

"Why not? I play fairly well, and there really seems no time to get a substitute, even if I knew one—which I don't."

"Oh, sir, you cannot do such a thing; it is impossible!" cried the youth. "I wish I had let you know earlier. It is not fair to give you all this trouble; you have been always much too good to me as it is. My life is one long debt to you."

"Nonsense, I have done little enough," exclaimed Heron Archer, looking sadly at the wasted form and delicate features before him.

In his heart he knew how little benefit could be done him; how short a span of life remained for the troubles and perplexities of earth.

There was a moment's silence. Then Heron Archer spoke abruptly.

"Come," he said, "I have made up my mind; I shall like the duty immensely. You know I am fond of masquerading. This will be a new character to come out in. Give me the address."

"You are only joking, sir, surely," pleaded the young man. "Supposing anyone you know happened to be at the ball?"

"There is no chance of that. I know no one in this neighbourhood; even if I was recognized I should not care. It would only be one eccentricity the more for my friends to chronicle."

The invalid looked admiringly up at the handsome, determined face.

"Your acts of eccentricity are all noble and generous," he murmured. "How few of your friends know you really as you are."

"It is just as well they do not," said Heron Archer lightly. "No man bears being turned inside out, you know. There is always a little something about ourselves which we like to keep dark. But we are wasting time. It gets late, and I must go home and don my evening dress. Where do we sit—in a gallery?"

"No; there is a platform, I believe."

"Where—w! Then the guests have a full view of us?"

"Yes. Pray don't carry out your words, sir. Supposing anything happened that might make you regret it?"

Heron Archer laughed. "Just as if anything could," he said lightly. "Nonsense, Staunton; my mind is made up. It will be a great fun, and I shall come round to-morrow and bring your two guineas with me. If I got you a deputy now you would be a loser by the transaction."

"I would rather lose it twenty times over, sir, than that you should repent your determination of to-night."

"I shall not repent it," laughed the young barrister good-humouredly. "Good-bye, now, and go to bed and rest yourself. I shall ask Dr. Leigh to look in to-morrow."

And without waiting to hear the grateful thanks the invalid would have uttered, he hurried swiftly from the room.

All throughout his drive home Heron Archer never gave a serious thought to his eccentric scheme; it was a good joke, he thought, and it would benefit his poor consumptive protégé, in whom he had felt a most unusual interest for years past. As to anything awkward or unpleasant accruing to himself from such an act, it was a probability that never crossed his mind. He was accustomed to do strange things, and very rarely even troubled himself to give explanation to his ways by this time, and ceased to wonder when anything eccentric or startling had reached their ears.

"He is the worst man possible for the legal profession," argued his friends. "He never cares two straws for his own interests."

But Heron Archer paid no heed, and went on still in his own way. So it was no wonder that friend and acquaintances gave up wondering at him and arguing with him at last, and suffered him to take it unmolested.

That was just what he wanted. It is a thing many men want and never get.

A large, lofty hall, prettily decorated with flowers and plants; a smooth, well-polished floor, looking very inviting to lovers of dancing; a general sense of space and emptiness, and brilliant light reflected back by numerous mirrors; this was the scene that met Heron Archer's eyes as he entered the Marlborough Rooms. He had explained to the other musicians that young Staunton was too ill to come, and he had been sent as deputy; and though they had regarded him with evident wonder, and treated him with a certain sullen deference as one plainly superior to themselves, he yet no way assumed any airs of superiority, or for one moment allowed them to perceive he was in any way different to what he represented himself.

The people began to arrive at last in large numbers. Heron Archer sat there at the piano, and watched them with a certain amused indifference. Presently one of the masters of ceremonies advanced and ordered the band to play a waltz, and while his fingers struck the notes and his powerful rhythmic touch brought out the full sweet melody, the pianist's eyes roved carelessly from group to group of the moving, floating figures, and he was conscious that life still held for him a new sensation.

Dance after dance followed now. Heron Archer looked less at the dancers and more at his music, though his thoughts were far away from either, and his fingers only did their work with mechanical precision. It must have been nearly 11 o'clock, when he suddenly stood up to reach a set of lancers lying on a chair on the platform. As he turned back to his seat, his eyes fell on a group just forming into figure at his end of the room. He started as if a pistol-

shot had struck him. There, in the full brilliance of the lights—there, facing him a few yards distant, stood the object of his search, his thoughts, his dreams these two weeks past! She was talking to her partner, and her face was flushed and slightly turned away from the platform. With a strong effort Heron Archer recovered himself, and then, as he once more took his seat, the full sense of what his eccentric action might cost him burst upon his mind. Suppose she saw him, recognized him; what would she think? He could have groined aloud as he thought of this, as he saw the barrier he had raised between them, and knew that, now, though she was so near, he dared not give one sign of recognition or seek her side, despite his frenzied longing.

His one hope now was that she might not recognize him, and yet that was a chance he hardly dared count on. The platform was raised some feet from the hall, and he was the most prominent of all the players. The set in which the girl was dancing was close to the platform, and she herself stood directly facing him. At any moment she might raise her eyes—see him and—then! He dared not dwell on the humiliation such a recognition would bring. He only prayed she might not think of looking at the platform. He tried to avert his eyes, but every moment they stole a glance at that couple. How he envied the man who danced with her! How he cursed the fate that held him here, chained to a hateful penance, while any of the careless vapid through below were free to win her smiles and seek her hand in the dance! The signal was given, the music struck up. Mechanically he played the selection from Carmen before him, and uselessly he strove to keep his face turned away from that one seat in the room below.

But in vain. Despite his efforts, his resolves, his eyes would turn to that radiant, graceful figure, with her crown of sunny hair and snowy floating robes. She was standing still while the sides were going through their evolutions. Her eyes roved carelessly around—before—then up. Heron Archer should have turned away, but he was not able to do so. Like some spell, those eyes met and held his own, and across the distance that separated them flashed one lightning glance of mutual recognition. That she remembered him he could doubt no longer, for a burning wave of colour swept up to her brow, and the startled glance told its own tale.

His heart beat high despite the pain and humiliation that oppressed him. At least she had not forgotten. That thought was sweet beyond all others, though he gave her no sign, and kept his head turned resolutely away for the rest of the dance.

When it was over, the various couples began to promenade round the room. Heron Archer followed that slight figure with anxious, watchful eyes. She did not make the circle of the room, but to pass out with her partner through a door leading to the refreshment-room. With beating heart and eager gaze he watched for her reappearance. How he envied the man by her side; how he wondered what he was saying to her, or she to him. Then again came the summons to play and as the plaintive waltz air rose and fell, he saw her again floating round the room to the melody his fingers gave forth.

The situation was torturing in the extreme, and as the hours went by and he saw her courted, besieged, surrounded, and met no further glance from her averted eyes, and could guess nothing of the shame burning in her young passionate heart, he felt that his self-imposed task grew each moment more hateful and irksome, that it was almost beyond his strength to carry it through.

But everything must have an end, and at last the final waltz was on the desk. How gladly he played it; what a welcome relief to feel each bar, each page brought him nearer to the conclusion of this unpalatable duty.

Then out crashed "God save the Queen," and he was free to go, free to return home and chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, and wish, with vain fierce wishes, that he had never placed himself in such a false position. The money was in his hand, and with young Staunton's roll of music under his arm, he hurried out of the building. At the entrance a crowd of cabs and carriages were still waiting. He paused a moment. A vague hope that he might see her once more ere she left was in his mind. He saw a gentleman call a cab, and then go back to the portico for two ladies, one elderly, and shawled and cloaked with great care; the other—yes, it was—the mysterious "she" who so changed the calm and even tenor of his life. A mass of fleecy white lace was round her head and shoulders, her tiny gloved hand rested lightly on her companion's arm. Heron Archer drew his hat low over his brows, and strained his ears to catch the directions given to the cabman. "1.—Street, Maiden Vale."

Then a silvery voice said, "Good-bye." It has been a most delightful evening. So many thanks for the tickets, and the cab drove off.

That was all. Yet not quite all, for lying on the pavement, close to Heron Archer's feet, lay a little bouquet of faded primroses. They must have fallen from her dress as she stepped into the cab. He snatched them up as a miser might have snatched at gold. They were more precious than gold to him. He thrust them into his breast, and then, dizzy with confused hopes and thoughts and plans, he sprang into a hansom close by, and was driven rapidly home through the pale sweet dawn of the Spring day.

(To be continued.)

A RACE FOR LIFE.

A CURE FOR PRACTICAL JOKING.

One hundred years ago there lived upon the shores of Stephen's river (a small stream emptying into the Casco bay) a man named Peter John, an honest, upright fellow, a good neighbour and friend, but with one abominable habit that won him many enemies, and caused much discomfort and suffering to those around him. This was an almost irresistible fondness for practical joking that would not allow him to let an opportunity pass unimproved, wherein he could gratify this special passion of his being.

There came a time, however, when the exercise of this peculiarity brought upon him an ordeal so sharp that it cured his unfortunate propensity, to the great joy of his friends and family. The process was disagreeable, but the cure was effectual and permanent.

One day Peter had been at work a few miles from home. After his day's labour was finished his employer invited him to partake of the evening meal with him. This invitation Peter accepted, and then, his system fortified by a hearty supper, he commenced his journey homeward. The path that Peter trod that night would lead one to-day through cultivated fields and by many pleasant farm-houses; but then it was an unbroken forest.

It was a dark, cold December night; the wind swept fitfully among the great pines and beeches, and strange, moaning sounds went sobbing through the forest; now and then an owl uttered its hoarse cry, or the sudden rattling of the dead leaves told where some timid animals scurried away from sounds of footsteps.

But Peter was strong and light-hearted, and went quietly along, without paying much attention to the sight and sounds around him, until he had achieved perhaps one half his journey, when suddenly his ears caught the sound of a horse's feet descending the long rocky path behind him. Gradually the sound grew nearer, until the sharp peculiar whin of the horseman could be heard urging the horse to a faster gait.

"Ah! ah!" said Peter to himself, as he heard the familiar tones, "this is uncle Tom Barry."

Now uncle Tom and Peter were neighbours, that is to say their clearings lay about a mile apart, and none knew better than Peter that the old man was naturally of a timid disposition, and, furthermore, that nothing inspired him with greater fear—nothing that he had not rather meet, than a wolf.

No sooner, therefore, had Peter become convinced that the horseman behind him was his neighbour than he resolved to use this trait of uncle Tom's as a means of working out what he considered would be a capital joke. His plans were soon laid, and he proceeded to put them into execution. Creeping through the undergrowth, which bordered his path, he crouched down and patiently waited the approach of his victim. He had not waited long before uncle Tom, his horse at a sharp trot, and himself casting timid glances around, arrived opposite to his place of concealment. Peter allowed him to pass a few paces, and then springing forward on his hands and knees, he uttered one or two snarling yelps followed by the loud, clear, gathering cry of the wolves.

The effect upon uncle Tom was electrical. Springing half way out of his saddle, he uttered a scream of terror, and then, stooping until his head nearly touched the mane, he plunged his spurs into his horse's flanks, and was off down the road like a shot. As for Peter, he rolled over on his back, and kicked his heels in huge enjoyment of success. Loud and long he laughed, occasionally varying the performance by making the forest ring with the repetition of the wild, savage cry that struck such terror into uncle Tom's heart. But there is an end to all things; and so, after a while, there was an end to Peter's mirth, and he was about to resume his journey, when he heard a sound that sent the cold shivers coursing over his body, and almost froze the blood in his veins. The wolves had heard the successful imitation of their music, and were coming down, full cry upon him.

In an instant he realized his position and peril. From the sounds he knew that the wolves were coming down on each side of the path he had just travelled, and therefore the nearest point of safety was his own clearing, more than a mile away.

All this passed through his mind like a flash, and then calling all his energies into play, he dashed down the path with scarcely less speed and terror than did uncle Tom Barry. Peter was a famous runner, and had come off victor in many a trial of speed, when the people had come together at a raising or log-rolling; but this was no holiday game. He was not taxing his music to win the applause of admiring friends, or to gratify an ambition to excel.

Down the long slope that led to Pitkin's Hollow, and up the ascent beyond, fled Peter, while hardly a hundred yards behind came a snarling pack, hungry and fierce. The life of an unarmed man would not be worth a minute's purchase could they once surround him. This Peter acknowledged to himself, as a thought entered his mind to stand on the defensive; so he abandoned the thought before it was fully formed, and braced himself anew for the flight.

Down another long slope across a broad sheet of ice at its foot, and Latherine's Hill with its long, straight ascent, lay before him. He shuddered as he glanced at its ragged side, for he

felt his strength would scarcely suffice to carry him to the top.

The perspiration streamed from every pore—his breath came in short, wheezy gasps—his steps were becoming unsteady, and once striking his foot against a loose stone, he prevented himself from falling only by an extra exertion so great that the blood spouted from his nostrils, and flames seemed to leap before his vision.

Still he kept on though it seemed madness to hope, for his pursuers had gained on him fearfully; he knew it by the beating of their footsteps; but with eagerness inspired by mortal terror he ran on, hoping to gain only the brow of the hill, for there the ground became open, and his own cabin was but a few yards beyond. He felt very sure that his pursuers would not follow him beyond the summit; but could he reach it before they would close upon him?

No, not by his own exertions, for just as the thought passed through his mind his foot caught a gnarled root that extended across the way, and he fell heavily forward, his head striking the frozen ground, and he lay senseless.

When Peter recovered consciousness he found himself hanging over the broad shoulders of his brother John, and about to enter his own door. Here he soon collected his scattered senses and was able to listen intelligently to his brother's account of the rescue.

Uncle Tom Barry, in his flight, had stopped at the cabin long enough to shout through the window that the wolves were out and hurried on. John, who lived with his brother, knowing that Peter must come by the same path, took his gun and walked out to the edge of the forest, where he halted to listen. But a short time elapsed before he heard the sound of the pursued and pursuers, and rushing down the hill he arrived just in time to leap between Peter's prostrate form and the wolves, the foremost of whom were less than ten feet distant. Taking steady aim, he sent a bullet through the animal's brain, and then, while the pack were fighting terribly over the dead body of their comrade, he slung Peter over his back and gained the open ground in perfect safety.

Peter frankly told the truth about the affair, from beginning to end, and concluded the story with the emphatic assertion that as long as he lived he would never be guilty of such another practical joke; a vow he faithfully kept.

We comment this resolution to all practical jokers. Nothing is more foolish and reprehensible than the average of practical jokes. The temptation to perpetrate one comes often, but should always be resisted.

HOW FREDERICK DOUGLASS GOT HIS NAME.

In the first number of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE (November), Frederick Douglass tells for the first time the manner of his escape from slavery. The account takes him to New Bedford, where he obtained steady work and where he got his name, as follows:—

Once initiated into my new life of freedom, and assured by Mr. Johnson that I need not fear recapture in that city, a comparatively unimportant question arose as to the name by which I should be known hereafter in my new relation as a free man. The name given me by my dear mother was no less pretentious and long than Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. I had, however, while living in Maryland, dispensed with the Augustus Washington, and retained only Frederick Bailey. Between Baltimore and New Bedford, the better to conceal myself from the slave-hunters, I had parted with Bailey and called myself Johnson; but in New Bedford I found that the Johnson family was already so numerous as to cause some confusion in distinguishing them, hence a change in this name seemed desirable. Nathan Johnson, mine host, placed great emphasis upon this necessity, and wished me to allow him to select a name for me. I consented, and he called me by my present name—the one by which I have been known for three and forty years—Frederick Douglass. Mr. Johnson had just been reading "The Lady of the Lake," and so pleased was he with its great character that he wished me to bear his name. Since reading that charming poem myself, I have often thought that, considering the hospitality and manly character of Nathan Johnson—black man though he was—he, for more than I, illustrated the virtues of the Douglas of Scotland. Sure I am that, if any slave-catcher had entered his domicile with a view to my recapture, Johnson would have shown himself like him of the "stalwart hand."

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.

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