

## IN ONE SHORT YEAR!

Mrs. Blake did not taint. She did not even revile her future daughter-in-law. Percival's manner told her that words to this effect would be wasted. But she entreated her son, by every claim she had upon him, to do nothing hurriedly. Of course she objected to his desire, but she knew her objections would have no influence upon a man so madly in love. But she prayed for delay—literally went upon her knees and besought him not to be married for twelve months. A clever woman was Mrs. Blake. Who knew what unforeseen things might happen in a year?

Percival yielded to some extent. After all before he married he must prepare another home for his mother and sisters. He wished to refurbish the rectory. He wished to be married without undue haste. He wished to see his people friendly with Phillips, and he wished Phillips to get some idea of what a clergyman's wife should be. So he agreed to wait six months, when were cut by his mother's fearful importunities, extended this time of probation till the end of the present year. In exchange, he stipulated that Mrs. Blake should try and bring herself to regard Phillips as a daughter. He told Phillips what he had promised. However, he vowed that the first of January should be his wedding-day.

Mrs. Blake kept, at any rate, the letter of her contract with her son. The intercourse between the rectory and the Hollies seemed so friendly, that it looked as if the rectory's mother was going to make the best of what she thought a bad job. Yet her presentiment was always with her. All through it was placed beyond doubt that Mrs. Russell had a considerable fortune. Mrs. Blake kept her presentiment, and prayed every night that Phillips might escape from this sin. To do her justice, she was not anxious that he should marry money, so Mrs. Russell's fortune did not affect her views. Mrs. Blake played her part very well, and Percival was delighted when she suggested that Phillips should accompany her daughters and herself to London, whither they always went early in June; for Mrs. Blake, although but a country rectory's widow, was a woman of fashion and friends.

It is very possible that whilst pressing this invitation on Phillips Mrs. Blake thought: "She has lived in London. A woman of her extraordinary appearance cannot be forgotten. Some one must surely know all about her."

Although Percival begged her to go with his mother, Phillips hesitated.

"Have you forgotten?" she whispered.

He frowned.

"It is better to face what may be in store than to fly it. Nothing can part us."

"Very well, I will go."

She kissed him and for the thousandth time told him how much she loved him.

A fortnight afterward Mrs. Blake and Phillips were seated side by side at an evening party. The beautiful young widow was the object of much attention. Suddenly Mrs. Blake noticed that her companion stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and begged a gentleman near her to lead her from the room. The hostess was overheard her. Then Mrs. Blake felt sure that something had occurred, and looking round in search of it, saw a man leaning against the opposite wall and eying Phillips with amused wonder.

She knew him well—a rising barrister, with whose family she had long been upon terms of intimacy. So when he turned his eyes from the vanishing Phillips to her vacant chair, Mrs. Blake signed him to fill it.

She cut greetings and inquiries very short.

"You know that lady who just left my side?" she said.

"I thought so. Perhaps I was mistaken. Tell me her name."

She told him.

"It must be the same," he said.

"What do you know of her?" asked Mrs. Blake.

"The law has its secrets as well as the church," said the barrister laughing.

"Don't jest, Richard Graham. I have known you and your family for years, and I ask you to tell me who and what Mrs. Russell is."

Graham glanced at her, and saw she was in earnest. He hesitated, then said:

"I met her professionally. I was her counsel in an action."

"A criminal action?" she asked sharply.

"Well—yes, it was."

"Was she acquitted?"

"No; but I believe she was innocent. I believe it firmly. The jury were fools."

And this woman about to marry the Rector of Chelston! No wonder Mrs. Blake's agitation was great enough to puzzle the barrister.

"Speak low," she said. "What had she done?"

"Her husband—a fearful rogue—was tried for forging and swindling. The rascal tried to save himself at her expense. She was tried with him. The man was sent to penal servitude for five years."

"Yes, yes—but the woman?"

"It was a burning shame," said Graham. "On my soul, I believe she was innocent. The judge thought so too."

"Go on quickly," said Mrs. Blake.

"Her sentence was three months," said Graham reluctantly and sullenly. He hated himself for having talked about this beautiful woman so tactlessly.

"Then," said Mrs. Blake, with emphatic pauses, "she has—actually been—in prison?"

"I suppose so. But why do you want to know? I wish I had said nothing."

"I have a right to know all about her," said Mrs. Blake, icily. "For the sake of sealing your lips, I may tell you that Percival intended matrimony when he was an escape! In prison! What an escape!"

She sailed away in search of her daughters and Phillips. Her head was in a whirl. The Rector of Chelston about to make a criminal wife of this time-lane mad and wicked woman! Her presentiment had come true with a vengeance. She walked from room to room in search of her charges, and mechanically murmured: "What an escape! What an escape!"

Mrs. Russell was willing enough to go home. Mrs. Blake's lip curled as she thought why. She said nothing, but before going to bed telegraphed to her son, bidding him come at once.

He came up by the first train the next morning. Mrs. Blake managed to get Phillips and her daughters out of the way, so was able to meet him alone. His first inquiry was for Phillips. He seemed greatly relieved by hearing she was well.

Then Mrs. Blake made her communication. She was kind enough to suppress all show of triumph; but she told him everything, and wondered at the silence with which he heard it.

"Oh, Percival, my son," he cried, "what an escape!"

"I hoped you would be spared this," he said. "I hoped it might remain unknown to all save Phillips and myself."

"Percival! What are you saying?"

"I knew it before she promised to be my wife. She told me herself. Poor girl, she was really wronged. Her life has been a hard one. Till her wretched husband died in prison it was misery."

"She deceived you—outraged you! Percival! You cannot mean that!"

"This will make no change in my plans. I shall be married on the first of January."

Mrs. Blake really did succumb at the announcement. She fell, a dead heap, into a chair.

"Graham! I shall see at once," continued her son, "and extract his silence. But even if my matter becomes public property it may be lived down."

Mrs. Blake was goaded past endurance. She rose in fierce wrath.

"Deserted boy!" she cried, "You—in your position—Rector of Chelston—to marry a convict, a felon! Percival, I am ashamed of you—abashed! I will go to the bishop—to Lord Keynham. It shall never be!"

In his present mood the names of the bishop and Lord Keynham were to Percival no more than sounding brass.

"I am sorry, very sorry, mother," he said; "but I love Phillips too well to give her up; and surely, if one person above another should exercise Christian charity, it is a clergyman."

"Christian charity!" said Mrs. Blake with biting scorn. "Call it by its true name—blind, unwholesome passion!"

She left him, little knowing how deeply her parting shaft had struck.

He saw Graham; then returned and told Phillips everything. She listened with composure.

"I expected it," she said, "the past can never be obliterated." Then she added, "I do not even offer to free you. You are mine—mine for ever."

The look which accompanied her words added another link to the chain which already bound him.

It was impossible she should remain long with Mrs. Blake. That afternoon, accompanied by the rector, she went back to Chelston. Percival, who considered that he was absolved from his promise to his mother suggested an early day for the marriage.

"No, no," said Phillips. "Why another plan? I have no fear of losing your love. No one shall say I have hurried you into marriage."

Mrs. Blake's hopes revived when, in reply to a long, reproachful letter, her son informed her that the previous arrangement would be adhered to. There was still six months' grace, so Mrs. Blake did not curtail her visit to London. She even went to the seaside for a few weeks as usual. Whilst "that creature" was within stone's throw, the Rectory was not an attractive residence.

At last she returned home, and it soon became an open secret that there was friction between the ladies of the Rectory and the lady of the Hollies, but signs soon multiplied which told the Chelston folk that the rector meant to have his own way.

In the late autumn a house was taken in the neighborhood, and was perfectly well known this was to be Mrs. Blake's house after the marriage. Whispers went round that Mrs. Russell had ordered and extensive trousseau from London. But all that was disposed of when the banns were called in Chelston Church. Then Mrs. Blake's heart really sunk. She had kept, and would keep her own counsel. The worst need not see the Rectory's cold lines. But after this public announcement, which she called an insult to God and man, she had another stormy scene with her "deserted boy." He was more determined than ever to go his own way, so she washed her hands of him altogether. Perhaps she was not to blame.

Although he saw Phillips frequently, the days passed slowly with the rector, and he longed for the moment which for better or worse, would make Phillips his wife.

Service, he preached his sermon, introducing a few fitting words about tomorrow's event; then having lingered in the vestry giving some last instructions to his subordinates, he started to walk across to the Hollies.

In going from the church to the Hollies, about two hundred yards were saved by turning out of the main road and passing through the meadows which ran by Chelston stream. Although this route took one to the back of the house, he usually chose it, Phillips having given him a key which opened the garden gate. He went this way now.

It was a clear starlight night. The ground was turned into iron by a sharp frost. As the rector walked briskly along the river path, he thought of all that had occurred since this time last year, when he bore Phillips into the vestry. Not now did he wish this year taken out of his life. But he prayed that before the next year was over many things which had distressed him might be made right. It was a terrible thing to quarrel with mother and sisters, but then it had been for Phillips's sake, heavens! how he loved that woman!

He returned from the river path and struck across the field toward the Hollies. He had scarcely gone twenty yards when he heard a sharp scream; and looking round, he saw to his right some distance up the river bank, two dark struggling forms. As he ran toward them he saw that the combatants were a man and a woman, but he was almost within arm's length before he realized the truth—that the woman, who appeared to be defending herself from some ruffian's murderous attack, was Phillips.

Percival Blake was a man of immense muscular power. At Oxford he had been famous as an athlete. Without a word he set his teeth an iron spring on Phillips's assailant. He dared not strike him—his crushing blow might fall on the wrong person—but in a second the wretch found his arms wrenched from his victim and half-dislocated, whilst he writhed helplessly in the enraged clergyman's grip.

That invincible old Adam, revenge, lurks in every heart, lay or clerical. Whether it is aroused or not is but a question of the stimulating motive. Surely a man in the rector's situation may be pardoned for inflicting summary punishment. He did not stop to argue the moral points of the case. His blood boiled in a most unclerical, unlikable manner. Without more ado, he put forth all his great strength and hurled the ruffian from him with prodigious force. The man fell with a dull heavy thud on the iron-bound path; moreover, he lay there still and silent; and Percival, whose rage was expended in that effort of strength, felt his heart grow sick from the fear that he had taken human life.

Yet Phillips was his first care. She stood by his side motionless. He faced in the moonlight, looked livid. Her eyes were dilated and full of horror. She paid no heed to his anxious inquiries, but she clasped her hands round his strong right arm—she even seemed to caress it, to be trying to estimate its power.

"Percival," she whispered, "you are strong—you have killed him."

"Go back!" said Percival nervously, and stepping to the fallen man. His feet were soon at rest. The fellow breathed heavily and as he leaned over him the rector detected in that breath a strong smell of ardent spirits. He was glad to find the man a stranger to Chelston—glad that he had been compelled to chastise one of his own flock. Evidently the rogue was a half-drunk on tramp; so, greatly relieved, the rector went back to Phillips.

"He is dead—you have killed him!" she said.

"No—senseless, and I suspect, half-drunk. Now go home. I will run up to the village and fetch the constable."

"Go back and kill him!" she said in a strange voice.

The rector looked at her in amazement. Her large eyes gleamed like those of a wild animal.

"My darling," he said, "you are upset. If he has robbed you or injured you he will pay bitterly for it. Go home, dear Phillips. I will soon be with you."

Again he felt her shudder. Then all at once her calmness and presence of mind seemed to return.

"I was upset," she said. "I don't know what I said. I am sorry. I cannot leave the poor wretch lying there."

The rector was thinking the same thing. "Besides," she continued, "I am only frightened, not hurt. If you send for the police, I will have no fear of losing your love. No one shall say I have hurried you into marriage."

"I will have her account of herself," said Percival sternly. "Wake up!" he continued shaking the tramp's shoulder. All the waking up he seemed capable of was limited to a carry him up to the house—it is not far," suggested Phillips. "Leave him in one of the outhouses until he recovers."

The rector could discover no better plan. He threw his fallen foe, who proved to be a slight, attenuated creature, but whose head and bore him to the Hollies. By Phillips's directions he placed him on the floor of the outhouse. There was no lock to the door, so as the man gave no evidence of an immediate return to consciousness that mattered little.

"We must try and revive him," said Percival rather nervously.

"Come indoors," he said. "I will get something to drink. He is cold. He has been out in the snow for hours. He has been lying on the cold stones and lay there in contrition and abasement until five o'clock in the morning. Then, a humbled man, he crept to the rectory and from sheer exhaustion slept."

Terrified fearful faces met him when he arose. As gently as they could, people told him that an hour ago Mrs. Russell's old servant had found her mistress in her own room, lying on her own bed, dressed as one going to a ball, but quite cold and dead. In a horrified whisper they added it was feared she had committed suicide.

This is the story of that year in a man's life which must be swept away from his memory before he can call himself happy.

THE END.

intoxicating bliss—and yet faintly through it he seemed to hear his mother's words, "blind, unwholesome passion!"

"Percival, Percival!" murmured the woman. "You love me!" His answer was not given in words.

"I am worth loving," she whispered. "Such love is worth a sacrifice. Percival! it is worth more. It is worth a crime!"

Even then he returned her embrace.

Percival, listen. Love, kiss me and list on. That man outside—he is my felon husband."

A sharp fierce cry broke from him. His very lips turned ashen. Yet still he held her to him.

"They told me he was dead—yet he lives. No matter. Shall our love be wrecked by him?"

A cold sweat broke out all over the man. Yet he turned not from her kiss.

"Dearest," she went on in her flute-like voice. "How shall it be. Shall we fly like towards to another land? I am rich, you know."

He shivered from head to foot. Some strange instinct made him turn his eyes to the little bundle she had placed on the table. The woman followed his gaze.

"No," she said, with a low, wild laugh. "No need to fly. Percival, I would have done it alone, but I knew we should love the better if we sinned together. Come."

Still holding his hand, she rose. Percival Blake staggered to his feet. He swayed to and fro like a drunken man, and grasped the table for support. The woman smiled in his face.

"I am worth it," she whispered, as she unwound a large handkerchief and disclosed a stopped bottle.

"It will be painful," she murmured. "It will be like going to sleep. Come, dearest."

She placed the handkerchief and the bottle in one of his nerveless hands; the other she held in her own. She led him, as one leads a blind man, to the easement. She opened it and the keen fresh wintry air out into the perfumed atmosphere of the room like a knife.

On the threshold she paused and clung to him in an aim at frenzied embrace. The man quivered beneath it. Then, hand in hand, they walked down the garden path. They went swiftly, although the man moved as one in a trance.

She led him to the door of the outhouse. It was open. She looked into his set drawn face. Her burning fingers tightened round his icy-cold hand.

"Your hand! trembles, sweet love," she said, and therewith took the handkerchief and the bottle from him.

She passed in, and whilst he stood as one spell-bound, leading for support against the doorpost, she began feeling about for the recumbent figure of her husband.

In a minute she was at her lover's side again. She shook his arm fiercely.

"Get up! He has gone!" she cried. "Seek him! He cannot be far off!"

Her words, her touch, seemed to break the spell. With a low cry Percival Blake fell upon his knees, and lifting up his hands, moved heaven, whose mercy had willed that he should not be a murderer in deed as well as in thought. Then the humbled man bowed his head, and sob after sob broke forth.

The woman stood like a statue. A dreary look of hopeless despair settled on her pallid face. Not a muscle moved—not even when Percival Blake rose to his feet and confronted her with eyes full of horror and aversion.

"Come, dearest," he whispered. "I have another prayer to make—that we may never meet again."

He turned away and went swiftly down the path to the gate by which he had entered. It was but a few steps away. Before he passed through it he cast one look back. Phillips stood as he had left her, tall and erect; her white face, neck and arms glimmered in the wintry moonlight. Then, even then, the old fascination struggled for supremacy—all but mastered him. He took a backward step. Half he made but one sign he must have rushed to her side. But she slight, attenuated creature, but whose head and bore him to the Hollies. By Phillips's directions he placed him on the floor of the outhouse. There was no lock to the door, so as the man gave no evidence of an immediate return to consciousness that mattered little.

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THE CZAR OF RUSSIA'S WINTER PALACE.

The Winter Palace is described as the largest palace in the world, being one-third larger than that of the Emperor of Austria, and unsurpassed in point of splendor. It is the residence of the Czar and his Court during winter, and stands on the left bank of the Neva. The palace is four stories high, or about 80 feet; the frontage is 455 feet in length, in breadth 250 feet.

The principal entrance or "perron des Ambassadeurs" is from the Neva, and leads by a magnificent flight of marble steps to the state apartments of the palace. A gateway in the centre of the building, facing Alexander's Column, opens into a large court. The most magnificent apartments are the Throne Room of Peter I., where the diplomatic corps generally present their congratulations on New Year's Day; the White Hall, the Hall of St. George, a parallelogram of 140 feet by 60 feet; the gallery of the Field-Marshal and the Alexander gallery, a suite of splendid halls, filled with marbles, mosaics, vases, and pictures. When the Imperial family is in residence, about 6,000 persons are lodged in the building.

It is enough to take away your breath to hear of a California onion weighing nearly two pounds.

An exchange has a poem "On the Birth of Twins" and didn't know enough to make the rhyme a couplet.

Any man may set his own value, but the trouble is to make other men believe in his figures.

A GENERAL AGENT AND THE EDITOR.

The Circular Circuit Agent who struck the Town of Bencombe called at the Barle Office for the purpose of insuring a "Four Column Ad. of his Greatest Show on Earth, and the following Dialogue Took Place:

"Has your Paper a Pretty Good Circulation?"

"Oo, yes."

"About 1,000 I suppose?"

"One thousand. Why, Sir, the Barle is the Party Organ in this Congressional District."

"Say, 1,500?"

"Sir!"

"Oh, well I'll pay you on the basis of 2,000 circulation, but it's 1,400, too many."

"Sir! Do you mean to insult me?"

"Will you swear to 3,000 Circulation?"

"Of course I will."

The Editor was taken out and sworn, and the Ad. which the Agent hoped to get in for \$15 cost him \$45—with Complimentary Tickets for the Editor's Family of Sixteen.

MORAL.

The real circulation was 750 copies, but by Store you are Right and then go ahead and swear to it.

## NEWSPAPER FABLES.

A \$ Mark and a \* were one day left close together on the Imposing Stone, and the \$ Mark sighed in a Pensive way and observed:

"I am constantly used to designate the Wealth of the World."

"And I," replied the \*, "as he Bristled up in the Promp set Manner, "am a symbol of Liberty."

"By means of me," continued the \$ Mark, "the Printer can change 1 000,000 Grains of Sand into \$1 000 000."

"Yes, but Heaven's vaults are studded with Stars, and I am frequently used in Print to represent Unknown Quantities."

They were still Boasting when the Approaches came up and Inquired the Cause of the Excitement. Having received an Explanation, he said:

"B\*th are of so little use that I'll chuck you into the pi cases."

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THE TOWEL AND THE STOVE.

A Printing Office Towel suddenly Balled Over one day and called out to the Stove:

"Lands alive! but when were you Blacked Lust?"

"And when were you Washed Last? let me Humblely inquire?" sneered the Stove.

"The Editor uses you for a Spittoon!"

"And the Apprentice uses you for a Mop!"

"You are Cracked in a Dozen places!"

"And I can Count Twenty Holes in you!"

At this moment the Sheriff came in to Levy on the Entire Outfit, and the Standing Galley heaved a Deep Sigh and Observed:

MORAL.

"Reconciliation Never Helps a Bad Matter."

OH, DEAR!

When you hear squalls about the house it's about time you can expect.

The "hire" education of woman, says a close observer, consists in teaching her how to labor for the wages of independence.

Although some new fall bonnets are trimmed with gems, no one will be permitted to "shoot the hat," says the New York Journal.

What a woman makes up her mind to do, she will do, and she will do it to the hilt. The key to this will be for a quarter.

Onida says: "A girl's love must never be bagged but conquered." Paradoxical as it may seem, the girl cannot be conquered unless she conquers.

It is about time the papers let up on publishing that threadbare item about not stirring aewed mushrooms with a silver spoon. In the first place, this a close season for mushrooms, and, secondly, the stockbrokers haven't let us any silver spoons.

Alaska Glaciers.

It was nearly sunset when we began to near the Muir glacier, and the day was near ended when the cliff was reached, and we had anchored near the towering precipice. The shades of evening had gathered about the islands passed during the day and half hid from sight the lower ranges and the trackless forests; but the Fairweather peaks were visible still and glowed with a ghastly light in the isolated height like banks of phosphorus hung above the trees. Around us floated icy fragments, grinding against each other, or floating, solitary, and majestic down the watery way. The scene was grand past all conception, wild and beautiful, and silencing all with admiration. No other wonder of nature equals this glacier of untold age, as it moves silently yet irresistibly down from its birthplace to the sea, crying as it comes the very embodiment of strength, the destroyer of all life. All the glaciers of Switzerland might be combined and together they would not equal this of Gaea's Bay. Set it crawling over the valleys guarded by Mont Blanc, and it would crush the country beneath its weight and leave a wilderness behind. And yet in Alaska, long and broad and wild, it is a mere feature—a single stream among the many.—[San Francisco Chronicle.

Pride.

Pride is base from the necessary foolishness of it, because it cannot but imply that our eyes look downward only for there is not the man so lofty in his standing or capacity, but he must be humble in thinking of the cloud habitation and far sight of the angelic intelligences above him; and in perceiving what infinity there is of things he cannot know nor even reach unto.

## FOREIGN.