

sons. Candidly, I should have preferred to ignore it altogether, but, as it was, I could not help turning it over in my mind, and with more or less reference to myself. I, too, am young; exposed to temptation; quite as liable as anybody else to commit a false step, and it was only natural to ask myself what I would do if I found myself circumstanced as you are."

This explanation soothed Bonair. Bending toward me he asked in a gentle voice:

"Well, what would you do?"

"I would marry Gaisso."

He shook his head and looked away; then in a deep, hollow voice exclaimed:

"I expected that answer."

"Understand me. When I came to that decision, it was under a double hypothesis."

"Namely?"

"That I still loved Gaisso."

"As I do, Heaven knows how truly."

"That she was pure and worthy of my love."

"As she is, Carey Gilbert. Pure! I once dared, and that in my old father's face, to hint my suspicions of the contrary, but it was with the malice of a fiend. In my heart I knew that Gaisso was chaste and true and that never for one moment had she swerved from her devotion to me."

"Then, I repeat, I would marry her out of hand."

Bonair dropped his head on his breast and reflected. It was evident from his manner that a tempest was raging in his soul. At length he roared out:

"Oh! it is all very fine, very easy to theorize, to make heroic resolutions in fancy. But the deed, the act, the irrevocable act, that is the frightful difficulty. What, Carey Gilbert? Marry a girl that has negro blood in her veins! Think of it. Try to take in all that it means."

I saw now what turn the combat was assuming. Bonair was struggling against his instincts. As no battle can be more fierce, I feared it was going to last too long, and I would have been as well pleased to keep out of it. With this view I asked Bonair whether he still desired my advice; for if he did, I might have unpleasant things to say.

"Yes, yes," he answered eagerly. "Do not leave me to myself. Do not abandon me."

"Be cool, Bonair." (I spoke to him more familiarly now than I had ever done.) "Look at facts, not fancies. Leave prejudice to fools. What is this fiction of negro blood? Ask any physiologist. He will tell you it is as bright scarlet as yours or mine. And, after all, spite of the few drops of negro blood which flow in her veins, did you not love the girl, did you not win her love and feel proud when she gave you the whole worth of her existence? Had you any repugnance for this negro blood when you kissed her lips and called her your own?"

"Oh! there is a gulf-like difference between loving a girl and marrying a wife. Passion is blind; passion is not always dainty. I have had enough of passion, firing the brain, causing the young blood to bubble at the heart, the young limbs to writhe and quiver into faintness. Reason now and reason alone must be my guide."

"Let reason then be your guide. Look at Gaisso! Who could tell that she has a globule of African blood? I never knew it till I was informed of it."

"Is that possible?" exclaimed Bonair, delighted to hear it.

"Yes. I never saw a more perfect octoroon. She has not a single African feature."

"Aye, that is true."

"There is nothing to betray her—"

"Except, perhaps, that touch of waviness in her hair."

"Not at all. I have observed the same in many white women."

"Oh! but the damning objection ever recurs. She may pass for a white woman, but she is in reality coloured. Nothing can wash out that stain."

"Coloured! What is colour but another prejudice. Reflect a moment. Are not many women of southern climates—Spaniards, Italians, Mexicans and our own Creoles—the fairest of the fair, with their raven locks, olive cheeks and coal-black eyes, darker than many a mulatto girl that you and I have seen? But in no case has their colour prevented their being loved, wooed and won. On the contrary, in thousands of instances, their rich, ripe colour has fascinated because it was the symbol of warm blood and a generous heart. Colour! I am ashamed to hear you make the objection. How many Americans have married Indian girls, from Pocahontas down to our day? Married them, lived openly with them, travelled with them, introduced them to the noblest of the land, procured for them the place of honour even at Presidential levees. Some of our most distinguished men sprang from Indian mothers. How many British officers, stern conquerors of the East, have allowed themselves to be seduced by Bengalee beauties, and in more than one baronial seat of Old England have the silk turban, the shawl of Cashmere and the embroidered slipper flashed at the head of the hall? How many Spanish grandees have married Moorish maids and even Zingales? How many chivalrous Frenchmen have united themselves to Algerine belles? When all other qualities are present, colour counts for nothing. If I truly loved a girl, I would marry her were she brown as snuff, black as night, red as an autumn leaf, yellow as ochre, blue as indigo, or green as a mermaid. And I would show her bravely to the world, defiant of sneering lip or carping tongue. I have

been told that there are children who are ashamed of their old parents; husbands who are ashamed of their homely wives. I do not understand this. I can scarcely believe it. I can conceive of no circumstance, short of crime, which could make me blush at the mother of my children."

"No, no, it is not colour," groaned Bonair, who had listened to my rhapsody with an attention which he would perhaps not have given the words of an older man with larger experience of life. "I understand that now. It is not colour. Besides, Gaisso is fair."

"She is fairer than any brunette," I added.

"Ah, Carey, the objection is deeper still. It lies in her social condition. She belongs to a degraded race. There is an abyss between her and me. Surely you cannot expect a free man to mate with a slave!"

"You have set your finger on it at last. Yes, that is the root of the difficulty. I have been expecting you there all along. No. I do not want to see a freeman mated to a slave. Marriage, to be happy, must be founded on social equality. There are natural ranks in society which must be kept. Barring certain cases, the higher must unite with the higher, the middle class with the middle class, the lowly with the lowly. I note only one exception. The rich may marry with the poor. There is a beautiful fitness in a wealthy man taking unto himself a destitute girl. Socrates should not have married Xantippe, but Boaz did right in making Ruth his wife. The word slave is a terrible word. It means ignorance, abasement, a bruised will, abject fear. The slave has no hope, no incentive to love, no motive power. He is false, hypocritical, mean, brutalized. With such a creature a person of refinement and education cannot yoke himself for life. But you know full well, Bonair, that this description does not apply to Gaisso. She never was a slave, not even in name. She never associated with your father's blacks. She was brought up in this house as a companion. And thanks to this exceptional condition, she has risen far above the mental and moral state of a slave. She reads and writes, she converses well, her sentiments are delicate, she is religious, and all her deportment is that of a lady."

"But her mother, Carey, her mother."

"What of her mother?"

"She was a slave."

"Hardly more so than Gaisso herself. I have it from your father, who told me she occupied almost the same position in your own mother's family that Gaisso has held in yours. She was a handsome quadroon who took care of the children in your grandfather's house."

Bonair had been pacing the room for some minutes when he stopped at my ear and whispered,

"Yes, but she was never married."

I started at these words, for I did not expect that it would come into Bonair's head to pronounce them. The struggle must have been desperate, indeed, when he was driven to such an outrageous objection as this.

"Oh! Bonair Palatine," I exclaimed with an emphatic sneer, "this is too bad, too bad. Such a reflection comes with fine grace from your lips. What! Rake up the sins of the dead? We shall toy with the poor things when they are pretty and good; we shall abuse their helplessness and force them to do what, if left to their own better natures, they would recoil from, and when we are tired of them, we shall flout our cant morality at them. The shame is ours, not theirs. Ah! In this atrocious system of slavery there are horrors and mysteries which must sooner or later draw down the wrath of heaven. White fathers have been known to sell like beasts the children of their own loins. White lovers have cast off as old gloves the poor slave girls whom they seduced under the fascination of holiest promises. Bonair! You reproach Gaisso's mother with her transgressions. And yourself, then? What have you done? You dishonour the mother; how did you treat the daughter?"

"No more, Carey. Don't enter into that. It is all past now, and no good can come of its being recalled."

"But I will recall it. You asked my advice; you shall have it without stint. In this discussion you have been all selfishness. You have viewed everything only as it concerned yourself. Turn the medal. Look at its reverse. Have you not certain sacrifices to submit to? Have you not one great reparation to make? Is it possible that you expect to save yourself by unveiling Gaisso's birth?"

"I unveil nothing, Carey. The whole world knows that she is illegitimate."

"Yes, she is illegitimate. Say it more cruelly, more brutally. She is a bastard. Bite into that word. Chew it up. Suck all the honey that you may find in it. Bastard! Well, what of it? Is it any fault of hers? Has she not atoned for that reproach a hundred times by her virtues, and more especially her heroic patience. And, at any rate, has she not taken from you all right to throw it up to her? The great world is not so fastidious as you are. At this very day there are bastard princes sporting their purple in the open light of day. They are recognized; they are admitted into the highest society. And why not, provided they themselves behave well and by their virtues repair the accident of their birth? The Norman William gave as a dowry to the memory of his deflowered mother the fair island of the Britons. Don Juan of Austria dashed the bar sinister from his escutcheon and replaced it with the morning star of Lepanto."

"Bravo, Carey!" exclaimed Bonair, stopping short in his excited walk. "Your voice has the ring of a conqueror. You have driven me in disgrace from post to pillar. You have forced me into my last entrenchment. You have taken every word out of my mouth except one. But that word resumes all. It is like a hand grenade. It contains within itself what will destroy all your fine ethical theories at a brush. That word has been before me since this morning. I have sat down to write and it has continually oozed from the point of my pen. I have written it in large letters, in small letters. I have spelled it. I have analyzed it. I have laughed at it, been afraid of it, cursed it. I have tried to get rid of it, but in vain. It is one of those terrible words which make an epoch. There is no answering it. It is a withering enthymeme. It consists of both premise and conclusion; premise clear as fire, conclusion irresistible as fate. With that one word ringing in my ears, I could never, never marry Gaisso."

I fancied Bonair was raving.

"Well," said I coolly; "I am waiting for that word. It is not, I hope one of those cabalistic terms which it is death to utter."

Bonair stopped directly in front of me and in a deep sepulchral voice pronounced—

"Miscegenation!"

"What a barbarous word," I exclaimed. "I never heard it before."

"It is new. It has just been forged. It has not yet got into print that I know of; but when it does it will stir the nation to its centre. It will serve to precipitate a crisis between the South and North."

"I have now sounded that word, Bonair. I understand it. Like all catch-words, it means nothing and it means a great deal, just as your prejudice takes it. But it has no terrors for me. The man who can trace the etymology of a fancy word strips it at once of all the colours which ignorance or fanaticism give it. I wonder you do not see through it, Bonair. Why, a mixing of races has been the pith and marrow of our whole discourse. What do I care and what should you care, if, after accepting the fact, the fact itself should be dinned into our ears by a big sounding word—and an awkwardly formed one at that—intended solely to swell the cheeks of the rabble. Let the word go forth; let politicians mouth it at the hustings; let men of science make it the text for profound disquisitions on the radical distinction of races, in defiance of Genesis; let free and independent electors throw it at one another's heads in place of brick-bats, but you, humbly obedient to the instincts of your conscience, gently yielding to the current of your avowed love, take unto your own, for better and for worse, and forever, the best and the fairest octoroon in the Western land."

Bonair burst into tears. He stood before me for several minutes, gazing upon the floor and giving free scope to the pent-up sorrow against which he had so long been struggling. When the worse was over he turned to the table, stretched out his hand to his pistol, raised it, took aim, and before I had time to spring upon his arm, fired.

The ball shivered the window-glass, which rattled to the floor. The whole room was filled with smoke.

"Bonair! I shouted, 'what on earth is the meaning of this?'"

He smiled grimly, and handed me the heated weapon.

"That is my answer to your arguments and exhortations, Carey. It is the signal-shot of surrender."

(To be continued.)

MARK TWAIN AT THE BARBER'S.

All things change except barbers, the wags of barbers, and the surroundings of barbers. These never change. I went to get shaved. The barber shoved up my head and put a napkin under it. He ploughed his fingers into my collar and fixed a towel there. He explored my hair with his claws and suggested that it needed trimming. I said I did not want it trimmed. He explored again and said it was pretty long for the present style—better have a little taken off; it needed it behind especially. I said I had it cut only a week before. He yearned over it reflectively a moment, and then asked with a disparaging manner who did it. I came back at him promptly with a "You did!" I had him there. Then he fell to stirring up his lather and regarding himself in the glass, stopping now and then to get close and examine his chin critically or torture a pimple. Then he lathered one side of my face thoroughly, and was about to lather the other, when a dog-fight attracted his attention, and he ran to the window and stayed and saw it out, losing two shillings on the result in bets with the other barbers, a thing which gave me great satisfaction. He finished lathering, meantime getting the brush into my mouth only twice, and then began to rub in the suds with his hand; and as he now had his head turned, discussing the dog-fight with the other barbers, he naturally shovelled considerable lather into my mouth without knowing it; but I did.

He now began to sharpen his razor on an old suspender, and was delayed a good deal on account of a controversy about a cheap masquerade ball he had figured at the night before, in red cambric and bogus ermine, as some kind of a king. He was so gratified with being so chaffed about some damsel whom he had smitten with his charms that he used every means

to continue the controversy by pretending to be annoyed at the chaffings of his fellows. This matter begot more surveyings of himself in the glass, and he put down his razor and brushed his hair with elaborate care, plastering an inverted arch of it down on his forehead, accomplishing an accurate "part" behind, and brushing the two wings forward over his ears with nice exactness. In the meantime the lather was drying on my face, and apparently eating into my vitals.

Now he began to shave, digging his fingers into my countenance to stretch the skin, making a handle of my nose now and then, bundling and tumbling my head this way and that as convenience in shaving demanded, and "hawking" and expectorating pleasantly all the while. As long as he was on the tough side of my face I did not suffer; but when he began to rake, and rip, and tug at my chin, the tears came. I did not mind his getting down so close to me; I did not mind his garlic, because all barbers eat garlic, I suppose; but there was an added something that made me fear he was decaying inwardly while still alive, and this gave me much concern. He now put his finger into my mouth to assist him in shaving the corners of my upper lip, and it was by this bit of circumstantial evidence that I discovered that a part of his duties in the shop was to clean the kerosene lamps.

About this time I was amusing myself trying to guess where he would be most likely to cut me this time, but he had got ahead of me, and sliced me on the end of the chin before I had my mind made up. He immediately sharpened his razor—he might have done it before. I do not like a close shave, and would not let him go over me a second time. I tried to get him to put up his razor, dreading that he would make for the side of my chin, my pet tender spot, a place which a razor cannot touch twice without making trouble; but he said he only wanted to smooth off one little roughness, and in that same moment he slipped his razor along the forbidden ground, and the dreaded pimple-signs of a close shave rose up smarting and answered to the call. Now he soaked his towel in bay rum, and slapped it all over my face hastily; slapped it over as if a human being ever yet washed his face in that way. Then he dried it by slapping with the dry part of the towel, as if a human being ever dried his face in such a fashion; but a barber seldom rubs you like a Christian. Next he poked bay rum into the cut place with his towel, then choked the wound with powdered starch, then soaked it with bay rum again, and would have gone on soaking and powdering it for evermore, no doubt, had I not rebelled and begged off. He powdered my whole face now, straightened me up, and began to plough my hair thoroughly with his hands and examine his fingers critically. Then he suggested a shampoo, and said my hair needed it badly—very badly. I observed that I shampooed it myself very thoroughly in the bath yesterday. I "had him" again. He next recommended some of "Smith's hair glorifier," and offered to sell me a bottle. I declined. He praised the new perfume, "Jones's delight of the toilet," and proposed to sell some of that. I declined again. He tendered a tooth wash atrocious of his own invention, and, when I declined, offered to trade knives with me.

He returned to business after the miscarriage of this last enterprise, sprinkled me all over, legs and all, greased my hair in defiance of my protests against it, rubbed and scrubbed a good deal of it by the roots, and combed and brushed the rest, parting it behind, and plastering the eternal inverted arch of hair down on my forehead, and then while combing my scant eyebrows and defiling them with pomade, strung out an account of the achievements of a six-ounce black and tan terrier of his, till I heard the whistles blow for noon, and knew I was five minutes too late for the train. Then he snatched away the towel, brushed it lightly about my face, passed his comb through my eyebrows once more, and gaily sung out "Next."

This barber fell down and died of apoplexy two hours later. I am waiting over a day for my revenge—I am going to attend his funeral.

A CARD.

To all who are suffering from the errors and indiscretions of youth, nervous weakness, early decay, loss of manhood, &c., I will send a recipe that will cure you, FREE OF CHARGE. This great remedy was discovered by a missionary in South America. Send a self-addressed envelope to the REV. JOSEPH T. INMAN, Station D, New York City.

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