

burning brightly. As a treat, the table was garnished with a dish of oysters. Emma sat waiting his return, and beating a tattoo upon the fender with her foot.

"Courage," was his first word, when he entered, "Courage, Emma."

(To be Continued.)

## Mrs. Hartsey's Experience.

**D**ARIUS Hartsey came of a family whose men were noted as affectionate and devoted husbands and prosperous business men; so even before he became of age he was angled for, with more or less skill, by many judicious mothers and not a few young women. He enjoyed the experience, but the distinguishing family trait being strong in him, he succumbed soon after he became his own master, the fortunate woman being as good and pretty as any of her companions. Every one told Mrs. Hartsey that she was very fortunate, and for a few months the young wife believed what she heard.

But her husband was human, and so was she; there is nothing so good but it might be better, so Mrs. Hartsey soon began to wish that her husband might be one thing and another that some other men were, and she didn't hesitate to tell him so. Hartsey did his best to be obliging, but the more he did the more he was expected to do. In his courting days he had told his sweetheart that he was a devoted slave; she took him literally at his word and treated him accordingly. She never doubted that she loved him with her whole heart; neither did Hartsey, but sometimes he was compelled to admit to himself that some hearts were far smaller than others, and that his wife's was not of the largest size. His wife longed to have him always with her, but Hartsey could not help at times believing that his mate unconsciously regarded him as a trustworthy rubbish heap, upon which she could cast all the odds and ends of gossip and temper that she scarcely dared heap upon anyone else, the quantity of this worthless mental residuum being so great that the patient husband felt, after enduring uncomplainingly for two or three hours, as if he had done a hard day's work, and all to no purpose, for when Mrs. Hartsey's mind was entirely emptied it was in a condition so unsatisfactory to its owner that she herself was sensible of some things unusual and unpleasant, and invariably devised some way of blaming her husband for it.

Hartsey bore all uncomplainingly; he loved his wife with all his strength, which was great, and when he was away from her he freshened his affections by worshipping the ideal he had formed of his companion in their ante-marital days, and although Mrs. Hartsey was as likely as not to break the image to fragments when next he met her he went on living according to his nature, and hoping that some day something would open the dear little woman's eyes to the mistake she was making. But Mrs. Hartsey's eyes did not open; they could see just well enough to perceive the mote in those of her husband. As the children who came to the couple grew large enough not to be treated as lap dogs, Hartsey experienced some relief that was a thousand times less endurable than the original trouble, for a great deal of Mrs. Hartsey's petulance was relieved upon the little ones, so they changed from cheerful babies to boys and girls by turns excitable and morose. What intensified the husband's misery was that Mrs. Hartsey clearly saw the faults of other women whose temperament was exactly like her own, and held them in utter detestation, but when Hartsey attempted, as occasionally he did, to hint to his wife that she sometimes acted like her detested acquaintances, he was rewarded by a torrent of tears and an occasional hysterical fit.

As had been his custom ever since marriage, Hartsey asked himself frequently and honestly whether the fault could be his. He knew that his wife never lacked what money she needed, that she had plenty of servants, and that he spent most of his hours at home in quieting irregularities of tradesmen, servants, and children. He stole a couple of hours daily and took his wife out riding, but the principal result was that Mrs. Hartsey saw houses that she liked better than her own; he tried to amuse his children so they should not worry their mother, but was soon accused of 'ov-

ing his children more than he did his wife. He took Mrs. Hartsey to the theatre, and a frantic admiration of actors, each of some assumed look or quality that Hartsey did not possess, made the poor man very uncomfortable.

Finally the miserable man broke down physically. During the first day of his sickness, his wife was so tender and sympathetic that she seemed like her old self; on the second day she was cheerful but not very attentive; after that she came to her husband with each day's worries and found some excuse to blame him for all of them. Hartsey endured to the best of his ability, but in his weakness he was not equal to all he had borne in other days, so one night, after a day of continuous exasperation that made his nerve temporarily serve as strength, he got out of bed, donned his clothes, and left his house without being seen.

When Mrs. Hartsey discovered that her husband was nowhere in the house, she indulged in a most satisfactory amount of weeping, complaining and raving. Having thus readjusted her equilibrium she was compelled to endure some painful interviews with her conscience; she tried to make light of them, but conscience in Mrs. Hartsey had lain dormant so long that it was untiring when aroused, and the wretched woman was compelled to tell herself the truth about her conduct during most of her married life. She consulted the police about how to find her husband; in the meantime she astonished her children beyond measure by making herself companionable instead of fretting at them. She confessed her fault to many of her feminine acquaintances, and warned several wives to avoid the errors she had committed. She wept, she prayed, she imposed hard penances upon herself, but still her husband was not to be found.

As for Hartsey he started to take a train for Washington. But his strength failed him before he could reach a car or omnibus. Then an odd thought struck him; he remembered having heard his wife talk tiresomely for an hour or two about the boarding-house across the street having changed hands within a day or two, and wondering what sort of people the landlady, who was a stranger to the neighborhood, would have. Hartsey leaned against that lamp-post to rest himself; then, gathering all his strength, he crossed the street, rang the bell of the boarding-house, and asked if any front rooms were vacant. There were; he engaged one at once, paid for a month's lodging to avoid giving reference, and fell upon a lounge as soon as the landlady left the room.

The entire quiet he enjoyed for several days was an experience so unusual that his physical condition improved daily, but his mind was in so much worse a condition than his body that he was utterly apathetic about his family. Although he was strong enough to move about his room, he scarcely ever looked across the street at his own house. He informed himself that his wife was always happiest when she had most to fret about, his children had heard him scolded so much that all but the baby held him in contempt, there was plenty of money in the savings bank to his wife's credit, so why should he make haste to go home? Relief from abuse was very delightful, and liberty, although he had not known it for so long that he did not know what to do with it, was rather pleasing as a sensation. In the two or three times he had been away from home during his married life he had found that absence caused him to think more tenderly of his wife and to see her good qualities more clearly; perhaps now, unless the feminine mind was not entirely unlike that of man, his wife might be forced to recall some of her husband's traits that she had long ceased to recognize.

But as the worn out man began to recover, thanks to entire peace and rest, the family across the way came to his mind more and more, so occasionally, from behind the lace curtains of his room, he peeped at his house; gradually he came to sit by the hour where he could see all that passed in and out. He saw some of his wife's familiars, all weak-minded gossips, call at his house, and he amused himself by devising imaginary conversations. He saw his children go to school and return; they did not seem to be suffering. Occasionally he caught glimpses of his wife, but only for an instant, as she moved about in front of the house, and he thought he knew, by her appearance and the hour of the day, just whom she was fretting at and what was her imaginary trouble. On Sunday he saw her going to church; there was nothing unusual about her appearance, that he could see, except that she seemed to cling very closely to her eldest son