

## THE CORNER.

The seat in the corner—  
What comfort we see  
In that type of affection,  
Where love bends the knee,  
Where the prayers of our childhood  
We learned to repeat,  
And the lips of a mother  
Made holiness sweet.

The name of a corner  
Has something still dear,  
That tells us of pleasures  
Ne'er bought with a tear:  
Of loved ones remembered,  
Of faces once gay  
They have fled like a dream,  
Like a vision away.

Our letters, full often,  
Kind sayings abound;  
But still in the corner  
The kindest is found.  
We look to the postscript,  
And there written small,  
We find in the corner  
Words dearer than all.

Our heart receives many  
We love with good will,  
But who gets the corner  
Is loved the best still:  
For the heart bathes its corner,  
And dear is the one  
Who remains its possessor,  
Till life's love is gone.

CHARLES MACKAY.

## UNCLE GEORGE'S WILL.

1.

"But, mamma, it is impossible!"  
"But, Mollie, it is not only possible, but it is a fact!"

"Mamma, I don't believe it!"  
"Very well, then look at your uncle's letter yourself," and Lady Mary Houghton tossed a closely-written letter across the breakfast table to her daughter.

Mollie picked up the letter gingerly with the tips of her fingers.

"It won't bite," said her mother irritably.  
"I don't feel at all sure about that, mamma. If it were Uncle Edward himself, it would."

"Nonsense!"

Mollie, with a deep frown upon her pretty white forehead, began to read.

"I am glad poor Uncle George has left something to Meta and Agnes," she said. "At least there is some good in his will."

"Five thousand to each of my married daughters," said Lady Mary complacently.  
"Yes, it will gratify your brothers-in-law; and I am sure Meta will want it, if she goes on having two babies regularly every year."

"If they are all as pretty as the last four, I wish she might have three a year," said Mollie lightly. "I never saw such a set of little ducks."

"Of course you like them, you have none of the trouble and responsibility, you little goose."

"Not to speak of the natural affinity between ducks and geese," said Mollie gravely—her poor little face becoming more and more disconsolate.

"And five thousand to you, mamma, that is nice! and I see nothing about me. You were hoaxing after all, mamma dear, I am so thankful."

"Mollie, when you have a little more experience, you will know that the residue is always at the end."

"Oh, but if it is only the residue—" she cried hopefully.

"Only the residue! but that is the bulk!"

"Oh dear!" cried Mollie. "I thought the residue meant the big end, and the bulk the capacious middle, and—"

"You are incorrigible!" said Lady Mary, drawing her chair from the breakfast table, and warming her feet by the fire. "Come and sit by the fires and if I can, I will explain it all to you. The residue of your uncle's fortune amounts to two hundred thousand pounds, and this is left to you absolutely, but on one condition—"

"And that condition is the impossible thing that I can't believe."

"And that condition is," went on Lady Mary, without taking the smallest notice of the interruption, "that you marry your cousin Stephen Charles Algernon Houghton."

"Was there ever such a man!" cried Mollie.

"And if you refuse to marry him, or marry any one else, then all this money is to go to a nasty hospital. I never heard of such a thing!" cried Lady Mary in a burst of indignation.

"It is the most abominable, dreadful, wicked and intolerable will that ever was made," said Mollie. "And oh! to think that poor dear, good Uncle George should have imagined such iniquity!"

"Granted that it is all you say, Mollie!" said her mother severely, "remember that you have got to do it."

"Mamma!" cried Mollie, in a tone of such amazed horror that Lady Mary in spite of herself could not help laughing.

"Oh Mollie, Mollie, of course you must—don't you see it? You can't ruin this poor young man's prospects—you can't condemn him to beggary. I must appeal to your better side."

"No, no, no!" cried Mollie, shutting her ears with her fingers. "I won't have my better side appealed to! Yes, I will though," very suddenly.

"Of course my better side is all for the hospital—of course I could not think of thwarting Uncle George's philanthropic intentions, certainly not! I am not so bad as that, mamma."

"You are silly this morning," said Lady Mary, "and are taken by surprise also, so I will make allowances for your silliness. Hospital indeed! I never did approve of pauperizing the people and—"

"Good morning, mamma," cried two bright young voices, and the two married daughters came in together.

"Aggie wanted to go to Marshall and Snelgrove's, and I wanted to take her, so I picked her up in Brook street, and we have come in on the way to hear if you have heard from Uncle Edward."

"Yes," said her mother. "I have. Ring the bell, Mollie, for more coffee. What will you have, dear?"

"I should like something—I am awfully hungry," said Meta, undoing her fur hat. "I breakfasted at half-past seven with Tom, who has gone into Hertfordshire for a shoot. Is that muffin quick, Mollie. But how late you are! What time did you go to bed?"

"Nine o'clock," said Mollie absently. "There is nowhere to go now, so we went to bed. Mamma and I are always late in the morning when we go to bed early."

"Oh, do be quiet," said Agnes. "You do chatter so; and I am dying to know about the will."

"He has left you girls—"

"What? Quick, mamma!"

"Five thousand."

"Oh!" Meta jumped up, and executed an animated pas seul in the middle of the room.

"He is an intense old brick!" she cried.

"He isn't," said Mollie mournfully.

"He is, you minx. I shall send Tom a telegram, I think, very carefully worded."

"It is very nice," said Aggie, more sedately.

"Go on, mamma."

"He leaves the big silver dinner-service, and all the Houghtonleigh plate to your brother Charles. It will be very useful to him at Marchlands. Five thousand to me."

"And nothing to the Indian cousin?" asked Meta. "Every one said that he was sure to have the bulk."

Lady Mary glanced at Mollie, who gave a little bound in her chair.

"You talk about what you do not understand, Meta," she said, flushing scarlet. "A will is like a merino sheep—all its value is in its tail."

"What does the child mean? Go on, mamma."

"The residue of the property is left to Mollie on one condition."

"Oh!" cried both again, "my dear Mollie! how magnificent! How much!"

"Two hundred thousand."

"And Mollie is to have it all?"

"Not a sixpence," said Mollie dolefully. "It is a snare and a delusion, a mirage which no earthly traveller can reach, an apple of Sodom which turns to ashes at our lips. It is all left to found a hospital!"

"Mollie," said her mother indignantly, "I did not bring you up to tell positive black lies."

"A lie that is half the truth, is ever the worst of lies," said Mollie, unable to resist the quotation.

"Oh, how you chatter!" said Agnes. "Do tell us the whole thing, mamma, and don't let Mollie interrupt every moment."

"Be quiet, Mollie! The money is left to her, on condition that she marries the Indian cousin, Stephen Houghton, and if she does not marry him it is all to go to found a hospital."

"So Mollie is provided with a fortune and a husband without the trouble of waiting for either," said Meta, pouring out some coffee. "I congratulate you, Mollie."

"I won't be congratulated! There is nothing to congratulate me about."

"My dear little child," said Aggie soothingly.

"Don't say things now that you will be sorry for afterwards. You would not do such an immoral thing as deprive Stephen of his patrimony."

"I should do worse if I were to consent to marry the creature without—without—"

"Without what?" said her mother coldly.

"She means love, mamma," said Meta. "With an utter disregard for the fact that love is an exploded idea, and that nothing is of the smallest consequence except an adequate settlement."

"And a virtuous esteem," put in Aggie.

"Don't be childish, Mollie; you have that already for the worthy Stephen, and there is always a chance that such a beginning may ripen into a warmer sentiment."

"Certainly, Mollie," said Meta, whose young husband had fallen in love with her at first sight, and stoutly maintained that she had done likewise. Their love affairs had been highly satisfactory.

"Well, what is to be done?" said Agnes.

"There is always a next move to everything; what is it to be?"

"I really have not had a moment in which to think," said Lady Mary ruefully. "What with Molly's high-flown nonsense, and your talk, my dear girl, I have not been able to collect my thoughts; and there is a letter from your Aunt I have not even opened yet."

"Ah, that is sure to contain some suggestion of value," cried Meta. "Open it at once, mamma, and let us hear it. Aunt Jennie is always the cleverest of the whole lot."

Lady Mary opened the letter, and her three daughters gathered all round to read it over her shoulder, Meta holding a corner of it to bring it more within the vision of her rather short-sighted eyes. They read as follows:

"My Dear Mary,—Now there must be no nonsense about this matter. I cannot hear two words about it. Of course I can't have poor dear Johnnie's son denuded of his own lawful property for the sake of any romantic trash a silly chit may take into her head."

"How you catch it, Poll!" said Meta.

"Sh—go on."

"Please to impress this at once upon Mollie. I expect her cousin here on Tuesday the eighteenth of next month; he will spend some time with me, and matters shall then be finally arranged as to fitting times and seasons."

"I dare say!" said Mollie indignantly.

"Hush—sh!"

"So, dear Mary, pack up Miss Mollie at once, without any unnecessary delay. You can go and stay with Charles at Marchlands, it will do you all good; and I will undertake Mollie's affairs. She does not leave this house until she has made up her mind to be a reasonable woman. As to love, I do not think any daughter of yours could be so irrational as for one moment to consider it worthy of consideration when a plain duty is involved."

"Oh, yes, I see my duty," said Mollie with a gasp. "There is such a want of hospitals, and this one—"

"My dear Mollie, what on earth do you mean?"

"I won't go to Aunt Jennie's."

"Yes, you will," said her mother.

"Oh, yes, darling, of course you will," said her sisters.

"But I am not going."

"Mamma," said Meta, "we are going to Marshall and Snelgrove's. Do you want anything for Mollie for this visit? Has she got anything in the world to wear?"

"I have got all my season gowns."

"All London, and smelling of smoke. Oh, please, mamma," cried Meta, "let me get her one or two really killing gets-up. Nothing is worn now but tailor-made, and she has got such a nice round, soft little figure."

"Very well, only you must let me have some little choice in the matter. I should like her to look her best."

"Naturally," said Aggie significantly.

"But I won't look my best, if you mean that—that—"

"Yes, that—that!—Come Poll, be reasonable, and I will make you a real duck."

"Turkey twill quilted elder-down, so fitted for an æsthetic figure like mine," said Mollie hysterically.

"The brougham is at the door, my lady."

"There, I must not keep the horses waiting. Quick, Mollie, get your hat."

Mollie ran up stairs.

Lady Mary began giving hurried directions, and had not finished before she reappeared.

"Cloth, Meta, mind, and made to fit thoroughly, and moderate buttons—yours were too large; and patterns for the evening."

"All right, mamma. Come, Aggie, Marshall is selling off, and I mean to buy half the shop at half price."

II.

"Prit-ty, prit-ty Polly Hopkings.  
How do you do-o?—How do you do-o?"

"Ready, Poll! How much longer do you mean to keep a fellow waiting?"

"Mamma, said Mollie, "There is Tom down stairs shrieking for me already, and I wanted to say so many things about—"

"Mollie!" from below.

"You must not keep him waiting, dear, when he is ready to take you to the station. I really think you have said all that there can be to say. If you only knew how tired I am of hearing you say the same thing over and over again."

"But, mamma," cried Mollie, trying very hard to suppress her tears, "I won't do it, mamma, you know."

"Mollie!"

She stamped her little foot.

"My dear little girl, you will lose the train. Give my best love to Aunt Jane, and tell her to write to me at Marchlands."

"Oh, mamma, I—"

"Nonsense, child, you have got three weeks to enjoy Aunt Jennie before Stephen comes, so think no more about it."

"I shall come back on the seventeenth, mamma, that is quite decided."

"Mollie! ten-forty!"

"My dear, do go."

"Good-bye, mamma, till the seventeenth. I shall go to Marchland's if you are not here."

But Tom would wait no longer, he dashed up the stairs five steps at a time.

"You'll be late for the train, you perverse young person, you! Now do you come."

With one hasty kiss Mollie ran down stairs.

Meta was waiting to take her to the station with the four children in the carriage. Tom jumped into a hansom and they were off.

"You look charming, my dear, quite charming!" said her sister. "If only Stephen—"

"Oh, Mettie," cried Mollie in an agony. "If you knew how like pins and needles, mustard and peppercorns, his horrid name is to me, you would forbear."

"I forbear," she answered laughing. "Here we are at Paddington, and Tom gesticulating frantically."

"Bell rung! quick, quick!"

They had to run up the platform, as fast as it was possible to run, to the carriage where Mollie's anxious maid was leaning out of the window, white with suspense.

The train was just starting. Mollie put out her pretty head.

"Good-bye, Tom; tell Meta I won't—won't—"

"Refuse!" shouted Tom. "That is right, dear! that's right!" waving his hand—and Mollie was borne off with a horrible doubt in her mind as to whether he had only pretended to hear wrong or not.

However, she settled down in her corner of the carriage with one of the immortal "Chronicles of Carlingford" to read, and was very uncomfortable.

At one o'clock hunger overpowered prudence, which would have suggested a later hour for luncheon, and Mollie ate all her sandwiches.

She regretted this when five o'clock tea-time came and passed—but regrets were useless. Not until seven o'clock did she reach her destination, and even then there were twenty minutes of warm brougham and fur rug between her and Lady Jane's house, Holfiwell.

All things come to an end. Just as they were arriving her maid suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, I beg your pardon, miss, but Sir Thomas gave me this for you, and I quite forgot it."

"This" was an ornamented box of French bonbons. Mollie was touched, and said, "Dear old Tom!" under her breath, and wished she had had them sooner—they might have helped to fill up the gap at five o'clock, and now it was nearly dinner-time.

The carriage drew up, a hospitable light streamed from the hall door, and in two seconds Mollie found herself in the arms of her aunt in front of a fire large enough to roast an ox whole.

"My dear child," said Aunt Jane, kissing her again and again, "I am so glad to see you, and you are looking so pretty!"

It was a very proper boudoir in which they met, the paper Morris' darkest sage-green, the chimney-piece painted to match: the whole room full of screens, many embroidered sunflowers, many scanty-leaved irises.

A large sofa was drawn up near the fire, on which lay Lady Jane's only daughter, Gwendoline, the owner of the boudoir, and alas! an invalid. Had she been bright with health she would have been a very pretty woman; as she was, there was something very sweet in the delicate face.

"How are you, Cousin Gwendoline," said Mollie, stooping to kiss her cousin affectionately. "I do so hope that you are better."

"I am very well for me," was the cheery answer. "Are you cold, Mollie? Mamma, bring her close to the fire."

"Oh no, thank you," said Mollie, who, coming in from the frosty air, was stilling. "I am as warm as a toast indeed."

"How nice to be quite warm in such weather!" said Gwendoline with a little shiver.

It was too late for tea, so Mollie was taken up to her room to dress and rest before dinner, and there Aunt Jane could say nothing to her, because her maid was getting out her things as quickly as she could, so Mollie felt thankful that the evil moment was put off.

"Did you hear whether anybody was staying here, Burton?" she asked, as soon as the door had closed upon her aunt.

"Yes, miss; your grandmamma is here—no ladies but her ladyship—and Captain Houghton."

"Oh!" said Mollie. She wondered who Captain Houghton was, then suddenly remembered with a horrible qualm that some one had once said that Stephen was a captain.

"Impossible," she said to herself, half-rising from her chair. Her aunt would never be guilty of such a piece of treachery as that! Her cheeks burned so much at the very idea that she wondered how she should ever get them cool for dinner.

Meanwhile an odd conversation was going on in the drawing-room down stairs. Gwendoline in her long pale gown, her wraps of elaborate crewel-work had been carried up stairs; and Lady Jane in a most comfortable and becoming peignoir of crimson plush, had taken her place on the sofa. In front of her, standing with his back to the fire, stood a very tall and very handsome specimen of the Houghton family. Lady Jane found herself in a somewhat embarrassing position. It had never even entered her head that the most natural thing in the world would occur, namely, that her favorite nephew, on hearing of his uncle's will, would immediately run down to Holfiwell to talk it over with her. He had arrived without warning that afternoon.

"Oh, Charlie, Charlie," she said, "I little thought you were so utterly destitute of common sense."

"My dear aunt, I can't for the life of me see what common sense has got to do with it. I am not going to sell myself for money."

"But you see, there is the poor child to consider; one must not be selfish, my dear boy."

"I understand that she has already some small fortune," he said hastily. "And if, as you say, she is so pretty, she is quite sure to marry."

"Two hundred a year," said his aunt. "It has sufficed hitherto for her clothes. Oh, yes, I dare say she will marry, because she is more than pretty; she is quite lovely. I think she is far the prettiest of my sister's daughters, and they are all handsome. Meta and Agnes both married the very moment they came out, and extremely well, too."

"How many are there?"

"Five altogether, Charles—Agnes, Meta, Amelia, Mollie and Algy."

"That makes six," said he suspiciously.