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VOL. 8.—NO. 32.

SACKVILLE, N. B., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1877.

WHOLE NO. 386.

LITERATURE.

TWO COBWEBS.

An Old Man's Story.

From the Detroit Free Press.

"There, I've found the place, Cobweb."

"You have, papa?"

"I have."

"Not a dreadful detached village, or cottage orce, papa?"

"No, no, no, no, my child, it's just what you asked me to get—old, and rugged, and picturesque, and inconvenient, and damp, littered with leaves, and four miles from any railway station; and now a hope you're happy?"

"Oh, I am, dear, dear, dear, father!" she cried, seating herself on my knee, and nestling her head on my shoulder.

"I am so, so glad. You've made me so happy, for I was very tired of London."

I did not answer but sat looking down on the smooth peachy cheek that one of my hands would keep stroking, and at the long yellow hair that hung over the shoulders in waves, and in spite of myself a sigh escaped my lips.

Ruth—Cobweb as I have always called her because she was so soft and downy—started up, and gazing earnestly in my face, and then kissed me very, very fondly.

"Don't think about the past, dear father," she said softly—she always called me father when she was serious.

"Can't help it, child," I said mournfully; and then seeing the tears gather in her eyes, I tried to be cheerful, and smiled as I said, "I have the future as well as the past to make me sad, my dear."

She looked at me wonderingly, but did not speak, and I sat there holding her little hand in my heart as I thought of the past, and how ten years before, just as business was beginning to prosper with me, I was left alone with the little fair-haired girl of eight, who found it so hard to believe that her mother had been taken away never to return, only to live in memories.

And then I thought of my other sorrow—the future—and pictured with agony I cannot describe the days when I should have to resign my claim to another, and be left alone a desolate broken old man.

I am naturally a very common, hard, and business-like old man and selfish. Cobweb had woven herself so round my heart, that in my peevish, irritable way, I was never happy when home from the city without her. She was waiting on me—filling my pipe, mixing my one nightly glass of grog, upon which the butler frowned—in fact, he had once suggested to me that his late master always took pride of an evening.

Cobweb was very quiet as she glided down from my knee to her hassock at my feet, and was evidently thinking as much as I; and at last I brought her up for a thought had come to me with a selfish kind of comfort.

"She'll be quite away from all temptations to leave me, there, anyhow," I said to myself as I thought of the said at homes and balls to which she was so often receiving invitations.

This set me talking—talking, as I called it in my great cunning—to see if there were one of the rocks ahead of which I was in dread.

"How shall you be able to leave all your fair friends—parties—and set-sons?" I said.

"Oh, I'm tired of them all!" she said, clapping her hands.

"A gay cavaliers, with dandy airs and mustaches, and programmes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" she laughed merrily; and then, as it seemed to me in my jealous watchfulness, turning the subject, she began to talk about the country place I had taken.

A fortnight later and we were settled down, and really, with all my London notions, I began to find the calm and repose of the country delicious. Cobweb was delighted, and constantly dragging me to some where or another into the grounds of the pretty old place, where she arranged garden seats in the sunniest, shadiest spots for my special behoof.

There was a wilderness of a wood adjoining the garden, which the possessor had left in a state of nature, saying that he had had the old footpaths and tracks widened into their old winding ways, carefully turfed, and dotted with a chair here and there.

This was Cobweb's favorite place, and if I missed her out in the garden, I knew I should find her here, with the sun shining a shower of golden beams through the network of leaves overhead, to dance and flash among the waving tresses of her long golden hair.

One day I found her leaning on a dead bough which craved an opening in the wood, where all seemed of a delicate twilight green. She was listening intently to the song of a bird overhead, and as I stopped short gazing at the picture before me, I said to myself with a sigh—

"All that's bright must fade! My darling, I wish I had your likeness as you stand. Time flies! I muttered, and the winter comes at last, with bare trees to the woods—gray hairs and wrinkles to the old."

A day or two later I was in the city, where I always went twice a week—for I could not give up business, it was part of my life—and when an old friend dropped in, and in the course of conversation he said—

"By the way, Burrows, why don't you have your portrait painted?"

"Bah! stuff! What for? I said. I'll have my old friend laughing. 'I don't know, only that it would give a poor artist I know a job; and, poor fellow, he wants it badly enough.'"

"Bah! I'm handsome enough without being painted," I said gruffly. Then as a thought flashed through my mind—for I saw again the picture in the wood with Cobweb leaning on the branch—Stop a minute. Can he paint well?"

"Gloriously."

"And is terribly hard up?"

"Horribly, poor fellow."

"How's that?"

"Don't know. He's poor and proud, and the world has dealt very hardly with him. It isn't so smooth with every one, Jack, as it is with us."

"True, Tom, old fellow," I said, "true. Well, look here: I'll give him a job. Would he come down and stay at my place?"

"Oh, yes, if you treat him well; but, as I tell you, he's poor and proud, and quite a gentleman."

"Well, I'm not," I said testily. "But I added, slapping my pocket, 'I can pay him like a gentleman.'"

"Get out, you purse-proud old bungler!" I said my friend, laughing, as he clapped me on the shoulder.

"But there, I'm obliged to you. Have him down, and I'll thank you. He's a gentleman, and a man of honor."

"Oh, I'm not afraid he'll steal the spoons," I said, laughing.

"No, he said drily, 'no fear of that. But you'll make a good picture.'"

"Stuff," I said. "Do you think I'm going to be painted?"

"Why, what are you going to do, then?" he said in an astonished way.

"Let him paint little Cobweb," I said, chuckling, and rubbing my hands.

"My friend gave a long whistle, and after a few more words he left. It did not strike me then, but I remarked afterwards that he seemed disposed to draw back from his proposition; but I was too wrapped up in my plans that I could not think of nothing but the picture in the wood, and I went home full of it, meaning it for a surprise.

Two days later one of the servants announced a Grand old business, and, on his being shown in, I found myself face with a handsome, grave-looking man of about thirty. He was rather shabbily dressed, and looked pale as he bowed to Cobweb, and smiling as I asked, "I have the future as well as the past to make me sad, my dear."

"This annoyed me—a stout, choleric, elderly man—for no one had a right to look at my Cobweb but me; and I spoke rather testily I said:

"Now, sir, when you please I am at your service."

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a low musical voice. "Miss Burrows, I presume. One moment, please—don't move."

Cobweb was sitting in the bay-window, and to my utter astonishment he quickly drew one of the curtains, and then half closed the other, and that the light fell strongly upon her hair.

"I could not speak for the passion bubbling in my throat, and as I stood gazing, he came and took my arm, laid me aside, and then, pointing to where Cobweb sat, as stounded as myself, he said:

"That would be admirable, sir. We could not improve that natural pose."

"What the dickens—Are you mad, sir? What do you mean?"

"I beg your pardon," he said, flushing, and speaking hastily. "I thought you understood. Mr. Eldon, you wished me to paint this young lady's portrait. Am I mistaken?"

"But!" I ejaculated, cooling on the instant. "I beg your pardon. Sit down, sir. You're hungry—of course. How stupid of me—Cobweb, dear, order some lunch into the dining-room."

He smiled, returned the pressure of my hand in a frank, honest way that I liked, and then looked after my darling in a way I did not like; and then, as if by magic, and my jealousy was aroused. I expected some snuffy-looking old painter, not a grave, handsome young fellow. But I remembered Tom Eldon's words—"He is a gentleman, and a lover of every object he sees. I used to wonder how he had learned so much, and found time to paint as well."

"I'd half forgotten it," I said.

"She'll make a good picture, eh?"

"Admirable, sir. That position struck me at once as I entered."

"I'll show you a better one than that, my boy," I chuckled. "But I'm a business man; what's your figure—the price, eh?"

He hesitated, and his hand trembled as he said:

"Fifteen—fifteen guineas be too much?"

"Fifteen!" I said.

"I should take great pains with it—it will be a long task," he said eagerly; and there was trouble in the wrinkles of his forehead. "But if you think it is too much—"

"I think it is an absurd price, sir," I said testily, for Mr. Eldon had said he was very poor. "Why, Mr. Eldon gave four hundred for a bit of a scrap of canvas—"

"Look here, I said, 'Mr. Eldon gave four hundred for a bit of a scrap of canvas—'

"Grantly, you make a good picture of it and I'll give you fifty guineas."

"He flushed, and looked pained.

"Less than half would pay me well, sir," he said.

"Tut, tut! stuff, man! Eldon told me you were poor and hard up. You always will be if you are not more a man of business."

"Sir!" he exclaimed, rising and looking at me angrily. I came here expecting the treatment—"

He stopped short, sank into a chair, covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a child.

"My dear sir—I really—I—I didn't mean—I stammered, presiding at every pore, for the position was most painful."

"No, no," he said hastily, "I beg your pardon. But—but, he continued, striving manfully to master his emotion, "I have been very ill, sir, and I am weak. I have been unfortunate—almost starving at times. I have not broken bread since yesterday morning—I could not without obliging my colors. I—I am much obliged—forgive me—let me go back to town. Oh, my God! it has come to this!"

He sank back half fainting, but started as I roared out, "Go away!" for Cobweb was coming into the room.

"Thank you," he said, taking my hand as he saw that I had done. "It was kind of you."

"My dear fellow," I said, "it's terrible," and I mopped my face.

"There, sit still—back directly."

I ran out to find Cobweb in the hall.

"Oh, you dear, good father!" she cried, with tears in her eyes. "What a kind surprise! But is anything wrong?"

"The artist little faint," I said. "Here, the sherry—biscuits. Stop away a bit."

I ran back with them, and made him take some wine; and, thus revived, he rose and thanked me.

"What are you going to do?" I said, staring.

"I'm going back to town, sir," he said quietly, but with his lower lip trembling. "I am not fit to undertake the task. I thank you, but it is too late. I am not well."

I looked at him as a business man, and in that brief glance, as he looked at me, I saw the struggles of a poor, proud man of genius, who could not battle with the world. I saw the man who had sold, bit by bit, everything he owned in his struggle for daily bread; and as I looked at him, I felt ashamed that I should be so rich, and fat, and well.

"Mr. Grantly," I said, taking his hand, "I am a rough man, and spoiled by bullying people, and having my own way. I beg your pardon for what I have said and am going to say. You came down here, sir, to paint my little girl's portrait, and you are going to paint it before you go back to town; and when you do you are to have fifty guineas in your pocket. Hush! not a word, sir. My old friend Eldon told me that you were a gentleman and a man of honor. Tom Eldon is never deceived. Now, sir, please come into the dining-room and have some lunch. Not a word, please. If good food won't bring you round, I shall have the doctor; for, as the police say, 'I continued, laughing, 'my prisoner—but on parole.'"

He tried to speak, but could not, and turned away.

"All right," I said; and I patted him on the shoulder, and walked away to the window for a few minutes, before I turned back to find more composed.

"At afternoon we all three went to the wood, and I made Cobweb, and as I had seen her stand on that day.

Grantly was delighted, and insisted upon making a sketch at once; and then the days wore on, with the painting progressing slowly, but in a way that was a promise to me, so my young lady's portrait. Am I mistaken?"

Those were delightful days, but there was a storm coming. I quite took to the young fellow, though, and by degrees heard from him his whole story—how, young and eager, he had, five years before, come to town to improve his art, and how before he had encountered my friend Eldon, he had been really, literally dying of sickness, and want.

It was a happy time, that, for when the painting was over for the morning we gardened, or strolled in the country—our new friend being an accomplished botanist, and a lover of every object he sees. I used to wonder how he had learned so much, and found time to paint as well.

I say it was a happy time for the first three weeks, and then there were clouds.

Cobweb was changed. I knew it but too well. I could see it day by day. Grantly was growing distant, too, and strange, and my suspicious grew hour by hour, till I was only kept from breaking out by the recollection of Tom Eldon's words—"He is a gentleman and a man of honor."

"Tom Eldon never was wrong," I said one morning, as I sat alone, "and for a man like that, after my kindness, to take advantage of his position to win that girl's love from me would be the act of the greatest scoundrel."

"May I come in, Mr. Burrows?" said the voice of the man of whom I was thinking.

"Yes, come in," I said; and there we stood looking in each other's eyes.

"He's come to speak to me," I said, and my heart grew very cold, but I concealed my feelings till he spoke, and then I was astonished.

"Mr. Burrows," he said, "I've come to say good-bye."

"Good-bye!" I said.

"Yes, sir, good-bye. I have just wakened from a dream of happiness to a sense of misery of which I cannot speak. Let me be brief, sir, and tell

you that I shall never forget your kindness."

"But you have not finished the picture."

"No, sir, and never shall," he said bitterly. "Mr. Burrows, I cannot stay. I—that is—I need not be said, and to own it, I love your child with all my heart."

"I knew it," I said bitterly.

"And you think I have imposed on your kindness. No, sir, I have not, for I have never shown by word or look—"

"No, you scoundrel!" I said to myself, "but she knows it all the same."

"And, sir, such a dream as mine could never be fulfilled—it would be impossible."

"Yes, I said, in a cold, hard voice, quite impudently.

"God bless you, sir! good-bye."

"You will not say good-bye to her?" I said harshly.

"He shook his head, and as I stood there, hard, selfish and jealous of him, I saw him go down the path, and then breathed freely once more, for he was gone.

Gone, but there was a shadow on my home. Cobweb said not a word and expressed no surprise, not even referring to the picture, but went about the house, slowly drooping day after day, month after month, till the summer time came round again, and I knew that in my jealous selfishness I was breaking her young heart.

She never complained and was as loving as ever; and the tears spangled like dew whenever it was alone.

It was a year after that, I feeling ten years older, went to seek her one afternoon, and found her as usual in the little wood, standing drearily and sad in her position, leaning upon the tree, listening to no bird song now but with a far-off, longing look in her eye, that swept away the last selfish thought from her heart.

I did not let her see me, but went straight up to Eldon's, learned what I wanted, and in a short time after was in a handsome studio in St. John's Wood, staring at the finished picture of my child—painted from memory—against the wall.

As I stood there, I heard the door open, and turning stiff face to face with Grantly.

We looked into each other's eyes for a few minutes without speaking, and then in a trembling and broken voice I said:

"Grantly, I've come as a beggar upon the charity of God forgive me! I've broken my heart!"

It was my turn to sit down and cry like a child, while my dear boy tried to comfort me—telling me, too, with pride how he had worked an income famous, and in a few more months had meant to come down and ask my consent.

But there, I'm mixing it up. Of course he told me that as we were rushing along, having just had time to catch the express; and on reaching the station there was no conveyance, and we had to walk.

The scoundrel would not wait, but ran on without me, and when I got there, panting and hot, I found my darling's heart was melted with all of that belonging to the good man from whose arms she ran to hide her rosy blushes on my breast.

I'm not the selfish old fellow that I was about Cobweb, for here in the old place, where they've let me stay, I pass my time with those two floppy-haired little tyrants, Cobweb and the Second and the Spider, as we call little Frank. As for Cobweb the Second, aged two, she said to me this morning, with her tiny arms around my neck, and her soft cherub cheek against mine: "Oh, papa, dear, I love you as I love her with all my selfish heart."

The diminution of live stock in Great Britain and Ireland within the last few years is causing considerable anxiety in agricultural circles. There has been a decrease in the number of cattle and sheep in Great Britain since 1874 of 7 p. c. There was a steady increase of cattle during 1876, and the number of the cattle in Great Britain for this year shows only 5,698,000,000,000 in Great Britain, which is a loss of 428,000 in three years. At this rate of diminution the head of cattle will be reduced to one-half in about twenty-one years. In Ireland the decrease has been more than 3 p. c. Sheep in Great Britain have decreased to the number of 2,733,000, or 7 p. c. while in Ireland there has been a falling off of 10 p. c. and yet there is now in Great Britain more land under crops or crops for feeding animals than there was in 1872. The decrease in the number of live stock kept is due to one or both of two causes: either the farmers are short of money for buying cattle and sheep for keeping up the yield of their green crops, or disease has visited live stock with such excessive mortality as to discourage farmers from herding.

"Do you believe in the use of the rod, my dear Professor?" asked a lady whose children were making life a burden to all the guests in the hotel. "In some cases, madam; but there are others," glancing at her rambling daughter, "where I prefer the revolver."

There are pretty impudent in these days, but we do not recognize anything quite equal to the impudence of some fellows who at the close of the last century contrived to go in gorgeous attire to a drawing room at St. James's and tried to "go through" the Prince of Wales.

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All kinds of planing and sawing executed at the shortest notice.

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July 26 J. F. ALLISON.

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NOTICE.

THE GO-PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS which existed between the Subscriber and his late father, THOMAS BARR, Esq., is now continued by the Subscriber JOHN MILTON BARR alone under the old style of Firm of

THOMAS BARR & SONS,
Pursuant to the provision of his father's Will.
JOHN MILTON BARR,
Sackville, Oct. 22nd, 1877.

Notice of Removal.

G. H. VENNING,
Clock and Watch Maker.

WOULD respectfully inform the inhabitants of Sackville and vicinity that he has removed his Shop to Mr. John Bell's NEW BUILDING, where he will be happy to attend to his old customers and as many new ones as will favor him with their patronage. He can promise strict attention and reasonable despatch. Plain Gold Rings made to order. Jewellery neatly repaired. sep 26 G. H. V.

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