

The daughter will remain with us, at least until her father returns, and not improbably for several weeks. She is, in my judgement, a remarkably fine girl—young lady I should say—not pretty exactly—or not *always* pretty. When animated, as in conversation, then the countenance, which some would consider almost lovely while unmoved, becomes fairly radiant, even beautiful. She is intelligent, indeed an excellent reasoner, well educated, well read, and a good conversationalist, which implies being sympathetic and an appreciative listener, as well as a good talker. I am sure you would be quite captivated with this young lady, crusty old hack that you are, though not of course made captive. Who would dream of cousin Dick surrendering to the charms, however varied and great, of any of the fair sex, after having “run a muck”—unscathed?—Oh! who can say? It would be absurd though, would it not? for a man of thirty-five to be captured by a young lady more than ten years his junior. I had for the moment forgotten, also I would not have written this lightly, that Miss Ruth is in quite a precarious state of health. The symptoms are certainly those of at least the early stage of pulmonary trouble, but as there is no hereditary predisposition to consumption, I hope that judicious treatment will be effectual in restoring her to her usual robust health. Last winter Miss Ruth while skating at the rink got very much heated, and instead of walking home, she took the street cars and became thoroughly chilled. Then instead of taking a warm bath and hot drinks and going to bed, she attended a party the same evening, lightly attired of course. A succession of parties followed, to which she, with unflinching determination worthy a better cause, dragged herself. Late and unwholesome suppers, late hours, exposure and fatigue complete the history of the case.

Beside H—'s anxiety on account of his daughter he has had a great deal of trouble with a cantankerous neighbor about a disputed boundary, arising out of a change in the course of a small river.

The business which has occasioned his trip to the States would furnish material for the plot of a novel. When about six or seven years of age H— came from Boston to Halifax with a gentleman and lady whom he called, and has until a few weeks ago regarded as his father and mother. These people were in good circumstances financially, and when the old gentleman died, a few days subsequent to the demise of his wife, he left H— enough money to give him a good start in business.

The box in which old Mr. H—'s will was found after his death was taken charge of by and has since remained in the care of his lawyer, until a few days ago, when on retiring from the active duties of his profession, this gentleman sent the box to H—. An examination of the contents revealed besides files of old letters, mortgages, deeds and other papers, a number of volumes of which the old gentleman had kept a diary for a long series of years. These journals Miss Ruth became much interested in, and from her perusal of them learned that her father had been taken from an orphan asylum in Boston, and had been formally and legally adopted by his supposed parents, who, as I have already intimated, a few years thereafter removed to this city. When Miss Ruth communicated this startling discovery to her father, the to him terrible possibility and indeed very great probability of a bar sinister immediately crossed his mind, and, as the certainty of illegitimacy could not be more terrible than uncertainty, as to his parentage, and as there was a ray of hope that inquiry might establish the legitimacy of his birth, H— determined to investigate the matter thoroughly. When my friend informed me of the discovery he had made concerning his adoption by his supposed parents, I immediately recalled having found among grandfather's letters one from a friend residing in Boston, in which mention was made of the death of a young married lady who with her husband had moved to that city from Halifax, and of this lady's infant son having been placed in an orphan asylum by his father, who had then left Boston for the gold fields of California. On referring again to this letter I found that this child would, if still alive, be about H—'s age. This revelation afforded more than a ray of hope to my friend's mind of the possibility of establishing his legitimacy, and his trip to Boston is undertaken with the hope of finding there some clue that will lead to his identification with the infant left at the orphanage as narrated in the letter to my grandfather.

You will probably remember that when you were here last spring I told you about a young couple in whom H— and I had become greatly interested, on account of their intelligence, their romantic attachment to each other, and their family history.

Since H— left for Boston, while in conversation with an old lady, from whom I had learned much of the family history of these young people, they are, I believe, second or third cousins—you know I get all mixed up by intricate relationship—I learned that an uncle or great uncle of theirs had emigrated with his bride to Boston about a year prior to the events recorded in the letter to my grandfather. If the identity of these two couples can be established—and I have no doubt but that it can and will be—and H— succeed in obtaining sufficient proof of his identity with the orphan infant, materials are, as I have said, furnished for a very good plot for a novel.

Now I must close this letter and attend to duties which have been neglecting while writing it. I shall not be at all surprised if we have the pleasure of a visit from you very soon. Of course you know that you will be welcome at any time and at all times.

As ever your friend and loving cousin,

S. C.

P. S.— “There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out.”

And out of things apparently evil related in this letter I hope that some soul of goodness will be distilled for you.



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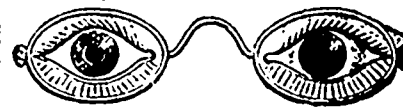
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