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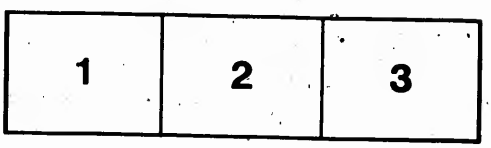

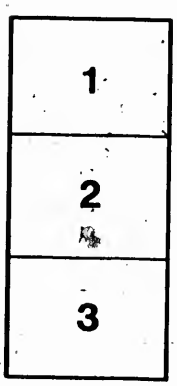

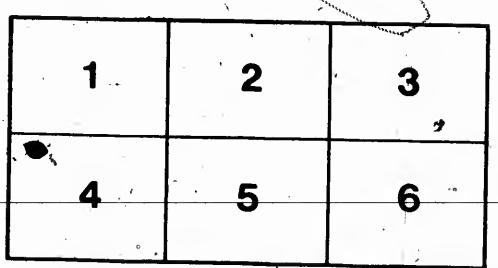

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OR

FIRST FAM'LIES OF THE SIERRAS.

BY

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Author of "Songs of the Sierras," "Songs of the Sun-Lands," "The Ship in the Desert," Etc., Etc.

COMPLETE.

TORONTO:
J. Ross Robertson, 67 Yonge Street
1878.

THE DANITES,

OR

FIRST FAM'LIES OF THE SIERRAS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FORKS.

Now there was young Deboon from Boston, who was a very learned man. He was in fact one of those fearfully learned men. He was a man who could talk in all tongues—and think in none.

Perhaps he had sometime been a waiter.

I am bound to say that the most dreadfully learned young men I have ever met are the waiters in the Continental hotels.

Besides that he was very handsome. He was, indeed, almost as handsome as a French barber, or a first-class steward.

Another thing that helped to defeat him in this hurried election was his love of animals and his dislike of hard work. The handsome fellow stood for election this day with a bushy-tailed squirrel frisking on his shoulder, and a pair of pink-eyed white mice peeping out like a handkerchief from the pocket of his red shirt.

Then there was Chipper Charley—smart enough, and a man, too, who had read at least a dozen books; but the Forks didn't want him for an Alcalde any more than it did Deboon.

Then there was Limber Tim, and Limber certainly could write his name, for he was always leaning up against trees and houses and fences, when he could find them, and writing the day and date, and making grotesque pictures with a great carpenter's pencil, which he carried in the capacious depths of his duck breeches' pocket. But when Sandy proposed Limber Tim, the Camp silently but firmly shook its head, and said, "Not for Joseph."

At last the new camp pitched upon a man who, it seemed, had been called The Judge from the first. Perhaps he had been born with that name. It would indeed have been hard to think of him under any other appellation whatever. It had been easier to imagine that when he had first arrived on earth his parents met him at the door, took his carpet-bag, called him Judge, and invited him in.

As is usually the case in the far, far West, this man was elected Judge simply because he was fit for nothing else.

The "boys" didn't want a man above them who knew too much.

When Chipper Charley had been proposed, an old man rose up, turned his hat wrong side out with his fist, twisted his beard around his left hand, spirted a stream of tobacco juice down through an aisle of rugged men and half way across the earthen floor of the Howling Wilderness saloon, and then proceeded to make a speech that killed the candidate dead on the spot.

This was the old man's speech:—

"That won't go down. Too much book larnin'."

But the new Judge, or rather the old, bald-headed, dumpy, dirty-faced little fellow with the dirty shirt and dirty duck breeches, was not a bad man at all. The "boys" had too much hard sense to set up anything but a sort of wooden king to rule over them in this little isolated remote camp and colony of the Sierras. And they were perfectly content with their log too, and never once called out to Jupiter for King Stork.

This old idiotic little Judge, with a round head, round red face, and round belly, had no mind—he had no memory. He had tried everything in the world almost, and always had failed. He had come to never expect anything else. When he rose up to make a speech of thanks to the "boys" for the "unexpected honour," and broke flat down after two or three allusions to the "wonderful climate of California," he was perfectly serene, perfectly content. He had got used to breaking down, and it didn't hurt him.

He used to say to his friends in confidence that he certainly would have made a great poet had he begun in his youth. And perhaps he would, for he was certainly fit for nothing else under the sun.

The Forks was the wildest and the freshest bit of the black-white, fir-set, and snow.

...the men, was about the first to make friends with this first stranger in this wild Eden. Men noted this, as they did all things that in any way touched the life or affairs of the Widow, and made their observations accordingly.

"That's a bad lot," said the Innocent, as he rested his elbow on the counter and held his glass poised in the air; "that's a bad lot for the squaw, as writes poetry."

Then the cool of Eden reached us: the row of men, by his side—ranked right and left—lifted his glass, shut both his eyes, and emptied his "invention juice," as they called it in the mines.

Then, then more liquid fire kissed mouth on his red sleeve, hitched up his broad belt that supported his pack, screwed, and said, with another wink—

"Just think of Bayne, that fellow, Lord O'Bryan. Why, gents, I tell you he was prize on the side."

But the Parson, the great rival of Saddy for the Widow's affections, took a deeper interest in this than that of an idle gossip.

It was with a joyful smack of freshness in his lungs and manner that, as we say, always spoke of the stranger little more as "That Boy."

The Parson regarded Bayne with more severity, as for aforethought, at dusk and alone, saw him enter the Widow's cañon. At once down the...

...was yet slept. The rib had not yet been taken from his side. He was alone. Behold, these men went up and down the earth, meeting new things and possessing them.

Strong, strange men met there from the farthest parts of the world.

Men were grandly honest then. They invariably left gold in their gold-pans from day to day open in the claim—ounces, pounds of it, thousands of dollars to be had for the picking up. Locks and keys were unknown, and, when the miner went down to the Forks on Saturday night to settle his account, he, as a rule, handed the storekeeper his purse and let him weigh whatever amount he demanded, without question.

When the great Californian novel which has been prophesied of, and for which the literary world seems to be waiting, comes to be written, it will not be by a popular. And that is because every true Californian, no matter how depraved he may be, somehow has somewhat of the hero and the real man in his make-up. And as for the women that are there, they are angels. So you see there is no one to do the business of the heavy villains.

Sixty miles from the nearest post, and ...was open all at once at staring at the Forks. Perhaps they were glad to get away from the grimness up there, and were shouting with delight. At all events, they rose together here, united their forces in the friendliest sort of manner, and so moved on down together with a great deal more dignity than before.

Not can it even called the Forks simply because it was the Forks. In California things name themselves, or rather Nature names them, and that name is visibly written on the face of things, and every man may understand who can read.

If they call a man Smith in that country it is simply because he looks as if he ought to be called Smith—Smith, and nothing else.

Now, there was Limber Tim, one of the first and best men of all the thousand bearded and leathery set of Missourians, a nervous, wealthy, sensitive sort of a fellow, who kept always twisting his legs and arms around as he walked, or talked, or tried to sit still, who never could face anything or anyone two minutes without flopping over, or turning around, or twisting about, or trying to turn himself wrong side out, and of course anybody instinctively knew his name as soon as he saw him.

Let us rather accept the situation, good or bad, play the piece out, and look to promotion in the next great drama.

Do not despise my spicy little camp in the Sierras. It was a world of itself. Perhaps it was as large as all Paradise was at the first; and then it was so new, so fresh, so fragrant, sweet, and primitive.

It was something to be the first man in that camp. Cæsar, if they have written their chronicles true, would have preferred it to the second place in Rome.

Here only the strong clear heads towered up. It was not accident that made Sandy, or the Parson either, a head man in the Forks.

The Forks knew just how sterling, and how solid, and how sincere he was. No flattery here. There was not a penny to win by it. No applause to care for here. No public opinion to appease or won. If a man did not like the company at the Howling Wilderness, he need not put in an appearance. He could stay at home, lord of his castle, full three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, and no man would question him or doubt his motives.

Nor was it any accident that made Limber Tim, the partner of Sandy. These things have a deeper root than men suppose. Sandy was the strongest man in the camp, Limber Tim was the weakest. Nothing in nature was more natural than their present relation.

CHAPTER VIII.

SANDY'S COURTSHIP.

Swiftly, and very sweetly for Sandy, the days went by in the Forks; down there deep in the earth, almost in the dark of the under-world, in the cool of the forest, in the fragrance and spice and sweetness of the fir, and madrona, and tamarack, for ever dripping with dew, and dropping their fragrant gums and spices on the carpeted, mossy mountain side, filling the deep chasm with an odour found nowhere save in the heart of the Sierras, and Sandy was happy at last.

A thousand men, I said, and not a single woman; that is, not one woman who was what these men called "on the square." Of course, two or three fallen women, soiled doves, had followed the fortunes of these hardy fellows into the new camp, but they were in some respects worse than no women at all.

As was usual with these fallen angels, they kept the camp, or certain elements in the camp, in a constant state of uproar, and contributed more to the rapid filling-up of the new graveyard up on the hill than all other causes put together. The fat and dirty little judge, who really wanted to keep peace, and who felt that he must always give an opinion, when asked why it was that the boys would fight so dreadfully over these women, and kill each other, said, "It is all owing to this glorious climate of California."

The truth is, they fought and killed each other, and kept up the regular Sunday funeral all summer through, not because these bad women were there, but because the good women were not there. Yet possibly "the glorious climate of California" had a bit to do with the hot blood of the men, after all.

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE BILLIE PIPER.

Nobody knew when he came. Perhaps [illegible] reflect that no man had ever entered this little cabin.

Cabins in the mines in those days were generally open to all. "The latch-string," to use the expression of the Sierras, hung on the outside to strangers. But this one peculiar cabin had no "latch-string" for any man.

Men began to get curious. I assert that curiosity is not the monopoly of sex. One Sunday some half idle and wholly inquisitive men went up to this cabin as they passed in the trail which ran hard by, and asked for a drink of water.

A little hand brought a dipper of water to the door. A boy face lifted up timidly to the great bearded men from Missouri as they in turn drank and passed the big tin dipper from one to the other till it was drained; then the little hand took the dipper back again and disappeared, while the men, half ashamed and wholly confounded, stumbled on up the trail.

The boy had been so civil, so shy, so modest, and yet when occasion offered, so kind withal, that few could refuse to be his friends; and now he had, only by lifting his eyes, won over this host of half-vulgar, half-ruffianly fellows to his side.

Once the saloon-keeper, the cinnamon-haired man of the Howling Wilderness, on

CHAPTER IX.

"A MAT BOY" IS BORN.

How their courtship got on, or where and when Sandy first opened his lips, nobody ever knew. At first he took Limber Tim with him. But really Limber was so awkward in the presence of ladies, or at least so thought Sandy to himself, that he was ashamed of him.

It was a great relief to Sandy, if he had only known enough to admit it to himself, to find some one the least more awkward than himself. Looking for a better boon, which fortunately then to see some one there a little more than yourself.

Limber Tim would stand for hours at the door, and would not sit down. He would not even consent that the well-used stool should stand on all four legs, with his hands stuck in his pockets, and his head inclined to one side, while his mouth fell open, with his teeth glaring up against the wall, as if he were sort of observing that he might as well up its mind never to fall down on its face.

He would stand in this position till the widow would speak to him, or even smile on him, and then he would fly right over with his face to the wall, while out a great handful from his canvas pocket, and then slowly begin to unravel the data, or as near as he could, and his manner so gentle, that they saw in him, in some sort, a superior.

Yet Limber Tim, the boy-man, came pretty near to this boy's life. At least he stood nearer to his heart than any one. Their lives were nearer the same level. One Sunday they stood together on the hill by the grave-yard above the Forks.

"Tell me," said the boy, laying his hand on the arm of his companion, and looking earnestly and sadly in his face, "Tell me, Tim, why it is that they always have the grave-yard on a hill? Is it because it is a little nearer to heaven?"

His companion did not understand. And yet he did understand, and was silent.

They sat down together by-and-by and looked up out of the great canon at the drifting white clouds, and the boy said, looking into heaven, as if to himself,

"O! fleets of clouds that flee before
The beery winds of upper seas."

Then as the sudden twilight fell and they went down the hill together, the white crooked moon, as if it had just been broken from off the snow peak that to hall been hiding behind, came out with a star.

"How the red star hangs to the moon's white horn."

There was no answer, for his companion was awed to utter silence.

young man with hands white and small and a waist like a woman's, and now that he was dying it wanted to be forgiven.

It was something to the Forks that it had allowed this boy to beat his own Christian name; the only example of the kind on its records.

The Widow was not very talkative after that, and Sandy went away earlier than usual. He thought to drop in and see the boy; but turned aside and called at the Howling Wilderness. In a few minutes he went back to the cabin of the sufferer. Gently he lifted the latch, and on tip-toe he softly entered the room where he lay.

The man was utterly amazed. The Widow sat there, holding his hands now, now pushing back the soft long hair from his face, folding back the blankets, cooling his hot brow with her soft fresh hand, and loking into his eyes all the time with a tenderness that was new to Sandy.

The boy was quite wild with the fever, and weak and helpless. Men stood back around the wall and in the dark; they had not dared to speak to her as she entered. They were so amazed that a woman would dare do this thing—to come in among them alone, take this boy in her arms, wave them back—wild beasts as they were, they stood there mute with astonishment and devotion.

Lord O'Bryan."

And so the status of the strange boy was fixed at the Forks. He was declared to be a poet, and was no more a wonder. Curiosity was satisfied.

"It is something to know that it is no worse," growled a very practical old man, as he held a pipe in his teeth and rubbed his tobacco between his palms.

He spoke of it as if it had been a case of the small-pox, and as if he was thinking how to best prevent the spread of the infection.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST WOMAN IN THE FORKS.

One day Limber Tim came up from the Howling Wilderness, all excitement; all gyrations, and gimlets, and corkscrews. He twisted himself around a sapling—this great, overgrown, six-foot boy without a beard—and shouting down to his "pardner" in the mine, Old Sandy, who stood at the bottom of the open claim, leaning on his pick, resting a moment, looking into the bright bubbling water that burst laughing from the bank before him, dreaming a bit in the freshness about him; and said, "Hallo! I say! a widder's come to town. D'ye hear A widder; one what's up and up, and on the square."

know his fellow-man, for those forest of the mountain are sudden and severe, and their work is soon done or abandoned.

After that the camp had a patron saint. The Parson fell ill next, but the boys rated him so soundly about his motive—as if any man could have a motive in falling ill—that he fell to cursing, and cursed himself into a perspiration, and so got well.

One morning the Widow found a nugget of gold on her doorstep. What particular goose of the camp had laid that great gold egg before her door she did not know. Maybe, after all, it was only the devotion of some honest, clear-headed man, some wealthy, fortunate fellow who wanted to quietly reward her for her noble deeds in the day of trouble.

Then came another nugget, and then another. She laid them in a row on her mantel-piece, and men (for visitors were not so infrequent now as at first) would come in, handle them, make their observations, guess from what claim this one came or that; and no man there ever told or hinted or in any way remarked that he had sent this or that, or had any part in the splendid gifts that lay so carelessly on the little Widow's mantel-piece.

The little dreamer, the boy-poet, was once more seen on the trail with his pick and pan looking for gold in the earth by day, for gold Widow, openly. He can do, and he does lie, very cheerfully and very rapidly, in spite of his name, which might suggest better things; but he steals no more—do you, little brownie?"

Washee-Washee's little black eyes glistened with gratitude. The little pagan was coming up in the social scale. The Widow had begun her missionary business where all the world ought to begin it—at home.

The Parson went away. He felt that somehow his footing with the Widow was shaken, and that he must do something to redeem the day.

The Parson was always trying to do something original. He concluded to "lay for" the Chinaman.

He took a fresh quid of tobacco, stowed himself away in the bush, and waited.

In the twilight, the mournful, the sad, but beautiful ghost of the great golden days of the Sierras, a hand reached out and took Washee-Washee by the queue as a man would take a tethered horse by the lariat.

The little man did not smile as before. He even struck back with his little brown bony hands. He wound one of them in the Parson's beard, and shouted aloud to the empty woods. The valour of honesty was on him.

However, kick as he might and shout as he could, it all did but little good, and the Parson proceeded very coolly to take him by the two heels, hold him up in the trail, and

up over the fire-place of this cabin.

Old Baldy whistled a little air, and walked up to this glass, sideways, sheerly, and stood there smoothing down his beard.

"Ginger blue!" cried the Parson, at last, bounding up from his bench and throwing out his arms as if throwing the words from the ends of his fingers. "Ginger blue! hell-to-flicker!" And here he danced around the cabin in a terrible state of excitement, to the tune of a string of free-and-easy oaths that fell like chain shot. They called him the Parson, because it was said he could outswear any man in the camp, and that was saying a great deal, wonderful as were his achievements in this line.

After the astonishment, every one of the ten men there took a look at the little triangular fragment of looking-glass that was tucked up over the fire-place.

The arrival of Eve in Paradise was certainly an event; but she came too early in the world's history to create much sensation.

Step back, and fancy the arrival of the first woman on earth to-day—in this day of committees, conventions, brass-band receptions, and woman's rights!

Yet imagine a princess had come to camp, a good angel, with song and harps, or, at the least, carpet-bags, and extended crinoline,

headed Israelite had not a shirt, collar, or handkerchief, or white fabric of any kind whatever in the shop.

It might have been a bit of fast-chase and old-fashioned chivalry that had lain dormant in these great hairy breasts, or it might have been their strict regard for the appropriateness of names that made these men all once call her the "Widder;" or it might have been some sudden revelation, a sort of inspiration, given to the first man who saw her as she rode down the mountain into camp, or the first man who spoke of her as she rode blushing through their midst with her pretty face held modestly down; but be all that as it may, certainly there was no design, no delay, no hesitation about it from the first. And yet the appellation was singularly appropriate, and perhaps suggested to this poor, lone little woman, daring to cross the mountains, and to come down into this great chasm of the earth, among utter strangers, the conduct of her life.

The first woman came unheralded. Like all good things on earth, she came quietly as a snow-flake down in these mides, without ado or demonstration.

What she was or where she came from no one seemed to know. Perhaps the propriety of questioning occurred to some of the men

leaves with his thumb and finger, and then, feeling perfectly certain that it did not belong to any of the boys in the camp, and equally certain that it was not an article that he cared to carry around loose with him, he slipped it into his pocket and, handing it back to Deboon, Warren said, "Got it!"

The Gopher crept out of the trail, and the little pagan like other.

A Missionary who lay in his bunk, up against the wall, smoking his pipe of "pig-tail" after supper, looked out from his cabin window through the wood and up towards the Parson's cabin, where the trail wound on the hillside above him.

"It's a thunderin' and lightnin' like outs and down. There's a-goin' to be a storm to-night."

But it was only the Parson swearing at his head lock and that Chinaman.

"Only a Testament!" Then the idea struck him like an inspiration. Did not the good little Widow give the brown wretch this thing?

He stopped swearing, stood still in the trail a moment, and then, giving a long whistle as he drew a long breath, he went on to his cabin in silence.

That Testament troubled the Parson. There was not much religion in the Forks. There was little sign of anything of that kind among the men of the Sierras. Perhaps there were other Testaments hidden

all this in confidence to a knot of friends the next day.

Deboon only breathed and breathed with both hands, a pat fox which perched friskily on his shoulder, but said nothing.

The Gopher slowly arose and shook himself. Then he reached out his fist and shook it in the air.

"What if she is? By the eternal Tom Cats! What if she is the real living and breathing Nancy Williams? And what if they do say she killed one of 'em the night before she got away, eh? Here she is and here she stays, and let me see the Destroying Angel, Danite or Devil, that dares to interfere."

The man strode out of the cabin like a king, and Deboon only stroked his frisky fox and walked on after him, looking quietly at the little crowd over his shoulder.

Yet for all that, these men, who were so brave and defiant in open fight, were awed and almost terrified by the strange and mysterious order that moved so secretly and so certainly upon its victims, and no other man there gave any expression to his thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARSON'S PURSUIT OF LOVE.

But the Danites did not again openly appear. The Widow it seemed was now

it, but always something, if that something were possible. Left this be said and remembered of these brave old men of the mountains.

A few days after this, it came out that Deboon was dead. Then it was whispered that she had starved to death. This last was said with a sort of a shudder. It came out with a struggle between the teeth, as if the man were afraid to say it.

On [illegible] it was found that the poor woman had been ill some time, had been [illegible] and weakness, and what becomes of a woman of this kind, who has no money, wherever she [illegible] and strength never had much money, always gave it away to the needy as fast as she got it, and so had nothing to fight the world with when she fell ill.

Then the men with the rest, the look of the log cabin, a space between a haystack, Jew and a flint-faced Yankee—took her rings and jewellery, one by one. The latter grew surprising, and finally she bothered herself to bring her much [illegible] that was all there was of it. Then was the end.

That butcher never [illegible] there [illegible] that. Some one wrote "Death" [illegible] over his chest every night for a month, and it was [illegible] like a gentleman. Until that did not bring Delores back to life. The ring was an

...ferry, politics, theology; anything which for that matter came up. I do not think he was irreligious; but he was always so positive, and always so ready with his opinions, and always so ready to back them up too, that all were willing to ask his opinion in matters of doubt, and few were willing to question his replies.

After awhile it became talked about that Sandy was losing ground with the Widow—or, rather, that the Parson was having it pretty much his own way there; so in other things in the camp, and that Sandy rarely got in an appearance.

A year went by, and then a pretty little cottage began to peep through the trees from a little hill back of town; and then it came out that one, with its glass windows and green window-blinds, was the property of the Parson, and destined as the home of the Widow.

I think the camp was rather pleased at this. True there was a bit of ambition and a grain of cunning too in the Parson's nature, which made the free, wild men of the mountains look upon him sometimes with less favour than they did on Sandy. Still, some of them liked him, and all were glad that the Widow was to have a home at last.

But somehow the wedding did not come on as soon as was expected, and the Widow kept on rubbing, rubbing, day after day.

The Parson's eyes twinkled with delight. "I move that Sandy take the chair for this occasion, and accept the motion, and plank down twenty ounces for the Widow."

Sandy removed his slouch hat, blushed behind his beard at the new dignity, and said:

"Bully for you! I raise you five ounces and ante the deal."

Here he drew a long, heavy purse from his pocket, and passed it over to the bar-keeper, who thereby became treasurer of the enterprise, without further remark. The Parson's eyes twinkled again.

"I see your five ounces and go you ten better."

"Called," said Sandy, and he pocketed at the bar-keeper, which little motion of the head meant that that further amount was to be weighed from the purse for the benefit of the Widow.

One by one the boys came forward; and, as the enterprise got noised about the camp, they came down to the Howling Wilderness saloon till far in the night, to contribute what they called their "Widow's mite."

Even the head man of the company up the Creek known as the "Clay Rooters," and who was notoriously the most rough and reckless man in the camp, jumped a five-dollar poker game, where he was playing at twenty dollars ante and pass the buck, to

...an old maid." He scratched his bald head above his ear and went on, for the big vein at his side began to double up his knuckles. "I should say she's a widder. You see, the maids never gets this far. They seem to split first."

The Judge spoke as if talking of a sort of pickled oyster or smoked ham.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY IN THE SIERRAS.

Never did the press feed on a political war or a calumniated poet as those men of the Howling Wilderness fed on this one woman of the Sierras.

Yet let it be remembered they always, and to a man, with scarce an exception, spoke of her with the profoundest respect. Few of them had had the pleasure of seeing her, fewer still of speaking to her; yet she was the ever-present topic. Even the weather in a Lundet winter is hardly more popular a theme than was the widow when they met in haste in the little town after the day's work was over.

The boys, silent, modest little within had put her hands to the plough at once. Those hands have perfectly well those honest people hill no knowledge there but to work; and when her little hands, that did not look

Then there was the mending of clothes! Mercy! Great big hairy men sitting up and out on the hillside with their heads up against the pines, sitting there out of sight, half naked, stitching, stitching, stitching, and swearing at every stitch.

But the great and terrible event of Sunday, before the widow came, was the washing of clothes. Neither love nor money could induce anyone save the uncertain little Chinaman to undertake this task for them, before the arrival of the widow. Therefore, when Sunday came those men went down in line, silently and solemnly, to the little mountain stream (allowed to rest and run clear and crystal-like on Sunday), and stood in a row along its banks, in top-boots, duck breeches, red shirts, and great broad hats. Then, at a word, each man laid aside his hat, undid the bosom of his shirt, straightened his arms, and drew his shirt up and over his head, and then fastened his belt, and squatted by the stream, and rubbed, and rubbed, and rubbed. Brawny-muscled men, made above the waist, "naked and not ashamed," hairy-breasted and bearded; noble, kingly men—sinless washing their shirts at a mountain-station of the Sierras. Thoughtful, earnest, splendid men! Bright above them, pine-tops toying with the sun that here and there reached through like finger pointing

boys were with the Parson, and the Parson with the boys. They all consoled each other, for was a royal good fellow, and thank the Widow could and would do better.

The conquest of gold-records by the men in their sudden and impulsive charity was in family, for, time in the Widow's station, a reasonable fortune.

"What if she give up and win?"

The man who said these was a narrow-chested, one-eyed, sharp-nosed fellow, who heavily handed being knocked down by the head of the "Gay Rooster," and kicked into the street by the crowd.

There was a poor Dutchman in the camp who had been crippled in the first settlement of the camp, and who had been all the time too lame to work and too poor to go away.

The Parson and Sandy were sent in a committee to the Widow with the gold. She smiled, took the heavy bag in her hand, turned, shot thunder in their faces, but did not say a word. That evening she was seen to enter the crippled Dutchman's cabin. The next day the crippled Dutchman rode up the trail out of camp, and was seen no more.

Still later in the fall the Parson sat in the Howling Wilderness, with his back to the

habits of life. He called on him on Sunday, entered his cabin, and found him covered in his blankets.

"What, my brother, are you sick?" said he, after the first salutations and embraces were exchanged.

"Sick! No, not sick."

"Then why are you in bed?"

"Oh! I washed my shirt to-day and got in bed to let it dry."

"Why! haven't you got but the one shirt?"

"But the one shirt! No! Do you think a man wants a thousand shirts?"

These men were mostly shy with their letters and their tales of love. That was sacred ground, upon which no stranger, rude foot could pass. No gold-hunter there, perhaps, but had his love—his only love, without a chance or possibility of changing the object of his devotion, even if he had desired it. Man must love as well as woman. It is the most natural and consequently the most proper thing on earth. Imagine how unfamiliar and how terrible a man's devotion would become under circumstances like these: The true image in his heart, the one hope—Home. So much time to think, bending to the work in the running water under the trees, on the narrow bunks beneath the shadows of the forest, by the camp and

Howling Wilderness. The Parson was thinking of gaily again, and swearing with unusual eloquence and brilliancy, when a tall, thin, and sallow man, from Missouri, known as the "Jumper," entered. He looked wild and excited, and stepped high, as if on stilts.

The tall, thin man went straight up to the bar, struck his knuckles on the counter, and nodded at the red bottle before him. It came forward, with a glass tumbler, and he drank deep, alone and in silence.

When a miner of the Sierras enters a saloon where other men are seated and drinking alone, without inviting any one, it is regarded as a deliberate insult to those present, unless there is some dreadful thing on his mind.

The Jumper, tall and fidgety, turned to the Parson, bent his back against the counter, and pushed back his hat. Then he drew his right sleeve across his mouth, and let his arms fall down at his side limp and helpless, and his round, brown bottle-nose head rolled loose and awkward from shoulder to shoulder.

"Parson."

"Well! well! Spit it out!" cried the Parson, as he arose from the bench, with a dreadful oath. "Spit it out! What is it—I is busted now?"

"Parson."

Here the head rolled and the arms swung

came into camp, and taken at once upon her shoulders the task of washing and mending the miners' clothes.

Men, even the most bloated and besotted, walked as straight as possible up the trail that led by the Widow's cabin, as they passed that way at night; and kept back their jokes and wild whoops till far up the creek and out of her hearing in the pines.

A general improvement was noticed in all who dwelt in sight or hearing of her cabin. In fact, that portion of the creek became a sort of West End, and cabin rent went up in that vicinity. Men were made better, gentler. No doubt of that. If, then, one plain woman, rude herself by nature, can do so much, what is not left for gentle and cultured woman, who is, or should be the true missionary of the West—the world?

A woman's weakness is her strength.

She was tall, gentle, genial too, and soon a favourite with her many, many patrons. She had a scar on the left side of her face, they said, reaching from the chin to the cheek; but with a woman's tact, she always kept her right side to her company, and the scar was not always noticed.

What had been her history, what troubles she had had, what tempests she had stood against, or what great storm had blown this solitary woman far into the great black sea of life that bobs about and lies in the shadow

Pegan, or less, opened the door, and went straight up to the Parsonage. The Parson saw the manoeuvring boys gave to the cottage on the hill among the trees.

"Come for him two little half-pays," said Stubbs. That was what the Parson called his silver-mounted derringers.

"There will be a funeral at the Forks to-morrow," gasped the Jumper.

Here the German undertaker arose cheerfully, and went down to his shop.

"Well, Sandy is no sardine. But your boots, Sandy, ain't no sardine!" said Stubbs. "Ave, anyhow, he's got the start just a little, if the Parson does nail him. Fun he's won her heart; and that's a heap. I think, for wimmen's mighty scarce in the mines—Sumthin' to die for, you bet."

CHAPTER XII.

QUIET.

The Parson was absent for hours, and the Howling Wilderness began to be impatient.

"He's a-healin' himself like a fighting-cock," said Stubbs; "and if Sandy don't go to kingdom come with his boots on, then shaw me up for a shrimp."

The man here went to the door, opened it, put his head out in the frosty weather, and peered up the creek for Sandy, and across the little hand that ever opened to the knock of the miners' knuckles on the door, and reached through the partly opened place, and drew back timidly and with scarce a word.

No man had yet entered her cabin. The wise little woman! If one man had been so favoured, without good and sufficient reason, then jealousy, unless others had been allowed to enter also, would have made a funeral, and very soon, too, with that one favoured man the central figure.

No man had entered that cabin; but a boy had, and oftentime too. In fact from the first little Billie Piper, whose cabin, as I have said, stood hard by, seemed to be as much at home and as much in place with the Widow as he was out of place with the men. The friendship here made him enemies elsewhere. Such is human nature.

CHAPTER V.

WASHEE-WASHEE.

Two days after the Widow had arrived, Washee-Washee, as the "boys" had named him, stood out on the steps of his cabin all the afternoon, looking up the Forks and down the Forks, and wondering what in the world was the reason the "boys" did not come croaking along and screeching their great gum boots together, with their extra

"Boys, fall in line, fall in line. Rally around the camp again."

They fell in line, or at least the majority did. Some, however, sneaked off in little knots and groups on the other side, and pretended not to have heard or noticed what was going on. These it was all once understood were fast friends of Sandy's, and unbelievers in the Parson.

The graves were filled quietly, slowly, and respectfully, almost like filling a grave, and then emptied in silence.

Again it was observed that the Parson did not swear. That was considered as remarkable as the omission of prayer from the service in a well-regulated church, and, I am sure, contributed to throw a spirit of restraint over the whole party friendly to the Parson. Besides, it was noticed that he was pale haggard, had hardly a word to say, and most of all, had hardly touched the glass to his lips.

No one, however, ventured to advise, question, or in any way disturb him. All were quiet and respectful. It was very evident that the feeling in the Forks, at first, was largely with Sandy.

But Sandy did not appear that evening. This, of course, was greatly against him. The Forks began to suspect that he feared to take the responsibility of his act, and meet the

buy another supply.

Other circumstances, not dissimilar in result, began to be talked of quietly; the men began to question whether or not after all the camp had been greatly the gainer by this new element in its population.

One afternoon there was a commotion at the door of the Widow's cabin. Sandy was in trouble with Washee-Washee. The moon-eyed little man tried to get back into the house, but the great big giant had been too long a patient and uncomplaining sufferer to let him escape now, and he reached for his queue, and drew it forth as a showman does a black snake from a cage.

The Widow saw the great hairy face of this grizzly giant, and retreated far back into the cabin. She was certain she was terribly afraid of this great big awkward half-clad unexpected man, and therefore, with a woman's consistency, she came to the door, and in a voice softer than running water to Sandy's ears, asked what could be the matter?

Sandy was taken by surprise, and could not say a word. He only rolled his great head from one shoulder to the other, got his hands locked up somehow in his leather belt, and stood there sadly embarrassed.

But who ever saw an embarrassed Chinaman? The innocent little fellow, turning his soft brown almond eyes up to the Widow,

[illegible] of the door. The bar-keeper [illegible] fully left a [illegible] between the Parson and the door, and the inevitable was not prevented.

The day [illegible], and still Sandy did not appear. By this time he had hardly [illegible] in the town.

"Down," [illegible] of a [illegible]. "Gone down in his boots!" "Buried in the snow!" "Lost his grip!" "Don't know his hand!" These and like expressions [illegible] now and then from the little knots of men here and there, were the certain indications that Sandy had lost his place in the hearts of the leading men of the Forks.

Toward midnight the latch lifted.

Then.

The door opened, and Sandy entered, backed up against the wall by the door, and stood there, tall and silent.

His great head was bowed a little, his bushy hair carefully combed behind his ears, and the neck-tie was now subdued into a neat love-knot, in spite of its old persistent habit of twisting around and fluttering out over his left shoulder. His eye met the Parson's, but did not quail.

The bar-keeper settled down gracefully behind the bags of sand, so that his eyes only remained visible above the horizon.

The head of the "Gay Rosetta" tilted a table up till it made a respectable barri[illegible] that Sandy did not [illegible]. Maybe he was surprised at the singular action of the Parson. Perhaps he had his eye on the uplifted right hand of his antagonist. At all events he had the "drop," and could afford to waste the smallest part of a second, and see what he would do.

"I have been a-wait-ing"—the Parson halted and paused at the participle. "I have been a-wait-ing for you, Sandy, a long time."

His voice trembled. The voice that had thundered above a hundred bar-room fights, and had directed the men through many a difficulty in camp, was now low and uncertain.

"Sandy," he began again, and he took hold of the counter with his left hand, "I am a-going-a-way. Your cabin will be too small now, and I want you to promise me to take care of the Parsonage till I come back."

Sandy sank back closer still to the wall, and his arm hung down at his side.

"You will move into the Parsonage when it is all over. It's full of good things for winter. You will take it, I say, at once. Promise me that."

The Parson's voice was a little severe here—more determined than before; and, as he concluded, he drew the key from his pocket and handed it to Sandy.

"You will?"

---

nearly every English [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible],
Her [illegible] [illegible].

Washee-Washee looked strangely, for he was a Chinaman, as he gradually [illegible] up the trail, still [illegible] at the cabin, that look of calm delight and perfect happiness, such only as the pure in heart are supposed to know. His hands were drawn up and folded calmly across his [illegible] stomach, as if he feared, by [illegible], [illegible] burst open, and wanted to be ready to hold himself together.

In the great little republic there, where all had begun on even and equal terms in the battle of life, where all had begun as beggars, this tawny little man from the Flowery Kingdom was alone; he was the only representative of his [illegible] nation in all that camp. And he did, [illegible], so perfectly full of [illegible]. Perhaps he smiled to think how fat he was, and how he had flourished in the little [illegible].

He was making a sharp turn in the trail, still holding his clasped hands over his extended stomach, still smiling peacefully out of his half-shut eyes:

"Washee! Washee!"

A terrible tide of [illegible] was in the town. A [illegible] hand reached out from behind [illegible] and calmly waited an answer.

The door half-way opened.

"Beg pardon, [illegible]."

He bowed softly as he said this, and then shifting Washee-Washee round, quietly took his [illegible] hand in his other hand, and proceeded to shake him up and down, and dance him and stand him gently on his head, until the clothes began to [illegible] out from under his blue [illegible] garments, and to peep through his pockets, and to reach down around his throat and dangle there his [illegible], till the little man was nearly smothered.

Then Sandy set him down a [illegible] to rest, and he looked in his face as he sat there, and he had the same peaceful smile, the same calm satisfaction as before. The little man now put his head to one side, shut his pretty brown eyes a little tighter at the corners, and opened his mouth the least bit in the world, and put out his tongue as if he was about to sing a hymn.

Then Sandy took him up again. He smiled again sweeter than before. Sandy tilted him sideways and shook him again. Then there fell a spoon, then a pepper-box, and then a small brass candlestick; and at last, as he rolled him over and shook the other side, there came out a [illegible] strangely and wonderfully made of whalebone and brass and hooks and eyes, that

[illegible] storms and drifts of snow—Sandy entered the Widow's cabin.

The Parson was not to be seen, either at the Howling Wilderness or about his own house.

Men stood about the door of the Howling Wilderness, and up and down the single street, in little knots, noting the course of things at the Parsonage, and now and then shaking their loose blanket coats and brushing off the fast falling snow.

After a while, when the smoke rose up from the chimney-top, and curled above the Parsonage with a home-like leisure, as if a woman's hand tended the fire below, a man with his face muffled up was seen making his way slowly up the rugged way that led from town across the Sierra.

It was a desperate and dangerous undertaking at that season of the year. He made but poor headway against the storm that came pelting down in his face from the fields of eternal snow; but he seemed determined, and pushed slowly on. Sometimes it was observed he would turn, and, shading his eyes from the snow, look down intently at the place of smoke drifting through the trees above the Parsonage.

"Some poor idiot will pass in his checks to-night, if he don't come back pretty soon," Stubbs, as he nodded at the man up the hill, brushed the snow from his sleeves, and went back into the saloon.

saloon, said: "Sandy is a [illegible] fool." The Judge winked, and he went on. "He wants to marry that are Widow. Wal, now, that are Widow is in love with that are boy. Nobody to blame. You see, if the Widow loves the boy that's the Widow's business, not mine; only Sandy mustn't be a fool. Besides"—and here the man's voice sank low, and he looked around as if he feared a Danite might be standing at his elbow—"besides, it's my private opinion that that are Widow is the Nancy Williams."

It was late in the Fall, and it certainly must have been a cold, frosty morning, for Sandy's teeth chattered together as if he had the ague, when he told the Judge.

In fact, he stood around the Howling Wilderness more than half a day, but he could not, or at least would not drink, though he did very many foolish things, and seemed ill at ease and troubled in a way that was new to him.

At last he got the Judge to one side. He took him by the collar with both hands, he backed him up in a corner, and, as he did so, his teeth chattered and ground together as if he stood half-naked on the everlasting snows that surrounded them. He pushed his face down into the red apple-like face of the magistrate, and began as if he was about to reveal the most terrible crime in the annals of the world. All the time he was holding on to the Judge with both hands, as if he

celestial, who sat there piled up in a little bit of a heap, the happiest thing in all the Forks, perhaps, save Limber Tim.

"Let him go, please; let him go," the Widow [illegible] came in. "You can go now, John, but don't do so any more. It is not right."

The Widow smiled in pity as she said this to Washee-Washee. The Chinaman understood the first part of the proposition perfectly, but not the last at all. To him all this was simply a bad investment. To him it was only a little shipwreck; and having been taught by the philosophers of his country to prepare for adversity in the hour of prosperity, he was not at all lacking in resignation now. He rose up, smiled that patient smile of his, and wended his way to his house.

Sandy looked a moment at the retreating hungry-looking little Chinaman, and then thrust his two great hands into his two great pockets, and [illegible] his head, first on the left shoulder and then on the right, and tried to look the Widow in the face, but found himself contemplating the toes of his great gum boots.

"Will you not come in?"

The man rolled forward. He sat down by the Widow's cabin in a perfect glow of excitement and delight.

[illegible] them affectionately, but they seemed more in the way and uglier than ever before. Then he spread them out again, but jerked them back instantly, and drove them back under his hips as if they had been two big and unruly bull-dogs, and he nearly upset himself in doing it. They had fairly frightened him, they were surely never half so large before. It seemed to him as if they would reach across the room, through the wall, and come down to the Howling Wilderness. He twisted them up under his hips and got them fast there, and was glad of it, for now they would not and could not run out and reach across the room at the Widow.

But poor-poor Sandy, any further [illegible]. His eyes came upon them suddenly, in a sort of dismay. It seemed as if he had just found them out for the first time, and knew them for mortal enemies, and determined to do away with them at once, and at any [illegible].

[illegible] had the Widow really been looking at them all this time? The back of [illegible] out of sight with all his might.

[illegible] his [illegible] a [illegible] the [illegible]

"At [illegible] back [illegible] bolted [illegible] up and down [illegible] duty [illegible] out his round [illegible] to [illegible] with the [illegible]

"O this [illegible]" He [illegible] if he [illegible] the [illegible] think [illegible] heard [illegible] that the remark was not wholly new, none of them felt called upon to respond.

"Well"—the little man lifted up on his toes as he said this, and took in a long breath—"it'll come off about the next snow fall."

He had said these words one at a time, and by inches as it were, slowly, deliberately, as if he knew perfectly well that he had something to say, and that the men were bound to listen.

This time they all looked up, and half of them spoke. And oh, didn't he torture them! Not that he pretended to keep his

[illegible] the fire, and stood up by the side of the red little man, and looked down at him as if he would like to [illegible] him for a piece of raw beef.

A fair boy, the dreamer, the poet, went back to a bunk against the farther wall, where the barkeeper's bulldog lay sleeping in his blankets, and put his arms about his neck, and put his face down and remained there a long time. Perhaps he wept. Was he weeping for joy or for sorrow?

There was a great big grizzly head moved out of the crowd and up to the bar. The head rolled on the shoulders from side to side, as if it was not very firmly fixed there, and did not particularly care at this particular time whether it remained there or not. A big fist fell like a stone on the bar. The glasses jumped as if *frightened* to death; they ran up against each other, and clinked and huddled together there, and fairly screamed and split their sides in their terror. A big mouth opened behind an awful [illegible] of beard; again the big fist fell down, again the glasses screamed and clinked with terror, and the head rolled [illegible] again, and the big mouth opened again, and the big voice said:

"By the bald-headed Elijah!" and that was all.

Then there was another calm, and you might have heard the little brown wood-mice nibbling at the old boots, and leather

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Sandy sat still as the statue of Memnon in the Valley, but that abominable *felon* hanging by the neck at his side kept twisting around and around and around as if he never would die or be still. The Widow sat down with her work as before, and this time she began to talk about the weather, trusting that on this subject at least, her great good friend could open his lips and speak.

"How very cold it is this evening. The chill of the snow is in the air. It blows down from the banks of snow on the [illegible], and I fancy it may be cold here in this [illegible] while the summer through."

Still the ugly cravat, that now began to grow black in the face, swung and twisted at his side; but he did not speak.

"Do you like the cold?"

"Yes 'um."

The two words came out like the bark of a bull-dog; as if one of the brutes he had drawn back under his bench had stuck out his nose and yelled in the face of the Widow, and Sandy was frightened nearly to death. The perspiration streamed from his brow to his boots, and he knew that things would not last in this way much longer. The bull-dogs would be out, and he knew it. He felt sure that he [illegible] down upon would rise up in judgment, and

have been so very kind; please to call, stop in as you pass, and rest. It is so lonesome here, you know; nobody that anybody knows. And then you are such good company."

And then the pretty little Widow with the sad sweet face, laughed the prettiest little laugh that ever was laughed this side that other Eden with its one fair woman.

[illegible] Tim closed his mouth and unwarped himself from the palings on the fence without so [illegible] appearing, and the two took their way to their cabin.

"And you are such good company." That was all Sandy could remember. What could he have said? He tried and tried to recall his observations, whatever they may have been, on the various topics of the day, but in vain. He could only remember the circumstance of driving two ugly bull-dogs back under his bench, of choking and hiding away his spotted cravat, and then hanging a felon for high treason; and then chiefest of all, "You will come again, it is lonesome here; you are such good company."

"You are such good company." The wind sang it through the trees as he wended his way home. The water, away down in the cañon below the trail, sang it soft and low and sweet, sang it over, and nothing more, and the tea-kettle that night simmered

been told all about it before, and perhaps not. Tim was not a talker, but a listener. This affliction meant the loss of his partner, the man he loved—a divorce.

Poor Limber! he only looked up against the wall, lowered his head there, twisted one leg in behind the other, rested his hands in behind him, and so stood there till he saw a man looking at him. Then he stopped over with his face to the wall, dug up his great pencil from his vest pocket, and fell to writing on the wall, and trying to hide his face from his fellows.

"Rather sudden, ain't it, Judge?"

"Well, not so sudden—not so sudden, considerin' this—this—this glorious climate o' California."

After awhile, when the things were all assorted itself again, and affairs were going on in the saloon just about as they were before the Judge made his appearance, a tall, not impressive man, with a hatchet face and a hump in his shoulder, and a twist in his neck, which made him look like an interrogation point, rose up, and stroking his neck out toward the bar, said in a sharp whisper:

"I'll bet a forty dollar note she's the real Nancy Williams."

The red-headed barkeeper bristled like a porcupine, and then put out his broad hand as if it was an extinguisher.

Alas! the form of the ceremony had not arrived. He had nothing of the kind to guide him. He had never officiated in this way before. He had never studied up in this branch.

Why should he have studied up in this line, when there was but one woman in all his little world?

As the form had not arrived, he had nothing in the world but his moral observation to use on this imposing occasion, and he was embarrassed as a man had never been embarrassed before.

He stood there trying hard to begin. He could hear the men breathe. The pretty little woman was troubled, too. Her face was all the time held down, her eyes dropped, and she did not look up—did not look right or left or anywhere, but seemed to surrender herself to fate—to give herself away. Her soul seemed anywhere, as if she had on a high bluff above all this, and was not of it or in it at all."

"Do you solemnly swear?"

The Judge had jerked himself together with an effort then, made his joints fairly rattle. He lowered his right hand in the air as he said this, and, having once broken ground, he went on. "Do you solemnly swear to love and honour, and obey?"

Poor Limber Tim, who had just room enough behind the Judge to turn over, here

half shut his eyes as they entered, laid his head a little to one side as they tore up his bunk, and looked perfectly happy, and peaceful as a lamb, as they pulled out from under it enough old clothes to open a shop in Portsmouth Lane, or even in Bow Street.

They found a ride-blanket in one of his wooden shoes, and it was heavy with gold-dust. Poor Washee-Washee, when called upon to explain, said timidly that he had found it dredging up the river past his cabin, and took it in to dry it. He seemed hurt when they refused to believe him. They found a bag rolled up in his great bamboo hat. One of the most look holes of his queue, his beautiful long, black queue that swept the ground with its braided folds and black silk tassels tipped with red and gold, and found it heavy with nuggets. Higher away, for what purpose goodness only knows, it was heavy enough to sink it like a shot were it a fish line—and all this gold was his!

They threatened hard things to Washee-Washee, these rough, outlawed, hairy fellows, who had intervened him and helped him, and tried to get him drunk in the world; but he was positively positive and unappall.

A man who stood there with a bundle of reserved, treasure-trove, in the shape of shirts and socks of many colours, because of many pockets, took Washee-Washee by the

"Believe hell!" said the editor to himself.

"Come, let's do a little missionary business, and begin at home," urged the Graphic.

"Get the Judge to reprimand him. Have him talk to him an hour, then let the Parson speak to him another hour. If he lives that through he will be an honest man, or if not honest he will at least be harmless."

Now, they had no preacher in the Forks, not even the semblance of one yet, neither had they a lawyer or a doctor, but this Parson was a lawyer in the camp. He was perhaps the most popular man there. He was certainly the most influential, for he was a man who could talk. They called him the Parson because he was certainly the profanest man in all the mines.

The idea was novel and was at once adopted.

Here at last was a practical application of the popular feeling, in older republics, that the officers are the servants of the public.

The little Judge here was certainly the people's servant. If he had not been, if he had asserted himself at all and taken up arms and fortified himself behind a barricade of books, they would simply have called a citizens' meeting in half an hour, and in half an hour's time have had the little man ousted and another man in his place, and there back to their work as if nothing had ever happened. Never in the world had this happen

again the hand trembled under it. Then it rose up again, and there was something like a "Thrice, twinkle, little star." Then the voice died quickly down the hand was under water. Then it rose again, and the hand went high up in the air, and the voice was loud and resolute, and the star rose on his upturned, and brightening face.—"Whom in the course of human events," he went on in a deep and solemn tone, "he wants to hurt, may God have mercy on him. Whom he wants to help, may God help him. Whom he wants to bless, may God bless him. Whom he wants to keep, may God keep him. Whom he wants to lift up, may God lift him up. Whom he wants to make his face shine upon, may God make his face shine upon him. Whom he wants to be merciful unto, may he be merciful unto him. Whom he wants to raise his countenance upon him, may he raise his countenance upon him. Whom he wants to give peace, may God give him peace. And I pronounce you man and wife."

The ceremony being over, Jack took against the wall on one side of the door, and Jill on the other, and they remained in a pair of the most unenviable positions, and the Widow and the Widow's son were quite over, for they had a low but clear voice—

"Then by virtue of the authority in me vested, and according to the laws and the statutes of the State of Jamestown, in such cases made and provided, I pronounce you man and wife."

Then he rose up, came forward, and shaking the new bride by the hand, there, lifting

[illegible]

lution. The verdict of the Camp was: Served him right.

The other little event was, to all appearances, of still less consequence. Yet it showed that there was a storm brewing, and if was a straw which showed which way the wind was blowing. The boy was seen late at night by some men who were passing, peering in at the Widow's window. He ran away like one caught in a crime. But they said he "looked pale as a ghost, and sickly, and sad, and lonesome."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW?

Just exactly how many days or weeks or even months had blown over the Forks through the long bleak winter since the wedding no man knew. Those men in the mountains stayed up for half-a-year, where there is no business, where there is no law, no church, nothing, but half-wild men, and no week—those men, I say, sometimes forget the day, the week, even the month. Yet the Day of the week is always kept. Six days they labour in the mine; the seventh, they do not rest, but they at least do not mine.

Certainly, there was snow on the day of the wedding, and certain it was that there

[illegible]

freely for joy as for grief. Between intense delight or deepest sorrow the wall is so thin you can whisper through it and be heard.

Here, at this same place, you had dealt out to you ever a great plank laid up upon a barricade of sand-bags, that were laid there to intercept any stray bullet that might be making its way towards the crimson-headed vender of poisons, almost any drink that you might name. And it is safe to say that all of the following popular drinks, that is—Old Tiger, Red Eye, Forty Rod, Rail Fence, Hot Gut, Hell's Delight, and Howling Modoc—were all made from the same decoction of bad rum, worse tobacco, and first-class cayenne pepper. The difference in proportion of ingredients made the difference in the different drinks.

If one of these splendid, misled fellows, who really knew no better, felt very sad, he took one of these drinks; if he felt very glad, he took two.

Sandy wheeled on his heel the moment he found his old friend, and went out without saying a word. He stood there in the snow, the wind twisting about his beard, blowing his old hat-rim up and down, and he seemed as one lost. At length he lifted the latch again heavily, hesitated, looked back, around, up towards his cabin, up the hill, and then suddenly pushing his hat back

had taught him many things—had made him, in fact, another man—but she could never get him to speak of her to the other miners but as "The Widow." He had gone out by himself and practised it in the dark to himself; he was certain he could say it in the crowd, but somehow just at the moment he tried to say it he was certain some one was thinking about it just as he was, was watching him, and so it always and for ever stuck in his throat. How he loved her! How tender he was to her all the time! How he did little else but think of her and her happiness day and night; but he had been a savage so long, had been with the "boys" so much, that he could not find it in his power to say that one dear word. It was like a new convert trying to pray in public in one of the great camp meetings of the West, or to stand up before all his neighbours and confess his sins.

He stood still only a second; in fact, all this took but a moment, for Sandy was in a terrible flurry. Limber Tim had never seen him in such a hurry before. Up shot the hand, down slid the hat, and Sandy was quite hidden away again. It was a moment of terrible embarrassment. When an Englishman is embarrassed he takes snuff; when a Yankee is embarrassed he whips out a jack-knife and falls to whittling anything

I fancy you might voice this as full you come to the awful tragedy of Mountain Meadows. Putting the two tragedies together, side by side, and judging them as to the impartial judgment of cooler pages, I am not certain that he would not pronounce in favour of the Mormons.

History furnishes already ample precedent, and here we meet here the very essentials and cruelest traced outlines of the former, and follows on in the latter, as we began.

The story runs that the Danites found traces of one man who had taken an active part in the death of their prophet. His name was Williams, and he was a man of a large and refined family.

Williams in the course of a year was found dead—drowned! Destroyed by accidently with, but whether by accident or the design of assassins (for suicide does not cover the life of the herdiner) was not known. Then his eldest son was found dead in the woods, his empty rifle was in his hand. He too might have perished either by accident or design. The latter was the best version. There was inducement in the family—in all the circumstances.

Another victim! Then another! Now it was terrible that many awful mystery was at work, and that the family was doomed. The only heirs of eldest lay in flight. One night the four surviving children, three grown sons and a daughter, set out to swim the

The pursuit was not long continued. As they neared the Sierras, a story that from the willows that grew on the banks of the Humboldt laid the brother dead at his sister's feet.

Nancy Williams was now left alone. One day, as they ascended the Sierras, she also was gunned. Little was said. People feared to speak. There was something terrible in this persecution to the death in the dark. Who were these men, and where? Did they sit up with you, very often in camp, and dig from the camp fish? They too could keep secrets as well as the members of their so-called prophet.

What had become of Nancy Williams? Had she too really been murdered? Or had she in terror stolen away in disguise, and under her very nose (she missed them) No one knew. People soon became too much concerned with their own affairs, as they hunted the gold fields, and men only now and then thought of the name of Nancy Williams.

One day two strange men entered the Howling Wilderness saloon, and spoke in subdued and accommodating tones to the dismounted bar-keeper, and pointed up toward the cabin of the "Widow." Sandy entered as these two men withdrew.

The bar-keeper waited for Sandy a long time, as it would seem, for something was troubling his mind. At last, in a husky and hur-

freely for joy as for grief. Between intense delight or deepest sorrow the wall is so thin you can whisper through it and be heard.

Here, at fifty cents a glass, you had dealt out to you over a great plank laid up upon a barrel-side of mud, logs that were laid there to intercept any stray bullet that might be making its way towards the quarter-headed vendor of poisons, almost any drink that you might name. And it is safe to say that all of the following popular drinks, that is—Old Tiger, Red Eye, Forty Rod, Rat Piano, Rot Gut, Hell's Delight, and Howling Modoc—were all made from the same decoction of bad rum, worse tobacco, and first-class cayenne pepper. The difference in proportion of ingredients made the difference in the different drinks.

If one of these splendid, spirited fellows, who really knew no better, felt very sad, he took one of these drinks; if he felt very glad, he took two.

Sandy wheeled on his heel the moment he found his old friend, and went out without saying a word. He stood there in the snow, the wind twisting about his beard, blowing his old hat-rim up and down, and he seemed as one lost. At length he lifted the latch again hastily, looked back, looked around, up towards his cabin on the hill, and then suddenly pushing his hat back hand, taught him many things—had made him, in fact, another man—but she would never get him to speak of her to the other miners but as "The Widow." He had gone out by himself and practised it in the dark to himself; he was certain he could say it in the crowd, but somehow just at the moment he tried to say it he was certain some one was thinking about it just as he was, was watching him, and so it always and for ever stuck in his throat. How he loved her! How tender he was to her all the time! How he did little else but think of her and her happiness day and night; but he had been a stranger so long, had been with the "boys" so much, that he could not find it in his power to say that one dear word. It was like a new-convert trying to pray in public in one of the great camp meetings of the West, or to stand up before all his neighbours and confess his sins.

He stood still only a second; in fact, all this took but a moment, for Sandy was in a terrible hurry. Limber Tim had never seen him in such a hurry before. Up shot the hand, down slid the hat, and Sandy was quite hidden away again. It was a moment of terrible embarrassment. When an Englishman is embarrassed he takes snuff; when a Yankee is embarrassed he whips out a jack-knife and falls to whittling anything

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I fancy you might guess this as well as I can the awful tragedy of Miserable Hollow. Putting the two tragedies together, side by side, and putting them on to the impartial judgment of cooler pages, I am not certain that he would not pronounce in favour of the Hollow.

History trembles slowly upon its pinions, and there we must leave the very unenviable and unduly famed outlaws of the forests, and follow on in this latter, as we began.

The story runs that the Danites found traces of some men who had taken an active part in the death of their prophet. His name was Williams, and he was a man of a large and refined family.

Williams in the course of a year was found dead—drowned! Drowned by accident? Drowned by carefully contrived plot, whether by accidence or the design of enemies (for suicide does not cover the life of the brother) was not known. Then his eldest son was found dead in the woods, the empty rifle was in his hand. He too might have perished either by accident or design. The brother was the next victim. There was consternation in the family—in all the settlement.

Another victim! Then another! Now it was certain that some awful agency was at work; and that the family was doomed. The only hope of safety lay in flight. One night the four surviving children, three grown sons and a daughter, set out to swim the

The pursuit was not long sustained. As they neared the Narrows, a story that from the willows that grew on the banks of the Humboldt hold their brother dead at his sister's feet.

Nancy Williams was now left alone. One day, as they ascended the Narrows, she was not pursued. Words were said. People feared to speak. There was something terrible in this persecution to the death in the dark. Who were these men, and where? Did they all go over very often in camp, and dip from the same dish? They too could keep secrets as well as the members of their so-called prophet.

What had become of Nancy Williams? Had she too really been murdered? Or had she in terror stolen away in disguise, and amidst her woe taken the solemn vows? No one knew. People soon become too much concerned with their own affairs, as they hunted the gold fields, and even only now and then thought of the name of Nancy Williams.

One day two strange men entered the Howling Wilderness saloon, and spoke in whispers and mysterious tones to the dissolute bar-keeper, and pointed up towards the cabin of the "Widow." Sandy entered as these two men went out.

The bar-keeper leaned on Sandy a long time, as if vainly trying to solve what battling in his mind. At last, in a husky and her-

ried voice, he said, as he looked out through the door, and over his shoulder, as if he feared the very logs of the house might betray him:—

"The Danites."

"What in hell do they want at the Forks?" The sledge-hammer fist fell on the counter like a thunderbolt.

"Sh-sh!" The red, bristled head of the bar-keeper reached over toward Sandy. The bar-keeper's hand reached out and took Sandy by the loose blue shirt bosom, and drew him close up to the red head. Then again looking toward the door, and then back over his shoulder, as if he suspected that his own bottles might hear him, he said, in a sharp, hissing whisper, "Sh-sh! They want Nancy Williams!"

Sandy's mind at once turned to the Widow. He dared not trust the bar-keeper, in truth, no man dared trust his best friend where this most terrible and secret order was concerned. He did not answer this man, but silently, and as unconcerned as possible, turned away and went back to his cabin.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT BOY.

As before remarked, the boy poet, Little Billie Piper, shy and timid as he was with the men, was about the first to make friends with this first woman in this wild Eden. Men noted this, as they did all things that in any way touched the life or affairs of the Widow, and made their observations accordingly.

"Thim's a bad lot," said the Irishman, as he rested his elbows on the counter and held his glass poised in the air; "thim's a bad lot fur the women, an' widow Nancy."

Then the men of Rein looked at the row of men by the table—looked right and left—lifted their glasses, shut both eyes, and swallowed his "tarantula juice," as they called it in the saloon.

Then this man wiped his bearded mouth on his red sleeve, lifted up the broad belt that supported his dark breeches, and said, with another wink:

"I just think of Bryan, that fellow, Lord O'Bryan. Why, dude, I tell you he was pizen on the gals."

But the Parson, the great rival of Sandy for the Widow's affections, took a deeper interest in this than that of a mere gossip.

It was with a deep pang of jealousy in his bone and marrow that he now always spoke of the comparatively young man as "That boy."

The Parson regarded him with bitter envy, as for afternoons, at dinner-time, now men enter the Widow's cabin. At such times the Parson would usually stride up and down the trail, and swear to himself till he fairly tore the bark from the trees.

On one occasion the boy, returning to his own cabin at an earlier hour than usual, was met in the trail, where it ran around the spur of the mountain on a high bluff, by the infuriated Parson.

Little Billie, as was his custom, gave him the trail, all of the trail, and stood quite aside on the lower hillside to let him pass.

But the Parson did not pass on. He came close up to the boy as he stood there alone in the dusk, half trembling with fear as the Parson approached.

The strong man did not speak at first. His face was terrible with rage and a strange tumult of thought.

The stars were half hidden by the sailing clouds, and the moon had not risen. It was almost dark. Away up on the mountain side a wolf called to his companion, and a lonesome night-bird, with a sharp smoked voice, kept up a mournful monotone in the canon below.

The boy began to tremble, as the man towered up above him, and looked down into his uplifted face.

"By God, youngster," muttered the man between his teeth. The boy sank on his knees, as he saw the Parson look up and down the trail, as if to make sure that no one was in sight.

Then he reached his great hand and clutched him sharp by the shoulder.

"Come here! come! come with me!"

The broad hand tightened like a vise on the shoulder. The boy tried to rise, but trembled and half fell to the ground. The infuriated, half monster man, held tight to his shoulder, and led forward the precipice.

The boy, half lifted, half led, half dragged, found himself powerless in the hands of the Parson, and was soon on the brink of the canon.

"Now sir, damn you, what have you been doing at the Widow's?"

The boy stood trembling before him.

"Boy! do you hear? I intend to pitch you over the rocks, and break your infernal slim little neck!"

The boy still was silent. He could not even lift his eyes. He was preparing to die.

"Now, sir, tell me the truth, what have you been doing at the Widow's?"

The boy trembled like a bird in the clutches of a hawk, but could not speak.

The Parson looked up the trail and down the trail; all was silent save the roar of the water in the canon below, the interrupted howl of the wolf on the hill, and the mournful and monotonous call of the night-bird. He looked up through the canon at the sky.

It was a dark and cloudy night. Now and then a star stood out in the frame of clouds, but it was a gloomy night.

"Now you look here," and he shook the boy by the shoulder and laughed like a demon. "Don't you know that if you go on this way you will fall over this bluff some night and break your cussed little neck? Don't you know that? You boy! You brat!"

Still the boy could not speak or even left his face.

"I'll save you the trouble," said the Parson between his teeth. "The boys will rather like it. They will say they knew you would break your neck some night."

The boy did not speak, but beneath the iron clutch of the Parson settled to his knees.

"Now, sir, you have just one minute. Do you see that star? When that flying cloud covers that star, then you die! and may God help you—and me!"

The man's voice was husky with rage and from the contemplation of his awful crime.

"Speak, boy! speak! speak but once before I murder you!"

The boy's eyes were lifted to the star, to the flying cloud that was about to cover it, and, then to the eyes of the Parson, and he, trembling, half whispering, said, "Please, Parson, may I pray?"

The iron hand relaxed; the man let go his hold, and staggering back to the trail went down the hill in silence, and into the dark, where he belonged. * * *

The two men who had entered the saloon at the Forks so mysteriously, and had so terrified the bar-keeper, had disappeared. Yet Sandy, every man, knew that these men or their agents were all the time in their midst. No one knew the face of Nancy Williams; everybody knew the story of her life. At first there was terror in the camp. Could the Widow be Nancy Williams? It was decided that that was impossible. Then all was peace.

CHAPTER VIII.

SANDY'S COURTSHIP.

Swiftly, and very sweetly for Sandy, the days went by in the Forks; down there deep in the earth, almost in the dark of the under-world, in the cool of the forest, in the fragrance and spice and sweetness of the fir, and madrona, and tanerack, for ever dripping with dew, and dropping their fragrant gums and spices on the carpeted, mossy mountain side, filling the deep chasm with an odour found nowhere save in the heart of the Sierras, and Sandy was happy at last.

"You will please come again. You are such good company!" Sandy had come to think he was one of the best talkers in the world; and thinking so he felt really able to begin to talk. Such is the test and power, for good or ill, of woman.

Water will find its level. In this camp, in all new camps, in all new countries, new enterprises, wars, controversies—no matter what, there are certain men who come to the surface. These come to the front, and men stand aside, and they take their place. They stay there, for they belong there. They may not come immediately; but let any great question be taken up, let it be one of enough consequence to stir up the waters, and the waters will find their level.

No man need stilt himself up, or seek applause, or friends in high places, or loud praise. If he belongs to the front he will get there in time, and will remain there when he arrives. If he does not, there is but little need for him to push and bribe and bother at all about it. He will only stand up in the light long enough to show to the world that some one has escaped from the woodcut of a comic almanac, or the Zoological Gardens, and will then sink back, to end his life in complaining of hard treatment and lack of appreciation.

Let us rather accept the situation, good or bad, play the piece out, and look to promotion in the next great drama.

Do not despise my spicy little camp in the Sierras. It was a world of itself. Perhaps it was as large as all Paradise was at the first; and then it was so new, so fresh, so fragrant, sweet, and primitive.

It was something to be the first man in that camp. Cæsar, if they have written their chronicles true, would have preferred it to the second place in Rome.

Here only the strong clear heads towered up. It was not accident that made Sandy, or the Parson, either, a head man in the Forks.

The Forks knew just how sterling, and how solid, and how sincere he was. No flattery here. There was not a penny to win by it. No applause to care for here. No public opinion to appease or woo. If a man did not like the company at the Howling Wilderness, he need not put in an appearance. He could stay at home, lord of his castle, and thrice hundred and sixty-five days in the year, and no man would question him or doubt his motives.

Nor was it any accident that made Limber Tim, the partner of Sandy. These things have a deeper root than men suppose. Sandy was the strongest man in the camp, Limber Tim was the weakest. Nothing in nature was more natural than their present relation.

It is as remarkable as it is true, that wild beasts, even when the sense most distinctly human, has divided from weak other, mate them. The strong bear or the strong buck contemplated with the weak.

This Sandy never himself asserted himself at all. He was born above most men of his class, and hovered at their head boldly without knowing it. Had he been born an Indian he would have been a chief, would have led in battle, and dictated in council, without question or without opposition from any one. Had he been born in the old times of kings he would have put out his hand, taken a crown, and worn it as a man wears the most fitting garments, by instinct.

Sandy was born King of the Forks. He was king already, without knowing it or caring to rule it.

There are people just like that in the world, you know,—great, silent, fearless fellows, as at least there are in the Storr-world; and they are as good as they are great. They are there, throned there, filling more of the world than any ten thousand of those feeble things that God sent into the world, in mercy to the poor good men who sit all day silent, and cross-legged, and in nine parts, sewing, on a table.

They will not go higher; they cannot go lower. They accept the authority as if they had inherited through a thousand sires.

CHAPTER IX.

"I HAT NOW" IN H.B.

How that courtship got on, or where and when Sandy first opened his lips, nobody ever knew. At first he took Limber Tim with him. But really Limber was so awkward in the presence of ladies, or at least so thought Sandy to himself, that he was ashamed of him.

It was a great relief to Sandy, if he had only known enough to admit it to himself, to find some one in the town more awkward than himself. Nothing for a better boon, when embarrassed, than to see some one else's blunders help foster yourself.

Limber Tim would come to town he would not sit down. He would go over against the wall, and stand there on one leg, with his mouth stuck in his hand, and his head inclined to one side with his mouth half open, with his back glued up against the wall, as if he were sort of statutory that it made up its mind never to fall down on its face.

He would stand in that position till the village would speak to him or some smile on his mind that he would fly right over with his face to the wall, whip out a great pocket from his canvas pocket, and then slowly begin to unravel the lace, or as near it he could guess it, and sketch grotesque pictures all over the new hewn logs of the cabin.

The Widow used to call that place the Almanac, for Limber Tim knew the date and day of the year, if any man in the Forks knew it—though it sometimes happened that when the pack-train with the provisions would come in from the outer world they would find they were two, three and even four days behind or ahead in their calculations.

At last Sandy began to get tired of Limber Tim on the wall at the Widow's. Perhaps he was in the way. At all events he "shook" him, as they called it at the Howling Wilderness, and "played it alone."

One evening Sandy had a sorry tale to tell the little woman. She listened as never she had listened before. Poor Little Billie, young Piper the boy poet, the boy who was always so alone, was down with a fever, and was wild and talking in strange ways, and they had no help, no doctor, nothing. "Yes, yes," cried Sandy, "the Forks is a doin' its level best. Watchin' and a watchin', but he won't git up ag'in. It's all up with poor Billie."

And all the Forks was doing its best too. But the boy was very ill. The Forks was very ill. The Forks was good: and it was also very sorry, for it had laughed at this young man with hands white and small and a waist like a woman's, and now that he was dying it wanted to be forgiven.

It was something to the Forks that it had allowed this boy to beat his own Christian name; the only example of the kind on its records.

The Widow was not very talkative after that, and Sandy went away earlier than usual. He thought to drop in and see the boy; but turned aside and called at the Howling Wilderness. In a few minutes he went back to the cabin of the sufferer. Gently he lifted the latch, and on tip-toe he softly entered the room where he lay.

The man was utterly amazed. The Widow sat there, holding his hands now, now pushing back the soft long hair from his face, folding back the blankets, cooling his hot brow with her soft fresh hand, and loking into his eyes all the time with a tenderness that was new to Sandy.

The boy was quite wild with the fever, and weak and helpless. Men stood back around the wall and in the dark; they had not dared to speak to her as she entered. They were so amazed that a woman would dare do this thing—to come in among them alone, take this boy in her arms, wave them back—wild beasts as they were, they stood there mute with amazement and devotion.

"I will go now!" The boy then reached his hands and tried to rise up. "I will go away up, up, out of it all. I don't fit in here. I don't belong here. I don't know the people, and the people don't know me."

Then he was still, and his mind wandered in another direction, when he began again:

"Now I will go; and I will go alone. I am so, so tired. I am so hot and thirsty here. I will cross on the cool mountain and rest as I go."

The woman looked in his face, took his face in her hands as she sat by the bed, raised him tenderly and talked in a low soft voice all night long; soft and sweet and tender as the stranger as the voice of a mother.

She held his hand all night, as if she would hold him back from crossing over the river, and talked to him tenderly as if to draw him back to earth.

The gray dawn came at last, stealing down the mouth of the great black chimney, through the little window in the wall, where a paper did the duty of a pane, and there the men still stood in a row around the walls of the cabin, and there the Widow still sat holding the boy's hand, cooling his brow, calling him back to the world.

And he came. He opened his eyes and knew his fellow-man, for them fevers of the mountain are sudden and severe, and their work is soon done or abandoned.

After that the camp had a patron saint. The Parson fell ill next, but the boys raised him so soundly about his motive—as if any man could have a motive in falling ill—that he fell to cursing, and cursed himself into a perspiration, and so got well.

One morning the Widow found a nugget of gold on her doorstep. What particular goose of the camp had laid that great gold egg before her door she did not know. Maybe, after all, it was only the devotion of some honest, clear-headed man, some wealthy, fortunate fellow who wanted to quietly reward her for her noble deeds in the day of trouble.

Then came another nugget, and then another. She laid them in a row on her mantel-piece, and men (for visitors were not so infrequent now as at first) would come in, handle them, make their observations, guess from what claim this one came or that; and no man there ever told or hinted or in any way remarked that he had sent this or that, or had any part in the splendid gifts that lay so carelessly on the little Widow's mantel-piece.

The little dreamer, the boy-poet, was once more seen on the trail with his pick and pan looking for gold in the earth by day, for gold in the skies at night. But never a word did he whisper of the awful threat of the Parson.

CHAPTER X.

A SCENE IN THE SIERRAS.

To the amazement of all the Forks, one day, when a bearded man in gum boots, slouch hat, and blue shirt, reached in at the Widow's for his washing, the hand that reached it out was not the Widow's. It was the little brown lazy hand of Washee-Washee.

Of course the camp did not like this. This Chinaman to them was a sort of tailless, a dark body passing between the sunrise and their sun. They remonstrated, and the Parson bore the remonstrance to the Widow in a speech of his own; and, to his own great surprise, it was not ornamented with a single oath.

"The Forks began his reformation; let me go on with it. Why not?" answered the woman.

"You will be plundered."

"Of what?"

The Parson looked at the gold nuggets on the mantel-piece, and shifted the quid of tobacco from right to left.

"Washee-Washee wilt lie," began the Widow, soberly. "He can lie, and he does lie, very cheerfully and very rapidly, in spite of his name, which might suggest better things; but he steals no more—do you, little brownie?"

Washee-Washee's little black eyes glistened with gratitude. The little pagan was coming up in the social scale. The Widow had begun her missionary business where all the world ought to begin it—at home.

The Parson went away. He felt that somehow his footing with the Widow was shaken, and that he must do something to redeem the day.

The Parson was always trying to do something original. He concluded to "lay for" the Chinaman.

He took a fresh quid of tobacco, stowed himself away in the bush, and waited.

In the twilight, the mournful, the sad, but beautiful ghost of the great golden days of the Sierras, a hand reached out and took Washee-Washee by the queue as a man would take a tethered horse by the lariat.

The little man did not smile as before. He even struck back with his little brown bony hands. He wound one of them in the Parson's beard, and shouted aloud to the empty woods. The valour of honesty was on him.

However, kick as he might and shout as he could, it all did but little good, and the Parson proceeded very coolly to take him by the two heels, hold him up in the trail, and

shake him in a smooth level part of it, just as if he were about to empty a bag, and did not wish to waste the contents.

Now the Parson was not at all vicious on this occasion; he had no wish to harm the Chinaman; he only wished to help the Widow. He shook Washee Washee in perfect confidence that he would find all the gold nuggets, half the spoons, and nearly all the household goods in the little Widow's warm and sparely furnished room. He had not been a bit surprised if he had shaken out the Widow's goods and wares, her washtub, and clothes-line. "Ah, certainly," said the Parson, pausing to himself, "for is not Washee Washee's line the clothes-line?"

Shake, shake, shake. It was of no use. Something had fallen from his blue blouse, but it was not gold. He stood the little man down, with the other end up, and was a bit angry that he did not go on smiling as before.

He stooped and picked up the little black object that had been shaken from the brown little fellow before him. The Parson began to swear. It was only a little hair-coat Testament, in diamond type, with a cloth cover. The Parson put his head to one side, slipped the leaves with his thumb and finger, and then, feeling perfectly certain that it did not belong to any one now in the camp, and equally certain that it was not an article that he cared to carry around long with him, he slipped it into his pocket again, and, handing it back to Washee Washee, said, "Git!"

The Parson took one end of the trail, and the little Chinaman the other.

A Missourian who lay in his bunk up stairs, and was smoking his pipe of "pigtail" and reading, looked out from his cabin window through the wood and up towards the Parson's cabin, where the trail wound on the hillside above him.

"It's a thunderin' and lightnin' like cats and dogs. There's a-goin' to be a storm to-night."

But it was only the Parson swearing at his own lowly and fallen condition.

"Only a Testament!" Then the idea struck him like an inspiration. Did not the good little Widow own the heaven-wrench this thing?

He stopped swearing, stood still in the trail a moment, and then, giving a long whistle as he drew a long breath, he went on to his cabin in silence.

That Testament troubled the Parson. There was not much religion in the Forks. There was little sign of anything of that kind among the men of the Sierras. Perhaps there were other Testaments hidden away under the bunks of miners, but they were never visible. I knew of one, the gift of a good mother, that for ever refused to get lost, or wear out, or disappear under any circumstances. Other books would get themselves borrowed and never come back, other books would get themselves thumbed and thumbed, the backs torn off, and the leaves torn out, but this one little book with its black modest cover was always the same. It looked as new and nice, as ready to be read, as full of hope and promise, after ten years of service in the Sierras, as it did the day it first nestled down in the bottom of the carpet-bag to wait patiently for the prodigal to return and feed upon its glorious promises.

But the presence of this book had a wider meaning than all this to the Parson.

Williams had been a sort of Calvin. He was a terrible religious enthusiast. It was his devotion, his zealous earnestness, that made him take part in the persecution and death of the so-called prophet. It was that which brought the awful persecution upon him and his. The children, it was said, inherited their father's religious zeal.

This Testament was to the Parson only another evidence that the Widow was indeed the missing Nancy Williams. He told all this in confidence to a knot of friends the next day.

Deboon only brushed and brushed with both hands, a pet fox which perched friskily on his shoulder, but said nothing.

The Gopher slowly arose and shook himself. Then he reached out his fist and shook it in the air.

"What if she is? By the eternal Tom Cats! What if she is the real living and breathing Nancy Williams? And what if they do say she killed one of 'em the night before she got away, eh? Here she is and here the stays, and let me see the Destroying Angel, Danite or Devil, that dares to interfere."

The man strode out of the cabin like a king, and Deboon only stroked his frisky fox and walked on after him, looking quietly at the little crowd over his shoulder.

Yet for all that, these men, who were so brave and defiant in open fight, were awed and almost terrified by the strange and mysterious order that moved so secretly and so certainly upon its victims, and no other man there gave any expression to his thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARSON'S PURSUIT OF LOVE.

But the Danites did not again openly appear. The Widow it seemed was now

ensure, and the men began to forget that they had ever counted her the best of the deserted family, or suspected that there was blood on her hands.

In the meantime, from camp, her influence dropped off like early confidence for effect, and left the child entirely at the mercy of the leading men of the camp—Sandy and the Parson.

Sandy was a man of magnificent stature, with a splendid flow of sandy beard, but, as I have said, an undeveloped child of history; a born leader of men, but a man who declined to lead unless forced to come to the front by his fellows and for the time take charge of mysterious matters over which consideration in the camp. Sandy was a man you believed in, trusted and hankered after from the first. There was not an ugly line or thought in his physical or mental make-up.

The Parson, good as unscrupulous, humane as instinctive, Gothic man, though not an Englishman. He had been a soldier, I think. At all events, he had a blue bend of feather ink, with little diamonds of red set in between the bends, on his left wrist. Possibly it was his right wrist, for I cannot recall positively at this distance of time, but I think it was the left.

The Parson was the first authority in history, politics, theology, anything—indeed, for that matter up. I do not think he was learned, but he was always so positive, and always so ready with his opinions, and always so ready to back them up too, that all were willing to ask his opinion in matters of doubt, and few were willing to question his replies.

After awhile it became talked about that Sandy was losing ground with the Widow—or, rather, that the Parson was having it pretty much his own way there, as in other things in the camp, and that Sandy rarely put in an appearance.

A year went by, and then a pretty little cottage began to peep through the trees from a little hill back of town; and then it came out full size, with its glass windows and green window-blinds, was the property of the Parson, and destined as the home of the Widow.

I think the camp was rather pleased at this. True there was a bit of ambition and a grain of cunning too in the Parson's nature, which made the free, wild men of the mountains look upon him sometimes with less favour than they did on Sandy. Still some of them liked him, and all were glad that the Widow was to have a home at last.

But somehow the wedding did not come on as soon as was expected, and the Widow kept on rubbing, rubbing, day after day, week after week, as if nothing of the kind were ever to happen to her.

Late in the fall, one evening, as the men stood in a semicircle in the Howling Wilderness saloon, with their backs to the blazing log fire, Sandy brought his foot down emphatically on the bar, so as to get part in the conversation, and, turning to the crowd, said:

"It's an everlastin' and a burnin' shame!"

He rested his right elbow on the bar, and drew the back of his left hand across his mouth, as if embarrassed, and again began:

"It's an everlastin' and a burnin' shame, I say, that the woman has got for to go on in this way, a-wailin' of nights over the coyote, until the coyote howls and howls—and—and—"

He wiped his mouth again, and broke down utterly. But he had said enough. A responsive chord was touched, and the men fairly sprang to their feet with delight at the thought.

Some of the best things in life are like beds of gold—we come upon them in a kind of sudden discovery.

The Parson's eyes twinkled with delight. "I move that Sandy take the chair for this occasion, and accept the motion," and plank down twenty ounces for the Widow."

Sandy removed his sleeve hat, blushed behind his beard at the new dignity, and said:

"Bully for you! I raise you five ounces and ante the dust."

Here he drew a long, heavy purse from his pocket, and passed it over to the bar-keeper, who thereby became treasurer of the enterprise without further remark. The Parson's eyes twinkled again.

"I see your five ounces and go you ten better."

"Called," said Sandy, and he looked at the bar-keeper, which little motion of the head meant that that further amount was to be weighed from the purse for the benefit of the Widow.

One by one the boys came forward; and, as the enterprise got noised about the camp, they came down to the Howling Wilderness saloon till far in the night, to contribute what they called their "Widow's mite."

Even the head man of the company up the Creek known as the "Gay Rooster," and who was notoriously the most rough and reckless man in the camp, jumped a first-class poker game, where he was playing at twenty dollars ante and pass the buck, to

come in and weigh out dust enough to "call" the Parson and Sandy.

The Parson felt proud of Sandy for the deal. Man alive, Sandy could and would in a better manner with themselves for the next.

All at his stage, it was pretty well conceded that the gold, and the Widow too, would very soon fall to the possession of the Parson.

"Set 'em deep, Parson! Set 'em deep!" said that head of the Gay Roosters, as he shook hands with the Parson that night, with tears in his eyes, and returned to his quest of luck.

Among the many a funeral at the Forks, one never to blush or to wedding. But now this luck, with all its risks and mysteries, was about to come upon the Forks, and the Parson felt dignified and elated. He was, of all those thousand bearded men around, unconscious. It was the surest thing, the greatest conquest, the Dolly Varden of the day. The appreciative talking was the morning talk, the talk at noon, and the talk at night.

And it was good for the camp. The last days were forgotten. Money took a back seat in the minds of those strange, queer men, and if the truth could be told, I dare say the Parson understood, who had sat up under the hill, noted a marked decline in his business.

The "boys" were with the Parson, and the Parson with the "boys." They all consulted that he was a royal good fellow, and that the Widow could not well do better.

The arrangement of gold raised by the men in their sudden and impulsive charity was in itself, for one in the Widow's station, a reasonable fortune.

"What if she gits up and sits?"

The man who said that was a narrow-minded, one-sided, suspicious fellow, who barely escaped being knocked down by the head of the "Gay Roosters," and kicked into the street by the crowd.

There was a poor Dutchman in the camp who had been crippled in the first settlement of the camp, and who had been all the time too lame to work, and too poor to get away.

The Parson and Sandy were sent in a committee to the Widow with the gold. She smiled, took the heavy bag in her hand, turned, shut the door in their faces, but did not say a word. That evening she was seen to enter the crippled Dutchman's cabin. The next day the crippled Dutchman rode up the trail out of camp, and was seen no more.

Still later in the fall the Parson sat in the Howling Wilderness, with his back to the blazing, crackling fire, having it all his own way at his favourite game of old-sledge.

He had led his queen for the last point as though he knew where every card in the pack was entrenched. Then he led the king with like composure, and was just crooking his fingers up his sleeve for the ace, when a man in black, with a heavy hat and white neckties, rode by the window on a bloody horse.

"Somebody's a dyin' up the creek, I 'spose," said Stubbs. "Maybe it's old Kahler. He allers was a kind of a prayin' sailor cuss anyhow."

Here Stubbs turned and kicked nervously at the fire.

The game did not go on after that. No one said anything. Perhaps that was the trouble. The men fell to thinking, and the game lost its interest.

There was no fight of importance in the Howling Wilderness that night, and by midnight the proprietors of the saloon had withdrawn. The candles were then put out, and the proprietors barricaded the door against belated drunkards, spread their blankets on a square table, with their pistols under their heads, and lay the smouldering fire more at rest.

The ground was frozen hard next morning, and the ministers dashed into the Howling Wilderness. The Parson was looking off gaily again, and exercising with unusual eloquence and brilliancy, when a tall, thin, and sallow man, from Missouri, known as the "Jumper," entered. He looked wild and excited, and stopped high, as if on stilts.

The tall, thin man went straight up to the bar, struck his knuckles on the counter, and nodded at the red bottle before him. It came forward, with a glass tumbler, and he drank deep, alone and in silence.

When a miner of the Sierras enters a saloon where other men are seated, and drinks alone, without inviting any one, it is meant as a deliberate insult to those present, unless there is some dreadful thing on his mind.

The Jumper, tall and fidgety, turned to the Parson, bent his back against the counter, and pushed back his hat. Then he drew his right sleeve across his mouth, and let his arms fall down at his side limp and helpless, and his round, brown butternut head rolled loose and awkward from shoulder to shoulder.

"Parson."

"Well! well! Spit it out!" cried the Parson, as he arose from the bench, with a dreadful oath. "Spit it out! What is it—I is busted now?"

"Parson."

Here the head rolled and the arms swung

more than ever, and the man seemed in dreadful agony of mind.

The Parson sprang across the room and caught him by the shoulder. He shook him till his teeth rattled like castanets, and finally

"Tom—you man, Jay Hawker!" gasped the Jumper. "The black man, on the black horse, with a white shadow." The Jumper looked blank, and staggered back on the sofa, gasping for breath, reminded: "Well, he's gone, hooks and he won't marry you. Cause why, he says Sandy ought not get one wife now any how, in Minnesota, and maybe two."

The Parson sank into a seat, dropped his face in his hands for a moment, trembled only a little, and arose pale and silent. He did not swear at all. I am perfectly certain he did not swear. I know I shall spoke of this for a long time afterwards, and considered it one of the most remarkable things in all the strange conduct of this man.

In fact, the Parson upon the Jumper shook himself loose from the counter, and walked across to the other side of the room, to give him place.

The stricken man put his hands on the counter, peered over the bar-keeper's shoulder at his favourite bottle, as if meaning fully to a friend, but said not a word. He emptied a glass, and then, without looking right or left, opened the door, and went straight up to the Parsonage. The Parson saw who came, the boys gave to the cottage on the hill among the trees.

"Come for his two little half-pays," said Stubbs. That was what the Parson called his silver-mounted derringers.

"There will be a funeral at the Forks to-morrow," gasped the Jumper.

Here the German undertaker arose cheerfully, and went down to his shop.

"Well, Sandy is no antelope. Set your boots Sandy ain't no sandpiper!" said Stubbs. "And, anyhow, he's got the start just a little, if the Parson does nail him. For he's won her heart; and that's a heap. I think, for wimmen's mighty queer in the mines—Sumthin' to die for, you bet."

CHAPTER XII.

GRIT.

The Parson was absent for hours, and the Howling Wilderness began to be impatient.

"He's a healin' himself like a fighting-cock," said Stubbs; "and if Sandy don't go to kingdom come with his boots on, then chaw me up for a shrimp."

The man here went to the door, opened it, put his head out in the frosty weather, and peered up the creek for Sandy, and down the creek for the Parson, but neither was in sight.

The "Gay Rooster" solemnly knocked off from their work, with many yawns, and came in to "wet in drier" at the bar. The Howling Wilderness was bowled out during a rushing business.

The two bar-keepers chatted and carefully arranged the mud-bags under the counter, which in that day and country were placed there till every well-regulated drinking saloon, so as to intercept the shudder story bits of lead which might be thrown in the direction of their heads by the still coming Gentile, and calmly scrutinized re-entering.

About dusk, a thin blue smoke, as from burning paper, curled up from the chimney of the Parsonage, and the Parson came slowly forth.

"Blessed if he hasn't been a-takin' of his will and a-burnin' of his letters. Looks grimmer than a dancer, too," added the man as the Parson neared the saloon.

He spoke quickly to the boys as he entered, but did not smile. That was thought again remarkable indeed.

He went up to the bar, tapped on the counter with his knuckles, threw his head back over his shoulder, beyond the crowd, and yet apparently without seeing any one, and said:

"Boys, fall in line, fall in line. Rally around me once again."

They fell in line, or at least the majority did. Some, however, edged off in little knots and groups on the other side, that pretended not to have heard of anything that was going on. These in the all once understood were fast friends of Sandy's, and unbelievers in the Parson.

The glasses were filled quietly, slowly, and respectfully, almost like filling a grave, and then emptied in silence.

Again it was observed that the Parson did not swear. That was considered as remarkable as the omission of prayer from the service in a well-regulated church, and, I am sure, contributed to throw a spirit of restraint over the whole party friendly to the Parson. Besides, it was noticed that he was pale, haggard, had hardly a word to say, and most of all, had barely touched the glass to his lips.

No one, however, ventured to advise, question, or in any way disturb him. All were quiet and respectful. It was very evident that the feeling in the Forks, at first, was largely with Sandy.

But Sandy did not appear that evening. This, of course, was greatly against him. The Forks began to suspect that he feared to take the responsibility of his act, and most the

when he had so strangely delivered, and to all appearance, so deeply injured.

The [illegible] from the saloon was crowded almost [illegible] hour before. Many stood off in little knots and groups, talking excitedly. There was but one topic—only the one great subject, the impending meeting between the two leading men of the camp, and the struggle pending.

The Parson was among the first present that day, in his customary place. Many formed him [illegible] in his garments of his misdemeanor, the occasion of their meeting. But the further results of the Parks, I am [illegible] to say, [illegible] to you [illegible] as the others many of the [illegible] should have [illegible] the next day.

The day passed, and still Sandy did not appear. [illegible] was rather [illegible] of strong [illegible] through the [illegible] and lips, the [illegible] contemptuous stalking of [illegible] opponent, and in the face of the [illegible] it might have [illegible] that he had [illegible] the Parson and fled to other [illegible].

The Parson came down a little late [illegible] morning, well and quiet as before. He did not [illegible] his dress, in fact, he did not [illegible] it. Pencil [illegible] behind his [illegible] ear, with his [illegible] in the five shot [illegible] to the door. The [illegible] talked [illegible] [illegible] between the Parson and the door, and the [illegible] was not [illegible].

The day passed on, and still Sandy did not appear. By this time, he had hardly [illegible] his house.

"Sandy in?" [illegible] "Gone down, in his boots!" "Buried in the [illegible]!" "Left his grip!" "Didn't [illegible] his head!" These and [illegible] remarks, thrown out now and then from the little knots of men here and there, gave certain indications that [illegible] had [illegible] place in the hearts of the [illegible] of the Parks.

[illegible] and [illegible] the bell struck [illegible].

The door opened, and Sandy entered. Instead of [illegible] the hall by the door, and [illegible] there, [illegible] and [illegible].

His great beard was [illegible] a little, his bushy hair carefully combed behind his ears, and the rash-like [illegible] was now subdued into a mere [illegible], in spite of the old, persistent habit of twisting around and [illegible] out over his left shoulder. His eye met the Parson's, but did not quail.

The bar-keeper settled down gradually behind the [illegible] of mud, so that his eyes only remained visible above the [illegible].

The head of the "Gay Reserve" tilted a table up till it made a respectable barricade for his breast, and the crowd silently settled back in the corners, packed tighter than [illegible] in a tin box.

You might have heard a mouse, had it entered the room. Even the fretful fire paused to hold for the time its unquiet tell-tale, and the wind without to [illegible] against the door and listen.

The Parson slowly arose from the table. He had his right hand in his pocket, and was very [illegible].

Experienced [illegible], old [illegible] of mortal combat with their kind, glanced from man to man, measured every [illegible], every [illegible] with all the [illegible] of artists who are [illegible] with one great and [illegible] study, and for the last [illegible]. Others held their hands down, and only waited to [illegible] favor of manner for the [illegible] of the bull-dogs.

Neither of Sandy's hands were visible; but as the Parson took a few steps forward, and quickly drew his hand from his pocket, Sandy's right arm came up like a steel spring, and the ugly black muzzle of a [illegible] was [illegible] the Parson's [illegible].

Still he advanced, till his face almost touched the muzzle of the pistol. He knew all but to use it, or to have the least acquaintance of his danger.

Towards strange this Sandy did not pull. Maybe he was surprised at the singular action of the Parson. Perhaps he had his eye on the uplifted right hand of his antagonist. At all events he had the "drop," and could afford to wait the smallest part of a second, and see what he would do.

"I have been a-waiting" the Parson halted and paused at the participle. I have been a-waiting for you, Sandy, a long time."

His voice trembled. The voice that had thundered above a hundred heroic fights, and had directed the men through many a difficulty in camp, was now low and uncertain.

"Sandy," he began again, and he took hold of the counter with his left hand, "I am a-going-a-way. Your cabin will be too small now, and I want you to promise me to take care of the Parsonage till I come back."

Sandy sank back closer still to the wall, and his arm hung down at his side.

"You will move into the Parsonage when it is all done. It's full of good things for winter. You will take it, I say, at once. Promise me that."

The Parson's voice was a little severe here—more determined than before; and, as he concluded, he drew the key from his pocket and handed it to Sandy.

"You will?"

"Yes."

The men looked a moment in each other's eyes. Perhaps they were both embarrassed. The door was convenient. They seemed to decide the best way out of the difficulty, and he opened it softly and looked out. The Howling Wilderness was dazzling with wonder.

The Parson looked a little while out in the dark, through the open door, and then went. There was a murmur of disappointment behind him.

"Don't you fear?" at last shouted in the head of the "Gay Reveller." "This is even never done! That old monkey, the Parson, is deeper than a infernal pole."

"I look here!" He put up his finger to the side of his nose, after a pause, and scratching his head mysteriously, said: "I look here! Shoo! Not a word! Lucky now! Powder! There's what's wanted. Powder! Glide from here into the Parsonage and leave 'em to kingdom come, tantalize!"

The Howling Wilderness was convulsed. It was certain that this suit was not won, by a great deal. It was again thrown into disorder, however; and, for want of a better expression, took a drink and settled down to a game of whist.

Early next morning, a morning full of unutterable storms and drifts of snow—Sandy entered the Widow's cabin.

The Parson was not to be seen, alone at the Howling Wilderness or about his own house.

Men stood about the door of the Howling Wilderness, and up and down the main street, in their hats, noting the course of things at the Parsonage, and now and then shaking their loose blankets over and brushing off the fast falling snow.

After a while, when the smoke rose up from the chimney-top, and curled above the Parsonage with a home-like luxury, as if a woman's hand tended the fire below, a man with his face muffled up was seen making his way slowly up the rugged way that led from town under the Sierra.

It was a desperate and dangerous undertaking at that season of the year. He made but poor headway against the storm that came pelting down in his face from the fields of eternal snow; but he seemed determined, and pushed slowly on. Sometimes it was observed he would turn and, shading his eyes from the snow, look down intently at the pleasant smoke drifting through the trees above the Parsonage.

"Some poor idiot will pass in his checks to-night, if he don't come back pretty soon."

Stubbs, as he nodded at the man up the hill, brushed the snow from his sleeves, and went back into the saloon.

Sandy was now the subject of conversation in the camp; the disappearance of the Parson and the coming of Sandy.

One day, however, there was quite a ripple in the usually smooth current of affairs. It was this. A very meddling man who took to pry into Sandy's affairs, and talk a long time in a low tone, and confidential manner. He was of great importance in the camp, and was the oracle of the gang. He was a man of great influence, and was looked up to by all the rest. He was a man of great influence, and was looked up to by all the rest. At last he came out, and, on his way down, had a confidential look.

[illegible] like that, [illegible] to speak [illegible] slowly [illegible] It had [illegible] topics to [illegible] the [illegible] of the Parson, the [illegible] of Sandy, but now above all and [illegible] the [illegible] and frequent visits of the Poet to the Widow's cabin.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

One day a miner had his two fingers crossed, and twisting his head to one side as he looked a moment at [illegible] across the [illegible] said: "Sandy is a infernal fool." The [illegible] and he [illegible] on. "He comes of pretty good [illegible] Widow. Wal, now, that ere Widow is in love with that ere boy. Nobody to blame. I'm one of the Widow down the bay, that's the Widow's likeness, and [illegible] only Sandy mustn't be a fool. He [illegible] and says, like a man a voice, quick low, and a look [illegible] as if he feared a Dumbo might be standing at his elbow,—" besides, it is my [illegible] opinion [illegible] that ere Widow is the Nancy Williams."

It was late in the Fall, and it certainly must have been a cold, frosty morning, for Sandy's coat, buttoned together as if he had a vest, when he told the Judge.

In fact, he stood around the Howling Wilderness more than half a day, but he could not, or at least would not drink, though he did very many foolish things, and seemed ill at ease and troubled in a way that was new to him.

At last he got the Judge to one side. He took him by the collar with both hands, he backed him up in a corner, and, as he did so, his teeth chattered and gnashed together as if he stood half naked on the everlasting snows that surrounded them. He pushed his face down into the red apple-like face of the magistrate, and began as if he was about to reveal the most terrible crime in the annals of the world. All the time, he was holding on to the Judge with both hands, as if he

feared he might not listen to his proposal, but [illegible] and [illegible] to escape.

At last Sandy drew a [illegible] short breath, and blurted out what he had to say, as if it was [illegible] the big [illegible].

"Good [illegible]!"

The Judge drew a long breath. He swelled out to nearly [illegible] his [illegible] importance. You could [illegible] him [illegible].

It was now the [illegible] half of Sandy. [illegible] where [illegible]

The [illegible] high [illegible] his [illegible] till he [illegible] glorious climate of California."

Never rode a king into his capital with such majesty as did the Judge the next day enter the Forks. He was swelling, bursting with the importance of his secret. But now he had Sandy's permission to tell the boys, and so went straight to the Howling Wilderness for this purpose.

[illegible] the fire [illegible] there [illegible] his [illegible] a [illegible] had happened [illegible]

At last the [illegible] turned his back to the fire, [illegible] behind his coat-tails, [illegible] up and down [illegible] deep [illegible] out his round [illegible] to [illegible]

"O this wonderful climate [illegible]!" He puffed [illegible] coat-tails a [illegible] his belly a [illegible] if [illegible] the [illegible] thing [illegible] something like [illegible] the remark was [illegible] them felt called upon to respond.

"Well"—the little [illegible] up on his toes as he said this, and took a long breath—"on or about the next snow fall."

He had said these words one at a time, and by inches as it were, slowly, deliberately, as if he knew perfectly well that he had something to say, and that the men were bound to listen.

This time they all looked up, and half of them spoke. And oh, didn't he torture them! Not that he pretended to keep his secret of half a day—not at all! On the contrary, he kept talking on, and tip-toeing, and flapping his coat-tails, and pushing out his belly, and puffing out his cheeks, just as careless and indifferent as if all the world knew just what he was going to say, and was perfectly familiar with the subject. "Yes, gentlemen," puffed the little man, "on or about the next snow-fall, the Widow, as a widow, ceases to exist. This lovely flower, my friends, is to be transplanted from its present bed to—to—to—the—O this wonderful climate of California!"

The Howling Wilderness was as silent as the Catacombs of Rome for nearly a minute. Then Sandy had not been deterred either by the Widow's strange intimacy with the eccentric little Poet, or by the suspicion of the camp that this woman was the last of the doomed family.

The first thing that was heard was something like a red-hot cannon-shot. The cinnamon-headed man behind the bar dodged down behind his barricade of [illegible] till only his bristling red hair and a six-shooter were visible. The decanters tilted together as if there had been an earthquake.

It was a Missourian swearing.

Somebody back in the corner said "Jerusalem!"—said it in joints and pieces, and then came forward and kicked the fire, and stood up by the side of the red little man, and looked down at him as if he would like to eat him for a piece of raw beef.

A fair boy, the dreamer, the poet, went back to a bunk against the farther wall, where the barkeeper's bulldog lay sleeping in his blankets, and put his arms about his neck, and put his face down and remained there a long time. Perhaps he wept. Was he weeping for joy or for sorrow?

There was a great big grizzly head moved out of the crowd and up to the bar. The head rolled on the shoulders from side to side, as if it was not very firmly fixed there, and did not particularly care at this particular time whether it remained there or not. A big fist fell like a stone on the bar. The glasses jumped as if frightened to death; they ran up against each other, and clinked and huddled together there, and fairly screamed and split their sides in their terror. A big mouth opened behind an awful barricade of beard; again the big fist fell down, again the glasses screamed and clinked with terror, and the head rolled sidewise again, and the big mouth opened again, and the big voice said:

"By the bald-headed Elijah!" and that was all.

Then there was another calm, and you might have heard the little brown wood-mice nibbling at the old boots, and leather

bets, and the odes moved over, shuffled, and other rubbish up in the locality of the Bowling Williamses.

Then the first named dodo heard a big mouth opened, and the big mouth said, slow and loud, and long and high, like the growl of a grizzly:

"Bowler for Tim Kidder!"

Then the mouth left talk and talked time. The crowd had whatever remained there was in his life, whatever sentiment he may have had, whatever poetry there was near him in the heart of this great Timon, it lacked an other expression than this.

The genial gambler, who sat behind a table with his green cloth and silver box, forgot to throw his card, but kept it suspended in the air till any man could have seen the Jack of Clubs, through a dozen dollars' worth of gold-dust deposited on the turn.

Yet all this soon had an end, of course, and there was a scattering of bystanders, and a noise that settled gradually over the whole hall. Even then, it was a long time before, though the men mostly returned to their knew it as the time when the customers hankered deadly of drinks, and devoted themselves in a glorious cockfight and Saturnalian carouse to Tom and Jerry.

Limber Tim was there in their midst, but was quiet and silent. Perhaps he had been told all about it before, and perhaps not. Tim was not a talker, but a thinker. This of him himself the loss of his partner, the man he loved—a divorce.

Poor Limber! he only backed up against the wall, squared his back there, twisted one leg in behind the other, stuck his hands in behind him, and so stood there till he saw a man looking at him. Then he stepped over with his face to the wall, dug up his great pencil from his breast pocket, and fell to writing on the wall, and trying to hide his face from his fellows.

"Rather sudden, ain't it, Judge?"

"Well, not so sudden—not so sudden, considerin' this—this—this glorious climate o' California."

After awhile, when the crowd once had settled itself again, and chairs were going on in the saloon just about as they were before the Judge stuck his head out, a tall and impressive man with a hitched face and a hump in his shoulder and a twist in his neck, which made him look like an interrogation point, rose up, and, reaching his neck out toward the bar, said in a sharp whisper:

"I'll bet a forty dollar note she's the real Nancy Williams."

The red-headed bartender bristled like a porcupine, and then put out his broad hand as if it was an extinguisher.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING IN THE MORNING.

The morning came. The camp had slept itself to rest. There was not one place in the camp that could tell a story of the night and there was the Bowling Williamses, more than ever, from the wedding, either the groom or the bride, and the world outside, stretching away, the mountain, with frost and snow in its breast that morning, and the sky above it.

What a place was that Bowling Williamses! It was fascinating, glittering, dazzling, gorgeous, with its mountains, chapel, everything, in turns.

Limber Tim, poor, poor Tim, sat and stood in front of the crackling fire, before the [illegible] Williamses were left. It was crowded when the marriage took place. Eighty [illegible] Tim, poor Tim, the poor stood there [illegible], with hardly room to breathe. The fat little magistrate was terribly embarrassed. He had read all the way across the mountains by stage-coach, by the last express, by the last man who had passed the snows, but no book-trade, no express, nothing had supplied him with the complete, the so-much-needed marriage ceremony and service, which he had received to read to the people, interspersed with such remarks and moral observations as the case might require. Alas! the form of the ceremony had not arrived. He had nothing of the kind to guide him. He had never officiated in this way before. He had never studied up in this branch.

Why should he have studied up in this line, when there was but one woman in all his little world?

As the form had not arrived, he had nothing in the world but his moral observations to see on this imposing occasion, and he was embarrassed as a man had never been embarrassed before.

He stood there trying hard to begin. He could hear the men breathe. The pretty little woman was trembling, too. Her face was all the time held down, her eyes drooped, and she did not look up—did not look right or left or anywhere, but seemed to surrender herself to Jesse, to give herself away. Her soul seemed everywhere, as if she set on a high bank above all this, and was not of it or in it at all.

"Do you solemnly swear?"

The Judge had jerked himself together with an effort that made his joints fairly rattle. He moved his right hand in the air as he said this, and, having once broken ground, he went on. "Do you solemnly swear to love and honour, and obey?"

Poor Limber Tim, who had just room enough behind the Judge to turn over, here

became embarrassed, through sympathy for the little red-faced neighbour, and of course dropped eyes, and began to write his name and the date, and make pictures on the wall, with a thorough regularity proper enough to his understanding.

"Are you extremely wicked?"

It was very painful. The little man took down his head, ashamed, to write his little bald head, and he could not pull it up again, but stood there still and helpless.

You could hear the most profound despair then before all these hushed and listening ears. All their might to hear. They heard the water suddenly plashing all down over the great boulders, over their dams, and all through the canon. They heard the little brown squirrels nibble, and nibble at the bits of broken-off nut and fruitful boots left by the boys where their lunch had been eaten all up. At last the Judge roared, and began again in a voice like a bull of desperation:

"Do your solemnly swear to love, and protect, and honour, and obey, till death do you part? I will——"

Here the voice fell deep, like thunder, and the Judge was again floundering in the wilderness. Then his head went under entirely. Then he rose, and "Now I lay me down to sleep" pulled unconsciously through the silent room from the lips of the Judge. Then again the head went under water, then it rose up again, and there was something like "Twinkle, twinkle, little star." Then the voice died quite away, the head was under water. Then it rose again, and the hands went high up in the air, and the voice was loud and emphatic, and the man rose on his tiptoes, and beginning with—"When in the course of human events," he went on in deep and unbridled gloom with the Declaration of Independence, to the very highest tyrannical King George, and then defended his hand during it successfully for the gratifying sight that stood to his right, and left, and there, and reaching, and [illegible] as he lifted forward on his toes, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world. He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the state remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands. He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers. He has made judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures. He has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power. He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation: for quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: for protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states: for cutting off our trade with all parts of the world: for imposing taxes on us without our consent: for depriving us in many cases of the benefits of trial by jury: for transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences: for abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies: for taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments: for suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us. He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation. He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands. He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions of existence. In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends. We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour."

This he read and came forward, and shaking the new spirit by the hand, then lifting it to his lips and kissing it gallantly, he said graciously, and as if nothing had happened, "You will pardon me for passing occasionally as I did. The room is so warm and the ceremony is so long, that I really began to be exhausted."

He was going on to say something about the glorious climate of California, but the men came forward, crowded around in this day of all days, and quite engrossed the little man away from the "Widow," as she was still called.

It was perfectly splendid! How they did shout, and laugh, and cheer, and how careful they were to shake all the round out the end of their speech before addressing her. And how they did crowd around, as Sandy led her away, every man of them, even to Wicked Weaker, to wish her "God speed," and a long and a pleasant life in their midst, down there in the gorge, in the heart of the great Sierras.

Only two circumstances in connection with this first family of the Sierras worth mentioning, occurred for some months. The first of these was the banishment of the boy-pest from the premises of the Widow. Sandy led her all over to the "Parsonage" with the green window blinds, as he had solemnly promised the Parson to do. Into this home the boy was never seen to enter. Sandy, it was whispered, had forbidden him the house. The verdict of the Camp was: Served him right.

The other little event was, to all appearance, of still less consequence. Yet it showed that there was a storm brewing, and it was a straw which showed which way the wind was blowing. The boy was seen late of night by some men who were passing, peering in at the Widow's window. He ran away like one caught in a crime. But they said he "looked pale as a ghost, and sickly, and sad, and lonesome."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW?

Just exactly how many days or weeks or even months had blown over the Forks through the long bleak winter since the wedding no man knew. Those men in the mountains, snowed up for half a year, where there is no business, where there is no law, no church, nothing, but half-wild men, hold no watch—times there, I say, sometimes forget the day, the week, even the month. Yet the Day of the week is always kept. Six days they labour in the mine; the seventh, they do not rest, but they at least do not mine.

Certainly, there was snow on the day of the wedding, and certain it was that there

was a little fall of snow on the high hillsides, and in the black fir trees and the great pines were lodged its white, so Sandy here and from his cabin down to the Basin in search of his now lifelong friend and companion Limber Tim. He was gaunt and exhausted. He pushed his great black beard back over his ears as he hurried on down that trail, slipping and sliding over the worn walk, over the new sprinkle of snow, in his great big gum boots. Then he pushed his hat back so as to get the cool wind of March in his face and with the blustering snow in his beard.

He found Limber at last standing on one leg by the great log fire in the Howling Wilderness, lonesome as a cow in Monk. He pulled his hat again down over his eyes as he approached his old partner, and stooped his shoulders and looked out from under his rim, as if he were half afraid or else was half ashamed.

In all western towns, in all mines, in all cities, great or small for that matter, there is always one common centre. Here it was the Howling Wilderness. If a man felt sad, what better place than the Howling Wilderness saloon to go for distraction? If a man felt glad, where else could he go to share his mirth?

Here was happiness or unhappiness. All great extremes run together. Tears flow as freely for joy as for grief. Between intense delight or deepest sorrow the wall is so thin you can whisper through it and be heard.

Here, at this same place, you had dealt out to you over a great plank laid up upon a barricade of mud bags, that were laid there to intercept any stray bullet that might be making its way towards the crimson-headed vendor of poisons, almost any drink that you might name. And it is safe to say that all of the following popular drinks; that is—Old Tiger, Red Eye, Forty Rod, Rah Piper, Hot Gut, Hell's Delight, and Howling Modoc—were all made from the same decoction of bad rum, worse tobacco, and first-class cayenne pepper. The difference in proportion of ingredients made the difference in the different drinks.

If one of these splendid, misled fellows, who really knew no better, felt very sad, he took one of these drinks; if he felt very glad, he took two.

Sandy wheeled on his heel the moment he found his old friend, and went out without saying a word. He stood there in the snow, the wind twisting about his beard, blowing his old hat-rim up and down, and he seemed as one lost. At length he lifted the latch again hastily, hesitated, looked back around, up towards his cabin up the hill, and then suddenly pushing his hat back again, as if he wanted room to breathe, he tumbled into the saloon, went right up before Limber Tim, and bringing his two hands down on his two shoulders, said tremulously, "Limber Tim!"

Sandy had laid hold of him as if he had determined to never let him go again, and the man Sandy wanted under his great vise-like grasp. He looked at that back leg to the fire, looked left and right, but did not look Sandy in the face. If he had he would for the first time in all his storied experience have been able to have had it all his own way.

"O, Limber!"

Sandy had fished up one of his hands high enough to pull his hat down over his eyes, and now nothing was to be seen but a hat rim and the fringe of a grizzly beard.

Limber Tim looked up. He never before had heard his old partner's voice trembled, and he was very sorry, and began to look, or to try to look, Sandy in the face. Up went a big hand from a shoulder, back went the old hat, and there Limber Tim looked to the left at a lot of picks and pans, and tom trunk, and creosote spoons, that lay up against the wall, but did not speak.

"Limber Tim! I tell you. My—my—"

Sandy choked. He had never yet been able to call her his wife. He had tried to do so over and over again. His dear little wife had taught him many things—had made him, in fact, another man—but she could never get him to speak of her to the other miners but as "The Widow." He had gone out by himself and practised it in the dark to himself; he was certain he could say it in the crowd, but somehow just at the moment he tried to say it he was certain some one was thinking about it just as he was, was watching him, and so it always and for ever stuck in his throat. How he loved her! How tender he was to her all the time! How he did little else but think of her and her happiness day and night; but he had been a savage so long, had been with the "boys" so much, that he could not find it in his power to say that one dear word. It was like a new convert trying to pray in public in one of the great camp meetings of the West, or to stand up before all his neighbours and confess his sins.

He stood still only a second; in fact, all this took but a moment, for Sandy was in a terrible flurry. Limber Tim had never seen him in such a hurry before. Up shot the hand, down slid the hat, and Sandy was quite hidden away again. It was a moment of terrible embarrassment. When an Englishman is embarrassed he takes snuff; when a Yankee is embarrassed he whips out a jack-knife and falls to whittling anything

feared he might not listen to his proposal, but very softly and attempt to [illegible].

He [illegible] drew a [illegible] breath, and blurted out what he had to say, as if he was [illegible] his [illegible].

"Good [illegible]"

The Judge drew a long breath. He swelled out [illegible] importance. You [illegible]

It was [illegible] by half a [illegible] Sandy. [illegible] had [illegible] office, and [illegible] his wounds up [illegible] where and [illegible]

The Judge [illegible] Mr. [illegible] high [illegible] his shoulder [illegible] till he [illegible] what [illegible] Yet all that Sandy [illegible] almost all that he [illegible] glorious climate of California."

Never rode a king into his capital with such majesty as did the Judge the next day enter the Forks. He was swelling, bursting with the importance of his secret. But now he had Sandy's permission to tell the boys, and so was [illegible] to the Howling Wilderness [illegible].

[illegible]

As [illegible] back [illegible] behind [illegible] up and down [illegible] deep thought—[illegible] out his round [illegible] to burst with the [illegible].

"O this [illegible] climate [illegible]." He puffed [illegible] coat-tails [illegible] belly [illegible] if [illegible] the [illegible] thing [illegible] something like [illegible] the remark [illegible] none of them felt called upon to [illegible].

"Well"—the little [illegible] up on his toes as he said this, and took a long breath—"[illegible] about the next snow fall."

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Somebody back in the corner said "Jerusalem!"—said it in joints and pieces, and then came forward and kicked the fire, and stood up by the side of the red little man, and looked down at him as if he would like to eat him for a piece of raw head.

A fair boy, the dreamer, the poet, went back to a bunk against the farther wall, where the barkeeper's bulldog lay sleeping in his blankets, and put his arms about his neck, and put his face down and remained there a long time. Perhaps he wept. Was he weeping for joy or for sorrow?

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"By the bald-headed Elijah!" and that was all.

Then there was another calm, and you might have heard the little brown wood-mice nibbling at the old boots, and leather

bolts, and the cries stirred other sleepers, the other rubbish up in the bar of the Howling Wilderness.

Then the fire went down again, and the big mouth opened, and the big mouth shut, slow and loud, and long and low. And the growl of it grimly:

"Swallow" (yawn) "that" (yawn) "down!"

Then the man for Cook and talked about his crowd; and whatever promises there were in his life, whatever sentiment he may have had, whatever poetry there was and is in the heart of this great Titan, it lodged all other expression there also.

The genial gambler, who sat hunched at table with his great dark and silver head forgot to throw his card, but kept it pressed in the air till any other could have seen the Jack of Clubs through a thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust dazzled on his brain.

Yet all this soon had an end, of course, and there was a confusion of [illegible] noted that stealed gradually over [illegible] boy. Even them, it was [illegible] though the poor [illegible] knew it at the [illegible] Their [illegible] incident double of drinks yet [illegible] it's a gin cocktail and [illegible] in a Tom and Jerry.

Limber Tim was there in their midst, but was a kid and a silent man. Perhaps he had been told all about it before, and perhaps not. Tim was not a talker, but a thinker. This of him meant the loss of his partner, the man he loved—a divorce.

Poor Limber! he only backed up against the wall, screwed his head down, twisted one leg in behind the other, stuck his teeth in behind him, and so stood there all he saw a little bobbing at him. Then he dropped over with his face to the wall, dug up his great pistol from his great pocket, and fell to writing on the wall, and trying to hide his face from his fellows.

"Rather sudden, ain't it, Judge?"

"Well, not so sudden—not so, sudden, consideria', this—this—this glorious climate o' California."

After awhile, when the stench grew had scattered their ashes, and chairs were going on in the saloon, just about as they were before the Judge made his announcement, a tall and impressive man with a bronzed face and a hump in his shoulder, and a twist in his neck, which made him look like an interrogation point, rose up, and reaching his neck over toward the bar, said in a sharp whisper:

"I'll bet a forty dollar note she's the real Nancy Williams."

The red-headed bartender bristled like a porcupine, and then put out his head as if it was an extinguisher.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING IN THE SIERRAS.

The [illegible] over. The camp had been invaded by a man. [illegible] was not one place in the camp that could hold a [illegible] of its people, and there was the Howling Wilderness. The fire had been in there also with [illegible] the graves on the hill; but the wild [illegible] growing down the mountain, with frost and sheet in its hands, that morning [illegible] every storm in the Sierras.

What a place was that Howling Wilderness! [illegible] gambling-hells, prowling, dead-[illegible] dance-hall, court-house, chapel, [illegible] grave-yard, side by side and hand in hand [illegible] the crackling fire, before the [illegible] the [illegible] was hot. It was [illegible] in the morning-dew. Timber [illegible] the fire, the men stood there [illegible] with barely room to breathe. The [illegible] magistrate was terribly embarrassed. He had sent all the way across the mountains by the last pack-train, by the last express, by the last man who had passed the snows, but no pack-train, no express, nothing had returned with the answer, the no-much-needed marriage ceremony and service, which he had received to read to the people, interspersed with such remarks and moral observations as the case might require. Alas! the form of the ceremony had not arrived. He had nothing of the kind to guide him. He had never officiated in this way before. He had never studied up in this branch.

Why should he have studied up in this line, when there was but one woman in all his little world?

The form had not arrived, he had nothing in the world but his moral powers, and up on this imposing occasion, and he was embarrassed, as a man had never been embarrassed before.

He stood there trying hard to begin. He could hear the men breathe. The pretty little woman was trembling, too. Her face was all the time [illegible] her eyes drooped, and she did not look up—did not look right or left on anywhere. She seemed to surrender herself to fate—to give herself away. Her soul seemed [illegible] as if she sat on a high bank above all this, and was not of it or in it at all."

"Do you solemnly swear?"

The Judge had jerked himself together with an effort that made his joints fairly rattle. He lowered his right hand in the air as he said this, and, having once broken ground, he went on: "Do you solemnly swear to love and honor, and obey?"

Poor Limber Tim, who had just room enough behind the Judge to turn over, here

that he can find, not excepting the ends of his fingers; but a true Californian of [illegible] jerks his head at the boys, heads straight up to the bar, knocks his knuckles on the board, winks at the bar-keeper, points his nose at his favourite bottle, fills to the brim, nods his head down the line to the left, then to the right, hoists his Poison, throws back his head, and then falls back, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, quite recovered from his confusion.

Sandy backed his partner into a corner rapidly, and then, laying his hands again on his shoulders, said: "Limber Tim! she's sick!"

He had to throw his head forward to say it. It came out as if jerked from his throat by a thousand fish-hooks.

He raised his two great hands, and reaching out his face again clutched the two shoulders, and said, "She's d—d sick!"

Up went the hands, back went the hat, the door was jerked open, a man whirled out of the door as if he had been a whirlwind, up the trail, up over the stones and snow and logs. Sandy climbed to his cabin on the hill, while the boys followed him with their eyes, and then stood looking at each other in wonder as he disappeared in the door.

Through the cabin burst the man, and back to the little bedroom, as if he had been wild as the north wind that whistled and whirled about without.

The little lady lay there, quiet now, but her face was white as ashes. The blood had gone out from her face like a falling tide; the pain was over, but only, like a tide, to return.

How white she was, and how beautiful she was! How helpless she was down there in the deep, hidden in a crack of the world, away from all her kindred, all her sex and kind. She was very ill, so alone was she, not a doctor this side of that great impassable belt of snow that curved away like a deep white wave around and above the heads of the three little rivers. Sandy saw all this, felt all this. It cut him to the core, and he shook like a leaf.

What a pretty sort of a sick-room! How fragrant it was from the fir-boughs that were gathered under foot. There were little curtains about her bed, [illegible] in the [illegible]. Coarse they were, it is true, very coarse, but white as the snow that whirled about without the cabin. Still, you might have seen here and there that there were [illegible] that had refused all the [illegible] would [illegible], rub and work and [illegible] them up the Widow and [illegible] would.

If you had lain in that bed through a spell of sickness, and looked and looked at the curtains (as all things in sick people will all the time look and look when they lie there and can do nothing else), you would at last have noticed that these coarse but snowy curtains had been made of as many pieces as Jacob's coat. And lying there all looking and looking, you would have at last in the course of time read there in one of the many cloudy spots, these words stamped in [illegible] rows of fantastic letters:

SELF-RISING FLOUR.
WARRANTED SUPERFINE.
50 LBS.

There was a little cracked piece of looking-glass on the wall, no bigger than your palm. It was fastened on the wall, over, perhaps, the only illustrated paper that had ever found its way to the Forks. There were little rosettes around this little glass that had been made from leaves of every colour by the cunning hand of the Widow. There were great maple-leaves, and leaves of many trees in all the hues of summer, hung up here and there, sewn together, and made to make the little bedroom beautiful. And what a treasure the little glass was! It seemed to be the great little centre of the house. All things rallied, or seemed to be trying to rally, around it. To be sure, the Widow was not at all plain.

Plain! to Sandy she was the centre of the world—the rising and the setting of the sun.

The carpet had been stitched by the same cunning hand. This had been made of gunny bags sewn together with twine; and under the carpet there was a thick coat of fine fir-boughs that kept the room all the [illegible] and warm, and fragrant as a [illegible] in the spring. There were little [illegible] bunches waiting about in the [illegible]; and by the bedside the old great [illegible] of the camp, a rocking-chair made of [illegible]. This was the gift of a rejected [illegible] lover.

On the little wooden mantel-piece above the fire-place there stood a row of [illegible]. They lay there as if they were a [illegible] fruit put by to ripen. They were like oranges which you see lying [illegible] Italy and [illegible]. These were the gifts of the hardy [illegible] of the Forks to their patron saint; they gave of such things, and in such ways as they could, [illegible] well be refused.

Once, [illegible] and [illegible], late in the night, a heavy [illegible] against the door, while the two [illegible] as the camp used to call [illegible] sat by the fire.

[illegible] Sandy's [illegible] his nose out like a little bull-dog and began to look down the hill in the darkness.

A man leaned over the house and [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
"Good-bye, [illegible]
[illegible]
for the Widder.
Pike. Good-bye."

Widow Wadsen went and next morning the worst sinner he found lying at the door was the cause of the trouble in the night. It was a great nugget of gold that the rough Missourian had thrown to his patron saint as he passed.

Once a miner sent them a great fine salmon. The Widow on opening it found it half full of gold. She took all this back to the man, whom she found seated at the green table at the Howling Wilderness, behind a silver faro box; for to mining the man also attached the profession of gambler. She laid this heap of gold down on the table before the man with the faro box and cards. The miners gathered around. The man with the silver box began to deal his cards.

"All on the single turn, Missus Sandy?"

The Judge came forward, "Don't bet it all on the first deal, do you? That's pretty steep, even for the oldest of us."

"Bet! I don't bet at all. I bring Poker Jake his money back. I found this all in the fish he sent us. It is his. It is a trick, perhaps. Fish don't eat gold, you know."

"O yes they dus, Missus Sandy."

Poker Jake stopped with the card half turned in the air. The Widow held up her pretty finger, and her pretty lips pouted as she made her little speech to the gambler, and told him she could not keep the gold. The miners gathered around in wonder and admiration.

Jake laid down his card.

"Well, can't a salmon eat gold if he likes?"

"No."

"There, Missus Sandy, y'er wrong!" argued the little Judge, and then he began to tell her the story of Jonah and the whale, and wound up with the declaration that there was nothing at all unnatural in a fish eating gold in "this glorious climate of California."

"Will you not take back your gold?"

"Nary a red."

There was a pale thoughtful young man, half ill, too feeble to work, to leave, to retreat from the mountains, standing by the fire when the Widow had entered the saloon. It was this boy, pale.

She took up the bag of gold, turned around, looked back in the corner of the saloon, but he had retreated out of sight as she entered, now the young man hiding back in the shade, leaning over the bank, caressing the bull-dog, possibly he was crying. Her face flushed with a light that was like and [illegible]

"Here, Jake," said the gold cure to Poker Jake.

"No."

"And these fish is mine? all mine, to do as I like with it?"

"Yours, lady. Yours to take and go home and get from out of the cavern, out of this hole in the ground, and live like a Christian, as yer are, and not live here like a wild beast in a caravan."

The man stood up as he spoke, and was proud of his speech, and the men cheered and cheered and said:

"Rally for Poker Jake!"

Then the little Widow turned again, went back to the boy leaning over the bull-dog, thrust it in his arms as he rose to look at her, and turning to the men was gone.

They looked at each other in amazement and disgust. They could hardly believe their senses.

"How dare she do it before us all?" said one.

CHAPTER XVI.

WAS THE WOMAN INSANE?

As the boy left the saloon one of the men said, "Now I guess the little cuss will git up and dust." And that thought was their consolation. Not that they hated this boy, but they felt that he was out of place in the cabin of their "Widder."

Other, and equally ingenious ways, all quite as innocent, had been used by the miners to force their gifts upon the one sweet woman, the patron saint of the camp, until she might have been almost as wealthy as this good old saint who lies mouldering before the eyes of all who care to pay a five-franc note, in the mighty cathedral at Milan. But now they would do so no more.

Nuggets, and bars, and scales, and specimens, and dust in her home in profusion. And why did the little woman remain in the wilderness? Why did not this little woman rise up some morning, smile a good-bye to those about her, leave the heathen to Wadsen Wadsen, take her great big bodyguard, mount a mule, turn his head up the corkscrew trail toward the eastside, toward the snow, and find a milder clime?

Who could she have been, this half hermit, this little missionary, who had in one winter half civilized, almost christianized, a thousand savage men without preaching a single sermon?

Perhaps she knew her own weakness in [illegible] where they [illegible] [illegible] with these rough fellows, [illegible] receiving their [illegible].

Besides, there was a point of honour in the partnership with these men of the Sierras. It might have been [illegible] to go away, and leave them behind her in the wilderness, to whom she owed all the comfort she had brought her, besides they would have missed her so sadly.

And yet, after all, had things gone on smoothly, there was no good reason for her to hurry away. But as it was, it was certainly going to blow great guns, and she certainly knew it.

But here she was now ill, very ill. All this gold was dross. It was nothing to her now. She could hardly lift her hand to the row of golden oranges that lay there before her on the little mantel. She looked at Sandy as he watched and tried to smile. There were tears in her eyes as she did this, and then she hid her face in her hands.

He went and stood and looked in the fire, and tried to think what he should do. Then he went and stood by her bed, and waited there till she uncovered her face and looked up.

She was very pale, and he tried but could not speak.

"Is it raining, Sandy dear?"

She asked this because as she put her hand out some drops fell down from his head upon her own.

"My pretty baby, my baby in the woods, what in the world is the matter?"

He leaned over her, and his voice trembled as he spoke. Then he went down on his knees and looked [illegible] her face.

"Is it cold, Sandy dear? Do you think that we, that I, could cross the mountains to-day? If we went slow and careful, and climbed over the [illegible] on our hands and knees, don't you think it could be done, Sandy?"

She kept on asking this question, and arguing it all the time, because the man kept looking at her in a [illegible] way, and could not answer a word.

"If we went up the road a little way at a time, [illegible] and [illegible] the [illegible] to rest, and then went a little way each day, and so on, as fast as it [illegible], up the mountains, don't you think it could be done, Sandy?"

The man was silent. He kneeled there, [illegible] his [illegible] together, [illegible] all the time, and [illegible] at nothing.

There was a long silence then, and still Sandy kneeled by the bed. His eyes kept wandering about till they lighted on [illegible]. He [illegible] by [illegible]. He [illegible]. Then [illegible] them up and down, and counted, and then counted them backward, and was quite certain he had got it all wrong, and fell to counting it over again.

The little woman watched with pain, and then [illegible] to his counting again. It passed, and she, pale, fair, beautiful, with her hair about her like folds of sable fur, she put out her round white arms to the great half-grizzly, half-baby by her side. She was still a long time then; then she called him pretty names, and she cried as if her heart would break.

"Sandy, I told you it was not best, it was not right, it would not do, that you would be sorry some day, and that you would blame and upbraid me, and that the men would laugh at you and at me. But you would not be put off. Do you not remember how I shut myself up and kept away from you, and would not see you, and how you kept watch, and sent round, and would see me whether or no?"

He now remembered. And what then? Had he repented? On the contrary, he had never loved her half so truly as now. His heart was too full to dare to speak.

"Do you not remember that when I told you all this would happen, that you said it could not happen? That, happen what would, no man should mock or laugh, or reproach, and live? Well, now, Sandy dear, it will happen. I have done you wrong. I now want to tell you to take back your promise. That is best."

The man rose up. The place where he had hid his face was wet as rain.

"Sandy, Sandy, can we cross the mountains now?"

The little lady lay trembling in her bed with her hands covering her face.

Then she put down her hands and looked up into the face of her husband.

"Sandy, leave me!"

She sprang up in bed as she said this, as if inspired with a new thought.

"There! take the gold; the gold all of it!"

She left her bed with a bound, and heaped the gold together and turned to Sandy.

"Take it, I tell you, and go. That is best; that is right. I want you to go—go now! Go! Will you go? Will you not go when I command you to go?"

"Not when you're sick, my pretty; get well, and then I will go,—go, and stay till you tell me I may come back."

"Will you not go?"

"Not while you're sick, my pretty."

"Then I will go."

She caught a shawl from the wall. Her

face was silent. She sprang to the door, through the fence, and to the fence in a moment. Sandy's arms were about her now, and he led her back and laid her in her bed.

She lay there trembling again, and Sandy bent above her.

"Sandy, when all the world turns against me and laughs at me, what will you do?"

He did not understand; he could not answer.

"When men laugh at me when I pass, what can you say and what will you do?"

"What will I do?"

The mist seemed to clear now, and to understand. He sprang up, upon about, and tossed his head.

"What will I do? Shoot 'em!—scalp every mother's son o' 'em!" And he brought his fist down on the little mantel-piece till the bits of gold, reminding and the little trinkets leapt half way across the room.

The little woman lay a moment silent, and then she threw back the clothes, and pushing Sandy back, as if he had been a great child, sprang up again, and again dashed through the door.

Limber Tim had been standing there all the time, half hidden behind the fence, against which he had placed his back, waiting to be of some use if possible to the guardian angel of the camp. There was also a row of men reaching within hail all the way down to the town, waiting to be of help, for Limber Tim had told them the Widow was ill.

The man started from his fastening on the fence at sight of this apparition; wild, half-clad, with her hair all down about her loose, unfastened garments, and he stood before her.

"I want to go home," the woman cried, wringing her hands. "I want to go home. I will go home. There is something wrong. You do not understand. Sandy is an angel; I am a devil. I want to go home."

The strong manly arms were about her again as she stood there on the edge of the fence, and he bore her back, half fainting and quite exhausted, into the house.

He laid her down, and stood back as if half frightened at what he had done. Never before had he put out a finger, said a word, held a thought, contrary to her slightest and most unreasonable whim. Then he came back timidly, as if he was afraid he would frighten her, for she began to tremble again, and she was whiter than before. She did not look up, she was looking straight ahead, down to her feet, but she knew he was there—knew he would hear her, let her speak more or less.

"When the great trouble comes, Sandy, when the trouble comes and never both of us with care, will you remember that you would not quit me? Will the trouble come, will you go and desert me, that you would not let me go away? that you would not go away? Will you answer me, Sandy?"

She was speaking wild again, and sprang up in bed another mad thing, and looked the man in his face so earnest, so pleading, so pitiful, that Sandy put up his two hands and covered a coloring cheek to remember.

She sank back in bed, drew the clothes about her, hid her face from the light, and the awful thought came fully and with all its force upon him that she was insane.

Ah! that was what it was. She feared she would go mad. Mad! mad! The thought of all the mad people he had ever seen or heard of; thought how he had been told that it runs in families; how people go mad and murder their friends, destroy themselves, go into the woods and are eaten by wild beasts, lost in the snow, or drowned in the waters hurrying by wood and mountain wall, and then he feared that he should go mad himself.

"Poor little soul!" he kept saying over to himself. "Poor, noble little soul! would not marry me because she knew she would go mad." And she was dearer to the man now than ever before.

"Sandy."

The sufferer barely breathed his name, but he leaned above her while yet she spoke.

"Sandy, bring Billie Piper."

"What?" He threw up his two hands in the air. The woman did not seem to heed him, but, resting and lying quite still a moment, said, softly—

"Being Bunker Hill."

"Being what? who?"

"Go, being Bunker Hill."

If this wife had said, "Being Satan," or had requested her "Being Billie Piper," the man could not have been more surprised or displeased.

Now this Bunker Hill, or Bunkerhill, was a poor woman of the town—the best one there, it is true, but bad enough, no doubt, at the best. She was called Bunker Hill by the boys, and no one knew her by any other name, because she was a sort of a bench mark.

"Did you say, my pretty, did you say—"

"Sandy, being Bunker Hill. And being her once. Open, Sandy, open; once, for the love of God."

The woman was writhing with pain again on the pain shot through the door, and looked back over his shoulder to be sure that she did not attempt to leave the house or destroy herself the moment his back was turned.

Limber Tim was there waiting silently, and

patiently. He scratched his head, and wondered, and [illegible] to the jail, and [illegible] with all his speed down the trail [illegible] to bring the woman. [illegible] He [illegible] would have given worlds almost to know how the fair woman fared, but they did not ask the question, did not stop the man a moment. A moment might be precious. It might be worth a life.

There are some rules of etiquette, some principles of feeling in the wild woods among the wild men there, that might be transplanted with advantage to a better society. There might have been a feeling of disappointment or displeasure on the part of the men standing waiting — waiting for an opportunity to be of the least possible service, as they saw Bunker Hill leave town to return with Limber Tim, but it had no expression.

The man who sat behind the silver faro-box no doubt felt this disappointment the keenest of any one.

When we feel displeased or disappointed at anything, we are always saying that that is about the best that could be done. "What else could she do? The woman's ill; the Widder's sick. She sends for a woman, a bad woman, p'raps, but the best we got. Well, a woman's better as a man, any way you put it. What else could she do? A bad woman's better as a good man. What else could she do? I puts it to you, what else could she do?"

The crowd at the Howling Wilderness was satisfied. But the men stood there or sat in knots around the bar-room in silence. The crimson-headed bar-keeper had not seen such a dull day of it since they had the double funeral. What could be the matter? Men made all kinds of guesses, but somehow no one hinted that the little woman was dead.

The Roaring Whirlpool, as the Howling Wilderness was sometimes called, drew its last [illegible] of that night. Men kept [illegible] going out and looking up toward the little cabin on the hill.

The man with the silver faro-box sat by the table with the green cloth, as if in a brown study. The great fire blazed up and crackled and roared, for but few men gathered about it all that evening. The little brown [illegible] could be heard nibbling at the [illegible] and [illegible], and their little [illegible] together as if [illegible]. Now and then [illegible] cards with his fingers [illegible] of a [illegible] way, as if just to keep his hand in, but the mice had it mostly their own way all that night.

One by one the men who stood waiting dropped away and went off at the [illegible] to get their dinners, but still enough stood there the livelong night to pass a message from mouth to mouth with the speed of a telegraph into town.

Then these men standing there, and those who went away, as to that, fell to thinking of Bunker Hill. Somehow she had advanced wonderfully in the estimation of all from the moment she had been sent for by the Widow. It was a sort of special dignity that had been conferred. This woman, Bunker Hill, had been knighted by their queen. She had been picked out, and set apart, and over and above all the other fallen women of the Forks.

Even Limber Tim, who stood there on one leg, with his back screwed tight up against the palings, began to like her overmuch, and to wonder why she also would not make some honest man an honest wife. In fact, many men that night recalled many noble acts on the part of this poor woman, and they almost began to feel ashamed that they had sometimes laughed at her plainness, and promised in their hearts to never do so again.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN TOMMY.

There was a gray streak of dawn just breaking through the black fir-tops, that towered above the high, far, deep snow, on the mountain that lifted to the east, as the door opened, and Bunker Hill came forth alone. There were ugly clouds rolling overhead, mixing, marching, and counter-marching, as if preparing for a great battle of the elements. On the west wall of the mountain a wolf howled dolefully to his mate on the opposite crest of the cañon. The water tumbled and thundered through the gorge below, and sent up echoes and sounds that were sad and lonesome as the march to the house of the dead.

She came out into the grey day, slowly and thoughtfully, her head was down, and when Limber Tim helped her over the fence she was shy and modest, as if she herself had been the Widow.

He tried to ask about the Widow, but that awful respect for the other sex that seemed born with the American of the Far West kept him silent; and as Bunker Hill led the way silently back to town and did not say one word about the patient, he followed, as [illegible] in camp.

On the way the woman slipped on the wet and icy trail and fell, for she was in terrible haste and terribly excited. Perhaps almost

however or heed on the sharp shout of the bell, for as she heavily swung back again beneath, she kept repeating and increasing her right arm with her left.

The last passenger to the Howling Wilderness, filled the lamps and extinguished, looked all around, but did not speak. She was in a great hurry, and was evidently looking for some one she wished to find at once. Women spoke to her now. The few found there at this hour were the wildest and most reckless in the camp, but they were respectful, as if in the presence of a lady because he was a lady.

There was something beautiful in this silence and respect. Even the man with the silver faro-box for a breastwork rose up and stood in her presence while she remained. He did not do it on purpose. He would not have done it the day before had she stood before him by the hour. He did not even know whom he arose, but when she moved past the lamp lit, and turned away and went out again into the cold and did not drink—did not drink, mind you—did not even look at the crimson-headed man who had risen up in perfect confidence, he found himself standing, and found his heart filling with a kind of gallantry that he had not known before. He had risen in her presence by instinct.

"Come, we must find Captain Tommy." The woman said this to Limber Tim as they left the saloon, and then led swiftly on to Captain Tommy's cabin.

This Captain Tommy was a character and a power too, and, wretch as she was, was a woman to be leaned upon and trusted too to the last.

Two, she was very plain. But you may adopt it as one of your rules of life, and act upon it with absolute certainty, that, if you have to trust any woman, trust a plain one rather than a handsome one; for the plain ones were and made to sell, else they too had been made handsome.

"Let us go for particulars about a delicate subject," said old Baldy, who had been fortunate enough to know her, "her memory possibly may reach back to the Black Hawk War."

But the overwhelming feature of this woman was her overpowering head of hair. It was black as night and wonky as a Kanaka's; all about her head in a heap, that seemed to be constantly in motion. Out of the back and down, almost to the waist, it had gathered into a mighty mass, and hung down like a bell-rope, and there was no end to it.

She constantly kept her mouth closed; but when excited she pulled up her head, took hold of the bell-rope, and pulled and pulled till her mouth came open; then she would throw out her fingers, and contemplate at her back hair, and pull and twist, and wind, until she had screwed herself up so tight that it was impossible to close either her mouth or her eyes. After that she would talk faster than any man in the world, and fasten them a great many minutes, until she ran down, and the bell-rope hung loose between her shoulders. Then her mouth would close suddenly, and she would have to stop that instant, even in the midst of a sentence, until she could seize the bell-rope, pull herself open and wind herself up again.

The Captain had admirers in the Forks—many and many a worshipper—and not altogether without reason. There was about her a certain sweetness of nature that contrasted well with the rough life in which she was thrown; and the strong men noted this, and liked the sense of her presence.

Besides that, this woman had a certain sincerity about her, a virtue that is as rare as it is dear to men. I think, if we look at ourselves closely, we will discover that this one quality wins upon us more than any other—that is, more than beauty, more than gold—sincerity, earnestness. For my part, I only make that one demand on any man or any woman. You cannot be graceful at all times, or truthful, or beautiful, or always good-natured; but you can be in earnest. You can refuse to lie, either in word or in deed. I demand that you shall be in earnest before you shall approach me. Be in earnest even in your villainy.

The woman knocked on the door with her knuckles, and called through the hole of the latch-string to the woman within; for Captain Tommy was also a woman, and a woman of the order—of a less order even than this good Samaritan, who stood calling through the key-hole and shivering with the cold.

There was no answer, and then the two stood there in the black, still, cold, gray morning together. There was a noise of somebody dressing in the dark very fast, a hand took on here, the scratching of a match, the lifting of a latch in the rear of the cabin, the sound of a man's boots scratching over the uneven of a hewn hill that led to the Howling Wilderness, and then the door opened, and Bunker Hill had in instantly, went right up to Captain Tommy, took her hand in her own, and whispered in her ear.

The Captain sought her breath, and then with both hands up, as if to defend herself, staggered slowly back against the wall. Then, as if suddenly recovering herself, and coming upon a new thought, she raised her lifted arms, let them fall, and rounding her shoul-

[illegible] up to [illegible] [illegible], they turned her back [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] looking at Bunker Hill sidewise, and said:

"Ye're [illegible]!"

"[illegible], Sandy, [illegible] [illegible], and [illegible] would [illegible] you. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], for you [illegible]! I can't go it all night. Some people must be there, and there [illegible] people must be [illegible]."

"[illegible], you don't play me! Go 'long with yer [illegible]! Git!" The Captain was getting out of [illegible]. What was to be done? Bunker Hill went close up to her, and, leaning up, whispered [illegible] in her ear.

The Captain only said, "[illegible] blowed!" and turned and kicked the fire till it blazed up and filled the room with a [illegible] light, which only an [illegible] [illegible] can throw out when [illegible] up to a [illegible]; and then she turned around and looked at Bunker Hill as if she half [illegible] make up her mind [illegible] to be [illegible] at the good-natured [illegible] before her as if she would [illegible] her through; then suddenly her eyes [illegible] on [illegible] white cuffs. "What the devil's that on yer sleeve? [illegible]"

"Come, come, there's no time to lose. It's a [illegible]!"

Bunker Hill took hold of Captain Tommy's arm and [illegible] her to the door. [illegible] was [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible], and still kept looking at [illegible] [illegible].

"What the devil's that on your sleeve? It looks like blood."

Bunker Hill lifted her arm, looking [illegible] back her sleeve, and held it to the light.

"Blood it is! Will you believe me now?"

[illegible], with her back to the fire, dashed forward [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

CHAPTER [illegible]

[illegible]!

[illegible] his back [illegible] about to fall on their head, and their lives

depended on his strength. His mouth had been wide open with wonder. He had not understood at all from the first, but now he was more than bewildered—he was terrified.

"Blood! blood!" He [illegible] himself from the wall, went winding his long limber legs up the trail past the [illegible] Widow, [illegible] after the [illegible] [illegible]; and all the time this awful [illegible] of Bunker Hill's was shooting through his brain—"Blood! blood! it is! Will you believe me now?"

He reached his post by the pine fence, and, being no wiser than before, he again wound himself up against the palings, and reached back his arms and wove them through the pickets, and stood there on one leg looking over his shoulder as the two women disappeared into the Widow's cabin.

Dawn comes slowly down in these dark, deep, wooded canons of the Sierras. Morning seems to be battling with the night. Night is entrenched in the woods, and retreats only by inches—the Battle of the Wilderness.

In the steel-gray dawn, cold and sharp, Limber Tim heard a cry that knocked him loose from the fence. He picked himself together, and again twisted himself into the pickets; but all the time he kept seeing Bunker Hill pushing back her sleeve, holding up her arm in the ghostly light of the pine-log fire, and saying, "Blood it is! Will you believe me now?"

"Blood," mused the man. "Somebody's hurt. Somebody's hurt awful bad, too, or they wouldn't keep a feller a-standin' up [illegible] the whole blessed night."

The man's teeth began to chatter. The thought of blood and the bleak cold morning kept them knocking together as if he had had an ague.

A man in [illegible] came [illegible] by the cabin; his [illegible] was [illegible] straight for the [illegible] [illegible] against Limber Tim as he [illegible], [illegible] against the [illegible], and asked [illegible] and very [illegible] of the Widow.

Limber held his head thoughtfully to one side, as if he was trying to balance the important facts in his mind, and reveal only [illegible] of the condition of the Widow, [illegible] it was that was hurt, [illegible] how bad, and so on, [illegible].

[illegible] Sandy's [illegible] his feet [illegible] night

Widow! It could hardly be! [illegible] thought the Fairy, [illegible] and [illegible]

Could it be [illegible]

[illegible] again and [illegible] and [illegible] feet [illegible] in the air, [illegible] round [illegible]

"Sandy, by the [illegible]!"

"Daniel Hill, by the holy poker!"

"And what's that she got [illegible]?"

"It's a table-cloth a hangin' out for dinner!"

"It's a flag of truce!" cried the Judge, standing on tiptoe on his stump and straightening his fat little body up towards the Shore.

"And here's Sandy [illegible]"

"And don't be [illegible] high [illegible]"

"And where's Captain Tommy, and where's the Widow?" [illegible] the Fairy, still looking [illegible] its little chains.

At last they [illegible]

[illegible]

hand, and [illegible] both [illegible] hill's [illegible] his [illegible] over the [illegible] sort of [illegible] blood [illegible]

[illegible]

"Three cheers for Sandy Hill!" They were given with a tiger. "Three cheers for the Widow! three cheers for Mister Sandy Hill!" And [illegible] tears of joy from her eyes. [illegible] three cheers for Captain Tommy. Then [illegible]

[illegible]

Of all things, [illegible]

[illegible]

"Well I don't think Sandy hardly got his [illegible]"

[illegible]

meant in compliment to him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER WARNING AT THE FORK.

The woman who stood there about to be made the bride of the second family in the Forks, had turned the Widow Bent to life and health, had lived all the days and years that lay between Miner Bent's leaving and coming, and had never for a single step to desert it. When her work was finished she had no place to go to. She carried with her the memory and the recollection of a duty well performed, and felt that it was enough. She had not seen the Widow any more.

The Judge stood there with the Declaration of Independence, the Statutes of California, and the marriage ceremony, all under his arm, and ready to do his office. The sun was pouring down in the open streets. Little Bunker Hill felt sadly somehow, that she had a right to be married out in the open day, in the fresh, sweet air, and under the trees; and Limber Tim preferred to be married where his partner had been married, and so it was that they had [redacted] the Howling Wilderness as before. [redacted] silence now, all were waiting for [redacted] to begin. Up in the loft the mice nibbled away at their endless rations of old boots, and a big red-headed woodpecker pounded away on the wall back by the chimney without.

There was a commotion at the door. Then there was a murmur of admiration and applause.

The men gave way, they pushed and pushed each other back as if they had been pushing cotton bales, they opened a line, and down that line a beautiful woman with her eyes to the ground and a baby in her arms moved on till she came and stood by the side of the little hunchback, still silent, and looking with the old look of sad, sweet tranquillity upon the ground.

It was really too much for the little man, who had opened his bosom, and who all the time had stood there with his books under his arm, perfectly cool, and perfect master of the situation. Now he was all of a heap. He had been acting with a sort of condescension toward the two half-children who had come before him that day, and had even prepared a sort of patronizing, half-missionary, half reformatory sermon, but now, and all suddenly, he was utterly overthrown. He began to perspire, and choke on the spot.

The silence was painful. The woodpecker pounded as if he would knock the house down, and the mice raged at their old boots and rattled away like men sawing wood.

The Judge began to hear himself breathe. In this moment of crisis he caught a book from his side and proceeded to read. He read from "An Act to amend an Act entitled an Act for the improvement of the [illegible] of sheep in the County of Calaveras." Little by little those who were near him began to giggle. Those more distant caught the infection, and soon the whole crowd was in a roar. Some were for the immediate forcible ejectment of the Judge, some were for breaking open the door, and some were for calling him down, and last that, above all others, had put the whole Judge to confusion.

When he heard the first laugh, then he knew he had handed his book as the wrong place, and his face grew red as fire. He could not give it back to the end, nor could he now be heard. He suddenly closed the book and said, "Then by virtue of the authority in me vested, and under the laws of the State of California in such cases made and provided, I pronounce you man and wife."

Then the little Judge arose up, shook them both by the hand, and his voice was suddenly clear as a bell, and he felt that he could now go on and speak by the hour.

The Widow bowed down above her baby and kissed the new-made bride silently and soberly as if she had been her sister, and then, with the same sweet, half sad smile she turned to the door. Her face fell to the ground, and covering up the little sleeper in her arms and looking neither right nor left, went back alone to her cabin.

The dark day was over. As the play, whenever you see the whole force of the company come forward and stand in a row and assume the most striking and imposing attitudes, and hear the fiddles play and the brass trumpets bray as never before, then you may be very sure the tragedy is almost over. So it goes in life.

The crowd had melted away a bit because it was very warm, and then the men were getting noisy enough, for this was the day on which every one however was expected to get drunk. It was a sort of Fourth of July.

The old question was being again raised. The bride was standing there in the midst of the men, a true good woman, a woman who had sinned, yet a woman who had suffered. One who had fallen was she, yet she who had resisted more than many a woman who would have cast a stone at her. She was very glad, and not a man but was glad to see it.

"That baby! It is an angel, and its mother's name is Madonna. That little bit of a brat! Why, I sold it first first of anybody, and it was a better seller than a pound of soap after a whole day's washing. Make a row about that little thing! A man who would make a fuss about a baby no bigger than that, no matter when it was born, is a fool."

"Bully for Nancy—for Missie! The Bully for [illegible]!" and the men shouted, and [illegible] their cheers [illegible].

The Gopher [illegible] perhaps more loudly than any one. [illegible] the Widow, and [illegible] and [illegible]. The Gopher, [illegible], was in disgrace, for the story went that the young man, his partner, who was the first to be buried in the Forks, had fallen by his hand. The blow had been struck in a crowd, it was said, and no one saw it, or at least no one cared to tell of it if he did, and so the Gopher had been left alone, and he had left men alone, and lived all the time by himself in a sort of cave, and that is why he was called the Gopher. Strange stories were told of this Gopher, too, and men who pretended to know said his cave was lined with gold.

"That baby!" began the Gopher, lifting up his doubled fist, and bringing it down now and then by way of emphasis. "That baby! Look here! Here's one baby among a thousand men. Here's a thousand men asking if it's got a father. Now does that little baby want a father? I've got a cave full of gold, and I'll be its father! I'll be its brother and uncle and aunt and mother!" The Gopher thundered his fist down on the bar as he concluded, and the glasses there jumped up and clinked together, and bowed to each other, as if they had been dancers about to begin a quadrille.

The [illegible] flew away, and the voice was heard no more that day, for the men shouted their approval till they were hoarse and [illegible].

[illegible] had been sitting there all the time, [illegible] doubled over a bench. He perhaps was thinking of the last wedding, for he kept looking steadily across the room to the [illegible] on the other side, and then he seemed to fix his eyes on some object there, and to fall to thinking very generally. At last he began to count on his fingers. Then suddenly he [illegible] laughed with delight, and jumped up, stepped across the room, and [illegible] on the spot where [illegible] scratching with his big pencil the day he was so embarrassed at [illegible] wedding, and [illegible] out—

"Look here! Here it is! Here's the date. That's the day they was married—September, eighteen hundred and fifty [illegible]!"

"Just eight months!" roared a man in the crowd.

"Eight months! [illegible]" and he fell [illegible] counting on [illegible] he turned to the crowd and [illegible] up to Judy with [illegible].

The crowd [illegible], and [illegible] never [illegible] been so stupid as not to see this thing right from the first! It was the [illegible] that had ever been. The Widow was [illegible].

The Gopher stood up by the wall.

"Are you all satisfied now?"

Satisfied! They would never doubt any woman any more as long as they lived.

He took his bowie-knife while the crowd turned to take a drink, and cut the date from the wall; and the only record, perhaps, of the first marriage in the Forks was no more.

The sharp-nosed man, one of those miserable men who never are satisfied unless they are either miserable or making some one else so, came up to the wall out of the crowd and began to look on the date as if he thought there might have been some mistake, and he wanted to count it all over again.

This man began to count on his fingers and to look along on the wall. Suddenly there was a something gleaming in his face like a flash of lightning.

It was the Gopher's bowie-knife. It was within two inches of his throat.

"Are you satisfied, my friend?" smiled the Gopher, with a smile that meant business.

"Perfectly satisfied," said the wretch in a whisper, and at the same time he bowed and backed as fast as he could till he came to the door, and then he was seen no more.

"But is it really all on the square, Judge?" asked Citizen Pete one day, timidly and in confidence.

"Right!—didn't I marry 'em?"

"But it wasn't twelve months."

"Twelve months! don't care if it wasn't six months. I married 'em, and I married 'em good and fast, and that's the end of it."

Public opinion flows and ebbs like the tide of the sea. At one time the little camp was unanimous in the opinion that the mysterious little woman could be none other than Nancy Williams, and it would talk of little else. Then it would tire of this subject, change its opinion, and let the matter drop for months together.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JUDGE IN LOVE.

"In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

This was the song of the fat little Judge, one fine morning, as he wandered down towards the Howling Wilderness, seeking the glorious forest, the very heart of the forest, and [illegible] over and over [illegible] towards the cabin of [illegible].

How new and fresh and sweetly and fragrant the odours of the mighty, mossy

"Captain," said the miner, and it bowed

little Madons, shaking back their hair all full of [illegible] and glory of the California [illegible], and making every one happy who beholds them.

"All in the glorious climate of California," says [illegible], as he comes [illegible] the hill to his [illegible], and the children of the [illegible] run to meet him.

Can it be possible? Did they all [illegible] again? Did they [illegible] and [illegible] like [illegible] in the beginning? Truly, there is something in the [illegible], and the fountain of youth flows [illegible] somewhere out of the Sierras.

[illegible] there stands a woman [illegible] herself up to welcome her husband; she is only a little stouter, and is even beautiful.

As for Limber Tim, being an "educated man," he started a newspaper in the nearest town, and after many battles and many defeats, finally climbed high on the ladder of distinction, and is now "the Hon. Mr. Tim," with a political influence second in that part of the country to no man, and to only one woman.

How things are changed, to be sure! The [illegible] of clouds that little Billie Piper [illegible] to look up to and wonder at, still [illegible] the [illegible], and [illegible] and [illegible] march and curl about the snow peaks as before. But the coyote has ceased to howl from the hill-side.

And what are these [illegible] curling like steam up from out the mighty forest that belts the [illegible] peaks about the [illegible] of the [illegible] that make the Forks?

It looks like a train of clouds driven straight through the [illegible], [illegible] and far away. It is as if [illegible] the very [illegible] of the Sierras.

[illegible] that is the engine, blowing off the clouds [illegible] as she [illegible] down the mountain [illegible] The train is a mile in length. The dust of [illegible] miles is on her skirts. But before the going down of the sun she will draw [illegible] by the Golden Gate.

CHAPTER [illegible]

THE [illegible] IN [illegible]

Stick a pin here. Do [illegible] you remember that [illegible] of the Sierras were all [illegible] [illegible]

This is history. The [illegible] landed [illegible] their [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible].

The Pilgrim Fathers [illegible] of the north of North America; while the few first settlers of the Sierras [illegible] years.

I am all the time wondering when I think of the [illegible] men and women, [illegible] blood will find [illegible].

I think he will [illegible] find [illegible] A people full of [illegible], [illegible] that of [illegible].

And somewhere in these Sierras will they make the new [illegible]. The [illegible] in the [illegible] New Day, will have their [illegible] away, and the last [illegible] mine.

The [illegible] the Golden Gate [illegible]

[illegible] day swing his harp in the [illegible] [illegible]

Now you would [illegible] Sierras.

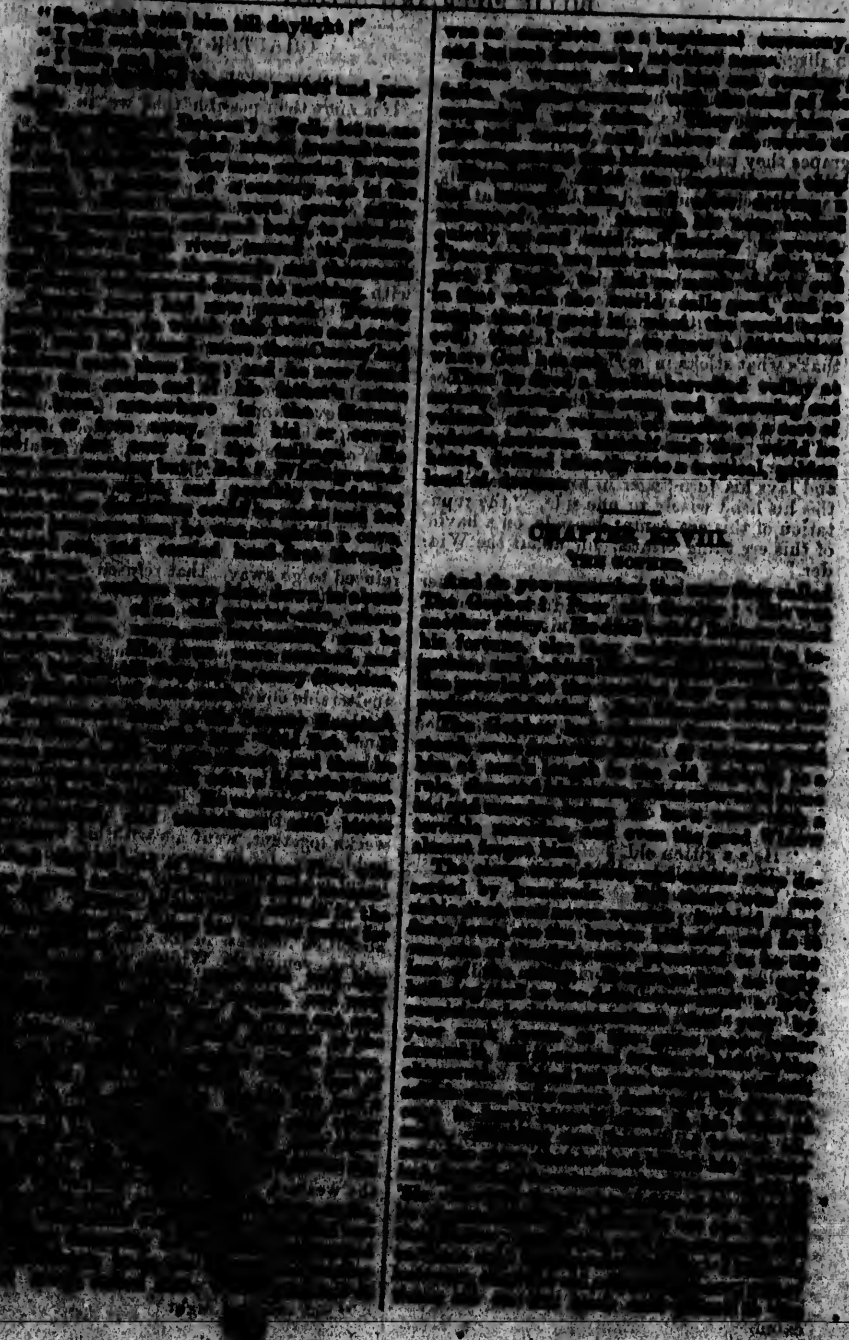
There is an old and a beautiful story. You know it long [illegible] God spoke face to face with man. He visited him every day in his own form. And [illegible]

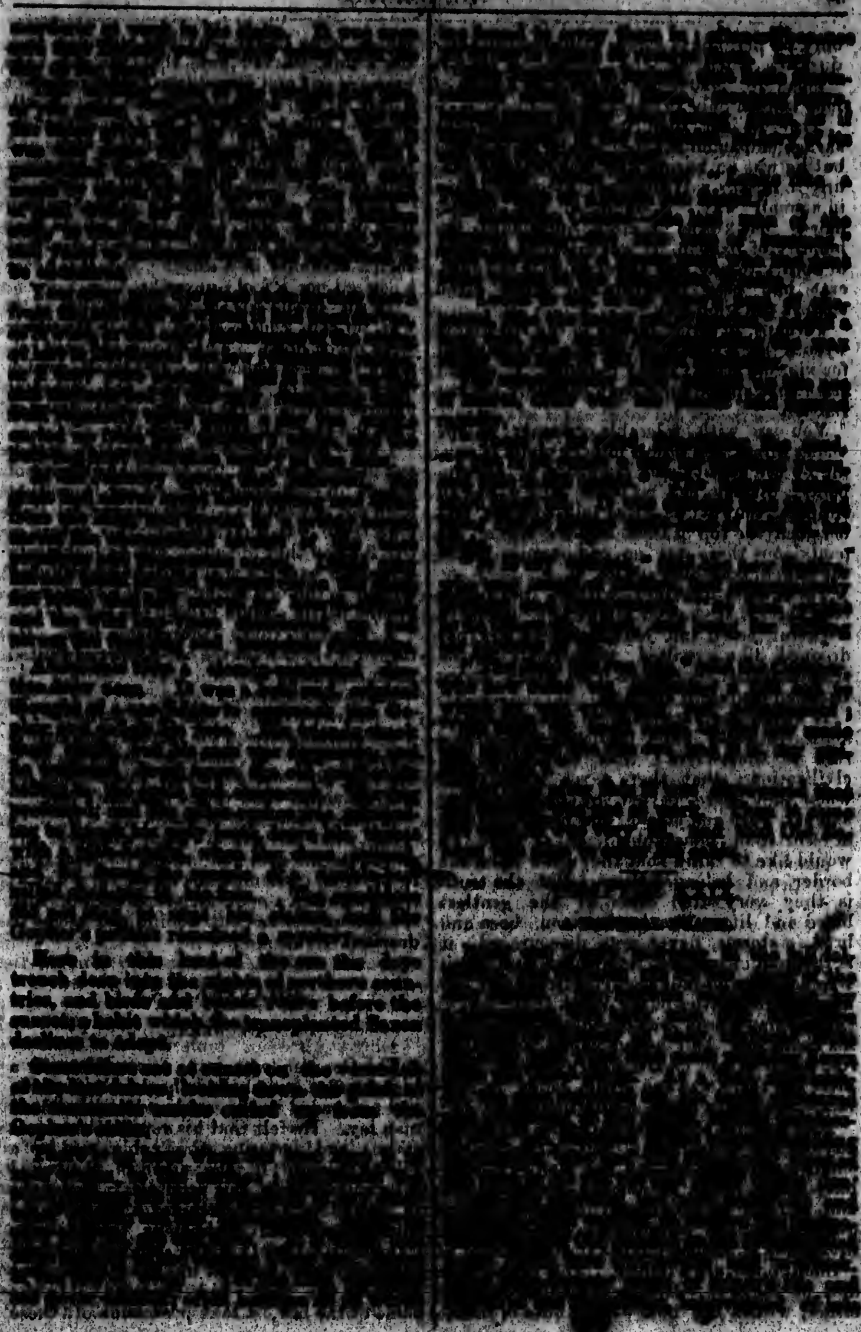
CHAPTER XXVII.

It is more than possible that we, in our simplicity, think Billie a real Dickens character, but I do not care for fantastic work, why can't nobody accept him as the product of Kansas origin, come and speak for his self, say that's what he is? I don't know that we ever had any thing, or class of things, or characters of things or any thing of the kind with which to compare Billie, so of the alternative, but I do know that two half-clean old dears, dearly fond of each other, and more than determined to be single, whatever they have been, whatever they will have, or shall ever have. There was a "Miss" to investigate. The family tree stood in the form of a misshapen old stump, which could do, that was certain. You could not go outside of the stump for leaves. The outside girdle of earth lifted itself in sympathizing gesture. How should I tell you what Billie Piper was? Well, you know, when Widow Hay refused to go away, that refused to budge, that refused to open her door, that refused to tell you whether Miss, why she pretended, or from whom she received the letter addressed to Aunt Billie Piper, the tendency of the conduct became half-humorous, and so the unfavorable comparison does not exhibit the best traits of the Widow. And the accumulated year has it, for you always, dependent, but he did look the same, by the clock, over and the year. I have no idea that he did not speak to, or only half-heard to each other, gave them, each to his, combed all the wools together, went on with his work, in a very feeble way, and

One evening the Widow was about to enter

"She isn't all right."





CHAPTER XXX.

A FUNERAL.

they began in the centre to sluice it to the bed-rock. They sluiced up the gulch for a distance and then down the gulch [illegible] until the whole hill-side was 'worked,' as it were, to the 'bed,' and [illegible] but not even so much as the [illegible] of the dead man's gold was found.

The [illegible] was [illegible], and the Gopher was voted a [illegible] dead than living.

It began to be noticed, however, that Bolson had [illegible] somewhat [illegible] since the death of the Gopher, and it was whispered that he knew where the treasure was.

Some even went so far as to say that he had the whole sum of it in his possession. "Some of these nights he'll [illegible]," said the landlord, [illegible] across his block. [illegible] it must be observed [illegible]. For was not Bolson near the scene of the death? And if he could get the dog, why not his gold also?

One night Bolson, holding tight to a [illegible] string, shuffled up to the stranger in the saloon, and timidly plucking his sleeve, said:

"Going away, I hear?"

"Yes."

"To the States?"

"Yes."

"To Missouri?"

"May be."

"Well, then, look here; come with me"— and with an old dog [illegible] the way up the gulch to the cabin. [illegible]

[illegible]

As the stranger [illegible]

candle, then came and sat down close at his side, with his string, and the old dog again threw his nose between his knees.

"Stranger," said [illegible] the other, and began in a whisper [illegible] Godfrey, there's [illegible] Godfrey and Whitman [illegible] very well, though, till Whitman was killed—"

"Till the Gopher killed him?"

"Well, now, there's where it is," said Old Bolson, [illegible]. The dog [illegible] and crowded his ugly head up [illegible] between the old man's legs.

"There's where it is. Godfrey did not kill Whitman. The Gopher [illegible] You see, [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] and he was only known as the Gopher.

[illegible] as if he knew the place of [illegible]

Open were the man's eyes, [illegible]

[illegible]

There were hundreds of letters, all written

in a fine steel-plate lady's hand. Some addressed to Godfrey, and some to Willie. Now and then one came with a border of black, telling that there was [illegible] gone to heaven. [illegible] "Come home, come home," was at the bottom of them all. One addressed to Willie [illegible] him with all a mother's [illegible] [illegible] for the money he had [illegible] sent them throughout all the years.

"That was it, you see," the boy said. "As Godfrey, that's the Captain, is dead, and can send them no more money, and as I was a-going to the [illegible], I [illegible] that you should drop in and [illegible] families gently [illegible] are dead. Say that they died [illegible] He sent them the last [illegible] before he died, and made me [illegible] to keep them away from the [illegible], so that he might not know his address, and so that they might not know that Curly had died long ago, and died a gambler. Take one of the letters along, and that will tell you where they are."

Again Old Baboon [illegible] the [illegible]. He looked toward the door, and when the man had stepped across the sill he put out the light, and the two stood together.

The old dog knew there was but the one place for his master outside his cabin at such a time, and, blind leading the blind, thither he led him through the dark to the saloon.

• • • •

And whither went the Parson that cold blustering evening? He set his face against the snow and started out alone up the corkscrew trail to try to reach, no one knew where. Or did he try to reach any place at all? Did he not take this course so that he might leave the mind of the woman he had loved free and careless of his fate?

Sandy had prospered, and so he had led his new wife to the Parsonage, and took possession as he had agreed. But much as he was, he often wished he had not done so. He could see the hand of his great rival the Parson in all things around him. Sometimes he almost fancied he could see his face, mournful, sad, looking in at the window out of the storm at the happy pair by his hearthstone.

Early one autumn some prospectors pushed far up the Fork, coming parallel with the trail leading out of the camp, and there, in the leaves, they found a skull. There was a hole in the temple, and the marks of sharp teeth on the smooth white surface. They also found a small silver-mounted pistol.

The party [illegible] to the Forks that night, where friends [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the saloon. The [illegible] had [illegible] they had found, and laid the pistol on the counter.

It was one of the Parson's little "bull pups."

The pistol was empty.

One final word of the once spirited Baboon, and we promise to [illegible] from the Sierras. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] still he lingered near his old haunts in the Forks.

At last the broken man, who was now only known as Old Baboon, became so very ugly, and twisted, and [illegible] when he had [illegible] [illegible] nothing [illegible] and [illegible] all [illegible] a [illegible] made his [illegible] a [illegible] He would not leave the [illegible] he [illegible] there. Here is an extract from a letter in which he invites a distinguished traveling Yankee [illegible] to [illegible] After describing the [illegible] and [illegible], he says:

"The lovely [illegible] in [illegible] We have two California [illegible], and a pair of bulldogs. [illegible] but I'll [illegible] troubled with visitors."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CARAVAN OF DEATH.

The little pale had its place in the [illegible] of the camp at first. And now at the last, when he was about to go away, he held open a [illegible] when he came.

Nobody [illegible] when he came, nobody would know when he was passing away, at last, nobody, save the Widow, knew of it. Truly [illegible] did not [illegible] he [illegible]

The Widow had been [illegible] to order the little [illegible] and very regularly of late, [illegible] could any [illegible] or [illegible] news. The case was peculiar. The guilt of the Widow was an accepted fact. No [illegible] could [illegible] of him. They left this all to her, a [illegible]

We leave her at [illegible] bedside and [illegible] for the last time [illegible] the little Chinaman.

And what became of the little brown man with the almond eyes and the [illegible] smile that for ever hovered about the corner of his mouth?

Poor little Washee Washee! When the Widow [illegible] he had to go. He could not [illegible] and he would not go away. The Widow [illegible] all he asked when he came to her, but that was very little. She [illegible] him to [illegible] [illegible] and to take care

"WARREN WARREN."

CHAPTER XXXII.

People began to remember that they had not seen Alvin about that singular little post since the death and burial of Daphne. He was ill. All events, the Widow west, boldly and regularly now to his cabin. And in the cradle of the camp, be it said, it at last began to look with toleration on Alpen, inclusive of the humble five-and-twenty acres of the sad and lonesome little pasture.

Only once more he came out and sat by the door, pale and dreamy and full of mystery, like some magician, not an unkindly man, stopped a moment with his book and slate under his arm, as he led a little girl by the hand, and looking into the pallid face before him, said:

"Now a long sit word, Billy. A hard one to-day. At last we have to behold the old truth, that he to make her live to learn how to die. The Bible tells him nearly all about it, and there is no more to be said. Why, the eye of the Lord is on all our ways, and he pondereth all our paths. And good, else why should we wish to live? I will pray of the Lord that I may have rest on his everlasting bosom."

And he kissed the child and then dismissed her with dignity, and prayed for the last time from the light of the window and in the solemn voice used by grave ministers, that door stood open. The little girl looked in, and then ran away as if afraid. But the one white face gazing within the door attracted it. The schoolmaster, perhaps by any connection with this singular being, knowing nothing of the little girl, and did not know, moreover, of her parentage, had not yet seen the face of [illegible] and [illegible] wildly. He had only nothing, he had heard

nothing, he had seen nothing. But somehow the man's heart was beating with a strange terror, and he wanted to turn back and enter the cabin, and speak once more to the lovely little sufferer.

The man called his school to order, however, took off his coat, hung it up behind the door, ran his two hands through his hair time and again, but failing to pacify himself by this means, called out a little boy, and flogged him soundly.

He afterwards remembered that there was a black cat sitting in the door as he passed, quietly washing her face, yet at the same time looking intently at him out of her green eyes.

The heroes of the world are women. The women, as a rule, have done the great deed of valour. Men, however, have written the histories and appropriated a great deal indeed to themselves.

I know very well that in a certain kind of noisy heroism man makes a great mark, and instances of valour, even in a quiet way, where man fights his battle alone and in the dark, without the observation or applause of the world, are not wanting. But the great battles, in darkness and disgrace, where death and ignominy waited, the small-great battles, the heart the battle-field, where no friend would come, where no pen should chronicle,—these silent fights have been fought and won by women.

Understanding all this, I can understand why the Widow chose to bear all the reproof, and let her friend, the refugee, the dreamer, the "Poet," live and die unknown and in peace.

The next morning as the schoolmaster came by, with the little girl sliding up close to his legs, on the opposite side from the cabin, the Widow, with a face of unutterable sadness, was outside trying to tie a piece of something black to the door-latch.

The man lifted his hat, and came reverentially and slowly forward.

There was no need of saying anything now. He understood it all, and after assisting her in silence to do the office of respect for the dead within, he took the little girl's hand again in his, turned to go, took a few steps forward, and then stopping and turning around, again lifted his hat and said softly to the Widow:

"I will step at the saloon and send up some of the boys to take charge of the body and prepare it for the grave."

"No," sighed the Widow, in a voice that was scarcely heard above the beating of her heart; "No, George," and she came slowly and calmly up to the man and stood there with her white face lifted close into his. "No, George, you will go back to the house, and get your mother and your sister to come and help me now at the last. For it is a woman that lies dead there in that little vine-covered cabin."

The woman had kept the woman's secret. She had given her life as it were for the life of another. But now that all was over, the whole story was to be written in the single name on the little granite gravestone. It was the name of NANCY WILLIAMS.

THE END.

MISS SUMMERS'S WIDOW.

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TORONTO:
J. Ross Robertson, 67 Yonge St.
1878.

MISS SLIMMENS'S WINDOW.

CHAPTER I.

THE SAINT CAUSE ONE MISS WISH SHAVE.

either, though rather old for a girl in her twenties. Let's see, he must be full forty year old; and that would be fourteen years difference. So then I told him I was sick of these everlasting white bonnets, and *I* thought peach-blows, or silvery-whites, would look sweetly, with [illegible] and asked if I could suggest any other improvement; and I fairly blushed at having him putting such questions to me, and I said, "Oh, Mr. Stebbins, if you'd really like my ideas on the subject, I think a handsome portcullis over the front door would make your house almost equal to Squire Higgins's." "The very thing!" said he. "Only, if—don't scot too much, I shall have one right away."

What's that you say, Obadiah Brown? "Stebbins is apt to look at the cost of a thing before he gets it." Supposing he is, then; so is any prudent man; they'd be a fool not to. I guess there's some as wouldn't in this shop for seventy-five cents and their board would be glad of a chance to help spend what he's been so prudential as to lay up. Mind that shoe you're running. You're getting it as crooked as one of Tim Button's shoes; and that reminds me for Mrs. Martingall, the particularest of all my customers.

What has Stebbins gone out of town for? I haven't insinuated that I know, have I? He said he could be down to get a new set of lasts between dinner and a carpet for the front room; but I'm certainly coming off; but that's not saying that he has, not that I know anything about his business. I'm going to make a wedding-bonnet for somebody for every time each chair's out of this piece of white satin; but that's not saying that I am going to. Look here, Diana Adams, if you don't quit that everlasting flirting and snorting, get a laughing, you'll quit my shop. How much do you suppose you get done in a day, between looking at [illegible] that you set up half the night to put in papers, and minding [illegible] Why, what every five minutes? [illegible] isn't real; it's cotton, and quite noticeably so. Enough! perhaps you'll get some [illegible] to believe [illegible], but not [illegible]

[illegible] Laurel fringe trotting about [illegible] all-wool de laine [illegible] Sundays. Her father just [illegible] by stable people; and if what [illegible] she'll catch it for [illegible] of his sleep to [illegible] his [illegible] What I [illegible] I'm sorry [illegible] to myself. And [illegible] I don't [illegible] to me. People think [illegible] that [illegible] must [illegible] to be brought [illegible] world in short [illegible] some time. When folks [illegible] to sending to Boston and Lowell for their bunnits, because there's nothing in their own village good enough for 'em, it's time—

Wonder whose dog that can be? Girls, run here, and look, before he gets past the corner; that one, with the crimpy tail, black and white. Did either of you ever see it before? "No!" Well, neither did I; guess your grandpa's got company, or somebody's been buying him. It's curious his master wasn't with him; being a strange dog, as he'd be apt to have somebody with him to keep watch of him. He couldn't be a stray dog; he ran along too contented for that. He's a beautiful fellow; such long, silky hair, such intelligent eyes, and such a curly—goodness! here he comes! not the dog, but his master! Yes, that must be him, for he's a stranger, and now he's a whistling to him; and he's got on one of them new-fangled overcoats, and is so stylish! Dear me! I wish I knew who he was visiting, and what brought him to Pennyville, and how long he was going to stay. Goodness! he looked right straight in the window; and he must have seen *something* to admire, for he kept on looking full a minute. Girls, what are you peeking over my shoulder for? Get back to your work, you [illegible] creatures! I declare I shall go crazy before I'm thirty years old, if I have to keep track of two such idle snips! He's gone round the corner, now, towards Squire Higgins's. If Sabina Higgins caught *that* fish, I wonder she was away to her uncle's, she did, more than I gave her credit for. Hmmd me that bonnet. It's to be called for at sundown, and I've not made the first bow yet, nor put in the lining. If there wasn't so much gadding on in this shop, there'd be more work done. I don't see what they wanted the hat so particularly to-night for. There's no picnic nor nothing going off that I've heard of, and it's three days to Sunday. Maybe Celestia's going to town with her father. What had taken his grain to market. It's always hurry! hurry! hurry! Everybody hurries the milliner, just for the fun of it, I believe. There's one thing, Elvira Slimmens don't intend to be their slave much longer. She sighs for the repose of a straw-colored house, with a white portcullis to shade it, like the satin cape of a leghorn bunnit. What's that? "Getting poetical?" Supposing I am! Young people mostly are occasionally; and I don't see what's to prevent. There are but four in the interesting situation of an engagement but feels inclined, at times, to express their feelings in verse. There was many lines by shoemaker to some body in the mail number of the Pennyville [illegible] signed J. T., one and, if C. H. doesn't write for Pennyville Gazettes, what does it stand for? I've answered them already, and shall send the verses over to the printer's to-

right; but I wouldn't have anybody know for the world that I was so jealous. I wouldn't say it to anybody if I was asked; but I [illegible] you, because I know you'd like to hear it.

"Long as there's water in the sea, [illegible]
[illegible]
My [illegible]—"

I've left the last word there, so that the public might not guess too much of what is too sacred to betray. This blue ribbon, Clara! Blue is a sweet colour. The language of blue is constancy. It's so romantic to have the virgin affections true to one—

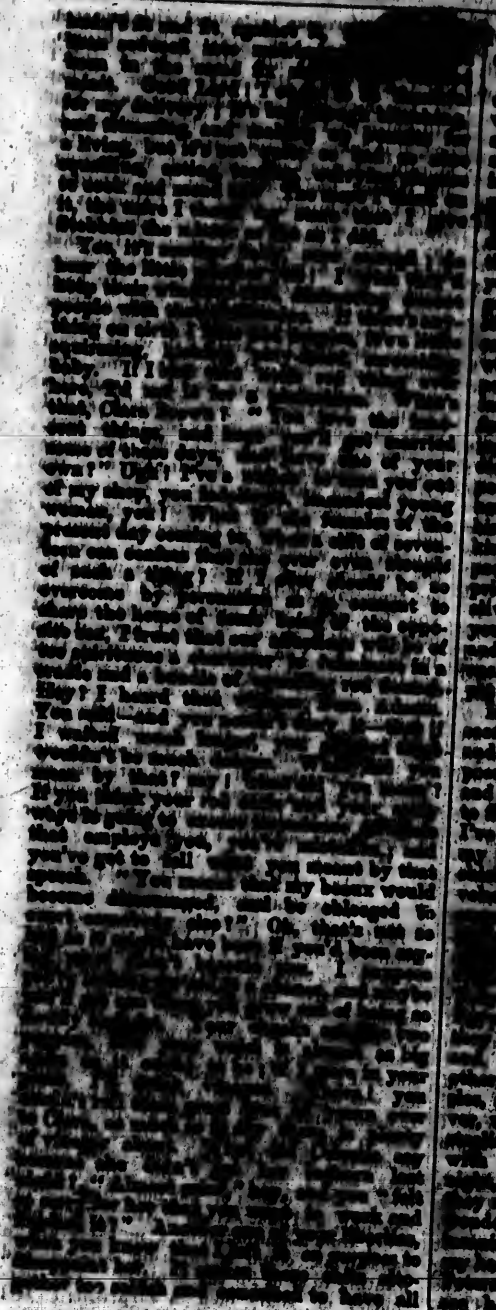
For the land's sake! as true as I'm alive, if there isn't Stebbins come home—it's he, too—and a woman with him, that ain't his mother! She's got white ribbons on her bonnet and a white veil; and he's helping her out as if he was treading on eggs. "She looks like a bride," say! was that what you said? She does, that's a fact; and I'll bet that heartless Stebbins has been up and getting married, without letting anybody know it, and his first wife scarcely cold in her grave. It's just ten months Tuesday since the funeral, when he took on so hard, the old hypocrite! I declare it makes me faint and sick to think of it; but I'm sure I need not be surprised, for he asked me long ago to take her place, but I refused him, with the [illegible] indignation. I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and he a widower such a brief length of time. Joshua Stebbins must have took me for a bigger fool than I am, to expect I was going to take up with a crooked stick at last, and two freckle-faced, quarrelsome, hateful little brats besides. I guess his new wife didn't know what she was coming home to; them children is the pest of the neighbourhood. Humph! he helps her up the steps under that portico mighty pleasant now, and I suppose she's admiring things; but if she don't wish many a month before the wintry weather gets anything more, and if she doesn't have to wear faded finery [illegible] while then I lose my guess. "You thought I approved Mr. Stebbins' prudence?" I do [illegible] proper degree of prudence in anybody [illegible] nobody ever heard me say I upheld the right-up-and-down meanness of that man—his stinginess. Why, he'd steal the cents off of a dead man's eyes, for all I know! and I don't wish you to say again that I approve of him.

She's walked into the house, now, and he's tied his horse and gone in with her. I hope you'll be able to keep your [illegible] on your work, now there's no more to be seen. [illegible] as if my window was made for nothing in the world but for my [illegible] out at everything and everybody. The [illegible] trimmed with two such [illegible] Clara [illegible] [illegible] I [illegible] [illegible] you [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] yellow is the [illegible] I [illegible] [illegible] My head [illegible] you know [illegible] I want a good [illegible] [illegible] again, [illegible] your [illegible] and I [illegible] by [illegible] well, [illegible] talk, I suppose [illegible] wondering who the [illegible] name is, and how she [illegible] come from, and how [illegible] coming for [illegible] you'll have a piece of [illegible] and how he [illegible] to get [illegible] I'd give [illegible] you [illegible] won't have it [illegible] just [illegible] be [illegible] that [illegible] yet. I'm going to throw on my [illegible] and run over and call. I want [illegible] to congratulate [illegible] Joshua Stebbins that I don't care a pin for him; though it positively was a [illegible] to see him for lack of [illegible] she might pick up a pretty man in Pennyville; but you can't catch old birds with chaff, nor Alvira Slimmens with a widower.

CHAPTER II.

MISS SLIMMENS HAS [illegible]

Isn't that old Dr. Greene—yes, it is—[illegible] out of Foster's! Of course, Sarah['s] got another baby! She and Queen Victoria have had about an equal number, though I believe she's beat the Queen by [illegible] this is her ninth. Well, I never [illegible] come to that! When she and I used to be girls together—that is, she was [illegible] I was a very little girl [illegible] [illegible] The Dr. [illegible] is surprising! If I



What! want you to? Well, call again. I shall feel extremely [illegible] about your health. Oh, no thanks at all, sir; I've only done my duty, as one of my sex should do it.

He's gone. "There! gone from my sight, like a beautiful dream!" How elegantly he [illegible] bowing [illegible], till he couldn't [illegible] to bow himself away; but he went up to the [illegible] and he [illegible] knows that his [illegible] has run long. If there ain't that [illegible] Clara, standing at the door, looking out after him, when I asked her to [illegible] she kept making eyes at him, and laughing in her sleeve.

My hand trembles so, I can hardly baste this silk on. It's some of his [illegible]. I knew it would! I knew Alvin [illegible] was destined to see the face of whom she had dreamed, about whom she has had many a [illegible] fancy—that he would come in some unusual way; and now a [illegible] Providence has thrown him into that pile of brick, at her very feet, as it were.

Dora Adams, go over to [illegible], and get me a dozen of them new-fangled [illegible] and a bottle of lavender water; [illegible] the bill; you can do it, while [illegible] and Clara don't quit [illegible] at each other, and making them eyes that you'll suppose it [illegible].

"Oh, Alvin! [illegible]

An [illegible] and that was the way [illegible] What a splendid subject for a [illegible] to be called "The Rainbow [illegible]" So! that's [illegible] "The Fearful [illegible]" [illegible] "The Stranger's [illegible]" [illegible] "The [illegible]" [illegible] is "Alvin, [illegible]" I'll do it this very [illegible] my hair in [illegible] in the [illegible].

Oh, Alvin, [illegible]

[illegible] and [illegible],

[illegible]

[illegible]

CHAPTER III.

MISS SLIMMENS IS HONOURED WITH A SERENADE.

Fly around, girls, and get this shop in a little better order! I'm expecting company this morning, of a little [illegible] order than usual. These new-fangled [illegible] are just the things to [illegible] my [illegible]; I think nobody could tell 'em from the most natural kind. Anybody could tell, Clara Brown, [illegible] all night. I believe you're setting your cap for somebody, but you needn't take all that trouble. Who'm I expecting? Why, who should I expect, but the one that's the most likely to come? [illegible] altogether probable that the common [illegible] of gratitude would prompt any right-minded young gentleman to testify his sentiments to his preserver. You aren't aware that I had acted as life-preserver to any young gentleman? Well, if I didn't exactly save the life of the stranger who was throwed out into the bricks yesterday, I did all I could towards it; and I offered him the refuge of my shop and of my—my support; and I dusted his clothes, and mended his coat, and made him fit to be seen again; and that's the next thing to it. If I was in his place, I'd sue the keeper of that livery-stable for damages, and get enough to set up housekeeping with; though I suppose he's rich enough [illegible] any time to-day. He seemed so dreadful sick and [illegible], he'd such an air, and his coat was cut so genteel. I almost wish he wasn't. I almost wish he was one of them suffering geniuses I've read about, [illegible] driven to the brink of [illegible] by [illegible] in circumstances, and, just as he was on the pint of committing [illegible], some sympathetic being who had money laid up in the bank, would step forward and rescue him from his impending fate by the offer of her heart and hand and one thousand dollars in the Bank of Lowell.

Here, Dora, thread this needle for me. Is my eyesight failing? I'm not aware it is, Miss [illegible], don't know any reason why it should. Anybody's hand would be a little unsteady that was all trembling with expectancy, to say nothing of being up late last night, composing poetry on a certain interesting event. Do I know the name of Josiah Dobbins? Miss Adams! never mention that name to me again, unless you want to go home to your mother. I've told you several times that I gave that man the mitten without any ceremony. I'm [illegible] and [illegible] of it now than ever. I wouldn't have had him if his [illegible] had been made of gold. Josh Dobbins! humph! [illegible] enough [illegible] I wish I knew when he came [illegible]. He never thought to leave it? Of course, he's got [illegible], unless he intends to appear anonymously, and even then he'd have to take a "nom de [illegible]," as the French say. It isn't a feather, [illegible] Well, what's the difference between a feather and a plume? I've not been a milliner for the last [illegible] years not to know what a feather is, and I don't want to be taught by a Miss like that, ought to be in pantalets yet.

There! there's a knock! Wait a minute till I fix myself a little. I wonder who it can be; I didn't see anybody pass by the win-

door. Now, open the door. Oh, Miss Grant! how do you do? I was just wishing you'd happen along. Been a stranger about your doors for an hour back. Hain't your poor dear old grandmother been succeeding in such an indisposition—and the boys? I hear Rambler's going to start a singing-school as soon as this weather and long evenings comes; and I hope the rumour's true, for I've been thinking of joining the school myself, as a powerful voice like mine hain't used to church music is always a help to the rest; that is, if I'm a resident of Pinery ville at that time, which maybe I shan't be. Nay, I don't know as I expect to set up the millinery business in any other spot; but I may take a fancy to quit it altogether. "Two yards of scarlet ribbon, wide"—here it is, if it suits you. It's for a cash, I reckon, as 'twas to the party that I hear is coming off next week. I said about bonnets yesterday that you didn't exactly fancy. You said that you thought you wouldn't take it; but I'm gettin' up another to be done against Sunday, that I shall try to have satisfactory; and I'll promise you not to make another like it for anybody in Pennyville. I'm not particular about the money till the end of the month; your father is always good pay. Old you hear of the dreadful accident? No? In a gondola? Yesterday—it was yesterday. Oh, dear me! I hain't got over it yet! I expect you'll see an account of it in the Eagle, when it comes out Saturday. No, they warn't killed; but they come as near it as they could and hope to survive. You see I was standing quietly in my shop, selling that nasty bonnet, and never dreaming of any trouble, and I heard a furious rattling down the street, and I run to the door, and there was the sweetest dark-eyed young gentleman that I never set eyes on last come before, a stranger in the place, stopping at the tavern, coming looking down the road as hard as the could kick, jumping and tearing like mad. I set in to scream 'runaway,' and my heart rise up in my mouth, for he's an ugly creature; and there he was in such imminent danger, for he couldn't guide him at all, though he held on to the reins bravely, and kept his seat until he picked for that brick heap across yonder; and then I screamed for I give up all for lost; but, resolved I'd rescue him, or perish in the attempt, I ran right out in the road before the furious animal, throwed up my arms, and would have stopped him; but it was too late. He had smashed into the brick, and the buggy upset, and the gentleman was thrown into them head first; and I picked him up for dead. But, after I'd carried him into the house, and bathed his brow with camphire, and rubbed his hands, and administered his child-bearers to give him ale, he survived, and, after awhile, was able to ascertain that he was not mortally killed. His cost was all torn to flinders. It took me two hours handsome to up so that he could get back to the tavern with it. Five and sixpence for the ribbon; quick's no; that's right. Tell your mother I've got some dress-caps now that another company anything I've had before. I said two to Squire Walden's wife, she liked 'em so well. Good-day. Come in to-morrow, and get some bonnets.

Two o'clock! This is the longest day I've ever lived for some time. Don't seem to be my business doings neither. I shall break up if things go on at this rate. What's that on the other side of the road? It's—no it isn't, either; it's only Jim Williams. Open the door, Dora. There's somebody knocking. Come, my love, will you be so kind as to hand me—Goodness! what a cunning-looking little thing! "Mother wants a skein of blue worsted." Well, speak out, and don't stammer so. Here, it is; though I don't see why you didn't go to the draper and mercer store, and not bother me with your pennies. Alvira Simmons is not so poverty-stricken yet as to be obleeged to sell a cent's worth o' silk. There, go along with you!

That's six times if it's once, that Emmeline Jones has passed this window to-day. She ought to be ashamed of herself! gad, gadding about, and her poor mother at home washing for a living! Perhaps she is going of errands? Pooh! perhaps she isn't. She's an idle, good-for-nothing girl, I make no doubt; sailing by in that old shawl as if she was a princess. She thinks those great black eyes of hers is going to save her the trouble of working for a living, as honest people have to. Some folks pretend she's got the consumption; and her mother makes a fool of her, nursing her up, and taking all the work on her own shoulders; but if there's any two things I can't abide it's pride and laziness, 'specially when they go together. Some young girls not very far from where I'm sitting, may have some of the same notions, and the quicker they get rid of them the better, if they expect my patronage and support.

That's a queer looking waggon, going by. A peddler's cart, most likely. He can't have the brass, as we would see it on the outside; it must be paper, or patent medicine, or furniture polish, or dry-goods. And there goes a man trotting by, as if he was going for the doctor, or running away from the hangman. And that just puts me in mind that I saw a notice offered in a New York paper last week for the apprehension of a

fellow who had been passing counterfeit money. That person that just passed looked like a counterfeiter. His whiskers was all over his face, and he had one of those wicked mustaches, and his cap was slouched over his eyes, and his boots was all in a foam, he'd been ridin' him so hard. What a curious coincidence it would be if this should be the same one!

Four o'clock! Well-l-l! it does seem as if the days were getting longer instead of shorter. It's an age since dinner-time. Good gracious! how that startled me! Go to the door, Clara. No, I hav'n't any paper—rags! Clear out, you little rascal! There comes that bragging Miss Barrows, with a subscription paper as usual. 'Good afternoon, Miss Barrows. Take a chair? No, I can't give a penny, and I won't! I don't make my own living now; the folks in Pennyville is getting too grand to patronize their own milliner, and going off to Lowell and Boston for their best things; and I shan't give one cent to any charitable purpose whatever, and I don't care if the minister himself hears me say so. I'm a-going to quit the novin' society next week, and take my name off the Missionary Club. Charity begins to home. When Pennyville treats me as it oughter, then I'll treat it as I oughter. Only last week, Deacon Walden's wife come home with a velvet hat (*hat's* the word now) that she paid nine dollars for in Boston.

Do hear that child squall! If Miss Peters is going to keep on raisin' a family, I'll move my shop out of this neighborhood. I've stood the screaming of nine successive babies, but I won't stand a tenth. You're doing your work all wrong, Dora. I won't pay you your wages this week, if you spoil that silk—and I really believe you have spoiled it. Clara Browne! you've come nothing to-day but start, and stare out of that window! if you were looking for a husband to happen along. You don't earn the salt to put in your porridge. If you wasn't seventeen years old I'd box your ears for the way you have put that border in. You needn't flush up, and shake back your hair so independent. You know very well that you've got no other place to go to; so you'd better take it easy. My! if the little baby isn't trying to cry. I hope she won't let her tears drop on that silk, because, if she does, she'll have to pay for the damage she's done. You're an ungrateful girl, Clara Browne, and I tell you, once for all—

Oh! how do you feel to-day, Mr. ——? I believe I hav'n't the pleasure of knowing your name yet. "Mr. Wiggleby." Walk in, and take a chair, Mr. Wiggleby. Clara, dear, place a chair for Mr. Wiggleby. Dora, my love, take his hat and cane. We didn't expect to see you to-day, Mr. Wiggleby; especially as we feared that your injuries had proved more serious than was at first apprehended. Allow me to congratulate you upon your speedy restoration to the valetudinarian. (Oh, my! he! he! he! Indeed, Mr. Wigglebey, I shan't take the particle of the credit upon myself. My humble efforts were prompted by the impulse of a woman's heart. You know what the poet says, Mr. Wigglebey? I know you do, now, and you needn't attempt to deny it. Those eyes and that forehead betray you to be one familiar with poetry as you are with your daily bread. But, as I was saying——

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

That is the way with our sex, Mr. Wigglebey. If you had appreciated me in any ordinary manner, you would have found me "coy" and "hard to please," for I'm very backful before gentlemen; but coming as you did, appealing to my tenderest emotions, when "pain and anguish wrung your brow," and your clothes was all covered with brick-dust, and your coat torn, and I feared the worst—oh, sir, I shall never be able to express what I felt upon that peculiar occasion! I always felt as if some such thing was going to happen to me; and when it really took place, I was so flustered I never slept a wink last night.

But oh, Mr. Wigglebey! I shall never cease to remember, with burning blushes of diffidence and regret, the imprudence, the immodesty, I may say, into which my fright and overwhelming feelings indirect me. I can never forget it, but I beg that you will; that you will banish it from your mind as a thing that has never been, or henceforth our future intercourse will be poisoned by the hateful thought that you are sometimes thinking of it, and speculating the rest. "To whom do I refer?" Oh, Mr. Wigglebey! is it possible that you were really insensible at that fearful moment? that you were not conscious that I received you in my arms? that your head was pillowed upon my trembling bosom? Then let the secret remain with me! you shall never know it, for Alvira Slimmens would die before she would willingly confess that a being of the opposite sex had reposed, even for a moment, upon her heart! much less, that in a moment of distraction, she had pressed her lips to his bleeding brow. I felt as if a mountain was lifted off of my breast, when I came to understand that you are not cognizant of my indiscretion.

Clara, darling, you may go and see about preparing the tea. You will stay to tea, will

you not, Mr. Wiggleby? We shall feel it a great honour; and, indeed, we can't think of letting you go. There!" thought we could persuade you! Dear, I presume Clara will spend your sentences. You can lay aside your wrap, and go and remain with her till supper is ready.

"What are the names of these young ladies?" You make me smile, for really I never think of them except as children; but they are growing up, I believe. Clara and Dora, two very pretty names; and they are nice enough girls, but foolish and giddy, like all apprentices. How do you like our village to-day? Have you perambulated about it sufficiently to be familiar with its principal localities? I trust you will find objects to retain you here a number of weeks. It's so seldom we have a stranger among us, that he is quite a treat, especially to me, who feel so much the want of congenial, intelligent society among the young of my own age. Did you say you was a painter, Mr. Wigglebey? No? I thought perhaps you might be. What is your place of residence, when you are at home? Boston! Allow me to congratulate you upon being a citizen of the "Athins of America," as our speaker said, at the last meeting of our Lyceum. You must attend our Lyceum, Mr. Wigglebey. We are quite proud of it. We have some excellent compositions, and some of the most instructive and exciting discussions. All our leading people take a part in it, including the minister and Squire Grant; and there is an occasional poetical suffusion from—I won't say who. It's a great secret; and there's great curiosity among the young men to find out who their "talented and unknown contributor is." You wouldn't guess it was me, now, would you, Mr. Wigglebey? I don't know that there's anything romantic in my appearance, but my ringlets and my pensive expression. Oh, now, you get out, Mr. Wigglebey! you're only trying to flatter me! Would you have known from the first glance that I "was a creature of the imagination, that there was but little that was real and substantial about me?" "She's all my fancy painted her"—how sweetly you quoted that, Mr. Wigglebey! Now, I'm sure you must be a poet. If you're fond of verse, I can read you some composed by a very dear friend of mine, no longer ago than last night, upon a certain subject interesting to both of us. I have them here; I just slipped them in my bosom to have them handy to look at, to remind me of the most thrilling incidents of my life. The authoress hasn't quite fixed upon a title-page yet, but thinks of calling it by some name that will be suggestive of the catastrophe. After you've heard them, you'll be good enough, maybe, to give her the benefit of your opinion. Hem! I hope you'll like them, Miss—"

The shadow of night was falling fast,
As through the vale a youth passed—

(That's a grammar license about the shadow, as it was quite early in the forenoon; but nobody expects poetry to be fastidious.)

A youth arose over new hats o,
Whose footsteps stood pressed, pinioned, and sore;
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

His brow was sad; his eyes beneath
Flashed like a dagger in its sheath;
While from a clarionet loud rung
The accents of that well-known tongue—
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

The hotel, wide standing about the ruins,
The tavern was fragrance in his veins,
As, greeting every stump and plank,
Still from his lips escaped this groan;
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

Aroused by the approaching peace,
The rural swarmed full of men and boys,
All "Stop him! stop him!" loud they call;
But he was deaf to all of all.
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

(Getting out of the sight of all is illustrious of the intense speed of his progress.)

Alvira, by the crowd amazed,
From out her window swiftly gazed;
She saw his danger; and her shriek
Told what she felt, but couldn't speak—
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

Some twenty feet away, or more,
Almost before her very door,
Against us a mountain-pile of bricks,
Towards which the wild steed runs and kicks.
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

"Oh, stay!" Alvira cried, "and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!"
She knew not what she did or said,
For love and pity turned her head.
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

Wildly she rushed across the street
That raging animal to meet.
"My life, she cried, "I'll give for his!"
And waved her arms, and shouted this:
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

But wildly on the pile he rushed;
The frame was bare, the boxes crushed.
Half buried in the bricks she found
The youth, who bled from many a wound.
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

There in the twilight, cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay.
His hands in hers she wildly pressed,
And clasped him to her heaving breast.
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!

Her touch restored his failing frame;
He gasped; he breathed; he sighed her name!

(Another license, as, of course, at that time, he didn't know it.)

She took him, living, to her shop,
While distant voices still cried: "Stop!
Whoa—oh! oh! oh!"

Do you *really* think it as pathetic as it is descriptive? My voice trembled so on the

[illegible] people, who [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] I [illegible] I'll [illegible] [illegible] And [illegible] on the table already! Well, girls, you've been uncommon quiet this time. Walk out into the [illegible], Mr. Wiggleby, and make yourself [illegible] [illegible] hear his [illegible]

Now he's gone, [illegible] I can tell you [illegible] to say to Mr. Wiggleby, [illegible] Children should be seen and not heard, particularly at the table. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Bless my heart! What [illegible] [illegible] a serenade. I [illegible] [illegible] I [illegible] my hair is in [illegible] tumbler, and [illegible] my [illegible] to it [illegible] but [illegible] see [illegible] O my [illegible] through the [illegible] I knew it was [illegible] singing now, and drumming on his dulcimer. [illegible] sweet thing, "Will you meet me by moonlight alone?" Oh, [illegible] where he said [illegible] and [illegible] wouldn't talk about [illegible] on! how I'd [illegible] with him, if he'd only ask me. I'm going to tell him, next time he comes, that I own this house and [illegible] and have six hundred dollars in the Bank of Lowell, and perhaps he'll [illegible] [illegible] Dora [illegible] To-morrow night I'll sleep in my [illegible] and then I'll be ready for anything [illegible] happen. Dear! dear! nobody [illegible] what's going to happen, if they wait [illegible]

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. [illegible] MEETS WITH A VERY GREAT LOSS.

Clara! Dora! come here, both of you, this very minute! Where's my teeth? where's my teeth, I say? You don't know? Yes, you do [illegible] They're gone, and I can't find them anywhere in this room. I [illegible] a few minutes ago to [illegible] and now they're [illegible] [illegible] water for a [illegible] you took 'em; for who else [illegible] for the doctor, now, this [illegible] Why don't I go? Yes, and meet Mr. Wiggleby at the very door, perhaps. He was to be here at two o'clock, to take me out riding, and it lacks but ten minutes of the hour, and here I am with my teeth gone. [illegible] I shall [illegible] in this plight. [illegible] Perhaps they've [illegible] and I'm so distracted I [illegible] best, and the one [illegible] new silk dress, if [illegible] Mr. Wiggleby arrives. [illegible] The tumbler was standing close to the window, and perhaps the cats got them, or some little boy has come in the yard and took 'em for fun! Oh-h-h! gor-

hand! I never was in such misery in my life. Them teeth cost me sixty dollars, paid cash; and to lose them—two front ones, too, all times! Oh, mother! mother! what shall I do? I won't that old woman see me without 'em. Oh, I'm so sick! I wonder if they're on the bed? Dear! dear! dear! I shouldn't wonder if that nasty, spiteful Jim had been hooking 'em, and run off. He's up to all sort of devilry. Come over there, Dora, and inquire. Clara, have you searched under the bed? Dear! dear! dear! the clock has struck two. Oh, my teeth! my poor lost teeth!

What's that? my tears are washing off my paint off! Oh, you hideous girls! you'll be the death of me yet! How can you have the heart to make fun of me when I'm in such trouble? One thing is certain; if I ever do find out you've had a hand in this, I'll be revenged!—yes, revenged.

There! there's the sound of a carriage stopping! He's knocking at the door! Oh, dear! what shall I do? I'll throw myself upon the bed, and pretend to be sick. I cannot see him, much as I want to; I look too frightful. Run, Clara, tell him I've been taken suddenly very ill, but I hope to be better by to-morrow, and will ride out with him then.

Has she gone, Dora? Oh, I dare not steal a look! I must hide my face in the pillow to stifle my groans. What's that, Clara Brown? Mr. Wigsby regrets exceedingly his disappointment, but, since he has the carriage at the door, would ask permission to take you out a little while. You can't go, Clara; do you hear? If the jade isn't actually tying on her bonnet, and pretending not to hear! If I dared to step out and tell her, but he's standing right there; and I can't even forbid her. I'll bet a hundred dollars she heard me; and she'll have the impudence to say she didn't.

They've gone, and I've nothing to do but be wretched. Who knows what temptation that saucy girl may have to make? And I can't even go out and make good my loss. Oh, my unhappy teeth! Bless me! if they ain't lying right here on the bed! I believe I put them there myself; or else them girls have been playing me a trick. How I wish I could find out! I'd never forgive them to the latest hour of my existence.

They're a mile away by this time, and I can set down to making buttuts again, I suppose. And this was to have been the happiest day of my life! for I'm sure that I could have brought him to a positive declaration. I could kill that Clara Brown. The happiest day of my life, indeed? I could tear things, I'm so mad!

CHAPTER V.

THE ARRIVAL AND CONDUCT OF THE STRANGER.

Rain! rain! rain! Heaven help those down below this window, or a person may be hurt with a stone, they pour so! though there are many people out this morning, I don't believe I shall have a customer to-day. If Mr. Wigsby goes along, he'll be more than I expect; though I do think he is the downright of all the suitors I ever had. He's been perfectly inconsistent in his attentions ever since I was the means, under Providence, of saving his life, that's two weeks yesterday. I don't think the most envious creature in Pennyville, even Sally Myers herself, can say now that I'm courting my customers before they're hooked. If such a villain as Mr. Wigsby has attempted to me ain't paramount to a declaration, then I never received one. Six evenings, two prayer-meetings—besides the one I lost on account of displaying my teeth—right calls in the daytime, and twice in the evening, walking home by my side from church, in the presence of the whole congregation—why, any jury in the land, that had a spark of gentleness in its breast for the feminine sex, who had a wife, or a mother, or a daughter, or a sister whose heart it did not wrench wantonly to[rn] with, would give me damages in case Mr. Wigsby should back out at the hour. But I'd rather have Mr. him five thousand dollars without him; and I don't think he has the least idea of retreating. I think he grows more ardorous at every interview. He squeezed my hand so respectfully, when he lifted me out of the buggy yesterday, I looked into his eyes to see if he meant anything, and he gave me such a glance! I declare I could hardly walk to the door without his assistance. What attractive eyes he's got, as black as this piece of ribbon, and as bright as spangles, and such a pitiful smile in them. What convinces me more than anything else of the sincerity of his attentions is the frankness with which he has told me all about himself. It seems he came to Pennyville to do some law business for his father, who owns property out here about six miles—he showed it to me the last time we drove out together, and 'twas there he was going that time when Smith's broncky horse threw him out, and he was borne into my shop, and recovered through my exertions—and he didn't expect to be retained more'n three or four days when he came here, but business, you know, is so unexpectedly. He's been unavoidably detained by various [illegible], by occurrences which he didn't foresee. In short, he's

found attractions in Pennyville that he had no idea existed here, and he don't know when he shall be able to tear himself away; he told me so himself. "Tear himself away" was the very words he used, and his manner spoke volumes. Now, Clara Brown, what's your face so red for? and you're crumpling that lace all up, with your carelessness. I never see a girl change as you have the last two weeks; you seem not to know whether you're standing on your head or your feet, more'n *half* the time, and I've had to rip out and do over full three-quarters of your work. I'm thankful my days in the apprentice line are pretty much over, for you'd better believe I'll shut up shop the day that I give up the name of Slimmens. I expect he'll build, maybe, on his father's property, and I've intimated pretty plain to him that I should have nigh on to a thousand dollars to help build and furnish the house with.

I want you girls to take hold and manage things a little more—take some of the responsibility on your own shoulders. If you do well and behave yourselves, there's no knowing but I may be induced to rent you the shop, and let you go along for yourselves. 'Tennyvate, I want you to take hold now, for I've got sewing of my own to do; I've sewed for other folks along long enough. I'm going to scallop the collar and cuffs of that night-gown I'm making, and put tape trimming all around the edge; then I've ruffles to hem for three new night-caps, and some bands to stitch, and sew that knit lace on, that I did last winter in the evenings; I've my green silk to turn the skirt of, and, as soon as I can make up my mind what it shall be, I've another dress to make—a party dress, you know—he! he! I can't decide which to choose; whether to have a sweet white muslin, low in the neck and tucked to the waist, with white satin ribbon run in the tucks, and a sash of the same, or to have a pearl-coloured silk and wear my bonnet. It's such an important moment of one's destination, it requires some reflection to decide upon so momentary a question. The bridal toilet is always the object of so much excruciating remark.

There goes Josh Stebbins out in the rain, with his umbrella over his head, and his wife following him to the door, to scold him for something he's forgotten, I make no doubt, or to ask him for something new, to make him draw down his stingy old face. I can see already that she's going to be very extravagant. There's groceries went into that house three times within a week, and a paper that I know was sugar every time; and they use three-quarters of a pound of butter every day of their lives, for I asked old Mrs. Grimes, that brings it to them, [illegible] was in here to see about having [illegible] her [illegible] bonnet, [illegible] and [illegible] these things [illegible]. "I don't [illegible] are happy, and I've [illegible] in Thursday day. I saw little [illegible] by the gate, looking as [illegible] as if his heart was breaking; I [illegible] over, and gave him a [illegible] and a lump of [illegible] asked him what was the matter [illegible] if he didn't like his new mother. You ought to have seen that child eat that cake! He never answered me till he'd swallowed it all down; and then he said he was crying because he lost the pretty new ball his mother made for him; but it's my opinion he was crying from hunger, and nothing else, though the poor little fellow didn't realize what was the matter with him. I asked him how he liked his new ma, and he said he liked her twenty bushels; and I asked him if she told him to say that, and that she'd shut him up in the closet if he didn't, when people asked him, and he acted as if he was afraid to tell me, but stammered, "He guessed so—he didn't know; his new ma had shut him up in the closet once when he was very naughty." My heart bled for him. I spread him a thick slice of bread, but he run off and wouldn't eat it. I've no doubt his stepmother has forbid him to stay anywhere long enough for the neighbours to find out how things is going. If she keeps anything that Alvira Slimmens doesn't worm out, either one way or another, she'll be the first inhabitant of Pennyville that's been deep enough to do it. Oh, my! wouldn't I like to catch the first glance of Josh Stebbins's face, when he hears the *news!*

Rain! rain! rain! rain! just a purpose to keep Mr. Wiggleby away, and prevent Miss Grant from comin' to settle for that hat. It'll give my window a good washing, anyhow; and it needed it bad enough. Run, Dora, and get a towel, and tuck around the sash there where it's beatin' in.

Well, for the land sake, if there isn't Jonathan Grimes driving his ox-team in such a day as this! He's worn that old straw hat now going on five year. See how the water drips off, and runs down his back, and his long legs hanging down into the mud, and that red flannin shirt on! It's a mercy I didn't have *him*, if he *is* worth three thousand dollars, besides a part of the farm when his father dies. Did you ever hear how near we came to making a match, I and Jonathan? Oh, dear, I shall expire with laughing to think of it! It all came of that very old straw hat. You see, about those days, he used to look pretty spruce; though

his legs always was rather long, and seemed to fall the way when he was sitting down, or standing, or standing still; though they were well enough to climb ladders and planing machines; but he kept dodging up right smart for he was paying attention to Joe Watson; and where was talk of there ceasing a match. Most people called Joe very handsome; though I never could see much beauty about her, except her bright eyes, and her cheeks as red as cherries. In my opinion, she was right-down dark looking, with dead dingle in her skin, and limping whenever she got a chance. One day, he came to my shop, and he had that hat in his hand, which he had first given two hundreds of shops for; and he wanted me to put a green silk lining in it, and a good broad green ribbon round it. So I called him to take a seat while I was doing the job; and he made himself very agreeable; and finally I inquired, and said said I, "I suppose you'll have another green bonnet like Miss Simmons to-go? the most lasting in this hat for ye, if report says true, Mr. Gritnut." And he blushed like a beet, and hemmed, and said "he didn't know; he guessed not." And just then unluckily, as luck would have it, Josephine Watson appeared at the open door with a bonnet in her hand, which she had brought for me to trim with white. She looked kind of confused at us to see Jonathan blushing and me laughing; and says I: "Oh, it's nothing, Joe! only I was guessing Mr. Gritnut of being engaged to a certain somebody, and he was denying of it; as if everybody didn't know without being told. But he! he needn't have got so mad about it, seeing he's going to have the best-looking girl about Pennyville. It's no wonder to couple that name with his'n, I reckon."

"I didn't know I got mad," said he; for he was a kind of bashful chap, and hadn't spunk enough to envy anything out.

"Well, maybe you didn't," said I; and then, to turn the subject, I asked him if he had heard of the rise in property in Pennyville since the railroad was talked of.

"Why," said I, "four years ago I paid fifty dollars for this lot, and a hundred and fifty for the shop; and now I wouldn't take six hundred for 'em. I've a notion to draw my money from the bank, and speculate in real estate."

"If you do, you'll make a pretty fortunate match for some man," said he, as he took his hat, and waited for Joe to do her errand. I see she began to look grave, and her eyes flashed a little, for Joe was as poor as Job's turkey; and his folks had cyphered him out once or twice; but she told me what she wanted done to the bonnet, and then bid me, very pretty, that her mother was ill, and she must go home; and I see her to the door, and curtsied her out, and said: "I'll be sure to attend to your order, Miss Watson, as soon as I can." I didn't mention I could, unless he should [illegible] engaged [illegible] to wait, I got out of it, and said: "With the greatest pleasure, ma'am." And the door opened, looking daguerreotypes, with the sun shining right on them; I guessed to prepare 'em, because I knew the daguerreotype gentleman in Pennyville; and I heard of Joe taking them; and I never also struck myself up on the strength of his good looks.

The next day, I was tired and in my best, and the new things came to the door in grand style; and I was in such good humour that I got Jonathan to carrying out quite free, a thing never for couldn't do; and we was starting away as merry as [illegible] when we drove up to Widow Watson's. Joe came out to the gate to show me in; and I spoke out just as she got within hearing, and says I, "Oh, indeed, it's too late now to think of [illegible] just as if I didn't intend she should have. Jonathan kind of looked confused, but wasn't quick enough to take, and let the matter slip. Joe got as white as a sheet, but smiled, and made herself agreeable to me; while Mr. Gritnut drove off to stay away till bed-time. We quilted all the afternoon; and I saw she felt bad, and couldn't hardly make herself sociable with the widows; while I was talking and joking all the time. During the evening, I stuck to her beau like a burr to a woollen stocking, and flattered him up so that his face shone like a pumpkin's; and, when we went off together after that dashing horse in that new rockaway by moonlight, I knew that Joe was just ready to burst out a-crying; but he didn't, for she bid him good-night so gay, and laughed so loud, that the fool thought she was all right. It takes men a great while to learn how women will

"Let conceitedness, like a worm in the mud,
Prey on her damaged cheek."

What happened after that, I don't know, except that they kept up a coolness; and folks said the match was broken off. Jonathan began to call in at the shop occasionally; and I expect, if I'd a had him, he'd have married me. But his legs were too long; and he hadn't none of that romantic air which Mr. Wigsley possesses in such an imminent degree. So one day, about six months after, when he came in to get a new ribbon, and said that he and Joe had made up, and was going to be married up two weeks, I told him: "I thought they was a

very good match, though the girl was poor, and her mother would likely be a dependence on him; and, seeing [illegible] on him, I was glad I hadn't given him any encouragement. I sent my most beautiful [illegible] to the bride that was to be, and we've been on speaking terms ever since, though I don't think Mrs. Osborne has any love to spare.

They've got two young ones now; and I dare say she finds a farmer's wife has more work than play; while I, thank goodness, am still an independent candidate. There ain't a [illegible] every [illegible]; while [illegible] is [illegible] in the [illegible] will [illegible] of her bed. [illegible] Dear me! what a [illegible] it is to the [illegible] to be [illegible] upon their bridal [illegible] and a veil, or [illegible] a bouquet! What a [illegible] to be in [illegible] girls, say which you think will become my style best.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WINDOW IS CURTAINED (FIGURATIVELY) WITH CRAPE.

Ten o'clock in the morning, and those girls not here yet! This is the last time I let Clara go home with Dora to sleep. I wouldn't have let 'em gone last night, but I expected Mr. Wiggleby was waiting for a chance to ask me to name the day; and if he'd wanted to stay and set up late, I didn't want them a-peeking through the keyhole. My plan was a complete failure, for he never came near me. Here I sat, fixed up to kill, till after ten o'clock, my heart [illegible] wildly at every sound, and never a knock [illegible] nobody but them [illegible] Putnams, wanting to know if I had any peppermint, for the baby had the colic, as if I might be expected to keep baby-fixin's on hand! They'll be coming over to borrow "Mother's Relief" next; and now I feel as cross as a bear. I'm tormented to know what kept him away; I never did feel so cranky before, in all my experience. I shouldn't like to let anybody but him know how I have set my affections on that man. I've wanted to marry bad enough, though I've made a [illegible] of pretending not to; but I haven't been ready to [illegible] for years and years. The very squeak of his [illegible] boots, as he comes along the sidewalk, sets the blood a-flying into my face, and when he gets to the door, and raps, and says, "Good morning, Miss Slimmens," in that [illegible] way of his, my feelings are [illegible]; actually, I [illegible] the strongest [illegible], to give him a [illegible]. He's just [illegible] of a beautiful man. If he wasn't worth a cent, but were some wandering adventurer, or belonged to a band of [illegible] brigands, or were a political exile with a price set on his head, or an [illegible] obliged to flee from his [illegible], it wouldn't make a bit of difference; there's something in the quirl of his mustache and the [illegible] depths of his dark eyes that the soul of a romantic being of the softer sex cannot resist. I'd rather be his wife, and carry on the millinery business for ever, than any of these Fancyville [illegible], and roll in luxury, and never be obliged to set a stitch nor look at a fashion-plate.

Oh, my! what a sigh that was! It came right up out of the pit of my stomach. I should so like to know what kept him away last night. I laid awake two hours by the clock, thinking how I wished I wasn't more'n twenty or twenty-two, and had my own teeth and hair back again, and was a Mexican heiress, riding on a steed through a mountain pass, with only one servant for a protector, and a band of banditti should rush out of a cave and seize me, and I'd struggle and pretend to want to get away, but should be overpowered, and my servant tied to a tree, and I shouldn't be able to help myself, but should be carried off in their arms into the interior of the cave, and should open my eyes, after fainting away in a graceful position, to find myself in a splendid chamber full of silver, and gold, and jewels, robbed from travellers, and find the chief of the banditti kneeling before me, begging me that I would accept his heart and hand and marry him. I should come to at last, and, when I lifted my eyes to his face, behold it was Mr. Wiggleby, and I was compelled to wed him, whether or no!

I declare it makes me sick, to get up this morning and find this same old shop, and these same old bonnets, and my old sign a-swinging out there in the wind, after such a beautiful revery. The millinery business was never intended for my destination, I'm convinced of that. If Mr. Wiggleby should come in here this hour and ask me to elope with him, I'd pack up my duds, draw my money from the bank, and do it. I do wish he'd come to terms, if he's a-going to. I feel that I've no time to spare, and I'm mighty uneasy about losing him; there isn't a girl in the village but would jump at the chance of becoming Mrs. Wiggleby. I've told him, point-blank, that I was worth three times what I am, for I knew it would be the only way to keep him, when there was plenty of "sweet seventeens" a-sighing for him. But I wish he'd come to terms! If there's anybody in the world that has had cause to realize that "a bird in the

hand is worth two in the bush," it's me; and I with Mr. Wigsleby was safe in my hand. I had an unaccountable sinking at the pit of the stomach this morning.

Those girls weren't up right yet. They won't find me in the best of humour; they'll have to have a better excuse than there's any danger of _ if they escape my wrath this time. Half-past ten of a Monday, and they not here to begin work! Such conduct is unprecedented! The sooner they come to losing of eggs, the more likewise they take. If I ever treat them another morning, it's now. There's those eight Lochaven and three Dunstable to be hung in the blanch-house, and that bonnet I didn't get done Saturday, on account of going out a-riding with Mr. Wigsleby, to be sent home, and them children's fichu to be lined and trimmed to-day, and I wanted to get down peaceably to my own sewing. The hops-work isn't stowed on to that night-gown yet, and there's no telling how soon it'll be required. If he would happen along to apologize for not coming to keep Sunday night, I shouldn't mind their tardiness to-morrow, but he don't coming. I've looked up and down till my eyes ache, and that's all the good it's done.

I think that girl Clara had got altogether more vanity and pride than's good for her. What does she do but buy one of my prettiest white bonnets—a velvet one, with a plume—Saturday night, and pay for it out of her own pocket. I didn't know she had saved up so much. She's not her cap for somebody, or she wouldn't have been guilty of such extravagance. I told her plainly I didn't think a velvet bonnet would be very suitable to her condition, and she said if she earned it and could pay for it, she didn't know who had a right to interfere; and then she tried it on and looked in the glass, and asked Dora if it wasn't sweet. I know she was thinking all the time that a pretty bonnet made a certain pretty face look handsomer still; and when somebody knocked and Mr. Wigsleby walked in, I could have scratched her eyes out, she turned to him so coaxy, with her cheeks all in a glow, and asked him how he liked her selection. She did look outrageously handsome just then; and I was on nettles till I'd thought of a way of taking her down, by asking her how many weeks' wages, at seventy-five cents a week, it would take for a village girl to buy a nine-dollar bonnet, and that I thought it would be very extravagant with a certain coloured merino shawl.

Seven o'clock! Well, this beats all! I'll put on my bonnet and go after them, straightways in less than five minutes; and I'll tell Dora's mother if she doesn't keep 'em in better order, she needn't expect I'll do any more for 'em. That's Dora now—no, it isn't—yes, it is; Dora Adams coming along alone, as clear as if she was marching to a funeral, and not a sign to be seen of Clara. I wonder what's that she's got in her hand, wrapped up in paper, and how she dares to take her time in this manner.

So, Miss, you've got along, have you? Of course, you've an excellent excuse, something entirely satisfactory, for staying away till this hour, and putting the work back of a Monday morning. Where's Clara? Sick, I suppose, with cutting-up of a Sabbath evening. What's that? You needn't stammer so, Dora Adams! You ain't stammering! Well, speak out, then. WHAT? "Clara was married to Mr. Wigsleby at nine o'clock this morning, and hopes you'll forgive her for not finishing out her time, as her husband is willing to make it all right if there's any discretion, and she sends her card and a piece of the wedding-cake, with their compliments." Me, I never will forgive her—you know I never will, Dora Adams! Throw that wedding-cake out in the street—throw it out, I say—and that card. I'll sue 'em both for damages! I'll sue her for her time, and him for a breach of promise. I'll break 'em up and ruin 'em, that I will! the deceitful, ungrateful, sly, tricky—hard-hearted — scandalous — outrageous — creatures! Hand me the camphire, quick! I'm swooning-co-cos-coming! The camphire!

Yes, I'm better now! Stand off! don't go to leaning over me with your pretence of being sorry! You've aided and abetted in this wicked conspiracy! I see it all now! No wonder I was overcome at the ingratitude of that serpent that I've nourished in my bosom, as it were, for the last three years! treated her as if she was my own sister, learnt her how to trim and do up bonnets in the best style, fitted her out to get her own living, and now she's rewarded my care and trouble by going off and getting married without so much as even asking my advice, and she with no mother to advise her, the bold, indelicate thing! to a perfect stranger, too. Flown from the protecting influences of my shop into the arms of a man! gone off with one of the male sex that she hasn't known over six weeks! How does she know but what he's got two or three wives already—but that he's a Brigham Young in disguise? I hope he is. I hope and trust she'll get some up with for her undecent behaviour.

"You don't know as it's anything so unpardonable for a girl to get married, especially a poor girl, when she has a good chance?" No doubt you'd like to try the experiment yourself. How do you, or she,

or anybody know, that Mr. Wigsbby is a good character? How do you know but what he's a runaway forger—I see one advertised not a month ago—or a gambler, or a confirmed malefactor?

"Your mother wrote and ascertained all about him—that he was a most excellent young man!" Pretty business for a mother to be in! get up mistakes for other people! If she'n upheld Clara Brown in this step to deceive and defraud me, do you go home to her, and tell her I've seen enough of you. Never do you darken my doors again, Dora Adams! I've had enough of prentice-girls bringing disgrace on my shop. There! you needn't flash up in that style! Isn't it a disgrace to have a young girl running off, and eloping with a stranger from the roof that sheltered her and the shop that learned her to bleach and trim, and the woman that took her in when she was a penniless orphan, with neither father nor mother? What's that? "I *did* take her in more ways than one!" Clear out, I say! go home to your mother, and run away with the first counter-jitter that comes along. I thank Heaven I've kept out of such scrapes, if I have had my own way to make in the world! Go along with you! you needn't stop to look for your thimble. I'll send it home on a dray to your ladyship—hire a horse and cart a purpose. Go along, I say, and take in washing for a living, as your mother had to, before you came to me to eat and drink at my expense, and learn the trade of the best milliner in Pennyville. Not a word! I won't listen!

She's gone, and I'm "alone with my grief." Oh, Alvira, Alvira Slimmens! you built your house upon a sandy foundation, and now it's tumbled down, and buried your heart in its ruins. Didn't I say a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush? as I've proved to my own satisfaction long ago. I'll never forgive them! I'll ruin them, if it's in my power! I'll sue him for five thousand dollars, and bring his own wife in to prove his perjury. His wife! Oh, Wigsbby! Wigsbby! I allowed myself to lie awake, and dream that that term of endearment would be applied to me. I can't be as mad at you as I want to be. I ain't half so mad at you as I was at Joshua Stebbins; but I feel a good deal worse. I may just as well give up, and be an old maid, and done with it. I'll never put my hair in papers again; and, if I didn't need 'em to eat with, I believe I'd sell my teeth. Crying? Yes, the tears is incessantly washing the paint all into streaks on my cheeks; and I stand here before the glass, and see it, and don't care a cent. I never felt so completely used up before. I'm worse off than the old woman that was "getting and contriving all day to get a nightcap out of a sheet." I've been plotting and contriving for twenty odd years to get a husband, and I hain't got one yet; and the material is all used up; and this last is the unkindest cut of all.

"Oh, ever since, from childhood's hour,
I've seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away!
I never nursed a dear young maid,
That froze my young heart to stone,
Blasting his wreath as woman can,
But left, as even he not well."

I'll shet and look the door! There she'n't a customer get in this day! I'll look the door, and put down the curtain before the window, and take off my hook-braid, and take out my teeth, and unlace my corset, and hang up my hoop, and go in my bedroom, and have a good, comfortable cry!

CHAPTER VII.

JOSHUA STEBBINS'S WIFE'S FIRST TEA-PARTY.

Good-morning, Miss Peters; glad to see you out again, after your sickness. Take a chair and rest yourself. Let's see: it's nigh on to seven weeks old, ain't it? and this is the first time you've been in to see a neighbour. You've had sickness, and been pretty low this time. All I can say is, it's a mercy you ain't in your coffin, and Peters looking around for some woman to take care of his orphans. Thank'ee, I *don't* feel at all well. I've had trouble o' mind lately; them 'ere nieces of mine behaved so shamelessly, and I've had other troubles besides. There's nothing brings the wrinkles so quick as trepidations of the mind, Miss Peters. I shouldn't wonder if I looked as much as thirty years old, since Clara Brown played me that trick. I hadn't any heart to fix up any for several days, and I don't know what would have stirred me up to pick up my crumbs, but that invitation to a tea-party to Miss Stebbins's. I expected to see you there, as much as could be. Wasn't invited? is it possible? There hasn't been no trouble, has there? I suppose it's because you've been sick ever since she came, and haven't called on her; but I don't think she'd any business to be so particular, when she must have known it was because you wasn't able. She come from a smaller town than Pennyville, and it don't become her to put on airs.

Well, I didn't feel like going out into company much, but I thought I'd go just out of curiosity, to see what was to be seen; and in I, I haven't been so amused in a long time. I believe I've always been considered as of an observatory disposition; I went a purpose to use my eyes and ears, and I used 'em. There's queer people in Pennyville,

Miss Peters, very queer [illegible]; and anybody that's made a study of physiology, as I have, is apt to discover the peculiarities of the [illegible] acquaintance. I felt myself very much improved by my visit; had several of my favourite theories confirmed in an astonishing manner, especially my theory of silly-fastenings—there's nocse, I suppose you're aware—which I learned out of that highly useful and progressive paper, the *Leaves of Life*. This is an age of very progressive progress, Miss Peters, and I'm glad, for one, to have been permitted to exist during its continuance. Don't you find it so? Sciences are making gigantic strides towards some fulminating point of glory; physiognomy and electricity are running a race, to see which shall reach the jail; the magnetical telegraph is stretching itself, like a boa-constrictor, "across the bosom of the watry deep;" the comet is waving his flashing tail for hundreds and hundreds of miles in the hemisphere, giving astronomers an unparalleled chance for stereoscopic views. But excuse me, Miss Peters; I didn't intend to touch upon these extended topics when I began—my enthusiastic nature frequently makes me aggressive—and I'll come to the tea-party directly.

Well, I fixed up in my best, for one or two reasons of my own, principally to let Miss Stebbins see that Pennyville wasn't behind Salem Four-Corners in the fashions. I put four yards of the stiffest kind of bunnit-wire around the bottom of my hoop-petticoat, and put on six of the *Leaves of Life*, gathered on a string, for a bustle, and I guess when I got there I took up as much room as anybody. All the visitors admired my head-dress so much; I must show it to you. Isn't it sweet? There's a whole piece of narrow pink ribbon in it, besides the lace and artificials, and I was a whole evening putting it together. Well, I went early, to see everybody come in, which is half the fun of going to meeting or to a party. There was nobody arrived previous to me, except old Miss Grant, and she always goes at one o'clock in the afternoon. Miss Stebbins—have you seen her? she's a little thing, with a figure like an apple and a form like a dumpling, no shape to her, no style—was dressed in a brown silk gownd, that I'll bet anything had been turned, and linen collar and undersleeves, to make people think she's economical, when the whole town knows she's spending Stebbins's hard earnings like water. Why, I could tell, the first time I seen her, the moment I looked at her silly-fastenings—kinder hooked and not exactly turned up, but just a-going to be—that she couldn't distinguish the difference between skim milk and cream. Stebbins's first wife used to make all her own butter, with their cow of theirs, and this un buys her butter's weak and gives the children that boy of the milk for their dinners. Them children are feeding up by the pounds, and 'll all look like their mother before spring. I wonder how [illegible] has to let her go on so—he must be [illegible] his first wife makes his friends think she didn't know whether her soul was her own or his's. She must do it by contrary, for nobody could ever drive Stebbins; and I think a woman that'll court a male creature that calls himself a man in [illegible] business; I wouldn't make a fool of any of that selfish sex, by petting and pooing him like a great baby.

As I said, there was nobody but old Miss Grant there when I arrived. Miss Stebbins was as pleasant as a basket of chips, said she believed Miss Stebbins and her husband were old friends, and she hoped I'd be as friendly with her; then, after we'd chatted a few minutes, she begged to be excused, saying she guessed she'd have time to mix her biscuits before anybody else come, and then 'twould be off her mind. I was just aching for a chance to peek her kitchen, to see how it looked; so I jumped up and said I wouldn't disturb her, but, if she'd excuse me, I'd keep her company; so we left old Miss Grant to her knitting, and I followed her into the pantry. Such a kitchen and such [illegible] that was! To be sure, it wasn't extra dirty, but things wasn't in the order they ought to be, and I wondered if they didn't ache to get back in the nice rows they used to be kept in. I never see any one with that kind of a span that can know the meaning of the word order. But I will say there was plenty of nice victuals on the shelf, all dished, and ready to go on the table. I offered to set the table, while she was a-mixing up her biscuits, so as to get a good chance to peek around. I thought she didn't seem exactly willing, but she thanked me very polite, and couldn't refuse.

"It's something of a knack!' to make nice soda-biscuits," said I, as I set the honey and pound preserves on the table.

"It is, indeed," said she; "it was a long time before I could get 'em to suit; but now, if there's anything I pride myself on, in the cooking line, it's soda biscuits," said she. "I reckon ever make a mistake. Mr. Stebbins is very fond of 'em with honey."

"You might pride yourself on all your cooking, so far as that goes," says I, as I [illegible] beautiful pound-cake beside the [illegible].

Just then there was a rap at the front door, and Mrs. Stebbins had measured the [illegible] flour, her short'nin, and her [illegible] had mixed the cream tartar in the flour, and put the soda in the

milk. "I'll have to wait before I make up the dough and roll it out," said she, "till it's time to put 'em in the oven." And taking off her check apron, she told me to leave the rest of the table and come along and see who it was.

But I managed to stay behind a minute, putting the cheese on the plate, for an idea had come in my head to play her a little trick. *If you'll promise*, on your word and honour, as true as you live, and breathe, and keep the breath of life, not to betray me to nobody, Miss Peters, I'll tell you what I did, for the joke is too good to keep. I didn't do it out of any bad feeling, but just for the *fun* of the thing, you know; I always was fond of a practical joke, when nobody was really hurt. Of course, I couldn't have a spiteful feeling against Miss Stebbins, for she never did me any harm; and as I saw she had plenty of good light bread, I thought I'd take down her pride a little; so I just stole into the pantry quick as a cat, and put a extra spoonful of soda in her milk, and wet it in the sitting-room in time to see Parson Higgins's wife come in, in [illegible] old purple silk of hers. She's [illegible] with new trimming—black [illegible] the sleeves and cape. I al[illegible]ices her nose, but I noticed it [illegible] over; it seems to get longer [illegible] every time I look at it; just the kind that's always poking itself into other people's business—a thing, of all things, that I hate and despise! I have my faults, like other folks, but I thank goodness that's not one of them! It's been a mystery to me how Parson Higgins, meek as he is, has been able to sustain his place so long, with a wife with them kind of slipfactories; but I suppose it's useful in sewing circles and missionary meetings. It's a very efficient kind of a nose, if it isn't one of the handsome sort; those kind can turn out a great deal of work, and that's what's most wanted in a minister's wife. She and I never did agree very well, and since I've sent all my scraps of silk and satin to the other society, for pin-cushions, she's been as cool as a cucumber. We were uncommonly civil to each other, which is generally a sure sign that folks don't feel like hugging and kissing each other from love. Human nature is awful depraved, Miss Peters, and when two women is so dreadfully polite, it's a pretty sure symptom that there's some kind of hypocrisidism going on behind it. We had scarcely got done paying our compliments and manifesting an interest in each other's health, when the rest of the company began to arrive pretty thick. Them two twin peas, Philista and Philistina Peddl, made their appearance simultaneously together, as usual, both smiling like two cabbage-roses, both with red merino dresses on, both with black ribbons around their necks, pinned with common pins, both with two little water-cirls on their cheeks, and black velvet strummers flying down their backs, and both said, "How do you do, Miss Stebbins?" in the same voice, at the same time, and both made a curchy at the same minute, and sat down together on the sofa. I don't believe it would be bigotry for two men to marry both them girls, for both of 'em together don't know as much as one ought to, and defy Miss Sharp's spectacles to tell 'em apart. I may have my faults, but being like anybody else ain't one of 'em, thank goodness! I don't intimate, and I can't be intimidated. Then there was Squire Walden's wife, as fat and good-natured as ever, with her ribbons a-flying out like rainbows, and her face as red and as broad as the setting sun. She went round and shook hands with everybody, one at a time, asking 'em how their ma, and pa, and little brother and darling sister was, and was so sorry when she heard anybody was sick, and gave so many directions about what they must do to get well, and was so intensely interested in Emeline Jane's cough, telling her to come round to-morrow and she'd give her a bottle of cherry pectoral, or some other stuff, and regretted so much to hear that Billy Thomas's grandfather had the rheumatism, and finally sat down by that tejus old Miss Grant, and got her to tell over all her ailments, from the sprain she got in her ankle, last winter, slipping on the ice, to the loss of appetite that had afflicted her since yesterday, till I was disgusted. Miss Walden is a good soul as ever lived; the only trouble is, she's too good. She lets people lead her wherever they've a mind to; she gets imposed on, every day of her life, by somebody. I don't believe she ever turned a beggar away since she was a housekeeper, no matter how much of a fraud he might be, without giving him something; and she believes everything that's told her, unless it's something bad about somebody. Every sick person in Pennyville you'd think, was some relation of hers, the way she nurtures and sticks by them. As I said before, she's too good; it's tiresome to see a person so everlastingly good-natured. She has no discrimination; I can't respect a woman that's eternally getting taken in by every kind of a compositor. I've no doubt I've my failings, but lack of discrimination, I flatter myself, isn't one of 'em; her worst enemy can't accuse Alvira Simmons of being easily made a fool of.

Did you ever see anybody dress in such hidjus taste as Miss Parker? I could hardly keep from holding up my hands when she come in, that afternoon. She'd made an

extra effort to look fine, because Joe Taylor was expected in during the evening, to see the girls home, and she'd see her cap her in good earnest. Such taste! you'd a [illegible] laughing when she made her depot into the room.

"She wore a wreath of roses
On the night when first we met."

She had a wreath of silver artificials all around her head, tied behind with a long blue ribbon. She's dreadful dark complected, and blue's terrible unbecoming to her. You know how short and squatty she is? Well, she had on a hoop as big as mine, and a pea-green silk dress, that was high in the neck, with a lace ruffle, making her look like a shaked chicken around her throat; then she had orange-coloured bows all up and down the front, and a sash of the same, and her undersleeves was trimmed with red. She seemed as if she'd tried to see how humbly she could make herself look. If I had such outlandish taste as that, I'd commit death by suicide within a week.

But of all the creatures, I think the Widow Wilson bears away the palm-leaf! All she thinks of is getting married again, I know, just as well as if I could see through her. Poor Wilson had only been in his grave three years, and a more devoted husband I never see than he was; his soul seemed set on that young thing, that was nothing but a child at the best, and incapable of depreciating his affection as it ought to be. I believe it was sinful for him to think so much of her—the reason he was taken away. All he lived for was "his Lizzie," she used to set on his knee like an overgrown baby, with her white frocks on and her curls crisping around her neck; and now that he's gone and left her with plenty of property and everything to be comfortable with, she must go to casting reproach on his grave by looking out for another companion. What's that? "You've never seen her scarcely look up since his death, and out nowhere but to meeting?" You've thought her a poor, heart-broken little thing? Well, if you'd seen her day before yesterday, to the tea-party, you'd have altered your opinion. She come in as demure as a kitten, with her black frock, that she keeps on a purpose to contrast with her white neck, and sot down by the minister's wife, and had hardly a word to say to me, but when the men begun to come in, just before supper, she brightened up like a sun after a shower. What do you think she done? Just as I'd got up to go and set by Mr. Hartly, the gentleman who's come as a partner in Squire Waldon's law-office, she flirted out of her seat on the other side of the room, and went and set down by his side, on the sofa, and commenced such a chose con-

[redacted] that some of us could get [redacted] though he wanted to [redacted] an old bachelor of sixty [redacted] says, the [redacted] I [redacted] you may mind to [redacted] Hartly a chance [redacted] person [illegible] to [illegible] in our village, when [redacted] to the door to say that [redacted] I'd been out the last half [redacted] I saw she looked very [redacted] the reason. Mr. Stebbins [redacted] at the flustered look on her face, which had been so mighty pleasant before she went out; but when we all filed into the dining-room and took our places at the table, and he lifted the plate of biscuits to pass 'em around, the mystery was explained. He looked at her so inquiring and mortified-like, that I thought she would burst right out a-crying, for, you see, this was her first attempt at entertaining company, and she's a childish thing anyhow. Such biscuits you never saw! as green as grass in streaks, and smelling of coloration enough to drive a person out of the room.

"I don't see how it come to make such a mistake," said she, in a distressed voice; "I never did before. The company will have to make out on bread, for they cannot eat my biscuits, I'm afraid."

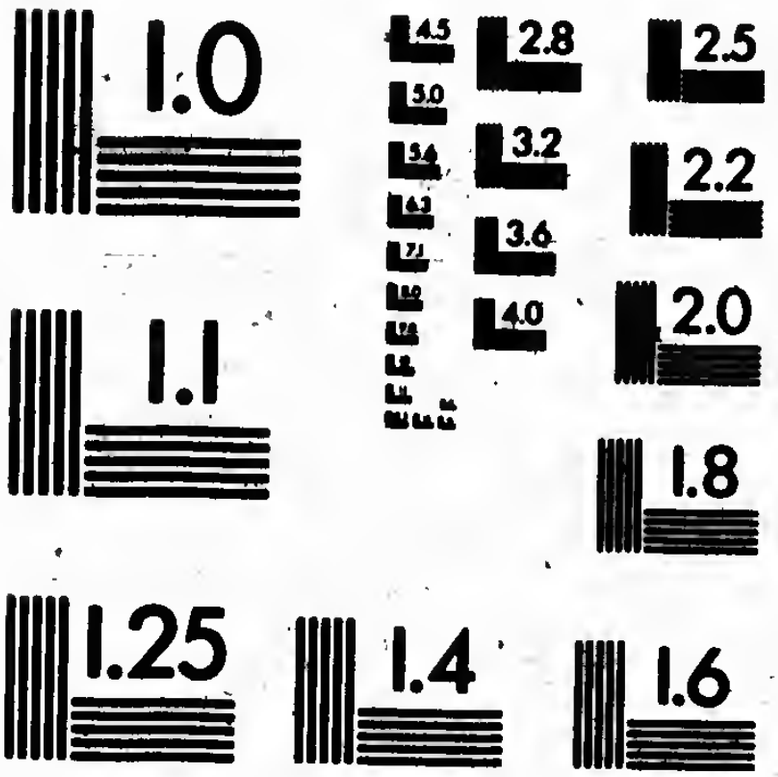
"Young housekeepers is liable to mistakes," said Miss Waldon, soothingly, "and your bread is excellent, good enough for the queen; so don't fret a minute about your failure, Miss Stebbins—pray don't!"

"She's always hit it to a T, before," said Stebbins, uneasily.

"I guess it was because I tried too hard," said his wife, trying to smile; "still, I can't account for it. I'm positive the measure was correct."

"That's worth speaking about, Miss Stebbins," said I, ready to burst with laughing secretly, to see her pitiful face. "We've all sot worse many a time, and anybody that can't make out a meal on what you've set before 'em ought to go hungry. I suppose you find Joshua a little particular, on account of having such a superior cook for his first wife; but 'time works wonders,' and I've no doubt you'll make out very well after a while."

I'm afraid she found me rather a sorry comforter, for she didn't really rally the whole of the rest of the evening; but as for me, I was in excellent spirits at the success of my innocent little joke, especially as I had a seat next to Mr. Hartly, and kept him pretty much of the time after we left the table. I'd made up my mind to impel him to see me home, just to spite the Widow Wilson—not that I cared anything about him—but the forward



thing got the start of me, and carried him off before my eyes. It takes them widows to come around the men. A young lady like myself would be ashamed to practise such arts as they resort to. I'm not perfect, no more'n some others, but hypocrisy and artifice isn't one of my faults, thank gracious! I do think a designing widow one of the most shameless of the female sex.

What! must you be going? I'm *real* sorry you wasn't to the party; Miss Stebbins *ought* to have invited you, though I suppose you couldn't have gone if she had. Do bring that sweet little darling of yours over with you the next time you come! I dote on babies, especially on your'n, Miss Peters, they're all such little loves!

CHAPTER VIII.

AN "ARGOS-EYED" SPIDER WEAVES A WEB FOR A FLY.

There goes Lizzie Wilson stealing by in her deep mourning; you'd think her face was as melancholy as her garments, if you didn't see it all in a glow, like a young girl's. I wonder where she can be going this forenoon, so early! into Martin's store, I'll bet, to buy something pretty to set off her face. Like as not, she's going to put on second mourning, to imitate to a certain person that she doesn't feel so afflicted as she did a while ago. No! she's gone by the store; and now—yes, as sure as I'm here peeking through this curtain, she's gone in Squire Waldron's office. Well, if *that* isn't carrying matters on pretty boldly, I wouldn't say so! What a blessing it is my window looks up and down the street so far, and over that other road that crosses it, too. I should miss some rich sights, if it wasn't for this window. Squire Waldon isn't in his office, for I see him drive away in his buggy half an hour ago. Of course she'll come right out, when she finds he ain't there; for any woman must know it would be highly improper for her to remain alone with an unmarried man in his office, even on business—which it isn't likely she has any. I'll bet anything she knew the squire was out, and took this opportunity to visit Mr. Hartly alone. I'm going to set here with my work and keep watch how long she stays. It's half past nine now by the clock. I feel so ugly since Clara Brown went away, I'm just aching to give somebody Jessie! Speaking of Clara, I expect it would be policy in me to tell Dora Adams she can come back to the shop. I hear she's promised to go to Miss Fudge's, and if I make an enemy of her, she may tell some things I'd rather have kept. Tennyrate, I don't want her to go over to Miss Fudge's side! that woman has been trying to get start of me ever since she came to Pennyville and set up her opposition to an old-established shop like mine. Dora must be kept away from *her*; I'll go over to her mother's this evening, and tell 'em I've made up my mind to forgive and forget the past, and do the best I can by her, if she'll be as good a girl as she used to be. Dora's such an easy-tempered little thing, she'll come back in a minute; and I must say she's better taste than anybody in this village, myself excepting. I find it quite too hard, getting along without her handy fingers; besides, I don't feel so mad at her as I did before I made the acquaintance of Mr. Hartly. Perhaps it's all for the best that Mr. Wiggleby fell in love Clara Brown. Goodness alive! there he is now! My heart is up in my mouth! It's the first time I've set eyes on him since he came back from his bridal tower. He is a handsome man, that's undeniable; but he's not so much dignity as Mr. Hartly, and I don't feel never so much overcome as I thought I should.

Ten minutes by the clock, and Widow Wilson hasn't stirred out of that office yet! She must have set down to a regular flirtation, for any ordinary business could have been enacted in less time than that. Here comes Miss Belden after her cap-border. I hope she won't stay long, for I don't wish to lose sight of that office-door. I'm bound to see *who* submerges from it, and *when!*

Good-morning, Miss Belden! Come for your cap-border? I've got it all ready pinned up in paper; it's only fifty cents. I'm in an awful hurry this morning; never was in such a flurry in my life! Both my prentices is gone, you know, and I've everything to do myself right in the busiest season of the year. You'll excuse my talking much, for when my fingers flies so fast I must keep my mouth shet. I've seven orders to finish by Saturday night. Don't go! you can set as long as you like, if you'll excuse my keeping on with my work. Well, if you must you must, I suppose. Good-by! Run in again, soon.

A good riddance! Seventeen minutes by the clock! Ah, Widow Wilson! you don't KLOW who's keeping an eye on your proceedings! You think your widow's weeds are going to give you impunity from remark, when they're all the more reason why a woman should deport herself discreetly.

Twenty-minutes! I'm perfectly scandalised by such conduct!

Twenty-three minutes and no signs of that black dress intruding itself from that door yet!

Twenty-seven minutes by the clock!

Thirty minutes, and there she comes! Now, if any one can explain what business could keep an unprotected female, and a widow a full half hour in a lawyer's office all alone

with an unmarried man, they may do it to their own satisfaction, but they can't to mine! I'm far from being of a suspicious disposition—I never believed anything bad of anybody till it's *proved*—but what a person sees with their own eyes, and counts by the clock, they are excusable for believing. Here she comes, tripping by with a face as innocent as the day. That face might deceive an angel of light, but it can't Alvira Slimmens. Now I don't really thing there's anything wrong between her and Mr. Hartly, but she's trying to catch him, and has invented some excuse for going to see the squire, to get a chance to make an impression, and that's as great a crime in my eyes as any she could be guilty of. She's had one husband, and now she better stand back and let other folks have their chance! I won't put up with her interference. She'll hear of this adventure before a week's out; I'll bet my head on that. Some people in Pennyville have found out before this that there is a pair of Argos eyes in it that can see in more directions than one; and if a married woman and a widow cannot exercise any more prudence than she has, she must suffer the consequences; I shan't hold myself responsible.

Here comes Mehitable Green. She's the sharpest nose in the village, it always gets into my shop some time before its owner is visible. As Campbell's Minstrels says: "Coming events cast their shadows before," and I'm awful afraid, always, when she's in here, that she'll knock down some of my fancy articles with that prognostic of her'n. It's better at scenting out a precious piece of scandal than a pig's snout is at rooting out at chestnuts. I'll put a flea in her ear, before she gets through with her visit, that'll do the business for Widow Wilson; and that without running any particular risk, myself.

La! Mehitable Green, is that you? Come right in, do! You're the very person, of all my friends and acquaintances, I was the most wishing to see. I've been so busy lately, I've had no chance to hear the news, and of course you can post me all up about Pennyville sayings and doings. Sich a favourite as you be in the community must know pretty much all that's a stirring. Set down, and we'll have a good, old-fashioned chat.

By the by, did you meet Miss Wilson just before you got here? She just passed by here on her way from Squire Waldon's office. The squire has gone to the country; so I suppose she and Mr. Hartly must have had a nice, *quiet* visit, seeing she staid the bigger part of the forenoon with him. Hey? Oh, I don't know; *business*, of course! These widows with property always have plenty of business to enact with all the marriageable lawyers that come in their way! Don't you wish you and I had some sich good excuse for making a two hours' visit all alone on Mr. Hartly? not but that it's perfectly proper—Lizzie Wilson never does anything but the very properest—and I wouldn't say it wasn't for the world. *Of course* she had important law matters, or she wouldn't have staid so long—especially in that private office where Mr. Hartly keeps his desk and books! No, I don't say it! I don't say anything, Miss Green! and I wouldn't have you mention this little occurrence on no account. Miss Wilson and I are old friends; and if I *knew* anything bad about her, I wouldn't say it. You must promise me on your word and sacred honour not to speak of this little affair; for it may turn out not to mean anything. I'd hate to put a wrong construction upon anybody, let alone such a pink of propriety as Miss Wilson. What, already! Why, you've hardly set long enough to get rested, and I did want a good long set-down with you. *Be sure*, now, not to speak of what has passed between us; I've told it in the strictest confidence, because I know if I could rely upon any one's voracity, it would be Mehitable Green's.

CHAPTER IX.

WANTED, A WIFE: MISS SLIMMENS ANSWERS THE ADVERTISEMENT.

Hand me that paper, Dora, that come around Miss Tuttle's bunnit. It's a Boston paper, and has got the latest news, probably. If it should have one of Longfellow's sweet, dear poems in it, I should want to cut it out and paste it in my scrap-book. I idolise that man! his poetry is so mellifluent, and his sentiments always congeal with my own. I've ever regretted that it has been our fate not to meet. If we'd have met in time, the destiny of Alvira Slimmens might have been very different from the fashionable milliner of Pennyville. I feel it within me that I am not all that I was culpable of. I do hope there's some more of that "Aristocrat of the Breakfast-Table" in here. I want to find out if that forward chit of a schoolma'am is going to succeed in her arts and endeavours, which I can see through as plain as a millstone, and should think he might.

Next to the murders and elopements, I always read the deaths and marriages—not that I know the people, but it's so exciting!—and next the advertisements. Bless my stars! Well, did you ever! *(Reads)*—

MATRIMONIAL.—A young gentleman, a student of Cambridge, who has graduated, and is now pursuing the study of the law, is desirous of opening a correspondence with some young lady, with a view to matrimony.

She must be young and tolerably good-looking, not entirely destitute of fortune, of an amiable disposition, and possess a large share of the sensibility and enthusiasm which make the gentler sex so charming. He would prefer a lady of poetic temperament, though not by any means a *blue stocking*, vivacious, witty, and with good musical tastes. The advertiser offers, in return for requiring so much, youth, health, an ardent, impulsive heart—quite new, having only seen service some three or four times—good prospects in his profession—being said to possess unusual talents for the law—a handsome form and face, with a particularly killing moustache, a romantic mind, and agreeable manners. Any young lady answering to the above description, and worth not less than three thousand dollars, with which to pay a few debts contracted at college and set up a sweet little suburban establishment, ycleept "Love in a cottage," will be sure of receiving the most candid treatment, and of finding a husband in every way calculated to make her happy. Address, with stamp to pay return postage, ADONIS, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dora, go and light the brimstun under the bleach-barrel. *(Soliloquises.)* I'll answer his advertisement this very evening. How fortunate that I picked up that air paper! I might never have known how near I had come to what I was wanting, and missed. I'm the very person to suit him, in every particular. If I'm not exactly *young*, I can make him think I am, by the application of paints and emetics, and plenty of ringlets and ribbons. He describes my temperature as well as if he knew me—"sensitive and enthusiastic"—and I flatter myself I can lead in the choir about as strong as any woman in Parson Higgins's meeting-house, so far as music is concerned. I don't just like that paying up of his debts, though I presume they don't amount to over eighteen or twenty dollars for candy and cigars, which all young gentlemen must have, and I'm arriving at an age when it will be necessary for me to make *some* sacrifices to get a young, good-looking husband. Oh my! my heart vacillates at the bare prospect. If there's anything I admire in a man, it's an arduous disposition, such as he confesses to, and I always have thought that I should take to them Cambric students, they're so dashing, and just a little bit wild. What's the use of my slaving and toiling in this shop for the last twenty years, if I can't enjoy my money, now its made? Only to think of a suburban residence, all nestled down in roses and marigolds, and such a sweet air of delusion about it, and *me* a-waiting for my husband to come home to tea, like the wife that Mr. Irving tells about, whose husband met with a reverse of fortune, and my Adonis coming up the revenue, while I stood on the porch watching for the first glimpse of his lovely mustache breaking through the distant foliage like—like anything. Oh, it's too good to be true! I'm afraid he won't love me; but then, as he is in such want of funds, which, no doubt, his father sternly denies him, but will give him plenty by and by, maybe he'll take me, if I *am* over twenty; and when I once get him under my thumb, trust Alvira Slimmens for pulling his hair if he don't behave! He'll have to be a good boy, if he gets pin-money out of my pocket. I'll engage to manage him after the ceremony is once said.

Got that brimstun to smoking, Dora? Well run up to the stationery store, and bring me a sheet of pink letter-paper and a pink wrapper to correspond with it—the best he's got—and two postage stamps, and get him to make me a good pen, with a fine point, oh boiled. And oh! don't forget a stick of blue sealing-wax; and remember to tell him the *best* paper he's got; I'd prefer it with some problematical device, like a Cupid flying, or a rosebud, or two doves with their bills entwined, or something similar. Stay! you might as well get three sheets of paper and three wrappers, as it's likely I shall want [illegible] much as that in the course of events.

You [illegible] to bed, Dora; it's half-past eight—time children was abed. I've a little writing to do, and wish to be left to the solitude of my own mediations while I'm a rolling up my hair. She's gone off giggling, the little minx. I'd have kept her at work an hour yet if I hadn't been aching all day to get at that letter. It'll take me till midnight to compose it. Now everybody's gone, and the street is quiet, and my hair in papers, and my corsets unlaced, I feel jest in the mood. I'll write it down on a piece of foolscap first, and copy it out fair and square. Let me see! how shall I begin?

Dear sir. No, that's not romantic enough; everybody begins that way. My dearest Adonis; that's too affectionate for the first, it'll do better for the second. Let's see! Unknown but admired Adonis. Unknown but congenial. Unknown but kindred-souled; *that's* the very touch!

UNKNOWN BUT KINDRED-SOULED ADONIS: I have read your advertisement in a Bostin paper. It has made an impression upon me for which I cannot account. Suffice it to say that, after long resisting the inclinations—through motives of feminine delicacy, which ever prompts the true of my sex to "blush unseen," as the poet says—I have found it impossible longer to withstand what is evidently my destiny. "Fate cannot be con-

trolled," says Byron, who is one of my favourite authors. Tell me, is he not also yours? But you need not answer; I *know he is!* The same initiation which tells me what your spirit is destined to be to mine tells me this. Is it not curious? But thus it is with those who were created for one another. It seems to me as if we were already intimately acquainted, as if I had poured out into your soul the burning—but pardon me! my enthusiastic temperature is carrying me away from the dictates of that modesty which is my idol. Dear Adonis—there! "from the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and I don't want to waste time by throwing away this letter, so again I beg you to pardon the arduous impulse of a youthful mind—it seems to me as if I must have seen you somewhere; perhaps it was only in my dreams. Your description of yourself is my exact ideal of a sweet young man, the very portrait which has ever slumbered in my breast. Dare I hope that mine will be so satisfactory? I am twenty-five—a little older than you hope for, am I not?—but my affections are virgin; they have been sacredly cherished until I should meet the hero of my musings; and with one of my arduous and romantic mind and exhuberant disposition, a few years more or less will make no difference. My lips have never yet been pressed by mortal man; I have kept the inferior youths of this vicinity at a proper distance. I am not positively handsome—my mirror tells me that—but I am *called* intellectual-looking, have long, flowing ringlets, that curl naturally and impart an air of childish grace to my otherwise almost too dignified demeanour, my cheeks are of a lovely red, I have hazel eyes—enviable people call them gray; but all the poets have gray eyes, you know—

"Eyes of gray
The soft gray of the brooding dove."

and with my figure I must say I do not think you will be displeased. I have ever loved poetry and the contemplation of the sublime and gorgeous in nature. Although I do not profess to be a poetess, my emotions often impel me to the composition of verses on my favourite subjects. I enclose "An Ode to the Moon," which was an entirely impromptu suffusion, which I wrote by moonlight one evening during the past summer, and which was published synonomously in the *Pennyville Eagle*, and much admired. My disposition is gay and infantile, but not so flippacious as that of many young ladies of the present day. Last and least,—for of course young people of such sentiments as you and I are more or less indifferent to peculiary considerations—I have the sum you mention, three thousand dollars, in my own right unencumbered, though not all cash. My property consists in a dwelling and lot, which can be readily sold, as it is in the centre of a flourishing village, part of the stock of a flourishing fancy and millinery establishment, and a thousand dollars in the Jewell Bank. If we suit each other, as my spiriticous perceptions insures me we shall, I shall not object to paying up in full such small debts as your youthful indiscretness may have incurred. As to the "love in a cottage," it suits my tendencies so well that I shall be willing to sell out my Pennyville property and invest the amount in a sweet, deluded retreat, somewhere amid the "classical shades" of Boston, which I have alway longed for—the intellectual privileges of its inhabitants. Hoping that your heart will respond to the sentiments which oscillate in mine, and that you will appoint a personal meeting soon, I shall look unintermittingly for your reply to this. When could you appoint our first interview, and at what spot? Let it be soon. With mingled sensations of anticipation, your *spirit bride*,

ALVIRA SLIMMENS.

P.S.—I send you three postage stamps.

P.S.—If you require peculiary aid to enable you to visit this region of the country, let me know the amount. Do not be modest.

P.S.—Alvira cannot rest until she hears further from *her* Adonis.

CHAPTER X.

SHE IS ACCUSED OF SCANDAL.

Ah! Mr. Hartly, how *do* you do? Walk in and take a seat. I'd begun to give up all hopes of the honour of a call from you. Pleasant weather for October, isn't it?—quite balmy. I guess we're getting our Injun summer, that delightful season which our aboriginal bards appear to be so fond of. I remember Longfellow speaks of it. Do let me take your hat—*do!* How do you like our village, Mr. Hartly? I suppose you begin to feel to home here by this time. Find the people unusually well-informed for a rusticaceous neighbourhood, don't you? I hope you'll make up your mind to reside here as a permanent residence. We shall hate to give you up, now that we have found out what a treasure you are. Gone into partnership with the squire, I reckon? What's that? Come to call on business? he! he! The female sex are not supposed to know much of such affairs, unless they chance to be of a pragmatical turn. But what is it, Mr. Hartly? I am curious to know.

What? Miss Wilson has got out a warrant against me for libel, and you have come to serve it? Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to

pass yourself off for a gentleman, and come to take advantage of an unprotected female in that way, Mr. Hartly? A label! I never said a word against Elizabeth Wilson in my life, never, and nobody can prove that I ever did! What damages does she sue for? "A thousand dollars!" Well, I hope she may get it. These things have got to be *proved*, Mr. Hartly, and I defy anybody to prove 'em. Where's her witnesses? What does she say I said? When did I say it? Tell her to prove it, I say; tell her to prove it! I *ain't* excited, but I'd like to know what I'm accused of saying, and who's her testimony. "Miss Wilson was very much grieved and hurt to hear, some days ago, that she was the subject of false and outrageous stories, which were being circulated through the village!" Well, what was them stories? "That she'd been known to spend the whole forenoon in your private office, alone with you, and had been seen coming out of it just before daylight, three mornings in succession!" That beats the pigs. And who says *I* said it? "Miss Wilson has taken the trouble to trace them carefully, and has found that they all come from Mehitable Green, who will swear in court that she had it every word from me?"—from me, Alvira Slimmens, who was never known to say a bad word against anybody, as long as she's lived in the village of Pennyville! That Mehitable Green is a perfidious wretch! I never said one word of it! I don't remember as I ever mentioned Miss Wilson's name to her, for if there's a person in this village that everybody is impelled to respect, and never find nothing to say about her, unless it's what's good, it's Elizabeth Wilson; and if there's a person in this village that I wouldn't breathe a secret to, if I had one to breathe, it's that Mehitable Green. Why, she's known as a scandalizer and a labeller, from Dan to Behemoth! I'd like to see her, and see if she'd tell me to my face I said it! She durstn't say it to my face, bold and pernicious as she is? She's said it herself, and she ought to be held responsible; SHE ought to pay damages! A thousand dollars! Why, it would break me up, root and branch, after all my saving, and working, and accumulating in the millinery line! Seriously, now, you're joking, ain't you, Mr. Hartly?"

There she goes, now, scringing along without coming in, as if she was afeard to meet me! I'll call her in! Mehitable! Mehitable Green! come in here a minit.

So, Mehitable Green, I've come, and done, and been a-saying things about Miss Wilson, have I? Oh, you needn't deny you've laid the sin at my door! Here's Mr. Hartly, who's going to take your deputation that you're so anxious to give. Now, then, out with it! What did I say about Miss Wilson? "I said I'd seen her coming out of Mr. Hartly's office before daylight three days in succession? Mehitable Green, I'll tear your eyes out, if you ever say that again! It's a perfidious, malicious, base, and unprovoked falsehood, and you know it! Let me at her! Don't restrain me, Mr. Hartly! I want to scratch her face for her. Well, it ain't very becoming, that's a fact, sir, but I've had more provocation than I can bear. Don't go yet, sir. I'll be calm and collective, if you'll remain and hear it out.

"I did say, anyhow, that she was in the habit of *spending* her forenoons, when Squire Waldon was out, alone with his pardner, in his private room?" Will you take your Bible oath of that, Mehitable Green? You'll have to swear to this in court. *Insinuated* it, did I? Ha, ha! we're coming to the point, Mr. Hartly. "I *did* say I see her making a two hours' visit on him, in his back office, the other morning, and that I supposed she'd make a good excuse for it!" Well, that's a *little* nearer the truth than you've teched before. Come to think of it, the last time Miss Green was in here, Miss Wilson had just passed by, coming from your office, and I spoke as she passed, and said she must have some law business to do, as she'd been in the squire's office the last twenty minutes, and that I'd no doubt it was important business, as she had considerable property to 'tend to. That's the long and the short of the whole matter, Mr. Hartly, and if Miss Wilson feels hurt about it, I'm willing to apologize, though of course I can't make any subtraction, as I only stated a simple fact, without the least bad intention.

Oh, yes, Miss Green, I've no doubt you're sorry you *misunderstood* me, now that the shoe is on the right foot, and the right person is in danger of damages for libel. If you're sorry, you'd better go to Miss Wilson and say so; perhaps she'll forgive you and perhaps she won't. *I* intend to see her before to-morrow morning, for if there's a person in this village it would distress me to have a falling out with, it's Lizzie Wilson, who's as sweet as she is handsome, and as good as she is sweet. I hope, Mr. Hartly, you haven't such a poor opinion of me as to think I could injure an angel like her, and an unprotected female like myself, with no one to defend her from the slanders of the world. Good afternoon, sir. Give my love to Lizzie, and tell her I'll call and make it satisfactory to her. *Good* afternoon, Miss Green.

Good gracious, but I was scared when he made known his errand! That Mehitable hasn't half the sense I give her credit for.

I'd no idea she'd carry the matter so far, and make herself liable to the law. If she'd had any prudence or wit about her, she could have done as I done—*hinted* things so darkly, nobody could have fixed anything on her; but a person that's born a fool can't help themselves, I suppose. The fat came pretty near being all in the fire. It would have been terrible unfortunate for my correspondent to come on here and hear that I was in danger of losing my thousand dollars through a suit for libel; and he's to be here this very evening. Oh, my! my heart's right in my mouth all the time. Eight o'clock this evening is the eventful hour! I've sent Dora home to her mother, and slicked up the shop, and now I've nothing to do, for four hours, but to do these curls over on the curling-tongs, put a little more carmine on my cheeks, dress up in my pink silk and lace cape, and set and anticipate. I *do* hope the stage won't tip over, or any accident happen. I shall be fidgeted to death with suspense, if he's not punctual to the minit. I wonder if he'll see how old I really am. I intend to have the lamp pretty dull, and use plenty of emetics.

Dear me! I hope that five-dollar bill I sent him will be enough to meet his expenses in coming. How frank it was of him to ask me for it, and what a stingy old father he must have, to keep such a nice young man on such a short allowance. It's very liberal of him to expect only three thousand dollars in a pardner, when he'll be heir to thirty thousand when his parent dies. If proves that he isn't mercendary in his character. I can't abide pursemoney in a man.

Dear! dear! how slow that clock ticks! It never was so dilutory before. I'll see how I look, now I'm attired. It's hard to pass the time with only one's own reflections. How are you, Miss Slimmens? I must say you're looking your best; you've done your cheeks and eyebrows beautifully. I shouldn't wonder if you took him in. Do your best, Alvira; you'll never have another chance.

Wasn't that the gate! I wished I durst peak through the curtain. No, not him yet. I'll put a little perfumery on my lips, and chew these cinnamon drops, for he *may* wish to salute me, which would be proper, considering our relations. There! it's HIM.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE IS EDIFIED BY THE THANKSGIVING SERMON.

This is a sweet day for Thanksgiving; the sky's as blue as indigo! I was very much edified by Parson Higgins's sermon this morning. You ought to have went, Dora, instead of spending the time flirting around, as I've no doubt you did. He's a powerful preacher, the parson is, when he's a mind to. His subject, this forenoon, was charity; he divided it into nine heads, and every one of 'em was worth listening to. *Some* people inside of the meeting-house must have felt hit, if they'd a particle of conscience left. I declare I don't see how he dared be so personal, as I knew he was. I should have thought them that the coat fitted would have got awful mad. He said there was other kind of charities than giving things away to the poor; he said that backbiters, slanderers and evil-speakers must all of them answer for their want of charity—that putting wrong constructions on people, and getting up trouble in families and churches, and always looking on the dark side of things, was a great and a crying sin. I declare, he might have just as well spoke Miss Sharp's name and Mehitable Green's right out! He described 'em exactly; and I couldn't help looking over to see how they took it. I expected to see their faces as red as fire, with a guilty conscience; but la! they were looking as cool and unconcerned as could be, and that Miss Sharp was turning her head to look at *me*, when she ought to have been hanging it for shame. But when the Parson said that some folks took credit to themselves for being very benevolent and all that, because they ground the faces of the poor in secret, and put a penny in the contribution-platter in public, I jest wanted to smile, for I knew *everybody* must apply it to Miss Tucker, who always heads the missionary paper with fifty cents, and who pays her washerwoman in cold victuals and old clothes. Why, I heard from somebody that had it from the woman herself, that the last time she washed there—and she had such a big washing she never got done till seven in the evening, and her three children waiting at home for their suppers, poor things!—she asked Miss Tucker for a little money, for that once, as she wanted some very much to buy her some wood with; but Miss Tucker said she could get plenty to do it without paying cash; however, as she'd had a hard day's work, she'd pay her nice and liberal in what would be better than money; so she give her a little bag with nigh about a peck of corn-meal in it, and a ham-bone, and a two-quart basin of broken victuals, and a great bundle of old clothes to make over for the children. So, when Miss Smith got home, she kindle a fire with some sticks she picked up on the way, and put the pot over, and made a good lot of mush, for the young ones was hungry, having went without their dinners; and when it was done, the meal turned out to be

so awful sour and musty that the children cried and said it was nasty, and wouldn't have touched it, if they hadn't been half starved. There wasn't meat enough on the ham-bone for a dog to pick; and as for the rest of the stuff, it was just fit for the swill-pail—*I* guess it came out *of* it. So after she'd got the young ones to bed, she thought she'd look over the bundle, and see if she could find something to run up a frock for Mary before she went to sleep, for the child needed it dreadfully; and would you believe it? there wasn't a rag in the whole mess fit for anything but paper-rags. She said they wasn't worth the thread and the time she'd have to put in the rotten old duds. The whole stuff she brought home wasn't worth twenty-five cents, and she'd done full six shillings worth of washing. I wondered if Miss Tucker didn't think of *that*, when the minister was speaking.

Who's that? Open the door, Dora. No! clear out, you begging little brat, you! I've got no old shoes nor nothing else to spare. Oh, yes! "father's drunk and mother's dead!" they always are. Shut the door, Dora; I'm cold, with that air rushing in here a perfect stream. Didn't I see you giving that little beggar a three-cent piece? Don't ever do that again, encouraging the little thieves to come around my shop. No doubt, he was an impositor. He'd have stole that piec of crape there, if he could have reached it when our eyes was turned. I believe in giving to the poor, when you've anything to spare, but not to these street beggars; they're *all* impositors, every one of 'em! I *might* have given him that pair of blue woollen stockings that I said I'd never darn again, his toes stuck out so, if I'd believed the little rascal, but I didn't; besides, I've saved them stockings to give to that old woman that does my scrabbing for me. She'd thankful to get anything! It's a real charity to give her work; and she's willing to take most anything in pay, she's so bad off. Dear! dear! *I'd* have got right up and walked out of church, if the minister had hit me as plainly as he did Miss Tucker.

"Charity doth not behave itself unseemly," saith Parson Higgins, and I knew he was thinking of Miss Grant and them Podd girls. Did you *ever* see girls take on so as them Podds do?—so fond of the gentlemen! Anybody could see they are crazy to get married; and the way they giggle and blush, and flirt round on the very church steps, to say nothing of their parading themselves past Jim Miller's store every day of their lives. There they go, now, in their pea-green merinos and pink bunnits, sailing by, making an errand, I'll warrant you, at the store, to buy a row of pins, as like as not. I should think, after the reproof they got from their minister, they might stay in for *one* day.

"Charity is not puffed up." I believe Parson Higgins looked straight at Miss Dawson's new bunnit and velvet cloak when he said that. She's getting so mighty fine she can't put up with Pennyville fashions. She sent off to Lowell to get her bunnit, instid of patternising me, as she used to. I'm glad he gave her a hit. That impudent Miss Sharp nodded over to me, as much as to say he was a-hinting at my marabout feather and white terry velvet; but if a milliner can't afford an occasional good bunnit, who can?

I declare, the minister didn't spare people's faults, and he hadn't ought to: it's a preacher's place to warn and instruct his perishing-ers. If he'd a hit *me*, I should have said just the same. It was as good as a play to me, to set and see people squirm that had their toes tro.l on.

I guess Miss Green felt mean about all she'd said to injure Miss Wilson. I do believe she wanted to catch Mr. Hartly herself. I don't see any other reason for her slanders and the trouble she made.

There goes the Parson and his wife now, on their way to Squire Lawson's to dinner. I expected to be invited to meet them myself. Mrs. Lawson must be getting rather stingy in her invitations. Howsomever, I couldn't go, for I'm expecting company myself to tea, a *friend of mine* from Boston, the same who called here last evening when you was home. You may set the table, Dora, and start the fire in the kitchen stove, and put that chicken on I picked this morning, and the tea kettle. Put some peach-preserves on the table, and that cake you baked for me yesterday, and a mince pie, and them biscuits. When you've got everything done, you can run home and spend the rest of the day with your mother. I *would* ask you to stay to supper, but I know it would be more of a treat to you to be to home, and you can take one of them pies, and a bowlful of that quince-sass, and that other fowl, as a present from me to your mother. If there's anything else you want, take it, for I'd like to feel you'd jest as good a meal as I have. The Lord has been very merciful to me this year, and I dont want to be stingy of his bounties. I feel to thank him for all his providencies, especially his throwing that Boston paper in my way. I've reasons that you don't know of, Dora, but will soon, for regarding it as the most circumstantial providence that ever occurred to me. Don't you be too curious, and you'll know all before a week.

I haven't seen any one going to Peters's to dinner. I don't believe they've asked a soul out of their own family; and with nine

young ones to feed, I shouldn't think they'd want to.

There's a whole carriage-load of folks drove up to Stebbins's. Run, Dora, come here? Do you know any of 'em? Neither do I. It must be her relations, coming to keep Thanksgiving. The 're some of them there the most of the time. It must go rather against the grain with that stingy Stebbins. Serves him right! needn't have married a woman who brought him nothing but an army of relations. Do see how she flies out the door, and hugs and kisses 'em! Hope her soda biscuits will be as good as they were the night I was there to tea. People call her a *good cook!* Why, them biscuits was as green as grass and as heavy as lead. Thank the Lord, Stebbins got the wool pulled over his eyes that time. There's Stebbins himself come out, now, and purtending to be so tickled, laughing and shaking hands; but he needn't purtend. *I* know that man better'n some folks do, and I know he is sorry for some things he didn't do, as well as for some he did; but it's too late for repentance, and *I* sha'n't be the one to say he isn't as happy as he might be. If he could have got the woman he wanted, he'd have been a different man.

Hurry up, Dora, or you won't get home in time to cook that fowl for your supper. I want an hour or two for quiet reterospection before my company arrives. A meditative mind like mine is always fond of solicitude and reflection. I shouldn't ever write any poetry, if I didn't indulge in these reverential moods. I really believe I could compose a piece this afternoon, if I wasn't agitated by anticipatory sensations. Besides, as it's Thanksgiving, I suppose it will be perfectly approbious for me to sing a few hymns. I don't know when I've felt the approbiousness of a hymn as I did one of them that was sung this morning. When I reflected upon what might have been and what was to be, upon the past, the fearful past, and the future, the transcending future, upon Clara Brown's running away and my picking up that Bostin paper, I felt my heart pouring out in the lines—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face."

Since I come home, I've composed and added these few lines:—

There's better fish within the sea
Than ever yet was caught;
The Lord has spread thy net for thee,
Then trust him as thou ought.

He filled the fishers' nets of old,
Do thou prepare the bait,
Nor let thy faith and hope grow cold,
Alvira, work and wait!

CHAPTER XII.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE WEDDING.

Unroll that bundle, Dora, and see what I bought *you* this morning, when I was a-buying for myself. Ten yards of real Swiss lace for the sleeves, and a whole piece of blue lutestring ribbon for the sash and tucks. Do you know what for? Well, that dress has got to be made and fitted by to-morrow night, and you've got to wear it and *stand for my bridesmaid!* I knew you'd be surprised. It's rather sudden, but you know I always *was* a believer in "love at first sight;" and when two persons of contiguous sentiments meet, and feel that each has met the pardner of his destination, that they are unanimous in every respect, what's the use of putting it off? As my sweet Adonis—that's his synonomous name, Dora—says, "there's no use; let us not tremble on the verge of bliss, but plunge instantaneously into the thrilling fountain of happiness! Let us no longer remain apart—we who have been too long strangers upon the same globe, yearning for each other, yet dissatisfied, we knew not why—knew not until we met, and then the mystery was revealed. Let us become one in the eyes of the tonsorious world, even as in spirit we are!" Those were his very words, Dora. Are they not beautiful? How could I persist against such pleading persuasions? I could not! I named the day, and to-morrow is the day! To-morrow, at eight o'clock in the evening, Alvira Slimmens will be submerged in a new capacity.

I've had but a short time to mature my plans; but I think I shall leave you in the care of the shop at present, and all the profits of the work to be yours; and if that uncle that you spoke of, that might help you to buy out the stock, comes forward with two hundred cash down, I'll let you have the shop, with good time for your payments. Come! measure off that skirt, and run up the breadths; there's no spare time; yet the time seems endless to me, when I reflect that I shall not see him again until an hour before the ceremony is to be performed. He's gone back to Bostin to perfect his arrangements. Oh, Dora, if you could see him! He's as handsome as a picture, with the sweetest black eyes, and such a lovely scarf and clothes, and a ring on his finger, and his hands as small and white as a woman's, and do you know I fancy he resembles Byron, or, at least, Byron's Corsair! I never expected to be so superlatively happy! Wasn't it fortunate I trimmed up them caps and things just before Clara Brown run away? They're all ready for an emergency, and I've nothing to do but get

this dress made and pack my trunks. See! how do you like it; I'd a' sent to Lowell, but I hadn't time; and this is next to what I wanted. I *wanted* a white more-antic, but there wasn't a yard in Pennyville, and I considered myself fortunate in finding this silver brocade. I paid three dollars a yard for it, at Curtis's; but a person don't get married every day, 'specially to a beautiful young student, that writes poetry and talks the dead languages as fluidly as his mother's tongue. Hand me them scissors, Dora. Dear me, I'm so flurried, I'm afraid I shall spoil the set of it. Won't you pull my corset-laces a little tighter, till I fit on the lining?

Make your frock as pretty as you can, for the ceremony is *going to be in church!* I'm determined all Pennyville shall have a chance of seeing that Alvira Slimmens hasn't gone through the woods to put up with a crooked stick at last—not she! Mehitable Green will burst with envy, to say nothing of them twin peas, Philista and Philistina Podd. I've heard of their remarks. I guess somebody hasn't been any worse off for a chance to get married than they have; and if they don't feel spiteful when they see the bridegroom, then I miss my guess. There's nobody in Pennyville that will begin to compare with him. Clara Brown-that-was's husband wouldn't hold a candle to my Adonis.

Snip that down a little lower in front. There! how does that set? You see, it all come of my reading the advertisements. He advertised in a Bostin paper, all about the kind of a wife he wanted, and we've been holding an episculatory correspondence ever since. He's been to see me twice, and we were mutually fascinated. The only fault I can find with him is, he's almost *too* pressing. He was determined I should set the very earliest day I could, and overcome all my scruples with the persuadingest eloquence, which I could not possibly resist.

When you come to Bostin *to buy your millinary goods*, Dora, you must come and see us. We are going to live in the suburbs, in the sweetest spot; he's described it all to me—a little rustaceous abode—a nest, he called it, a nest for his dove!—half cot, half villain, in the Gothic style of archetype, standing in the midst of a lawn, empowdered in trees, a fountain gambling in the mist, a portcullis running round three sides, the road to Bostin just visible, here and there, through the intricacies of the foliage, roses twisted round the pillows, and such a cunning little China pedogs in the back garden! He's gone to purchase it now. That's the business which keeps him from my side; otherwise, he assures me, he would not forsake me for an hour—that is, so but that he still haunted the vecinity of my abode—till *we were one!* He's placed the most touching confidence in me, as regarding all his peculiary affairs. I know just what his expectations from his stern old father are, who keeps him on short allowance till he shall settle down into a prudent, stiddy married man. He's going to pay down five hundred on the cottage, and lay out two hundred more on the furniture, which is to be in readiness, with a cook in the kitchen, and the tea-table set on our arrival at *our home*, when we have completed our bridal tower. Isn't it romantic? I was so pleased with the picture he drew, just like a novel, of our arriving at home at the twilight hour, with the lamp lighted in the parlour, and the servant opening the door to the new master and mistress, that I drew him a check for seven hundred dollars, to get everything ready beforehand, though I hadn't calculated at first on laying out so much until everything was sure. What's that? You should have thought I would have been afraid to trust a stranger? Me and Adonis strangers! What a ludicrious idea, Dora. It's plain you don't appreciate our spirituous relations; nobody but a kindred spirit could. We've been acquainted millions of ages, in some other spear, Adonis says, and I believe him. To be sure, I can't exactly recollect, but when he asked me if I had not some dim foreboding of the shadowy past, if I had not always felt a want never before satisfied, if I had not seen his features in my dreams, I answered, yes; and when he pressed me closer, and wanted to know if that had not been the undefinable reason why I had rejected all my previous suitors, I told him that it had. Oh, Dora, if you'd seen how delighted he looked when I gave him that assurance, you wouldn't wonder at my bliss. His face beamed with a soft smile,

"Like a light within an alabaster vase."

as Tom Moore says, and he folded up the check for seven hundred dollars on the Lowell Bank as carelessly as a piece of newspaper, and put it in his pocket-book

"With a gesture full of grace,"

and squeezed my hands and looked into my eyes. Oh, Dora! He placed this ring on my finger, as an outward testimony of our engagement. It's a real diamond, of the first water. Every time it sparkles it puts me in mind of what's coming; not that I ever forget it for an instant, but it seems more *bona fido*. I was afraid he would be displeased when he learned I had accumulated my money in the millinary business; but it didn't seem to make a bit of difference with him; he laughed, and said so nicely that a "bottle of frangiponi would remove all the

odour of Boquet de Brimstone from these precious fingers;" and then he put the ring on the engagement finger, and kissed it, and I felt in the seventh heaven of rapturous sensation.

See if you can hook up this lining. I'll hold my breath—now! O no, it's not a bit too tight. It's going to make up sweetly, isn't it? I stopped at Mother Brush's on my way along, and engaged her to bake me two nice loaves of cake, one of them to be the wedding-loaf. I'm going to have cake and wine, and confectionary, and after the ceremony such of my acquaintances as I invite are to stop in and congratulate us. The notes are to be sent out in the morning. Won't there be a flutter in Pennyville?—he! he! I think I see Mehitable Green reading hers. I've asked her and Miss Sharp on purpose to see how dumbfounded and enviable they will be. Won't I be polite and dreadfully civil when Miss Green comes up to wi-h me joy!

Eight o'clock, a-ready! One day more! twenty-four hours of "maiden meditation, fancy free," and Alvira Slimmens will be no more. I don't know where the time has flew to. My dress is hardly two-thirds done; and to-morrow I shall have all my packing, and my dressing, and a thousand little things to do. We won't get to bed before midnight, Dora. Your frock is going to be charming. Blue is very becoming to your complexion. I must stop sewing long enough to put my hair in papers. I don't know but it's fortunate that my Adonis is goingto be absent all day to-morrow; 'cause I can leave my hair rolled up till the last thing, and needn't be bothered with rigging up, till I dress for the ceremony.

Nine o'clock! I'm glad there's an hour less. Dora, hand me that trimming for the sleeves.

Ten o'clock! Twenty-two long hours still left!

'Leven o'clock! Heigh-ho! I wonder if he's asleep.

Twelve! *The wedding-dress is done!* Come, Dora, go to bed.

One o'clock! for the last time!

Two! I wish I could compose myself to slumber.

Three! I hope the stage won't be delayed, or tip over!

Four o'clock! Will morning *never* get here?

Five! I hope he doesn't sn-o-r-r-r-e! r-r-r-e! r-h-h-r-e!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WAY IT TURNED OUT.

Six o'clock, and he's to be here at seven! Oh, Dora! I shall never get dressed in the world, I'm so successfully flustrated. Hurry on your own things, and be ready to help me when I get my hair out of papers. Is that cake sliced, and the wine on the server, and the plates and glasses and everything in order? I leave it all to you; for if I should be looking right straight at 'em, I couldn't tell whether they was there or not.

These curls are beautiful; they never looked better. If they'd been frumpy now, or the weather had been wet, and straightened 'em out! I guess Pennyville has been in a stew to-day, if it never was before. Dear! dear! there's only one thing lacking to my peace of mind, and that's the capability of looking into the houses, and seeing the effects of those little notes with doves on them, that went flattering around this morning, like feathers, and lodging in people's dominoes. I'll warrant this has been as long a day to some others I might mention as it has to the bride-intended; some others whose curiosity always was their leading trait, and who're dying this blessed minit for eight o'clock to see how the bride is dressed, and what for a looking person, Adonis de Mountfort, Esq., the bridegroom, is.

Do see how the men are gathering about the door of the tavern, down the street there, where the stage is expected to stop! Dark as it is, I can count more'n twenty. They're there to see him get out of the stage when he arrives. Lordy! but wouldn't Miss Sharp like to go over there and look on, too, if she durst to?

Yes, you're all right! looking sweetly. Did you tell your beau to be over to the tavern to escort Mr. de Mountfort here, and to be all ready to transact his part as a groomsman? How's my cheeks? I want 'em just a little red, you know, but rather pale. Brides are always rather pale, you know; 'specially when they're young and sensitive. Oh, Dora, if you should ever be in my situation, you'll know what my feelings are! Don't let me forget anything, particularly my handkerchief, for I shall probably shed a few tears, and want something to hold to my eyes. I expect to be very much affected; but I don't intend to faint, if I can help it, as I might be liable to disarrange my bridal tournure.

Mercy! how the time does keep running on! hand me my dress. I must say this is the most opprobious dress for a wedding that was ever got up in Pennyville, if I do say it, that made it myself.

Can you see the sextant going over to the meeting-house yet? O yes! he's lighting up a'ready. My, I must sit down a minute! it gives me such a realizing sense of what is

about to take place, I am completely overcome. Lighting the bridal lamps, for Alvira Slimmens at last! thank goodness!

There! I guess I shall survive in a short time. You may hook me up. Ugh! that was something of a squeeze, wasn't it! *Now for the orange wreath and bridal veil!*

They're on, and I am ready! Do you see the stage yet?

Seven o'clock. The hour for his arrival has arrived! I wish it wasn't so dark out, we might see if the stage has drove up yet. I thought I heard wheels several minutes ago. Now that I'm all ready and waiting, I feel terribly. I shall be all in a trimble after a few more moments of suspension. I don't know what to do to calm myself, unless I read over his last sweet letter. Dora, child, be sure you don't make any blunders to spoil the effect. I want the ceremony to produce the greatest sensation of anything that has ever transferred in Pennyville. I hope Mr. Ellis has studied *his* part thoroughly. If they get here in season, we must practice a little before we start to church.

A quarter to eight, and no signs of his arrival! O Adonis! I hope, I trust no accident has occurred. I feel that I could not bear it, after being wrought up to such a state of expectancy.

Only five minutes to the time! Everybody in the church, and waiting—I can see them in my mind's eye—and no bridegroom yet. The stage must be upset, or some terrible accident. Pour me out a glass of that wine, Dora, and then throw your shawl around and go and inquire if there's any news of the coach. *You must!* I shall expire if this suspension continues much longer. My curls, too, are beginning to come out, and it's blowing up, as if it was going to rain. What will the folks think to be kept waiting in this style! I've a presentiment of some awful occurrence. There! thank goodness! that's the gate! they're coming! Open the door, child, while I compose myself.

Oh! Mr. Ellis, is that you? Where is he? where's Mr. de Mountfort? has the stage arrived? Is he coming! What keeps him? Perhaps it's to change his clothes, and the coach was later than usual. Oh, Lord 'a-mercy! What do you say John? "The stage came in an hour ago, and he wasn't in it!" Wasn't in it! Don't tell me so, don't!

He's sick—he's dead—he's false! No, no, he *isn't* false—never! I will not say it; I will not think it; he's dead! I know he is. O dear me! oh-h!

Take away the camphire! I don't want it; he may come yet, by private conveyance. Do not think I am going into church to be married smelling of camphire? How late has it got to be? Half-past eight! O dear! what *will* the congregation think? Mehitable Green is beginning to turn up her nose, I know she is! I can't bear it; I can't bear it, I say! anything but that—oh-h!

Oh, Mr. Ellis, won't you go to the telegraph office and see if there isn't a message for me? I shall expire long before morning, if I don't hear from him to-night. There's a knock!

Only the post-boy! but he's got a letter; let me see it. "Boston!"

John Ellis, go to the meeting-house and tell the minister and the people that the marriage is postponed—that Mr. de Mountfort is very sick, and couldn't get here to keep his appointment. Tell them to disperse; and mind, don't you come back here to-night to see Dora, nor for no other reason. I'm sick myself! and I shan't see any human being except Dora this night, not even the minister. He needn't come; nobody needn't come; the door'll be locked.

Now, we're alone, I'll read the letter to you, Dora, seeing you've known all about the rest of the matter, and I must tell *somebody*, or burst. Listen, and learn what confidence to repose in man:—

DEAR OLD GIRL,—Don't fret yourself looking for me, as I'm seriously afraid I shall not arrive; in fact, I'm prevented by positive engagements. I drew the seven hundred dollars—all right! much obliged. After paying up my college scrapes and settling matters around here, I find I've a cool four hundred left, with which to take a pleasure-trip to the South. In short, I'm about starting, and shall be out of hearing distance before you receive this. Don't tell anybody what a fool you've been; they might laugh at you. You were old enough to know better; but I won't reproach you.

Ever your admiring

ADONIS DE MOUNTFORT.

What do you think of that, Dora Adams? "A heartless villian!" Ha! ha! You think so, do you? Well, you needn't cry, and you needn't pity me. Mehitable Green will *pity me*, I suppose. That fellow has told the truth for once in his life; I *was* too old to make such a fool of myself. I don't want pity. There! do you see that bridal veil? I've stamped on it, and I've twisted them orange-flowers into fire-kindlings. No, I ain't going to cry, and I ain't going to faint, and I ain't going to hurt myself; I'm too awful mad! Seven hundred dollars of my hard-earned savings gone, and to such a wretch! I'll kill him if I have to follow him to the ends of the earth. I'll kill him! Seven hundred dollars, and to send me such a letter! "*Dear old girl!*" Seven hundred in good, hard money gone for ever; and that

isn't the worst of it—*that isn't the worst of it!* I shall be a laughing-stock to the whole of Pennyville. I shall never dare to show my face again. That Mehitable Green will be in her elements. Oh, how I hate her! how I hate the whole set! how I hate the whole world! I'll follow him; I'll track him to the other side of the earth! Seven hundred dollars, and all these wedding-clothes, and to be made a laughing-stock! Ha! ha! boo-hoo! I've got the hysterics, I know, but I won't have 'em; I'm too mad.

Unhook this dress! tear it off of me! I can't bear the sight of it. Take it, and hang it up in the closet, and hang another one over it. And look here, Dora Adams, if you breathe a word about this affair, so that it gets out about my losing the money and all that, I'll never forgive you. I sent John to tell 'em Mr. de Mountfort was sick, and I mean they shall believe it. I don't know but I shall purtend he's dead, and go into mourning. I'd rather lose the other three hundred, and be thrown back on my own resources and my shop and stock-in-trade, than have it get to Mehitable Green's ears the way I was taken in. *That's* the worst of all; I never could stand it. I'd rather pull up stakes, take down my sign, bar up my window, and go to some other town, and set up in business over again.

Look out, Dora, and see if the church is all dark. Are the lights all out, and the people gone away? It's well I'm as mad as I be, or I should go raving distracted; I should be in the lunatic asylum by to-morrow evening. It's just spunk that keeps me from it. There! I've kicked one of my white satin slippers into the fire. You needn't pick it out; let it burn; it does me good to see it. If I had Adonis de Mountfort in the same place, with a red-hot poker to hold him down with, wouldn't I laugh? "Dear old girl," indeed! "Old enough to know better"—ha! ha! Dora Adams, go to bed!

[The sign still creaks with an ancient, and wheezy, and very doleful sound, in front of the window. We had hoped to be able to announce that the sweet face of the youthful Dora was the one which now beamed forth from that window upon the inhabitants of Pennyville; but alas! hers is still in the background, and, we are afraid, somewhat depressed by scoldings more frequent and fault-findings more severe than ever. A certain nose has grown sharper, a certain chin more peaked, a certain pair of cheeks more bloomingly red than ever, and a certain pair of eyes keep more vigilant watch out of Miss Slimmens's window. Poor woman! We have reason, from finding one of her stray poetic gems in a neglected corner, to believe that in the society of the muses she now finds her principal consolation—that, in short, she is given to

"Learn in suffering and to teach in song."

The poem we refer to seems to us to bear a faint resemblance to Hood's "Song of the Shirt;" but as the fair authoress would doubtless resent the idea, we will not mention it to the public. It is called

THE SONG OF THE HAT.

BY ALVIRA S********.

With ringlets many and long,
With cheeks like roses red,
A milliner sat in her little shop
Plying her needle and thread.
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
On Tuscan, Leghorn, and flat—
And still, with a voice of wonderful pitch,
She sang the SONG OF THE HAT.

Work! work! work!
Bleaching and trimming alone—
Work! work! work!
For others, and not your own!
It's oh, to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where part of a husband we all might have,
If this be Christian work!

Wish! wish! wish!
Till the brain begins to swim—
Wish! wish! wish!
Yet never be asked by him!
Ribbon, and silk, and lace,
Lace, and ribbon, and silk—
Yet still keep on a smiling face,
And a look as meek as milk!

O men, with children dear!
O widowers without wives,
Forget the woman that's in her grave,
And take the one that survives!
Bleach! blea-h! bleach!
While your darlings play in the dirt,
When I ought to be making one a frock,
And another one a shirt!

But why do I talk of frocks,
Or little ones playing alone?
I've looked on them with such longing eyes
They almost seem my own—

They almost seem my own,
Because I have not any—
Good gracious! that husbands should be so few,
And the women who want them, so many!

Wish! wish! wish!
And try as hard as I can!
And what do I wish for? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread, and a man.
I've a roof and a carpeted floor,
Tables, and dishes, and chairs—
But never a husband home t, tea,
Or a husband's step on the stairs.

Wish! wish! wish!
Yet never dare to speak—
Wish! wish! wish!
From weary week to week!
Ribbon, and silk, and lace,
Lace, and ribbon, and silk—
Yet still to keep on a smiling face,
And a look as meek as milk.

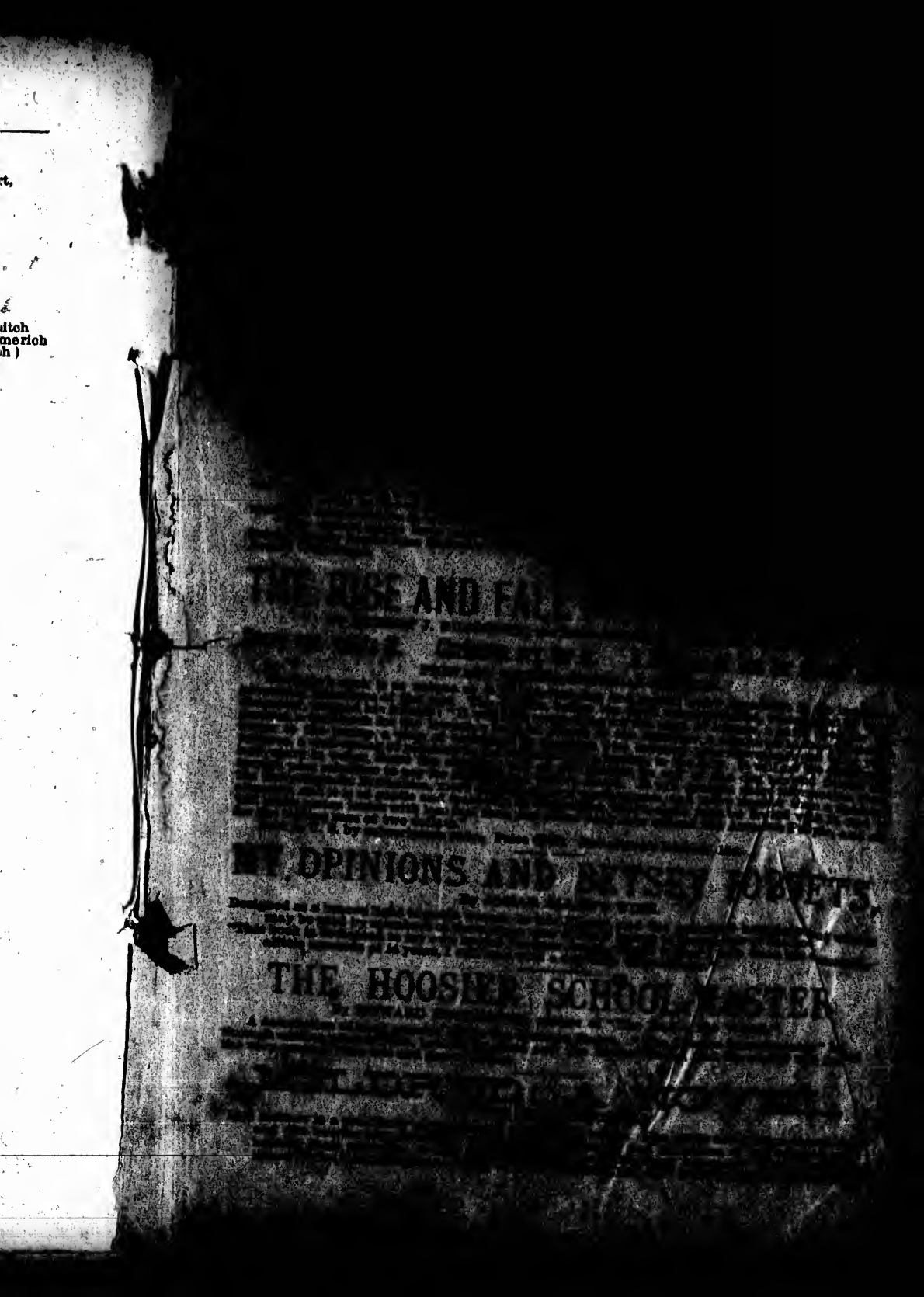
Bleach ! bleach ! bleach !
  In the dull December light ;
And bleach ! bleach ! bleach !
  When the weather is warm and bright—
When all around the yard
  The clucking chickens run,
As if to show me their numerous brood,
  And twit me with having none !

Oh, but to breathe the breath
  That comes through a soft mustache !
To lean my head on a loving breast,
  Without being considered rash !
For only one short hour
  To feel as the woman feels
Who has not only a house of her own,
  But a man to come to his meals !

Oh, but for one short year
  To be some good man's wife,
Even if I were left a widow
  All the rest of my life.
A little weeping would ease my heart,
  But [illegible] their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
  Is fatal to "carmine red."

With a heart that was tired to death
  Of being so old a maid,
A milliner sat in her little shop,
  Following her dreary trade.
Stitch ! stitch ! stitch !
  On Tuscan, Leghorn, and flat,
And still with a voice of wonderful pitch
(Would that its tones might reach some rich
Young man, it scarcely matters which)
  She sang the SONG OF THE HAT !]

THE END.


AND
OPINIONS AND
THE HOOSIER SCHOOL