AUNT ES.

I knew her at Amsterdam, in the family of one of my friends. Everybody in the house called her "Aunt Es." Her real name, I believe, was Estelle, or Esther. She was about sixty; but her hair, entirely white, alone indicated her age. She had fine skin, without wrinkles; an expression full of life; superb teeth, that a mouth most of the time smiling showed coquettishly. She had been very pretty, she was so still, and this resolute beauty showed an activity truly wonderful.

The expressive eyes, the speaking features, the hurried gesture, the rapid walk, all indicated with this charming woman of threescore, sprightly and affable, a character full of energy and absorbed in business.

It was that Aunt Es had been "in trade." I should say she was there still. They prophesied in her family that this indefatigable worker would never rest.

II.

For Aunt Es. was not a millionaire.

Although handsome, and well-established in her business, she had always lived in poverty independent but absolute poverty. She had never asked aught of any one. In order to make her partake of the family repast one time out of fifty, it was necessary to use the most pressing solicitation. She came, dressed in a robe of gray woolen, always the same, summer and winter, with close sleeves to the wrist, a long pointed waist, and little tabs at the bottom of the skirt. Generally she carried some sweet-meats to the children, appeared very well and gay, and when questioned upon her affairs, replied that all was well.

They were not, however of collossal importance, these business matters of Aunt Es.

The poor old lady dwelt in a cellar, one of those frightful cellars of Amsterdam—damp, unhealthy, a fever nest—where one is astonished to find nice shops, fruit stalls, dairies, shoemakers, coopers, fishmongers and even taverns. It was necessary to descend twenty steps in order to reach her stationery warehouse, grand as the cell of an anchorite. One saw there a small, very small table, which took the place of a desk; three or four boxes held ramettes of paper of differtnt forms; an old glove-box, in which steel pens, goose quills and bad pencils were thrown pell-mell; six jugs of ink and four rulers. This was all. The inventory was soon made. In her successful months Aunt Es made from twelve to fifteen florins.

At evening the shop was transferred into a dining-room, at night it became a bed chamber. She dined upon the desk and slept in a closet at the end of the cellar, a closet with double door, whose only shelf supported a mattress.

It was there, in that obscure underground room, that she had lived for more than forty years when I knew her. She lived there honestly, loyally, not in debt one sou, finding the way to accumulate and economize in order to amass a dot.

For aunt Es had a fiance.

It is necessary before proceeding to speak of the betrothal rules in Holland.

III.

When a young Hollander meets the maiden of his dreams and finds her agreeable the families consult and consent. The marriage decided upon, it is always agreed that the betrothal shall last a year or two. From this moment the prospective husband and wife live for each other. They can go, come, be out together without a relative, without the obligatory chaperone of the French. One sees the betrothed at the theatre, one meets them in the little journeys of the day, leaning affectionately upon each other, the future wife already under the protection of her husband. This early intimacy never shocks any one; never is this prologue to the marriage anything but a prologue.

One day when eighteen years old Aunt Es had presented to the family the man she had chosen, the one who solicited her hand.

A small merchant like herself.

Even smaller, for Aunt Es had a shop, a desk, some boxes containing ramettes of paper, an old glove box full of pens, while the man of her choice had no shop at all.

Or if had one it was so small that he could carry it under his arm. Karel was a cigar merchant; not one of those large dealers who obtain direct from Havana their enormous supplies. His ambulatory stock consisted of a small case, which before falling into his hands contained extra fine samples, from which he dispensed, not without a certain ostentatious pride, choice cigars at two centimes apiece.

He proposed devoting himself to the retail trade, never having more than a hundred cigars at a time, which he disposed of in about a fortnight.

This traffic brought him little more than his finance earned with her pencils, pens and note-paper.

Their union then presented rare points of equality.

It was a marriage of inclination since they loved.

It was a marriage "de convenance" looking at the equal position of the parties regarding fortune.

It was also a marriage of reason since they would not marry until they had accumulated a little money with which to go to housekeeping without too much inconvenience.

IV.

To this they adhered.

Aunt Es had formally declared that they would only marry when between them they had amassed the sum of a thousand florins. This was the least that would rent a larger shop, refurnish the supplies of tobacco and paper and provide for the family.

Thus from the day when she was betrothed to Karel, the neighbors were accustomed to hear Aunt Es singing in the cellar with as much animation and indifference as the nightingale on the summit of a poplar. Only Aunt Es, according to the unanimous opinion of that vicinity, was not serious enough. She changed.

They saw her excited with the sales and eager for gain. Nothing equalled her zeal, her ardor in work, unless it was the zeal and ardor of Karel.

But it was not an easy matter. The large dealers absorbed all, and their united efforts did not bring great results! He dealt in a somewhat costly cigar, and she sought to speculate in the famous Bath paper, newly imported from France; but this double commercial effort was disastrous, and shadowed at the same time the matrimonial hopes of the little subterranean stationer and the poor dealer in cigars.

"Let us not go too fast," they said then, frightened by their audacity; "do not let us embark in any adventures; we will keep to what we have, and ignore what we would have. Let us wait. In time we shall even go out of business."

V.

And they waited. They continued to live side by side, in that prudent and tender intimacy sanctioned by their betrothal, rich in love and hope.

Hope, because their hearts are full of it, and no illusions came to destroy it, and projects for the future, life-long projects of which they talked each evening (she seated behind the desk and he in front, regarding her with ecstasy). Sometimes it was of a commode of white wood, that they discovered in a shop of Kalverstraat, that they would buy to furnish their room when they were ready to go housekeeping. Again they discussed the manner of bringing up their household. One evening she had a new idea. Dost thou know? (they used thee and thou). Dost thou know what we should do? Thou wilt think it unreasonable, but my idea is fixed—we should both of us buy a lottery ticket.

Holland allowed lotteries, and received from them large revenues. The drawing took place in series, and was prolonged several weeks. The great prize of a hundred thousand florins was drawn the last day. The ticket that the fiance of Aunt Es bought, not being drawn the preceding days, indicated the supreme chance.

They wondered if their hopes were to be realized when approached the day of the great prize.

"If to-morrow thou shouldst see me come in a carriage," he said to Aunt Es, "thou wilt know ours was the fortunate number."

And the next day Aunt Es was at the door very early. How impatient! At the coming of each carriage she saw approach her heart beat violently. Happily they did not pass often upon the quays of Amsterdam. However, at a certain she turned her head, and felt herself grow pale. A fiacre was about to stop.

At the carriage door she perceived the head of Karel. In a few seconds all those projects of so many years passed through her mind. At last the happiness so much longed for—for had they not gained the prize?—since Karel had come in a carriage. She ran to the door of the fiacre, which was slowly opened. Karel's expression was troubled.

"What is the matter?" she asked trembling. "Have we not the prize?"

"No," he replied, "but I have just broken my limb."

VI.

She took care of him, gave up to him her closet and was content to sleep upon a chair. When he recovered he returned to his trade.

Thus the years passed with hopes deferred, yet never abating their earnest faith in a better future, they grew old side by side, not perceiving the wrinkles in their foreheads, that their hair was growing white, and that she was 64, that he was 70 and that their health even would be weakened.

Aunt Es was ill, and did not tell him. She was going in consumption, but exerted herself to make the best of it, and of their affairs, she suffered little in reality, never complained, and did not even care to consult a physician. One day she was weaker, and had retained her fiance, who had, however, a sale of twenty-five cigars to make. They talked a great deal. Those life-long hopes seemed more justified than ever. Indefatigable workers, the betrothed had finished by putting money aside. They lacked more than a mossty of the sum—a matter of some years.

While they chatted the night had come. A cool night in autumn. Aunt Es felt very well.

"I have an idea," she said; "we are old with all. If we might marry upon our present fortune?"

He thought the suggestion reasonable. What need to wait longer? Yes, yes; they would marry. She had taken his hand and pressed it warmly; then she had closed her eyes.

"It is agreed, then?" he said; "I will arrange all."

She did not reply.

He went away softly, believing her asleep.

She was dead.

VII.

When I returned to Amsterdam I saw, at my friend's house, a grand old man in deep mourning.

It was the fiance of Aunt Es.

The relatives of the wife have received him and surrounded him with affectionate care and touching consolation. He is one of the family.

Wrecked Manhood,

—Victims of youthful indiscretions suffering from nervous debility, lack of self-confidence, impaired memory, and kindred symptoms, should send three letter stamps for large illustrated treatise, giving means of certain cure, with numerous testimonials. Address World's Dispensary Medical Association, Buffalo, N.Y.

You had better lay in your summer's stock of eighty-ten guns now while the price is only £10,075. The quotations are likely to advance at any minute.

—All glands are secreting organs of which the Liver is the largest. Regulate the glandular secretions and open the clogged channels of circulation with Burdock Blood Bitters. 246

A West Newbury man has patented a new fire-kindler, but we doubt if it is any improvement on an obedient and self-sacrificing woman, who, with a quarter of an old newspaper and a couple of corn cobs, starts the matutinal flame.

—Mr. J. R. Allen, upholsterer, Toronto, sends us the following: "For six or seven years my wife suffered with Dyspepsia, Costiveness, Inward Piles and Kidney Complaint. We tried two physicians and any number of medicines without getting any relief, until we got a bottle of Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery. This was the first relief she got, and before one bottle was used the benefit she derived from it was beyond our expectation."

"What is the last important act that George Washington did?" asked a teacher of the juvenile history class. "I know," piped a freckled youngster, "he died."

—If your children are troubled with worms, give them Mother Graves' Worm Exterminator; safe, sure, and effectual. Give it a trial and be convinced.

Frightened contractor (to tramp): "For heaven's sake, don't lean against that building! It might tumble, and it isn't sold yet."

—The reputation of Ayer's Sarsaparilla as a blood medicine is maintained by cures made and daily making.

"What are you doing there?" asked the foreman of the printer's devil. "Why, I am distributing a handful of 'pi' I found on the galley," replied the imp. "Pi!" vociferated the foreman. "That's a new poem by Walt Whitman."

—The cheapest medicine in use is Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil because very little of it is required to effect a cure. For croup, diphtheria and diseases of the lungs and throat, whether used for bathing the chest or throat, for taking internally or inhaling, it is a matchless compound.

They had been married six weeks, and she said: "Now, don't oo stay out late, but come home soon to oor little wifey tifey!" They had been married six years and she said: "If you go out to-night, Smith, I'm going to lock up the house and go over and sleep at mother's.

—West Toronto Junction is within a few minutes walk of the Union station by the trains of either the Ontario and Quebec and the Grand Trunk or the Northern. Real estate in the neighborhood has steadily risen in value and promises to advance still more rapidly. Some of the best lots in West Toronto are to be had from Geo. Clarke, 295 Yonge street.

"Yaas," said young Smythe, "I suppose everything created has some use, but pon me honah, it is duced hard to believe sometimes, don't cher know?" "Yes," she replied, looking him over critically, "it is, indeed!"

—Leading medical authority indorse Ayer's Sarsaparilla as the best blood purifying medicine in existence.

An American claims that the north pole is the site of the old garden of Eden. Then Eve's preference for fig leaves over sealskin is explained; they cost more and had to be imported.

—Mrs. M. Stephens, of Albany, N. Y., writes as follows: My stomach was so weak that I could not eat anything sour or very sweet, even fruit at tea time would cause heartburn, fulness or oppression of the chest, short breath, restlessness during sleep, and frightful dreams of disagreeable sights, so that I would often dread to go to sleep. With the use of Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery the unpleasantness has all been removed, and I now can eat what suits my taste or fancy."

Mrs. R. Hill, of Lee county, has a chicken which has no feathers on it, being perfectly smooth nearly all over. It is evidently a spring chicken, grown bald from old age.

—W. J. Tucker, Manitowaning, says: "Burdock Blood Bitters is a boon to the afflicted, and gives great satisfaction to all who use it." It regulates the Liver, Kidneys, Bowels and Blood. 246

The baseball's wingless flight is fraught
Sometimes with direful doom
When it passes on the pitch'r's nose,
Before the eyes of whom
Ten million stars emit their fires
In agony of gloom.

—Mrs. George Simpson, Toronto, says: "I have suffered severely with corns, and was unable to get relief from treatment of any kind until I was recommended to try Holloway's Corn Cure. After applying it for a few days I was enabled to remove the corn, root and branch—no pain whatever, and no inconvenience in using it. I can heartily recommend it to all suffering from corns."

When Mr. Carpenter married Miss Barber last week, not a newspaper in the land said anything about the future race of shavers.

Catarrh—A New Treatment.

Perhaps the most extraordinary success that has been achieved in modern science has been attained by the Dixon treatment for catarrh. Out of 2000 patients treated during the past six months, fully ninety per cent. have been cured of this stubborn malady. This is none the less startling when it is remembered that not five per cent. of the patients presenting themselves to the regular practitioner are benefitted, while the patent medicines and other advertised cures never record a cure at all. Starting with the claim now generally believed by the most scientific men that the disease is due to the presence of living parasites in the tissues, Mr. Dixon at once adapted his cure to their extermination; this accomplished, the catarrh is practically cured, and the permanency is unquestioned, as cures effected by him four years ago are cures still. No one else has ever attempted to cure catarrh in this manner, and no other treatment has ever cured catarrh. The application of the remedy is simple and can be done at home, and the present season of the year is the most favorable for a speedy and permanent cure, the majority of cases being cured at one treatment. Sufferers should correspond with Messrs. A. H. Dixon & Son, 305 King street west, Toronto, Canada, and enclose stamp for their treatise on catarrh.—Montreal Star. 46

Ordinary astronomy teaches us the theory of spots on the sun, but Boston astronomy teaches the theory of specs on the daughter.

—The thin cannot gain in weight if they are troubled with dyspepsia, because the food is not converted into the due proportion of nourishing blood which alone can furnish the elements of flesh. But there is no reason, when this wearing, attenuating disease is conquered by Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, why there should not be an appreciable gain in weight, which indeed is usually the case. It is a peerless remedy also for constipation, liver complaint, kidney troubles, and roots out all impurities from the blood.

The fun of amateur theatricals is all on the side of those who take part in them. They are sad affairs for an audience.

To Dyspeptics.

The most common signs of Dyspepsia, or Indigestion, are an oppression at the stomach, nausea, flatulency, water-brash, heart-burn, vomiting, loss of appetite, and constipation. Dyspeptic patients suffer untold miseries, bodily and mental. They should stimulate the digestion, and secure regular daily action of the bowels, by the use of moderate doses of

Ayer's Pills.

After the bowels are regulated, one of these Pills, taken each day after dinner, is usually all that is required to complete the cure.

AYER'S PILLS are sugar-coated and purely vegetable—a pleasant, entirely safe, and reliable medicine for the cure of all disorders of the stomach and bowels. They are the best of all purgatives for family use.

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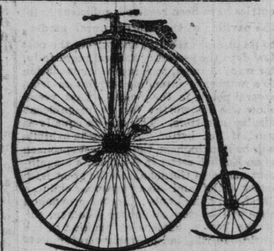

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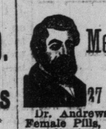

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