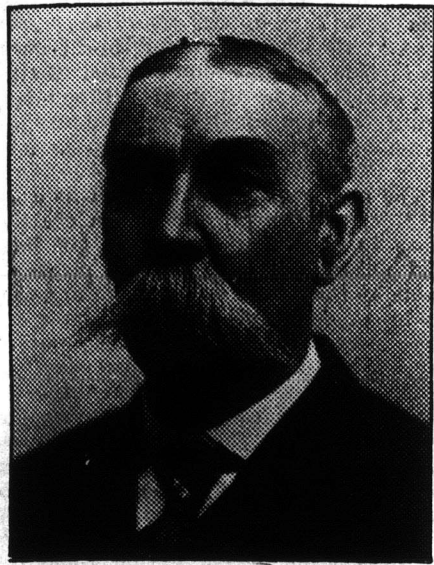


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the mantis sat up tall and twiddled her mandibles at him.

And Man clung rather closely to the skirts of Mother Nature, and admitted that these did not seem to agree with his ideas of females.

"But mine is higher!" he said, and held himself erect with renewed pride. "She is finer and nobler. She is sacred to maternity!"

Mother Nature looked at him dubiously, and then at the weak-legged tottling thing in the hobble skirt.

"That a sacred mother?" she demanded. "Does she bear many strong children, easily, successfully?"

Man admitted that she had but a few, and that he had to help her as a physician.

"Hm!" said Mother Nature. "Your super-mother has to have assistance to begin with. Does she suckle her children successfully?"

Man admitted that he had to help her as a manufacturer of infant foods.

"Hm!" said Mother Nature. "Does she provide food, shelter, defence for her children—like these others?"

Man admitted that he did all this himself; he had to—she was so busy.

"Mm!" said Mother Nature. "Does she teach them all that is needed to carry on the race?"

Man admitted that so far he had invented and managed education.

"Hm!" said Mother Nature. "Will you explain to me wherein this pretty pet of yours is a better mother than her ancestors?"

But while he hesitated she lifted her head and listened.

"Look here!" she said to him. "I still hear that noise. This isn't the one that was screaming!"

"No, indeed!" said the high-peeled pet. "I wanted to tell you that. I don't complain. I have all these decorations and nothing much to do, and no children to speak of. My weakness is my power, you see. At least, I know on which side my bread is buttered!"

But Mother Nature swept her aside. "You wretched little travesty!" she said. "You weak little imitation of a parasitic he-cirriped and a peacock! Out of my way—let me see the real ones!"

And she stood up and looked far and wide at the female of the human race. African woman; a sturdy straight-backed woman of the hill tribes of India, bearing great stones upon her head; a vigorous, big-armed German peasant woman; a free-limbed athletic English woman; a swift, agile, competent Western woman from America; and all of these were big and strong and brave and wise and efficient.

"Are these females?" she demanded of him. And he perceived that each one of them had her children with her, so he could not deny it.

"Where is the child of your pet?" asked Mother Nature. "Has she it there behind her?" But all the pet had behind her was a little yapping dog on a string, and she burst into tears.

Then Man was enraged that Nature should dare to find fault with the work of his hands. He held up his head in pride.

"I love my pet," he said; "I made her like this. I prefer her like this. By careful selection and education I have made the kind of woman I like."

"I see," said Mother Nature thoughtfully. "With all nature behind you, for example, and all womanhood around you, for illustration. You deliberately chose to evolve this work of art! It shows, my son, how utterly unfit you are to do the choosing."

Then Mother Nature turned to the women who were making the noise.

"Come, come, children," said she, "you do not have to make all this fuss. Develop your brains and muscles, earn your own living, be bought by no man, and choose the kind with which to replenish the earth. He has created the kind of woman he liked, and a pretty poor job he's made of it. Now do you resume your natural function of choosing—and make the kind of man you like—that is your especial duty to the race."

But the Man raised a fearful outcry. "This is an outrage against Nature!" he cried. "Is not this the woman that God gave me? Is not this my female?"

"Tut, tut, my son!" said Mother Nature, now quite calm again, and even a little sorry for him since he was about

to lose his pet. "I can't say about that donation, but I do know that she is not your female—you are her male! Go study your biology!"

And Nature began to pay attention to business again, rather regretting her nap.

Acted on Orders.

When I sailed with Commander McCalla several years ago, said a young naval officer, he had already made a reputation as a rigid disciplinarian. One day it chanced that a midshipman whom he had sent ashore went a trifle beyond the instructions given him with relation to his errand. The matter was not of the least importance, but McCalla chided him sharply, saying:

"When you receive an order, sir, do simply what you are told to do, and never a particle more or less."

The midshipman touched his hat respectfully, but he thought the rebuke uncalled for. A few days later McCalla summoned him and said:

"You will take a boat, sir, and go ashore to the post office. See if there is a package addressed to me."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The midshipman took the boat and went ashore. When he returned, McCalla asked:

"Well, sir, was there a package for me at the post office?"

"Yes, sir," replied the midshipman, touching his cap.

"Where is it?"

"At the post office, sir."

"What! you didn't bring it with you?"

"No, sir."

"Why not, sir?"

"Because I had no orders to do so, sir."

"I told you to get the package."

"Beg pardon, sir, but I understood you to tell me merely to see if there was a package for you at the post office, and I could not venture to do a particle more or less than my instructions indicated."

A Thanksgiving Offering

"Come, hear the tale I would unfold," said the Gobbler to his flock, "For what the stars this day have told has given me a shock."

"The zodiac, in days of old, with twelve signs was complete, But woe is me, this day I see, thirteen are on the sheet!"

"The last, a man with axe in hand, and blood within his eye, Determination on his face, and teeth for turkey pie."

"I hied me to the Oracle to see what did portend, And this is what he calmly said, 'I see your blooming end.'"

"This man will grab you by the feet, with ne'er a chance to peek, And though the axe is in his hand, you'll get it in the neck."

"Don't think that to your memory he'll offer up a toast; But on the other hand, I see you'll get a frightful roast."

"And when you're roasted to a turn, the tale is not half told; For while he likes you served up hot, you are not bad sliced, cold."

"You think your finish then you've seen—it were a view quite rash; This ruthless man with heart of stone will chop you into hash."

"E'en then he will not stay his hand—he'll make another swoop, And at the end you'll surely find you've landed in the soup."

The Gobbler paused and wiped his eye, and then he simply said:

"My friends, if all of this is true, there's lively times ahead!"

—R. L. Courtney.

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Mr. Henry Black.

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