

ground. Miss Prosser said it would leave out in March, but there was an appearance of "calm decay" about the stock, when closely inquired into, which made her assertion a triumph of faith. There were another ivy from Brantwood, a periwinkle from Addison's Walk at Magdalen College (despite the minatory board which calls down the vengeance of Presidents and Fellows on all pickers and stealers in that twice-hallowed path), a stalky geranium from Bemerton. There had been others—a parsley fern from Helvellyn, a baby oak from the Isle of Thanet (great-grandson possibly of that under which St. Augustine preached at Ethelbert), seathrift from

Sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days;

but the high, pure mountain air and depth of soil and wild sea-winds necessary to their growth were not to be had in Miss Prosser's hall bedroom. And though she put stones from the prolific back yard about the fern, and even went to Coney Island for salt-wet sand for the dainty thrift, both perished quickly, and the oak followed them within a twelvemonth.

The visitors who were stolid, or slightly mocking, or inattentive, never heard of these losses, nor all the histories of the survivors: how dear Miss Brown had ventured to ask for this, though of course not acquainted with the owners of the place; how kind little Emma Rogers had carried that in a basket all the way from London to Liverpool, for fear it should get wilted in the luggage-van.

Above all, to no one did Miss Prosser ever tell the secret of the Seidlitz-powder box which stood on a bracket below the Queen's portrait and the Union Jack.

Not until Margaret Hildyard came and unlocked the door of her old heart. They had got acquainted at church, where Miss Prosser always bowed "for religion" to the habitués who sat near her; and one day, when cable-cars were most rampant and carriages and trucks rather less in line and policemen less in evidence than usual at Twenty-third Street, Margaret found the little old lady making wild and abortive attempts to cross. Her own handsome face and imperious mien got her consideration from that "one of our finest" who had been lounging against a lamp-post observing Miss Prosser's plunges and retreats, and when he had piloted them over they walked on together, Miss Prosser's agitation and gratitude lasting her till they had encountered and safely passed the lesser perils of the dark Sixth Avenue crossing. They would have broken forth afresh had not Margaret by chance spoken of the London "refuges." This called forth such a flood of questions and exclamations that nothing remained but for Margaret to go all the way with her, answering, instructing, I fear perhaps bragging a little, as good travelers sometimes do. So much delight was given on one side, so much satisfaction received on the other, it was impossible the conversation should be continued. Miss Prosser begged the favor of a call; and the first rainy afternoon following, Margaret, in her Cording mackintosh, made her courtesy to the Queen and her bow to the Exiles, ay, and kissed one of them—the last shriveled brown leaf of the Stratford primrose.

"I always kiss the first primrose when I am in England in spring," she said. "I think we have no flower here quite so dear and dainty, do you?" And Miss Prosser, who had never seen a primrose, and knew little of American spring flowers save such hardier ones as found their way to the ven-

ders' stalls in Twenty-third Street, and whose scanty holidays for sixty years had been taken in the driest, most flowerless months, stoutly answered, "Indeed you have not."

And then it was, "Tell me, Miss Hildyard, were you ever at —?" or, "When you were at —" such a place—"did you do this? did you see that?" until at length, after long descriptions of royalties, great preachers, May-songs and Christmas carols, cricket-matches and poets' graves, Margaret exclaimed, "But, Miss Prosser, you must go yourself some day!"

Then it all came out. The dream of a lifetime, the hope of the last fifteen years, was to be realized, God willing, soon. "In the next luster, perhaps," said Miss Prosser, who loved a good word. "Please God, in five years' time I can go. I shall have the money by then. I am told that people *can* travel on less than ten dollars a day, but I am allowing that sum. I don't think I *could* travel third-class, and second is of course out of the question, I could not risk sitting with a lady's maid or a footman, my dear."

Margaret thought she had seen Miss Prosser rubbing shoulders with less exalted individuals, but she said nothing.

"I could not stay very long; indeed, my duties would not admit of more than four months' absence; but, like Moses, Miss Margaret, I have a great yearning to see my promised land before I die. I think I shall; I think my good God will permit it. I have wished it so long. But if he does not"—then came the secret of the Seidlitz-powder box.

"Oh, my dear young friend, I had not meant to tell this! You will not repeat it, nor laugh at me? Perhaps, since I should have been obliged some day to tell some one, it is providential that I have been led to tell you. You may see to it."

And Margaret promised, and cried a little, and laughed, and heartened the old lady up with much such comfort as Dame Quickly gave to Falstaff; but she did not forget. And she came often again to the little hall bedroom, and they grew great friends. And when spring came, it was not Miss Prosser's primrose that Margaret saw push up its crisp, crimped leaves and perfumed sulphur-colored flowers, but tufts and hedgerows and woods full of them in bowery Devonshire.

Miss Prosser was not envious nor discontented. The "luster" was only begun. She had all her passage-money yet to earn and tuck by in the Dime Savings Bank. Meanwhile, though she missed her lovely Miss Margaret, she had her letters, and Margaret was to bring her more plants. And she talked to the Exiles as though they were birds, and trotted about in the dog-days as in mid-winter, because "Englishwomen are great walkers," and read some faded old Murrys and Baedekers which she had picked up at a book-stall, and went to church every Sunday and saint's day, and prayed from her English Prayer-Book for "our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria," instead of for the President, though she "dared say he needed praying for," and was happy, waiting.

And the Seidlitz-powder box stood on the little bracket, waiting, too.

And one day, after a de-lightful letter from Margaret, which had perhaps gone a little to her head, for it told of an ideal house near Winchester which, when the great year came, Margaret meant to rent, and where she intended Miss Prosser to spend one whole month of her Sabbatical four, while, like their dear Miss Austen's incomparable

Mrs. Elton, in a barouche-landau, they would explore the parental county of Hants—after this too ecstatic and exhilarating parenthesis, before she had come outside its dreamy barriers into common, prosy life, she did not *quite* hear, or she did not *quite* see, and she was struck down, cut, battered, tossed aside, by one of the cable-cars which she had never been able to make up her mind to ride in.

And when the little friendless writing-mistress had been buried from the mission chapel near her boarding-house, where she never went even on rainy days, because it was not so much as a grandchild of the great Queen Anne church, the landlady sold her few books and hung Her Majesty's portrait in the parlor between Mr. Gladstone's (whom Miss Prosser hated) and Washington's, and the servants emptied the flower-pots on the dust-heap in the back yard, where only ailanthus seedlings grew; and the contents of the Seidlitz-powder box went there too—all but the sealed paper which lay on top, inside the cover. That they kept to laugh over with their friends the milkman and grocer's assistant. On it was written: "English earth, to be buried with me when I die."

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