

Choice Literature.

A PATENT ATTACHMENT.

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

If Rex had not exploded every time the lamp appeared about to do so, nothing of the sort would have happened. But I dare say if he had seen me spring from my seat half across the room when the lamp streamed up in a bigger blaze than was best; if he had seen me snatch an unruly lamp and sling it through the window; if he had seen me creeping with an old felt hat to clap down over one that was making a little volcano of itself with nothing but the burning of an old char of the wicks left about the burner; if he had heard me complaining, till he was tired of the sound of my voice, of the smell of the lamps and the smell of the smoke, and longing for the good old days of darkness and lamp oil, then, I dare say, he'd have been just as ready to listen to the glib tongue of the agent for "Prester's Patent Attachment to Kerosene Lamps" as I was.

Not that Rex ever did any of these things I speak of—I only said such a thing would happen if he had seen or heard me doing them. That is all I said.

The fact is, I like a great deal of light; but the gas-pipes don't run into our village, and of course we couldn't afford wax candles; and although I live in hopes of an electric lamp some day, that shall be like carrying round a little star in one's hand, I have to put up with kerosene lamps; and it has been my set weakness, every once in a while, to appear with a new one. There was the little plain bedroom lamp that every one has to have, there was the little brass student lamp, as pretty as a piece of jewellery, and there was the Longwy ware lamp, top heavy and ready to tip over—Rex couldn't bear it—but a perfect bouquet of flowers, anyway; and there was the bronze urn and there was the hanging lamp in chains, and there was mother's old Astral made over, and the Argand, and a horrible double burner that Rex had bought himself when he couldn't see with any of the others—in all as many as a dozen. To be sure, all of them were never lighted at once; most of them were usually out of order, and that was the reason I would get a new one. But they looked prettily here and there about the parlour—if only Rex hadn't found fault with the smell. And when he said that so many and such striking looking lamps were out of keeping with our circumstances and our little scrap of a house, I used to say they were no more out of keeping than his name was. Fancy a man whose name was Maximilian, or Thaddeus of Warsaw, or Rex, earning his living by the sweat of his brow, and that is what Rex is always saying he does, although he really only reads proof on the *Daily Yell*. If I had been called Thuringia or Cicopatra, he would have seen quickly enough whether or not it was in keeping with running a sewing machine and taking in plain sewing, as I did. However—

"It does seem to me," Rex would say, "that if I had the trimming of the lamps, I would put a stop to this overflow and sweat of grease on them, and I would try to avoid these foul odours for everybody sitting near them."

"You can," I said. "You can have the trimming of them any day you like. You try."

"Well, if it has come to that, that life is to be made a burden with the fear of grease spots and a stench in the nostrils, why, we'd better go to bed at dark, or burn tallow candles."

"There wouldn't be any grease spots with tallow candles! They wouldn't be dripping all over the floors and our pretty carpet and your trousers and my skirts! And, of course, there wouldn't be any smoke, smelling like mutton chops, whenever you blew them out, and nobody would have to be snuffing them all the time."

"At any rate, they couldn't explode and set the place fire."

"No; they wouldn't have any sparks to fly about and light among your papers, and you could see to read your fine text, and I to finish off my fine sewing beautifully. We'd better have candles!"

And we usually wound up with a smart quarrel, and then the absurdity of it struck one or the other of us, when we kissed and made up and were friends again till I blew out the lamp on getting into bed, when the danger of blowing down the chimney, and the propriety of blowing across it, and the expiring smoke into the bargain, started the whole matter again. Very likely it was my fault, all the rest of it. I know it was my fault, through not being nice about the house work and trimming the lamps in a left-handed hurry, so as to get at my sewing work, where I was very nice indeed; but it certainly wasn't my fault that the smoke was disagreeable after they were put out; and then I was put out, too, and didn't get good natured again till Rex woke me out of a nightmare, in which I was usually a kerosene lamp myself, and Rex was throwing me over the end of the world.

All the neighbours, of course, knew what a fuss Rex made over the lamps; for he was always sniffing and fussing and fretting before them; and if they thought I might have prevented a great deal of the trouble by a little more care—why, then, they thought the truth.

But, you see, like most people, we owed a debt, and I was wild to pay it. When other women would be dreaming of new bonnets and jackets, I only dreamed of the moment when 'he debt should be paid; and the only new things that came into our house were the lamps; and as we had to have those anyway, it was just as well to get them pretty enough to last for all time, and mine were beauties, and one of them had a cut glass shade fit to take the shine out of the Kobinoor, I used to think.

Well, any one might suppose that I would have taken all the care in the world of my pretty lamps and their shades. And I was always meaning to do so; but somehow it always seemed as if I could do it better to-morrow, when there would be nothing to hinder; and I was in such a hurry to get this piece of work done, or that begun, or the other carried home, and the work for which I had money paid me seemed so much more important than other things

took care of themselves. And if I really hadn't had the most indulgent husband in the world, who knew what I was feeling, and what I was trying to do, there would have been a great deal more remark made in the house than there was. However, there was quite enough. And I was annoyed enough, too, and often wished there had never been a lamp or a woman made, or that we all lived like savages by the light of pitch pine knots, or by no light at all.

"I can't see what ails our lamps," Rex would say. "The lamps don't burn this way in at the Peterses."

"They burn some other way, I suppose," I would answer tartly.

"They burn without making the whole air of the room smell like a pipe line, and—don't we buy good chimneys? You can see through the chimneys at the Peterses just as if they were glass. Ours are like some kind of thin horn. Don't we buy the best oil? Because, if we don't throw away what we have and get some of the best. What on earth has got into the things? If I turn them down they smoke like Vesuvius; and if I turn them up—there it goes now! a perfect little volcano! I can't endure such nervous shocks. Jane, we must give up kerosene."

And sometimes I didn't answer at all, and sometimes I cried, and sometimes blew up as well as the lamp. And it didn't make any difference who was there; for if there was a peculiar bad lamp, that was the one that happened to be lighted and to arouse all Rex's nervous anxieties till he sputtered as much as the lamp did.

Well, one night I was in one of my hurries, and suddenly there were black specks falling all over my white work, and I looked up and there was the smoke steaming to the ceiling.

"For goodness' sake!" cried Rex. "Can't you turn that lamp down when you're sitting close beside it?" And, of course, then I flared up, too.

"I wouldn't have taken you any longer to have turned the lamp down yourself than to have stopped and made that speech!" said I.

"It isn't my place to attend to the lamps," said Rex.

"It's your place to have the smoke in your eyes then."

"So it seems. When a man's wife cares no more for his comfort than—"

"Any one else would say 'twas a woman's husband that didn't care for her comfort, to be making such a fuss about turning down a lamp!"

"Well, it isn't the way Ray's wife does or Mrs. Peters or Mary Stetson. Their lamps are trimmed—"

"Like the wise virgins—"

"And you can see through their chimneys, and you can take them up—"

"Who? The Peterses and Rays and Stetsons?"

"Without daubing the next thing you touch. And you can sit within a mile of them without being stifled and—"

"And you can sit in the dark if you like that better!" I exclaimed. And I blew out the lamp with one breath and ran out of the room.

And, of course, when I ran out of the room where it was then dark as a pocket, I ran against the edge of the open door and fell backward with the force of the blow.

"Good heavens!" cried Rex, forgetting all the rest.

"Have you killed yourself? Where are you! Speak, speak, Jane!"

And he was groping his way toward me when bang went his head in the same place, and in spite of my pain and temper and all, I couldn't help laughing right out. And I sprang to my feet and found him and had my arms around his neck and was kissing his poor bruised temple, and crying out over my own hurt and begging him to forgive me all in one breath. And then I got hold of a match and re-lighted the lamp and got some turpentine and oil and brown paper and dressed our wounds. And we didn't do any more work that night, but sat acknowledging our faults and accusing ourselves and praising each other and acting as if we were just engaged, having, on the whole, a perfectly delightful evening.

And then I made a firm resolve that I would let the debt and the mortgage and the sewing go, and keep my house in the way it ought to be kept, and, among other things, trim my lamps decently. And early in the morning I made a great basin of suds, and I emptied every lamp and washed and scoured it, and boiled my chimneys and put in new wicks; and when I was through the lamp shell glittered like the inside of a kaleidoscope.

(To be continued.)

THE SCENE AT LINCOLN'S NOMINATION.

The following is from the September instalment of the *Century's* "Life of Lincoln": "Though it was not expected to be decisive, the very first ballot foreshadowed accurately the final result. The 'complimentary' candidates received the tribute of admiration from their respective States. Vermont voted for Collamer, and New Jersey for Dayton, each solid. Pennsylvania's compliment to Cameron was shorn of six votes, four of which went at once for Lincoln. Ohio divided her compliment, thirty-four for Chase, four for McLean, and at once gave Lincoln her eight remaining votes. Missouri voted solid for her candidate, Bates, who also received a scattering tribute from other delegations. But all these compliments were of little avail to their recipients, for far above each towered the aggregates of the leading candidates: Seward, 173½; Lincoln, 102.

"In the ground swell of suppressed excitement which pervaded the convention there was no time to analyze this vote; nevertheless delegates and spectators felt the full force of its premonition; to all who desired the defeat of Seward it pointed out the winning man with unerring certainty. Another little wrangle over some disputed and protesting delegate made the audience almost furious with delay, and 'Call the roll!' sounded from a thousand throats.

"A second ballot was begun at last, and, obeying a force as sure as the law of gravitation, the former complimentary votes came rushing into Lincoln. The whole ten

votes of Collamer, forty-four from Cameron, six from Chase and McLean were now cast for him, followed by a scatter of additions along the whole roll-call. In this ballot Lincoln gained seventy-nine votes, Seward only eleven. The faces of the New York delegation whitened as the balloting progressed, and as the torrent of Lincoln's popularity became a river. The result of the second ballot was: Seward, 184½; Lincoln, 181; scattering, 99½. When the vote of Lincoln was announced there was a tremendous burst of applause, which the chairman prudently but with difficulty controlled and silenced.

"The third ballot was begun amid a breathless suspense; hundreds of pencils kept pace with the roll-call, and nervously marked the changes on their tally sheets. The Lincoln figures steadily swelled and grew. Votes came to him from all the other candidates—four and a half from Seward, two from Cameron, thirteen from Bates, eighteen from Chase, nine from Dayton, eight from McLean, one from Clay. Lincoln had gained fifty and a half; Seward had lost four and a half. Long before the official tellers footed up their columns, spectators and delegates rapidly made the reckoning and knew the result: Lincoln, 231½; Seward, 180. Counting the scattering votes, 465 ballots had been cast, and 233 were necessary to a choice; only one and a half votes more were needed to make a nomination.

"A profound silence suddenly fell upon the wigwag; the men ceased to talk and the ladies to flutter their fans; one could distinctly hear the scratching of pencils and the ticking of telegraph instruments on the reporter's tables. No announcement had been made by the chair; changes were in order, and it was only a question of seconds who should speak first. While every one was leaning forward in intense expectancy, Mr. Cartter sprang upon his chair, and reported a change of four Ohio votes from Chase to Lincoln. There was a moment's pause—a teller waved his tally-sheet toward the skylight and shouted a name—and then a boom of a cannon on the roof of the wigwag announced the nomination to the crowd in the streets, where shouts and salutes took up and spread the news. In the convention the Lincoln river now became an inundation. Amid the widest hurrahs delegation after delegation changed its vote to the victor.

"A graceful custom prevails in orderly American conventions that the chairman of the vanquished delegation is first to greet the nominee with a short address of party fealty and promise of party support. Mr. Evarts, the spokesman for New York, essayed promptly to perform this courteous office, but was delayed a while by the enthusiasm and confusion. The din at length subsided, and the presiding officer announced that on the third ballot Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, received 364 votes, and 'is selected as your candidate for President of the United States.' Then Mr. Evarts, in a voice of unconcealed emotion, but with admirable dignity and touching eloquence, speaking for Seward and for New York, moved to make the nomination unanimous."

THE LARGEST OPIUM DEN IN CHINA.

A writer in a recent number of the *North China Herald* describes the Nangin-sin, the greatest opium den in China. It is known throughout the length and breadth of the empire to the Chinese, and it helps to make Shanghai regarded as a city affording the same opportunities for pleasure and dissipation that Paris does to the ordinary Frenchman. It is situated in the French Concession in Shanghai, within a stone's throw of the walls of the native city, within which no opium shops are supposed to exist. The character of the place could not be guessed from its external appearance, although the air of the people passing in and out might suggest it. The throngs visiting it represent all stations of life, from the coolie to the wealthy merchant, the small mandarin. It is with difficulty that one gets inside through the crowds of people hanging round the door. Those who have not the requisite number of copper cash to procure the baneful pipe watch with horrible wistfulness each of the more affluent pass in with a nervous, hurried step, or tottering out wearing that peculiar dazed expression which comes after the smoker's craving has been satisfied and his transient pleasure has passed away. One requires a strong stomach to stand the creaking fumes with which the air inside is thickened. The clouds of smoke, the dim light from the numerous coloured lamps, the number of reclining forms with distorted faces bent over the small flames at which the pipes are lighted, cause in the novice a sickening sensation. But as soon as the eye becomes accustomed to the scene it is noticed that the place is got up on an expensive scale. In the centre of the lower room hangs one of the finest of Chinese lamps, the ceiling is of richly-carved wood, while the painted walls are thickly inlaid with a peculiarly-marked marble, which gives the idea of unfinished landscape sketches. Numerous doors on all sides lead to the smokers' apartments. In the outer portion of the building stands a counter covered with little boxes of the drug ready for smoking, which a dozen assistants are kept busy handing out to servants who wait upon the *habitués* of the place. The average daily receipts are said to be about \$1,000. The smoking apartments are divided into four classes; in the cheapest are coolies, who pay about fourpence for their smoke; in the dearest the smoke costs about sevenpence. The drug supplied in each class is much the same both in quality and quantity. It is the difference in the pipes that regulates the price. The best kinds are made of ivory, the stem being often inlaid with stones and rendered more costly by reason of elaborate carving; the cheapest kinds are made simply of hard wood. The rooms are also furnished according to class. In the most expensive the lounge upon which the smoker reclines is of fine velvet, with pillows of the same material; the frames of each couch are inlaid with mother-of-pearl and jade, and the whole air of these rooms is one of sensuous luxury. There is also a number of private rooms. In the poorer section will be found many wearers of the tattered yellow and gray robes of Buddhist and Taoist priests. Women form a fair proportion of the smokers. The common belief is that the opium sleep is attended by a mild, pleasurable delirium, with brief