

"What do they say? But it's no matter," he replied. "You mean my spasmodic attempt to marry Nina Stanhope? She was a dear little dainty morsel, a bird of passage, who came here to visit her relatives, the Carrols. I always associate her in my mind with the birds of spring. She came in April with the swallows while I was still smarting from the intolerable blow I got at Christmas, and there was such comfort in her sweet unworldly nature that her innocent talk and the glance of her soft candid eyes were like healing balm to my sort heart, and I followed her about perpetually until those who looked on said, naturally enough, that 'Eustace Allan was in love again.'"

"One thing I see clearly," I observed as he paused for a moment, "she certainly did not jilt you. You are quite too civil about her for that to have occurred."

"Oh! that is what my friends say, is it?" he responded. "No, she did not jilt me. She never did anything in her life that was not good and true. We jilted each other by mutual consent, and I never think of her without being glad that I was not selfish enough to cumber her fresh young life with the dreary restless spirit that destroys my own."

"However, as I have just told you, I had no pleasure apart from her, and for a time I really fancied that I had formed an effectual way of repairing the mischief which had been done me. It was from no desire to annoy Constance, to show her that I could forget her, that I sought a refuge in the affection of this girl whom the world had not spoiled. I was so charmed by the purity and simplicity of her character that I was honestly won into believing that all would be well again if she could love me. So I did as men in my case generally do, declared myself her lover, was accepted, and thought myself happy."

"I had been riding with her one day, and after leaving her at home had gone to my office to write some letters, when Jack Curzon, who knew how I had been thrown over by Constance, came in, and, giving me a small package, said:

"I have just seen Mrs. George Gillespie. She and her husband are at the Crescent, passing through on their wedding trip. She requested me to give you this with my own hands, and also desired me to ask you to call upon her at the hotel. They leave at midday to-morrow."

"My friend made no comment upon the message he brought, nor showed the least curiosity about the contents of the parcel with which he had been entrusted, but, being a man of good sense and feeling, abruptly departed."

"I opened the package and found this ring and read the words inside, 'For old acquaintance' sake,' and then I remembered the message she had sent me, this bride of another man, and felt that all my new-found happiness was a sham, shivered and lying in ruin before me, and that I loved this woman, however unworthy of my love or that of any other man she might be, with a passion whose intensity shook me with the grasp of a hurricane."

"An imperious longing to comply with her invitation took possession of me. I may as well go, I thought. She can do me no further harm now. I shall never be free of this madness, and she will never let me go free while she can reach me, and I shall see her again once more. That will make up for what it will cost me."

"Well, this frenzy spent itself while I sat there alone, and I came to my senses so far as to resolve that I would conduct myself like a decent man. I would not go to see her. I had fought my battle with this temptation alone; but I knew that I could not trust myself in her presence, that there I was a slave, and I remembered that she had her bridegroom, and that I was engaged to marry Nina Stanhope."

"But the struggle mastered me to this extent, that I found it impossible to be the same man I had previously been to Nina. I strove hard to conceal from her the hopeless clog which had fastened upon my feelings, but I could not altogether hide the truth that the future upon which I had lately counted was stripped, as by some sudden curse, of the hope and spirit which had so warmed and cheered me."

"And if I had played my part better than I did, I should not have succeeded long in deceiving the clear-eyed little maiden. Besides, the recent marriage of Constance and her visit, brief as it was, to our city, had set tongues going and revived former gossip about her behaviour towards me, and Jack Curzon had spoken of her with some indignation and contempt, though he had not betrayed the mission upon which he had been employed when she sent him to me."

"So it came about that Nina heard of what had been between the beautiful Mrs. Gillespie and her own lover. A pleasant bit of news like that will never go untold while there are women upon this planet, and she asked me a few plain questions that went to the root of the matter."

"It was not possible to lie to such a girl, and indeed I was not quite unwilling, for her sake, to tell the truth, for I knew now that, with the best will to be otherwise, I should be an undeserving husband to one like her."

"It was a shock to her, and the sweet face turned pale and true, innocent tears fell over it; but they were not the bitter, scalding drops, that sometimes wash the light and joy out of a woman's eyes forever."

"I strenuously urged her to let me do my best, and told her that whatever my shortcomings might be, I should be proud to keep to my engagement if she would let me. But she was as firm as she was gentle. She even jests as she said:

"I will have no husband with a hole in his heart too big for me to fill. In that realm I must be queen, not a

bond-woman. We will part true friends. Perhaps we have both been a little mistaken."

"We separated without a shadow of bitterness or anger. She afterwards married Jack Curzon, and is, I believe, the happiest woman on this continent. He is a worthier husband than I should have been at my best, and his wife loves him, I am glad to say, with an ardour which has swept me out of her recollection as a lover, though we are all three fast friends."

"Do you ever hear anything now of Mrs. Gillespie?" I inquired when he had finished his story, the telling of which, like that of the "Ancient Mariner," seemed to be a necessity that brought relief to an oppressed memory."

"Yes," he answered. "I hear that she lives mostly between Paris and New York, that she is still renowned for her beauty, and still makes it a lure to bring men into captivity. She couldn't live, I fear, without that recreation. The world has never been without such women, the Delilahs who shear the locks of the credulous Sampsons who trust them. I hear, too, that she has an unfaithful husband, but I do not rejoice in that because she, perhaps, deserves it. I hate him for it, and I love her still."

I saw that my homilies would be not only vain, but exasperating to a man whose admirable gifts and opportunities were so perversely squandered, and kept my moral reflections and scraps of wisdom to myself. I knew that he was wrong, but it was useless to tell him so. He knew that as well as I. He did not want to hear unpalatable truth. He wanted a little tenderness and compassion just as he was. Undoubtedly the fair face and untrue heart of Constance Latimer had been his ruin, although his weakness and wilful infatuation seemed inexcusable. But who was to measure his amount of blame? Not I, nor any other of his fellow creatures. He was a man of some great qualities, all marred; keen feelings, miserably wasted; and noble acquirements, not unconsciously, perverted. Yet he would have scorned dishonour, or the thought of doing as he had been done by."

He recovered his usual strength in time, only to plunge into a more and more erratic life—wandering in aimless fashion to distant countries and strange and wild places in search of adventure or forgetfulness. I did not lose the deep interest I had felt in him, for he was one not easily forgotten; and two years later I heard with feelings of the most painful regret that he had died a violent death in the desolate Australian bush by the hand of a ruffian, who was identified and shortly afterwards brought to justice by the fact that he had in his possession a valuable, well known to many persons, which had at last proved fatal to its owner—the identical Guard Ring.

A. C. J.

DISPARITY.

A little maid with hair and eyes of brown,
And rosy lips and cheeks of vivid red,
Stands by my side with troubled gaze cast down,
And o'er a book desponding droops her head.
A slate and pencil in her dimpled hand—
"Please, sir," the sweet voice pleads tremulously,
"I never can this problem understand!"
She's but eleven,—I am twenty-three.

"Come here, 'Carina Mia,'" I murmur low,
And round her gently steals "The Master's" Arm;—
"Tis easier to guide the pencil so,—
And gracious goodness! where can be the harm?
"My darling" brings no blushes to her face—
My heart-throbs no mischievous eyes can see,
My breath upon her forehead leaves no trace,—
She's but eleven,—I am twenty-three.

A year goes by—more winsome grows the child—
So studious, gentle, sweet, bewitching, rare!
In spite of censor-conscience I'm beguiled
To love her—my most precious pupil there
Among a score; and then I'm sent away!
Some Argus' eyes have spied a favourite—more
Have "told tales" out of school; I must not stay,
Though she's but twelve—while I am twenty-four.

More years are fled—back from a foreign shore—
Eager, uncertain, anxious, up the street
I hasten swiftly to a cottage door
Framed thick in woodbine—praying there to meet
The child I loved—when lo! to my surprise
A maiden stands (great Heaven, am I too late!)
Beside a handsome youth with tender eyes,—
She's "sweet sixteen!" and I?—I'm twenty-eight!

But now she turns and sees me waiting there,
A swift blush brightens all the lovely face,
Her shy, glad greeting, drives the fiend despair
Straight from my soul back to his haunt apace.
The young Adonis his blonde moustache gnaws
And doubtless thinks while leaning on the gate
He kicks the turf impatient, then withdraws,
"No use, old fellow—you are twenty-eight!"

Days, weeks, ay months I linger near the town
And lovers hover round her by the dozen.
Sometimes with wearied air she sits her down
To rest near me—as if I were a cousin,—
So, "Fare thee well, my love," I say at last,
"I never now may hope to call thee mine;
I am too old!" A sweet, shy look, downcast—
"I'm seventeen—you're only twenty-nine."

FRANK ARTHUR FRENCH.



THE EIFFEL AERATOR.—A novel and interesting invention was exhibited as Anderton's Hotel. It consists of a machine for the almost instantaneous production of aerated waters automatically. The Eiffel aerator is very simple, water being placed in a copper cylinder and passed through an automatic pump, which is charged with natural gas brought from the springs of the extinct Eiffel volcano, in Rhenish Prussia, with the result that an ice-cold aerated water is produced. It was stated that each tube of gas sold produces about two hundred dozen bottles, at an average cost of about one half-penny a dozen.—*Court Journal*.

OILING THE WAVES.—There can be no doubt that the use of oil for the safety of vessels in stormy weather is becoming more general. A Norwegian engineer has recently drawn attention to the important point of selecting the most suitable oil. A fat, heavy, animal oil, such as train oil, whale oil, etc., is decidedly the best, but as these oils in cold weather become thick, and partly lose their ability to spread, it is advisable to add a thinner mineral oil. Vegetable oils have also proved serviceable. Mineral oils, especially refined ones, are the least effective. Crude petroleum can be used in case of need, but refined petroleum is hardly any good at all.—*Industries*.

THE NORTH SEA AND BALTIC CANAL, which was commenced on June 3, 1887, will unite the Gulf of Kiel with the mouth of the Elbe, and will run from Holtenau by way of Rendsburg to a point midway between Brunsbüttel and St. Margarethen, a few miles below Hamburg. It will, when completed, be 61 miles long, 196 feet broad at the water level, 85 feet broad at the bottom, and 28 feet deep, and it will have but two locks—one at each end. The canal will take in the largest war-ship that has been or will be constructed in Germany, and will, moreover, take her at all states of the tide, and in less than eight hours it will be possible for her to proceed by it from Kiel to the Elbe, or vice versa.

PROPOSED BRIDGE ACROSS THE BOSPHORUS.—The most recent proposal for a huge bridge is for one across the Bosphorus, a project for which has been made out by a French engineering company. The historic and picturesque channel between the shores of Europe and Asia, which connects the sea of Marmora with the Euxine, is 872 yards broad, and it is proposed that the bridge to span it should be of one arch only. In these days of huge bridges this should not offer very serious difficulties from an engineering point of view, if the financial ones can be got over. Various projects have been put forward to the same effect during the past twenty years, but it was not considered that the bridge would be useful enough to justify the enormous expense which it would entail. Railways have, however, developed very much during recent years, and it is now thought that, if constructed, it would act as a link in the local railway system, and eventually pay a fair return on the money invested in it.—*Industries*.

A MUSHROOM MYTH.—It is a popular error that mushrooms grow to their full size during a single night, and that they dissolve and vanish after the sun shines upon them. They are rapid in growth and rapid in decay; but the same mushroom may be watched growing and expanding for two or three days, and then gradually decaying away. Much depends on the dampness or dryness of the season. In some seasons they are exceedingly plentiful, while at other times they are comparatively rare. This also is believed to depend chiefly on climatic conditions. It is not unusual for cultivated mushrooms to become attacked by a parasitic mould, which renders them unfit for food. This misfortune rarely happens to the wild form, until it is in process of decay. The catacombs of Paris are noted for their production of mushrooms in immense quantities. From the Méry caves as many as 3,000 pounds are sometimes sent to market daily. We have heard of a crop being grown in a hatbox.—*Pall Mall Budget*.

THE HEIGHT OF WAVES AT SEA.—The height of the sea waves has long been the subject of controversy. Eminent hydrographers have insisted that storm waves were usually not more than 10 feet high, and rarely over 20 when the conditions of the sea were most favourable for wave development. Many a traveller, reclining on a cabin transom, has looked up through the skylight to see the waves rearing their frothy crests, and wondered how even a 20-footer could show so high above a great ship's deck. Many a sailor dowsed by an up-driving wave while lying out on a topgallant yard has, doubtless, shaken his head incredulously when told that the highest waves were not above 20 feet, the rest being "heel" of ship and dip of yard. Now, however, comes expert testimony to prove that storm waves are often 40 feet and sometimes from 60 to 70 feet in height. In the recent British scientific expedition some instructive data were gathered by a sensitive aneroid barometer capable of recording its extreme rise and fall by an automatic register. "With a sea not subjected to an atmosphere of unusual violence, it indicated an elevation of 40 feet from the wave's base to crest." Admiral Fitzroy, after a long series of careful measurements from the maintop of his ship, came to a similar conclusion.—*Scientific American*.