

AFTER THE OPERA.

We stood one night in Deacon street.
Before her family mansion,
While in my heart the throbs of love
Were struggling for expansion.
We just had left the theatre,
Had heard *Il Trovatore*,
And on the door-step talked about
The music and the story.
She raved about the wondrous voice
Of Signor Campanini;
She praised his acting and his face;
While I stood like a ninny—
I wanted to—but why explain;
I half suspect she knew it.
I hemmed and twisted like a fool,
And hadn't pluck to do it.
I waited long, for some excuse
My stupid brain perplexing.
And then at length a silence fell.
So awkward and so vexing.
But suddenly she brightened up.
This loveliest of misers—
"Oh, by-the-way, did you observe
How gracefully he kisses?"

BROWN OF NEVADA.

BY MRS. FRANK M'GARTHY.

"Who's that going into Scrimmage's?" said the senior partner of Hardscrabble & Co. to one of his general salesmen. "Isn't that Brown of Nevada?"

The general salesman jumped, and opened wide his eyes, as he always did when Mr. Hardscrabble called his attention to anything, and concentrated all his energies upon a pair of tweed coat tails vanishing into the portals of the rival jobbing house opposite.

"By gracious!" he said, "I'm afraid it is Brown of Nevada."

"That's the second time to-day he's gone into Scrimmage's," said Mr. Hardscrabble. "Just look up Pillikin, will you, and send him into the office."

The general salesman went in search of Pillikin, with a peculiar "misery-loves-company" expression, and found him looking piteously into the face of a Texas man who wanted his goods at ninety days, twelve per cent. lower than the cost of importation, and the privilege of sending back, at the firm's expense, some goods that he wanted to take on trial. The Texas man baited poor Pillikin to the verge of desperation, and walked out of the store with the passing remark that he'd look in again.

Even the soul of the general salesman—and as a general thing this kind of a soul is not made of wax—melted at the haggard visage of Pillikin when he told him that Mr. Hardscrabble wanted to see him in the office. Yet to save his life he couldn't help adding, as Pillikin went dejectedly to obey the summons, that Hardscrabble had just seen Brown of Nevada going into Scrimmage's. The general salesman had so often felt this sort of an iron enter into his own soul, he couldn't help assisting to probe others.

Pillikin grew deadly pale. "Brown of Nevada," he said, in a hoarse whisper—"into Scrimmage's!"

"It may be only to look around," said the general salesman, a little shocked that Pillikin took it quite so hard. "My gracious, man, you've got to be prepared for these things."

"I've had too many of them lately," said Pillikin. "I never had such luck in my life as I've had this season. Brown of Nevada is one of the men I thought I could rely upon. I've been looking for him all day."

"So you've slipped up with Brown, have you?" snarled the senior member as poor Pillikin walked into the office. "It appears to me, Pillikin, you're losing the little vim that you had last season. How long do you suppose we can stand this sort of thing? If you can't do better than this, you'd better not come to the store at all—just draw your salary and stay at home. Are you aware that this is the busy season, the short period when we are supposed to sell goods? If you'll take a memorandum of this fact, it may help you a little when you see such men as Brown of Nevada going into Scrimmage's. But the fact is we can't blame Brown. He wants a live man to deal with, not a wooden one."

A hot flame leaped into the haggard face of Pillikin. "See here, Mr. Hardscrabble," he said: "if you're not satisfied, tell me so, but keep a civil tongue in your head. I don't allow any man to speak in that way to me."

"You don't, eh?" roared Mr. Hardscrabble. But Pillikin had turned upon his heel and walked out of the office, more dead than alive. The flame had died out of his cheeks, and left them paler than before. His legs trembled beneath him as he walked out of the store. The general salesman who had delivered the message from Hardscrabble remarked to another general salesman that "poor Pillikin must have caught it pretty hard; he seemed all broke up."

Poor Pillikin walked on to the ferry with his head in a whirl of disappointment, chagrin, fear and doubt. His reply to the senior member would undoubtedly lose him his situation, as they would be glad to get rid of him now that his valuable trade was falling off. If he could have held on to Brown of Nevada, all would have been well; and without Brown of Nevada what would he be worth elsewhere? How could he support his wife and children, and his wife's widowed sister and her little boy, making nine of them in all, upon any salary that he could get without the trade of Brown of Nevada? He was already in debt, and some of the little bills must be settled at once; his account was overdrawn at the store. It made him shudder to think of it. The cabin of the ferry-boat was stifling. In spite of

the lowering clouds and piercing wind, he made his way out on the forward deck, and as he saw the black waves of the East River surging against the slimy sides of the boat, he was strongly tempted to do away with all further trouble for a party called Pillikin.

While the temptation assailed him, the chains rattled, the newsboys' cries were heard on the Brooklyn side, the boat bumped against the dock, the crowd pushed him along, and he found himself plodding his homeward way. He couldn't bear the depressing influence of the horse-cars, so he trudged along on foot, a fierce March sleet beginning to beat upon the only high hat he owned in the world. It was utterly impossible to buy another, but Pillikin didn't care. He probably wouldn't need a high hat in the menial employment he would be compelled to accept when he was kicked out of Hardscrabble & Co.'s, and had lost the trade of Brown of Nevada. When he at last reached home, his fingers were so numb with cold he could hardly get the key in the door, but this didn't matter in the least. Several young and energetic parties ran to let him in; his plump pretty little wife took his coat, and kissed him; his still plumper and prettier sister-in-law took his hat and cane, and kissed him; a half-dozen rosy children put up their mouths to be kissed. The dining-room was warm and cozy; there were his chair and slippers waiting for him by the open fire; an inviting meal was wasting its unctuous odor in the halls below.

"My love," said his wife, "how late you are!"

"My dear," said his wife's sister, "we were so afraid you'd gone off with some of those horrid customers. You know you expected Brown of Nevada—"

"Jo, dear Jo—my husband, my love, my darling—what is the matter?"

For poor Jo Pillikin had sunk into a chair, put his head upon the table, and burst into tears.

It was weak and unmanly, perhaps; but he had eaten nothing since breakfast, had been badgered and worried, and on his feet all day; the March wind had pierced to the marrow of his bones. To find all this love and cheer and comfort awaiting him, to remember how he had perilled them all in his talk with Hardscrabble, how he had been tempted to drown them all in his cowardice while upon the ferry-boat, and, above all, for his sweet sister-in-law to pelt him with the crushing name of Brown of Nevada, the author of all his misery—it was too much for poor Jo Pillikin. He wept, not as a woman whose tears console and comfort as they flow, but as a strong man weeps when the first keenness is added to the agony of despair.

Pretty Mrs. Pillikin got down on her knees, and wept on his shoulder, her sister cried upon his other shoulder, and all the little Pillikins set up a howl, none of them knowing in the least what they were crying about save poor Jo, whose tears ceased to flow when he found how contagious they were.

In the midst of all this uproar a man mounted the stoop and rang the bell; but it was Bridget's day out, and in all this noisy distress none of the Pillikins heard the bell. Pillikin had in his agitation left the door ajar, and nobody had thought to shut it. So the stranger walked into the little reception-room, hoping that he would soon have an opportunity of making himself known. When all this sobbing fell upon his ear, he was annoyed and shocked, and scarcely knew what to do. Through a crevice in the door that separated the reception from the dining-room, he saw Jo Pillikin sitting by the table, his head bowed upon his hands, one pretty young woman dressed in some soft, warm gray material, sobbing on one of his shoulders, and a still younger and prettier woman dressed in black sobbing on the other shoulder, and around the room, all about the floor and the chairs, were innumerable children, all howling at the top of their lungs. Pillikin hastily dried his tears and composed his features, and began to soothe his family. He took one of the pretty women on one knee, the other on the other knee, and gave each of his ten fingers to the young brood, hushing and coaxing them into calm.

"There, there," said Jo, "don't cry any more. I'm a heartless brute to have worried you so. But I couldn't help it. I feel better now; but I never was so completely broken up in my life. I don't mind telling you that I've done a very impudent thing. It has weighed like a mountain of lead upon my heart and conscience; but I feel more courageous now that I know you love me well enough to share the burden. But I ought to have kept my temper. A man ought to think of his family when his situation is at stake, and it was enough to make Hardscrabble lose whatever decency he ever had to see Brown of Nevada go into Scrimmage & Co.'s."

Both the women started and turned pale.

"Oh, Sue!" faltered the wife, to her sister—

"Brown of Nevada?"

"Oh, Kate!" gasped the young widow, to the wife—"into Scrimmage & Co.'s!"

"Brown of Nevada?" they repeated together, shaking their heads mournfully.

"Yes, Brown of Nevada!" repeated Jo, also shaking his head mournfully, but feeling consoled, in spite of himself, with his family's full appreciation of the disaster that had befallen him. "This was the drop that has overflowed the bitterness of my cup. Brown has always been my best card. It was a pleasure to sell to Brown. Most of these men would skin a flea for its hide. But there's nothing mean about Brown."

"There's something very mean in his going to Scrimmage's," said Mrs. Pillikin.

"I call it a very dishonorable action," said the widow.

"No," said Pillikin, "not dishonorable exactly; but I must say, if he wasn't satisfied with me, he might have bought his goods of some other concern, and not gone over to Scrimmage's right before Hardscrabble's eyes."

Here something like a distant cough was heard. They all looked around, but thought it must be one of the children.

"It was like flinging a red rag in the face of a mad bull," continued Jo. "Hardscrabble was white with rage, and didn't know what he said. I'm sorry now I allowed myself to reply as I did. But it was a bitter blow to me to know that Brown of Nevada, of all other men in the trade, should—But I tell you there's somebody in the other room." Poor Jo turned pale again. "I'm afraid it's Brown with that bill; I told him to call around. I can't pay him now; it's impossible. But I'll have to see him, I suppose."

"No," said his sister-in-law, springing to her feet: "I'll see him. I'll tell him you're not well, that you can't see anybody."

"That's a good girl," said Pillikin, with a sigh of relief. "Say that I'll call around next week. Heaven knows when I can pay him now; but say that I'll call around."

The young widow went around through the hall into the reception-room, and found there a young man of fine proportions and frank, pleasant countenance, who immediately began to apologize.

"I rang the bell," he said, "but nobody heard me, and finding the door ajar, I took the liberty of walking in. I'm exceedingly sorry to be the cause of any trouble. If you'll first tell Mr. Pillikin that my name is Brown, he'll guess the nature of my errand."

"We all know your errand," said the widow.

"My poor dear brother-in-law guessed it right away. Around the first of the month there are so many people coming here upon the same errand! And I've got a splendid idea what to do with them. My brother-in-law is such a dear good fellow, he's always robbing himself to help others; he's given me a home, and my little orphan boy a home, and no wonder he can't pay his bills. But I've got a piano and stool, and lots of music, and a cover that I've embroidered with my own hands, and these must be worth something considerable."

"Something very considerable," said the stranger, looking at the young widow earnestly.

"And I'm going to make the piano and stool and music and embroidered cover go as far as they will with my brother-in-law's bills. Now, I'll give you the first chance. Where is your bill? what is the amount?"

The young man reddened, bit his lips, smiled.

"There is some mistake," he said.

"Isn't your name Brown, and haven't you come to collect a bill?"

"I have not come to collect a bill. My name is Brown, but I don't think it's the same Brown. There are a great many Browns. If you will tell your brother-in-law that I am Brown of Nevada—"

"Oh!" gasped the widow; and for a moment Brown of Nevada thought she was going to faint. He sprang to her side to save her from falling, but she recovered herself, and her breath and color came again. She clasped her hands, and looked at the young man with her whole soul in her eyes. "Brown of Nevada!" she repeated—"Brown of Nevada! O my gracious!"

"Yes, I hurried over here to correct an error that had reached your brother-in-law's ears. I did not go into Scrimmage's to buy goods; it was only to meet a friend."

"Only to meet a friend," repeated the widow, still devouring him with her large, soft, pathetic eyes; and you did not buy your goods at Scrimmage's?"

"Certainly not. I shall buy my goods of your brother-in-law, as I always do."

"As you always do!" repeated the widow, tears springing to her eyes, her lovely face suffused with a sort of rapture that really embarrassed Brown. "Of course! As you always do! And you are really Brown of Nevada?" And here she began to walk to the door, keeping her eyes still fastened upon the young merchant.

"I am really Brown of Nevada."

"Dear me! Isn't it wonderful—strange—perfectly splendid! You'll stay here just a minute, won't you? while I go and tell Jo."

"I'll stay here any quantity of minutes," and out glided the young widow, leaving Brown in as delicious a daze as she was herself.

"Jo, Jo," said the widow to her brother-in-law, raising his dejected head, and shaking him energetically by the shoulder; "Kate, my sister, my dear ones, prepare yourselves. Don't let it come upon you too sudden."

"Good heavens!" cried poor Pillikin, leaping to his feet; "what has happened? What is it, now?"

"It's—it's not the Mr. Brown with the bill, Jo."

"Who is it? what is it? Misfortunes never come alone. I'm prepared for anything!"

"It's—it's—oh, Jo, it's Brown of Nevada!"

"Great Heavens!" said Jo, springing to the door.

"And he didn't buy his goods of Scrimmage; he went there to meet a friend, and he will buy his goods of you, as he always does," said the young widow, in a crescendo that at last reached a shrill treble; but Jo was already wringing the hand of Brown.

"Apart from the fact that you have not gone

back on me, Brown," said poor Pillikin, "I don't mind telling you that your presence is a reprieve from all sorts of miseries; but how the deuce did you find me out?"

"Why, one of your general salesmen over there—I forget his name—told me you and Hardscrabble had some words about my going into Scrimmage's. He said you were so cut up about it, and didn't appear to be well when you left the store; so I thought I'd take a cab and come over. It was a pleasant night—that is, not a very pleasant night; but I hadn't anything to do—that is, I had lots of things to do, but, hang it, I wanted to come, and I am glad I did!"

"So am I, Brown—God bless you, so am I!" Then poor Pillikin, relieved of the burden of doubt and wretchedness that had oppressed him, and having there before him as his voluntary guest the representative of a worshipful amount of trade—poor Pillikin gathered together his scattered dignity and self-esteem, and began to discuss matters of business with a serene and serious enthusiasm that bespoke the happiness of the occasion.

As for Brown of Nevada, he couldn't keep his mind upon what Pillikin was saying, he was so taken up with the rustling of drapery outside.

The two little women were flying around down stairs in the kitchen, and up stairs in the dining-room. The children had their bread and milk, and were washed and put to bed; the widow flew down to the kitchen and made some little dishes, all in the twinkling of an eye, their culinary perfection consisting in the rapidity with which they were got together, and clapped upon the dumb-waiter, and hoisted to her sister in the dining-room above, who whisked them upon the table, and what with the haste and happiness and unexpectedness of it all, when they rang the bell and invited the gentlemen out to supper, there couldn't possibly be two prettier or more engaging women in the universe; and a more appetizing meal Brown of Nevada never saw or tasted.

From pitying Jo Pillikin, he began to envy him. How hollow and cold and altogether unsatisfactory was the life of a bachelor!—particularly out in Nevada.

The March wind still roared and howled, and the March sleet yet beat upon the Pillikin window-panes, and nothing would do but Brown of Nevada must stay all night.

He knew it must be the widow's room that he slept in (as indeed it was, that little woman and her orphan boy crowding in with the little Pillikins), and Brown of Nevada went all around, admiring the pretty knickknacks, and worsted-work and embroidery, that was of course the work of the fair widow's hands. He went to sleep, and dreamed that Pillikin was so steeped in pecuniary difficulties that the widow found the piano and stool and music, and even the embroidered cover, were only a drop in the bucket; so in her warm generosity she threw herself in, and stood upon the piano to be raffled off by the creditors and friends of Pillikin. Brown threw double sixes every time, and had just made arrangements to have the widow and piano and stool and music and cover shipped out to Nevada with the rest of his goods when the breakfast bell rang. He awoke, and blushed to find what absurdities a man will dream, and blushed still more when the soft innocent eyes of the widow met his own over the potatoes, and the muffins, and scrambled eggs, and the multitude of good things which he found out afterward she had made with her own hands.

Her orphan boy was a fine little fellow, and would make a splendid man some day if he could be taken where there was room to grow.

But who can picture the pride of Pillikin when he walked into the store the next morning arm in arm with Brown of Nevada? Mr. Hardscrabble was just bullying one of the heads of stock, and catching a glimpse of this touching spectacle of amity between Pillikin and Brown of Nevada, he rushed forward, with tender hospitality placed an affectionate hand upon the shoulder of each, and thus lovingly linked together, the three walked down the store.

And the saying is that whatever you dream in a strange bed is sure to come true; and I shouldn't wonder if, when Brown went back to Nevada, he'd take all those things he won at that imaginary raffle—all except the piano and stool and music and embroidered cover. These the dear little widow declares she will leave to the young Pillikins.

HUMOROUS.

WHY is a general servant like a boat?—Because the one is maid of all work and the other is also maid of awl-work.

BETTER THAN PHONETICS.—A lazy man in Tennessee heads his letters "Lone," and another person in Wyandotte puts "Y.A."

A LEADVILLE journalist who makes a great feature of his "personal column" has shot so many men that he is now spoken of as "the local lead-litor."

"WHAT comes after T?" asked a teacher of a pupil who was learning the alphabet. He received the bewildering reply—"You do - to see 'Liza!'"

WHAT is the difference between the pawnee and the pawner?—The former watches for his prey until he gets it; and the latter prays for his watch, but doesn't get it.

BUSY editor to troublesome applicant who persists in calling: "To-day is Thursday, and I'm very busy. Suppose you call next Thursday, and then I'll tell you when to call again."

A GREAT Irish orator and wit was asked what an Irish friend of his, who had just arrived in London, could mean by perpetually putting out his tongue. "I suppose he's trying to catch the English accent," said the wit.