

One afternoon, some eight years after her coming to Springvale, Miss Lois, sitting in her chamber, writing, heard the gate creak, and, looking out, saw a pedler coming up the walk. He walked feebly, and she noticed that as he neared the steps he straightened himself with an effort. Her little maid was out, so she laid down her pen and went down to him.

The man stood looking through the open door into the wide, old fashioned hall. It looked very cool and inviting after his hot tramp, and Miss Lois, coming down the stairs, fair and sweet in her soft gray dress and lavender ribbons, seemed a part of the peace and quiet of the house.

She saw that he looked hot and tired, and asked him in, setting the large hall chair for him. He dropped into it wearily, and opened his stock without the volubility common to his kind. It consisted of the usual small wares, and Miss Lois made her selection of pins, needles, and tape with the careful deliberation of a New-England housekeeper.

Suddenly she turned very white, and laid her hand on the stair rail as though for support. It was over in a moment; and when the pedler looked at her again she wore her usual calm face, though the hands counting the money trembled a little. As he was gathering his wares together she asked him, "Have you been long at this business?"

"No, ma'am," he answered, rising stiffly; "only a year or two. I used to do a good business in Cleveland, Ohio, and had a house as pleasant as this, and a wife and child; but I failed in business; then my wife and child died, and I had a long sickness. After I got up from it I tried several different things, but finally came to this. Thank you, ma'am," putting the money in his thin pocket-book. "You look like somebody I used to know in Hillsborough, where I was raised."

But Miss Lois made no answer, except "Good afternoon," as he went down the steps.

When the gate closed behind him, she went up to her chamber, unlocked a drawer in her bureau, and, taking from it a thin package of letters, sat down with them in her hand.

There was no need to read them; she knew every word in them. They had come at long intervals during the first nine years of waiting; she could tell the very day the last one came. She sat there very quietly until her little maid called her to tea; then she put the letters back in their place, smoothed her hair, and went down. And neither Polly nor the friends who came in the evening suspected that Miss Lois had seen a ghost that afternoon.

The next morning Polly returned from the grocery in great excitement. A pedler had had a bleeding spell there the night before; they had made him a bed in the back room, and that afternoon the select-men were going to take him to the poor-house. Polly had seen her with her own eyes.

Miss Lois finished pasting the paper over the last tumbler of currant jelly, then washed her hands calmly, took off her apron, and went up-stairs. In a few minutes she came down with her hat on. "I'm going out for a little while, Polly," she said; "and while I am gone you may make up the bed in the east chamber."

Polly was amazed. Of course nobody in the town would come to stay all night; and Miss Lois had had no letters for a few days; besides, there had been no extra cooking. What could it mean? But, being an obedient little maid, she did as she was bid.

Bed making was an exact science with Polly, who had been carefully trained in it by Miss Lois; so the feather bed was rolled and thumped until it stood up a great fluffy mound, to be laboriously and critically leveled with the broom handle, Polly's art being far too short for the purpose. Then the lavender-scented sheets were carefully laid on, with due regard to wide hem and narrow hem, the homespun blanket, with its beaming bonnet border, was spread without a wrinkle and tucked under the smoothly rounded edges, and over all went the big white counterpane. Oh, it was a sight to do your eyes good. Polly was standing with the end of a pillow between her teeth, her head very far back, trying to alight the pillow case on, when there was a sound of wheels at the door. Without letting go the pillow, she managed to apply one eye to the street.

It was the public carriage, and, wonder of wonders, the doctor got out, then

Miss Lois, and, with the help of the driver, a man was taken up and carried up the walk.

But other eyes than Polly's had been busy, and within forty-eight hours everybody in Springvale knew that Miss Lois had recognized an old friend in the pedler, and had taken him home to nurse. And I think it is to the credit of human nature that, while a few said, "Did you ever!" and "How it looks!" the majority approved of the act and only hoped Miss Lois wouldn't get sick herself.

But Miss Lois's kindness was not to be taxed long. The man failed rapidly, and another hemorrhage made the end certain. He was delirious most of the time, and talked much of "Mary," and "Willie," and names strange to Miss Lois; but as the end drew near he ceased muttering, and lay apparently unconscious. That night as she sat beside him, he looked up suddenly, his eyes bright and clear.

"Why, Lois!" he said.

"Yes, David," she answered quietly, laying her hand on the one fast growing cold.

He made an effort to speak, his eye-lids quivered, a breath—and a second time he had gone on a long journey, leaving her behind him.

When the town authorities came to make arrangements for the funeral, Miss Lois asked that he might be buried in her own lot, for in the first months of her homesickness she had had the remains of her father and mother brought from their bleak hill-side graves to rest near her. So he was laid beside his old townsman, and a few months after a plain marble slab was placed at his head, bearing only the name "David Price," with the date of death, and his age, "52 years."

When Miss Lois wore the gray dress again, Polly noticed that the lavender ribbons were gone, and about this time people said to each other that Miss Lois was beginning to show her age. Not that she grew gray and wrinkled suddenly; but there was a change. It was not her heart that was changed, for her friends found her more and more delightful, and her house was the favorite stopping-place for young and old. She seemed to have a special tenderness for young girls, and many confidences, blushing or tearful, were poured into the sympathetic ear, and many were the lovers' quarrels healed by her gentle counsels. She used to say sometimes, in a wistful way, "I want them to have all the happiness I have missed." But her sympathies were not confined to the young; they overflowed on all who needed them. Discouraged men and women slouched into her gate at nightfall, and came out with their faces lifted and fresh hope in their hearts. Naughty boys, who deserved and dreaded the rod, knocked meekly at her back door for help, which was always given, mingled with such wholesome reproof that a boy seldom came twice on the same errand. Even hurt and homeless animals seemed to know by instinct where to find an asylum, and took the shortest route to Miss Lois's door, and not one was turned away unhelped.

So the peaceful years slipped away, until one day her friends gathered to keep her eightieth birthday; and they said to each other how well Miss Lois was looking, and that they hoped to keep her for another ten years; and the house was gay with flowers and little children, and Miss Lois beamed on them until her face seemed transfused.

That night, as Polly, now grown staid and elderly, went up to her room, she stopped to see if her mistress was comfortable for the night. She found her sitting in her great arm-chair, her head resting lightly against the cushions, and her eyes closed as though in quiet sleep. But it was the long sleep. One hand rested on a package of yellow letters, and the thin forefingers of the other had stopped at a verse in the open Bible in her lap; and when they raised the stiffening hand they read the words, "Even Christ pleased not himself."

Old and faithful friends gathered up her treasures, and when in looking over her papers they came to the package of yellow letters and read the signatures, they suddenly remembered the name on the slope in the graveyard, and looked at each other with pitying eyes, half guessing the story; but the story was ended.

Man's genius needs woman's encouragement to develop if

THE SPHINX.

"Riddle me this and guess him if you can."—Dryden.

Address all communications for this department to E. R. Chaubourn, Lewiston, Maine, U. S.

NO. 45.—A GENIAL FRIEND.

I have a hard, unyielding face,
But that I glow with inward grace—
All those whose feet have sought my aid,
In friendly circles should decide.
Sometimes my energies burn low,
Reluctantly my friends then go.
How well they in my presence fare,
Their hesitating steps declare.
I wake to life much kindling thought,
And when my genial warmth is caught,
Go forth, my friends, seek out the sad,
With like mild influence make them glad.
For many like me you may find,
Who only, solely were designed
To radiate the warmth and cheer,
And mellow all things cold and drear.

S. E. A. L.

NO. 46.—A CHARADE.

A worthless fellow, I declare,
Was first, who tried to catch a hare;
He was not second, so the chase
Was nothing but a useless race.
Then he grew sick and failed quite fast,
And, no great loss, he died at last;
His ailment was not whole, 'twas said—
And no one mourned when he was dead,

NELSONIAN.

NO. 47.—DIFFERENT VIEWS.

[Entered for Prize.]

A heterodox once gave utterance in presence of a thoroughly orthodox man to the following, "God is no where." The orthodox to vindicate his principle answered him, using the same letters that had been used by the former, and by so doing showed a belief diametrically opposite. What did he say?

G. S. W.

NO. 48.—AN ANAGRAM.

Try to excel; do not deplore
What you may seem to need;
Should "a mute lion" try to roar
Perhaps he would succeed.
'Tis rivalry that leads men on
To struggle till the prize is won.

NELSONIAN.

NO. 49.—A DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Two castles grand their turrets rear,
Each is a prison just as well;
In one my primals four appear,
My finals in the other dwell.

I.

One castle's gate required a catch,
A sort of fastening or latch.

II.

Some kind of molding, I conjecture,
Adorned of each the architecture.

III.

A skillful mason one day went
The walls to plaster or cement.

IV.

For nibbling mice as well as moth
Were depredating on the cloth.

NELSONIAN.

NO. 50.—A CONUNDRUM.

[Entered for Prize.]

What is that which is as old as the world, the same day and night, treats all classes of society alike, and is wasted and ill-treated by some?

M. H. K.

NO. 51.—A CAPTIVE'S ESCAPE.

Marble wall—curtains of silk;
Golden ball—river of milk;
In this palace alone doth dwell
A captive who daily consumes his cell.

When the earth hath twenty-one
Summersaults turned before the sun,
He with his trusty sabre of bone
Shall carve his way through wall of stone.

Then the palace sphered and fair,
Shall seem a rim all broken and bare;
Gone forever the curtains of silk—
Golden island—river of milk!

F. M. P.

CONTRIBUTORS' PRIZES.

1. A cash prize of five dollars will be presented for the best original contribution to this department before the close of 1895.
2. A prize of two dollars will be awarded for the best variety of contributions furnished during the same time, the winner of prize No. 1 to be excluded from trial for this premium.

Favors should be forwarded early, accompanied with answers.

ANSWERS.

- 33.—Swedenborgianism.
- 34.—ALBIC TYRANT HANNO ECHOIN NERVII ARIANA
- 35.—Colorado.
- 36.—Noise.
- 37.—Reverse her ever.
- 38.—Anagrams I detest.
- 39.—Time.

PRIZES.

The following prizes have been awarded for the best answers appearing before February. 1. Dr. Geo. W. McNamara, Tara, Ont., "World's Cyclopaedia." 2. Geo. L. Gray, Ausable Forks, N. Y., Chamber's Dictionary. The parties can have these books at once by applying to TRUTH office, or by mail by sending 15c. for postage.

The Editor of this Department writes: "Correspondence for 'The Sphinx' now arrives from every part of Canada and a large number of the States, evincing much interest."

SCRIPTURAL ENIGMA.

Some little time ago we propounded several scriptural enigmas, exercises, &c., to our readers. As they met with much appreciation, as was testified by the immense number of answers we received, we shall continue them from time to time.

NO. I.

The initials of the subjoined give the scene of the most terrible and majestic revelation of the Almighty to mankind.

1. The mother of the Hebrew race.
2. The child born when the glory had departed from Israel.
3. The minor prophet who penned these beautiful words: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him."
4. One of the sons of the Cyrenian who was compelled to bear the cross of Christ.
5. The father of the Arab race.

For a Scriptural clock take the word "Call."

A prize consisting of Chambers' Etymological English Dictionary will be awarded to the person sending the correct solution of the Enigma and the best clock within ten days.

"Many Men, Many Minds."

"Men's minds are like the pieces on a chessboard in their way of moving. One mind creeps from the square it is on to the next, straightforward, like the pawns. Another sticks close to his own line of thought, and follows it as far as it goes, with no heed for others' opinions, as the bishop sweeps the board in the line of his own color. And another class of minds break through everything that lies before them, ride over argument and opposition, and go to the end of the board like the castle. But there is still another sort of intellect which is very apt to jump over the thought that lies next, and come down in the unexpected way of the knight. But that same knight, as the chess manuals will show you, will contrive to get onto every square of the board in a pretty series of moves that look like a pattern of embroidery, and so those zigzagging minds will sooner or later get back to the square next the one they started from."—Oliver W. Holmes.