things beyond my control!"

"I knows—I knows"—answered her old father, with that suspicious thrill-in-the-voice of a subjugated parent. "It's yo' ignerront ole daddy an' yo' hard-workin' ole mammy what's er hamperin' ye! We ain't got no loving little Mell, no longer, to say, Popsy and Mamsy, so cute, but only er fine young miss, who minces out 'father' and 'mother' so gran', an' can't hardly abide us, the mammy what bare her, and the daddy what give her bein'. I knows. Ef it warnt fer us, ye'd be the ekill of the finess' lady in the lan', wouldn't ye, Mell? Wall, ye kin be, my darter, in spite o' us, ef you play yo' kerds rite. You'se got es big er forshun es Miss Rutlan'—bigger, I believe. Hern's in her pockit, yourn's in yo' phiz. But, arter all, a gal's purty face don't 'mount ter mor'n one row er pins, ef she ain't got no brains to hope it erlong. Play yo' purty face, Mell; play her heavy, but back her strong wid gumshun! Then you'll git ter be er gran' lady o' fashion, in spite o' yer ugly ole dad an' common ole mammy. Now, I wants ye ter tell me somethin' 'bout dat young jackanapes. What's his bizniss? What is he?"

"A perfect gentleman!"

"Sartingly—sartingly. I seed dat, as soon es I sot my eyes on 'im, but what sorter man? My ole dad ust ter say, 'one fust-rate man could knock inter blue blazes er whole cart load er gentlemin'. I'll tell yer fer er fack, er gentlemin ain't nothin' nohow, but er man wid his dirty spots whitewasht. But what air the import er this one's intentions respectin' of ye?"

Whatever her ideas on this point, the girl was too modest to express them.

"Wall, maybe you kin tell me the dispersition of your own min' regardin' him?"

"Yes, I can do that," she replied with alacrity. "Make up your mind to it. I'm going marry him just as soon as he asks me. And the sooner the better!"

"Exactly! But when is he gwine ter?"

"How do I know, father?"

"I kin tell ye, Mell. *Never!*"

"You don't know one thing about it—not a thing!"

"Sartingly not! It's the young uns these days what knows everything, an' the ole ones what dont know nuthin'. But yo' ole dad knows what he's talkin' 'bout. The likes o' him will never marry any gal who puts herself on footin' wid er cow. Does yer reckon Miss Rutlan' would excep' his visits in er cornfiel', and let him make so free?"

"It only happened so, father."

"Hump! It's happen'd so er good many times, es I happen ter know. Happenin' things don't come roun' so reg'ler, Mell. See hur, my gal, 'tain't no use argufyin' wid me on the subjec'. I ain't got nary objecshun ergin yo' marryin' the young man; provided—now listen, Mell! —*provided you kin git him*. He's es purty es er grayhoun', an' I reckon has es much intellergence, but insted ef lettin' him make a fool er you, es he's now tryin' ter do, turn the tables, Mell. The biggest fool on top o' this airth is the woman who wants ter git married; the next biggest fool is the man in er hurry ter git er wife! One mo' word, Mell, an' I'll go my way,

an' you kin go yourn. Ain't gwine ter mortify you no mo'. Remember, what I say: thar's only one thing you dassent do wid er fine gentlemin—*trus' him!* Don't trus' him, Mell; don't trus' him! My chile, the good Lord ain't denied ye brains, use 'em! Here ends the chapter on Devilho—"

Turning off abruptly, Mr. Creecy puffed sturdily up the hill, leaving his daughter deep in the sulks, but with much solid food for reflection.

Her eyes followed him sullenly. He was but one remove from—a darkey. Never had he appeared so irredeemably ugly, awkward and illiterate; never acted so altogether and exasperatingly vulgar, horrid and abominable, and yet she pondered deeply on his words. Their effect upon her surprised even herself. Can an unschooled man be wise? Ah, Mell! wisdom is not curbed by rhetoric, nor ruled by grammar. The *respicere finem* of the unlettered appears oftentimes to be *jure divino*.

After a while Mell wiped away the very last tear of agonized pride, which hung like a dewdrop on her long curling lashes. The gall and wormwood of her present feelings were somewhat abated. She knew what she was going to do.

"I'll get out of this!" exclaimed Mell, speaking to herself in particular, and into space at large. "Get out of it, the very first chance."

Get out of what, Mell? This humdrum life of little cares and big trials? this uncongenial association with an overworked and sickly old mother (once as pretty as yourself, Mell) and an ill-favored, ill-mannered and illiterate old father?

Is that what Mell intends to get out of?

Yes, and she means to do it in the easiest possible way, according to her own conception of the matter. Other girls may find it necessary to work their way, by a long and tedious process, out of disagreeable surroundings, but she will do it with one brilliant master-stroke—*coûte qu'il coûte*.

Put a placard on pretty Mell; proclaim her in the market place; hawk the news upon the street corners; inscribe it on the pages of the great Book up yonder!

To unite her destinies with some being—not divinely, blessing and being blessed—not vitally, loving and being loved; not necessarily a being affectionately responsive and, therefore, fitted to become the sharer of her joy and the assuager of her grief, but simply some being of masculine endowment serving in the capacity of a latch-key, through whose instrumentality she can gain admission into the higher worldly courts, for whose untasted delights her whole nature panted, is henceforth, until accomplished, the end and aim of Mellville Creecy's existence.

Ho, there! all ye buyers, come this way!

Here's a woman for sale!

CHAPTER II. A MOTE IN THE EYE.

In Pompeii, eighteen hundred years ago, people—a good many people, were dreadfully afraid of dogs; so much so that many of the householders in that famous old city put *Cave Canem* on their front-door-sills, as a friendly piece of advice to all comers-in and goers-out. Just how their feelings were affected towards the domestic cow, we are left to conjecture; but now, after eighteen hundred years, and in less famous localities, people—a good many people—are still afraid of dogs, and without a nice sense of discernment in their fears, include cows, putting the two together as beasts that want "discourse of reason."

Now, this is unrighteous judgment; for even a cow should be looked at fairly, even if she does show the cloven hoof. There are cows and cows, as well as men and men. Suke, the young Jersey, would not toss her horns at a butterfly, much less hurt a baby. She was sagacity itself, and granting she did not know the buttered side of bread, which is likely, she did know, to a moral certainty, where she got her grass and how.

Early the next morn, Suke began to low, and hoping to be heard by virtue of insistence, kept it up until nightfall, by which time she had bellowed herself hoarse. Suke could make nothing out of it, and no doubt dropped to sleep, theorizing on the perversity of remote contingencies, and wondering why it was that she had spent all the long hours of that breezy summer day in the lot, and the companion of her outings in the house.

The late afternoon found Mell in dainty attire, seated on the front porch, gazing wistfully in the direction of the Bigge House. He had not found her in the meadow in the morning, perhaps, he would seek for her in the little house on the hill, in the evening. It could not be that he had avoided paying her any attention that could be noticed by others; she had sometimes thought so, but then it could not be. She dismissed the idea; it was too uncomplimentary to herself, and too defamatory towards him.

But the slow hours dragged on; he came not. Mell sat alone. At ten o'clock she crept sadly into bed—into bed, but not into the profound slumber of youth and a mind at ease. Far into the night, her unquiet thoughts were yet heaving to and fro; advancing as restless billows of the sea, retreating as vaporous cloud-mists in the sky. Her snow-white bed—a feathered nest—erst so well suited to light-hearted repose, had changed its flexible lines of comfort into rigid lines of care.

Dropping to sleep at last, Mell dreamed she had made the world all over, from pole to pole, after a new model and on a modern plan, and having fitted it up expressly for her own needs, found it ever so much pleasanter, and a great improvement on the old.

It was upon the same old world, however, she opened her eyes the next morning, and into one of its most worrying days, holding, indeed, more than its share of disappointment and worry.

But when the third day was drawing to its weary close, and her longing heart longed still unsatisfied, existence had become a burden almost insupportable to poor Mell. For the third time she donned her prettiest dress. He *must* come to-day. Out again upon the little porch, with a book in her hand, and trying to read, Mell was oppressed with a sense of extreme isolation, a wasting famine of the heart, a parching thirst of the eye. In her despairing loneliness, incapable of any other occupation, she scanned eagerly every passer by; brooded deeply on many passing thoughts. This lonely waiting, in a small waste corner of the great wide universe, for a girl of Mell's ambitious turn of mind, was, in truth, hard. It was lowest pauperism to her panting spirit—panting to achieve not little things but great. Humble strife in a little world, amid work-a-day environment, and among everyday people, had no charms for Mell. Such living was, in a word, unbearable.

And over there across that beautiful valley, in the enchanted halls of the unattainable, life was a delightful series of interesting events, redolent of delicate sentiments and sweet-smelling savors, spiced with novelty, brimful of pleasure, amusing, absorbing, far-reaching, all-embracing; in brief, a ceaseless symposium, purged of every ugly, common or narrow element, as roseate and as captivating to the fancy, as hand-painted satin framed in mosaic.

A boy walked up the garden path. The young lady seated on the porch, saw him coming, and a feeling of exultation shot through all the blood in her veins. The boy held a note in his hand, and Mell jumped into the contents of that note, intellectually, in less than the millionth part of a second. He could not stand it any longer; he was writing to know if he might call, and when. She had a great mind to let him come this very evening, though he did not deserve it; but then, do men ever deserve just what they get, good and bad, at women's hands?

"A note, ma'am," said the boy. Mell took it in silence, opened it tremulously, and read:

"Suke is unhappy. Me too. Don't disappoint us to-morrow, and send me a bit of a line, sweet lassie, to say that you will not. J. P. D."

"The scribblings of a school-boy," muttered Mell, inconceivably dashed.

"No answer," she told the boy. When the messenger was beyond reach of recall, she was sorry she had not replied to the note, or sent word, yes; for, perhaps, it would be better to see him once more, have a plain talk, and come to some understanding. The more she dwelt upon the matter, the more certain she became that this was her best course; so upon the morrow, the half-past five o'clock breakfast was hardly well over, when, with alternate hope and fear measuring swords within her, she fled to the lot for Suke. With one arm thrown affectionately around the Jersey's neck, the two proceeded most amicably to the meadow. There she waited an hour nearly, before Jerome came; but he did come, eventually, wearing the loveliest of shooting-jackets, with an English primrose in his buttonhole, radiantly handsome, deliciously cool, and as much at his leisure as if it did not make much difference to him whether he ever reached his destination or not.

Thus Jerome—but what of Mell? Every medullary thread, every centripetal and centrifugal filament in her entire body was excited over his coming. She was flushed, and so hot and flurried, and had been waiting for him, it seemed to her, twelve months at least, and it enraged her now to see him sauntering so slowly toward her, just as if they had parted five minutes ago. Poor Mell, after her experiences of the past three days, was in that condition of body when a trifle presses upon one's nervous forces with all the weight of a mountain. Irritated, she returned his good morning coldly.

"Dear me, Mr. Devonhough! Is it really you? Why did you come? I did not send you word I would be here."

"No, you did not. Nevertheless, I knew you would."

"Nevertheless, you knew nothing of the sort! How can you say that? I had a strong notion not to come."

Jerome made a gesture of incredulity.

"Oh, a notion! I dare say. Girls live on notions, bonbons, sugar-plums, taffy, and what not; a pound of sweetened flattery to every half ounce of wholesome truth. But laying all notions aside, you will always come, Mellville, when I send for you."

"How dare you," began Mell, nettled to the quick and purposed to give him an emphatic piece of her mind, and then ignominiously breaking down, constrained, dismayed, crimsoning to the tips of her ears, paling to the curves of her lips, and wishing she had died before she left the farmhouse that morning.

"And now I have offended you," said Jerome drawing nearer, "and I did not mean to do that, pretty one! I cannot help teasing you, sometimes, because when you are teased your face has that innocent, grieved expression of a thwarted child, which I do so dearly love to see. And I must, perforce, do something in self-defence, you have been so cruel to me." His tones were low, now, and as oily as a lubricating life-buoy. "I have waited for you one hour each day; I have gone away after every waiting, desolate and unhappy. Don't you know, when two people think of

each other as we do, when two people love each other as we do, that separation is the worst form of misery? Then why have you been so cruel, Mell?"

Peeping under the fluted archway of the white sun-bonnet for an answer, his face came in dangerous nearness to its wearer; their quickened breath united in a symphony of sweet sighs, their quickened pulses throbbled in a unison of reciprocal emotion.

One moment more, and—Mell stood off at some little distance, looking back roguishly at the figure kneeling alone beside the old stump, with outstretched arms tenderly embracing naught, and stealthy lips defrauded of their prey.

Mr. Devonhough did mind a losing game such as this. To be made to feel foolish and to look foolish, was more than he could tolerate under any conjuncture of circumstances. He extricated himself as speedily and as gracefully as possible.

"Miss Creecy!"

"Mr. Devonhough!"

"You will probably treat me with ordinary civility, at the time of our next meeting."

"And you will probably do the same toward me."

"We shall see, as to that."

He bowed blandly, and turned upon his heel. He was going away? Well, he wouldn't go far. Mell was so confident on this point, that she seated herself comfortably on the old stump again, and gave herself no uneasiness. She could not credit the evidences of her own senses when the moving figure became first a mere speck upon the horizon, and then a something gone, lost, swallowed up into the unseen.

"It passes belief," said Mell; "surely he will come back, even yet!"

She waited one hour longer; she waited two—he evidently did not intend to come back.

She went home with a troubled heart.

The next morning, feeling somewhat more cheerful at what she considered the certain prospect of seeing him again, and to a somewhat better purpose, she called for Suke, in feverishly high spirits, and the two set off together on a spirited race down the hill.

One hour—two hours—three hours—and not a sign of her truant lover.

Mell burst into an agony of tears.

"I am no match for him," she sobbed. "He is heartless and cynical, and imperious and selfish. He does not care in the very least bit for me and I"—springing to her feet, and dashing away her tears—"I do not know, at this moment, Jerome Devonhough, whether I most love or hate you!"

This feeling of sullen resentment sustained her through that long, long day. In the cool of the evening her mother sent her on an errand to the little country store, about a mile distant. Coming back she encountered a gay cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen on horseback, conspicuous among them, Jerome. She had no reason to suppose he recognized, or even saw, the quiet figure plodding along on foot, and catching the dust from their horses' hoofs.

"This is my life," said Mell, looking after them with yellow eyes, "while others ride, I walk!"

The noise of their clattering feet and merry voices had scarcely died away, when there came another sound; faint at first and uncertain, it came nearer and nearer. A solitary horseman dashed up to her side and dismounted.

"Jerome! Is it you?" exclaimed Mell, with a glad start, forgetting all the anger she had been nursing against him since yesterday, in the joy of seeing him again. "How could you tear yourself away from that lively crowd?"

"One, if she is the right one, is crowd enough for me," declared Jerome, with a laugh; and throwing his bridle reins negligently across his arm, he walked along beside her. "When I saw you, Mellville, I dropped my whip out of pure delight, and as it is a dainty trifle belonging to Clara—Miss Rutland, that is—adorned with a silver stag's head and tender associations, I had, of course, to come back for it. At all events, I could not have closed my eyes this night, without seeing you, making my humble confessions, and imploring your forgiveness for my conduct of yesterday. I behaved abominably. I confess it. I am truly sorry. And, at the risk of falling in your esteem, I am going to tell you something—my temper is a thing vile—villainous, but it does not often get the better of me as it did yesterday. Forgive me, dearest?"

"I am not your dearest," Mell informed him, with head erect.

"Not? Why, how's that? 'Nay, by Saint Jamy,' but you are! I have one heart, but one, it is all yours; you have one, but one, it is all mine. We are to each other, dearest, *Ita lex scripta*."

"The matter is one in which I, myself, shall have a say-so."

"You have had a say-so! You have said: 'Jerome, I love you!'"

"How can you speak so falsely? It is not true—I did not say so."

"Not in words," conceded her tormentor, "but you do, all the same, don't you, petite?"

"I am not your petite, either," protested Mell, driven almost to desperation.

"No? Then you are sure to be my darling. That's it, Mell! You are certainly a darling, and mine."

"I am not!" shrieked Mell, choking with anger. This mockery of a sore subject was really unbearable.

"Not my darling, either?" inquired Jerome, grave as a Mussulman. "Then what the dickens are you?"

"A woman not to be trifled with," said Mell, hotly; "who finds it much easier to magnify injuries than to forgive them."

"Like the rest of us," interposed Jerome; "but that is not Christian, you know."

"You are enough to turn the saintliest Christian into a cast-away," proceeded Mell, severely. "Can't you be serious for a little while? I am not a child to be mocked at and cajoled and cozened and hood-winked, *faire pattes de velours*, treated to flim-flam and sweet-meats, knowing all the while that you are ashamed of my mere acquaintance."

"You can't think such a thing!"

"I do think it! I have cause to think it! See here, suppose you were in love with Miss Rutland—"

"I can't suppose that! I couldn't be if my life depended on it; not after seeing you. Why do you wish me to suppose that?"

He shot a keen glance at her.

"That I may ask you this question—If you were, would you make love to her after the same methods you employ toward me?"

"No; I don't believe I would. I am quite sure I would not. The woman is herself responsible for the way in which love is made to her. I can't be with you any time without wanting to call you some pet name, and I never feel that way with Clara."

"It is my fault, then, that you are so disrespectful?"

"Am I disrespectful?"

"You are. Listen to me for a moment, Mr. Devonhough. If you really care for my society, as you say you do, why do you not seek it as you do the society of other young ladies—at home? My father is a poor man, but he is honest; and honesty should count for something, even in good society. He is also illiterate, but no one can say aught against his character; and character ought to be more desirable than much learning. Then, again, although the blood in my veins may lack in blueness, it is pure, which is a matter of some importance. Altogether, I don't see why you should look down upon me."

"I do not look down upon you!" Jerome was earnest enough now. "I know that I ought to have called at the house, but—ahem! my time is not exactly at my own disposal. In a word, I have not had an opportunity."

Jerome, saying this, looked far away in pensive thoughtfulness. Mell, listening, looked hard into his face.

"Opportunity!" ejaculated Mell. "You manage somehow to call upon me pretty often elsewhere!"

"Not at a visitable hour."

"Were I a man and wanted to see a girl, I'd *make* my opportunity!"

She laughed, derisively—there is something very undiverting in such a laugh.

"Would you, Mell? No, you would not. You would do like the rest of mankind; submit as best you could to the inflexible logic of events and do the best you could under the circumstances."

"Is a cornfield the best you can do under the circumstances?"

"It is Mell—the very best. Now, my sweet Mell, I am going to be serious—really serious—dreadfully in earnest. I acknowledge that you have some cause to find fault with me. There are things 'disjoint and out of frame' in my wooing, which I cannot explain to you at this time. Bear with them, bear with me for a little—there's a dear girl—and when I come back—"

"You are going away! Where, Jerome? When?"

"Only a run over to Cragmore, for a week or ten days. I have friends there, who are writing for me. Another guest is coming to the Bigge House, and I rather think we shall be in each other's way, Mell."

She leant upon his words as if they planned

"Eternities of separate sweetness."

"Mell, will your regard for me bear a heavy test? I cannot now speak such words to you as my feelings prompt me to speak, but will you not trust me blindly until certain difficulties which surround me are overcome? Is your affection great enough for that?"

"I do not know," faltered Mell; "I would trust you to the world's end, and to the very crack of doom, if you would only tell me."

"And then it would not be trust," Jerome gently reminded her, with his mysterious smile. Catching his glance of penetrating tenderness, a vivid breathing reality from a misty background of fogs and doubt, under the spell of its enchantment, Mell thought she could. Her face softened.

"It will be hard, Jerome, but I will try."

"Then, believe me, all will yet be well with us. Whatever untoward event may occur, whatever else you may have cause to doubt, never question the sincerity of my attachment. I call upon God, who readeth the heart of man, to witness that you, only, are dear to me—you, only, precious in my sight. Believe that; be patient, and trust me."

The deep silence which followed these words was broken only by their slow moving feet, crushing the crisp leaves beneath them, and the wild palpitations of the girl's heart. Crystal stars made haste to lend their liquid glimmering to the scene, and blinked knowingly at each other from azure heights on high. The sweet south wind, in melting mood, murmured tunefully above their heads, swelling in delicious diapason of melodious suggestions, and mingling with mysterious elements in stirring pulse and thrilling nerves.

The rasp of a discordant tone, thrust vehemently into this sweet blending of concordant harmonies, disturbed upon a sudden Mell's unwonted peace of soul. She heard her father's voice. He was saying: "Don't truss him, Mell; don't truss him."

"How can I be patient," she asked, with a touch of her old petulance, "unless I know why it is you treat me so? Jerome, tell me your difficulties."

"And by so doing increase them? No. My hands are full enough as it is, and to have you incessantly fretting and fuming about little crooked things which all the fretting in creation won't straighten out, would be more than I could stand. Melville, you must really consent to be guided blindly by my judgment in this matter. I have studied the subject carefully, and it is only for a little while, sweet. We are young, we can afford to take things easy."

"Men of pluck," exclaimed Mell, with spirit, "don't take things easy! They grip hold of things and turn them into moulds of purpose."

"Do they, little wiseacre? Then, manifestly, I am not a man of pluck. I am made of weak stuff, a feeble straw, perhaps, in your estimation, tossed about by every little puff of air! Ha! ha! ha! How little you know about me, Mell!"

"That is true," responded Mell, promptly, adding, with that lively turn of expression which gave such zest to her conversation, "very little, and that little nothing to your credit!"

Jerome was amused. He laughed and stopped, and forthwith laughed again.

"Ah, Melville, you charm me afresh at every meeting. Where do you get all your *sauce piquant*? Beside you for life, that old meddling busy-body, *ennui*, will never get a single chance at a fellow. Your name ought to be Infinite Variety."

"And yours," retorted Mell, with the quickness he enjoyed, "Palpably Obscure! But here we are at my own gate. Fasten your horse and come in."

Her voice was absolutely pleading.

"I would with ever so much pleasure, but—that whip is yet to be found, and the riders will be coming back. I must at once rejoin them. Good night, Mell."

"Good-night," responded Mell, from the other side of the gate, and in angered tones, "Jerome, have I not spoken plainly enough to you? Must I repeat that I am not your toy—not your plaything—but a resolute woman, determined to maintain my own respect and to accept nothing less than yours? You shall not so much as make free with the tip end of this little finger of mine, until—"

"Well," said Jerome, "let me know the worst. When will that terrible interdict be removed?"

"When you can enforce the right by virtue of possession."

"Heaven speed that moment!" exclaimed he, sighing audibly and mounting his horse. "When shall we meet again, Melville?"

"That rests with you."

"Let me see, then. Not to-morrow, for at daylight we are off to Gale Bluff for the day. Not on Wednesday, for there's a confounded picnic afoot for that day. I wish the man who invented picnics had been endowed with immortal life on earth and made to go to every blessed one of 'em! But on Thursday, Mell, I shall be in the meadow at the usual hour."

"But I won't!"

"Yes, you will, Mell."

"Positively, *I will not!*"

"Nonsense. What is your objection? Where is the harm? The young ladies at the Bigge House entertain me out of doors."

"Do they?"

Mell was astonished, and began to waver.

"I thought it wasn't considered the thing."

"On the contrary, it is *the* one thing warranted by the best usage. Out-of-doors is now in the fashion. Doctors preach it, preachers expound it, legislators enact it, and the whole people make it a decree *plebiscite*. Clara sits with me for hours under the trees—"

"Oh, does she!" interrupted poor Mell, with a pang. Seeing her way to a question she had long been wanting to ask, she subjoined quickly: "And what do you think of Clara Rutland, Jerome?"

Do you call her an interesting girl?"

"I never have called her that," replied Jerome, "never that I know of, but—she'll do. One thing, she can talk a fellow stone blind at one sitting. But that's nothing. Starlings and ravens can talk, too."

At the end of this speech, Mell was doubly anxious to know Jerome's real opinion of Clara Rutland. It seemed to her that the question was more open at both ends than it ever had been before.

Jerome patted his horse's head, told him to "Be quiet, sir!" and resumed the threads of discourse.

"What was I saying? Oh, yes! We live out of doors at the Bigge House. There wouldn't be any use for a house there at all, if it wasn't for bad weather. Those girls try their best to be agreeable, but none of them are *provoquante* and charming, like you, Mell. While they sleep away the sweetest hours of these golden summer mornings, what harm is there in you and I enjoying pleasant converse together in the green fields, inhaling the pure air of heaven? I promise you to be on my best behavior. I promise you to uphold the integrity of the tip end of that little finger inviolate; and so you will be on hand without fail, Mell, and so will I, and so will something else."

"What else, Jerome?"

He bent low from his saddle-bow to whisper into her ear:

"That supreme happiness which is present everywhere when you and I are together. Be sure to come, darling. And now, once more, good-night!"

He galloped off, leaving Mell standing in the gateway, and on the uncomfortable side of a very knotty point. Did Jerome really love her? She believed he did—ardently. Did he love her well enough to surmount those difficulties of which he had spoken? Did he love her well enough to marry her?

"Aye, there's the rub!" cried Mell. Her mind fairly swarmed with ugly suspicions, some of them as infinitesimal, and at the same time as dangerous as those microscopic bacteria which enter the physical laboratory, disorganizing, and, if not quickly eliminated, destroying the very stronghold of life itself. And as biological analysis was not yet, at that time, practiced as a method of research into the germs of things, Mell must needs fall back entirely upon inferential deductions.

Those difficulties, what could they be that she might not know them? If this tantalizing, and yet, withal, most fascinating, of created beings, truly loved her—loved her in love's highest sense, and with no thought of deception, would he at every turn put her off with honeyed words and paltry evasions? Would he have said, "You must really consent to be guided blindly by my judgment in this matter," if he valued her as she valued him?

Of one thing she was sure; she would be guided blindly by no human being, man or woman, in anything.

"No, I won't!" she audibly informed the dew-damp lilies and the secretive rose, stamping her foot to impress it upon their understanding. Catch any wide-awake, thoroughly independent, altogether self-sufficient and splendidly educated American girl going it blind at any man's behest! She would make short work of his courtship, and him too—first.

Still pacing distractedly up and down the garden path, Mell heard a window open, saw a head protrude, and heard a voice, which said:

"Send 'im ter his namesake, Mell. Let 'im git thar before he gits the better o' you!"

"So he shall, father."

"Then go ter bed."

"I am going now—going to bed," she continued, communing with herself—"to bed, but not to the meadow Thursday morning. I'll cut my throat from ear to ear, just before I start to the meadow again at the bidding of Jerome Devonhough!"

Bravo for Mell! Strong in this determination, she is now comparatively safe, except for the one menacing fear, that this sentimental feeling she has for Jerome may interfere with the more serious business of life. Love was all well enough in its way, but what this country maiden panted for, was a new life on a higher plane, with or without love. It was the thing her education demanded. It was the thing she intended to accomplish.

After all, she went to bed in very good spirits. She was tolerably sure of bringing Jerome to her own terms, and if not—well, not to make a sad subject likewise tedious, Mell, in spite of all her love for Jerome, was as much for sale as ever.

CHAPTER III. A TOTAL ECLIPSE.

Nothing ever turns out just as we expect.

The next day promised to be long to Mell, but before the old tall clock in the corner tolled out the hour of ten, something happened which gave to its every moment a pair of golden wings.

Miss Josey Martlett, one of those ancient angels who personate youth, who endeavor to assimilate facial statistics and unfledged manners, who are interested in everything under the sun except their own business, came driving up to old man Creecy's farm. Under this lady's auspices it had been, and through her material assistance, that the sprightly little country girl had been mercifully snatched out of regions of ignorance and darkness, and maintained for a number of years at a famous boarding-school, where, among other things, she had been taught to worship the beautiful in all its forms, to cultivate the refined in all its processes, and to execrate the common and the ugly in all its manifestations. A defective curriculum—for what is more common than human frailty; what uglier than, oftentimes, duty?

Let us hasten to concede that old man Creecy has some show of reason on his side. Not all education educates. The best may furnish us with feet and hands, eyes and wings, trained members, fit implements, shields, anchorage, strongholds, and stepping-stones; but also hiding-places, weak spots, loopholes, clogs, and stumbling-blocks.

"I would stay, but I can't," protested Miss Josey, as Mell insisted upon her taking off her hat and sitting down in the most comfortable rocker in the house, while she herself sat beside her and toyed with the visitor's hand, and fanned away the heat; and then ran for a glass of fresh buttermilk, and brought in some red peaches and blue grapes on an outlandish little Jap waiter in all colors, "just too 'cute for anything." Miss Josey was Mell's only connecting link with the country "quality," and hence appreciated in due proportion to her importance.

"I declare, Mell, you spoil me to death," simpered Miss Josey, "and nothing else in life is half so nice as being spoiled to death. But I must eat and run—must, really—I'm just so busy I hardly know which way to turn. I want you to go to a picnic with me to-morrow."

"A picnic!"

Mell's heart got into her throat at one single bound, and stuck there. Jerome had said something about a picnic.

"What picnic, Miss Josey?"

"The Grange picnic. I'm one of the lady managers, as perhaps you know, and I want you to help me with the tables. Mrs. Rutland cannot go, and there are so few to be depended on."

"You can depend on me," said Mell; "I will go with you gladly—gladly spend and be spent for you, who have been always so kind to me."

Hadn't she, though? But this was the crowning act of all Miss Josey's kindness. At this picnic she would see Jerome, and, who knows, perhaps find out his difficulties!

"You are a sweet girl, Mell," returned Miss Josey, gratified. "So grateful, in a world chock full of the basest ingratitude. I told Miss Rutland, 'Mell Creecy is the girl to take your place. She knows what to do, and she'll do it!'"

After this, Mell could scarcely follow the drift of her visitor's conversation. She was in a ferment of impatience for Miss Josey to be gone, that she might put the finishing touches to a new white dress in readiness for to-morrow's festivities. But Miss Josey, who couldn't possibly stay two short minutes when she arrived, did not get off under two mortal hours, or more. This is one of those little peculiarities of the sex, which the last one of them disavows.

Gone at last, Mell went dancing over the house and singing over her work at such a lively rate, that her father put his head in at the chamber-door wanting to know "what she was er makin' sich er fuss erbout?"

"The Grange picnic, father, tra-la-la! I'm going with Miss Josey, folderoll!"

"Oho! Devilho gwine ter be thar, I s'pose?"

"Yes, indeed! Hail, all hail! La-la-tra-la!"

"Make him toe the mark, darter!"

Mell's song abruptly ceased.

To make an individual of Mr. Jerome Devonhough's subtle intellect and masterful will toe the mark was going to be no easy matter. He was far from being an exact science whose formula could be reduced to the touchstone of certainty. Softer were his ways, and more complex his web, the fabric of his purpose more difficult to trace, than the intricate meshes of this cobwebbery lace she was basting in the neck of her dress. Nevertheless, every stitch of her needle fastened down her gathering intentions to the figure of her mind. Jerome must have done with these evasions; he must tell her the truth, and the whole truth; he must henceforth act right up to the notch, or else she would put an end to everything between them, and in the future have nothing whatever to do with him. Several measures such as these, rightly enforced, would, she believed, bring the most slippery Lothario in existence down on his knees at a woman's feet, *If* the man really loved the woman. *If* Jerome really loved Mell.

"*If, Si, Wenn, Se!*" vociferated Mell, stamping her fiery little foot. "Why was it ever put into articulate speech?"

She knew it, this highly educated girl, in so many languages, and could not blot it out in a single one of them! Is not mere human knowledge a kind of blunt tool?

But she was ready, bright and early, the next morning, so promptly ready that Miss Josey commended her in unstinted terms.

"Had it been Clara," said Miss Josey, as Mell sprang lightly into the little basket phaeton, "she'd have kept me waiting, probably, a whole hour without a scruple of compunction! Come, we will go to the Bigge House first for some things I must carry."

To the Bigge House? The gates of Paradise were about to open for Mell. Rejoice with her, all ye who read. How will you feel when the doors of your big house are about to unclose themselves before your long-aspiring and wistful gaze, disclosing within the risen Star of Conquest, the bright realization of many golden visions and many rose-colored dreams?

This Bigge House, of so much local fame and importance, was, in fact, a spacious mansion of no small pretention, and having been originally built for a man named Bigge, in spite of all that the present owners could do in the way of writing and calling it Rutland Manse, it remained, year after year, the Bigge House. Pleasantly situated, well-constructed, and well-kept, the house itself was surrounded by extensive and beautiful grounds, a grove, a grass plot, a flower garden embellished with trellises, terraces, fountains, rare shrubbery, and an artificial pond to row pretty little boats on, and secondly, to propagate fish. The family were of an old stock, but a newly rich—a class who like much to enjoy their money, and better still, to show it.

On this cloudless summer morn, perfect as weather goes, so perfect that one might look upon it as a Providential complicity in the booming of the Grange picnic, a gracious provision of nature to suit one special occasion, the approaches to the Bigge House presented a stirring scene. Carriages, buggies, and wagons, vehicles of every description, and vehicles nondescript, lined the roadways in every direction. Servants were rushing hither and thither, fresh arrivals coming every few moments to swell the throng, voices calling to each other in joyous recognition, fair hands waving *au revoirs*, as they dashed by, without stopping, on their way to the scene of the day's festivities. A pleasurable sense of expectation brightened every face, a buoyant sense of exhilaration quickened every heart, and high above the heads of all, a brilliant sun, regnant on a field of blue, lighted up the long sloping hills and broad green valleys. Mell looked about her wonderingly. Who were all these people, and how many of them would she know before the day was done?

Miss Josey had left her holding the reins while she ran in for a cargo of bundles. It was not at all necessary, except in Miss Josey's imagination. Her well-groomed little nag was alive, it is true, but some live things creep, and Aristophanes—called Top,—was one of them. He never thought of starting anywhere as long as he could stand still. In this respect, he differed from his mistress, who never stayed anywhere, as long as she could find enough news to keep going.

"Hold him tight, Mell," had been Miss Josey's injunction when she left Mell alone with Top.

At another time this arrangement would have greatly disappointed Mell. Her whole being had clamored to get inside the Bigge House, and, behold! here she sat along with Top outside the sacred precincts. But, somehow, her heart beat so high with rainbow-tinted fancies, she was altogether unconscious of anything amiss in the situation. If not within the very courts of the wonderful palace, the very penetralia of the Penates, she was very near the goal; nearer than she had ever been before. She could almost look in—she could almost see the shining garments and gloriously bright faces of the beings she envied, the beings who lived that life so far above her own. She had come thus far; she waited at the gate, and some day the great doors would be flung wide open for her; she would cross the threshold. But not alone. One would bear her company who was ever an honored guest there, and in many another home of wealth and fashion and influence.

These thoughts transferred their suppressed rapture into the expression of her face—into cheeks dazzling for joy—into eyes swimming in lustre—into a mouth wreathed into curves of exquisite transport. She was beautiful.

A number of young gallants came crowding about the gate. They stood in the plentitude of checked tweeds and light flannel, with the latest sheen on a boot, and the latest paragon of a hat—mighty swells, conscious of their own superiority, eying this deuced pretty girl, and wondering who she was.

"You ought to know, Rube," said one.

"But, I don't!" said Rube. "I will know before I'm much older though, you can depend upon me for that! She's with Miss Josey."

Mell did not notice them beyond a casual glance. They had about them, incontestably, an enormous lot of style, but compared to Jerome, they were flat,—awfully flat. She caught a glimpse of him now, this swellest swell of the period, coming down the marble steps of the mansion.

Some one is with him—a lady. Yes, just as she thought, Clara Rutland. Here they come. She, so—so—almost ugly, and he, so—so—so Jerome-like. That's the only way to express it. Jerome is more than simply handsome, more than merely graceful, more than a man among men—he's a non-such, in a nut-shell!

But here he is, almost in speaking distance, and every step bringing him nearer. Isn't he going to be surprised? Isn't he going to be delighted? Isn't he going to shake her hand and smile that impenetrable smile, and—?

How is this? Jerome has come and gone. He did not look at her—he did not once raise his eyes in passing.

Just ahead of this poky little vehicle, where Mell awaited the return of Miss Josey, stood a lordly

equipage, all silver plate and shine, with a well-dressed groom standing in front of the champing, restive, mettlesome animal, as eager to be off and gone somewhere as the most restless of human hearts in a human bosom.

Into this nobby turnout Jerome assisted Miss Rutland, and then springing in himself, grasped the reins from the groom's hands. For one awful moment (to Mell) the horse stood straight upon his hind legs, and then, obeying Jerome's voice, who said in the quietest of tones, 'Go on, Rhesus,' gave one wild plunge and dashed ahead, leaving Mell with a stifled feeling, as if she was buried alive under twenty feet of volcanic ashes.

But what did it mean—his passing her without a sign of recognition? Jerome might be of a truant disposition, of unstable fancy, and superior in his own strength to most ordinary rules, but he couldn't help knowing her face to face. There was a bare possibility that he had not really seen her; his sight, come to think of it, was none of the best, or, at least, he habitually wore an interesting little *pince-nez* dangling from his button-hole, and sometimes, though not often, stuck it across the bridge of his well-shaped nose with telling effect.

With such arguments, and much wanting to be convinced, Mell recovered her equipoise to some extent, managing to hear about half Miss Josey was saying, and to answer only once or twice very wildly at random. Arrived at their destination, she assisted her patroness in receiving and arranging the baskets; this important contingent of the day's proceedings being satisfactorily disposed of, they followed the example of the crowd at large and strolled about in search of some amusement. A more delightful location for a day's outing it would be hard to find, the world over. On three sides of the principal grove, stretched an immense plateau, smooth as a flower-garden, and level as a plumb line, and on the fourth side a sudden, bold declivity, just as if a giant hand had pulled the clustering hills apart and left them wide asunder, laying bare the heart of a magnificent ravine. In this wild gorge were stupendous cliffs and brinks, shady shelves o'erhanging secluded and romantic nooks, enormous rocks holding plentiful treasures in moss and lichen, singularly constructed mounds, probably the remaining deposit of a prehistoric race, wild flowers in variety, wild scenery in perfection, and a beautiful stream of running water, wherein disported finny tribes in abundance. Nothing in the highest art of gardenesque could produce such results as this. A mere ramble amid such scenes of diverse picturesqueness—nature's wear and tear in moods of passion—amounts to a study of geological architecture under favoring conditions.

Mell loved nature, but not as she loved Jerome. Her brains were crammed with wild speculations in regard to him, which accounts for the fact that she had no mind on that eventful day to invest in all those wonderful manifestations of nature's power and nature's mystery.

During their circuitous meanderings, two young men joined Miss Josey and were duly presented to her *protégé*. They were fine young fellows, and very pleasant, too, but Mell continued so preoccupied in the vain racking of her brain, trying to imagine what had become of Jerome and Clara Rutland, that she did not catch their names, and replied to their efforts at conversation with monosyllabic remarks. One of them, a merry-tempered, straightforward, stalwart young chap, armed with rod and bait, asked her, with a flattering degree of warmth, if she wouldn't go with them a-fishing; but reflecting if she did so, she would in all likelihood be out of the way of seeing Jerome for hours to come, Mell declined without circumlocution, glad to get rid of him on the pretext of having promised to assist Miss Josey in her onerous duties, as commissary of subsistence. Discouraged, the young fisherman bowed and left.

"Such a pretty girl," he remarked to his companion. "It's a pity she doesn't know what to say!"

Think of Mell Creecy not knowing what to say! The girl who was always saying things nobody else had ever thought of saying. Such is the pretty pass to which an unhappy love may bring the brightest girl! And, after all, she saw absolutely nothing of Jerome until all those wagon upon wagon loads of baskets had been ransacked, and their tempting contents emptied out upon the festive board, giving forth grateful suggestions of the coming mid-day meal.

While squeezing lemons, flushed and more than ever anxious, deft of hand, but uneasy in mind, the buggy containing Jerome and Miss Rutland dashed into the grove.

"We've been all the way to Pudney," called out the young lady, holding up to view some tied-up boxes, "and here are the prizes."

"All right," responded Miss Josey, "but do let us have the ice. The prizes are of no consequence to a famishing people, but the dinner is, and we are about ready."

"She's powerfully interested in the prizes," commented a girl at Mell's elbow, "but she has a good right to be."

"Why?" inquired Mell.

"Because she is going to be crowned queen of love and beauty."

"How do you know?"

"I've put things together, and that's the way they sum up to me. That young man with her can beat all of our boys, and he's going to crown her."

"Is he?" ejaculated Mell.

Let him dare to do it! Before Jerome Devonhough should place a victor's crown on Clara Rutland's head, she would—well, what would she do? "*Anything!*" muttered Mell, between her teeth.

Poor Mell! She had been to such an expensive school and learned so many things, and not one of them was of the slightest use to her in this sore strait. Could there not be established a new school for girls, differing materially from the old; founded upon a more adaptable basis, taught after a hitherto unknown method, and including prominently in its curriculum of studies, that branch of knowledge whose acquisition enables a woman to bear long, to suffer in silence, and in weakness to be strong? These are the practical issues in a woman's daily life, and although in such a school she might not get her money's worth in German gutturals and French verbs, she would, at least, have indulged in a less reckless expenditure of time in obtaining useless knowledge.

But let us not blame the schools over much, and without a just discrimination. Not all the fault lies at their door. Something there is amiss among the girls themselves. It may be, that they love and hate, and talk too much, even in one language.

In a girl of Mell's temperament, love would not have been love, lacking jealousy, and its twin-feeling, revenge. More's the pity, Mell!

That picnic dinner was splendid. Everybody enjoyed it but Mell, and it was not the young fisherman's fault that she did not. Although he was in attendance upon another young lady, who seemed to know what to say, and said it incessantly, he kept an eye on Mell, and proffered her every tempting dish he could lay his hands upon. To no purpose; for Mell could not eat. She tried, and the very first mouthful paralyzed her ability to swallow. It was altogether as much as she could do to keep from sobbing aloud in the faces of all these omnivorous, happy people. What made it all the worse, at breakfast time she had been happier than they—too happy, in fact, to eat, and now, here at dinner, she was too miserable.

And there sat the author of all her misery, not twelve feet distant, perfectly oblivious to her proximity, nay, her very existence. Not by any chance did he ever look toward her, or show any consciousness of her presence. So devoted and so marked were his attentions to that uninteresting and anything but attractive Clara Rutland, that Mell heard it commented upon on all sides. These two, so sufficient unto themselves, were among the first to leave the festal board and wander off in sylvan haunts. Anon, all appetites were satisfied, and amid the buzzing of tongues and boisterous flashes of merriment, the multitude again dispersed. Unobserved and in a very unenviable frame of mind, the unhappy Mell stole away to herself. The paramount desire of her wounded spirit was to get beyond the ken of human eye. In a hidden recess screened by an overhanging rock, she sat down, the prey of such discordant and chaotic thoughts as wear away, in time, the bulwarks of reason. It was yesterday, no, the day before, no, longer, that he had called upon God to witness that she alone was dear to him, she only precious in his sight, and now, how stands the case? Ah, dear God, you heard him say it! Oh, All-seeing Eye, you have looked upon him this day, and will not a lightning blast from an indignant Heaven palsy the false tongue, whose words have no more meaning than loose rubble!

Into the heaviness of these thoughts, growing heavier with access of bitterness as the moments sped, there came the ringing tones of a voice—a voice well known to Mell.

Shaking off her lethargy and looking out from her hiding place, she beheld the object of all these harrowing reflections, grasping Miss Rutland's two hands in his own, as they together, and laughingly, descended a precipitous declivity. Once down, they proceeded with access of laughter, to push their way through a tangle of brushwood. To get out of this into the beaten path, they must necessarily advance in the direction of her place of concealment, and, devoured with jealousy, inflamed with distrust, tortured with the cruel madness of love, Mell determined to satisfy herself on the spot, as to whether Jerome's avoidance was premeditated or unintentional. Just as the couple emerged from their nether difficulties, and stood on clear ground and firm footing, Mell suddenly stepped forth upon the same path, confronting them face to face. Miss Rutland did not speak. Mell knew she would not, although they had attended the same boarding school for years, lived in the same house, and graduated in the same class, where Miss Rutland, unlike herself, achieved no distinction of self-merit; being content to be accounted distinguished through the sepulchre of a dead father.

Mell did not expect recognition from her in such a place at such a time; for the neighboring rocks were alive with the best families in the county, and Clara was one of those feeble brained persons, who have minds suited to all purposes, save use and knowledge of that kind which may be put on and off as a movable garment. Such creatures, tossed about helplessly on the billows of circumstance, keep one finger on the public pulse, and know you, or know you not, according to its beat. For all this, Mell cared nothing in that supreme moment. One swift glance at Clara, and after that every faculty of her mind and body was centered on Jerome. He was evidently surprised at being nearly run over by this blustering and blowsy young lady, but beyond that—nothing. He looked her full in the face, the unknowing look of a total stranger. The result of this look was to Mell calamitous. A waving blankness came before her sight, her knees trembled, her strength seemed poured out like water, and staggering to a tree, she caught hold of it for support.

"Cut—cut, dead!"

This, after all that had passed between them, was simply brutal. But the despised and slighted country girl was only momentarily stunned, not crushed. Out of the throes of her wounded pride and injured affection, there burst forth the devouring flames of a fiery and passionate nature, incapable of any luke-warmness in emotion. Her eyes dilated, her fingers twitched, her face set like a flint, her lip curled in scorn, and she shook her clenched fist at Jerome's retreating figure.

"Contemptible coward! Miserable trickster! What have I ever done, that you should refuse to speak to me in the presence of Clara Rutland?"

Her bosom heaved; she sobbed aloud, and shook her fist again.

"I'll make you sorry for this! I'll get even with you, yet!" Words, whose fierce earnestness embodied a prophesy, and were followed by a prayer:

"Oh, God, only give me the power to make him feel it, and I ask no more! I care not what then befalls me!"

This paroxysm of passion swept over her as a besom of destruction, leaving her quenched as tow, white, unnerved, quite pitiful and hushed. She sank to the ground and into a state of semi-unconsciousness.

Some one coming near, some one lifting her into a sitting posture, some one pouring cold water upon her head, and holding something to her nose aroused her.

"That's right," said the young fisherman, "open your eyes—open them wide! It's nobody but me. I wouldn't tell another soul, for I know you wouldn't want the mischief of a fuss made over it. But how did you come to pitch over?"

"I did not come to pitch over," said Mell, bewildered, "did I?"

"Of course you did! I had been looking for you for ever so long, and standing on top there, I happened to look down, and saw you lying here. And you never will know how scared I was, for, at first, I thought you were dead. Gad, didn't I make tracks, though, after I got started! But, drink a little more of this, and now, don't you feel set up again?"

"Considerably so," said Mell, trying, too, to look set up. He was so kind, and she, poor, bruised thing, so grateful. This little word, kind, so often upon the lip—upon yours and mine, and the lips of our friends, as we encounter them socially on our pilgrimage day by day, is only at certain epochs in our own lives fully understood, and deservedly cherished deep down in the heart. And yet, so few of us can be great, and so many of us could be kind if we would, and oftener than we are.

"I know just why you toppled," proceeded Mell's kind rescuer.

"But I didn't topple!" again protested Mell.

"Did you fall down on purpose?"

"No. I did not fall at all, as far as I know."

"Exactly! those are the worst kind—the falls you can't tell anything about."

So they are. Her's had not been far in space—she remembered it all now, with an acute pang—but, oh, so far in spirit!

"You could walk now a little, couldn't you?"

"I think I could," said Mell.

She got upon her feet with his assistance.

"You are shaky, yet."

"A little shaky," Mell admitted.

"Then take my arm."

She took it, as a wise being takes the inevitable all through life, submissively, and without saying much about it.

They walked slowly, and the young follower of dear old Ike watched his companion's every step, with a solicitude bordering on the fatherly.

"What do you suppose I am going to do with you, now?"

She could not imagine.

"Give you something to eat—not that only, make you eat it! I gave you enough at dinner time, if you had only eaten it, but you left all my goody-goodies untasted."

"And you unthanked," added Mell, with a ghost of her old smile, and a *souçon* of her old sprightliness.

"No matter about that! Only, I was worried that you could not eat, and I know the reason why."

Did he? Did he know it? The girl at his side dreaded to hear his next words.

"Miss Josey had been working you to death all the morning. I saw you how you stayed around and looked after everything, while Miss Josey sat on one side with her hands folded. She's good at that! She never does anything herself but reap all the glory of other people's successes. The very worst of these picnics is, that a few do all of the work, and the many all the enjoying. Now, you—you haven't had much of a time, have you?"

She had not, but no girl in her right mind is going to confess, out and out, that she hasn't had a good time, even in the Inferno.

"Rather slow, perhaps," answered Mell, putting it as mildly on a strained case, as the case would bear, "but there's nobody to blame for it, but myself. If I wasn't such a fool in some respects, I might have had a—a perfectly gorgeous time. *You* would have given me all the good

time a girl need to look for."

"But you wouldn't let me!"

"Well, you see," explained Mell, warming with her subject, "I had promised Miss Josey—"

"Never promise her anything again!"

"I don't think I will! But, as I was saying, I promised her to come and take Miss Rutland's place—to come for that very purpose, and when I make a promise, however hard, I'm going to keep it."

"Bravo for you! Not every girl does that."

"Every high-principled girl does." Her tones were severely uncompromising.

"*Ought to*, you mean," rejoined her companion, with an incredulous laugh.

"No—*does!*"

Light words, lightly spoken, lightly gone! Alas! How these bubbles of talk, subtle as air, come back home after a time, to twit us with scorn, to taunt us with falsity, to impute wrong unto us, to arraign, to accuse, to denounce, to condemn out of our own lips.

"Here we are," said Mell's companion, still laughing at the idea of a young woman thinking it necessary to hold tight to her word. "Here we are. Now sit right down here and rest your head comfortably against this tree. I'll be back in a twinkling."

So he was, with a plate in his hand filled with edibles, and a bottle of sparkling wine.

"Eat," commanded this eminently practical young man; "eat and drink. That's all you need now to fetch you round completely."

This settled the question, and settled it most judiciously and satisfactorily. The solid food proved a balm of comfort to that desolate goneness within her, which Mell had wrongly ascribed as due entirely to the volcanic derangement of her heart; and the strong wine sped through her veins a draught of health, a cordial to the mind, a rosy elixir of life.

Mell began to take some interest in her companion and her present surroundings. She recognized in them a certain claim to her consideration, and a certain charm. This young stranger was a gentleman in looks and bearing; he had some manliness in his nature, nevertheless, (Mell felt down on gentlemen) and a heart as brimming full of charity as St. Vincent de Paul, himself. He was not ashamed among all his fine friends, to speak to a simple country girl, who, destitute of fortune, had nothing to commend her but innate modesty and God-given beauty. So far from being ashamed, he was ministering to her wants as no one had ever ministered to them before—as kindly and courteously as if she were in every respect his equal in social standing. Jerome would not speak to her, and this gentleman, in her weakness, held the cup to her lips, and put the food into her mouth with his own hands.

"I'll pray for him this very night," thought Mell, and moistened the thought with a grateful tear.

But, long before the edibles were consumed, every vestige of a tear had disappeared from Mell's eyes, and she was talking back to this pattern of a gentleman, as few girls of her age knew so well how to do. The blood rushed back to her pallid cheeks, witchery to her tongue, magic to her glance.

"Don't be offended," she remarked to him, with enchanting candor, after they had become the best of friends; "but I did not hear your name this morning, and I have not the slightest idea who you are."

"Have you the slightest desire to know?"

"Indeed I have! You can't imagine—the very greatest desire!"

"Then let me refresh your memory somewhat. Do you recall a pug-nosed, freckle-faced, bull-headed youngster, who used to pommel Jim Green into blue jelly, every time he wanted to lift you over the swollen creek or carry your school-bag, or—"

"I do; I remember him well. But you—you are not Rube Rutland?"

"Then I wish you'd tell me who I am! I've been thinking I was Rube Rutland for a good many years now—for I am older than I look."

"And to think I did not know you!" exclaimed Mell.

"And to think I did not know *you!*" exclaimed Rube. "That's what gets me! I was asking everybody and in all directions who that stunning girl was, with—"

"Well," inquired Mell, laughing, "with *what?* I'd like to know what is stunning about me."

"With the sweetest face I ever looked into."

This reply caused Mell's eyes, intently fixed upon the speaker, to drop with rare grace to meet the maiden's blush upon her cheek. A perfectly natural action, it was for that reason and others, a very effective one.

"When I found out who you were," pursued Rube, studying the face he had praised, seeing it glorified by his praises, "I fairly froze to Miss Josey, wanting so much to renew our acquaintance, and when you had no word of welcome for an old friend, and gave me the cold shoulder with such a vengeance, I was cut all to pieces over it. Fact! I couldn't enjoy fishing, and I feel bad yet!"

"You might have known I did not recognize you," said Mell, lifting her eyes. "I cannot tell you how glad I am, Mr. Rutland."

"*Mr. Rutland!* It used to Rube."

"And shall be Rube again, if you so desire! Rube, I am just delighted that you've come back home!"

CHAPTER IV. EVEN.

So far, she had dallied innocently enough with her old playfellow; neither seeking to please nor deceive, spreading no nets of enchantment, nicely baited, to entrap the fancy of this agreeable young man (rich too), who was as frank in nature and as transparent in purpose, as physically muscular and daring.

At three o'clock, Miss Josey came to sound the horn for the races, and the crowd came surging back. Old and young, big and little, the cream of the county and its yeomanry, a congregation of the mass, a segregation of the cliques, mounting high into the hundreds. The order of the Grange was then at the zenith of its fame and power.

The crowd, as we have said, came surging back. The best of the fun was yet to come. Mell roused herself and looked about her. Here were other girls with sweet faces, and many of them, as she was aware, possessed of those heavier charms of worldly substance which oftentimes outweigh the sweetest of faces. None of them must lure him from her. He should stick to her, now, come what would. The careless beauty, the ingenuous and undesigning woman, is immediately transformed into a greedy monopolist, a wily fox, a cunning serpent, a contriving, intriguing, manœuvring strategist, bent upon mischief, who will play a deep game and stoop to the tricks of the trade, and shift, and dodge, and shuffle, and aim to bring down, by fair means or foul, the noble quarry.

Eye, lip, tongue, mind, heart, soul, the graces of youth, the allurements of beauty, the treasures of a cultivated mind, and all those sweet mysteries of sense which float in the atmosphere between a young man and the maiden of his fancy, were put in motion to bear upon Rube's case.

He did not move; no wonder; gorged on sweets, Rube had neither power nor inclination to be gone.

After a little, a group of young men stationed themselves at a given point, not far from where this couple sat. They had been into an adjacent farm-house and changed their clothes, and now appeared in knee pants, red stockings, and white jackets, a striking and interesting accessory to an already animated and glowing landscape. In this group of picturesque figures Jerome was conspicuous. Jerome looked well in anything, and generally well to everybody.

Not so, to-day.

To one pair of eyes, not distant, he now loomed up blacker in broad daylight than the blackest Mephistopheles in a howling Walpurgis night.

He saw Rube beside her, and she noted his start of surprise.

"Have a care!" cogitated Mell. "There may be surprises in store for you—greater than this and not so easily brooked."

She turned her back upon him and gave her whole attention again to Rube. The first duty of a woman is to respect herself, the second duty of a woman is to enforce the respect of others. Some of these days Jerome Devonhough would be only too glad if she would deign to permit him to speak to her.

"Aren't you going to take part?" she asked her companion.

"No; I'm not in trim, and it's no use trying to beat Devonhough."

"*You* could beat him," said she. She spoke with confidence and seductively.

"You are awfully complimentary, I declare! Do you wish me to run, Melville?"

"I do. Yes, Rube, I wish it particularly. Why should this stranger carry off the palm over our own boys?"

"For the best of reasons. He deserves to carry it off. Devonhough can out-run, out-leap, out-ride, out-do anything in the county."

"Except *you*," again insinuated Mell.

"Say! what makes you believe so strong in me?"

"Nothing makes me, but—I cannot help it!"

At this point, dear reader, if you are a man, and happily neither blind, nor deaf, nor over eighty years of age, take Rube's seat for a moment, at Mell's feet. Let her tell you in the sweetest tones, that she cannot help believing in you strong—let her bend upon you a glance sweeter than the tones, stronger than the words, and then say, honestly, don't you feel, as Rube did at this juncture, mighty queer?

Under the spell, her victim stirred—he lifted himself slowly toward her, inquiring in a low voice,

but with intense energy:

"Melville, are you fooling me?"

"Fooling you!" she ejaculated, in soft reproach. "Would I fool you, Rube? Is that your opinion of *me*? You think, then—but tell me, Rube, why do you think so?—that those early days are less dear to me than to you—their memory less sweet?"

"I have thought so," murmured he in great agitation, "because I have not dared to think otherwise—*until now*."

And into his great soul there entered, then and there, the ineffable beatitude of the true believer.

Oh, wicked, wicked Mell! One little hour ago, and you had forgotten his very existence! Is the Recording Angel, who stands above your head up there, off duty, that you should dare to do it? Or, will it help your case in the day of reckoning, that deception foul as this, has been raised by clever women into the dignity of a fine art, and goes on among them all the while, as inexpugnable as an Act of Congress?

"Melville, I will run this race—run it to please you."

"I knew you would! And believe me, Rube, nothing could please me more."

"Suppose I should win," said Rube, "what then?"

"You will be the hero of the day, and—" Mell halted very prettily, but finally brought it out in sweet confusion, "and maybe *I* would wear a crown."

"By my troth, you shall! But what of me? I take no stock in crowns like that. If I should win, Mell, may I name my own reward?"

"You may."

"It will be a big one."

"The man who runs and wins generally gets a big one."

"But understand my meaning, Mell, understand it perfectly. I do not want the shadow of a doubt to rest upon this matter. Who shall decide when lovers disagree?"

He had been toying with a twig broken from a flowering bay; it was stripped of foliage, save a few green leaves at the end, and with this he lightly touched the dimpled hand reposing upon her lap.

"*That* is what I would ask. Will you give it to me, Mell, if I win the race?"

Mell trembled violently, but she said "yes."

That was natural enough. When a woman says yes, it is time to tremble. Even Rube knew that.

"You mean it? It is a solemn promise! One of those promises you always keep!"

Again Mell trembled violently—worse than before, and again said "yes."

That barely audible yes, had scarcely died upon her white lips when Rube sprang to his feet, and casting off his fawn colored flannel jacket and light waist-coat, tossed them in a careless heap upon the ground at her feet. Divested of those outer garments, the symmetrical curves of his young manhood, and the irregular curves of his honest face showed up to great advantage in white linen and a necktie—the latter a very *chic* article of its kind, consisting of blazoned monstrosities of art, in bright vermilion on a background of white—blood on snow.

"You must excuse my shirt-sleeves," said Rube, during the process of disrobing. "I have no costume, so must do the best I can under the circumstances."

He next made off with his suspenders, and began tugging at his shirt in an alarming fashion.

"What are you going to do?" interrogated Mell, with a horrified expression. "You are not going to—"

"No," said Rube, laughing, and coloring too. "I'm not going to take it off. I'm only going to—" tugging all the while—"make myself into a sailor boy, or flowing Turk, or a loose Brave, or a something or other, to keep pace with those brocaded Templars, Hospitallers, and Knights of the Golden Fleece over there. Come, now, can't you fix a fellow up?"

"Fix a fellow up?" echoed Mell, helplessly. She never had 'fixed a fellow up,' and she knew less about it than the sacred writings of Zoroaster.

"Yes," said Rube. "Give me those ribbons you've got on—fix me up, put your colors on me, don't you see?"

Mell did see at last, and greatly relieved, proceeded to do his bidding. The sash from her own supple waist was deftly transferred to his, and a knot of ribbons at her throat, after many trials, was finally disposed of to their mutual liking.

"Now, don't I look as well as any of 'em?" inquired the improvised knight, quite carried away with the fixing-up process.

"As well, and better," she assured him.

"Well, then," he held out his hand to her, "let us seal the compact. If I win, Melville——"

"Yes," said Mell, hurriedly.

"But if I fail."

"You *cannot* fail, not if you love me!" She spoke impatiently, and with flashing eyes. "A one-legged man could not, if he loved me! Love finds a way, and love which cannot find a way is not love."

"Enough," said Rube, below his breath. "You will know whether I love you or not."

Their hands were still clasped together in bond, until, perceiving they had become a subject of curiosity to those about them, Rube at length allowed Mell to withdraw hers, whereupon he turned off with a light laugh; that proficuous little laugh, which amid life's thick-coming anxieties, great and small, serves so many turns, and turns so many ways, and covers up within us so much that is no laughing matter.

Rube laughed and mingled with the crowd.

"Come out of that!" shouted an urchin. It was the signal for a regular broadside of raillery and chaff from the pestiferous small boy, a many-tongued volume out of print, and circulating in open space at the rate of a thousand editions to the minute.

Nothing abashed, amid groans and jeers, and gibes, and hoots, Rube took his place with the others, the only make-shift knight among them.

"For pity's sake, look at Rube," exclaimed Miss Rutland, "actually in his shirt sleeves? Rube, don't! You are not in costume, and you spoil the artistic effect."

"Look sharp," came Rube's laughing reply, "or I'll spoil the artistic result, also."

"Don't get excited over the prospect," commented Jerome, nodding his head reassuringly at Miss Rutland, "there's not the remotest cause for alarm."

Miss Rutland sat on a tub turned bottom side up, which had served its purposes in lemonade. Jerome took his ease on a wagon-body, also turned bottom side up, which had served its purposes as a table. Such are the phases of a picnic—and one picnic has more phases than all of Jupiter's moons.

"The tortoise," pursued Jerome, now turning his attention more particularly to Rube, "is a remarkable animal, but like thee, oh friend of my soul, 'thou drone, thou snail, thou slug,' not much on a run. How much is it I can beat thee, Rube, every time and without trying—three lengths?"

"Just you keep quiet," retorted Rube. "The man so sure, let him look to himself; the man who blows, let him beware! In all our trials at speed there never was before anything to win, and I'm a fellow who can't run to beat where there's nothing to win."

"A tremendous issue is involved on the present occasion," announced Jerome in withering scorn. "A lot of paper flowers strung on a piece of wire to stick on a girl's head, and when it's all over and done, I don't know who feels most idiotic or repentant, the girl who wears 'em or the fellow who won 'em. I've been there! I know. I hope a more enduring crown than this perishable travesty will fall to my lot!"

"So do I!" prayed Rube aloud, and with devoutness.

"Oh, Rutland, Rutland!" exclaimed his friend, going off into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "There isn't anything in this wide world half so deliciously transparent as your intentions, unless—unless," subjoined Jerome, as soon as he could again command his voice, "unless it be Miss Josey's juvencity."

"Hush laughing," said Rube, drawing near and speaking low. "See here, Devonhough, you don't care the snap of your finger about this affair; you've said as much; so hold back, dear old fellow, won't you? Give me a chance!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Jerome, again going off. "'*Dear old fellow!*' That's rich! Very dear old fellow, never so dear before!"

"Oh, go along with you," responded Rube crossly. "Go to the devil until you can stop laughing!"

He was about to turn off in high dudgeon, when Jerome with an effort pulled himself together and soberly considered the subject. "Hold on, then! I'd like to oblige you Rutland, of course I would, but there's Clara! She expects me to—"

"Hang Clara!" said Rube, with the natural unfraternalness of a brother.

"That's what I propose to do," answered Jerome. "Hang her with a wreath!"

"Don't!" again pleaded Rube. "Not this time. If you just won't, I'll—"

"Rub-a-dub-dub!" beat the drum.

"Into place!" shouted a stentorian voice.

"Ready?"

"One—two—Boom!"

They were off in fine style, Jerome quickly showing the lead, and Rube gaining gradually upon him towards the middle of the course. To one spectator it was more interesting than the sword-dance, more exciting than a steeple-chase. But the eager spectators at the starting place could see very little beyond a certain point, owing to the crowd of boys and men which lined the sides of the track and closed up as the runners passed. They could hear vociferous yelling and

screaming, sometimes the outcry, "Devonhough ahead!" and then, again, "Hurrah for Rutland!" and, at the last, a tremendous whooping and cheering and clapping of hands, in which no name was at first distinguishable. Then, amid the unbounded enthusiasm of the multitude, the victor was lifted above the heads of the crowd and brought back in triumph.

Mell had scarcely moved from the spot where Rube left her. She had had some time for reflection, and had profited by it, to such an extent, that she now felt quite miserable. That was the way with Mell, and continues to be the way with Mell's kind. They make a practice of hitching together the cart of Unthought and the sure-footed beast Think-twice; the cart in front, the horse in the rear; and if, under such circumstances the poor brute, nine times out of ten, lands his living freight into very hot water, too hot for their tender feelings, who is to blame for it?

Some very strange thoughts coursed through the girl's mind. Now, suppose it was Rube seated up there on the heads of an idolizing populace, and it became incumbent upon her to fulfill that promise so rashly and foolishly given, could she do it? No! No! She would rather live a thousand years and scratch an old maid's head every hour in all those years, than marry Rube Rutland!

It made her sick to think about it; every nerve in her body recoiled; every good instinct within her lifted up a dissentient voice.

"Can't you see who it is?" She inquired hoarsely of her nearest neighbor, a much be-banged girl, who peered above the crowd from the top of a dry-goods box, with the cute expression of a fluffy-faced puppy, "Can't you see?"

"Not distinctly yet, but I think it is that young stranger, Rube Rutland's friend; I'm pretty sure it is."

"Thank God!" muttered Mell. She was ambitious, but she was not yet the hardened thing that ambition makes.

"My goodness!" suddenly exclaimed the girl on the box. "It isn't that strange young man! It is Rube Rutland! I can see him distinctly now. Oh, how glad I am! It is Rube Rutland, boys." "Rutland forever!" shouted back the boys.

In all that big crowd there was but one heart not glad. Rube was in the house of his friends, the other a stranger. County pride, State pride, local prejudice, all sided with Rube. Jerome was an alien. He had come there to beat "our boys," and one of our boys had beaten him. Huzza! Huzza! Shout the victory!

They did shout it with a noise whose loudness was enough to bring down the roof of heaven. Never had there been such a victory at a Grange picnic before.

Deafened by the noise Mell slunk back into the wood. All color forsook her face once more. She had played for high stakes, this ambitious girl; she had won her game, and in the winning cursed her own folly and realized with a pang of unspeakable bitterness, that a victory for which one pays too dear a price is the worst kind of defeat.

Released from the well-meant persecutions of his many admirers, Rube asked for his coat and things, and a fan, and was next subjected to a statement from the master of ceremonies.

"With this wreath," explained that individual, "you may crown the lady of your choice, crown her queen of Love and Beauty, and it will be her prerogative to award the other prizes won on this occasion. Who is the fortunate lady?"

Every woman in hearing distance held her breath, every man opened wide his ears.

"Miss Mellville Creecy."

"Whom did he say?" queried Miss Josey, tremendously excited and not quite certain she had heard aright. Miss Josey was nibbling at a peach; she nibbled no more. Though blessed with an excellent appetite, Miss Josey in her hungriest moment was more eager to hear something new than eat something nice.

"Did you say Mell, Rube?"

"I did," said Rube.

It struck the crowd speechless. What? Rube Rutland, the son of an ex-Governor, an ex-Judge, an ex-Senator, dead now, but dead with all his titles on him; Rube Rutland, the greatest catch in the State, going to crown Mellville Creecy, daughter of that old ignoramus who made "fritters" of the King's English, and dug potatoes, and hoed corn, and ploughed in the fields with his own hands? The thing was preposterous! It was a thing, too, to be resented by his friends and equals.

Miss Rutland drew her brother aside.

"Rube, you cannot mean it! You surely have some sense! A little, if not much! You can't crown that obscure girl with the cream of the county, your own personal friends, all around you."

"Can't I?" said Rube. "I can and *will*! The cream of the county may go to—anywhere." Rube closed up blandly: "I will not limit them in their choice of locations. That would be not only ungenerous but ungentlemanly."

"Rube," persisted Miss Rutland, "do listen to reason. What will mother say? What will everybody say?"

"Say what they darned please!"

Rube was first of all a freeborn American—secondly, an aristocrat.

“What’s the use of being somebody if you’ve got to knuckle down to what people say?”

“But you are not obliged to crown anybody,” insinuated Clara. “Rather than crown this low-born girl, make some one your proxy. Jerome would—”

“Oh, I have no doubt, with pleasure! You are a deep one, Clara, but you’ll wear no crown this day. Might as well give it up.”

So she perceived, and turned off in a rage, first informing him that he always had been, and always would be an unconscionable ass.

“You have fully decided, then?” questioned the master of ceremonies. “I have,” Rube told him, beginning to get put out. Pretty Mell might well have been a scare-crow, such consternation had she created amongst them all. “I decided some time ago. Will it be necessary for me to mount a tree-top and blow a clarion blast before I can make you all understand that I am going to crown Mellville Creecy, and nobody else?”

“Certainly not, certainly not,” hastily replied the master of ceremonies. He too was disappointed; he had a sister. Was there ever a man in power who didn’t have a sister?—who didn’t have a good many, all wanting crowns?

“Will you make a speech?”

“Nary speech,” declared Rube, laughing. “I’m not so swift in my tongue as my legs! See here, Cap’n, there’s no occasion for an unnecessary amount of tomfoolery about this thing. Some gentleman bring Miss Creecy forward. I’ll put this gewgaw on her in a jiffy, and that’ll be the end of it!”

Rube smiled softly to himself. That was very far from being the end of it.

“Mell! Mell!” screamed Miss Josie, running up to her *protegé*, the bearer of astonishing news, “you don’t know what’s going to happen! You’d never guess it! Rube is going to crown you, my pretty darling! You are to be queen of Love and Beauty.”

“But, I’d rather not,” said Mell, drawing back.

“Rather not?” screamed Miss Josey. “Did anybody ever before hear of a woman who would rather not be a queen—a queen in the hearts of men?”

“I don’t see how you can help it,” continued Miss Josey. Mell did not, either, alas! “But I don’t wonder you feel a little frightened about it. It is such a wonderful thing for Rube to do: but Rube has two eyes in his head, Rube has, and knows the prettiest girl in the county when he sees her! This thing is going to be the making of you, Mell (rather say the undoing, Miss Josey) so don’t be so frightened, but hold your head high, and bear your honors bravely, and remember all eyes are upon you. The rest of the girls are fairly dying with envy, don’t forget that!”

This last remark brought Mell to her senses. Not one of them but would gladly stand where she stood—gladly put themselves in her shoes if they could. Rube was not a mate, as mating goes, to be met with every day in the year. The sugared point of this timely suggestion served Miss Josey’s purpose effectually. It stilled the wild throbbing in the girl’s heart, brought the blood back to her face, and turned the purple of such wondrous hue in her eyes, to the softest black; with intensity of gratification, Jerome himself was forgotten for the nonce.

Miss Josey, still in a flutter of delight, now proceeded to put on her sash, to replace the knot of ribbons at her throat, to pass her hands assuagingly across Mell’s wilderness of frolicsome hair, and to put an extra touch or two to her simple toilette generally; whispering words of stimulation and encouragement all the while.

Thoroughly put to rights, Miss Josey placed the girl’s hand into that of a very grand personage—the president of the Grange, in fact—who led her gallantly to the spot selected for the coronation ceremonies. There stood the hero of the day. He advanced a step or two as she drew near, he bowed low, and then in a distinct voice with a somewhat heightened color, but in his usual simple, straightforward manner, said: “Miss Creecy, I beg you will do me the honor to accept this trophy of my victory.”

Miss Creecy silently bowed her head; he placed the wreath upon it, and lo! what has become of our rustic maiden? She is a Queen!

Nevertheless, she immediately fell back again into Miss Josey’s hands, who hastened to push the crown this way and then that,—forward a little, and then backward a little—just one barley-corn this side and just one the other; until the magical spot of perfect-becomingness having been reached, she wisely let it be. As soon as the crowd caught sight of this bright splendor of yellow hair, surmounted by a wreath of flowers, the shouting and yelling re-commenced; and when it was passed with electric swiftness from mouth to mouth, that the head of the Rutland family, the owner of an honored name and a big estate, had chosen for his queen, not the daughter of a rich planter or a great statesman, but a child of the yeomanry, a ripple of intense excitement flashed through the multitude, and enthusiasm knew no bounds.

“Rutland for the people, and the people for Rutland!” was the joyous outpouring of the common heart. A sentiment which only subsided occasionally, to be renewed with increased vigor and manifold cheers.

“I see your game,” said the secretary of the Grange to Rube, with a sly wink. “You are going to run for the Legislature?”

"Your penetration surprises me," returned Rube with a laugh. "What a pity the voting couldn't be done now; I'd be willing to risk a couple of thousand on my own election, if it could!"

"It's awfully becoming to her, isn't it?" inquired Jerome, speaking to Clara, and referring to the crown which sat upon the queen's head.

"I don't think so," returned Clara, "not in the least becoming. It doesn't suit the color of her hair."

"Sure enough! I had forgotten that. We bought it to suit yours, didn't we? It is too bad! but never mind; we'll come in for the second prize, certain."

"Not I!" exclaimed Clara, with a toss of her head. "It is first or none with me. There is something mean, little, contemptible, about a second prize, just like all second-rate things! Having failed in securing the first, were I in your place, I would not try for the second."

And she left him, much angered.

"Whew!" softly whistled Jerome. "It strikes me that what pleases one woman, doesn't please another. Why is that? It also strikes me that it's no use trying to please any of 'em. A man can't; not unless he converts himself into a sort of synchronous multiplex machine, and tries seventy-five different ways all at once."

The stream of people now poured in one direction,—towards royalty. Queens differ; but there is a something about every one of them which fetches the crowd. While this one stood hemmed in on all sides, an object of curiosity to all classes and conditions, all eager for a sight of her, some eager to be made known to her, others wanting to catch a look, a word, a smile, Mell heard some one at her elbow say, softly:

"Mellville."

Turning, she confronted Jerome. In a flash, her whole appearance changed. The moment before she had been a gracious sovereign, accepting with queenly grace the homage of her loyal subjects. Now, she was an outraged monarch jealous of her rank, standing on her dignity.

"How dare you, sir!" asked Mell, eyeing him haughtily and drawing herself up to her fullest height. "How dare you to speak to me! How dare you touch me! I have not the honor of your acquaintance, sir!"

Jerome was undeniably astonished; but this was not the time, not the place to indulge in a feeling of astonishment, or to make an exhibition of himself or her.

"Your Majesty," said Jerome, with his characteristic coolness, "will graciously pardon me. The crowd is great, it pressed heavily upon all sides and I have not been able to resist it."

He fell back at once, and Mell bowed, just as if nothing had happened, to the gentleman, whom the master of ceremonies was in the act of introducing to her.

In the crush, Jerome encountered Rube. He had been called off on some matter under discussion among those running the shebang—Rube's way of putting it—and was now endeavoring to push his way back to Mell.

"How-do, old fellow?" said Jerome, by way of congratulation.

"Tip-top!" said Rube, by way of thanks, and seizing his friend's hand he wrung it as if his intention was to wring it clean off. "You're a trump!"

"Don't mention it!" begged Jerome. He began to laugh again. For some reason the whole thing was excessively amusing to Jerome.

"But I *will* mention it," persisted Rube. "I'll thank you for it to my dying day. It was so self-sacrificing on your part, considering everything."

"Oh, was it?" exclaimed his companion, choking down his risibles. "Well—ah—I don't exactly feel it that way. A mere trifle."

"Not to me," declared Rube.

"Perhaps not to me, either," conceded Jerome, looking on the subject more seriously. "For Clara _"

"You can patch up Clara," Rube suggested, soothingly.

"Do you think so? It's a rankling *casus belli* at present, I can tell you! But how about your rustic beauty, eh, Rube? Is she pleased? Does she like it?"

"Pleased? Like it? You bet she does! She's delighted!"

"No one has introduced me yet," Jerome next remarked, quite incidentally. "And I am sure if her Gracious Majesty smiles upon any of her loyal subjects it ought to be me."

"That's so! So come right along now." They reached her side.

"Mell, here's the very best fellow in the world," said Rube, out of the fullness of his heart, forgetting the prescribed forms of etiquette in the absorption of warm feeling.

Mell had noted their approach. She was not taken unawares. She bent her head slightly to the newcomer, she looked him over for a whole minute, it seemed, before she opened her lips and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Very-Best-Fellow-in-the-World?"

Those near enough to hear roared with laughter, for the young queen's manner made the whole thing so absurdly funny; and perhaps there is nothing a crowd so much enjoys as the taking down of a person whom they regard in the light of one much needing to be taken down.

"His name is Devonhough," Rube hastened to explain, not relishing the laugh against his friend at this particular time by his particular fault. "Mr. Devonhough, Miss Creecy. He is my very best friend, Mell. Shake hands with him."

Mell did so; but without the faintest glimmering of a smile, and with such glacial dignity as fairly charged the atmosphere with iciness. Not content with this, she met all his subsequent efforts to cultivate her acquaintance with the briefest and chilliest repulses.

Rube was much concerned. He saw dimly that his best friend had not, somehow, made a favorable impression upon his future wife; but he could not tell the why or wherefore. While he wondered within him what he could do to put things on a pleasanter footing between them, someone else demanded his attention.

"See here," said Jerome, as soon as Rube's back was turned. "I hope you now consider me sufficiently punished. I hope you feel even. I hope you won't treat me to any more state airs. I am tired of them. Your Majesty, let me tell you something. Mark well my words. It is to me, not Rube, you owe your present exaltation."

"To you!"

The unsmiling countenance now broke into a ripple of scorn.

"What a ridiculous thing for you to say!"

"The whole thing has been ridiculous," said Jerome. "I never in my whole life ever enjoyed anything so much. 'Tis the one grain of truth which gives point to the ridiculous. Think of Rube, dear fellow, so anxious to crown you, knowing nothing, suspecting nothing, begging me not to run fast, and I, so ten thousand times more anxious than he could possibly be, to have you crowned."

"You?"

"Yes. *Me!* Don't you know, in your heart, Mellville, that I wanted you crowned?"

"No, I know nothing of the kind! When a man wants a thing done, he does it with his own hand; when he does not want it done, or cares not much about it, he does it with another man's hand. Had you been anxious you would not have left it to Rube."

"But with that wreath in my own hand, Mell, I was morally bound to put it upon another head."

"Ah, indeed! Why?"

Jerome did not answer immediately. When he did, it was with averted eyes, and with some impatience, and not in reply to her first question at all, but her quick repetition of his own words, "Morally bound, eh?"

"Yes, Mellville. You forget I am a guest in her mother's house."

"I do not forget it! I remember it every hour in the whole twenty-four; but does that make it incumbent upon you to ignore me? Jerome, look me in the face. What is Clara Rutland to you?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed he, savagely, between compressed lips. "Less than nothing! A hundred times to-day I have wished her at the bottom of—"

"There! No use to send her there *now*. It's too late!"

The knowledge of what she had done, the wretchedness she saw it was destined to entail upon her, all this while couchant like a wild beast within her, now uprose into her expressive features. Jerome was struck with it.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You will know soon enough," she responded.

He stooped to pick up the handkerchief she had dropped, and in restoring it, his hand, so cool and steady, came in contact with hers, so hot and tremulous; it touched and lingered, lingered long, and clung in a tender pressure; while a voice so low and firm, a voice, oh! so faint and sweet, stole its way into her ear, murmuring but one word, one little, fond word, which moved her in the strangest way, which thrilled, yet soothed her. Cooler than snow it fell upon her burning cheeks, warmer than a sunbeam into her freezing heart. That little game with Rube passed out of her memory.

But looking up all too soon, she saw him. He smiled upon her. He was glad to see that she and Devonhough were getting along quite pleasantly.

"I wish you would go away!" she suddenly exclaimed, turning upon her companion rudely. "Go back to Clara Rutland! You have no business here! I do not believe a word you have said to me! I yet fail to comprehend why a man may not be the master of his own actions."

"Heigh-ho!" sighed Jerome. "Just so it is in life. Just as a man begins to think he has put everything in order, and settled the question, here comes chaos again. You do not understand that, Mell? Well, I will tell you. Every man has a master—circumstance. On my side, I am surprised that you, with all your quickness of apprehension, have not been able to see clearer and deeper into this subject. You ought to have known, you must have felt that I had some good reason for acting towards you as I have to-day. Have you been true to your promise to trust me

—and trust me blindly? I fear not. You have been cruelly angry with me ever since this morning, when I dared not speak.”

“And why was it that you dared not speak?” demanded Mell, her lip curling contemptuously, but with a tremolo movement in her voice. “Does it then require some courage for a man, in your position to speak to a poor girl like me? Rube does not think so.”

“With Rube it is different.”

“*It is*, very different. There is no false pride about Rube.”

“And I hope there is none about me. But, Mell, you do not in the least understand my position.”

“I know as much about it as I care to know. Henceforth, Mr. Devonhough, let us be strangers.”

“We can never be strangers,” said Jerome. He was growing earnest; he spoke very low and with that rapidity of utterance which accompanies excited feelings. “This no time nor place, Mell, for such an explanation; but here, and now, I will make it. I cannot longer exist under the ban of your displeasure. Know then, dear, that I would not speak to you this morning for your own sweet sake—not mine. I was driven to it to protect your good name, and keep you out of the mouths of those shallow-pated creatures, who have nothing else to talk about but other people’s failings. Had Clara Rutland once seen me speak to you—had she for one moment suspected the least acquaintance between us, that hydra-headed monster, Curiosity, would have lifted its unpitying voice in a hundred awkward questions: ‘How did you come to know Mell Creecy? Where did you meet her? Who introduced you to her?’ And so on to the end of a long chapter. I did not wish to say, for your sake, that I had never met you anywhere but in a cornfield. I did not wish to say, for your sake, that we had become acquainted in a very delightful, but by no means conventional, manner. I have thought it best, all along, to keep the fact of our acquaintance in the background, until we were brought together in some way perfectly legitimate and customary. Always for your sake, dear, not mine. Now you know in part; to-morrow I will make a clean breast of all my difficulties; so disperse these clouds, and give me one sweet look ere I go.”

Instead of that, Mell swallowed a lump in her throat which felt as big as her head. She studiously avoided, for the rest of the day, any further speech with Jerome. His explanation was plausible enough on its face; but Mell was in no condition of mind to draw conclusions which might stand the test of reason, or be satisfactorily demonstrated on geometrical principles; and nothing that Jerome could say was now calculated to act as a sedative on Mell’s nerves. She kept whispering to herself, “He feels it, yes, he feels it;” and thus nourished the firmness and the bravado necessary to her in the further requirements of her high position. She needed it all, and more, when it came to bestowing upon Jerome a handsome pair of spurs, as the second prize of the day. Certainly he cared for her, or why this glow on his clear-cut face, or why this light in his speaking eyes now bent upon her. Mell turned her head quickly.

“I can’t understand why you don’t like Devonhough,” Rube remarked, noticing the movement. “I think it odd. He carries things with a high hand among the girls, I can tell you. Most all of ‘em are dead in love with him.”

“And do you wish me added to the list?” interrogated Mell, finding herself in a tight place, and hardly knowing how to get out of it.

“Well, no; I don’t!” laughed Rube, much appreciating the sly humor of the question.

By seven o’clock the day’s festivities were concluded; and then ensued a melting of all hostile elements into a homogeneous mass, all ravenous after iced-lemonade and home-made cake, and a heterogeneous devouring of the same; after which, the crowd, well pleased, but pretty well fagged out, turned their faces homeward, under a sun still shining, but shorn of its hottest beams.

No one will gainsay the statement that our heroine has made great social strides in one summer’s day. In the morning a simple country girl, poor in pocket, humble in rank, unknown in society, seated beside Miss Josey in the little pony phaeton, full of fair hopes and inspirations; in the evening the affianced wife of the best-born and most eligible young man in the county; returning to the old farm-house in grand style, leaning back on soft cushions, beside her future lord, in a flashy open carriage drawn by a ravishing pair of high mettled roans.

Ambitious, indeed, must be that girl not satisfied with this wonderful result of one single operation in matrimonial stocks. And yet Mell is not happy. She forgets to give heed to what Rube is saying; she forgets almost to answer him back; so full of regret is she for her own lost self. She had had a thousand longings to get out of her old self, and out of her old life, and now, on the threshold of a new existence, Mell finds herself with only one desire—just to get back where she came from. If only she could—oh! if only she could, most gladly would this lately crowned queen have relinquished the glories of empire, the spoils of captive hearts, the trophies of social triumphs, the high emprise of a brilliant future, only to be simple Mell once more.

Ah, poor Mell! Not for sale now. Sold!

CHAPTER V. PLAYERS ON A STAGE.

Now, then, here is Thursday. Jerome had said: “You will be on hand without fail, Mell; and so

will I, and so will something else.”

“But that something else,” moaned the hapless Mell, bowed down and heart-stricken, “will never be on hand again in the meadow for me, nor anywhere else.”

Saddest of all, she had herself laid the axe to the root of her own happiness; she had baited her own hook and caught a big fish; she had provoked her own doom, and herself sealed it.

Rube was not to blame.

And Jerome—he had made out a good case. Had he loved her less he would, perhaps, have acted differently.

She had dugged a pitfall for her own occupation; and of all comfortless and stony places, such pitfalls as this make the hardest lying.

Out in the narrow hall, on its own particular peg, hung Mell’s white sun-bonnet. She took it down and put it on her head, and walked slowly to the top of the hill. With no intention of going to the meadow herself, her feelings demanded that she should find out if Jerome was there.

He was, strolling moodily to and fro, in deep thought.

He knows now. Rube has told him. He despises her to-day, and yesterday he had loved her. Look at him down there in the meadow! a beam from the sun, a breath from the hills, a part of the morning, the most glorious expression of nature in all nature’s glory! Observe how he walks! Note how he stands still! Most men know how to walk, and most men know how to stand still, after a fashion; but not after Jerome’s fashion. In motion, Jerome is a poem set a-going; standing still, he is grace doing nothing. He can lift one hand, and in that ordinary act sow the seed of a dozen beautiful fancies; he can wield such mastery over the physical forces of expression as has wondrous potency to sway the emotions of others.

So she thought; so she stood, hidden herself from sight, but with the meadow in full view; and while so thinking, and so standing, drinking him in with every breath, feeding upon him with her eyes, devouring him with her soul, she, the affianced wife of another!

Oh, wicked Mell!

Jerome grows impatient; he looks at his watch, and turns inquiringly towards the hill; and Mell flies back to the house as if pursued by fiery dragons. For if he but caught sight of her, if he but crooked his finger at her, she would go down there, and then—what then?

Mell was not blind to her own weakness. The afternoon brought Rube, overwhelmingly happy, overwhelmingly devoted. She must take an airing with him in his brand new buggy; and while they scoured the country round about, Rube was making diligent inquiry as to how soon they might get married. Mell caught her breath, and, in the same breath, at a possible reprieve.

“Won’t you give me a little time to think?” she pleaded. “It has come so sudden!”

“Hasn’t it, though!” cried happy Rube. “Do you half realize the romance of the thing, Mellville? ‘Tis like a page out of Knight-Errantry, the days of lances and standards, and blood-thrilling adventures, when warriors in steel swore by the Holy-rod, and won fair women’s smiles by deeds of valor—something very unlike the prosaic happenings of this practical modern life. But yesterday a wandering pilgrim, to-day I have found a shrine. ‘Tis a dream!’ I thought, when I opened my eyes this morning, ‘a dream, too sweet to be true! Rube, old fellow,’ I said to myself, ‘you’ve got something to live for now. You must look to your ways and improve upon the old ones. There’s a dear little hand that belongs to you; there’s a pair of blue eyes to watch for your coming; there’s a sweet little woman who believes in you, God bless her! For her sake I will run the race of life like a man; for her sweet sake I will win it!’”

This was the time for Mell to speak. She wanted to speak, but—she did not. There were just exactly six reasons why she did not.

Here they are, all in a row:

Reason Number One.—She was not quite sure of Jerome—quite sure, perhaps, in regard to his affections, but not his intentions. Love is much, but not everything, and a lover surrounded by difficulties is not to be depended upon matrimonially.

Number Two.—She was as resolutely bent upon getting out of this mean, sordid life as ever, and what way was there but this way?

Number Three.—Rube was rich, and Rube’s wife would be rich, too. For her part, she was sick and tired of poverty. Poverty, in a world governed by wealth, is the most unpardonable sin in that world’s decalogue.

Number Four.—Rube was in “society,” and what ambitious woman ever yet saved her soul outside the magic circle of society?

Number Five.—Rube was an aristocrat, and Rube’s wife would be *ex necessitate rei*, an aristocrat also. Her Creator, she believed, had intended her for an aristocrat; otherwise why had He endowed her with intellect, beauty, and the power to sway men’s passions?

Number Six.—The fact that she did not love Rube had, in reality, nothing to do with Rube’s eligibility as a husband. He would make a very good one, an infinitely better one than none at all!

Of course, she would be paying a tremendous price for all these worldly advantages. Mell was aware of that all the while, but after deducting from the gross weight of their true value the real

or approximate weight of their possible evils and disadvantages, she would undoubtedly still be getting the best of a good bargain.

What is life but an enigmatical offset of losses and gain—so much gain on the one hand, so much loss on the other? And what was this transaction between herself and Rube but a repetition, under a somewhat different formula, of those mathematical problems worked out on her slate at school? It was all very simple.

Young woman, if you were in Mell's place; if you had six good reasons for not telling the man you are about to marry that you did not care a straw about him, wouldn't you hold your peace?

Then cast no stones at Mell.

Mell was deeply moved by Rube's words, but not deep enough to damage her future prospects. And since a woman has very poor prospects outside of matrimony, ought we not to excuse her for attending closely to business?

At all events, although Mell's thoughts were heavy, and her soul stirred within her, and her thick breathing almost stifled in a painful sense of guilt, she did not say a word. Feeling that Rube's eyes were fixed upon her, she raised to him her own, suffused in tears; an answer which fully satisfied her companion. From which it will appear that a woman may weep for the man she takes in—weep, and yet keep on taking him in.

And what can a man do? How could Rube tell that it was the hidden pathos of his own groundless faith, and not a feeling of sympathetic affection, which brought such softness of expression into that girl's luminous orbs?

If the actual is the only true thing, and amounts to everything, as it really does in the school of Realism, there is still one difficulty to be encountered—to get hold of the actual. He who aspires to find out the actual, where a woman is concerned, must get himself another kind of eye, one whose vision is introspective and able to penetrate into that mysterious element in a clever woman's nature which enables her so successfully to clothe the Not-True in the beautiful garments of Truth.

Rube Rutland felt uncertain about a good many things—his own strength under temptation, his mother's consent to this marriage, Clara's temper, the great sea serpent, the Pope's infallibility, the man in the Iron Mask, and many a cock-and-bull story beside, but he never once doubted Mell Creecy's love, the purest myth among them all.

He came, after this, every day to the little house upon the hill, and had it out "comfarterble in the parler," as old man Creecy had advised Jerome to do. He courted with the enthusiasm of an incorrigible faddist over a new fad; and no lover of those olden days of which he had spoken, when goodly knights tilted in the jousts of arms, and won fair lady's favor with deeds of prowess, ever yet surpassed a modern mighty man with a mission. Devotion itself is paralyzed when it comes to them.

At the Bigge House, as one may suppose, there had been considerable consternation when its young master announced his intention of taking to wife old Jacob Creecy's daughter. Consternation, but hardly surprise; for Rube had ever been one of those lawless members of well-conducted households privileged to say and do outrageous things, and expected to turn out of the beaten track on the slightest provocation.

Miss Rutland was most concerned. Said she to her brother:

"Rube, why not marry a female Ojibbwa, and be done with it? *That* would be an improvement on Mell Creecy as a *mésalliance*. My God! Rube, you can't bring a girl here into this house as your wife, whose father talks like a nigger, who says 'dis,' and 'dat,' and 'udder;' or do you expect to hold your position in society, your place among honorable men, simply by the grace of heaven?"

This was severe; but it was not all—not half, in fact, that Rube had to hear before he got rid of Clara. But it was not the first time he had brought a hornet's nest about his ears, nor swam against the stream, nor borne the brunt of Clara's tongue. Through much practice Rube had pretty well mastered the art of holding out, which does not consist so much in talking back as in saying nothing. Moreover, his cause was good, and half a man can hold out with a good cause to hold on. One hard speech Rube did make to Clara; he told her, in effect, that whatever might be the grammatical shortcomings of old Jacob Creecy himself, his daughter knew more in one single minute than Clara would ever learn in a lifetime.

Mrs. Rutland was not less unwilling, but more reasonable.

"You are my only son," she said to him, "my first-born. I expected you to add lustre to the family and make a great match."

"The family is illustrious enough," replied he; "if not, it will never be more illustrious at my expense. I will have none of your great matches, mother. I intend to marry the woman I love. I have loved her ever since she was a child. None of the rest of you need marry her, however; I will not impose that task upon you. But Mellville is to be my wife to a dead certainty, and I am my own master."

"You are, my son. I have not sought to prevent your marrying her. I have only expressed my disappointment."

"Well, I am sorry about that. But see here, mother; I will make it easy for you. Keep this as your own home as long as you live, and I will make another home for myself and the wife you do not like."

"No, no, my dear boy, ever generous, ever kind! As your wife she *must* be dear to me. What is a mother's greedy aspiration compared to her child's real happiness? Follow your bent, my boy; follow it with your mother's sanction. And now, do you still love me a little, Rube, in spite of this new love?"

"A little, dear mother!" He threw his arms about her. "No, not a little! Much, very much; more than ever before! And believe me, when you know Mell, you will feel very differently about it. You have only seen her so far, through Clara's eyes; come and see her as she is; come now, mother, with me."

And so it came about that on a certain day Rube came as usual to the farm-house, but not as usual, alone. His mother came with him—came, looking about her with prying eyes, and a nose bent on thorough investigation, and a mind ready to ferret out every idea in Mell's brain; a mind ready to probe every weak place in Mell's character; a mind ready to catechize every integument in Mell's body.

The look of things about the premises prepossessed her at once in the girl's favor. The house was neither large, handsome, nor fresh; but it was venerable, an attribute greatly esteemed by people of rank. Much of its unpainted ugliness was concealed in trailing vines and creeping ivy, much of its dilapidation shrouded in luxuriant shrubbery, an every-day adaptation of the simplest elements of relief, technique. The little front garden, in its white-sanded walks and well-weeded beds, brilliant in many-hued blossoms, was just like a spruce country-damsel in her best bib and tucker. The little parlor, daintily furnished and tastefully arranged, where the visitor trod, not on bare boards, but a neat carpet, commingling Turkish forms and Yankee interpretations, was still more suggestive. Into this cozy apartment Mell had really crowded, in practical forms, all she had learned of human nature as it appears in man's nature. Pretty things there were, but none too pretty for use. Perfect neatness there was, but not too perfect to interfere with a man's love for the let-me-do-as-I-please principle. Here a man who smokes might, after asking permission, puff away to his heart's content, puff away without a compunction and without a frown from its ministering spirit. Or, if my lord feels in a breaking mood, let him break, break right and left, and there's no great harm done; a few dollars would put them all back. This is a consideration by no means small or unimportant to some men, who seem inspired to break everything they touch, from a woman's heart to the most venerated of old brass icons.

This little room did everything it could to please a man, and put nothing in his way; although it made him feel, with its presiding genius in it, every kind of way, except uncomfortable.

There's a rose upon the mantle, stuck by careless hand in a vase of antique design—one rose, no more; for one such faultless rose as this fills up all the spirit's longing in a rose. A thousand roses, perfect of their kind, could do no more. Here we have *sub rosa* a profound philosophical maxim showing its colors—as brief as profound, i.e., enough is enough, whether it be enough rose or enough stewed pigeon with green peas.

On a spider-legged table in this diminutive lady's bower, there sat a dish of ferns; some moss was growing in a basket; some colored strands of wool lay across a piece of canvas; a carved paper-cutter peeped out from the leaves of an unread book, left lying on an ottoman by some person who had been seated in an easy-chair with silken cushions, soft to rest upon in weariness, in a cozy corner; and on a sofa of crimson plush reposed, in restful quiet, a guitar with blue ribbon attached. This guitar told its own tale; Mell *had* learned something useful, after all, at that famous boarding-school; for to the strumming of this guitar she could sing you, with inimitable taste and in a bird-like voice, an English madrigal, or a French *chansonnette*, or one of those plaintive love ditties which finds its way into the listener's heart through any language.

"Now, mother," said Rube, looking about him with pardonable pride, "isn't this pleasant? Have we, amid all our grandeur, any such snug den as this?"

"Well, no, Rube! It *is* charming! *Multum in parvo*, one may say. But whom have we here?"

It was Mell, halting for one awe-struck instant in the doorway, attired in a fresh muslin dress, with ribbons to match her eyes, and cheeks dyed a red carnation at the formidable prospect of meeting, face to face, the august mistress of the Bigge House. Rube pressed forward to meet her, and took her fluttering hand in his own, and led her forward.

"Your new daughter, mother, and this, Mellville, is our good mother. You'll get along famously with her, I believe, in spite of Clara."

Who but a blundering man, like dear honest Rube, would have so completely let the domestic cat out of the bag?

No need for Mell to be the most wide-awake creature in existence to understand on the spot, the real status of affairs, as concerned herself, at the Bigge House.

Subjugated at once by her beauty, constrained to admit her lady-like deportment, Mrs. Rutland kissed the rounded cheek and hoped she would make her dear boy very happy. And Mell looked flatteringly conscious of the great lady's condescension, and blushing avowed her unalterable determination to try. This interesting little ceremony seemed to dissipate all the underlying displeasure at Rube's choice in his mother's mind.

She watched the girl closely during the interview which followed. Many girls are pretty and lady-like, not many are to be found as well educated as Mell Creecy, or as thoroughly equipped by both nature and education to entertain, to amuse, to fascinate. This was that part of Mell which "tuck arter her ole daddy," as old Jacob was wont to say. Even Clara Rutland's manners

were not more easy and irreproachable, and Clara had never been half so ready in speech and apt in reply. It was a matter of agreeable wonder to Mrs. Rutland how a hard-working uneducated farmer could have such a daughter, and she wondered also if this phenomenal social prodigy could be found so strongly marked in any other land under the sun.

Obeying an instinct of curiosity, the visitor inquired:

"Your father and mother, Melville, are they here? Will they see us?"

"Not if I can help it!" inwardly.

Outwardly very different.

"So sorry! Mother is not well to-day. She is rarely well, and rarely sees anyone. Father is as usual busy upon the farm."

"Rube says your father is a very thorough farmer," remarked the visitor.

"Doesn't a good farmer make money out of it," queried Mell, glancing at her betrothed with a doubtful little smile, "just as a lawyer does out of law, and a doctor out of physic? The earth is full of gold, and ought not a good digger to strike it somewhere—some time? Father, at any rate, is devoted to farming, as an occupation, and is happy in it, getting out of the ground more of God's secrets than the rest of us find among the stars."

"That is a pretty idea, Mellville," said Mrs. Rutland.

"Bless you!" exclaimed Rube, "that's nothing! She's full of 'em!"

Full of them, yes; and feeding his honest soul upon them, in place of the real bread of affection.

The visit was long and pleasant, and at its close Mell accompanied her guests to the very door of their carriage. There Mrs. Rutland again touched the girl's soft cheek with her high-bred lips. Her foot was upon the stepping-stone, when with a sudden thought, she turned once more.

"Mellville, we are to be very gay next week, a house full of company; but I suspect we shall be honored with very little of Rube's society unless we first secure yours. Will you come, then, and make us a little visit?"

"You are kind," answered she, coloring beautifully with intensity of gratification. "Most kind! I will come with exceeding pleasure."

These were perhaps the first unstudied words she had uttered in Mrs. Rutland's presence. There was no doubt about her wanting to go to the Bigge House. She had been wanting to go there a long time. A veritable flood-tide of joy filled her being at this speedy consummation of her dearest hopes, but it was not of this she thought at that moment, nor of Mrs. Rutland, nor of Rube. "I will see Jerome," was what Mell thought.

"Sweetest of mothers!" said Rube inside the vehicle.

"Luckiest of men!" returned his mother. "I am returning home as did the Queen of Sheba; the half was not told!"

Rube now felt solid, unquestionably solid, in his own mind.

Mell, standing yet in the gateway, looked after them; gladly received they had been, like many another guest; gladly, too, dismissed.

"The chain tightens," cogitated the future mistress of the Bigge House, "and if I should want to break it!"

But why should she want to break it, unless—

"There's no use counting upon that," Mell frankly admitted to herself, "and no man's difficulties must be allowed to interfere with my future. And Rube is *so* eligible! A good fellow, too; a most excellent fellow! There's a something, however. What is it?"

We will tell you, Mell—Rube is not Jerome.

Going back into the house she found her father and mother peeping through the blinds.

"Lord, Lord!" exclaimed old Jacob. "You'se jess er gittin' up, Mell! I knowed ye could do it, darter; but I mus' say, I never lookt fer yer ter git es high es the Bigge House."

Mrs. Creecy inquired about Mrs. Rutland. Was she nice? pleasant?

"Very. No one could be nicer or pleasanter. She asked for you—both of you."

"She did? Then why didn't you tell us?"

"Wife!" remonstrated the old farmer, "you is sartinly loss yo' senses! Don't ye know, when Mell's fine friends comes er long, we's expected ter run inter er rat-hole or some udder hole? All the use chillun has fer parients these days is ter keep 'em er going. Onst Mrs. Rullan', Mell aint gwine ter know us by site! She aint no chile er mine, no how, Mell aint!"

"Wall, now, she is yourn, I kin tell ye," cried Mrs. Creecy, flaring up, very much to the enjoyment of her liege lord.

The daughter turned off in disgust. Her father's pleasantries were the least pleasant of all his disagreeable ways. A coarse man's humor is apt to be the coarsest thing about him.

It was under very different auspices from those of her day dreams, that Mell, after a few days of busy preparation, was admitted into the sacred precincts of the social hierarchy.

Jerome was to have been the founder of her greatness, her steersman in these unknown waters—not Rube.

None in this higher realm welcomed her more graciously than Clara. Clara had high views of philosophy, but only one maxim: "See how the hare runs, hear how the owl cries, accept the inevitable, and get all you can out of it."

Jerome returned from Cragmore the day following her own domestication into this new sphere of existence. How strange it all seemed, and how unnatural! How strange he should find her there, and with so good a right to be there! Surely years have intervened since those lovely mornings in the meadow, when Sukey cropped the dew-wet grass, and she sat on the old tree-stump and Jerome lay at her feet.

Surely long, long years!

So long that Jerome has forgotten all about them—and her. She is now to him only Miss Creecy, the prospective wife of his nearest friend, the prospective mistress of the Bigge House, and not attractive, it would appear, in these new surroundings. Others, very likely, did not notice how he never spoke to her, if he could help it; how he never looked at her, if he could help it; how they kept far apart, as far as the East is from the West, though sleeping under the same roof, and eating at the same table, and constantly together morning, noon, and night. Others did not notice all these things, but Mell did.

"He despises me," sobbed Mell in the darkness of her own chamber, smothering her sobs in her own pillow. "Once he loved, and now he despises me!"

Better go to sleep, Mell; tears cannot wash away stern facts, and what good would it do now, if he did love you?

The other guest has come; the one of whom Jerome had spoken. It is the Honorable Archibald Pendergast, who is middle-aged, well-fed, and somewhat portly, who has big round shoulders and a jolly way of looking at things, who bellows out his words with a broad accent, and says, Aw! aw! with tremendous effect; who wears his whiskers *à la manière Anglaise*, as befits a man proud of his British ancestry and his English ways. This great man's marvellous wealth and honors, and incalculable influence in national councils, and stupendous grandeur of future prospects, carry everything before him—at the Bigge House, and everywhere else.

Adapting herself with versatile cleverness, to these prevailing conditions in her unaccustomed environment, Mell's conception of modes and manners expanded day by day, and she began to see plainly a good many objects only dimly discerned before.

"I don't think," remarked she, quite innocently to Rube, the day after the great man's advent, "that Mr. Devonhough admires the Senator as much as the rest of us."

"I shouldn't wonder!"

Rube looked knowing and laughed.

"If he was as badly stuck on you as he appears to be on Clara, I wouldn't admire him either!"

"But," said Mell, "is Jerome?"

"Yes, certainly. Didn't you know that? I thought you did. They are in the same interesting predicament as ourselves. Only Clara won't announce, because she wants to keep up to the last minute her good times with other men. I don't see how Devonhough stands it, and I'm awfully glad you're not that sort of a girl!"

"How long?" asked not-that-sort-of-a-girl, trying to steady her voice, trying to maintain her rôle of a disinterested inquirer.

"How long have they been engaged!" repeated Rube. "Let me see—Six months at least."

"Six months!"

"You seem surprised, Mell." He turned his glance full upon her.

"Not at all," said she, pulling herself to rights. "I was only thinking that you ought to be willing to wait as long as that."

"So I would; as many years, for that matter, if there was any good reason why I should. But there is not; not one, and so, Mell—"

"Six months!" ejaculated Mell, in the privacy of her own room. "So all the while he lay at my feet he was engaged to Clara Rutland!"

Mell began to understand Jerome's difficulties.

Later on she saw clearly some other things. Clara is fond of Jerome, and would gladly, for that reason, marry him; but she is likewise attracted by the mighty Senator's wealth, and national importance, and English ancestry, and future expectations; and for such reasons leans matrimonially towards the Honorable Archibald, who is thirty years older than Jerome, but thirty years richer and thirty years greater. Between two fires Clara meanwhile keeps to the letter of the law with Jerome, and holds out in ambush *le pot au lait* to the Honorable Archibald.

A closer acquaintance with the interior circuit of these unwanted surroundings, so delicately refined, so distinctly aristocratic, so far above her own poor world, and yet withal, so unsatisfying and so "over-charged with surfeiting," developed to Mell the startling fact that a

life spent in incessant amusement not only soon ceases to amuse, but becomes, in process of time, a devouring conflict with *ennui*. She recalled with a sense of wondering comprehension the Arab proverb: "All sunshine makes the desert."

Another thing, these women at ease, with nothing in the world to do, Mell was thunderstruck to discover, were the hardest worked people she had ever known, striving each on a daily battleground of dawdling, dressing, and pleasure. Seeking after some personal end, some empty honor, or some favorite phantom just out of reach. What bickering and strife; what small conspiracies; what canker at the roots and stunting in the fruit; what Guelph and Ghibbeline factions in the midst of all this music, and dancing, and laughter! The same amount of time spent in a good cause, Mell's long head could not but realize, would ease the rack, plant many a blade of corn, staunch many a bleeding wound, wipe the death drops from many a ghastly brow, lift up heaps of fallen heroes prone on stony plains, and plant the standard of the cross on many a benighted shore. Outside, Mell had yearned towards this stronghold of the rich, as a place where there was plenty of room for growth and happiness: inside, she discovered with astonishment and a groan, that there was plenty of room there for dullness and unhappiness as well. Idleness without repose, leisure and no ease, tears and no time to shed them—on every side, and unexpected dry-rot in the substance of things, she had pictured to her own fancy as fair, and only fair.

"Then," interrogated Mell of her conscious Ego, "if not here, where dwelleth content?"

Mayhap, Mell, upon the rock where the hawk's nest, or in that haven where the roving wind hideth its tired self for rest. Somewhere, but never among the haunts of men. The deep hath its treasures, and there are treasures of the mine; the mind hath its treasures, and there are treasures of store; but content is the golden treasure, hardest of all to find, and when found hardest to keep.

One night there was a ball, and the social lights of Pudney and Cragmore, and the capital of the State itself, turned out in full force. The Bigge House was crammed to its utmost capacity.

Dressing early, Mell left her room to other guests, in various stages of evening toilet, and descending to the first floor, looked about her for some quiet spot where, for a time, she could hide herself and her tumultuous thoughts. The large reception room was dimly lighted as yet, and empty apparently. Glad to find it so, she walked in, and standing between the long pier-glasses, a tapering column draped in tulle clouds, took a full-length, back and front inspection of her own person.

Now this dainty rustic maiden, as we have seen, looked at when framed in a high-necked, long-sleeved, simple morning-gown, made a sweet picture for any eye; but it was, in some respects, a tame presentation compared to this gorgeously arrayed being, bedecked in flowers and a low corsage, with marble shoulders, shapely throat, alabaster neck and rounded arms, bewilderingly displayed, cunningly concealed. This fairy-like being cannot be a *bona fide* woman; she is more likely a study from Reynolds or Gainsborough, who has stepped out of canvas and a gilt frame on the wall there, merely to delight the living eye and inflame the fumes of vital fancy.

Not long, however, whether sprite or woman, did she pose there in admiration of her own face and figure. For, truth to tell, they have both become hateful in the girl's own sight. Her fair face looks to herself no longer as a fresh-gathered blossom sparkling with dew, as the ethereal interpreter of a woman's pure soul, blameless and serene. Much more does it look, to her own acute sensibilities, as a painted mask, put on for hard service; always in place, always properly adjusted, proof against attack, but every little loophole needing to be defended at every point. A mask very troublesome to wear, but not upon any account to be discarded, since it concealed the discordance of a secret love and the clanking of a chain.

But now, to-night, in this empty room, in this deep silence and blessed solitude, where there is no eye to see, no ear to hear, she will throw off for one thankful moment the ugly, hateful thing. She will allow the dejected visage to fitly portray the dejected mind; she will breathe freely once more, and sigh and sigh, and moan and moan, and wring her hands in uncontrollable agony; and, ignoring the fact that the heaviest part of her trouble is of her own making, wonder why she had ever been born for such as this.

Hope is entirely dead in Mell's heart. Transplanted out of the lowly valley of her own birth to the mountain-tops of her soul's desire, she feels as lonely as we might imagine the spirit of Greek art, set down in a modern world. Turn whatever way she would, there was but one fate for her—martyrdom. If she did not marry Rube, she would be a martyr in her own humble home; if she did marry him, she would be a martyr in his more pretentious one; and there was not as great a difference as she had thought between the air in the valley and the air on the mountain-top. It is the lungs which breathe, and not the air inhaled, most at issue, and a martyr is a martyr anywhere, the social type being hardly less excruciating to undergo than others more quickly ended.

Pitiful in the extreme are such thoughts in a young mind; pitiful such manifestations of suffering in one too young to suffer.

How the people upstairs would be surprised if they could see her! How the Honorable Archibald, who liked things jolly, begawd! who thought all evidence of feeling bad form, you know; who believed, root and branch, in British stoicism, even in the jaws of death; how he would advise her in a spirit of friendliness and a well-bred way, not aw to make a blawsted dolt of herself—if he only knew. Fortunately, he did not know; fortunately, nobody knew.

Nobody?

Then who or what is that creature in semblance of man, in attitude of deepest thought, with folded arms and hanging head, darkly shadowed, dimly seen, scarcely discernible in the embrasure of the window over there?

Spirit or man? If a man, he might be a dead one for all the noise he makes—only a dead man was never known before to use his eyes in such a lively manner, or his ears to such good purpose, or to betray so deep an interest in a living woman, even in a ball dress.

Mell did not look towards him, did not know he was there; yet, on a sudden, as if from some inward sense of vigilance rather than any extraneous source of knowledge, her pulses strangely fluttered—she became aware that she was not in reality alone. *How*, in the absence of visual impression, we can only say by an instinct as unaccountable as the phenomenon of sound waves which excite wire vibrations.

She was mysteriously imbued with another presence, if such a thing is possible, and in all the world there was but one who could so clothe the circumambient air in his own personality.

That one was Jerome Devonhough. Perceiving she now knew he was there, he got up and came towards her.

Mell did not look at him; she looked upon the floor. He looked straight at her, and looked so long and hard, and with a gaze so fixed and steady, that he seemed to be slowly absorbing her very being into his own entity.

When this became intolerable, the fairy-like apparition in tulle, wrestling with the situation, on a war footing with her own feelings, lifted from a glowing face those *lapis lazuli* eyes of hers—pure stones liquified by soul action—to his face and dropped them. In one swift turn of those eyes she had taken in as much of that stern, cold, accusing face as she could well bear. But there was nothing on it she had not expected to see. She knew the unrelenting disdain of that proud nature for what is stained, unworthy, unwomanly, as well as she knew its strength to esteem, its gift to exalt, its power to bless.

And to look into a once loving face now grown cold, and to find there no longer an indulgent smile nor approving aspect, is not an experience to be coveted, even by the happiest.

"You are enjoying it, I hope," said at length a low mocking voice.

"Enjoying it!" retorted plucky Mell, "of course I am enjoying it! Why shouldn't I? I am probably enjoying it as much as you are!"

"More, I hope. I, for one, never did enjoy being miserable."

"Oh, miserable!" exclaimed Mell, in a lively tone. His misery appeared to put her in the highest spirits. "Going to marry a rich girl and feeling miserable over it, how is that? You ought to be as happy, almost, as I am!"

"The happiness which needs to be so extolled," replied Jerome, with a sardonic laugh, "rests on a slim foundation. Mine is of a different stamp. It leads me to envy the very worms as they crawl under my feet. Even a worm is free to go where his wishes lead him—even a worm is free to find an easy death and quick, when life becomes insupportable."

Mell pressed her hand upon her heart, beating so fast—that pent-up heart in a troubled breast, which rose and fell as a storm-tossed vessel amid tempestuous seas.

"You cannot blame me for it," said she wildly. "You slighted me, you trifled with me, you goaded me to it! I would do it again; if need be!"

"Once has been enough," Jerome told her, in sadness. Speech was an effort to him; when a man regards some treasure, once his own now lost to him, he thinks much, but he has little to say. That little, nine times out of ten, would better be left unsaid. Jerome felt it so; for a long time he said nothing more—he only continued to look at the woman he had lost.

She continued to contemplate the floor, until those polished boards, waxed in readiness for gay dancers' feet, became to her a sorry sight indeed, and a source of nervous irritation. When their glances encountered again, hers was full of passionate entreaty, his of inflamed regret.

"I have a question to put to you," he broke forth, harshly. "What right have you to marry Rube Rutland, loving me?"

"The same right that you have to marry Clara Rutland, loving me!"

This turned the tables. Now Jerome's glance was riveted upon those polished boards, and she looked at him. She had not had so good a look at him in a long time, and her two eyes had never been eyes enough to take in as much of him as her heart craved.

"At least," said Jerome, regaining his composure and holding up his head, "this much may be said for me. My contract with her was made in good faith. I liked her well enough—I loved no one else—it was all right until I met you. My soul is as a pure white dove in this matter, compared to yours! And these bonds of mine, they hang but by a single thread. Our future would have been assured but for your broken faith."

"Mine? It is all *your* fault, not mine! Had you trusted me, as a man ought to trust the woman he loves, all might have been well with us."

"All would have been well with us had you trusted *me*, as a woman should trust the man she loves. Did I not ask you so to trust me? Great God! Mellville, could I conceive that you would stake your future happiness—our future happiness, on the paltry issues of a foot-race? That

whole day my mind was full of projects for bringing about a happy termination to all our troubles. I could have done it! I would have done it! But now!"

Lashed into fury by a vivid conception of his own wrongs, brought about, as he chose to consider, through her treachery alone, Jerome turned upon her angrily:

"Let me tell you one thing! You shall not marry Rube Rutland!"

"Shall I not?"

Mell laughed—not one of her musical laughs. Now that she was fairly in for it, she rather enjoyed this fencing match with Jerome. Hitherto, she had always by stress of circumstances, acted upon the defensive with him; now she could assert her mastery.

"Shall I not? How will you prevent it?"

"I will open his eyes. I will tell him you do not care a rap for him."

"You will tell him that? Very well. I will *swear* to him that I do. Whom will he believe? *Not you!*"

Her words, her manner, were exasperating, and they were intended to be exasperating. That cool and systematic self-control which characterized Jerome, had more than aroused a feeling of rebellious protest in the girl's impetuous nature. If she could break him up a little—

"*I say you shall not marry him!*" The words were not loudly spoken, but they were the utterances of a man much in earnest. "Rather than see you his wife I would gladly see you dead!"

"Oh, no doubt! But let me tell you, sir, I do not propose to die to please you! I propose to please myself by becoming the wife of Rube Rutland!"

This was too much, even for Jerome.

"You heartless, cruel, wicked woman!"

With a single stride he reached her side; he shook his finger rudely in her face; nay, in a frenzy of mad passion he did worse than that—he took hold of the wayward creature herself and shook her with such violence that those heavy coils of hair, upon which she had expended so much time and pains, loosened and fell about her in a reckless loveliness beyond the reach of art.

"Woman, do you know what you are doing? Do you know that you are playing with dangerous implements? toying with men's passions? dallying with men's souls?"

It is safe to say, Mell had never had such a shaking up, however frequent the occasions when she had deserved it.

This unconventional usage on the part of Jerome, a man who wore self-possession and correct manners as an every day coat of mail, not only surprised Mell, but terrified and subdued her. In undertaking to "break up" Jerome by stirring up the green-eyed monster, Mell had neglected to take into account the well-established fact, that no jealous man stands long upon ceremony. Panting for breath, she awoke unpleasantly to a full comprehension of a madman's possibilities, and ignoring all those impassioned inquiries with which he had interlarded the severer measures of corporeal punishment, she remarked in a spirit of meekness and a very faint voice:

"Jerome, let me go, please; you are hurting me."

"But how much more you are hurting me," said Jerome, harshly.

He released her, however, and felt ashamed. No man with real manliness in him, but does feel ashamed after he has hurt a woman. She may have deserved it, and yet he feels ashamed.

One would think that now after this ungentlemanly conduct on Jerome's part, Mell the high spirited will not only be full of a tremendous indignation, but be willing, and more than willing, to give him up for good and all.

How little you know a woman, you who think that! A harmless man never does anywhere so little harm as in a woman's affections. The rod of empire sways the world and a woman's mind—all women, to a great or less degree; all women are sisters.

In other words, it is very necessary for a man to be capable of shaking up a woman for past offences, and present naughtiness, when she needs it, or else he must make up his mind to take a back seat and give up the supremacy. Some of the fair sex never come to terms without a shaking—there may be one or two, here and there among them, who never come to terms, even with a shaking!

Mell did not belong to this small minority; she was completely subdued. Contrite, and submissive, she now approached her audacious antagonist; approached him timidly, where he stood a little apart, and with his back turned to her, feeling, as we have said, quite ashamed of himself, and said gently:

"Jerome, I will break with Rube if you will break with Clara."

"An honorable man cannot leave a woman in the lurch," answered he, in a manner indicative of a strong protest under the existing law.

"And how about an honorable woman?" interrogated Mell.

"She can lie, and lie, and still be honorable," he informed her with fierce irony.

"Then you expect me to——"

"I do! I confidently expect you to do it, and at once. Break with him, and have a little patience with me, until Clara gets the Honorable Archibald taut on the line, and awakens to the fact that she loves me still—but only as a brother! It is coming—it is sure to come, and before long."

"In the meantime," remarked Mell, with a peculiar expression, "what's the use of hurting Rube's feelings?"

"Gods and angels, listen!" exclaimed her companion, in overwhelming indignation. "The question then has narrowed down to the getting of a husband without regard to any body's feelings—save Rube. His are not to be hurt until you can hurt them with impunity! You are bound to hold on to *him* until you secure *me*, beyond a peradventure! That is your little game, Mell, is it? Out upon you! Oh, unfortunate man that I am, to have fallen into the hands of a woman who is particular as to the fit of her ball dress, but has no preference when it comes to a husband; who has the aspect of a goddess, but the easy principles of a Delilah; who is, in fact, not a genuine woman at all, with a heart and a soul in her, but a man-eating monster, seeking prey—a shark in woman's clothing, ready to take into the matrimonial clutch, and swallow at a single gulp, me, if you can get me; if not me, Rube; if not Rube, any other eligible creature in man's guise, whether descended from a molecule in the coral, or a tadpole in the spawn: whether a swine of Epicurus, or an ape just from Barbary! Shame upon you, woman! Shame! Shame!"

Restive under these severe strictures, Mell had made several ineffectual attempts to put a stop to them, but her appealing gestures implored in vain. Finding he would not desist, she bit her lips in great agitation, and crimsoned violently.

"You are the most impertinent man in existence!" she informed him petulantly, when he had done.

"That's right, Mell," he answered. "Turn red—turn red to the tips of your eyelashes! It is the most hopeful sign I have yet seen. Mellville, look at me."

She raised to him wonderingly her wondrously beautiful eyes.

"I have been asking myself how I could love you so well, a woman who could condescend to sail under false colors; who knows how to stoop from her high estate, and trick, and juggle, and blind; who has set a trap to catch a mouse, and victimizes her prey; who has spread her toils to obtain a husband under false pretences. I have asked myself many times, 'how can you love that woman?' I have wished that I loved you less—that I loved you not at all! And I would crush it out—this unspeakable tenderness, which shields and defends your image in my heart—crush it out, beat it down, tear it into tatters, grind it into dust under the heel of an inexorable resolve, but that I believe, but that I *know*, Mell, that there is something within you deeper, better, worthier! 'Truth is God,' and the woman who is true in all things is a part of Divinity. But what of the woman who is false where she ought to be true? Let her hide her head in the presence of devils! Be true, then, Mell, be earnest! This frivolous trifling with life's most serious concerns shows so small in a being born to a noble heritage! It is only excusable in a natural *niais*, or a woman unendowed with a soul."

Jerome here paused. After a moment spent in thought, he approached his companion very near, and in a voice of passionate tenderness resumed:

"My darling! you can never know what hours of torment, what days of suffering, this conduct of yours has cost me. But I believe you have erred more through thoughtlessness, and a pardonable feeling of resentment—more through love turned into madness, than any settled determination to do wrong. But now let it go no further. Hasten to set yourself right with Rube. No matter whether you and I are destined to be happy in each other's love or not; at all hazards be true to the immortal within you. Promise me to undo the mischief you have done; promise me to be a good, true, useful woman, thinking more of duty than your own interest and pleasure. The world is overstocked with butterflies, but it needs good women, and I want you to be one of them—the best! My darling, you will promise me?"

Mell was much affected; she hung her head and her bosom heaved.

"Do you hesitate?" cried Jerome, mistaking her silence. "Promise me, Mell, I implore, I beseech you!"

"Theatricals?" asked a voice in the doorway.

It was Rube.

"Rehearsing your parts?" he again inquired, coming in.

"Yes," replied Jerome. "For are we not all players upon a stage?"

"And what play have they decided upon?" next questioned the unsuspecting Rube, who, carrying no concealed weapons himself, was never on the lookout for concealed weapons on others.

"I don't recall the name," said Jerome. "Do you, Miss Creecy? It is 'Lover's Quarrel,' or some such twaddle, I think."

Mell thought it was something of that kind, but she furthermore expressed the opinion that it would be well-nigh impossible to get it up in time for the delectation of the Honorable Archibald.

"Which is no great pity," declared the off-hand Rube; "I wish he'd take himself elsewhere to be delectated."

There was no doubt as to Rube's preferences for a brother-in-law; which, however, did not take away from the awkwardness of this remark. Not suspicious, neither was Rube obtuse; he noted a singular contraction on Jerome's brow, he noted a strange confusion in Mell's manner, and he put it all down to his own blundering tongue, which was always placing his best friend either in a false or in an annoying position before Mell. Out of these considerations he made haste to subjoin:

"Ah, Mellville, you should have seen Devonhough how splendidly he acquitted himself in our class plays at college!"

This was a pure offering from friendship's store. Honest Rube, with his fine open countenance all aglow with enthusiasm for his friend and joy in the presence of the woman he loved, looked the archetype of hopeful young manhood, untouched, as yet, by sorrow or mistrust. Regarded from an architectural standpoint, he had the sublime simplicity and dignity of the Doric, which was just wherein he differed from Jerome, who was a Corinthian column, delicately chiselled, ornately moulded.

Mell remarked, in reply to this expression of lively admiration from Rube, that she wished she could have seen Mr. Devonhough—or something. Mr. Devonhough, with the expression of a man whose self-respect will not admit of his bearing much more, said with an impatient "Pshaw," that she needn't wish to have seen him, that this good acting of his was all in Rube's eye, and nowhere else; that he hated an actor, and that he never would act another part himself, as long as he lived, not to oblige anybody, and so help him God!

After which, shadowed by clouds, beleaguered with dark thoughts, with sombre fires of jealousy smoldering in his eye, and war-hounds of anxiety gnawing at his vitals, he abruptly turned and left the room—not with his usual deliberation.

And still Rube saw nothing.

"He's real cut up," said the sympathetic Rube, looking commiseratingly after the friend of his bosom. "And all for what? Because a woman never seems certain of her own mind. When judgment overtakes you women what is to become of you all, anyhow—eh, Mell?"

Mell could hardly say; and Rube, dismissing Jerome from his mind for the present, found other occupation. He had never seen Mell before in full dress. He addressed himself *con amore*, and exclusively, for a time, to the study of structural femininity and those marvels of nature presented to the eye of the earnest investigator, in the shape of a well-formed woman on the outside of a ball dress.

During this process Rube's sensations were indefinable.

Mell, preoccupied in thoughts of her own, hears, at length, his voice dreamily, as a sound from afar, and looks up irritably to see, for the hundredth time, how coarse of fibre Rube is compared to Jerome.

She resents the unpalatable fact. She resents something else, and makes a very vigorous but unavailing effort to gain her freedom.

"I cannot understand," playfully remonstrated Rube, and with arms immovable, "why so simple a matter disturbs you so much. You are as white as a sheet, you are quivering like a leaf, your hands are icy cold, and what is it all about?"

"I told you never, *never* to do that!" cried out Mell, in an agony of passionate protest.

Even the most cold-blooded among mortals finds the caress of a person not dear to them offensive; but take the woman of emotional nature, exquisitely sensitive in all matters of feeling, and to such the touch of unloved lips is worse than a plague spot.

"Don't you hear me? I cannot bear it! I am not used to it!"

There was something more than maidenly coyness in her tone; there was mental anguish, and a downright shade of anger. We wonder Rube did not detect it. But you know, gentle reader, how it is. There are so many things all around and about us which we do not hear and see, because we are intent upon other matters, and are not looking for them. With such feelings, in that dreadful moment Mell would rather have submitted to a dozen stripes from Jerome, than one single caress from Rube—her future husband, bear you in mind! the being by whose side she expected to pass the rest of her days. Poor Mell! If getting up in the world requires self-torture, self-immolation such as this, wouldn't it be better, think you, not to get up? Wouldn't it be better, in the long run, for every woman, situated as you are, to use a dagger, and thereby not only settle her future, but get clean out of a world where such sufferings are necessary? There can't be any other world much worse, judged by your present sensations.

But Rube, as we have said, did not hear that piteous wail of a woman coercing her flesh and blood, the frame of her mind, the bent of her soul. She was his own, and no words could tell, how he loved her. If a man cannot lawfully kiss his own wife, or one so near to being his own wife, it is a hard case, truly. That one little slip "twixt the cup and the lip," which has played such havoc in men's expectations, from the first beginnings of time to the present moment, did not enter into Rube's calculations, or his thoughts.

He was in a playful and a loving mood. He tightened his clasp upon her, he chucked her under the chin, he pinched her cheek, he patted those sunny locks of hers and smiled down into that fair face, *faire les yeux doux*, and babbled to her in lover-language, not unlike the "pitty, pittie tittle shing" upon which we linguistically feed helpless infancy, as little witting the possible

sufferings of the child under such an infliction, as Rube did Mell's.

"Now truly, Mell," asked Rube, "did you never let any other fellow kiss you—never? not once?"

"No!" said Mell, emphatic and indignant. "*Never!* And *you* shouldn't now, if I could help myself! Do go away! I tell you I'm not used to such as this!"

She was almost ready to cry.

The whole thing was immensely amusing and entertaining to Rube, and while he laughed, he could also understand how it might come hard on a girl, at first, to feel the bloom despoiled on her chaste lips.

"But you will get used to it after awhile," he assured her, with a quiet smile. "My word for it, you will! I will see to it that you do. There now, my pretty one (just what Jerome called her) sweet, frightened bird, why ruffle your beautiful plumage against these bars? They are made of adamant; but only be quiet and take to them kindly and they will not derange a single feather. You are exquisitely lovely to-night! You will intoxicate all beholders! And have you been thinking of that blissful time when we are going to get married?"

She had, of course; but what made him so impatient? Couldn't he wait until she got back home? Rube could, certainly; but only on conditions, and those conditions would come very hard on a girl not used to a lover's kiss, and who objected to a lover's fondling, unless she managed well.

Fortunately, Mell could manage well. She could have managed the diversified attractions of a dime museum if necessary.

"And before he shall desecrate my lips again," Mell vowed to herself, under her breath, "I will perish by my own hands!"

Ah! Mell, Mell, you should have thought of that before you sold yourself!

At daylight she crawled upstairs and into bed. The ball had been a great success and she its reigning belle. Women like her, with such a form, with such a face, with such glory of hair and wealth of high spirits and physical exuberance, work like a spell in a ball-room. There was something bewildering in the gleam of her eye; something intoxicating in the turn of her neck, the flow of her garments.

She had danced, to please Rube, more than once with Jerome. It was while the two were floating together in that delirious rapture of conscious nearness, to which the conventional waltz gives pretext and the stamp of propriety, and while their senses swayed to the rhythmic measure of the sweetest music they had ever heard, that Mell looked up meltingly into her partner's face—a face absorbed, excited, yet darkly set with a certain sternness which Mell fully understood—looked up and said to him: "Only wait until I get back home." Simple words indeed, and holding little meaning for those who heard; but they gave a new lease of life to Jerome. He answered back in a whisper, certain words. And now it only remained for Clara Rutland to accept the Honorable Archibald Pendergast and the happiness of two loving hearts would be assured.

The ball is over, gone, past, never to come back again, with its waltz melody, its ravishing rhyme without reason, its sweet smelling flowers, its foam-crested wine, its outlying joy, its underlying pathos, its hidden sweetness, and its secret pain. For, there never was a ball yet which had its lights and not its shadows; which did not have some heavy foot among its light fantastic toes; some heavy heart among its gallant men and beautiful women.

Mell lives it over in the pale dawn. It made her blood curdle and her flesh creep to think of those two men. What was she going to do with them—Rube and Jerome? How was it all to end?

Horrible it would be to break off with Rube, more horrible still not to do so. Fearful it would be to tell him the truth—the whole truth. But that was what Jerome expected her to do, what she ought to do.

Those words of his were burned into her memory with fire. He wanted her to become a good, true, useful woman, and be no longer a butterfly.

He had called her 'my darling.' He had called her so twice. He loved her just as much as ever. In fact, he loved her more; for the man is not living who does not love a woman more when he finds out somebody else loves her as well as he.

She was quite decided, and Jerome was undeniably right; there was but one honorable course for her to follow. Even if Jerome married Clara, and she herself never had another offer of marriage (she never would have another such as Rube) how sweet it would be, even in a life of loneliness, to be free, to be able to maintain the dignity and the probity of her womanhood, to be able to throw aside the despicable part of a double-dealer and a deceiver, to be able to feel that she had been worthy of Jerome though never his.

Thus Mell felt when she stretched her weary limbs on that silken couch of ease in the dim morning light, and turned her face to the wall, and closed her eyes, and thought of that exquisite moment, when from Jerome's shoulder, conventionally used, she had proffered to him the olive branch of peace and had caught the heavenly beams of that smile which restored her to his favor. With the bewitchment of this smile reflected upon the fair lineaments of her own face, Mell fell into that sweet rest, which remains even for the people who flirt.

But how different everything always seems the day after the ball!

It must be the gas-light in the ball-room, it must be the sunlight in the day-time, which makes all the difference. Sunlight is the effulgence of a God, and lights up Reality; gas-light is a ray

kindled by the feeble hand of man to brighten the unreal—a delusion and a snare.

The absurd fancies of a ball-room hide their fantastic fumes in the broad daylight.

Coming down to a six o'clock dinner—finding Rube at the bottom of the stairs to attend upon her—finding the assembled company, including the Honorable Archibald, half-famished and yet kept waiting for their dinner, until the future mistress of the Bigge House put in an appearance, Mell began more clearly to estimate her own importance—her own, but through Rube. Her beauty, her wit, they were her own; but they had availed her little before her betrothment to Rube. Especially was she impressed with this aspect of the case, when, hanging upon his arm, she entered the brilliant drawing-room to become immediately the bright particular star of the social heavens, the cynosure of all eyes; to be immediately surrounded by flattering sycophants; to be pelted with well-bred raillery for her tardiness and sleepy-headedness; to be bowed down to and revered and waited upon and courted and admired by these high-born people—she, old Jacob Creecy's daughter, but the future wife of the young master of this lordly domain.

And Jerome expected her to give all this up—did he? And to give it up whether he gave up Clara, or not? Jerome was simply crazy—and she would be a good deal crazier herself before he caught her doing it! Mell still has an eye to the main chance. Mell still “tuck arter her ole daddy!”

The summer wanes. The ripened grain is harvested and the chaff falling from the sheaves on the threshing floor; the patient teams sniff the first cool breeze and put their shoulders to the wheel; the wagons are heaped in corn; the fields grow white for the picking. In the windings of green valleys yellow leaves and red play fast and loose amid the green, and go fluttering to the ground; the deer stalks abroad; glad hunters blow their horns, and the unleashed hounds are joyful at the scent of noble prey.

Twice has the moon changed, and Mell is still at the Bigge House, showing up amid its polished refinements, as a choice bit of Corian faïence contrasted with cut-glass. Every day she spoke of going, but every day there was some reason why she should not go and should stay. Mrs. Rutland wanted her to stay; and Mell herself, whatever her misgivings, whatever her struggles, whatever her trials, wanted, too, on the whole, to stay. Here was a congenial atmosphere of style and fashion, congenial occupation—or the congenial want of any, endless variety of amusement, the hourly excitement of spirited contact with kindred minds, and no vulgar father and mother to mortify her tender sensibilities. Here, too, she was in the presence of the one being on earth she most loved, and even to see him under cold restraint, was better than not to see him at all. Sometimes it happened they sat near each other for a few blissful seconds; sometimes it was a stolen look into each other's eyes; sometimes an accidental touch of the hand when Jerome was initiating the ladies into the ingenious methods of a fore-overhand stroke or a back-underhand stroke, or the effective results of skillful volleying—such casual trifles as these, unnoticed by others, but more precious to them than “the golden wedge of Ophir.”

So the days passed on; rainy days, dry days, clear days, cloudy days, bright days, dark days, every kind of day, and every one of them a day's march nearer the imperishable day.

“There's a messenger outside, Miss Mellville, to say that your father is sick and wishes you to come home.”

Jerome, it was, who spoke.

“Father sick!” exclaimed Mell. “I will go at once.”

“How provoking!” broke in Mrs. Rutland. “I wanted you particularly to-day. Rube, too. Don't you remember he wants you to go to Pudney?”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted Mell hastily. She did not wish Mrs. Rutland to say before Jerome what Rube wanted her to go there for. It was to have her picture taken. “I am very sorry, but if father is really sick I ought to go.”

“Rhesus is under saddle,” said Jerome. “Shall I ride over and find out just how he is? I can do so in a very few minutes.”

“No!” said Mell, with quick speech and restrained emphasis. Whom would he see there? What would he hear? Her mother in an old cotton frock, talking bad grammar. And Jerome was so delicate in his tastes, so fastidious and æsthetic.

“No,” said Mell, decidedly. “I'm much obliged, but—”

“Yes,” interposed Mrs. Rutland, “I wish you would go, for Rube is not here and I've no notion of letting Mell go unless it is necessary.”

“Did you say I must not?” inquired Jerome, addressing Mell and not moving.

“Go, if Mrs. Rutland wishes it,” stammered Mell, furiously angry with herself that she could not utter such commonplace words to him without getting all in a tremor. They were all blind, these people, or they must have seen, long ago, how it stood with Jerome and herself.

He was back in an incredibly short space of time.

“I saw your mother,” Jerome reported. (Great heavens! in her poke-berry homespun, without a doubt!) “Your father is quite sick, but not dangerously so. He only fancied seeing you, but can wait until to-morrow.”

While the old man waited, Mell had her pretty face photographed for Rube.

He drove her home in the buggy the next morning. Coming in sight of the quiet and shade of the old farm-house and recalling, as a forgotten dream, its honest industry, its homely manners, its sweet simplicity, Mell marvelled at her own sensations. Could it be gladness, this feeling that swept over her at sight of the old home? Yes, it was gladness. Perplexed in mind, heavy at heart, and fretted to the lowest depths of her soul by this struggle within her, which seemed to be never ending, Mell was glad to get back into the quietude of the old farm house after the continuous strain and excitement of the past few weeks. The flowers in the little garden stirred gently in the breeze; there was a gleam of blue sky above the low roof; birds chirped softly in the euonymus hedge under the window of her own little room, and the tranquillity and serenity and staidness of the spot soothed her feverish mind and calmed her feverish spirit. It was lonely, desolate, mean, and poor, but none the less a refuge from the storms of a higher region; from the weariness of pleasure and the burden of empty enjoyment; from the tiresomeness of being amused, and the troublesomeness of seeming to be amused without being; from an ecstasy of suffering and an agony of transport; in short, a hoped-for refuge from herself and Jerome.

"Hurry up, Mell! Hurry up! He's mos' gone!"

"What, mother! You don't mean—?"

"Yes, I does, Mell. He was tuck wuss in the night. He won't know ye, I'm 'fraid."

But he did, and opening his eyes he smiled faintly, as she hung over his ugly face—uglier now, after the ravages of disease, than ever before; dried up by scorching fevers to a semblance of those parched-up things we see in archæological museums; deeply lined and seamed and furrowed, as if old Time had never had any other occupation since he was a boy but to make marks upon it; uglier than ever, but with an expression upon it which had never been there before—that solemn dignity which Death gives to the homeliest features.

"Father! father!" sobbed Mell, "don't die! Don't leave your little Mell! Don't leave me now, when I've just begun to love you as I ought!"

Ha, Mell! Just begun! He has reached a good old age, and you are a woman grown, and you have just begun to love your father! It is too late, Mell. He does not need your love now. He is trying to tell you that, or something else. Put your ear a little closer.

"What did you say, father! Try to tell me again."

And he did; she heard every word:

"Good-bye, little Mell! I ain't gwine ter morteefy ye no mo'!"

CHAPTER VI. A DEAL IN FUTURES.

"Why do you fret so much about it?" asked Rube, sitting beside his promised wife about a week after the old man was laid to rest. "You loved your father, of course, but—"

"There's the point!" exclaimed Mell. "I did not love him—not as a child ought to love a parent. What did it matter that his looks were common and his speech rude? His thoughts were true, his motives good, his actions honest, and now I mourn the blindness which made me value him, not for what he was, but what he looked to be. In self-forgetfulness and sacrificing devotion to me he was sublime. He went in rags that I might dress above my station; he ate coarse food that I might be served with dainties; he worked as a slave that I might hold my hands in idleness; and how did I requite him? I was ashamed of him; I held him in contempt. Oh, oh! My, my!"

"Come, now," remonstrated Rube, trying to stem the torrent of this lachrymatory deluge, and wondering what had become of all the comforting phrases in the English language, that he could not put his tongue upon one of them. "Do try to calm yourself, dearest. I know you are exaggerating the true state of the case, as we are all prone to do in moments of self-upbraiding. I never saw you lacking in respect to him."

"There's a great many bad things in me you never saw," blubbered Mell, breaking out afresh.

"Dear, dear!" said Rube, "I never saw such grief as this!"

"You—are—disgusted, I know?"

"Not a bit of it!" declared Rube; "just the contrary! I fairly dote on the prospect of a wife who is going to cry hard and cut up dreadful when anything happens to a fellow. It kind of makes dying seem sort of easy. But, come, now; you've cried enough. Let me comfort you."

"No, no!" cried Mell, shrinking away from him. "If you only knew, you would not want to comfort me. I do not deserve a single kind word from you. I am unworthy your regard. I am a weak woman, and a wicked one. Oh, Rube! I have not treated you right. That day at the picnic I was angry with some one else; I was piqued; I did not feel as I made you think I felt. I—that is—"

Here Mell broke down completely in her disjointed arraignment of self, thoroughly disconcerted by the young man's change of countenance. His breath came quick, a dark cloud overspread his features, and he lost somewhat of his ruddy color.

"Do you mean, then, to say I was but a tool, and the whole thing a lie and a cheat?"

Rube's thoughts sped as directly to their mark, as the well-aimed arrow from the bent bow.

"Don't be so angry with me," prayed Mell, "please don't! You don't know how much I have

suffered over it. I say, at that time I thought I cared for some one else, and so I ought not, in all fairness, to have encouraged you; but, it is only since father died, that I have been able to see things in their true light. I have had a false standard of character, a false measure of worth, a false conception of human aims and human achievement. Out of the wretchedness of sleepless hours I have heard the under-tones of truth: Knowledge is great, but how much greater is goodness without knowledge than knowledge without goodness!"

Rube made no reply. He left her side, and, crossing the room, folded his arms and looked moodily out of the window. He was very simple in nature, somewhat slow, sometimes stupid; but loyal and true—true in great things, and no less true in small ones, and as open as the day.

Mell dried her eyes, and glanced at him anxiously. The worst part of her duty was now over. She began already to feel relieved; she began already to know just how she was going to feel in a few minutes more, the possessor of a conscience, void of offence before God and man. There's nothing like it—a good conscience.

"This beats all!" soliloquized Rube, at the window; "I'll be hanged if there's enough solid space in a woman's mind to peg a man's hat on! Now, just as things have panned out all right for Devonhough, here's a tombstone in my own graveyard!"

"Ha!" thought Mell, hearing, considering.

"Just as things have panned out all right for Devonhough."

What did that mean? Her throbbing, panting, bursting heart knew only too well. Clara had come to a decision—she would marry Jerome, and not the Honorable Archibald.

Rube had scarcely ceased to speak when Mell raised her head.

"Rube!"

Very soft that call!

Unheeding, Rube still looked out of the window and into the past. That day at the picnic—that beautiful day, that day of days; a pure, white, luminous spot in memory's galaxy of fair and heavenly things—that day she had not felt as she had made him think she felt; hence, he had been a cat's-paw, a puppet; and she—oh, it could not be that Mell was a dissembler, a hypocrite, a serpent!

"Rube!"

A little louder was this call.

He turned, he obeyed—no more able to resist the beckoning hand, the dulcet voice, the luring glance, than you or I the spells of our own individual Sirens and Circes.

He came back to her, but stood in gloomy waiting, his brow so dark, his expression so hard and cold and stern, that the girl on the sofa felt herself wilting and withering before him, as a frail flower in a deadly blast.

She did not say a word.

She only used two eyes of blue, and two big tears which rolled out of them, and down upon her velvet cheek, and splash upon her little white hand, with crushing effect—not upon the hand, but the beholder.

"Mell," said he, hoarsely, "what is all this? What is the meaning of it? I do not see your drift, exactly. Do you wish to be free?"

"I thought that would be *your* wish," floundered Mell, "perhaps, when you heard of that other—other fancy—you know, Rube; if I had not told you anything about it, and it had come afterwards to your knowledge, you would have thought I had not acted squarely towards you."

"So much, then, I understand; but what are your leanings now? Don't beat about the bush; speak out your wishes plainly. I am not a brute. I would release a woman at the very altar, if her inclinations leaned in another direction. Do you imagine I would care to marry a woman, however much I might love her, whose heart was occupied by another? Where would be the sanctity of such a marriage? I would be the worse defrauded man of the two. So, Melville, if there is any one you like better than you do me, speak it now. Tell me plainly, do you care for me—or some one else?"

Now, Mell, here's your chance; hasten to redeem your past. He has put the whole thing before you in a nutshell. You know just how he thinks and how he feels. After this, you dare not further betray a heart so noble, so forbearing, so true! Tell him, Mell; tell him, for your own sake; tell him, for his sake; tell him, for God's sake! Come, Mell, speak—speak quick! Don't wait a second, a single second! A second is a very little bit of time, the sixtieth part of one little minute; but, short as it is, if you hesitate, it will be long enough for you to remember that you may live to be a very old woman, and pass all your life in this old farm-house, utterly monotonous and wearisome; that you will be very lonely; that you will be very poor; that you will be very unhappy; that you will miss Rube's jewels and Rube's sugar plums and Rube's hourly devotions, to which you have now become so well accustomed;—short, but long enough to remember all this. So speak, Mell, quick! quick! The second is gone before Mell speaks.

It was a long second for Rube.

"O Mell, Mell! can it be that you care for him and not for me? At least, let *me* hear it—let me hear the truth! I can bear anything better than this uncertainty."

Even this bitter cry brought forth no response. The dumbness of Dieffenbachia lay upon Mell's tongue.

"I see how it is," said Rube, turning to go.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed Mell, pulling him back. She was now desperate. Her tear-stained face broke into April sunshine. "I do not care for that other. How could you think so? Once I thought so myself; it was a delusion. A woman cannot love a selfish, tyrannical, overbearing creature like that!—not really, though she may think so for a time; but you, Rube, you are the quintessence of goodness! you are worth a dozen such men as he!"

"So it's me!" ejaculated Rube. "I am the lucky dog! I am the quintessence of goodness!"

He drew a long breath; he sank comfortably back into the old seat and into the old sense of security, and addressed himself with a joyous air and renewed enthusiasm to the old rôle of love-making.

Just like a man—the very man who thinks he has such a deep insight into dark matters, who thinks he knows so much about everything in the wide world, especially women!

"You are the most conscientious creature alive!" declared Rube, happier than ever, over a nearly lost treasure. "The whole amount of your offence seems to be that you once thought you cared—"

"Yes—that's it! I once thought so."

"But *I* once thought that I cared for another girl. You would not, for that reason, wish to send me adrift, would you?"

"No. Only I wish you hadn't!"

"Just the way I feel about it."

He laughed uncontrollably.

"Pretty one! Soul of honor! What other girl would have opened her lips about such a trifle? And now I will not be put off another moment. Name the day which is to make me the happiest of men."

The day was named, and Mell really felt more composure of mind and less disquietude of spirit than she had known for many a day. She had eased, to some extent, her guilty conscience. She had shed many bitter, if unavailing, tears over Rube and her dead father; and now, convinced that she could not help herself, and determined to make the best of it, her mind drifted complacently over the long stretch of prosperous years before her, wherein she would be neither lonely, nor poor, nor unhappy, nor unloved; with sugar plums to her taste and jewels in quantity—for there are just two things in this world every young woman is sure to love—tinsel and taffy.

A healing balm now poured itself, so to speak, into her life and future prospects.

Of Jerome she saw no more. He had gone home before her father's funeral. He had seemingly passed out of her life forever. She never so much as mentioned his name, even to Rube, and she even thought of him less frequently than of yore. How could she be expected to think of him with the wedding trousseau demanding all her thoughts and time?

But one day Rube came to the farm-house, worried, and told Mell, of his own accord, that it was about Jerome and Clara. There had been a row between them.

The Honorable Archibald Pendergast, as she well knew, was no ordinary man—neither, it seemed, was he an ordinary lover. Notwithstanding his late rejection, he had been paying Clara such marked attentions in Washington that a society journal had publicly announced their engagement; whereupon Jerome had delivered his ultimatum—she would marry him at once or else they were quits.

"And I don't blame him," declared Rube, "not one bit! He stood as much at her hands, and stood it as long, as a man *can* stand. I never could have taken the same from you."

Ah, Rube, we little know, any of us, just what we are taking at any hour in the day and at the hands of our own friends!

It is well for us that we do not.

"And now," inquired Mell, scarcely able to articulate, so great was her agitation, "what is Clara going to do?"

"She is going to marry the Honorable Archibald," replied Rube, adding, with the breezy disgust of a sunny temper: "It's a confounded shame! He's old enough for her father, and I don't believe she cares *that* about him! But he's a great statesman, and there's a good prospect of his getting into the White House some of these days; and some women love social eminence better than they do their own souls! I am glad you are not one of that kind, Mell—you will be content with your planter husband, won't you, Mell?"

"I have written him to come to our wedding," pursued Rube. "I like him as well as ever—even more! He's a splendid fellow! I hope he will come, but I think it hardly probable."

Mell thought, too, it was hardly probable. After this, things went wrong again with Mell. Her trousseau ceased to occupy her time and attention; her wayward thoughts waged internecine strife in regions of turmoil and vain speculation.

Meanwhile, Jerome made no sign.

"Woe is me!" wept Mell. Much had she wept since her father died; but a dead man is not half so sore a subject of weeping as a living woman's unworthiness, when it falls under her own judgment.

"To do right is the only thing," moaned the unhappy girl—"to do right and give no heed to consequences. I have learned the lesson at last. It has been a hard one. Henceforth I am going to do right though I slay myself in the doing."

She prayed that night as she had never prayed in all her life before. She asked for divine help in doing right by Rube. And she arose from her knees strengthened to do her duty, as she then conceived it.

CHAPTER VII. THE LAST STRUGGLE.

And the quiet days pass one by one—each one very like the other—until the last sun has set, and the evening lights gleam in the old farm-house on the last night before the wedding-day—that wedding-day which she had, to the very last, put off to the latest possible time. Under the hush of evening skies, in the flower-decked garden, in the dreamy grey air, in the sight of fallow fields glistening in the moonlight, Rube is saying good-night.

"To bed early," was the parting injunction of Mell's future lord; "we have a long journey before us."

"Yes," answered Mell, solemnly, "a very long journey. The journey of life."

"However long, all too short," was Rube's fond reply. He stroked her lovely hair. "Mell!

'May never night 'twixt me and you
With thoughts less fond arise!'"

After he was gone Mell repeated those words, "a very long journey." Then she sighed.

It would have to be a very long journey, indeed, to correspond with this sigh of Mell's—a very long sigh.

Well, there is no better time for a woman to sigh than the night before she is married. Nor are tears amiss. Not one in ten knows what she's about; for, if she did, she would not—

On the brink of the Untried there is room enough to stop and look about one, to think better of it, to turn around and go back; only no man or woman was ever yet gifted with brains enough to do it. The things unknown, which loom up so temptingly into sight upon the brink of the Untried, look far more desirable, infinitely more tempting, than all the known blessings of the past. And so Mell sighed—but lifted not a finger to save herself.

She went back into the little parlor to finish packing some favorite trifles in a box to be sent to the Bigge House ere she returned—school friend's mementoes and some of Rube's presents.

Thus engaged, outside was heard the noise of stamping hoofs and the rumbling of wheels—some vehicle stopped at the gate—somebody came up the sanded garden path, ascended the steps, crossed the little porch and gave a hasty rap upon the front door.

Mell sprang to her feet. It thrilled her strangely, that footstep on the porch, that knock upon the door.

Who could be coming there at such an hour—and the night before her wedding?

Rube, perhaps; something he had forgotten to do or say. She would go to the door; she started, and came back. She listened again.

It was not Rube's step—it was not Rube's knock.

Her senses were ever alert; she always noticed such things.

But the man outside had no time to lose, and did not propose to wait there all night. He cleared his throat impatiently and knocked again. This knock was louder than the first and more peremptory. It had a remarkable effect upon Mell—a startling effect.

She sank upon the nearest chair, she trembled from head to foot; wild thoughts whirled through her anarchical brain with the swiftness of a whirlwind, and it was not until the persistent intruder knocked the third time that she succeeded, through breath coming thick and fast, and half-palsied lips, faintly to call out, "Come in!"

And the man came in, and the girl, crouching upon the chair, as if she would fain hide herself down in depths of concealment where he would never find her, felt no surprise, knowing already the late comer was Jerome.

Jerome—but not at his best. He had been sick—or, so she thought, her affrighted eyes sweeping over him in one swift glance. Pale was his face, and careworn; physically, Jerome had never appeared so ill; spiritually, he had never appeared to better advantage.

There are perplexed and ethereal truths in the heart of human things which no bloom of health ever yet expressed. The sweetness pressed out of suffering by the operations of its own nature, clothes itself in a subtler and more irresistible charm than was ever yet discovered in the hues

of a pearly complexion, or the rays of a brilliant eye. From under the potent spell of its attraction, we soon forget a countenance merely beautiful; we never forget the one made beautiful through suffering.

Our sainted mother, who went through rivers of fire and a thousand death agonies ere death itself came; who died, at last, with a joyful smile on her face, bidding us meet her on the other shore—we do not forget how *she* looked!

Our heroic father, borne home from the battle-field, with his death wound; who bade us with his last breath to serve God and our country—we do not forget how *he* looked! These are the images indelibly fixed in the sensitized slide of memory, while the peach-bloom face upon the boulevard, the merry face in the dance, fade as fades the glory of a flower.

Jerome has suffered. Some of his youth he has left behind him. But with that youth he has left, too, much of his suffering. At this moment every feature in his facial federation of harmonious elements was lighted up with a kindling spirit of its own. Whatever the inspiration, whether intrinsically noble, or ignoble, it is to its possessor a glorious inspiration. We say noble, or ignoble; for, one man's glory may be another man's shame, and both true men. So, perhaps, no cause is great in itself, but only great in the conception of the soul who conceives it and who fights for it.

Out of Jerome's presence, Mell had branded him as a being selfish, tyrannical, and incapable of long retaining a woman's love; in his presence she only knew he was the embodiment of life's supreme good.

But worse than a flaming sword was now the sight of the man she loved. She dreaded the sound of his coming voice as she dreaded the trump of Doom. What would he say—he who handled words as a skilful surgeon manipulates cutting-instruments, to kill or cure—what would he say to the woman who had been untrue to her word?

He said absolutely nothing.

No formal salutation passed between the two. Drawing a chair directly in front of the hostess, by whom his coming was so little expected, Jerome sat down upon it and regarded the agitated face and the almost cowering form of the woman before him, in profound silence.

She had dreaded his words, had she? Heavens! This wordless arraignment of her guilty self at the bar of her own conscience, her silent accuser both judge and jury, and only two wretched hearts, which ached as one, for witness, was worse than a true bill found in a crowded court of justice. A storm of angry words, a typhoon, a sorocco, a veritable Dakota blizzard of sweeping invective, would have been easy lines compared to this.

She would die—Mell knew she would—of sheer shame and self-reproach, before this awful silence, which threatened to continue to the end of time, was ever broken.

Would he never open his mouth and say something, no matter how dreadful?

He did, at last.

"Mellville," said Jerome, gently, "are you glad to see me?"

"No!" passionately.

"Not glad? Then you are the most ungrateful, as well as the most faithless, of mortal beings. I have travelled long to get here. My reaching here in time was uncertain, well nigh a hopeless matter; but nothing is hopeless to the man who dares. What did I come for? Do you know?"

"To load me with reproaches. Do it and begone!"

"No, Mell; I have not come for that! There's no salvation in abuse, and I have come to save. Perhaps, Mell, there is no one in the whole world who understands you—your nature, in its strength and in its weakness—as well as I. You are not a perfect woman, Mell; you have one fault, but even that fault I love because I so love you! And I see so plainly just how and why your love has failed me in my utmost need, and I know so well just how and why the conditions of existence, amid such surroundings as this, must be utterly unendurable to a girl of your temperament and aims. And so, through all my anger and all my sorrow and all my wounded affection, I have made excuses in my heart for my pretty Mell, my faithless Mell, whom I still love in spite of all her weakness; who in that weakness could find no other way of escape from a poor, bald, common-place, distasteful life, except through the crucifixion of her own heart, the ruin of her own happiness. Weak, you are nevertheless far dearer to me than the strongest-minded of your sex; false in act but not at heart, you are still the sweetest to me of all sweet womanhood; and I have come to save, not to reproach you! Here is what I bring. It goes fittingly with the heart long in your possession."

He reached forth his hand to her. Mell inspected it with those dark and regretful looks we bestow on the blessings which are for others, but not for us.

This was the hand whose touch conferred happiness; a hand so strong, so firm, so steady, perfect in every joint and finger-tip, endowed with all the intellectual subtlety and effective mechanism of which the hand of man is capable—the only hand, among thousands and ten-thousands of human hands, she had ever wanted for her own—and now here it was, so near, and, alas! farther than ever before! She clenched her own hands convulsively together, and closed her eyes to shut out the sight of it and the entreating tenderness of its appeal.

"Take it," said Jerome, seductively; "it is now mine to give, and yours to accept."

"Too late," returned Mell, in sadness; "to-morrow I wed with Rube."

"*To-morrow?* Yes, I know. But have you ever reflected what a long way off to-morrow is? and how little we need to dread the coming of to-morrow, if we look well after to-day? And, my dear Mell, how many things occur to-night ere to-morrow ever comes! That's another thing you have not thought about. In your plans for marrying Rube to-morrow, you have neglected to take into consideration"—the rest he whispered into her ear, so low, so low she could scarcely catch it, but the sudden crash of brazen instruments, the sharp clash of steel, a thunderbolt at her very feet could not have made her start so violently or convulsed her with such terror—"the fact that you are going to marry me to-night!" With a gesture of instinctive repugnance, with a look of supplicating horror, she pushed him away.

"Only devils tempt like that!"

"No devil ever yet tempted a woman to right-doing."

"It could not be right to treat Rube so."

"It is the only way to right a wrong already done him."

"No. I am going to make that wrong up to Rube. I have sworn to do it! I am going to stick by Rube through thick and thin. You go away! What did you come here for? Dark is the fate of the woman who breaks her plighted vows."

"Darker still the fate of the woman who seals false vows. Such are untrue to the high instincts of the immortal within them."

"But think how infamous! how base such an act! how scandalous! I cannot do it!"

"Yet, you will do worse—far worse. A loveless marriage is worse than a broken vow. Such a marriage may pass current for legal tender in the courts of the world, but when some day, you come to square up accounts, you will find fraudulent bonds and unholy speculation in married estate the worst investment a foolish woman ever made. Dishonesty never pays, but it pays less in a marriage without love than anywhere else. And where's the use of trying to deceive Rube and the rest of the world, when God knows? You can't very well hoodwink *Him*, Mell. And how will you be able to endure it; to be clothed in marvellously fine garments and ride in a chariot, and envy the beggars as you pass them in their honest rags; to be a Jonas in every kiss, a Machiavelli in every word, a crocodile in every tear; Janus-faced on one side, and mealy-mouthed on the other; to be a fraud, a sham, a make-believe, an organized humbug, and a painted sepulchre? That's the picture of the woman who marries one man and loves another. Is it a pleasant picture, Mell? You will chafe behind the gilded bars, and champ the jewelled bit. You will feel the sickening thralldom of a cankering memory, a rankling regret, a sullen remorse, a longing after your true self, with every breath a lie, every act a counterfeit, every word a mincing of the truth. God only knows how you will bear it!"

God only—she did not. Her head drooped lower in unspeakable bitterness and humiliation. Amid all the darkness she could see but one ray of light.

"But if I do my duty—" began Mell.

"A woman's first duty to her husband is to love him," said Jerome, gravely; "failing in that, she fails in all else."

"But love comes with the doing of duty, everybody says. I must do my duty by Rube."

"Very well. Do your duty, Mell, but do it now. That is all I ask. Manifestly it is not your duty to marry him. With every throb of your heart pulsating for me, you will not be worth one dollar to Rube in the capacity of a wife. He would tell you so, if he knew. Can't you see that, Mell?"

She could see it distinctly. Jerome's words burned with the brilliancy of magnesium, throwing out this aspect of the subject in glaring light. Rube stood again before her, as he had stood on the morning of that day upon which she had undertaken to fulfil her promise to Jerome and failed so ignominiously—stood, and was saying: "*I would be the most defrauded man of the two,*" and "*where would be the sanctity of such a marriage?*"

Not one dollar would she be worth to him—if *he knew!* He would know some time; everything under the sun gets known somehow, the only question is—when?

Seeing the impression made, Jerome spoke again, in words low, impassioned:

"Save yourself, for the love of God! Save yourself and Rube from such a fate!"

Mell glanced about her in terror and confusion, turning red and pale. Gladly would she save herself; but how can a respectable member of good society accept salvation at such a price—the price of being talked about?

"It is too late," she told her companion, in tones as sorrowful as the wail of a wandering bard in a strange land; "too late! Why, man, the bridal robes are ready, the bridal cake is baked, the bridal guests are bidden; and would you have me, at this last minute, turn Rube into a laughing-stock, a by-word on every idle lip, a man to be pointed out upon the streets, a man to be jeered at in the crowd? Would you have me do that?"

"Yes. That is not a happy lot, but it soon passes, and is better than being duped for life and wretched for life."

Mell averted her face. She seemed striving for words:

"I don't see why Rube should be so unhappy as you seem determined to make him. Even

granting that he knew that I do not feel romantically towards him, as I have felt towards you—”

“Have felt?” interposed her listener.

She waived his question aside and proceeded:

“Still there is a love born of habit and propinquity, and that will come to my rescue. Rube is a splendid fellow! I respect him. I honor his character, and I could be happy with him if—”

“Well,” said Jerome, huskily, “go on.”

“*If it were not for you.*”

“Ha!” exclaimed he, “has it come to that? That alters the case completely. I will take myself off, then! I will get out of your way! Had I suspected the existence of one drop of real affection in your heart towards the man you are about to marry, I would have cut off this right hand of mine rather than come here to-night. In coming I was sustained by the belief that I would not defraud my friend—not in reality—not of any thing he could value; not of a wife, but of an empty casket. This belief, on my part, is all that redeems my coming from being an act of diabolism. And now it turns out that there is a very good reason why the bridal cake cannot be thrown to the dogs, and the bridal robes cannot be committed to the flames, and the bridal guests cannot upon any account be robbed of their bride upon the morrow—*you could be happy with him if it were not for me!*”

Bitter in tone was this repetition of her words—words which wounded him so keenly. They were calculated to wound the tender sensibilities of any lover, most of all a lover of Jerome Devonhough’s stamp. He could condone any weakness on her part, except that which touched his own dominion over her—the sceptre of his love, the yoke of his power. Under a pacific exterior, there seethed in Jerome, volcanic masses of self-will and unchangeable purpose; hemmed in, held in bounds, seldom breaking forth in violent eruption, but always there. He was totally unprepared for any change in the feelings of the woman upon whom he had lavished the arbitrary tenderness of his own strong nature. Jerome, you perceive, is no more of a hero than Mell is a heroine. He is the counterpart of the man who lives round the corner, who sits next you in church, whom you meet not unfrequently at your friend’s house at dinner. This man loves his wife, not because she is an artistic production, elaborately wrought out in broad, mellow, triumphant lines, grand in character, but rather because he recognizes good material in her for his own moulding. We must never approach the contemplation of any man’s requirements in a wife with our minds full of loose generalities. There is so much of the fool in every man, the wisest man, who falls in love. He falls in love, not so much with what is ideally lovable in a woman, but what is practically complemental to his own nature. Jerome, being strong, loved Mell, who was weak, and weak in those very places where Jerome was strong. She needed him. He felt that he was a necessary adjunct to her perfect development in the sphere of womanhood; he felt that she was necessary to him in the enlargement of his manhood. For, does not a man of his type need some one to guide, to govern, to lord it over, and to get all the nonsense out of? But he would love her, too, notwithstanding all this, with that sheltering devotion which a woman needs—all women, with one exception. A strong woman in her strength is not dependent upon any man’s love.

“So it has come to this,” pursued Jerome, brooding in low tones over the matter, “there is but one impediment to your happiness—the man whom you have professed to love, whom you have so basely resigned. With me safely out of the way, you and Rube are all right. You do, it seems, know your own mind at last. And Clara Rutland knows hers at last, and everybody is about to be made incontinently happy—everybody but me! I am left out in the cold! I am left, between you all, stranded on the lonely rock of unbelief, either in a woman’s word or a woman’s love; and must eat alone, and digest as best I may, all the sour grapes left over from two marriage-feasts. A pleasant prospect, truly! Would to God I had never seen either one of you!”

Mell was dumb. She was dumb from conviction. Clara Rutland *had* treated him badly, and so had she; and she could think of nothing to say which would put in any fairer light that ugly treatment. She marvelled at his patience through it all; she was bewildered that he had thus far, during this trying interview, remained

“In high emotions self-controlled.”

She knew a change must come. She saw through furtive eyes and without raising her head, that a change had already come. Not even a strong will can regulate a heart’s pulsations—a heart which has been sinned against in its most sacred feelings. As the storm-clouds sweep up from the west and mass themselves with awful grandeur in battle array, so lowered dark and tempestuous thoughts, pregnant with danger, on the young man’s brow. Across his frame there swept a convulsive quiver of emotion; his features took on that hard, stern look of repressed indignation and passion which Mell so well knew and so much feared.

With that look upon his face, Jerome was not a man to be trifled with.

But what was he going to do? Shake her again?

She said nothing when he took hold of her two hands with a grasp of iron. Silently she awaited her fate; tremblingly she wondered what that fate would be.

He was only telling her good-by. He knew not how hard he pressed upon those tender hands; he only knew he might never clasp them in his own again. It was a terrible moment—terrible not alone for Mell.

One would have thought, seeing how he suffered in giving her up, that she was the last woman

in the world; whereas, we know there are multitudes of them, many more estimable in character, some equally desirable in person, with just such wondrous hair, just such enchanting eyes, just such shapeliness of construction, enough in itself to inspire mankind with the most passionate love—plenty of her kind, but none exactly Mell!

Sensible of that detaining clasp; knowing his keen eyes scanned darkly and hungrily every quivering feature in her unquiet face; hearing his labored breath and the low sobs wrung from a strong man's agony, Mell felt first as a guilty culprit.

If only he would stab her to the heart, and then himself.

We little thought, any of us, when we saw him lying in the meadow on the grass at her feet, that out of the joyous inspiration of that glorious summer weather, out of two young lives so beautiful, out of young love, a thing so full of poetry and romance, would come such wretchedness as this.

After a little while, the touch of those rose-leaf palms, the whiteness of her face, the appeal for mercy in those eyes seeking his own, had a soothing effect upon Jerome. He would now put forth all his strength and quietly say good-by.

Softly he pressed to his lips one of those imprisoned hands; softly, in a heart-sick rapture of despairing renunciation, he was about to do the same with the other, when the glint of Rube's solitaire, the pledge of her hated bondage to another, the glaring witness of her treachery towards himself, flashed into his eyes and overcame all his good resolutions. With a look of unutterable reproach, with a gesture of undying contempt, he tossed the offending hand back upon her lap.

"Think not," he broke forth, in vehement utterance, "that no thought of me will embitter your bridal joys! I leave you to your fate! I go to my own! Dark it may be, but not darker than yours!"

And this was the quiet way in which he bade her good-by.

The words pierced Mell to the very soul, and, combined with the blackness of his countenance, filled her with indefinable, but very horrible imaginings. He had almost reached the door, when with a smothered cry of pain, she followed him.

As irresistibly as ever he drew her.

"Jerome! Jerome! Where are you going?"

"To ruin!" exclaimed he, turning upon her with that barbaric fierceness which seems to underlie everything strong in nature—"to ruin, where you women without principle, have sent many a better man! To ruin, and to hell, if I choose," he added, with fearful emphasis. "My going and my coming are no longer any concern of yours!"

"Yes, they are, Jerome," she assured him, deprecatingly. "Don't leave me in anger, Jerome!"

"Not in anger? Then, how—in delight?" There was now a menacing gleam in his eye which more than ever alarmed her. "My cause is lost. You have done me all the wrong you could, and now that I am dismissed, set aside, told to begone, debased, and dethroned, you expect me to be delighted over it, do you?"

"No, Jerome; but do not leave me feeling so. Promise me to do nothing rash."

"I will not promise you anything! You have not spared my feelings, why should I spare yours? Since your affection for me has moderated into that platonic kind, which admits of your happiness in union with another, I will do whatever I please to do, knowing no act of mine, however dreadful, will affect you."

"Oh, Jerome, do not say that! You must see, you must know in your heart, that I do still care for you—Oh, God! more than I ought."

"And yet not enough to make you do what is right!"

"But to right you, will wrong Rube," she answered in confusion.

"Enough, then; you know your own feelings, or ought to. Since Rube is the one dearest to you, marry him!"

He turned again upon his heel. Obeying an impulse she could not resist, Mell once more detained him. It is hard to die, everybody says; but to die yourself must be easier than to give up the one you love.

"Jerome, wait a moment! Come back! Jerome, you do not realize what a dishonorable thing this is you are persuading me to do?"

"Don't I?" he laughed wildly. "God Almighty! Mellville, what do you take me for? Wouldn't I have been here a week ago, two weeks ago, but for the battle I have had to fight with my own scruples—but for the war I have had to wage with my own soul? I have said to myself, again and again, 'I will not do this thing though I die!' But when I started out upon this journey, it had come to this: 'I must do this thing or else—die!'"

Shaken as a storm-rifted tree bending in the blast, she was not yet uprooted.

"It is hard, hard," she murmured, wringing her hands in nervous constraint; "but time, you know, Jerome, time softens everything."

"It does!" he said, harshly—"even the memory of a crime!"

"What do you mean by that?" exclaimed Mell, every word of his filling her with indefinable

fears.

"I mean what I say. Once out of the way, you and Rube, the two beings most dear to me on earth, could be happy together; you have told me so. Then, how selfish in me—"

"Oh, Jerome, you would not! Surely you would not do such a thing!"

"I do not say that I would, nor that I would not. A desperate man is not to be depended on either by himself or others. I only know that in this fearful upheaval of all my life's aims and ends, any fate seems easier than living. But *Mellville*—" his tones were now quiet, but they were firm; his lips were set in angles of immovable resolve; his brow bent and dark with the shadows of unlifting determination. It would be difficult to imagine a more striking figure than Jerome in the rôle of a man who had made up his mind—

"But *Mellville*, this struggle must end. It must end *now*, or it will put an end to us. I did not come here to-night to submit to the humiliation of begging a woman to marry me against her will. I came to rescue a being in distress from the painful consequences of her own rash act. Now, then, you love me, or you do not? You will marry me, or you will not? Which is it? Answer! In five minutes I leave this house, with or without you!"

He dropped upon his knees at her feet; he snatched her to his breast. Reason was gone, his soul all aflame:

"Mell, listen: Love is more than raiment, more than food, more than the world's censure or the world's praise. It is sweeter in life than life itself! But time presses; the other wedding comes on apace; we have no time to spare. An hour's hard driving will bring us to Parson Fordham's, well known to me. There we will be married at once, and catch the early train at Pudney. Our names will be an execration and a by-word for a little time, but what of that? What though all friends turn their backs upon us! Together we will enter hopefully upon a new life, loving God and each other—a life of truer things, Mell; a life consecrated to each other and glorified by perfect love and perfect trust. Will you lead that life with me?"

"No, I will not!"

"What, *Mellville*!" he cried. "You will not! I thought you loved me, loved me as I loved you?"

"Once I loved you," she said. She spoke now as much to her own soul as to his perceptions. "Once—or was it only that I thought I did? For long weeks I struggled against deceiving Rube, and out of that I must have drifted by slow degrees into deceiving myself. For, to-night, even to-night, when I parted from Rube I thought it was you I loved, not he! But the mists have lifted from my vision, and now, at this moment—never fully until this moment—I see you both in your true light; I weigh you understandingly, one against the other; I set your self-seeking against his unselfishness, your improbity against his high sense of honor. And how plainly I see it all! Just as if a moral kaleidoscope were exhibiting by spiritual reflections, to the eyes of my mind, the difference between one man and another, at an angle of virtue which is the aliquot part of three hundred and sixty degrees of real merit! Upon this disk of the imagination appears your own image; and what are you doing? Passing me by as an unknown thing, a thing too small to know in the presence of mighty magnates at a county picnic! There is another manly form; what is he doing? Lifting me up from the bare earth where the other's cruel slights have crushed me; feeding me with his own hands; even then loving me. How different the pictures! Shift the scene. Some one is crowning me: I am a queen before the world. Whose hand has held a crown for me? Not yours—Rube's! You had not the courage. He had. I love courage in a man. I love it better than a handsome face or an oily tongue. A man without courage—what is he? He isn't a man at all—not really. *Jerome Devonhough*," here she turned her lovely face, grown so cold, and her exquisite eyes, grown so scornful, full upon him, "were you the right sort of a man, would you be here to-night? Will a man, false to his friend, be true to his wife? I can trust Rube Rutland; can I trust you? No! For, even while loving, I could not keep down a feeling of contempt. Beginning with respect for Rube, that sentiment of respect has ripened into love—real love—not the wild, senseless, mad, unreasoning passion of an untutored girl, which eats into its own vitals, and drains its own lees,—as mine for you,—but that deeper, better, higher, more enduring, and well-nigh perfect affection of the full-lived woman, who out of deep suffering has emerged into an enlightened conception of her own nature's needs, her own heart's craving for what is best, truest, most God-like in a man! That love, which will wear well, nor grow threadbare through time, which will take on a more wondrous glow in the realms of eternity, is the love I feel for Rube!"

"Bah!" he exclaimed, not yet quenched, not yet hopeless. "Eternity is a long word, and all your fine talking cannot deceive *me*! Oh, woman, woman, what a face you have, and what brains! I do not know which holds me tighter. That face so fair, that mind so subtle—together they might well turn the head of the devil himself, but they cannot deceive *me*! The string which draws you is golden. It is not Rube you love so much, so purely, so perfectly; oh, no, not Rube! Not Rube, but his possessions. Not the man—the man's house! Its beautiful turrets and gables, its gardens and lawns, its lovely views, and spacious luxury, and abounding wealth. For that you give me up. Still loving me, Rube's self is dearer still!"

"Not now—not now! Now I love *him*—the man! Not for what he has, but for what he is. For his truth, his nobility, his honor; and, as that honor is in my keeping, I bid you go and return no more. Your power to tempt me from my duty *and my love* is over! My faith is grounded, my purpose unalterable. Go!"

"This is folly. Come with me!" he cried, striving to draw her towards the door.

She resisted.

"Come!" he urged.

She broke from him, crying:

"No, by heaven! Were it the only chance to save my own life, I would not go! I have done with you now, forever!"

"Good-night, then," he told her, with a bitter sneer and a low, mocking bow. "Good-night; but you will be sorry for this! You will regret this night's work all the days of your life. Its memory will darken the brightest day of your life!"

She did not speak, or move, as he turned upon his heel and left her.

There sounds his foot upon the stair, and next upon the gravelled walk! And now the garden-gate swings open, and the carriage-door bangs shut, after which the wheels grate upon the pebbles, and the clatter of horses' hoofs rings out upon the midnight air. Gone! Gone!

Her head reels; all her senses seem benumbed. Not even a heavy tread through the dark entry did she hear. It was the clasp of strong arms around her which woke her from her trance.

She turned, exclaiming in alarm: "Rube! You here! You—you have heard?"

"Every word. I was up; I could not sleep. Does any man sleep the night before he is married? *I* could not. I lighted a cigar and went out upon the lawn. At the gate I stood, puffing away and looking up in this direction, wondering if my sweet wife that is to be had obeyed my parting injunctions and gone to sleep, when presently a carriage came tearing along, going in the very direction of my own thoughts. A man sat within; I cannot say that I exactly recognized that man in the moonlight, but I saw him move quickly back when he saw me, and that aroused my suspicions. I followed; I could not help following. Something told me my happiness was menaced, my love in danger. I was determined to know the truth, Mell. I listened."

"And you do not hate me?"

"Hate you, Mell? Dearer to me than ever you are at this moment! I know how you have been tempted; I realize all you have overcome. Never could I doubt such love! Comforted by it, I can bear up even under so heavy a misfortune as the treachery of a friend. But the hour is late; we must not talk longer; you must snatch a little rest. Good-night once more, dear love. To-morrow, Mellville, you will be mine—to-morrow!"

"Aye, Rube! To-morrow, yours! Upon every day and every morrow of my life, always yours!"

THE END.

Transcriber's Note:

Authors' archaic and variable spelling and hyphenation is mostly preserved.

Authors' punctuation styles are preserved.

Any missing page numbers in this HTML version refer to blank or un-numbered pages in the original.

Typographical problems have been changed and these are highlighted, as are changes made to standardise some hyphenation.

Transcriber's Changes:

Page 169: Was 'territores' (nullify the results of the war by converting the Southern States into conquered **territories**, in order that party supremacy)

Page 169: Was 'acquiescence' (The hint was taken, the contest of 1868 was fought under a seeming **acquiescence** in the views of Stevens and Morton.)

Page 194: Was 'imperturable' ("No, indeed! I have pledged my word to *her* never to touch a drop!" protested Andy, with **imperturbable** good nature.)

Page 221: Was 'anymore' ("W.," she said, "you don't know **any more** about it than Horace Greeley did.")

Page 225: Was 'contemptously' (Mrs. W. spoke of them **contemptuously** as "nasty black worms.")

Page 245: Was 'in' (which is much better, and come to the reader **in the** shape of love-stories, odd adventures,)

Page 248: Was 'of' (and if she were in the company **of one** whom she trusted intimately, she would laugh those popular virtues to scorn with her warm,)

Page 254: Was 'pleasant, sounding' (Mell's rather strained gayety found an agreeable echo in his **pleasant-sounding** laughter.)

Page 263: Standardised hyphenation: Was 'pic-nic' (Not on Wednesday, for there's a confounded **picnic** afoot for that day.)

Page 263: Standardised hyphenation: Was 'pic-nics' (I wish the man who invented **picnics** had been endowed with immortal life on earth and made to go to every blessed one)

Page 269: Standardised hyphenation: Was 'pre-occupied' (They were fine young fellows, and very pleasant, too, but Mell continued so **preoccupied** in the vain racking of her brain)

Page 270: Was 'omniverous' (It was altogether as much as she could do to keep from sobbing aloud in the faces of all these **omnivorous**, happy people.)

Page 273: Was 'inate' (to a simple country girl, who, destitute of fortune, had nothing to commend her but **innate** modesty and God-given beauty.)

Page 276: Was 'It' ("You mean it? **It is** a solemn promise! One of those promises you always keep!")

Page 278: Was 'repentent' (I don't know who feels most idiotic or **repentant**, the girl who wears 'em or the fellow who won 'em.)

Page 278: Was 'juvenality' (Jerome, as soon as he could again command his voice, "unless it be Miss Josey's **juvenility**.")

Page 281: Was 'It' ("But I don't wonder you feel a little frightened about it. **It is** such a wonderful thing for Rube to do: but Rube has two eyes in his head,)

Page 282: Was 'How—do' ("**How-do**, old fellow?" said Jerome, by way of congratulation.)

Page 287: Was 'bran' (She must take an airing with him in his **brand** new buggy)

Page 289: Standardised hyphenation: Was 'farmhouse' (And so it came about that on a certain day Rube came as usual to the **farm-house**, but not as usual, alone.)

Page 291: Was 'it' (The visit was long and pleasant, and at **its** close Mell accompanied her guests to the very door of their carriage.)

Page 293: Was 'wont' (Only Clara **won't** announce, because she wants to keep up to the last minute her good times)

Page 298: Was 'fiercy' ("She can lie, and lie, and still be honorable," he informed her with **fierce** irony.)

Page 299: Was 'tortment' (you can never know what hours of **torment**, what days of suffering, this conduct of yours has cost me.)

Page 301: Was 'exquisively' (but take the woman of emotional nature, **exquisitely** sensitive in all matters of feeling, and to such the touch of unloved)

Page 302: Was 'it' (The ball is over, gone, past, never to come back again, with its waltz melody, **its** ravishing rhyme without reason)

Page 303: Standardised hyphenation: Was 'gaslight' (It must be the **gas-light** in the ball-room, it must be the sunlight in the day-time, which makes all the difference.)

Page 304: Was 'forgotton' (the quiet and shade of the old farm-house and recalling, as a **forgotten** dream, its honest industry)

Page 305: Was 'euonyms' (birds chirped softly in the **euonymus** hedge under the window of her own little room)

Page 305: Was 'ecstasy' (from an **ecstasy** of suffering and an agony of transport; in short, a hoped-for refuge from herself and Jerome.)

Page 313: Was 'ignominously' (upon which she had undertaken to fulfil her promise to Jerome and failed so **ignominiously**—stood, and was saying)

Page 313: Was 'ques-is' (He would know some time; everything under the sun gets known somehow,

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