

while I breathe a blessing on the true hearts I leave behind.

The scene has changed. I stand in my own room in my native town. The shades of evening gather round as I put the finishing touches to my toilet, and when I mention that I am about to visit my Angelina for the first time since my return, I need not say that my attire is arranged with scrupulous neatness. I take up the brush to smooth the refractory curl, and ere I lay it down, in the absence of mind natural on such an occasion, I give it a flourish round either jaw, forgetful for a moment of the loss I have sustained. I turn away with a sigh, but console myself with the thought that where two loving hearts are concerned, what matter a few hairs more or less.

I don't recollect how many steps I jumped over coming down stairs, but I remember seeing the inmates of the kitchen rush out expecting to find a subject for an inquest at the bottom. But who can wonder at my spirits being light; for was I not about to see again the joy of my life after a long absence of three months!

The evening too was one to charm the senses. "The moon's pale light shone soft o'er hill and dale."

The evening's shower had revived the drooping flowers, and the air was laden with a thousand balmy odors, while each rustling leaf seemed to jostle and elbow its neighbor, as though to remind it that this was an evening on which they should dance and be merry.

Merrily, too, I march along, swinging my cane and switching at every little pebble in the exuberance of my joy. I suddenly bethink me how my charmer made me promise to bring her back an account of my travels, of the habits of the people, how they catch their fish, salt their fish, dry their fish, &c., for Angelina takes a great interest in these things. So I begin a mental rehearsal. I have just settled to my satisfaction what are the duties of a header,* when the question arises whether he who cuts off the tail is called the "tailor." This important question was under debate when I found myself at Angelina's door.

John Thomas, the footman, with both hands in his pockets, was standing on the steps smoking his pipe and gazing skyward, as though some wonderful stellar phenomenon was momentarily expected.

I accost John Thomas in a free and easy style, for I have known him for many years, and he is one who takes no improper liberties. So I exclaim as I run up the steps, "Well, John Thomas, how has the world been using you since I saw you last?"

John Thomas does not reply with his usual readiness, nor at his usual length; but after watching his glowing pipe from his mouth and hastily shoving it into the pocket of his coat, to the great danger of that garment, he only gives utterance to one word—"Sir!"—rather in a tone of exclamation than interrogation.

This seems strange; I, therefore, repeat my question, adding that he looks as though he had never seen me before. Whereupon John Thomas, looking completely puzzled, mutters, "Bless me soul an' body, that vice; I shed know that vice. Why, Mr. Smith!" he suddenly exclaimed, in the tone of a school-boy bellowing out the only word he happens to know in his lesson,

"Ye, John," I replied, "it is Mr. Smith."

"Well now," said John Thomas, "who'd a thought it? But I ax yer parding, sir, seein' as how I didn't know you, sir, which you're werry much altered, sir."

This brings to my mind the loss of my whiskers. Ay, 'tis that has wrought the change. But I say to myself, "Such a trifle cannot deceive the eye of love. Oh, no, she will know me."

"Is Miss A— in?" I asked John Thomas.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "an' Captin' White."

"Who is Captain White?" I anxiously inquired.

"He's captin' of a Heast-injy-man as is now in port," replied John Thomas.

"Does he come often?" I asked, as carelessly as I could.

"Well, yes, sir, pretty often, leastways three or four times a week."

I am afraid that at that moment I did not wish Captain White's next voyage to be as pleasant as he could desire; however, I soon banish all uncomfortable thoughts in the anticipation of the joyous meeting, feeling certain that no kind of steel was ever truer than my Angelina.

Just as I am about to enter, I meet a remarkably good-looking gentleman coming out, wearing a really magnificent pair of whiskers, the exact counterpart of my own, (forgive this pardonable bit of pride, dear reader, but they were really fine—I mean mine were). As I pass him, I fear I am not altogether guiltless of the tenth commandment.

But I am staying too long upon the steps—I must hasten to the glad meeting.

I am ushered into the drawing-room and find myself its sole occupant. As I glance around, I see many evidences of her sweet presence; and, strange to say, the music on the piano is open at the favorite song we used to sing together, while I stood by her turning the leaves, and drinking in the dulcet tones of her melodious voice. Indeed, I have often been so enrap-

ported that I have unconsciously dropped my share in the performance; and she has had to reprove me for making the piece a solo when it should not be one.

But I hear a step upon the stairs. Ah! I should know that gentle footfall among a thousand. I employ the next few moments in picturing the happy meeting, the loving embrace, the little scream, the exclamation of "Oh, Charles, is this you?" or words to that effect.

As I draw this pleasant picture, I leave my seat and stand erect, so that I may be ready for the embrace. I even go so far as to select a good position, with regard to surrounding objects, so that my beloved may be able to rush into my arms without having to dodge round any such impediment as a chair, table, &c.

I am standing thus and gazing at the door, with a pleasant smile playing around my mouth, when it opens (I mean the door) and the idol of my heart is before me.

But alas! I wait in vain for the expected spring into my arms. There is no little scream of glad surprise, nor does she smilingly exclaim "Oh, Charles, do!" Alas, no! she does nothing but stand and give a stately bow.

Of course I am thunderstruck. I ask in amazement if it is possible that she has so soon forgot an old friend.

"Is something of the old smile lights up her face, but somehow it is not as bright as it used to be, and there is a curious look in her eyes as she exclaims, "Oh, is it really you, Mr. Smith?" (Ah! Mr., not Charles, as of old.) "I really did not recognize you, you are so changed."

"And oh, Angelina," I mentally ejaculate, "are not you changed?" But I ask of her aloud how I am changed.

"Why, your appearance is greatly altered, and not" (I really think she was about to say "not for the better," but she continued, looking a little confused) "I should not have known you but for your voice."

Of course, I had to relate my misfortune in all its torturing details. Once or twice during the recital I noticed a peculiar twinkle in her eye which I must charitably suppose was a twinkle of sympathy, and several times she turned suddenly towards the window, although I don't know that anything extraordinary was going on in the street. I wonder if it was to conceal a pitying tear.

When this subject had been exhausted, there was an uncomfortable silence for some moments, and after several ineffectual efforts to get up the old style of conversation, I asked her if she would kindly favor me with some music.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Smith," she said, "I am so tired, I have been playing all the evening." (Ah! the Captain with the whiskers dashed across my mind.)

After a little more conversation, very different from that of old times, I rose to take my leave.

"I trust you'll call again, Mr. Smith," she said softly. "Father will be glad to see you, but I think he will be away on business to-morrow night, and I have an engagement out too."—(again I thought of the whiskered Captain)—"but the next night we shall be happy to see you up."

I did not sleep much that night, for I lay thinking—thinking and wondering if it would all come right at last. After viewing the matter in every possible light, I came to the conclusion that I would learn the true state of affairs on the first opportunity.

On the evening appointed I called again, was welcomed heartily by the old gentleman, and felt altogether more comfortable than on my former visit. In the course of the evening I proposed to Angelina that we should take a walk, and she, being agreeable, we sauntered forth.

"Now or never," I said to myself, so I told my tale of love. In my softest and sweetest tones, I told her all, and, as I finished, I took her hand in mine. But she withdrew it gently but firmly, and there was silence for some moments, while I awaited her answer in an agony of suspense. At length she said in a low tone:

"I exceedingly regret, Mr. Smith, that this should have happened. If I ever seemed to give you any encouragement, or unintentionally led you to indulge in false hopes, I am very sorry—very. But such a thing as you speak of could never be."

I begged her to let me have some definite reason why she could give me no hope. I said I knew I had no right to ask this, but I should take it as a great favor if she would answer me.

"Our tastes, our dispositions are quite different," she said.

"But, oh, Angelina," I cried piteously, "how do you know that we are so different, that we could not be happy together?"

"I know it," she answered; "I can easily read the character in the face."

"Miss A—" I returned sadly, "you won't be angry if I ask you one more question ere I drop the subject, never to trouble you with it again? I would ask you if there was a time when you did care anything about me—any more than you do now?"

"That is hardly a fair question to answer," she replied, looking down; "however, as you seem so anxious about it, I will tell you that there was. At one time, I confess, I did feel a preference for your society, to that of any other

* I may here mention that Angelina professed to be a physiognomist, and often asserted that she could read the character by the face as readily as from a printed book.

gentleman of my acquaintance, but since your return, I—all that has changed."

"Miss A—" said I earnestly, "I implore you to bear with me while I ask one more question, for this may be the last opportunity we shall have of speaking together. Will you tell me if the—the loss of my whiskers had anything to do with causing the change?"

"Well, I may say it did, Mr. Smith," she answered.

Perhaps I smiled sarcastically. I don't know, but I may have done so, for she added hastily:

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Smith! The loss—hem—the loss to which you refer may not have influenced my decision so directly as you imagine; but it was the means of causing me to change my opinions."

"I shall not do you the injustice," I replied, "of supposing that such a trifling change in my personal appearance could influence you to act as you have done, Miss A—"

"Not at all!" she answered, with a little laugh, "but as you so badly want to know, and in order to do away with such a suspicion as you just hinted at, I suppose I must tell you how it was. You know," she continued, seemingly a little embarrassed, "I can see more of your face now than when you left the country. That being the case, I have gained a new insight into your character."

"Well, Miss A—, I trust my character will bear inspection," I replied somewhat curtly.

"I don't for a moment doubt it, Mr. Smith," she hastened to say. "You wrong me. I do not mean to imply that your character does not come up to the standard I had formed, but only that it is different from what I supposed it to be. You understand me now, Mr. Smith?" she asked, looking earnestly into my face.

I murmured mournfully that I thought I did, meaning that I understood what she intended to say, but I was very far from understanding her.

By this time we had arrived at her own door.

"Won't you come in?" she asked.

"Not to-night, Miss A—" I sighed; "our conversation has quite knocked me up," (or rather down, I should have said.)

She held out her hand, saying, "I trust we shall be good friends as ever, Mr. Smith?"

"And nothing more?" I asked gloomily.

"Nothing more," she echoed, shaking her head. And so she left me, in a state combining that of the clergyman and maiden referred to in the song, being not only "shaven and shorn," but "all forlorn."

Was this to be the end of all my bright hopes and fond anticipations? Was my delicious dream so soon to vanish? Were all my beautiful castles in the air to be demolished at a blow? Alas! alas!

With heavy steps I wandered homewards, and there, in the solitude of my chamber, I penned a long letter to Brown. In the fulness of my heart, I told him everything—how she had been to me the very air I breathed, the sun of my soul, and the guiding-star of my life. "And how can I exist?" I asked him, "now that I have no air to breathe, and the sun shines no longer, while the star of my life has set forever?"

The concluding paragraph of my letter was as follows:

"My dear Brown,—I want you to write me a good comforting letter, and give me all the consolation you can. I know that the world says you are a stoic and a cynic, and I don't know what besides, but you know that's all bosh. So I shall expect a sympathizing letter by the next mail, telling me how you would manage under such painful circumstances, and how you would seek consolation if your soul were in my soul's stead. Remember me to Jones and Robinson. I wish I could be with you now, for this place has become hateful to me, everything reminding me of the times that have been, but can never be again."

A few weeks afterwards I received Brown's reply, and a curious piece of composition it was. He began by saying that my letter had made him feel both glad and sorry. He was glad to find I was well, with the exception of a little love-sickness (ah, Brown, did you ever feel it?), and that I did not forget old friends. But he was sorry to hear that such a trifle as "sing'd whiskers" had cast a blight upon my prospects.

He said that he had read a number of extraordinary love-yarns, but mine beat them all by "long chalks" (sic). He also said that he had read somewhere of "beauty drawing as with a single hair." "Now you know, my dear fellow," he said, "you shouldn't be surprised if Beauty left you behind when you and the 'hair' parted. In fact, I think we may consider her former partiality as only another instance of capillary attraction."

"But seriously, my dear Smitty," this is how he closed his epistle; "but seriously, my dear Smitty, if all had turned out as you wished, could you trust a future little Smitty to the care of one who would turn off a man because he happened to have a little less furniture about the jaws, or a bump or depression more or less than she had previously noted,—I say, could you go away and leave the little innocent in the arms of such a physiological and prenological mother? What if she were to find a feature that did not come up to her standard? Why, I shudder to think of the consequences! So, you see, it may have turned out for the best, after all."

I thought of omitting the foregoing paragraph, lest some evil-disposed persons should be uncharitable enough to impute my publishing

"Christmas will soon be along," (this is still the letter) "Christmas will soon be along, and we want you to take a run down and spend it with us. I guarantee you'll find many a sweet creature here, who would not throw away a dicky-bird because it may have happened to lose a few feathers. Now do come, and we'll give you such a welcome as you won't forget in a hurry."

Such was the style of Brown's letter. I confess that sentence about the "dicky-bird" is somewhat obscure. I must not forget to ask him for an explanation in my next.

Perhaps the reader will say that such an epistle did not contain much comfort. Well, I thought the same at first, but I like it better now. On reading it for the first time, I said to myself, "Tis not strange, Brown, that you should make light of my grief, for your heart has never been torn and lacerated as mine has been!" And yet it sometimes strikes me that Brown may have passed through the like dark waters of affliction, that he, too, may have "loved and lost." For often, when he thought himself unobserved, while Robinson has been contrasting the enjoyments of married life with the miserable loneliness of the bachelor, I have seen him gaze into the fire with such a sad, wistful look! The hard lines had disappeared from the face, and it wore an expression mild and gentle as that of a woman. And when we would rally him on his abstraction, tendering him a small coin for his thoughts, he would start as from a dream, and be the cynic immediately, dispensing his bitter pills more freely than ever. Yes, Brown, I sometimes thought you were no exception to the rule that "there is a skeleton in every house," but I did not know all till a few days ago, when I learnt it from one by whom you were deeply wronged, but who now loves and honors you. He told me how he had been the means of separating her and you, Brown, and how, after having wandered in many a foreign land, you returned just in time to see the loved one laid in the ground. And I know, too, that when they bore her to her last resting-place, you followed at a distance, and stood afar-off while she was lowered into the grave, and how you shuddered when the mould rattled on the coffin-lid. And when the last shroud of earth had been thrown over the dear form, and the last loiterer had left the graveyard, I know how, with faltering steps, you approached the new-made grave, and stood long and earnestly gazing downwards, as though trying to call her back from the "echoless shore;" and as you turned away, with the impress of your great grief upon your face, your thoughts wandered back to the past, among the happy scenes of the long ago, and with these came the thoughts of what might have been.

And, more than this, I know, Brown, how on many a stormy night your body has sheltered that sacred spot, as though the poor senseless dust beneath could feel the beating of the storm. Then, too, you thought of what might have been.

And, knowing all this, Brown, I can tell what visions you saw in the flickering blaze,—a fair young face, very beautiful, with its border of golden ringlets and the laughing blue eyes that were wont to smile so sweetly, but will never smile again, and the lips which ever spoke so lovingly till Death touched them with his icy finger, and commanded silence. Yes, Brown, you were again thinking of what might have been.

And now, kind reader, you may wonderingly ask what induced me to publish this. Well, I had several reasons for doing so. One of them was that I thought I should feel relieved by pouring my woes into some pitying ear. Another reason I had for giving publicity to my troubles was the desire to avoid misunderstanding, and that there may be no wrong construction put upon my otherwise unaccountable actions, for my friends tell me that I am sometimes seen under very suspicious circumstances. After these confessions, dear reader, if you should meet me, you will know what has thinned my hair, dimmed my eyes, paled my cheek, and caused my once springing step to become languid and slow. And if it should be your lot to see me, while walking along the street, suddenly fly off at a tangent, and precipitately make for the first door that offers shelter, please don't imagine 'tis to escape the sheriff's officer; and if it should happen to be a liquor store that I have hastily entered, don't think, gentle reader, that it is with the intent to imbibe spirituous liquors. Ah, no! it is to avoid Angelina's carriage, which is coming down the street at the rate of several knots. I cannot yet bear with equanimity the look of mingled pity and contempt which John Thomas bestows. Nor can I bear without flinching the triumphant look of the whiskered Captain, nor (worst of all) the beaming smile with which Angelina gazes upwards at the said Captain's face. Not yet is my wound sufficiently healed to bear such rough usage! When I think of all I have suffered, I wonder that my hair has not turned grey. But I fear even this won't be left me to boast of much longer, for, if I don't mistake, while making my toilet yesterday, I found a very suspicious looking hair, but while taking it to the window to make certain, I lost it. However, I can conscientiously say that I have lost, on an average, three hairs daily for the past week, which amounts to twenty-one

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