

IV.

Paul Hudson has a card which he keeps with care, and which he is not ashamed, strong man though he is, to cry over some times. It is his business card, with his age—many years younger than he is now—written on it in pencil. And on the back:

"You saved me from a suicide's grave in August. I save you from a worse fate to night. We are quits."

"RICHARD ROBINSON."

LIKE A MAN.

There is something sublime in a Niagara of trouble that roars and crashes through the world with a heroic fuss that one can brag about—but this constant drizzle of petty annoyances, drip, drip, drip!

To begin with, I am a long young person, with big bones, and plenty of them—and I don't care a button if my hair is red!

I have good reason to know that I am not considered beautiful; that my nose, for instance—but there's really no need for such distressing details.

My father, Peter Brown—the best farmer living in all Fairfax, be the deal one who he may—is the unfortunate possessor of thirteen children, every single one of them girls—and the married ones, too, for that matter!

Of course, girls are all very well as far as they go, but one gets too much of a good thing sometimes, and so when poor pa takes a notion to upbraid Fate because all his boys turned out girls, I must say I rebel against the decree that condemns me to slavish frocks and frizzes.

Most good folks sing out that they want to carry harps and be angels, but—if only I were Peter Brown, junior, and had a farm like pa!

I don't blame ma, of course, but I really do think the even dozen ought to have contented her—and, what's more, I say so, when pa and I get beyond the subduing influence of her eye—for there's nothing trifling about Ma's eye!

When pa and Ma's love was young, and their future a rose-colored rose—there! I've heard pa say it a dozen times, but when a girl happens to be shackled with a memory like a boy's pocket upside down, and the middle nowhere, and gets that memory from her ma, I suppose there's to be allowances—anyhow, the first girls got the benefit of it all in the way of mugs, and corals, and names as fine as fiddles; then there came such a disastrous lull in pa's enthusiasm that ma says, when he panted up from the fields one hot noon and found our dear old twins waiting, instead of his dinner, it set him so frantic that he threatened to bunch the whole family together like a string of fish and do a dark and desperate deed.

But ma just kept on having her own way—which meant girls—until by the time she wound up the home circle with me—at your service—she had so worn her intellect down at the heels thinking up double-barreled names for the other dozen, that she handed my christening over to pa, and pa everlastingly disgraced himself, in my estimation, by heartlessly calling me Sis—absolutely nothing but Sis!

If I had been a boy this indignity, at least—but there are some wrongs so great that the only thing one can conveniently do is to forgive them.

But, though pa has been cheated of his bishops and senators and things (poor dear, he never dreams that sons of his might have turned out farmers like himself, only not half so good), the girls have certainly made up his loss in husbands. Indeed, pa seems to have more sons-in-law than he quite knows what to do with—and as to grandsons!

"If one could only feed them like chickens!" sighs poor ma, plaintively.

"If one could only kill them like chickens, you mean," I retort, vindictively.

After that little business talk pa and I had behind the barn, I've settled in my mind that the Browns have got to economize—and I mean to start with the grandchildren, by way of a noble beginning.

"Now, look here, ma," I say to the dear old soul who is already staring at me with big, anxious eyes, like a hen with her feathers ruffled, "this thing had gone on long enough, and I just mean to hitch old Calico to the cart and dump every scrap of grandchild at his own lawful door—I do! It's downright mean in the girls to impose on us in this everlasting way—as if there wasn't work enough of our own—"

"There, there, sis," interrupts ma, pathetically, "they only mean to please pa—"

"And a nice way they take to do it! Pa's an old man now, and after pinching and slaving all his life for an army of girls, what right have they to keep him pinching and slaving to the last? Oh, you needn't look at me like that, ma, dear; children, like good manners, ought to be found at home—hi, you Tom, Dick, Harry, etc., etc.," and when at last I have packed them in the wheezy old cart, and we go laughing, scratching, and squalling down the road, I feel like the piper of Hamelin, only there's no hill with wide, greedy jaws waiting at the end of the trip—more's the pity!

That sounds as if Sis Brown were not fond of children; but I really am, when they come like silk frocks and other occasional luxuries—considered as every-day affairs, however, if I am to be allowed a preference between the two—why, give me the locusts of Egypt, and accept my grateful thanks.

When I have impartially divided their howling household gods between the eight sisters who live so uncomfortably near, the sun is sinking behind the trees in a blaze of glorious yellow. There is a long road with many leafy turnings, that Calico knows as well as I, and while she dawdles along it with a languid elegance that suits us both, I sit, tailor-fashion, in the bottom of the cart, thinking, thinking, heedless of whip or rein.

I read a story once of a devil-fish crawling over the roof of a pretty cottage by some southern sea. I don't suppose there was a word of truth in it; but, some way, ever since pa made a clean breast of his troubles, I can't get that shiny black monster out of my thoughts night or day. I should say, indeed, that a mortgage like ours was a trifle the worst of the two, because there's only one weapon to fight it, and where in the world is pa to get the first red cent of that terrible three thousand dollars?

Echo answers—where?

If pa had only told me in time, perhaps I might have done something heroic with my poultry—a flock of gray geese did grand things for history once on a time—but no, he kept as dumb as Cheops, until I found it all out for myself, and no thanks to anybody.

The way of it was: ma started me down to the meadow one evening last week to see what pa meant by keeping supper waiting, and when I found him leaning against the barn there as quiet and gray as the twilight shadows, why, I think the One who doeth all things well, must have put it in my heart to wake him up and tell me the matter.

There is no woman in all this big, glorious world so weak as Samson with his head shaved, and so he told me between sobs—I don't ever want to see my father cry again—how the big family had gobbled up the small earnings, how at last there was nothing to do but borrow money on the dear, shabby old place, and now a villainous bill of some sort was coming due.

"Never mind, dad," I said, "come along to supper; I'll get you out of your fix."

I don't think pa realized at the minute—and I'm sure I did not—that I had never seen so much as a hundred dollars in all my life together, for he followed me home contentedly, put his head under the spout while I pumped, and then, with his hand on my shoulder, went into the house and ate supper enough for two!

The next day pa was out of his head with a fever, and now to see him prodding about the farm with a stick in his hand and a pain in his back—poor, dear pa! Of course, the first thing that suggested itself at his bedside was blood, and plenty of it—and I did saddle Calico and race off to murder the mortgage man—but I might have saved myself the trouble, for the vile creature wasn't at home; then I turned the old mare's head towards the family sons-in-law, but there wasn't a husband among them who had the cash to spare—they don't seem to spare anything quite so conveniently as children! I even decided to—

"Say young woman!"

I am not a coward, but the creature who has brought the cart and my thoughts to such a sudden halt looks so like some great famished wolf, standing there at Calico's head, that I shiver from head to foot, and he sees it.

"You needn't be afraid," he gasps, in a rasping sort of whisper. "I haven't the strength to harm you if my will was good for murder—look at this!"

His eyes turn towards his breast—his right arm lies stiffly across it clotted with something that must be blood, and the fingers look like the flesh of a dead man.

I think he understands that I am sorry him, for before my heart can jump back to its right place again, he drops the reins and touches his mangy cap.

"I've been skulkin' in these ere woods, miss, nigh onto a week, and what with starvin' and the pain o' this, I'm most about dead played out."

"If you will cut across the fields to that house over there," I say, kindly, I am sure—for God knows, I pity him from the bottom of my heart—"I will see that you get a good supper."

"I couldn't crawl there, much less walk, and my time for supper is over for this world, I reckon."

I am so sorry for the poor, misery-ridden creature standing there in the summer twilight, with the fragrant woods all around him, and the birds chirping sleepily in the trees—so very sorry, and I tell him so.

He totters as I say it, and I am just making up my mind that Calico and I have a disagreeable job before us, when he lays one miserable hand on the wheel, and drawing his face near enough for me to see the ghastly seams that want has seared there, cries imploringly:

"There's them that's hunting me to my death; for God's sake, won't you help me?"

All my life I have wanted to be a man, and now the time has come to act like one. I am rubbing Calico down in her stall—pa and I being the only men—I mean pa being the only man about the place, we do this sort of thing ourselves—when the dear old fellow hobbles down the pathway and puts his head in the door.

"Sis," he begins, with wide, excited eyes, "did you meet a big fellow down the road—a dark chap with lots of humps and black, frizzed whiskers?"

I had not and I said so.

"Well, he came by here hunting up some scamp who robbed a bank in Richmond and got down to these parts with the money in his pocket and a bullet in his flesh. I started him

down the main road. I wonder you didn't see him."

"I drove around by the mill," I answer, quietly enough, considering I feel like a tornado; "but he won't catch his scamp to-night, dad."

"Think not? Why?"

"Because I've got him snug in the barn!"

"Goodness, gracious! then I'll just—"

Pa is making his way to warn justice as fast as his weak legs will let him, when I steady him against the stable-door and take away his cane.

"Dad," I cry, savagely, "I adore you, but if you take another step to harm that man, why—you've only got a dozen daughters to go through the rest of your life!"

"You!" gasps pa—and I wonder the wispy of straw he has been chewing does not strangle him black on the spot—"a child of mine help a thief—"

"Exactly! and she means to make you an accessory after the act. Now, see here, pa, I don't set up to be a cherub, but when a fellow-creature, starved and bleeding, asks me to help him in the name of God, why I mean to help him if I break every law in Virginia to atoms—so there!"

Pa looked stunned a bit—as I knew he would—wavers a bit, and then laying one big brown paw on my head, as I likewise expected, knowing pa's ways as I do, cries stoutly:

"Spoken like a man, Sis; and now let's have a look at your villain."

When we stand at last before the poor fellow, he looks so pitifully helpless stretched out there on the friendly straw, that pa's loving heart gets the best of his law-abiding principles, and he bathes the hurt arm as tenderly as if it had never been raised in crime.

When pa first notices the jug of water I have brought from the spring and the carriage-robe rolled up for a pillow with the rough side in, he looks at me wonderingly for a second, and then ejaculates with some contented happiness:

"Thank God, Sis, you are only a woman after all!"

I suppose pa means well, but it does not sound encouraging considering I've been trying to do my duty like a man. Even fathers are human!

"It's no use," moans the poor creature, when pa has done his best with the wound. "I'm a goin' fast, boss, but she said they should not touch me—"

"Don't worry, my lad," cries pa, cheerily. "Right or wrong, here you'll stay until—"

"It won't be long—I feel it comin' fast—and hard—I would have died out there on the black roadside except for her, God bless her! If you—don't mind"—and here he looks at me so like some gaunt, faithful dog, that I lean over him by pa to catch his dying words—"if you don't mind—will you take this bag from—around my neck? It chokes me—it chokes—"

"There, there," says pa, tenderly; "and now, my lad, before you go to—sleep, tell me, does this money belong to the bank?"

"Yes, yes," cries the dying man, with an imploring glance at pa while he tries to touch my hand with his own poor, feeble fingers; "take it back, boss, and tell them—tell them—that the reward—belongs to—her—"

Yes, that is the true and simple story of my fortune, no matter what the papers said. For a long time pa would not let me touch a penny of that five thousand dollars, but when the people at the bank insisted that business was business, I had earned the money and there it was, why—

FOOT NOTES.

Fob chains, with a bunch of old-fashioned seals attached, are much worn in London, both with morning and evening dress. It is whispered that even the pawnshops have been ransacked for specimens of the quaint gold-mounted lozenge-shaped seals whereon our great-grandfathers were wont to have their coats of arms engraved.

A NEW dance has just been introduced in London called "Le National." It consists of a quadrille danced by eight persons to slow waltz music combined with the graceful movements of the minuet. It lasts about eighteen minutes, and is danced without the slightest fatigue being felt at its termination. The music is spirited and very suitable. Any one who can valse well can learn it in four or six lessons.

ENGLAND is considerably exercised over the attention now being given in France to shipbuilding. A writer in one of the English journals says: "Our maritime supremacy is seriously threatened; and if we are not willing to degenerate as a naval power, our constructive programmes must become more imposing than they are at present, or we may some day experience the costly disadvantages of shipbuilding under the existing influences of a panic."

A NEW fashion has sprung up in England—that of boys, dressed as pages, taking a somewhat conspicuous part in a marriage ceremonial. They carry the bride's train, or add to the effect of a picturesque group of bridesmaids; but, whether train-bearers or attendants, they certainly are pleasing additions to a wedding party. They may be dressed in different styles; but velvet, satin and lace are the proper materials, and their silk stockings should match the dominant color of their dress.

SEVERAL interesting discoveries are announced from Athens. The excavations at

Eleusis, now being carried on by the Archaeological Society, have laid bare the whole of the floor of the great temple, and that part of it which was the scene of the mysteries has been recognized at the back of the temple, where the foundations of a kind of spiral labyrinth have been traced. At Athens two very curious archaic statues have been found at the foot of the Acropolis, and with them an arm of Parian marble, said to be a chef d'œuvre of sculpture.

How beautiful is youth—early manhood—how wonderfully fair! What freshness of life, cleanness of blood, purity of breath! What hopes! There is nothing too much for the young maid or man to put into their dreams, and in their prayer to hope to put in their day. O young men and women! there is no picture of ideal excellence of manhood and womanhood that I ever draw that seems too high, too beautiful for young hearts. I love to look on these young faces, and see the firstlings of a young man's beard, and the maiden bloom blushing over the girl's fair cheek. I love to see the pure eyes beaming with joy and goodness, to see the unconscious joy of such young souls, impatient of restraint and longing for the heaven which we fashion here.—Theodore Parker.

A GREAT deal has been said about the bad delivery of the speech of Mr. Childers on the Budget. The fact is it was fairly well spoken and thoroughly understood. Mr. Childers is an amiable man. He is in fact quite too utterly polite. So far as appearances go, one could well fancy him as a parish priest with "high" leanings, or a colonel of artillery, or even as a butcher in the Borough road. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has an adaptable manner. When it was his duty to answer ticklish questions about Army expenditure Mr. Childers generally managed to render himself "inaudible to the gallery," which was decidedly clever on his part, inasmuch as it became quite impossible to pin him down to any particular statement in black and white. When Mr. Childers wants to be understood he speaks up like a man, and does not fidget about like a marionette. The consequence was that the Budget speech was heard fairly well.

IT'S AN ILL-WIND THAT BLOWS NO GOOD.—"How is your wife this morning?" asked the pastor of Mr. Johnson.

"She died last night."

"Ah, that's a grievous affliction."

"Yes, I know it."

"But, Brother Johnson, it's an ill wind blows no good, and it's all for the best."

"I think so myself, sir, and I try to bear up under it."

"That's right. I'm glad to hear you say so."

"Yes, yes; I've just figured up that the funeral will cost \$93.75, and the amount she had calculated on for spring clothes was a hundred and one dollars and a half. It is true that \$2.75 is not much on such an occasion as this, but I try to be calm and not let my feelings overcome me."

PARIS has a new bit of slang. Like its predecessor, "chic," the new-comer is of German origin, and is spelled "pschutt." It means everything, and especially whatever goes swimmingly with a good deal of money. It is a mirror of fashion. It's very "pschutt" to have one's coat-of-arms emblazoned or embroidered on the back of white Swedish gloves. The dandy who is "pschutt" now wears square-toed shoes, very much cut down at the instep, and thin, black silk stockings. His street paletot is short in the waist and long in the skirts; angles are rounded off the collar. His trousers are tight and short, with large pocket-flaps, and his hands are ungloved, but très soignées and glittering with rings. It is "pschutt" to wear in the evening a white waistcoat, buttoned with a jewel that accords with the field of one's coat-of-arms. The word "pschutt" breaks out like a zymotic eruption in the vanity fair columns of the Boulevard gazettes. Tailors, jewellers, milliners, and tradespeople who live upon the vanity of the wealthy have got it on the tips of their tongues.

THE term rastouquier in the new slang dictionary of the Paris boulevards is applied to those rich foreigners who are a god-send to the played-out nobility of France. The rastouquier or rastouquière is invariably exotic, and dashes about money with ostentation. He or she is not of necessity a parvenu. He or she may have a long line of ancestors. What distinguishes one and the other is determination to be an evidence, and to shine by means of wealth alone. If Cæsar from Brazil walks the hospitals because he is devoured by a love of science or some other noble fashion, he ceases to be a rastouquier. If young Wall street trudges over Europe to study its flora, he becomes an étranger. But Georges Flammi does not rise to that level when he sends, to puff his journal, a correspondent on an expedition into an unexplored territory. He may have promoted geographical science, but he remains, because he was heroic by deputy, a rastouquier. The Russian young ladies who attend the lectures at the Sorbonne and College of France are, notwithstanding residence in cheap lodging-houses, étrangères. The pretty English peeress, who rushes from one public place to another, is a rastouquière rastouquière.

IF NEARLY DEAD after taking some highly pulled up stuff with long testimonials turn to Hop Bitters, and have no fear of any Kidney or Urinary Troubles, Bright's Disease, Diabetes or Liver Complaint. These diseases cannot resist the curative power of Hop Bitters; be-ides it is the best family medicine on earth.