

## SNOWED UNDER.

Of a thousand things that the Year snowed under—  
The busy old year that has gone away—  
How many will bloom in the Spring, I wonder,  
Brought to life by the sun of May?  
Will the rose-tree branches, so wholly hidden  
That never a rose-tree seems to be,  
At the sweet Spring's call come forth as bidden,  
And bud in beauty and bloom for me?

Will the fair green Earth, whose throbbing bosom  
Is hid like a maid's in her gown at night,  
Wake out of her sleep and with blade and blossom  
Gem her garments to please my sight?  
Over the knoll in the valley yonder,  
The loveliest buttercups bloomed and grew,  
When the snow has gone that drifted them under,  
Will they shoot up sunward and bloom anew?

When wild winds blew and sleet-storm pelted  
I lost a jewel of priceless worth;  
If I walk that way when snows have melted,  
Will the gem gleam up from the bare brown earth?  
I laid a love that was dead or dying  
For the Year to bury and hide from sight;  
But out of a trance will it waken, crying,  
And push to my heart like a leaf to the light?

Under the snow lie things so cherished—  
Hopes, ambitions, and dreams of men,  
Faces that vanished, and trusts that perished—  
Never to sparkle or live again.  
The old Year greedily grasped his plunder,  
And covered it over and hurried away.  
Of the thousand things that he hid, I wonder  
How many will rise at the call of May?  
O wise young Year, with your hands held under  
Your mantle of ermine, tell me, pray!

## BENEATH THE WAVE.

Owing to the miscarriage of one of the advance sheets, we have to postpone the sequel of this interesting story for one or two numbers. The tale is now verging to a close.

## MY COMEDY.

## I.

Dramatic writing has no special charms for me. In the plight I had been in, a struggle of some painful years, if, reversing a great English dramatist's career, I had thought that a trowel would have led to speedier results than a pen, I should have at once adopted the mechanical calling.

I had battled for actual existence, winning my bread crust by crust. At last I was fortunate in securing the publication of some stories. It happened that an English playwright had clapper-clawed an anonymous story of mine, and had put it in action on the London stage. I owed this person no grudge, but was rather grateful for the accident. I wrote, telling him he was perfectly welcome to my crude material. In a courteous reply, in which some remuneration was offered me, the author suggested "that perhaps in dramatic composition there might be an opening for me." In the letter were enclosed a few words of introduction to the manager of a New York theatre. I at once accepted the situation. Very deliberately I set to work to write my first play, and, although my poor mother almost starved during the time necessary for its production, at last my drama was completed. Strangely enough, by sheer luck, my first work found a theatre. Whether from want of merit, dramatic construction, or because it was at the end of the season, my play was withdrawn after a few weeks' performance. If not the success I had wished, at least it was no failure.

Knitting my brows with a feeling rather akin to anger, I made another venture, and wrote a second piece. This new effort was fortunate even beyond its deserts, yet I can not say I felt the elation I was longing for. Such applause as I received I only considered as the interest on a capital spent during some years of toil and privation. At least, my pride was no longer wounded. I had finally emerged from that most painful of all situations—that of writing jackal, who waits hungrily for such lumps of literary garbage as may be thrown him. Thanks to rather an old head on young shoulders, such unmeaning or unsubstantial compliments as I received I took exactly for what they were worth. All I believed was that, having found a vocation, my work was now really to begin. Without being sordid, I was grateful for the money I had earned. Thank God, it gave me the opportunity to surround a mother with some few of the comforts which my former extreme poverty had deprived her of.

A third piece of mine had been accepted by a leading manager. Having completed my task under less stress, perhaps with a certain degree of spontaneity, for the first time I felt surer of success. Still, the school of misfortune had left its impress on me. With most men an improved physical condition rapidly effaces former mental sufferings. If I was not exactly morbid, and did not recur to those troubles which had been, nevertheless a certain elasticity of spirits was foreign to my name. Without being morose, I was not genial.

That pleasing *bonhomie*, that graceful ease, that half-fellow-well-met manner some of my contemporaries possessed, which undoubtedly surmounted many a difficulty, I did not have. People on the stage did not know me as Dick, for Dick would not riot nor hobnob with the best of them. Even had Mr. Launcelot, the

manager, slapped me on the back, I should have been quick to resent the liberty.

Mr. Richard Carter was not a favourite in the green-room. As that channel into which was to be filtered all the rapid nonsense, the private bickerings, the senseless jealousies of stage people, I was the most undesirable of confidants. Intent solely on the business I was engaged in, when my rehearsals came, and it was necessary to impart instruction, I gave it, possibly, in a pedagogic way. Why should I not have done so? If I had not taught a night school some few years before, I should have starved, and possibly the insistent manners of the schoolmaster still remained.

My relationship, then, with professional people was of a restricted kind. A certain glitter of very thin metal, a resonance that was jarring, a tension too prone to snapping, an over-gushing from a very scanty emotional source, a facial contortion simply indicative of muscular suppleness, which I deemed all these people had, made them distasteful to me. I suppose I should have waited until the comedians had emerged from the house in order to appreciate some natural differences. But in their homes I knew none of them. Having little time to waste, such invitations I might have been honoured with, as to dinners at certain artistic club with the men, or to gay reunions with the women, I had politely declined. "Carter is a bear," I had heard it intimated, and Richard Carter had very carelessly accepted the ursine characteristics.

Mr. Launcelot, the manager, had said to me more than once words to this effect: "My dear boy" (Mr. Launcelot would have been familiar with a grandee of Spain after an introduction of five minutes), "you don't advertise yourself. Now, I wouldn't have you eccentric. It really doesn't pay talent nowadays to wear hair hanging around one's shoulders, nor to sport a dress-coat lined with cherry-coloured satin; but really you don't show enough."

"My brilliancy does not shine, then, through my bushel basket? Is that what you are driving at?" I asked.

"A certain amount of intimacy with the people behind the curtain is a necessity. You don't—indeed you don't—seem to be enough with us. Now, please don't allow your pride to run away with you. Please don't get it into your noddle that any of our ladies want to make love to you. I am rather inclined to think they enjoy sometimes a quiet laugh at your expense. Don't you pose just a trifle? I would not for the world be officious in proffering my advice, but, on my word, you are the most unsociable human being I ever met with. I can't say you are modest, for, by George! you hector me at times, and have a most obstinate way of asserting your right. You aren't tricky, or anything that way, and are a serious man, and I believe good to tie to—only, can't you unbend at times? A theatre is not the Supreme Court of the United States, nor are actors undertakers. Where you are wanting in sympathy. You are a lump of ice—a log of wood."

"Permit me, Mr. Launcelot," I replied. "I appreciate a great deal the kindness on your part."

"Well, that's more than you ever said before, dear boy."

"But, Mr. Launcelot, this house of yours is nothing more to me than a hotel. Among your numerous people I am only your butcher. I try and bring you a good piece of beef, freshly slaughtered, with alternate streaks of fat and lean. Your actors and actresses are the cooks, who baste the meats and apply the sauces."

"I keep an ordinary, then, do I?" inquired Mr. Launcelot, rather testily.

"Exactly, and you dispense your feasts to a hungry public. You pay your purveyor liberally enough. But why should the cooks want to be on familiar terms with the butcher?"

"It is an exceedingly coarse way you have of putting things, Mr. Carter."

"I am sorry you think it so, Mr. Launcelot. The simile is a Greek one, some thousands of years old; but I did not mean to be discourteous."

"I hate all classic nonsense; but, as you will, Mr. Carter."

I was sitting, then, rather moodily in the corner *fauveuil* of the orchestra during a third rehearsal. It happened to be a convenient position, because there was an entrance from the *couloir* of the house to the stage, and Mr. Launcelot could come easily to me. The manager's comments in regard to my play under rehearsal were peculiar:

"That's a send-off! When she works off that first act in a dove-coloured shot-silk with black lace flounces—cost two hundred and fifty (catch Claudia Aubrey going for any of those duds one finds in Sixth Avenue, though Mrs. Launcelot is glad enough to buy there)—and has a train five feet long, with the nicest little nigger you ever saw to hold it up, and Claudia shows that handsome arm of hers—no enamel there—and that and of hers waves an ostrich-tipped fan, she will electrify the house!" Then the manager lowered his head and bolted through the hole in the passage.

"Don't you think," inquired Mr. Launcelot, anxiously, when he returned with a piece of brocade in his hand, "it would be better if our ladies showed their feet a trifle more? Clocks on stockings, dear boy, were made to be seen. What a delicious pair of high-heeled shoes Miss Aubrey has for the part! Now, couldn't she loop up her dress a trifle more? All the rest of

the women want to do it, but she won't, and if you veto short costumes there is certain to be a row. You just bother with a woman's make-up, and you're gone! Propitiation is the thing, dear boy—propitiation. Pray, now, don't give Claudia any chance to get miffed with you. In fact, she knows her business so well that she won't allow it. My wife and Claudia are great friends. You may, of course, in your position as author, backed up by me, bully the men to a certain extent, but be at least politic with our leading lady. Oh, I say, this is the colour of the furniture, and it lights up with a perfect blaze. The whole rig brand-new—stuff costs seven dollars and sixty-five cents a yard."

Now a man in shirt-sleeves appeared through the gloom of the dark passage.

"Yes, I sent for you, Mr. Balders. Buy twenty yards of crash and cover me up all that new furniture, or the damask will be ruined. Women smear things so with their cosmetics. I don't care who it is, I won't have anybody flop down on my chairs until they are in use on the stage. If necessary, have bits of wood studded with nails—jagged ones—and put them on top of all of them, like those on carriages, to prevent the boys getting up behind. Miss Aubrey is late, and you are in a fidget! The call was for two o'clock, Mr. Carter, and it's 'most a quarter after. Ah, here we are at last! Oh, I say, Perkins, that branch of that tree in the forest-set got swinging last night in the most ridiculous way. Hop up and fasten it with a bit of light stuff and some nails. We don't want our brains knocked out—we none of us have too much to spare. Ah, now we are going to have it! There, that opening seems to go along pretty smoothly, don't it?"

"Only tolerably for a third rehearsal," I replied, rather indifferently.

"There you go, freezing again! Now comes one of the happiest points in the play."

"Which, allow me to remark, I deem to be the weakest. It is just that portion which I do not like."

"What, the snuff-box scene? There is a deal of point in it. Believe me, experience, my dear boy, has shown me that a snuff-box or a warming-pan always delights a house. I have seen a pinch of snuff save a poor piece and carry it through triumphantly. Once out in California, when I started in the business, I ran a small concern in Sacramento; I had a regular miner's supper in the piece. The play was awful stuff, but the scent of the frying onions brought out biggest yelling you ever heard, and the onions were encored every night."

"So much the worse for the public taste. Now to return to the piece. In compliance with your wishes, what was but a simple incident in the original conception you have allowed your people to amplify quite unnecessarily. If this scene fails, the fault is yours. Mind, beyond a certain point I will allow of no such liberties of my text."

"I never made a mistake in my life, Mr. Carter, and the scene will do. Now watch Jenkins—the best man for the part in the universe."

"Come, Mr. Launcelot, you really do not mean to say that you have collected under one canvas all the wonders of the world? Keep your puffs for the programme. I might like Jenkins better if he did not put in so many gags."

"But it is a trivial rôle, only a few lengths here and there, and he wants to prop it up. Dear boy, we have Jenkins entirely for his gags. He is the cleverest gagger at this present moment on the stage. Four snuff-boxes, and all out at the same time! Good! An idea for you. How would it do to make an incident, for some future piece, out of snuff-boxes? Have poison in one of 'em, and then the heroine comes in, and just in time saves her lover by dashing the poisoned box to the ground—eh?"

"It would be simply disgusting, Mr. Launcelot."

"I don't know. But what is the matter? That's an ugly look you have put on."

"Would you expect," I replied, "that a duke, or a marquis, would take snuff out of such trumpery wooden boxes—no better than one sees on the bar of a lager-beer cellar?"

"Seize your idea at once. Want 'em rich? They ain't wood, but horn.—I say, Mr. Balders, clap me some gold-leaf on those boxes, and get—get me a paste shoe-buckle (there are lots of them knocking about in the old property-box), and putty me an odd shoe-buckle on the duke's box.—Are you satisfied? Nothing like keeping up the unities."

The "unities" was a word Mr. Launcelot had picked up somewhere, but with the faintest conception of its appropriateness. Whenever Mr. Launcelot collared The Unities, he invariably wiped his forehead with a musky handkerchief. The Unities annoyed me less than another pet word of the manager's—"an anachronism." When Mr. Launcelot lugged in that he always invoked a pantomimic benediction, casting his eyes in a supplicating way toward the chandelier.

I had little fault to find with Miss Claudia Aubrey. The lady's dramatic instincts were of undoubted excellence. Still, I thought, as far as this rehearsal went, that Miss Aubrey had remaining on her mind the reminiscence of a rôle she had lately created and which she had played during a whole season. Her diction had less of a former mannerism than her action. Possibly with the lady, as with myself as an audience, the physical impression was the more lasting.

My acquaintance with Miss Aubrey had only dated from a first rehearsal, which event had taken place a week before. Then our conversation, after a formal introduction from Mr. Launcelot, had been limited exclusively to the business of the piece. I was pleased by what seemed to be a natural and straightforward manner. I had fancied, though, after closely watching the lady's expression, furtively scanning the pure outlines of her hand—some face, that a certain fixity of the lips indicated no small force of will. I dreaded a latent obstinacy, and feared that Miss Aubrey might be disinclined to accept any suggestion on my part.

"My impressions of the part, Mr. Carter," the lady had said in rather a nonchalant way, "are quite vague and confused. I have scarcely studied it—in fact, merely glanced at it. I have no doubt but what you say is quite right and proper; only, of course, when I settle down to the work I shall want elbow-room—latitude, in fact. I am led to believe that Mr. Carter is quite difficult to satisfy—you may rest assured, sir, that I am equally hard to please, not only in regard to my own task, but as to the work of others." Then a pretty gloved hand was waved toward me. I had bowed gravely and was dismissed.

During the first and second rehearsals, which simply indicated the situations, matters, as they always do, went haltingly. There happened to be a line which Miss Aubrey objected to, offering something else in which the alliteration was manifest. Interrogated directly by the lady as to the propriety of the change, I politely declined altering the line, and without much insistence gained my point.

At this third rehearsal, which I am describing, Miss Aubrey was better-pleased, and the improvement on all sides was manifest, though the lights and shades in the picture were still indistinct. Presently the call boy handed me a note. It contained the following words, written in a clear, bold hand: "Miss Aubrey's respects to Mr. Carter. Miss A. does not like the opening of the second act. As the Duchess, Miss A. comes in too soon. Would Mr. Carter kindly reconsider it? There should be further preparation before the Duchess's introduction. Mr. Carter has forgotten, possibly, that an elaborate toilet has to be prepared. That alone should appeal to his gallantry."

I read the note over twice—the first time, I must acknowledge, without much regard to the sense, but simply critical as to the spelling. There was not a slip nor a word underlined. My reply, written on the same sheet of paper, was as follows: "Mr. Carter feels obliged to Miss Aubrey for her polite suggestion, but sees no necessity for a change. The second act can be rung up five or ten minutes in order to allow for any exigencies of costume."

In a second back came that bit of paper, now somewhat crumpled, with only two words, "You must!" Worse than the coarseness of the two syllables, they were underlined. My reply might have been, "I won't!" but, restraining myself, I wrote: "When Victor Hugo wrote 'Hernani' for Mademoiselle Mars, this great actress declared her unwillingness to recite a certain line, and insisted that the author should change it. Like a good, kind-hearted woman she accepted the inevitable, and, in her rendering of what was an objectionable phrase to her, made it the most famous passage of the drama. Very respectfully, Richard Carter."

In another second back came the piece of paper with this on it: "I am neither good nor kind-hearted. You are not Victor Hugo!"

I was out of patience—utterly so—and my impulse was to reply in the childish tit-for-tat style; but, commanding myself, I wrote, "But Miss Aubrey may become Mademoiselle Mars."

The unpleasant correspondence ended here for the notice. It was Miss Aubrey's *entrée* again on the stage, I noticed, as she swept on the stage, her black silk dress rustling as it went, that she held a wretched bit of paper in her gloved hand. Quite carefully, ostentatiously I fancied, the lady tore the scrap into minute bits and scattered the fragments of our correspondence like a snow-storm on the stage.

Seated in my *fauveuil* reconsidering all these indications on the part of the lady, I felt some annoyance in regard to the fate of my play. A whim on the part of Miss Aubrey might damn my hopes. As the rehearsal went on, however, I was pleased to notice that the lady warmed up with the part. At the conclusion of one of the acts, a short soliloquy falling to her share, she was so happy that a salvo of applause greeted her from her comrades on the stage.

"Can't you, my dear boy, just bring those palms of yours together in the feeblest way?" asked Mr. Launcelot, who was now again by my side. "A kind word accomplishes miracles. Get down from your high horse—Capital, Miss Aubrey! Capital! a brilliant effect. Mr. Carter is delighted! It will be a big thing—a monstrous big thing! We must fetch it this time! Propitiate, dear boy!"

Miss Aubrey smiled for a moment—playing with the rich trimming of her dress—then, as she came forward, said, not unpleasantly:

"A *claque* of two, or rather of one, can't be called very effective. However, I trust to carry it through. Now, what next?" and she glanced at the manuscript copy in her hand, and said to the prompter: "Now, Mr. Jones, I fancy I am fairly up to the close of the act—quite letter-perfect. Only there is one bit of business here that isn't quite clear. Well, here goes. Ah! one moment.—Miss Mortimer, when you come on, don't now, please, don't burst in on me. I can't stand that kind of thing.—If not a liberty—"