POOR DOCUMENT

## SELECT STORY.

### ONE OF LIFE'S INCIDENTS.

"A message for you, sir." And the servant handed in a small folded paper and withdrew, while the master of the house walked to the window, and sought by the fast failing twilight to decipher the almost illegible scrawl, "Will mother come to 28 Barker street?"

"Who is it from, Henry?"

A delicate woman with soft brown eyes, and a smile on her sweet, pale face, came to her husband's side, and leaned on his broad shoulder, as she glanced at the paper he held in his hand. So different they looked as they stood together, and yet so like; even a casual observer might see that between them was an affection which had triumphed through sorrow, and over which time had no power. But the smile vanished as she read the contents of that rudely written missive, and, with an almost agonized expression on the now sad face, she gasped out—

"Oh, God, my child!"

"Hush, Mary!" The husband's voice tried to be stern, but it quivered a little. "Hush! I must speak to this man."

He stepped into the hall as he spoke and confronted the waiting messenger.

"You will tell the person from whom you received this message, that there is nothing here for such as she; that she is not known here, not acknowledged—that she—" the speaker's brow darkened, and his voice grew hard—"that she long ago cast away the love of father, mother, home, and she has no longer claim upon them."

"But—she is dying, sir."

"Dying!" The voice shook for a moment, but only for a moment; a moan from the inner room roused him and, walking to the door, which he had left partially open, he drew it sharply to. "Take my message," he said harshly to the waiting man, and, mind you, do not ever let me see you here again."

"What is it, Mary?" The voice was tender enough now, and the manner anxious, as he bent over his weeping wife, and took her in his arms. "Hush, hush, my darling!" as sobs shook her slight frame, and she wept passionately on his breast. "Mary, Mary, what is this? Is your husband so little to you that you can forget him to mourn for the ingrate who has broken both our hearts?"

"Oh, husband, husband! she is our own child, our little child!" sobbed the stricken woman. "The only one God sent us, the only one we ever had to love."

There was silence in the room for a long time, broken only by the half-stifled sobs of the mourning mother as she wept on her husband's breast. He held her closely in his arms, with his face pressed to the sunny hair; but his brow was working, and his lips were very pale. So they sat in the deepening twilight—the bright fire in the grate casting a glow upon them, and upon the luxurious appointments of the room, so cosy and comfortable, and such a contrast to the wild storm without, and to what might be taking place in that other home. The mother shuddered as she thought of it; she calmed herself, and raised her heavy, drooping eyes to her husband's face; his were cast down, but he clasped her more closely to him.

"Husband, darling—" she put her arms around his neck, and drew his face down to hers—"it was but yesterday we were speaking of our wedding day—let us talk of it now. Twenty-three years to-night since I left my home for yours—left father, mother," she continued, half musingly, while tender recollections gathered around the lips, and filled her eyes with a soft mistiness. "Twenty-three years to-night! Shall I go on, Henry? Shall I speak of that happy time? Ah, we were happy! Poor father and mother, they were very angry at first, but they forgave us after. Time went on, and a little child was born to us; she grew up to be our light our joy"—the father hid his face—"and then"—the voce faltered, and tears fell faster, "she did what her mother had done before her—she loved another more than father, mother, or home, and she left them for him. She has lived to repent it, as"—and the wife clasped the hand she held with both hers—"as her mother has never done. Husband, is she more to blame than I was? No! no! not more to blame—more to be pitied—more to be loved. Darling, there are furrows on your brow which time cannot claim—there are furrows in both our hearts—we can trace them to the same cause. Let us forget them! Let us only remember the one who is suffering for what we can give her—the heart which is breaking that we can relieve. Oh, my little child—my little child!"

"Mary"—the father raised a pale, sad face—"you have conquered, as you always do; act as you wish in this matter—I will not go against you—I cannot see her—no, no!" as his wife raised a pleading look to his face. "There are some wounds too deep to be re-opened, and this is one of them. Go to her if you wish—give her my love, my forgiveness"—he paused and passed a trembling hand over his eyes—"my blessing."

An hour later, a graceful, quite form, clad in deep black, passed up the steps of No. 28 Barker street, and paused before a half-opened door, and the visitor entered the poorly furnished apartment—entered, and looked upon the scene around. Upon a shabby bed, and covered by a patched and well worn quilt, lay a sleeping form—very simply sleeping, with the peacefulness of health, but fitfully, with nervous starts, and low, moaning whispers. The long, dark hair lay unbound upon the pillow, and formed a strange contrast to the white, worn face. "Mother!" the sleeping girl whispered, and faint smile gathered on the faded lips. "Mother—father!" She was dreaming something of her childhood's home, and whispered of flowers and birds; and then a spasm of pain contracted the white brow, and she commenced to cough painfully. Her mother's arms held her during the paroxysm, and on her mother's bosom the aching head rested; but she did not seem to recognize her. She lay for a few moments half sleeping, half exhausted.

"Lena!" a gentle voice whispered, and a loving kiss was pressed upon the damp brow. "Lena, my child!"

"Mother!" It seemed to come to her suddenly, and the wide open eyes looked fixedly into those from which the tears were falling upon the upturned face. "My mother!"

Ay, home once more, home upon her mother's breast—the tired girl lay all night, and in starts and gasps told her the whole history of that sad parting—told her how he had left her, he for whom she had given up everything that woman holds dear. For a little while they were happy, a very little while—and then he left her, and for ten years she had struggled and suffered alone—alone, excepting for the baby boy, born one month after his cruel father had gone. For him she had lived—for him she had struggled and suffered—not daring to go to her father's house where she thought of his proud, stern face, fearing she knew not what, until the hand of death had sent her a suppliant to her father's door, not for herself, but to plead for her innocent child.

"See, he [illegible]"

With feeble hand she drew down the coverlid, and revealed the face of the sleeping child. Calmly, sweetly, without a thought of coming ill, the boy slept on, his long lashes resting on a flushed cheek, and the little head crowned with light golden curls.

"He shall never want a home while I live, darling," whispered the weeping mother, "and father will say the same. He forgives and loves you still; and we will give him a place in our home and hearts."

"My place," whispered the dying girl. "Let him have my place, my room—tell father I am sorry—love—forgive—"

* * * * * * *

It was early morning when the visitor who had entered that dreary-looking house on Barker street the night previously, and passed up the rickety stairs, passed down them again, this time with a sleeping child in her arms. She was weeping quietly, but her close veil screened her from the peering curiosity of the few stragglers around at that early hour.

The daughter she had gone to comfort in her last hours had passed away calmly and happily with her parents' forgiveness in her heart, and a mother's kiss upon the pale weary lips.

* * * * * * *

"Who is it, Mary? Whose child have you brought with you? And Mr. Lane cast a strange, anxious forgiving, glance at the beautiful boy, who clung, half frightened, half willingly, to his grandmother's dress, as she entered her husband's room. "Did you see our—Lena?"

"I did, husband; she has gone to that home where we shall all meet her so soon." And the mother's tears fell fast as she told the sad story. "Gone and left this dear child to be in her place, the comfort of our declining years."

The father took him in his arms and hid his face in the bright curls; when he looked up there were signs of tears on the ordinary stolid cheek, but the kiss he pressed upon the upturned, wondering face of the child showed how willingly he accepted the charge.

CROQUET ON CITY HOUSETOPS.—A contributor to the Boston *Globe* suggests, as a magazine writer did some years ago, utilization of city housetops for gardens, &c.—but the *Globe* man describes how croquet grounds can be laid out upon them: "Many of the roofs are flat or nearly so, and they could easily be made as level as might be desired for croquet or any such diversion. Perhaps the proper way would be to spread over the roof a large, rough tapestry, of a texture that would not be injured by the summer showers that might occur. On this wickets and stakes could be set, and a neat wire net work, supported by ornamental nickel posts, if you please, would serve to keep the balls from rolling off. Rustic seats and hammocks, of course, should be disposed conveniently about. Running vines and ivies should be trained by the chimneys, so as to hide the brick and mortar work with a mantle of green. Urns of flowers and potted exotics would by no means be out of place. Over all the arrangements conceive a fancy awning, throwing a grateful shade, and you have a unique aerial lawn, which would afford no small number of pleasant afternoons and evenings to the stay-at-homes; for myself I should prefer to be of them, all things considered, to forming a part of the hero in cramped quarters at the springs, seaside or mountains.

### French Madhouses and their Victims.

The sensation of the hour in Paris is the case of Jean Mistral, who has been forty-two years in the private lunatic asylum of St. Remy, in Provence. He was, it is now admitted all round, of sound mind when his father, on a doctor's certificate, and in virtue of the law of 1838, locked him up there. His reason for incarcerating his son was to prevent him remarrying a Polish lady whom, in good faith, he had married abroad. The marriage ceremony, on the petition of the elder Minstral, had been set aside by a French tribunal because there had been insufficient publication, and other formalities prescribed by the code had not been observed. Old Minstral was a very wealthy manufacturer of jet and beads. He wanted his only son to heap fortune upon fortune in marrying the heiress of a Marseilles shipowner. The Polish lady was very beautiful, of honorable life, but poor, and she had been obliged to turn an enthralling voice to mercantile account by singing in theatres and at concerts. Jean Minstral was taking steps to marry her according to French law, when his father one day ran against him in the high street of Tarascon, in the year 1840, and cried out to a couple of policemen who were with him to arrest the madman.

The son made a desperate fight for his liberty, and soldiers were called in. He was subjugated, and sent off manicled to an insane asylum near Montpellier, where he still is. The fact that he resisted *la force publique* was taken as confirmation of the doctor's *lettre de cachet* or certificate, and he was treated for raging lunacy. Old Mistral died soon after. The fortune that he made in glass trinkets went equally to the captive at Montpellier and to his sister, Mme. Barnard. It was a great one the Barnards kept the alleged madman in durance. His wife (the Polish woman, who was in law no wife) died when he was a score of years locked up. Her daughter, after an interval of six months, followed her to the grave. Old Mistral had caused the former to be expelled from France on the ground that she was a bad character, was disturbing the peace of a wealthy and respectable family, and had no visible means of existence. Technically she was a vagabond, as she was reduced to go from one small town to another to sing in cafes. A charge brought against her was that to command sympathy she had falsely alleged she was *enceinte*. There was no falsehood told by her on this score. Soon after she was turned out of France she gave birth to a daughter in Switzerland. Mother and child died in extreme poverty some years later.

The news of their death threw the prisoner in the asylum into a state of frenzy. The fortune inherited by Jean Mistral from his father has gone accumulating at simple and compound interest, and has been very carefully nursed by the Barnards, who are his heirs-apparent. M. Favriner, who has been exerting himself to get the lunatic released from the asylum, is his first cousin. According to an article in the Civil Code, a rich madman or madwoman is not to be confined in a madhouse, but placed under treatment at home, and is to be provided with a domestic establishment corresponding with his or her yearly revenue. Mistral is an ordinary boarder at the asylum, where he has passed nearly half a century, and is allowed one man servant, whose business is not to minister to his comfort, but to prevent him from escaping.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

### Short-Lived Californians.

The number of men who die in California in what may be called the prime of their years, occasionally arrests attention. The proportion of these sudden deaths appears to be large. They occur not among men born on the soil, but among those who have been transplanted, and have been subjected to the varying conditions of poverty and affluence. It is not climate that kills then, since the climate is favorable to longevity. Native Californians live to an extreme old age. The centenarians are numerous. But these men have lived out of doors nearly all their lives. They have lived on simple food; have been on horseback a good deal. Indeed, the native Californian never walks if he can get a mustang to carry him. He lives out of doors, never dies of apoplexy or heart disease, but generally of old age. The majority of those who immigrate do not seem to reach extreme old age. The pioneers drop off early. They have checkered lives for the most part. Ups and downs kill a great many people. The excitement is not good for them. It is neither good on the score of longevity to meet with sudden losses nor to make fortunes rapidly. The exceptions are those where great equanimity of temper has been preserved. Quakers generally have great longevity. They not only are temperate, but they are not subject to great excitements. The serene life is the one most favorable to Longevity.

THE MODERN PRINTER.—He must be satisfied with about one third of a price for his work, and then he must be willing to do the work over seven or eight times, "to see how it will look," for the generality of people do not know how a thing will come out in print, and, of course, want it a "little different." He must be willing to wait six months for his pay, and take it out in second-hand clothes pins or last year's seeds. He must never be so bold as to suggest that a little cash might not come amiss, for people expect him to work for nothing and board himself, and yet, always to be cheerful and happy.

### Scorching a Skull.

The Dubuke Telegram is responsible for the following remarkable story: There resides in this county, between Dubuque and Kookdale, a girl about 17 years of age, who has no hair on her head and never will have. The cause of this is worth relating. About seventeen years ago a well known physician of this city was called upon by a woman with an infant in her arms, and asked that the babe treated for a peculiar ailment. The top of the child's head seemed to be coming off; in fact the skull had already parted at the sutures and was liable in a short time to be entirely loose. The physician made some inquiries and learned the following facts: The father and mother had gone home from Dubuque one night with a bottle of liquor, and after drinking until they were stupid from the effects of the fluid, laid down in front of the fireplace and went to sleep. The fire was buring brightly, and threw out a steady heat. The infant became restless during the night, but its movements did not arouse the mother. Finally the little one crept from its mother's arms, and laid down near the hearth, with its head close to the fire. In this position it remained until morning, when the parents, having slept off the effects of their debauch, awoke and picked up the infant, which was in a stupor, and so remained all that day and the next—then only rallying a little and for a few moments. After a while the skin on the top of the head began to peel off, and at length the entire upper portion of the cranium seemed to be loose. Then it was that the mother brought the child to Dubuque and consulted a physician. After hearing her story the physician came to the conclusion that the child's head had been literally baked by the fire, before which it had slept that eventful night. He also discovered that the child's life was in danger, and that it would be impossible to prevent the upper portion of the skull from coming off. He took the child under treatment, and in a short time he removed a piece of skull three or four inches long, and over two inches wide. The operation was very delicately performed, and in a few weeks a thin membrane formed, which protected the brain. The child lived and thrived, and is to-day a young woman, although she will always be compelled to wear a wig. The parents feel under lasting obligations to the physician for saving their child, and to this day show their appreciation. The story seems almost incredible, but is entirely true.

### The Extreme Limit of Human Life.

Can man reach and pass the limit of 100 years is a question concerning which physiologists have different opinions. Buffon was the first one in France to raise the question of extreme limit of human life. In his opinion, man, becoming adult at 16, ought to live six times that age, or to 96 years. Having been called upon to account for the phenomenal ages attributed by the Bible to the patriarchs, he risked the following as an explanation.

"Before the flood the earth was less solid, less compact than it is now. The law of gravitation had acted for only a little time; the production of the globe had less consistency, and the body of men being more supple, was more susceptible of extensions, being able to grow for a longer time than now."

The German, Hansler, had suggested on the same point that the ancients did not divide time as we do. Brevious to the age of Abraham, the year, among some people of the East, was only three months, or a season; so that they had a year of Spring, one of Summer, one of Fall and one of Winter. The year was extended so as to consist of eight months, after Abramham, and of twelve months after Joseph. Voltaire rejected the longevity assigned to the patriarchs of the Bible, but accepted without question the stories of the great ages attained by some men in India, where he says, "it is not rare to see old men of 120 years." The eminent French physiologist, Flourens, fixing the complete development of man at 20 years, teaches that he should live five times what it takes him to become an adult. According to this author, the moment of a complete development may be recognized by the fact of the junction of the bones with their apophyses. This junction takes place in horses at 5 years, and the horse does not live beyond 25 years; with the ox at 4 years, and it does not live over 20 years, with the cat at 18 months, and that animal rarely lives over 10 years; When it is effected at 20 years, he only exceptionally lives beyond 100 years. The same physiologist admits, however, that human life may be exceptionally prolonged under certain conditions, or comfort, sobriety, freedom from care, regularity of habits, and observance of the rules of hygiene; and he terminates his interesting study of the last point (*de la longevite humane*) with the aphorism, "Man kills himself rather than dies."—*Popular Science Monthly.*

A traveller saw in Portland, Me., while waiting half an hour in a railroad station, a barrel of ale rolled in a saloon, an intoxicated man fight a hack driver, and two men drink whiskey from a bottle. He concludes it possible that the Maine prohibition law is sometimes broken in Portland.


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Fredericton December 5 1881.