

charm him on to love me, and then, when he began the invariable eulogy, wither him with my scorn and sarcasm, what a glorious revenge it would be! she thought, as she stood by her dressing table, piling up the coronal of golden hair. I wonder if I will ever meet him in society, and if he will ask for an introduction.

She was the only daughter and heiress of Hugh de Estabrooke, Esq. His father was Banker Maxwell, of St. Louis; nothing could be more probable than that they would meet, and so she planned till a servant entered.

A gentleman in the drawing room, Miss de Estabrooke.

Blanche let her hair fall from its heavy pile as she asked.—
Who is the gentleman? didn't he send his card?

No, Miss de Estabrooke, he just said, all at home this eve? and walked past me as if he knew the way.

Who can it be?
She arranged her wondrous tresses with renewed vigor, gave a parting glance at the tall glass, and, wending her way down the wide staircase and along the stately hall, stood in the rose-flushed reception room, a tall, queenly girl, in black velvet and diamonds.

A gentleman, a tall, handsome fellow, arose at her entrance.

Miss de Estabrooke, I think?
Blanche bowed haughtily.

I am Mr. Maxwell, and, at the offset, apologize for my intrusion, or rather hasten to explain my stupid error. I started to call on my sister, Mrs. Secor, and mistook your house for hers. It is next door, I believe, and I am as yet so unused to your streets that I make a great many mistakes. This, however, crowns them all, still I hope you'll excuse me.

A very natural mistake for a stranger, and most excusable.

She bowed with grave courtesy as she spoke. Her voice was politely even, but I think he must have seen some animosity lurking in her eyes, for, with all due clarity, he bowed himself to the hall. Blanche was left alone in the reception-room, to think over her shade of an adventure, and quell the rising thoughts.

I wish I hadn't heard that about him, for I really like his looks. I wonder what his cynical lordship thinks of me. And she glanced at her reflection in the pier glass. A slight graceful form, slender, swan-like throat, glossy, golden hair, and such eyes! Deep, shining, azure blue naturally, in the shade gleaming gray, sparkling black in excitement. With such a face and such eyes, what could he think of her but that she was wonderously lovely? Perhaps, even yet, she thought, shamefacedly to herself, fate may bestow upon me the weapons of revenge.

Just then the door bell rang, and the servant brought in a note.

DEAR BLANCHE:—Elmer says you are alone this evening. If so, will you accept an informal invitation, and spend a few hours with us? Come in just as you are the minute you receive this, and oblige Yours, sincerely, ADA SECOR.

At first, 'Dear Blanche' was angry with Elmer for taking so much upon himself; but by-and-by she concluded to accept the invitation. So she went in, found pretty Mrs. Secor very much amused at her brother's adventure, and her brother ready to receive a formal introduction with a 'nonchalance' that, to say the least, annoyed her.

She had only made her debut the preceding season, and in that time had been more admired for her queenly grace, more revered for her stately hauteur than any belle that for years had appeared in the giddy vortex.

Surely Mr Maxwell could not have been aware of the fact, or he would not assume such an almost condescending air, would not listen with such polite indifference to her graceful platitudes, or lean over the piano with such an unmoved face as her melodious voice filled the room with the harmonious echoes of 'Adelaide,' or soared away in unpronounceable Italian arias. She changed her fancy then, swept the keys of Steinway's grand piano-forte, and broke into the plaintive melody of the 'Land o' the Leal.'

Thank you, Miss de Estabrooke. His face was radiant now. At the risk of disgracing my taste forever, I'll boldly assert that your last selection is my favorite style of music—perhaps owing to the same principal which is carried throughout our whole lives. We admire the grandeur, of the incomprehensible, but turn with relief to that which we know and love.

I don't think I quite understand you, Mr. Maxwell. It seems to me that music, even the abstract, is never incomprehensible. Your principal may apply to outside things, but I really think its bearing upon music is very indirect.

Do you? I'm sorry my theory meets with your disapprobation, but, not being musical myself, perhaps I did flounder a little.

Blanche, calmly triumphant, allowed her fingers to wander idly over the keys as she replied,—

Music always seems to be a little world by itself, removed from idle theory and metaphysics that disturb us here below. For they are disturbing. I like to take life as a beautiful reality and let metaphysics alone.

Most ladies do, he replied, laughing carelessly. They like to accept life as a beautiful reality, themselves being a part of it.

Ah! So he isn't content to vent his sarcasm among his club companions, Blanche thought, and, folding her jewelled hands, she turned from the piano and looked him in the face.

Accepting your verdict for the sake of argument, may I ask a question in return? How far superior are the lords of creation? They do not say that such is their acceptance of life, but they accept it. A woman of wealth, of position, may have vague longings, but the by-laws of society so-called, effectually bar their fulfillment, keep her down in her place, as its vocabulary says. Men, on the other hand, have no such difficulties. They are as free as the very air they breathe, and use their freedom by enjoying life to the very utmost; then in case of a 'blase' sensation, vent their sarcasm upon the weaker sex, point out their inefficiencies, their weaknesses, happily forgetful of the fact that, were we all weighed in the balance, they may be found wanting.

I doubt if, in the whole course of his petted life, Elmer Maxwell had ever so truly admired a woman as at that moment he did Blanche Estabrooke. He was arbitrary and slightly vain, but he had a strong, deep love for the beautiful either in nature or sentiment.

Forgive me, Miss de Estabrooke, he said, extending his hand, and henceforth number me as one of your converts. I agree with you heartily and unreservedly, and sincerely thank you for opening my eyes to an undeniable fact. We do forget that

"Life is real, life is earnest."

Blanche liked him so much. She was an enthusiastic girl on some points, and this frank candor was one of them. It was a relief to really talk after being saluted with platitudes so long. She liked him very much; but still her purpose was clear before her. No enthusiastic sayings, no mere emotion, should shake her from it.

They met very often after that. Nights after he might be seen leaning over her at the opera, or treading the mazy waltz to Strauss's divinest inspirations. Day after day he watched for her golden hair for a glimpse of the fair face on the fashionable promenade. He walked beside her, drove beside her, or, if the weather was unpleasant, wended his way to the brown stone front next to Mrs. Secor's home. There he hung enraptured over the piano in the little rose flushed room, or she, toying with pretty words, would lift her bewildering eyes, and ask Mr. Maxwell to read to her while she finished those slippers for papa. Sometimes she let him make his own selections from Owen Meredith, Longfellow, and Tennyson, and once he read the whole of "In Memoriam."

Mr. de Estabrooke liked him—liked better still his evident 'penchant' for fair, stately Blanche. But Blanche herself! Who could fathom Blanche? At last it came to an end.

Elmer came in one morning with a cloud upon his handsome face. Blanche looked up, and seeing something was coming, asked no questions, till he began—

I'm going home to-morrow. She had been prepared for this some time.

Inded? It must be a premature decision.

It is no decision of mine at all. My mother is ill, and, though not dangerously so, has sent a telegram for me. Otherwise, you know I would be content to linger here indefinitely.

You will not return very soon, I suppose?

No trembling, no emotion in her voice.

I will not, except on one condition.

The white and crimson wool over which she bent became more intensely interesting. He, with his strong hands pushed the mass away.

Do you want to know what that condition is?

She looked up fearlessly. No, for I know it already.

And you will be my wife, Blanche, won't you?

Her hour of triumph had come her espousal of her sex's wrongs; but her anticipation of pleasure was not quite realized, as she answered,—

No, decidedly no! When a gentleman selects his club for asserting that ladies in these days simply say yes for the pleasure of afterward refusing, and for his part, he would feel refreshed to get a decided no, I like the pleasure of refreshing him.

She had expected that her speech would have the effect of making him plead more earnestly; that he would humbly acknowledge his error; but, instead of that, he merely rose from his seat, and for a moment stood before her.

No more, Miss de Estabrooke, please. When a man asks a woman to become his wife, and offers her his undivided love, he can offer no higher proof of his esteem. No true woman would select such a time for arranging any fancied wrong, for in this case, the wrong is entirely fancied; and, more than this, Miss de Estabrooke, a true woman, such as I imagined you to be, would never stoop to enact such a revenge. You did it for my good, I presume. Well, in parting from you with open eyes, I can only pity any poor, blind successor, who may be the next victim of your philanthropical schemes.

Another moment, and he was gone. Blanche was left alone in the middle of the room, anguished in the tumult of her own miserable thoughts. Her revenge was so mean, so trivial—and she loved him! She loved him with her whole heart, soul and strength. She could not call him back; she could not throw herself upon his mercy. He despised her, mistrusted her, he went gladly from her presence. His wounded, deadened love would take the form of ambition. Men would rise and call him great, and she—ah! She could only—

Watch and love him better than he knew.

Elmer went away next morning, and Mrs. Secor accompanied him. Blanche watched them through the lace curtains of her own room, and felt her heart sinking, slowly sinking, as she saw the smile with which he assisted Ada into the carriage, the affected horror of his face as he placed Baby Secor beside her mother, then jumping in gaily, looking as carelessly at De Estabrooke Mansion as if he had never entered it.

Blanche turned slowly from the window,—

"Saying only, it might have been."

Society had claims upon her, after that, and she satisfied society, talked, laughed, danced and flirted, as if no shadow had ever ruffled her popularity. Even to herself, to her heart, she tried to say she did not care; but of course the result was a failure, her heart being the repository of all vague longings and regrets which beset her almost hourly.

An indefinite number of successors took the place of the departed Mr. Maxwell. Miss de Estabrooke smiled upon them all, and before the season was over had the hardest name of all the reigning divs. She did not care for that, however. She had said once, and believed always, that flirting was the lowest use a woman could make of the talents her God had given her; but theory and practice did not always go hand in hand, and now, outwardly at least, Miss de Estabrooke gloried in the list of the fallen.

Girls hated her. To a certain extent they always do hate a contemporary. Agtoun recognized the fact, and said,—

"A fairer face, a higher place, More worship, more applause, Will make a woman loath her friend, Without a deadlier cause."

Blanche recognized it in her own experience, and smiled at the recognition. To her the amusement was like some sparkling wine, enlivening at the time, lasting, depressing in its effects.

Mrs. Secor returned, and from time to time there floated upon Blanche news of Elmer Maxwell's rising fame. In the bar he was looked upon as authority, in politics, despite his youth, men respected him. The mystic ranks of literature he invaded, always meeting with success.

Ah, well! She was his inspiration. Even in her humiliation that was a comfort.

At last spring wore away, summer arrived and with it the Long Branch season. Miss de Estabrooke drew heavily upon her father's well-filled purse, saw that an elaborate wardrobe was prepared, and then, chaperoned by a widowed cousin, started for the campaign. Of course the gentlemen were delighted to see her. She was well established by this time, and stepped naturally into her place of pre-eminent belle.

Who is here? she asked the evening of her arrival, as she swept along the veranda leaning on Clire Gower's arm.

Couldn't begin to tell, he answered. But as your question doubtless refers to the gentlemen, I'll do my best. There are the usual set—Leigh, Warner, Dick Leslie, but Elmer Maxwell is the lion. There he is now, coming along with Miss Helen Markham. It is on-dit that they are engaged, for she was our belle before Miss de Estabrooke came.

She was too faint to thank him for the compliment—escape was all she wanted.

It feels damp, take me in, please, she said, quickly, and in mute dismay. Then she went to her room, and thought—thought over all her past conduct till she grew calm, and went down with fixed determination on her face. In the hall she met him, the lion of the day the man whom she had refused nine months before.

How do you do, Mr. Maxwell? she said, advanced with outstretched hands and a grave smile of welcome.

Miss de Estabrooke! this is an unexpected pleasure. Cool, but friendly;

nothing remarkable in his manner. Have you been here long, Miss de Estabrooke?

No; I only came this morning. You have arrived at the acme of gayety, they say. Are you going to the ball-room?

No. I am looking for my cousin. Will you take my arm? Perhaps I can assist you in your search.

Ten minutes after, they were strolling along the veranda, and Blanche was saying,—

I have heard of your success, Mr. Maxwell. Will you allow me to congratulate you?

Thank you, but to me congratulations seem like a mockery till some pinnacle of fame has been reached. And I, as yet, am only on the road.

Yes; but when you are once fairly started on the road, the ascent is easy. May I go further, and congratulate you upon a still happier event?

You refer to my reported marriage with Miss Markham? No, you may not congratulate; if it were true, which it is not, congratulations from your lips would be mere mockery.

He thought of her, then? In a moment the girl beside him was standing still; her face, revealed in the moonlight was passionately pleading, her eyes were mutely imploring, and the two beautiful white arms were clasped together on his arm.

I want to tell you, she said, and I want you to listen to me. It hurts my pride, but even that I can bear. You despise me, I know, and I deserve it, but oh! I have suffered for my folly. I wanted to be heroic; I thought it would be a lesson to you. I thought you would say something more, and I would relent. I never imagined you would leave me as you did.

He clasped her to him. My darling! Blanche! Did you love me then, and do you now?

Her happy face was his answer. They buried their mutual follies in the grave of the past, and began a new future, a happier, truer future than they had ever dreamed of.

WHEN a crowd of jay hawkers started a disturbance in a Texas church, the preacher raised a shot gun from behind the pulpit and said, William Delloon, sit down, or I'll make it painful for you. William sat down and paid strict attention to the sermon, and so did his comrades.

I DON'T complain, said a political orator, that my opponent speaks so often on the causes of the public distress—no, not at all; but I do complain that every time he speaks he has a new theory on the subject!

WHEN will the counsel for the defendant learn wisdom? exclaimed a lawyer named Fall, who was speaking for the plaintiff. Undoubtedly before Fall, if ever, retorted the counsel for the defendant.

A CITIZEN of Philadelphia, who went to live in an ice-house during the summer, and found it intolerably cold, hid upon the happy expedient of putting up a stove, and is now enjoying life serenely.

A STUDENT at a veterinary college being asked 'If a broken-winded horse were brought to you for treatment, what would you advise?' promptly replied, 'to sell him as soon as possible.'

A VERMONT paper says, that a young girl from the country called at a village bookstore the other day and asked for a deck of them new postal-keards.

A SIGN on a garden fence near Long Branch reads thus: Positively no more stearing allowed on the premises, No exceptions.

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The Wife.

What is a wife? A fellow's soul That shares our joys and troubles,— But halves our pleasures on the whole, And all our sorrow doubles.

What is a wife? Our reverse side, Grim shadow, twin existence; For let good luck or ill betide We still have one subsistence.

What is a wife? A plant that twines Young olives round our table; And bids us joy in our hard lines, And love them—if we're able.

A wife is—what? A doubtful prize; Much angel, but more tartar; Bliss which exalts us in such wise As martyrdom the martyr.

Our slaves while we her will obey; Our solace when contented; Our ruin when she has her way; Our torment when prevented;

Our friend when fickle fortune smiles; Our light when noon oppresses; Our hope when we have done with fears, Wet blanket in successes.

What is she? To sum up, a wife Is speaking with urbanity— The harsh, strong, bitter pill of life, And blister of humanity.

SELECT STORY.

No, Decidedly No!

HI! the women form a slippery element. In these days, it would be extremely refreshing to get a decided no, the fashion being to say yes, and, if convenient, to jilt a fellow afterward.

They thought he could never have been in love, or had been ignominiously jilted; but, of course, both conjectures were wrong. He had fancied himself in love very often, but as yet had never met with the fate which he foolishly asserted was so common. What he said it for, I'm sure he could not tell himself unless by the extravagance of the speech he hoped to gain a momentary supremacy among his fellows. People often do get tired of the beaten track of conversation, and risk saying an absurd thing for the sake of going off by themselves.

Elmer Maxwell was just sufficiently 'blase' to enjoy such notoriety; but, alas for poor Elmer! his joy was destined to be of short duration.

Young Wayman heard of the brief oration, and thought it worth remembering, and being in that delightful stage of puppyism where to stigmatize his superiors in the 'genus homo' was of itself a pleasure, he repeated it, with variations, to Blanche de Estabrooke. Of course he could not have found a more appreciative audience. Blanche was young and enthusiastic enough to undertake the thankless task of defending her species, so, in a state of lady-like wrath, she arched her superb brows over Mr. Maxwell's unqualified impertinence.

Really, our alluring sex ought to feel grateful to this 'Daniel come to judgement!' she scornfully said.

While thus encouraged Mr. Wayman added to the variations, till Elmer Maxwell and his ill-timed cynicism stood out in frightful enormity before Blanche de Estabrooke's eyes.

At periods throughout the following day she thought of it, and, when the unusual prospect of a quiet day promised itself, she recommenced her analysis.

If I were only a Circe, that could