

BEHIND THE SCENES.

BY NED F. MAH.

There, you young doc! You've got behind the scenes At last! Stand where this canvas foliage screens Your visage. Keep cool. Efface yourself. Be small and lean. And watch the star. Her like there has not been In this age!

I watched the star. She understood to win Men's hearts. Such power, such grace, and tenderness lay in Her fashion. The audience wept like children as they ate And the pit rose at her, moved by a great Commission.

The drop scene fell. She came, and in a jet Black draught plunged pouting lips which trembled yet.

With pathos. Yet—ere they plunged—a sounding slap. "Take that. I'll teach you fools to let my stout get flat!" O bathos!

MISS EULALIE'S ELM-TREE.

It was a magnificent work of nature, Miss Eulalie's elm-tree: so tall and graceful, overhanging the street with its green banner, lending a charming shade to her little parlor, which gave it the air of a dim, cool recess in the woods on a summer's day. Miss Eulalie loved it, and except for her gay young ward, it would seem as if she had little else to love. Her grandfather had planted it; it was a sort of heirloom. She had passed her youth beneath its boughs; her name was carved on its stem. She never looked at the tree without thinking of the one who had carved it there; of the still, moonlight nights they had spent together in its shadow. It gave her both pain and pleasure—pleasure, because it reminded her that he had loved her once; pain, that he loved her no longer. She could not guess why he had never returned to her; what had estranged him was still as great a mystery to her as in those early days of her bereavement, when sorrow and suspense had been her daily companions, rising up and sitting down with her. Perhaps some fairer woman had enslaved him, perhaps he had never really loved her at all, and she experienced a pang of mortified pride when she reflected that she had possibly been vain enough to make the mistake. Year by year she watched the tender green of the elm thicken into dark masses of leaves; year by year she watched them fading and falling, like her own hopes and illusions: it was a poem to her; and yet, after all, it was only Miss Eulalie's elm-tree by permission. The home of her ancestors had fallen into other hands; she had only returned to it by a happy chance, not as its owner. Mrs. Vaughn, the purchaser, had a daughter to be educated, and Miss Eulalie had taken the situation. When Mrs. Vaughn died, she devised that Miss Eulalie should make a home with Isabel, be mother, sister, and teacher, all in one, to that wayward young person, till she should marry—in short, stand in the gap. Miss Eulalie had been used to standing in gaps all her life; this was nothing new. And it was a home—her old home where she had dreamed dreams. When she walked at twilight beneath the old elm its leaves seemed to whisper, "Just here he kissed you first," and "Here you said good-by." No wonder she loved the old tree! "Dangerous thing," said Captain Valentine, tapping its trunk with his cane as he walked by: "hollow-hearted as a jilt, Miss Eulalie."

"You are mistaken," she rejoined; "it is as sound as a nut."

"But it must come down," he added, as if his word were law.

"Never, while I live, Captain Valentine."

"You forget that I am a man of property; that I pay more taxes than any one in Littleford; that I can buy every tree in the place, and cut it down, if I choose."

"Then it is only from pure good nature that you beg my consent to cut down this exquisite tree? Do you know, I have loved it from a child; my grandfather planted it—"

"I know that Miss Isabel owns the whole estate, and I know that this bone of contention, this tree, obstructs the view from my windows, Miss Eulalie, which is more to the point—that its boughs leap into the air so high and spread their branches so wide, that it blots out the view of the sea, 'the open sea';" and he passed on up the long green lawn to his new home, with its marble steps and broad balconies, which made its humble neighbor seem forlorn and shabby. Miss Eulalie looked at the imposing structure, at the parterres of brilliant flowers, at the fountain tossing its jets into the sunlight, the velvet terraces and lawn, and smiled. Why had Captain Valentine chosen to build his palace so near her home? Why had he built at all, at his time of life, with no family to inherit, and no wife to do its honors? How lonely he must be, she thought, in the spacious mansion, with nobody but the servants to speak with! Why had he never married? In the humility of her heart Miss Eulalie never dreamed that it was because she would not marry him. That had happened so many years ago, before he and Anson Andrews had sailed together in the *Water Witch*. How angry he had been then! how jealous of Anson! How bitterly he had sworn that the day should come when she would give her heart's blood to recall the words—when she should regret her folly in dust and ashes! But of course he had forgotten all that—the ravings

of an untamed nature. He had been only second mate then, with little or nothing ahead in the world; to-day he was Captain Valentine, with that world at his feet; the richest man in town, perhaps.

"You might have been mistress up there, Miss Eulalie," he had reminded her one day, pausing at her gateway after the house was done. "But you took your choice—you took your choice, and"—laughing—"they tell us that beggars shouldn't be choosers."

From the very first Captain Valentine had raised a hue and cry about Miss Eulalie's elm-tree; it almost seemed as if he had selected the site to tease her, as if he wished to strip her of everything she loved, since she declined to love himself. "I have bought the most expensive spot in town," he said, "and spared no money, in order that I might open my eyes every morning on my beloved sea, and you refuse to sacrifice a tree for an old friend and neighbor, a tree which will drop of its own will presently."

"Captain Valentine," she said, "you have my word, once for all: the elm shall stand so long as I am mistress here. There need be no more words about it."

"No more words, but deeds," he answered, and a wicked, angry light flamed in his eyes, such as she had seen there once before. The man could hold fire like iron.

But then the subject dropped, as she believed. He did not mention the tree again. "He has given it up," she thought; "he makes a great noise when he can't have his way, and then forgets about it." But Miss Eulalie did not do the Captain justice. One twilight, as she returned from a sick neighbor's, it gave her a curious shock to see her pretty ward, Isabel Vaughn, talking, over the hedge which separated the grounds, to Captain Valentine, who wore a rose in his button-hole.

"See, dear Miss Eulalie," she cried—"see what a basket of roses Captain Valentine has brought us! And might I go up to The Towers to-morrow with Mrs. Van Buff to see Captain Valentine's Corot?"

Miss Eulalie could hardly refuse—why should she?—and Isabel returned in ecstasies with the medieval furniture, the Persian draperies, the wonderful carved ivory, the carpets like woodland moss, the Oriental rugs, and skins of ant-eaters and tawny lions.

"It is just heavenly," she said. "It makes home look squalid and mean. It makes me low-spirited to come back. Why did you let me go, Miss Eulalie? And the elm-tree does interfere with his view more or less; but what of that? He has everything else. He can gallop to the sea in half an hour. Such horses! I've always longed for a saddle-horse. Captain Valentine has promised to lend me a safe one."

And day after day he kept his word, and brought his horses round for Miss Isabel to try, or left flowers and fruits that fairly inundated the small house; or perhaps he gathered the young people together, and gave a fête under his trees, with dancing on the broad veranda hung with festoons of Chinese lanterns; and sometimes Miss Eulalie was obliged to chaperon Isabel, and sit, a faded wall-flower, in the house of her old suitor.

"I wonder why Captain Valentine never married?" said Isabel, after one of these fêtes. "I wonder how he seems to be so everlasting rich; to have no worry about money; to—"

"Isabel," warned Miss Eulalie, "you care too much for money. There are better things."

"Mention one, please."

"You will think I am a sentimental old woman, but love is better a thousandfold."

"I don't know. Love is very nice, but if you must go without everything else, without pretty gowns and jewels and splendor, give me money."

"You are too young to choose. Pretty gowns, jewels, and splendor lose their charm when you are used to them, but love outlasts everything."

But Miss Eulalie's words were wasted. "I love money," Isabel confessed; "I adore clothes. I don't know about love."

In spite of all that had happened, Miss Eulalie was quite unprepared when Isabel said to her: "I've something to tell you. I dare say you know it already, though. I am going to marry Captain Valentine, and wear cashmeres and sapphires, and go abroad, and never have to count my change again. Congratulate me."

"You are joking," cried Miss Eulalie.

"Then it's the best joke in the world! It's no joke to the other girls, let me tell you."

"You are going to marry Captain Valentine? Do you know that he is old enough—"

"To know better."

"Do you love him, Isabel?"

"I like him well enough. I love his money."

"Isabel, don't do it. You will sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. I can't allow it; the idea of your marrying him! It is too preposterous, too mercenary. Why, he was once a lover of my own," pursued Miss Eulalie, forgetting herself.

"Why didn't you marry him, and save me the trouble?" asked Isabel. "But perhaps he was poor then?"

"It was not that."

"What then? You loved somebody else?"

"I don't mind telling you now, Isabel. I had another lover—Anson Andrews. I've never gotten over it. There have been weeks and months when I've tried with all my soul to forget him—to unlove him. He and Captain Valentine sailed together in the *Water Witch*, and when Captain Valentine returned he brought me all the trinkets and letters I had sent Anson Andrews, but never a word more."

"You dear old faithful thing! you shall dress in satin de Lyon and thread lace; we shall live in the lap of luxury; and I'll send word to Anson Andrews if he is at farthest Thule. How oddly things turn out! Fancy my marrying your cast-off lover!"

"Isabel, I beg you not to—"

"Not marry Captain Valentine just because I'm not in love! Perhaps I never shall be in love. You would have me give up so much for a mere sentiment. You mustn't expect everybody to have as intense feelings as yourself. I couldn't remember a man fifteen years if he were the Great Mogul himself."

Captain Valentine and Isabel were married in the little parlor of the old house, shaded by the old elm-tree, which made pretty dancing shadows on the wall. It was a most informal affair; and when it was over, and the clergyman had pocketed his fee, and the bride was trying on her travelling hat, Miss Eulalie stepped into the garden to draw a long breath. What were the working-men doing there at that hour?

"Go into the house, Miss Eulalie," said Captain Valentine. "I am going to celebrate my wedding day. Isabel has made me a wedding gift of the old elm-tree, and I'm cutting it down to burn on the hearth at The Towers, while we look out at the 'dreary winter sea.' Miss Eulalie, when you thwart a Valentine, you do it at your peril. Do you think I married Isabel for love? Revenge is sweeter than love. When you refused to marry me, I swore I would make you repent in dust and ashes."

Miss Eulalie turned silently toward the house, but paused to look back from the doorway. There was a crash, and when a strange blur had cleared away from before her eyes, Captain Valentine lay dead beneath a great arm of the tree, which had snapped as it fell.

"I feel so awfully wicked," said Isabel, some months later, awed and ashamed at finding herself in possession of the coveted wealth without the burdensome conditions. "I've been looking over his papers with Mr. Billings, the executor, and we ferreted out this letter. It's from Anson Andrews. I thought it explained something; at any rate you might like to see it. It's dated Australia, a year ago."

"DEAR VAL" (Miss Eulalie read),—"Here I am, leagues from home, but possessed with an unquenchable longing to hear from the old place, and a homesickness which no money can relieve. Sometimes when I'm smoking in my bungalow, alone, I fancy I am home again under the old elm-tree with Eulalie, still young, with hope in my soul, and presently I awake from the day-dream and berate myself soundly for allowing the old wound to throb and ache. Believe me, old boy, in spite of the fifteen years behind us, my bald head, and her double-dealing, I can not think of her and all I've lost without a weight at my heart. I was a happy wight when we shipped in the *Water Witch*. I'm free to confess I've never seen a happy day since you confided to me that you were going to marry Eulalie. I remember how black you looked when I told you she belonged to me, and how we then and there swore we would neither of us marry such a heartless jilt! How have you weathered it, mess-mate? And what has happened to her? Has she befooled any more true-lovers? After all I believe that

"My heart would bear her and beat Had it lain for a century dead."

"Write me about her, and if the old elm-tree, where I kissed her first, is still standing. 'Our love is dead, but the tree is alive.' No, love is not dead; I can not slay it; it smoulders and torments me."

"Miss Eulalie," said Isabel, when Eulalie had folded the letter with trembling fingers, "there has been a great wrong done. Mr. Billings and I mean to right it. We mean to send word to Anson Andrews; we are going to tell him what an angel you are. We have talked it all over. And about this money—I couldn't make up my mind to touch a cent of it if I were starving. I shall found an hospital with it. Mr. Billings is to help me. We have talked it all over. I don't care for splendor any longer; I have found out, Miss Eulalie, that love is best."

SOME DELUSIONS REGARDING THE OYSTER.

BY CHARLES L. DANA, M.D.

The oyster does not present a very lofty theme, and I venture to apologize first for calling attention to it at the present length.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his address upon America, made no reference to this interesting animal, and we are left to infer that it has no importance in American society, and no definite relation to the problems of evolution. But one may fairly claim that this is a neglect, and that he went too far in ignoring what is so unobtrusive. For the oyster represents, very typically, that absence from work and worry which should characterize the evolved life toward which Americans are advised to strive. Furthermore, the oyster, besides thus offering us certain valuable ideals, is a very considerable factor in the social life of the "R" months.

With this preamble, I venture to submit some corrections of prevalent errors regarding the mollusk in question.

First. That the oyster digests itself. For several years the statement, quite uncontradict-

ed, has been going the rounds of the press, that the oyster digests itself. I believe that Dr. Wm. Roberts first gave currency to it. The theory is that the oyster has a large liver, which contains a diastase, and that this diastase, in some inscrutable way, digests the whole animal, under suitable conditions. Thus it has become a wide-spread belief that the oyster, taken into the stomach, does, by virtue of its liver, execute a kind of *felo de se*. Such a belief is very consoling when a person is committing midnight indiscretions with *ostrea edulis*, and it is unpleasant to be obliged to dispel it. Yet it is a fact, which the accompanying record of experiments will show, that an oyster has no more self-digestive power than a man. The hepatic diastase referred to has no power except to change glycogen into sugar—a very trivial matter. It cannot even digest the liver tissue. I have kept oysters, previously crushed between the teeth, in water (temperature 100° F.) acidulated, and neutral, for hours, with no resulting digestion whatever. I have even dissected out the liver, and given it the best possible chance to eat itself; but neither the mystic diastase nor any other ferment at all affected its succulent autonomy. The oyster does not and cannot digest itself.

Second. That raw oysters are always more digestible than the cooked. I quite admit that the ordinary stew is less digestible than the plate of raw oysters. The stew generally contains milk, butter, and a larger number of oysters, all of which complicates the question. Half a dozen oysters, however, roasted in the shell, or simply boiled a short time, will be digested nearly if not quite as rapidly as the same number of raw. Thus the white of an egg, unless thoroughly beaten, is slowly digested, and similarly, raw beef has to be finely minced in order to be quickly affected by the gastric juice. Cooking, on the other hand, loosens the tissue binding together the muscular fibrils, and allows the peptic juices to penetrate.

Third. That fermented liquors dissolve or digest the oyster. Currency has been given in the *Reporter* and many other journals to the following highly instructive tale: Rev. Dr. Houghton, of Dublin, clergyman, physician and physiologist, was sitting with a friend at a restaurant. Raw oysters had been brought them. Believing, however, that it is proper *desipere in loco*, Dr. Houghton's friend ordered brandy; he himself ordered ale. Wishing to demonstrate the wisdom of his choice and the beauty of physiological processes, Dr. Houghton poured some brandy into one glass, and ale into another, and then dropped an oyster into each. The oyster in the brandy grew hard and shrivelled; that in the ale gradually melted away into a diffusible, invisible solution. Moral: Drink ale with oysters.

Now Dr. Houghton's name and authority have great weight. I doubt if the incident related really occurred, yet it is widely circulated and credited. But it is quite as well, if one is bound to have bad and bibulous habits, to put them upon as near as possible a physiological basis. Therefore I venture to deny the possibility and accuracy of Dr. Houghton's alleged experiment, at least as regards American oysters. These grow hard in ale or beer, instead of dissolving.

When any one becomes so dissolute, therefore, as to drink fermented liquors with his oysters, he should not allow his habits to be confirmed by a false confidence in the potency of malt diastase.

VIEUXTEMPS.

Vieuxtemps, the celebrated violinist, used to tell a strange story of his experience in London. One day, he said, he was crossing London bridge when a poor wretch jumped into the water. There was at once a cry:

"I'll bet he drowns."

"Two to one he doesn't."

"Done."

In the meantime Vieuxtemps hastened to get a boatman and sped to the assistance of the drowning man. Just as they were about to reach him there was a roar from the bridge:

"Leave him alone. There is a wager on it."

The boatman immediately lay on his oars and refused to lend a hand. Vieuxtemps was forced to see the man drown before his eyes. He told this story so often that he finally believed it.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

GEORGE CHANOT, the eminent violin maker, of Paris, has just died.

In Albany, last week, the Senate attended, in a body, the performance of Salvini.

SOME newspapers are fretting over the fact that there has never been any scandal about Albani or Nilsson.

WAGNER left no fortune but his rights as an author, which are worth about \$30,000 a year for thirty years.

NILSSON always sings her prayers before she sings in public. Emma Abbott says her prayers in public.

POPULAR opera has been established in Paris, in the reconstructed building lately occupied by the Panorama of Belfort.

NICOLINI vows he does not sing for pleasure, but to please Mme. Patti. He forgets that he thus annoys thousands of persons by pleasing one.

It may be taken for granted that the Royal College of Music, at South Kensington, will be officially opened by the Prince of Wales in May.