

tore aside the curtain, and let the moonlight stream in. The bed was empty.

Three days later a man wandered aimlessly about the streets of the deserted city. It was Lightner, gone mad from the events of the past week, and the sole surviving inhabitant of the dead camp. He roamed about the streets all the forenoon, and then drifted back to his little office. Sitting down at his desk, as he had before a thousand times done, he wrote:

"CHEERING PROSPECTS.—Treasure Peaks was never on a more substantial basis than at present. Its population is constantly increasing; buildings are going up at a rate which speaks a population, by next fall, of double that which we can boast at present. The strike in the Lone Pine yesterday is one of immense importance, and more will be said of it in our next issue."

He hung this on the hook, and went out to "rustle" for more items, going from one empty store to another, and returning in an hour or so to scribble his impressions on paper. He moved about all day, and returned home at night, wholly oblivious of the fact that he was the only inhabitant of the dead and desolate city.

Occasionally the Indians would pay the Peaks a visit, but seldom, as the dreariness of the place was to them more lonely than the unexplored forest. These savages, who never harm a demented man, brought Lightner provisions, and treated him with great respect. He usually alluded to their visits as the arrival of New York capitalists seeking investments in mining property.

There was an old hall at the Peaks, which had been occasionally used for theatrical performances by local talent. Not unfrequently, Lightner would repair to this building, and, taking a front seat in the dress circle, sit for a couple of hours under the supposition that a play was in progress. Here, indeed, was the "beggarly array of empty benches." The moon, shining through the gaps of dismantled windows, threw but an indifferent light upon the stage and over the interior of the building, and occasionally Lightner would allude, in his paper, to the fact that it was a pity that the leading place of amusement in the city was not better lighted. He was always very guarded in his comments, however, as he seemed to fear that, unless he remained on good terms with the manager, he might lose his advertising patronage. Sometimes he would hang about the empty box-office for days, with a bill which he was anxious to collect.

On one occasion he delivered a lecture in the theatre, on the "Life of Charlemagne," and roared and gesticulated for an hour and a half, by the light of a tallow candle, to absolute emptiness, weaving his mad oratory to the irresponsive air, and trying vainly to call down the applause of the silent gallery.

On the Fourth of July he decorated his office with evergreens; pulled out an old American flag, which he hoisted early in the morning; read the Declaration of Independence to a band of Washoe Indians; marched them up and down the main street, and wanted to get gloriously drunk, but lacked the spirituous auxiliaries.

During the next few months the town shrank away like a withered vegetable. The buildings twisted and warped with the summer's heat, and the dry rot set in. Here and there patches of grass could be seen in the streets, a sort of verdigris collecting upon the town. Day after day the signs and awnings were shaken by the mountain winds, and fell to the ground alongside the sinking buildings. Vines and weeds began to mantle and choke the charred and blackened ruins of the hoisting works, and cover the grim wrecks of machinery.

In the midst of all this, the demented editor prolonged his solitary existence, subsisting on the scanty allowance which the Indians furnished him, and occasionally issuing the *Standard*, printing it on odd pieces of paper, and distributing it by throwing it into the yawning doorways. Its circulation was generally about a dozen copies, and it came out as the humour seized him.

When not at work on his journal, he was digging among the ruins for the body of his wife, whom he firmly believed had been burned in the fire. One day he found some bones, probably belonging to a miner, and, believing them to be the remains of his lost helpmate, he buried them in a little knoll back of his office, and began to plant flowers there, watering the spot daily. These flowers soon completely engaged his attention, and, one day, seeing them through the open window, he wrote:

"The flowers are coming up close by our door again. All hail! As, in our wild and uncertain struggle for wealth, we toil in the lower levels, let us not forget the priceless treasures of the upper earth. The gold of the mine is not half so bright as the yellow buttercups that fleck the sod above it. The cold crystals, the gleaming pyrites, and the many-coloured traceries of wealth and beauty that blend in the soulless rocks, make poor compare with the vines and grasses, which, a hundred feet above, tell us of God's divine sympathy and nature's exhaustless bounty. The gold and silver last forever because neither have ever lived. The flowers spring up and die because they are immortal. Does not the spirit of the rose, upon the hill yonder, live and breathe as a man lives and breathes? Does it not feel every movement and change of the air which surrounds it, and die as the blast smites it? Does not the spiritual essence of its fragrance haunt the earth, while

its seed is quickened for another spring? Let every man have his share, for the treasures of nature are illimitable."

In the fall he imagined that he was nominated for Congress, and for about six weeks he conducted a vigorous political campaign. He went on a canvassing tour through the mountains, and wherever he struck an Indian camp he made a speech—a rousing and ringing Republican oration—which was generally listened to with marked attention by groups of stolid savages.

On election day he distributed his tickets through the saloons, laying a pile on each dusty counter, and covering them with small stones to hold them in place.

In a day or so he imagined himself elected, and thanked the solitudes about him as follows:

"It is with a feeling of no inconsiderable pride that the editor of the *Standard* is able to announce that he has been chosen by the people of Nevada as their congressional representative. We did not seek the office, and, in accepting it, we but bend to the royal will of the popular majority, who were determined to do us honour, in return for our labours in behalf of the growing country during the past four years. Our record as a pioneer, a journalist, and a citizen we feel proud of, and shall make it our endeavour to retain the confidence of our constituents in the future as we have in the past."

That night he packed a small black valise, and determined to set out for Washington on the early stage. He went behind the office, and stood for half an hour by the grave which he supposed to be that of his wife, and then turned sadly back to the dingy old printing shop. Sitting down at his desk, he seized a scrap of paper, and began to write. He wrote slowly for about half an hour, and then, throwing away the manuscript, wrote again. Then he carefully read his copy, and hung it on the hook.

"Julia," said he, "set that up in leaded minion, and then we'll go home."

He looked over toward the case where his wife had so often worked, and his dimming eyes tried to pierce the gloom. Folding his arms upon the table, he laid his head down upon them with a sigh of weariness, and was soon asleep.

Three years later, a man and a woman came up the grade on horseback and entered the deserted town. They walked where the ruins of the hoisting-works crumbled beneath masses of waving grass, and inert machinery lay in the close embrace of creeping vines. The pair rode through the flowers and weeds in the main street, and neared the office of the *Standard*. The woman's quick eye caught sight of the grave at the top of the knoll, and she walked up to it. On the head-board she saw the inscription cut deeply into the wood:

JULIA LIGHTNER,
MY BELOVED WIFE.
Died April 16th.

The two looked in each other's faces, when the man remarked:

"The day of the fire."

They walked through the office, passed the cases, thick with spider's webs, the rusty press, and the pied masses of type. They saw something bowed over the editorial table. It was a human figure, half-skeleton, half mummy, over which clung some ragged remnants of clothes.

"My husband!" said the woman. A horrible shiver came over the man, and the woman, ashy pale, clung to him for protection, as if she expected the figure would rise up and confront them.

Presently, Houghson walked up closer, and seeing a sheet of paper on the hook, took it off, shook the dust free, and, with some difficulty, read as follows:

"HOME.—Love is a sleep, in which a man dreams of joys which rise before him in the air, in endless architecture which the imagination never tires of rearing upon the clouds. He awakes, is at home, and the unsubstantial castles of his dreams become a solid masonry, when he views the cheerful hearth, hears the prattle of his children, and presses the responsive lips of his faithful wife. This is the glad consummation of all his hopes, and all other joys which wealth and power and satiated ambition tempt us with, pale before the splendour of such a sun as this whose fire the grave itself quenches not, and whose light pierces the shadows of eternity."

As he read, Houghson had moved toward the light which came through the broken window, and his back was turned away from the woman whose affections he had won. Suddenly the crash of a pistol's report caused him to leap back as if the ball had pierced him.

As he turned, the woman fell to the floor at the skeleton's feet, the blood which streamed from her mouth mingling with a bubbling froth which swelled from her nostrils. She made no motion after the fall, except to inflate her chest once or twice.

Houghson gazed, transfixed, upon the corpse for a few minutes, incapable of motion. The sun had set, and the scene was shrouded in the gathering shadows. He made a step to approach the body, met the fixed gaze of the eyes, and, recoiling, reeled through the open door. The two horses were close at hand; one he liberated, and the other he mounted. He turned one more look at the office, and paused, as if he would go back; and then, wheeling his horse about, dashed through the crumbling and rotting city at a pace which made the frail houses tremble as he passed, and in the misty twilight disappeared down the lonely grade.

SAM DAVIS.

WAS SHE A COQUETTE?

BY MURPHY.

Miss C—, permit me to introduce Mr. M—.
Mr. M—, Miss C—.

Short and informal as this introduction was, and occurring as it did—being merely in conformity with the conventional usages of society,—one would not suppose results other than agreeable would follow from it, or that heart ache and despondency, consequent upon an attack of that universal malady—love—was very severely attacking myself, the before-mentioned Mr. M. Having, in the course of my life, met many ladies, numbers of them beautiful, I, not naturally of an amorous nature, with a cool head; critically exact in my estimate and appreciation of the fair sex, it was not to be for a moment imagined, that the charms of Miss C. (and they are legion) would make an immediate impression upon me, or that my heart—already almost ossified—would prove so susceptible as to bring me at once to her feet, and subject me to a thralldom so complete in its nature, that my very life seemed dependent on her favor.

I am not a demonstrative man, neither am I impulsive, but one whose coolness in the ordinary affairs of life, would lead to the inference that in an *affaire de cœur*, where a hope existed of it resulting in a *vinculum matrimonii*, my mental equilibrium would not be disturbed. The smoothest exterior at times covers the most troubled heart. No vapor rises from the molten gold; no turbulent waves sweep over its surface; its mirror-like smoothness gives no indication of its latent heat, and yet it possesses a wonderful power to destroy. So it was with me. To all outward appearances, calm and unmoved, my very vitality was being destroyed by the passion I could not control. As the sportsman lures on the unsuspecting game by an imitation of its cry, so was I led on by a mesmeric power that was perfectly irresistible. At times my spirits would be buoyed up on the wings of a bright hope, born of some slight favor extended to me,—a kind word, a languid look. Alas, how evanescent were my moments of pleasure!

At others, a frown would dispel the illusion of my happiness, and an anguish as of despair, distracting and agonizing in the extreme, would supervene. For days and weeks—in fact I was entirely oblivious of time—the seeds of my destiny were being sown, perhaps all unconsciously by the young lady; perhaps with a perfect knowledge of the consequences—let us hope the former,—in a soil that, although barren and unyielding to the fascinations of others, was at last compelled, by some occult power to develop and produce fruit terrifying in its reality. The impulse to see her was uncontrollable; the desire to be near her could not be overcome; my destiny seemed fixed; my "affinity" (I conceived) was found, and nought but the great leveller death, could keep me from her side, where, I fondly flattered myself, I was ever welcome. What an hallucination! What an egotistical phantom! How my poor brain whirled as in my mind I painted the object of my constant thoughts; what grand castles I built, surrounding them and embellishing them with the offerings of love; with what ecstatic pleasure I anticipated a realization of my hopes, none can ever know; and yet, even now I am in that dreadful state of uncertainty, that at every thought of her, my heart flutters as do the sails of a ship as she heads the wind. A description of my *anamorata* would not, I think be out of place here. Of medium height, a form perfect in its contour; dark brown hair, luxuriant and glossy in its graceful and becoming arrangement; clear, trustful, limpid eyes, of an ethereal blueness, whose soft yet penetrating gaze would send the blood with lightning speed coursing through one's veins, and create a longing desire to fold their possessor in an eternal embrace; features, although not faultless in outline, or perfect in their separate form, yet blended together with a unity that created beauty, not incomparable, but fascinating and dazzling in its brightness, and classic in the animation imparted to them by the healthful glow of the carmine fluid as it flowed and ebbed beneath the clear, transparent skin. A wonderful neatness and taste in dress, with a happy blending of colors, made a *tout ensemble* bewitchingly charming. In her disposition, she was at times very peculiar; in fact, not only peculiar, but enigmatical. As I have already said, attracting one to her by some incomprehensible, magnetic power; holding him spell bound, at her pleasure, and then, without any evident effort, repelling him with a frigidity and ease worthy of an ocean of icebergs. Such, was, and is Miss C. What could be done by the writer, but fall head, body and all, into the maelstrom, and be carried round and round unceasingly?

At last the climax was reached, as I thought. An opportunity offered, and the words were spoken. Again was displayed the skill of a great commander. At times the reply to a particularly soft question (it would not look well on paper) would so elate me, that my spirits would rise far above the boiling point—I would just more than effervesce and bubble over with joy,—while a corresponding expansion of feeling towards the whole world in general would make everything appear bright, and pleasant, and happy. I would, at such moments, enjoy an Elysian bliss, transitory, however, I am sorry to say, for perhaps ere two days had passed, the "winter of my discontent," would be upon me, and the change in her bearing towards me would be as great as the atmospheric difference between midsummer

and midwinter, while the reaction would almost make me a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. (I hope, gentle reader, you do not think I am one already.) These are not merely "pouting" spells, to be overcome by a little caressing; they are not passing clouds obscuring the sun of my happiness, which will reappear in all its brilliancy; neither are they spontaneous ebullitions of Quixotic temper that rise from, yet leave the surface intact. They are as pre-meditated negatives, as the opposite mood is an inferred affirmative to my hopes. They crush me with their power; they submerge me with their weight; they congeal my blood with their icy coldness. I stand aghast, trembling like an aspen. An impassable gulf suddenly appears between us, and I attempt a retreat from my threatening proximity to its brink, when presto, change; suddenly the sky clears up; the "yawning abyss" is bridged by a ray of light from her eyes; I approach her; I emb—; (let the reader imagine the rest) mutual regrets are expressed; promises made; and again everything is lovely, and the goose hangs (on her neck) high.

What reply can be given to the interrogatory heading; this dyed-in-the-wool "tail"! There is a very large margin for conjecture. This, indeed, presents a good subject for discussion by one of your debating clubs, and, perhaps, there might be found amongst the members, some one whose experience is reflected by the above, (I cast no reflection upon them, however;) let them pause and reflect.

My head feels easier, thank you, and like the lady whose health was improved by giving her neighbour "a bit of her mind," I feel "aiseyer," now that I have spread myself by detailing a very melancholy chapter of facts,—and stern, stubborn things they are.

Beaurivage, P. Q.

HEARTH AND HOME.

THE joy of the spiritual life does not eclipse the joy of the earthly life; on the contrary, did we live as we should, the one would rather illumine the other and make it more conspicuous, as the sun lights the earth and reveals its beauty.

If we would direct any one how to reach a far-distant city, we must first know from what point he will start; so, if we would advise any one wisely concerning his conduct in life, we must know whereabouts he now stands, in order to show him the right direction to take.

TALENT is power; tact is skill. Talent is weight; tact is momentum. Talent knows what to do; tact knows how to do it. Talent makes a man respectable; tact will make him respected. Talent is wealth; tact is ready-money. For all the practical purposes of life tact carries it against talent in the proportion of ten to one.

WHEN we so adapt our expenses to our means as to have no overburdening cares, when we prize consistency above luxury, and comfort above display, when we welcome our friends to our homes as they are, not as they may be strained to appear, we are at once invested with a freedom and self-respect that make all our arrangements pleasing and our hospitality graceful.

THE diligent striving to accomplish any task worthily reveals new fields to conquer, and protects us against self-sufficiency. The study of the lives of great and good men, the contemplation of nature's wonderful works, the search into her mysteries, the culture of the faculties—all tend to the same result. Whatever opens up new fields, and higher views; whatever broadens our minds, and deepens our thoughts; whatever raises our ideal of what we may be, also sobers our opinion of what we are.

THOUGHT.—Thought is a constant, though silent, agent in making us what we are. It is with us in every waking hour. We have the power to cherish one class of thoughts and to dismiss another, to encourage those that lift us up and restrain those that drag us down. We can never stop thinking any more than we can stop breathing; but, as we can in a measure control the quality of the air we breathe, so to a great extent we can determine what we will think about. It is quite as needful to turn away from evil or puerile thoughts as from books or companions of the same sort, and it is possible to occupy the mind so fully with what is good, noble, and uplifting that there shall be no room nor desire to harbour what is false, low, or injurious.

COMMON SENSE.—The phrase "common sense" is generally applied to individuals, and used to indicate a certain style of character. It designates a man who is well ballasted and moves on an even keel, one who is not carried away by the winds of passion or warped by prejudice, one who does not change his mind very often, and is not easily led astray by dreamy and speculative people. When the coast is clear and the light is strong, he moves boldly and confidently—but he always feels his way in the dark. He is circumspect—that is, as the etymology of the word indicates, he looks all around before acting, and not merely in one direction. He very rarely, if ever, makes a fool of himself—this is a great thing to say of a man. He is not given to bluster, and does not parade himself ostentatiously before the public, he is superior to shame, however high-sounding. He judges men according to what they are, and not according to what they call themselves.