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THE COMET OF A SEASON!

By JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M. P.

There was a long service before the orator of the day appeared. The spiritual guide who usually conducted the ministrations of the church began by reading various portions from the theologies of all countries, the object of this exposition being to show that whatever men might have said, or thought they said, or wanted to say, at all times and in all ages, on the question of the soul and the future life, they all believed exactly the same thing, and that the more strongly they contradicted their neighbors the more irresistibly did they prove that they and their neighbors were in complete accordance.

At the right time, and from a side-door to which people's eyes would not naturally have turned, Montana suddenly came out and stood in an instant full in face of the congregation, on the platform from which the former speaker had just been addressing them.

CHAPTER XV. "DO NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE MEMBS?"

Perhaps, if Montana had not had time to resist the first impulse of his mind, he might have given in to what certain writers call "the voice of nature." Perhaps he might have welcomed with outward satisfaction at least his father's recognition, and owned himself the long-lost son.

still only dreaming of a career; that time when even you yourself seemed a burden to an ambitious young man determined to dazzle the world, and all bent back by the obliging arms of his father's wife.

Montana stood erect on his platform, determined to belong to the future and not to the past. He saw his father's eyes fixed on him with intense and wistful eagerness.

Perhaps, if Clement Hope had had a mind free to pay any attention to the subject, he might have become a little sceptical too; but, happily for his continued faith in his leader, his whole soul was absorbed in the effort to keep Mr. Varlowe in decorous restraint.

Lady Vanessa listened, with good-humored indifference—that is to say, she listened to a passage now and then, and as she did not care much about the continuity of the race, she allowed her thoughts to wander away to anything else.

CHAPTER XVI. "ALL FANCY-SICK SHE IS."

Montana got into Lady Vanessa's carriage. He was to have luncheon with her and her husband that day. Lady Vanessa chafed him sanely and even rudely about the old man who had claimed him as a son.

that Montana knew it. This had not occurred to her at first. She thought, like everybody else, that the poor old man was simply the victim of an hallucination born of his love and his hope.

As Montana passed out of the room he fixed on Clement a special look of affectionate interest and sympathy. Mr. Varlowe gazed wistfully after him, and made a movement as if he would leave his seat.

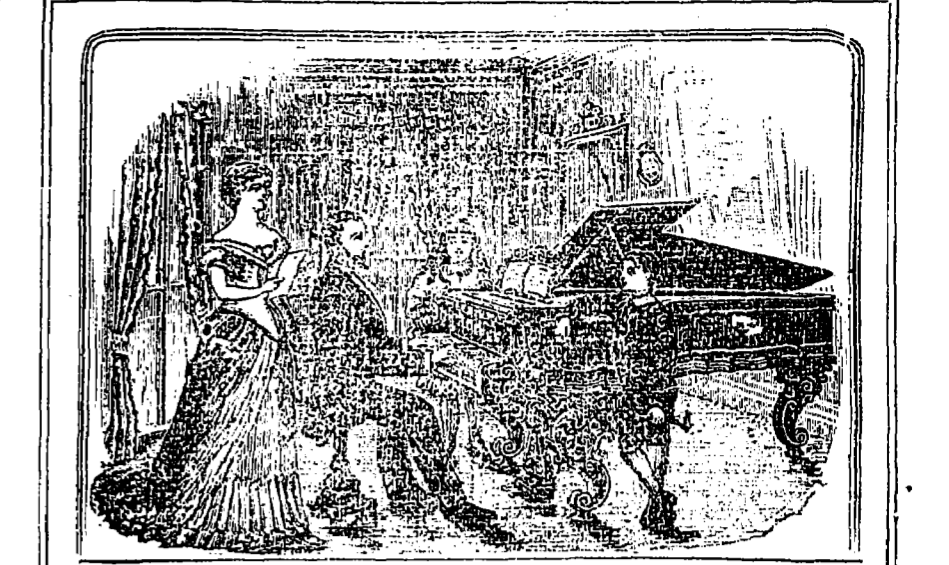
"You don't mean to say you don't know me, Edmund, my boy? You don't mean to say you don't recognize your father? You are Edmund Varlowe, Good God! of course you are. I'd know you among ten thousand!"

"My dear old friend," said Montana, sweetly, "I am sorry, so sorry, to have to disappoint your hopes, your very, very natural hopes to see your son. Assuredly you will see him one day yet—pray Heaven you may. But you are mistaken about me. I am not your son. I could wish I were, to be the son of so fond a father, and to be able to give him back the hope of his life; but you will trust to a better and a higher hope than I can give you. I am not your son."

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