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The Week's Doings.

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"Hem to the Time, Let the Clocks fall where they May."

J. E. BIGNEY,
Editor & Proprietor.

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Falconer & Durning's Column.

In Spite of Herself!

BY J. E. BIGNY.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER V.

PLAIN TALK.

"And a naughty little game came in just at that moment, and got the benefit of your mood," interrupted Lottie. "Well, I have listened to your sermon and understand it, and that is more than I can say of many I heard. It certainly was pointed, and seemed pointed at me, and I have heard it said that it is proof of a good sermon for each one to go away feeling that he has been directly preached at. But permit me, as a friend, Mr. Hemstead, to suggest that this will not answer in our day. I fear from my little forecasts, that people will not be able to sit comfortably under your homilies, and unless you intend to preach out in the backwoods, you must modify your style."

"That is where I do intend to preach. At least upon the frontiers of our great West."

"Oh! how dismal!" she exclaimed; "and can you, a young, and, I suppose, ambitious man, look forward to being buried alive, as it were, in those remote regions?"

"I assure you I do not propose to be buried alive at the West, or spiritually smothered, as you hinted, in a fashionable church in the East. I think the extreme West, where States and society are forming with such marvellous rapidity, is just the place for a young, and certainly for an ambitious man. It is nothing to have a part in founding and shaping an empire."

"You admit that you are ambitious, then?"

"Yes."

"Our minister inveighs against ambition, as it were one of the deadly sins."

"He means the ambition that is all for self. That is as wrong and contemptible as the beauty that is miserably without a looking glass. An ardent desire to obtain glory, Divine Mission, and to be worthy of it, to be successful in serving a noble cause, cannot be wrong."

She looked at his earnest face and eyes, that seemed to glow with hidden fire, almost wistfully; and said with a tinge of sadness:

"You will feel very differently, I fear, twenty years hence. Humanism is a rare thing in the day, and I imagine it is soon quenched everywhere."

"So it is; it needs constant rekindling."

"But then Mrs. Marchmont and Mr. Dimmerly appeared, and soon after they all sat down to a late breakfast."

CHAPTER VI.

A SLEIGH-RIDE AND SOMETHING MORE.

Lottie assumed an unusual degree of gaiety during the early part of the meal, but her flow of spirits seemed unequal, and to flag toward the last. She had sudden fits of abstraction, during which her jolly eyebrows contracted into unwonted frowns.

Her practical joke did not promise as well as on the evening before. That unexpected half hour's talk had shown some actions in a new light. She did not mind doing wicked things that had a spice of hardihood and venture some in them. But to do what had been made to appear mean and dishonorable was another thing, and she was provoked enough at Hemstead for having unconsciously given that aspect to her action and character, and still more annoyed and perplexed that her conscience should so positively side with him. Thus it will be seen that her con-

science was not so easily won over and subdued as she had seemed to be. As she came to her breakfast, she found that she was different from what she had expected. The conventional ideas of a theatrical student had been in her mind, and she had expected to see a rather narrow and slightly excited man, full of the theatrical mania, who would sit down and laugh at her when she saw that Hemstead's awkwardness would wear away through familiarity with society, and that when at ease he was simple and manly in manner. She also perceived that he was the cause of his diffidence, had been employed in training and richly storing his mind. Moreover, to one so accustomed to the insincerity of society, his perfect frankness of speech and manner was a novelty, interesting if not always pleasing. She read his thoughts as she would an open page, and saw that he esteemed her as a true, sincere girl, kind and womanly, and that he had for her the stougest respect. She feared that when he discovered her true self, he would scorn her to loathing. Not that she cared, except that her pride would be hurt. But she feared an honest man's verdict.

But soon her old reckless self triumphed. "Of course what I am doing will seem awful to him," she thought; "I know that before I commenced. He will not preach me out of my fur in one half hour. If I could make him love me in spite of what I am, it would be a great triumph. After all I am only acting as all the girls in my set do when they get a chance. It's not as bad as he makes out."

Still that was a beautiful half-hour, when they looked upon a transfigured world together; and while they saw nature in her rarest and purest beauty, she had also been a glimpse into the more beautiful world of truth, where God dwells.

But as the morning advanced, good impulses and better feelings and thoughts vanished, even as the snow-wreaths were dropping from branch and spray, leaving them as bare and insightless as before. By the time the sleigh drove up to the door she was as bent as ever upon victimizing the "western giant," the conspirators had named him. She was her old, decided resolute self; all the more resolute because of her new hindrance—her own conscience, which Hemstead had unwittingly awakened; and she said to his uncomfortable possessor some rather severe things that day.

If Lottie were Bell Parton, she would have been in a miserably undecided state. But it was her nature to carry out what she had begun, if for no other reason than that she had begun it, and she was not one to give up a frolic at any one's scolding; not even her own.

As she tripped down the broad stairs in a rich cloak trimmed with fur, she reminded Hemstead of some rare tropical bird, and DeForrest indulged in many notes of admiration. Lottie received these as a matter of course, but looked at the student with genuine interest. His expression seemed to satisfy her, for she turned away to hide a smile that meant mischief.

It was quietly arranged that Hemstead should sit beside her, and he felicitated himself over their artifice as if it were rare good fortune.

Though the sun and the rising breeze had shaken off the clustering snow to a great extent, the evergreens still bent beneath their beautiful burdens, some straight cedars reminding one of vigorous age, where snowy hair and beard alone suggest the flight of years.

Though the face of nature was so white it was not the face of death. There was a sense of movement and life which was in accord with their own spirits and rapid motion. Snow-birds fluttered and twittered in weedy thickets by the wayside,

breakfasting on the seeds that fell like black specks upon the snow. The bright sunlight had lured the fox-squirrels from their moss-lined nests in hollow trees, and their shrill bark was sometimes heard above the chime of the bells.

"There goes a parson crew," cried Addie Marchmont. "How West and solemn he looks against the snow."

"Why are crows called parsons, Mr. Hemstead?" asks Lottie, as a child might.

"Indeed, I don't know. For as good a reason, I suppose, as some girls are called witches."

She gave him a quick, keen look, and said, "I hope you mean nothing personal?"

"I should never charge you with being a witch, Miss Marsden, but I might with witchery."

"A distinction without a difference," she said, seeking to lead him on.

"He means," explained DeForrest, "that you might be bewitching if you chose."

"Hush, Julian, you leave no room for the imagination," said Lottie frowningly.

"Look at that farmyard, Miss Marsden," said Hemstead; "the occupants seem as glad that the storm is over as we are. What pictures of placid content these ruminating cows are under that sunny shed. See the pranks of that colt which the boy is trying to lead to water. I wish I were on his back with the prairie before me."

"Indeed, are you so anxious to escape present company?"

"Now I didn't say that. But we have passed by, and I fear you did not see the pretty rural picture to which I called your attention. Were I an artist I would know where to make a sketch to-day."

"I think you will find that Miss Marsden's taste differs very widely from yours," said DeForrest, "that is, if you give us to understand you would seek your themes in a barnyard, and set your easel upon a muck-heap. Though your pictures might not rank high, they would still be very rank."

Even Lottie joined slightly in the general and not complimentary laugh at Hemstead, which followed the thrust, but he with heightened color said:

"You cannot criticise my picture, Mr. DeForrest, for it does not exist. Therefore, I must conclude that your satire is directed against my choice of place and subjects."

"Yes, as with the offence of Denmark's king, they 'smell to heaven.'"

"I appeal to you, Miss Marsden, was not the scent of hay, and the breath of the cattle as we caught them passing, sweet and wholesome?"

"I cannot deny that they were."

"You have judicial fairness, and shall be umpire in this question. And now, Mr. DeForrest, there is a celebrated and greatly admired picture in a certain gallery, representing a scene from the Roman Saturnalia. You do not object to that, with its classical accessories, as a work of art?"

"Not at all."

"And yet it portrays a corruption that does in truth 'offend heaven'; your muck-heap, which did not enter into my thoughts at all, and would not have been in my picture could I paint one, would have been wholesome in comparison. Have I made a point Judge Marsden?"

"I think you have."

"Finally, Mr. DeForrest, what are we to do with the fact that some of the greatest painters in the world have employed scenes as these, which just such scenes as these, which perhaps offend your nose and taste more than they do heaven, and pictures such as that farmyard would suggest adorn the best galleries of Europe?"

"What artists of note have painted barn-yard scenes?" asked DeForrest in some confusion.

"Well, there is Herring, the famous English artist, for one."

"Herring," indeed. You are evidently telling a fair story," said DeForrest, contemptuously.

"No, he is not," said Lottie. "Herring is a famous painter, I am told, and we have some engravings of his works."

"And I have read somewhere," continued Hemstead, "that his painting of an English farmyard is the most celebrated of his works. Moreover, Judge Marsden, I must ask of you another decision as to the evidence in this case. I affirm that I did not call your attention to the farmyard itself, but to the occupants. Is not that true?"

"I cannot deny that it is."

"We all know that many eminent artists have made the painting of animals a specialty, and among them such world-renowned names as Landseer and Rosa Bonheur. Moreover, in the numerous pictures of the Nativity we often find the homely details of the stable introduced. One of Rubens' paintings of this sacred and favorite subject, which hangs in the gallery of the Louvre, represents two oxen feeding at a rack."

"Come Julian, hand over your sword. It won't do for you or any one to sit in judgment on such painters as Mr. Hemstead has named. You are fairly beaten. I shall admire barn-yards in future through thick and thin."

"That is hardly a fair conclusion from any testimony of mine," said Hemstead, "a barn-yard may be all that Mr. DeForrest says of it, but I am sure you will always find pleasure in seeing a fine frolicsome horse, or a group of patient cattle. The homely accessories may, and sometimes may not add to the picture."

"How do you come to know so much about pictures? Theology has nothing to do with art."

"I dissent from Judge Marsden's decision now, most emphatically," replied Hemstead. "Is not true art fidelity to nature?"

"Yes, so it is claimed."

"And where does nature come from? God is the Divine Artist, and is furnishing themes for all other artists. God is the author of landscapes, mountains, rivers, of scenes like that we saw this morning, of a fine face and noble form, as truly as a chapter in the Bible. Now, fine paintings, statuary and music, bring out the hidden meanings of nature, and therefore more clearly God's thought. Theology, or knowledge concerning our Creator, is a science to which everything can minister, and surely the appreciation of the beautiful should be learned in connection with the Author of all beauty."

"I never thought of God in that light before," said Lottie. "He has always seemed like one watching to catch me at something wrong. Our solemn old Sunday-school teacher used to say to us children just before we went home. Now, during the week whenever you are tempted to do anything wrong, remember the text, 'Thou God seest me.' When wasn't I tempted to do wrong? and I had for a long time the uncomfortable feeling that two great eyes were always staring at me. But this isn't sleigh-riding chit-chat," and she broke into a merry little trill from a favorite opera.

Hemstead, with his strong love of the beautiful, could not help watching her with deepening interest. The rapid motion, the music of the bells, the novel scenery of the sun-lighted, glittering world around her, and chief of all her abounding health and animal life, combined to quicken her excitable nature into the keenest enjoyment. From her red lips came ripples of laughter, trills from operas, sallies of wit that kept the entire party from the thought of heaviness, and to honest-minded Hemstead, and the evidences of a happy, innocent heart."

With secret exultation she saw how rapidly and unconsciously the

unwary student was passing under the spell of her beauty and pitchery.

One must have been cursed with a sluggish, half-dead body, and a torpid soul, had he not responded to the influences under which our gay party spent the next few hours. Innumerable snow-dakes had carried down from the air every particle of impurity, and left it sweet and wholesome enough to seem the elixir of immortal youth. It was tempered also, that it only braced and stimulated. The raw, pinching coldness of the previous day was gone. The sun, undimmed by a cloud, shone generally, and caves facing the south were dripping, the drops falling like glittering gems.

Now and then a breeze would career down upon them, and catching the light snow from the adjacent fence, would cast it into their faces as a mischievous school-boy might.

"Stop that!" said Lottie to one of these sportive zephyrs. "Do you call that a gust of wind? I declare it was a wileless sprite—or a party of snow elves playing their mad pranks upon us."

"I prefer fairies less cold and ethereal," said DeForrest with a meaning look at the speaker.

"What do you prefer, Mr. Hemstead," she asked. "But where was the world speak of fairies, sprites and nymphs, I suppose you permit yourself to think only of angels."

"Why so?"

"You might use your wings and leave us."

"Were I one, I would not leave you after that speech. But see how far I am from it. I weigh one hundred and fifteen pounds."

"I wish you were no farther off than that."

"What do you mean?"

"It's not our weight in avoirdupois that drags us down. But I am not going to preach any more to-day. Listen to the bells—how they echo from the hillside!"

"Yes, Julian, listen to Belle," said Lottie to DeForrest, who was about to speak. "I'm talking to Mr. Hemstead. See those snow crystals on my muff. How can you account for so many odd and beautiful shapes?"

"To me all the countless forms in nature," said Hemstead, "prove an infinite mind gratifying itself. They are expressions of creative thought."

"Nonsense! God doesn't bother with such little things as these."

"We do not know what seems small or great to Him. The microscope reveals as much in one direction as the telescope in another, and the common house-fly in size seems mid-way in animal life."

"And do you believe that the divine hand is employed in forming such trifles as these?"

"The Divine will is. But these trifles make the avalanche and the winter's protection for next year's harvest."

"What is that?" said Harcourt from the front seat, where he was driving.

"Do you know?" cried Lottie, "that Mr. Hemstead thinks that everything we see, even to nature's smallest trifles, are an 'expression of the Divine creative thought.'"

"Is that scene such an expression?" asked Harcourt, with a sneering laugh in which the others joined.

By the roadside there was a small hotel, at the door of which a half-fledged pig was squealing. When they were just opposite, a slatternly, curly-headed woman opened the door and raised her foot to drive the clamorous animal away. Altogether it was as squallid and repulsive a picture as could well be imagined.

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