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BELFORD'S MAGAZINE

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BELFORD'S MAGAZINE.

VOL. II. DECEMBER, 1888. No. 1.

A CHRISTMAS ROUND-ROBIN.

I.

THE MORNING BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

When Malcolm Rutherford entered the library, on the morning of a certain day before Christmas, he was surprised to find his wife in tears. This was all the more vexatious because he knew that she possessed everything to make a reasonable woman happy; but Mrs. Rutherford was not always a reasonable woman, being prone to causeless jealousy and impulsive to rashness. They lived about five miles from Winchester, Va., in which city Rutherford had a fine legal practice.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Have any of our guests disappointed us?"

"No," she replied, drying her eyes. "They have all arrived and are in their rooms; and"—here she assumed an air of mystery—"in addition to the house-party, I have invited a couple of strangers to dine with us to-day."

"Indeed! Isn't it just a little extraordinary to invite strangers?" he interrupted.

"Strangers they are to me, but not to you. The woman claimed to be a friend of yours."

"Well, I have some friends whom you do not know."

"Miss Emily Tillinghurst, for example."

Rutherford started and turned red.

"Ah!" continued his wife, in a tone of triumph, "I think I have at last detected you. The woman who called upon me this morning—she has but just gone—was a Mrs. Honey. She had a letter of introduction from Lydia Wildfen; and what do you think her business was?"

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"How should I know?"

"To solicit *our* patronage for a school she is going to open in Winchester. She says that you can recommend her because you once personally placed a young girl-pupil under her charge. Though dying of mortification at your having such a secret from me, I pretended to know all about it, and as your friend I asked her to dine with us to-day and to bring her husband."

"Very good," was Rutherford's comment.

"It is *not* very good; it is very bad. I demand an immediate explanation of all the circumstances."

"I cannot give it," Rutherford replied, meditatively; "not, at least, until after Christmas."

"A pretty Christmas I shall pass with these dreadful suspicions of you gnawing at my very heart. You must—you *shall* explain it all to me."

"I neither can nor will," said Rutherford, angrily; and he abruptly terminated the conversation by turning on his heel and leaving her to suffer the tortures of what she believed to be well-founded jealousy.

Rutherford strode down the one street of the suburban village in such blind haste that he ran full tilt against old Mr. Robert Plowden, who was taking a stroll, and who, with his young wife, was a guest of the Rutherfords that Christmas.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, "you almost knocked me over, Rutherford."

"Excuse me. I'm in an awful hurry to get to the telegraph office. It's fortunate I've met you here, as I've something to say to you which I would sooner not say indoors."

"You surprise me," said Plowden, falling into step with Rutherford. "Is it anything serious?"

"Extremely."

"And concerns me?"

"Yes. I will come to the point, so as not to keep you in suspense. Although so long settled in Virginia, you are an Englishman?"

Plowden nodded, and Rutherford continued: "And although, before you married your present wife, always supposed to be a bachelor, in reality you left a wife in England."

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"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Plowden, half-falling against Rutherford in his surprise.

He was a physically weak old man. "It is all true. I can explain everything satisfactorily, however. But how came you to know all this?"

"I learned it from an elderly Englishwoman who came to my office yesterday. She called herself Maria Plowden—"

Plowden uttered a groan.

"I see you know the name."

"Yes," returned Plowden; "it is that of my first wife, who died in England shortly after I came to this country."

"Are you sure she died?"

"Bless my soul! of course I'm sure."

"Can you prove it?" persisted the lawyer. "How do you know that she is dead?"

"I had a letter from a friend telling me so."

"Have you that letter?"

"I do not know; I may have. But one doesn't keep letters for twenty years. Why do you ask me all these questions?"

Rutherford replied gravely: "Because the elderly woman claimed to be your wife, and desired to retain me as her counsel in the prosecution she contemplated of her alleged husband, Robert Plowden, for bigamy."

"She's an impostor!" cried Plowden.

"She says she has a bundle of letters which will establish her identity," said Rutherford; "and she was so anxious to begin her suit that I could hardly persuade her that she would have to wait at least until after the holidays."

"My God!" groaned Plowden, "could there have been any mistake about her death?"

"All things are possible, you know; your passing as a single man was hardly wise."

"That may be, Rutherford; but my married life had been so full of pain and shame that I wished with her death to bury all remembrance and reminder of it. When quite young I married for her beauty a girl greatly beneath me in social station, and very ignorant. That I could have borne uncomplainingly, even after my infatuation was over, but her terrible temper and, worse than all, her intemperate habits made my life a burden, and, divorce being then next to impossibility of attainment in England, I determined to leave her. In fact, I was obliged to do so. I placed her in a private Home for Inebriates, and with my little Anna, aged six, I came to this country. Shortly after my arrival here I was informed of her death."

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"By the proper authorities?"

"No; for it seems she made her escape from the Home and died elsewhere. You can understand that these sad facts made me disinclined to speak of my married life; and as people seemed to take it for granted that I was a bachelor—well, I simply did not contradict them."

"And what became of little Anna?"

"She died on the vessel which brought us over," said Plowden with emotion. Quickly recovering himself, he inquired of Rutherford what he should do in the matter.

The lawyer reflected a moment and then replied: "I too am in trouble. It has just occurred to me that you can help me, and in return I will do my best to help you."

Plowden assured him that he would do anything he could, and Rutherford proceeded to explain himself.

"I too have a secret," he said; "not so bad a one as bigamy, thank Heaven! but bad enough."

Plowden groaned, while the lawyer, with a surreptitious smile, continued: "It concerns a young girl whom I placed at a boarding-school in New York years ago. Now, my wife—whose infernally jealous disposition everybody knows—has been told of this by the very woman in whose charge I put the girl. I saw her, though she did not see me, as she came from my house half-an-hour ago."

"The girl?"

"No: the schoolmistress."

"Who is she?"

"She was a Miss Archer—an old maid; a Winchester woman who lost all her people and her money during the war. She then went to New York and opened a young ladies' school. Mrs. Wildfen was one of her pupils. She was doing very well until she committed the folly of marrying her servant, a man named Honey, an extremely handsome but ignorant cockney, and young enough to be her son."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Plowden.

"This naturally caused a scandal. Her pupils were withdrawn in a body, and the school was closed for want of patronage. And now my wife tells me she has returned to open a school in Winchester. You will meet them at dinner to-day; my wife asked them."

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"That's strange, isn't it?"

"Yes, a most unfortunate complication for me, their being where my wife can—and she will—pump Mrs. Honey. It was to get the chance to do that, I fully believe, which made my wife invite them; hence the absolute need of my having some plausible story with which to satisfy Edna. You, by reason of your age and respectability, can better do this than anyone else."

"But, 'pon my soul, Rutherford," expostulated Plowden, "much as I would like to serve you, I'm afraid I can't. What can I say to your wife?"

"You can tell her that the girl was yours; that to hide her from your wife I secretly put her into the school, for you, under an assumed name."

"But what will my wife say—she who never suspected that I had a wife before her, much less a child?"

"Oh, it will be all right after Christmas. I can then square myself with my wife, and you can make a clean breast of it to yours."

"Why don't *you* make a clean breast of it at once? It happened before your marriage, you know."

"Oh, as for that, it would be all the same to Edna, if it had happened in a previous existence. But that isn't the question. It is a professional secret. I am under a pledge to an old client of mine for whom I acted. He is now in Boston, and I'm going to telegraph him that domestic peace demands my release from my pledge. So you see, Plowden, that if you *can* stave off my wife's suspicions until after Christmas, I will—"

"What?"

"Stave off Mrs. Plowden Number One."

"I'll do my best," groaned Plowden, "though the Lord has not gifted me with the art of deception."

"Inspiration will spring from necessity. Remember, it will bring us a peaceful Christmas and you—relief from Number One."

Together they entered the telegraph office, and Rutherford sent off his message to Boston.

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II.

THE AFTERNOON BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

Miss Helen Fithian, a poor, elderly relative of Edna's, was spending the season—much more than the holidays—with the Rutherfords. She and Edna were sitting together in the library that afternoon, while the perturbed Plowden was learning his hard lesson of enforced duplicity. Mrs. Rutherford was in no humor for conversation. Miss Fithian nestled into the depths of a big arm-chair in a shadowy corner, clutched her lank red fingers over the tidy she was eternally crocheting and never finishing, dropped the eye-glasses from her bony nose into her lap, and went to sleep.

"Can I speak with you alone, Mrs. Rutherford?" tremulously asked Plowden, stopping at the threshold.

"Certainly, Mr. Plowden; come in," Edna replied, trying her best to speak pleasantly. Plowden glanced at Miss Fithian. "Oh, I am as good as alone," continued Edna, following his look. "Helen is asleep; and even if she were awake, she could not hear you if you spoke in an undertone."

"True," assented Plowden. "I forgot that she's as deaf as a post. Well, the trouble is just this. Your husband has confided to me that a little difference has arisen between you, owing to a slight misunderstanding—"

"Ah, indeed! 'A slight misunderstanding,' eh? Well?" interpolated Mrs. Rutherford, icily, but with fire in her eye.

Plowden was very nervous, but he struggled on bravely: "As I alone can set the matter right, he appealed to me to do so."

"Ah! You think you can. I am curious to know how. I presume I shall understand as you go on."

He shuddered, but continued: "In order that you may do so, I must reveal to you my secret—one that I have locked up for many years. When I came to this country, I left a wife in England."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Edna, drawing away from him in surprise, and saying to herself, "Ah! is he too a villain?"

Involuntarily he raised his voice a little, to span the distance that now separated them, and went on: "Yes; but I had some excuse, I assure you." He then related the story of his married life as he had told it to Rutherford, carefully omitting, however, to mention the age of his daughter.

When he had finished, Edna remarked: "Well, I *am* surprised, Mr. Plowden. But still I do not see what all this has to do with me and my husband."

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"I am coming to that. You will see. Fearing that my wife might follow, trace, and reclaim my daughter if she remained with me, I prevailed upon your husband to place her in a boarding-school in New York, where she remained, under a false name, until, upon the death of her mother, I removed her. Now, do you see?"

"I do, I do!" exclaimed Mrs. Rutherford, her clouded face clearing. "How simple it all is, in the light of this explanation! What a weight you have lifted from my heart! I was looking forward to a wretched Christmas, but now I shall have such a happy one. How can I ever repay you, Mr. Plowden, for your noble frankness?"

"By keeping my secret, as your husband has done all these years."

"I will; I promise you that. Only, I do not see the necessity for secrecy, since your trouble is over and done for, and you are happily married to another woman."

"That's just the reason, dear friend. You see, I allowed people to think I was a bachelor, if I did not actually tell them so. Gertrude became my wife under that belief."

"Why did you not tell her the truth before marriage?"

"I tried to; but my dear, sweet, young Gertrude was so romantic that, while she could and did overlook the disparity in our ages, she never would have done the fact that I had been married before and was a father. It would have disenchanting her completely, and I should have lost her. So, you will keep my secret, my dear madam, will you not?"

"That I will. Oh, how shall I ever forgive myself for wronging my own dear, innocent, faithful, self-sacrificing love by my cruel suspicions and hateful jealousy?"

"Freely confess to him your fault."

"That I will. I will fly to him and ask his forgiveness."

And "fly" she did, as literally as she could, but in the wrong direction. As the last whisk of her skirts was heard in the direction of Mr. Rutherford's study den, that wily gentleman emerged from a door on the opposite side of the library.

"Well?" he demanded anxiously. "Don't keep me on thorns. Have you made it all right with her?"

"I have," replied Mr. Plowden.

"You don't mean to say she swallowed it all!"

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Plowden nodded.

"And didn't even drop on the weak point in the story—that when I was supposed to be placing in school your little girl, aged six years, I was not much older myself?"

"No."

The two gentlemen exchanged a smile; then the elder, becoming serious, said:

"But of course you will keep faith with me, Rutherford, and as soon as you obtain your telegraphic release you will tell her the whole truth, whatever that may be?"

"Yes; but I can't get that, you know, until the day after Christmas. I had to wire to my client's business address, so it was too late to connect to-day. To-morrow is a holiday. It will be the day after before I can hear."

"And what about my affair?"

"That is not so easily managed. Still, I have a suspicion that—but I'll say nothing about that at present. The woman is very determined. I told her I could do nothing in the matter until after the holidays. She said she didn't care 'three ha'pence for holidays,' and if I wouldn't take her case and push it, there were plenty of lawyers who would jump at the chance of prosecuting the rich Robert Plowden for bigamy."

"Hush! for heaven's sake!" gasped Plowden, in a hoarse whisper, as, with an expression of terror in his countenance, he pointed at the old maid. Rutherford also looked frightened as, wheeling round, he for the first time descried her; but seeing who it was, and that she was asleep, he was reassured, and replied indifferently:

"Oh, it's all right—nobody but that mischief-making old cat who foists herself upon us six months out of every twelve. You gave me an awful scare. But she's as deaf as an adder when awake, and can't hear thunder when asleep. Come, let's go to the billiard-room and have a game. I feel like a new man, now that I've got a respite from this business until after Christmas."

"Well, I can't forget that it's only a respite, and my anxiety will spoil Christmas for me."

"And so will mine, I suppose, but we must not show it."

"Oh, what a pair of reprobates we are!" groaned Plowden, as his host led him away to the billiard-room, which, as is frequently seen in the South, was a detached structure, at a little distance from the main building.

No sooner had the front door closed behind the gentlemen than Miss Fithian sprang up. Pallid and quivering with wrath, she muttered half audibly:

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"So I'm 'a mischief-making old cat,' am I? and I 'foist myself on' you, you villain! do I? and I'm 'deaf as a post and an adder,' am I? Well, I'm not so deaf but what I heard the whole of your vile plot to conceal your crimes; and if I am deaf—you hypocrites! you conspirators! you bigamists!—you shall find that I'm not dumb!"

III.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

Not until she was dressing for dinner did Edna Rutherford find herself alone with her husband. Then, between sobs and buttoning her shoes, broken sentences and doing up her hair, she, metaphorically speaking, smote her breast and cried, "*Mea culpa! mea culpa!* I have sinned against thee! Forgive me!"

Rutherford was not only a shrewd lawyer, but a natural diplomat; and finding himself master of the situation, he took advantage of it to exact a promise—which she passionately and penitently gave—that she would "never again suspect him; no, not even on the evidence of her own eyes and ears." This signal victory and the extreme comprehensiveness of the articles of capitulation thus agreed upon enabled Mr. Rutherford to meet Mr. and Mrs. Honey with that calm, clear conscience which finds its strength in the certainty of the impossibility of detection. He greeted them with the unruffled mien and courteous ease of the polished gentleman—a manner that fairly overwhelmed the ex-man-servant, and made him feel that he would willingly have bartered his remote future to the arch-fiend. None but Honey himself knew how unhappy he was made by his dress-suit, which seemed to persistently inspire him with the idea that he was still a waiter; or how wretched he was in the constant fear that he would be betrayed by that

inspiration into the doing of something for which Mrs. Honey would pounce upon him. In vain he had implored his inexorable partner to be allowed to stay at home, impressing those considerations upon her with all the eloquence of which he was possessed; and indeed she saw for herself that he could not refrain, when he wore his dress-coat, from laying his handkerchief over his left arm like a waiter's napkin. Mrs. Honey replied, however, that he *must* meet people on a footing of equality or he would never learn how to conduct himself properly in society; an argument which finally induced him to accompany her, shamefacedly.

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Only the persons already mentioned in this narration sat down that afternoon to what was destined to be a fateful Christmas Eve dinner. Smiling faces masked anxious hearts, all round the board. The Wildfens had had a more than usually spirited battle of words just before coming down from their room. Mr. Honey endured the misery of constant effort for the maintenance of a correct deportment, to insure which his wife seemed to fix her gray eyes steadily upon him with a stony glare, while she held an iron-shod heel ever ready to crunch his corns as a silent monition. Edna was still afraid that her husband had not really forgiven her in his heart; and Rutherford's mind was far from easy. Plowden felt that he might just as well be a murderer as a mere bigamist, so conscience-stricken and care-ridden was he. Miss Fithian, osseous, grim, and scowling, looked like "the skeleton at the feast," and felt like "the dread Avenger." The only undisturbed soul present was that of pretty, gentle Mrs. Plowden.

Walnuts and wine were reached at last. Then Mrs. Wildfen remembered how fond Mrs. Honey used to be of making speeches, wherever she might air her oratorical gifts, and in an unlucky moment called upon her to make a speech.

Mrs. Honey was in the act of rising to respond, when Miss Fithian, rudely pushing her down upon her chair, took precedence and demanded of Mrs. Wildfen:

"You want a speech, do you? I'll make you one that will make certain persons here tremble."

There was no doubt about that. Two of them—the conspirators—were trembling already. They felt instinctively that the hour of trouble for them had arrived.

"Cousin Edna," continued the spinster, "I regret the pain I feel it my duty to inflict upon you, but that false husband of yours has again deceived you."

Mrs. Rutherford sprang to her feet, instantly armed *cap-à-pie* with her never-failing jealousy: "What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Silence!" cried Rutherford in a commanding tone to Miss Fithian.

Plowden, who had been struggling with a sudden faintness, suddenly succumbed to it and fell against his wife, who cried out in alarm, "Rob! Rob! what's the matter?"

"I will *not* silence, sir," retorted the old maid, "for I consider it my duty to publicly expose and denounce you—'deaf as a post' though I may be" (here Plowden gave such an agonized groan that his wife forcibly poured a glass of wine down his throat, choking but reviving him), "and 'deaf as an adder,' Mr. Rutherford, I overheard you confess the foul plot you and that monster had concocted to deceive my poor cousin, your long-suffering, unsuspecting wife. Oh! I'm not afraid of you," she cried, as Rutherford arose with a dangerous look in his eyes. "The girl you placed at school was the creature of your villainy, and not Plowden's daughter."

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"What!" cried Mrs. Rutherford, as Mrs. Plowden at the same moment exclaimed: "His daughter! Of course not. He never had a daughter. Had you, ducky?"

"Ducky" was unable to quack a negative, or even to respond when Mr. Rutherford in a stentorian voice called: "Give this woman the lie, Plowden."

"And what if he should," retorted Miss Fithian; "who would believe the word of a bigamist?"

"A bigamist!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Do you mean that my husband is a bigamist?" demanded Mrs. Plowden, jumping to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"I do mean it. Ask him."

"Deny it, Rob, love! Mr. Plowden! Deny it, darling," urged Gertrude, seizing his collar and giving him a shake.

The movement disturbed the doubtful balance of his limp form; he slid from his chair and disappeared under the table, almost unconscious. Surprise at his sudden vanishing-act so startled everybody that a momentary silence ensued, in which sounded sharply the ringing of the front-door bell. Honey instinctively jumped up to answer the summons, but was promptly recalled by his quick-witted wife to a proper realization of his altered social condition. That poised heel came down with such vigor on his toes that he howled with pain.

"Do that 'ere just once more," he yelled, savagely, "han' I'll cut loose from you for good."

"You never can hear a bell ring but you want to run and answer it," she retorted, in an undertone.

At this juncture, Sam, the old darkey factotum, shambled in with a card, for which Honey, in his pain and confusion, unthinkingly stretched out his hand. Sam gave it to him and left the room.

"Who is it? Who is it?" demanded several voices.

"Read it out, Mr. Honey," called Mrs. Wildfen.

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"I cawn't, ma'am; hit's writin', an' I cawn't read writin'."

"William!" cried Mrs. Honey, in an awful voice, snatching the card from him and again bringing down that merciless heel upon his already aching toes. Honey sprang to his feet with a cry of anger and pain, half-threatening and half-whining—the vocal outcome of his divided emotions—proclaiming:

"That settles it. I told you I would if you did it wunst more. 'Arriet, I said I would, and I will. I'm a goin', for wunst and hallways."

As he dashed out of the room, with a ludicrous limp, there was a general cry of "Come back, Honey! come back!" But Mrs. Honey arose and, though very pale, said with much dignity:

"Oblige me, ladies and gentlemen, by letting him go. I deserve this public desertion for my folly in marrying my inferior. The name on the card is '*Mrs. Plowden*.'"

A blood-curdling groan nearly froze the blood in the veins of the guests. It came from under the table, whence, simultaneously with it, emerged Plowden, to whom terror lent instant animation and activity.

"My wife!" he breathed, huskily.

"Your wife!" exclaimed Gertrude. "Then it is true! You are a bigamist!"

"Yes! No! She's dead! Save me from her!" he cried incoherently, rushing to the French window overlooking the lawn and throwing it open. "You will forgive me, Gertrude," he declaimed, with his foot upon the window-sill, "when the black waters are surging over my head. Farewell! Farewell forever!" And leaping out into the darkness, he was gone.

"Stop him! stop him, someone!" pleaded Gertrude. "He will drown himself!"

"He can't," sneered Miss Fithian; "the fish-pond is frozen over."

"I would advise you, sir," now remarked Mrs. Rutherford to her husband, in a voice of suppressed passion, "to follow your fellow-criminal."

"I will, madam," he retorted, in a like tone of restrained fury; "and since you actually presume to order me from my own house, I go—never to return." As he spoke, he too passed out through the window.

A momentary awe seemed to oppress those remaining at the table. The silence was soon broken, however, by Wildfen saying to his wife:

"A pretty row you've made all around, haven't you?"

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"I!" exclaimed Lydia, in amazement.

"Yes, you."

"How?"

"Why, by giving Mrs. Honey a letter of introduction to Mrs. Rutherford—as you confessed to me you did."

"I'm sure I didn't mean any harm by it."

"You did," persisted the quarrelsome Wildfen. "You're always making mischief and pretending you don't mean to."

"I'm not."

"You are. And I want to tell you, once for all, that I'm tired of your eternally contradicting me. Do it once more, just once, and I'll follow the other gentlemen."

"Who cares if you do?"

"You do."

"I don't."

"What! already! Now I *am* off;" and he sprang up and started for the window.

"Good-bye, and good riddance," Lydia called out, as his form vanished in the darkness without, and the window closed behind him with a slam; then sank back in her chair, laughing hysterically. This roused Mrs. Rutherford from the semi-stupor into which she had sunk.

"Laugh," she said bitterly, rousing herself; "laugh while my heart is breaking. No, do not speak. I want no sympathy, no pity. I know his perfidy now, and shall know how to act."

"Why! what's happened to Mrs. Plowden?" exclaimed Lydia.

"She has been in a faint since her villain escaped," replied Miss Fithian, who was supporting the

unconscious form, "and I've been trying to revive her."

"Open the window," suggested Edna.

"No, don't," cried the contradictory Lydia. "If you do, I'll catch my death of cold."

"She's coming to," said Mrs. Honey. "Oh, here's the punch coming in. Give her a drink of that and she will be all right."

Sam, who brought in the steaming punch-bowl and placed it upon the table, stared about him in amazement, unable to comprehend the mysterious disappearance of all the gentlemen. He knew that Mr. Honey had gone out by the front door, but, the window being closed, the idea of the others having made their exit by that way did not occur to him.

"Where's the woman who brought that card, Sam?" spoke up Miss Fithian. "Ask her in. She will bear evidence to the truth of my charge." [Pg 14]

"Why, miss," replied Sam, "dat a' woman acted de mos' curusest you ebber see. She done come to de do' an' stan' dah, till she see dat a' Mistah Honey come a-shootin' out de dinin'-room do' an' fro' de front do' like he done gone mad. She scrunch herself clus agin de wall fo' to let him pahs, an' he go by like de bird an' nebber see her. Den she scoot out an' scuttle off, like de debble he after her, in jes' de udder way what he didn't took."

"Strange!" commented Mrs. Wildfen, and looked disappointed when no familiar voice responded, "No, it isn't." The silence and the empty chair beside her quickly reminded her that her contradictor was gone—perhaps forever.

IV.

CHRISTMAS.

When Rutherford, in a white heat of wrath, rushed from the house, he found Plowden in the garden, jumping from one foot to the other with an agility surprising in a man of his age, and vigorously slapping his sides with his arms, as if embracing an invisible friend.

"What are you doing?" asked the lawyer.

"Trying to keep myself warm. Why do you follow me?"

"Because I was ordered to—"

"It is useless; leave me to my fate."

"Hello! Who's that?" exclaimed Rutherford, as he caught the sound of a man's running. "Hello!"

"Ullo, yourself," came back in the unmistakable English accent of Honey, who quickly came up, panting.

"It's Bow-Bells," said Rutherford. "Why are you running so?"

"To keep warm. I've run hup an' down the road, hand I cawn't see no signs of hany hinn or public."

"No; there is none near. But come with me. I am still your host, and I think I can make you at least measurably comfortable for the night in the billiard-house."

As they eagerly started to follow Rutherford, glad of any shelter, a voice was heard behind them hallooing, "Hi, there!" and brought them to a halt.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Rutherford, "if it isn't Wildfen! There has evidently been a general mutiny among the women." [Pg 15]

"Where are you all going?" asked Wildfen, joining them. "Take me along, wherever it is."

"Come on quickly, then," replied Rutherford, leading the way, like the captain of a small skirmishing party, to the billiard-house.

It seemed by the flickering light of a match rather a bare, desolate, cheerless sort of place, but they were all too glad to find shelter, to make any complaints. "And now," he continued, having lighted a lamp, "make yourselves as comfortable as you can, while I find Sam and get some things to render our plight a little more endurable."

"If he could slip our overcoats out of the hall and bring them here," suggested Plowden.

"Of course he can. Don't be uneasy; you'll be all right in a few minutes."

"No, we won't," muttered Wildfen, querulously, in an undertone.

"Of course; we shall be quite jolly, you know," spoke up Honey cheerfully, in reply to Rutherford's encouraging words.

Plowden said nothing. His soul was precipitated into a depth of gloom, where its only company was a vaguely-formed but terrible demon labelled "Bigamy." It was that presence, even more than the weather, which made him shiver.

Rutherford was gone but a short time, and when he returned was accompanied by Sam, who bore a load of overcoats and a bottle of some amber fluid that seemed to bestow warmth and animation. The faithful old servant proved himself an able skirmisher. Snatching a pillow from one room and a blanket from another, making prey of a quilt here and a comforter there, he succeeded eventually in getting from the guest-chambers a fair supply of bedding, which he transferred to the billiard-house. He also got in an ample pile of wood, with which Honey skilfully made a rousing fire on the broad, open hearth. Honey, too, utilized the bedding as it was brought in, making as comfortable couches as possible under the circumstances, on a sofa and three chairs for Plowden and Wildfen, and upon the floor for himself. Rutherford dragged from a closet an old hammock that he sometimes used to take a summer afternoon nap in, and said he would sleep in that, with a blanket around him. Honey found another lamp and lighted it. What with the cheery glow of the dancing firelight, the bright lamps, and the colors of the bedding distributed about, the erstwhile dismal room began to seem rather pleasant, and in great measure the happy transformation was due to Honey's readiness and ability in doing things which belonged to his proper sphere of effort.

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"Are we going to bed?" asked Plowden, sadly.

"I should say not," ejaculated Wildfen. "Why, it isn't more than eight o'clock."

"I am in no humor for sleep to-night," said Rutherford, moodily.

"I'm hagreeable for hanythink," remarked Honey, amiably.

"What do you say to a quiet game of 'draw'?" suggested Wildfen.

The idea suited Rutherford; Honey knew a little about the game and liked it; and Plowden, though he had some doubt about his ability to play it, upon learning that it was not in the least like whist said he would try. So Sam, when he came in with another load of fire-wood, was despatched to capture a pack of cards from his master's room and a box of gun-wads from the closet where Rutherford's sporting paraphernalia were kept.

The game was not a lively one, and a gloomy despondency seemed to spread its shadow over the table.

"This is very far, my friends," remarked Rutherford, "from the pleasant evening I hoped to give you."

"No matter," sighed Plowden, resignedly; "even this is better than being hanged for bigamy."

"Oh, pshaw, man! that is not a hanging offence. And you're not even convicted yet. Don't give way so. You'll come out all right."

"Yes, I suppose we all will—if we don't starve meanwhile," grumbled Wildfen.

"Oh, no fear of that," laughed Rutherford. "Sam will see to it that we at least sit at the second table."

"That's what I've been used to," remarked Honey, unthinkingly; and then, recalling himself, seemed to listen for a sharp voice saying in reproof, "William!" After a moment he went on confusedly, "Well, gents. I don't pretend I'm equal to my position among you. Hit was 'er has dragged me hinto hit; I didn't want ter come. But that's hall hover an' done for. She's a good woman, honly I cawn't stand 'er hallways ha-naggink hat me hafore folks, hand ha pickink me hup habout my haitches. Why, hafore she married me, hif I'd ha' dropped ha bushel hof 'em she wouldn't ha' said nothink. Marriage, gents, 'as been a werry big disappointment to yours trewly."

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"My wife," said Wildfen, sullenly, "is the spirit of contradiction personified."

"And mine of jealousy," added Rutherford.

"And mine of all that's angelic," moaned Plowden; "therefore I must be torn from her by the rude clutches of the law. Did you observe how sweetly she bore the horrible revelation? She looked like a drooping lily, didn't she, Wildfen?"

"No," answered that embodied negative; "you did the drooping-lily part of the play yourself. But are we going to stay here all Christmas, while they are having a good time by themselves?"

"I'm afraid so, unless we sneak back, humbly beg pardon, and persuade them to take pity on us," replied Rutherford.

"Never!" exclaimed the others as one man, except Plowden, who said that he was tired and would lie down, though he did not suppose he could sleep. So he dropped out of the game and stretched himself on the sofa, where Honey neatly tucked him up. The others played on until gray dawn.

A little after midnight, Rutherford, having chanced to glance at his watch, grimly wished his companions:

"Merry Christmas, gentlemen."

"It isn't," snarled Wildfen.

Plowden uttered a groan, so long and deep that the others laughed; and after that laugh they seemed to brighten up a little.

The sound of crunching footsteps in the new-fallen snow was heard outside a little after eight o'clock, and Honey, looking out of the window, exclaimed joyously:

"'Ere's Sam, with a basket han a coffee-pot!"

Rutherford apologized for the poor fare, but the coffee was excellent, the bread and cold meat were appetizing, and Honey, who was the Mark Tapley of the occasion, voiced the general sentiment when, having aided Sam in spreading the viands on a billiard-table, he said: "Cold wit les is werry heatable when you're 'ungry. Ah!" he added, reflectively, "me an' mother 'as hoften been werry 'ard pushed to get has good has this 'ere."

"You haven't got a mother, have you?" asked Wildfen. He couldn't quite contradict the affirmation of a maternal entity, but came near it, in his tone at least.

"Yessir, I 'ave. That's one reason I married habove me—for to get ha comfortable 'ome for mother. My wife said Hi might bring 'er from Hengland, an' we've brought 'er 'ere to Winchester, to keep 'ouse for us, while me and 'Arriet keeps school."

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To cover the general smile at this remark, Rutherford asked Sam how the ladies were getting on.

"Dunno how dey is dis mawnin', mars'r."

"Did Mrs. 'Oney stay?" inquired her husband.

"Yes, sah. I heard missus say her husband done leave her dah; she got stay dah till he done come back an' git her."

"And my Gertrude," asked Mr. Plowden, anxiously, "how was she enjoying herself?"

"Dey wa'n't nobody 'joyin' desselves, so fur as I seed, sah. Dey was a-doin' a powah of talkin'. I hyah missus say, sarcastic-like, it were de 'mizziblest merry Christmas' she ebber see; an' de udders groan like de elders does in a 'sperience meetin' when dey means 'Yes, Lawd.'"

Sam's understanding of the prevailing sentiment among the ladies was quite correct. When each of them sought her solitary bed, that night before Christmas, it was with an aching heart that it should be so desolate and dreary. In the morning they dolefully wished each other "A Merry Christmas!" and, after a late and melancholy breakfast, sat in conclave in the library, to discuss the situation.

"Where they all can have gone to, puzzles me," observed Mrs. Rutherford. "There is not a house this side of Winchester where they could get accommodation for the night."

"It was bitter cold last night," sighed Mrs. Wildfen; "and poor Steve is such a shivery fellow anyway, he would have frozen if he had tried to walk to town."

"Perhaps they're all frozen," suggested Miss Fithian, with an air of hopelessness.

"If they are," said Mrs. Rutherford, sternly, "you, Helen, will have four murders on your soul."

"I don't see why you couldn't have kept quiet, at least till after Christmas. It wasn't any of your business anyway," remarked Mrs. Wildfen, aggressively, to the old maid.

"Umph!" sniffed Miss Fithian. "It's safest not to rub cats the wrong way"—which ambiguous expression her hearers vaguely construed as having merely a general application, they not knowing its personal significance.

"Well, it has just completely spoiled our Christmas," sighed Plowden's young wife.

"And theirs too—if there's any comfort in that," added Mrs. Honey. "I never knew my angel boy to show so much spirit before. His favorite corn must have been very bad."

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No one inquired the relation between his spirit and his corns.

"Have any of you decided upon a course of action?" inquired the hostess. "You don't seem to, since you say nothing. Well, I have, then. As soon as the law courts open after Christmas, I shall apply for a divorce from Mr. Rutherford."

"I don't see upon what ground," observed Mrs. Honey, who was not only the oldest but the most practically informed woman present.

"He has deceived me."

"His putting a young girl in my charge proves nothing; not even that. It seems to me that there is a game of cross-purposes here—something underneath all this that we do not understand, and that only the interested parties can explain."

"Explain in their own way," retorted Mrs. Rutherford.

"Ladies," said the amiable Mrs. Plowden, "what has occurred is very unpleasant, but for all of you is only a little disagreement that really—as Mrs. Honey says—may be capable of explanation and eventual reconciliation with your husbands. But what is my position? I am the only one who has been terribly deceived, beyond the possibility of a doubt, and the consequences of that deceit are irreparable. If Mr. Plowden left a legitimate wife in England, then what is my position? What am I?"

"The divorce court," said Mrs. Rutherford, "is as open to you as to me."

"But I don't want a divorce from my Robert," sobbed the "willowy" and now weeping Gertrude.

"And you don't need any if he has really been guilty of bigamy," added the practical Mrs. Honey.

"Oh, I'm sure he did not intend to deceive me. He must have married me by mistake."

"Married by mistake! That's a new way of marrying. Ha, ha!" laughed Miss Fithian, scornfully.

"I am willing," continued Mrs. Plowden, unheeding the old maid's taunting laugh, "to wait for his explanation before condemning him, if he would only come back and make it; but I fear he may never do so. Even now I tremble to think that he may be behind prison bars."

"If so," replied Mrs. Wildfen, "he at least is well fed and warm, no doubt, while my poor Steve is wandering over the frozen roads, in the snow, houseless, hungry—and on Christmas, of all days in the year."

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"What a wretched quarrel, when there should be 'peace on earth, good-will to men!'" commented Mrs. Honey. "I could find it in my heart to forgive William, if only for the sake of the season."

None of the ladies felt "up" to going to church, so they passed the time, until luncheon was served, speculating upon what had become of the gentlemen, and how they were faring. When they returned to the library, and were talking there, the Indian-like ear of Mrs. Rutherford caught unwonted sounds in the dining-room, and she quickly glided into the hall-way to learn the cause of the violent clattering of dishes, scuffling of feet, and masculine coughing she heard. Darting into the dining-room, she surprised Sam (was the artful Sam surprised?) in the act of clearing the remains of the luncheon from the table and packing them into a large market-basket.

"Why, Sam!" she demanded, "what does this mean?"

"Fo' de Lawd, missus, I dassent tell," he replied, affecting great confusion.

"You must. I insist upon it. Where are you going with that basket of food?"

"Well, missus, ef I must 'fess, I 'fess. I gwine take it to mars'r. I'se on'y a pore ole nigger, but I can't let de gemmen starve, specially young mars'r."

"Where is he?"

"In de billiard-house, missus. All de gemmen dah. Dey's mose starbe', mose froze; don't hab nuffin but cole stuff dis mawnin. Mars'r look mighty sick, an' I reck'n dat ole man, Mars'r Plowden, he mose done gone."

"Sam," said Mrs. Rutherford, with her usual impulsiveness, "after you have taken that basket to them, come back to me. In the meantime, I will consult with my friends as to what steps to take. But say nothing to the gentlemen about this until I bid you."

"No, missus," replied Sam, shuffling off with his load, and wearing a knowing smile on his honest black face. While the husbands were discussing the viands he carried to them, their wives were discussing the new situation of affairs.

"Ladies," said Mrs. Rutherford, after informing them of the whereabouts of their spouses, "you are all at liberty to invite your husbands back here to dinner; whether you do so or not is for each of you to decide for herself. As for me, Mr. Rutherford said he would never return, and I am not going to ask him to."

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"We all, in the heat of passion, say things," replied Mrs. Honey, "which at the time we think we mean, but for which we are afterwards sorry. Did not William say he left me forever?"

"No," answered Mrs. Wildfen, "he said 'wunst an' hallways.'"

"That's unkind of you, Lydia," remarked the gentle Gertrude. "What does it matter whether a man spells his heart with an 'h' or an 'a,' so long as it is in the right place?—as I am sure Mr. Honey's is."

"Thank you, my dear," responded Mrs. Honey, with moistening eyes. "Your good husband can never have committed the crime imputed to him."

"Nor mine either, I suppose you think?" queried Mrs. Rutherford; to which the schoolmistress replied that that certainly was what she did think.

"Oh, yes," sneered Miss Fithian; "you're all in the melting mood. You'll get down on your knees and beg 'em to come back and trample on you."

Mrs. Honey smiled as she remarked: "They must, by this time, be too famished to trample much. I know that must be my husband's condition. With his enormous appetite I think he must be now about starved into submission, if not penitence."

"Remember, it is Christmas, and we should forgive and forget," said Mrs. Plowden. "Suppose we unite in an invitation to them to come to dinner to-day."

"Good!" eagerly responded Mrs. Honey, "and send it by Sam, with a flag of truce."

"Yes, and put in that we will undertake to keep the peace during dinner," added Mrs. Plowden.

"Say rather," suggested Mrs. Rutherford, "that we will preserve an armed neutrality."

"No, no, that's too warlike," protested Mrs. Honey; "I will draw up a pacific invitation, and we will all sign it."

"I won't," promptly objected Mrs. Wildfen. "At least, I won't put my name first. That would look as if I had flung down my arms and surrendered unconditionally."

"What then *shall* we do to preserve our dignity and get them back?" piteously asked Mrs. Plowden. "Rob and I had no quarrel, and I want him—bigamist or no bigamist."

"Mrs. Plowden! I am shocked! and will no longer remain under the same roof with you!" exclaimed Miss Fithian. "Edna, I am going to order Jim to hitch up the sleigh and drive me to the depot. I shall go to cousin Melinda's."

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Mrs. Rutherford made a feeble show of urging her to remain until after dinner, but she replied: "No, no; I will not sit at table with your hypocrite and that woman's bigamist."

Said Mrs. Rutherford coldly, "Then I fear that we will have to be deprived of the pleasure of your society."

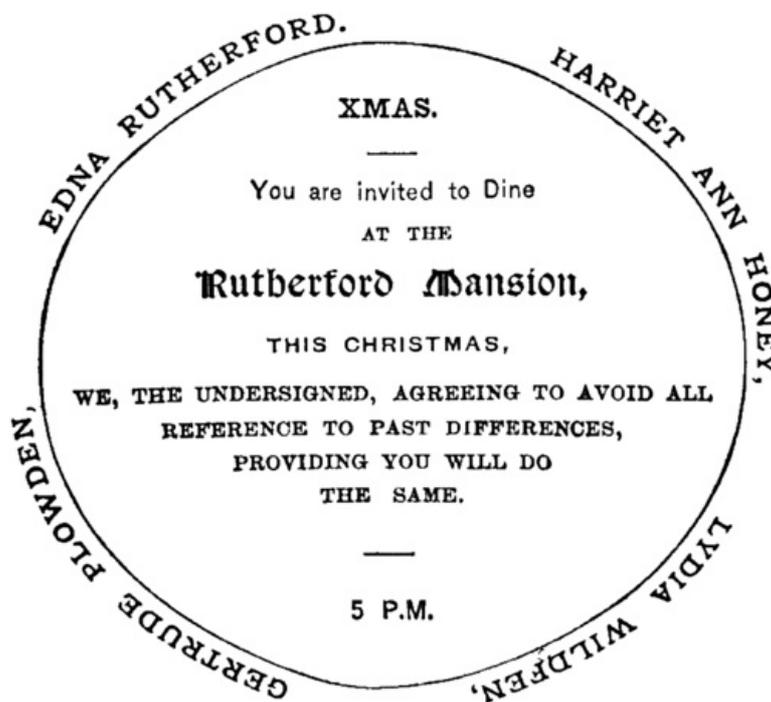
As soon as order was again restored, after Miss Fithian's unregretted departure, Mrs. Honey took up the interrupted theme. "Suppose, then," she said, thoughtfully, "as no one seems willing to sign first, that we draw up a 'round-robin' which we can all sign, without either seeming to lead."

"I won't," again objected Mrs. Wildfen—"not until I know what a 'round-robin' is."

"It is a paper to which signatures are affixed in a surrounding circle, so that the precedence of all is equal."

"Oh, I'll sign that!" "So will I!" "And I!" responded the other wives.

This then was the form in which Mrs. Honey drew up the invitation, and the signatures were affixed.



When completed, and addressed "To the gentlemen in the pavilion," it was handed to Sam for delivery, and he went off chuckling over the success of his ruse in attracting attention to his foray upon the luncheon-table. In a short time he brought back a verbal acceptance of the invitation.

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Mrs. Honey had constituted herself leader of the feminine discontents. When they were marshalled in the dining-room, awaiting their guests, she thus addressed them:

"Ladies, now let us preserve a calm, cold, and dignified demeanor, so as to let them understand that we have simply taken compassion upon them, not as husbands, but as men, and in the name of a common humanity."

"Exactly," assented Mrs. Rutherford. "No beggar, especially at this season, should be turned away either cold or hungry from my door."

The speech addressed by Mr. Rutherford to his friends and partners in adversity was quite in consonance with that uttered by Mrs. Honey.

"Gentlemen," said he, "do not let us show elation or be too eager to forgive our wives, but bear

ourselves as just men who, having received overtures for peace, are willing to grant proper consideration to proffered terms of capitulation."

Following their host, Wildfen and Honey supported between them Mr. Plowden, who when he entered the dining-room seemed much cheered by the absence of Miss Fithian. No word was spoken as the husbands entered, and in stern silence each retook the seat he had occupied on Christmas Eve. The turkey—a grand bird, yellow-meated and tender from fattening on English walnuts—had been served and eaten in silence.

Suddenly Sam ushered in a shivering telegraph-boy, with a message for Mr. Rutherford. When the diners were left alone again, the host arose and said:

"Friends, last evening you heard made against me a charge which I was, at the time, bound in honor not to refute. It fortunately happens that you are all present to hear my exculpation. First let me read this telegram: 'Your message received by fortunate accident. Tell everything. No further need for secrecy. Mother dead two months. Daughter with me.—*Charles Wilbour*.' Now for the solution of it. I inherited my father's practice, and some odd clients he had. Among them was a gentleman who had made a secret marriage, for which his wealthy mother, if she had known of it, would have disinherited him. It was effectually concealed, and he had a daughter pretty well grown when I had anything to do with the case. His wife had died but a little while before. He was recalled home to his mother, whose health was believed to be failing, and knowing that he would have to remain there some time, he wished his child put in a boarding-school, as a place of safe care for her, and under a false name, to still conceal her identity while his mother lived. He came to me, as his lawyer, to so dispose of her, under a solemn pledge of my word of honor that I would keep his secret. That was the girl I confided to Mrs. Honey, and her father was Mr. Wilbour, the signer of the telegram I have just read. Further documentary evidence, if needed, is in my office."

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"Oh, Malcolm! forgive me!" cried his wife, throwing herself into his arms.

Sam entered in time to be both amazed and delighted by this tableau. When he could claim his master's attention, he drew him aside and told him in an undertone:

"Dat strange ole woman what come hyer las' night done come agin, sah. She outside 'n' say she jes want to see you a minnit, but she mus' see you. She say she got lettahs fo' you, sah, 'n' wun't gib 'em to nubbudy else."

"Show her in here, Sam."

"Yes, sah."

Rutherford had raised his voice in giving the order, and Plowden looked up at him inquiringly as Sam left the room. The lawyer bent down to him and whispered: "Mrs. Plowden, Number One."

The unhappy old man half arose, pallid with a sudden scare, and looked as if he meditated going through the window again; but before he could do so, Sam returned, ushering in a stout elderly woman. At sight of her, Plowden sank back in his seat, and his face gave evidence of lively emotion, but the feeling it expressed was astonishment rather than consternation.

"Are you Mrs. Robert Plowden?" demanded Mr. Rutherford.

"Yes, sir; that's my name," the new-comer replied.

Young Honey, who had been sitting with his back to her, and indeed had not even noticed her coming in, jumped up at sound of her voice, turned and confronted her, with a cry of—

"Mother!"

The woman seemed to shrink and cower, as if overcome, not by fear, but by shame at sight of him, and whined: "Oh, Billy! Hi didn't know you was 'ere hagain."

"Why are *you* 'ere, mother?"

She hesitated, stammered, seemed as if she would have turned and fled, had not the stern demand in his glance detained her.

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"I didn't think it was hany 'arm," she whimpered; "I 'ated so to be dependent hon you an' 'Arriet—an' 'e's so rich."

The honest fellow's face flushed crimson, tears dimmed his eyes, and his voice trembled, as he said, in tones not of anger, but of deep sorrow: "Oh, mother! 'ow could you? Poor an' hignorant we hallways was—which hit was hower condition—'ard, but not dishonest—and nothink hever for to be hashamed of huntill now. Oh, mother, you've broke my 'art!"

"No, no, my boy," impulsively exclaimed the good-hearted Plowden, hurriedly rising, coming to him and laying a hand on his shoulder, "don't feel so. I can understand better than you how desperately one may feel who is poor as well as old. Sister-in-law Sally, I forgive you; for if you have raised a ghost—that has put some gray hairs in my head in the last twenty-four hours, I think—you have also laid it, and forever. Yes, Sally, I forgive you with all my heart; and if you want to be independent and go back to England, I'll give you enough to enable you to do so."

She was sobbing, too much overcome to reply in words, and could only bow over and kiss the

kind hand that he extended to her. Then she turned toward the door, and her son led her out. Rutherford called to him as he went, "You must return, Honey," and he nodded assent. Mrs. Honey, pale and silent, followed them to the vestibule. After a short absence she returned with her husband. Tinkling sharp and clear in the crisp wintry air, they heard the bells on the horses that carried the old woman away. Fainter and fainter became the sound until it died away in the distance, and then the cloud lifted, as if by magic, from over the house-party, and at last "Merry Christmas" came for them.

CELIA LOGAN.

A CHRYSTMESSE WYSHE.

There be
A wyshe I have for Thee
Thys Chrystmesse-tyde:
 Maye Joye, and alle Gladde thynges
 The seasonne brynges,
Gette to Thee
And Abyde.

WM. HALLISTER WALL.

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"DEAD-SHOT DAN." ^[A]

"Come, Dan, old man, it's your turn now."

This remark was made by one of a group of miners seated in front of a camp-fire in San Mateo canyon on the Colorado.

The person addressed as Dan was a splendid specimen of a "frontiersman," having all the characteristics of a frank, free American, with the physical advantages of a stalwart "Englischer." Among the miners he was variously known as "English Dan" and "Dead-Shot Dan." How he got the latter nickname always seemed a puzzle to his comrades, for he was one of the best, gentlest, and kindest fellows on "the lode." His manners and appearance indicated anything but a wicked nature, and he was always ready to do a comrade a good turn, or act as peacemaker in the ever-recurring rows of the miners.

It was Christmas Eve, and the boys were gathered around the fire, smoking their pipes, and telling stories of their past lives. Some told of homes and loved ones in the far-distant States; some of the late Civil War and its scenes of strife and sorrow; and some of escapades with the Mexican "greasers" and cattle-thieves of the Rio Grande.

Now the crowd turned to Dan, whom they regarded as a sort of superior creature. He was a general favorite. He knew something of medicine, and had nursed and cured many a comrade of camp-fever. He had, on more than one occasion, even set a limb and extracted a bullet from a wound—attentions which undoubtedly had the effect of increasing the freedom of the miners in the use of the "seven-shooter."

"Come, Dan, it's your turn now."

"Yes, yes," shouted a dozen voices. "Give us a story, English."

"I'm not much of a story-teller, boys," said Dan; "can anybody suggest a subject?"

"Yes," exclaimed old Peleg Carter, the Nestor of the crowd, "I can suggest a subject."

Peleg was a Missouri man. He was over six feet high, and had gray hair, while his large and flabby ears stood out from his head like the side lamps of a hansom cab. He had only one eye, and he boasted that he had lost the other in driving Joe Smith and the Mormons from "Nauvoo." His word was law in the economy of the camp, so that when he said he could suggest a subject to Dan, all the lads waited with awe and attention to hear what the subject would be.

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"Well, old man," observed Dan, "start the subject, and I'll do my best."

"Tell us, then," said Peleg, "how you got the name of 'Dead-Shot Dan.' You never wear a weeping, unless you keep one underneath your jumper."

"No," replied Dan, "I don't carry a weapon. I carried a pistol once, but swore I'd never 'bear arms,' again. Well, lads," he continued, as he filled his pipe, "you want to know how I got the name of 'Dead-Shot Dan'?"

"Yes, yes," was the unanimous response.

"I must tell you, then, that I came to Colorado, not exactly a fugitive from justice, but the victim of what is called in civilized countries the 'code of honor.' I was an assistant-surgeon on board one of the 'Quintard Line' of steamers, sailing from Liverpool to the Mediterranean. On my first voyage we put in for passengers and coal at Marseilles. We had forty-eight hours to remain in port, and as I was anxious to see all I could of foreign parts, I went ashore early in the morning. My companion was the senior surgeon of the ship, a strange, hot-headed old fellow. He had formerly been a surgeon in the Royal Navy, but had been cashiered while on the West Indian station for challenging the admiral on account of some supposed affront. His name was Dr. Caldwell, and he was sometimes known as the 'Fire-eating Surgeon.' Both of us, being very hungry when we got on shore, thought we would have a jolly good breakfast before visiting the objects of interest in the place.

"Come with me, Dan," said the Doctor, "and I will take you to a famous restaurant frequented by all the savants of the city. Astronomers and political economists go there, and Italian refugees and communists too. Frenchmen rarely have more than a crust of bread and a cup of coffee before noon; but if the frog-eaters have such a thing in their larder, we'll have a beefsteak or a brace of chops."

"With that he led me into a quiet side street, and we soon reached the restaurant. Early as it was, the principal dining-room was filled with customers sipping their coffee, and I could see at a glance that they were of no common order. They appeared to form a kind of literary class.

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"We took our seats at a table which was already occupied by an old French gentleman, with a mustache and beard of a decidedly military cut.

"Two large beefsteaks!" shouted the Doctor, in a voice which attracted the attention of everyone in the room.

"The waiter looked at us as if we were lunatics escaped from an asylum, and said, in broken English, '*Messieurs*, this is not the time for beefsteaks. Beefsteaks are at twelve o'clock. 'Tis now only half-past eight.'

"Two beefsteaks, d'ye hear!" again roared the Doctor.

"Certainlee, if *messieurs* will have it so," replied the waiter, somewhat staggered.

"Beefsteak! Beefsteak!! Beefsteak!!!" was the exclamation which went from one person to another around the room, and all eyes were turned towards us.

"Look," said the Doctor, "how these French fools stare. Confound them! What do they mean?"

"Pardon me, sare," remarked the old gentleman at our table, addressing himself to me, 'ess zis your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

"Don't answer him," said the Doctor; "we'll have some sport with these fellows."

"The beefsteaks were brought, and we attacked them with great effect.

"It must be ze dinnaire," muttered our military friend to himself, just loud enough for us to hear.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he again said, addressing himself to me in a louder tone, 'ess zis your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

"Bring some fried eggs," called out the Doctor, before I could answer.

"*Oui, messieurs*," replied the waiter, quickly darting into the kitchen.

"Oh, it must be ze dinnaire," again muttered our old friend opposite; "certainlee, it must be ze dinnaire."

"The eggs were brought and soon despatched. The old Frenchman looked aghast.

"Pardon me once more, my dear young friend," he said, 'ess zis your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

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"The Doctor winked at me not to answer, and called out, 'Waiter! two more cups of tea!'

"The old Frenchman looked at his watch and said despairingly, 'Oh, it must be ze dinnaire. Dinnaire at half-past eight! *Mon Dieu!* Howevoire, I will ask once more. My dear sare, ess zis your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

"Sir," I replied, somewhat petulantly, "we came here to eat, not to answer questions!"

"Yes, sare, but I am a journalist, and am anxious to study ze characteristics of ze Engleesh; zerefore, I ask, ess zis your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

"Bring more toast, waiter," said the Doctor.

"More tost! Ah, it ess ze dinnaire—must be ze dinnaire," mumbled the old Frenchman.

"The toast and tea disposed of, we rose and paid our bill. We were about to leave the restaurant, when the old Frenchman quitted the table, as if for the purpose of having a parting shot at us. Just as we were stepping into the street, he tapped me on the shoulder, and making a polite bow, said, 'Sare, if you please, was zat your breakfast or your dinnaire?"

"This seemed too much for human nature to bear, and without thinking exactly what I was about, I threw my glove into his face.

"Sare, what you mean? An insult?"

"Yes,' said the Doctor, 'and another, if you like. We have stood your impertinence for the last half-hour. You are no gentleman.'

"Sare? No gentleman? Zare is my card!"

"And there is mine,' said the Doctor.

"One at a time, my friends,' coolly replied the old man. 'My business is wiz zis young gentleman first. He has struck me wiz his glove! He must fight.'

"Agreed,' said the Doctor. 'Send your friend to me. I shall be happy to assist this young gentleman, and to fight you myself afterwards.'

"One moment, gentlemen. My friend, Colonel Monier, now at yonder table, will confer wiz you;' and the old fellow called to his friend.

"In a few moments arrangements were perfected for a meeting between the Frenchman and myself the next morning at daylight, at a small clump of trees a few miles from town. Weapons, pistols; distance, fifteen paces.

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"Don't be alarmed, Dan,' said the Doctor, as we were going on board our ship; 'I'll teach you how to wing the frog-eater. Wing him, my boy! Wing him! I've done the trick a dozen times!'

"Next morning the Doctor, Tom Wallace, our purser, and myself drove to the place appointed for the meeting, and found the French party already on the ground.

"Cheer up, Dan,' said my second, 'and remember, aim for his left shoulder. You'll wing him like a pigeon. Those Frenchmen know nothing of fire-arms.'

"The preliminaries over, we took our positions. I must confess I was terribly nervous; but while I intended to merely wound my adversary, I determined to follow the advice of the Doctor, and 'aim for the left shoulder.'

"Are you ready?"

"Ready.'

"Fire.'

"One.'

"Two.'

"Three.'

"It had been arranged that we should fire between the words 'One' and 'Three;' and as the word 'Two' was on the lips of the second, I fired.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried my opponent, falling bleeding into the arms of his second, as the bullet from his pistol almost grazed my cheek.

"*Parbleu!* He is dying—shot through the heart. You are a surgeon; can you do anything for him?" said I, appealing to my friend, the Doctor.

"No, my lad,' said he; 'you aimed too low.'

"This is terrible,' I cried, now for the first time realizing the awful position in which I was placed. 'What can we do?'

"Get across the frontier as soon as possible,' was the advice of the old Frenchman's second.

"Our ship sails at noon,' said the Doctor.

"I advanced to the dying man, whose life-blood was pouring from his side, and with tears streaming down my face, begged his forgiveness. He opened his poor, sad eyes, now almost glazed in death.

"Oh, speak to me!" cried I, 'if only one word. I would give the world to recall this wicked duel. Is there anything on earth that I can do for you or yours? Tell me, and on the honor of an English gentleman, I will do as you command.'

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"Ah, my young friend,' said the dying man, 'I feel that I have but a few minutes to live. I am dying even while I speak; but I shall die perfectly happy if you will tell me whether *zat was your breakfast or your dinnaire?*'"

WILLIAM J. FLORENCE.

[A] From "Florence Fables," by William J. Florence (Comedian), just published by Belford, Clarke & Co. Copyrighted, 1888.

"FORGET-ME-NOT."

"Forget—forget me not!"
Vain, piteous human prayer!
We all are doomed to be forgot;
It is, alas! the common lot
Of mortals everywhere.

'Tis everywhere the same;
Over the olden stone
That bears the once dear dead one's name,
Whom love and tears could not reclaim,
The willow weeps alone!

There is no sadder thought
Of death and its sweet rest
Than that we are so soon forgot—
E'en in those hearts remembered not,
That we have loved the best.

It hath been so, and must
So be for aye and aye:
And though it seemeth hardly just,
Affection will not cling to dust,
Nor linger with decay.

Where'er above the dead
The gentle willow waves,
The warmest tears are ever shed,
The freshest flowers ever spread,
Over the freshest graves!

THOMAS HUBBARD.

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CERTAIN ANCESTORS OF PRESIDENT CLEVELAND.

PRESIDENT CLEVELAND'S GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER IN HALIFAX—"MATHER'S CHURCH," THE FIRST
DISSENTING MEETING-HOUSE—SOME RARE ANTIQUE BOOKS—ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH—THE POET
CLEVELAND AND OTHERS—A POEM—A REPARTEE.

On Pleasant Street facing Spring Garden Road—two aristocratic avenues of residence in the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia—is St. Matthew's Congregational Church. To sight-seekers from "the States" who during the last three years have visited Halifax this ecclesiastical building has become a place of especial interest. An ancestor of President Cleveland was the first pastor of the society; and through the influence of Rev. Aaron Cleveland, the first non-conforming church in British North America was built. It stood at the corner of the present Hollis and Prince streets, upon what now is the site of the Halifax Club, a portion of the building being occupied by Doull & Miller's dry-goods store.

There the little structure remained for more than a century, although Mr. Cleveland's ministry extended over but five years, when, in 1755, the pioneer pastor removed to England, leaving behind him no church records. Hence the history of Congregationalism in Nova Scotia, during that period, is traditional. A few volumes, unique in style and huge in size, the nucleus of what to-day is the Church and Sunday-school library of St. Matthew's society, survived the pastor's departure. Many of the books were the gift of Mr. Cleveland. In some of them is preserved his autograph presentation. A large proportion of the other volumes were donated by friends of Mr. Cleveland, mostly residents of Great Britain. Of these the notable ones are:

A Large and Complete Concordance to the Bible, by Samuel Newman, now teacher of the church at Rehoboth in New England. London, 1650.

The presentation reads as follows:

"This book is the Gift to the present Minister of the Gospel at Halifax in Nova Scotia, and to his successors,

By their well wisher and Humble Servant

Nov. 6, 1750.

JOHN STANIFORD.

The same date and wording of presentation accompanies

The History of Britain, 1655.

Bearing the imprint, London, 1684, are the

Works of the Rev. and Learned John Lightfoot; Late Master of Katerine Hall, in Cambridge. With Author's Life and Maps.

Also, illustrated with many fine engravings, are

THE WORKS *of the* LEARNED *and* PIOUS AUTHOR OF
THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.
London, 1704.

The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. London, 1752.

The Works of the Rev. & Learned Lord Mr. Joseph Boyse of Dublin, Never before Published. 2 vols., London, 1728.

This last book was

"The Gift of the Rev. Mr. John Walker of London, to the Rev. Aaron Cleveland and his Successors in the Ministry at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, 1753."

St. Matthew's Church, called in early days "Mather's Church," was constructed after the same plan as Maryborn Chapel, England. This "Meeting-house for Dissenters" was put up in 1750, at a cost to the colony of £1000. In a letter dated July 10, 1750, to The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, written by Hon. Edward Cornwallace, Governor of Nova Scotia, the "Meeting-house" was grouped as one of the "necessary works," with "a Court House and Prison, and a powder Magazine."

At the time of Mr. Cleveland's ministry in Halifax, "The Dissenting Congregational Meeting-house" was known as "Mather's Church." It derived its name from the then famous New England Congregational divine, Cotton Mather. The frame of the building was brought from Boston. Tradition erroneously says that the edifice was removed bodily to Halifax, and that it was the identical church in which Cotton Mather preached.

After the fire, January 1, 1857, that destroyed the original structure, the present St. Matthew's church edifice was erected. The building, which is of brick, is the best of its kind in the Dominion. Its cost of construction was \$75,000. The manse was built at an additional expense of \$12,000. The congregation is fashionable and influential. The Word is preached from an old-fashioned box-like pulpit, perched, like a bird's nest, near the ceiling. The minister reaches this enclosure by means of two winding stairways, curtained with red drapery along their sides. The pews are, as in ancient times, padded throughout with scarlet. British "red-coats" constitute a portion of the congregation. They occupy the high gallery that reaches around three sides of the auditorium. The Sunday-school is one of the largest and the best conducted in the city. The original silver-plate communion-set and the baptismal fount have been preserved and are used as occasion allows. These pieces are engraved with the follow inscription:

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"The Gift of Francis White, Esq., to the first Protestant Dissenting Church in Halifax, Oct. 25, 1769."

A prominent officer of the St. Matthew's Society stated in the presence of the writer, "We have many proofs that the Lord has abundantly blessed the labors of the first minister, the Rev. Aaron Cleveland, ... and we rejoice in the manifestation of His goodness in having raised his descendant to the highest honor in the gift of a free and sovereign people."

To the town of Cleveland,—a corruption of Cliffe land,—Durham County, England, the family of Cleveland or Cleaveland owes its name. "The principal branch was seated in the county of York. Early in the fourteenth century, Sir Guy de Cleveland was present at the siege of Boulogne, in France, and afterwards at the battle of Poitiers, where he commanded the spearmen. A branch of the family went into Devonshire, and continued until the male line of the family was extinct."

The Rev. Aaron Cleveland, great-great-grandfather to the President of the United States, was the son of Captain Aaron, a grandchild of Moses Cleveland who came to this country from Ipswich, county of Suffolk, England, about 1635, and who died at Woburn, Mass., January, 1701-2. Seven sons and five daughters composed the family of Moses. From the eldest son, "it is confidently believed, are derived all the Clevelands or Cleavelands in this country, of New England origin." The other of the two brothers who came to this country settled in Ohio. One of them, General Moses Cleveland, was born 1754, in Canterbury, Connecticut. He graduated from Yale College, and subsequently held a position as general in the regular army. Afterwards he practised law. As chief of the staff of surveyors commissioned by the Connecticut Land Company, he was sent to the Western Reserve, where he secured the confidence and friendship of the Indians by his tact and repeated evidences of friendliness. He established a surveying camp, laid out a city, and gave to it his name. It was to his memory that the Early Settlers Association of Cleveland, Ohio, celebrated the ninety-second anniversary of this event by unveiling, in the public square, the 22d of last July, a bronze statue of the city's founder.

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"The brother who settled in New England had two sons, one of whom removed to Michigan, the other to New York. From the family of the latter sprung the President."

The following epitaph immortalizes the memory of Colonel Aaron Cleveland, who is buried in the Congregational graveyard at Canterbury, Conn.:

"In memory of Col. Aaron Cleveland, who died in a fit of apoplexy, 14th April, A.D., 1785. Born 7th of Decr. 1727; on the 17th of June, A.D. 1782, when in the bloom of health and prime of life, was struck with a numb palsy; from that time to his death, had upward of sixty fits of the palsy and apoplexy. He was employed in sundry honorable offices both civil and military.

"Calm and composed my soul her journey takes,
No guilt that troubles, and no heart that aches.
Adieu! thou Sun, all bright like her arise,
Adieu! dear friends, and all that's good and wise."

Rev. Aaron Cleveland, the Halifax minister, was the fifth son and the seventh child of Captain Aaron Cleveland. He was born in Cambridge, Mass., 1715. He studied and graduated at Harvard College, and was married to Susanna Porter, a daughter of Rev. Aaron Porter, of Medford, Mass., the same year, when but twenty years of age. Four years later, 1739, he was called to the pastorate of a congregation at Haddam, Connecticut, where he continued until dismissed for alleged heterodoxy.

A year later Mr. Cleveland was installed over a congregation at Malden. His views being there deemed too liberal, he was obliged to resign that charge also. This circumstance occurred in 1750, the same year in which he went to Halifax. Falling into disrepute once more, because of his too rapid advance in theological tenets, he was forced to give up the Nova Scotia pastorate. The same year, 1755, he removed to England. He subsequently disconnected himself from the denomination of his early choice, and took holy orders in the Church of England from Bishop Sherlock, of London, from which denomination he received the following commission:

"CHARTER HOUSE, JULY 1, 1767—Good Gentlemen: The society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts have granted your request and appointed Mr. Cleveland their missionary in your church; but it is on the express condition, which is now a standing rule in their missions, that you provide him with a good house and glebe, and not less than twenty pounds sterling per annum, towards his more comfortable support. Heartily recommending you and Mr. Cleveland to God's blessing, I am, sirs, your very faithful, humble servant,

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PHILIP BEARCROFT.

To the church wardens and vestry of the episcopal church of New Castle, in Pennsylvania."

Returning to America, he officiated at Lewes, Delaware, and at New Castle, Pennsylvania, until his death, which occurred suddenly at Philadelphia, August 11, 1757, while he was visiting his friend Benjamin Franklin, but two years after his removal from Halifax. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, at that time owned and edited by Franklin, contained the following obituary—a sober paragraph amidst the bountiful supply of wit and ridicule with which that journal abounded.

"On Thursday last, the 11th, died here the Rev. Mr. Cleveland, lately appointed to the mission of New Castle, by the society for the propagation of the gospel. As he was a gentleman of humane and pious disposition, indefatigable in his ministry, easy and affable in his conversation, open and sincere to his friends, and above every specie of meanness and dissimulation, his death is greatly lamented by all who knew him, as a loss to the public, a loss to the church of Christ in general, and in particular to that congregation who had proposed to themselves so much satisfaction from his late appointment among them, agreeable to their own request."

During Mr. Cleveland's residence in Nova Scotia three children were born to him, they being the last of a family of ten. All these survived the father's death. The widow removed to Salem, Massachusetts, and there made a future home for her children and herself. Aided by a relative, Judge Stephen Sewell, Mrs. Cleveland supported her family in comfort and respectability until the time of her death, in 1788. Aaron (5th), who was also the fifth of the children, was born in Haddam, Conn., February 3, 1744. He lived in Halifax with his parents from his sixth to his eleventh year. He became a member of the legislature of Connecticut in 1799. Subsequently he followed the early calling of his father and became a Congregational minister, and was known throughout New England as a statesman, an orator, and a wit. Twice married, this Aaron (5th) was the father of William, one of fifteen children. Said William was grandfather to President Cleveland.

Aaron was a poet. He never claimed to be such, and the few verses that he allowed to find their way into print were published anonymously. Many of them have been lost. The authorship of others was never given to the public. A few, however, of his poetic word-creations passed into the possession of his grandson, the Rev. Arthur Cleveland Coxe, of Hartford. Illustrating Mr. Cleveland's appreciation of personal merit and personal exertion over that of ancestry, we insert the following satirical composition from his pen:

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THE FAMILY BLOOD: A BURLESQUE.

*"Genus et proavos et quod non fecimus ipsi
Vix ea nostra voco."*

Four kinds of blood flow in my veins,
And govern, each in turn, my brains.
From CLEVELAND, PORTER, SEWELL, WATERS,
I had my parentage in quarters;
My fathers' fathers' names I know,
And further back no doubt might go.
Compound on compound from the flood,
Makes up my old ancestral blood;
But what my sires of old time were,
I neither wish to know, nor care.
Some might be wise—and others fools;
Some might be tyrants—others tools;
Some might have wealth, and others lack;
Some fair perchance—some almost black;
No matter what in days of yore,
Since now they're known and seen no more.

The name of CLEVELAND I must wear,
Which any fondling too might bear:
PORTER, they say, from Scotland came,
A bonny Laird of ancient fame:
SEWELL—of English derivation,
Perhaps was outlaw from the nation;
And *Waters*—Irish as I ween,
Straight—round-about from—Aberdeen!

Such is my heterogeneous blood,
A motley mixture, bad and good:
Each blood aspires to rule alone,
And each in turn ascends the throne,
Of its poor realm to wear the crown,
And reign till next one tears him down.
Each change must twist about my brains,
And move my tongue in different strains;
My mental powers are captive led,
As whim or wisdom rules the head;
My character no one can know,
For none I have while things are so;
I'm something—nothing, wise, or fool,
As suits the blood that haps to rule.
When CLEVELAND reigns I'm thought a wit
In giving words the funny hit;
And social glee and humorous song
Delight the fools that round me throng;
Till PORTER puts on the crown,
And hauls the CLEVELAND banner down.

Now all is calm, discreet, and wise,
Whate'er I do, whate'er devise;
What common sence and wisdom teach,
Directs my actions, forms my speech;
The wise and good around me stay,
And laughing dunces hie away.

But soon, alas, this happy vein
May for some other change again!
SEWELL perchance shall next bear rule:
I'm now a philosophic fool!
With JEFFERSON I correspond,
And sail with him, the stars beyond:
Each nerve and fibre of my brain,
To sense profound I nicely strain,
And thus uprise beyond the ken
Of common sence and common men.

Thus great am I, till SEWELL's crown
About my ears comes tumbling down.
Wise fools may soar themselves above,
And dream in rapturous spheres they move;
But airy castles must recoil,

And such wild imagery spoil.

But who comes now? Alas! 'tis *Waters*,
Rushing and blustering to headquarters:
He knows nor manners nor decorum,
But elbows headlong to the forum;
Uncouth and odd, abrupt and bold,
Unteachable and uncontrolled,
Devoid of wisdom, sence, or wit,
Not one thing right he ever hit,
Unless, by accident, not skill,
He blundered right against his will.

And such am I! no transmigration
Can sink me to a lower station:
Come, PORTER, come depose the clown,
And, once for all, possess the crown.
If aught, in SEWELL's blood, you find
Will make your own still more refined;
If found in CLEVELAND's blood, a trait
To aid you in affairs of state;
Select such parts—and spurn the rest,
No more to rule in brain or breast.
Of WATERS' blood expel the whole,
Let not one drop pollute my soul:
Then rule my head—and keep my heart
From folly, weakness, wit apart:
With all such gifts I glad dispense,
But only leave me—COMMON SENSE.

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As a wit, Mr. Cleveland's reputation has been immortalized by a few sentences that are frequently quoted, and which the writer furnished to the Editor's Drawer, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, August, 1885. Mr. Cleveland was a Federalist of the school of Jay and Hamilton, whom he supported with more than ordinary zeal, and perhaps not without something of the prejudice which ranked all Jeffersonians with French fatalists and infidels. On horseback one day Mr. Cleveland was riding from Middletown to Durham; a little stream bounded the limits of the townships. He halted to water his horse; meanwhile a young man, having come from the opposite direction, drew rein so suddenly in the midst of the brook as to render the water unfit to drink.

"Good-morning, Mr. Minister," said the youth.

"Good-morning, Mr. Democrat," replied the reverend gentleman.

"And pray why do you take me for a Democrat?" queried the young man.

"Pray why did you take me for a minister?" rejoined Mr. Cleveland.

"Oh," said the fellow, "that is plain enough—by your *dress*."

"And that you are a Democrat is plain enough by your *address*," was the retort of the preacher.

Mr. Cleveland was buried in New Haven, Conn., where he died suddenly, while paying a visit to friends in that city. He lies in the "New Haven City Burial Ground," the first cemetery in this country that was divided into family lots. The plot in which Mr. Cleveland was interred was at that time owned by Edmund French. Recently it was resold to William Franklin, a proviso of the transfer being that all previous interments should forever remain undisturbed. Two massive stones, of veinless white marble, mark the head and the foot of the scarcely perceptible mound. They are low and unpretentious. The larger is about two feet in height; the smaller is proportionally less tall. Erected but a short time ago, it is said that President Cleveland ordered them that he might mark the last earthly resting-place of his great-grandfather. The inscription reads:

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REV. AARON CLEVELAND
son of
REV. AARON CLEVELAND

BORN IN HADDAM FEB'Y 3. 1744
DIED IN NEW HAVEN SEPT. 21. 1815

A much loved, and respected, and stainless name is the inheritance that this man has left to his descendants.

THE SOLDIERS' DAY AT SHILOH.

The wives and little ones at home who knelt one Sabbath morn,

And prayed for God to save our land, with battles rent and torn,
How little knew the quick reply, while yet they bent the knee,
In Shiloh's fierce and stubborn strife beside the Tennessee!
Oh, may they never cease to pray for our dear nation's good.
Till wrong no more shall lift a hand to claim the price of blood!
For heavy was the debt we paid in noble blood and true,
When Slavery cast the gage of war between the gray and blue.

Bright burst the dawn o'er Shiloh's field, as o'er the northland homes;
As o'er the worshippers that rose to seek their shining domes;
And gentle morn, that whispered low and woke the sleepers there,
Had almost led the soldier back the Sabbath joys to share,
When, lo! a murmur through the trees above the breezes came,
And shook the forest in our front with thunder-sound and flame!
Now all the dreams of peace and home in quick surprise dispelled;
Adown the line and far away the clamor rose and swelled!

Defenceless on a field of war—'tis terrible in thought!
Then how the holy morn was changed for those who blindly fought!
At breakfast fire and forming line, their life-blood stained the green;
Before them flashed a fiery storm; behind, the river's sheen!
The army smitten in its camps, though flinching, rallied soon,
And steady rose the battle's roar on that red field ere noon,
While, mindful of their sad neglect, up came our generals then—
Alas! they could not form in rank the dead and dying men!
Against a crushing battle-tide right well we fought our ground;
Full oft the foe that smote our ranks the soldiers' welcome found.
That day the swaying underbrush a reaper, all unseen,
Smote with the battle's deadly breath as with a sickle keen;
The scorner of the widow's wail, the orphans' sore lament,
There gathered treasure in his grasp, from hut and mansion sent.
With deadly volleys crashing near, the cannons roll afar,
That Sabbath closed on Shiloh's field, a bloody scene of war.

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Ere long the thrilling scenes will fade, the veterans will depart;
But ere we leave the land; my child, write this upon thy heart:
No soaring genius labored there to guide the stubborn fight—
That was the common soldier's day from morning dawn till night;
His stinging volleys checked the foe and laid their leader cold,
As ever near with gleaming front the wave of battle rolled.
Until the western sun was low and succor reached the field,
Madly they pressed the volunteers, Columbia's pride and shield.

The trump of fame has sounded long for those who led us then,
And echoes still where poets sing the praise of mighty men.
But where the commoner is found beneath his household tree,
The soldier's heavy tramp is heard, the bayonet's gleam we see!
Ah! never more in knightly ranks will nations put their trust,
And soon the fabled hero's sword will gather mould and rust:
As war disclosed the true defence in man's unarmored breast,
So has it shown a nation's strength above the dazzling crest.

The stars of union raise aloft that once on Shiloh led;
Give justice to that rank and file, the living and the dead!
And when ye see that flag on high, remember how they fared
Who sprang to meet a cruel strife, surprised and unprepared:
O children, often when I see our standard quick unfurled,
Unconsciously my steps are braced to meet those volleys hurled!
Still burdened with the memories of sad and glorious fight,
The morning breaks among the tents, by the river falls the night.

Remember, 'twas the Sabbath day—the holy, blessed time
When neighbors crowd the roadside walks, and bells do sweetly chime—
Your fathers thronged the gates of death in Shiloh's bloody fray,
Beside the rolling Tennessee:—call that the soldier's day!
And oh, for our dear country pray, that all her laws be good,
That wrong no more shall lift a hand to claim the price of blood!
For heavy was the debt we paid, in noble blood and true,
When Slavery cast the gage of war between the gray and blue.

CHRISTMAS IN EGYPT.

"Christmas comes but once a year,
And when it comes it brings good cheer."

Or it ought to. But when a Christian finds himself, on that most sacred of all the Christian holidays, in a Moslem country, say in Egypt, the procuring of the wherewithal to make the prescribed good cheer becomes a matter of no small difficulty.

If the Christian be an English one, the difficulties are apt to be increased by the fact that an Englishman is nothing if not conservative.

To the average Englishman the correct celebration of Christmas means attendance at divine service, *perhaps!*—the regulation Christmas dinner, certainly.

Christmas means a crisp, cold day, the home bright with glowing fires—a yule-log, maybe—and flashing with the brilliant green of ivy and the crimson of holly-berries; a dinner of roast-beef and plum-pudding; and, to wind up with, a bowl of steaming wassail and a kiss under the mistletoe.

When an Englishman finds himself in a country where he can sit in the open air, under a blazing sun, on Christmas Day, and where neither roast-beef nor plum-pudding has any place in the domestic economy, and where the "wassail" is always drunk iced, and called by another name, and where mistletoe does not grow, the possibility presents itself that he would be obliged to accommodate himself to the situation and do without these particular features.

Not at all!

He immediately sets to work to obtain them, crying aloud, meantime, against the barbarity of a land that does not offer, at this particular season, the things that are peculiar to his own tight little island.

To the casual observer this may seem a light task that he has set himself. But it is by no means so. On every hand he is met by an almost impenetrable wall of difficulties.

The fire he cannot have, for the very simple reason that there is no chimney in the house.

The beef he can get by sending for it to England, where it has been purchased from either Northern Europe or America. But where is the great fire before which it ought to be roasted, by the aid of a "jack," and with frequent bastings at the hands of a comfortable, rosy-cheeked, red-armed woman cook, in "Merry England"?

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Here, in Egypt, the only fire to be procured will be a tiny one of charcoal, one of a dozen, but each separate, like the squares on a chess-board, and not much larger. And the cook will, in all likelihood, be a wizened, yellow little man, smelling of "arrack," and much given to speculation.

He may succeed in procuring his Christmas pudding, if he, early in November, orders the ingredients for it from England, through his English grocer, and if the ladies of his household agree to compound it.

Then the dreadful question presents itself, how is it to be cooked? A Christmas pudding of fair proportions needs to be boiled from four to six hours, and during those hours it wants to be kept steadily and continuously boiling, or it becomes what the English cook calls "sad." And so do its consumers.

Now a charcoal fire is a good deal like Miss Juliet's description of lightning, "it doth cease to be, ere one can say it lightens." And no power on earth less than a file of the Khedive's soldiers would keep an Egyptian cook in his kitchen, feeding a fire, four or five hours.

Aside from the fact that he hates and despises, as a good Mussulman should, his Christian employer, and regards with horror and disgust the pudding around which cluster the hopes of this Christian family, he has a great number of little habits and customs that demand his frequent absence from the scene of his distinguished labors.

He has a "call" to the little shed at the corner of the street where "arrack" is illicitly sold by a cyclopean Arab. No sooner is this accomplished, and he slinks back to his kitchen, furtively watching the windows and wiping his treacherous mouth with the back of his dirty yellow hand, than he feels himself obliged to again rush out and indulge in a war of words with the old man who has brought the daily supply of water to the household.

This is a very dirty old man, bare as to his legs and feet, and without any toes to speak of. He is clothed in a goat-skin, as is also the water, for he carries that blessed commodity on his back, in a goat-skin that is distended like an over-fed beast, with its legs "foreshortened" and all in the air, like a "shipwrecked tea-table."

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The greatly overtaxed cook has scarcely had time to recover from this sally, when he feels himself called upon to again issue forth and attack the donkey-boy, a small and inoffensive child who brings him vegetables, which the patient little donkey carries in two panniers slung over his back.

After invoking upon the head of this child a string of polyglot curses, one of which is that his progeny, to the sixth generation, maybe born with their faces upside-down, he again retreats to

his kitchen, gives the pudding a vicious punch and the fire a morsel of charcoal.

Soon he must go and squat in the sand at the back of the house, safe from all fear of observation, and play a game of dominoes with "Nicolo," the cook of the neighboring house.

Then he must smoke two or three cigarettes, which he deftly rolls with his dirty yellow fingers.

Is it surprising that after these manifold exertions his exhausted nature demands repose? He stretches himself in the warm white sand, and, indifferent to the sun and oblivious of the fleas, he falls into a sweet sleep.

For the pudding? Let us draw the mantle of silence over that heavy, stately ruin. When he wakes to find the ruin he has wrought, he will weep and wail and beat his breast, and call upon *Allah* to witness that never—not for an instant—has he left the kitchen.

And in his heart he will secretly rejoice.

The Moslem servant always secretly rejoices in the annoyances and discomfitures of his Christian employer. If that Christian employer is met by annoyance and discomfiture while attempting to keep up any custom associated with his religion, or to celebrate any Christian holiday, the Moslem servant is especially and particularly pleased.

And in this he obeys one of the laws of Mohammed, which forbids friendship or good-feeling between Moslems and either Christians or Jews.

The Moslems have a great number of holidays in their calendar, but these are nearly all fast-days.

The Arabs are a temperate, abstemious race, a race of light feeders; naturally, they have a contempt for gluttony. In the matter of food, an Egyptian would feast luxuriously for a week on the amount that an American or Englishman would consume at a single meal.

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Thus the very abundance of the preparations which the Englishman makes for his Christmas dinner repels good Mussulmen.

Then, they do not celebrate the birthday of their own prophet; and the celebration, in their own country, of the day which to us is invested with so much love and reverence they consider an insult to them and to their faith, and they submit to it with an ill grace and in sullen silence.

All these things make a combination of opposing forces against which the Englishman, endeavoring to enjoy his Christmas in Egypt, struggles in vain.

So he eats his roast-beef, which is braized, and his boiled plum-pudding, which is fried; takes his kiss—if he has any sense—without mistletoe; winds up an unsatisfactory day by drinking, instead of the time-honored "wassail," a jorum of champagne punch, cooled with artificial ice; and goes grumbling to bed, with the conviction that a Christmas in Egypt is a very "brummagem" sort of Christmas.

ROSE EYTINGE.

STATISTICS OF IDLENESS.

Reliable statistics relative to the number of men out of employment and seeking work have always been difficult to obtain. In June, 1879, the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor investigated the matter in that State, reporting "28,508 as the aggregate number of skilled and unskilled laborers, male and female, seeking and in want of work in Massachusetts." In November of the same year the number was reported as being 23,000. This was a little less than five per cent of the total number of skilled and unskilled laborers in the State at that time. Upon that basis, says the report, "there would be 460,000 unemployed able-bodied men and women in the United States, ordinarily having work, now out of employment." On the basis of the June report, there would have been 570,000 unemployed in the United States. This was the only statistical report upon the subject made prior to 1885; and coming, as it does, from Colonel Carroll D. Wright, through the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, it possesses as much authority as statistical statements ever do.

While taking the census of Massachusetts for 1885, Colonel Wright thoroughly canvassed the subject of the unemployed in that State, the result being published in the Report of the Bureau of Labor for 1887. This report, though much delayed, is a remarkable one, not only for its completeness and the masterly analysis of the figures it contains, but also for its minute divisions of the classes of unemployed; giving the age, sex, nativity, and trade of each person unemployed, and how many months in the year such enforced idleness is suffered.

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Out of a total of 816,470 persons employed in gainful occupations in Massachusetts in 1885, 241,589, or 29.59 per cent, were unemployed. The duration of the idleness varied greatly in different industries and localities, but the average loss of time was 4.11 months per year for each of the unemployed. Over 29 per cent of Massachusetts protected workingmen idle for over four months of each year! The idleness of 241,589 persons for 4.11 months is equivalent to 82,744 persons unemployed for an entire year. This is nearly 11 per cent of the entire population

employed in gainful pursuits. Idleness, that is enforced idleness, increased 110 per cent in Massachusetts between 1879 and 1885; and this average time unemployed is net average, as the 10,758 persons, whose loss of time at their "principal occupation" or trade was partially made up by securing "other occupations" and "odd jobs," are separately tabulated, and the amount of work at "other occupations" is deducted from their loss of time at "principal occupation," thus giving a net average of the time wholly unoccupied at any sort of labor. It is interesting to note the industries in which the greatest percentage of this enforced idleness occurs. I take the following from an elaborate table given in Mr. Wright's report. In the boot and shoe industry of Massachusetts, 48,105 male adults are supposed to be employed. Of these 15,731 get steady work, while 32,374, or 67.3 per cent, are unemployed four months in the year. The same industry employs 14,420 females, of whom 10,250, or 71 per cent, are idle four months, an average of 2.62 months idleness for all persons employed in that industry. The cotton-mill operatives number 58,383 of whom 26,642 are males, 31,741 females. Of all these operatives, 24,250, or 41.5 per cent, are idle more than one third of the time.

In the manufacturing of agricultural implements, a protected industry that, being carried on in factories, needs not stop for weather, 69.1 per cent of all persons employed are idle 4.12 months per year; whereas, of farm laborers, whose occupation is unprotected, and whose employment is wholly at the mercy of seasons, only 30.19 are idle during any part of the year, while 69.81 per cent find steady employment the year around.

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Carpenters, also, whose labor is unprotected and dependent largely upon season, report 52.82 per cent steadily employed, with 47.18 per cent idle three months in the year.

Compositors and printers number 4541 in the State, only 450, or 9.91 per cent, of whom are idle during any part of the year, while 90.09 per cent find steady work. On the other hand, 51.31 per cent of the stove-makers are idle 4.09 months per year, and 66.4 per cent of rolling-mill employés are idle 4.04 months. Stone-workers and brick-masons fare better, though unprotected, since but 46 per cent of these are idle during any part of the year; while the tack-makers, taking both sexes, have 70 per cent of idleness for one-third of the time, only 30 per cent finding steady work. The silk industry employs 1975 persons—556 males and 1419 females; of these, 979, or 49.5 per cent, are idle nearly four months each year.

The woollen industries of Massachusetts employ 22,726 operatives of both sexes. Of these, 9463, or 42 per cent, are idle four months in the year.

Perhaps the infinite beauty of protection is best illustrated by a comparison of the work secured by blacksmiths with that of rolling-mill employés. Of blacksmiths, 82.25 per cent had steady work for the entire year, while only 17.75 per cent were idle 4.41 months. Of rolling-mill employés, as stated above, 66.40 per cent were idle 4.04 months, and of nail-makers 73.49 per cent were idle 3.86 months.

The manufacturing industries of Massachusetts furnish 69.14 per cent of the idleness of the State; i.e., of the 241,589 unemployed, 167,041 depend upon the manufacturers for work and sustenance. On the other hand, agriculture furnishes but 6.28 per cent, transportation 2.91 per cent, personal service but 1.72 per cent, and the day laborers but 8.43 per cent.

Fall River, with a total laboring population of 26,220, found steady employment for but 11,437, or 43.62 per cent, while 14,783, or 56.38 per cent of her population, were seeking work 3.49 months in the year. The result of it all is that one third of the persons engaged in remunerative employment in Massachusetts were unemployed for more than one third of the time.

It is significant that 129,272, or 53.51 per cent, of the total number of unemployed were found in twenty-three cities of the State, while 325 towns furnished 46.49 per cent.

It is often claimed that labor disturbances, strikes, and lock-outs are responsible for most of the idleness in manufacturing industries. The report under review goes into this question, and as a result ascertains that in the manufacturing industries "an average suspension of one-fifth of a month (0.20) was caused by repairs, improvements, etc. An average suspension of one-fiftieth of a month (0.02) was caused by strikes and lock-outs," while the balance was due to "slack trade." Just how much of the loss of time was due to combinations and trusts "restricting production, so as to control prices," does not appear; but when it is shown that in an average idleness of 4.11 months per year, strikes are responsible for but an average of one fiftieth of one month, or but little over one-half day, it is time for "statesmen" to abandon their stock argument of "strikes and strikers," and look about for some of the real causes of present conditions.

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It is possible to only partially supplement this investigation in Massachusetts by similar investigations in other States.

In 1886 the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, in an investigation of trade and labor organizations, covered the question of the number of weeks' work secured during the year. The following analysis of that report refers only to the membership of labor organizations in the State which reported upon that question, or 85,392 workingmen. For these the average was 37.1 weeks work and 14.9 weeks idleness during the year. Only one-fifth found steady work for the year; about one-third could get work but one-half the time; while, to quote from the report, "the industrial people, as a class, secure work for only 71.7 per cent of full time, and spend 28.3 per cent of their time in idleness, for want of work to do." (Illinois Report for 1886, page 319.) The coal-miners of the State secure work for but 23 weeks in the year. The occupations securing the greatest percentage of employment are those most removed from the protecting influences of

that Congressional bill of fare called tariff. Thus the barbers, horseshoers, printers and pressmen, street-railway employés and railroad men, report nearly full time; iron-moulders and rolling-mill men, 35 weeks per year; while other metal-workers report 30 weeks of work and 20 weeks of want of work.

In commenting upon the tables given, Colonel John S. Lord, the able secretary of the Bureau, says: "Whatever value may be attached to the ultimate percentage of time lost, as deduced from all classes, the specific facts remain as to a great number of men and occupations. No interpretation of these facts can obscure the important fact that out of 85,329 workingmen, organized to promote their material interests, and presumably able to secure a greater share of them than the unorganized, only about one-fifth of them can obtain continuous work for a full year of working time. As the last table shows, those who get less than 40 weeks work are 65 per cent of the whole; and those who get only from 13 to 30 weeks' wages in the year are 35 per cent of the whole, or 30,451 in number." (Page 320.)

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Another and not less important feature of the Illinois report is that it shows the number of members of labor organizations out of work at the time of the investigation—June and July, 1886.

The question of the number of weeks' work secured during the year might be sometimes loosely answered by the secretaries of labor unions; but as to the number at that time unemployed the answers would be almost as accurate as a census enumeration. The 634 labor organizations of Illinois had an enrolled membership in June, 1886, of 114,365. It was found that 17 per cent of these belonged to both the Knights of Labor and to a trade union, and had hence been duplicated. Deducting these, it was found that 103,843 persons were members of these bodies. Of these, 88,223, or 85 per cent, were employed, while 15,620, or 15 per cent, were idle. Applying this percentage to the entire number of persons engaged in the industries in which organizations were found, basing that number on the census of 1880, there must have been in the three grand divisions of industry—manufacturing, mining, and transportation—at least 50,000 men unemployed in Illinois in June, 1886. If that percentage could be applied to all occupations, this number would be swelled to 150,000. The Illinois Bureau found 15 per cent of all those engaged in manufacturing and mining industries idle in 1886.

Massachusetts finds the equivalent of 11 per cent of all her industrial population idle during the year 1885, and finds 69 per cent of this idleness in protected manufacturing industries.

So far as I can see, the result of the Illinois investigation strengthens and verifies that of Massachusetts, both resulting in the conclusion that for 1885 and 1886 the equivalent of at least 11 per cent of our industrial population was out of work. The Iowa Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1887 threw out the "raw material" of a report that would, if digested and tabulated, strengthen this position. Unfortunately, the report as printed is but the reproduction of individual returns, and the work of getting an average is too great for the time at command.

A brief computation, however, on the figures presented shows that, in a total of 1989 reports to that Bureau from workingmen in all industries, trades, and occupations, there was an average loss of time of 80 days per man per year; or, counting 300 working days per year, 26 per cent of the time of the workingmen of Iowa is unemployed.

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After this survey of the field from the reports of three States, we turn to the report of the United States Bureau, at Washington, for 1885 (pages 65 and 66).

That report, from information gained by its agents and other sources of information at its hand, estimates that 7-1/2 per cent of the 255,000 manufacturing establishments of the country were absolutely idle during the year ending July 1, 1885, and that 168,750 factory hands were thus rendered idle. By applying the 7-1/2 per cent to all industries, that bureau stated that there "might be" 1,304,407 men out of employment that year, but again readjusts its estimate as being too large, and gives the number as 998,839. That same year 11 per cent of all the people engaged in all gainful pursuits in Massachusetts were idle; the next year 15 per cent of all those engaged in the three principal industries aside from agriculture were idle in Illinois. In Iowa, 26 per cent of the time of workingmen in all industries is spent in hunting work; and how, from this state of facts, the Federal Bureau could get at a 7-1/2 per cent estimate it is difficult to see. Massachusetts finds 29 per cent of her people idle one-third of the time, or 11 per cent all the time. If it is said that this percentage would be reduced in agricultural States, Iowa proves it to be not quite true, and at least the reduction would be slight. Allowing 4 per cent less of idleness for Western States than for Massachusetts is shown to be error by the reports of Illinois and Iowa. The first estimate of the Federal Bureau, 1,304,407, was not too high, but rather too low at that time. Applying the Massachusetts percentage to the entire country at that time, there must have been 1,913,130 persons out of work; and it should be remembered, too, that this is using as a base the number reported in the census of 1880, without allowing for the increase. Colonel Wright gives in his Massachusetts report for 1885, 816,470 persons engaged in all industries; the census of 1880 gives that State 720,774, showing an increase of 95,696, or a gain of over 13 per cent. Applying the Massachusetts gain to the entire class of productive industries, we find 19,753,071 as the number to which this percentage should be applied, instead of the Census number of 17,392,099.

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I think no fair estimate of the number of unemployed in 1885 could be much under 1,900,000, and I believe no fair estimate of the present number of idle persons wishing employment and unable to find it, can be placed lower than 1,500,000. At least 6,000,000 of persons ordinarily employed are in enforced idleness from two to five months in the year, and thus forced to

consume, while seeking work, the little it was possible to save during their six or eight months of employment.

It is not the purpose of this paper to consider the causes for this tremendous aggregate of enforced idleness. Doubtless much of it is due to the frantic attempts of combinations to control prices by limiting production. Protected by laws of Congress from competition with the industries of other nations, under the guise of "protection to American labor," the combined steel industries of the country pay the Vulcan Steel Works of St. Louis \$400,000 to stand idle, thus throwing its workmen out of employ! The Waverly Stone Ring pays quarries thousands of dollars—in one instance, \$4500 per year—to do nothing. The salt works along the Kanawha were bought up by the American Salt Manufacturers' Association, and have never employed a man since. Thus is American labor protected! The Standard Oil Company buys up competitors and dismantles their works. The tack manufacturers buy out a refractory fellow who would not join the pool, and not a wheel has turned since. The Western Lead and Shot Association buys the shot-tower at Dubuque, Iowa, to keep men from working there. A leading politician and prominent officeholder of Illinois goes to Washington to prevent the tariff reduction on jute bagging proposed by the Mills bill, and pleads manfully for the poor American workingman, though his own bagging mill has been idle for three years, while he draws a dividend from the pool for "limiting production," greater than he could realize by running his works. It doth not yet appear that his idle workmen have shared in the profits he derives from their idleness.

Sloan and Company stop as many coal-mines as is necessary to prevent the output from exceeding the limit agreed upon at the "annual meeting" of the combination. So with the coke-ovens.

The Joliet Steel Mills suspended "indefinitely" upon the publication of Cleveland's message to Congress, because "we can just as well as not, and we wish to impress upon our workmen the necessity of maintaining the tariff." Very timid is capital, and very shy when it uses its power to starve a thousand men into voting for its interest and against their own!

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That very much of this idleness is caused by these attempts on the part of protected industries to limit the production of commodities at home, is probably true. That voluntary immigration into a country already cursed with a large idle population is the cause of much of it is probably also true; but not to so great an extent as the imported contract foreign labor. Voluntary immigrants usually come intending to go far west and take up land. They come with intelligent purposes, and intelligently carry them out. The imported laborers are of a very different type.

A Pennsylvania newspaper states: "There were six hundred and forty Bulgarians just from Europe, by way of Castle Garden, marched to the mouth of a coal-shaft at Johnstown yesterday and halted at the entrance like soldiers. On the opposite side of a close board fence six hundred and forty of the old miners marched out and were discharged. The new men, great, burly, blank-faced fellows, then marched into the dark hole and took up the task laid down by the malcontents. We doubt if one of the 'new arrivals' knew a word of English, or how much they were to receive for their labor. What grand opportunities these animals will have to study the beauties of our institutions!"

There is in New York a company, with a capital of \$50,000, chartered by the State to furnish Italian and Hungarian laborers, in defiance of the laws of Congress. That a committee has been appointed to "investigate" this matter of the importation of foreign labor under contract would be a healthful sign, had not these investigations become so diseased by contamination with corporate influences that most of them end at the "gate." The immigration for the first six months of 1888 exceeds that of any year since 1880, and it must follow that a vast percentage of this is either imported under contract, or, what amounts to the same thing, deceived by the lying promises of the agents of those interested in flooding the American labor market. There is certainly no crying need for additional laborers in this country, except to accomplish the purposes of a circular not long ago issued from a New York banking house, stating that "to check the demands of labor for excessive wages, it is necessary to augment the tide of immigration to the United States." The excessive demands of labor average \$1.16 per day.

It is not, however, much that New York should charter a company to violate the law of the land, when an Illinois legislature elects to the United States Senate a "high-protective-tariff" man who is building the State House of Texas with foreign contract laborers, brought there in defiance of the law passed by the Senate to which he was elected. Just how many of the four hundred thousand immigrants arriving annually are brought here under contract, or lured by deceptive promises and advertisements of those most interested in making laborers so plentiful that labor shall be cheap, it is of course impossible to tell. But that the fact is one of evil omen admits of no doubt. Rome drew nearer and nearer her end as the army of idle, hungry men increased. Feeding them from her public granaries may have postponed, it could not prevent, her final collapse. "Enforced idleness, or the cheapening of men," says a writer, "is not the sign of decadence, it *is* decadence." It is laudable and praiseworthy to make money by just and legitimate means, but it is damnable to *unmake* men in order to make money. To study the causes for this vast and constantly increasing army of unemployed, and then *do something* to check those causes and prevent their effects, while it might not be so good partisanship, would be much better statesmanship than to "fire the Northern heart" by "bloody shirt" speeches in the Senate, and the raking up of old letters to "expose" the views some men held twenty-five years ago.

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P. S.—Since writing the above, several hosiery works and woollen mills have closed because of a "tariff agitation" which, if successful, will give them cheaper raw material! "No matter," says a leading hose manufacturer in a Chicago paper, "whether the result of the proposed tariff-tinkering will benefit or injure us ultimately, any sort of agitation of the question immediately blocks trade. People will not buy when there is the remotest hope that goods will be cheaper after a while. The manufacturing industries at this time cannot stand any tariff agitation." No sane person believes that there is a man, woman, or child in the United States going without stockings until they see whether the Mills bill will pass the Senate! No sane man believes that one pair less of hose is sold in the United States because of tariff agitation. The underlying fact is, that the protected industries propose to "shut down" and throw their employés out of work for the purpose of starving them into voting for a continuation of the present iniquitous tariff schedules. It is the refined "shot-gun electioneering system" of the North.

E. S.

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THE BELLS OF CHRISTMAS.

O bells that madly toll to-night,
What is the meaning of your note?
Is disappointment or delight
The burden of each brazen throat?
And what the words my weary brain
Discovers in your vague refrain?

From the high casement of my room
I watch the world below asleep;
While from the belfries clothed in gloom
The clangor rolls from deep to deep,
Repeating, as afar 'tis flung,
A lesson from an unknown tongue.

O music that eludes the soul,—
Like that sweet sea which vexed the thirst
Of Tantalus, but never stole
Across his fevered lips accursed,—
Unfold your mysteries to-night,
Your misty meaning and your might.

It surging sweeps upon the air.
Besides the clamor of the bells
Are echoing strains from everywhere,
Past, present, future. How it swells
Into an endless sea which roars
And moans on lonely rock-bound shores!

Hoarse, hollow echoes from dead years
Of that which I have thought and done—
The discords of past sin and tears
Through e'en your fairest measures run.
Alas! when will those discords cease?
Does sorrow never lead to peace?

Chords of the present clash and jar
As though each note would never end;
Yet as their rhythms die afar,
They slowly unto beauty blend,
And the last cadence fades away
As fades a perfect summer day.

O vibrant strains of the to-be,
With promise pregnant and with hope,
You are a glad epitome
Of the hereafter's power and scope;
Yet 'neath your softest note appears
The thunder-march of coming years.

Ring, Christmas bells! The past is dead,
E'en though its requiem never die,
And God His endless love has spread
Upon the scenes that round us lie.
Ring loudly to the midnight air
That Love and Hope have slain Despair.

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Ring out, O bells! The world is wide,
And Goodness sits upon a throne.
Ring out upon the Christmas-tide
That God will not forget His own,
And that on all, from far above,
Descends His never-failing love.

WILLIAM E. S. FALES.

THE AMERICAN EAGLE UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

It seems to be a striking case of misunderstanding from the Romans down, or up, to the Americans. Every theory and supposition has curiously added to the misapprehension. Rightly judged, with the plainest facts of his life even casually considered, the Bird o' Freedom seems so disreputable a fowl that one wonders how he ever came to be chosen as a figure-head by Romans, Germans, Americans, or the Michigan Regiment that bore him alive as its standard through the smoke of a score of battles, and brought him home again unscathed to make a curious part of the history of a gallant State in the times that tried men's souls. Innumerable myths trail behind him as appendages to his unearned fame. He was the Bird of Jove. He has ever been the reputed king of an ethereal world of fancy. His eye alone may look upon the sun unwinking and undazed. And yet it is all in his eye, or rather in that of the credulous mortals who believe the ancient story. There never lived a poet, sticking to his business, that has not at some time in his career become a panegyrist of his extraordinary supposed qualities and a proclaimer of his magnificence. It is a curious fact, too, that all the moralists, save one, have at some time or other used him as a simile, a great example, a something to be imitated. That one, greatest of all, is content with the familiar and plebeian hen and chickens in one of the most eloquent and touching of his monologues, and uses the miserable sparrow in that illustration which has in all time since given comfort to forsaken souls.

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With the poetry about this overrated fowl everybody is more or less familiar. There is nothing finer; and it is somewhat startling, and also destructive of our most cherished ideas, to say that it seems a case of mistaken identity almost from beginning to end. It cannot be the eagle, *our* eagle, that is meant. He has never in a single instance done anything to entitle him to a medal. Yet the idealism of the ages has been heaping honors on his crested head through the necessity, as yet unexplained, of having some winged creature to glorify, to use as an emblem, to paint, to describe incorrectly if poetically, to embellish a heroic national moral with. It has been done without regard to fact in all the school-readers and other truthful volumes intended for the use of the very young. Every boy regards the American Eagle as the king of birds even from a moral standpoint, and he is liable to at least a brief spell of disappointment if he has the faculty of observation and the love of nature sufficiently developed to find out by-and-by that he has been deceived.

The coparcener with the eagle in all this beautiful nonsense is a bird that never existed at all, and who, having at last fallen from her high estate, is now principally useful as a name for a hotel that has been too often burned, or as the escutcheon of an insurance company. Considered in a matter-of-fact way, and in the cold and unflattering light of natural history, our national emblem is no more a truth than the Phoenix is, and is almost as preposterous as the roc. One wonders why, in the course of so many ages in which the gradual drift has been toward common-sense and fact, men have not learned to turn for their animal ideals, if it is necessary to have them, to the beasts and birds entitled to some consideration for actual qualities; for both beauty and gallantry, for instance, to the male of the barn yard fowl; for devotion, to the grotesquely homely stork; for self-sacrifice, to any of the beautiful creatures who flutter along before you in the path, with the distressful pantomime of a broken wing and great distress, inviting you to kill them easily with a stick or stone if you have the heart, and offering you every inducement to pursue them that is latent in man's cruel heart, but only after all to lead the marauder further and further away from a nest that is cherished.

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As to the first of these hastily-given examples, any country-raised boy will concede the point, and he has not been left entirely out in the poetry, and especially in the folk-lore, of the nations. He it was who marked with his clarion the moment when he upon whose name is founded the most powerful of the Christian Churches denied his master and his faith. He sings the coming of the dawn in every clime, and marks the hour when graveyards cease to yawn, or when Romeos must depart. He leads his harem abroad in the morning as he has ever done, ever ready to fight his rival from across the fence or to meet in unconsidered duel the marauding hawk. With a gallantry quite unknown to any other bird or human, he calls familiarly to others of his family to come and eat the choicest morsel he may find. He is gay. He has the natural gait and air of an acknowledged chieftain. The sun glints upon his neck. His tail is a waving plume the equal of which few birds can boast. He hath a bold and glittering eye. Sometimes retreating under the dictates of prudence, as many higher personages have often done and been commended therefor, he is yet the ideal of homely, home-defending courage. Withal, he will upon necessity demean himself to scratch for a brood of chirping orphans, and gather them to his gallant breast because they have no mother. Yet, forsooth, not this illustrious bird, but the eagle—the "American" Eagle

—is the emblem of the foster-mother of all the nations.

There is a place where every visitor to Chicago may see this emblematic lordling near at hand. It is at Lincoln Park. There is a colossal cage there where there are a dozen or so of him, and he is not even restricted in certain limited flights which seem fully satisfying to him in his well-fed condition. If you go to see him there you will have the advantage of observing how absurdly draggled and slovenly he may become with full leisure to make his toilet if he ever does, and that he evidently is not naturally a dandy. This trait is not common with any of his captive neighbors except the coyotes, and nobody who has known the coyote in his native wilderness expects anything better of him. You can also observe his grotesqueness when he is on the ground, where he often comes, and there is probably nothing more ridiculously abortive in all nature than his movements when so situated. But one cannot visit him often or observe him long without becoming convinced that none of the attitudes in which he is almost invariably depicted on flags, medals, seals, coins, and other ornamental and emblematic devices is natural to him. He never assumes them even by mistake or chance. "The poised eagle" becomes poetry like all the rest, when you observe that his "eagle glance" has taken in a piece of fresh meat somewhere, and he wishes to keep someone else from getting it. He then scrambles to the edge of a board, or hitches along to the end of a branch of the dead tree where he sits, and drops off like a hen, making an awkward flight toward the morsel that has attracted him. And when he gets there he edges suspiciously around it in the evident fear that it may be alive and may bite him.

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You will, however, be able to observe some of his traits that seem more natural. There are the cruel eyes and the relentless expression; the "hooked claws" and the "bending beak." It is an eye whose expression never changes, and which regards with constant malice all its surroundings. The brow, which gives it the look so much admired, seems, according to Mr. Ruskin, to be merely a provision of nature to keep the sun from shining into it, thus disposing, Ruskin-like, at one fell swoop of one of the most striking of the poetical myths.

Still others will be disposed of if you stay long. Did any one of my readers ever read that neither the eagle nor the lion would eat anything they had not themselves slain? Well, later advices seem to indicate that both will upon occasion descend to carrion of the basest quality, and that both consume considerable time in their native haunts in catching and devouring bugs. Lizards and such small fry are assiduously looked for. Convincing proof of this, in the eagle's case, was not wanting in one brief visit to the above-mentioned famous and beautiful resort. In the same huge cage with the eagles were certain crocodiles, or alligators, or whatever name you may choose to call the Floridian saurian by. To me they all seem very much alike. I suppose this is because I do not care much about supra-orbital bones, or the number of teeth or toes, or minute particulars of anatomical conformation, but am disposed, after a blundering and non-technical fashion, to mostly regard looks and actions. The adult, or semi-adult, alligators lie all the time asleep, never moving, never winking, never so much as apparently breathing, and looking very much like chunks in a clearing. One wonders, in view of all the stories told, if they are really alive this fine summer weather, when there is no excuse for hibernation, and if so, how they ever manage to catch anything except possibly by lying with their mouth open and waiting until something mistakes the locality and crawls into it by inadvertance.

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But there is one little beast in this interesting family so young and inexperienced as to be only about nine inches long, including all there is belonging to him, largely tail. He is of a dark-green color, with a mottled-yellow belly, and a mouth, when he opens it, very red indeed. He has no teeth large enough to be very frightful at a distance, and evidently depends upon the mere opening of this fiendish mouth to scare away all disturbers of the profound peace which broods perpetually over him and all his family.

This small one had got away, and in a modified and unsatisfactory search for his native bayou had crept through the meshes of the wire and into the other apartment where the eagles were. He was down in the little rill of running water, and partially hidden under a stone. An eagle had espied him there, and was watching him, while I watched the eagle. Presently the natural instincts of the bird of Jove became too strong for successful repression even in the presence of distinguished company, and he left his perch in the usual ungraceful way, and after alighting on the ground waddled to where the little reptile was having a comfortable time in his exile. He hesitated about the water, but finally waded in and scratched the monster out from under his sheltering rock. He then caught him round the middle with one gigantic claw which met entirely around his prey, and scrambled ashore. By this time the saurian was fairly awake, and began to provide for his immediate future by opening his mouth. The eagle, looking between his legs, saw this and dropped him as an uncanny thing, and afterwards spent some ridiculous minutes dancing around his foe and warily dodging his satanic manifestations of open mouth. The whole performance was such on the part of the eagle as would have disgraced in the eyes of her waiting family, an ordinary hen, and the end was that the alligator got safely back to his puddle and his rock. He did it deliberately, and backwards, with his mouth open about one-third of his entire length. The bird was of average size. He had the white feathers on his head which made him the "bald" or "American" eagle. Here was the emblem of this great republic vanquished by a sleepy little lizard less than a foot long. It was almost as disgraceful a performance as the Mexican War of '46.

I was once part proprietor of an eagle. He belonged to us, and we were a company of soldiers at a frontier post. While I knew him he lived in the mule-corral, and appeared to me to be at a great disadvantage there. Somebody had winged him against the face of the brown cliff at whose top he had been hatched, and he was now accustomed to sit upon a rail in the corner of the shed, and

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glare balefully at all intruders in the place he fancied he owned. He was perhaps fat beyond rule, but his claws were as long and sharp, and his eye was as relentless, as though still obliged to follow his natural calling of catching the little New-Mexican cotton-tail, and swooping down upon horned toads.

His wings measured about five feet from tip to tip, though he was supposed to have only lately passed the perilous period of his first moulting, and to be quite young. He was fed with bloody morsels of beef, and had, when he chose to take it, the freedom of the whole enclosure. But he was not on good terms with his neighbors, and maintained a very dignified demeanor toward some fifty mules, a dozen or so of cocks and hens, and an especially-privileged pig who had the run of the premises because it had been brought up by hand, and had, for a pig, remarkably aristocratic ideas. He frowned upon all manner of fellow-creatures who by accident and unintentionally paid a visit to his majesty. Peg, who owned a house which she considered her own near his perch, this mansion being a deal-box turned down, was a special aversion. Peggy was a large dog, and was herself not a pattern of amiability, especially when she was the mother of from nine to thirteen puppies, as frequently was the case; and it was commonly remarked that Aquila was in danger of having his head bitten off if he interfered with this interesting family, which he seemed rather foolishly inclined to do. Yet this was not by any means what became of this Monarch of the Air finally.

If the eagle is one of the striking emblems of power, he is also upon occasion, as before remarked, a specimen of decided and almost pitiable imbecility. He cannot even walk. His utmost endeavors in that humble direction seem to result only in an ungraceful waddle, in which his claws interfere with his shins, and those of his right foot interfere with those of his left, and he drags his tail in a most undignified manner in the dust. Also, his long wing-tips refuse to stay folded in a proper manner, as each time he stumbles he is impelled to throw out a wing, reminding one of a boy walking across a brook on a log. This one could fly only a little. The accident that had resulted in his captivity he had recovered from, but the wing bone had not been properly set where it was broken, and the short flights he attempted were very one-sided. So when he wished to go anywhere he usually walked, and it was such a walk as above described, or worse.

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And when he did, it was to a place one would never have imagined that a properly conducted and self-respecting eagle would have thought of. But the bird seemed to have a liking for low resorts, and his special weakness was the pig-pen. This was, as it should have been, outside the walls, and was generally occupied by some eight or a dozen little, sharp-nosed, pointed-eared, anti-Berkshire, Mexican pigs, whose business it was to eat up all that was left from the dinner of more than a hundred soldiers, and to be the heirs of all the condemned commissary stores, and whose fate it was to be finally eaten themselves, say about Christmas. The last lot that went in there is a distinct recollection to me, aside from their doings with the eagle. They came from some aboriginal hamlet on the banks of the Rio Grande, about a hundred miles away. Each two of them had accommodations to themselves—a pen made of willow sticks, tied together with raw-hide, and slung upon a donkey. The long-suffering animal who had carried them so far had a round dozen for his cargo. He was heaped and piled with pig-cages, and the topmost pair of little swine were having an airy ride at the apex of a pyramid about eight feet from the ground, swaying from side to side with a sea-sick motion as the donkey walked; and they looked sick. A more unpromising family was never reared even in New Mexico. Nevertheless they were dropped over the side of the pen after much chaffering with the owner, and at an expense of "four bits" each.

As soon as by some means he found out they were there, it was to the pig-pen that this fatuous fowl resorted. I do not know why, but it was not because he loved them, nor that he had especial business with them. Making his way thither as best he could he would perch upon the side of the pen and glare balefully down upon the occupants, who did not seem to greatly care if he chose to amuse himself in that senseless manner. But after a while he would drop down on the back of the nearest one, and holding fast with his claws, he would proceed to bite the back of his neck, tweak his ears, and otherwise maltreat him. But at his first squeal the others would make common cause with him, after the unselfish fashion of pigs, and together they would pull our emblem down, drag him down in the dust or mud as the case might be, and finally would hustle him off into a corner, where he would sit scowling until some soldier came and took him away. Whenever the shrill voice of a pig was heard expostulating it would be understood that the eagle was at it again, and somebody would go to the rescue of our national greatness. Often have I seen a couple of soldiers, each with the tip of a wing in his hand, and with the eagle between them, marching him across the parade-ground to his proper roost. On these occasions he looked exceedingly silly. When his feet touched the ground he would attempt to walk, and with even less success than usual. He reminded me of some urchin who had fallen into the creek, and who was being led homeward in much wetness and humiliation.

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It is a sad story when the traditional dignity of the principal character is considered, for he was finally killed by those pigs. The facts developed at the inquest seemed to indicate that he had no discretion, and had gone too often. They had walked over him, and had even lain down upon him. Dead and disregarded he lay in a corner among the litter, and they had not even attempted to eat him. This seemed to indicate that they had killed him merely as a lesson to him. There never was more ignominious end to an exalted character.

Literature is very full of the reputed nobleness of certain birds and beasts; their vaunted qualities of head and heart; the pride of their bearing; the independence of their lives; the solitary grandeur of their characters. And in the majority of cases these heathenish notions have

remained undisputed by the lapse of time. Even men assume for long periods of time the characters that romantic biographers have clothed them with, and the youth of this country, now men, are only just beginning to recover their senses after the singular yarns of such books as Abbott's Life of Napoleon, read in youth. As instances of the first statement, the elephant is actually, and in his real circus life, an indocile and malicious beast, prone to blind rages, revenges, and sly malice. The camel, darling of the Arab, ship of the desert, etc., has, by the testimony of those who know him well, less sense than a sheep; as long-necked and homely a piece of perfect stupidity as there is in the caravan, and looks it. I shall have attained the topmast round of a species of high treason when I mention a doubt as to whether that noble slave, the horse, is entitled to his general reputation, but such a doubt I have. There are those who lose a good deal of money on him, and will forgive him anything, even to the occasional breaking of their necks. He has his admirers in a majority of mankind, yet there never actually lived that fabled creature, a "safe" horse.

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To revert again, and finally, to our national emblem, his mode of life gives him, if we may fall into the vernacular, dead away. He may have his virtues from our standpoint, and one of them is that he is not prolific. His crude nest is such a one as a boy might build in rough imitation of a nest, and call it an eagle's. Made of big sticks and nothing else, and added to as the years pass, it is wedged into the forks of a solitary hemlock, as high as possible from the ground and as remote as possible from any other thing, or is perched upon the shelf of the cliff above the canyon or the coast. It contains only three or four homely eggs. He seems faithful in his domestic relations, and pairs off not for a season, but for life or good behavior. This one fact covers his good qualities, for there is undoubtedly a spice of the heroic about it. With all his rapacious and predatory power of wing it may not be doubted that he is a bug-eater and a lizard-catcher, and that on mesa or in valley he fights with the raven and the buzzard for the possession of the uppermost eye of the casual dead mule. But his especial weakness is an article of diet that he has no right to in the animal code, for the reason that he can't catch it. That is fish, and he invariably simply steals it when he gets it. Any man who has witnessed this proceeding and not been outraged by it could hardly be considered a competent jurymen in a Chicago boodle case. The osprey, having caught his lawful fish by pure skill and natural capacity, bears it away wriggling in his talons. He is weighted by his booty and flies heavily. Somebody who has been sulkily watching him for perhaps a day or two from some unseen nook, sails after him and pounces upon him from above. Turning to fight he must drop his fish, which the other gets and goes off with. One can but see the disappointed fisherman return again to his watching, and think of a hungry brood of nestlings waiting at home, and feel some degree of displeasure and regret in the fact that the marauder, unpunished and unregretful, is none other than the emblem and figure-head of the great republic. He knows that no nation can be considered strictly honest except his own, and he ever after is disposed to wonder at that ignorance of the plainest facts of natural history that has led it to choose out from the beasts and birds a thief and a coward for the only bit of heraldry its statutes know,

JAMES STEELE.

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THE HOLY NIGHT.

It was so still a night—
So calm and still!
And watching stars, far in the silent sky,
Shone tenderly
Upon the quiet world asleep and chill,
And lying breathless in the frozen light.

O earth, unconscious earth!
Serene that hour
As the untroubled heart of the sweet maid
Who now hath laid
Her little Child to rest—her Child whose power
Hath bid e'en soulless things proclaim His birth.

Yet silent lies He now,
And asketh naught,
This sweetest One, but on His mother's breast
He findeth rest.
And of her tender smiling (sorrow-bought)
The still light falleth on His sleeping brow.

"My Own!" she whispers low,
And then her ear
Hath caught the angel anthem from above,
Where the Blest Dove
Forever broodeth, and she waits to hear
The song of peace re-echoed o'er the snow.

And yet the Babe doth sleep;
And does He dream
How, in the golden Christmases to come,
Through each fair house
That self-same song of peace, while tapers gleam,
Shall sound, as now it soundeth, strong and deep.

For happy childhood bears
Forevermore
His seal upon its brow, and childhood's voice
Shall e'er rejoice
At this glad time, when the Redeemer wore
Its poverty, its feebleness, and tears.
And every human heart
Shall tender grow
And very humble, if a child but speak,
That seemeth weak,
But still is strong in Him who would forego
Through strength of love all things that joy impart.

We praise Thee, O Thou King
Thou Holy One!
We praise Thee for our childhood, and we praise
Through all our days
This festival of peace and good-will shown
To man, while evermore the angels sing.

HELEN GRACE SMITH.

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JOE:

A STORY OF FRONTIER LIFE.

In the early days when stage coaching formed a prominent feature of frontier existence, "The Pioneer Home" was one of the most popular of the Sierra stations. This was not due to its dimensions, nor to its architectural advantages, nor to the accommodations it offered, for it was nothing more than a roughly though substantially built, comfortable-looking log-cabin. But standing as it did on the main street of Nevada City, it would have invited observation on account of its neatly kept, old-fashioned garden of hollyhocks, marigolds, and gilly-flowers, even if a swinging black sign-board had not designated it in glaring red letters as a place of "Entertainment for Man and Beast."

It was Nathaniel Parkenson who, with the aid of his wife, rendered this depot attractive both within and without. When news of the discovery of gold in California reached there, this enterprising couple were among the first to venture from their home in Connecticut. Bent on seeking a fortune in the new El Dorado, they crossed the plains and joined an established mining camp. But their hardships were by no means terminated when their journey came to an end. Nathaniel found working the pick and shovel far more laborious than he had anticipated, and the privations and exposure of camp-life soon began to tell upon his health.

As for Mrs. Parkenson, able-bodied and capable of work though she was, she soon determined in her mind that more congenial occupation and surroundings would have to be sought. Many a plan suggested itself to her, but none formulated to her satisfaction until the coarse canvas bag in which her husband's earnings had been concealed and regularly added to through many months began to evince a state of plethora. Then she felt that the time had come when silence ceased to be golden.

"This kind of livin' ain't goin' to do for you, nor me nuther, Nathanel," was the statement with which she one day interrupted a fit of coughing on the part of her husband.

Too much absorbed with the suggestion she was about to offer to observe his surprise at the first expression of dissatisfaction he had heard from her lips, she continued: "We've got to git out er this place in a little less nor no time, unless we wait till we're tuk out, and that's all there is about it." Mrs. Parkenson emphasized her remarks with decided jerks of the head, which set in motion the half-dozen black, pipe stem curls that hung on either cheek.

Nathaniel recognised this swaying of his wife's ringlets as a sign of deep emotion, which only served to increase his surprise.

"But, Marthy, how's it to be managed?" he inquired in a gentle, deprecating tone. "Surely yer wouldn't go back East to set the folks there to makin' fun of us, would yer, arter what they said agin our comin' so far away?"

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"Who spoke of East or West or any other p'int of the cumpis, I should like to know?" asked Mrs. Parkenson, in a tone that indicated the uselessness of reply. "Ef you think I'd be satisfied jest to settle down here and cook for the fellers in this camp for the rest of my natural existence, you don't know the stuff Martha Gummidge Parkenson is made of."

Nathaniel gazed at his wife with admiration and pride, while she laid before him, in her peculiarly convincing manner, the project that had long occupied her thoughts. This was that he should obtain the agency for a stage company; and, encouraged by the expression of his countenance, she explained how she had already begun negotiations which it would be easy for him to complete.

And this is how it came about that Nathaniel Parkenson purchased the establishment in Nevada City which he called "The Pioneer Home." It did not take long for travellers to find out that here pies, biscuits, corn-bread, and Indian pudding of a superior order were to be had; for Mrs. Parkenson had profited by her New England training, and cooking was in her eyes a fine art not to be despised. Besides, she was ably assisted in her labors by Mary Jane, a niece who had joined the Parkensons shortly after their removal to Nevada City. Mary Jane was a dark-haired, brown-eyed, well-grown Yankee girl, who delighted in styling herself "Aunt Marthy's right bower," which she did with an air of unmistakable appreciation of her own importance.

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The dining-room was Mary Jane's special charge; and as the stage-drivers, accompanied by the passengers they had brought, filed in with an expectant air (for they knew what good cheer was sure to await them at this station), the girl received each with a friendly nod, some cheerful remark, or other token of kindly recognition. It is needless to state that she had her favorites amongst those whom she knew best, for, being a woman and young, she had dreamed of her beau ideal in the opposite sex. Ample opportunity was at hand to study the male character in certain circumstances, and Mary Jane did not neglect it.

The bar-room was simply a part of the dining-room, a red calico curtain, almost always drawn aside, forming the line of division between the two apartments. Here the men employed in the stables, the drivers, and whatever passengers waited over for the morning stages congregated to pass the evening; and the smoking, drinking, and card-playing were interspersed with many a thrilling, blood-curdling story of the road.

Mary Jane's ideas of propriety would not permit her to cross the curtain line at such times, but standing within its folds, partly concealed, she would strain her ears to catch every detail of the narrative, oblivious of work or of Aunt Marthy's displeasure, until warned by Nathaniel to "Git along, Mol, and do up yer chores."

Thus she first learned of Joe Marshall's exploits, and his bravery elicited her admiration.

Joe drove the stage between Nevada City and Camptonville, a distance of twenty miles, including a dangerous mountain-trail. Nobody knew anything about his antecedents, but he was considered "the whip" of the hour, and his daring feats were oftener recounted than those of any other mountain Jehu. In short, his comrades regarded him as an honor to the "profession." Mary Jane did more: she fell in love with him in spite of her aunt's frequently expressed disapproval.

"Girls always have a fancy for these good-lookin', rakish kind of fellers that don't care a fig for anybody," said Mrs. Parkenson; "but, take my word for it, Joe'll be slinkin' off one of these fine days and makin' love to some other girl; then you'll just break your heart over him," she added, with a violent shake of the curls in her niece's direction.

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Mrs. Parkenson's warning was not prompted by dislike of Joe, but, with an eye to the main chance, she had set her heart on bringing Dick Bowles into her family. Dick was the driver of the You Bet stage, and he had prospects in the shape of a wealthy uncle in the East who had promised to make him sole heir to his entire fortune.

"Dick ain't so very good-lookin', I'll allow," Mrs. Parkenson would add, by way of comparison; "but he's more of a man than Joe, as anybody might see with half an eye. Besides, he's clean gone on you, Mary Jane, and he don't mind if the hull world knows it; but that Joe's indifference jest riles me all over. He's nuthin' but a beardless, pretty, good-natured, kind-hearted, careless boy—that's what he is," she added with a low chuckle, "though he will persist in declarin' over and over agin that he's turned twenty-five. Some folks may credit that, but I don't."

"Humph!" exclaimed the girl, tossing her head and turning up her nose, while she thought: "I'd like to know where auntie gits her men if Joe's a boy." The angry color dyed her cheeks as she spoke in defence of her favorite: "I guess it's no fault of his if he ain't got a beard; just give him time, and I'll bet a quarter he'll turn out as good a crop as any of the other fellers."

Mary Jane was perhaps the more indignant because she could not but acknowledge to herself the justice of Mrs. Parkenson's criticism. Joe was, without doubt, undersized and boyish in stature; the most vivid imagination would fail to discover even embryotic promise of beard or mustache; and although his flowing chestnut locks might excite admiration, they served to enhance his youthful appearance. These facts provoked the girl excessively, particularly as ardor, which would have compensated her for everything else, was decidedly lacking in Joe Marshall.

Joe's peculiarities were not infrequently the subject of comment amongst the men. "It's not that ee's muskilar, but ee's wiry," was the criticism of Captain Cullen, the driver of the Malakoff stage. Cullen had been in command of a British brig before emigrating to America, and therefore

retained his title, while he still struggled with his h's. "Joe hain't afraid of nothink," he would declare, shaking his head and opening his round, dull eyes to their fullest extent; "and dern me if 'is 'orses don't seem to know it by the way they 'ammer hover the road. 'Tain't that ee can outcuss the rest on us, for by Jove! I never 'eard a hoath hout of 'is lips. I've made hup my mind that it's sumthin' supernateral wot's got hinto 'im." Having thus delivered himself, Captain Cullen considered that point satisfactorily explained.

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"I reckon you've about hit it," returned Dick Bowles. "Joe's got his good p'int, to be sure, though he can't cuss wuth a damn. Mebbe it's coz he don't drink whiskey; I dunno. That larf o' hisn gets me every time; I never did hear anythin' to ekal it! Mebbe you've heard tell of the circus man that cum along here last year and offered to give Joe fifty dollars a week ef he'd agree to travel about with his show jest to start up the larf at the performances."

This was a fact. But the proprietor of the circus was not the only person on whom Joe's laughter made an impression. When his full red lips parted in merriment, displaying his large, pearly teeth, and emitting a low, gurgling sound, one was reminded of the rippling of water over pebbles. Mrs. Parkenson declared that "Joe's laugh was more contagious nor the measles."

"Most everybody takes to Joe," said the landlord, by way of accounting for Bowles's statement. "For when he gits off that larf o' hisn, I'll be blowed ef it don't kinder draw folks towards him. But yer can't take no liberties with him, once he fixes them gray eyes on yer."

"He's too soft and sneaky for me," returned Bowles, testily. Then observing the deprecatory glances of the others, he added: "Ef I hadn't er seen him oncet when the Injins got arter him, the way he blazed away at the skinflints and then druv his team straight ahead 'thout even so much as losin' his color, I'd call him an out-an'-out milksop."

Knowing glances were exchanged by some of the men, amongst whom it was no secret that Dick was decidedly jealous of Mary Jane's preference for Joe. Dick had reason to believe that if this formidable rival were removed the girl would treat him better. For, cruel though she was at times, she accepted his attentions with unconcealed satisfaction when Joe was out of the way; it aggravated him, therefore, beyond measure to see her sweetest smiles bestowed upon his rival.

"Guess you ain't feelin' O K," said Mary Jane one evening as she placed a dish of smoking-hot bacon and eggs in front of Joe. "Wot's up? bad noos from the States?" she added, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. This was banter, for nobody knew better than she that the young man never received a communication of any sort through the mail.

Mrs. Parkenson had remarked upon this many a time, and in no complimentary terms. "It must be a black sheep, and no mistake, that home folks wouldn't send a letter to in all these years," she had said.

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Joe looked into Mary Jane's face, while a pained expression flitted across his own; this was instantly followed by his peculiar laugh, though it lacked the genuine ring and sounded forced and jerky. But it attracted the attention of two strangers who sat at the end of the long table. They had arrived by one of the stages, and had registered in Parkenson's big book as "John Carter, M.D., and Edward Fulton, Minneapolis, Minn." Their business had been to examine a mine in the interest of an Eastern company, and they were now on their return-trip. Both seemed young, though the doctor's hair was sprinkled with gray at the temples, and there were dark lines beneath his eyes which told of sorrow.

The doctor started perceptibly at the sound of Joe's voice, and dropping his knife and fork, leaned forward with an attempt to obtain a view of his features. This was frustrated by our hero, who had turned away, and in a low tone was answering his interlocutrice. The doctor looked puzzled, and continued his meal.

Presently Joe left the table and passed into the bar-room. In silence he examined the last leaf of the register. His face flushed, his hand trembled; he was thankful that his agitation escaped observation. He longed to get to his little room over the stable; but the only exit was through the apartment he had just left, and he hesitated. At the sound of approaching footsteps he moved towards the curtain, raised it, and met Doctor Carter face to face. They exchanged glances; neither spoke, but the doctor looked troubled, and with a deep frown riveted his gaze on Joe's retreating form.

"Who is that youth?" he asked, pointing toward the door through which Joe had disappeared.

"That's Marshall." answered the landlord. "Everybody in these parts knows him."

"Is he employed here?" was the next query.

"He runs the Camptonville stage, and there ain't a better driver in the hull West."

"Strange!" said the doctor, evidently not satisfied with the intelligence. "Has he been here long?" he added.

"It must be all of five years since Joe put in an appearance on this line," returned the landlord.

"Five years," repeated the doctor dreamily. He looked as though some painful reminiscence had been recalled to him.

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"I'd like to know what you've found to interest you in that fellow," said Fulton, who now stood at

his friend's elbow. "You could scarcely eat for watching him, and I failed to make you listen when I spoke to you."

"It is a resemblance to a person whom I once knew well—nothing more—queer, is it not, with what persistency a familiar face will sometimes haunt us?" returned the doctor, assuming an off-hand air.

"This fellow's double must surely have robbed you—for you looked ready to spring upon him just now when he went out," said Fulton, jocosely.

"Robbed me?" repeated the doctor; "ah, yes—he did, indeed—but you shall hear about it another time." And they seated themselves at the card table.

When Joe closed the door behind him, he moved slowly away. His eyes were fixed on the ground; he was absorbed in thought. Suddenly his attention was arrested by Mary Jane, who awaited him, as she had frequently done, in the doorway of a rickety, long-disused barn. "I say, Joe!—hist!" she exclaimed, on seeing that he was about to pass without observing her. "Look wot I've fetched yer;" and she held up a couple of well-polished apples.

The young man's melancholy smile troubled her, and although he pressed her hand in gratitude for the attention, she felt instinctively that she had not occupied his thoughts.

"I say, Joe, what ails you?" she asked, tenderly. "Did I hurt your feelin's when I asked ef you had noos from home? I thought you'd know it was fun."

"Ah, no; you have never been unkind to me; you're a good girl. I'm not ungrateful; you must never think that—but—"

"But you're sick," she interrupted. "I just knew there was somethin' out er kilter when you kum in, fur you looked so kinder wore out. I'll run and git you some brandy."

He held her back. "No—no; stay—it's nothing; I'll be all right to-morrow—'all hunky,' as you say." He laughed to reassure her, and asked where she got the apples.

"Jake fatched 'em up from Frisco, and it isn't everybody I'd hook things for, you'd better believe."

"Wouldn't you do it for Dick?" Joe asked, with a mischievous smile.

"None o' yer business," she returned, indignantly. It would have pleased her to notice even a suspicion of jealousy on Joe's part; but it seemed to her that the mention of his rival just at that moment was ill-timed, and she wondered why the fellow stupidly neglected his opportunities. He was evidently touched, though, for he folded her in his arms, and spoke affectionately.

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"Tell me, Mary Jane," he said, looking into her eyes, "is it because you really like me so much that you are so kind to me and put nice things in my room? Did you think I couldn't guess who left the cake there yesterday?"

The girl blushed with pleasure, and her eyes fell beneath his gaze. When she raised them they were filled with tears, and her voice trembled when she spoke:

"Oh, Joe, if I didn't care so orful much for you I wouldn't be always gittin scolded about you; but—but—" She was interrupted by her sobs. Joe stroked her hair lovingly, and she wept freely upon his shoulder. "Ca-ant yer see I lo-ve you better nor Dick and all the rest o' the fellers put together?" she asked, at last.

He kissed her again and again, then darted away and left her alone.

"Well, ef he isn't the queerest lot I ever *did* see!" said Mary Jane, after convincing herself that he had really gone. "He hugs a girl different from any man I ever heerd of; Dick could give him pints on the subject and no mistake."

Prompted by coquetry and an earnest desire to arouse Joe's resentment, she lavished attentions on Dick the next morning, much to this individual's satisfaction. Her indignation was increased considerably at Joe's unmistakable indifference. Indeed, he took so little notice of her that after hastily swallowing a cup of coffee and refusing the viands she placed before him, he devoted himself to his horses, fondling them, calling each by name, rubbing their limbs, and adjusting the various straps and buckles about the harness, until the stable boys set up their shrill nasal cries:

"All aboard for You Bet! Here you are for Camptonville! This way for Downieville, Blue Tent, Forest City!"

At the sound of a loud, piercing whistle every driver springs to the box of his respective stage, the passengers take their places, crack go the whips, and the coaches are off.

They were scarcely out of sight before Fulton began to regret that he had persuaded his friend to remain over for a day's rest, for the doctor was evidently chafing at the delay, and he seemed unaccountably out of sorts. He wandered along the road, and evinced the greatest impatience every time he consulted his watch. He questioned the landlord so closely about the stage drivers that Fulton laughingly inquired whether he proposed establishing an opposition company.

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The day dragged its slow length along, and sunset brought the excitement and bustle that accompanied the return of the stages. They came in at intervals, each depositing its passengers, bundles, boxes, and mail-bags, then disappearing in the direction of the stable. It was soon

observed that the Camptonville coach, usually one of the first, had not returned. Supper was served at the customary hour, and by eight o'clock the men had assembled in the bar-room; still no Camptonville coach. The air was rife with conjecture.

"I say, Parkenson, wot's 'appened to 'er?" asked Captain Cullen; "she's genally the fust in."

"I reckon we'll have to go out in search of her putty soon ef she don't appear," replied the landlord, who was showing unmistakable signs of uneasiness.

"'Taint likely the road agents has stopped her, is it?" asked Bowles, in an awed tone.

"Wall, they'll find our Joe one too many for 'em ef they git arter him, for there ain't a better fighter nor a truer shot in the hull country," returned Parkenson, so ready to exalt Marshall's qualities that it required only a slight stretch of imagination to proclaim him a pugilist. "Wasn't I along with him oncet when the Injuns attacked him—"

"Yes," interrupted the Captain, "but Hinjuns is different from road hagents; yer hain't got no chance with a lot of fellers as jump hout from be'ind a tree with a rifle levelled at yer 'ead."

"But I tell you, I seen Joe," persisted the landlord, raising his voice with a determination to be heard, "when the derned redskins cum along whooping and yelling like a lot o' devils let loose. Joe never stopped to ask how he could sarve 'em, but he jest blazed away at 'em, keeping the mustangs straight along 'thout so much as lettin' a cuss or a sound out of his mouth."

This was one of Marshall's peculiarities. He was ostentatious in his silence, seldom uttering a syllable while driving, unless it was to give vent to some scarcely audible command to his horses.

The words had hardly passed Parkenson's lips when the sound of wheels and the clatter of horses' hoofs were heard. Everybody hastened to the door; even the women were on the alert, and they had to crane their necks to get a view over the heads of the men of the belated stage. Joe Marshall's seat on the box was filled by Tucker, a well known miner.

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"Lend a hand, here, boys," he cried; "Marshall's knocked up, inside there." Quickly securing the reins he jumped to the ground, just as the stage door was thrown open. Another miner of the neighborhood sat in a corner, tenderly supporting the unconscious form of poor Joe, and under his direction a dozen willing hands were enlisted to convey the wounded young man to his room.

"You're a doctor, ain't yer?" asked Mary Jane of Carter, wringing her hands in distress, while tears streamed down her cheeks. "Then why don't yer take a holt and do somethin' for Joe?"

Carter's agitation was so great, however, that he was unable to offer suggestions, and, for the moment, forgetting the requirements of his profession, he simply moved along with the crowd.

Joe's clothing was torn and stained with blood; so were the lifeless hands which lay where they had been placed across his breast; while his long, brown hair fell back in a heavy, damp mass from his broad, pallid brow, revealing an ugly cut. A stream of blood trickled from the wound, to which the doctor mechanically pressed his handkerchief from time to time, while the others were lavish in their expressions of sympathy and regret. They laid the wounded driver gently on his cot, and then withdrew and placed themselves in the doorway to await the doctor's verdict, while the landlady bustled about somewhat noisily in her eagerness to procure the necessary restoratives.

"We must have more air and quiet," was the doctor's first remark, after he had carefully examined the wounds and counted the pulse of the injured man. No second hint was needed, and he and the landlady were left alone with the patient.

In the bar-room, Tucker was giving the details of the accident. "Joe must er felt that he was in fur hard luck, fur I noticed that he wasn't like hissself the minute I jined him. He looked so sour and seemed so low in his sperits that I asked wot was up. Then he seemed madder'n ever, and he druv so reckless that I was putty derned sure we wouldn't come out with whole hides. Sure enough, afore we knowed it, the animals shied at somethin' on the road and started to run. I got a holt onto the ribbons, Harris, here, a helpin' all he could; but Joe jist let go, and laid back until we came to a turn. Then away the poor fellow went flying over the rocks 's if he'd been shot from a cannon. As soon as we could git the horses hauled in and quieted down, we went back to get Joe. We thought he was dead, but Harris got some water and throwed it on him till he began to groan, then we fixed him in the stage and fotched him along. That's the upshot of the hull business. It's dern'd lucky you had a doctor handy, though he don't seem to be much 'count."

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After duly discussing the accident in all its bearings, the bar-room occupants disposed themselves as usual at the card tables.

The clock struck ten. At that moment Mary Jane, who having failed to obtain news through Joe's keyhole, had taken her stand at a window which commanded a view of the stable, saw her aunt emerge. In an instant she was at her heels, and the two women entered the bar-room together.

Mrs. Parkenson wore a mysterious air, and there was something about her that attracted all eyes. It was easy to see that she brought important tidings. Her eyes glistened, her face was flushed, and she seemed bristling with information. Some of the men rose and gathered about her, asking questions.

"He isn't wuss, is he?" said Mary Jane, with an injured air, adding: "I reckon it wouldn't take a

month to git it out, ef he wus." The girl thought she had been left out in the cold, and resented her dismissal from the patient's chamber.

But without accordin' her the slightest possible attention, Mrs. Parkenson addressed herself to the men. "What do you all think?" she asked, at last, without expecting or awaiting a reply. "When the boys were sent out of the room the doctor jest kept starin' at Joe, till I thought he was goin' to let the poor feller die 'thout doin' the fust thing for him; so I spoke up, and gave my opinion of the case. Then he roused himself, for he seemed most as much dazed as Joe was, and began doin' things to bring the boy to. At last I ses, 'Let's put his feet in hot water;' and away I started for the bucket; well, it was a long time before I could git the water to bile, and when I went back to Joe's room—of course I didn't stop to knock—what do you think I saw? You'll never guess, not if you tried a hundred years. There sot the doctor on the bed a huggin' and kissin' Joe, a-cryin' and callin' him his darlin', his long-lost pet, his angel, and all such nonsense. I thought he was crazy; the bucket fell out of my hand, and the bilin' water went streaming over the floor. If Joe hadn't er spoke to me, I dunno what I wouldn't er done to that doctor. He wouldn't let Joe say much, but he turned to me and explained that Joe ain't a he at all; he's a simon-pure, flesh-and-blood woman." She almost screamed the last words in her eagerness to make the climax effective.

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For an instant the air was filled with ejaculations, so varied, so original, so potent, that Fulton, who was a stranger to the local phrases, was as much astonished at them as he could have been at the news of Joe's sex. His head reeled as he turned from one to another.

"No woman could er druv them 'orses over sech roads," at last exclaimed Captain Cullen, with a highly indignant air; "you'll hexcuse me ef I refuse to believe such 'umbug."

"Well, ef Joe's a woman, who is she, anyhow?" asked Dick Bowles, with a triumphant glance at Mary Jane.

"It's a dirty, mean shame, that's wot it is," said that young woman, angry tears welling up to her eyes.

"Joe's real name is Josephine Marsh," continued Mrs. Parkenson, anxious to keep the floor as long as possible, "and ef you'll jest listen to me a minute longer, I'll tell you the hull story. It seems that Joe's mother died in an insane asylum, and that is the cause of the hull trouble. Joe was engaged to be married to this very doctor, who lives in the town she cum from; well, one night she heard some of her folks talkin' about crazy people, and all of 'em agreed that when there was that sort er trouble in a family no marryin' ought to be allowed, and they told the reason why. Joe loved her beau too much to run the risk of bringin' such a misfortune on him as they described it to be, and she couldn't bear to stay right there and break with him, so she up and skipped. The poor thing sacrificed her hull happiness for what she thought right, and I don't care what any er you say, I respect her for it. I left the doctor explaining that her mother's case couldn't affect anybody but her own self; I don't quite understand how he made it out, but Joe was satisfied; that I could see plain enough, for it brought the color back to her cheeks in a jiffy, and she jest looked as pretty as a picter. I don't see how any of us could ever have believed such a sweet lookin' creetur to be a man, or a boy either, for that matter."

"I ain't a bit surprised," calmly observed Mary Jane, with a curl of the lip, Then turning to Dick Bowles, who beamed with happiness, she added. "I kinder think there was sumthin' peculiar about Joe all the time."

What Dick's private opinion may have been did not appear, for he was careful not to discuss the subject with his lady-love. It satisfied him to find that when he took her hand and pressed it tenderly, she allowed it to rest in his.

ROSALIE KAUFMAN.

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EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

THE LATE ELECTION.

There are two lessons, taught by the late contention, that the people will be slow to learn until coming events force them to a knowledge.

The first is, that our government has passed from the political fabric built us by the fathers to a financial concern in which private interests dominate public affairs.

The second is, that no public man, let his honesty and influence be what they may, can menace the moneyed power of our land and remain in public life.

We are so accustomed to being fed on phrases that we lose in their use the object for which they were framed. Our fathers sought the shores of America to escape oppression at home. The sum total of the despotism was found in the fact that while they who produced all enjoyed nothing, they who produced nothing enjoyed all. In framing certain legal enactments, in the shape of a constitution that was supposed to be good against such inequality and injustice, the fathers thought to eliminate privileged classes by wiping out the laws of primogeniture and entail. They took no account, for they could not know, of the corporation, that has all the powers and

privileges of the born aristocracy, and renders all the guarantees of the constitution of no avail.

Under the power of the corporation we have a hundred and fifty thousand miles of operating railway that has passed to the control and into the virtual ownership of less than sixty families. To this combination has gone an attribute of sovereignty found in the power to tax the people. As Senators Sherman, Conkling, and Windom said, in their famous report to the Senate, this railroad power can tax all the products of the country in a way Congress dare not attempt. This iron network of rails enters every man's business and pleasure, and is the taxation without representation that brought on the Revolution and gave birth to our government. The people lose through fraud all that they gained through violence; and, sad to say, generally with their own consent.

We have the telegraph, so necessary to our business, which science gave as the poor man's post, for it consists of a wire, a pole, a battery, and a boy, that is openly owned and operated as a luxury by one man.

The currency, the life-blood of trade, is farmed out to something over two thousand corporations, that, acting as one, contract or expand it to suit their own greed.

We are cursed with a system, called a tax, but which is in fact an extortion, that, under the plea of favoring certain moneyed interests, not only forces the consumer to support the burthens of a government kept upon a war footing nearly a quarter of a century after the war closed, but enables less than a million out of sixty millions to accumulate means until our rich men are marvels to mankind. The great Republic, through this process, has entered the avenues of private enterprise, and with its crushing weight reduces labor to starvation wages.

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All these combined form trusts, as they are called, which, limiting production, shut out competition, and accumulate for the favored few while the masses suffer.

All then, united, make our government; for government is that power from which there is no appeal, upon which we depend for a recognition of our rights. This power elects our Congress, selects our Presidents, and intimidates our courts.

To meet it we have a government of parties. It is a cast-iron, immovable, insensitive concern, farther removed from popular control than any government on earth. The party once in power can perpetuate that power under the best of circumstances; but when backed by the monopolized wealth of the continent it cannot be displaced. History tells us that it called for bayonets and bloodshed to displace the Democratic party in '61, and we fear history will repeat itself when a long-suffering and outraged people come to recognize the source of their wrongs and the cause of their sufferings.

In addition to this, there is an ugly rock on which we once were nearly shipwrecked, upon which we are again driving. The sectional differences of '61 have been steadily cultivated for selfish partisan ends, and to-day the North is united, as far as a majority can unite, against a solid South. While recognizing the fact that it is only through a careful and jealous guardianship of the home governments found in the States that this wide continent can be held under one control as a nation, we have the dominant party fatally bent on a centralization of power in the political structure at Washington. The negro is the Chinaman of the South, and while Congress excludes through legal enactment the Mongolian from our midst, that same Congress presses the ignorant, vicious African upon the South. This means not only a subversion of political rights, but a social revolution that will make a San Domingo and an Ireland of half our territorial limits. The South cannot submit to this and live. The South has given a bloody pledge to its intent in this direction, that it would be well for us to remember. The North can welcome negroes to its firesides, may return them to office because of their color, for this means votes, and nothing more. But at the South it signifies a great deal more: it means the subjugation of the white race politically and socially to the domination of the most degraded and ignorant class known to humanity.

This election has settled the fact that no public man can raise his hand or voice against the moneyed interests above enumerated and remain in public life. Had President Cleveland been content with the mere routine of office; had he, in addition, used the offices under him as a reward for personal services; he would have stood a good chance of re-election. He is not of that sort; and when he sought to reduce taxation on the poor man's clothes and blankets he aroused the wrath of the great national combine, and his fate was sealed.

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There is not a man of average intellect in the whole length and breadth of the continent but knows that our elections are mere questions of money. From the first move of the Republican party to the last, there was nothing but assessments and expenditures in this direction. Senator Ingalls struck the key-note when he advised the selection as a candidate for Vice-President of "some fellow like Phelps, who could tap Wall Street." Senator Plumb continued the cry when he called for a squeeze of the fat manufacturers, the only class, he said, benefited by the tariff; and he added truthfully, that if he had his way he would put them on a gridiron and fry the fat out of them. This was unblushingly embodied in a printed circular. Colonel Dudley followed, in his advice to State committees to schedule the floaters and buy them by the half-dozen, assuring the instructed that means would not be wanting to carry on the corruption. What this corruption was, one word tells with more emphasis than volumes. That word is Blaine. He nominated that figure-head Harrison, and planned and openly carried on the campaign of abomination to the end.

It would be a waste of space and ink for us to recapitulate the career and character of this man.

The platform which he has built under himself and which has been accepted by his party is a pillory of public contempt and condemnation. Perhaps the eloquent Governor Stevenson, himself a Republican, put it all in one sentence when he said of James G. Blaine, as presiding officer of the House, that "more property passed under the gavel of the Speaker than was knocked down by all the auctioneers' hammers of the United States."

We waste much valuable indignation in denouncing individual wrongdoers instead of attacking the system that makes such criminals possible. In no other civilized community on earth than ours would such a man as James G. Blaine be tolerated for a day. The Ingallses, Plumbs, Dudleys, and that sort are leaders only under the great Republic.

We are defeated and well-nigh disheartened. We have to remember, however, that the war is on, and that it is a campaign and not a battle. We must suffer many defeats, and we hope to enjoy many triumphs. Our people are patient under abuse, but they are intelligent, and when once aroused to a knowledge of not only their wrongs, but the source of such wrong-doing, are terrible in their wrath. The hour seems dark, but it may be the hour before dawn. We remember the millions that in casting their votes were counted for free trade and all reform. Aided by the suffering that comes of abuse we will yet win.

In all the gloom of disaster and defeat it is a comfort to know that our President stands higher in his loss of office than the incoming nonentity in his success. He leaves the Executive Mansion with the respect of a people, and will go down to history as the one President who dared offend his own party in the high discharge of his great office. The intellect and honesty of the land follow him in admiration to his retirement. No cause is wholly lost that is supported by such a statesman and such a following.

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THE BALANCE OF TRADE.

There is no phrase in our political discussions so little understood and so generally employed as the above. Its use and abuse serve to illustrate the strange ignorance of political leaders and pretentious journalists. When a Senator at Washington, of the length and solemnity of the Hon. John Sherman, lifts a warning voice while calling attention to the "balance of trade" against us in our trade with the Canadas, we are enabled to measure the density of the fog-bank called the Senate, and why it is that fog-horns have taken the place of the persuasive oratory that awoke musical echoes in the days of Webster.

As we reserve a corner of our magazine to the better instruction of Senators in political economy (\$2.50 per year, invariably in advance: now is the time to subscribe), we requested our accomplished friend John McClung to put in brief a clear, concise, and correct definition of the phrase "balance of trade." We begged our able contributor to treat the subject as if he were preparing a lesson for the use of schools—say children of tender years—so that our Solons at the national capital might comprehend without too great a strain upon their Senatorial brains.

Here is Mr. McClung's effort at instruction, and we commend it to our law-makers and the gentlemen of the journalistic pen as an easy lesson on a subject that it is not of any great credit to comprehend, but utterly disgraceful to be ignorant of.

THE SO-CALLED "BALANCE OF TRADE."

That it is good for a country to have its exports exceed its imports is a notion that has been widely accepted among us. We have usually been in that position, and the fact has been accepted as proof that we were doing well under a policy of protection. England, on the other hand, has had an excess of imports over exports, and England is free trade; the English excess of imports has been accepted as proof of the mistaken nature of a free-trade policy.

The idea that it is a good thing to have the imports less than the exports, to have the balance of trade "in your favor," as the phrase goes, is a relic of that "Mercantile Theory" overturned by Adam Smith. That theory was briefly, that wealth consists in the precious metals, and that for a country to remain wealthy, it is necessary to keep bullion from going out of the country. It followed from this principle that everything should be done to discourage imports, for it was thought that imports must, of course, be paid for by bullion. Modern political science teaches that wealth does not consist in gold and silver, but that these are commodities, like any other commodities, except that they happen to possess a special fitness to be a medium of exchange. It discards the old notion that imports are paid for by specie, and asserts that they are paid for by commodities. It teaches that it is not a bad thing to have the imports exceed the exports, that this excess is not "unfavorable," and that in fact there is no such thing as "a balance of trade." The old "Mercantile Theory," with its corollaries, has indeed long been abandoned, but many people still consider it matter to congratulate ourselves upon that our exports exceed our imports.

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It is Bastiat who has given the most lively account of this subject. He complains in an amusing manner that the doctrine of the "balance of trade" should exhibit such practical vitality, when it is admitted that it has so long been theoretically dead. He observes that the protectionists are perfectly willing to leave him the victory in books, provided always that their idea is paramount in practice. He finds but one man, Lestiboudois, who has the courage of his convictions, and who says that, because France imports 200,000,000 francs' worth of goods a year more than she exports, she is that much in debt to foreign countries. Others are not so candid; they accept the free-trade principle, but their conclusion is protection. Bastiat is not content with obtaining the

theoretical victory, but wishes to meet his opponent in the domain of business. He undertakes to prove from the books of his friend, Mr. T. of Havre, that the idea of a "balance of trade" is wrong in practice, and to this end gives sketches of two of this gentleman's enterprises.

In one of these transactions Mr. T. despatches from Havre a vessel freighted for the United States with French merchandise valued at 200,000 francs. It was at this figure that Mr. T. entered his export in the Havre custom-house. The cargo on its arrival in New Orleans had paid ten per cent expenses, and was charged thirty per cent duties. Its value was accordingly 280,000 francs. It was sold at 20 per cent profit on its original value; this, being 40,000 francs, brought the value of the cargo to 320,000 francs. This sum the assignee converted into cotton; the cotton had to pay expense of transportation, insurance, commission, etc., of 10 per cent. The return cargo, therefore, on arriving at Havre was worth 352,000 francs. This cargo Mr. T. sold at a profit of 20 per cent and made 70,000 francs. The cotton was thus sold for 432,000 francs. Bastiat offers to send the protectionist author an extract from Mr. T.'s books in which he sets down as gained two sums: one of 40,000 francs, the other of 70,000 francs. Bastiat adds that Mr. T. is perfectly convinced that he made this money. Mr. Lestiboudois, however, would have found at the custom-house that France had an export of 200,000 francs and imported 352,000 francs, and would have concluded that she had squandered on foreign nations 152,000 francs.

About the same time Mr. T. despatched another vessel, freighted also with a cargo worth 200,000 francs. But this vessel went down and never reached New Orleans at all. Mr. Lestiboudois would find at the custom-house that 200,000 francs' worth of goods had been exported, and that there was no importation to balance this entry. France has therefore in this transaction a clear profit of 200,000 francs.

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So much for his friend T. Mr. T.'s case, Bastiat continues, is exactly that of the French nation. If France imports more than she exports, she does not lose the excess any more than Mr. T. did. Bastiat invites his opponents to carry his theory to its farthest limits. Let it be supposed that France only imports and does not export at all; in other words, gets everything for nothing: he still defies them to prove that France would be the poorer.

It was that very able and convincing writer, Augustus Mongredien, who showed, perhaps more clearly than anyone else, in his treatise on free trade, that where a country imports more than she exports, it is impossible that the excess should be paid in specie. Debts owed by one country to another can be paid to but a limited extent in specie. The French indemnity was paid largely in commodities. So have been paid the great sums of money which England has from time to time lent foreign countries. The French indemnity was paid largely in bills of exchange. The excess of imports over exports must be paid by commodities, for there is no other way in which to pay it. This excess in England is yearly, we will say, £70,000,000. It is out of the question that such a sum can be paid in specie, for there is not the specie to be had. The amount of specie in a country never exceeds to any considerable extent what is necessary for circulation. It is impossible that a country can retain an amount of specie much greater than that. The specie which remains after the demands of circulation have been satisfied lowers interest and raises prices, and attracts merchandise from without; it thus very quickly finds its way abroad. On the other hand, when specie is sent abroad to such an extent as to trench upon the requirements of circulation, this raises interest and lowers prices; the specie is thus quickly recalled. The action of the Bank of England familiarly illustrates this law. When it is wanted to attract gold, the rate of interest is raised and the gold quickly appears; when there is too much gold, the interest falls and the gold quickly disappears. It takes only a small sum, say £4,000,000, to produce this effect. How then is it possible that a yearly excess of £70,000,000 could be paid in specie? The payment of such balances for two years would take out of the country not only all the coin, but all the gold cups and silver pencil-cases and earrings it contains. It is computed that all the circulation, taken together with the articles of ornament and utility in Great Britain, the plate, watches, and trinkets, barely comes to £140,000,000. And yet at the end of a long period, in which there has been a steady yearly excess of imports over exports, the country still has plenty of money.

If this excess is not paid for in specie, neither is it obtained on credit. Merchants nowadays do not give and take the long credits that were formerly the custom. There are certain imports, indeed, that are paid for before the goods come to hand. A cargo of wheat from California, for instance, takes from four to five months to reach England. But it is paid for by drafts on England at 60 days sight, which, sent forward by rail and steam, mature a month or more before the arrival of the wheat in England. It is probable, indeed, that the whole excess is paid for before it is received. The excess is certainly not a debt owed by England; it is rather the payment of a debt owed to England. It is sent in payment of interest and dividends on English money invested abroad.

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Mongredien shows that so far from its being an indication of debt when the imports of a country exceed the exports, it is an indication of wealth. Such a condition is a matter for congratulation. But many people still cling to the early notion. While all are agreed that foreign commerce is a good thing, and while the world is unanimous in thinking that it is well to have the exports as large as possible, many people still cherish a dislike to large imports. It is forgotten that you must have imports to pay for the exports, and that, if you limit the imports, you of necessity limit the exports. The exports must be paid for by importing commodities and not by importing specie. The case has been supposed of a protectionist Paradise, in which goods only were exported and nothing but bullion received in return. Would a country be richer for such a state of things? It would certainly not be richer, for there would be an over supply of bullion, and it would fall in value in comparison with other commodities. The workingman might receive twice his former

wages, but he would have to pay twice as much for everything he consumed. Indeed, prices would rise much more rapidly than he could induce his employers, by remonstrances and by strikes, to raise his wages. Bullion would thus become very cheap. It would be worth about half its price in foreign countries. The result would therefore be that those holding it would send it abroad. But it would of course be sold for goods, since the only other thing for which they could exchange it would be bullion. The country would at once cease to receive nothing but bullion. There would be great exports of bullion and great imports of goods. Protected interests would be ruined, and everything would be upside down, until the superfluous bullion would be worked off. Of course a country which imported nothing but bullion and exported nothing but goods would be impossible, since no prohibitory measures can prevent the transfer of specie from the country in which it was worth less to that in which it is worth more. But the hypothesis may serve to show that such a condition of things would be productive, not of good, but of harm.

The volume of "Commerce and Navigation" for 1877 shows that our total exports for that year were \$703,022,923, while our total imports were \$692,319,768. The countries to which we exported more than we received from them were England, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Peru, etc., while the countries to which we exported less than we received from them were Brazil, Germany, France, Switzerland, Mexico, Cuba, Japan, Venezuela, Roumania, etc. It does not appear that the countries having the balance of trade "in their favor" as regards ourselves are more fortunately situated than we. It will be seen that, regarding our whole foreign commerce, the balance "in our favor" is something like \$10,000,000. These figures, it may be remarked, are by no means exhaustive and exact. The freight is largely carried in British vessels, and this great sum goes to England. Large sums are sent out from this country to Americans living in Europe. These people, of whom there are many thousands, must live, and they live upon money sent out from here. Then no account is taken of the great quantities of stuff brought to this country by travelling Americans. These are, of course, not put down among our imports. The returns of the United States and England are no doubt more exact than those of other countries. Before 1854 the value of the imports of England was given in the official valuation, supposed to represent the prices of different articles in 1699, but of course having no kind of relation to their recent value. From 1854 to 1871 the value of imports was estimated upon the average prices of goods as reported by the brokers and the various Chambers of Commerce. Since 1871 it has been the habit to trust completely to the values as given by the merchants themselves. The exports from the beginning of the century have been reckoned upon the values entered by the exporters at the custom-house. The returns of imports and exports are of course less trustworthy in other European countries than in England. It is far easier to smuggle across a frontier than to smuggle in ships, and it is difficult for governments to watch the traffic of railways. It does not appear that there is much to be learned from an examination of the custom-house returns of Continental countries.

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Of course few persons could now be found to defend the ancient superstitions of the "Mercantile Theory." But there yet remain among us many who have a dislike to large imports, and who think an excess of exports a fortunate condition and one which furnishes evidence of the advantage of a protective policy. The considerations set forth in this paper, which have been more elaborately represented in the writings of Bastiat, Mongredien, and Leone Levi, show clearly that an excess of imports is not paid for in specie, but in goods; that it does not represent a debt owed by the country, but the payment of a debt to it; that instead of being a bad condition, it is a good one, because it is good both for individuals and for countries that debts owing to them should be paid; and that in fact there is no such thing as the once famous "balance of trade."

A PLEA FOR THE PARENT.

It is somewhat strange that while our social structure trembles with affright at the bare mention of communism, one of the most popular institutions in our midst is as pure an instance of communism as ever human ingenuity devised. We refer to our common-school system. It was invented not only to give the State control of the children, but so arranged, the authors thought and its supporters teach, to force the rich through taxation to educate the children of the poor.

To put it in a more homely fashion, it is a process through which Jacob Thomas, being with or without children, but viciously possessed of property, shall be made to educate the children of John Smith, who has virtuously a large family of children, and is poor.

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It is claimed that wealth owes this to the government for the protection which popular education gives to property: and so the government robs in one direction to prevent robbery in another.

There are, however, two well-known truths that make this conclusion erroneous. The first is, that it is not property that pays taxes or, indeed, aught else, but labor. It is through labor that all values are developed. The other truth, not so generally recognized, but yet a truth, is that education does not make property more secure. On the contrary, it adds to the insecurity complained of.

Instead, then, of having the rich pay for the education of the poor, the wage-worker not only pays for the so-called education of his own children, but that of his more fortunate neighbor. This is so evident, when once seen, that it is not necessary for us to offer any argument in its support. Law-makers have, for a thousand years, been elaborating laws through which capital in lands, tenements, and other forms of fixed values shall be made pay its share of the public burthen. They are no nearer the desired end than when they began. It is a vain attempt to reverse the pyramid and make the base stand on the apex.

The other error is not so patent. It comes of confounding intelligence with the popular process of education. If the mass of men could, through any process, be made more intelligent, we are prepared to admit that there would be a moral gain. The gain, however, would not be so positive or so great as many believe. Intelligence is not necessarily moral, nor is morality necessarily intelligent. The rules that govern moral conduct are few and simple, and, after all, it is more a matter of training and habit, more the result of kindly feeling and religious belief, than any intellectual process based on an accumulation of facts.

This grows plainer as we look more carefully into this thing called popular education and realize its constituent parts. The true definition of education is, that exercise and development of the intellectual faculties which teaches and trains the mind to think. This presupposes intellectual faculties. They are not general. The inequality, in this respect, of the human family is well marked and universally recognized. Through all the avocations of life, we find here and there at long intervals men so blessed in this respect that the masses look up to them, select them to be teachers and leaders. It is the foundation of our hero-worship, and formulates the habits on which we live socially and politically.

The popular idea of the common school is not this. It is based on a proposition that the masses can be educated; that is, taught to think. This conclusion is got at through a most ludicrous process. The mind is reduced to a memory. Facts are crowded into the pupil, and as the facts accumulate the education is supposed to proceed, and in possession of these facts the graduate comes forth the superior of Plato, Bacon, or Herbert Spencer.

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This is simply an idiotic exercise of the memory, and as the memory grows perfect the intellectual faculties weaken and disappear. It is now recognized by the more thoughtful that an abnormal memory is evidence of idiocy. The net result, then, of all the labor is to graduate a learned ass.

The proof of what we assert is found in the result after the pedagogues have completed their work. The millions are considered taught; the masses take the level of unthinking multitudes, and look about among themselves for their teachers and leaders. The schoolmasters have held all to a dead level; but once out in the world, and nature asserts her rights, and the truly educated, the strong minds that have taught themselves to think, move to the front and take command.

If this thing were harmless, we could be content to let the popular craze wear itself out. But it is not harmless. In our insane desire to have this monstrous system prevail, let the cost be what it may, we lose sight of the grave fact that, while we cannot educate the people, we can train the people up to that moral condition so necessary to a safe and healthy condition of a Christian community.

In our idiotic belief that in a cultivation of the memory we are elevating and purifying the mind, we make our schools not only godless but positively immoral, for the untrained mind is trained in iniquity. And this pernicious result is strengthened by another crotchet of the popular mind—the habit we have fallen into of regarding the human race as a continuous whole instead of being the individual. We fail to realize that when one is born the world begins, and when one dies the world ends. We are like the notes of the piano: each key has its own separate and distinct sound, and while they may be made to harmonize with each other, the melody that melts through a flute or flows in endless eddies from a violin can never be reached. That government approaches human perfection which cares for the citizen and not the majority; and that moral religious training given us by our Saviour is the watchful care of the one soul. To this end the Church was organized: to this end was marriage instituted and made sacred. This means the home—the only school, public or private, that has an unalloyed good in its composition.

The wrong being done our people cannot be overestimated. The child in being put to school has been expelled from home. The parent is taught that the State has intervened and relieved God's responsible agent of all responsibility. This strikes a death-blow at the agency for good found in the parent. We all recognize the fact that from the home comes all that is sound in the State. By the hearth-stone grow, not only moral impulse, but true religion and all the patriotism that gives a love of country, and stability and power to the State. Anything, then, that saps the foundations of the household takes from under us the solid earth. This, we maintain, is what our common-school system as now organized and controlled is doing.

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We trust our readers will be patient with us. We know that we are touching on a tender subject. There is a religious feeling injected into the craze that makes many men wild and unreasonable the moment the system is criticised. We appreciate and partake of the sentiment born in us through many generations of a struggle against the tyranny ever found in a union of Church and State. Our blessed Saviour saw this when He laid down that line of demarcation between the two when he said: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's." We not only say that we are opposed to governmental interference with religion, but we go a step farther, and, to make the line between Church and State yet more distinct, we assert that government has nothing to do with the morals of its people. Government is an expression of justice, as seen and felt in restraining through punishment the overt act of injustice. Morality and religion are so interwoven that they cannot well be separated, and the man who claims the political machine to be a great moral engine gives away all that our Christ commanded and our patriotic fathers sought to establish in framing our Constitution.

We hold that the morality of a people, like their religion, may be safely left to the Church and the home. When, therefore, the socialistic belief that the child belongs to the State and not to the parent prevails, not only the barriers but the very foundations of our social and political existence

are broken down and in a fair way to be destroyed.

When we assert that the State rests upon the home, we say that which all men save communists heartily indorse. Now, the home is founded mainly on the mother's love. It is the strongest feeling given to animated life. We share it with the brute. It is the law of our being, and the source of all that is good. From the mother's care and training come our physical and moral health. This is not sentiment, it is solid fact. It is not that poets have sung and sages taught this great truth, but there is not a reader of this who cannot trace back to his early home and his mother's love not only all that has held him or her to moral conduct, but much that makes life worth living. This, that makes home what it is or should be, cannot be replaced by the State. The great infidel Robert Ingersoll retains his hold on certain thoughtless classes, not by his wit, which is keen, nor his eloquence, which is unquestioned, but because he preaches a sort of religion of home, and claims to be the only man, *par excellence*, who loves his wife and children.

The writer of this, when a judge, was remonstrated with for giving a child to a mother whom he had divorced from her husband on the ground of her infidelity. He made reply that the wife might be a bad woman and yet a good mother. Certainly there was no one to take her place. The court could not give the custody of the child to a man who thought so little of its welfare as to come into court and ask for a decree of divorce. The law had to be obeyed, and the divorce granted; but the custody of the child was left to the discretion of the court, and the court considered it merciful to leave the child with the mother rather than give it to a father who, in asking for a divorce, served notice that he would marry again and give this unfortunate to the care of a stepmother, to torture it with the taint of its origin, and a conflict with the natural affection for the newly found household and offspring.

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The New England system of common schools recognizes the communistic theory of right, in the State, to the child. It reduces this theory to practice by supplanting the parent by the pedagogue. It teaches that to instruct the child is to make it moral, and its instruction means, as we have said, an abnormal development of the memory. A belief in this has come to be a popular fetish. The man who ventures to comment on it, or offers to amend or improve it, is hooted down as an enemy to his country and an infidel to its perfection. Pulpits resound with thanks to God for the blessings of free education, the press is filled with praise, while on the stump eloquent orators assure applauding crowds that our common-school system is the corner-stone of not only the great Republic, but of our social existence.

And yet, where are we? From all this senseless noise let us turn to the actual situation and consult the cold, naked facts. The increase of crime and insanity in the United States within the last half-century is something appalling. They have not only kept pace with our much-vaunted prosperity, but have been, and are, forging ahead at a rate that fills all thoughtful minds with alarm.

We cannot extend our space and burthen our brief comment with the statistics necessary to prove this fact, already patent to the more intelligent. Let the reader consult them for himself. He will find that the increase of criminals and the increase of insanity, set forth in cold figures, are not to be disputed or misunderstood. But it does not follow that these grave evils are to be laid to the communism of the New England common-school system. Perhaps not; but how much has this wonderful system done to arrest those evils? According to preachers, poets, editors, and stump orators, we are safe in leaving all to its care and keeping. It has certainly accomplished little in behalf of the Republic. Penitentiaries and asylums for the insane are increasing at a fearful rate; divorces follow fast upon the heels of marriage; and it may safely be said that not a single trust-fund has been left untouched by the hand of fraud throughout the entire country.

A further investigation, however, will lead us to yet another conclusion. The communism of the common school accompanies the evils. In those parts of our country where it is most rigidly enforced crime and madness have increased. In those sections yet new to the system these ills are less; and as there must be a cause for the difference, is it not safe to attribute it to this usurpation of the State, this insidious assault on the parent, and through both a weakening of religious faith and moral conduct?

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We are well aware that, in the bigotry of belief that hedges about this system, there is no toleration for comment or criticism, and no room for amendment. To add to this, immense sums of money are involved; for while the State is keenly alive to the education of the people, and furnishes, with the greatest liberality, school-houses and pedagogues, it is strangely oblivious to the demand for books and stationery. In this supply lies two-thirds of the vociferous praise and vindictive support of the system. As the late Colonel Sellers was wont to say, "There's millions in it."

ABOUT THE BALLOT.

We have a growing number of earnest reformers who seek to better the machinery of elections by throwing about the ballot-box certain precautions, legally enacted, that will make the purchase of votes and the intimidation of voters more difficult. The trouble, however, is not in the vote, but the voter. If the one is corrupt, there is no legal process known to law-makers that will purify the other. If a man holds his vote in the light of property and knows of a purchaser possessed of means, it is extremely difficult to keep the parties apart or prevent the sale.

This, however, does not apply to that well-known evil of undue influence on the part of party

leaders, or "strikers," as they are called. Those partisans are reinforced by men who have others in their employ dependent on such employers for a living, and of course possessed of an influence calculated to control the vote of the dependent, whether such voting is in accordance with the wishes or conscience of the voter or not.

We know, for example, that in the late canvass every capitalist with his investment depending for its profit on the success of the Republicans took pains to inform his workmen that unless Harrison were elected the works could not continue, and they, the laborers, would be discharged and left to starve. He was animated in this only by the highest philanthropic motives, not by any wish to influence the votes of his laborers.

Now, the operatives were intelligent enough to laugh at this, but they were well aware of what he meant, and that was to inform them of his wishes; and as he had it in his power to know how each voted, it was as much as each man's place was worth to vote the Democratic ticket. That there might be no mistake about this, the few who ventured to disobey this champion boss were soon disposed of. It is scarcely necessary to say that the smoke continued to pour up and out of the chimneys until an unfortunate wheat deal at Chicago sent the head centre of the attempted corner to the penitentiary, and made this capitalist who thus sought to intimidate his laborers quite fit for the same locality.

If some process of voting, whether Australian or not, could be devised to end this "bulldozing," as it is popularly called, it would be an excellent reform. It would also go far towards weakening the blind adhesion to political organizations. Many men are held to this more by association and that lack of independence necessary to a severance of old ties. This denies the voter the right to scratch his ticket when he finds a name on it that he knows to be that of a man he cannot approve and ought not to vote for. To keep abreast of his party he must vote "the ticket, the whole ticket, and nothing but the ticket." The leaders and their lieutenants, as the machine stands, have it in their power to spot and expose anyone venturing to break over the line and obey his own will.

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This is the power, well recognized, which makes the nominating caucus the government. The right to vote carries with it to each voter a right to a candidate of his own selection. As the matter stands, in fact, he comes to the polls and has presented to him generally two tickets. It is claimed that he can vote one or the other, or, as it is called, vote in the air. The fact is he has no such choice. The despotic power of party discipline holds him firmly to the ticket his party has put in nomination. Our ballot, that is claimed to be secret, is open as the day. Every vote is counted and every voter known, and to make assurance doubly sure the polls are guarded by both parties, and the noble citizen runs the gauntlet through double lines of detestable township or ward politicians, potent for mischief in their sneers and jeers, and, if need be, ready with dirty fists or clubs, sometimes revolvers, to back the edict of the party.

Through this process a majority is supposed to govern. The practical fact is that a small minority, and that made up of the worst element, holds sway. The nominating caucus is composed of men who work for pay, and put in nomination the political aspirants corrupt enough to purchase their positions. The more decent class of our citizens avoid the primaries. They well know that to control them means a corrupt use of money, or a fight wherein victory is as fatal as defeat. In the rural districts the farmer is called to leave his plough and ride from one to three miles, and lose a day's work, for the privilege of being controlled by a small political bunco-steerer to the support of some aspirant to office who has the fellow in his pay. If the farmer differs from Mary's little lamb in not being white as snow, he resembles that poetic pet in his amiable docility. The caucus is composed of a mere corporal's guard from the army of voters. In the towns and cities the element is so brutal, impudent, and active that decency shrinks from a mere contact, let alone a contest in which decency will have its hat mashed over its eyes, its nose bloodied, and its body bruised. In ward and township these able manipulators are not the majority, as we have said, and yet they rule with a despotic brutality that makes the kingdom of Dahomey a liberal government in comparison.

Now, as we have said, if some legalized process could be devised through which the ballot could be made safe and secret, a deadly blow would be given to the caucus. As it is, the managers buy a few and intimidate the many. The basis of such reform, however, rests on the entire machine being paid for by the government. Tickets should be printed and furnished free on the demand of any ten men claiming to be a party with candidates to be voted for. Economy in this direction has costly results. On the plea of legitimate expenditures large sums are collected, and the people debauched. Any use of money other than that by the government should not only work a forfeiture of office, but open the penitentiary to the voter.

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The truth is, however, that to make this reform effectual it must be thorough and radical. The one great evil in our way is in our frequent elections. The insane effort to apply the ballot to every office has so multiplied elections that it is impossible for a man to give attention to one-half, and follow his business so as to support his family. The average citizen is forced to leave the filling of office to the professionals, vulgarly called "bummers" in town, and "gutter-snipes" in the country. We have not only cheapened the suffrage and thereby cheapened office for the representative who represents, but we have degraded the civil service until it is more of a disgrace than an honor to be an official.

That sort of reform which compromises with wrong is worse than none. To be effective, reform must be radical. Chucking a boulder in a rut of a bad road makes the highway the more impassable. The rut itself must be eliminated before repairs can be said to have a foundation.

PASSING EVENTS.

The political battle has been fought. We can look calmly over the field, estimate the causes that led to the result, and to some extent forecast the future. The Republican party had no uncertain triumph. Since the day when Greeley was defeated by Grant there has been no such overwhelming majority in the Electoral College for a Republican candidate. Even without the vote of New York General Harrison would have been elected. The line of the "solid South" has been broken by West Virginia joining the Republican column, and Delaware for the first time in her history elects a Republican legislature. Both Houses of Congress will undoubtedly be Republican, so that there can be no shifting of responsibility for bad legislation. The defeat of the Democrats is clear, clean-cut, decisive.

It looks at first blush a temporary triumph for protection as against free trade. There is no mistaking the fact that the country in a four months' campaign could not be educated to give up ideas which had been advanced by leading statesmen of both parties for the past twenty years, and which met but very feeble protests from true Democrats. The protection fetish has been shattered, but not overturned from its shrine. The result shows the folly of half-hearted campaigns. Even the very authors of the Mills bill, filled with fearful tales of the New York workingman's aversion to free trade, when they came to the metropolis, instead of avowing that they proposed gradually to remove all restrictions upon our commerce with the world, began to apologize for their position, and to protest that they were not engaged in a free-trade campaign. Mr. Cleveland could not have been worse beaten had the fight been openly made for the abolition of all duties whatsoever and the closing of every custom-house. But those who think with the New York *Sun* that we have had the last of an "educational campaign" very much deceive themselves. What could not be done in four months may be achieved in four years. The free-trade fight is on, and it is not at all impossible that Grover Cleveland may yet be the standard-bearer in a victorious campaign for human rights against combined monopolies. Other reasons for the Democratic defeat were: the greed of local halls for petty patronage, divisions among the Democrats of New York City over the mayoralty, jealousies of rival bosses in King's County, the free use of money by the Republicans, especially in Indiana, and the superior management of the Republican leaders, who were at least honestly fighting for what they believed in.

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The longest session Congress ever held closed on October 20th, having lasted 321 days. Its most interesting features were the tariff discussion and the unparalleled deadlock in the consideration of the direct-tax bill. With the short session which begins on December 4th the present Democratic ascendancy will come to an end, as the Republicans will have a good working majority of at least thirteen in the Fifty-first Congress.

The diplomatic world is laughing at Lord Sackville for his foolishness in falling into a Republican trap, and his summary dismissal by President Cleveland. In answer to an unknown correspondent in California, the English minister wrote expressing his views as to the pending Presidential election—a thing in violation of all diplomatic custom. The letter was published and used as a campaign document. President Cleveland at once demanded his recall, and Lord Salisbury not acting with sufficient promptness, the unlucky minister was given his passport on October 30th.

England and Germany are contending for supremacy in East Africa, the latter by bombarding the natives of Zanzibar into submission, and the former by the peaceful methods of trade. Portugal is to join England and Germany in a naval blockade of Zanzibar to suppress slave-dealing, and the Pope has sent \$60,000 to Cardinal Lavigerie for the same purpose. The Cardinal is raising a volunteer corps with which to fight the slave-dealers of Central Africa. The Congo Free State, the only absolute free-trade country in all the world, is being rapidly opened. The first section of the trans-African railway, from St. Paul de Loanda to Ambaca, has been completed. Stanley has been heard from indirectly, but the news is eleven months old and his present position is unknown.

Russia came near losing her ruler in a railway accident not far from Tiflis on October 29th. As the Czar and Czarina were returning from the Caspian to the Black Sea, the train left the rails and was wrecked. Twenty-one persons were killed and thirty-seven injured, but the Czar escaped with a slight injury to his foot. Balkan questions still cloud the political horizon. Austria is contemplating the occupation of Servia, a step which would be followed immediately by Russia occupying Bulgaria. King Milan has got his divorce from Queen Natalie. He pointed out to the Metropolitan of the Servian Church that the sovereign of course was superior to all law in such little matters as marriage-ties, and the Metropolitan obediently issued a decree granting the divorce. Queen Natalie has appealed to the Greek Patriarch at Constantinople. Meanwhile Roumania is trying an experiment in self-government, having introduced a system of elections for members of a Chamber of Deputies, for which all citizens paying taxes are electors.

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Emperor William has returned from his junketing tour. His reception by the Italian people was enthusiastic, but his interview with the Pope was hardly a love-feast. Pope and Kaiser met face to face for the first time since Henry IV. of Germany did penance at Canossa before Gregory Hildebrand in 1077. A curious incident that happened just after the Emperor's visit was the breaking out of a fire in a wing of the Quirinal, in which the pontifical escutcheon affixed to the palace was burned. Another historical event occurred on October 17th, when Hamburg joined the German customs union, giving up its privileges as a free port. Bismarck's policy proved stronger

than that of the free-traders in the Reichstag, and German custom-houses now cast their shadows on the waters of the Elbe.

In France the government proposals for a revision of the constitution seem to be in a fair way towards adoption. They include a fixed term for the ministers and curtailment of the Senate's powers. The senators oppose the plan, not caring to be "revised" out of their privileges. The Haytien republic has nearly finished its revolution. General Salomon, the exiled president, died in Paris on October 19th, and General Télémaque was killed in an attack on Port au Prince. The only other candidate for the presidency, General François Denys Légitime, was elected by the National Assembly on October 17th. The efforts of Manitoba to reach a foreign market without being subjected to the odious monopoly of the Canadian Pacific Railway may have serious consequences. The Province is building a railway to connect with the American lines, and the Canadian Pacific refuses to let them cross their tracks. Both sides threaten to fight.

Business is quiet but steady. Wall Street sharpers are anticipating a boom, as it is not expected that the new administration will do anything to hurt the monopolies. The shares of those trusts listed on the New York Stock Exchange—American Cotton Oil trust and Chicago Gas trust—have advanced in price. "Old Hutch" of Chicago is said to be engineering a corner in December wheat and January pork. Mr. John Taylor, of Chicago, who lost his fortune in "Old Hutch's" last corner, shot himself in a railway train while travelling from Paris to Marseilles, making the second suicidal crime attributable to this commercial freebooter. The investigation of the will of Mrs. Stewart, who was left a fortune of twenty-five million dollars by her husband, and died ten years afterward in debt over one million to her friend, ex-Judge Hilton, who managed her estate, is developing a remarkable system of book-keeping. All her investments ceased to pay, and her adviser even charged interest for her husband's funeral expenses. The directors of the Richmond Terminal Company have obtained control of the Georgia Central Railroad, with seven thousand miles of track and \$9,000,000 gross earnings, and its ocean steamship line of ten steamers, plying between Savannah, Baltimore, New York, and Boston. Half the South is thus put under one gigantic railroad monopoly.

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London has been startled by another horrible murder in Whitechapel, the ninth committed by an unknown assassin. All the victims have been unfortunate women of the streets, and all have been horribly butchered. The criminal record is enlarged by the flight of City Treasurer Thomas Axworthy of Cleveland, Ohio, who was nearly a million dollars short in his accounts, and whose defalcation temporarily bankrupted the city.

An accident which proves the value of water-tight compartments occurred on November 10th near Sandy Hook. The *Umbria* had just begun her voyage to Queenstown when she ran across the freight steamer *Iberia* during a fog, cutting her in two. Both parts of the *Iberia* floated away and kept above water for hours, allowing the rescue of all hands. Not so lucky was the Russian steamer *Archangel*, which collided with the Glasgow steamer *Neptune* in Christiana Bay on October 19th, losing her captain and seventeen of the crew. Another steamer disaster was the burning of the *Ville de Calais*, owing to an explosion of petroleum gas while in port at Calais. Over a dozen lives were lost. As an excursion train was returning from the fêtes at Naples, a landslide occurred, crushing the train, and killing ninety persons and wounding seventy. By an explosion in a mine at Frontenac, Kansas, one hundred and eighty persons were buried, not more than fifty of whom were taken out alive. A similar explosion occurred in the Campagnac coal-pit, Aveyron, France, in which eighty miners were killed. Yellow fever still lingers in Florida. It has claimed 384 victims out of a total of 4,469 cases up to November 10th.

The theatrical season thus far is somewhat dull. Gilbert and Sullivan's "Yeomen of the Guard" was brought out at the New York Casino about a week after its production in London, and met with no better success. The lively sparkle of "Pinafore" and "Patience" is missing. London has a new playhouse, the Shaftesbury Theatre, opened on October 20th with "As You Like It." New-Yorkers feel a pardonable pride in the success of the "Giants" in obtaining the League baseball championship. Starting third in the race, they obtained first place in the last week in July and held it until the end. Sporting men have been wondering at the remarkable jump of Steve Brodie from the Poughkeepsie bridge into the Hudson River, a distance of 212 feet. Mr. Richard K. Fox, by an offer of \$500 and a gold medal, incited this foolhardy attempt, but the boy escaped with slight injuries. Two other Foxes, the famous sisters who forty years ago founded spiritualism, have created a sensation by telling how they humbugged people into believing what they now style a monstrous imposition. An attraction for lovers of art have been the paintings of Vasili Verestchagin, the Russian artist, which are being exhibited in New York. Critics pronounce them marvels of strength in delineation, but a little too realistic for the most refined taste.

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Four well-known journalists have died during the month: Joseph M. Levy, proprietor of the London *Daily Telegraph*, who died on October 12th; "Long" John Wentworth, an old journalist, but best known in Chicago politics, whose career closed on October 16th; Colonel R. M. Pulsifer, former owner of the Boston *Herald*, who committed suicide on October 19th; and Napoleon N. Thieblin, a New York financial writer, who died of consumption on November 1st. The obituary record is also augmented by the death at Tashkend of Colonel Nicholas Prejevalski, the famous Russian explorer, just as he was about to start on an exhibition to Thibet.

History of Tennessee.—The Making of a State, by James Phelan. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)—This book is to us a great delight. It illustrates so clearly what we have often said, that the success of an author is not so much in what he has to say as in the manner of saying it. This is an English rendition of the French axiom that style is thought. Anyone doubting this has only to remember that Shakespeare translated to any other language than his own is poor stuff. We laughed ourselves into tears once over the play of "Hamlet" rendered into French. The melancholy Dane became a grotesque mountebank, and Shakespeare's thoughts the dreariest sort of commonplace. It is the same of all.

Now, we have had histories and histories. Those of the dull, plodding workers in the worm-holes of time lift out the dust, and dust it remains until taken in hand by genius, and the dust is changed to gold. "The rank is but the guinea's stamp"—but the stamp makes it currency, and it is prized as it passes from hand to hand.

We have histories of States, we have histories of Tennessee—and they are too solemnly stupid, it is said, for consultation. The consultations are so rare that moth, mold, and mildew eat in and destroy them unmolested. We are erecting at an immense expense a huge building at Washington to hold the bound commonplaces of authors. How much better it would be to have a commission of good fellows go through and consign to the flames, or to the Young Men's Christian Association, or the common-school libraries, all the unreadable books! What a bonfire we should have of histories alone! The dry theological husks of learning would give Satan material for his furnaces for some days.

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To return to our mutton—and it is tender, appetizing, digestible mutton. We have had histories of States and histories of Tennessee. They are all full of solid facts. Yet if a man can be found who will make affidavit that he has read any one of them with comfort to himself, we shall doubt his sanity or his truthfulness. Here is a young man, and a Member of Congress at that, who takes the same dry bones of fact, and through the magic touch of his pen, lo! the old skeletons take on flesh, drink in life, and through the roseate atmosphere of romance the records are fascinating, and one closes the book with the feeling that pervades our being at the close of a grand opera well rendered, when in the silence the feelings yet vibrate like the waves of the sea when the winds that have vexed them are still.

For the first time we waken to the fact that the earlier settlers of Tennessee were not common people. As a well-painted landscape is more prized than the real view, because of the art, so Mr. Phelan has given us a local coloring that makes these hardy pioneers picturesque and poetic. They make a charming background for such men as John Sevier, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Daniel Boone, Sam Houston, and other noted characters who toiled and wrought, killed and got killed, while the State was forming.

Mr. Phelan tells us in his charming way of the struggles and hardships, the wanton wrongs and wars, until the forests were felled, the swamps drained, fields opened, highways and railroads built, and the wilderness changed in less than three generations to farms and villages, where the busy hum of human life took the hearing from the cry of wild beasts, the yell of Indians, and the sharp crack of the murderous rifles in the hands of robbers.

Our space will not permit our giving much of this fascinating volume. The author seeks to rescue John Sevier from an undeserved oblivion. At the same time he relegates that historic myth Daniel Boone to his deserved contempt as a land-shark and speculator. It is a great comfort to find a man of genius and a student withal going through these sham gods of the past, and puncturing their bran-stuffed bodies until they collapse into insignificance. What a task some iconoclast of the future will have among our war heroes of the late armed conflict! How the great generals whose fame, like kites, has been made of newspapers, will tumble from their pedestals, while the real heroes are lifted into place!

We give space to give one extract not only as an example of our author's style, but for the facts he narrates. Speaking of the early Methodist Church of Tennessee and its pioneer preachers, he says:

"His manners were not polished, but they were far from rude. They were simple and sincere, and were filled with a real sympathy and warmed the hearts of his associates. He was plain of speech, however, though if he wounded the vanity of his hearers he never wounded their sensibilities. These were his chief limitations: he was narrow, sectional, and bigoted, unpolished, beyond the grasp of any but Christian fellowship, taking a hard, austere, and almost terrible view of the world as it is, having real sympathy alone with the world as it should be or as he would make it. Religion to him was the goal of existence; all other interests were greater or less temptations that drew away from the path of that goal.... It is not a figure of speech to say that his path was beset with death, and that for months at a time the penances of a Trappist monastery were but as luxuries as compared to the daily trials of hunger and thirst and sleeplessness which fell to his lot. He would ride for days at a time, through any inclemency of weather, through any degree of heat or cold, to keep an appointment to preach the Word to those who hungered for the Lord. The last rain perhaps had swept a bridge away. A tribe of hostile Indians were prowling through the forests which he would have to penetrate. A heavy fall of snow had obscured the trail that led through the intricacies of a swamp. It was doubtful if he could procure food for man or beast for days, and it was vain to try to carry a sufficient supply. It was impossible to procure a

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guide across 'the forks' of some range of hills, thickly covered with ravines and with dangerous defiles. Starvation and all the forms of death lay thick around and before him. The stoutest heart might have quailed, the most unflinching sense of duty might have wavered. The rational mind might have justly demanded a greater degree of equality between the magnitude of the thing to be accomplished and the difficulties and dangers attending its accomplishment. All these things gave him not a moment's pause. Herein was manifest the grandeur of the circuit rider's character. His mind was not the mind of a rational man, as we estimate rationality. His profession of faith and his wish for salvation were sincere to the full extent of their importance as he estimated it. Religion was a real and a tangible thing to him. The simple, unhesitating sincerity of his faith was grand, it was wonderful, it was sublime.... He merged the individual completely in the work, he lost all sense of personal interest in the craving to advance the interests of others. He was willing to meet death for the attainment of the smallest of the tasks set before him. He was willing to forego all personal comfort as a part of the daily life of which hunger and thirst were the incidents. Luxury he had never known or seen.... As the Church increased in numbers and influence, the pioneer of religion, the one who had hewn for it a way through the primeval forests, either pushed forward with the advance line of civilization or yielded to the mellowing influence of a more genial state of society. As villages developed into towns with souls enough to repay an exclusive charge, the saddle-bags and the saddle were exchanged for a settled habitation. Sometimes he married, and from the first, marriage had practically destroyed his usefulness as an itinerant. He is now familiar to us only in tradition. The discipline of Conference assignments of duty, which carry with them change of habitation, still suggests his noble activity in the early days of Tennessee history."

And yet, remembering the self-devotion, the sacrifices, the fervor and force of this religious enthusiasm, how little trace was left. The religion of Tennessee to-day is farther removed from the teachings of those early martyrs to what they believed the cause of God than were the Indians they cared little for, or the rough settlers they sought so fervently to convert. There is no trace of Indian or settler, nor the remotest vestige of the religion these preachers so earnestly taught. This because it was the religion of dogmas, founded upon the vengeance of God as they saw it in the chronicles of the Hebrews. They carried what Burns called "tyding o' damnation;" and the long-haired, hollow-eyed, hot gospeller gave vivid descriptions of unending torture of hell to the unbeliever. The love of God, the tender mercy of our blessed Redeemer, were lost in the awful vengeance of an offended and unforgiving Deity.

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Poor human nature, as found among those earlier settlers, was frightened. The historian tells us that these attacks, more on the nerves than the conscience, culminated at revivals in what was called the "jerks." He says: "They were involuntary and irresistible. When under their influence the sufferers would dance, or sing, or shout. Sometimes they would sway from side to side, or throw the head backward or forward, or leap, or spring. Generally those under the influence would, at the end, fall upon the ground and remain rigid for hours, and sometimes whole multitudes would become dumb and fall prostrate. As the swoon passed away, the sufferer would weep piteously, moan and sob. After a while the gloom would lift, a smile of heavenly peace would irradiate the countenance, words of joy and rapture would break forth, and conversion always followed."

It came, in time, to be observed that this conversion affected only the converted member's manner. To be very serious and sad, to have profanity give place to prayers, made the substance of the process through which one escaped eternal punishment after death. Faith that is simply a longing for life was confounded with belief that, having its base in evidence, is entirely beyond the control of the would-be believer. The whole theological affair touched the moral conduct of the true believer only slightly. Life was harder in the Church than out of it. Charity, the love of one's neighbor, the forgiveness of sins on the part of the member—how could he forgive when his God would not forgive?—all gave way to a loud assertion of total depravity in the convert, and a profound belief in the dogmas. It was not long before these settlers observed that in dealing with a class-leader they had to be more cautious and guarded against being cheated than in like transactions with the godless.

However, those simple souls upon the border did not differ much from our humanity of to-day. Poor human nature is prone to love in the form itself the object for which the form was created. The white-chokered leader of Sunday-schools who flees to Canada with the cash of the bank where he was cashier is no more of a hypocrite than the president and directors. Religion to all these is one thing, moral conduct quite another. They are on a par with the bandit of Italy who hears mass, goes to confession, and has prayers said in his behalf before going out to rob and murder. Nor do they differ from the committee of negroes that waited on their white preacher and begged him to stop for one Sunday talking about lying and stealing, and "gib 'em one day ob good ole-fashioned glory-to-God religion."

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Men and Measures of Half a Century, by Hugh McCulloch (Charles Scribner's Sons).—Here is a name that will loom up in the hereafter as that of one of the ablest financiers given our country. It is lost now in the yet lingering glare and blare of war, where little men, magnified by newspapers to gigantic generals, famous for the wanton slaughter of their own men, absorb public attention.

Mr. McCulloch was called to the Secretaryship of the Treasury by President Lincoln, and continued there by Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson. It was the hard task of Mr. McCulloch

to rectify the errors of Salmon P. Chase. This great man had won success for the government in the war with the South on his financial blunders. Finding capital so unpatriotic that it would loan the government no money so long as the conflict was in doubt, Chase appealed to the people, and made his loans from them in the shape of promises to pay in the currency. While the soldiers in the field and the average citizen took a patriotic pride in accepting this currency at par, the financiers were as busy as Satan in depreciating it, until the Secretary was driven to buying up those money-getters. They drove a hard bargain with the oppressed Secretary, and this bargain ended in turning over a large part of the fiscal agency of the government, and all the currency, to nearly two thousand corporations.

When Mr. McCulloch took the portfolio of the Treasury our financial condition was most deplorable. The land was flooded with an irredeemable currency, and the source of credit being thus poisoned, all business was mere gambling. To understand this, one has to remember that in the first year of the war a tariff on imports was enacted by Congress that amounted at first to prohibition. In thus closing the door against foreign capitalists the government raised the prices of all manufactured goods against itself. The evil did not end here. As a purchaser of supplies in a paper currency for a million of wasteful and extravagant men in the field, the government again augmented prices to its own hurt. After the battle of Gettysburg, when the timid capital felt that it was safe, not to help an impoverished government, but to make investments, bonds were taken, paid for in the depreciated currency—and when the war ended, a subsidized Congress, leaving the loan in the shape of currency made by the people to take care of itself, enacted that these bonds, bought in currency, should be redeemed, capital and interest, in gold.

This was the situation that faced Mr. McCulloch when sworn in office as Secretary of the Treasury. He was selected by President Lincoln, and continued in office by Andrew Johnson. A more admirable appointment could not have been made. Hugh McCulloch is not only a remarkable man, but one singularly well adapted to the position assigned him. An eminently handsome man, he carried a large, healthy brain on a trunk capable of great endurance. It was health, good health, throughout. To a keen, sensitive intellect he adds a calm, dispassionate temperament and the highest courage. Although modest in manner and reticent in speech, his very presence commanded respect among his opponents, such as all positive characters possess; while his friends felt that their cause, whatever it might be, was safe in his hands. Trained a banker, he had made a success of his banking; and while possessed of a thorough acquaintance with the details of his business, he had also a philosophical knowledge of the science. This is a rare combination.

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"How little those people know of their own business!" said Salmon P. Chase to Mr. Richard B. Pullen, of Cincinnati, after a meeting of bankers that the able Secretary of the Treasury had called for consultation. It was well for the bankers that such was and is their condition. They are practical men—that is, men who accept the fact as they see it, without bothering their brains as to the reason for it. The business man who sends an order through the telegraph or telephone does not stop to consider what strange agency he is using. If he did, he would not only have his mind taken from his avocation, but lose the chance of a deal in the market. The mind given to and capable of study is one given to dreaming, not acting.

The vast debt owing the people by the government in the shape of currency presented to Secretary McCulloch his first problem that had to be solved before credit could be restored and business again put on a sound, healthy basis. He had the advantage of knowing clearly and precisely the work before him. It was the error of the day, as it is the error now, to confound currency with money. By money is meant the great measure of value in gold and silver coin determined on by trade and accepted the world over since trade first began. Currency, on the contrary, is that form of credit used in paper to facilitate exchange. Now, trade calls for a certain amount of this, not so large as is popularly supposed, but fluctuating in quantity as trade makes its demand. Gold and silver cannot be relied on for this purpose, for their intrinsic value, which makes them a measure of value, forbids. This measure of value, like that of the yard as to length, and the pound as to weight, becomes an abstract idea. When one seeks to purchase a pair of shoes, and the shoemaker says that their price is five dollars, one may pay for them five bushels of wheat; so that on both sides a value is got at that facilitates the exchange. If currency is used, it, too, has the same nature—with this fact added: the intrinsic value of the paper promise to pay coin lies in the credit of the man, corporation, or government issuing the promise.

"If a man fall down a steep place," said the Hon. Tom Benton, "and get killed with a gold dollar in his pocket, and his bones be found a hundred years after, they will be worth the dollar. If, however, he has a promise to pay a dollar, he has that which depends for value on a board of directors sitting around a mahogany table. It may be worth a dollar and it may be worthless."

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This disposes of the fiat money. We cannot create something out of nothing by act of Congress. When the government issues its paper, it coins its credit into currency. Its value, if it has any, lies in that.

Now, when Secretary McCulloch took command of the Treasury Department the credit of the government was at a heavy discount, and getting less every hour. The only class at the North that doubted the ability of the government to maintain itself in the War of Secession was the moneyed class, and this class continued to decry the credit of the government long after the war had been brought to a successful conclusion. This, because the condition of discredit was a source of income. They who had refused to fetch out their money-bags to aid the government when the roar of the first artillery was throbbing along the halls of the Capitol, now sought to fatten on its

distress.

Hugh McCulloch found the government financially aground like a stranded whale, with sharks eating in at one end, and vultures and wolves at the other.

And yet all the vast powers of the government are given to the aid and support of this class from which come the sharks, buzzards, and wolves.

The new Secretary had this class to contend with; and he had another in the form of politicians, the representatives of the people that represented everything but the people's patriotism. Mr. McCulloch knew that to restore credit and redeem our currency the volume must be contracted. The moneyed class wanted to be let alone—it always wants that. The politicians wanted more currency—or money, as they called it.

In addition to this trouble, the politicians of the dominant party sought to make a colony of the entire South, to be governed by carpet-baggers and bayonets, because Southern staples could thus be made to contribute to Northern capital, and the ignorant plantation negroes could be used to keep that party in power. In this way half our territory and the most valuable of our products were paralyzed.

Fortunately for the country, President Johnson got into a row with both capitalists and politicians. As a poor white of the South, he hated wealth; as a Southerner, he hated Northern politicians. An ignorant, vicious sort of a man, Johnson was obstinate and courageous. It was, however, a sort of moral courage—if we may use such a term in this connection. Probably his nerve had been demoralized by his intemperate habits. It is true that the man who in the Senate defied the fierce slave-holders was the man whom General Don Carlos Buell cowed at Cincinnati, and who ordered the unfortunate and innocent Mrs Surratt to be hanged within twenty-four hours, with the recommendation to mercy of the court that condemned her before him, and the shrieks of her agonized daughter ringing in his ears.

Be all that as it may, Andrew Johnson, cutting loose from Congress and the moneyed class, took the executive government into his own hands. Few of us realize what a tremendous power is this government of ours. The framers of it made it so, to guard against the people in whose behalf it was created. The politicians in Congress saw this, and sought to free themselves of Johnson through impeachment. They charged him with selecting his cabinet. The charge was absurd, and failed; and while Johnson, with little dignity and less success, went on fighting politicians, Secretary McCulloch used the power given him to contract our currency, restore our credit, and put the country once more on the road to honest trade and its high prosperity.

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No one, however, must open Hugh McCulloch's book with any hope of finding therein a history of this financial crisis and his part in the restoration to honor we enjoyed. The author is a modest man, and leaves to others the truth and the praise the truth awards him.

There is a more serious objection to the work, and that comes of Mr. McCulloch's marked ignorance of men. While clear-sighted and profound in his knowledge of great economic subjects, he scarcely knows one man from another, save as they are labelled and described by popular expression. It is amusing to run over his list of prominent men and see under each, if not an official pedestal, one given by social verdict. With the conservatism of his temperament in his judgment of men, he seldom departs from the recorded estimate of the public. The most ludicrous instance of this is his history of Grant and his summing up of the man's supposed character. It is the political fiction and newspaper lie of the day.

From this we can turn to the views of a statesman on finance, the tariff, and on reconstruction with not only pleasure but profit. So far we have three great historical characters to record as financiers: Hamilton because of his luck, Chase for his blunders, and McCulloch for his ability.

RECENT NOVELS.—The great stream that swells day by day in the form of prose fiction is simply appalling. It is not only the genius of to-day that has seized on this vehicle of thought and feeling, but the amateur pen-driver plunges in without hesitation. Every male citizen of these United States is born to hold office and edit a newspaper. Every female born under the stars and stripes comes into the world prepared to write a novel. No study, no preparation whatever is needed. When the Irishman was asked if he could play upon the French horn, he responded, "Shure, it looks aisy;" and a love story looks so easy that every little girl is ready to produce one.

Of the pile before us we of course seize first on that under the name of Julian Hawthorne. The admiration felt by all for the father, to say nothing of the love that yet lingers in memory for the man, makes the name of Hawthorne sacred. It brings to mind the noble, handsome, Cæsarian head of the master, that was made winning by the shy, gentle, and affectionate manner—so little understood by the many, so fascinating to the few. Then lived our greatest genius in the world of fiction. When one realizes the nature of the material upon which he had to work, the cold, barren soil of New England, the hard, unsympathetic characters, with no background of romance on which to build, the mighty power of the magician looms up before us. The touch of his pen wrought such strange wonders that the very hardness of the groundwork seemed to play into his hand, and from the *Twice-Told Tales* to that grandest of all tragedies in the English language, *The Scarlet Letter*, one is held spellbound.

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Well, it is not belittling Julian to say that it is a misfortune that he should be the son of his father. We read his charming stories by the light of a past that can never again be renewed, and all the time the memory of the mighty master dwarfs the work of the son. In this way I read aloud to my

dear invalid *A Dream and a Forgetting*. Had there been any other name upon the title-page than Hawthorne, we should have been charmed with the book that Belford, Clarke & Co. have gotten up so beautifully. As it was, we could not help looking for the sunlight through rifts that, alas! can never come again. It is singular to note, however, the Hawthornish traits that yet linger in the son. The same boldness that made the elder Hawthorne accept and use without hesitation the most unpromising characters, and make them not only acceptable but attractive, belongs to the younger. It is this which drives him not only to depict Fairfax Boardwine, but to make his hero such a weak, selfish creature. After all, he is only a foil to Mary Gault, and the true work in the artist lies in the clear yet delicate prominence he gives to his heroine.

The charm the elder Hawthorne threw over the rocky land of New England is evident in the *Pot of Gold*, by Edward Richard Shaw (Belford, Clarke & Co.). Here is the barren, sandy coast, with a few rough fishermen, the cold, heaving sea, enlightened by no love, but made attractive by the shadowy play of adventure found in piratical ships, that come and go as if they were phantoms of a half-forgotten past. With all the dim, misty character of the piratical craft, the author gives us the coast and its atmosphere, the rough, ignorant characters of its inhabitants, in a way to prove that he is an artist and has made good use of his study. To the average reader, as well as the more cultured, this book is very attractive.

Edgar Saltus, whose immature book, *The Truth about Tristrem Varick*, won him wide mention as the author of a grotesque bit of immorality, comes to the front again in *Eden*, a novel published by Belford, Clarke & Co. There is the marked progress in this volume we prophesied in the young author. He has great ability, marred by certain affectations, that will in time, we hope, disappear. Mr. Saltus has been roughly assaulted by the critics. He probably deserved all that he got. We can say to him, as the fond parent said to his son after the youth had been kicked in the face by a mule, "He will not be so handsome hereafter, but he will have more sense."

Mr. Saltus builds his novels on the French methods. His narrative and conversations find expression in short epigrammatic sentences. To the average reader this is easy and delightful, for there is a sense of wisdom that to such is quite captivating. To the more cultured it has the effect of an old-fashioned corduroy road over a swamp. It simply jolts one, and the knowledge that the short sticks and logs cover a quagmire is not comforting. The characters are nearly all alike; and their conversation so much so, that to a listener to one who reads aloud, omitting the names, it seems to be one person dealing out worldly wisdom in short, jerky sentences. As a specimen of style we quote:

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"Then, Miss Menemon, you must know the penalty which is paid for success." He straightened himself, the awkwardness had left him, and he seemed taller than when he entered the room. "Yes," he continued, "the door to success is very low, and the greater is he that bends the most. Let a man succeed in any one thing, and whatever may be the factors with which that success is achieved, Envy will call a host of enemies into being as swiftly as Cadmus summoned his soldiery. And these enemies will come not alone from the outer world, but from the ranks of his nearest friends. Ruin a man's home, he may forget it. But excel him, do him a favor, show yourself in any light his superior, then indeed is the affront great. Mediocrity is unforgiving. We pretend to admire greatness, but we isolate it and call that isolation Fame. It is above us; we cannot touch it; but mud is plentiful and that we can throw. And if no mud be at hand, we can loose that active abstraction, malice, which subsists on men and things. No; had I an enemy I could wish him no greater penance than success—success prompt, vertiginous, immense! To the world, as I have found it, success is a crime, and its atonement, not death, but torture. Truly, Miss Menemon, humanity is not admirable. Men mean well enough, no doubt; but nature is against them. Libel is the tribute that failure pays to success. If I am slandered, it is because I have succeeded. But what is said of my father is wholly true. He did make shoes, God bless him! and very good shoes they were. Pardon me for not having said so before."

Again, here is another character speaking, and it seems a continuation of what we have quoted. It is not; there are nearly a hundred pages between the two, and a world-wide difference in sex. Now read:

"Before I met you I thought myself in love. Oh, but I did, though. And it was not until after I had known you that I found that which I had taken for love was not love at all. How did I know? Well—you see, because that is not love which goes. And that went. It was for the man I cared, not the individual. At the time I did not understand, nor did I until you came. Truly I don't see why I should speak of this. Every girl, I fancy, experiences the same thing. But when you came life seemed larger. You brought with you new currents. Do you know what I thought? People said I married you for money. I married you because—what do you suppose, now? Because I loved you? But at that time I told myself I had done with love. No, it was not so much for that as because I was ambitious for us both. It was because I thought Wall Street too small for such as you. It was because I discerned in you that power which coerces men. It was because I believed in the future; it was because I trusted you. Yes, it was for that, and yet this afternoon—"

The advance made in this brilliant book, for such it is with all its faults, from that grotesquely immoral work called *The Truth about Tristrem Varick*, justifies our expressed faith in the ability

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of Edgar Saltus. This novel is clearly highly dramatic and intensely interesting. There is the making of a foremost master of fiction in the young man when he shall have shaken off his affectations.

His Way and Her Will, by Fannie Aymar Mathews (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—This is a vivid picture of our supposed New York social life, as seen by certain writers of fiction through the plate-glass window of a fashionable *modiste* in an atmosphere heavy with the cheap scents of a barber-shop. We are introduced to most elegant people of high birth and culture through many generations. The villain is a villain because he is the son of a lowborn and base stonemason.

We have two sorts of fiction affected mainly by our American novelists. One is of the English sort, not Braddon, but Trollope and Miss Austen, where the interest, of a mild sort, turns on the social law of caste. "The hero and the heroine paddle about in the shallow sea of affection, never out of sight of the church-steeple," and it is a poor plebeian girl beloved by a lord, or a noble lady, rich and well-born, who is sought for by a lover of base origin. The other, or French method, is to have the characters tossed upon an awful ocean of passion, where the rag of chastity is torn in shreds by the lurid storm.

The novel before us is of the English class. As we have no aristocracy, one is created. It is, of course, one of birth. The old Knickerbockers and the Puritans of the Mayflower furnish the lofty pedigree, and chivalrous gentlemen and silken dames appear in or come out of elegant drawing-rooms, and love and make love in a most refined and lofty sort.

The stories are not only imaginary, but the foundations for the same are of the stuff dreams are made of. There is no such social life in this land of ours. The aristocracy we have here is one of wealth, and of necessity is without culture. Money-getting, in its best aspect, is a mere instinct. As we have to get our living from the hard crust of earth on which we are born, nature has given us the instincts necessary to that living, and a man gathers the good things about him very much as swine seek shelter and make a bed before a viewless coming storm. As we cultivate the animal we destroy the instinct; hence it is that when a man ceases to accumulate and goes to spending he loses the power of accumulation.

We do not mean to say by this that a man may not, through an exercise of his reason, accumulate property also. The goose that flies a thousand miles on a line due north is emulated by the mariner, who, by the use of a compass, will sail with the same accuracy. But the goose carries its own stomach, and the sailor a rich cargo of silks and velvets. The rule, or rather, the law, is that when reason takes the place of instinct, the instinct is lost. The man who from natural impulse and motive makes his money is unable to enjoy what he has made. He is a mere animal, and of these animals is our aristocracy made.

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When, therefore, we apply to American life the characters, motives, and manners of European social existence, we make an egregious blunder. The aristocracy of Europe, mainly of England, is not one of wealth alone, for many commoners are richer than their lords. Nor is it of pedigree, for the great majority of them are without such. It is the power of a hereditary class. It dominates not only the social but the political structure as well. The lords we look up to and dwell upon, so fascinated, are the masters, and, relieved from the necessary toil for an existence, have time and means to be cultured.

It is a class with the prestige of power. Take this away, and a lord would be no more than the ring-master of a circus, and not half so amusing as the clown.

Our social aristocrats play at being such, and are ring-masters and clowns, admired by the ignorant and laughed at by all.

Again, there is no class in the United States that has the leisure necessary to learn. We have no idle class. We have a continuous stream of would-be aristocrats, but they come and go so rapidly that no time is given for the cultivation of manner, nor can there be the repose necessary to aristocratic ways. The duration of family life on Murray Hill, or any other fashionable locality in New York or elsewhere, is that of the penitentiary or the car-horse—about five years. All the families change in that time. Whence they come they carefully conceal; whither they go no one cares to learn. There are enormous fortunes made in a day, that disappear in a night.

All the while the money-getting and -losing continue. There is no pause. The masculine element of such society is made up of men who carry the anxieties of their work into parlors and ball-rooms. The late dinners and later parties are frequented by fathers and brothers who know that at counting-rooms and offices they must be every morning by ten o'clock, to worry all day with an anxiety that kills. These noble scions of male American aristocracy carry protested notes on their dyspeptic countenances, and the female specimens their bills for jewelry and gorgeous wearing apparel. The surface of the whole creation is not even good veneer, but the thinnest sort of a scratched varnish.

What absurd fictions, then, are our society novels!

We have in reality our social life, and it is of the best and highest. The millions of homes over the land have their comedies and tragedies well worth putting to record, but they are American, not European. Why cannot our gifted authors, such as Miss Mathews, for example, turn to these and give us a fiction worthy the name? The book she has given us, with all its defects, is entertaining. From title-page to close the interest in the plot and characters holds the reader who does not look too narrowly into the probability.

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Of the same sort of work is the volume entitled *That Girl from Texas*, by Jeannette H. Walworth (Belford, Clarke & Co.), an amusing story under a bad name. The idea is not so original, as Sancho Panza remarked, but what we might have met it before. The "Fair Barbarian" who invades England and crops out in English novels, much to our discredit, and the like character from the far West who assaults fashionable life East, are getting to be somewhat monotonous. Society is shocked in both localities by the rough ways of the maiden; but as she is ever beautiful, rich, and shrewd, she plays a leading rôle and comes out victor in the end. If "Elmira does not stab that deep-dyed villain, the Count," she circumvents him in the most adroit and unexpected manner, so that virtue triumphs and vice is exposed and punished.

We cannot comprehend why it is that when a sprig of English nobility seeks our shores, he should always be a cad or an idiot, and in many instances blooming specimens of both. Time was when this specimen proved a fraud, and the so-called lord turned out a lackey. But now his ancestors are the real lace, but his intellect, morals, and manners are at a heavy discount.

Nor is it understandable why the newly rich of the far West are such ignorant boors, while the same articles at the East are refined and intellectual. We observe that the difference between the two is to have the Western man spell his words as they are pronounced, while all the correct spelling is given to the Eastern gentleman. This is scarcely fair to the citizen of means from a Texan ranch or a Nevada mine. But the dramatic effect is good, so we must not complain.

Allowing for these slight defects, *That Girl from Texas* is a well-told story, and, like the preceding, *His Way and Her Will*, is a healthy book. There is nothing in either to shock even the sense of propriety, let alone morals, and both give evidence of a talent for story-telling that if properly cultivated will make the fair authors famous.

Some years since Théophile Gautier published a strange story of transformation in which the soul of the lover was passed to the body of a husband, and the inner life of the husband transferred to the body of the lover. Morbidly-inclined readers are referred to this ingenious but disgusting work for entertainment. The author of *The Princess Daphne*, too modest to put his or her name upon the title-page (Belford, Clarke & Co.), to accommodate morbid readers unacquainted with French, has translated Gautier's plot and adapted it to American taste by making the transferee female instead of the coarser sex. "Whether it was worth while to go through so much for so little," as Sam Weller's school-boy remarked when he got done with the alphabet, "is a matter of taste." We think, in the case of *The Princess Daphne*, that it was not.

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THE QUEEN OF THE BLOCK.

BY ALEXANDER L. KINKEAD.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY BALL.

Bill Kellar played the first fiddle and called the figures; Blind Benner was second fiddle, and Hunch Blair blew the cornet. A curious trio they were.

William Kellar had come from an Eastern city, where he had been the leader of a successful orchestra. The noises of the streets had proved too much for his sensitive hearing, and he had fled from them to the stillness of the forest. He lived at the foot of Coot Hill, where he was frequently visited by Blind Benner, a young man to whom he had taken a fancy and whom he taught to play on the violin.

Blind Benner had a Christian name, but the people of Three-Sisters did not know what it was, and they always spoke of him by the title his infirmity suggested.

Hunch Blair did odd jobs at the furnace store at Three-Sisters, a village located at the foot of a spur of the Alleghany Mountains. Only his father called Hunch by his Christian name. He was a mannish dwarf. Somewhere he had learned to play the cornet.

These were the musicians at the Queen's ball, and lively music they played.

"Move round there, you huckleberry-huckster, and keep some sort of time to the music," Bill shouted at Mrs. Wright from Tihank.

She sold berries in their season and was a quaint character. Spurred by the caller's sharp reprimand, she got ahead of the others, and left her partner before it was time to "turn corners."

He was none other than the stalwart, handsome, dignified owner of the Three-Sister furnaces, and known to all the iron trade as Colonel Jerry Hornberger. He had honored the Queen's ball with his presence and was dancing the first quadrille with Mrs. Wright.

"Seat your partners," Bill shouted presently, "and give Hunch a chance to fill that extra lung he carries on his back."

The party was given in honor of Elizabeth McAnay, the Queen of the Block of Blazes, who had

become twenty-one that day.

Tall, strong, light-footed, and graceful, she was the best dancer in Three-Sisters and eagerly sought as a partner at all the balls. Although not pretty, her face was full of character. Her eyes and hair, which was worn short, were black. Her walk was erect, and her manner regal. She was always grave and dignified, yet could enter heartily into the spirit of a jolly occasion. However, she never lost her womanly dignity as many girls do at balls or parties in the country, by playing practical jokes on the young men; and because she would not join in such tricks, one of the girls had given her the nickname, "The Queen of the Block."

"Twenty-one dances, mind," said Bill, tuning his fiddle for the second dance. "Your positions for number two. Huckleberries, you dance here where I can tap you with the fiddle-bow."

Mrs. Wright, taking a place on the floor by the side of John Gillfillan, the head clerk at the furnace store, turned up her nose at Bill, and joined another set. [Pg 109]

Snap! Blind Benner broke a fiddle string, and was so grieved that he could not play that Bill delayed the dance until the string was again tuned.

Elizabeth was dancing with her oldest brother Levi. Her partner in the first quadrille had been her aged father, who danced no more that night.

Levi was tall and wore his hair long, falling on his shoulders. He was a school-teacher, and a strange combination of faculties found expression in his methods of instruction and discipline. His smile was potent with his pupils being both their reward and punishment; to the deserving it was a benediction, to the unfaithful it was a mocking grin, confounding and abashing them. He was gallant to his sister, and walked gracefully through the dance with her.

Elizabeth's partner in the third dance was Matthew McAnay, her brother, four years older than she. By occupation a wood-chopper, he was an active, strong man, but rather a clumsy dancer. Sometimes his face wore a smile similar to Levi's; to acquaintances it was tantalizing, to strangers annoying.

Cassius McAnay was Elizabeth's partner in the fourth dance. He, too, was her brother, two years her senior, and much like their elder brothers. He was his father's assistant in the coaling.

After the fourth dance John Gillfillan made his way along the ball-room to Elizabeth's side. The change of her manner as she accepted his arm for the next dance showed how welcome he was, yet they were not avowed lovers. He had not made his declaration, but she was expecting it that night. It came, yet not as she had hoped for it.

The ball-room was a long porch, which had once been the platform where freight was received when the Block had been a warehouse, Three-Sisters at that time being the terminus of a railroad. When the railroad was carried farther up the river, the warehouse was found to be unnecessary, and Colonel Hornberger, desiring to turn it into a tenement-house, bought it from the railroad company.

In it a dozen families could be comfortably accommodated, each family having five rooms, three upstairs and two down. The long platform was divided by fences, and to each door steps led from the street. In the openings thus made in the floor of the platform trap-doors were fitted.

These porches were the wash-rooms of the families; and on a Monday, when the washing of clothes took place, so many quarrels arose between the women that the house was given the nickname of the Block of Blazes.

On the night of Elizabeth's party there was harmony in the Block. The wash-tubs and benches were removed, the middle fences were taken away, the trap-doors were down, and the platform made a dancing-floor, which was lighted by candles placed in the windows, and by perforated stable-lanterns, swung on ropes above the heads of the dancers.

John, or Gill, as he was called, conducted Lizzī—for that was what her brothers shortened her name to—to the end of the porch opposite the musicians, who had seats raised above the floor.

Many of the guests were grouped near this platform, gathered around Jacob McAnay and his wife; and Gill and Lizzī had the other end of the porch to themselves. She leaned over the rail and looked at a star twinkling near the horizon, which was made in the West for Three-Sisters by a ridge that was precipitous and high.

"Lizzī," said Gill, "will you be my wife?"

"I will, John."

The shrill voice of Bill Kellar broke upon their ears.

"Cotton, Lizzī! cotton, quick! or there'll be no more dancing here to-night."

Lizzī turned impatiently toward him.

"Never mind him; he's drunk," said Gill.

"Lizzī, the devil is here, and wants a dance, and if I don't get some cotton for my ears, I'll have to give it to him." [Pg 110]

"I must humor him, John," said Lizzī, and disappeared in the house.

There she encountered Gret Reed, Seth Reed's wife, who, knowing Bill's eccentricities, had gone for some cotton when he first asked for it.

"I have it, Lizzī," said Gret; "your mother told me where it was."

"Just like you, Gret; always the first to do anything that is asked."

Gret took the cotton to Bill, who stuffed it in his ears. Then he shouted, "Partners for the fifth dance."

Gill led Lizzī to the floor. She was very happy, betrothed to the man she loved. How light her step, how graceful her movement, as the tall, comely girl walked through the quadrille by the side of her promised husband!

After the dancers were seated when this quadrille was finished, Bill took Hunch aside and asked:

"Hunch, are you afraid of the devil?"

"Ain't afeard uv nuthin'!"

Hunch looked it. His wrinkled old face, with its expression of cunning, and his disfigured form suggested that he was on intimate terms with all sorts of evil spirits.

"The devil is here to-night, Hunch, begging me to play for him to dance, and I don't want to hear him. That's why I put the cotton in my ears. But I will have to play for him. He never lets me go without a dance when he comes around. If I refuse to play, he gives me a lower-region chills-and-fever that makes my bones ache and my flesh burn. But to-night he will have to wait until the party is over; then I will play for him. He will dance on the roof. When I give you the nod, just take your cornet, sneak up on the roof and blow a hole through him, will you?"

"I will thet;" and Hunch jerked his head in a way that showed he intended to ventilate Satan effectively.

When Bill returned to the musician's stand, Blind Benner, who knew the mood that was upon his master, asked the privilege of playing second fiddle for the devil's dance.

"Sorry, Benner, but Old Nick wouldn't have it. He will dance to but one fiddle, and insists that I shall play it. And if he don't get his dance to-night, he will give me an ague that quinine won't cure."

Blind Benner looked sad. Hunch was given the privilege of driving Satan away; but he could not extend to his teacher, tortured into playing for the demoniacal dance, the sympathy of an accompanying violin. With a sigh, he twanged the strings of his violin to learn if they were in tune.

The last dance was a Virginia Reel. With Colonel Hornberger as a partner, Lizzī took the head to lead off.

When the reel was finished, the guests prepared to leave.

"Not yet," shouted Bill. "Don't go yet. Seats, everybody, and we will have a jig by the devil."

A shiver passed over the guests, and they remained standing in groups.

Bill, who was tuning his violin, seemed to have been suddenly transformed. A demon seemed to have taken possession of him. His look was wild, and his eagerness to play almost a frenzy. Before he put the instrument under his chin he unstopped his ears. Immediately, when his bow crossed the strings, he gave himself up to a delirium of melody. His eyes glared, and his body swayed. His auditors were frightened into silence. However, Hunch was self-possessed, and held his horn ready to perforate Satan with a blast from it. Blind Benner wept silently.

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Finally Bill nodded, and Hunch hastened from the porch. A minute after he entered the Block, a discordant blast from the roof broke the spell, restored the player to his senses, and relieved the others, who to this day declare that they distinctly heard the cloven hoof keeping time to the music on the shingles.

On his way home Bill muttered:

"What infernal business had Old Nick at Lizzī's party?"

In after-time he knew.

CHAPTER II.

GILL ELECTS A SQUIRE.

John Gillfillan was chief clerk at the furnace store. Upon him was the entire responsibility of its management; to him was given the sole charge of its business. Colonel Hornberger was always boasting of his ability and trustworthiness, and made him his deputy with full power to act for him. John went to the city and bought the goods for the store and put the selling price on them. He knew just how much stock there was on hand. He was a genius in a way, having a remarkable

memory, which relieved him of the trouble of keeping an order book. Gill was the quickest and shrewdest buyer with whom the wholesalers had to deal.

He was handsome, tall, broad-shouldered, muscular, and always well-dressed. His mustache and hair were dark, almost black; his eyes gray.

In the furnishing of his room, which was on the second story of the store building, a taste almost effeminate was displayed. A stranger entering it would think a woman dwelt there.

When he went to it after leaving the McAnay ball he sat down, not to think in superstitious wonder of the strange fancy of Bill Kellar's, but to recall the words, actions, looks, of the graceful and willowy girl who had said, "I will, John."

"She has more pride than Queen Elizabeth," he muttered. "No 'Thank you' to me; but 'I will, John.' Lizzī, you are the comeliest girl I know, and I have got your promise to be my wife. Well, so much."

Hard, unfeeling words, dictated by passion. Love is tender, generous; Passion, harsh and selfish. They sit opposite at the same feast. Love surrenders to the intoxication of the scene, grateful to be allowed there. Passion glances scornfully at foolish Love and considers his presence at the banquet a compliment to the giver. Love treasures the crumbs. Passion wastes basketfuls.

"So far, so good," Gill murmured. "I'll go to Jim Harker to-morrow."

And without one tender thought for the woman, who even then, all a-tremble with delight at being his betrothed, was uttering a prayer for him, he threw himself on the bed and went asleep.

Lizzī did not sleep. Gill's declaration of love, as she regarded his proposition of marriage, had opened the door of the future, and her eyes were fastened on the scenes that imagination conjured up beyond the threshold. She lay awake looking at them, all beaming in the sunlight.

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"Squire, can you keep a secret?"

James Harker, shoemaker to Three-Sisters, sat in front of his shop, smoking, when Gill addressed him. The title flattered him, coming from so influential a person. He was a candidate for the office of Justice of the Peace. At the polls on the following Tuesday—the McAnay ball was on Wednesday—it would be decided whether Squire Parsons should retain the right to issue warrants and summon law-breakers before him, or have only the dignity of the title, while James Harker, formerly shoemaker, occupied the office and received the fees.

Jim looked piqued by Gill's question.

"Keep a secret? Humph! do yer take me fer a woman?"

Gill laughed and stroked his mustache. "I'll bet you ten dollars if I was to tell you a secret that you couldn't keep it an hour."

"Ten dollars is skeerce with me, Gill; but I'll hev ter go yer thet much anyhow."

From somewhere in his clothes Jim produced a greasy wallet, which he opened. He took from it a ten-dollar gold piece. Gill promptly mated it, but modified the time.

"An hour's too short a time for a fair test."

Jim replaced the money in his wallet. Gill tossed his gold piece into the air, caught it as it fell, balanced it on the tip of his finger, and said:

"Jim, how would you like to have this shiner for your first wedding-fee?"

Jim's eyes dilated.

"Well, yer wouldn't think I'd objec', would yer?"

Gill laughed and slipped the coin into his pocket. Jim's face betrayed his eagerness for the gold.

"Let's go into the shop. I've something particular to say to you," said Gill.

They entered, and Jim shut the door. Gill dropped into the shoemaker's seat and laid the lap-board on his knees.

"Do you know, Jim, that Squire Parsons is going to be hard to beat?"

Jim sat down on a stool and drew a heavy breath, which was an admission that he was of that opinion.

Gill had a knife in his hand and was cutting a piece of leather into strips. The shoemaker, too cunning to force the conversation, looked on in silence. Finally Gill said: "But I believe we can do it, Jim."

"Think so?" Jim asked carelessly.

Gill took another piece of leather and, after whetting the knife on the side of the bench, began cutting a shoe-string. When he finished it, he said:

"Jim, if you will promise to do me a favor, I'll elect you."

Without looking up, or waiting for an answer, he began cutting another string, running the knife dextrously around the circular piece of leather. With great difficulty Jim restrained a promise to do anything Gill might ask. He began to feel his way cautiously.

"If it be in my power as an honest judge."

"I am not in the habit of asking impossibilities."

Gill was pointing the ends of the shoe-strings, and appeared very indifferent as to whether Squire Parsons remained in office or not. His coolness proved too much for the shoemaker, whose greed had been greatly excited. He leaped to his feet and held up his right hand.

"I'll do it. I swear I will."

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"Sit down, Jim, and keep cool. This is to be a bargain, and bargains made in cold blood are surest kept."

Jim resumed his seat and stared in amazement at Gill, who, sure of his man, seemed to take interest only in the shoe-strings he held before him.

"Guess I'll send these to Squire Parsons with your compliments, Jim, as a hint that we'll string him up."

A poor attempt at wit, but it had the desired effect, and Jim was soon as calm as Gill could desire. Then he threw the shoe-strings away and proceeded to business.

"I mean to elect you Justice of the Peace, Jim. That office will materially increase your income. In return for my exertions in your behalf, I expect you to marry me. You will be elected on Tuesday. On Wednesday night you will meet me at the church and unite me to the woman of my choice. I will pay you a fee and, besides, will bet you twenty dollars in gold that you will be the first to tell of a marriage which for good reasons my intended wife and I desire to be kept secret for some time."

Jim rose, delighted that the favor asked of him would be so easily granted.

"Say, Gill, that's all right; yer needn't make the bet. Yer jist 'lect me squire, an' I'll marry yer fer nuthin' and never tell a soul."

"But I think I'll win, that's why I want to bet."

"Well, then, I'll jist take yer up."

"All right; it's a wager."

His business completed, Gill returned to the store.

Squire Parsons was defeated by two votes, and great was the astonishment in Three-Sisters, where everybody believed that John Gillfillan, clerk of the election, was a surety against fraud.

But Gill gave little thought to the deceit that had placed Jim Harker in the office of Justice of the Peace, for he had a weightier matter on his mind—theft. For more than two years he had been stealing systematically from the cash-box, and protected himself from discovery by false entries in the books. The money thus obtained he had lost at the gaming-table during his semi-annual visits to the city for the purpose of buying goods. As soon as he got back to the store he began thieving again in small amounts, in order to accumulate capital for another venture when he next visited the city.

Luck having been so persistently against him, he had determined to learn the art of juggling with cards, and purchased a book of instruction in that line. With this open before him and a pack of cards in his hands he sat in his daintily furnished room on the night of the election. He continued to shuffle and cut the cards until near midnight, when he rose, muttering as he concealed the pack and book:

"I think that practice will make me an expert at cards, and I'll win next time; but I don't propose to risk much longer the chances of being caught by Colonel Hornberger. Something has got to happen to those books, or they will tell on me."

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CHAPTER III.

IN SUGAR CAMP HOLLOW.

Gill did not caution Lizzī to keep their engagement secret. He knew she would, for every true woman enjoys alone for a short time the knowledge that her love is reciprocated. She does not hasten to tell that she has had a proposal and accepted it. To her such conduct seems eagerness to boast of a good bargain. And Gill reckoned rightly when he esteemed Lizzī a true woman.

He did not speak of his intended marriage to any one but Jim Harker. It did not occur to Lizzī that he was trying to see as little of her as possible. Very busy at opening and marking the fall invoice of new goods, he saw her only when he passed the Block on his way to the warehouse, or when

she came to the store. On these occasions he was very gallant, and addressed her with a meaning in his tones and looks that her heart quickly interpreted.

Sugar Camp Hollow was the shortest cut from Three-Sisters to the farm on which an uncle of Lizzī lived. It was a long, deep ravine, where grew great towering pines and graceful sugar-maples. These latter gave it the name. Every spring there was a sugar-boiling at the mouth of the hollow. In the fall and winter the deer herded in the laurel thickets near the top of the mountain. A narrow path ran the length of the ravine, and from a spring near the mountain-top a noisy brook rolled to the mountain's foot and tumbled into the river.

Lizzī's aunt was ill, and, on the Sunday following her engagement, Lizzī, with a basket full of good things, went to visit her. The day was very still, and she enjoyed the deep silence of the woods, broken only by the rustling of the dead leaves as she stepped lightly on them. Sometimes she paused to let the quiet rest her.

As she turned a sharp bend in the path she discovered Gill waiting for her, and uttered an exclamation of glad surprise. Putting down the basket, she let him fold her in his arms. Her heart beat quickly and strongly. He felt it throb, and a thrill startled his steady nerves. Lifting her head from his shoulder, he took her face in both hands and drew it slowly closer to his, feasting his eyes on it. She looked a quick protest and then yielded. A flush mantled her cheeks.

He would have repeated the kiss, but she would not let him. Repetition would be profanation in her eyes and he understood her refusal. Ever after in her life she regarded that first kiss as sacred.

Usually his manner was lightsome, but to-day it was subdued.

"Why have you got such a long face, John? Ain't you glad to see me?"

"Of course I am."

He pressed her hand and looked away from her. The sad smile on his face was succeeded by an expression of dejection.

"Sit down on this log and tell me what's the matter."

Gill sat on the log and looked down the mountain-side to the village below. Lizzī took a seat close to him, and waited for his confidence. Apparently he was hesitating.

"What am I for if you can't tell me your troubles?" she asked impulsively, and caught him by the arm.

Thus encouraged, Gill said:

"I had a letter from mother, yesterday."

She withdrew her hand quickly, sat erect and waited for him to continue, ready to become intensely jealous of that mother, who was probably some selfish old woman that would not let her son marry.

Gill took from his pocket a neatly folded, daintily perfumed letter, the chirography of which was like steel-engraving. From it he read:

"There are indications in your letter just received and read with the eagerness of a mother homesick for her only child, that your affections for the first time in your life are feeling with restless tendrils for a place to cling to in another woman's heart."

Gill could see from the corner of his eye the resolute expression melt on Lizzī's face and a gentle glow of color appear on her cheeks, while a soft look suffused her eyes. He continued:

"Now I hasten to warn you. I care not how beautiful, how accomplished the woman is who enthralls you; if I hear again of this—rather, I should say, that if you do not write to me that you are free, I shall make my will according to your father's directions."

Lizzī had placed one arm on his shoulder and was reading the beautifully written lines, breathlessly looking for the threat she knew they embodied. When she saw it she rose to her feet, and passed her hand quickly over her eyes as if to brush away something that prevented her from seeing clearly. Gill stood up too, and, grasping her shoulder with one hand, gave her a little shake.

"Don't you see, Lizzī? I have been in love with you for a long time and gave mother a hint to learn her opinion, and then before the reply came, my heart broke from its bonds, and I told you my love."

"Yes?" said Lizzī, interrogatively.

"And then I got this letter, threatening to disinherit me, as my father directed I should be if I married without my mother's consent."

"Yes?" again the plaintive interrogation. Then by a sudden great effort she overcame the doubt

that had for the moment shackled her. She loosed his grasp, picked up the basket, and, standing erect with one foot advanced, a queen abdicating a throne, said:

"Write to her you are free."

"But I will not."

His reply was positive. He stood before her, blocking her way, himself aroused to earnestness that needed no affectation, for it was honest. He had just discovered how unselfish a woman's love can be, and reckoned upon it as the last means of retaining his promised wife.

"See," and he tore into bits the beautiful letter. "Thus do I leave my mother for you, Elizabeth; but it will break her heart, it will shorten her life."

His head drooped, his chin touched his chest. Lizzī was touched by his grief, and for him had great compassion. She still held the basket on her left bended arm. With her free hand she gave his forehead a quivering pressure.

"Wait, John, till your mother dies; then I will be your wife."

"I cannot. I will not!"

He lifted his hand determinedly. She still held the basket, her right hand clasping the left, her posture signifying that she was pausing for him to let her pass. He gave her an imploring look, but she was inflexible. Her face had assumed a softened yet determined expression. Regret and resolve had mingled their lines and gave her features a sad tenderness. She was merciful, yet resolute.

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Gill pulled aside the overhanging branch of a tree and bowed to let her pass.

A sigh parted her lips as she gave him her hand in farewell. He seized it eagerly and held it firmly. She endeavored to take it from him, but not rudely. He loosed his grasp slightly and his hold became clinging in its significance. Her bursting heart, for she was giving up her life to her pride, rightly interpreted the meaning of this change in the pressure of his hand, and she thought of the tendrils spoken of in his mother's letter. Yes, they clung to her heart, and she could not roughly tear them away. So she lingered.

He gave her hand a pull, bending it until the wrist would not give way. Holding it thus, he said despairingly.

"I thought, Lizzī, you could arrange it some way."

He tried to lift her hand to his lips, but her wrist was firm.

"Can't you help me, Lizzī?"

The wrist yielded, her hand was at his lips. She let him kiss it, and then set down her basket.

Gill knew he had won. But she would have her hand free, for that would give her a feeling of independence. At the first hint he released it. She interlocked it with the other and looked meditatively at the ground, moving a loose stone with the toe of her shoe.

"I don't like bein' married as if I was ashamed of it."

She was suggesting a clandestine marriage, just what he wanted. He met the question frankly.

"It does look cowardly in me to ask such a thing; but if I get that money, I could buy an interest in the furnaces from Colonel Hornberger, and we could live as well as they do."

"It would be nice to have a home like the Hornbergers'. If we was rich, I'd want long hair. Guess it will grow, though;" and she ran one hand through it, shaking it out.

"I like it better as it is," and he played with it too.

"Do you, dear? Then I'll never have it long again."

"And your father is old enough to quit working. We could give him and your mother a good home, and I'd help Levi become a lawyer. We could do lots of things if we had mother's money. She is old and won't live long, perhaps a couple of years."

"Let us wait for two years."

"No, I will not. If you do not marry me, I will go away."

"John, would you marry me and give up the money—marry me before people and send your mother word?"

"I would, indeed."

"Then I will marry you and not let people know."

"Thank you, sweetheart. You are so good!"

He would have kissed her again, but she would not let him. Her heart was sore at having consented to a secret marriage.

"Let us be married on Wednesday night after prayer-meeting."

"Oh! I couldn't get a new dress by that time."

Gill laughed at her vanity.

"I thought you looked the prettiest I ever saw you on your birthday."

"Would you like me to wear that dress?"

"Yes, dear."

"I will if you want me to, but I must hurry to aunt's, or she'll think I'm lost."

Gill lifted the heavy basket and went with her.

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The gentle autumn day was asleep on the crazy patchwork quilt spread over the vast mountains, and the lovers walked along in silence, lest they should disturb its rest.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE-SISTERS.

It is one town and not three contiguous villages as its name might suggest. Three blast-furnaces stood on the bank of the river below the town. These Colonel Hornberger had named for his daughters, Martha, Sarah, and Henrietta. So the town that grew up near them came to be known as Three-Sisters, and was often spoken of as Three-Girls.

On all sides of it mountains, through which there were three gaps, rise precipitously. Through one of the gaps Boomer Creek, a clear and rapid stream, given to sudden rises, runs into the river, which is picturesque and famous, and almost encircles the town. Through another gap the river glides to the village, and by still another pursues its journey towards the sea.

Beginning above the town, and running parallel to the river, the race conducts the water to the huge wheels in the bellows-house and at the saw-mill.

The railroad runs to the left of the village, crossing the flat on which it is built, while the river flows to the right.

A long wooden covered bridge spans the river and race, and the island between them, and connects Three-Sisters with Boomer Creek Valley, in which are many farms that are gradually encroaching on the forests.

Many of the streets and alleys in the town were given high-sounding titles, but nearly all have their nicknames. The street on which the proprietor dwells is called Big-bug Avenue. There are Goose Street and Backbiter's Alley. Harmony Lane is where the worst wranglers in the village live. And there is the Block-of-Blazes, standing at the head of Big-bug Avenue, yet giving it the cold shoulder, for not a door of the Block opens, not a window looks, except askance, upon the Avenue.

The people of Three-Sisters, in the days of this story, were laborious, frugal, and patient; they had few grievances. Strikes were unheard of, and no trouble was fermented, except by the tavern whiskey, which flowed freely on Saturday nights, when there were frequent fights among the men.

The women were given to gossip, but were honest. Scandal was rare among them, and they prided themselves on being good cooks and tidy housewives.

CHAPTER V.

THE QUEEN'S WEDDING.

"Weddin's-day."

Lizzi's happy thoughts would play upon the word Wednesday, and the gentle breeze in the pines above her made sweet accompaniment to the tuneful repetition.

She sat where Gill had said he would meet her, in the pine-grove at the edge of which stood the church. She had dressed and left home early, apparently for a walk, but now when the church-bell rung the call for prayer she was at the trysting-place.

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"My wedding-bell," she murmured as the mellow solemn tones fell quivering on the air. When they ceased the echo floated to her, a far-away sound almost silence. Clasping her hands, she bowed her head in thankfulness.

"The angels up in heaven ring my weddin'-bell too, and that means John and I will be happy."

There was in this muscular daughter of the forest (she was born in a cabin in the woods) a gentle womanliness that was charming. As the hour drew near when she would give up her maiden name and freedom, she thought Time surely ought to go more slowly. He had taken his ease from Sunday until now, though she, running ahead, had pulled him along; but now, when only one

short hour of her maidenhood was left, the contrary old fellow would run.

She blushed when, all too soon, she saw her promised husband enter the grove; and when he took her hand it trembled.

"What, Lizzī, not scared by the dark?"

The pressure he gave her hand and the light laugh that followed his words corrected their impression, and the sharp pain they caused was soothed by the knowledge that he really understood.

"What if it had been some other man going through the grove?" he asked.

"Then my hand wouldn't have shook."

It was the coming of the bridegroom that made her heart beat more quickly and her hand unsteady.

Gill repaid her for the pretty compliment with a kiss. Then they approached the church, which was wrapped in darkness.

Jim Harker, sexton and squire, had put out the lights after prayer-meeting was dismissed, and closed the shutters. Inside the church he was waiting.

Lizzī hesitated when, in answer to Gill's knock, the door was thrown open and she saw that the church was dark.

"Go in, Lizzī," said Gill. "We'll have a light as soon as the door is shut. If the church was lit up, somebody would see us go in, and come to peep to see what we was doin'."

She stepped into the close darkness. Gill followed, and Jim shut the door. Lizzī gave a little start when she heard the click of the latch, and a shiver ran over her. She was not frightened, only realizing that the door of her maiden life was closed behind her.

Squire Harker lighted two candles, and Lizzī's eyes blinked in the yellow light but soon they were able to pierce the semi-darkness, and to her surprise she could discover no preacher. She had thought him part of the romance. To no plan of Gill's had she objected after consenting to a secret marriage, but she had never dreamed otherwise than that the ceremony would be performed by a clergyman. When she saw Squire Harker, she supposed, because he was sexton, Gill had taken him into confidence and he was present because of his duties at the church, putting out the lights and locking it up.

Gill seemed as much astounded as she that there was no preacher present, and asked rather sharply why he had gone. Squire Harker replied that the preacher had been detained at the other end of the circuit by quarterly meeting.

"It's too confounded bad!" said Gill, angrily.

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"It's bad luck to put off a weddin'," said Lizzī, disappointed.

"I think so, too," Gill remarked, and then asked, as if the idea had just struck him:

"Why not be married by the Squire?"

Lizzī, dressed in her best, demurred. She thought a church-wedding should be conducted by a preacher.

"A marriage ceremony performed by a Justice of the Peace is as binding and respectable as any churchman's," Gill urged.

"It's common-like, though," Lizzī replied; "but I'd be married by a squire rather than put it off."

"You will have to do it then," Gill said, in a tone that did not conceal his chagrin at having to be wedded by a Justice of the Peace.

While Squire Harker was gone for his books, pen, ink, and paper, which were concealed in a thorn-bush near the church, Lizzī sat silent in a pew and wondered if the angels would make merry over a church-wedding conducted by a squire.

When Squire Harker thought he had allowed himself time enough to get to his office and back, he tapped at the church door. Gill shaded the candles and called to him to enter. He closed the door and made a hat-peg of the key, the black slouch effectually preventing any peeping through the keyhole.

He took a position behind the table on which he had placed the candles, and Gill and Lizzī stood before it. The candles threw their weird shadows on the walls and ceiling of the low lecture-room. The shadows deepened and faded, advanced and retreated, nodded and bowed in the uncertain light from the candles which seemed to struggle against their own consumption, yet were never quite able to master the eating fire that at intervals flashed greedily.

The Squire took up the church book and began to read the ceremony, but Lizzī stopped him.

"Not the preacher's way by a squire; take your own book."

So he opened a volume of legal forms and asked the question, "Are both parties of contracting

age?"

Gill responded "Yes," and Lizzī said she was old enough to know her own mind.

The shadows stood still.

"Is there any person here present who knows any good reason why these two parties shall not be united in marriage? If so, let him speak now, or forever after hold his peace."

The candles spluttered, the flames leaped and flashed, and the shadows nodded and bowed and nodded.

"Join your right hands."

Gill took Lizzī's hand in his, and the Squire continued the ceremony, reading the form slowly, stumbling over the big words, but at last he pronounced them man and wife.

Then the shadows stood solemnly still, while Gill kissed Lizzī.

After congratulating the bride and groom, the Squire sat down to write the marriage certificate. Gill and Lizzī retired to a window and conversed in low tones. Presently, after a long while it seemed to the flustered Squire, he handed Lizzī her marriage certificate. It was written on legal-cap and tied with red tape. She received it joyfully and placed it in her bosom. There it lay, the legal testimonial of her purity, the proof of her honesty, should that ever be questioned.

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The Squire gathered up the things he had brought with him, blew out the candles and left the church, going his way, while Gill and Lizzī went to her home.

CHAPTER VI.

BLIND BENNER'S JEALOUSY.

Languid Indian Summer loitered among the great mountains. Her veil, caught on the peaks, draped gracefully in the ravines and hid the valleys beneath a gray sheen. Every evening the sun set in red wrath at this persistent half concealment of her beauty, and the big hand he reached out above the horizon, the broad fingers stretching to the zenith, freed the winds that they might tear off the gauze. But they yielded to her charm and became her lovers, fanning her cheek so gently that her gossamer veil was scarcely rustled. One morning she was gone, vanished with the night, and the winds dashed in furious pursuit of her. Ah, the jilt! She will come again next year, and the silly winds will forget her fickleness, paying court to her, while she dreamily crosses the mountains.

On a Sunday afternoon in this sweet after-thought summer-time, two weeks after Lizzī's wedding, Blind Benner and Hunch were half-sitting, half-lying on a pile of leaves on the top of Bald Mountain. Hunch was greatly distressed at not being able to quiet his friend's discontent, which was very evident as he turned his sightless eyes to the sky at one moment, and at the next rolled over and buried his face in the leaves.

"'Tain't no use in carryin' on thet way. Lizzī ain't here, an' thet's all there is 'bout it."

"There ain't no comfert in her bein' away," Blind Benner groaned.

"It's the first time she's missed comin'; an' yer know, Benner, she's mortil fond uv yer, an' she hed good reason fer stayin' er she'd ben here."

"Thet's more comfertin' talk, Hunch."

If the blind man could have seen the smile that broke out on his friend's face at this remark, he would have been amply repaid for it. There was moisture, too, in the dwarf's eyes. He was grateful to the friend who had said he comforted him. For a long time Blind Benner lay face downwards in the leaves, and Hunch sat beside him in silence, his untutored intelligence having caught the great secret of sympathy—unobtrusiveness.

Until this time Lizzī had always been their companion on these Sunday jaunts, but on this day she could not be found, and the two friends had gone off in a desperate sort of way, resisting the old habit, yet unable to break it.

Hunch openly declared that he loved no one but Blind Benner. The dwarf was unseemly, disagreeable. He felt that he was pitied by those who saw his deformity, and he loathed their compassion. In this list he did not include Lizzī, who said a kind thing about his back, and Bill Kellar, who was always making fun of it.

Lizzī once said:

"Hunch, don't mind about your back. You're so good to Blind Benner, that I know you're an angel, and the hump on your back is only your wings folded up."

He ever afterwards remembered her fondly, but he had no love for anyone except Blind Benner, who did not know how hideous among men the dwarf was.

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Blind Benner's affection for Lizzī was the love of a mature man for the woman who alone has been able to work upon his heart the spell that entralls it forever, yet it had no hope, and his

only longing was to be near her, to hear her voice, sometimes to have her hand in his. A new element, one of pain, had entered into his life, and he groaned, for he was jealous and helpless. He had some way divined Lizzī's love for Gill, and the knowledge had revealed to him the nature of his own affection for the woman whom he never dared tell that he, the blind man, loved her with the love that would make her his wife. He lay fighting the new pain, and Haunch sat near him, ready with help such as he could give if it was asked for.

At last Blind Benner said:

"Hunch, do yer mind the time Lizzī told me what she looked like?"

"Mind ev'ry bit she said."

"Tell me it all over."

"She sed she wuz taller'n yer, Benner; and yer know'd thet. She told yer she hed a good figger; and there ain't no better in the mountins."

"Jist tell what *she* sed, Hunch."

"All right. She sed she wuz strong, an' could carry yer easy as a baby, an' could chop wood like a man; her daddy learned her how ter handle the axe, an' Levi learned her spellin' an' grammer."

"She talks mighty pretty, don't she, Hunch?" Blind Benner interrupted.

"Ain't no better talker, nowheres. An' her hands wuz perfect, she sed, on'y they wuz red from soapsuds, an' *they* didn't wear off in a week. Her hands wuz whitest Sundays."

"Oh! I mind how she laid one on my head when she sed thet," Benner again interrupted, "an' I sed it wuz yellor in feelin'; an' she wanted ter know why, an' I sed 'cause it felt warm an' soft like the sunlight, an' they say thet's yellor."

"Yes, an' I sed the furnace fire was red; but yer got techy an' sed thet wuz hot. Do yer mind thet, Benner—hot and scorchin', not soft an' warm? An' then when yer thought yer bed spoke too sharp ter me, yer made up fer it by sayin' colors wuz hard fer yer ter make out, jist as if a little thing like thet'd make me mad at yer, Benner."

"I ain't got no business speakin' sharp ter yer, Hunch, what's so kind ter me allers," and Blind Benner laid his head on his friend's knee. "Thet wuzn't all she sed."

"Nuh! she sed her feet wuz big."

"An' yer sed thet didn't make no diff'rence, fer her skirts hid 'em," and Blind Benner laughed. "But tell me what she sed 'bout her face."

"She sed it wuzn't very purty, an' wuz big an' round, an' almost filled up the lookin'-glass; thet Levi sed it wuz allers full moon at their house, fer her face wuz allers shinin' with good-natur'."

"An' I mind I sed it must be allers, fer her voice wuz allers glad an' sweet, sweeter'n a fiddle when Bill Kellar plays it."

"An' yer mind she sed her eyes wuz black, Benner, an' yer asked if they wuz purty, an' I sed 'mighty'; an' yer sed the 'dark is black, an' it wuzn't so bad ter live in the dark after all?'"

"Yes, I mind it, Hunch; but her eyes don't shine inter this dark;" and the blind man struck his chest, while a scowl passed over his face.

Hunch did not reply, and there was a moment of silence, broken by Benner, who said fiercely:

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"Ef I hed the use uv my eyes, Gill wouldn't git her; I'd cut him out."

"Ef it would help yer, Benner, I'd cut his eyes out, an' take the chances uv gittin' away," Hunch said in a low, determined tone.

Blind Benner smiled and replied:

"No, thet wouldn't do no good. It would on'y put the light out uv Lizzī's heart an' make her blinder'n me. No, there ain't no hope fer me. Gill's goin' ter git her because I can't ask fer her. But he'll never love her no more'n I do."

"Benner," said Hunch, cheerfully, "mebbe yer kin hev yer eyes fixed. I've got some money, saved it, an' I'll give it ter yer, ev'ry cent: an' when yer well, yer kin pay me back."

"Yer mighty kind, Hunch," Blind Benner said, putting his arm around the dwarf's neck, "but there ain't no cure fer me. I've jist got to go 'long gropin' an' wishin' I'd hed eyes like Gill's."

"There ain't no tellin'. Do yer know, Benner, I wuz layin' in bed th'other night, an' I thought the wall wuz lookin' at me, with a great big eye. I ain't easy skeered, yer know, an' I set up ter git a better look, an' what do you think it wuz? The lookin'-glass hangin' there; an' thinks I, mebbe ef Benner hed lookin'-glasses in his eyes, he could see too. Let's try to get them put in, Benner. Twon't cost much." The dwarf spoke very earnestly, and a moisture filled his friend's eyes.

"Tain't no use, Hunch; there wuz a doctor in the city where Bill Kellar come from, thet sed I wuz stone-blind; an' couldn't never see. My daddy took me ter him long 'fore I knowed yer. Anyhow, Hunch, how yer goin' ter git lookin'-glasses inter a feller's head."

"Well, I think yer kin, an' I'm goin' ter ask Bill Kellar. What he don't know's hard ter find out."

"Come, Hunch, let's go ter the Block, mebbe Lizzī'll be there. 'Tain't nice up here without her, an' I ain't comin' no more, 'less she's along."

"Ain't yer tired, Benner?"

"Yes, I am, Hunch. Tireder then I've ever ben in my life."

"Git on my back an' I'll carry yer."

"I ain't tired in my legs, Hunch. I kin walk."

Taking Blind Benner's hand, Hunch led him down into the deepening shadow of the valley.

CHAPTER VII.

BILL KELLAR.

"He is coaxing again, that violin-loving devil."

New Year's Eve had come, and Bill Kellar sat before a log-fire in his sitting-room, glad that he had given his violin into Lizzī's charge the night of her birthday ball. Since then he had not seen it, though his fingers had often itched for the strings, and his arm longed for the bow.

"He is there, the red salamander; and already his tempting has ceased. Now he commands. Soon he will threaten. Well, let him; I will not give up this time."

Bill looked resolutely into the fire, as if resolved to stare the tempter out of countenance. He ran his thin hand through his long hair, and seemed quite satisfied with his powers of resistance.

"Lord! what is that?" he cried suddenly, and started to his feet. For a while he was motionless, gazing at the flames leaping up the chimney. Presently he muttered, "Sure as I live, the devil wears a mask, and a queer one. The eyes are curiously long with curving corners, and set up and down in his face. The nose is long, with a high bridge. The chin is turned up, and has fiddle-screws through it. The devil holds a violin-bow in one hand, and in the other a scourge of fiddle-strings. Something has happened to my fiddle, my dear old violin."

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He covered his face with his hands, and wept convulsively.

"I thought my fiddle would be as safe in Lizzī's keeping as her honor."

His clock struck ten.

"I will have to go." The resolution formed, he removed his hands from his face, and dried his tears on a bandanna handkerchief. Then he continued the soliloquy.

"I meant to fight it out this time, and let Satan go without his New Year's dance. I could have sat here until morning and shaken with chills-and-fever until my teeth dropped out; but I can't stand this uncertainty about the fate of my violin. This suspense would make me mad—madder far than the noises of the city would have done; madder than crazy Lear; crazier far than that lunatic Bill Kellar has ever been."

"Yes, you soul-thief, redder than the flames around you. I will go to see the waif, my child that I abandoned for fear of you and your shivers; and if it is well with the darling, you know you will get your annual Harvest dance. For I must needs caress the baby, and to the music of its glad laugh you will kick your cloven hoof, you superannuated old fiend. What have I done that you must select me for your soloist on the violin?"

As he talked, Bill looked steadily at the flames as if at the face of a person. When he had thus relieved his mind he took down his heavy coat, and nervously buttoned it round him. Snatching his hat, he jammed it over his eyes and opened the door. With one hand on the latch, he turned and glanced over his shoulder. The apparition had vanished.

"The devil is mighty eager for a dance, else my old eyes have been making a fool of me."

Leaving the door wide open, he returned to the fireplace. He waited a while, but did not see the face in the fire.

With a glad shout he suddenly ran to the door, and slammed it shut.

"I'm free, free!" he cried, clapping his hands gleefully.

Hanging his coat and hat on their pegs, he sat down before the fire, and congratulated himself on his liberty. But his cheerful mood did not last long. Soon he began to shiver, and in the fire beheld the devil return.

"Oh, Lord! he is back. I am still his slave. He has not removed the violin-mask. Yes, yes, I go to my child."

Bareheaded he plunged into the cold, which he did not mind, and the darkness, which he did not heed, for his way was marked by the light of the Three-Sister furnaces, reflected by the clouds.

Lizzī was at the window, listening to the gunshots—the farewell volleys to the old year, the welcoming salute to the new—when a cold, nervous hand was laid on her shoulder. She had not heard the door open, but as it was like any one of the boys to steal up behind her and say something humorous in her ear she sat still, and continued to watch for the flashes of the guns.

"Lizzī, what has happened to my fiddle?"

Recognizing Bill Kellar's voice, harsh as it was, she caught his hand in a hard grip and turned, not knowing whether she would face a lunatic or a drunken man, but afraid of neither.

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He was not intoxicated nor seemingly crazy, only intensely eager. His eyes were not wild, but pathetically pleading as they met hers.

"Nothin', Bill," she replied gently. "It's just as you left it. I keep it in the cupboard, and Blind Benner dusts it often."

His fast walk, which had been a sort of run over the frozen road, had worn Bill out, and he almost swooned with joy when he heard the good news. As he gasped for breath his body swayed, and he would have fallen had she not supported him with her free hand—he still clung to the other—and helped him to a chair. While she stood beside him he kissed her hand frequently as he silently wept. She did not take it away nor forbid him to caress it. Understanding his emotion, she allowed it to express itself in the way it chose.

Presently he became less demonstrative and said:

"Now please give me the fiddle, Lizzī."

She opened the cupboard, and handed him the box. He was so nervous that he could not fit the key in the lock, and Lizzī did it for him. When the lock sprung open he eagerly raised the lid, and there lay, bright and unharmed, the violin that he loved as his life.

"The red devil wore that lying mask and forced me to come. He knew chills-and-fever had about lost their terrors for me, so instead of trying to force me that way, he threw me into an agony of suspense that drove me here. Very well, King of Liars, your dance this time will be short. Bill Kellar's nerves are too shaky and his brain too tired to fiddle long for you to-night."

While he talked he tuned the violin. When it was in chord he began playing a slow improvisation that calmed and rested him, but must have made Satan angry, judging from the sarcastic smile that settled on the fiddler's face.

He had not played longer than ten minutes when Blind Benner entered, and sat down at Lizzī's feet.

Soon the spirit of the violin began to gain the mastery, and Bill's playing became more rapid, his execution more emphatic. Then Blind Benner knew that the demon of the music had woven its spell over his master.

Rising, Blind Benner groped his way to the door and went out. Lizzī was rather lethargic, not fully sympathizing with the violinist, yet gradually yielding to the fascination of the music. Soon Benner came back, with Hunch, who had his cornet. Bill's gleaming eyes caught sight of it, and he rose, stamping his foot and shaking his head. Hunch gave him a look of inquiry, and held up the horn.

"Yes; don't blow it to-night, for I've got Old Nick in my power, and he must dance until I fall senseless, unable to play longer."

Hunch laid the horn on the table, and settled himself to see the end of the violinist's madness. Blind Benner stood reverently near his maestro, while Lizzī tried to hear the devil's hoof on the snow-covered roof.

Furiously Bill played out the old year, and in the new. Guns were popping all around in the semi-darkness. The horn and the goblin were silent. They had the power to break the spell of the music.

Suddenly the music ceased. Hunch caught the violin, and Lizzī seized in her strong arms the falling player, who otherwise would have struck his head on the bare floor as he sank into unconsciousness.

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CHAPTER VIII.

FIRE.

The snow was deep in the forest. It upholstered the gaunt branches of the giant trees; it clung tenaciously to the leafless twigs; it encrusted the millions of pine needles; it covered the rough mountain-sides: it piled up its crystals in the deep ravines, where the deer hid; it lay like a warm blanket over the wheat; it spread all over the land, a great white silence, through which the river and creek, spellbound, flowed without a murmur.

Thus it had lain for three months—December, January, February. The clouds, jealous of the sun and proud of their artistic skill in softening the face of Nature, grim and gaunt in her winter's sleep, came almost daily and sifted fresh snow upon that already fallen, which the winds and sun

were in alliance to disfigure and soil.

March had just come. Each day the sun rose more confident of victory. Ere long he would succeed in making Nature look like an old wanton, her powdered face tear-streaked and unsightly.

On the last night of February the clock in Lizzī's room made one quick guess at the time, and brought her back from a flight of fancy. She was startled to see that it was one o'clock, and resumed the sewing that had lain neglected in her lap, while her thoughts roved.

She was sewing in secret, with the blind of the window down and her candle shaded. The garment she was fashioning was one of those almost shapeless infant robes that the inventive skill of dawning motherhood makes so diversely pretty and daintily ungraceful. She had begun to fold a plait in it, and paused to debate with herself on the size of the fold.

"If I was sure it would be a boy I'd make these pleats wider," she murmured.

From that her thoughts had wandered until she was recalled to her work by the striking of the clock. For another hour she worked diligently, then arose and put the sewing away where her mother would not be likely to find it. After that she blew out the candle and raised the blind for a last look that night at the store. The moonlight streamed into the window, dazzling her eyes accustomed to the candle-light. She shut them quickly in pain, and when she opened them a thrill of terror passed over her.

She saw a great column of smoke rising from the roof of the store, and a little flame leaping up through it.

The next moment, an axe in her hand, she was on the street.

"Fire! Fire! The store's on fire!"

Her clear voice rang wild and sharp on the still night air. The echoes mocked her.

"Colonel Hornberger, get up!"

With her axe's handle she rattled fierce blows on the front door of the proprietor's house.

"Help! Help!"

The echoes hurled back her voice mockingly:

"Help! ha, ha!"

"He is dead," she thought, "and the echoes are making fun of me."

Cry after cry she uttered in her anguish, fierce alarm-notes that aroused the heavy sleepers and brought them to the windows, only to hastily throw on some clothes and rush to the rescue, for they all knew that Gill slept in the store and even then might be dead.

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Oh! Lizzī's strength! No longer screaming in terror, no more exhausting her breath by calling for help, she dealt mighty blows with the axe against the door of the office, above which her husband slept. Giant strokes, rapid, unerring, concentrated, made effective by the skill of a woodman, the strength of despair and the agony of love. Against them the door could not stand. It fell in, cut off its hinges. A great volume of smoke rolled out and beat her back.

A closed door separated the office from the store and was a barrier to the flames which were raging in the store-room.

Drawing a full breath and bowing low, Lizzī plunged into the office and reached the stair door. Well she knew the way. The door was closed, and she was so unnerved with joy that for a moment she clung to the latch and listened to the flames roaring in the store. She could see them through the window which give light from the office to the rear of the store, and they fascinated her. The heat cracked the glass in the window, and a tongue of flame leaped towards the opening made by a falling pane.

This recalled Lizzī to a sense of the danger and the need for urgent action. She jerked the door open, breaking the latch, and sped up the stairs, chased by a volume of smoke. To her horror it filled the room, else it was in her eyes. Thank God! she had brought the axe. Staggering to the windows, she smashed them both and knocked the shutters open, giving vent to the smoke.

She could not see Gill, but she knew just where he lay. With an effort she reached the bed. Her mouth was firmly closed, but her strength was almost gone Her trembling hands touched him. He was motionless.

Then when her heart had almost stopped and she was falling in a swoon, the flames burst into the room, lighting up Gill's face upturned and white. Uttering a scream, she caught him up in her arms, became strong again in desperation, and leaped recklessly down the stairs. Tottering with her burden into the street; she sank unconscious at the feet of Cassi, who, hearing her cries, had come running, the first to answer her call.

There had not been so much smoke in Gill's room as Lizzī had imagined, and he soon recovered consciousness in the cold air.

There was no hope for the store, and no one remembered the office books. A little presence of mind and prompt action on the part of first-comers might have saved them, but every one was so excited over Lizzī's daring and remarkable strength in saving Gill from a horrible death that all else was forgotten. Some ran for the doctor and others tried to restore her to consciousness, Colonel Hornberger encouraging them.

"Never mind the store," he exclaimed. "The fire is only making away with the old stock and giving Gill and me an excuse for a trip to the city. But save that brave girl if possible."

He tore off his coat and threw it over Lizzī, who lay on an improvised couch of store boxes, hastily placed together by willing hands.

"Heavens, what a woman!"

He uttered the words impulsively as he gazed admiringly upon her.

Other men followed his example, and they stood shivering, while their coats covered Lizzī.

She lay still. The weird red light of the roaring flames could not even tint her face, so white and cold it was.

Over her bent the man whose life she had saved. His face was firm, his eyes were dry, his pulse was steady. His only speech, a question spoken in a low tone, sent a thrill through the crowd, in which were now a number of women.

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"Will the doctor never come?" he asked.

Coatless and inefficient, the men stood at a respectful distance from Lizzī, over whom Cassi bent, speaking to her in fond tones, and their stern silence checked the gabble of the women, who knew not what to do to restore her to life, but had suggested many things that night avail.

A shriek, the quavering cry of old age, nor piercing, but heart-rending, broke from the lips of Lizzī's mother, as half clad, she pushed feebly her way through the yielding crowd and fell across her daughter's body.

Colonel Hornberger put his arm around her and lifted her away from the boxes.

"Here, Gret Reed, you take charge of Mrs. McAnay. Go with her to my house."

Gret obeyed the excited proprietor, and as she supported the moaning woman along the street they met Hunch leading Blind Benner.

"She's dead!" Mrs. McAnay exclaimed. "My Lizzī's dead! my Lizzī's dead! Oh! oh!"

Blind Benner heard her and stopped. "Take me away, Hunch," he pleaded, "take me away."

Hunch turned towards the Block. Tears streamed from the blind man's eyes, and sobs choked him. After going a few steps he halted and faced the fire. Hunch, obedient to his every wish, let go the hand he shook as if to free it. They were near the fire, and its heat burned Blind Benner's face. Hunch stood with his back to it, watching its light on the snow-covered mountain.

A quick movement on the part of Bind Benner attracted his attention. He turned around and saw the blind man running straight to the fire. Shouting to him to stop, Hunch started after him, but he was running swiftly without stumbling, and there seemed small hope of catching him.

Gret looked over her shoulder on hearing Hunch's cries, and saw that Blind Benner meant to commit suicide. Clear as a bell her voice rang out in the only lie she ever told.

"Benner, you have passed the fire; turn back."

The doubt she raised checked him for only a moment, but long enough to bring Hunch upon him. In a twinkling his feet were knocked from under him and Hunch sat upon his prostrate form.

The messenger who had been sent for the doctor brought back word that he had not returned from a late call up Boomer Creek.

"My God, she will die!" Gill groaned, "and for me!"

His words scored sympathizing hearts and indented faithful memories.

The store building was dry as tinder and burned very rapidly. The roof had fallen in before Gill recovered consciousness, and soon after the walls toppled into the cellar.

The news of the doctor's absence sent a pang to the hearts of all, and hope for Lizzī was abandoned, she being beyond the restorative power of the water which had been dashed in her face.

A hastily constructed stretcher, made of two benches from the tavern fastened together, was brought, and Lizzī's limp form was laid upon it. Coats were her mattress, and coats her covering. Four strong men lifted the stretcher and headed the procession, which filed silently around the rapidly lessening glare. Gill and Cassi came next, walking arm in arm, the former wearing a coat that a brawny man had thrown over his shivering shoulders.

When the column came to where the front entrance of the store had been, Hunch and Blind Benner were struggling in the water made by the snow melting in the heat of the fire. "What's

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this?" sternly demanded Colonel Hornberger, who broke into a laugh before he received an answer. The fire excitement was still working in him.

"He tried ter burn hissself an' I wouldn't let him," Hunch replied.

"What did he want to do that for?" asked the Colonel.

"Cause Lizzī's dead."

Thus was told in simple words to the people of Three Sisters what Lizzī herself had not known, that Blind Benner loved her.

Simultaneously with this disclosure came the sound of a horse galloping over the Boomer Creek bridge. The horse came rapidly nearer, and soon his hoofs resounded from the long bridge that spanned the river.

It was a wild gallop, yet the horse ran as if some one sat him urging him on.

"The doctor," surmised every one, and the procession halted. Hunch voiced the general guess to Blind Benner, whom he yet held on the ground.

"The doctor's comin'. He'll bring Lizzī back ter life, see if he don't, Benner."

The blind man ceased struggling, and Hunch let him get on his feet, but watched him warily.

A shout of glad welcome greeted the familiar roan that "saddle-bags," as the Three-Sisters folk would call their physician, always rode when visiting distant patients or in response to urgent calls. The men who bore the stretcher set it down, in readiness for Dr. Barnes, as he reined his horse in the midst of the crowd of men and women who pressed dangerously near the excited animal. Strong hands seized the bridle and muscular arms almost pulled the physician from the saddle, while Colonel Hornberger graphically narrated the story of Gill's rescue and told of Lizzī's swoon which was like death.

"She's choked with the smoke, Lizzī is, and don't come to," said Cassi, piteously.

Garrulous women pushed forward to furnish the doctor with details of the rescue and praise Lizzī, but he would not listen to them. He pressed his ear to Lizzī's bosom and silence fell on the spectators. He raised his head, and they, eager, expectant, saw no encouragement in his face. From his pocket he produced a small mirror and wiped it dry with a silk handkerchief. He held it a moment over Lizzī's mouth and smiled.

The air quivered with shouts, the boisterous hurrahs of the men, the shrill huzzas of the women.

CHAPTER IX.

A LETTER FROM GILL'S MOTHER.

Lizzī recovered soon after she was placed in her bed. Gret Reed had aided the physician, and was the first person Lizzī saw when her eyes dreamily opened. They closed again at once, for from downstairs Gill's voice reached her ears, and she knew he was safe. She was ill (she would laugh at the word) but a day.

When the excitement over her had subsided, wondering inquiries as to the origin of the fire began to be voiced. Gill was called to account for going to bed with his clothes on.

"I was working late at the books," he said, "it being the end of the month, and I got so sleepy and tired that I just pulled off my coat and threw myself on the bed and fell asleep."

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Colonel Hornberger believed him, and no one had reason to suspect him.

The origin of the fire remained a mystery, but the loss occasioned by the destruction of the store was severe upon the Three Sisters people. Colonel Hornberger set out at once for the city to buy a new stock, first making arrangements with the proprietors of the nearest store to supply his employés with necessities. The Colonel took Gill with him.

Before departing, the latter called upon Lizzī and, in the presence of her family, feelingly expressed his gratitude for the heroic rescue of his unworthy life. He depreciated himself modestly, and the McAnays thought him very unassuming. Lizzī put up her hand in glad protest as she heard his graceful sentences, conveying to her a deeper meaning than thankfulness.

"When I come back," was their promise, "then," they said to her, "I shall acknowledge you as my wife, Lizzī."

The Colonel was expeditious, and soon returned with a large stock of goods, some of which were stored in the warehouse at the station; the balance was placed upon the shelves of the temporary building that had been erected in his absence. For a few days Gill was very busy, and his visits to Lizzī were only short calls.

One evening he came early, evidently with the intention of making a visit. Soon he and Lizzī were left alone together.

"I have had a letter from mother, Lizzī," Gill said eagerly, but his tone was not loud. "Such a

letter about you and the fire, and I am sure all I have to do is to go and see her, and she will be only too glad to receive you as her daughter."

Lizzī stood still. Her heart beat so hard she thought it would burst, and the color deepened on her cheek. She had few tricks. Her honest nature expressed itself simply. She was glad, and her face and posture were the manifestations of her joy. She was one of the few persons with whom words at times have too deep meaning to be uttered, and whose actions are the sole exponents of their feeling.

Gill said quietly:

"Sit down, dear, and I will read you the letter."

But she could not do so without giving vent to her feelings, which she did in the very undramatic act of poking the fire. She did it vigorously, and the click of the metal stove doors as she closed them was a "There now" to her mood. Then she sat down ready to listen. He began at once.

"My dear son, doubly precious to me because of your nearness to a horrible death, give my love to the brave girl who saved you to me. Some day she may know from the anguish of her own heart over a child's peril how much I mean when I say I am grateful to her. Words cannot be stronger than that. If she is ever a mother, she will learn that it is the parent's love alone that endures in all its sensitiveness.

"But I am jealous, weakly, selfishly jealous of the grand girl of whom you write so admiringly. It seems to me I detect in your sentences the evidence that she has dethroned me in your heart, where until now I flatter myself I have been first.

"You say she is beautiful, womanly; that her great physical strength does not detract from her femininity; that she is always a modest, gentle woman. I am glad to know it, and if you love her I cannot be so cruel as to execute the threat I wrote so fiercely some time ago, when I guessed you were losing your heart. I guess again, John: Lizzī is the woman you wrote of then. But come home; come and tell me about her who has saved your life, and against whom I have not the heart to hurl my former threat.

YOUR FOND MOTHER."

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Lizzī took the letter and looked at it. The beautiful, clear writing was the same as that of the other letter, which had led to her secret marriage. Now the obstacles to the acknowledgment of that ceremony were, or soon would be, removed. She clasped her hands, enfolding in them the letter, and sat still, listening to her heart beating a reveillé for the sunrise of certainty. She had been living in the night of doubt. She had been afraid of this formidable mother, who wrote so beautifully and coldly, but now this fear was banished, and love, reciprocally grateful, took its place. Her heart went out to the fond, yet jealous, mother who had written so yieldingly of her. This mother had clung so determinedly to her son, but now she loosed her grasp on him that he might tend whither he would, because his way led to her, Lizzī.

She was flattered by the manner in which Gill had written to his mother of her. "For," she reasoned, "a man will be honest with his mother."

"Go, John," she said simply. "Your mother should know before the world does."

"I think it best, Lizzī. I shall come back in two weeks unless something happens to me."

"Don't say that, John, or you can't go. If anything should happen to you, death would happen to me."

She kissed him. Her kiss was fire to his blood. He caught her in a passionate embrace. His lack of reverence wounded her. She shrank from his touch, which for the first time seemed coarse. Instinctively he understood and released her.

The next day he departed for his mother's residence.

CHAPTER X.

BLIND BENNER'S TRIBUTE.

The two weeks of Gill's absence ran into six and he had not come back. Lizzī wrote to the address he gave, and the letter was returned to her. Gossip said he had deserted her, but she said to her broken heart, "John is dead."

She recalled his fond good-by and his promise to return, with or without his mother's approval of his marriage, at the end of two weeks. She remembered his cavalier appearance as he rode by the Block and waved her a farewell. She heard still the sound of his horse's hoofs in the long bridge. She knew he had considerable money on his person, and supposed some one had murdered him for it. She was left a widow, indeed.

Yet she held her peace and bore herself proudly as ever. Her eyes did not quail before the cold stare of the matrons. Her honest heart sustained her. It did not cry out, "Shame! shame!" So she did not seclude herself, nor was she forward. When necessity called her into the streets, she courageously faced her old acquaintances and bore with patience their scorn. Two women were

kind to her and sad for her, but were not oppressive in their attentions. These were Mrs. Hornberger and Gret Reed. Yet she did not seek the comfort of their sympathy, nor once become weak enough to ask them to believe in her. Appearances were against her, but she never intimated that she could produce legal proof of her innocence. Her heart cried out in woe, "I am bereft," and there was no solace for her, grieving for her dead husband. She could not weep, because the tears would be misconstrued.

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Her father's kind words had been a great support to her.

"Ye may have gone wrong, Lizzī, but I'll ne'er believe it till ye tell it me."

The deep tenderness of his tones had touched her where the tears lay, and they rose, overflowing the obstruction her will had built against their flood. She fell at his feet. It was Saturday night, and he sat in his split-bottomed chair, resting. She laid her head on his knee, and sobbed and wept convulsively. His shaking hand stroked caressingly her soft black hair, and he murmured low lullaby words as if soothing a child. His conviction had been unhesitatingly expressed, but his sympathy could not find suitable language except in a song that was used to hush a crying infant.

He was seventy years old. His hair and beard were pure white. His broad chest and square shoulders told the story of his vigorous age. It was not to frown that he contracted his eyebrows, but to narrow his vision, while he fixed a gentle look on his daughter, for whom his heart ached, but in whom he believed. No, he did not frown on her. He never did shadow her babyhood, her childhood, her dawning womanhood, nor now would he her approaching motherhood, by scowl of his. He sat bowing above his daughter, not casting a stone at her, but quivering over her head a blessing of trust.

His wife tottered down the stairs, and Lizzī made a movement as if to arise, but he kept her at his knee.

Mrs. McAnay was not a hard woman, but she had to the full measure her sex's vindictiveness against the woman who is weak and it was difficult for her not to relieve her mind of what she considered its just sentiments towards her daughter. Yet she pitied Lizzī. She stopped at the foot of the stairs and gazed wonderingly at the father and daughter. Peter did not speak and Lizzī remained on her knees. Mrs. McAnay slowly approached her child and bent over her.

"I am glad yer confessin', girl," she said in a weak, quavering voice.

Lizzī shivered. Her mother's hand resting on her head was not cold, but the knowledge that she yet withheld from her parents what they should know sent a chill to her heart.

"Tain't that yet, mother," said Peter, "for I'm thinkin' she ain't got anything to confess that's wrong. I was sayin' something to her that made her cry, that's all."

The door opened, and Levi and Matthi entered. Lizzī had not yet risen, and her mother stood over her.

The boys stopped at the door, and would have gone out again had not their father bade them stay. They knew no law higher than obedience to their venerable father. So they remained, awkwardly seating themselves, while Lizzī rose to her feet and buried her tear-stained face in her hands. An embarrassing silence fell on the group. It was broken by the entrance of Cassi and Blind Benner. Cassi saw at a glance that a family scene was in progress, and he started to escort Blind Benner to the door, but Peter said he was welcome. Cassi seated Benner, and then leaned against the wall.

"Boys!"

Peter had risen, and at the sound of his voice addressing them Levi and Matthi stood up, and Cassi took a step from the wall. "Boys, I've been tellin' yer sister that I don't believe she has gone wrong, and I want to know if you think as I do."

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"Yes."

A volley of affirmation, a single unflagging response, which Lizzī echoed by a sob, and their mother heard with pride, but still she doubted. She went from one son to the other, kissing each in turn, yet she doubted her daughter.

Blind Benner had groped his way to Lizzī, and caught her right hand just as it was going to produce her marriage certificate.

"Listen!" he said as he held her hand in both of his. "Listen an' I'll tell yer all 'bout Lizzī."

An expectant hush fell upon the group, and even Lizzī's thumping heart beat more softly as she awaited her blind friend's story.

"My eyes are only a joke." He spoke like a wise cynic. "They don't see. Hunch says they look like good eyes an' move an' wink like other people's. 'Tain't no use their winkin', 'cause the light don't hurt them."

Very bitterly he spoke the last sentence as he winked his eyes sarcastically.

"But my ears, they're good; they know." His tone became more cheerful, but no less earnest. "They hear well, better than you folks see. They know when the birds laugh and when they cry,

when they're glad and when they're sad. They know when the fiddle's in tune. They know a right sound. No, I've no eyes to see the white snow, er the blue sky, er the green grass; but my ears hears the wind in the trees, and it never lies ter me. I know when it's mad, when it's sad, when it's glad. So is Lizzī's voice ter me, like the wind among the trees that never lies ter me. I hev never seen Lizzī's face, but I hev heard her voice. I know when she's glad, when she's mad, when she's sad. I hev heard her sing her baby songs when she thought nobody was listenin', an' she sings 'em like my mother did, an' my mother wasn't false; no more is Lizzī."

The men clamored their approval of Blind Benner's tribute to Lizzī, but Mrs. McAnay remained silent, still doubting, and Lizzī, though her heart hungered for her mother's trust, would not ask for it.

CHAPTER XI.

LIZZĪ STOPS A FIGHT.

Saturday evening was a money-making time for the landlord of the "Three-Girls" Tavern, as the inn was familiarly called. On that evening old scores were wiped off the slate and new ones opened, to be lengthened during the coming week until on the next Saturday they followed their predecessors into Nowhere. Into Nowhere? Perhaps. But Memory hides in Nowhere, and Memory is terrifying when she catches one in a lonely way and brings him up with hair on end, as he gazes at the dog Conscience, whose leash she seems ready to let slip that he may rend the poor wayfarer. Yet, the score is erased from the landlord's slate and, it may be, from memory's tablet—for the nonce.

The usual Saturday night crowd had gathered in the bar-room, and tongues had been loosened by drink. Words flew thick and fast. Language was not choice. At short intervals there was a demand for an apology, or a fight. The McAnay brothers were there and all drinking, though not very deeply. Cassi, who was standing treat, was the centre of a group of muscular men, some of whom were intoxicated. The glasses had been filled with pure rye whiskey. They were held high in the air, then they were clinked, while the landlord bowed and smirked as he waited for the toast.

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Henry Myers gave it.

"Here's ter yer and the rest uv yer family, and ter the rightin' uv yer sister's fair name."

Cassi's face flushed. Levi and Matthi scowled, but the others drank off the toast with a smack. Levi, Matthi, and Cassi did not drink, but the latter pretended to do so, holding the glass to his lips. When the others were done and the glasses rattled on the bar, he removed the glass from his lips. The whiskey was untouched. Before a question arose as to why he had not drank, he spit into the liquid and threw it into Henry's face.

"Thet's the way I drink such a toast, Hen Myers."

Henry, pale with rage and goaded by the challenge and the loud laugh that greeted Cassi's act, leaped at the latter, but was met with a blow that staggered, but did not fell him.

"Yer hed no bizness ter drag my sister's name inter this bar-room," yelled Cassi, following up his advantage and striking Henry fairly between the eyes, knocking him against the bar.

"She's dragged her own name in the mud," shouted Tom Myers, Henry's brother.

"Yer a liar!" Matthi replied.

They began to fight. Levi stood by, a smile of admiration playing around his mouth, while he urged his brothers to do their best. The crowd cleared a space. The landlord implored the fighters to cease, but their blood was hot. The spectators knew they would behold a rare struggle, with the odds against Cassi and Matthi, for the Myers brothers were notorious fighters and older men. Man to man was the rule of the Three-Sisters code of honor, and Levi stood by, ready to continue the fight in the place of the first vanquished brother.

Henry Myers rushed on Cassi again and, seizing him in his powerful arms, threw him with great force on the floor. There he lay senseless; his head had struck against the bar.

Immediately Levi, the queer, leering smile hovering around his mouth, leaped into the fray and dealt Henry a blow that shut one eye. His dexterity was applauded by the spectators, who thought it a great pity that Levi had not opened the fight instead of Cassi, who was too light for Henry, whom Levi fairly mated. Matthi was not faring well with Tom Myers, and the way the struggle was going it looked as if Levi and Tom would be left as sole contestants, when into the midst of the fighters rushed Lizzī, brandishing the poker, a long iron rod, which she had snatched from the stove as she entered.

Hunch had seen her on the opposite side of the street, and, running to her, had said, "Hooray! Lizzī, the boys is gettin' in great licks fer yer."

Pausing, she listened to his proud story of how the fight began; and, without waiting for him to conclude, crossed the street quickly and entered the tavern, the dwarf following closely.

In the low-ceilinged bar-room, where the smoke from strong pipes almost stifled her, she stood, an Amazon before whom the fighters fell back sullenly. There was majesty in her demeanor, and

upon her face no sign of shame. Honest motherhood and sincere sisterly gratitude, pride, and affection flashed from her eyes, deepened the modest blush on her cheek, and trembled in her tones.

"I am thankful to you, Levi and Matthi, and to you, dear Cassi." Kneeling, she kissed the forehead of the unconscious man.

When she rose, the poker fell from her fingers and struck the floor with a dull thud. Standing firmly, with one foot advanced, she continued: "Yes, dear boys, I'm thankful to you, but my name needs no defence."

A hush followed her words, then a cheer broke involuntarily from her hearers. The Myers brothers looked at each other furtively, and a smile appeared on Levi's face, who was uninjured. Matthi, whose mouth was bleeding, betrayed by the expression of his eyes his pride in the sister for whom he had fought. Some of the spectators stepped forward to raise Cassi, but Lizzī intercepted them. Then pointing to her brother, she regally commanded the Meyers boys.

"You killed him; now take him to his old mother."

Murder! a shiver ran through the crowd.

The Myers brothers looked at the men around them. A living wall encompassed them, which at a woman's bidding would topple and crush them. They could not pierce it. Lizzī stamped her foot and startled them into action.

They lifted Cassi gently. Lizzī pointed to the door. The crowd fell back. Levi and Matthi led the way. Next them came Thomas and Henry with Cassi's limp form. Lizzī followed, and the crowd escorted them. At the edge of the assemblage were boys whose shrill voices broke the silence. Vengeance was held in abeyance by a woman's whim; and Thomas and Henry Myers walked unsteadily, fearful that, Herodias-like, she would have their heads.

Before they were half-way to the Block the constable appeared, and to the stern assemblage added the subtle, intangible when not provoked, but when angered terrible, presence of the law.

Nearer to the Block the crowd approached. Doors and windows were thrown open hastily, and broad beams of light fell across the street, while curious persons thrust out their heads to learn the cause of the unusual procession marching so grimly over the bands of light and darkness.

Nearer still to the Block the column came. Soon the heavy footsteps on the porch would strike terror to the aged mother's heart, already half broken by doubt. Soon to the feet of that doubting mother would be borne the senseless form of her youngest son, stricken down in defence of his sister's fair name. Halt, pressing crowd eager to witness a heart-break.

But the Queen had commanded, and there was no alternative.

There was a momentary halt at the door as if for orders, every man acting as if under a spell which she alone could break. But she could not speak. Her voice seemed dead in her throat.

The door was open and she saw her mother, who did not look up as Levi and Matthi entered. The Myers brothers with their burden crossed the door-sill, and Lizzī, a queen no more, but a remorseful, dejected woman, stood in the open door, with her profile to the crowd, keeping it at bay.

Mrs. McAnay was apparently asleep, and the noise of the heavy shuffling feet had not waked her. Her head rested on one hand, her elbow supported by the arm of the chair.

"Mother."

Levi spoke low.

"Mother, wake up."

He shook her gently. Her head drooped a little lower, but her eyes remained closed.

"Mother, get awake."

His voice was harsh and loud, and the shake he gave her vigorous and sudden, but her head only drooped lower.

The Myers brothers had laid Cassi on the floor at her feet, and were standing at a little distance from her. Matthi, stanching the flow of blood from his lips, stood near the door.

It was a cruel scene, this attempt on the part of an older son to arouse his mother to the knowledge of the injury done to her best beloved, and in silence the spectators beheld it.

Sharply the stillness was broken as Lizzī, with a shriek, threw herself across Cassi and buried her face in her mother's lap.

"Dead, dead!" she moaned, "Cassi and mother—and both for me!"

Cassi was restored to his senses by the jar of her fall upon him, and Thomas Myers saw in his opening eyes the return of life.

"Cassi's livin'!" he cried. "He's opened his eyes."

But only Henry Myers heeded him. The others were engrossed by the awful scene before them.

Levi and Matthi, stunned by the sudden death of their mother, were motionless. Their wits had apparently deserted them, and they were unable to comprehend the situation.

Lizzī did not remain long on her knees. Struggling to her feet, she tore open her dress at the neck, as if to give her greater freedom in breathing, but really to reach her marriage-certificate, which she snatched from the little pocket made for it and held it before her mother.

"Are your eyes open in heaven, mother? If they are, read this. You died without seein' it."

Of the gaping, mystified crowd none guessed what the crumpled paper was. Thrusting it back in its hiding-place, she turned to the wide-mouthed throng, and said:

"Leave us alone."

Slowly the burly men and curious boys went away in obedience to the pathetic command. Thomas Myers closed the door behind him, shutting Henry in, who, thoroughly repentant, remained to be of service.

Cassi, who had staggered to his feet, seeing him, made an attack upon him, muttering as he swayed in uncertain advance:

"Yer hed no bizness ter drag my sister's name inter this bar-room!"

He tried to shake off Lizzī's enfolding arms, but they held him firmly.

"It's all right, dear Cassi. You fought hard; but Hen's apologized, and if you make a noise you will wake mother. Now go to bed."

She led him to the foot of the stairs and kissed him good-night. He obeyed her, for her will was dominant in that household.

CHAPTER XII.

LIZZĪ PROVES HER INNOCENCE.

When Cassi had entered his room, Lizzī lifted her mother and laid her on her bed. Then she sent Levi for Margaret Reed, a little, winning, sympathetic woman who was summoned on all occasions. In times of sorrow she shed a soft radiance on darkened hearts, and in times of rejoicing she was bright as the sunshine. "Send for Gret"—no one called her Mrs. Reed; toddlers said "Det"—was the suggestion of sadness, the impulse of joy, and Gret, childless herself, but mother to all the babies and sister to all the mothers of the village, answered every call.

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She had no rebuke for Henry Myers, whom she met as she entered the McAnay home, except such as just hearts will sometimes express by an unconscious manner of repugnance. Henry was sensitive enough to feel it, and he departed cursing himself bitterly.

Gret went straight to Lizzī, and felt like a giantess as the latter knelt before her and clung to her dress.

"I killed her, Gret; I killed her. I never told her, and it broke her heart; and I am a murderer, worse than Henry Myers would have been if he had killed Cassi. She couldn't think it was all right, and when she heard the boys was fighting for me, she couldn't stand it any longer and just died where I left her. And I was so crazy to have Cassi brought home, so I could say to her, 'There, mother, you see how he believed in me, fightin' till he died;' but the Lord shut her eyes so she couldn't see the cruel sight. Yes, I'm punished for my stubborn silence. If I had showed it to her she wouldn't have died so sudden."

Gret did not invite confidence by asking Lizzī what she should have shown her mother.

"And poor father," Lizzī continued, "away out in the cabin alone, his wife dead and his daughter disgraced—how will I tell him that mother is dead?"

"I'll send Seth," said Gret; "and while he is gone we must get your mother ready for the grave."

Gret went out, and soon came back with the news that Seth was on his way to Peter McAnay's cabin.

Lizzī was more composed, and assisted Gret in preparing the body for burial.

It was near daybreak when Peter reached his home. Gret met him at the door. Levi, Matthi, and Cassi rose to receive him. They had been sitting in the room where their mother died. Blind Benner lay asleep on a bench, and Hunch was crouching in a corner. Lizzī was with the dead. She heard her father's voice in response to the greeting of her brothers, but did not move from her knees.

Her father's step on the stairs told of his approach. She bowed her head lower and clasped her hands. Her posture was one of utter dejection. Her father stood over her. She did not move. He spoke to her. She did not reply.

He glanced at the bed, and saw how tastefully she had dressed her mother for the grave. He

could see through the mist in his eyes that the dress was not stiff in its folds, but gracefully draped the rigid form. He was touched by the natural arrangement of the snow-white hair.

"Yer hev drest yer mother pretty, Lizzī; she's sleepin' nateral."

This broke Lizzī down completely, and she fell forward, with her face between her father's boots and her arms outstretched.

"Oh, father, forgive me for bein' so bad! I killed mother. I killed her by not tellin'."

When Lizzī began to speak, Levi closed the stair door. The noise he made, though not loud, was sufficient to wake Blind Benner. By Levi's direction, Hunch led the blind man to his home.

Lizzī lay on the floor moaning and calling herself "a bad, bad woman."

Her father's heart almost burst. Could it be after all that she was dishonest? Could it be that her mother had read her aright? Could it be that she had cruelly encouraged his faith in her, knowing the certainty of his discovery of the truth at last? No, no; it could not be. In his desperation he became calm, with the forced self-control that makes many a man firm on the gallows. His tones had not a ring of hope as he said:

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"Don't grovel there, Lizzī. Stand up. There's yer old dead mother, and here's yer old dyin' father. Git up and face her and me, and tell the truth, and it all too, mind."

His voice grew sharp and commanding; never had he spoken so sternly to her. She slowly lifted herself and looked first at the dead, then at her father. A shudder passed over her. He mistook her manner for fear, and was convinced she had deceived him. Taking one step forward, he lifted his hand to strike her and huskily exclaimed:

"You hussy!"

A spasm passed over her face, then she calmly awaited the blow. The look in her eyes checked it. When his hand fell to his side, she spoke:

"I forgive you, father, for the dead mother's sake."

Her tones were deep and tender, and he bowed before the majesty of unsullied womanhood. He knew without further assurance that she was pure.

"Call the boys," she said in quiet command. He obeyed her, and her brothers promptly responded. For a moment she gazed upon them tenderly as they stood mutely expectant behind their father; and then, with one of her royal gestures, put her hand to her neck and tore open her dress, exposing her bosom.

"My heart's white as that," she said, tapping with her finger-tips the fair skin, "and there's the proof of it."

She handed her marriage-certificate to her father with manner as stately as if it were the title to a throne. His hands trembled so he could not grasp it, and it fell to the floor. Levi picked it up.

"Read it to us, Lizzī," he requested.

"No, I want you to see it and read it for yourselves."

Then he read it aloud. They were overjoyed at this confirmation of their faith in her. Peter fell on his daughter's neck and begged her forgiveness. With a kiss she sealed it, already granted.

When she could control her voice she said: "John's mother was opposed to our marriage, and threatened to cut him out of her property. John is dead, or he would have come back to me."

Lizzī had schooled herself, and was able to utter that sentence as she would have told a bit of ordinary news.

"So I never told you, and let mother die without knowin' I wasn't bad, because I don't want John's mother to know he left a wife, for she would cut me off without anything, and after a while I might want to claim her property for John's child."

"Oh!" said Cassi, a vision of wealth gleaming before him.

"Oh!" echoed Matthi, glad of Lizzī's prospects.

"Ah!" ejaculated Levi, seeing ahead a sensational lawsuit that would likely come on by the time he was admitted to practice and make him famous.

But the father said:

"I hope Gill's money will come ter yer, Lizzī; but I'm gladder of thet writin' than if yer had the wealth of Nebuchadnezzar. I'd a great deal rather see you eatin' grass and know yer was clean, than have yer livin' in a king's palace, foul."

It was a thrilling speech dramatically delivered.

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"And you'll keep my secret, boys? Tell them to, father."

"We will," they answered, without waiting for their father's command, and speaking earnestly, as

if they took an oath.

From downstairs came a rattling of the stove doors. Gret, unconscious of the dramatic incident upstairs, was getting breakfast. She did not wonder why Peter had called his sons. She was not inquisitive, not officious, but sympathetic and helpful.

"I must tell one woman," Lizzī said, "for I can't bear to have all my sex have a bad opinion of me. So I'll tell Gret Reed. Levi, you go down and help her a minute, while I tidy up a bit."

Gret had breakfast on the table when Lizzī came downstairs, and the hungry brothers had taken their seats. Peter stood at the foot of the table. Gret was at Lizzī's accustomed place; the mother's chair at the head of the table was vacant. Lizzī went to Gret: "You take mother's place."

"No, Lizzī, that is your seat now. I will sit where you used to."

Gret would not yield to Lizzī's urgent request.

"Then," said Lizzī, "I can't sit there till you read that and know I don't shame my mother's place."

"Why, Lizzī!" Gret began in protest, but Lizzī interrupted:

"Read it; you have trusted me, and I'll trust you."

Gret took the marriage-certificate, read it, and returned it without a word. A soft smile was the only indication of joy at Lizzī's vindication.

"I have good reason for wantin' nobody else to know it' Gret. Now sit down to breakfast."

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OATH.

"It's not worth the paper it's written on, except to show us our sister is pure."

Levi addressed his father and brothers in the school-room on the Sunday following his mother's funeral. He referred to the marriage-certificate which Lizzī guarded so carefully.

Hunch Blair lay close to the floor, under a desk which protected him from discovery. During the day he had heard Levi tell Cassi to come to the school-house in the evening. Suspecting something interesting, he got there before the McAnays.

"It's no good, I say," Levi continued, "and there's nothing left for us to do but bring the sneak back and have Parson Lawrence marry him and Lizzī. And if he won't come, why, settle with him, that's all."

"Yes, tar and feather and then burn him," suggested Matthi as his idea of settlement.

"No, lynch him," Cassi advised.

"Well, we must lose no time," said Levi.

"But Lizzī believes Gill is dead," Peter remarked.

"Dead nothin'," replied the stolid Matthi. "He's most likely foolin' another girl some place, and I'd like ter git a chance ter put a stop to his gallantin'."

Matthi made a gesture suggestive of wringing the neck of a chicken.

"Come, boys," Levi said, "let's swear. Join your right hands to mine above our father's head. Now say, we are three brothers whose sister has been deeply wronged, and we do swear in the presence of our aged father and upon our honor as men to seek John Gillfillan, our sister's betrayer, and compel him to return to her and make her his wife, and if he will not, to avenge our sister's honor by his blood."

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"We swear," they all said solemnly, after the formula had been repeated.

Peter bowed his approval, and encouraged them by saying:

"Go to-morrer, boys, and God bless ye. I'll take care of Lizzī."

Levi pulled from his pocket some money, not very much, although it was the savings of two years, and began counting it in the moonlight, while the others watched him curiously. He fingered the bills fondly. He slowly dropped the gold coins into his hat, and listened with evident delight to the clinking of the falling pieces. He held the silver close to the window, and looked from it to the gold, from the gold to the moon.

"The moon is a silver dollar, and the sun is a twenty-dollar gold-piece."

About to make a sacrifice, he said a silly thing that his father and brothers should think he gave easily and without pain.

"There, father," he said, turning first the silver, then the gold, into his father's hat, and on top of the yellow and argent pile laying the paper money, "there, father, that's for Lizzī, and will keep her until we come back, bringing her husband. If we don't find him, we'll work for her."

Peter, seized with a fit of trembling, sat down helplessly, and picking up the hat, ran his fingers among the coins, clinking them. Cassi and Matthi looked on in quiet admiration, both wishing heartily that the balance due them on the furnace books was not so light. Although half ashamed to place his small savings beside Levi's princely gift, Matthi remarked:

"Guess if we put our money together it would look bigger, Cassi."

"Kind of small potatoes beside of Levi's pile," Cassi replied; "but if Levi will write us an order, we'll sign it, hey, Matthi?"

Levi had with him an inkstand, a then new invention for the pocket, and pen and paper. He wrote the order in the moonlight, and the brothers signed it.

"God bless ye all!" exclaimed Peter as he received the order. "Ye are the best sons any man ever had. Oh! if yer mother's lookin' down on us, she's not ashamed ter hold her head up among the angels, 'less she feels bad 'bout not believin' in Lizzī." He put the money and order in his pocket. When they were secure, Levi hoisted a window on the dark side of the school-house and crawled through it. Then he helped his father out, and the others followed. For a moment they stood under the trees and breathed the resinous atmosphere of the woods just budding.

There was a silent shake of the father's trembling hand by each son in turn, and then they parted.

Lizzī got the usual early Monday breakfast, but made places for four only. Levi's school was closed for the year, and she meant he should enjoy a long morning nap if he chose. Her father came down, and she inquired if he had called Matthi and Cassi.

"I looked in their room, but they're up," he replied.

"Up? Funny I didn't hear them. Wonder where they could have gone this time in the morning without any breakfast."

"There's no tellin'," was Peter's answer.

Father and daughter ate silently. When his hunger was satisfied, Peter kissed her and, taking his axe and bundle, departed to the chopping.

The morning slipped by. Matthi and Cassi did not return, and Levi's sleep seemed endless. Lizzī went to his door and listened, but heard no sound. Pushing the door open a little, she looked in. The room was empty. The bed had not been slept in that night. On the wash-stand lay a note addressed to her in Levi's writing.

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"DEAR LIZZĪ: We have gone to find out for you all about John Gillfillan.

YOUR THREE BROTHERS."

"Father knew it," she said, with a soft smile. "I hope the boys will bring me good news; but I know John is dead."

She had not wept for her husband, but for him a constant stream of grief flowed through her being, a river of soul-tears, no sound of its current rising to the surface.

She was almost entirely alone now. No one came to see her except Gret Reed and Mrs. Hornberger. Even Blind Benner and Hunch seemed to have deserted her, for they were missing from the town.

CHAPTER XIV.

HUNCH AND BLIND BENNER VISIT BILL KELLAR.

"I know somethin' I won't tell," was Hunch's greeting to his blind friend on the Monday following the secret meeting of the McAnays in the school-house.

"Yer allers knowin' somethin', and it ain't nothin' when a feller finds it out."

"But it's somethin'; no little niggers in a peanut-shell this here time."

Hunch lowered his voice to a whisper, as he led Benner to the rear of the store. There he continued:

"Levi, Cassi, and Matthi's gone ter find Gill."

Benner gave a start, and would have uttered an exclamation, had not Hunch prevented him by laying a hand over his mouth and saying:

"Hush."

"They'll mebbe kill him," he continued.

"What fer?"

"Fer not marryin' Lizzī right."

"Lizzī don't know," Benner asserted.

"Yes, she does," Hunch replied.

"Yer a liar," and Blind Benner struck at Hunch.

He dodged, and said:

"Can't yer keep quiet? Lizzī don't want nobody ter know it."

"Yer a bigger liar than ever, an' yer ain't no friend uv mine."

Benner spoke louder than before, and sprang at Hunch, but missed him, and would have fallen against the counter had not Hunch caught him.

"Hello, there, boys! What are you fighting about?" Colonel Hornbeger called from the desk.

"Nothin'," Benner replied surlily; and Hunch said, "Benner's mad 'cause I told him somethin' he didn't like."

"Well, no fighting here."

"Say, Benner, what'd yer call me a liar fer?" Hunch asked when the Colonel's back was turned.

"'Cause yer sed Lizzī knowed she was married wrong."

This was spoken in a whisper so the Colonel would not hear it.

"Didn't say nothin' uv the kind. I sed she knowed the boys hed gone huntin' fer Gill." [Pg 141]

"They won't ketch him," the blind man stated. "If he's run off, he'll hide from 'em, but he couldn't hide from me."

Hunch did not laugh at this declaration. He had equal faith in the blind man's ability as a detective, and expressed it.

"They orter hev took yer with 'em."

"Yes, they orter."

"Hunch!" called the clerk who had succeeded Gill. He responded, and was sent to the cellar. When he returned, Blind Benner had formed his plan and was ready to disclose it.

"Hunch, Gill must be brung back ter Lizzī, an' I want yer ter take me ter the McAnay boys an' I'll help find him."

"I'll do it, Benner."

"Hand, then, Hunch."

They closed the compact, which had been made in whispers, with a vigorous hand shaking.

Bill Kellar stood before the door of his house, shouting at the top of his voice as if he bayed the moon, just rising over the top of Bald Mountain. Echo, hiding in the shadow, replied to him. He would shout, then listen to his voice coming back, mellowed and musical.

"Bill's got 'nuther crazy fit," said Hunch, pausing at the gate, while Benner leaned against the fence to rest. In one hand the dwarf carried his cornet, in the other Blind Benner's fiddle, enclosed in a green bag.

"You fellows are always welcome on this plantation," said Bill, coming to meet them, and grasping Benner's hand affectionately, while he playfully knocked Hunch's hat over his eyes.

"Say, Bill," inquired the dwarf, "what 'er yellin' at, the sky?"

"Well, Hunch, I'll tell you and Benner, for I know you will keep it secret. I'm working on an invention that will be a blessing to the folks that live in cities. I mean a sound-softener."

"Sound-softener, thet runs off yer tongue slick as soft-soap."

Blind Benner was very angry at this lack of reverence, but Bill only laughed, and replied:

"It does slip easily, too much so, or I'd have found it out before now and had the right thing patented."

"Why don't yer set a trap fer it?" Hunch inquired seriously.

"Hunch, yer a fool!" Benner exclaimed angrily.

"Jist find it out?" the dwarf asked serenely.

Bill continued:

"I've been experimenting, but I have only one voice, and it makes the same echo. Now, you boys shout when I do, one short loud yell. Then pause and listen. Now, ready: one, two, go."

They shouted loudly as they could, and became instantly still. Echo sent back to them their voices, Hunch's shrill scream dominant over Bill's round full tone. In the wave of sound Benner's plaintive cry was almost drowned. Bill clapped his hands; he was overjoyed.

"It'll work, it'll work," he exclaimed, "and the dwellers in cities will thank me, thank Bill Kellar when he perfects his Echo Sound-softener. I am going to rig up a combination of walls that will reverberate sounds, most of which will die before they reach the drum of the ear. It will just slip over the ear easily and fit it comfortably. Two people wearing sound-softeners can converse easily on the streets, undisturbed by the noise of drays, street-cars, stages, and the shouts of the drivers."

Bill broke off abruptly here. He had become excited, and was nervously afraid his hearers did not understand him, so he ceased description and remarked:

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"You will see just how it works when I get it done."

Blind Benner said he was sure it would succeed. Hunch was silent for a while. Presently he observed:

"Last winter my ear-lugs shet up my hearin' purty near, and I hed ter punch a hole in 'em, and then I didn't hear very loud."

Bill looked at the goblin leering at him in the moonlight and wondered how much mockery, how much earnestness there was in his words. As for Blind Benner, he was so much vexed as to lose his patience. Yet, willing to avoid a quarrel, he asked Bill how his violin did.

"Well, very well," Bill replied. "Last night I named her Magdalene, for in her dwell seven devils of fascination. She went before me, and I followed. We climbed heights, we plunged into depths, until I fell prostrate, worn out in the chase after the phantom, Music, who smiled on me pityingly as she stepped into her star chariot drawn by flying meteors."

Blind Benner, enraptured, cried:

"Go on, go on."

But Hunch again checked Bill's enthusiasm by pointing to the Milky Way, dim through the moonlight, and remarking:

"Jerushy! What a lot uv crazy fiddlers' girls must be out ridin' ternight."

Benner's face at first expressed contempt, but it softened to compassion as he said:

"'Tain't yer fault, Hunch. Yer ain't got it in yer head."

But Bill thought Hunch had it in his head, and resolved never to mention the sound-softener nor use high-sounding phrases before him. Becoming more practical, he invited his guests indoors, curious to know the object of their visit, yet too courteous to inquire. Benner did not keep him long in ignorance.

"The McAnay boys is gone ter hunt Gill, but they'll never find him, an' me an' Hunch is goin' ter find the boys an' help 'em git Gill. Then they'll bring him back an' make him marry Lizzī right."

"How can you help find him?" Bill asked gently and not incredulously.

"By my ears. He can't fool 'em if they'd ever hear him laugh er speak, but he might fool the boys' eyes."

"That's so," Bill assented. "But how are you and Hunch goin' to keep up with the big McAnays? They wouldn't want to be bothered with you."

He was considering the plan practically.

"We thought mebbe you'd lend us yer spring wagon," Benner said timidly.

"Of course I would, and drive it too, if I had somebody to look after the place."

"Gee-whitaker!" shouted Hunch. "Wouldn't that be the dandy fun, though?"

"We could give concerts to pay expenses," Bill continued, "only I'm afraid of the devil."

"Thunder! I'd blow the devil up his own chimney with my horn," Hunch fairly screamed, greatly excited by the proposed tour.

Benner trembled in silent joy. He was afraid to speak lest he should suggest some objection to the plan and overthrow the whole scheme.

"We'd have to practice awhile together, then I'd know if the devil meant to bother me." Bill spoke meditatively, and continued his thought in silence. Presently Hunch broke the quiet.

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"Say, Bill, listen ter me. It's my thinkin' thet if there's enybody this side uv heaven that Satan's afeard uv, it's Parson Lawrence; an' ef yer hed somethin' uv his'n 'long with yer, I don't think the devil'd come near yer."

"Right, boy, right." Bill rushed at Hunch and shook him nervously. "Maybe you have freed the devil-bound slave."

Blind Benner expressed his gratitude by saying:

"Yer *ain't* no fool, Hunch, but yer an awful tease."

No king ever received homage more gracefully than Hunch.

"What'll it be?" he asked; and when the others failed to suggest anything he gave them further reason to admire his cleverness.

"I don't think Satan'd dare put his split foot on a lock uv Parson Lawrence's hair."

That was decisive; but how to obtain a lock of Parson Lawrence's hair was not so easily agreed upon. Finally, Hunch asserted with something of a swagger.

"I'll git it, don't be afeard, fellers."

Before him rose a vision of the good man asleep upon his bed. A malformed figure creeps silently across the floor. It is Hunch. He reaches the bed. He stretches out a hand, which holds a pair of shears. There is a snap in the stillness. Soon the dwarf departs through the window, bearing with him a lock of the snow-white hair.

Blind Benner spoiled this possible adventure.

"Don't steal it, Hunch," he said, "'cause if yer do, the devil will walk on it jest like he would on his own carpet, fer all stole things is his."

Hunch's countenance fell and his manner became less confident, but yet he declared he would be able to procure the lock of hair. However, he made an effort to prepare Bill for disappointment by asking:

"Wouldn't cotton in yer ears do as well as the hair in the box?"

Bill shook his head despondently, and replied:

"No, no; that makes me deaf for a while to the sweet voice of the violin, become a devil's witch when my bow crosses the strings. When I refuse to listen, the old Tempter gets into the fibre of the violin and pleads by the touch of the vibrating, throbbing instrument, tender and thrilling as the caress of the woman you love."

Blind Benner's thoughts went to Lizzī. He knew what her touch was to him.

While talking, Bill had got the violin and was tuning it. Hunch caught up his horn and blew a series of discordant notes. A frown settled on Bill's brow as he put the violin back into the box, while Hunch exclaimed:

"That devil of yers couldn't stand a brass band, ef one horn scares him, an' I guess there's no use in gittin' a lock uv hair from Parson Lawrence."

"Yes, there is. Get it for me. When I'm alone I can't resist the temptation sometimes, and I haven't got you to drive Satan away. Yes, Hunch," he pleaded, "please get it for me."

Early the next morning Hunch started for Parson Lawrence's home, near the Boomer Creek church. On his way he met the mail-carrier going to Three-Sisters, and sent a note to Lizzī. It read:

"Lizzī: Me and Benner is visitin' Bill Kellar fer fun.

HUNCH."

The dwarf never gave a thought to the store or his father, nor for a moment regretted the loss of a situation, which he knew would be the penalty of his unceremonious departure. The note to Lizzī would inform Benner's friends of his whereabouts and quiet their uneasiness.

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"Parson," Hunch said, meeting the reverend gentleman at the church door, "what der yer think crazy Bill Kellar's got inter his head now?"

"I am sure I cannot imagine. A crazy man's notions are hard to guess."

"He still thinks the devil's got him by the ear an' makes him play the fiddle in spite of hisself."

"That is his old delusion, and I'm afraid he will never be rid of it."

"But he thinks yer kin cure him, Parson."

"How?" asked the kindly man, much amused, but willing to be of assistance to the violinist.

"By givin' him a lock uv yer hair ter keep in the fiddle-box, and thet'll keep the devil out so he can't coax Bill."

"He wants a fetich," the clergyman replied sharply, not inclined to encourage the superstition.

"Oh! he's crazy enough ter want anythin'," Hunch remarked innocently, not knowing what a fetich was, but thinking it a queer name for a lock of hair.

The minister laughed. He did not think it wrong to humor the fancies of the insane, and so complied with the request.

Bill received the lock of hair with demonstrative joy and effusive thanks, and Benner shook the dwarf's hand gratefully.

Within a week the trio departed on their tour. A man whom Bill could trust was left in charge of his farm, and a note was sent to Lizzī by her laconic correspondent:

"Lizzī: Bill, Benner and me is gon' consertin'.

HUNCH."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BROTHERS LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT GILL.

The McAnay brothers went direct to the town where Gill had said his mother lived. There they learned that he had not been seen in the village since his mother died.

"How long ago was that?" Levi asked their informant.

"'Bout five year."

"Five years? You must be mistaken."

Levi was staggered by the realization of the cruelty of Gill's plot against his sister, while Matthi and Cassi ground their teeth and clenched their hands.

"If yer don't believe me," said the indifferent villager, "yer kin ask his mother-'n-law; she lives jist over there."

"His mother-in-law? Has he a wife?" Levi would not believe Gill was so depraved.

"He hed one here; nobody knows how many he's got scattered 'round. The one here died 'bout a month ago. She heard he'd marrid agin, an' the news didn't 'gree with her. She was sickly ennyhow. Gill's a slick un, he is."

"Did they call him Gill here?" Levi asked.

"Yes; nobody but his mother an' his wife called him John. Gillfillan's too long, so folks jist called him Gill, 'cept his mother-'n-law, an' she didn't call him nuthin'."

Levi laughed in a forced way at this, but Matthi and Cassi scowled. With his sinister smile lighting up his face, Levi said, lightly as he could:

"We didn't know Gill was so gay. We used to work where he did, and as we were out of a job, thought we'd hunt him up and get something to do, since we were passing his way."

"He ain't ben here fer more'n five year, as I was tellin' yer. Guess he's somewheres in jail. He was honest 'nuff, but would go courtin' the gurls in spite uv ennything."

The garrulous fellow was laughing at his own wit, when Levi said in a careless way:

"Since we have heard so much about Gill, I would like to know one thing more. He was always bragging about his rich mother and the fortune he was going to get at her death."

The villager exploded in a loud guffaw at this, and, after a vigorous shaking of his sides and slapping his thighs, said, between the gasps and swallows which were distressing him:

"Why, she—well, thet's—by jiminy—well, heng it, she was a wash an' scrub woman, an' the neighbors buri'd her."

By this time Levi had obtained the mastery of himself, and laughed heartily, apparently, as he said:

"He was a very tall liar, and he fooled us all. Lord, how we used to envy him when he told of his rich mother, that she was mighty fine-looking and could write such beautiful letters, and all that! Guess it was all a lie, eh?"

"Couldn't write her own name; never went to school in her life."

Matthi and Cassi were becoming restless, and their black looks attracted the villager's attention. The brothers had met him just at the beginning of a street, and were able to have this conversation with him alone; but presently two or three curious men came up to learn the reason of the visit of the stalwart strangers.

"These fellers knowed Gill somewheres, an' they thought he was livin' here. Guess from the looks uv two uv 'em it wouldn't go easy fer him ef they was ter git their han's on him."

The villager vouchsafed this explanation to his fellow-townsmen.

"Well, we have got a crow to pick with him if we happen to find him," said Levi, who persisted in talking for himself and his brothers, feeling he could not trust them, they were so angry.

"Where yer from?" asked one of the new-comers.

"Three-Sisters."

"Why, thet's where Gill got his last wife," exclaimed another.

Levi was thankful that it was growing so dark that faces could not be clearly distinguished. He stated frankly, believing the quickest way out of the difficulty to be the truth:

"That wife was our sister, and we are looking for him."

"I hope yer will ketch him an' bring him back here, an' I'll help yer settle with him."

"Who are you?" asked Levi, struck by the fierce earnestness of the man who had come up just in time to learn the object of the McAnays' quest.

"One uv his fathers-'n-law," the man replied, with brutal sarcasm.

"The father of the wife he had here?"

"Who told yer 'bout thet?" asked the man, angrily. "Bet 'twas thet little gossipin' woman, Pete Dunn, thet I seen yer talkin' ter."

He made a rush at Pete Dunn, but Matthi interfered.

"He was only obligin'. Natur'ly we'd ask the first person we met 'bout Gill. So don't put the blame on our friend here."

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Matthi's position was so reasonable that even the angry man agreed with him.

The brothers went in company of the villagers to the town, and stopped all night at the inn. When they departed next morning, a crowd gathered and wished them success in bringing to justice the man who had injured them.

They went from town to town, stopping a week or more at a place, doing what work they could obtain, and keeping a sharp lookout for Gill. Their reticence and mutual understanding, coupled with their constant watchfulness, excited suspicion when they first entered a village or town, but when they departed from it they left behind many friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

BILL BENNER AND HUNCH JOIN A CIRCUS.

The musicians went first to Barberry, where they gave a concert, at which the advance agent of a circus was present on a complimentary ticket given him by Bill Kellar.

There was a small audience, but the performers were not discouraged. They began the programme with a trio, which was rather noisy than melodious. Of this Bill was rather glad, for, although not discordant, it was sufficiently vigorous to warn the devil that there was ample discord in reserve to overcome the wooing of the violin should he instigate it to tempt the violinist.

Next came a violin solo by Bill, which he began nervously but played to the end without distress. The audience demanded more, and he gave an improvisation, a slow, insinuating thing that held the senses of the hearers with the winsome spell of an opiate.

Hunch followed as the "Human Bagpipes," introduced by Bill, who spoke of him as "the unpremeditated, one of impulsive Nature's whims, a man full of unexpected things and bountifully provided with breathing apparatus."

"The hump on his back," Bill continued, "is not a deformity, but an abundance. Consumption would grow weary in trying to absorb his lungs, and pneumonia hesitates to attack him. He is triple-lunged, and the bump on his back is the home of the third one. In this curved space the superfluous, yet useful, lung inflates and collapses, and from it are emitted the musical notes which you will now listen to. It is with great pleasure, ladies and gentlemen, that I introduce to you Mr. Blair."

Hunch got up on the platform and made a bow that caused everybody to laugh, it was so comically affected. Bill noticed with pride that the circus agent paid more attention to the bagpipe imitation than he had done to his own solo. A veritable Scotchman Hunch seemed as he wriggled his back and piped the "Campbells are coming." For an encore he gave "Annie Laurie." He himself could not give an explanation of the manner of producing the peculiar tones that so closely resembled the bagpipes. He knew only that his mouth was partly open while it emitted the sounds, and that instinctive, rather than intended, movements of his jaws, assisted by nervous contractions and expansions of his throat and chest, forced out the notes. When he finished the encore he was loudly applauded, and a repetition was insisted upon. Hunch was obliging, and played on his larynx the ever-popular "Bessie, the Maid of Dundee."

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The next thing on the programme was a series of magical tricks performed by Bill, who claimed to have been a pupil of Signor Blitz. These pleased the audience, and they cried for more. He executed all he knew, and then treated them to some ventriloquism, which was not good, but delighted them nevertheless.

The musicians remained in Barberry another night, and the school-house would not hold the crowd that came to hear the demon-driven fiddler, his blind second, and the human bagpipes.

The circus agent was again in attendance, and concluded that it would be wise to compromise

with the opposition show. So he made the musicians a liberal offer, which they accepted, thus becoming a part of Barkup's Colossal Aggregation. With it they wandered from town to town, exhibiting twice a day, but doing none of the drudgery attendant upon the pitching and striking of the tents.

They gave their performances in a side-show, and during the exhibition in the big tent played with the band. Only here Blind Benner handled the bow, playing second to Bill, who was leading violin.

The season was almost over, and the circus was working towards the Eastern city whence it started. One dismal night the flickering fires of pine-knots in the iron crates on the posts in front of the tents shot long quivering lances into the darkness without seeming to illuminate it. The glib ticket-seller stood before the side-show, active and picturesque in the ruddy gleams. One minute he was half in shadow, at the next in bold relief, as the blaze of the fires bent toward him as though giving him its undivided attention, while he cried the list of curiosities, phenomena, and attractions to be seen inside the tent for the small sum of a dime.

Just as the words "human bagpipes" fell from his lips, three men emerged from the darkness and stopped a few paces from the tent. They were tall, muscular, and seemed to be listening to his fluent and wordy narrative of the annex-show. He noticed them and, beginning anew, he directed his harangue to them. Amused smiles spread over their faces when they realized to whom his descriptions applied, and, buying tickets, they entered with the other sight-seers.

Hunch mounted the platform and began his bagpipe imitations. The peculiar position of his head in this vocal exercise required him to look towards the top of the centre-pole of the tent, so that he could not see his audience except when making his bow.

When he finished, and the audience was tumultuously encoring him, a hand was laid on the arm of the tallest of the three men, who stood apart from the crowd. Hunch, who was bowing to the mixed assemblage, missed Blind Benner from his accustomed seat, just before the stage. Hunch soon caught sight of his blind friend, who was saying:

"Oh, I'm so glad ter see yer, Levi."

Levi started in surprise at the naturalness of the greeting. After scrutinizing the blind eyes for a moment, he waved a hand close to them, but they stared at him without blinking.

Hunch jumped from the platform and elbowed a way through the astonished spectators.

"Gee-whittaker, fellers! we thought yer was dead, er lost, er back in the Sisters. We've been huntin' yer."

"Say, Benner, when did you leave the Sisters?" Cassi asked.

"'Bout a week after yer fellers."

"And Lizzī was well then?"

"Yes, she was well."

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The blind man had turned toward the stage, where Bill was standing violin in hand, and was waiting reverently to hear the music.

Hunch shouted familiarly:

"Say, Bill, don't yer know yer old frien's?"

The audience laughed at this ingenuous inquiry.

Signor Kellar, as he was denominated on the bills, did not smile, but bowed gravely and slipped the violin under his chin.

"They might 'Signor' Hunch Blair all they'd a mind ter, he'd stop the biggest show on earth ter shake han's with Lizzī's brothers," the dwarf muttered.

The liquid notes of "Home, Sweet Home" floated to him as he stood by the exit. The air seemed to rise and fall in long undulations set in motion by the violin. In these waves the brothers bathed their weary souls. The melody caressed them, and, thinking of their own home, they wept silently.

Blind Benner crouched at Bill's feet. A silence almost of pain held the incongruous crowd.

Hunch alone seemed untouched—apparently he was beyond the power of spells. He made no effort to guard Bill from the fascination of the instrument.

"Bill don't need no horn ter let him loose," he growled. "There ain't no devil in that tune. He don't kick his feet ter eny sech. Guess Bill's playin' fer the angels."

CHAPTER XVII.

BLIND BENNER FULFILS HIS PROMISE.

"How did you know me," Levi asked Blind Benner as they went from the side-show to the big tent.

"I don't know how; yer didn't speak and yer didn't laugh. Hunch was bagpipin', an' all at once somethin' pulled me an' I follered, an' when I got closer I knowed it was you."

"You have a bad cough, Benner," Levi remarked sympathetically, as he listened to the blind man struggling for breath.

"Yes; I ketched it soon after we left the Sisters. It goes hard with me sometimes, but mostly it's only a little hack."

Here he caught Levi's arm and asked in a whisper:

"Did yer hear anything of him?"

"Yes, we heard something of him, but we did not find him."

"Yer oughter hed me with yer from the first; I'd hev found him. Bill an' Hunch an' me's been huntin' yer all this time."

"That's why you left Three-Sisters and joined the circus?"

"Yes, we thought yer would come to the show when yer seen Bill's and Hunch's names on the bills."

"You have been on another road from us. We did not see any bills posted before to-night. We had been workin' in a choppin' over the hill yonder, and just come to the town to settle our account and go somewhere else. But didn't you hear anything of Gill?"

"Nuthin'. Hunch kep' askin' 'bout him, an' I kep' watchin' the folks goin' inter the tent when I could. I allers waited 'bout Hunch when he was bagpipin', thinkin' mebbe Gill 'ud be in the crowd an' I'd hear him laugh er somethin', but I didn't."

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A tear rolled over Blind Benner's cheek, and in the red firelight resembled blood.

Blood! It is typical of vengeance, emblematic of atonement. It is a scarlet thread through the history of the world. On it are strung covenants; from it dangle the names of covenant-breakers, and close to these latter hang the names of avengers. Blood on Blind Benner's cheek. It sent a thrill through Levi's being. The blood in his own heart warmed and leaped to his face as he grasped fraternally the blind man's hand.

Then Hope, coy, fickle, and false, appeared, like a comet in the heavens, which stretched without horizon their black expanse before Blind Benner's eyes. Behind her trailed a long train of gleaming possibilities, and he said with emotion:

"We'll find him yit."

Levi replied in a trembling voice:

"You may; we can't."

And the blind man answered:

"I will."

Then they were in the tent, and the evening show began.

The season had been prosperous, but the fall rains had set in and the roads were heavy. The labor attendant upon getting from town to town became arduous. Overworked men daily left the combination, and the McAnay brothers were hired by the proprietor, who was glad to secure the services of three able-bodied utility men.

One day early in November the Colossal Aggregation stuck in the mud, and was unable to keep its engagement at a town in the mountains. The proprietor decided not to show at the place, but push on to the county-seat, where the circus was billed to appear on the following day. The citizens of the village, however, demanded a performance for their pleasure, and, as the proprietor refused to give one, there was every chance of a riot. Finally a compromise was effected at the suggestion of a man who wore green goggles, and who seemed to be a ruling spirit among the villagers. He proposed that Barkup should give each man two tickets, admitting him and his wife or sweetheart free to the show at the county-seat. Barkup consented to this, and when the tickets were distributed the circus passed on.

Blind Benner lay asleep in a closed van, and knew nothing of the occurrence until in the evening, when Hunch graphically told of it.

"I tell yer," he concluded, "there was a tight fit uv missin' a fight, an' Levi grinned as onconsarned as if he hed wings."

A great crowd attended the circus at the county-seat. There was a rush and struggle for the pasteboard slips when the ticket-wagon was opened. At times it seemed as if the vehicle would be overturned, but the ticket-seller was as imperturbable as the man with green goggles, who held his ticket between his fingers and calmly watched the embryo riot, caused by those who had bought their tickets struggling to get through the crowd pressing forward to buy.

A youth who had in his escort two buxom girls grew tired of being hustled about. Going to the front of the wagon, he dropped on all fours and, with heroic disregard of his Sunday suit, crawled

to the rear. Thrusting his head between a pair of active legs, he lifted their owner into the air as he raised his burly form erect. In a moment he was supplied with tickets and placed on the ground the man who had squirmed upon his neck, departing as he came. Goggles laughed heartily, much amused at the rustic's stratagem.

"How funny!" a woman remarked.

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Goggles turned to see who had spoken. She had been pretty, but now she was brazen and her voice sounded like a cracked cymbal.

"Mighty smart fellow, that," he said. "But you may not have a ticket. Let me offer you one; see, I have two." He took a ticket from his pocket.

"I don't need a card, thank you; I go in the back way," she replied, smiling invitingly, as he thought.

"I have often wanted to see in the dressing-tent of a circus. Could you take me in?" he asked.

"Oh yes. I'm a privileged character 'round this show. There's only one Mlle. Faro in this country, and if she don't have her way she raises Cain. I'm Mlle. Faro. Old Barkup will say, 'Walk right in, Mr. Smith, if Faro has invited you.' Yes, indeed I'm descended from the pyramids, and am cousin, many times removed, of Cleopatra."

The equestrienne talked thus volubly as she led the way to the ante-room, her new acquaintance stumbling after her. Passing into the tent, he was given a seat on an upturned bucket placed against a tent-pole.

In the ante-room Blind Benner lay on a bed of coarse blankets. He coughed frequently and painfully. The man in the goggles turned inquiringly towards the couch, but paused to admire a splendid gray horse that was waiting for Mlle. Faro, who was to ride him in the grand entrée. Soon she appeared in a long riding-habit, trimmed with gold tinsel, and with a jaunty air walked to the horse. The ring-master gave the signal. From the main tent sounded the boom of the big drum, the clash of the cymbals, and the blast of the cornet.

Mlle. Faro was just settling in the saddle, when she heard Blind Benner cough. Slipping to the ground, she ran to him, tucked the blanket around him and gave him a pat on the cheek. In another moment she was acknowledging the applause of the spectators as her mettlesome horse dashed into the ring.

"By thunder, she can ride!" exclaimed the man in goggles as he watched the movements of the horse.

She threw him a kiss, as she returned to the ante-room, and he hastened to assist her dismount. Promising to come back soon, she retired to the dressing-room, while he resumed his seat on the inverted bucket. Before long Mlle. Faro came out in ballet costume, and, leaning against a pole, began to talk in a rattling way to him.

Bill Kellar hurried past them and paused at the couch.

"Are you awake, boy?" he asked gently.

"Yes," Blind Benner replied, and caught Bill's coat in his thin hand, giving it a pull.

Bill understood, and, bending lower, placed his ear close to Benner's lips.

"Tell Levi I want him."

Away went Bill like a hurricane, jostling against Faro, who gave him a slap for his rudeness. He was scarcely out of the tent, when Levi entered and asked Benner what he wanted.

"Levi," a low, hoarse, eager tone, "jist knock off them green goggles thet Faro's teasin' her feller 'bout."

Just as Levi turned, as though half in doubt, the man laughed. Instantly Levi's indecision left him, and with a bound he stood before the couple.

"Beg your pardon, Miss Faro, but I've got a curiosity to see your lover's eyes."

The man with the goggles did not move.

"I think you're very impudent, driver, and I'll have Barkup discharge you," Mlle. Faro said indignantly.

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A fiendish gleeful laugh broke from Levi's lips.

"I'll bet you a dollar that one of his eyes is blue and the other black. Come now, Miss Faro."

The man with the goggles moved uneasily and slipped a hand under his coat. Levi watched him warily.

"I'll bet you five dollars that you are wrong," said Faro, angrily.

The man with the goggles rose quickly, and a knife flashed in his hand. Levi warded off the blow, and before it could be repeated Mlle. Faro held his arms by his side.

"Don't stab him, dear, 'cause that would stop the show too long on the road. Just show him your eyes, for I want to win his money."

Before he could free himself her deft fingers had removed the goggles.

"You see I have lost, Miss Faro," Levi said gayly; and then sternly added, "My brothers and I have been looking for you, John Gillfillan."

Hunch had come in, and was sitting on the couch. Blind Benner, leaning against him, was quivering with joy, and uttering low cries of satisfaction. Mlle. Faro heard them, and went to him. When she stood by the bed he was saying:

"Oh, Hunchy, I kin die happy now, 'cause I found Gill. Won't Lizzī be glad ter know it was Blind Benner what found him?"

"What does it all mean?" Faro asked.

He did not reply, but Hunch answered:

"He didn't marry Levi's sister right."

"He didn't? Let me kick him."

She ran to thus express her contempt for Gill, but Levi restrained her and led him away.

Hunch picked up the long knife which Mlle. Faro had taken from Gill and thrown on the ground.

"Gill, you must go back to Three-Sisters and marry Lizzī," said Levi, when they were out of the tent.

"All right, Levi, I'll go; but, to tell you the truth, I'm ashamed to meet Lizzī."

"I ain't doubtin' you," said Cassi, who, noiseless as a shadow, had followed to assist Levi if Gill should attempt to get away.

That was all that was said, the brothers not being talkers. One of them constantly remained with Gill.

Two days later the Colossal Aggregation went into winter quarters, and the members of it from Three-Sisters, accompanied by Gill, started homewards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIZZĪ'S VENGEANCE.

On the last night of November a gypsy-like covered wagon stopped at the farther end of the river bridge at Three-Sisters. From it Levi and Gill alighted. Matthi and Cassi followed, and then paused to assist Parson Lawrence to the ground. Levi and Gill entered the bridge immediately at a rapid pace, the others following leisurely. Bill Kellar, Blind Benner, and Hunch were left in the wagon to follow later, in time to be guests at the wedding by the church's ceremony of Gill and Lizzī.

She sat near the stove, rocking the new cradle her father had brought that day from the chopping. It was made of wild grape-vines ingeniously plaited, and rocked smoothly on oak rockers. She was very proud of it, and as she moved it with a light motion of her foot, she hummed a lullaby which had soothed both grandfather and grandchild, for they slept, he sitting in the arm-chair where his wife died. His clay pipe was held lightly between his fingers.

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Some one entered without knocking, and Lizzī slowly turned from the fire at which she had been gazing vacantly. Her glad cry of welcome startled her father, and the pipe slipped to the floor, breaking it in pieces; but he did not heed it, so astounded was he at seeing Lizzī throw her arms around a man's neck and lay her head against his chest. The man apparently was a stranger, but Lizzī soon informed her father who she greeted so affectionately.

"Oh, John!" she said, "you have come back at last, and I'll not see a finger pointing at me from everybody's eyes any more."

Gill had no reply ready for such a welcome, and none suggested itself to him. So he remained silent, while Lizzī, forgetful of the open door, wept on his shoulder. Levi, gazing upon the scene, was fully repaid for his long search for Gill.

Presently Peter arose, and walked with dignity to the door. Laying his hand on the latch, he paused and said sternly:

"Ef yer come back, Mister Gillfillan, ter cure the hurt yer give Lizzī, I'll shet this door with yer inside; but ef yer ain't, better let me shet it as yer found it yerself, with yer out in the dark."

Calmly he awaited the reply.

"If I have come for anything but Lizzī and the baby there in the cradle, I hope she will never forgive me for being away from her so long."

Gill spoke frankly.

When Peter slammed the door he was outside, peering into the darkness and hoping to discover the sons for whom his heart longed.

The jar caused by the door being shut so positively awoke the baby, and it began to cry.

"Come see the baby, John," said Lizzī. "There isn't a finer boy in the regi'n."

Then running to the cradle, she patted and soothed the child, exclaiming in the glad language and fond tones of happy mothers: "Oh! oh! it was too bad for its granddaddy to scare it awake that way."

She did not lift the infant from the cradle, for she wanted to keep Gill in ignorance as long as possible of the fire-mark that disfigured its cheek.

He admired his son very much, yet in lame sentences that seemed forced. A twinge of disappointment shot through Lizzī's heart, and a shadow of vexation passed over her face. Seeing the change in her countenance, he said:

"You know, Lizzī, that a man isn't much at praising a baby, no matter if he thinks it the prettiest child ever born."

This in a measure satisfied her, and, smiling brightly, she said:

"I think he looks like you, John."

He laughed, and sat down in the chair she had placed for him beside the one she had occupied. She, too, sat down, taking his hand in hers.

They were silent, she trying to frame a question about his absence, and he seeking for a proper introduction to the story he meant to tell. An exclamation from Peter McAnay interrupted her just as she had formulated her inquiry and was going to utter it.

"It's Levi," she cried, as his voice was heard replying to his father.

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Hastening to the door, she opened it, and paused on the threshold. Her father was saying:

"Boys, I knowed yer was here when I waked up an' seen Gill. Yer done well, an' yer hev yer father's blessin'."

Gathered around him were Levi, Matthi, and Cassi, and just beyond them, in the semi-darkness, she could see another person, a tall man with white hair and beard.

Glancing quickly over her shoulder, she saw that Gill had risen and was standing near the table on which the lighted candles stood. Had not Cassi, who was nearest to her, thrown his arms around her, she would have shut the door and run to Gill to ask him a question. But Cassi held her and was kissing her cheek, and the other boys pressed forward for a welcome. Forced thus to remain she received her brothers, as joyously as her chilling heart would permit, gazing inquiringly the while at Parson Lawrence, whom she had recognized. At last, released from her brothers' embraces, she entered the house and went to the cradle, giving Gill an appealing look for an explanation of it all as she passed him. He stepped forward to speak to her, but Peter McAnay interrupted again.

"Lizzī, we'll have a great weddin' ter-night."

She had dropped on her knees by the cradle to soothe the infant, petulant at being neglected. Without rising, she looked over her shoulder at Gill, who went nearer to her and said:

"Lizzī, your father and brothers think we had better be married by a preacher; then no one would question our relations."

Slowly she rose to her full height, the baby held to her bosom, and her look defiant, uncompromising.

"No," she said, "married once to the same man is enough. If the first time isn't right, the second can't make it so. No, I won't throw doubt on my boy." Then she paused and kissed the child. "No"—something choked her, but she gulped and continued bravely—"I won't marry you again, John, for it would cast doubt on the boy."

There was a pathetic tenderness in her voice. Not yet had she given up her husband.

"You were all right," exclaimed the impetuous Levi, "but your marriage was not legal."

Gill turned to him in silent appeal. Lizzī listened with her lips apart, gazing in mute inquiry from one to the other of the men before her. Deliberately she tore open her dress and got the marriage-certificate once so precious in her eyes. Holding it before them with a shaking hand, she said:

"This is all I've got to keep my name clean and give my boy a right to his father's name. Why isn't it legal?"

There was a wail in her unsteady voice that cut her hearers to the heart.

"Because Squire Harker married you before he was commissioned, when he had no right to issue writs or marry people."

Levi spoke in a lawyer-like way, and the terrible meaning of each word was plain to her.

"John, did you know it?"

Her effort to be calm was great. Her voice indicated the measure of her success, as in even cold tones she asked for the truth.

He hesitated.

The certificate fluttered to the floor.

As she turned her back upon them all, Blind Benner, led by Hunch, came into the room. She sank upon her knees. The blind man groped his way to her and knelt by her side. [Pg 154]

"Oh, John, you wronged me! You wronged me! You wronged me!" she repeated piteously, as she laid her head on the blind man's shoulder, and held her child close to her breast.

Parson Lawrence's beard was wet with the tears that flowed unheeded down his cheeks.

The brothers looked murder as their gleaming eyes saw their old father sink helpless and undone in a chair, while their sister grovelled before them.

In Hunch's hand, partly concealed, glittered the knife Gill had drawn on Levi in the circus-tent.

All waited for Gill to act, for upon him lay the burden of proof, although he was really the defendant in the case. Advancing to Lizzī he laid his hand gently on her shoulder, and said:

"Lizzī."

His touch restored her queenliness to her, and she stood erect in the majesty of scorn. Her contempt flashed from her eyes as with a magnificent sweep of her perfect arm she repelled him.

"What did you tell your mother?" she demanded, while with bowed head he obeyed the command of the gesture.

He did not lift his eyes.

"His mother had been dead for five years," said Levi, angrily.

"Then who wrote this?" she inquired imperiously, producing from the pocket where it had lain beside the certificate, which she now trampled upon, the letter Gill had read to her the night before his departure on the pretended visit to his mother.

All eyes were directed to him. His gaze was riveted to the floor.

"Oh, John, John! how could you, and in your mother's name, too?"

That was her only rebuke when his plan to ruin her was fully revealed.

With downcast eyes and slow step she moved towards the stove, intending to destroy the letter, but Levi snatched it from her hand, and read it aloud, despite her protestations.

When he had finished the letter he leaped at Gill with a shriek of rage, and thrust it into his face. Gill did not attempt to run or show fight, as Levi's hand closed on his throat in a grip that meant sure and speedy death.

"No, Levi, no; you must not punish him: leave that to me. And, Hunch Blair, how dare you?"

She stamped her foot at Hunch, and entwined her fingers around Levi's, her touch thrilling Gill as always it had done when she caressed him.

Hunch had darted forward with the knife uplifted, but Cassi had restrained him.

Matthi had turned to Parson Lawrence, who had begun to remonstrate, but ceased when Lizzī went to Gill's rescue.

Peter McAnay rose and looked approvingly on his son wreaking vengeance on the betrayer of his daughter, and frowned when she interfered to prevent a murder.

Levi obeyed her with savage reluctance, and Gill stood free, gasping for breath.

All the while Lizzī had held the baby to her heart, which she thought would not thump so hard if the child were pressed against it.

Hunch blurted, as he gave up the knife:

"He drew it on Levi, an' I wanted ter stick it inter him."

That informed Lizzī fully: Gill had been compelled to come back to her. Looking around upon her brothers, she tried to smile gratefully, but it was a dim light that flittered across her face to leave a deeper shadow. They had meant well, but far better for her had they left Gill where they found him; for then, had he not returned, she would not have known that she had been his victim, and would have continued to mourn for him as dead, believing herself his widow. [Pg 155]

Holding the child before him, she said: "Take your last look at him, John. See the fire-mark. I shivered when I first saw it, but didn't mind it long, for it made me think I had saved you from

death once. But I do mind," and her voice rose and vibrated in scorn, "if he bears your name. That would be an awful mark on his soul for God to look at; a horrid ugly scar that would make him hideous to the angels that rung his mother's weddin' bell."

Her voice faltered a little as that pine-grove memory came over her, but it became strong again as she addressed Parson Lawrence.

"Will you baptize my boy?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," the saintly man replied, his voice ill controlled.

"His name will be Peter McAnay," she said simply. Then facing Gill, she held the child to him.

"You may kiss him, John."

The boy cried when Gill pressed his lips to the purple mark.

At that moment a sharp crash of glass was heard. The elbow of a man pushed by the crowd behind him on the porch had gone through a pane in the sash.

"Let down the blind, Hunch," Lizzī commanded.

Hunch pulled the string, tied in a bow, and the green shade shut off the crowd.

"Now, John, good-by."

She held out her hand to him, but withdrew it quickly. Her momentary tenderness vanished when she saw the eagerness in his eyes. She dared not shake hands, remembering how he had clung to her in Sugar-Camp Hollow. Another opportunity she dared not give him now, for he must know she was implacable. With the boy held to her bosom as if to shield him from Gill, she stood erect and pointed to the door.

"Go!"

It was a stern command.

She met his appealing look with unyielding gaze.

Slowly he walked to the door.

"Wait!" she called.

He paused, but did not turn.

"Have you any money?"

"Yes," he replied eagerly, and came back to her, a roll of bills in his extended hand.

"Give it to Levi."

"So much is mine, Levi," and she named an amount, remembering to a cent how much of his money she had spent.

Levi counted the sum, making change from his pocket.

Matthi and Cassi stood near the door, looking on in amazement. Parson Lawrence leaned against a table. Peter McAnay sat with his face buried in his hands. Hunch walked nervously around the room, while Blind Benner waited near Lizzī, hoping she would speak to him.

Levi returned the balance of the money to Gill; he proffered it to Lizzī.

"Not a cent," she said proudly. "The money you gave Levi is what I spent of his savin's, when I thought I was your wife; but not a cent of your money will I take from this on. I'll scrub and wash for a livin', if I must, and Benner, here, will help take care of little Peter. Now go!"

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Compelled to give vent to her feelings, she impulsively kissed Blind Benner. His hand was across her eyes as he lovingly felt her face, and she did not see Gill pass through the door.

CHAPTER XIX.

BLIND BENNER SEES LIZZĪ.

When Gill left Lizzī he was her subject; and no exile, however long, could diminish his loyalty to her. All his mature years he had been a libertine, cold, clever, selfish. No thrill except that of passion had stirred his blood, quickened his pulses; yet they beat quickly now as he stood outside of the home whose threshold he dared not cross. In his despair he loved the woman whom he had wronged.

A hard gripe was fastened on his collar. He closed his eyes and hoped he had been seized by one of her brothers who meant to kill him.

"Stop with me ter-night, Gill."

It was Henry Myers who spoke.

Gill was bewildered; the hubbub about him increasing his confusion.

"I will sleep in the bed of the river," he replied with a laugh. Then seeing Bill Kellar, he continued: "Take me home with you, Bill; fiddle up the devil and get him to grab me."

His humiliation was complete.

Henry gave him a push, and he walked along meekly, Hunch following close to his heels, and the crowd straggling after.

Without a word to any one Lizzī went to her room, which with the door closed became a holy place, where Grief was high-priest. Peter McAnay climbed the stairs softly and listened outside the door. The only sound he heard was the light tapping of her heel on the floor as she danced the baby on her knee.

Levi escorted Parson Lawrence to Seth Reed's house, and Blind Benner sought his home.

Matthi and Cassi went aimlessly out into the streets. Their oath had not been kept: Gill had escaped without punishment from them. They had not settled with him, because the Queen had forbidden them to harm him. Had they met him on the street, they would have stood aside, accepting the situation, while they thirsted for his blood.

On his way home from Seth Reed's, Levi stopped at Squire Harker's. From that official he learned of the bargain made by him and Gill in the shoe-shop. With this information to impart, Levi called on Squire Parsons and advised him to ride immediately to Squire Barton and procure a warrant for the arrest of both Squire Harker and Gill. Squire Parsons acted on the suggestion, and by midnight was far up the Boomer Creek road. The night was far spent when, warrant in hand, he set out to return to Three-Sisters. He rode hard, hoping to reach the village by daybreak. About a mile from the town his horse stumbled over a loose plank on a Boomer Creek bridge, and lamed himself so badly that the Squire was compelled to walk.

Lizzī rose early after a sleepless night, and taking the boy downstairs placed him in the cradle. He was sound asleep, and the noise she made in building a fire in the stove did not disturb him.

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While the fire was catching she sat with her elbows resting on her knees and her hands clasped before her. Presently the sound of many feet marching in measured tread reached her. It grew more distinct, then ceased for a moment, was heard again, growing gradually fainter. She listened to it as if in a stupor, while the bacon sizzled meaningly in the skillet and the tea-kettle hummed a busy tune.

A surly, resolute crowd was leading John Gillfillan to the bridge to hang him. At first the intention was to lynch him before the Block, but some of the men urged in opposition to this plan that it would be too hard on Lizzī when she should learn that he had been killed in front of her door and she unable to prevent it because she was ignorant of it. Their counsel prevailed, and the bridge was decided upon as the place of execution.

Bill Kellar, assisted by Hunch, had told Henry Myers, who had recently been elected constable, and the constantly increasing crowd, the history of the search for Gill, and how at last Blind Benner had discovered him. For a conclusion to the narration, the dwarf gave a graphic description of as much as he had witnessed of the scene when Lizzī learned of Gill's perfidy and refused to be party to a second marriage ceremony with him.

"Yer orter be hung, damn yer!" Henry Myers fairly yelled, as he shook his fist in Gill's face.

"There's no telling but he fired the store fer ter kill hisself, forgettin' us poor folks thet might hev starved."

This suggestion of a burly teamster became as it passed from lip to lip an assertion, and violently-excited men surrounded Gill, charging him with incendiarism and daring him to deny the accusation. He was very white, but cool and quiet, neither defying them nor asking mercy at their hands. A grim sort of submission was expressed by his face as he stood against the wall of the little room and waited for a decision of the mob as to his punishment. When at last it was resolved to lynch him he betrayed no fear, and the crowd, awed by his calmness, became sullen. Loud tones gave place to surly growls that indicated inflexible determination to perform an act of justice that should both be a vengeance on the culprit—for not a man was present who had not fully convinced himself that Gill had set fire to the store—and a warning to all incendiaries of the fate that would be theirs if they should be so unfortunate as to be captured. A rope was procured, and a noose made in it, which was thrown over Gill's neck. Then he was led away to the execution.

Blind Benner had coughed almost incessantly from the time he went to bed, and at last in desperation rose. Dressing himself he sat down in a chair near the kitchen stove, in which the fire still smouldered. The change of posture gave him relief, and he fell asleep. The tread of the men passing the Block with Gill aroused him. Listening to the heavy, regular footfalls, and not hearing

a voice, he feared he was dreaming. Creeping to the door, he opened it. The cold air rushing in started his cough and convinced him that he was awake. Struggling for a moment with the cough, he overcame it, and, impelled by a vague alarm, went down the porch steps. Pausing a moment, he listened again. The footsteps seemed far away. Groping his way to the end of the Block, he went into Big-bug Avenue, where he could hear them more plainly; yet they were going away from him towards the bridge.

His determination was taken at once, and rapidly he followed the crowd. Running recklessly, and keeping as near the middle of the street as he could, he stumbled often and at last fell. He rose quickly, not minding the pain, took one step and stopped, brought to a halt by an obstacle on which he placed his hands.

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"It's the horse-block," he exclaimed joyfully, patting it affectionately, as he would a friend.

It was a friend indeed—a guide.

Leaving it, he went ahead slowly, swinging his arms and reaching as far as he could, pausing at every step. Presently the tips of his fingers touched something. Going nearer, he found he was beside a post, which he felt eagerly as if searching for some mark by which to know it. He found two rings hanging one above the other from staples driven into the wood.

Leaning against the post, he listened. A cold breeze blew over him, and he shivered, coughing in spite of the hand that covered his mouth. He hoped to hear some one speak, but nothing reached his ears from the bridge but the trampling of heavy boots on the floor. Again the wind blew, harder this time, and he coughed louder; but if he was heard, no one heeded him. A creaking sound came from above him, but he did not need the rasping screech of the sign on its rusty hinges to inform him that he was in front of the tavern. Listening a moment longer, he patted the post as he had done the horse-block, and stole towards the bridge. Soon from the remark of a man on the outskirts of the crowd he learned what was to be done.

"Heng Gill," he repeated in a whisper, half joyfully, wholly willing that it should be done. Then came the thought,

"But Lizzī would rether they wouldn't."

With eager, impatient search, he tried to find the sign-post to guide him towards the Block, where he had decided to go and tell her what was happening. Reach out as he would, he could not touch the post, and he began running in circles, striking out with his hands like a madman.

"Hunchy! Hunchy!" he called, but his voice was weak, and he was not heard.

When he was almost exhausted he struck a tree with his arm. Pausing a second to feel the bark, he went quickly around it and stumbled over the board walk in front of Colonel Hornberger's house. Then he knew the way. The board walk passed the Block. He ran on it fast as he could, and burst in upon Lizzī as she sat before the fire with her face buried in her hands.

Between gasps for breath he began to tell his story, while his head resounded with whirring noises and his temples throbbed as if they would burst.

"Mind the baby, Benner," she called to him from the porch before he had finished.

A wail from the infant directed him to the cradle. Kneeling beside it, he struggled with his cough and rocked the crying child.

When the lynchers entered the bridge, Henry Myers climbed up to one of the cross-pieces. The end of the rope was thrown to him, and he made it fast. Then Gill was placed on a chair.

"Yer hev got ter die, John Gillfillan, an' yer may as well make a clean breast uv it," said Henry, his feet dangling not far from Gill's head.

The sullen faces of the angry men did not seem to frighten Gill, who could see them plainly in the light of several stable-lanterns distributed through the crowd. The rope pressed against his neck, but his hands were unbound.

"We'll give yer three minits ter make up yer mind, not as we've got enny doubts 'bout yer guilt, but we think yer might die easier hevin' told the truth onct in yer life."

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Henry took a bull's-eye watch from his vest-pocket and asked for a lantern. By its light he grimly watched the hands.

The silence in the bridge was so intense that Gill could hear the watch tick, and the sounds of Blind Benner's feet striking the board walk as he ran to Lizzī were borne to the ears of the crowd.

At last Henry said:

"Yer hev jist got a quarter uv a minit, Gill."

Clearing his throat, Gill made a sign with his hand that he was going to speak. The men came closer to him, and Henry put his watch away.

"I guess I ought to tell. I did set fire to the store because I wanted to get rid of the books. I meant to get out in time through the window; was just going to open it and jump when I heard Lizzī"—his voice faltered a little—"call for help and her axe strike the door downstairs. Then I thought I'd

let her save me. You know how she pulled me out, but you didn't know that I was pretending I was overcome with the smoke."

"Why did yer want ter burn the books?" asked Thomas Myers.

"Because I had been stealing from Colonel Hornberger, and couldn't have hid it much longer."

He was very calm, but his face was blanched.

"Yer kin say yer prayers ef yer want ter," said Henry.

"Guess they wouldn't be much good," Gill remarked with a wan smile.

"Then tie his arms, Tom."

Near the bridge Lizzī stopped suddenly, her impetuous rush to save Gill's life checked by the thought to which she gave utterance in a whisper:

"I know my shame."

She had not known it when she ran to rescue him from death in the store fire; she had not learned it when she faced unflinchingly the scorn of the women; and she was ignorant of it when she dashed into the bar-room to stop the fight her brothers made in defence of her good name: but now it was upon her with crushing weight, and she stood helpless in sight of the rope that was to strangle Gill.

If she would save him it behooved her to act quickly, for she could see a man pinioning his arms. Moved with great pity for her betrayer, whose white face she could see plainly, she summoned strength to enter the bridge.

As she stepped on the planks she was conscious of a change in the manner of the crowd, and seeing Squire Parsons force his way to Gill's side, paused.

"Henry Myers!" called the squire.

"Here," answered Henry from the cross-piece.

"I have a warrant for the arrest of John Gillfillan issued to you as constable, and you must take him in charge."

Law had entered the crowd, and its presence was immediately recognized by submission. Henry dropped to the bridge-floor and muttered a curse as he addressed the squire:

"Yer hev spoiled a good job; ef yer'd b'en a minit later the devil'd hed Gill, sure."

Lizzī, seeing Gill would not be injured, turned and fled through the darkness to the refuge of her home.

She entered it with bowed head, her queenliness having gone from her forever.

The child was crying petulantly. Blind Benner, lying on the floor, supported his head with one hand and feebly rocked the cradle with the other. [Pg 160]

A pool of blood lay on the white quilt that covered the infant, and another was forming on the floor under the cradle.

The child wailed as the cradle rocked slowly and unevenly.

The blood flowed noiselessly from Blind Benner's lips. He knew Lizzī had come back, but he would not speak until she did. He was afraid to know what had happened in the bridge, and would die in ignorance, obeying her last command to him.

With eyes cast down she moved slowly towards the cradle. The blood on the quilt was lighted by the unsteady flame of the candle. Suddenly she saw the scarlet pool. Her head swam and she sank on her knees. Taking the blind man's head impulsively yet tenderly in her hands, she laid it against her heart, bursting with this new grief.

Soothed by the mother's presence or frightened by the nearness of Death, the infant ceased its wail.

The cradle stood still.

But the red stream flowed rapidly, while Blind Benner nervously and weakly took from his vest-pocket a piece of crumpled paper and handed it to Lizzī.

She smoothed it and read, while Blind Benner clung to her neck.

"Too Hoom it may consern.

I leeve all my Sirkus munny to Lizzī an' my fiddel to her boy.

his X mark.

Witness
HUNCH."

She kissed him on the lips wet with blood.

His head fell. The hemorrhage had been very profuse, and she saw the death-pallor on his cheek. Soon he raised his head, and with his lips close to her ear whispered:

"I kin soon see yer, Lizzī."

Ever after that he was silent.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BELFORD'S MAGAZINE, VOL 2, DECEMBER
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