

"Do not take me up so shortly, Phoebe," replied Frances; "I but confess to you what forms of discontent loom up before me sometimes. I know they are of Satan; but humanity has often an inclination to embrace what is evil and what it hates.

We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

At this point in their conversation they were interrupted by the entrance of Frances' mother and another woman. Mrs. Harding said: "The time is arrived. Precede me, ladies, to the second storey, where in Frances' bedroom are arrayed the wonders of the trousseau. I wish to catch my breath and wipe away a tear."

Frances arose, and kissing her mother, left the room accompanied by her friend. Then the woman spoke, who had come with Mrs. Harding, saying: "Does it not wring your heart to see your daughter leave the scenes of her maidenhood and her virginity, to enter the wider domain? One I godsped from our roof; it was a new and trying experience. But life is a succession of surprises. We remember when we were married, Lucretia. We thought—did you not?—that the honeymoon would prove to be at once the epitome and the summum bonum of life; yet it was only the beginning of revelations, only the Novembrian snowflakes preceding the drifts of winter."

"I remember," replied Mrs. Harding; "but to see our flesh and blood going from us contentedly, glad to go, pains me most. How instinctive for the damsel to cleave to her lover, and wellnigh to forget them who gave her birth and years of loving tendance. I will go up stairs, leaving to you the management of the ground floor."

Her companion observed in reply: "I note the absence of presents. When we were married, if you like me, we were tolerably equipped by the coerced munificence of our guests."

"It is better now," said Mrs. Harding. "On my daughter's wedding day, I would be a giver only."

Another woman now entered the room and said to Mrs. Harding's companion: "We are seeking your advice, for counsel."

Before the one addressed could reply, Mrs. Harding observed, with a smile: "I leave you to your devices."

She spoke and left the room, whereupon the last comer said: "How does she bear the deprivation so imminent?"

"With a true mother's absence of philosophy," replied the other. "But Lucretia is of hot blood and of strong affections."

The last comer replied: "We have not in our times the philosophy of Job nor the buoyancy of Alexander. But come and be our culinary president."

As they left the room the other replied: "It is a pleasant event, anyway, enlivening the monotony of pastoral and agricultural life. I attend you, Martha, but I distrust my powers of direction."

SECTION 4.

In the course of the day Frances and Rodney, their parents, their friends and neighbors, and their pastor, were sitting by a long table on which savory soup was steaming; and the mother of Phoebe, when all of the others were seated, remained standing and said: "The first course is on the table, Mr. Jenwig, and awaiting the attention of the company."

"Let us rise," replied the minister, "and sing our imploration of the blessing."