

[For the News.]

MOLLIE'S ANSWER.

O Mollie dear! before you leave me,
Ere yet your slumbers you begin,
I have a question, sure to whither,
That troubles all my peace within.
I hope to make a benefactor
Out of your own sweet self, as there;
You'll be a darling, if you'll only—
Only say yes, and nothing more.

Ye know the little stream that's windin'
Adown the shady glen below.
Ye know how winter's cold can chain it
Stiff and dark, and stay its flow.
Until the blessed Spring comes smilin'
All fresh and bright, (like you as there.)
And breathing o'er its icy prison,
Gives to it life and voice once more.

Well Mollie, you must now imagine,
Just suppose a little while
That I'm the chained up, frozen river,
Waiting Spring's sweet, welcome smile.
Bound soul and body, captivated,
Chained by— Ah! sure yourself can guess.
I'm not myself, but you'll restore me,
If—if you'll only answer yes.

Marrone! I see your answer comin'.
Not set in words, but sure 'tis known.
That Love can talk without pronouncin',
Having a language of its own.
Ah! 'tis your heart that's speakin' Mollie,
Speaking through your eyes as there.
The Spring is come, the ice is broken,
And Mollie I'm myself once more.

E. A. STURTON.

Quebec, 16th September, 1881.

THE FATEFUL FIRST.

"Died, on the 1st of September, Ernest Frederick Walters, aged thirty-one." The announcement caught my eye amongst a string of similar funeral details in the column of the *Times*, and raised some curious reflections. He was dead, then, my schoolboy and college friend, whom I had not seen for six years, and who, the very last time we met, had told me, laughingly, that I should probably be reminded of him in a few years by seeing his name in print. A strange bizarre character, with much natural mirth and a rich vein of humour; but overpowered by the one sombre mastering idea that he was born to be the victim of some hereditary Nemesis. For his father, whom he had never seen, had killed his dearest friend in a duel—of course for a woman's sake—and had shot himself through the head the same day; and his grandfather had perished in some wild eastern war, in which he had madly plunged to forget the too terrible fascinations of a cold-hearted and treacherous girl. "It will be a bad day for me when I fall in love," he used to say. "We do not indulge the tender passion in our family harmlessly." "Well, it can be avoided, surely," I answered. He merely shrugged his shoulders. "We shall see. I worship the old Greek goddess, *Hesperia the Adaptor*."

Six years ago I found him at an hotel at Nice, terribly altered, a mad gambler, a careless, furious libertine, living from hand to mouth, with all the sunshine gone out of his life, and the visible imprint of his Nemesis on his brow. And there he told me his tale. Seeing his name in the paper to-day brings the very words he used back to me; for I shall not easily forget his eyes, and his shaking hand, and that tumbler, so often emptied, so often replenished, on the table by his side.

"Are you a sportsman? Well, then, when you worship at the shrine of St. Partridge, remember me. I worship at another shrine: I worship *Adrasteia*, as I used to tell you in college days. But the day on which I offer my libations is the day on which you and others start for the stubble. It is the 1st of September. You won't forget me, now; for here is a link easily remembered. When the 1st of September comes round, think of Ernest Walters."

"I have told you often of my father, have I not? And of my grandfather? Well, they were both born on the 1st of September: so was I. Most of the males of my family have that natal day; it is the sign and seal of their predestination. My elder brother was the only exception; and he is, or rather was, a lucky man. He was, I say, until my cursed fate crossed his path. Then, as evil is always stronger than good, my fate swept him down. You had better leave this hotel to-morrow; perhaps even yet my companionship may have the power to harm you." Here he stopped and looked hard at me; then, with a sigh, he turned his hand to the familiar glass by his side. I tried to smile and shake my head, mutely to reassure him that to me, at least, he did not appear contagious. But I could not speak. There was a strange fascination about him which compelled my silence till his tale was finished.

"Soon after you left college," he resumed, "I went down into Somersetshire to read for my final schools. It was at my brother's recommendation that I went to that region; for he told me that to him Somersetshire was the best of counties, for it had given him the girl whom he was going to marry. The news of his intended marriage surprised me; for we are not a fortunate family in love affairs. But, then, he was not born on the 1st of September."

"To me, at all events, Somersetshire presented few attractions. I read a little, I wandered much over the Quantocks and the borders of Exmoor, and I bored myself a great deal. Then came the opening of the hunting season, with meets of the stag-hounds at Cloutsham and Hawkcombe Head and Eggesford. Mounted on a rough nag, lent me by the innkeeper at Porlock, I felt all the inspiration of Whyte-Melville and 'Lorna Doone'; and the hunting fra-

ternity of the neighbourhood got accustomed to see a man, who couldn't ride, and was villainously mounted, tumbling up and down as best he could the coombes and precipices of Exmoor. My reading, it is true, did not prosper; but I had postponed that to a more convenient season, and I felt happier than I had done for years.

"The day, I remember, was miserably wet and cold, and for that reason, or some other, I did not join the hunting-party. At four in the afternoon I threw aside my Plato—do you remember where Socrates prays that he may not incur the vengeance of *Adrasteia*?—and sallied out through the drooping lanes and over the miserable bedabbed moor. Wandering aimlessly, I at last struck upon one of the lanes which led down to the little village of Porlock, intending to return to my Greek philosopher. Suddenly there smote upon my ears a cry, the voice of some woman in distress, shrieking for assistance, at first far away, then gradually coming nearer to where I stood; then, as I ran to meet the voice, there showed itself for a moment clear against the sky the figure of a girl clinging to a horse, which was madly careering down the hillside, her habit flying in the wind, hatless, with hair streaming behind her, and with wild eyes seeking some help or refuge from her only too probable fate. A rush, a wild leap, a shriek, and a dull crash. The horse had leapt into the lane, and had fallen prone fifty yards in front of me. Underneath, as it seemed to me, was a motionless heap—black habit, gold hair, and white face all mixed in a horrible confusion of death."

He stopped again to moisten his dry lips, and shadowed for a few moments his eyes with his hands. I listened, spell-bound.

"Was she dead? No. I carried her in her death-like swoon, painfully and slowly, into Porlock. I carried her into my own room in the inn, with the white hands hanging down so piteously; and for six weeks she lay there on my own bed, hovering between death and life, saying never a word—a mute suffering angel, with only the innkeeper's wife, her old father, and myself as her nurses. And so the time passed, with my books neglected, and my vacation spent in hanging about the room of a sick girl and talking to her father. To him I seemed to be her saviour. (How horribly he smiled as he laid his hands once more on the tumbler of spirits!) "Yes, I was indeed her saviour! And she thought so too when she slowly crept back again from the dark valley into the borders of the light of day, and when she first could leave her bed, and when she first could venture ever so little a way out of doors with a man's arm to help her. Saviour and preserver, she said, to whom she owed her life and everything. Everything except her happiness. For, as our confidence grew, and she knew how much I loved her, she told me many things of her own past life, of her foolish passion for riding when the doctors told her she was suffering from heart-disease; above all, did she tell me of a still more foolish passion for a man, to whom she had last year become engaged, almost before she well knew what love was. So she said, and I believed her; for there was that in her eyes which told me that she knew love now. How do these things grow, old friend! Contiguity, curiosity, proximity under special circumstances, ambition, vanity, selfishness—what nonsense the philosophers talk! Love is unanalysed in its essence, and unanalysable. It is itself, like honour and sorrow and all-powerful primitive feeling. Every one knows it ere he dies, but nobody can tell what it is. To define it is like trying to define God."

His voice had a tenderer sound, and his eyes a softer look. But only for a moment, and the gentle benign gleam vanished before the habitual cynical bitter smile. Once more I tried to speak, but I could not. I could only hold out my hand, which he refused to take with a deprecatory gesture.

"O, it was a long struggle! If it had not been, it would not have been worth the winning; but I triumphed at last. What woman does not yield when she feels the pressure of her fate day by day, and herself owns the rebellious inclination of her heart? She loved me; I loved her. There are the premises, and the conclusion, albeit unknown to Aristotelian logic, is rigorously drawn. She left her father and her home, and fled with me. It is done, statistics tell us, over and over again; but some do it because they are under the guidance of a baleful destiny. They cannot help or avoid their fate. It is greater than they are, like the stars and the vault of heaven, which hear and disdain our prayers."

"We went together far from Somersetshire, happier than I can tell, leaving sorrow and ruin behind us, but ourselves full of a strange delirious joy. We would not think, we dared not remember, we shut our eyes to the future. O, the mad infatuation of those days!"

He stopped abruptly, and for a long time there was silence. The candles flickered in their sockets, stirred by the rising night wind. Far away the cry of some bird came with a weird sound through the open window. I could not help a shudder. At length he began again:

"Why do I pause? Well, I love the tale, and hate it, all at once, and now I have nearly done. Here is the last scene. On the Yorkshire coast you may know the long reef of rocks which runs out above the town of Filey. Beyond one may see on a clear night the twinkling lights of Scarborough. Here we were wandering together, still lapped in amatory slumbers; and the waves were beginning to smite the rocks and leap over their heads, and on the horizon the

clouds were gathering in sombre masses. The day had been fine, but at sundown the weather showed signs of change. It was the night of the 1st of September. There he came, climbing over the ridges of rock, that figure which we had been watching with idle curiosity—a tall, well-set figure of about the same height as myself, but broader and stouter and better made. At length he was only twenty yards from where we sat, but the darkness which was gathering fast prevented me from seeing his face. Then a sudden gleam of wild moonlight shot across the rock; I saw her look with strange eagerness at the face of the stranger (did I tell you her name? It was Helen); I saw him start and glance first at one, then at the other, of the pair of lovers before him, and in a moment I knew and recognized the whole tragedy. I had my arm round my brother's affianced bride!"

How nervously he drank his glass, how wet was his forehead with cold drops of perspiration, will never be obliterated from my memory. I remember, too, how a puff of wind extinguished our candles, and how I could hear the flapping of a bat's wings circling round our heads. Some scenes one remembers down to the smallest detail. The words seemed torn from him as he spoke.

"We stood there, we two, brothers of the same father and mother, looking in each other's faces, each of us knowing exactly what had happened, with the fair Helen, with her frightened eyes and imploring hands, standing mute by our side. And I struck him there as he stood, my own brother, and we closed to grapple on the slippery rocks; and neither of us, so fierce was our present hate, thought of the poor girl whom we had both loved, and only one of us possessed. And as we struggled close and hard, there was a cry and a spring and a falling form, and we both knelt over a dead body. Her heart had broken, and one of us and both of us were her murderers."

"That is all," he said roughly, and went away in the darkness, six years ago. His death is now reported in the paper under my hand, on the 1st of September. *Hesperia the Adaptor*."

THE GOOD EFFECTS OF A LITTLE COMMON-SENSE.

The other day, you will remember, it rained in a drizzling sort of way from morning until night, and froze as it fell. The next morning everything, especially back stoops, was covered with ice. One of our neighbours went out early into the back yard with a pan of ashes in his arms. The instant he stepped from the door upon the stoop that foot flew out from under him in a flash, and he went down the steps with the same foot sticking straight ahead and the other sticking straight out behind, with the pan still in his arms. It was a great wonder he wasn't killed; as it was, he was so fearfully wrenched through the hips that he had to be lifted up and carried into the house, being almost blinded, too, by the ashes. I understand that nearly one hundred persons went off their stoops in a similar unpremeditated way that morning. My wife said to me, on hearing of our neighbour's mishap,—

"It will learn him to use his head after this. There was no need at all of his falling off that stoop, and if he hadn't been so stupid it would not have happened."

"It was a stupid performance," I said, dreamily.

"Of course it was," she went on. "He knew it rained all day yesterday, and he knew it froze, and he knew that everything was a glare of ice last night, and so it must be this morning. And he ought to have had on rubbers when he went out there, or been careful where he stepped. And if he had that he wouldn't have made such a spectacle of himself, and hurt himself so, and be laid up, perhaps, for several days. I haven't myself got any sympathy for him, or for any one that ain't got any more sense than to do that."

Upon that my wife went back to the kitchen to her work, and I fell to musing upon what she had said. I confess there was some wisdom in it. The spectacle of a hundred people in a New England town—that New England so well known for its hard, sterling sense—sliding off back stoops, pans of ashes in their arms, and screaming and swearing in their rage, is not a pleasant one to contemplate, especially when, as my wife says, the performance could be avoided by the exercise of a little common-sense. And yet how many casualties could be saved by this same exercise! It is not only by stepping from back stoops, but in a hundred matters a little wisdom would—Great heavens, what is it!

It is nearly half an hour since this writing was interrupted at the exclamation and even now I cannot understand, I can scarcely comprehend, what has happened.

There was a short, sharp scream from a woman. It came from the rear of the house. I went into the kitchen, thence to the back door, and—well! You would not believe it, but there at the feet of the stoop, struggling to get on her feet, and with an overturned pan of potato parings about her, was my wife.

I stood transfixed by the sight, with all the power of motion gone from me, and while I stared at her she reached her feet, and marched deliberately up the steps, and by me into the house, with the lines of her face drawn tight and hard. I mechanically followed.

"How on earth came you down there?" I managed to ask.

"How do you suppose I came there?" she retorted.

"I'm sure you didn't run there, because you were just talking about that, and you said—"

"For heaven's sake stop your noise," she angrily cried. "You are enough to drive a saint mad with your talk. I fell, and you know I fell, and if you had any gumption about you, or cared for me one bit, you would have shovelled the ice from that stoop an hour ago."

And then she darted out of the room, shutting the door as if it required all her strength to do it, and I came back to this writing, and am trying my best to reconcile the several elements of the situation.

HOW HE BUILT THE DOG'S HOUSE.

It was about nine a.m. when he began. At that hour my wife directed my attention to the fact that something was going on next door, and I went to the window. The man, with a hammer in his hand, was there, and so, also, were the boy and the dog. The boy is about fourteen years old, small for his age, with a face so white as to lead the casual observer to infer that he is an invalid. But he isn't. Not by a long sight. He got the dog the day before. The animal was a shaggy-haired dog, that incessantly wagged its tail, and crouched low to the ground when spoken to, and turned over on its back when patted. It was a very propitiatory dog.

The Man Next Door was in the best of spirits. He patted the dog, and laughed, and his whole expression was one of great satisfaction. He had a hammer, and a saw, and a sawer of nails. It was the regular family collection of nails—four straight ones and forty crooked ones.

He had plenty of material for the building of the dog-house. There were two dry-goods boxes. He knocked them apart, and was careful in doing it to save the nails. After he had got the pieces thus separated, he began to lay out the plan for the house. It was going to be quite an elaborate affair, judging from the care with which he shut one eye, and the number of times he stepped back and looked at the idea. Once, when he stepped back, he stepped on the dog, and the dog yelped and verged so suddenly and so unexpectedly that The Man Next Door lost his balance, and abruptly sat down on the saucer of nails. He got up without smiling, and mechanically looked around for the dog, with the hammer still in his hand. The dog had continued to verge, however, and was now out of sight, the boy being in sympathetic pursuit. Pretty soon The Man Next Door ceased to rub himself, and returned to the work of construction. He worked vigorously. He drove four stakes into the earth, and built up four walls to them. He called for his wife, and she came out ostensibly to hold the boards as he nailed them, but really to tell him how to do it. He knew how to do it himself, however, and lost no time in convincing her of the fact. Still she didn't let go of her idea. She held two boards for him, and was holding the third, when a carriage drove by, in which was a woman that had on a new kind of dolman. The wife of The Man Next Door was so startled by this appearance, which must have been entirely unexpected to her, that she dropped the end of the board she was holding to run out to the other side of the house, where a much better view could be obtained. It was an unfortunate time to select for the purpose. He had a nail partly set, and was about to give it a climaxing blow—in fact the hammer was already descending—when she dropped her end.

I wasn't exactly where I could see the whole performance. I saw the hammer go down, however, and then I saw it some thirty feet in the air travelling in a circle, and The Man Next Door was bending over and straightening up again, and holding on to one hand as if it was all he had on earth.

I could see by the movement of her eyes that she was talking to him, and I looked at his lips to see if they were moving in response, but they were not. They were tightly clinched; and after he had kicked down what he had built up, and jumped up and down on the saucer of nails until he had driven them into the earth, he went into the house.

Later in the day my wife saw his wife, and asked her what was the matter. She said her husband hit his thumb with the hammer, and that he ought not to drive nails anyway, because he didn't understand how to do it.

PEOPLE who suffer from Lung, Throat, or Kidney diseases, and have tried all kinds of medicine with little or no benefit, and who despair of ever being cured, have still a resource left in Electricity, which is fast taking the place of almost all other methods of treatment, being mild, potent and harmless; it is the safest system known to man, and the most thoroughly scientific curative power ever discerned. As time advances, greater discoveries are made in the method of applying this electric fluid; among the most recent and best modes of using electricity is by wearing one of Norman's Electric Curative Belts, manufactured by Mr. A. Norman, 4 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ont.

VIRTUE ACKNOWLEDGED.—Mrs. Ira Mullhol-land, Oakville, writes: "For several years I have suffered from oft-recurring bilious headaches, dyspepsia, and complaints peculiar to my sex. Since using your Burdock Blood Bitters I am entirely relieved."