



AMBIGUOUS.

MR. COPAL VARNISH—"There! I call that sublime! What do you think?"

MR. PLAINTALK—"Well, I can't say its exactly sublime, but its only one step from it!"

OLD FRIENDS.

THERE is another hoary-headed old falsehood that comes dancing around in its Sunday clothes every once in a while, looking so much like truth that people have at last come to consider it with a good deal of respect.

I always thought old friends were the best, probably because I had heard people say so so often. I frequently remembered my school chums and fancied if the whips and cords of time ever chased me into a hole, the old, old boys would come around with smiling faces and outstretched hands to pull me out again. But I've changed my mind. The other day a middle-aged man blew into my office, sat down beside the table, grasped my nervous palm with a fat and flabby hand and smiled at me with such warm affection that I had to lean up against his breath for support.

"I hope you are glad to see me Hennery," he at last with some emotion.

I said I was.

"It's a good many years now, since we were young and frisky together."

"Yes," I replied thoughtfully, "a good many years."

Then he launched out. He carried me through my school-days when we stole apples and water-melons together, and quarrelled about Mary Jones. Sweet little Mary—how the memory of thy pale child-face comes back to me now, bright, and pure, and tender as the wayside violet that blows in peace and happiness!

Tears came to my eyes with the thought of her. But my alleged old friend went on. He recounted anecdotes of my older days, many of which I had forgotten and many of which I would have gladly left at rest. With pitiless pertinacity he wrestled with them all. Well I bore them because—strange egotism of man—he talked about myself. Presently he left that engrossing subject and commenced telling me of people that I had known and people I didn't know. I tried hard to keep up the enthuse but it was no go. The foreman was howling around for copy and while this irrepressible, red-nosed, loud-voiced talker wandered on I could not write a line. I had lost all interest in the people he spoke of, some of them I had forgotten. What did I care about the reminiscences of his humdrum village life? I had made new friends and many. I lived in the present; I hated like thunder to be dragged back to a stuffy, stupid, uninteresting past.

When the evening came he got ready to start back to his excursion train. I was glad to see it. He leaned over to me and told me that he had been so glad to see me. He hadn't had such good time for years. He would come again and

come often, and would come prepared to linger, and speculate on the price of arsenic. As I speculated he said, half apologetically, half confidentially: "By the way Hennery, do you remember that \$25 you borrowed from me, before you left home thirteen years ago, old man—thirteen years, but I didn't forget it. Could you—?"

I could and I did. He went away. I felt sore. If any old friends of mine call again, they will find me armed—old friends are not the best. There is no friendship in them. They are the most barefaced, brazened, out-and-out frauds that this world of shams, and hypocrisies, and unwholesome creations of shallow sentimentality can boast of.

HENNERY SPIFF.

A SWALLOW tail—"Ten Nights in a Bar-room."

I love you not, my lass, you see,
That fact is very plain,
If you should give me one sweet kiss,
I'll give it back again.