

I saw it all as I covered under the holly hedge and he stood chewing the end of meditation outside. I saw how he had fooled us both to the top of our bent till he had learnt which of the two was the richer woman. He had finally decided in my favour, though why he had done so before Mrs. Fitzgerald had told him (as I gathered from her broken words that she had done) that she would lose her possessions by a second marriage, I was at a loss to imagine.

I shrank from the idea of going out and disclosing myself, and yet he made no move, and it was getting near the drossing hour and I was very cold! I could not feel sentimental, do all I would. This man seemed to me too thoroughly base and mean, with his rickety and calculations, for me to waste a thought about again. But I had liked him very much before I knew him to be the mere mercenary man he was; while, in fact, he was still an Apollo to me, and I did not desire to put him to the open confusion of coming out and detecting him. So I covered behind my hedge and gazed at my holly spray fondly: I resolved to wear it still on its own merits entirely, and not for the sake of my recreant lover, Lionel Poole.

He had stood perfectly quiescent for some minutes, apparently quite staggered by the sudden flight of Mrs. Fitzgerald, but he came back to animation with a laugh presently, and exclaimed—

‘By Jove! that pomost spray would be the very thing for little Eva—killed two birds with one stone by coming here—I gained a true statement of the widow’s finances, and I mean to gain a head-dress that will completely subjugate her vain little heart for Miss Travers.’

I had resolved upon wearing that holly spray, but I felt that I could not take it from his hands! So now I rose from my crouching posture with an immense effort—drew myself up to my full height, which isn’t colossal, and jumped at the coveted prize. He heard my efforts to gain it, and he saw a gauntlet glove gather the little spring, but he did not see me, nor did he suspect it was me, for he walked away with a muttered impression for having been overheard by any one.

I tore back to the house and arrayed myself in a rush for dinner. I gathered all my golden curls in a mass behind, and fastened them with a jet comb, from which descended the precious sprig of holly in the search for which I had found the blessed truth that saved me from being that miserable thing, a wife married for her money. Then I went down to dinner, and had the satisfaction of seeing that Mr. Lionel Poole was considerably agitated by the sign thereof.

‘Don’t go away to-morrow,’ I whispered to Captain Villars when the gentlemen joined us after dinner. And he said, ‘No, he wouldn’t, if I really meant it.’ Lionel Poole was rather *distrait* for a time, but he recovered himself as the evening went, and came up to me as I sat on the sofa by Mrs. Fitzgerald, for we had not got up a charade that night.

‘I want you to play me something,’ he said; and when I rose and walked to the piano, he whispered—

‘On the whole, Eva, dearest, I think you had better tell your friend of our engagement at once—that is, to-night. I shall leave the Firs early in the morning, and I could wish you to curtail your visit in order that we may meet in London again soon. I shall see your father to-morrow.’

‘There will be no occasion for your doing so, Mr. Poole,’ I answered, ‘and though I think it will be a becoming thing on your part to leave the Firs as soon as possible, still I must beg that you will not consider me in the matter at all.’

‘Why, Eva!’ he said, ‘I don’t like transformations usually, but this less than any I have ever seen.’

He tried to take my hand, and I could not avoid recoiling, for I felt how base he must have been to have won such a passionate protest from Blanche Fitzgerald.

‘Hodges have ears,’ Mr. Poole, I replied, ‘and the next time you propose making two offers in one day with reservations, don’t let it be behind a thick holly fence.’

I pointed as I spoke to my vivid brilliant ornament, and he glanced at it and accepted his defeat.

‘Then you were there?’ he said presently.

‘I was there,’ I replied, ‘and though I have nothing to tell Mrs. Fitzgerald, I shall say good-bye to you when I leave the room to-night. She shall not hear anything from me, therefore she will think you one degree better than you are—which will still leave you not too bright an object of contemplation.’

‘I will show you that I am not so wholly bad,’ he said. And I did not believe him then. But this year I am compelled to admit there was a strong alloy of goodness in this man to whom I was engaged for two hours before I married Captain Villars. For I have just had a note from Blanche (Fitzgerald no longer) asking us to spend Christmas with them in the new handsome Kensington mansion Lionel Poole worked so hard to gain when he found that the woman who loved him would lose ‘The Firs’ for his sake.

And this result would never have been obtained had I not gone in search of a sprig of holly. A. H. T.  
—London Society.

#### THE SELF-ACCUSING NATURE OF CRIME.

We are so constituted that although external circumstances may conspire to conceal our crime, yet retribution commences immediately after its commission. No sooner has the murderer accomplished his full purpose, than the agonies of an aroused accusing conscience begin to torment him. Sleep forsakes his eyelids, the darkness of the night is peopled with horrible phantoms. They crowd around his pillow, and shriek the name of the dark crime into his ear. Daylight brings no relief, for though he go forth into the busy world, and mingle with the bustling crowds of his fellow-men, though he tries to lose himself in the distraction of guilt; yet in all its scenes the phantom is at his elbow, gazing at him with its hollow eyes, appalling him with its speechless accusations, and high above the noise of many voices, the strains of music, the roar of cannon, or the peal of thunder, the death shriek of his victim rings through his soul, for the powers of nature as well as the hand of man are alike directed against him as against one common

enemy. What a fallacy is crime, seeing that it makes a brave man fear life more than death. And not only is this self-inflicting retribution attendant upon murder, the highest of all crimes, but in a proportionate degree it accompanies every infringement of the moral law. We may commit crime without detection, but we can no more commit crime without punishment than we can infuse poison into the blood without injury. It is one of the most subtle workings of our internal constitution, and is in strict keeping with the analogies of nature. We expose our physical constitutions to the action of forces inimical to it, whether of damp, cold, or heat, and we suffer accordingly; and if we expose our moral constitution to the action of crime, we must entail upon ourselves, as an inevitable consequence, the punishment of an avenging conscience—a moral palsy, a wounded self-respect, a loss of that conscious rectitude which can alone make a man decisive in action, bold in danger, and generous and good in all things. Take a case in point. There is a man who has broken the laws of his country, has stolen, perjured, or forged; the vengeance of social justice overtakes him, he is deprived of the rights of citizenship, and confined in prison, whence, after an assigned period, he comes out, and we say his punishment is over—it is not so, his punishment is going on within, and will probably go on as long as he lives. He has lost caste, has stilled his self-respect; henceforth he will never feel the same proud integrity amongst his fellow-men; there is a foul brand on his forehead, a felon-feeling in his heart, which will make his lips falter when he pronounces the words of probity and honour, for they will fall from him like lies. Society may welcome him back, may honour him with her most distinguished gifts; but in vain; he will drag the fetid corpse of his moral life through all the world’s fairest scenes, and though men may bow before him, yet the applause of honesty will be his most bitter reproach, for to himself he will always be a lost ruined man. Such is the terrible price of the departure from rectitude. Human law may assign punishment, but it cannot atone for the loss of that feeling of spotless honour, that consciousness of innocence which once gone can never be regained, and that whispering of the accusing self which will blight the fairest life and blast the happiest hour.—*Dublin University Magazine.*

#### THE REIGN OF LAW.

The power of forward motion is given to birds, first by the direction in which the whole wing feathers are set, and next by the structure given to each feather in itself. The wing feathers are all set backwards, that is, in the direction opposite to that in which the bird moves, whilst each feather is at the same time so constructed as to be strong and rigid towards its base, and extremely flexible and elastic towards its end. On the other hand the front of the wing, along the greater part of its length, is a stiff hard edge, wholly unelastic and unyielding to the air. The anterior and posterior webs of each feather are adjusted on the same principle. The consequence of this disposition of the parts as a whole, and of this construction of each of the parts, is, that the air which is struck and compressed in the hollow of the wing, being unable to escape through the wing, owing to the closing upwards of the feathers against each other, and being also unable to escape forwards owing to the rigidity of the bones and of the quills in that direction, finds its easiest escape backwards. In passing backwards it lifts by its force the elastic ends of the feathers, and thus whilst effecting this escape, in obedience to the law of action and reaction, it communicates, in its passage along the whole line of both wings, a corresponding push forwards to the body of the bird. By this elaborate mechanical contrivance the same volume of air is made to perform the double duty of yielding pressure enough to sustain the bird’s weight against the force of gravity, and also of communicating to it a forward impulse. The bird, therefore, has nothing to do but to repeat with the requisite velocity and strength its perpendicular blows upon the air, and by virtue of the structure of its wings the same blow both sustains and propels it.—*Good Words.*



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