

home to-morrow morning?" asked Bessie Richardson, anxiously.

"No, darling, you must wish me good by then."

Bessie's face put on a disappointed look.

"Why you silly girl, the parting must come sooner or later, and why not in the morning as well as the evening?" said he, smoothing her hair caressingly.

Bessie did not see the force of this reasoning. To a woman a good-bye is no good-bye at all unless it occurs at the very last moment.

However, it could not be helped, it seemed, so the little woman bustled about, and got his things to rights, and stood in the little dining-room with the tears welling up into her eyes. The next morning when the cab drove up to the door, there was a thick fog, and Bessie felt alarmed as women do at a parting, with a vague, undefined dread of some calamity.

"How soon shall I hear from you, George?"

"In a month, I hope; but it may be six weeks, or even more, so don't be uneasy. I will write, you may be sure, the first opportunity, and I may be back myself before my letter."

"I wish you were not going in this fog."

"Foolish girl!" kissing her. "The steamer won't start in a fog; don't alarm yourself about that. Besides it's only the morning frost; when the sun gets up it will be bright and clear."

She bore the parting better than could have been expected; for, truth to tell, she did not mean that to be the final one. In her secret little heart she had determined to make an expedition to the city, and have the real good-bye at the proper time, and she was looking forward joyfully to the surprise and pleasure it would be to George. So she put up a cheerful face to his, and returned his last nod from the cab with a smile.

But when, as the day advanced, the fog, instead of clearing, increased in density, and she perceived that her journey to the city was impracticable, then the reality of the parting first came upon her. It was their first separation, and the suddenness of the thing, and the distance, and the uncertainty of the post, and finally the breaking up of her little plan for a final and overwhelming good-bye overcame her, and she retired to her room, and was no more seen for several hours.

By the afternoon, the fog was so thick in the city and on the river, that Richardson felt certain the steamer would not start. "However," thought he, "I will have my trunk taken down, see the captain, and sleep on board; if necessary, to be ready directly he is able to get under weigh."

George had literally to feel his way through the narrow lanes to the river; by-and-by he found the wharf-gates, but all beyond was blank, save where some red spots of light, looking strangely high and distant, told him of lamps enveloped in the misty cloud. Confident, however, in his knowledge of the place, but in reality deceived in all its bearings, on he went, till, in a moment, his foot trod only on the empty air, and he fell headlong;—a splash—and the black river closed over him;—one struggle to the surface;—a desperate attempt to strike out in his thick great coat and water-logged boots, and George Richardson was swept away by the remorseless tide, only to be yielded up a corpse.

A month passed away. Bessie was daily expecting the promised letter; but the postman passed the door, or only knocked to bring any other but the looked-for envelope. George would surely be at home himself and allay her anxiety by his presence in a day or two. Did he not say he might return before a letter could reach her?

Six weeks, and no letter. Bessie became really anxious; away she went to the senior partner; he was somewhat uneasy himself; but, so far from adding to her anxiety, he assured her there was yet no cause for alarm. They had expected to hear before from Richardson certainly, but it was quite possible his voyage might have been longer than they calculated. His letter might have miscarried, or he might be at home himself any day; in short, the good old man almost reassured the poor little wife, and she went home more tranquil in her mind than she had been for many a day.

Two months had now elapsed, and it could no longer be concealed that there was grave cause for apprehension; but forasmuch as poor Bessie on every trifling occasion—to wit, when George travelled by railway—pictured to her mind the most awful accidents, or if he was half an hour late for dinner, felt a calm certainty that something had happened, so did she now resolve that nothing could be wrong, in proportion as real reasons for alarm increased, inasmuch that as they became almost certainties to the reflecting muscular mind—so did they diminish to this unreasoning little woman. In fact, she dared not admit the idea into her mind; she resolutely excluded it, steadfastly clinging to that lightest bubble of hope in her sea of doubt, and resolved that darling George would be restored to her arms in good time. It could not be in nature or in Providence, that one she loved so well should never look upon her face again. So her heart reasoned.

At length, however, arrived the steamer, itself without Richardson. It was then ascertained that no one answering his description had sailed in her. His trunk, purposely left undirected, in order to maintain the secrecy of his journey, was found on board. The members of the firm were now fully convinced that some fatal accident had happened to him. They sent for Bessie's brother and begged him to break the matter to his sister, promising on their part to leave no stone unturned to clear up the mystery that hung upon her husband's disappearance.

We purposely pass over the horror, the incredulity, and the despair that followed one another in poor Bessie's mind when the facts broke with full force upon her. The feelings of the bereaved wife must be sacred.

Meanwhile the partners set every engine at work to discover the truth. Detective officers came to and fro, examined and cross-examined with ceaseless activity, following up the scent like hounds. The facts by degrees unfolded themselves, and it became evident that Richardson must have been drowned that night of the fog on his way to the ship.

But what became of the body? More restlessness of detectives and further circumstances were relieved of their veil of mystery. A drowned man had certainly been found the very morning after his disappearance. The body was traced to the inquest, the records of that inquiry looked up, and all doubt removed that the remains there represented Macfarlane were in reality none other than those of poor Richardson. There was no possibility of direct identification at this distance of time, but a record of the articles found on the body (which had been given up to Woodley,) had been preserved at the police-office, and were identified by the wretched wife as the contents of her husband's pockets on the fatal day. But who and where was Woodley? What interest could he have in falsely swearing to the body? Was it a conspiracy or a mistake? More tracing of evidence; and now was found a memorandum in the registry, that the Insurance Company had asked for information concerning the deceased, and re-

ceived a copy of the entry. This was a fresh clue; a light broke in upon the darkness which had hitherto surrounded the inquiry. The Insurance Company was communicated with, and after having investigated the facts, came to the irresistible conclusion that their client Macfarlane had undoubtedly given evidence of his own decease, and was, in the society of Mrs. Mac—who had completely recovered from her indisposition—enjoying a slice of the Company's capital in some foreign country.

STATISTICS OF MARRIAGE.

From the official returns of the last census of England and Wales, there appears to be a determinate inequality in the relative proportion of the sexes—the total number of females of all ages, as compared with that of males, being as 53 to 47. This excess of females is not due to a primary inequality of births, but to the number of males constantly resident in or emigrating to foreign lands, and to the greater general mortality among them, resulting from casualties incident to their pursuits, to travel and to war, from which women are in great measure exempt. On investigation, however, of the distribution of the sexes, according to those proportions, into married and single, a remarkable diversity appears in the respective results, not so easily or satisfactorily accounted for, since the number of spinsters exceeds that of bachelors much more than might have been inferred from the respective proportions of the sexes. Between the ages of 20 and 40, the married women of England and Wales are to the spinsters and widows as 57 to 43, or, in round numbers, as 4 to 3; while the married men of corresponding ages are to the bachelors and widowers as 70 to 30! This surprising disproportion indicates an unaccountable diversity in the liabilities or disposition to celibacy in the two sexes.

In the present advanced state of science, it has been determined that no event is fortuitous, and may be referred to some definite antecedents, and be subjected to valuation. Every possible contingency of life is susceptible of calculation, so that the probabilities for or against its occurrence may be represented in arithmetical numbers, or estimated in current coin of the realm. Though no exact data exist for determining the absolute chances of marriage for each person, yet they may be approximately indicated, and we have pleasure in presenting to our fair readers a table showing the probabilities in favour of marriage at different ages, for the various conditions of life, calculated on the same scientific principles as ordinary tables for Life Assurance, from the returns of the Registrar General, by distinguished professional gentlemen, in whose accuracy every confidence may be reposed:—

Probabilities of Marriage at given ages for all conditions of life, computed from the Registrar General's report for 1857.

Age.	Bachelors.	Spinsters.	Widowers.	Widows.
20...10 to 19...	10	10	10	10
25...1 " 3...1 "	3	5	9	1
30...1 " 10...1 "	1	15	7	1
35...1 " 27...1 "	1	35	6	1
40...1 " 64...1 "	1	73	6	1
45...1 " 155...1 "	1	169	8	1
50...1 " 340...1 "	1	442	10	1
55...1 " 820...1 "	1	1292	15	1
60...1 " 2520...1 "	1	4283	22	1

From this it will be observed that at 20 the probabilities of marriage for a spinster, while slightly exceeding those of a bachelor of the same age, are infinitely greater than those of the widowed of either sex; or in other words, that the proportion of widowed at that age is much less than that of the unmarried. After 20 the probabilities both of spinster and bachelor continuously de-