

I knew that Mrs. Biggles was watching for the result with as keen anxiety as my own, that she could not fail to see that my hand trembled, that she must inevitably scan my speaking countenance and thus discover traces of unusual emotion. Nevertheless, I affected indifference, cut the shell, and looked within.

Alas!—it was *almost* perfection, yet fell just so far short that one must feel to the full the anguish of having almost had!—for while most of the encircling white was delicate, trembling, jelly-like, perfectly equipoised between toughness and elusive slipperiness, there was an inner ring of clear albumen next the yolk.

I suppose there was no real cause or justification for what happened; I do not pretend to explain it. I would like to think I was momentarily possessed of the devil, but had that been the case it is scarcely likely that my action would have been so weak, so ignoble. I hate to record it, but there is no use trying to steer around the truth. Here it is:—

My chest heaved, and before I knew what made it heave, a mighty sob burst forth!

It wasn't a sneeze, as I instinctively tried to