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Poetry.

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Take this for granted, once for all,
There is neither chance nor fate,
And to sit and wait till the skies shall fall,
Is to wait as the foolish wait.

The laurel longed for, you must earn,
It is not of the things men lend;
And though the lessons be hard to learn,
The sooner the better, my friend.

That another's head can have your crown
Is a judgment all untrue;
And to pull this man or the other down
Does not in the least raise you.

No light that through the ages shines
To worthless works belongs;
Men dig in thoughts as they dig in mines
For the jewels of their songs.

Hold not the world as in debt to you
When it credits you day by day
With the light and air, with the sun and dew,
And all that cheers your way.

And you in turn, as an honest man,
Are bound, you will understand,
To give back either the best you can,
Or die and be out of hand.

—*Phœbe Cary.*

Is It Pleasant to be Old?

Friend, is it pleasant to be old?
No, save only that the streets of gold,
And pearly gates they grow so near,
And jasper walls so bright and clear,
That like a picture they unfold,
In this 'tis pleasant to be old.

'Tis pleasant, too, to think that life,
With all its tumult, vast, and strife,
Its flimsy joys that fade so fast,
Its storms that bid us stand aghast,
And other ills are almost told;
In this 'tis pleasant to be old.

And then the aged feel that rest,
Is of blessings sweetest, best,
And sure to know that rest is near
Brings much to comfort and to cheer,
A rest above what earth could hold,
In this 'tis pleasant to be old.

'Tis pleasant that in age we stand,
With feet so near the border land,
That just beyond the sullen tide,
That's seldom very deep or wide,
We enter in the dear old fold,
In this 'tis pleasant to be old.

And when we draw so near life's verge,
And hear the sullen river surge,
And earthly sight grows faint and dim,
Our vision clearer is for Him,
Who says, the aged I uphold,
In this 'tis pleasant to be old.

And so we murmur not at all,
As age's night doth round us fall,
But upward look with faith's clear eye,
Beyond the earth, beyond the sky,
To jasper walls and streets of gold,
And there none ever do grow old.

—*Christian at Work.*

Select Literature.

A Divorce Case.

Edward Walston sauntered into the office to see if there was any extra assignment for the evening. He had been directed to report the meeting of the Society for Supplying Overcoats to the Hottentots, but as they would doubtless be brief, he could easily attend to something else. Quite unaccountably a vague idea had entered his mind that his services would be needed.

In this he was not disappointed. On his desk lay a note from the city editor. He opened it, and read as follows:

MY DEAR MR. WALSTON—There are rumors that Mrs. Henry Doncaster, of 146 Blank avenue, will bring suit against her husband for divorce. I got the hint from Somotes, the lawyer. Both parties, you know, stand high in society, and we can use all you can get of the case. C. B. W.

N. B.—Never mind the Hottentot society charity.

Walston softly whistled a note of astonishment as he read the words. He re-read it and whistled again. Then he sat down, knitted his brow, and gazed quite steadily at the ink bottle in front of him. 'Shall I go or shall I not?' he asked, but the ink bottle did not answer. He repeated the question, but the ink bottle grew more communicative. This is what it began to say:

DEAR MR. W.—I'm very sorry, but certain social connections make it impossible for me to attend to that case——

Here the ink ceased to flow. Walston stopped writing, grabbed the sheet of paper and tore it up.

'No,' he said, 'I'll go. Better I than a stranger.'

He put on his hat and left the room. A tall, well formed, solid looking, self reliant fellow he was, and he made a striking figure as he passed down the street. Several acquaintances bowed, but he returned their greetings formally and somewhat coldly, and walked along as if his mind was not with the crowd. It wasn't. It was occupied with the case that had been so suddenly thrust upon his attention.

It was a strange situation for any man, but it was only one of the many curious experiences that make a newspaper career so full of interest and so barren of monotony. There is no vocation that has in it as many contrasts. All kinds of people are met; all shades of crime and virtue, all phases of human nature and human character, come within the range of a reporter's observation. He sees the smallness and the bigness of life, the sunlight and the shadow, the humility and the vanity. To-day in politics, to-morrow at church; in the morning at a funeral, in the afternoon at a wedding, in the evening at the theatre, with its light and mimicry. And so the round goes, from light and laughter to sorrow and the grave, from death or divorce to the music of gay throngs and the joy of happy anniversaries.

At first his sympathies respond to the circumstances, but as the days and weeks and months and years bring their succession of events, there comes a hardening of the susceptibilities, and the reporter begins to look upon his work as the surgeon does upon his profession—he has no right to feel, only to see and do. He must dissect and describe, but not sympathize. Coolness is what he needs, not emotion. And yet all the stolidity in the world does not avail when scandal touches those who are near to him. He is one of the most sensitive persons in the world, with a wholesome horror of the newspaper noteriety that he helps to manufacture, and a keen contempt for those who like it. Walston was such a man. If he had been sent to report a case in which he had no personal acquaintance, he would have done his work with his usual unconcern; he would have gotten the facts, and written them up for all they were worth.

But this affair was different. He knew Henry Doncaster and Margaret Doncaster. Mrs. Doncaster was his cousin. Mr. Doncaster had been his room mate at college for four years. The Walston home was then one of the pleasantest places in the state. It had a famed hospitality. Here he and Henry spent a large part of their vacations. Here Margaret visited the Walston family. Here the courtship began. Edward saw and aided its progress, and enjoyed its consummation by acting as best man and practically superintending the whole wedding; 'for,' they said to him, 'unless you are in it, we shall not feel that we are quite married.'. In a month their path and his path had diverged, and all the old days were as a memory that glowed brightly in the evening of bachelor meditation, but vanished when the day came on with the care and competition of business. And now that memory was to be blurred by a divorce. It was really too bad, and something must be done to head it off, or at least to soften the notoriety that a sensational publication would cause.

Within a half hour after he left the office he was on the doorstep of a big brown stone house. He rang the bell. The man who opened it was evidently an old family servant, for a look of real pleasure beamed in his face when he saw who the visitor was.

'James, how are you?'

'Why, Master Edward, when did you get back to the city?'

'Oh, a week or two ago. Are the folks at home?'

'Y-e-s, s-i-r,' said James, slowly, as his face lengthened into an expression of decided uneasiness.

'Well, I want to see them.'

'I'll tell them, sir; but I'm afraid'——

'Never mind that. I know. But I must see them both. Here are two cards. Take one to each without letting the other know of it. Tell Mr. Doncaster first, and then Mr. Doncaster. You understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then be sure you do it correctly.

Walston sank into a chair and gazed quietly upon the elegant surroundings. He did not notice much, however, for he was thinking out something to say. It was a delicate position, very delicate, and all his trained diplomacy was necessary for the work before him.

Steps were heard, and a second afterward a tall, handsomely dressed man entered the room. They clasped hands, and fired questions at each other in rapid succession. Walston could see that beneath Doncaster's cordiality was a deep sorrow, and he observed in his face undoubted traces of dissipation.

'You've been back a month, you say. Queer I haven't seen you.'

'Are you sure you haven't?' asked Walston.

'Perfectly. But why do you ask the question?'

'Because I have seen you.'

'Where?'

'At— Why, Margaret, how do you do?'

The woman who entered the room was fitted to attract attention. She was beautiful; no doubt of that. She carried herself perfectly. She was dressed in faultless taste. Her face had magnetism and loveliness. She was older, more stylish, more womanly and self-possessed than when Edward had last seen her. He arose to greet her with his old time cordiality. She gave him a charming smile of welcome, but suddenly she saw her husband. The smile partly faded away; she trembled a little, but in an instant her social training had asserted its power, and she was herself again. Mr. Doncaster had arisen with the unmistakable purpose of finding an excuse which would get him out of the room. Walston saw it and arose fully to the situation. He quietly but deliberately closed the door.

'Now, then, sit down, both of you,' he said, as if he were the host and they the visitors, 'and let us have a good old time chat.'

He looked at each, saw Margaret gazing sideways at the window, saw Henry studying the carpet. He took a chair near the door and between the husband and wife, but far enough back to get a view of them.

'It's a positive pleasure to see you again,' he said, with cordiality. 'Ever since I was best man at the wedding I have felt as if I were a member of the family, and when I look around your beautiful home and think of my hotel life, I feel like putting my household goods in a pushcart and moving in.'

'I thought you were out west,' said Mrs. Doncaster.

'So I was. You remember that after I left college, and a few months after your marriage, father died. My share of the property was some $25,000. I took it and went to a western city to fill a long felt want. I flatter myself that I filled it. I poured all the $25,000 into it, and then used the rest of the space as a grave for the newspaper. The sheriff officiated, and various creditors acted as mourners.'

'When did you come east?'

'About a month ago. I fully intended to call, but you know I had been away five years, and had outgrown my society habits. Then it was necessary that I should bend all my energies to work, for while some of those creditors cheated me most abominably, I can't rest contented until all I owe is paid.'

'What are you doing?' asked Doncaster.

'I am a reporter on *The Comet*. And that is why I called this evening.'

This aroused Doncaster, who until now had been politely indifferent. He quit studying the carpet, glancing rapidly at Walston and seemed to suspect the cause of the visit. Margaret took a quick view at her cousin, but he was as matter of fact looking as if he had merely made a remark on the state of the weather.

'Explain yourself,' said Doncaster, not without a little uneasiness.

'Certainly. A report reached our office to-night that you two were going to figure in a divorce sensation. The idea was preposterous, but to save you from being bothered by a stranger I came myself to get your denials. The rumor is false, of course?'

'I have nothing to say,' said Doncaster, after a pause.

Watson turned to the wife.

'Margaret, tell me, is this true?'

'I prefer to say nothing.'

'Then it is true.'

A pause and a sigh.

'Who would have thought of it? What a world this is, and what changed creatures we are! To think that you two—the best and most devoted lovers in the world—should take such a step. The horror of it reconciles me to my bachelorhood, but it makes me shudder in spite of myself.'

'I think,' said Doncaster, with dignity, 'that it would be in better taste not to discuss the matter here.'

'Henry, I don't agree with you. We grew up together. I've known you both, and been a friend to each of you since childhood. I expect to be the same now. Such—I may say almost say everything—depends upon how this case is presented to the public. In journalism a first impression is worth a dozen supplementary reports. I want you both to talk the matter over with me. Margaret, you have retained Smootes, haven't you?'

She had been gazing with unbroken steadiness at the window, but this sudden question was a little too much for her composure. She turned to Walston, began to speak, closed her lips again, blushed unmistakably, and finally stammered, 'Not yet, but I may.'

'A capital selection. He is so unscrupulous, yet so ingenious. In one sentence he will prove you a paragon of sweetness and light; in the next he will picture you as an abused, degraded wife.'

She moves again, but the blushes did not increase. A firmness of the lips showed that she was conquering her feelings. The color left her cheeks, and she looked at Walston full face, and raised her eyebrows as if in doubtful surprise. Henry resumed his study in carpets.

'It will be a very cheerful scene,' pursued Walston. 'You will be the heroine. It is always so in a divorce case. Sympathy goes with the wife. She can sit dumbly, and the spectators will swear that she is an angel. The jurymen feed on her smiles and her sighs, softening with pity and admiration. Yes, Margaret, the city will talk about you; your portrait will adorn sensational papers, and you will be able to join in the great work of elevating the stage. But Henry! Ah! Henry, old fellow, you are in for it sure enough! In a divorce case a husband is always guilty until proven innocent. The guilt clings no matter how you act. If you smile, the perple will call you a hardened villain. If you frown, they will pronounce you a dangerous brute. If you preserve an air of gentlemanly indifference, they will consider you a cold souled scoundrel. Every change of countenance will be a witness against you. Every shift of attitude will be an added damnation to your cause. The husband in a divorce suit is the same old story of the western horse thief—he acts guilty, even if he is innocent, and he ought to be hung anyhow. Old fellow, I pity you; I do, indeed?'

'Thank you,' said Doncaster, coolly. 'But I must protest against discussing this affair here.'

'And I must insist.'

If it was Walston's intention to make his friends miserable, he could not have better succeeded. Henry seemed to stand it stolidly enough, but Margaret was evidently uneasy. Both devoutly wished that Walston had remained out west. But he was obdurate.

'Please remember,' he went on, 'that more interests than yours are at stake. You both come of good families—families that have lived honorably and proudly for years without the taint of scandal. This thing to them will be a blow of unspeakable anguish, and it is our duty to make that blow as soft as we can. Much, will depend, as I said, upon the first statement of the case, and upon the scope of the evidence. Don't go too deep in the mud. It is not necessary under our accommodating divorce laws. This thing is bad enough. Don't make it any worse, for at its best it will put a shadow on both your lives. Margaret you will be a heroine for a few days, but it will not last. To a woman's character too much publicity is like too much sunshine on a photographer's negative—it blurs and ruins it. And as for you, Henry, I know the experience will have a dangerous effect. I feel that it will make you both a great deal more miserable than you are, after all the romance and beauty of your love. But I beg pardon for talking so much. I'm taking up time. Let's get to business. I want you both to explain yourselves, and then I will suggest how it shall be published; and in this way we shall make the least scandalous showing to the public. It may protect you both. Now, Henry.'

'Look here, Edward; I object to this thing.'

'The objection is overruled. Tell me, frankly, what is the cause.'

'I prefer not.'

'So would I; but it is for your own and your family's protection.'

There was an uncomfortable silence. Henry arose, walked up the room, and then back again. Presently he found his speech, and it came out by starts and quits, as if he wanted to say something, and yet to say as little as possible,

'My statement,' he began, 'shall be brief. A happy couple come into possession of money and go into fashionable society. The wife receives a great deal of attention from men the husband does not like. The husband objects in vain and then begins to drown his objections in alcohol. He drifts into a rapid set, and he and his wife drift apart. Each is proud, and each maintains a stand. The gulf widens; the husband's dissipation increases. He finally gets drunk, gets into a fight, gets arrested and disgraces himself and his family, but fortunately escapes newspaper notoriety because his name isn't recognized in the police court.'

'Well, that's pretty bad. Now, Margaret, what have you to say?'

Now it was Margaret's time to arise. She went to the window and looked at vacancy through the lace curtain. When she answered she was calmer than her husband had been.

'I have little to add to what you have heard. We have been drifting apart until separation will be the best for both. I am tired of insane jealousy, tired of being accused of things of which I was never guilty. I have stood the nightly desertion as heroically as I could, but when there comes the disgrace of a street fight in the company of notorious men, and with the night spent in jail, I most emphatically object.'

Walston sighed. The clock on the mantel ticked industriously; otherwise the room was depressingly quiet.

'Of course, all your old love for each other is dead?' was the next question.

It came suddenly. Neither was prepared for it. Henry flushed with anger. Margaret grew whiter and more nervous. They now wished he was buried in that western grave with his newspaper.

'I beg pardon for asking such a question. Each of you is too polite to answer it. Well, I'll answer it for you. Of course it is dead; buried deep in that gulf which now separates you.'

Doncaster arose. He looked at Edward with no disguised wrath and spoke with undoubted sarcasm, 'If your cross-examination is over,' he said, 'you will please excuse me until the trial is regularly called.'

'Certainly not,' replied Walston. 'Why, great Jupiter, man, we haven't begun yet! You haven't given me any facts at all. Your general statements—both of them—are not worth the breath that it took to say them. I must have instances, dates, charges and all the other details. Who are the co-respondents?'

'The co-respondents?' exclaimed Henry, flushing still more, and looking at Edward as if he could kill him in cold blood.

'The co-respondents?' repeated Margaret aghast and ghastly.

'Yes, the co-respondents? That is only one of the details. You must give them all to me. We want two columns about the case for to-morrow's paper.'

'Two columns!' said Margaret, with a gasp, as she grabbed the arm of the chair for support.

'Yes, two columns, and more if we can get it—all on the first page, in large type and with a display head.'

The thought was too much for Margaret. She lost her speech in the horror of the thought. Henry took a rapid excursion up the room.

'Edward,' he demanded as he came back, 'can't this thing be kept out? I'll pay you—the newspaper—anybody for it.'

'Yes, can't it be kept out?' added Margaret, with a plaintiveness that would have touched any heart but Walston's.

'Of course it can't. And what if it could? It would be ten times worse when the papers were filed in court, for it would set a man from every office searching for scandals about you both.' He was piling it on at the sacrifice of some truth. 'Now, look here,' he continued, 'why don't you act sensibly? If you are going into this notoriety, you'd just as well prepare to face the music. You must begin by getting rid of your emotional ideas. You must chloroform your nerves, put ice water in your veins, and dismiss all your preconceived notions of delicacy. I advise you to begin now. Compose yourself and collect your facts while I go to my overcoat for my note book.'

Henry and Margaret were entirely too confounded to reply at once. He was angry beyond measure. She was as pale as the lace curtain to which she was clinging. Both devoutedly wished that Walston was in that grave. He, however, while calm as a corpse, was otherwise quite alive, and was walking towards the door.

'Two columns—co-respondents—' Margaret began to mutter.

Henry found his speech in some soul-felt words that referred to newspapers, and hoped for their extermination.

Walston partly opened the door. Then he paused, and finally closed it again.

'This thing is sad for us all,' he said, returning to his chair. 'I feel it as keenly as you do. Let us rest a minute or two. We can talk better afterward, and I know an experience of life that may help us along a little. Sit down, Margaret, and I will tell it to you. I won't keep you long.'

She obediently took the chair near the window.

'It's a true story of two young lives somewhat like yours. It was an ideal love match, an ideal wedding, an ideal first chapter of matrimony. The two were of excellent families. Money came to them by inheritance. They plunged into fashionable society in the city and at the resorts. She was a woman of beauty, fond of admiration, and burdened with a large supply of innocent intentions. He was a handsome fellow, with too much jealousy and pride, and too little tolerance and judgment. He objected to the crowd of admirers that surrounded his wife, and objected to her coquetry.

'She tried to laugh away the objections. She did not succeed. He began to like champagne too well, and to drink it too freely. Alcohol developed his suspicious nature and enlarged his obstinancy. From champagne was but a step to brandy and whiskey. From bright fellows was but a degree to fellows not so bright but more capacious in the matter of drink. The wife considered this a loss of interest in her, a cooling and a departure of love, and a steady degradation of the home. She increased her fashionable frolics, made herself more attractive to the popinjays of society. The quarrels began and increased. The one dissipated in the matter of admiration and attention, the other in and direction of intemperance and rapid companions. Finally, one night this fool of a husband got on a drunk of unusual proportions. When he reached a certain restaurant he was decidedly unsteady. I was sitting at a table with a friend. He was standing near, leaning on the end of the bar, but his back was turned my way, and I did not recognize him, although I knew him well. Presently a crowd of swells in full dress came in and took a position not far from him, but their backs were also turned to his.

'They were exchanging new and alleged experiences with the usual reckless mendacity of their set. To them a woman's honor is nothing; they would blackguard an angel in order to boast of an adventure. They talked of various ladies. Presently one of them mentioned the name of the wife in an insinuating, ambiguous way that showed what a contemtible cur he was. I arose to resent it, but before I could get fully up, I saw that drunkard arouse himself. 'You are a cowardly liar!' I heard him say, and he had not more than said it, when he jumped forward, and with a swinging blow laid that scoundrel on the marble floor. It was beautifully done, and, what was better, he followed it up with more of the same kind, and for about two minutes there was as pretty a scrimmage as ever took place. A policeman came in and arrested the man. I hurried to the station and did what I could to keep the affair quiet. I thought he saw and recognized me, but I found out to-night that he did not.'

Walston paused. Henry's uneasiness had been steadily on the increase. Margaret seemed in a condition of collapsed uncertainty, but when no one spoke she quietly asked:

'Well, what does your story mean?'

'Nothing; absolutely nothing.' He looked toward Henry and saw that he was very much worked up. Now was the time, he thought, for the climax, and so he went on with his answer: 'That fool of a husband,' he said, 'never explained the true circumstances to his wife, and she, suffering from the neglect, largely his fault and partly caused by her own folly, and growing desperate at what she thought was a mere drunken row, decided to apply for a divorce.' At this point Henry arose and advanced toward the door. Walston was ready for him. 'Now, Henry, you needn't try to creep out of here in that way. You know you were a fool.'

Margaret relaxed her hold on the lace curtain, and her face became one anxious interrogation.

'Was it'—

'Yes,' said Walston, taking the words from her, 'the brute of a husband was Henry.'

Henry tried to continue his progress towards the door, but Walston placed his hand on his shoulder and detained him.

'Now you two remain here a moment while I go to my overcoat and get my note-book.'

Then he wended himself out of the room, and brought the door to with an unmistakable slam.

It took him some time to get what he wanted, and when he returned he found a reconciliation, progressing under a flag of truce.

'Now you are sensible,' was his cheery comment. 'You needed a little earthquake to close up that gulf, and I'm glad the shock has come.' Then he suddenly changed. 'But, by Jove, it isn't right. The *Comet* is holding two columns for this—two columns at $8 a column—a dead loss of $16.

Evidently they did not care for the loss, for they seemed to be trying to frame something to say to their friend.

'We want'— began Henry.

'Me to come up for Sunday dinner,' put in Walston. You dine at 6? All right. I accept, and I warn you now that I shall take my revenge by eating the whole $16 worth.'

'Oh, we won't complain,' said Henry, 'Sunday, you know, happens to be the sixth anniversary of our marriage. I was thinking of it when you called.'

'And so was I,' said Margaret.

Walston stopped on his way down town to look in upon the religious meeting. He got what he wanted of the proceedings, and sauntered on to the office.

'I'm very sorry,' he said to the editor, 'but that rumor about the Doncasters is a mistake. There will be no divorce. I saw both parties. The Hottentot society isn't doing much now, because it is autumn and the overcoats are in use, but they hope to get along better in the spring. How much do you wish of it?'

'Oh, burn the Hottentots! What I wanted was that divorce case. It is very disappointing.'

'Very,' echoed Walston.—Lynn R. Meekins in *Harper's Weekly.*

—There are but three classes of men in every community, the retrograde, the stationary, and the progressive. The first two have little or no regard for the newspaper and its influence and read it simply to see 'what is going on,' but who could fold their arms and see it die with the utmost complacency, leaving the progressive class the only real sufferers. The retrograde and stationary classes of every community are generally the critics of the newspapers, and, as Steele says: 'Of all mortals a critic is the silliest; for by inuring himself to examine everything, whether of consequence or not, he never looks upon anything but with a design of passing sentence upon it.'—*Press and Printer.*

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