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POETRY.

MOTHER, HOME AND HEAVEN.

The words of sweetest meaning
To erring mortals given—
Of purest, deepest feeling,
Are Mother, Home and Heaven!

The magic name of mother
Revives in every heart
The feeling first awakened
On that dear parent's part:
And cold must be the bosom,
Devoid of love and soul,
That is not moved to goodness
By mother's mild control.

With home we all remember
Some vision of the past—
A May-day in the morning,
Too beautiful to last!
When flowers of lowly beauty
Beguiled our youth of tears,
Concealing 'mid the roses
The thorns of riper years!

Yet, when the past is challenged,
And we are asked to show
The word that is most eloquent
Is that dear one—home!

The Christian to the future
His earnest gaze extends,
While in the brightening distance
The bow of promise bends:
His weary feet have trodden
The devious paths below;
But now the glorious heaven
With light is all aglow!

His cares are nearly over,
His troubles soon will cease;
For smiles of resignation
Assure us of his peace.

Of these three words of beauty,
I know not which is best;
They speak of love and happiness
And one of future rest,
I feel that Heaven is dearest,
And yet I cannot tell,
For Mother fills the heart with love,
And Home has charms as well.

Then let the three united be,
Ner let the tie be riven;
For words of thrilling melody
Are Mother, Home, and Heaven.

COUSIN JACK'S COURTSHIP; OR THE LOST WAGER.

The trunks were all packed and corded, and the carpet bags were piled up in the corner of the spacious old-fashioned hall. How melancholy they looked, those emblems of parting and adieu. Not even the merry laughter of the two or three young girls who were gathered around a stalwart, handsome fellow of about thirty could entirely banish an impalpable something of sadness from the scene. Cousin Jack was going away, the general mischief-maker, tormentor and tease of the whole family, and old Mr. Chester, sitting by the distant window, wiped his spectacles every five minutes and declared, pettishly, that the type of the evening paper was a terrible trial to old eyes.

"Aye, you may laugh, girls!" said Jack, applying himself vigorously to the refractory lock of a portmanteau. "Perhaps you may one day discover it isn't such a laughing matter. Think of the loss the family is going to sustain in my excellency!"

"But you'll come back soon, Jack, dear?" coaxed Minnie Chester, the prettiest and most roguish of all his cousins, and the one who kept up a perfect fire of practical jokes and girlish tricks at his expense.

There she sat, on the biggest trunk of the collection, her brown curls hanging about her round face, and her eyes sparkling with a curious mixture of fun and tears.

"I'm not at all certain of that, Miss Minnie," said Jack, decisively. "If I succeed in finding a location to suit me, I shall probably decide to settle permanently at Thornville and turn landed proprietor on my own account."

"Only imagine our Jack a gentleman of property!" laughed Minnie, appealing to her sisters.

"I don't see anything so ridiculous in the idea," remarked the young man, rather piqued at the amusement of his fair relatives. "At all events, there's one incalculable advantage that will result from my departure."

"And what is that, Mr. Oracle?"

"The fact that you've played your last freak on me you tormenting little minx!"

"Don't be so certain of that, cousin Jack!" said Minnie, shaking her long curls. "What will you venture I don't bestow a parting trick on you yet? Ah! I haven't settled with you for several little pieces of impudence; but pray don't imagine they are forgotten, sir!"

"My diamond sleeve-buttons to your coral necklace that you don't impose on me with in the next three months, Minnie," said Jack, gaily.

"Done!" said Minnie. "Girls, you all hear the wager, don't you? I always coveted Jack's diamonds!"

"But you won't have them, mademoiselle! How dark it is getting in this cavernous old hall. Shall I ring for lights, Uncle Chester? and, by the way, have you written that letter of introduction to Mr. Thorne?"

"All in good time, my boy—all in good time," said the old gentleman, depositing his huge silver-bound spectacles in their case. "You young people are all in such a desperate hurry. Tell Betsey to carry a lamp into the library, girls. And Minnie, where is my old pea? I won't be very long about it, and then we will have a hot long evening to gossip about Jack's prospects."

While Mr. Chester sat in his cosy, red-curtained library, revising the letter which he had been writing to his old college friend Jabez Thorne, of Thornville, to the effect that his nephew, John Lacy, was in search of an eligible niece of his, and wished to settle down as a planter in that vicinity, and requesting Mr. Thorne's aid and cooperation in the selection of the same, Minnie opened the door.

"Papa, there is some one down stairs who wishes to see you immediately for one minute."

"Very annoying!" said the old gentleman. "Just as I was finishing up this letter of Jack's! However, I can seal it up afterward. Minnie, suppose you glance over it, and dot the i's and cross the t's; I'm not so much of a penman as I used to be."

And old Mr. Chester pushed back his seat and rose from the antique oak table to attend to the claims of his urgent guest.

Oliver Chester was brushing out the heavy braids of her luxuriant black hair before the dressing-mirror of her own apartment, two hours later, when Minnie ran in, with a countenance comically divided between dismay and delight.

"My dear Minnie, what has happened?" exclaimed the elder sister, dropping her hairbrush and letting all the raven tresses ripple down unheeded over her shoulders.

"I've won the diamond sleeve-buttons, Olive! But oh! I didn't mean to. What would papa say if he only knew it—and cousin Jack, too?"

"Sit down, you wild little elf," said Olive, gently forcing her sister into a chair, "and explain this mysterious riddle!"

"Well, you know papa left me to look over his letter to Mr. Thorne—and he was detained longer than he expected—almost an hour in fact, and I couldn't help amusing myself by writing a parody on the letter!"

"A parody?"

"Yes—you remember somebody was telling us what a beautiful daughter Mr. Thorne had—so I wrote that Jack was in search of a wife, and had heard of Miss Thorne, and wanted to settle in life, and all that sort of thing. In short, wherever papa had written land or estate, I wrote wife! Wasn't it fun?" ejaculated the little maiden, her eyes dancing with diablerie. "But you know I never once thought of sending the letter; I only wanted to read it to Jack when I went down stairs. Well, I signed it with a great flourish of trumpets, and just then, who should come in but papa and the stranger. Of course I fled—and when I came back the letter was sealed, and safe in Jack's pocket-book, and Olive, it was the wrong letter!"

"The wrong letter?"

"It was rather a dim light—and papa's eyes are not as keen as they were wont to be—and the impertinent missive was gone! While the real bona fide letter lay there amongst a heap of discarded papers. And I hadn't courage to confess my misdemeanor, papa is so opposed to my innocent little jokes—and Jack is off with that indescribable letter! I shall certainly win the sleeve-buttons, Olive, but what a torpedo there will be when my mischief leaks out!"

And Minnie looked so bewitchingly lovely in her alternate paroxysms of terror and laughter that Olive, grave elder sister though she was, had not the heart to lecture her as roundly as she deserved!

The crimson sunset of the very next evening shone radiantly into the special sanctum of the worthy old Jabez Thorne, of Thornville, Justice of the Peace, and chairman of all the agricultural meetings for ten miles around. It was no scholarly-looking library, like that of his ancient comrade Chester, but a square light room, with four uncurtained windows, and ornamented with numerous black-framed engravings of prize cattle and giant turnips. He was seated in a leather cushioned armchair, looking over the files of an agricultural paper to find some coveted information on the subject of phosphates and super-phosphates, when a servant brought him a card and a letter.

"The gentleman is in the parlor, sir!" Jabez Thorne laid aside his newspaper,

and glanced at the card, which bore the simple inscription, "John Lacy"—then at the letter which purported to be introductory to that individual.

"Hum, ha! from my old college chum, Chester, as I live. Remarkable change in his handwriting, but time alters us all—Haven't heard from him in twenty years—and—hallo! what's this? A pretty cool request, upon my word—nephew wants a wife, and has heard that I possess a daughter—has lots of money—wants me to aid him with my well-known experience in such matters. What does the old rascal mean?" ejaculated Jabez, the fringe of gray hair that surrounded his bald head standing absolutely erect with indignation, "I'll send Jeffers to kick the impudent young scamp out of the house!"

But with a moment's reflection came calmness.

"Why after all, I don't see what there is in the matter to make me so foolishly angry. Guess I'll see what Mr. Lacy says. An excellent family those Chesters, and this letter is just like Zebedee Chester—he was always singular in his notions. Rather unlike the ordinary method of coming to an understanding on such matters, but there's nothing like a dash of originality in this world, and if the boy is rich, and Mary don't object—At all events I'll see him on the subject."

And Jabez Thorne thrust the letter into his pocket and strode determinedly into the parlor where young Lacy was quietly awaiting his appearance. The old gentleman's face was scarlet with embarrassment; he was half-disposed to be angry at his guest's cool self-possession.

After the ceremonies of greeting had been exchanged Jack said, "I had thought of settling in this vicinity, Mr. Thorne, and understood from my uncle that you had a desirable piece of property you might be disposed to part with."

"Piece of property?" thought the old gentleman, beginning to fire up again; but he controlled his emotions, and only answered: "Really, sir, this is a very strange request. One can hardly be expected to answer definitively upon so very short notice."

"Certainly not, Mr. Thorne. I have no wish to hurry you," said Jack, politely; "but I am rather anxious to see-for-myself, and if you would favor me with a brief description of the prominent features of—"

But Mr. Thorne was fidgetting uneasily on his chair.

"What do you mean, sir?" he exclaimed wrathfully.

Jack was rather perplexed at this cavalier reception, but he answered, as courteously as possible:

"Why, sir, of course it is not best to be precipitate on a matter of such importance."

If this is a fair specimen of the rising generation, thought the indignant Jabez, they are about as impudent a set of jackanapes as I want to see. But I owe something to my long friendship with old Zebedee Chester—I won't turn the puppy out of doors yet.

"I suppose it is healthy?" asked Lacy, blandly.

"What is healthy?"

"Your property. Sometimes in these low grounds diseases are apt to prevail, and—"

"Does he expect my Mary has the fever and ague?" thought old Thorne, leaping briskly out of his chair as if an insect had stung him. "I'll send my daughter to you, young man—that will settle the business at once."

And before Lacy could express his surprise his choleric host banged the door behind him and disappeared.

Mary Thorne's astonishment was even greater than her father's had been. She was attired in white muslin, with a bouquet of crimson moss rosebuds in her bosom, and a sprig of the same exquisite flowers in her hair, for some rural party or picnic, and at first absolutely refused to enter the parlor.

"What an idea!" she exclaimed, blushing to the tips of those tiny, shell-like ears. "To be put on exhibition like one of your prize cattle! No, indeed! Let the young man go back where he came from! A pretty impression he must have of the ladies in this quarter of the globe!"

"But my love, Zebedee Chester is one of my oldest friends, and the young man is really a very fine-looking fellow, and rich into the bargain. Go in and talk to him a while, there's a good girl. I can't stand it a minute longer."

And old Jabez wiped his forehead, on which the perspiration was standing in big beads. Mary burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"This whole affair is so ridiculous!" she exclaimed.

But she adjusted the mossroses, nevertheless and tripped demurely in the parlor.

Now if there was a determined point in Jack Lacy's character it was his aversion to women in general, and if there was any one thing on which he prided himself it was his decided old bachelorism. Imagine his vexa-

tion and dismay, therefore, when, after a formal introduction, old Mr. Thorne withdrew, leaving him *à-die-à-die* with the pretty creature in white muslin and roses. It was embarrassing enough, particularly as Mary blushed every time he looked at her, and evinced an exceeding great disposition to laugh.

"Well," thought Jack, "the manners and customs of this locality are rather odd, to say the least of it. I come to consult an old gentleman about purchasing land of him, and he bounces out of the room, and sends in his daughter. What on earth am I to say to her, I'd like to know?"

And Mary, glancing shyly in the direction of her companion, came to the conclusion that he had "beautiful Spanish eyes," and a moustache decidedly superior in style to the hirsute adornments of the young gentlemen of Thornville.

Mr. Lacy looked up at the ceiling and down at the carpet, and wondered what the consequences would be were he to escape incontinently through the open French window. That would not be a very dignified proceeding, however, so he resigned himself to destiny by making some original remark on the weather. It had the much-desired effect of breaking the ice, however, and he was agreeably surprised with the arch vivacity of Miss Thorne. Only once did she seem confused; it was when she had been describing a fine grove of cedars that belonged to her father's land, regretting at the same time that he contemplated the sale of it.

"I believe I should like to become the purchaser," said Jack. "Your father has told you that I had some idea of settling here?"

Mary grew scarlet, and murmured some incoherent sentence or other; the conversation was effectually checked, and Jack, perplexed at the effect, for which he could perceive no visible cause, rose to take leave.

"Will you mention to your father, Miss Thorne, that I shall call to see him about this matter to-morrow morning?" he asked.

All the mossroses in Mr. Thorne's rose-garden could never have rivalled the hot glow on Mary's cheeks as she fled out of the room without a word of reply.

"Very singular family this," muttered Jack, slowly drawing on his gloves and walking down the broad garden path. "But she is an uncommonly pretty girl!—and I shall certainly take an early walk through that grove of cedars to-morrow morning, before breakfast."

He dreamed of blue-eyed Mary Thorne that night, and rose decidedly pleased that he should have a reasonable excuse for calling at her father's house so soon.

"I certainly can't be in love!" quoth he, mentally. "But how Minnie would tease me if she thought I was in any danger of suing for not only a farm but a wife."

Old Jabez Thorne was busily engaged nipping the dead leaves off his pet Laurustinus with a gigantic pair of garden-scissors, that morning, when young Lacy sprang over the edge and saluted him with a buoyant:

"Good-morning! Well, sir," he went on gaily, "I have seen the property, and am perfectly delighted. A fine healthy investment—no disease about it, I am convinced."

"Hem!" said Mr. Thorne, dubiously.

"And I would like to take a second more thorough inspection in your society, sir, if you please."

"Really, Mr. Lacy," said the old man, sharply, "my daughter has not yet come down stairs, and—"

"What the mischief has his daughter to do with the matter?" thought Lacy, but he said, politely:

"Of course I will await any time that may be convenient to you, sir. I observe a good deal of native roughness, but I cannot doubt that there is very great susceptibility to improvement. A little judicious cultivation will accomplish wonders."

"Let me tell you, young man," began Mr. Thorne, in a towering rage, but Lacy saw that he had unconsciously committed some arch blunder, and hastened to say—

"In short, I am determined to secure this rural gem at any price. What is the sum you demand?"

Mr. Thorne fairly sat down on the gravel walk, overpowered with the avalanche of wrath which he found impossible to shape into words.

"Upon—my—word—sir!" he began; "you talk as if this was a mere matter of business!"

Jack was puzzled enough. "It is the way in which I have always heretofore been accustomed to treat such affairs, sir."

"Heretofore—you have been accustomed! And pray, sir, how many such little affairs have you had on your hands?" shrieked old Thorne, growing purple in the face.

"Oh, several, sir. I am not so inexperienced as you suppose," replied Jack, smiling.

"And you are not ashamed to confess it?"

"No; why should I be?"

"Get out of my garden, you young reprobate!" screamed Jabez, leaping up with lightning rapidity. "To some here and of fer to buy my daughter, as if she were a patch of potatoes! Go, I say!"

"Your daughter, Mr. Thorne?"

"Yes my daughter, you jack-a-dandy!"

"But I'm not bargaining for your daughter, I'm bargaining for that land across the river."

"Don't tell me!" ejaculated Mr. Thorne, tugging away at the fastenings of his pocket-book, "your uncle's letter has informed me of your atrocious intention."

"Will you allow me to see the letter, sir?"

Thorne jerked it out of the compartment where it lay, and tossed it angrily towards Lacy. He opened it, and in spite of his annoyance and mortification burst into laughter at the sight of Minnie's dainty handwriting.

"It's nothing to laugh at, sir," exclaimed Thorne.

"My dear Mr. Thorne, we are all victims of a very ridiculous mistake," said Lacy. "My uncle never wrote this letter; it is the work of my mischievous cousin Minnie. The genuine document must have been left behind."

"And you didn't come to look for a wife?"

"I came to purchase real estate."

"Whew-w-w!" Old Jabez thorne whistled loud and long, then offered his hand to his guest with a hearty laugh.

"Well, my boy, I'm heartily sorry I called you so many opprobrious names, but Mary and I supposed you were after her. I must go and tell the little minx what a blunder we've made."

"Stay a moment, sir," said Jack, laying a detaining hand on the old gentleman's arm, as his quick eye detected the distant flutter of Miss Thorne's light dress among the trees, "will you allow me to make the necessary explanations myself? I am not at all certain that, after I have selected a home, I shall not enter into less business-like negotiations for a charming young wife to preside over it."

"As you please, my lad," said the old gentleman, chuckling. "I'll give my consent, if only to stone for my villainous treatment of you a little while ago."

He resumed his gardening operations, occasionally pausing to laugh to himself, while Cousin Jack sprang up the path to seek Mary.

They were absent a long time—in fact, as old Jabez thought, an unreasonably long time, before he discerned through the dense foliage of the acacia hedges their advancing forms. Mr. Lacy looking exceedingly proud and self-satisfied, and Mary leaning on his arm, with her pretty cheeks flushed, and her lips wreathed in timid smiles.

"What does she say?" roared the paternalias.

"She says she'll consider of it?" answered Jack, demurely.

A week or two afterwards Minnie Chester received a neat little package, containing the diamond sleeve-buttons and the following billet:

"DEAR MINNIE—I've lost my wager, but I cheerfully deliver over the forfeited stakes, for I have won something of infinitely more value—a wife!"

"COUSIN JACK."

From which we may conclude that the result of Miss Mary's "consideration" was favorable.

A DEAD MAN COME TO LIFE AND CONTESTS THE PROBATE RECORD.—Some years ago a man without a family or relatives lived in a county in Arkansas, and was possessed of an estate worth five thousand dollars. He went to New Orleans, and was absent forty years without being heard from. The Probate Judge granted administration on his estate—wound it up and discharged the administrator. The man returned—had been to Mexico—when in the court the following dialogue took place:

Dead Man—If you honor please, I want my effect returned to me, as you see I am not dead.

Court—I know as a man that your story alive and in court; but as a Court, I know you are dead, for the records of the Court say so, against their verity there can be no avowment—so says Lord Coke, and a good many other books I never read.

Dead man—But I want my property, and it is no difference to me whether your records be or not. I am alive, and have not transferred my property, and to deprive me of it without my consent is against the law.

Court—If you intimate that the records of this court lie, this court will send you to jail!

Dead man—Send a dead man to jail!

Court—Sheriff, take this apparition out.

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