

His Wife Raised the Coin

By Mrs. Ella Higginson.

Mr. Sparks was moody after dinner that night. Another article had come back declined with the thanks of the editor of the All-Round Writers' Weekly. "I'll tell you what it is, Eliza," said Mr. Sparks, "I've got to buy a camera and learn photography. There's no other way out of it. You can't tell stories nowadays unless there are pictures with them. The ordinary magazine editor would turn down Shakespeare's Hamlet if Shakespeare were writing to-day and submitted a manuscript without a photograph of Hamlet with his feet just clearing the grave. There's Boggs now. He takes fine photographs and he sells every article he writes, though his English is pretty tough."

"Well, Henry," said his wife, "get your outfit and I'll learn to take the pictures and you can do the writing."

Mr. Sparks shrugged his shoulders and just escaped sneering. "There never was a woman who could take a decent photograph," he said. "You tend to the knitting and do the darning of Frances' stockings, and I'll take the pictures and write the stuff too. There's no use of wasting plates and smashing lenses just to let you experiment."

The next day Henry Sparks bought his camera. He was told that the Cloudy Day Company's camera was the best for an amateur. Henry didn't know until he got into the store that the Cloudy Day camera cost \$50, and this without tripod, plate holders and the black cloth that looks like part of the fittings of an undertaker's shop. Henry bought and nearly went bankrupt. The man told him how to work the thing, talked wisely and glibly about focusing, snap shots, time exposures, lights and shadows and a lot of other things that Henry Sparks understood about as clearly as he did the second aorist of the Greek verb. He nodded his head, however, and went home with a face full of confidence. The next day Mr. Sparks started out after breakfast. He was going to write an article on the beauties of the country homes at Highland Park. He spent the entire day in the place and promised every householder a copy of the picture which he was taking of the householder's home.

Henry went back to Chicago and told his wife that he had contented himself with nothing but snapshots because the sun was bright and the taking of a snapshot was an easy matter for an amateur. Then the "poisons" were mixed up and Henry prepared to develop his plates. The man at the store had told him that the chief joy of an amateur photographer's life was the witnessing of the gradual appearance on the plate of a picture which was to bring so much joy to his heart. He washed the said back and forth over the plate for forty minutes. The temperature of the dark room was 120 and the odor of kerosene from the sputtering lamp assailed the toiler's nostrils. Henry had lifted the plate thirty times by actual count and had looked through it at the red flame. Where now were the highlights and the shadows of which the salesman had told him? Where was the outline of that little ravine nook just below the bay window of the palatial summer home of the Hon. Ezekiah Jepson of Highland Park? Alack and alas, the only high light in the room was that of the lamp, which had suddenly blazed up and threatened explosion, and the only shadow in the room was that which hung heavy over Henry's heart.

He covered the tray and invited Mrs. Sparks in. She looked at the plate and said simply: "There is nothing on it. It has never been exposed." Then they passed out into the light.

Mrs. Sparks brought the camera. "Henry," she said, as she pointed to a little contrivance at the right of the lens, "did you set the shutter each time?"

"I did what the fellow in the store told me to do. I pulled the slide out over the plate and squeezed the bulb. That's what I did. The camera's no account. That's what's the matter."

"Henry," said Mrs. Sparks, "as you did not set the shutter all your plates are as void of impressions as are the minds of some people."

"Well, as you know everything, show me how to do it and I'll try it again."

Mrs. Sparks showed him. The next day Henry went again to Highland Park. This time he set the shutter. He developed the plates. Then they were printed. The bay window of the Hon. Ezekiah Jepson showed up in the picture much bigger than the house itself. The veranda had a slant to it that looked as if the Hon. Ezekiah did not have enough funds to keep his country home in repair. There was a black hole in the side of the chimney and the Hon. Ezekiah

himself, who stood upon the piazza, looked as though he had been paying a visit of several hours' duration to his wine cellar before being called to pose for his portrait as the lord of the domain.

The other plates were of the same general lack of character. The pictures apparently were those of a lot of disjointed structures looking as if they had been erected by a force of imbricated carpenters and masons. Where shadows should have fallen there was glaring light, and where the bright sunlight should have made glad the view there was the blackness of Erebus.

Henry wanted to kick the camera, but he conquered the impulse. He made the trip to Highland Park twice more. There never was a lottery which held as many blanks as Henry drew in his photographic game of chance. One Friday morning he sat down to figure up. "Friday is a good day," he said, "to cast up these eussed accounts."

Under the head of loss he put down camera, tripod, plates, etc., \$65; four round trips to Highland Park, \$4.60; loss of four days' work, \$32; total, \$101.60.

Mrs. Sparks entered the room. "Eliza, when the junkman comes around sell him this outfit. Maybe he'll give you \$5 for it. It isn't worth it, but I'd just as soon 'do' a junkman."

"Henry," said Mrs. Sparks, "I'd like to try my hand at this thing. Don't let's sell the camera yet."

"Fudge," said Henry, "a woman can't do anything where a man fails. You'll buy and ruin a hundred plates and when the thing has cost us another hundred you'll be as ready as I am to chuck it out of the window."

Then Henry Sparks started down town to his little office to go back to the writing of photographic articles. He was away all day. When he came back at night he took with him a copy of a new magazine called "The Beauties of Nature." It was a big affair, full of reproductions of magnificent photographs. Henry put the magazine down open before his wife. "Eliza," said he, "if a person could take pictures like that he'd be a photographer that people would take their hats off to and he could sell his articles, even if they were the veriest drivel. The publishers of this magazine pay big money for stuff, and I suppose that man Boggs will grab off a lot of it. Don't you lag that camera where I can see it again. It cost me over a hundred; the rent's due and I am broke."

Just one week later, when Mr. Sparks arrived home at dinner time, his wife said: "Henry, do you remember that article you wrote a year ago called 'Beauty Spots of the North Shore?'"

"Yes," said Mr. Sparks, with a look that showed that the subject was distasteful. "It was sent back with thanks that were not felt by seven different publishers. Don't talk about it; it makes me sick."

Mrs. Sparks took a letter from the mantelpiece, opened it and placed it before her husband. This is what she read:

"Editorial Room, the Beauties of Nature, New York City. Mrs. Eliza Sparks, Dear Madam:—The article entitled 'Beauty Spots of the North Shore' has been received with the photographic illustrations. We place a high standard for our judgment of photographs, as you may know by looking at our magazine. Allow us to say that the pictures which you have submitted are of unusual excellence. We shall use them shortly. Enclosed you will find a check for \$150, which we hope will prove acceptable."

"We ask permission to alter the article which was submitted in several respects. We trust that the writer, Mr. Henry Sparks, will not feel offended at the liberties which we wish to take with his manuscript. Yours sincerely,

John Thoreau,
Editor, the Beauties of Nature."

"Henry," said Mrs. Sparks, "I remember your article and I took those pictures the day you told me to sell the camera, and when you said also there was no use for a woman to try to do something that a man couldn't do. This check will pay for the camera, the et ceteras and the rent."

What did Henry Sparks say? Was ever a man magnanimous in a matter like this? A married man never.

"Well," he said, "we needed the coin."—Edward B. Clark in Chicago Record-Herald.

FOR SALE.—A snap—Road house, 20 steady boarders. Apply LAWICK'S GROCERY, near Klondike foot bridge. crt.

Clothing cleaned, pressed, repaired and made to fit.—R. I. GOLDBERG, at Hershberg's.

Ice cream soda—at Gandolfo's, 1744

Joaquin Miller wrote: "In men whom men condemn as ill, I find so much of goodness still; In men whom men pronounce divine, I find so much of sin and blot, I hesitate to draw a line Between the two—where God has not."

"And this applies to books as well as to men. So, having read the amazing 'Story of Mary MacLane,' by Herself, I am not going to ignore the good in it simply because there is so much in it that is bad, or coarse, or both. It is a book that every one is curious about just now. Whether one will read it through or not depends, perhaps, upon where one begins. The first dozen pages, for instance, will bore the average person more than the mining town of Butte, Montana, bores Mary MacLane—which is putting it strongly—and most people, having read those pages and no more, will throw the book aside. But I chanced to open it at the little character-sketch of the immoral, swearing old woman of Dublin Gulch, and a girl of nineteen, of Butte, Montana, and of no "advantages," who can do a bit of descriptive work like that is not to be called a fool. I freely grant that the book is coarse and sensational and objectionable in many—yes, in most—ways; but I find some good and much promise in it.

In all the notices I have seen of the book, only the worst has been mentioned; therefore, I shall quote the sketch of the "peddler-woman," which is better than the one of the Dublin Gulch old woman.

"One day last summer an Italian peddler-woman stopped at the back-door and rested. She had a telescope valise filled with garters, and hairpins, and soap, and combs, and pencils, and china buttons on blue cards, and bean shooters, and tacks, and dream books, and mouth organs, and green glass beads and jewsharps. I had always wanted to talk to a peddler-woman, and my mother never would allow one in the house.

"Is it nice to be a peddler?" I asked her.

"It ain't bad," replied the peddler-woman.

"Do you make a great deal of money?" I next inquired.

"Sometime I do, and sometime I don't," said the woman. She spoke with an accent that, while it sounded Italian, still showed unmistakably that she had lived in Butte.

"Well, do you make just enough to live on or have you saved some money?" I asked.

"I got four hundred dollar in the bank," she replied. "I been peddlin' eight year."

"Eight years of tramping around in all kinds of weather," I said. "Your philosophy must be peripatetic, too. Haven't you ever had rheumatism in your knees?"

"I got rheumatism in every joint in my body," said the woman. "I have to lay off sometime."

"Have you a husband?" I wished to know.

"I had a man—oh, yes," said the peddler-woman.

"And where is he?"

"Back home—in Italy."

"Why doesn't he come out here and work for you?" I asked.

"Yes, why don't he?" said the woman. "Dat-a man, he's dem lucky."

When he can get enough to eat—he is."

"Why don't you send him some money to pay his way out, since you've saved so much?" I inquired.

"Holy God!" said the peddler-woman. "I work hard for dat-a money. I save every cent. I ain't got no now to 'row it away—I ain't. Dat-a man he's all right where he is—he is."

"What did you marry him for?" I asked.

"I marry him w'en I was young girl. And he was young, too."

"Yes, but what did you do it for? Was he awfully nice, and did he say awfully sweet things to you?"

"He was dem sweet—oh, yes," said the peddler-woman. She grinned. "And I was young."

"And don't you like your man now?" I asked.

"Dat-a man, he's all right in Italy—he is," replied the woman.

"The peddler-woman picked up the telescope valise.

"Yes," she remarked, "a man, he's sweet two days, three days, then—holy God! he never work, he git-a drunk, he make-a rough house, he raise hell."

That little sketch—I have not quoted all of it—it is finely and strongly done. The beauty of it is that no one can doubt that the conversation really occurred and that a girl of nineteen could recognize the bitter humor of the woman's philosophy is remarkable. "Dat-a man, he's all right, in Italy—he is." The old woman's life-story lies under those briefly-spoken words.

When Mary MacLane deals with herself, her feelings and desires and emotions, the devil to whom she prays and whom she entreats to come to her, nothingness and sensations and her "young woman's body," and all the other absurdities of the book, why, then, she bores her readers as one would not expect a young woman who is so easily bored to do. But if she will learn that there are such things in writing as good taste, repression and elimination of self—in brief, if she will forget all about Mary MacLane and create some more characters like the old woman of Dublin Gulch and the old Italian peddler-woman, she can give us some stories as daring and strong and original—as out of the ordinary—as "The Luck of Roaring Camp." The field is hers.

As for her "litanies"—really, life is hardly worth living until one has read that. It equals crossed live wires in the number of shocks it gives the reader in rapid succession. There is one thing in it that requires an explanation; she asks to be delivered from "the soft, persistent, maddening glances of 'water-cart drivers.'" But, perhaps, one must live in Butte, Montana, and be "of woman-kind and nineteen years" to understand that.

I consider the description of Butte, Montana, worth the price of the book and it is with a regret that amounts to compassion that each careful reader will turn from the fine things in the book to the silly, morbid and almost insane ranting about the girl's self. Mary MacLane has yet to learn that any woman who can write at all might write like Ouida, Laura Jean Libbey, Marie Perle, or even like Mary MacLane—if she would! But not for all the mines of Butte, Montana, would any woman write that way if she desires fame instead of a vulgar notoriety. But for all this, I and myself at-

tached to Mary MacLane, I find her far more to my taste and my respect and my liking than the young woman of the same age, of irreproachable manners and habits and speech, who made me a visit the other day and in the purport of English talked another girl's good name away. Of the two I certainly prefer the girl who talks or writes her own good name away. And of the other kind I know an many!—Ella Higginson.

Endowment Increased.
Philadelphia, June 18.—During the 146 annual commencement exercises of the University of Pennsylvania today, President Harrison announced that Joseph Wharton, founder of the Wharton School of Finance and Economy at the University, had increased his endowment of the school from \$100,000 to \$300,000.

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