A GREAT MISTAKE.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Fennimore, who had been Robert Ludlow's lawyer, took pleasure in doing the small service which his late client's daughter had asked, with so much gentle hesitation, for her mother's sake.

A confidential messenger was sent from London to Barlaston-Regis, while yet Miss Ludlow's advertisement was to be seen in the *Times*; and before long the young lady was in possession of all needful particulars concerning her mother's friend Mrs. Throgmorton, who, as it proved, was still living in the quiet little town, where she was indeed a person of some social importance.

A house was even spoken of on the day of Miss Ludlow's visit to the old lawyer's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which Mr. Fennimore thought would be the very thing for the widow and her daughter, should they decide on moving to Barlaston.

"Ah, my dear old friend," said Miss Ludlow, with her sad smile, "I am afraid it is a little premature just yet to talk about a house; but all this will give dear mamma so much pleasure to hear! I confess I did not think there was the slightest hope of tracing her friend after all these years."

"You intend of course to communicate with Mrs. Throgmorton?"

Miss Ludlow hesitated.

"I hardly know what to say," she replied; then wistfully, "Of course poor mamma feels that, if she were to take such a step, her motive might very fairly be misconstrued. We have come down in the world, you see, and Mrs. Throgmorton is prosperous and happy."

"True, true, my dear young lady."

"Still"—appealingly—"I don't think Mrs. Throgmorton could blame me, her old schoolfellow's daughter, for wishing to bring about a reunion between my mother and her, if she knew that it is the one bright spot to which my poor love seems to look forward in her loneliness. Do you think she could, dear sir?"

The young lady leant forward and laid her clasped hands on the arm of the old man's chair, looking earnestly into his face with her large clear eyes.

Mr. Fennimore put out a kind trembling old palm to pat the little well-gloved fingers.

"I don't think she could indeed, my dear Miss Ludlow," he said warmly—"I really don't think she could."

"I am so glad to hear you say so!" exclaimed Ada, brightening. "I have felt from the first myself that my duty was quite clear. Mamma's happiness is the first thing to be considered now, and I must not mind humbling my own pride a little if I can secure that."

Mr. Fennimore nodded and smiled admiringly at the pale little woman, who was nearly swallowed by his great office chair, and who seemed so ill fitted for the struggle that was awaiting her with the world and its cares and difficulties.

"I decidedly advise you, my dear Miss Ludlow, he declared, "to make overtures to Mrs. Throgmorton; your own delicate tact will best teach you how; and in the meanwhile you cannot do better than think over the little place Johnson tells us of. It is pleasantly situated, has a good garden—by the way, you will have Mr. Throgmorton for your landlord—did I tell you?—and the rent ——"

"Ah, yes, the rent!" objected the young lady, sighing and shaking her head. "I am afraid we must not dream of it. We should have nothing left," she laughed sadly, "to buy boots and shoes when our present supply is worn out."

Mr. Fennimore patted the little clinging hands again. There was a pause, and then Miss Ludlow stood up, with another sigh and another sad little laugh.

"We must see what we can do," she said, making an attempt at cheerfulness. "Perhaps I may be able to meet with a few ladies in Barlaston who would like to learn singing from a pupil of Schira's. They would do to buy boots and shoes with!" And holding out both hands in a softly impulsive manner, she added, "I think you know how grateful I am, Mr. Fennimore, for your goodness to dear mamma and to me."

"Miss Ludlow! What nonsense my dear!" protested the old lawyer. "I should like to know who could help being good to you!"

She smiled and shook her flaxen head, and got gracefully to the door.

"You will let me know when you have arrived at a decision?" Mr. Fennimore asked kindly.

"At once," Miss Ludlow returned, making him a little grateful bow; and then, with an air of sudden recollection, she came back to his side. "There is something else," she began, hesitating and looking down in some embarrassment at the tips of her gloves—"there is something else; but—I hardly know how to speak of it."

"My dear Miss Ludlow," responded the old gentleman cordially, suspecting some little money trouble, "is it about—you will allow me to——"

"It is about my cousin Lucy," the young lady answered in a very low voice.

"About Miss Thrale!" Mr. Fennimore's kind old face grew suddenly hard. "What has Miss Thrale been doing now?"

"Pray do not speak so, Mr. Fennimore! I want you to help me in a little difficulty. I want you to intercede with mamma for her."

"My dear Miss Ludlow, I——"

Ada put her finger to her lip with a winning and pretty gesture.

"Yes," she said, smiling; "I know all that you are going to say, my kind friend. But you will not say it, for my sake?" She lifted her earnest face to the old man's as she spoke. "While poor papa was alive, Mr. Fennimore, it would have been useless to suggest such a thing, as you know; but, now that my cousin and I are both in the world—both poor and friendless—save for you, dear sir—I want mamma to consent to her living with us again."

"My dear young lady, if you will take an old man's advice———"

Ada smiled again, still standing very near him and holding her face up to his.

"But you see," she said, "on this point—only on this—I am obstinate; and you will let me have my own way, won't you?

Mr. Fennimore took the two eager little hands in his; but his face did not soften.

"Miss Thrale has her hundred a year as well as you, my dear—the hundred a year settled on each of you—most fortunately—by the late Mr. Ludlow. Your cousin can live upon that, it seems to me; or, if not, she has had an excellent education——"

"She is an orphan, sir; and she has not a friend in the world but mamma and me."

"Then let her remain in the convent, where your poor father very sensibly sent her after her unnatural behavior. It is the best place for her. She cannot do much mischief among the nuns."

"Mr. Fennimore!" said the young lady reproachfully.

"Well, well, my dear, I am a grim old lawyer, I suppose, and not much given to sentiment. I certainly don't feel much compassion for Miss Thrale. But I am not too old or too grim to admire womanliness and generosity when I see it; and you will let me say, my dear Miss Ludlow, that I admire and esteem you as if you were my own daughter."

"And you will speak to mamma," persisted Ada, smiling; "and Lucy shall come to live with us again?" And then, as the old gentleman promised to do his best, she stooped her fair head over the hand he extended, and touched it softly with her lips.

In another moment she was gone, and the sober old office seemed strangely empty without her.

"Poor girl—poor girl!" said Mr. Fennimore, shaking his white head. "She bears her troubles beautifully! What are the young men about, I wonder, to allow such a treasure to go a-begging?"

CHAPTER IV.

Denmark Terrace was looking its gloomiest in the chilly dusk of a late October evening, when Lucy Thrale, in her convent uniform, with her boxes full of convent treasures and her heart still thrilling from the good-bye sobs and kisses of the whole school, came home to the green rep drawing room in Maida Vale, and to the sight of the mourning worn for her uncle, whose last words to her had been words of anger.

The beginning of her journey had been pleasant enough; for she had been driven to the station in a comfortable carriage belonging to the convent, and had been confided as a precious charge to the fatherly guard, while friendly faces had smiled a farewell as the train moved away from the platform.

But, at her journey's end, no one had come to meet her, and Lucy, who had never before traveled alone, and who was very childish for her years, felt a good deal bewildered by the bustle and noise of the London streets, and could not help trembling when she found herself in the power of a husky voiced cabman, and rumbling slowly along towards Maida Vale.

The foggy suburban roads dotted with dimly burning lamps, the sudden glare of the public houses at the corners of the streets, the throng of shabby hurrying passers-by, all seemed to belong to some unknown world which she could not believe to be a part of that sunshiny, flower decked, holiday London at which she had looked a year before from the window of her uncle's carriage.

By the time the cab stopped in Denmark Terrace poor Lucy was trembling from head to foot with fatigue and excitement and hunger, and stood sorely in need of a kind welcome to warm her little frozen heart and give it courage.

"Are you quite sure this is Denmark Terrace?" she demanded nervously of the husky-voiced cabman. There had been a good many stoppages on the road while he had inquired his way to the newly built street so called.

A tired-looking servant opened the door and admitted that that was number fourteen and that Mrs. Ludlow lived there; but she did not volunteer any assistance as she stared with all her eyes at the pale, pretty child in her quaint dress, so that Miss Thrale was left to pay the cabman treble his fare and to see to the bringing in of her boxes herself.

"Is my cousin here?" the poor little thing faltered, when at last she found her way into the narrow hall and stood helplessly in the midst of her luggage. "Is there no one at home?"

The tired servant explained that Miss Ludlow and her "mar" were both at home.

"It's the droring-room floor, miss—first door you come to. I'll fetch a light in a minute."

But Lucy was already about half way up the narrow flight of stairs. After a little groping on the dark landing, she found the door of the drawing room and knocked with trembling fingers.

No notice was taken of the timid appeal; so she opened the door and went in.

By the uncertain light of a small fire—lit for the invalid—she could see a slender black figure bending over some work, and a pale woman, in a widow's cap, lying on the sofa which had been drawn up to the hearth.

The scene looked as if it were painted in black and gray and flickering shadows; the very silence seemed full of gloom.

Lucy thought of her last coming home to the cheerful splendors of the house in Prince's Gate, of her aunt and Ada kissing her before they went out in their glistening dinner dresses, and leaving her to rest, happy and hopeful for the morrow.

The contrast was sharp between now and then.

"Ada!" cried the poor worn out child, in a tremulous voice, as she stood in the doorway; and Miss Ludlow, letting her work fall, turned round with a slight start.

"Lucy, is it you?" she asked in a whisper, rising to meet the traveler. "We had given you up for to-night. Come in; but pray don't speak loud, for mamma is asleep!"

Holding up her cheek as she spoke to her taller cousin, Ada drew her kindly into the room.

Lucy tried to speak, but her words dried in her swelling throat; and, catching Ada in her arms, she covered her face with passionate kisses.

"Ada," she cried, "you are so good; you don't know what I feel for you! But I would give my life to make up for the past! Do you forgive me, dear, and will you love me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," returned Miss Ludlow quietly. "You must not think of it any more. Come and have some tea."

Lucy released her with a sigh, and stealing across to the sofa, bent down to look at the sad sleeping face that lay there in the widow's cap.

"Oh, Ada," she said, a sob breaking from her overcharged heart, "how changed she is—how terrible it all seems! Poor, poor uncle Robert! If I could only have been able to see him before he——"

"Hush, pray!" whispered Ada, as she arranged the disordered tea table with slow and noiseless touches. "I am afraid the tea is cold. Let me take your jacket and hat."

Lucy had sunk down upon a chair by the sofa, covering her face with her hands, and doing her best to conquer the agitation that was shaking her from head to foot; but she rose now, and began with unsteady fingers to put aside her wraps.

"I hope you had not a very unpleasant journey?" continued Miss Ludlow. "I could not leave mamma, or I should have gone to meet you, and"—with a sad little smile—"there is no carriage, you know, to send now. But I hope you found us out without very much difficulty?"

"Yes, thank you," returned Lucy faintly; and then the tired servant, entering in answer to a summons from Miss Ludlow, explained that "missus" was out, that there was very little fire in the kitchen, and nothing in the house.

"It does not matter!" exclaimed Lucy hurriedly. "I—I am not hungry. I will have some tea, please; it will be quite hot enough."

"If you don't mind then," said Ada with gentle reluctance; and she poured out a cup of the cold tea and herself brought it to her cousin. "You see, Maida Vale is not quite like Prince's Gate, is it?"

Lucy swallowed the tea as well as the big lump in her throat would let her. Being a little weak from her fever, and having eaten nothing for some hours, the tears came into her eyes in spite of herself; but she was so determined that they should not fall, so resolved to look on the bright side on this her first night at home, that she sat and stared at the fire until it looked like a great red sun, filling the room with an unnatural splendor, not trusting herself to speak.

Meanwhile Ada had resumed her macrame.

"You don't mind my going on with my work?" she had said, smiling. "It is an order from the Gentlewomen's Aid society, and I am anxious to finish it before we leave town."

"How soon do we go?" asked Lucy, wincing under this fresh reminder of the changes that had come to pass, unconsciously as it seemed to be spoken.

"We have only been waiting until you were able to travel."

A long silence followed between the cousins. It was broken by a feeble voice from the sofa.

"Mary," said the sleeping woman, smiling and stirring among her pillows, "the lilac bushes in the playground are beginning to bud; it will soon be holiday time."

"Mamma," said Ada, going to her and kneeling down by the sofa, "are you awake?"

"Oh, is that you, my love?" said the poor lady, sighing as she put her hand on her daughter's head. "I believe I was dreaming. Have I been long asleep?"

"Not very long, mamma. Here is Lucy. Will you not sit up and speak to her?"—"Lucy!"

Mrs. Ludlow started up and looked with wild sleepy eyes at the pretty troubled young creature, who had risen and was standing before her in her gray convent-gown, uncertain whether to approach any nearer.

"Pray speak to my cousin, mamma," urged Ada, softly.

And then Mrs. Ludlow held out her hand and spoke a few words, not unkindly, while her gaze still wandered uneasily over the budding figure and sweet quivering face that rose above her daughter's flaxen head as the two girls knelt before her.

"They did not cut off your hair?" she said, looking at the great rough bronze braid that fell on Lucy's milk-white neck. And Lucy answered—

"No, they thought it would be a pity, aunt Letitia; it is such a mop!"

"You do not look as if you had been ill," observed Mrs. Ludlow, and then added, turning to her daughter, "I think, my love, I will go to bed. I am very tired."

Seeing her stand up, Lucy sprang forward to carry the pillows and to offer her young arm as a support.

But the poor woman shrank back piteously and clung to her daughter.

"Ada will help me, thank you," she said; and poor Lucy, blushing, hung her head.

"Mamma is not quite so well this evening," Miss Ludlow explained in gentle apology. "I think, if you don't mind, I had better stay with her, and not come down again. Mary Jane will show you your bed room when you have finished your tea. I hope you will find it comfortable. Good night."

"Good night," faltered Lucy, as the little invalid procession moved slowly towards the door; and then, with an irresistible impulse, she ran and laid a wistful hand on her aunt's arm.

"Won't you kiss me, aunt Letitia?" she asked, with quivering lips. "It is my first day at home, and I am so glad to be back with you again. It was very good of you to send for me. Won't you give me one kiss?"

Poor Mrs. Ludlow flushed at this little appeal and grew white again; but she did not say a word. And Ada, shaking her head, whispered that mamma would be more herself again on the morrow, as she led her feeble charge gently from the room.

And that was how Lucy Thrale came home.

CHAPTER V.

"Wait until March comes back!"

"Yes. What will the Doctor say?"

"You had better give in, Bee!"

These were the confused exclamations overheard by Doctor March as he opened the door of the dining-room in Mrs. Throgmorton's house in Upper Brunswick street, Barlaston-Regis—the old butler having merely smiled a respectful welcome in the hall and left him to find his own way, and saw Bee Throgmorton, a tall, brown beauty, in a riding-habit, confronting the assembled family with a vexed, laughing face, and valiantly proving that she had the courage of her opinions on some subject unknown to the new-comer.

The morning sunshine was streaming warmly in through the Moorish curtains and lighting up with a friendly radiance the well-spread luncheon-table and the animated faces round, Mr. Throgmorton's bald head and shrewd-looking spectacles, his wife's sweet matronly figure, with its abundant black hair and becoming mop-cap, Bee's ripe young tints and Juno-like outlines, her brother Jack's handsome close-cropped dark head, and a big fair giant of a young man, who was sitting next to Miss Throgmorton, and who remained absolutely silent, his eyes fixed on that young lady's expressive face throughout the hubbub.

"Oh, of course Doctor March will side against me!" she retorted, in a bright contralto voice. "He always does! But, as his ignorance on the subject happens to be positively dense——"

Here an indignant exclamation at the door made every one start and look round; and then, as they saw the young man standing there, hat in hand and revenge in his eye, such a happy little scene of confusion, delight, welcome, ensued as brought a flush of pleasure to the Doctor's dark and sunburnt face.

"What, March, my boy, back again! Glad to see you!" said the master of the house, with his mouth full of game-pie.

"My dear George, this is a delightful surprise!" cried the mistress, rising and giving him both her fair plump hands. "You are just in time for luncheon. Sit down and tell us all about yourself. What will you have? When did you arrive?"

"I say, mother, pass him around!" cried Jack.

"And leave a little bit for me, please," added Bee, making room for the new comer at her side; while young Ackroyd stopped looking at her for several seconds, and seemed almost about to speak in his desire to join in the general welcome to Doctor March.

Was it really six weeks since the Doctor went away to Connemata and salmon fishing, for his autumn holiday?

It seemed an age, the young people agreed it seemed as if they never could tell each other all that had happened, all they had heard and seen and done, since they had said good bye in that very room.

But the Doctor's account of himself was brief. He declared that he had brought an excellent appetite with him from Ireland—an assertion which he proceeded to prove as well as the prevailing excitement would permit—and that he had left his heart behind him, neatly divided in five pieces between as many cousins with gray eyes and a delicious brogue, each of whom had rejected him decisively, but with every assurance of her distinguished consideration.

"Irish girls are noted for their sterling common sense," said a mischievous voice, which went on, without allowing time for a reply, to say that Jack had been on a walking tour in Devegshire with Ted Ackroyd, who had spoken more than once on the road; that Mrs. William had taken baby to Scarborough to be spoiled by a fond grandmamma; that papa and Bee had been abroad among the mountains—they had met the Bryers at Pontresina, and Janet had enquired most tenderly after the doctor—a dismal groan here from the doctor—and that only poor mamma had remained at home all by herself and spent the warm September days in looking after the house in King's Road for the Ludlows.

"The Ludlows?" repeated Doctor March inquiringly, as he set down his empty tankard.

"Doctor March has not heard about the Ludlows, mother," said Bee, with a good natured shrug of the shoulders; "and of course he won't care to hear about them or anything else in poor old prosy Barlaston, while his ears are still ringing with that Irish part-singing he used to rave about in his letters."

"My wounds bleed afresh at the recollection," said George March mournfully.

"I believe myself," said Bee, with some severity, "that he heard nothing but the soprano voice. It was your cousin Aileen, wasn't it, who sang the treble part?"

"Yes; but her sweet heart, young Chute, was six feet high and kept his eye on me. I had no chance at all in that quarter."

"Take care, Bee!" interposed her brother provokingly. "Better not talk about music. It brings us back to the all important point in the discussion of which we were pulled up by George's appearance on the scene."

"By the way," George put in gravely, "didn't I hear something as I came in about When the doctor gets back? It seems then Miss Throgmorton, that no one can be found capable of keeping you in order during my absence?"

Bee smiled disdainfully, and Ted Ackroyd, putting his arm over the back of his chair, fell to smoothing his tawny moustache with slow and thoughtful strokes.

"It is a pity you did not get back a day sooner, old fellow," persisted Jack, offering a piece of bread to a magnificent red setter that was lying at young Ackroyd's feet—the insult being ignored by the recipient with imperturbable good breeding. "You missed a treat, by Jove! What do you think our friend Reyloff gave us by way of voluntary yesterday at afternoon church?"

"I am afraid to guess," declared the Doctor solemnly. "I know Reyloff's proclivities too well."

"Oh, go on, pray!" observed Miss Throgmorton, with marked politeness.

"Let us have it, Jack! I am prepared for the worst. What did he play?"

"Only a transcription of Beethoven's Adelaide—that's all."

"Did he, by Jove?"

"He played it deliciously," protested Bee with warmth.

"No doubt. But since when," inquired Doctor March calmly, "has that ultra passionate love song been considered sacred?"

"Sacred?" echoed the young lady scornfully. "All good music is sacred, Doctor March!"

"My dear!" cried Mrs. Throgmorton, in a warning voice.

George March raised his eyebrows provokingly.

"Now that point is settled," he observed, "I shall look forward with considerable excitement to next Sunday, Who knows but by that time we may be dancing gravely out of church to the minuet in Don Giovanna? I believe—I believe, Miss Bee, that Mozart's music is still considered pretty good, though Richard Wagner has asserted it is only fit to facilitate digestion at a royal banquet."

"Not a bad thing to do either," declared Mr. Throgmorton, helping himself to another cutlet. "I doubt whether Wagner's music would do as much for me."

"Would you like me to play the Swan song, or the Pilgrim's Chorus, papa, by way of trying the experiment?" cried Bee, flashing friendly defiance at Doctor March out of her brown eyes.

"Spare us!" cried George and Jack, with admirable unanimity; and Ted Ackroyd stopped stroking his mustache and looked round furtively for his hat.

Mr. Throgmorton smiled fondly at his daughter's animated face.

"I am too old, child," he said, "to play tricks with my digestion."

"Besides," suggested George, "isn't it Thackery who complains of the difficulty a man with any ear has in eating to music—how he lets his soup get cold by keeping time with a march, or bolts his mutton when the band strikes up a galop?"

"A man's dinner should not be trifled with," said young Ackroyd, speaking for the first time in a deep lazy voice like that of an amiable ogre.

"In the sacred cause of dinner, Ted, you can, I see, be eloquent," said Jack.

Young Ackroyd, unmoved by his conversational success, merely went on stroking his mustache and looking at Miss Throgmorton.

"Music is all very well in its way," was Mr. Throgmorton's summing up; "and I like mine with a tune in it."

"So does Doctor March!" cried Bee, tossing her dark head. "He believes fondly in Donizetti and Bellini, whose overtures Weber used to call 'un certain bruit'—that, Mr. Ackroyd, being translated, means 'a certain noise.' You see, Doctor, Wagner is not the only composer who has said spiteful things."

"I am crushed," returned the Doctor meekly. "Mrs. Thogmorton, will you send this young lady away? She has eaten quite as many peaches as are good for her; and I stand in need of a little stroking down after this unexpected and, I may add, unmerited attack. The Irish girls I have met lately were too amiable to quarrel; and I am out of practice."

"Poor thing! I am so sorry for you!" ejaculated Bee, following the young man as he rose and went across to Mrs. Throgmorton's easy chair, which stood by the open window, near the well filled flower boxes.

Mrs. Throgmorton looked up affectionately as he perched himself on the window sill close to her work basket—a tall, dark, broad-shouldered fellow, who seemed to have brought with him some happy and wholesome influence born of his long days in the sun and rain and fresh Irish air, and whose face was yet alight with the pleasure of his coming home. The face was a plain and somewhat stern looking one; but its dark and straight nose were redeemed from severity by a good humored mouth and by the pleasant flash of white teeth from out a crisp tangle of nut-brown beard.

"I am anxious to hear," he was saying to his friend, "why you have been stopping in town, my dear Mrs. Throgmorton, during the hot weather? It is easily seen the family physician was away."

"There, Bee, my dear," said her mother fondly, "run and change your habit. We must soon be thinking of getting across to King's Road. It is after three."

"Mamma wants to talk secrets with the Doctor," declared Bee, planting herself on the arm of her mother's chair and laying her blooming cheek down on the mob cap. "Come into the brown room, you dear transparent old darling, and Doctor March shall smoke his cigarette while you tell him all about the Ludlows. Jack," the young lady added, as she stood up and pulled her mother fondly out of the depths of her easy chair, "you had better take Teddy away; we are going to talk sentiment."

Young Ackroyd stopped stroking his moustache and pushed back his chair.

When he too rose and joined the group at the window, it appeared that, tall as the young Throgmortons were, his blonde head rose above them both.

"You had much better come and mark for us," returned Jack. "We are going to have a game of billiards."

"Take—Teddy—Ackroyd—away!" repeated his sister, with a superb gesture of dismissal, which had the effect of loosening the Marechal Neil rose she wore between the buttons of her habit.

The flower fell upon the floor; and Ted, stooping, picked it up and began to fasten it carefully into his own coat.

"You might say 'please,' I think," observed Bee, with some coldness.

Mr. Ackroyd said nothing, but continued to arrange the leaf to his satisfaction.

"Come along, Ted," urged Jack impatiently. "You'll be spouting poetry next!"

The two young men went off together, Ted Ackroyd looking back at Bee as the door closed.

"Ted is talkative as ever, I see," said George March, smiling, "and as devoted as ever to ———"

"Billiards," suggested Bee calmly.

"And now," continued the Doctor, "how about that cigarette in the brown room, Miss Throgmorton? I have been looking forward to it ever since I started on my journey home. Stands the piano where it did? And how are Desdemona and Othello?"

Tom Throgmorton, his face covered with a silk handkerchief, was already asleep in his arm chair. Bee put her finger to her lips and seized upon her mother's work basket.

"To the brown room!" she said in a stage whisper, leading the way."

Bee's old school room, a rambling old wainscoted barn on the dining room floor, was the favorite resort of the whole family. It had a huge bay window looking out on the smoke blackened town garden at the rear of the house, a huge fireplace lined with blue and white tiles, which was at present filled with a great bank of growing ferns, and it was furnished in an agreeably composite manner, with odds and ends from all the other sitting rooms in the house.

Bee and Jack had papered the walls above the wainscot with a miscellaneous collection of photographs picked up from time to time during their holiday travels. The brown oak floor had a square of old Turkey carpet in the middle, and various old Persian rugs laid down before sofas and tables, while every variety of screen and lounge and easy chair that the mind of the Barlaston upholsters had conceived during the past twenty years was to be found represented in the comfortable old brown room.

Everyone had his or her particular seat or corner there. Papa would ask for a cup of tea and glance over the evening papers there; mamma would doze over her knitting in her especial sleepy hollow on wet afternoons; Jack would run in for a few minutes before he dressed for dinner to tease Othello and Desdemona, Bee's cats, or to tumble her music and crewel about with brotherly sang froid. Mrs. William, the gentle little wife of the eldest son, liked to sit there when she was tired of playing with her own doll's house, and was always welcome when accompanied by baby, as that small potentate helped to make talk, and placid little Charlotte was otherwise rather heavy in hand.

Miss Throgmorton drew the line of admittance, with two exceptions, at the members of her own family. These exception were Ted Ackroyd, the only son of her father' partner, with whom she had grown up in frank and sisterly intimacy, and Doctor Marsh.

Seven years before, when the young man had come down to Barlaston Regis to succeed old Doctor Featherstone, whose practice he had bought, he brought with him a letter of introduction to the Throgmortons; and, having conceived a hearty liking for the pleasant family whose children he romped with and scolded and charmed, he had grown by degrees to be looked upon as a son of the house.

Bee had then been a thin awkward child of thirteen, in short frocks and long plaits; now she was a beauty, done with school and governesses, very fond of riding with Jack and Ted on her bay horse Nip, and very popular with the Barlaston young men.

It was Doctor March's daily custom to steal half an hour on his way home to his bachelor dinner for a chat in the brown room. Mr. Throgmorton's kindly face was like a cordial to the lonely man, and he could always find something to dispute about with Bee, to whom he was in the habit of reading small lectures which it was plain she did not receive with any great respect. George persevered nevertheless in his warnings against the sinfulness of an idle life and the many little temptations which beset a pretty spoiled girl in a wealthy home—notably the love of dress, which he declared, somewhat unjustly, was Bee's greatest snare, or of frivolous reading, or gossip or flirtation.

Bee's piano still stood in the corner, where she used to thump it for weary hours together in her school days; and sometimes, when the young man had exhausted his powers of invective and had subsided into a friendly chat with Mr. Throgmorton, the girl would play a dreamy accompaniment to their conversation, filling the pauses with delightful music that ever after reminded her vaguely of Turkish tobacco and knitting needles.

Doctor March's one cigarette was sanctioned by the imperious young mistress of the brown room, though no one else, as Ted ruefully declared, dared as much as to mention the word smoke. She had even learnt to make the cigarette herself, and took pleasure in doing her old friend that small service.

George used to declare that it agreed with him to be made much of, just as it was an idiosyncracy of Miss Throgmorton's to require a great deal of judicious bullying; and it was certainly very refreshing, as he often admitted, to feel that, after a long and harassing day's work, there was one place where he was sure of rest, and could enjoy to his heart's content the spoiling and consideration which he professed to need.

On this day there was no music in the brown room, and no squabbling. Mrs. Throgmorton was too full of her friends the Ludlows and their troubles. Bee made the Doctor his cigarette in silence as the story was told of her mother's girlish friendship and of the appeal made by her old schoolfellow for a renewal of the long forgotten intimacy.

"It is a wonderful world!" the kind woman concluded, with a sort of awe in her voice. "There are all sorts of unexpected ups and downs in it, and if ever I felt tempted to grumble over the difference between my position and Letitia's, I am sure I ought to ask pardon for it now on my knees. Just look at me, Doctor, with my home and my kind old Tom, and my three dear children—bless him!—round me still; and here is poor Letitia, who has lost husband and health and money all at one blow, coming to Barlaston with her poor girl unprovided for, to live in that little villa in the King's Road, and to eke out her scanty income as best she may."

"So that is the meaning of your stay in town, my dear Mrs. Throgmorton?" said George gently. "No wonder you are looking none the worse for it; you are never so happy, I know, as when you are devising kindnesses for others."

"And to show you," remarked Bee, who was putting the finishing touches to her cigarette, "what an old fashioned, unsuspecting, behind the age darling she is, Doctor, I must explain that my mother sees nothing strange in the fact that the Ludlows, who have ignored her existence for nearly thirty years of prosperity, have suddenly recalled the fact in their poverty."

"Don't, Bee, my child," said Mrs. Throgmorton, shaking her head—"don't try to make yourself out so cold and calculating; it is Jack who puts such notions into your head, because he thinks they are manly—foolish boy!—and show his knowledge of the world."

Bee was giving Doctor March a light, and did not answer, except by softly touching her mother's blooming cheek with her disengaged hand.

"Why should not poor Letitia come to me in her trouble?" continued Mrs. Throgmorton simply. "Did I not promise long ago that I would never forget her?"

"And you have kept your word, you old love! Do you know, Doctor March, my mother has a little packet of yellow letters up stairs from Mrs. Ludlow, and a long curl of light hair, and such a pretty little miniature in a short waisted gown! She has often shown them to me when I was a little girl, and told me stories about Letitia Butler and Addison house. Fancy—after thirty years! I wonder if I shall ever remember anything or anybody so long?"

"Why, of course you will, you foolish child!" returned her mother seriously. "Do you suppose you could ever forget Ted Ackroyd or the Doctor, who are your friends and Jack's, just as poor Letitia was mine?"

"Oh, the Doctor!" echoed Bee, pursing up her scarlet lips. "Painful impressions are notoriously hard to eradicate!"

"All right," said George, nodding lazily, "I will think of a tremendous retort presently, madam. Just now I want to hear more of these unhappy friends of your mother's. There is a daughter, you say, my dear Mrs. Throgmorton?"

"Oh, yes; and a charming girl, I am sure to judge by her letters! It is really wonderful, the spirit in which she takes their reverses—her engagement only just broken off too when the crash came! Most girls would be completely crushed."

"Yes," admitted Bee doubtfully—"if she cared for Lord Meldrum. Somehow one is always disposed to think that when a girl marries a lord she does it only for the sake of the title, and it seems rather unfair. I suppose they are the same as any other young men?"

"I am afraid Lord Meldrum was not quite so steady as some young men, Bee, or he would have known his own mind a little better."

"Miss Ludlow was engaged to Lord Meldrum?" asked the Doctor, with all the suave readiness to be amused induced by his excellent luncheon and Bee's dainty cigarette. "And he threw her over on account of the crash, I suppose—wanted money with his wife?"

"No, no," returned Mrs. Throgmorton—and her blooming face began to harden and grow cold. "I thought so too—I am afraid there are men in the world heartless enough to marry for money—Letitia writes me word that it was all Lucy Thrale's fault."

"Lucy Thrale. Who is Lucy Thrale, pray?"

Bee heaved an elaborate sigh.

"Who is Lucy Thrale?" she repeated dolefully. "If you had not been in Connemara for the past six weeks, Doctor March, you would not have required to ask that question. As for papa and Jack and poor me, we have eaten and drunk and thought nothing but Lucy Thrale ever since we got back!"

"Bee," said Mary Throgmorton, smiling and coloring like a girl, "you must not laugh at your poor old mother."

"No, darling, I won't," cried Bee, squeezing her mother's head against her bosom as she stood behind her chair—"at least not now. I'll go and change my habit, and you shall have the Doctor all to yourself, an unresisting victim."

"And now," demanded George, as the door closed behind the girl's tall shape, "who is Lucy Thrale?"

"Miss Thrale is Ada Ludlow's cousin, a girl she has treated like a sister; and it is she who was the cause of Lord Meldrum's dishonorable behavior."

"Has Lord What's his name married the cousin then?"—watching the delicate smoke of his cigarette as it curled above his head.

"Oh, dear, no!" returned his friend, with a short, scornful laugh. "I don't suppose he meant anything serious; the young lady gained nothing by her device after all."

"Did Lord Meldrum throw over both the girls then?" inquired George, somewhat bewildered.

"My dear George, no—of course not! Miss Thrale is by way of having refused him, don't you see? But what do you think of a girl who could encourage her cousin's betrothed husband so shamelessly as to lead the young man into a proposal?"

"And apparently for the mere pleasure of refusing it?" added George, dubiously. "It seems rather a complicated case, and I am afraid I must reserve my decision. But in the meanwhile what has become of Miss Thrale?"

"Oh, she is to live with the Ludlows again, I believe! Ada does not agree with her mother in blaming Lucy for Lord Meldrum's fickleness."

"It would be an admission of Miss Lucy's superior fascination to do so; wouldn't it?"

"George," cried his friend reproachfully, "if you had read Ada's letter, you could not suspect her of such paltry feelings! And, besides"—with a pretty air of triumph—"it is she who has persuaded her mother to send for Miss Thrale; so you see she can't be very much afraid of her cousin's fascination, as you call it."

"I beg Miss Ludlow's pardon," said George, laughing.

"Ada declares—so her mother writes, poor thing!—that Lord Meldrum must have heard rumors of the difficulties that were threatening the firm, for she had noticed a change in his manner towards her long before Lucy Thrale and he ever met. It is very sweet of Ada, of course, to take her cousin's part; but I have my own opinion of Lucy Thrale. I hate a deceitful girl!"

"In that case, mother," cried Bee, coming into the room in a charming walking dress, and pulling on her long suede gloves as she spoke, "you will allow me to tell Doctor March frankly that he is very much in the way, and that we shall be obliged to turn him out if he doesn't go out of his own accord."

George rose reluctantly and looked at his watch.

"For my part," he grumbled, "I prefer a little amiable blarney in a woman to such frank impertinence. But I know whom to thank for all this. Miss Ludlow is at the bottom of it. I think I must make up my mind to hate her."

"Why not drive over to King's Road with us and see the house?" suggested Mrs. Throgmorton as she left the room to put on her bonnet. "We have really made it look very pretty, considering how little time there has been."

"I am afraid I must not be tempted," said George. "Your little romance has beguiled me into forgetting the hour. I had no idea it was so late. This is my first day back, you know; and I must see Stetson, who will be wanting to get away. I have a few visits to pay too at the North End."

"Well, come back and dine with us, if you can," urged his friend hospitably; "we shall be quite alone;" and she went away to get ready for her drive.

Bee was looking at herself in the dingy old mirror over the tall chimney piece, and tying her bonnet strings in a prettier knot.

"I suppose, child," said Doctor March, with a sudden gravity, "it is of no use to ask you for any news of my poor people over there?"

Bee turned round.

"I have no time to spare," she said.

"From choosing new bonnets?"

"Do you like this one?" she demanded archly. "Is not that little crimson pompon very becoming? Tell the truth now!"

"You foolish girl," persisted George unmoved by the flash of white teeth and the provoking sparkle of dark eyes, "why don't you try to think of something better than bonnets?"

"Is there anything better?" she asked demurely.

But George would not smile.

"I don't like close rooms and narrow alleys in warm weather," pouted the girl, seeing his grave face; but her great brown eyes fell under the young man's cool glance.

He laughed and sighed in spite of himself.

"You did not like them any better in cold weather, as far as I can remember!" he cried; and then Bee made an appealing little face.

"Don't scold me on your first day at home," she said, smiling. "I will try to get up a taste for dirty babies and bad air; and then I will invest in a poke bonnet and a big basket, and go about like Janet Bryer, asking poor people impertinent questions and calling women old enough to be my mother by their Christian names."

"Janet Bryer means well," said Doctor March coldly.

"So do I," Bee asserted with a coaxing air. "Oh, here is mamma! I am quite ready, darling. Come, Doctor."

"I will get you to drop me at the office, Mary, on your way," said Mr. Throgmorton, opening the dining room door as they crossed the hall. "I have had an uncommon long nap, to be sure! Couldn't have slept sounder through one of Reyloff's voluntaries!"

"Tom," said his wife suddenly, as they followed Bee and the Doctor, and heard the happy young voices disputing up to the very door of the carriage, "do you know what has come into my head?"

"Nothing very bad, I dare say, Mary my dear," responded Tom Throgmorton, with a complacent glance at the handsome matronly figure by his side.

"You know how long I have been urging George March to marry?"

"You are a born match maker, Molly, like every woman who is worth her salt."

"Well, I have got the very girl at last, I do believe, who would just suit him for a wife."

"Where?" asked Mr. Throgmorton, looking vaguely up and down the tranquil sunshiny street; while Doctor March, unconscious of the fate in store for him, was helping Bee in her tied back skirts into the carriage.

"I don't understand——"

"Of course she can't expect to meet lords in Barlaston," continued the lady somewhat incoherently. "And I am afraid most young men nowadays look for money with a wife. But George can afford to marry for love. And, oh, Tom, if it can be managed, won't it be nice if he should take a fancy to Ada Ludlow?"

CHAPTER VI.

Doctor March was the youngest of the three physicians in the quiet old town of Barlaston Regis; but, in spite of his youth, which some people, and especially the other two physicians, looked upon as a serious disqualification in a medical man, he was the most popular.

Not a few of Doctor Featherstone's patients, it is true, had complained, when the young man first came to settle in the town, that he was hard and unsympathetic—which may have been the case when he had to deal with imaginary sufferings. He was apt at these times to speak the truth a little too plainly, and had made enemies of those who did not understand him. Men whom he debarred from their selfish indulgences, or to whom he recommended cold water and exercise as his only prescriptions; women who expected him to suggest new pleasures as remedies for a too listless and frivolous life—these were the people who had found Doctor March cold and intolerant.

But they were few, now that he had been seven years laboring among them; and if the young man had to bear cold looks and misconstruction in his time, he had his reward at last in the affection with which he was now regarded by his patients, high and low, and in the grateful looks and lighting up of heavy faces that met him as he went on his way, bringing hope and healing and consolation with him.

George March was too indifferent about success, as the world understands the word, too careless about money or position, to be ambitious; and yet, in spite of his unselfishness, in spite of many hours devoted to unprofitable work, he had, somewhat to his own surprise got on.

His position was firmly established in Barlaston Regis. His brougham with the bay horses was to be seen driving about all day in the best neighborhood; his name was on the staff of the various hospitals in the town; and the result of all this was a very handsome income, which was steadily on the increase.

No wonder the Barlaston young ladies looked kindly upon him; and George March was, besides, very well worth liking on his own account.

There was nothing especially hero-like about him, perhaps; but he was so cheery and steadfast, so strong and so gentle, that people who had looked in his face—and especially women—felt instinctively that he was to be trusted and esteemed, whatever differences of opinion might afterwerds occur between them.

Perhaps it was because Doctor March liked most people—and all women—in return, and could always see some good in every one. Children positively adored him; and, as George had no little nephews and nieces to spoil, he was obliged to content himself with such snatches of enjoyment as were to be found in the nurseries of his friends and patients. Sometimes indeed the enthusiasm of the baby members of the Barlaston society proved rather embarrassing to the young man, who would find himself, perhaps in the street, clasped tightly round each leg by two fat little arms, shrieks long and loud following the nurse's endeavors to release him.

George did not mind. He loved the little ones, and laughed at them, and let them climb all over him and kiss his kind brown face, just as he was good natured, and a shade paternal, in his manner to all the young ladies who admired him so much.

It was certainly a pity, as several kindly matrons had often declared, that Doctor March should be so entirely alone in the world, and that he should be spending the best years of his life without creating any interest for himself outside of his profession.

His mother had died while he was a little fellow at school; and his father having married again abroad, young March had fought his way in the world with but scanty encouragement or help from home. Indeed the household of half-foreign children and their middle-aged coquette of a mother which went by that name was no home in the eyes of the young Englishman.

But for all that the slip-shod family in Brussels had profited considerably by his increasing popularity; and his father's widow, with her numerous offspring, were now recognized pensioners on his bounty.

George was a cheerful giver, and did not complain; but it is certain that he had not been mortally offended when his step mother had elected to remain among her own friends in Belgium, instead of accepting a share of his home in Barlaston Regis. It was quieter to be alone, he considered, though there would certainly have been ample room for them all.

Doctor March lived in Beaudesert Gardens, in a big old fashioned house which he had taken with the practice from old Doctor Featherstone, and which he continued to occupy, though it was situated in an antiquated quarter of the town and was a great deal too spacious and stately for his simple bachelor establishment. But it suited the Doctor, who liked the old world tranquility of the square in which it stood, and his patients did not find it too out-of-the-way to prevent their thronging of a morning in goodly numbers to his consulting room. Good old Mrs. Batters a relic of Doctor Featherstone's regime, had remained with the other fixtures, playing the part of ministering spirit to the young man and making him as comfortable as it was possible for a bachelor to be. George used to declare, laughing, that that was saying a good deal.

Popular and prosperous as he was, it was evident that, outside of one or two houses, Doctor March did not care much about society; and many sighs were caused by the careless good humor with which he divided his attentions among the many pretty girls in Barlaston who were so willing to please him if they had only known how, and who secretly pitied him so much for living all by himself in that great lonely house.

George March was perfectly contented however with his condition; and prudent mothers, who had paid the rising physician many attentions since his arrival in Barlaston, began to look upon him as a hopeless case.

One or two of these ladies, more daring than the rest, or having a larger number of daughters on probation, had sounded the young man discreetly on the subject of marriage, and had given him to understand that in his profession it was most desirable that he should settle down early and begin to be looked upon as a family man. But the Doctor only laughed, declaring that he was as happy as the days were long, and that a man could be no more if he had twenty wives. And he would add that he claimed to be considered a regular old fogey already by right of his ugly face.

It was evident that he was incorrigible. Having an immense and eager interest in his profession, and a large capacity for hard work, the world to his nine and twenty years seemed a bright place enough.

His household was well ordered, faithful old Batters being the fine flower of managers; and, if ever George dreamed of a change in the tranquil routine of his existence, it was as of some far off indefinite prospect which did not trouble him at all as yet.

And in the meanwhile there was the pleasant old house in Upper Brunswick street to look upon as home, to say nothing of his little brood of step brothers and sisters to provide for, and the various cares and interests which had grown about him since he had taken root in the town.

Among these were the visits at the North End, of which he had spoken to Mrs. Throgmorton. They were to be paid in the poorest quarter of the town, and would bring the Doctor no fees at all. The poor woman nevertheless whose scalded child lay dying in a stifling garret, and the bed ridden girl, her neighbor, found the tenderest skill, the gravest sympathy, most freely lavished in their service; and the delight of these poor women and of other humble patients in the Doctor's return was certainly worth the additional hour they kept him away from home.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Salem, Mass., is one of the oldest towns in the country, and this, we suppose, is why the inhabitants are so forgetful and absent minded. It was a Salem man who, having a letter to post, forgot it for a day or two, then gave it to another man who in turn carried it to Boston and back two or three days, who handed it over to a third man with a request that he, to save time, would post it in Boston. The third man forgetting it until he came back to Salem, saw the first man on his way to town and handed it over to him, when he recognized that the letter he had given him to post nearly a week before was still unmailed. Still more recently a Salem man forgot his youngest child, left him in the Boston depot and went home without him. And this last week a Salem mother who has a daughter so closely resembling her that the one is frequently taken for the other, walked up to her own reflection in the large mirror of a dry goods store, and, putting forth her hand said, "Why, Maria, when did you come home? I thought you were to stay at your uncle's a week."

JAMES BOWIE.

Anecdotes of the Inventor of the Bowie Knife.

On one occasion Bowie, whose reputation had reached Memphis, arrived by boat at that city, or rather at what was then known as the Third Chickasaw Bluffs. The bank from the boat landing to the top was about one hundred and fifty feet high, and a large number of people were watching the arrival of the strangers. Looking down one of them recognized Bowie as he stepped over the gang plank and made the remark, "There comes Jim Bowie."

"What!" shouted a big flatboatman, then known as the "Memphis Terror," as he looked down the bluff; "What! Jim Bowie? That's the fellow I've been looking for for months. Jim Bowie! Why ——— him, I'll whip him so quick he won't know what hurt him. I'll whip him if I never whip another man as long as I live! Stand by, boys, and see the fun!"

Bowie came slowly up the bank. In his hand he carried an old umbrella. He had no pistols and was evidently not expecting or in fact prepared for a fight. The fact did not escape the now thoroughly interested spectators. Up went the flatboatman, promptly, as Bowie reached the top of the bluff. "Is your name Jim Bowie?" he asked.

Bowie replied that it was.

"Then," shouted the flatboatman, as he squared off, "I think you a d——d rascal and I'm going to whip you right here and now."

Bowie was a man of few words. He stood and gazed at his adversary, who was more emboldened than ever. "I think you're a d—d coward," he yelled, "and I'm going to knock your head off," and so saying the "Memphis Terror" advanced to the conflict.

Bowie never flinched. His keen eye was fixed on the "Terror," who at this moment was face to face with him. But as the man of Memphis drew a dirk from his breast, Bowie stepped back a foot and thrust out his umbrella as if to keep his antagonist at bay.

The "Memphis Terror," seized the umbrella with one hand, made a pass at the inventor of the famous knife with the other. In doing so he pulled the umbrella to himself, leaving free in the right hand of Bowie his murderous weapon, which till this moment had been concealed in the folds of the impromptu sheath. The sight of Bowie standing there, with the knife in his hand and the gleam of vengeance in his eyes, was too much for the "Terror."

From the bouncing bully he became transformed into a craven coward in a second.

His face turned pale and his knees trembled, while the dirk dropped from his hands as he gazed on Bowie's weapon with staring eyes. "Put it up; put away that scythe, for God's sake, Bowie. I was mistaken in my man."

Bowie advanced a step.

"Don't—don't kill me!" besecched the bully; "for God's sake, don't go for me with that scythe and I swear to you I'll never attack another man as long as I live."

Bowie looked at his now thoroughly demoralized opponent for a moment, and then turning on his heel with the expression "Coward," walked rapidly away. Thenceforth the "Memphis Terror" was a changed man, and until the day of his death he never lost the sobriquet of "Put up that scythe."

Bowie was very fond of music and dancing, and on occasions where he would enjoy both he invariably appeared in the best of humor, and the reserve which had begun to characterize him at this time appeared to thaw out. It was on one occasion at a dance, when he was in such favorable conditions, that I had an opportunity of a free and easy chat with him about some of the encounters in which he had been engaged. Referring to the disparity in size between himself and some of the men whom he had met in conflict I asked him how he regarded his chances under such circumstances.

"Suppose," said I, referring to a man of herculean build, who stood near, "suppose you were attacked by such a man as Hob Johnson there. What then?"

"Oh," dryly responded Bowie, "I would cut him down to my size!"

A STRANGE CUSTOM.

Dancing and Rejoicing Over the Death of a Child.

[San Antonio, Texas, Express]

Wakes in some portions of Ireland, and dances over the dead in Mexico, are common, but in this part of the civilized world people frown down upon the custom as only fit to be practiced by barbarians. Still, there was a wake in this city last evening at the residence of Francisco Ramos, a Mexican, on Losoyo street, adjoining San Antoino ice street. A child eight months of age died yesterday morning, and the parents did not weep, but rejoiced over the loss. They loved their little one, yet rejoiced because it was taken away in its purity of infancy to join the angel hosts up yonder. They were glad they had been thus made instrumental in adding another chorister to the hosts singing hosannahs on high. So they determined to demonstrate their rejoicing to the world by inviting friends and relatives about them, and having a dance—a wake, as the world regards such demonstrations. An *Express* representative chanced around to the place about 9 o'clock p. m., found the house brilliantly lighted and quite a number of persons present. A harper seated in front of the entrance door, was playing a familiar waltz, and three or four couples were dancing to the music. Under the gallery shed, and just behind the harper, lay the dead infant, a pretty little girl. She was dressed in black, and had been placed upon a box that was covered with a white cloth, trimmed with red about the borders. The hands of the infant were nicely folded, and within them was placed a bouquet of artificial flowers of crimson hue. Resting loosely about the head of the deceased was a coronet of white artificial flowers, and a similar wreath encircled the lifeless frame, while roses, pinks and several kinds of wild flowers were strewn promiscuously about the remains. The little departed one was actually nestled in a bed of natural and artificial flowers and wreaths of vines. Quite a number of ladies and gentlemen who passed that way were invited within by the father, and admired the pretty little infant, but looked with strange thoughts upon the scene in the adjacent room, where rejoicing took the place of those common expressions and demonstrations of grief that are manifested where the loved ones of the family circle are taken away to be here no more forever. This was the first scene of the kind the reporter ever witnessed in this city.

CHAMPION LIARS.

A Few Startling Yarns Told in a Texas Grocery.

Hank's grocery is situated on the edge of a prairie in Southern Texas and on Sunday quite a crowd used to meet there and snap news and lies and have horse races and get boiling drunk and indulge in other harmless amusement. Old Lem Williams used to be on hand every Sunday and was considered the boss liar of the State. One Sunday Lem Williams himself was seated in front of Hank's grocery, spitting tobacco juice at a grasshopper, when Bill Parker inquired:

"How's crops up your way, Lem?"

"Well," he replied, "corn's sorter 'gin to tasseling, but the stand is powerful poor."

"That seems to be the general complaint," remarked Bill.

"Yes, this here country ain't good for raisin' corn," said Lem, as he took a fresh chew; "but if you want to see corn what is corn, you just orter go to Fort Bend. When I was farming on the Brazos, in that country, my corn grew so tall and thick that I had to hang lamps on the mule's ears to see how to plow a fourrow. It was corn and no mistake, and in the fall the stalks were so high that I had to knock the ears down with a sassafras pole. Darn my skin, the ears were so big that it tuk a strong man to carry more'n three of 'em at a time."

"Speakin' about strong men," remarked Bill Barker, "sorter causes me to remember an old steamboat captain who used to run on the Yazoo River in '58. One day he stopped at a landing for some wood, and the niggers were kinder slow about bringing it aboard. Old Jenkins the captain, roused up and cussed everythin' in reach. Says he, walkin' up to the woodpile whar the niggers were at work: 'Pile on your timber, yer onery skunks, and let me show you how to carry wood,' and he stretched out his arms. Well, sir, the niggers piled on the wood, and kept pilin' until Jenkins had a cord and a half of firewood on his shoulders, and he turned and carried it on the boat jest as easy as if it was a bokay. He was what I'd call a purty tolerable stout man."

"That reminds me of a man I used to know in Budford county, Alabamy," said a stranger named Tipper, who had been in the neighborhood but a short time. All eyes were turned toward the speaker and they began to size him up. "I guess old Pete Jennings," continued the stranger, "was about the heftiest man in these United States, if I ain't mistaken."

"You see, one day he was hauling some fence posts in an ox wagon, when the wheels begun to creak like if they needed greasin'. He looked under the wagon for his tar bucket and found it warn't thar, and what do you 'spose he hid?"

"I don't know," growled Bill Barker and Lem Williams in a chorus.

"Well, I'll just tell you what he did. He propped up the axle tree, tuk the wheel off and steppin' out in the woods he picked up a pine knut, held it over the axle and squeezed the tar outen it. Old Pete Jennings had a grip what beat a vise, you bet."

"Stranger," said Lem Williams, as he rose up, "I don't like to dispute a man's word, but that's a blazing lie, and I ain't gwine to believe it," and he and Bill Barker, out lied and disgusted, mounted their horses and left Tipper with a serene smile on his face as he whittled the edge of a cracker box.

THE FARMER'S HIRED MAN.

"I'm kinder lookin' around the market for a hired man," he exclaimed as he stopped at one of the stands and nibbled at an onion. "I kinder need one, but yet I kinder hope I shan't be able to find one."

"How's that?"

"Wall, there ain't no profit in a hired man no more. No, sir, he's no good any longer."

"What's the reason?"

"Oh, a dozen reasons. First and foremost, times have changed, and the hired man has changed with 'em. Ah! sir, it makes me sad when I think of the hired men we had before the war—great big fellers with the strength of an ox and the vim of a locomotive. I didn't have to holler my lungs out to git one of 'em out of bed at three o'clock in the morning, and it was all I could do to coax 'em to got to bed at 10 o'clock at night. I'm afraid that we shan't never see no more hired men wuth keekin' around for their board."

"That's sad."

"It's sad, and more, too. Now, as I said, I want a hired man. I'm willing to pay $11 or $12 a month for a smart one. Some farmers want a man to work all day and all night, but that ain't me. I have never asked one to git out of bed before 3 o'clock—never. I allus give my man three-quarters of an hour at nson, unless the hogs git out or cattle break in or a shower comes up. After a man has worked right along for nine hours his system needs at least half an hour to brace up in. They don't quite work on some farms till 8 o'clock, but I'm no such slave driver. At half past 7 I tell my man to knock off. All he has to do after that is to feed the stock, cut a little wood, mow some grass for the horses, milk four cows, fill up the water trough, start a smudge in the smoke house and pull a few weeds in the garden. I never had a hired man who didn't grow fat on my work, and they allus left me feeling that they hadn't half earned their wages."

He stopped long enough to wipe a tear from his eye and then went on:

"And now look at the hired man of to-day. He wears white shirts and collars. He won't eat with a knife. He wants napkins when he eats, and if we don't hang up a clean towel once a week he wipes on his handkercher. Call him at 3 and he gets up at 6. He wants a whole hour at noon, and after supper he trots off to a singing school or sits down to a newspaper. Fifteen years ago if my hired man was sick for half a day I could dock him. If he died I could take out a month's wages for the trouble. He was glad to git store orders for his pay, and he would wash in the rain barrel and wipe on the clothes line. There's bin a change, sir—an awful change, and if a reaction don't set in pretty soon you will witness the downfall of agriculture in this country."

"Then you won't hire another?"

"Wall, I can't just say. Work is powerfully pressing, but I am going slow. Before I hire him I want to know whether he's a man who'll pass his plate for more meat and taters, and whether we've got to use starch in doing up his shirts. The last man I had took me to task for not holding family prayers twice a day, and after I had done so for three months I found it was only a game of his to beat me out of half an hour a day. He thought he had a pretty soft thing, and he looked mighty lonesome when I cut Old Hundred down to two lines and got through with the Lord's Prayer in forty seconds."

WHAT THE BASHFUL CLERK WANTED.

Old Pinchem sat in his private office the other day figuring up his profits for May, when his head clerk, looking as pale as a sheep and as red as a cow by turns, entered and began:

Mr. Pinchem, I—I———"

"Have you got those goods off for Kalamazoo?" interrupted the old man.

"Yes, sir, they gone off. Mr. Pinchem, I have long———"

"And about that order for starch?"

"That has been attended to, sir. Mr. Pinchem, I have long wanted to speak to you."

"Ah! speak to me. Why, I thought you spoke to me fifty times a day."

"Yes, sir, I know, but this is a private matter."

"Private? Oh! Ah! Wait till I see how much we made on that last 10,000 pounds of soap. Six times four are twenty-four; five times two are ten, and two to carry are twelve; three times seven are twenty-one and one—ah, well, go ahead; I'll finish this afterwards."

"Mr. Pinchem, I have been with you ten long years."

"Ten, eh? Long years, eh? Any longer than any other years? Go ahead."

"And I have always tried to do my duty."

"Have, eh? Go on."

"And I now make bold—"

"Hold on! What is there bold about it? But never mind—I'll hear you out."

"Mr. Pinchem, I want to ask—ask—I want to ask—"

"Well, why don't you ask then? I don't see why you don't ask, if you want to."

"Mr. Pinchem, I want to ask you for—for—for—'

"You want to ask me for the hand of my daughter. Ah! Why didn't you speak right out? She's yours, my boy! Take her and be happy. You might have had her two years ago if you had mentioned it. Go 'long, now—I'm busy."

"Mr. Pinchem."

"What, you here yet? Well, what is it?"

"I wanted to ask you for—for—"

"Didn't I give her to you, you rascal!"

"Yes, but what I wanted to ask you for was, not the hand of your daughter, but for a raise of salary."

"Oh, that was it, eh? Well, sir, that is an entirely different matter, and it requires time for serious thought and earnest consultation. Return to your work, and some time next fall I'll see about giving you a raise of a dollar a week. Six times four are twenty-four and two t carry; and three times——."—*M. Quad*.

THEODORE PARKER ON MARRIAGE.

Young people marry their opposites in temperaments and general character, and such marriages are generally good ones. They do it instinctively. The young man does not say, "My black eyes require to be wed with blue, and my over vehemence requires to be a little modified with somewhat of dulness and reserve." When these opposites come together to be wed they do not know it, but each thinks the other just like himself. Old people never marry their opposites; they marry their similars, and from calculation. Each of these two arrangements is very proper. In their long journey these opposites will fall out by the way a great many times, and charm the other back again, and by-and-bye they will be agreed as to the place they will go to, and the road they will go by, and both become reconciled. The man will be nobler and larger for being associated with so much humanity unlike himself, and she will be a nobler woman for having manhood beside her, that seeks to correct her deficiencies and supply her with what she lacks, if the diversity be not too great, and if there be real generosity and love in their hearts to begin with. The old bridegroom, having a much shorter journey to take, must associate himself with one like himself. A perfect and complete marriage is, perhaps, as rare as perfect personal beauty. Men and women are married fractionally, now a small fraction, then a large fraction. Very few are married totally, and then only, I think, after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment. Such a large and sweet fruit is a complete marriage, that it needs a very long summer to ripen in and then a long winter to mellow and season. But a real, happy marriage of love and judgment between a noble man and woman is one of the things so very handsome that, if the sun were as the Greek poets fabled, a god, he might stop the world in order to feast his eyes with such a spectacle.

—There was a young fellow named],
He grabbed and lit out with a jacket.
He went to the station
For?
And kicked up a terrible racket.
But the Bobby engaged in detection
Was slow to prove]'s connection;
So, during the racket,
With a —— out went],
And was no more seen in that §.

—The rage for insect decoration has extended to garden vegetables. The potato vines are already decorated with a very unique gold and black striped bug, while cabbage plants affect an emerald worm.