

THE COMET OF A SEASON.

"He is drowned! I know he is drowned!" she cried. "There has been a wreck, and he is drowned, and I shall never see him any more!"

Had Montana merely fallen overboard in the night and so perished? Had he deliberately put an end to his career? That no one ever can know.

There was a very happy Thanksgiving at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Miller, of No. 319 East Fifty-second street, New York, and as the hitherto moderately furnished apartment was freshly furnished up with the addition of two cosy arm chairs, a reporter inquired of Mrs. Miller how she had been able to make so many comfortable changes, to which she replied: "It is all due to our dear little daughter, Joie; she is a great girl and so nice to me and her father, and though only 15 years of age, has worked very hard as a seamstress, earning but a meagre pittance to help us pay the rent."

JOIE'S THANKSGIVING.

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"I was afraid," interrupted Mr. Miller, "the little darling would overwork herself; she is so good, and she has saved a few dollars this week. About the beginning of November I was surprised when she told me that she had sent a dollar by mail to M. A. Dauphin, New Orleans, La., with the expectation of making a large fortune. I did not approve of it at first, when she said she had done the same thing before, and had implicit faith in the Louisiana State Lottery Company. Imagine what an agreeable disappointment we received on the 14th November last, when we were notified that ticket numbered 52,116, which she held, was entitled to one-fifth of the capital donation of \$75,000."

"Did Miss Josephine collect her share promptly?" queried the reporter. "Oh, yes indeed; Mr. Dauphin paid over to the express company \$15,000 to the order of Miss Josephine Miller, and she got the money last week."

"Was she elated with her success?" suggested the reporter. "The little darling was so crazy with joy that I asked her to take a little vacation, and the old gentleman smiled, as he thanked the reporter for congratulating him upon his daughter's good fortune." Philadelphia Record, December 6.

A beverage that is said to have taken the place of absinthe to a considerable extent in France has been introduced in New Orleans. It is called amstel-poon, and is believed to assist digestion, to be an aperient and febrifuge, to stimulate agreeably, and to kill with certainty if afforded a full opportunity.

"BUOHUPALBA." Quick, complete cure, all annoying Kidney, Bladder and Urinary Diseases. \$1. Drugists.

Since Wolsey, 1633, the following British and Irish Cardinals have been created: Fisher, 1633; Beaton, 1546; Pole, 1588; Allard, 1594; Howard, 1694; Torris, 1704; York, 1807; Erekine, 1811; Weld, 1837; Acton, 1847; Wiseman, 1865; Cullen, 1873; Manning, Howard, Newman, Macobe.

Smart Weed and Belladonna combined with the other ingredients used in the best porous plasters make Carter's S. W. & B. B. Scotch Plasters the best in the market. Price 25 cents.

FOR 30 YEARS

The dark-eyed and lovely daughters of Spanish America have used Murray & Lamy's Florida Water as their most cosmetic and toilet perfume. It is the most fragrant, as well as the most lasting of all Florida Waters, and possesses refreshing and invigorating properties not contained in any other preparation of the kind.

Dr. Hawkins, ex-Provost of Oriel College, Oxford, who died lately, aged 95, had the distinction of being in his day the best hated head of a house in that university, more especially in his own college.

"FEMALE COMPLAINTS."

Dr. R. V. FISHER, Buffalo, N. Y.—"Dear Sir:—I write to tell you what your 'Favorite Prescription' has done for me. I had been a great sufferer from female complaints, especially 'dragging down,' for over six years, during much of the time unable to work. I paid out hundreds of dollars without any benefit till I took three bottles of the 'Favorite Prescription,' and I never had anything do me so much good in my life. I advise every sick lady to take it."

Mrs. EMILY RHODES, McBrides, Mich.

In a running race in New York last evening, Thomas Delaney, of the Grammarly Athletic Club, beat George, the English champion, by 58 seconds, and also the best amateur record.

Holloway's Ointment and Pills.—In all outward complaints a desperate effort should be made to at once remove these annoying infirmities, and of establishing a cure. The remarkable remedies discovered by Professor Holloway will satisfactorily accomplish this desirable result, without any of those dangers or drawbacks which attend the old method of treating ulcerative inflammations, scrofulous affections, and scorbatic annoyances. The most timid invalids may use both the Ointment and Pills with the utmost safety with certain success, provided a moderate attention be bestowed on their accompanying "Directions." Both the preparations soothe, heal, and purify. The one assists the other most materially in effecting cures and renewing strength by helping exhausted nature just when she needs such succor.

It is reported that some time ago the L. C. Railway authorities sold ten locomotives which were said to be the best for general use. Monday's junk dealer, it is stated, was the largest purchaser.

THE DWARF'S SECRET.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

"I hope you are not going to work late," she said.

"Only to write a letter, dear child," he answered.

"I understand," said Sulpice, "you are going to wait for Xavier."

"Yes, he must hear my decision to-night."

"Remember your promise."

"Have no fear, Sulpice. Rest in peace my good son!"

The young priest went up to the top floor, where his room was situated.

Sabine went to her little apartment, just between her father's and Xavier's.

The young girl, who had begged her father to retire early, seated herself at a table, and began to write with the rapidity of inspiration and of joy.

Meanwhile M. Pomerol rang for Baptiste.

"Let me know when M. Xavier comes in," he said briefly.

"M. Xavier has been in more than an hour," said the man.

"Then ask him to come to my study."

A moment more, and Xavier was in the study.

His countenance bore traces of late hours and of premature excess; his eyes were dim, his lips colorless, his usually careful dress was disordered, his hands trembling with nervous excitement.

"Why did you not appear at dinner?" said his father.

The young man hung his head, but said nothing.

"Where were you?"

"At the club."

"So you preferred the society of your friends to ours?"

"I have not dined," said Xavier, in a low voice.

"What were you doing then?"

"I was playing."

"You were playing, and you lost, I suppose?"

"I lost."

"A large sum?"

"Yes, father."

"How much?"

"Forty thousand francs."

"Your gaming purse is large then?"

other to the street. It is a more serious matter than to disappoint some hot-headed boy, who staked at the card-table a portion of his inheritance. Honor! Honor! Honor! is to fill the duties imposed upon us by society and by our conscience. For the soldier, it consists in defending his flag at the cost of his life; for the magistrate, in unwavering integrity; for the artist or man of letters, in employing his talents to the best advantage; for the merchant, in preserving his credit; for the son, in showing his gratitude to his parents. Honor! I can speak of it, for I have kept my own. But I forbid you to mention the word in connection with a gambling debt. And as for the law, it considers them so sacred that it takes no cognizance of them."

"I advise nothing. I simply say that I will not pay this debt."

"Then, what am I to do?"

"Make an arrangement with this creditor, as you have made with many others. You must ask for an extension of time, which will doubtless be granted you. You do not know, for you take no interest in family affairs, that Sabine was betrothed to-day to Benedict Fongereis. I do not think it right to sacrifice her share and that of Sulpice to your extravagance. I will not throw their fortune into the pit you dig for it. To-morrow you will take control of the factory, and will receive a salary of twelve thousand francs a year. By means of that sum you will pay this gambling debt."

"Father," said Xavier, rising, his face livid, his limbs falling under him. "You will not compel me to do this, to admit my poverty, to ask for a delay! Give me this forty thousand francs, and after that refuse what you will. Do not reduce me to shame and despair. What are forty thousand francs to you?"

"Such a sum represents the careful savings of several families," said the father. "Forty thousand francs! How many small tradesmen would it save from ruin, how many people from despair. I tell you plainly you have spent more than your share of the inheritance. The rest belongs to Sabine and Sulpice."

"What use is such a fortune to my brother," cried Xavier, "who lives in a garret, goes barefoot from choice and feeds on bread-and-water?"

"You forget the poor, sir."

"Oh, it is horrible, atrocious!" cried the young man. "I am willing to amend, to give up everything, even to go into the factory, and be content with twelve thousand francs a year. But pay my debt, father, pay my debt. It must be paid, it must, do you hear? I want your word for it, your promise. There is gold in that safe. Give me some of it till I pay, till I pay."

"I have said no," said the merchant struggling to overcome the impression which Xavier's grief made upon him.

"Take care, father, take care!" said Xavier, wildly, and as he spoke approaching his father's desk.

"Wretch, do you threaten me?" said M. Pomerol, rising.

Just as the father and son stood thus face to face, the one livid with rage, the other justly indignant, the study door was suddenly opened and Sabine, with a cry of horror, rushed between them. Xavier pushed her away, and the young girl weeping threw her arms around her father's neck. He gently disengaged himself, saying, "Leave us, dear child, leave us, I beg of you; my disagreement with your brother is painful, it is true, but it need not alarm you."

"O Xavier!" cried Sabine, turning to her brother, "do not sadden by a violent scene this day of my betrothal. Beg father's pardon, for you must be wrong. He is goodness itself!"

Xavier remained silent and morose.

"It is my turn to command, Sabine," said the father gravely. "Go to rest and come to me early. I want to speak to you."

Sabine addressed a last entreaty to her brother, who looked at her with a sullen and lowering eye, then embracing her father she went away.

"You refuse me," said Xavier, "you finally refuse me."

"I do," said his father.

"Then," cried the young man in a despairing tone, "it is your doing if misfortune comes upon this house."

CHAPTER III.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE BLACK CAP.

In the very heart of Paris, near the quay and bordering upon the river, in the broad light of day and in a pleasant neighborhood is a street or rather a narrow lane, through the centre of which runs a muddy stream and where high dark walls shut out the rays of the sun. The Rue Gil-le-Cour, one of the oldest streets in that ancient Paris which has disappeared under the progress of modern improvements, remained what it was in the middle ages. But little more and it would require to have an iron chain stretched at either extremity of it, which together with the watch might enable honest citizens of Paris to sleep in peace.

About half way down this street, some four years before this story opens, stood a square shop, full of rubbish, rusty iron, broken or mended china, old clothes, curtains ready to fall into dust, copper vessels covered with verdigris, instruments of all trades which men may lawfully and openly pursue.

We say lawfully and openly, for in dark corners of the room were huge bunches of keys of every conceivable form, finely pointed chisels, files of exquisite perfection, pin-cers that were masterpieces in their kind, in fine, a whole collection of disapproved articles or articles which were seldom called for, in an other language than that of slang.

Father Methusalem, who owed his surname to his indefinite age, was, within the memory of a whole generation of men, already old when he became proprietor of this shop and all its belongings. These belongings, beginning by a court dark as Erebus, gloomy as a prison gate, ended in a building for the construction of which Father Methusalem had made use of the most heterogeneous elements. Wood and mortar had the principal share in it. The doors and windows had neither form, proportion, nor equilibrium. Several panes in the window were supplied by greasy paper; hinges creaked, window bolts had ceased to work, the ancient stove smoked, and yet there appeared in white letters on a black board, placed just above the entrance door, the sign, "Pension Bourgeoise."

These words set us thinking. What sort of kitchen could there be in the underground depths of this extraordinary structure? Who could be the customers of such a table d'hote?

In the middle of a large room stood a deal table, stained with wine and gravy, and backed by the knives of the boarders and set at the time when we entered with dipped plates, wooden spoons and iron forks. There were no knives, as the guests usually brought their own. Fewer mugs stood before each plate. Benches served for seats. There was but one chair in the room; it marked the place reserved for Father Methusalem.

A dark, winding staircase with rickety steps led down into the depths of the cellar transformed into a kitchen. Upon a long range

of furnace, in stew-pans as large as boilers, over a hot fire boiled a strange mixture, the *olla podrida* daily served up to the boarders; it was in fact the inevitable dish. In the steaming mess were rabbits, bones of mutton, chunks of beef, the tails of red herrings, sheep's tails, remnants of calves heads, beetles, onions and lobster claws. A great lump of grease and several cloves of garlic gave all these components a certain similarity of taste. Some of the chickens, ready for broiling, were out-laid and beefsteaks laid out upon the table proved that this establishment was capable of rising to the level of circum-stances. Beside the heavy, sodden-looking potato-salad was delicate lettuce or fresh red cabbage; close to the livid cheese, the odor of which, *vis generis*, betrayed its quality, a superb basket of fruit awaited those who were equal to the expense of a dainty meal.

Among the tables, pots and kettles moved an extraordinary figure who seemed in perfect accordance with her sinister surroundings. It was a woman scarcely three feet high and apparently some fifty odd years of age. Her head was disproportionately large, her face sullen and dark in expression, crossed over and anon by a gleam of cold malice. Her grey hair, too abundant to be held in check by the red plaid handkerchiefs which covered it, hung loose upon her shoulders; in her great ears, which stood far from her head, she wore a pair of earrings, such as might have belonged to some Norman peasant and so long that they touched her shoulders. The upper portion of this singular creature was of the usual proportions of a woman, but her lower limbs were uncannily small. She had the appearance of a human trunk attached to a pair of broad feet. This horribly deformed being was dressed in a Brandenburg or Hussar jacket, a faded blue skirt and shoes made from a pair of boots whence the uppers had been cut off.

How Methusalem and this dwarfish creature had become acquainted, and why this singular pair, similar in vice, continued to remain together no one could tell. If Methusalem were the head of the house, La Naine was undoubtedly its right arm, and her influence upon the dealer in questionable commodities was very great.

The Naine was Methusalem's factotum. She went to market every day and made all necessary purchases; and also to the lowest restaurants, buying up at nominal prices the half spoiled remnants. A tin box received fish, meat and vegetables all in one, an earthenware jar held coffee grains, tea-leaves, and crusts of bread, which were used for various culinary purposes.

Meanwhile Methusalem was taken up with commercial affairs; he kept the shop, and waited upon customers. He had customers of two sorts, those who needed tools, who wanted to hire a complete dishwasher for a day or a week, and those who wished to engage a room or take some meals at the Pension Bourgeoise. The ordinary meal cost ten sous. It comprised the daily bread at discretion, a small bottle of wine and a cup of coffee. Dinners *a la carte* were such as might be provided at a second-class restaurant.

A worn-out cloak, of which the enckoek declined to appear, struck out six. The Naine immediately seized a spoon of unusual dimensions, and plunging it into the pot dipped up the soup. After which, taking the earthenware tureen by both handles, she mounted the stairs with an agility surprising in a being so deformed. Just as she reached the dining-room the door leading from the courtyard opened, and a dozen or so of men, with Methusalem at their head entered. Each one took his own place, which was indicated by a square of copper, marked with a figure, and Methusalem began to serve.

"Well, well, boys," he said with a sort of grim jollity, "how goes business? Have you anything to sell or to exchange? Who wants any rabbit skins, rusty iron, or broken glass?"

"I do," said a man of ferocious aspect, who was known as Rat-de-Cave. "I have six silver forks and spoons which Providence has thrown in my way; they are first class and should sell for twenty-three centimes the gram, but they might get one into trouble. People who forget these things on their dirt-heaps, dare to claim them before the magistrates, sometimes, but I'll not give them the chance. Once melted up, silver never reappears except in the pocket. Will you oblige me by making these into ingots, Father Methusalem?"

"With pleasure, comrade, with pleasure," said the old man, "but we must be quick about melting it, and you about selling it. Several silver mines have been discovered near Valparaiso, a pick is put into the earth, and presto, the metal gleams. So silver is going down in the Parisian market."

"Bah," said Rat-de-Cave, "there is a tariff for silver."

"There is a tariff, true; but just take your ingots to the mint, my lad, and see what price they will offer you. It is a fine establishment, we must not speak ill of our neighbors; but suspicious, inquisitive, meddling; one cannot go there with an ounce of gold but they must know precisely where he got it."

"How much will you pay for silver, then, Methusalem?" asked Rat-de-Cave.

"Sixty-five centimes the gram," said Methusalem, "and I lose on it, it is merely to oblige a customer."

Rat-de-Cave shook his head, incredulously.

"And you, Pommé d'Api," asked Methusalem, addressing a boy about fourteen years of age, whose pallid, worn face betrayed an early acquaintance with vice, "did you open many carriage doors last night, or pick up any cigar ends?"

"I should think so," said the boy, proudly.

"There was a beautiful actress; a piece, the 'Drame de la Misere,' the play began at three o'clock; there was a crush and a crowd, no one looked out for his pocket. But the coming out was best of all, the street was packed, every one wanted carriages at the same time. I had ten of my men ready to my orders. When one of them told me the carriage was ready, I ran to open the door. I helped my lady in, I assisted a stout gentleman, and nearly every time, a fan, a lace handkerchief, or a piece of jewelry remained in my hands. Mère Fanfane got the best of me, but it's all one, I don't complain. I love pretty actresses, as much at least as the great people do."

"So Mother Fanfane had all the profits of the sale?"

"I kept whatever I could for you."

"And what do you want now?"

"A complete costume of velvet, with sleeves and hat to match."

"You have some plan in your head?" said Methusalem.

"I am going to the ball at Vauxhall," said Pommé d'Api, "and I must be smart; there is no smuggling in it, white blouses there; it is near the Custom House."

"I say, Pommé d'Api," said Rat-de-Cave, "be gallant and take the Naine there, so that you will have a dancer ready to hand."

The Naine's eyes flashed, and she replied, "I'd have you to know that I want none

of his company; nor the likes of him either. If I had wished, I could have been the wife of a man who could raise four weights of three pounds each, with his arms extended, and who could have knocked you all down with one blow of his fist."

"At this outbreak, Methusalem's guests all laughed outright."

"And you refused a husband of that sort," said Pommé d'Api. "By my faith, you're hard to please; are you waiting for the King of Blarney, or must your heart be touched like the strings of a guitar?"

"My reasons do not concern you, miserable pigmy," cried the Naine.

"Then why do you confide in us?" said the boy. "and if it comes to that, I know all about it."

"Stop," cried the Naine, "stop."

"If you get angry, I'll tell his name," said Pommé d'Api. "I know more than you think about the romance of your life, and it was queer enough how I got to hear it. It was one night at a gingerbread fair. The Monte-bank saw his clown come to read drunk, to the despair of the manager. I saw there were some pence to be earned, and I offered to take his place. The man thought me rather ambitious, but he questioned me about my kit, and finding that I could receive a kick or a box in the ear gracefully, he engaged me secretly, saying never a word to his master. After the show, being charmed with my debut and the receipts, they invited me to supper. I accepted, and at dessert Signor Gulgofo asked me to enter his troupe. I declined the honor, informing Gulgofo that I exercised the lucrative trade of opener of carriages, and dealer in theatre checks."

"I spoke of Father Methusalem's boarding-house, and of you, Naine, and Gulgofo exclaimed, 'By your description, I am sure I know her once.'"

"Bah," cried I, incredulously.

"How and where? I asked."

"It is a long time now, since such a woman became a member of our company. She brought with her a child some three years of age, pale and delicate, with eyes of clear amber, and dress that bespoke wealth. We could easily train the child, and as for the woman, she had only to show herself to make an audience laugh. I engaged her. During her engagement we went through Spain, Italy, and France; when I offered to renew my agreement, she said that she wanted to put the child under a regular course of study. Sturdy indeed, a fine joke! I have taught her enough to gain a living in any city of Europe. But remonstrance was useless, she took the child, and I never saw her since. If she is in want, give me her address. There is always place for her in the company. I promised Gulgofo to bring you to him, but I always forgot. Perhaps I should never have remembered this episode, if you had not spoken of your journey, and the athlete who asked you in marriage."

An expression of pain and rage crossed the woman's face, and she would have thrown the bottle she held in her hand at the boy's head, had not Methusalem, seeing the danger, interposed, reminding Naine of her duties, and calling Pommé d'Api to order.

Supper went off gayly.

After it was over, the Naine lit a petroleum lamp, which gave out a horrid odor, and each one of the guests lighting his pipe or his cigar, soon filled the room with a dense cloud of smoke.

Conversation had ceased, the Naine was about to bury herself in the black depths of the kitchen, when a young man of some twenty years of age opened the dining-room door. He quickly removed his hat, put it under his left arm with a graceful gesture, and drawing from his pocket a soft cap of black silk, placed it jauntily upon the side of his head, and advanced into the circle of smokers.

"Hurray for the Knights of the Black Cap!" he said in a sonorous voice.

This was the signal, every one of the guests immediately put on a similar head gear, and once hoisting this passport, became mutually confidential and communicative.

"Have you dined, Fleur d'Echouaund?" asked the Naine of the new-comer.

"No, bring me whatever you like, only see that it is good, and in a private room. Rat-de-Cave will keep me company."

"Willingly," answered Rat-de-Cave.

"What," cried Methusalem, "concealment from the Father of the Knights of the Black Cap?"

"You will know all in a day or two, old man," said the new comer.

"Agreed, I permit the consultation."

The Naine soon appeared, with a beefsteak deliciously cooked, salad and a bottle of wine. She laid the table in a neighboring room, and Rat-de-Cave was soon closeted there with his hopeful associate.

The latter, whom they called by the name of Fleur d'Echouaund (Gallows-Flower), was a good-looking, well-made youth, carefully dressed and intelligent. His face was a perfect oval, his eyes were blue, and not as yet dimmed by late hours, his brows finely pencilled and delicately arched. If his lips were somewhat too thin, they had a trick of smiling pleasantly. His hands were white, his feet small. His hair, reddish in color, showed to advantage the delicacy of his complexion. Everything about him indicated a man who had led an easy life, and whose habits would seem to have led him far from the motley assemblage by which he had been so rapturously received.

"Well, young un," said the old thief, "I smell a rat."

"You are not mistaken, devil's limb," said the other.

"What's the game?"

"A hundred thousand francs to divide."

"And the danger?"

"The danger is little."

All right then, youngster, the game's worth the risk."

Meanwhile the Naine from a convenient corner listened quite so attentively as did Rat-de-Cave, while his associate continued as follows:

"Here it is, then," said Fleur d'Echouaund: "my master, Antoine Pomerol, had a visit the other day from his great friend, Nicols, the banker. I met him by chance in the hall, and struck by the expression of his face, concluded that there was a secret on foot. So as soon he had been ushered in, I listened to every word of his interview with my master. We can so easily make other people's affairs our own. I learned, then, to my great surprise that the banker Nicols, having been imprudent at the Bourse, ran the risk of being found out, and came to borrow a hundred thousand francs from the millionaire. To do so, Pomerol justice, he is goodness and honesty itself; he treats me, his secretary, as kindly as he does his son, M. Xavier. I was not therefore surprised to hear him promise the money to his friend, and I determined to profit by this circumstance. I have been three years in his house, and have had time to take the form of every key, and to have the most important ones duplicated. M. Pomerol got the money at two o'clock to-day. To-night it will rest quietly in his safe, and we must take it from there."

(Continued on Third Page.)

*Naine signifies a female dwarf.