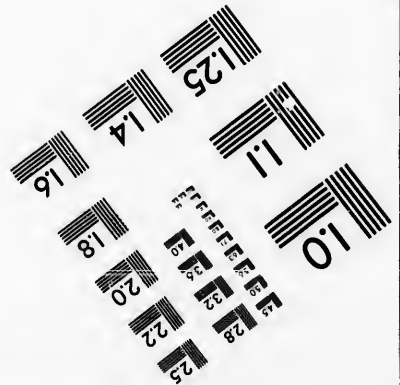
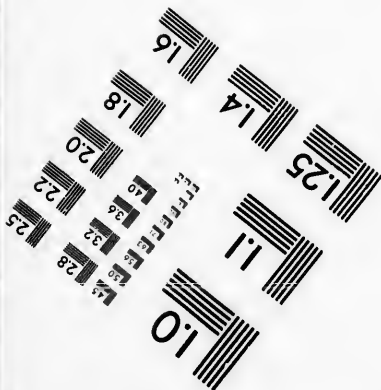
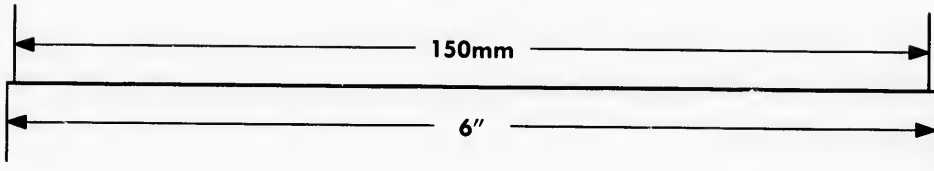
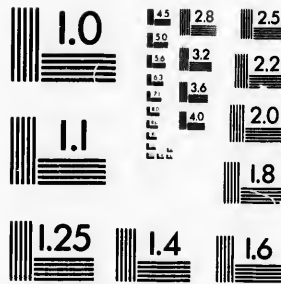
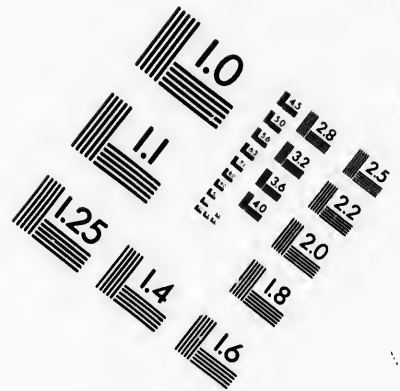
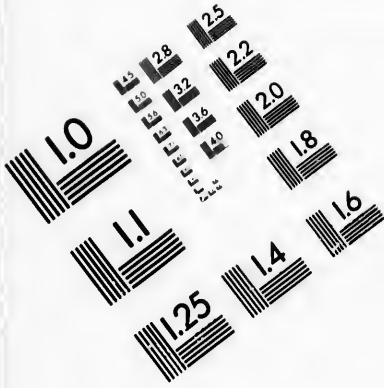


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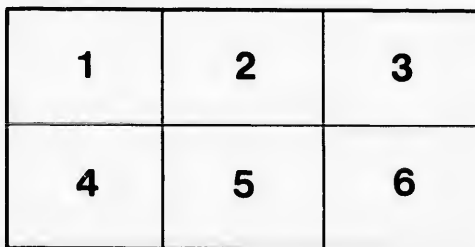
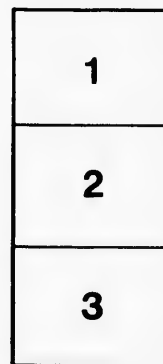
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TOM'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HONEYMOON.

At length we were safely married, and as happy and joyous a couple as ever started down life's path way together, amidst the good wishes of kind friends. We seemed to each other to have been created expressly Tom for Matilda, and Matilda for Tom. It appeared to us, after we had mutually pledged our love, that, since the creation of the world, eternal destiny had decreed that we should be united.

Our wedding trip over the mountains and lakes, under the greatest of nature's cataracts, and home by our country's most beautiful river, was to us like a journey in fairy land. We cast behind us all the cares and duties of life, painted everything in the most brilliant colours and felt that our present great happiness was to last forever. At length we reached the city on our return, and, descending as it were from the clouds, touched once more our mother earth.

Like many another man who had lived as a bachelor all his life and was but lately married, I had several pet theories with regard to the management of a household and the proper manner to get along with a wife. I held it as an established fact that most young wives lacked a certain sense of responsibility and accountability, so I resolved to set things right on that score with my wife on the start.

"Matilda, dear," said I one evening, "we can't be butterflies all our lives, you know, floating from flower to flower. The ants and bees don't make so much show, but they are very much more useful."

"Why Tom! You must have been reading some Sunday-school book. But what do you want me to do, darling?"

"First, Matilda, that you may understand the necessity of shaping our affairs by certain rules and within certain restrictions, I wish to lay before you the state of my business affairs."

"Pshaw, Tom? I hate business. I couldn't understand it, and am willing to

leave everything to you. I didn't ask you how much you were worth when I consented to be your wife, and—"

"All right, but now you are a married woman—"

"I don't care if I am. You said you would allow me so much a month, and I am going to economize and get along on that," and Matilda held up her diamond engagement ring to the light to admire its sparkle.

"True, my dear, I certainly intend to allow you this monthly amount, to do with as you please, so long as I can afford it, and also increase it when I am able, but things might change, and I might have to stop the allowance altogether—how then?"

Matilda gazed at me wonderingly for awhile, and then said: "Well I think that would be very unkind indeed." I paused a moment, thoughtfully stroking my moustache.

"How would it do, Matilda," said I, "for you to make believe you were a business woman, keep a book for all your cash transactions, and open a bank account for your savings?"

"I think that would be splendid," replied she with enthusiasm. "I know I should soon be rich. I'd bet I can beat you saving money."

"Oul you bet," cried I, throwing my arms around her slender form, and drawing her down on a chair beside me. "Just you sit here till I open your cash account for you."

While engaged in ruling a little blank book, and making the necessary opening entries, I found myself overwhelmed with all sorts of questions as to why I did this and why I did that. Matilda's life had heretofore been a long holiday, and the keeping of accounts was something of which she had never dreamed.

Things progressed pleasantly and the stream of life flowed on almost without a ripple. My wife was on the alert to please me and meet in every way my bachelor ideas as to the arrangements of the furniture and ornaments of our apartment. I noticed for

CHAPTER II.

BAFFLED.

awhile that she worked steadily each evening over her account book with much knitting of her fair brow. After a time, however, I remarked that her work in this way seemed to cease. At the end of the month I said :

"Now then, Matilda, it is time for you to balance your cash, and the difference of the credits from the debits should be the money you have in your pocket."

She promptly set to work, while I slyly watched her over the book I was reading. After great labour, with much figuring and counting of funds, things seemed to be very unsatisfactory.

"Oh, dear. I never saw such a hateful thing."

"Why! What's the matter now?" asked I.

"I don't know what's the matter—according to these figures I ought to have twenty dollars and forty cents in my pocket-book, and I only have eleven dollars and twenty-one cents."

"That's bad!"

"I believe somebody has stolen some of my money."

"Or else you have failed to put down all you've spent."

"Oh no I haven't! I put down the last thing only two weeks ago, and I remember everything since."

"That's doubtful! Let me see your book."

"No, no, Tom! I don't want you to know what I spend. It isn't right. I don't look in your book."

"Why, my dear! You can if you want to, there it is," said I, a little surprised.

"Well, I don't want to; you are so quiet about your affairs so I'll just keep quiet about mine."

"Quiet about my affairs!" I exclaimed in still greater astonishment. "I offered to explain everything to you and you said you couldn't understand."

"Oh I could understand easily enough if I had the chance."

I bit my lip and was silent for a while.

"I consider this, Matilda," said I at length, "a want of confidence on your part."

"I don't Tom. I just want to say, I haven't been used to being overlooked so, and if I've got to give an account of every cent I spend, you needn't give me any money at all, I'll just go out and earn some myself."

Inclined to get angry at first, I finally changed my mind, and burst out laughing. After some little effort I succeeded in smoothing the ruffled feathers, and passed a merry evening, letting the accounts lay over for awhile.

Arriving home one evening I was met by Matilda, arrayed with the utmost care in her bridal costume. Her golden hair arranged in the most artistic manner, her bright blue eyes sparkling with suppressed excitement and fun, as the colour came and went in her cheeks, her well-rounded arm just showing with her tiny hands encased in white gloves. As she walked before me in her usual easy graceful manner, for she danced to perfection and all her motions were modulated accordingly, I still stood gazing at the vision, in open-mouthed astonishment. It seemed to me as if I had never seen a more striking example of a glorious perfection in youthful womanhood.

"What's out the carpet to-night?" inquired I, coming to myself.

"Nothing, Tom," cried she, with a merry laugh. "I only thought I'd surprise you."

"Well you have done it, I must confess. I'm not going down to supper with you, young lady, in my every-day working clothes."

"Oh! You're going to be the bee and I the butterfly, you know," replied she archly. "Come along."

The gaiety and happiness of Matilda seemed to be complete that evening, and I was proud of my young wife. I was glad to see her happy, and I was happy myself.

A few evenings after this I was detained at the store several hours, and hurrying home expected to be met in the hall as usual; but entered with my night-key without seeing any one. Proceeding up stairs I opened the door of our apartment. The gas was turned low and at first I could see no one within. Finally, however, I made out a figure, whether male or female I could not tell, crouching over the fire in our open grate. Being very much mystified and not knowing whether I was in the right room or not, I approached cautiously.

"Is that you, Tom?" said a very lugubrious voice proceeding from the strange figure.

Turning up the light I then saw for the first time it was my wife. She was clothed in an old wrapper, her hair hanging down her back, an old flannel petticoat tied on her head and a stocking round her throat. I should have burst out laughing had I not been so much astonished and alarmed.

"Why, Matilda!" exclaimed I, "what has happened?"

"Don't you see," said she, giving a cough, "I'm sick. I am going into a consumption."

"Ah! I see you have caught a cold."

My mother had initiated me in many of the homely mysteries of medicine, and I had doctored myself with good success for many years. Now if there was anything in which I may be said to have had a pardonable weakness, it was the desire to try on others what I had found to be beneficial to myself. A hasty examination showed my wife was choked with a cold, her throat sore, eyes inflamed, head aching and so forth. I immediately proceeded to take her case in hand.

"You must bathe your feet in warm mustard water, have your chest and throat rubbed with liniment, and a bat of cotton put on. I'll fix a gargle for you at once and you must take a dose of castor oil."

Matilda gave a groan, but without waiting a moment I rushed down in the basement. The girl had gone to bed, there was no hot water to be had, and vinegar and mustard I could find none. I rushed up three pairs of stairs to the servant's room, and induced her to dress, after much grumbling, and come down. Then it proved there was no mustard in the house, so I was obliged to put on my overcoat and sallied out for some. As the stores were mostly closed, I had quite a search, but found some at last. Returning at double-quick, I proceeded to manufacture the gargle and get the pail of mustard-water ready. After an hour's delay, and somewhat exhausted with my violent exercise, I reached our apartment once more to find my wife in bed.

"Now then, Matilda," said I, panting, and carrying the pail of hot water, "here we are; get right up and I'll soon fix you."

"No, no, Tom, I can't do it," replied she from under the clothes.

"Can't do it! Can't do what!"

"Why, I never soak my feet in hot water, and I can't bear the thought of castor oil."

"Oh, nonsense! Here, let me give you some ipecac and squills right off for your cough," said I, taking up the bottle which contained the mixture.

"I can't take it, Tom, I can't take it."

"Can't take it! Why not?"

"You are not used to medicines, you may give me too much."

"Good gracious, Matilda! don't be a fool. Do you think you are going to be poisoned with ipecac and squills?"

"Well, I don't like medicine of any kind, because I've never been sick," and she burst into a flood of tears.

I was very much puzzled, and knew not what to do. I was confident I could break up the cold by morning, but indistinctly I felt that I was a brute for desiring to resort to the necessary remedies to do it.

"Oh, my poor head!" moaned she, coughing violently.

"Well, Matilda! what sense or consistency

is there in your complaining, if you won't allow me to do anything to help you?" ventured I.

"Tom, if you don't love me any more, I may as well die and be out of the way."

This was a settler. Thinking she might be more ill than I supposed, I resolved without further delay to go at once for the doctor. The only physician I was at all acquainted with lived in a distant part of the city, across town, in a location difficult to reach by street cars. I put on my overcoat once more, however, and trudged valiantly out in the street just as it commenced to rain heavily. It was past midnight when I reached the doctor's, and although I had the shelter of his covered gig, on our return, my exposure on the way had so thoroughly drenched me, I was laid up the next day, and for some days after. My recovery was greeted with this pleasant document:

MR. HASTY to DOCTOR PARKER, DR.,

For medical attendance, self and wife, \$30 00.

As the treatment he pursued for my wife's cold was virtually the same I had proposed myself, and as— but on the whole I thought it better to keep my reflections to myself. Words cannot do them justice.

CHAPTER III.

BOARDING.

Like a great many young couples, now-a-days, when first married, we had concluded to board for awhile. My wife had said she was tired of keeping house and wanted to rest. As she had lived with her mother all her life, what she had done to exhaust herself so completely I could not conceive. However, I readily yielded to her wishes.

It was exceedingly pleasant for a man like myself, who had been relying for years upon his own resources and shutting himself up away from all others, to come home at night after combatting all day with intellects as keen as his own, and being on a continued mental strain—to come home, I say, and be received with a kiss and a smile, to be lovingly waited upon, accompanied down to dinner, listening to the little recital of the day's doings, and feeling that there was one tender, loving heart in the world that relied absolutely on him for very life.

After dinner, too, how delightful to repair to the parlour, and lounging on the sofa lazily watch my wife's graceful and girlish form seated at the piano as her nimble fingers flew over the keys from one tune to another in lively succession! Alas! all this seems to be ages ago, and I have almost forgotten that Matilda ever could play upon the piano.

Thus did our evenings glide along in sweet

monotony; they usually ended in our going up-stairs, I taking a book, while Matilda seated herself in a low chair beside me and plied her needle, with which she was very expert. The numberless little pretty gim-cracks, the millinery, embroidery, and so on, that she used to think out and put through, often called forth my clumsy admiration.

"To . . ." said she quietly one evening, after we had sat in silence for above an hour. I reading, she sewing, "are you going to read all night?"

"Not quite, I hope. I intend to do some tall sleeping yet before morning."

"Is it very interesting what you are reading?"

"Well, yes, I must confess it is. Socrates has always been a very interesting phenomenon to me, and I am now re-reading what I have gone over years ago."

"I thought you must like it, you haven't said a word for an hour," answered she, pointing to our bronze clock which was just striking ten. "You used to like to talk to me, but I have heard that all husbands soon change."

"Well now, Matilda! Haven't we been spending the whole evening together? And haven't you been playing and I listening? Now, don't be unreasonable."

"Well, you keep so still and you don't let me share what you are doing. If you would read aloud it would be some company."

"All right, my dear, I'm sure I don't object to that if it would please you."

I prided myself on my reading aloud, and I saw at once that here was a chance to give my wife some instruction in a pleasant way. Her reading had been slight, and to me exceedingly unsatisfactory. I was reading *Rollin*, and immediately turned back a few pages and commenced his very interesting account of Socrates. I read along in my best manner for a few minutes, and as my wife was very quiet, congratulated myself upon entertaining and instructing her at the same time.

"Tom," she broke out after a while, "it's the queerest thing, when you read aloud I can't tell whether you are reading poetry or prose."

"Why, how's that?" asked I, a little nettled.

"I don't know. You seem to rumble and roll out your words in such an odd way."

I proceeded, trying to rumble a little less. Getting interested myself as I reached the trial and death of Socrates, I almost forgot who it was I was reading to, and breaking away from the book, proceeded in a half speech, half soliloquy.

"It is the most astonishing feature in the history of Athens, producing as she did so

many great men, warriors, poets, statesmen, and philosophers, that almost without exception she compelled them to end their days in dishonour and disgrace, seeming to take an insane delight in degrading those very men who constituted her chief glory."

"Let's see, Tom, you went to Athens, didn't you? Oh! no—I forgot, it was Paris."

Disregarding this little interruption, and carried away by the rush of thought, I proceeded:

"There was the hero of Marathon, Miltiades, him they banished; there was their great Themistocles, whom they forced to die broken-hearted on a foreign shore, and here now we have that prince of philosophers, Socrates, who seemed above all others of the ancients to have a direct light from on High, him they put to death—and for what, forsooth! because he taught virtue to the young men of Athens."

My wife was gazing intently in my face as I poured forth these words in my earnestness. I had never seen her so much interested. I was proceeding:

"Stop a moment, Tom," exclaimed she suddenly, "you have winked so hard while talking there is an eyelash on your cheek, and you can make a wish."

"Well, I do wish that my good and pretty wife could take more interest in what interests me."

"But why should we care how those old fellows, with outlandish names, died a thousand years ago? They would be dead by this time anyway, no matter what they did—wouldn't they?"

"After all," thought I, "perhaps my wife is as sound a philosopher as any of them."

CHAPTER IV.

CHECKMATED.

My old bachelor brother dropped in to see me at the house one evening, for the first time since my marriage, and was cordially greeted by both of us.

"By George! Tom," said he, "you ought to be a happy fellow, fixed as you are now."

"Well, and so I am, no man more so," replied I, looking admiringly at my wife.

"Indeed, Matilda, he is entitled to you anyway; I never saw a man work harder, or more perseveringly."

"Ah! how was that?" asked she.

"Why, only a few years ago a more staid old bachelor never existed; devoted to his business and his books, he never swerved right or left for any amusement whatever."

"Well, I hope I didn't make him neglect his business, did I?"

"You soon multiplied his avocations. He

struck out for dancing-school at once, and at thirty entered upon the mysteries of the waltz.

"Now, now, brother, that's a shame," said I.

"Never mind, Tom, I shan't tell how night after night you used to practice steps in your solitary chamber, and instead of continuing to store your mind with knowledge took to limbering up your joints."

"He never told me that," cried Matilda, laughing.

"Well," said I, "I believe I found learning to dance about as difficult as anything I ever undertook. But it was necessary; I found I couldn't hold on to Matilda without it."

"Nonsense! don't you believe him, brother Joe!"

"And there's driving, now, too," continued I. "I never knew anything about a horse, and certainly never dreamed of owning one. But down in the country there, I'd lay out an evening to spend with Matilda, thinking to have it all my own way, when along would come some chap with a horse and buggy, and off would go Matilda, pleading a previous engagement, and all I could do was to smile politely and trudge home. You see, investing five hundred dollars in a turn-out was not a fancy; it was a necessity."

"Indeed!" said my brother.

"Yes, sir, my boy. You can make up your mind you will find it mighty difficult to get a wife, now-a-days, if you are not able to dance, and can't sport a horse and wagon."

"Well, then, as I don't and can't do either one, I think my case is utterly hopeless."

"Don't you believe him at all, Brother Joe. He's always trying to make the women out ridiculous."

"I shall not believe him, Matilda; I know the ladies better."

After some little more playful conversation, I bantered Joe for a game of chess, and we soon had board and men before us. He had taught me chess many years before, and we had pegged away at one another pretty constantly. Of course, on the start, he was vastly my superior, but I had overhauled him pretty well by the time of which I write. From giving me at first the odds of a queen, he had changed to two rooks, then receded to one rook, then a knight, only, after that a pawn and two moves, and, finally, we met foot to foot on even ground. I played a more brilliant game than he, but was frequently rash and unsound, whereas his coolness and caution never failed to take advantage of my slightest mistake. From numberless severe defeats, I was taught after awhile that "all is not gold

that glitters," and to get a supposed commanding position in chess, as well as in the world, one can pay altogether too much for it.

I was glad to cross swords with him once more, not having played a game in four months; so we were soon hard at it. It required all my skill and care to hold my own against my wily antagonist, but I was determined on being cautious, and played with unusual deliberation. At length, after having fought with great obstinacy, we had each scored one, and were deeply engaged on the decisive game. I had gradually forced him back, and was pressing him very hard, when I surprised him by announcing mate in two moves. My brother surveyed the board and shook his head. Just then we were startled, by the clock on the mantel striking twelve, and we both involuntarily started and hastily arose. Joe said, with a smile:

"I don't see the mate just yet, unless I throw the game away; but as you can get my queen, and must beat me anyhow, I may as well resign. Good-night."

Having seen him to the door, I hastily returned to the table to satisfy myself that I could have mated in two moves. I had the white pieces, and the position, which I noted down before I retired, was as follows:

To my surprise and discomfiture, I found I could not force a mate in two moves. Whether the interruption had driven the process out of my head, or whether I had been mistaken, I do not really know to this day, for I have pored over the problem many times, never being quite convinced that the thing could not be done.

Waking up as if from a dream, so intense had been my mental concentration, I noticed for the first time that my wife was not in the room where we had been playing. I was not at all aware when she had left, but, supposing she would return shortly, I put away the men and took a seat.

It being late, and Matilda not immediately appearing, I started up to find her, not a little surprised to know where she could be. The lights were out everywhere, and in going down stairs, I made a miss step, and nearly tumbled down the whole flight. Reaching the parlour, I groped painfully around, struck my shins against the sharp edge of a chair, and was finally astonished to come across Matilda, seated alone, in the darkness, on the sofa. Supposing she had fallen asleep, I gave her a little shake.

"Well!" said she, "what is it?"

"Goodness, my dear!" exclaimed I, "why are you down here?"

"I believe I am at liberty to come here if I like."

"Certainly! But shall we go to bed?"
 "You can if you wish. I intend to sit up awhile."

"Why, what's up now?"

Matilda said nothing to this, but turned her back upon me, and closed her eyes. I was somewhat staggered at this conduct, and a little hurt, but continued kindly:—

"Come, come, Matilda, what's the good of staying down here at this hour!"

"I don't see that that need interest you, Tom, what I am doing or going to do. You have other things to occupy your time."

"Oh, pshaw, my dear!" why talk so foolishly?"

"If you are going to play chess every night till twelve o'clock, Tom, and won't say a word to me, or look to right or left, I might as well go out and spend my evenings elsewhere."

Stung with the crying injustice of this remark, I set my teeth, and unconsciously jerked out rather emphatically:

"Confound it! This is too bad!"

"Why-T-o-m! I didn't know you *swore!*" exclaimed Matilda, looking at me in horror, as she arose and left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

SURPRISED.

I pleased my wife a few evenings after by a promise to go to the grand opera of *Il Trovatore*, which was to be sung by Madame Parepa and Wachtel, the next night at the Academy of Music. As we marched gayly off at the appointed time, anticipating the treat we were to have, Matilda hung on my arm and poured out little items of news, with sundry accounts of her various trials during the day.

Mr. and Mrs. Blank, with their cunning little daughter Anna, boarded in the same house with ourselves. They were nice young people, and the lady was pleasant company for my wife during my daily absence from the house. It seems, however, that she had considerable fault to find with her husband, in a small way, and in her statement of the case to my wife had somehow gotten the latter lady around to her way of thinking.

"Well, I do think!" exclaimed Matilda, "that Mrs. Blank has a hard enough time of it."

"Indeed!" responded I, "it seemed to me she had it rather easy. I never see her at breakfast, and I think you told me she did not get up any morning before nine, and often not before ten."

"Well, if you had to take care of Anna, day and night, I think you'd like to lie abed too."

"Why, as far as I've noticed, Anna is a very sweet, good little child, and Mr. Blank was bragging to me how well she slept nights."

"That's as much as he knows about it. Why don't he get her a girl?"

"I suppose he thinks it's unnecessary and perhaps can't afford it. He's no doubt trying to save all he can."

"Of course he is, trying to make his wife get along with as little as possible," retorted Matilda triumphantly; "but look at the clothes and things he gets for himself—a new suit only this week, and a cane too—now what does he want with a cane?"

Not being able to answer that question, I proceeded to draw Matilda out, always being amused at her earnest, whole-hearted way of going into everything.

"For my part, I can't for the life of me see what Mrs. Blank could do with a girl. She is young and healthy, the baby is good, and she has nothing else in the world to occupy her time but to take care of it."

"Just like all the men. You have no sympathy with the women, and don't seem to want to have."

"I recollect my mother, now," continued I, disregarding this interruption. "She had nine children altogether—a continuous baby, mostly cross, for eighteen years—kept house right along, never having but one girl, and often none."

"Oh! yes, that's quite a different thing. The women in our mothers' time were a great deal stronger, I can tell you, and the men too. I've no doubt your father worked twice as hard as you do."

I gave up the argument as a bad job, and we proceeded to the opera.

My wife, some months after we were married, often accused me of not paying enough attention to my dress.

"You ought to have a new coat and vest, Tom."

"Can't afford it, my dear; with an expensive wife on his hands, it behooves a man to keep everything down to hard pan."

"Nonsense; I tell you I don't cost you very much. If every wife was as economical as I am, the husbands needn't be alarmed."

"But you are so inconsistent, Matilda—you accuse Mr. Blank of dressing too well, and now you want to urge me up to the same extravagance—for shame!"

"Don't be silly. I want you to look decent, when you go in the street. You *must* have a new coat."

"I think not, my dear, this year. You know my system—I make a schedule of my probable expenses at the beginning of the year—divide it up in departments—how much to spend for this, how much for that,

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like a government appropriation. I've got
no coats down for this year."

"Suppose some one should steal the coat
you have now, what then?"

"Ah! that would be a calamity, and
would be provided for in the contingent
fund. You see, I lay my plans on the first
of January for the whole year, and pride
myself as to the closeness I can live up to
them. Some of the plans I have in my head
now will take at least five years to complete."

"Well, they won't come out right; I think
it is real wicked. If I am real anxious to do
anything, I try not to think of it; if I do
think about it, and set my heart upon it, I
am sure to be disappointed," said Matilda
solemnly.

"Well, let me see then," answered I.
"Let me try to reduce your ideas to a
theory. If you have in your mind the re-
mote conception of a thing, your point is to
keep dark on the subject. You think if you
should let Providence into the secret, it
might burst up the business."

"Why, Tom, don't talk that way—it's
dreadful. You know the Bible says, 'take
no thought for the morrow.'"

"I've known people construe that text
into a belief that they might live on their
friends, go ahead and get all the credit they
could, without taking any thought how they
were going to meet their obligations. That's
not my style."

My little girl opened her large eyes and
gazed at me anxiously and earnestly. I
soon, however, laughed her into good
humour. It was a constant source of quiet
amusement with me to mystify and puzzle
my honest-hearted, innocent wife. By
starting all sorts of odd arguments and as-
suming a variety of strange attitudes, she
never could rely in her mind upon just what
I did believe, or when I was in jest and
when in earnest.

I was a little surprised one day shortly
after, at Mr. Blank showing me some
samples of cloth, and asking my opinion as
to which was best to choose for a suit.
Blank had just had a new suit made, and I
thought to myself he was really giving my
wife some ground for her accusation of per-
sonal extravagance. I examined them, how-
ever, and told him which would be my
choice.

About a week or so after, my wife met me
in the hall, and, after our usual greeting,
said deprecatingly as we were ascending the
stairs: "Now, Tom, you musn't get angry."

"Why, what's up now?"

"Well, you'll see."

My curiosity being excited, the first ob-
ject I saw on entering the room was a new
coat and vest hanging over the back of a

chair. Upon examining it hastily I observed
it was of the same material as that of which
I had expressed my approbation to Blank.
I saw through the trick at once—Matilda
and he had been conspiring together to sur-
prise me.

"Now, see here, Matilda, why did you
do this?"

"Why, you needed them badly, Tom,
and I thought I would get them for you out
of my own money."

"Then it seems I am not to be judge of
my own clothes hereafter."

"Not while I am around; Tom, you shan't
look shabby."

"This is all very well, my dear," said I,
trying on the coat and admiring the fit.
"Many thanks; but if you continue this
way, how are you going to save any money
for hard times?"

"Bother on the hard times! You look
splendid."

"Well, put it away carefully; you know,
according to my plans, I can't wear it *this*
year."

"Now, Tom, if you go to acting so foolish,
I will not love you a bit."

CHAPTER VI. SHOPPING.

Matilda had been for some time intending
to buy a silk dress for summer wear, and I
agreed to accompany her and assist in the
selection. Business being a little dull at the
time, I had appointed a day, and she was to
meet me at the store by ten o'clock, and we
were then to proceed up town together. She
came along after a time as merry as a cricket,
but I was a little surprised to find her accom-
panied by Mrs. Blank.

"How is this, my dear?" inquired I in a
whisper.

"She has very good taste, and I induced
her to come along. She, herself, only wants
to match a few buttons," answered Matilda
aside to me.

I was not altogether pleased at the pros-
pect of company, though a little reassured
when informed that the lady only wished to
match a simple article. With a larger expe-
rience, however, I have been surprised to
find how great a portion of a lady's
time is taken up in matching things. It
seems as if there was no end to the occupa-
tion.

After I had ascertained from Matilda that
three o'clock would give us ample time, I left
word at the store that I would be back
at that hour, and we proceeded merrily up
town.

"Maybe we'll have time, Tom, to go in
and look at some pictures," said Matilda.

"Or take a ride in the Park," suggested Mrs. Blank.

"Or get our photographs taken," I put in.

Arrived at Stewart's, I happened to turn round for a moment, when of a sudden the ladies had disappeared. After a long and diligent search I found them, at length, busily engaged at the cloth counter, the obliging clerk handing down piece after piece.

"My dear," said I mildly, "I thought you wanted to see summer silks."

"So we do, in a few minutes," and she and Mrs. Blank continued comparing notes at a great rate.

I sauntered off to look over the vast store, went up in the top story by the elevator, and took note of the perfect system and order everywhere prevailing, came back again, and found the ladies at the cloth counter yet.

"Isn't this splendid, Tom, dear? and only two dollars a yard!" said Matilda with enthusiasm.

"It is fine enough, I suppose; but I don't understand what you are doing here. You certainly can't use such heavy goods at this time of year."

"That's all right; but do you think we are never going to need any cloth?" Matilda put this question rather triumphantly, as if she thought it was a poser. "Mrs. Blank and I both expect to have cloaks next winter."

"Come, come, Matilda," said I a little impatiently, "as we are young people, and only have an hour or so to spend, we can't hope to select goods now to wear in our old age."

She looked at me with a little pout, then smiled at the obliging clerk, thanked him for his kindness, and finally got over to the silk department. With a sigh of relief I now congratulated myself that I was all right, and the business would soon be gotten through with. She was commenting to examine rich goods, *moire antique* and so on, but, happening to glance at me and seeing a cloud gathering, she prudently desisted. At length began the examination of the goods she actually wanted to buy.

"Do you want a stripe, a plaid, or a figure?" inquired the clerk.

"Well, I don't know," answered Matilda.

"Mrs. Blank, what do you think?"

"Really, I couldn't say without seeing some samples; what is your husband's opinion?"

"I have no opinion," answered I, a little savagely. "I don't see why that was not decided before leaving home."

The ladies turned their backs on me without further ado, as if they considered it time

lost to consult me further. I took another turn around the store, and finally pulled out the morning's paper, which I had already read, and looked it through again. After an absence of a half-hour or so, I returned to where they were.

"Here is just the thing I want," cried Matilda, holding up a piece—isn't it lovely?"

"Well, have you bought it?" inquired I eagerly.

"No, it isn't the right colour." My countenance fell.

"But here is another piece—exactly what I want."

"Well, what then?"

"It is too high-priced."

"It is nearly one o'clock now, and we will have to get some dinner," said I. "Has Mrs. Blank selected her buttons yet?"

"She is looking at some now, over there."

"Well, I'll step over, and tell her about dinner."

"But, Tom! don't you get cross. You look as black as a thunder-shower now. And say—"

But I was out of hearing. After the most heroic and persistent efforts I got the two ladies out of the store, neither having decided upon anything. Both were enthusiastic over what they had seen, and like Alexander, were eager for fresh exploits. I sat during the meal in moody silence, and did my duty with the most frigid politeness.

"I don't get out often," said Matilda to her friend, "and then I like to see everything there is to be seen."

"That's my case," answered Mrs. Blank; "you know how tied down I am. By the way, the clerk told me I would have a hard time matching my buttons. He said I might have to go in every store on Broadway and Sixth-avenue. My heart sank within me."

"Time is getting short," said I, as we came outside, adding a little sarcastically, "especially if we are going to see any pictures." The ladies laughed good-naturedly, and we were soon in another large store. Some little delay occurred before we could get waited upon; then began the same interminable getting down, unrolling and rolling up again, with the prospect of any definite result as far in the future as when we first set out. After two mortal hours more of most inhuman torture to me, driven to desperation, I could stand it no longer, but, pleading a business engagement at the store at five, I left.

"I am sorry you have to go, Tom," said Matilda. "I'm afraid I may get something that won't suit you."

"I'm sorry, too," answered I, "but I guess you and Mrs. Blank can fix it. Remember, we close at six."

With a bursting headache, I proceeded down town and hastily ran over some letters till closing-up time. I got the porter to hold on awhile, but still Matilda did not appear. We locked up finally, and I stood outside and waited. It was getting dark, and I was worried.

Seven o'clock struck, then half-past seven, and still I waited in vain. Just as I was becoming thoroughly alarmed, Matilda came alone, completely tired out.

"For goodness' sake, where have you been staying?" asked I, anxiously. "Where is Mrs. Blank?"

"She had to leave about five o'clock, on account of the baby."

As it was too late to go home for supper, we went into a restaurant for the meal.

"Well, did you get your dress?" inquired I, when we were quietly seated.

"Yes, but not what I wanted—I don't like it."

"Well, why didn't you get what you wanted? You were long enough about it to negotiate the transfer of any valuable piece of real estate."

"Long enough at it? I wasn't at all. You hurried me so, and were so cross all the time, that I didn't have the least comfort. You were real rude to Mrs. Blank, and you'll have to apologize."

"With all my heart," said I, smiling.

"You bothered me to death—I'll never take you along with me again shopping."

"Please heaven! you never shall. But, thank goodness! it's over. You are all right now, I suppose?"

"Well, I don't know; he said I could change it if I wanted to, and it will take me another day anyhow, to get the lining buttons, trimmings, and—"

I interrupted her with a burst of laughter, as I couldn't hold in any longer. She looked at me a moment reproachfully, and then joined in heartily.

"To—," said she, "you are enough to provoke a saint."

CHAPTER VII.

RUSTICATING.

Summer was approaching, and we began to think of some rural place in which to spend the warm weather. Matilda wanted a change; she had always been used to her own part of the country, and wished to go somewhere else this summer. I being perfectly willing, we decided on the Catskills. We had debated somewhat as to our plans

for the fall, the question being housekeeping or boarding.

"Now, mind, young lady I don't make a mistake and think poor people can live same as rich."

"Oh! don't you get worried. I want a home of my own; I'm tired of boarding. You needn't think I want a girl, Tom; it will be just fun to keep house with only you and I."

"Well, do you know how to cook and make all sorts of nice things?"

"You'll see; but I don't suppose I can suit you now. Before we were married you used to like my things. I don't want you to tell me, though, how your mother does, or anything about it—now, will you, Tom?"

"Oh, no, shan't mention the old lady, I'll give you a good fair show, but I'll have my eye on you. You know I'm particular about apple pies; I want them sliced."

So it was agreed we should keep house in the fall. We therefore packed and stored the furniture, pictures, books and ornaments we had, and proceeded up the river to rusticate for the summer.

The freshness and picturesque beauty of everything up there among the mountains and water-courses was enchanting. We were lovers, we were children once more. We roamed around hand in hand, swinging our arms as schoolgirls do, breathing the bracing mountain air and drinking the crystal spring water.

We fell in with a pleasant party at the village where we were stopping—visitors there like ourselves, and made up almost every day excursions to all sorts of places. We prepared ourselves with lunch in the morning, then started out with staffs, the girls being rigged for it as well as the men, and tramped many a day all day long till evening, never being able to get enough of the distant landscape seen from the heights, or the wonderful rocks and cascades that surrounded us as we proceeded.

One day I proposed a ride to Matilda. A man in the neighbourhood had a horse and buggy that we could hire, so we fixed on a day to engage it. She was delighted at the idea of exploring some new road alone with me, without the fatigue of walking.

When we were all ready the horse and wagon came around. To me the horse seemed very demure, but Matilda took one glance, and then said firmly:

"Tom, I'm not going with *that* horse."

"Why not, Matilda? Brown says he is perfectly gentle; besides, I have engaged and paid for him."

"I can't help it; you must get another."

"There is no other to be had in the neigh-

bourhood; we must either take this or stay at home."

"Well, just see how wild he looks—fairly wicked. I'll bet anything he knows that you are green about driving."

"Haven't you ridden with me enough yet, Matilda, to have confidence in my driving?"

"No. I was always afraid to ride with you, although I didn't say so; besides, you used to have a horse we knew all about."

We were standing all this time, I with the reins in my hand, and Matilda about to step in the waggon, only not doing it. Brown had the horse by the head.

"You'll find him quiet as a kitten, m'sdam; only don't strike him with the whip."

There was no whip to strike him with, so I didn't see how this admonition applied.

After much argument and persuasion, Matilda was induced to take a seat, though with strongly expressed trepidation. When I had gotten fairly in my seat, a firm grip on the lines, and well braced back in the rickety waggon, Brown let go the horse's head. Not knowing the horse, and being rather prepared by Brown's manner for a dashing start, I was a little disappointed when the animal moved away with quiet deliberation. After going on his way for some time, I chirruped to him encouragingly in order to see if he would not quicken his pace. From chirruping I spoke kindly, afterwards with more decision, and finally with the utmost savageness, but the brute seemed utterly indifferent to any sort of appeal; he lagged along like an old cow. At length I struck him rather smartly with the line, which started him up for a few paces pretty lively. As the rickety waggon rattled over the stony road, Matilda, who had been rather reassured and amused at my efforts, became again alarmed.

"Now, don't do that again, Tom; you frighten me to pieces to make him go so fast."

As she spoke the horse fell back in his azy, lagging, provoking walk. I uttered an exclamation of impatience, and again walloped him with the reins. Again he started off briskly a few steps, and again dropped back into his dead-and-alive gait.

"I wish I had a whip," muttered I between my teeth. "I'd show him."

"Well, if you had, you shouldn't use it while I was here. You know what Mr. Brown said."

"Bother on Brown! I believe he's a fraud, and his horse another. I'll not stand this much longer."

"I like gentle horses."

"So do I, but this one suits me too well

When gentleness is accompanied with such hopeless laziness, I lose patience."

"Well, you never have any patience at any time."

After some time more of exasperation and despair, when I had exhausted all peaceful remedies and could get no further satisfaction, I drove up under a tree and stopped. In spite of the repeated and urgent remonstrances of Matilda, I stood up on the seat, took out my knife and cut a whip, whittled off the leaves with determination, and resumed my seat.

"Tom, you musn't strike him with that. If you do I'll get out."

"You keep your seat," said I savagely, "I'll not be defied by any man, let alone a horse."

Matilda seemed a little awed at my tone and kept quiet. I touched him gently and cautiously at first, with no particular result; a little harder, and still no satisfaction. At length, losing all patience, I put forth my strength in one supreme effort and gave him a sounding blow. He started off as if shot out of a gun. Our heads flew back, and our feet violently struck the dashboard. Our slight, flimsy wagon hounced like a cat-ball over the rocks, which were but partly covered with earth. The harness I knew was insecure, and I was myself a little unprepared for this John Gilpin rate of speed. My wife uttered not a sound, but caught me round the waist with both arms, which greatly interfered with my ability to manage the brute. However, a few minutes later, and the tantalizing wretch dropped quietly back into his jog-trot, as if nothing had happened.

"Tom, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to treat me this way."

"Why, me dear, it's Brown's horse ought to apologize. Confound the nag, I'll not drive him another minute. Here, take the reins yourself."

She took them from me, apparently with great relief.

"Now," exclaimed she, "I feel safe."

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANNING.

We had made up our minds to keep house in the autumn, but we had no house. To find one in price, location, and convenience exactly suitable, was now the problem. The rent must be moderate, in order that we might live within our income. I had lately gotten my life insured for a pretty large amount, in favour of my wife, and the annual premium had to be met. I had also, at the beginning of the year, been admitted into

our business concern by bringing a certain amount of capital. Not having enough of my own, I was forced to borrow, and the yearly interest was another slice off our income. We wanted things pleasant, but, being only two, did not need much room.

It happened at this time, luckily for us, that Mr. and Mrs. Blank were looking likewise for a house; so we agreed to take one together. The ladies were located up in the country for the summer, and as we gentlemen were obliged to be down in the city a good part of the time, it was thought best for us to select the house and have things all arranged when they moved down.

"I don't know about you, Tom, getting the house; but as Edward is going to be along, perhaps—"

"What, my dear! Have you more confidence then in Edward than in your own husband?"

"No, not at all. Only he's had more experience."

"Of course we're poor people, and won't expect much. A house, now, in Brooklyn—say a pretty little frame house, one story and a half high with a piazza and a little rustic arbour—"

"Oh, goodness! You must be crazy! Do you think I would go into a frame house. I want a nice house."

"An ice-house! Well, that's cool!"

"Stop your foolishness now, Tom, and listen. You must be very particular about the neighbourhood, that's the most important thing. And the yard, look out about that. Don't get an old, dingy house either; I want everything new and bright."

"Well, who's getting this house?"

"You are, I suppose."

"And who's going to pay for it?"

"You know well enough, but I'm the main one to be suited."

"Have I nothing to say, then?"

"And oh, Tom! The parlours! Look out about them—they are very important. Hot and cold water wanted in the house, and all conveniences, of course."

"Certainly—brown stone front, ceilings frescoed, furnace in cellar, Baltimore heater in basement, everything top notch, price moderate—anything else?"

"To be sure, we'll take all we can get."

"Matilda," said I, solemnly, "you had better select this house."

"I wish I was down there, I'd find one to suit."

"But as you and Mary cannot come down, Edward and myself intend to select a house, the best we can get within our means, and you must abide by the result."

She seemed inclined to demur at this con-

clusion, but, however after a while, acquiesced.

"Who is going to buy all the carpets and things?" asked she.

"Who, you will not be down. I'll have to do so, I suppose."

"You'll never get things right in the world, Tom."

"Life is short my dear. Judging from the headway I observed you made in buying you dress, I reckon we would both be getting gray before you finished purchasing everything necessary to commence keeping house."

"Pshaw! Just you wait and see what luck you'll have. I'm real sorry I can't be there."

"You must reconcile yourself to that, and make up your mind to be suited with everything."

Matilda looked a little worried, as if turning over in her mind the very great power she was placing in my hands.

"One thing I have made up my mind we must have, Tom."

"Well, what's that?"

"A handsome Brussels carpet for our best room."

"I'm afraid it will not come within the amount I have set apart to furnish the house."

"Oh, goodness! have you been making appropriations again?"

"As every sensible man should. Happy is he who can come within his estimates."

"Well Tom, we must have it. I would really not be contented or happy without it. I would just as leave have matting everywhere else in the house."

"Well, I wouldn't. I don't admire walking around my bedroom barefooted in winter-time on matting."

"Edward is going to have a Brussels carpet on his parlour I know, for Mary told me so, and I'm sure he doesn't make as much a year as you do."

"Edward is the architect of his own fortune, your humble servant claims likewise the same privilege."

"Mary asked him for one and he said she could have it, but you don't seem to care what your wife wants."

"My dear, you should have married Edward, and been happy."

"Well, he is a great deal more considerate any way."

Informing her that I thought we had discussed the carpet about enough for that day, we changed the subject and started for a short ramble. The perseverance of the female sex in endeavouring to attain their points I deem worthy of a better cause. The

next day, having started another topic, I was unconsciously led into the carpet question again.

"Tom, I don't like the idea of your selecting all the things."

"If time was not so limited, you might come down and pick them out, but we have only three months you know."

"What do you know about carpets?"

"I know we can't afford Brussels, my dear."

"Well, we'll see about that. But have you good taste in patterns?"

"Excellent taste in design, only I can't tell one colour from another."

"Can't tell colours! Why that will never do in the world; you may get something dreadful."

"I'll try at least to select something striking."

"I'm afraid I'll have to go down after all. I can't trust you;" said Matilda desperately.

"But I can get Edward to go along, and then we'll be all right."

Matilda shrugged her shoulders, then suddenly exclaimed:

"I've been asking Mary about Brussels carpet, and she says it is very cheap just now. Yet could get the best body Brussels for about twenty-five cents a yard more than a good ingrain."

"Very true my dear, but you don't seem to know that ingrain is a yard wide, and Brussels but three-quarters, which with the increased price would make the latter nearly fifty per cent the most."

"Well, what of that! If we have a nice room, we want a handsome carpet. How will our best room look with an old ingrain carpet? What will our friends say?"

"I have no doubt all those of whose opinions we care a snap, will commend our good sense in not buying a more expensive article than we could afford."

"But Mary is going to have Brussels," said my wife, emphatically, as I moved away.

CHAPTER IX.

PREPARING.

The question of trusting me absolutely to select and rent a house, and buy everything to put in it, continued to agitate the mind of my wife. She was, perhaps, fully justified in being desirous to attend personally to the many details, but latterly she had not been at all well in the city, and could not stand the extreme heat of the summer there. She was located up in the mountains comfortably, and I did not wish her to make

a permanent move until Autumn. Still she felt extremely reluctant to delegate out of her hands irrevocably such an important mission.

"Tom," said she a few days after, anxiously. "You don't know what trouble you'll have buying everything."

"I can imagine, my dear, what I would undergo should you accompany me."

"Now Tom, that's unkind!"

"Excuse the joke, Matilda, but you know you are so much more particular than I am."

"I know I am, and that's just it. You'd just go in and order the very first thing you see."

"If the first thing suited, why not?"

"I'll tell you, if you get mother to go with you I should be thoroughly contented and know everything would be all right."

"I could you pledge yourself then, to accept all selections without murmur?"

"If mother goes along with you, I'll be sure to be satisfied with everything," said Matilda, timidly. I sat down and commenced to write.

"What are you doing now, Tom?"

"Drawing up a contract. You sit still awhile, and I'll show you."

After a few moments of rapid penmanship, I read the following for her approval:

"It is hereby formally agreed upon the part of Matilda Hasty, that having delegated all authority to her husband Thomas, and one Edward Blank, his friend, conjointly in the selection of a dwelling house in the city of Brooklyn, to rent for one or more years, and having likewise delegated to said Thomas Hasty and Mrs. Ann Chadwick, her mother, conjointly, the power to make all necessary purchases to furnish said dwelling when selected, she, Matilda Hasty, will abide absolutely, without murmur or desire to exchange, by all purchases and selections so made.

"CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, Aug. 19th, 187—"

"Now then," said I, quietly, "I think we'll be all right."

"Tom, you are a goose. What's the good of that?"

"Words spoken are apt to be forgotten or misunderstood; in an important matter like this, I prefer to have some written authority."

She looked at me steadily for awhile and then put her name to the document. As I was to go in a day or so, she began at my request to make a catalogue of things to get. I confess my courage began to fail me as I saw this list gradually lengthening into most formidable proportions. Things which I had never seen or heard of I mildly objected to, as being perhaps unnecessary, but was invariably told that those particular articles

were the most important of the lot, and one never could keep house without *them*. Feeling myself not fully posted, therefore, I withdrew my objection.

The day came for my departure. The carpet matter had rested quiescent for some time, although I had received numerous and profound instructions upon every other point of which I had charge.

"Tom," said Matilda, at almost the last moment, "I nearly forgot to give you that address where Brussels carpets are so cheap."

"I'll take it, my dear, but I don't think I'll be able to make use of it."

"Now, Tom, I don't love you when you act this way; you know I have my heart set on it."

"The time, Matilda, for negotiation is past; remember I have your written and pledged word in my pocket, wherein you agree to abide by my purchases whatever they may be."

"All right! But you knew the whole time I wanted a Brussels carpet; it was the pattern only to which I meant to agree."

This was the final shape this discussion took just previous to my departure. It might be called a drawn battle, with hostilities likely to be resumed at any time. However, I proceeded to the city and fell back in the usual routine of business, which had been so delightfully interrupted by the rural solitude and picturesque scenery of the mountains.

A few weeks after, Edward, who had been looking for a house quietly during this time, hoping to light on one by good luck, came and informed me that he had not yet succeeded and that we would have to take a regular day of it together. Then began that everlasting tramp, tramp, up one street and down another, hurrying hither at the suggestion of a friend, hastening to the other end of the town in consequence of some advertisement, until we were fairly exhausted and downhearted, in that most wearisome of all chases—house-hunting. At last, after many weary days' search we came across a house which we decided would do—*must* do. I hastened to visit my wife and give a full description, to the best of my ability, of the successful object of our search. I was overwhelmed with questions, examinations, and cross-examinations. If it was a new house or an old house, if the cellar was all right, if the neighbourhood was good, who had occupied it before, if it had borne a good reputation, who was the landlord, and so forth and so on, all of which I answered to the best of my ability but not apparently to the satisfaction of my fair questioner. She declared I never could tell her anything,

and that she would have to see it for herself to learn anything about the house.

I returned to the city and undertook the lighter task, as I supposed, of providing the necessary furniture and accompaniments. The following extract from a letter to my wife will throw some light on the matter:

"MY DEAR MATILDA:—Your mother and myself have had a regular field-day buying things for the house. By the way, I consider your mother a most satisfactory woman to get along with—the very antipodes of the typical mother-in-law. Her patience and good-nature are wonderful, and her powers of grit and endurance beat all creation. Very well! After I had made my estimates, and some preparatory inquiries, we got under sail, in good shape and, with a brisk breeze after us, steered straight for our first port, viz.:—the carpet man's. I find, my dear, it will be impossible to get the Brussels carpet at our price, unless we have matting on every other room in the house, as you suggested, and which every person I have consulted, with your mother included, thinks quite ridiculous. As much, therefore, as I would like to have carried out literally your oft-reiterated idea, I felt myself obliged to give way to the combined advice of all my elderly friends. We, however, have selected some which I am sure will suit, your mother giving in somewhat to my wish to have something original and striking. I forbear particular description of designs and colours until you can see for yourself. All your other minute wishes, of which I had taken careful note from your lips, and which, in addition, you have transmitted to me in your numerous epistles, have been strictly carried out. Many of the things, however, you spoke of, your mother, in an experience of twenty five years' keeping house, never having heard about, we did not know where to look for. These we have left for you to select. Most of the necessary furniture is bought, likewise the stove and a French coffee-pot, with other things too numerous to mention. I was fortunate enough, after your mother had gone home, to find in cutlery some very handsome hard rubber, black-handled knives—they are cheaper than ivory and but little higher than bone, while very much nicer and more durable than the latter. . . ."

CHAPTER X.

MOVING.

It has been ingeniously remarked, in relation to the oft-repeated comparison between a battle and a game of chess, that in the latter, the men were perfectly passive and under the complete control of the player,

while in the real fight the general had to contend with all the caprices, jealousies, rashness, and cowardice of his own officers and men, as well as with the wily devices of the enemy. I had played chess; I now had to make my plans and combine my forces for a general engagement, to wit: move into the new house.

I consider to this day that my arrangements were all made with the genius and precision of a Von Moltke, and, *personally*, that I should not be made responsible for the disasters that ensued.

It was arranged that all necessary repairing should be finished, and the house thoroughly cleaned before we moved in, which was accordingly done. There being no one in the house or in the neighbourhood to receive anything that might come for us, it was part of my plan to have everything come in succession on the same day. My wife from the north was to arrive by a certain time, her mother from the South was to reach the city about the same time, and at once proceed over to the battle-field with the keys. After they had been there about a half-hour the carpets were to come all ready, and the men with them to put them down in place at once. Next was the crockery to wheel into line, then the stove and kitchen fixings, then the beds, bedding, and furniture, and finally I was to appear accompanied by the remaining traps, pictures, ornaments, and the like. After everything was in shape we were to have a jolly supper together, and go to bed in our new house victorious and happy. The programme was certainly attractive and well gotten up.

"Ah! here you are, mother!" said I cheerfully, as Mrs. Chadwick walked in at nine o'clock. "Right on time, eh!"

"Yes, indeed. Has Matilda arrived yet?"

"No. I'm expecting her every minute. I couldn't leave just now, so I sent one of the boys up to meet her at the depot. Just take a seat, please."

After waiting about an hour, wondering impatiently, the boy came in alone.

"Where's Mrs. Hasty, you rascal!" shouted I.

"She didn't come by that train, sir."

"Why didn't you wait for the next one, then, blockhead?"

"The next train don't arrive till twelve o'clock."

"Very well, then, you go up there in time to meet that when it comes in. 'Tis very provoking in Matilda," said I to Mrs. Chadwick, "that she must always be behind time."

"Perhaps I had better go on over to Brooklyn with the keys," said she.

After some consideration, it was thought best for her to go, and she started. At one o'clock Matilda came along.

"Good gracious, my dear!" exclaimed I, saluting her. "Your mother has been waiting here ever so long, and has gone on over. What's been the trouble?"

"The trouble, Tom! Well I think you must be crazy to suppose I could come from Catskill down here and arrive by nine o'clock. Why, I would have to get up at least by four o'clock to take that train. As it was, I was hurried off not half ready."

I had to confess to myself that I had put down Matilda's time of arrival a little too early, so said nothing. I concluded to go over with her, and we started at once. Upon arrival, expecting to find the carpets down in place, we were surprised to find them all piled up on the front stoop, and Mrs. Chadwick seated outside on the pile.

"Why, what's the matter? Can't you get in?"

"Oh, yes. I couldn't do anything inside, and I became tired standing around, so I came out here."

"Where are the men to put the carpets down?" continued I hurriedly.

"I don't know positively. I found the carpets piled up here when I came, and a boy watching them. He told me that the men were very busy over here, and might not be able to put them down for a day or two."

"Why, I explained the whole thing when we brought them, and was promised faithfully that they should be all in place before noon to-day," said I angrily.

"You see, Tom, your plans don't always work, and everything come out just exactly right," said Matilda, as she examined critically the outside of the house.

"Well, I must get them inside, anyhow," said I, opening the front door and taking off my coat. After an hour of the most herculean exertion, I succeeded in getting the heavy rolls in the proper rooms upstairs, then sat down exhausted. As we had had nothing to eat, we camped out on the floor of our sitting-room, and partook of a cold lunch, consisting of crackers and cheese, which Mrs. Chadwick had been wise enough to bring along. I was gratified to find that Matilda was well pleased in the main with the house. I had taken the precaution in my description to rather understate than otherwise the appearance and conveniences.

"The house is very nice," said Matilda, "good street and all; but I don't see, Tom, why you got me so far from the ferry; it will be very unhandy."

"Well, my dear, Edward and myself tramped steadily for nearly three weeks in

our search, and concluded that this was the best we could do."

"Oh! it's very pleasant, indeed, but I don't think the yard is as good as it might be."

We let the matter rest at that for the present. After awhile, Mrs. Chadwick suggested that it might be advisable for us to attempt to put down the carpet in the back room, where we intended to place the stove when it came. We had no tacks, and no hammer. I started off about a quarter of a mile for these necessary articles. Upon returning, the old lady and myself stretched the carpet to the best of our ability, being watched keenly by Matilda. At the first tack I put in, my wife uttered a hasty exclamation.

"What's the matter now?" enquired I.

"Why, don't you see, Tom? Those tacks will never do."

"Won't do! Why won't they do, I'd like to know?"

"You know, mother, nobody uses anything but silver-head tacks nowadays. They'll never do in the world."

I was a little provoked, having already had my patience tried almost beyond endurance.

"If you think I'm going to rush around, and spend money to please every little foolish whim of yours, young lady, you'll find yourself mistaken, that's all. These tacks have got to go in." I spoke probably rather more crossly than I intended, as I hammered one energetically home; auyhow, Matilda suddenly disappeared.

Just then a big load of furniture arrived, late in the afternoon, and I hurried down to assist in bringing it in. The carpets not being down, we were much bothered to know how and where to store the things to best advantage until they were put down. We were blockaded and barricaded with furniture. Perspiring freely, and out of breath, I suddenly came across Matilda, seated on the floor of one of the closets upstairs.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what's the matter, now?"

"Well, Tom, if I'm not to have anything to say about fixing the house, I might as well go back into the country again. You know those tacks will look awful, and you act so cross you make me cry."

"Well, well, my dear, we'll fix that. I'm worried out of my life now. Ah! there comes the stove, and the room not yet ready for it." And I rushed once more down-stairs.

We concluded to put the stove up, and build a fire, although we knew we would have to take it down in the morning. Upon

making a survey, we found we had beds without bedsteads, a stove without any utensils, a few chairs, but no table. The crockery had not arrived, and we had no teapot or kettle. Our jolly supper was spread on a box, while we were seated around on the floor. The meal consisted of bread and butter and smoked beef, which I had bought at the grocery, and a cup of tea which we succeeded in making, by borrowing the necessary things of one of our neighbours. At length, worn out by our day's anxiety and hard work, we spread our beds on the floor, covered ourselves with shawls, and sought repose.

CHAPTER XI.

BESEIGED.

The morning brought us face to face with the ghastly realities of the field of battle on the morrow after the fray. The utter wreck and confusion of everything was heartrending in the extreme. There was so much to be done that we knew not where to commence, and everything to be-gone through at such a disadvantage now, that I felt seriously tempted to march directly on the carpet-man, who was chiefly responsible for all the trouble, and engrave my complaints upon his physiognomy. However, the getting to rights, like some dreadful nightmare, was at length safely got through with, and we emerged, after many days in smooth water.

On footing everything up, I found I had greatly exceeded my calculations, although made with the utmost care. The carpet bill was fifty per cent. more than I reckoned it would be chiefly on account of my inexperienced measuring. But, when the bill included a charge for putting down that back-room carpet, which I had carried upstairs at the risk of dislocating my spine, gone a half mile for hammer and tacks, and then with much vexation of spirit, put down myself, with the assistance of Mrs. Chadwick, I considered indeed, that, in this case, forbearance had ceased to be a virtue.

Matilda made herself as busy as a bee, fitting around arranging everything. What provoked me a little, however, was the fact that she never seemed to be too much occupied but what she had time to fix over again everything which I had adjusted and considered a finality.

"Haven't you got enough to do young lady," said I, "with your own affairs, but what you must everlastingly turn up to interfere with me?"

"Well, Tom, I want things nice and to match, and you do seem to have the oddest

ideas. You musn't use green picture-cord on this wall at all—it would never do."

The distinction was altogether too nice for me. At least, I confessed I was too green to appreciate it, or even to have thought of it. After some grumbling, however, I abandoned the verdant cord and procured red.

Matilda seemed not seriously displeased with any of the joint purchases of Mrs. Chadwick and myself, and, in fact, appeared to regard the most of them very favourably. I therefore congratulated myself on our good luck. I could not help owning, however, to an uneasy, undefinable dread that something would yet be wrong—a sort of atmospheric pressure that one experiences when a thunder-storm is approaching—or when he is filled with a presentiment that some danger is hovering near.

"Edward, who had not yet moved into his portion of the house, dropped in the store one afternoon, and agreed to accompany me over to supper. I had neglected to take over the package of cutlery purchased some time before, and about which I had written my wife; so took it along then. We had been using, heretofore, a few odd old knives that Mrs. Chadwick had brought from the country.

"Here are the new knives," said I, cheerfully, upon my arrival at home. "I think they are very nice."

"You needn't untie them, Tom," replied Matilda, calmly; "we are not going to keep them."

"Not going to keep them! Why not?"

"Do you think I am going to set my table when we have company, with a fine damask cloth, nice china and silver, and use *black-handle knives*? You must be crazy! What under the sun induced you to get them I can't tell. I was thunderstruck when I heard of it!"

"Better give it up, Tom," said Edward, laughing. "You'll have no peace till you surrender."

"Why, Matilda, now see here!" remonstrated I; "as I wrote, they are considerably cheaper than ivory, and very much nicer than bone, which soon cracks and turns yellow. This hard rubber, as the salesman told me, and as I know myself, is handsome and durable."

Matilda set her lips firmly and said nothing. I saw resolution pictured in her countenance, and I resolved this time to meet her on her own grounds. It seemed as if she had overlooked everything in the house with which she might have found fault, for the express purpose of making a decided point of these knives. But I was determined not to give in. I had considered well before making the purchase, had had a long talk at the cutlery

store, and had finally selected a full set of breakfast and dinner knives, with carver and so forth. I believed it to be mere whim on her part, and I resolved not to humour it.

We sat down to the table, having four places. The package I had brought was untied, but nothing taken out. I noticed my place was furnished with a butcher-knife for carver, and a silver hotel-knife for use. Edward had an old wooden-handled one; Mrs. Chadwick a bone-handled one, badly cracked, and Matilda none, being obliged to occasionally borrow her mother's during her meal. It struck me I could stand this thing as long as she could, and I judged that when she came to have more particular company, she would be forced into using the new cutlery, and then they could not be changed.

"Matilda, I am sorry to have you make so much trouble about so simple a matter."

"It may be simple to you, who don't know anything about it, but for my part, I like to have things as they ought to be. Do you think, Edward, old black-handled knives would look respectable on a fine table-cloth?"

"I can't say without seeing them," answered he, with a smile.

"I'm sure," said I, "the contrast would be pleasing. The glistening black handles tastefully arranged on the white cover—"

"Nonsense! I'd just as lief see black folks here at the table."

"You see, Edward," said I, "on a legal basis, Matilda has no right whatever in this matter. She has conveyed away all her authority." And I quietly took out the document she had signed, and showed him.

"That don't apply to these knives," cried my wife.

"It seems to me, Matilda," said Edward, after a pause, "as if he had you."

"Well, he hasn't. You see, his privilege in selecting was only in connection with mother, and I have a letter from him saying he picked these out all by himself. Now, I know mother would never have selected these—would you, mother?"

"I can't say as I should," said Mrs. Chadwick, laughing.

"You are quite a lawyer, Matilda," cried Edward; "I believe you've turned the tables on him."

Things went on for about a week, during all which time the handsome knives lay where I had first put them, and we continued to use the dilapidated and wretched apologies at our meals. I had been subjected to an unremitting bombardment of argument, remonstrance, threat, and entreaty. It seemed as if there was nothing else to think about, or talk about, but black-

handled knives. I sank to slumber with some suggestion about them in my ear, they floated through my dreams, and haunted me in the wakeful watches of the night; they were the first topic in the morning when I arose, and greeted me on the doorstep in the evening as I returned from business. Life became a burden to me. I felt myself growing gray, and I finally succumbed to Matilda and to fate. Edward met me as I was going out with the package, and recognizing it, shouted with a laugh:

"I told you you would have to give in; might as well have done it gracefully on the start."

CHAPTER XII.

HOUSEKEEPING.

Mrs. Chadwick had gone home, and we had decided to get along without a girl. Matilda had said it would be fun keeping house alone without a servant only us two, and I was perfectly willing to humour and assist her. In fact, it was one of the main reasons that induced me to get the house, that my wife might have something definite and continuous to occupy her time and attention. Of course I had my share in the daily duties.

Totally inexperienced in everything appertaining to the working of a household, having always lived a bachelor, and more or less a humoured one, I had, in a measure, to commence life anew in this enterprise. The getting up before daylight in winter time, splitting kindling wood, and carrying up coal three pairs of stairs from the cellar, might under my former circumstances have been considered quite a task; but all this I bore cheerfully, gracefully yielding to the inevitable.

I consider, however, to this day, that the stove we had procured was a special invention of the arch fiend, to tempt and ruin us mortals below; and whereas Satan in days gone by had tormented Job with boils and sores of various descriptions, he had now hit upon another expedient to make one curse the hour of his nativity.

Before making any effort at all to build a fire, I had consulted some friends as to their methods, in order that I might do it smoothly and scientifically. Being informed as to the draughts and so on, I put in my paper, then fine kindling wood, then heavier sticks, and finally, filled it up to the top with the coal. My wife had complained of some ill-success the day before, but I told her emphatically that the reason she had bad luck was because she did not understand it—if a person knew how, it was easy enough.

I carefully took the ashes out from beneath, and proceeded down stairs with them in the pan. I threw them in the first barrel I came to without considering what it was; then suddenly bethinking myself, looked hastily in to see if it was the right one. Suffocated, choked, enveloped in a cloud of ashes from head to foot, I jumped back, broke a window pane, and then stood gasping to recover my breath and senses. There being nobody to blame but myself, I concluded to remain good-natured. I therefore washed my face and hands, although my clothes were still covered with ashes, and taking up a book seated myself till the fire should burn up.

Being interested, I read longer than I supposed, until remarking with a start that the stove must be red hot by this time, I hastened to the room to investigate. To my extreme disgust I found nothing whatever but the paper had burned—the wood even had not ignited, let alone the coal. There was nothing to be done but pick the coal out with my hands, and re-arrange the whole structure. In doing this my hands became smeared with smut and I inadvertently got some on my face.

"Tom!" screamed my wife from upstairs, "shall I get up? Is the fire burning yet?"

"Not quite," shouted I back again.

From a careful review of all these circumstances, I became convinced that the fault lay in putting on the coal in the beginning, before the fire had gotten fairly under way; I therefore this time lighted the paper and wood first, and was soon cheered by a ruddy blaze. Congratulating myself that I was now all right, I piled on the coal, confident of a felicitous result. I had heard that it facilitated the drawing of a stove to have a circulation of air, so although it was an extremely cold morning, I flung open all the doors, and hoisted the windows, and stood chattering in the gale. According to Victor Hugo, it was fate which defeated Napoleon, but I am still convinced that I had to contend with the old boy himself. The fire again went clean out—hopelessly and irrevocably extinguished.

"Tom!" screamed my wife once more, "shall I get up now?"

"No, I told you," returned I, savagely. "Can't you lie still, awhile? I'll let you know when I am ready."

I determined to investigate the cause of this exasperating behaviour on the part of the stove. I felt that I had never done anything to be treated thus. I was, sure, after a little thought, that the trouble was with that mysterious thing about a stove—the draught. I took down the stove-pipe and fireboard, ornamenting myself still fur-

ther with the soot, and looked up the chimney, I thought I discovered some obstruction there, and accordingly resolved to go on top of the house. Not being able to learn anything there without sounding, I took a cord from my pocket, and finding a loose brick, quickly manufactured a plummet and commenced investigation.

My wife went down stairs at this moment, and was apparently amazed at the state of things. The doors and windows were all open to the keen morning air, no fire was burning, and the stove lids all off, the stove-pipe was setting against the wall, while coal and dirt were strewn over the floor. Added to this the mystery of my absence and a curious noise in the chimney caused her to cry out:

"For land's sake! Tom, what is going on?"

"The blasted stove won't draw," yelled I down the chimney.

"What do you say?" screamed she, going toward the open fireplace.

Just then my string gave way, and the heavy brick came crashing down and broke in fragments at her feet. A piercing shriek rent the air, and I thought I heard a fall. I rushed headlong down the ladder and the one flight of stairs to the apartment. Matilda was seated in a chair somewhat recovered from the shock, but my sudden apparition seemed to fill her with more terror than before. I was covered with ashes and soot, my hands black, and my face streaked and spotted, while my hair hung wildly around my countenance, and my eyes glared with excitement and exasperation. Had I been a wild beast I could not have frightened her more.

"Matilda, it is I."

She burst into tears.

"Tom, you will kill me, if you keep on this way; what makes you act so?"

"Act so! The everlasting stove wouldn't burn, and I wanted to find out the cause."

"Shut down the windows, for goodness sake! you will freeze me to death." I slammed them down with a vengeance.

"Don't break the windows, Tom; it isn't their fault if you don't know how to make a fire." And Matilda burst out laughing. After some little pause I found I couldn't help joining in.

"Do put up the stove-pipe and go brush your clothes, and wash your face and hands. I'll make the fire. What will you have for breakfast?"

"It is 'oo late now," answered I humbly, "to get breakfast here; I must get over in the city."

After much brushing, and washing, and

combing, I found myself fit to go in the street, and called out on an empty stomach, brooding over the idea of getting square with stove-makers in general, and my own man in particular.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARKETING.

A larger experience, more patience and caution, with a little overhauling of the stove and chimney, and the problem of the morning fire was, in a great measure, solved. Though somewhat chagrined on the start, I found that perseverance was the father of success (mother unknown), and so in the end was triumphant. I learned also, as in the case of dancing or swimming, that theory was good, but actual practice seemed to be necessary to accomplish any satisfactory result.

It had been arranged that I should do the marketing, an employment of which I had had about as much experience as in furnishing supplies to an army in the field. I tried to find out from Matilda what she would like, but was told anything would suit her, so without being more circumstantially informed started out to investigate. I told the market man that I would leave the quantity and quality to him. I wanted sufficient for a small family, but did not state of how many the family consisted. He had some fine eels and I was extremely fond of them; he put down some of these at once. Soft clams also were added to the list, likewise some nice calf's liver, which I proposed to have smothered with onions. To have a variety, I also procured some mutton chops, and ordering them sent home with some vegetables, proceeded over to business. Upon arriving home at night I found supper ready, the eels nicely fried and the clams stewed. Matilda was a neat and handy housekeeper; in fact, had developed qualities in that direction with which I was agreeably surprised.

"For goodness sake, Tom, what do you take us for?" exclaimed my wife upon my entrance.

"Take us for! why what should I take ourselves for?"

"You've sent home enough for ten men. Any one would think you were providing for the crew of a ship."

"Ah, I told Jones enough for a small family."

"You didn't just go in and leave the order, did you?"

"Certainly, what do I know about fish or flesh?"

"That isn't the way at all. You'll get

cheated out of your eyes. You must select everything yourself, and see it cut off and weighed."

"Well," said I, "I don't believe myself in that kind of philosophy that labours under the everlasting suspicion that every one is on the alert to get the best of me."

We took our seats, and after a silent grace proceeded with the business of the meal.

"You needn't help me to any of the clams, Tom, help yourself."

"Excellent!" said I, between the mouthfuls. "Quite equal to my mother's."

After some little time I observed with surprise Matilda was eating bread and molasses.

"Why don't you help yourself to some of the eels and fried potatoes?" I enquired.

"Well, Tom, I don't like eels, and potatoes I don't care for alone."

"Too bad! and you don't want any of the clams either? But why didn't you cook some of the liver or mutton chops, then?"

"I can't bear liver and I am sick and tired of mutton chops."

"What under the sun do you like, then?" cried I in astonishment and a little provoked.

"Lands! you needn't get angry about it. I can't make myself like what I don't like. Why didn't you get some beefsteak or something decent? I don't see what possessed you to go and order such a quantity of outlandish things, especially since you'll have to eat them all up yourself."

I received this rebuke in submissive silence, inwardly resolving, however, that I should either throw up my commission of marketing or else insist upon written orders from Matilda hereafter.

The next morning, after lighting the fire, upon going up stairs I found Matilda still asleep. As she had complained of being very tired the evening before, I concluded to let her sleep, and try my own hand at breakfast. It was rather a formidable undertaking, but I went at it like a hero. I took an inventory of our stock of provisions, and concluded the vast piece of liver alone, if I only was going to feast on it, would last about three weeks. The remainder of the eels and clams, with the numerous untouched mutton chops, would be, I judged, in all, enough to keep us the best part of the winter. Jones had certainly miscalculated things amazingly, but, like most of the tradesmen's mistakes, it had accidentally been made in his own favour.

I considered for some time which of the different articles I could probably manage to cook with the greatest facility, and after much deliberation, decided on the mutton chops. I had the water on boiling to make the coffee, though just how to do it was

puzzling me somewhat, never having made any in my life. One thing suggested itself to me as ingenious. I knew it was necessary to use egg-shells to settle the coffee, and as I intended to boil Matilda a couple of eggs, why not boil them in the coffee-pot, and then make the coffee? It seemed to me the result would certainly be the same. I proceeded to put this idea in immediate execution.

The coffee well along, the next thing was to broil the mutton chops. I knew pepper and salt was necessary, and I was sure I had seen the ladies use flour on something, and I concluded chops were as suitable as anything else. After a plentiful sprinkling of salt, pepper and flour, and a careful adjusting on the double wire gridiron, I congratulated myself that I had at least started right.

Taking off the lids of the stove, I carefully placed the peppered chops over the blazing fire. Then opening the oven door, I put inside a dish, with a lump of butter in it, as well as some pepper and salt; all of which I had seen the ladies do at different times.

In the midst of my occupation I was interrupted by the milkman's ring, and hurried down stairs with a pitcher. Being delayed a few moments longer than I supposed, upon my return I was positively alarmed at what I saw. On opening the door, it seemed as if the whole room was one mass of fire and smoke. The savage flame almost reached the ceiling. I caught the gridiron from the stove and tried to extinguish the blaze, at the same time nearly suffocated with the stifling smoke. I had just succeeded in reducing the chops from oblong balls of living fire to black and smouldering coals, when the door opening, a voice hailed me through the dense fog.

"Tom! Tom! What in the world is the matter? Is the house afire?"

I could not see anybody, in fact, could hardly breathe, but sung out in reply:

"Don't be alarmed, Matilda, it is all right. If these plaguy chops were not made of gunpowder they at least have now been reduced to charcoal?"

Just then happening to strike the corner of the dish with the gridiron in endeavouring to put the remains of the chops upon it, the piece of crockery went spinning out in the middle of the room with a great clatter, with the meat wildly scattered in different directions. It was some time before order was brought out of chaos and a decent breakfast gotten ready by Matilda, I humbly retiring.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONTINUED.

The novelty of housekeeping, after a month or so, beginning to wear off, Matilda complained of the drudgery. She had no time to herself, to rest or read, or go out, she said; the continued strain of being on her feet exhausted her, and the cooking of victuals took away all her appetite; Mary had a girl to depend on, but she had no one at all to relieve her in any way.

"Why, Matilda!" exclaimed I, a little hurt, "do you call me nobody?"

"Well, Tom, of course you do the best you can, but I want some one all the time, that I can call on at any moment."

"To be sure, my dear, I have no wish to tax you beyond your strength, but I think a servant with us is about as necessary as two tails to a cat. I have observed that the average Irish domestic is the bane of all housekeepers and the greatest drawback to domestic peace and happiness. The longer we can banish this incubus from our circle, the more so much will our felicity be augmented."

"Of course, Tom, if you don't wish me to have any help, I'll try and stand it; I'll go till I drop, and then you can soon get another in my place."

When Matilda began in this strain, I knew argument to be of no avail, so I quietly desisted from any further exposition of the matter. Locke, with all his logic, would have been totally out of place. She had taken it in her head that she needed a servant, so I made no further objection to allowing her to get about securing one in her own way. She finally wrote out an advertisement, for insertion in the paper, inviting applicants to call at the house. I said nothing, but obeyed instructions.

The day appointed arrived. We were both up as usual, and I hastened over to business as soon as breakfast was finished. Being quite busily engaged till about one o'clock, I had quite forgotten all about the matter of the advertisement, when I suddenly received a telegram from Matilda to come home at once. Surprised and alarmed, I dropped everything and hastened on. The anticipation of evil being generally greater than the reality, my mind was filled with all sorts of wild forebodings, so that when I reached the corner of our street I was in a terrible state of excitement and prepared for almost any dreadful calamity.

Two women were just leaving the house, two more were ascending the steps, and I noticed one only a few houses off, coming toward us. On opening the front door I found the parlour filled with females, and several,

unable to find seats, standing in the hall. I rushed up stairs without further ado, and bursting in the front room saw Matilda stretched on the lounge with a wet handkerchief across her forehead.

"My dear, what has happened?" asked I, anxiously.

"Oh Tom! have you come at last? I couldn't have stood it much longer. I talked with eighteen, and I am completely worn out. The Blanks were all going out, and I was afraid to be here alone."

"Have you engaged any yet?"

"No, there has been none to suit."

"Go up stairs, Matilda, and leave this business to me. I'll finish it."

Having a bursting headache, she consented and went. I arranged a chair with a table in front, and opening the door stepped down a few steps.

"Now then, if you please," said I, "come up one at a time, and as soon as you are dismissed, pass right out of the front door."

I took my seat and waited a few seconds. There shortly entered with a stately tread, a female which I took to be a fashionable lady. Her apparel and ornaments, as far as my ignorance went, seemed to be quite up to anything I had seen.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said I, politely, "we advertised for a servant, not a companion."

"Sure and I'd work for yese, for proper considerashuns—that is, if you had nothing to do," added she condescendingly.

I reflected that it would never answer to have a servant who dressed better than her mistress, and also if we engaged a person we might have something for her to do. I thought best to decline the proffered services.

The next comer, before I had a chance to open my mouth upon my own account, assailed me with such a multitude of questions, that I was in some doubt for a time whether I was to hire her or she me.

"Are you the master thim, sir?"

"That's my station, I believe."

"Ay! well, ye're a young looking man. The mistress, now, is she around anyhow?"

"She is up stairs with a headache, but—"

"Too bad! She's younger than yese I suppose. Have ye children too?"

"None whatever."

"Insta'le now, ye don't tell me! Children are a great trate, but they do make work. Maybe ye're expecting some, sure?"

I broke out angrily, "As you have displayed more curiosity than we care to encourage, I find myself compelled to state that your services will not be required." And I pointed to the door.

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The next applicant was a German girl, who entered hesitatingly with a bewildered look. When I spoke to her, she gazed at me in blank astonishment. After I had several times repeated my words, with great distinctness and emphasis, and found myself able to elicit only a few grunts, I gave up in despair and waived her away.

A tidy girl, who next entered, pleased me at once. She was pleasant spoken, and seemed sensible. After some preliminary conversation, I ventured to ask:

"Have you a character, Mary?"

"I had, sir, but I was unfortunate enough—"

"Unfortunate! What do you mean?"

"To lose it not long since, sir. Indade it was quite accidental."

My brow grew dark, and a painful pause ensued.

"I alluded to a written recommendation," said I.

"Sure and that's what I mane, sir," answered she, quickly.

Much relieved, I softened my tone somewhat in saying:

"We don't allow any beaux, Mary."

She cast down her eyes and said nothing.

"Gallante are good in a story or poem, but in the domestic economy they are apt to make trouble."

"I am afraid, then, I can't be coming sir."

"Very well, Mary, act your own pleasure; we shall have to seek some one less ambitious to entertain their friends." After some little embarrassment she withdrew.

I was next confronted by a robust, able-bodied female with a glowing face. She was rather emphatic in informing me that her price was fifteen dollars.

"Indeed!" said I. "You cook well I suppose, and are a good washer and ironer?"

"Is it to cook and wash both ye want me to do thin?"

"Certainly."

"Sure I was niver asked to do that afore; and I always had me Winsdays and Saturdays out."

"With us, unfortunately, that liberty would have to be more or less curtailed."

"But how many is it there is of ye?"

"Just a pair," answered I.

"Two! And ye want me to wash, and cook, and clean the windows, run up and down the stairs, and mind the door and all that. Och! get out wid you! How many shirts do ye wear a wake any how?"

This question I refused to answer. Being irritated by her manner, I peremptorily declined further negotiation. Not having been up to this period of my life accustomed

to give an account of my linen, or be restricted in its use, I was not then certainly going to begin. Being wearied and disgusted at the whole matter, I in a few moments more went down stairs and dismissed the whole assemblage without engaging any one.

CHAPTER XV.

SHADOWS.

As both Matilda and myself had had a somewhat painful experience in endeavouring to engage a domestic, we concluded to let the matter lie over for awhile. After some weeks she began another negotiation, in connection with Mrs. Blank, of which I was only partially informed. I did not know how far it had proceeded or with what result.

Coming home one evening as usual, I was confronted with a grenadier in female form. Six feet high, broad-shouldered and straight as an arrow, the lady towered aloft, while her dark brows overshadowed me like a beetling crag. At this unexpected apparition I was filled with agitation and alarm, and could say nothing. "Walk right in, sir, don't be afraid. You're the husband, I suppose. My name's Mrs. Fitzpatrick, I'm going to take hold here for awhile."

What she was going to take hold of I did not exactly know, but fearing it might be me, and knowing I would be powerless in her grasp, I hastened up stairs. Matilda seemed as much subdued as I was, but in a few words made me acquainted with the situation. She appeared to me changed and unlike herself. We spoke in whispers, glaring stealthily around as if we feared detection. All sense of joyous freedom was gone, and I felt like a school-boy forced to be good on a Sunday.

Our evening meal was passed in comparative silence. When it was finished, I lighted my cigar as usual, and stretched myself on the lounge. An exclamation of alarm from Mrs. Fitzpatrick caused me to look up hastily.

"Surely, you're not going to smoke, sir?" said she.

"Smoke! Why not? I did not know there would be any objection, ma'am. Matilda is used to it."

"It don't affect me at all," said Matilda.

"Oh! but it will in time. It won't do at all," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick firmly. "Still, you can do as you please, sir, you know; it is only for her good that I am anxious."

I made no attempt to argue the question. Though annoyed and made uncomfortable in having my old habits interfered with, I felt that I was ignorant

of what was for the best, and so, without saying any more, I arose and putting on my heavy boots, which I had just relinquished for slippers, I buttoned up my coat, and sallied out in the street. Feeling myself shut out from the company of my wife, I communed with the stars till bedtime.

It wasn't long before Mrs. Fitzpatrick seemed to assume entire control of our household. Matilda was so surrounded by a network of directions and cautions, that she was like a person walking a plank over a dangerous chasm—she dared not step to right or left. As for myself, I began to feel more and more that I was an intruder and an interloper—a person who was not wanted in his own house.

After having eaten supper for several evenings in silence, and immediately afterwards lighting my cigar and going out, I was at length confronted by an emphatic protest from Matilda.

"I think it cruel in you, Tom, to go out every evening and leave me alone," said she, reproachfully.

"You have a watchful companion, Matilda; you don't need me."

"At such times, Tom, I should think you would be considerate."

"Considerate! You know I have always taken a cigar after dinner at night to assist digestion and soothe my nerves when the day's mental strain is over. If I find my personal liberty restricted here, I have no other resource but the street."

"Well, Tom! You needn't be cross with me. Mrs. Fitzpatrick says it is bad for me; that's all I know. However, if you must smoke, I suppose I can run the risk; you may as well stay at home and do so."

"Mrs. Fitzpatrick is arrogating to herself altogether too much authority," retorted I, with some warmth. "I believe that many of her outlandish regulations are pure humbug."

"I should think," replied Matilda, with considerable animation, "that she would know more about such things than you or I."

The grenadier entered at this moment and interrupted our interview.

"Highly tighty!" exclaimed she. "This will never do. Why, sir, I am surprised. You ought to know better, in her condition."

I was at once completely vanquished, and beat a retreat without delay. This was the main source of the tremendous power by which I was so completely swayed. Matilda's condition was continually held over me as a warning and a threat. I felt it overshadowing my very existence like some great unhealthy bat. As I had already

a natural anxiety for the event, to have the matter so constantly and pointedly brought home to me, I felt myself weighed down and encompassed on every side, like a person oppressed for breath.

One day Matilda expressed a desire for strawberries. It being February, I treated the matter as a joke; but Mrs. Fitzpatrick at once took it up.

"You must get her some, sir, without delay."

"Strawberries in winter, Mrs. Fitzpatrick! Why, Ma'am, they are worth their weight in gold!"

"Can't help it, sir, they must be had. It never does to let 'em hanker after anything in these cases."

Being totally ignorant of the mysteries and requirements of the situation, which situation was made ten times more mysterious by the maxims and example of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, I gave way, and forthwith procured the hot-house fruit. On reflecting, however, the logical extent to which the theory of Mrs. Fitzpatrick in regard to hankering might be carried, I became really alarmed. My means were but moderate, and Matilda might covet diamonds, camel's hair shawls, or anything else, and as she could be denied nothing, the result would be ruin.

I did not grumble at any reasonable necessary expense, but was made unhappy by noticing that, Matilda seemed entirely changed in thought and manner. We appeared to be drifting away from one another, and it seemed as if Mrs. Fitzpatrick had suddenly arisen as a wall of separation between us, and was thrusting us apart. My wife either believed of her own accord, or was made to believe, that I was not doing my duty by her, or was lacking in attention and consideration, or something or other. Although not knowing just what it was all about, I gradually, came to feel that I had committed some crime and ought to shun the sight of my fellow-creatures.

I began at this time to be much away from home, usually eating my supper alone over in the city and arriving home late enough to go to bed, without seeing any one, in a small, uncomfortable room, to which I had been banished. I pleaded business as my excuse, saying as cheerfully as I could that I would have to work considerably harder now. "Business," said Dr. Hepworth one evening, "like sundries in book-keeping, covers a great multitude of items."

However, during all this period the work of preparation went steadily forward. The sewing, the cutting, the knitting, the long and painful consultations of the ladies, as to how this should be made, and

how that would look, seemed to be interminable. Collections of all sorts of curious articles, apparently of the most opposite uses, were made in great quantities, especially pins of all kinds, sizes and descriptions. I could not help watching the proceedings with distant interest, although I asked no questions, and was daily becoming more and more miserable.

CHAPTER XVI.

REINFORCEMENTS.

I came slowly home one evening, moody and downhearted as usual, when the door was quickly and joyfully opened for me by Mrs. Blank, and I found myself heartily shaking hands with her before I knew it.

"You must allow me to congratulate you, Tom."

"How! What!"

"Yes, it's all over. Everything joyful, and——"

I heard no more, but sprang up stairs. My whole heart was melted in love and pity when I thought of my young wife, all she had gone through and the danger she had passed. A great weight was lifted from my breast, and I felt that my little girl had never been so near and dear to me as now. Mrs. Fitzpatrick met me at the door with her finger on her lips and barred my entrance.

"Not to-night, sir, not to-night. You must not disturb her."

"Can't I see her for one minute?" entreated I.

"No, sir. You must keep away from her to-night," answered the grenadier in an emphatic whisper.

Thus repulsed I turned disconsolately away and sought comfort in my cigar.

At ten next morning I was admitted to the bedside of my wife, as she lay pale and languid on the pillows. A long kiss, as she placed her arms quietly around my neck and rested her cheek against mine, and I felt our little past estrangement float away as a summer fog, and the sun emerge once more from the clouds. She pulled aside the counterpane a little and motioned to a confused bundle of clothes which lay rolled up there.

"Isn't it lovely?" whispered she.

"What is it?" asked I, a little puzzled.

"Oh Tom! you know well enough. It's our little boy."

I looked at the heap curiously, but could see nothing but clothes.

"Don't it breathe?" I asked.

"Breathe! Certainly it does."

Just then, as I continued to gaze earnestly

at the phenomenon, a sharp cry, shot like an arrow from the bundle, and the heap became strangely convulsed.

"There now, Tom, you've made him cry," said Matilda reproachfully.

"Then he must object most absurdly to being looked at," replied I, a little hurt at the accusation.

"Go away, now, sir," put in Mrs. Fitzpatrick, turning me out of the room, "don't you see he wants his breakfast."

I hadn't observed anything of the kind, but supposed it must be so when stated on the authority of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, so without more ado took my departure.

Anxious to inspect the lineaments of my first-born, for as yet I had only heard his voice, I hurried home at the earliest possible moment that afternoon. I had left him in the morning about to take his breakfast, and upon my return I found him still engaged in the same interesting occupation.

"What!" exclaimed I, in astonishment, "has he been feeding all day long?"

"Go along, sir," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, in disgust at my ignorance, "he don't hold but a thimbleful."

"Ah! well, I thought there must be some mistake."

I watched the performance with intense interest, and when he had desisted, expressed a desire to take him in my arms.

"Now look out, Tom," said Matilda anxiously, "I'm afraid to trust you."

"Why, what's the matter, does he break easy?"

"Well, you'd break my heart, if you dropped him."

"Never fear, my dear, I'll fix him all right. Here you go, old fellow! Come to your papa! Why, good gracious, Matilda, how his head wobbles!"

"Tom, put your hand to the back of his head instantly. Goodness! You'll frighten me to death."

I did as directed, inwardly confessing that it was more of an art to handle these fractional parts of humanity than I had supposed. The grenadier had gone down stairs.

"Tom, Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Mary both think he looks just like you."

"Indeed!" said I, gazing at him intently.

"Upon my word I don't see the resemblance. I confess, however, that I am not so skeptical now about Darwin's theory as I used to be."

"Why, Tom! you ought to be ashamed of yourself. I think he's just splendid, so noble looking."

He opened one eye as she spoke, and gazed at me with a transient stare.

"Ah! I observe that now," answered I. "His brow is high—there is promise there."

"Do you see that, too?" cried Matilda

eagerly, raising herself on her elbow. "I noticed that right off."

"I wonder now," continued I, "if there is any virtue in Lamartine's progressive genius idea."

"Why, how's that?"

"He says, in his life of Cicero, that a great man is not made all at once, but grows through successive generations. My son should be a smart man, judging from me."

"That's so," said Matilda, emphatically.

"But there is a difficulty."

"How?" enquired she, a little alarmed.

"You see, my dear, these successive links are abruptly cut off and come to an end when the truly great man is reached. Now, our son would be nobody, supposing me to be the great man already."

This proposition seemed to startle Matilda a little. After a pause, however, she said cautiously:

"Why, Tom, I don't think you are such a very smart man."

I did not attempt to contradict the proposition, and gave her to understand that I thought he had a great future, before him. I was curiously examining one of the little hands, so fearfully and wonderfully made, being a germ which, when matured, would be capable of doing a great amount of good or evil, when I was startled to observe him go through a variety of strange contortions of countenance.

"What's the matter with him, now, Matilda? He seems to be suffering from some internal agitation."

"You mustn't twist him around so, Tom; hold him quiet."

"There! good gracious! Take the young one; he has thrown up all over me," cried I, hastily handing him back in bed.

"Goodness, Tom, you mustn't throw him around like a cat ball. There, darling, come to mamma; your papa hasn't got any patience. He wouldn't care if he broke your neck."

I left the room shortly after, as Mrs. Fitzpatrick entered, and went down to compare notes with Mary about the baby.

When I entered the sick-room again, I observed, as I had already done before, that the atmosphere was oppressive and the room was dark that when one first came in he could hardly see anything. It seemed to me calculated to make a well person ill to be shut up there long. Mrs. Fitzpatrick being absent, I ventured to raise the blind a little and pulled down the sash about an inch from the top. Matilda was asleep, and I was about to steal out when I was met face to face by the grenadier.

"What have you been doing now, sir?" said she.

"Doing, Mrs. Fitzpatrick? Why, ma'am,

I have been introducing a little of the life-giving elements—light and air."

"Well, Mr. Hasty, sir! I believe I have charge here."

"Why, ma'am, do you mean to say a little pure oxygen will not be beneficial to my wife?"

"Certain death, sir," answered she emphatically.

My opinion being so decidedly opposed by one apparently knowing all about it, I said no more, but hastened away.

CHAPTER XVII.

HESITATING.

During the long and tedious convalescence of Matilda, Mrs. Fitzpatrick kept possession of power and ruled our household with a rod of iron. If I had felt before that I had little to say about the management of things generally or the transactions of my wife in particular, I was now given to understand that it was the height of presumption on my part to suggest, let alone put in practice, anything whatsoever regarding the baby. I never had my own nothingness so powerfully brought home to me as now. I felt the natural affection for my offspring and interest in his progress nipped in the bud, thwarted and turned aside.

How could I, a tender hearted father, see my boy carefully kept a prisoner in a darkened and airless dungeon, without feelings of resentment and despair? How could I observe his yielding flesh creased with tight bandages, and stuck all over with pins, without being prompted to rush in and rescue him at the peril of my life? I was willing to admit that I knew little about infants or their bringing up, but I reflected that these did exist certain general principles applicable to all mankind, which certainly could not be violated without paying the penalty. I thought that I might be consulted occasionally, and if the theory of management was open to argument, at least be granted an opportunity to have my say. But to be treated as knowing nothing whatsoever was humiliating and discouraging.

I had another cause of depression. Business had not been as prosperous as we had hoped, and my income had been correspondingly curtailed. While this decrease had been going on upon one side of my cash account, the other side had been materially swelled. The lengthy sojourn of Mrs. Fitzpatrick had been as expensive to the pocket as it had been depressing to the spirits, while the doctor's charges for the long sickness of Matilda had apparently been based by him upon altogether a wrong

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XVII.

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impression of my capital. Add to this the recent furnishing of the house, the annual life insurance premium, and interest to be paid regularly on loan, and I found myself exceedingly straitened for ready means.

It was about this time that Blank came to me with some important information. He was a confidential clerk in a large banker's and broker's concern in Wall-street, and knew everything not only that was actually going on, but much also that was about to take place.

"Tom," said he in a mysterious whisper, "here's a chance for you to make something."

"How?" asked I, eagerly, much interested.

"Have you got any more money than you want?"

"About one hundred thousand less than I want."

"Ah! I know; but have you anything over?"

"Over I confound it, Ed, I'm almost completely under."

"That's bad! I have got all I can rake, scrape, or borrow locked up in another thing, and I wanted to let you in this!"

"Well!" said I, "if it's a sure thing, I suppose I can borrow some money from my brother; but what's it all about?"

"Why," said he, "I'll tell you. Next Wednesday the dividend of a certain road is due, and I have inside information that they intend to pass it. What's the result? Down will go the stocks, and then's the time to buy."

"A good time to buy when the stock's going down, Ed?"

"Certainly, for the road is in good condition, and is only going to put this thing up on the street; the next dividend will be all right, paid promptly and increased."

"But will the Board of Directors agree to this?"

"Board of Directors! what do they know about the thing. The chief officers, President and others manipulate matters to suit themselves, keep the books and the funds, and tell the directors, as well as the public, what suits them best."

"Humph!" exclaimed I musingly, "is that so?"

"Yes, indeed. You see when the dividend is passed, as one or two of the officers want to buy some stock, they will employ some newspaper to start a rumour about the company being insolvent and going behind and so on, and down will run a lot of darned fools to sell all they've got."

"Ah! I see."

"Then the reaction comes, and up the stock goes again."

"A pretty little game, Ed, but the small sum of money I could raise wouldn't amount to much."

"Don't you believe it, Tom? You only need put up a margin of ten per cent., and five hundred dollars cash would buy five thousand dollars stock. An advance in the price of ten per cent. would make you a gain of five hundred dollars."

"But a decrease of ten per cent. and my original five hundred—"

"Is gone where the woodbine twineth. But when a man is posted this need not happen. In this case I happen to know how the cat's going to jump."

"I don't like the idea, Ed; I think it is wrong to risk money in this way, especially if not your own."

"Well, well, of course, do as you like. I only mention the chance out of friendship. If you want an opportunity to make five hundred dollars inside of thirty days, here it is."

With that we separated, and I proceeded on over to business. I thought long and earnestly over this matter. Somehow I was able to argue myself into the belief that there was nothing wrong in the investment, but I could not bring myself to feel just right about it. But I was in urgent need of ready money and I did not like to borrow unless I saw positively early means to refund. Edward Blank was my friend, lived in the same house with me, was a shrewd man and had every opportunity to know what he was about. I was convinced he would not advise me except for my benefit.

I would have liked to talk confidentially with my wife on the subject, but somehow I could not seem to get as near Matilda as before. Not only did I find Mrs. Fitzpatrick a constant interruption and means of separation, but Matilda herself seemed now so completely taken up with the baby, to the utter exclusion of everything else whatever, that she never appeared ready or willing to talk on any other subject or give attention to any other matter. At another time I could have relied upon her ready perception of right and wrong, and her quick sympathy with anything concerning my welfare, but I now felt myself outside the pale of her interest, and so made no effort to lay the thing before her.

In this uncertainty another interview with Edward determined me to risk some amount, even if smaller, but he said any smaller sum than five hundred dollars would hardly be worth while. I therefore enquired of my brother if he could let me have the money, without telling him what I was going to do with it. He advanced it to me without a moment's hesitation, saying that he knew I wouldn't ask for it unless I had use for it, and he could rely on me to do what was

right. His frankness and confidence quite broke down my resolution, and after I had left him with the cheque in my pocket, I was determined to return it next day. I resolved, however, to find out for a certainty, at least whether there was really any risk in the proposed investment. Edward convinced me that there was no real risk, that his information was positive, and success a certainty. I therefore placed the funds in his hands for him to employ a broker in my interest, and went away much relieved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUGGESTING.

Having made the investment, and looking upon the ultimate success of the same as being assured, I became much easier in my mind about money matters, and began to relax my hold upon expenditures. I had already drawn my full allowance promptly to its utmost extent from the store, but I now saw no reason why I should not overdraw to a reasonable amount, since I was certain to be able to repay all within a short time. I began to think that my wife's oft-repeated theory, that the time to enjoy money was when one had it, and not wait till some indefinite period in the future, might have more in it than my former bringing up had led me to suppose.

We had at last bade adieu to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, having secured a neat, tidy housemaid from the country, and we felt ourselves free once more. Matilda, who had complained grievously of my sombreness and repeated depreciations of expenditure, was now correspondingly rejoiced at my gaiety, and apparent plenty of money. In my own mind, I looked upon the success of my first venture, whether I gained five hundred or a thousand dollars, as a mere stepping-stone to future transactions, since, if it were once demonstrated that money could be made in this way, from the inside information Edward had constant opportunity to procure, there was no reason in the world why it could not be made a permanent source of income.

Our boy was a bright little fellow from the start. As soon as he had his eyes fairly open, he began to notice everything, and within a few weeks laughed so roguishly when I looked at or talked to him, that Matilda declared positively that he knew me as soon as I appeared. I did not question him on this subject, but I had my doubts as to the truth of the statement.

One day, as he was being put through his daily ablutions, which the little rascal seemed to enjoy hugely, I stood by watching him, and took occasion to remark :

"Has our offspring received a title yet, Matilda?"

"Title, Tom! What do you mean? We don't belong to the nobility."

"True, Matilda, but still it seems necessary to label him somehow."

"Label him! There, baby, keep quiet, or you'll be off my lap. Anybody would think he was a bottle of patent medicine."

"Well, he has been about that, I think, while Mrs. Fitzpatrick was here. But I'll be plainer; has he yet been designated by any cognomen whereby he may be distinguished from the other members of the human race."

"Don't be so mysterious? Do you mean, has he been named?"

"Well, that's about it."

"No, indeed! you don't think I would do anything like that without consulting you, Tom—now, do you?"

"Well, Matilda, I have been so ruthlessly excluded from all management, consultation, or even view of my first-born, that I have been very much in the dark just what has been done."

"Well, he isn't named, anyhow," said Matilda, rolling the young gentleman over, and carefully fastening the back of his long robe with a safety pin. "I want you to name him."

"Ah! if you have no choice, then?" asked I.

"Well, I can't say; I have a name in my head, but I want you to name him."

Judging the future by the past, I could draw my own conclusions as to what the probable result would be, when my wife made this statement.

"I know a great many smart boys now," said I, "who have been named after their fathers."

"Yes, that might do very well, if the father had a nice name. Thomas is good enough, to be sure; but just think of your middle name. How under the sun will Thomas Eleazer sound, especially when it comes to have a junior on the end, too?"

"Well, Matilda," answered I with some dignity, "the name has been borne by your husband from his childhood up in a way not to be ashamed of I think."

"Yes, but it always made everybody laugh whenever they heard it. I was always surprised that a woman, with the good sense of your mother, would give such a name to a little boy. Our little darling shall never be treated that way, anyhow—shall you Petty?" And Matilda pressed him to her cheek and gave him a kiss.

"Well, Matilda, I shall not allow my name to be mutilated. If it is not good enough for my son just as it is, he shall not have it in any modified form."

A pause ensued as I ruminated over some new venture.

"I have a strong predilection for good old family names," continued I.

"But, Tom, your family seems to have such outlandish taste in names."

"Let us divide the thing up and choose from your side of the house as well as mine then. There is your father, Daniel, a good old biblical character, and there is mine, Lambert, likewise possessing a fair portion of solidity. A union of the two would be pleasing to them, and I think should be satisfactory to us."

"What, Daniel Lambert! Horrors! Why he was that wonderful fat man, wasn't he? You must be crazy."

"True," acknowledged I, "the combination might be more suggestive than I at first supposed. But there is your brother and mine; let us try that. Cyrus, now, the great warrior, and best of Persian kings—"

"Everybody would be calling him Si."

"And there is Alexander, the great Macedonian conqueror. Join these together and you have a name at once euphonious and impressive."

"Ridiculous, Tom! it would never do in the world. I have thought of calling him Arthur, a sweet, pretty name, and if we want a second name, there is Dudley. Arthur Dudley, now, is something like."

"Well, Matilda! if you had made up your mind to call him Arthur Dudley, or anything else, what was the use of keeping me here half an hour suggesting names for you that you never meant to use?"

"Why, Tom, you don't suppose I would have named him without consulting you, do you? It wouldn't have been right."

I said no more, fully convinced that Arthur Dudley was a fixed fact, and no mortal power could change the resolution that had decreed that to be the title of my son.

I had attended a book auction the evening before and had brought home an armful of purchases. As I was now carefully sorting them over and arranging them, Gibson's Rome, De Quincy's Essays, literal translations of Tacitus and Virgil, with some others, Matilda remarked:

"I thought you were so poor, Tom? You grumbled about paying Mrs. Fitzpatrick so much, and said you couldn't get any clothes for yourself or anything."

"Well, so I was poor."

"But you up and buy books whenever you feel like it."

"Certainly; the mind requires food as well as the body; 'Man does not live by bread alone.' Besides, there's our son; now I want to have him surrounded by the right element. I should be sorry not to have him

make a creditable figure in the world when he starts out."

"Well, he looks like starting out now, don't he?" said Matilda, holding him up; "but see here, Tom, I don't want you to make any plans about him now, or he won't live."

CHAPTER XIX.

SQUALLS.

There was one feature of our speculation which seemed to give great prospects of success, in fact ensure it to a certainty. Edward's information had proved to be thoroughly correct, and one portion of his prophecy had already been strictly verified. The railroad management had passed the dividend, as he said they would, and there had been the most alarming rumours circulating as to the condition of the corporation. It was surprising what an amount of knowledge the newspapers appeared to have on the subject. The array of figures which one or two produced, proving the desperate situation the road was in and had been in for a very long while, was absolutely convincing to the uninitiated. What had induced them to withhold this knowledge from the public so long I could not conceive, as the same journals invariably placed themselves in attitudes of warning to everybody on almost every other conceivable topic whatsoever, upon the slightest provocation.

In consequence of the information published, apparently so very accurate and minute, I could not help feeling myself somewhat alarmed. An interview with Edward, however, again reassured me.

"Didn't I tell you," said he, triumphantly, "how it would be?" You see the dividend is passed and the stock has caved, don't you?"

"Oh yes, I see that. But if it keeps on caving I don't see where the profit comes in."

"Nonsense! you must be patient, and keep a stiff upper lip. To-morrow the stock will be fifteen per cent. less than when I spoke to you about it. Then we'll buy, as I am convinced that will be the lowest point. In a little while, back she goes to where she started from, and you are seven hundred and fifty dollars ahead!"

This seemed satisfactory, and I went away with a light heart. Being well satisfied with myself and everything generally, I was not disposed to find fault at home. I could not help feeling, however, that Matilda carried her anxiety and care as a mother to extremes. So tremendously solicitous was she for the infant's welfare that everything else under heaven seemed, in her estimation, of

small importance. After being continually routed from one place to another when comfortably seated, forced to undergo a sort of preparatory Turkish bath by having all the doors and windows closed, and a roaring fire going, compelled to turn down the gas just when I was interested in a book, with many other things too numerous to mention, I began to remonstrate.

"Surely, Tom," retorted Matilda, "you wouldn't want Arthur to catch cold, or have him wake up just as I've walked him to sleep?"

"Certainly not, Matilda, but I decidedly object to having an individual so young in years taking possession of our only sitting-room, and prescribing rules for his seniors to go by."

"I suppose you would put him off up in the garret if you had your own way. The dear little thing. Just like all the men, they like to play with children a few minutes, but don't want any bother with them."

I thought this rebuke unmerited, on my part.

"I am well aware that the child is tender and helpless and needs care, but I must think that grown people around have some rights he should be bound to respect."

My boy, like a great many grown up children, was addicted to the bottle. Nature had denied his mother the pleasure of dispensing with all outside auxiliaries in the way of food, and the consequence was that her care and anxiety to have everything just right was increased four-fold. I had daily commissions in the city to purchase glassware and rubber goods, until our stock at home of the articles became so varied and extensive that it threatened to take the precedence of everything else we had.

Arthur was a healthy, and on the whole a very reasonable baby. As a rule, he laughed and played, took his rations and went to sleep with as little trouble as could possibly be expected. There was one point, however, upon which he never allowed the least inattention by those around him. When the time came, more or less frequent, in which he felt the cravings of hunger, his manner of indicating the same was pointed and emphatic. Unless the desired preparation was immediately forthcoming, no wild Indian on the war-path could possibly utter more prolonged or hideous yells than he. If his impatience and contempt at any ordinary and necessary delay was a little annoying in the day time, it can easily be imagined how it might be regarded by those within reach at dead of night.

Feeling assured that my investment must turn out profitable in itself, as well as be a stepping stone to things much more im-

portant in the same way, I began to think that our present domestic quarters were much too small, and I cast about in my mind a project of moving to some house where I could have a sitting-room to myself, and at the same time allow Arthur Dudley an equal privilege.

However, I was happy, and my dreams were mostly pleasant, though frequently liable to interruption. I would often get to calculating in my sleep, estimating rises and declines, ten per cent. margins, dividends and the like, mixed up with all sorts of strange, comical, or uncouth objects or transactions entirely foreign to the subject. Once I found myself suddenly in the midst of a fire, the crowd surging and yelling, the engine clattering and hissing, timbers falling, and so forth. As I ventured beyond the cordon of policemen in my eager curiosity, one of them grabbed my arm and shook me violently. I sprang up and looked wildly around. I was confident of the shake and sure I still heard the unearthly yells.

"What, where is it! are we safe?" shouted I.

"Safe!" exclaimed Matilda, "for goodness sake take the baby, and try and quiet him, while I fix the bottle."

The screeching of forty wildcats in hideous chorus seemed to me as gentle music, in comparison to the voice of my first-born, heard then in my half-awakened state. I hastened to the rescue and did my best to still the increasing tumult. Adjusting him on my shoulder I tramped backward and forward, valiantly whistling "The Girl I left behind Me," and keeping time on his tender body. As he increased the volume and energy of his notes, I accelerated my pace, till my military tread became a charge at double quick, as my slight night-robe flapped in the breeze.

Matilda had a regular and elaborate system in preparing that food, and no emergency, however urgent, could induce her to omit one iota, jot, or tittle of the details. After the mixing was finished, it must be heated to an exact temperature, and if it should be too hot, as was often the case, then it must be cooled. After having exhausted my whole stock of whistling tunes, "Mulligan Guards," "Finnigan's Wake," airs from "Barbe Bleu," and "La Fille de Madame Angot," with a few others, and being quite ready to drop with my violent and continued exercise, seeing that Arthur seemed rather gaining in vociferation than in any way decreasing, I ventured to urge Matilda to hasten her operations, as the child was evidently starving to death.

"Yes, in one second; but don't jolt the child to pieces, Tom."

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"No danger," replied I. "It is comfort-
ing, certainly, to know that our boy's lungs
are good, and also interesting to hear about
how much noise a child of this age can make,
but I think he shows bad taste in the time
and place he has chosen to display his ac-
complishments."

"Here! here! Arthur!" said Matilda, at
length prepared to take him and administer
the required sustenance. "Papa's been
plaguing my little baby."

No voracious cannibal ever seized on his
prey with more avidity than Arthur on that
bottle—and there was a great calm.

CHAPTER XX.

DOUBLING.

Being pretty busily engaged at store for
the next two weeks I had hardly thought of
my stock investment, supposing of course it
was all right, and knowing it would take
some time before a favourable result could
be reached. I was somewhat startled, there-
fore, at receiving notice from the broker who
had the matter in charge that my margin had
been eaten up by the continued decline, and
I must be ready with another ten per cent.,
or lose the whole. I rushed around to Ed-
ward's office.

"Why! how's this?" asked I, in some
excitement.

"What's the matter now?" retorted he
quietly.

"My five hundred dollars are gone accord-
ing to this notice, and I must back out alto-
gether or put up another five hundred. I
am afraid you've got me in a bad box."

"Bad box! well I'm sure I only advised
you as I would have acted myself. The
continued decline of this stock is most re-
markable. I didn't think people would be
such fools."

"Well, is it ever going to stop declin-
ing, and take the turn you've been talking
about?"

"You must judge for yourself; I shall not
advise any more, only state my opinion. You
know well enough that the road is in the
best condition and most thoroughly equip-
ped, that it has paid ten per cent. yearly
for a very long time, that the stock was held
stiff at one hundred and thirteen, and thou-
sands of persons bought as a permanent in-
vestment."

"Yes I know, but what do the papers
say now? That the road is burdened with
enormous indebtedness, and that the last
two dividends have been paid with borrowed
money."

"These stories, I am confident, are only
circulated by the bears, and when the next

dividend comes around and is paid you will
see the thing turn at once."

"Well," asked I anxiously, "would you
advise me to borrow five hundred dollars
more and risk it?"

I shall not advise you at all. I will only
say that if I was in your place I certainly
should not let a good thing go."

"The broker states my stock will be sold
before three o'clock, if the margin is not
forthcoming."

"Well, you haven't got much time then."

I hurried away full of doubt and anxiety.
All the money I could call my own was
locked up in the business, with five thousand
dollars beside, which I had borrowed from a
rich friend at the time I was admitted
partner, and upon which I was paying
interest. I had overdrawn considerably my
regular living allowance from the store, and
Mr. Brewster, the head of the firm, did not
seem well pleased at further calls for funds.
I had already five hundred dollars from my
brother, and to get five hundred more would
cramp him considerably, although I knew
he would willingly inconvenience himself to
raise it if I asked him. Still I must raise it
or lose all I had so far invested.

I hastened to him and found him in his
office, quite busy. He received me with
his usual kindness and affection and waited
for me to state my business. Somehow I
was ashamed to tell him the truth, and so
blushingly ventured on my first falsehood
with him.

"Joe, I must have some money."

"Well, Tom, how much? I'm pretty
short."

"We've been presented with some un-
expected drafts to-day and have been pretty
nearly cleaned out, we are behind about five
hundred dollars to meet a note to-morrow."

"Well, I think I can accommodate you,
but not for a long while. I have some
paper of my own coming due inside of two
weeks," said he, as he was drawing the
cheque.

"All right, a few days will see us straight
again. Much obliged, good day."

I hurried in the direction of Wall-street,
my eyes flashing in excitement, and my
fingers twitching nervously. I felt that if
this money was also lost that I would be
ruined, that my reputation would be gone,
and all confidence in me withdrawn. My
brother would never have advanced me
money to invest in Wall-street, my rich
friend would have at once insisted upon a re-
funding of his loan, and Mr. Brewster would
have promptly cancelled our partnership
contract, it being a special stipulation be-
tween us that neither should speculate.

When I reached home I felt gloomy and

downhearted. I had told my wife nothing at all of the matter from beginning to end. She had been so constantly and exclusively wrapped up in the baby that it seemed as if she did not know or care about anything else, and I felt no inclination to intrude my matters, which she probably would not have listened to. The baby was crying when I entered, and Matilda was walking him to and fro.

"Here, Tom, dear, take Arthur for a while, I'm nearly worn out."

"What's the matter with him?" asked I, rather gruffly.

"I think he is worrying with his first tooth," answered she, throwing herself on the lounge, and closing her eyes.

The little fellow snuggled up on my shoulder and laid his cheek against mine. He growled and scolded a little while in a low tone, as I walked him backward and forward, gently patting him on the back, but finally floated off in the land of slumbers. I placed him in the cradle and gently rocked him a few moments, bending over him in loving admiration. The sweetness and innocence of a baby asleep seems to surpass any other exhibition of those qualities which the world has to offer. As his long lashes lay upon his cheek, his red lips slightly pouting and his cunning little hands folded over his breast, I thought how pure he was, and how sordid and wicked I, his father, who now bent over him, must appear to a Higher power.

Matilda roused up and said it was time for supper. I replied that I had no appetite and could not eat supper.

"Why, how's that, Tom?" asked she anxiously.

"I am not feeling very well, and I want to be quiet and left alone," said I, gloomily.

"Can't I do anything for you, Tom?"

"No. I am going out shortly. When I come back I want to go to bed on the lounge, so I can get some rest. You can take Kitty in with you and the baby."

My wife said nothing, although I noticed she looked at me curiously and with increased anxiety. We ate a few mouthfuls in silence, when I arose and went out.

After walking and smoking for a while, mentally calculating all the chances of the future, and taking a calm survey of my present situation, I happened to pass by the blazing entrance to a theatre and at once made up my mind to go in. I was depressed and miserable, and somehow could not find that comfort and solace at home as of old. I had of late gotten it in my head that Matilda had not that deep affection for me that she formerly had, that quick consideration and

sympathy with which she used to perceive so promptly all my wants, and provide for them. From this lapse of time I feel convinced that I did her much injustice; that her affection as a wife had in no way declined, but was only temporarily overshadowed by the greater necessity for action and attention in her capacity as a mother.

My mind was too full and oppressed to enjoy the play, good as it was. After sitting through two acts, and without waiting for the final catastrophe, I sauntered home, let myself in with my night-key, and went to sleep on the lounge.

CHAPTER XXI.

CRUSHED.

Two weeks went slowly by. My anxiety over my situation was such that my business became a burden, and I was seized by such spells of abstraction and forgetfulness that Mr. Brewster could not help noticing it.

"Thomas," said he to me one day, "I don't think you can be very well."

"I don't think I am myself, sir," replied I.

"I think a trip West would brighten you up and do you good."

"Perhaps so, sir; I have no objection."

"Well, let's see; there's that Thompson matter in St. Louis, now, that seems to have gotten in a dreadful snarl; suppose you were to take the papers and run out there and straighten it up."

"All right sir, I'll get ready."

So it was arranged that I should start the next Sunday night, taking sleeping-car at nine o'clock on the Pennsylvania Road. This conversation took place on Friday, so that I had the rest of that day and all Sunday to arrange my business convenient for leaving. I told Matilda that evening that she must get me ready to take a short trip by Sunday.

"Why, Tom, where are you going?"

"Ah, Matilda, that is what few of us mortals can tell. Where this journey of life is leading us is a great and fearful mystery."

"Tom, you frighten me. Why do you speak so solemn?"

"We cannot always be light and flippant, Matilda? everyone has serious turns at times."

She looked at me with increasing anxiety. I paused awhile, then slowly took Arthur Dudley from her arms and placed him on my knee.

"According to your ideas, Matilda," asked I, earnestly, "what proportion of the human race are saved unto eternal life?"

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"Why, Tom, how do I know? You remember how our Saviour answered a man once who was curious in such matters, in effect: 'What is that to thee? Strive to enter in the straight gate.'"

"Well, Matilda, according to the testimony of the divines, and according to our own judgment of the lives of those around us, the great majority of the human race must of necessity be eternally condemned. How fearful is the responsibility of parents, then, in bringing children into the world only to plunge them in the midst of so terrible a danger."

"Certainly the Almighty gives none of his creatures greater burdens than they can bear. Our child's future rests with us and with himself," said Matilda, solemnly.

She took the baby from me and clasped it to her breast, while her eyes filled with tears.

"But how long will you be gone, Tom?" asked she, after a pause.

"Oh! I am only going to St. Louis for about a week."

"Well, do take care of yourself, dear, won't you?"

"Well now, really," replied I, more cheerfully, "I don't know as I should have thought of it had you not spoken; but I'll do the best I can."

Saturday came and found me at my desk as usual. A weight seemed to press me down, and a cloud portentous of evil seemed to surround me. On opening my mail I found a short note from my brother, putting me in mind kindly that the last loan, which was only temporary, had not been repaid, and that he had a note to meet on Monday, which he would find it difficult to do, unless I produced the five hundred dollars.

This increased my troubles. I had not the money, and knew of no way of getting it promptly. It was our tight season at the store, and I knew Mr. Brewster would not advance it, except upon the most urgent necessity, and only after the most thorough laying open of all the facts, which I was not prepared to do. I had not the courage to face my brother or to write him, and so went on wearily and anxiously with my regular work.

About three o'clock I received another note which completed my misery and despair. This was from the broker saying that my second margin of ten per cent had disappeared in the continued decline of the stock I held, and, unless the proper additional funds were forthcoming, before ten o'clock Monday, they would be forced, in order to save themselves from loss, to sell the stock at the opening of the board. I made no reply to this. I was like an animal hunted to

his lair, but without spirit enough to turn upon his pursuers. I felt I could do nothing more, but would let everything go by default and take my chances.

It happened most unusually that afternoon that a brace of customers from a distance had sent us remittances by Adams' express, aggregating nearly ten thousand dollars in bank bills. As these arrived between four and five o'clock, Mr. Brewster was unable to deposit the money, and so was forced to lock it up in the safe at the store. My eye glistened as I saw him counting over this money, and my heart beat and throbbed so that I could hardly get my breath. He called me to assist in counting it and put it up in packages. My hands trembled so much I could hardly hold the bills.

"This will help us out beautifully, Thomas," said he; "we are a little behind on our European remittances, but Monday we can deposit this and get out a short sight bill by Tuesday's steamer."

"Yes, sir," said I faintly, bending over the pile of money on my desk.

"I don't like the idea much, however, of leaving this here over Sunday. It is too bad it did not get in before three o'clock. But I think it will be all right."

I put my duplicate store key in my pocket, and hurried home immediately after closing, uncertain, agitated and nervous.

"Matilda," said I after a hasty supper, "I have concluded to leave you to-night."

"Why Tom, what for? please stay, and be with me and baby over Sunday."

"I have calculated the matter, Matilda, and find I will either have to be this Sunday, or next Sunday on the road, and I think I would rather be home next Sunday."

"That's too bad, Tom. It will be a terrible disappointment to me."

"Disappointments can't well be helped, my dear. Like disaster and disgrace, they beset us on every hand."

"Oh! do stay, Tom, over till to-morrow night," implored Matilda, as she hung on my neck and her eyes filled with tears.

I clasped her in my arms and said brokenly,

"Nay, Matilda! as God is above us, something tells me it is best for you and our little one that I go to-night. One kiss and then farewell."

I tore myself away, snatched a kiss from little Arthur, who was fast asleep in the cradle, seized my satchel and was soon in the street walking rapidly toward the ferry.

After a short and troubled sleep in my narrow berth in the sleeping-car, I found that settled slumber was not for me that night. It was bright moonlight, so I pulled aside the

curtain and gazed out as I lay upon my back, rapidly speeding over the ground. The calm moon was listlessly sailing through the placid sky, leaving behind her a few fugitive clouds. These I pictured to myself were the hopes I had once formed but now rapidly leaving me forever. I felt myself ruined in funds, ruined in reputation, ruined in friends. I was perfectly willing to die, and took a grim pleasure in contemplating the fact that my wife and baby would be richer with me dead and the insurance on my life collected than if I remained alive.

However, we sped along, passed through Altoona and among the glorious old mountains a little after midnight and arrived in Pittsburg to breakfast. Continuing the journey, Cincinnati was reached for a late supper, and being tired, I concluded to stay all night. I found, too, that I might transact some business there and run off in the evening to a little town on a local road, about an hour's distance from the city, where I accidentally heard one of the St. Louis parties whom I wanted to see happened to be at that time.

I took my place in the cars at the proper time and lay back wearily in my seat. There were but few in the train and I noticed the cars seemed running very fast. I saw a stream of water gleam ahead, I felt the train plunge on the bridge, a terrible crash, a piercing shriek, and I knew no more.

CHAPTER XXII.

SCENTING.

At nine o'clock Monday morning Mr. Brewster entered his office as usual. A hasty glance at the safe showed him that something was wrong. There was a hole drilled near the lock and a portion of the door shattered. It took but a moment to jerk the door open and hastily run over the contents. After five minutes' search Mr. Brewster's face turned white and his breath came short, though he said nothing. That short search had convinced him that his safe had been robbed—the packages of money placed there late Saturday afternoon were nowhere to be found.

Without making any commotion or calling upon any one in the store, he quietly sat down and wrote a note to police headquarters, giving a short statement of his loss and calling on them for assistance. A detective was at once detailed and sent down. Brown enquired particularly and noted down all the circumstances relating to the money and everything that Mr. Brewster knew up to the moment he discovered the loss. He made a thorough examination of the premises, the safe itself and everything surrounding it.

Next got Mr. Brewster to give a list of every one employed in or about the store, from himself down. After noting down everything carefully in his book, and reading it slowly over, he finally looked up and said:

"Now Mr. Brewster, what's going to be the reward offered?"

"Well, really I hadn't thought of that, Mr. Brown. Is a reward absolutely necessary for the police to do their duty?"

"Well, Mr. Brewster, in a difficult case, it helps a man wonderfully to get on the right scent."

"I have no objection to offering \$500 for the arrest and conviction of the villain, and \$500 more if the money is recovered."

"Good! That sounds like business, Mr. Brewster. This is Mr. Hasty's desk, is it?" continued he, turning round and carelessly opening the portfolio.

"Yes, sir, that's the one he usually occupies."

Two letters attracted Brown's attention. He picked them up and read then slowly.

"How long has Hasty been with you, Mr. Brewster?"

"About fourteen years. He came right from school here and has never been any where else."

"Humph! Married, you say, and lives happily with his wife?"

"Oh, yes; perfectly so. He has a fine little boy whom he loves dearly."

"You don't know if he is extravagant in his living, Mr. Brewster? Whether he has been getting beyond his income?"

"I think not; he is too sensible and cautious for that."

"Indeed! Well, that's right. He was here when you received the money Saturday, and helped you count it, eh?"

"Yes, sir, what then?"

"And left town Sunday night you told me, for St. Louis?"

"Yes, I suppose I shall hear from him to-morrow. But what has all this to do with the robbery?"

"Considerable. Thoma Hasty is the man that has taken your money."

"Never! I cannot believe it."

"Listen. I find upon investigation that the store was never broken into, but evidently entered as usual with the key. I find by looking at the safe carefully that no expert had anything to do with it, but it was certainly the work of green hands; add these points to the fact that he knew all about the money being there, and his sudden departure and what do you have?"

"We have, sir, no motive," said Mr. Brewster, emphatically, somewhat staggered, but still confident in the integrity of his

junior partner. "Absolutely no motive for a young man of his education, character, and surroundings to plunge himself into ruin."

"Behold the motive, Mr. Brewster," said Brown, passing over the two letters, one signed 'your affectionate brother, Joseph Hasty,' the other, 'yours, respectfully, Lionel Courtenay, Broker.'"

"What! what's this!" exclaimed Mr. Brewster, putting on his glasses.

"The old story. He has borrowed money to speculate with, he has lost it, and to hold his own has borrowed more. He has lost that too, and being in despair, the opportunity has arisen to tempt him, and he has fallen."

"Alas! It seems too true. It shocks me, Brown, much as the young man has wronged me, to contemplate breaking up that happy home and covering him with disgrace. His own interest here would about cover the loss, although I know that half of that is borrowed money. I am inclined, Brown, to drop the pursuit."

"Then, sir, you'll go clean back on yourself. I believe you offered a good reward just now."

"True. Perhaps I have no right to let villainy go unpunished. Go ahead and do your duty."

"Where does he live? I think I will go over and see his wife." Brown noted the number as it was given him, took up his hat and left.

In the afternoon Matilda received a call from the gentleman, and was a little surprised to see one who was a stranger here.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Hasty," said Brown very politely, "I hope I am not intruding. The girl tells me Mr. Hasty is away from home."

"Yes, sir, he left for St. Louis Saturday night. He was to go Sunday evening, but suddenly changed his mind and left on Saturday."

"Ah! is this his little boy? How much he looks like Thomas. Come here, you little rascal. You see, Mrs. Hasty, Thomas and I used to go to school together, but we have been separated a good many years. He settled right down and went to work in the city, but I have been knocking around the world since, and we have lost sight of one another completely. My name is Ayres. We used to be great chums."

"Well, Mr. Ayres, I am sorry Thomas is not at home. I know he would welcome you heartily. He always speaks of his youth with the greatest enthusiasm. You must stay a while anyhow, and rest."

"Well, now, Mrs. Hasty, I wonder if he has changed much."

"I think not. Thomas is rather fleshy, about medium height, with light curly hair and gray eyes. He is youthful in appearance, and has an easy, pleasant way of doing everything."

"Just as he used to be, Mrs. Hasty. He wears a moustache, now, doesn't he?"

"Yes, sir; no other whiskers."

"Well, I remember how much trouble he took to coax that moustache out at school." And Mr. Brown laid back and laughed. His good-nature and easy manner was contagious, and Matilda could not help smiling.

"A good fellow he used to be at school, generous within reason, but precise and correct in all his dealings."

"Just like he is to-day, Mr. Ayres," said Matilda, rather pleased at what she considered praise to her husband.

"I would like ever so much to see a picture of him."

There is a large one hanging over the lounge there, which is very good indeed. Here are some small ones in the album."

Brown looked at them all with great interest.

"Which is the best of these small ones, Mrs. Hasty? which looks the most like him now?"

"This is the last he had taken, and I think the best," answered she, pointing out one.

"Ah! It seems very good. Now, see here, Mrs. Hasty, you probably have some duplicates of these. I am going to ask you—what I know Thomas would not have refused me—I want one of these pictures."

"I don't see how I can deny you, Mr. Ayres. Here is the last copy I have."

"Thank you—thank you kindly. He will be back after next Sunday, you think?"

"Yes; he said he would, and he never breaks his word."

"Well, good day, now. I'll be around again and see him some time next week. Good-day, Mrs. Hasty."

"Good-day, Mr. Ayres. A very pleasant man," said Matilda to herself as she closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PURSUING.

Matilda had expected a letter by Wednesday; none came. She felt anxious and disappointed. The strange words of her husband at parting haunted her, and her quick, feminine perception had told her that something lay heavy on his heart, which he was keeping from her. She was jealous that anything should occupy a more important

place in his thoughts or affections than herself. Pained, to, that he had neglected her, and not written as he promised.

Edward Blank was likewise undergoing a most painful experience. His calculation had all gone awry. His private information had turned out worse than none. Never in his experience had any stock taken such a sudden and determined decline as that of the road in question. There seemed to be no bottom to it. His supposition, based upon information obtained from supposed reliable sources, that the officers of the road intended to set on foot a bear movement in order to prove false. They had deceived the public, and then send up the stock, had they had deceived their best friends, heaven grant that they had deceived themselves. The time for paying the second quarterly dividend had come and gone, and the dividend was hopelessly passed. It was now ascertained beyond any doubt that the money for the last six dividends paid had been borrowed; that the road was buried beneath a mountain of debt, and trammelled with numerous heavy endorsements on non-profitable branches and outside enterprises.

When Edward ascertained that his friend's second margin was eaten up, and the thousand dollars of borrowed money lost, when he saw that the stock had declined from one hundred and thirteen to seventy-five, and going lower every day, he was seized with remorse and despair. He looked upon himself as the cause of the embarrassment, if not the ruin of his friend, and honest and disinterested as he was in his advice, he now saw with horror, not only the danger of borrowing money to risk it in uncertain speculation, but the crime of lending one's influence to induce others to do this.

His grief and mental suffering, however, was rendered complete, when, upon Thursday morning, he accidentally heard of the theft at Mr. Brewster's store, and the suspicious circumstances attending it. The whole now flashed across his mind, the loss of the borrowed money, the sensitive brooding over loss of reputation, the desperation, the temptation, the fall. He looked upon himself as the thief, the tempter, the villain that should be punished. He rushed to Mr. Brewster's office, told him the whole story, and his innocent though culpable share in the transaction. Had any word been received from Thomas? Not one—not a telegram, not a postal card, not a line.

"He was to put up at the Lindel Hotel, in St. Louis, was he not?" asked Edward, gasping, and trembling.

"He was, I believe," answered Mr. Brewster sadly.

"There is still some slight hope. We'll telegraph at once."

The message was sent, and in an hour the answer came back that none of that name had arrived. Crushed and broken by the weight of his feelings, Edward proceeded homeward, and, laying his head on the shoulder of his wife, wept aloud.

The wretched, cruel story was soon told, and poor Mary, more heart-broken than her husband, mingled her tears with his. The great problem was now Matilda. They were confident that she knew nothing, had no suspicion whatever of anything unusual having happened. How could they bear to contemplate her misery and woe when she should come to know the facts? While in the midst of this discussion, Matilda, with her little boy in her arms, suddenly burst in the room.

"Mary, Edward, what has happened? Tell me quick."

Both buried their faces in their hands, and wept aloud.

"I knew something dreadful had taken place. I have received no word from Tom; I dreamed of him last night—tell me the worst—quick. Is he—is he dead?" Her eyes ranged wildly from one to the other, as her limbs tottered under her.

"No, no, Matilda, he is safe," answered Mary, at last coming to herself.

"Thank God!" cried the young wife, sinking on the bed with her child, and burying her face in the pillow.

A pause of some moments ensued, when, as each grew calmer, Matilda slowly raised her head and asked: "What, then, is it all about?"

"He has left town, as you know," began Edward hesitatingly, "and Mr. Brewster fears he does not intend to come back."

"Come, come, Edward, be honest," said Matilda, looking him square in the face. "He is my husband, now and forever. I took him for better or for worse; let me know the truth without delay."

Thus implored, Edward unfolded all that he knew, without reserve from beginning to end, upbraiding himself as being the cause of the whole ruin and disgrace. Matilda listened attentively, growing calmer and firmer as he proceeded in his narrative. Her own mind was busy reviewing the many times she had received her husband coldly or indifferently, when she had regarded her affairs as above his, or her own comfort and welfare. She reproached herself with having repelled his confidence, with having thrown him back upon his own or outside resources for solace and comfort, with not having tried to understand his affairs, or

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"And, so," said she, after Edward had
finished, "they think he has taken the
money?"

"That seems about it."

"Well, 'tis false—thoroughly, completely
false."

"I wish we could make them think so,"
said Edward, mournfully.

"Much as Tom might have been tempted,
he is grounded too strong in honesty and
truth to be shaken by any such trial," ex-
claimed Matilda, emphatically, drawing her-
self to her full height.

"By heavens!" cried Edward, "much as
appearances are against him, I believe it."

"And I too," said Mary, firmly.

"We must seek him at once; we must
find him," continued Matilda.

"I will do my best," said Edward, "to
undo the mischief I have done. But how
shall we seek him, and where?"

"We must start for St. Louis to-night.
He never vacillates, never deceives; depend
upon it something has happened to detain
him, and I feel we will be certain to find
him."

"I will keep Arthur while you are gone,"
said Mary.

"No, indeed," answered Matilda, decid-
edly. "Arthur shall not be taken from me
while I live," and she glanced lovingly to-
wards the little fellow contentedly lying on
the bed and critically examining the needle-
work on his little dress.

So it was arranged that Edward, with Matilda
and the baby, should take the train for St. Louis
that night. Having but a few hours to pre-
pare, and the traps necessary to protect and
feed a baby being almost as numerous as
the equipments for a regiment of soldiers,
there was no time to be lost. Things were
hastily packed, farewells quickly said, and
the party at length found themselves on
their way to the ferry. As the night ex-
press westward bound pulled out of the de-
pot that evening, it bore at least two anx-
ious, troubled hearts. The excitement of
the start had upheld Matilda; but when she
had seen her baby comfortably asleep, and
remained herself alone quietly in the dark,
all the misery of her situation was painfully
brought home to her. She had no settled
plan of action in her mind, she had no in-
formation to assist her search; but, turning
on her face, she prayed long and earnestly
and was comforted. She trusted to an al-
mighty and loving power above, and also to
the unerring instinct of an intense affec-
tion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CAPTURED.

When they reached Cincinnati, Matilda,
who was much exhausted by the unusual
fatigue of travelling, was suddenly taken
quite ill, and they were forced to stop. Ed-
ward attended as well as he was able to her
comfort himself, besides giving all necessary
orders to secure every attention. He did
prodigies in minding the baby, and was par-
ticularly skilful in amusing and keeping
him good-natured.

In the reading room of the hotel that even-
ing, his attention was attracted to the con-
versation of some gentlemen about a railroad
accident which had happened some five
nights before. It was a local train on a short
road, and had only a few passengers aboard,
so that the affair had not attracted much at-
tention or gotten in the newspapers to any
extent. The train was running very fast,
and in striking a small bridge had dislodged
a rail and the last coach had been thrown
from the track.

"Any one hurt?" asked Edward, joining
the party.

"Well, no, I believe not seriously," an-
swered the speaker, "for the fall wasn't
very great; though I was told there is one
young man lying at a farm-house pretty
badly smashed up."

"Did you hear his name?" inquired Ed-
ward.

"No, I did not. His bag had been lost
and there wasn't a name about him. He
has been unconscious most of the time. He
was a New Yorker, I think."

Edward saw here a gleam of hope, and
resolved to visit the place by the very first
train next morning.

Matilda was much better in the morning
and wanted to go immediately, but Edward
begged her to stay over for that day, say-
ing besides that he had an errand in the
neighbourhood that would take him away
most of the morning. Upon trying her
strength she found herself weaker than she
thought, and so consented to remain. Ed-
ward took the first morning train for the
scene of the accident.

Matilda came down in the dining-room
for a late breakfast, and almost the first per-
son she saw upon entering was her husband's
would-be friend, the self-styled Mr. Ayres.

"Why, Mrs. Haasty, good-morning," said
he cheerfully, as his eyes sparkled at the
sight of her. "Are you here?"

"Yes, Mr. Ayres, I am here; I was on my
way to St. Louis, when I was taken quite
sick and had to stop."

"With your permission, we will break-
fast together, Mrs. Haasty."

"Certainly, though my breakfast will be necessarily a short one. My little boy is asleep up stairs, and I have left him in charge of a maid for a few minutes only."

They proceeded with their meal. Matilda left in a short time, and Mr. Ayres, or rather Brown, who seemed to have nothing to do, after finishing, leisurely sauntered around the office picking his teeth. Finally, lighting a cigar he took a seat, where he could have a full view of the main staircase as well as the elevator, and composed himself to wait.

At twelve o'clock Matilda received a telegram from Edward to take the first afternoon train on a certain road, and he would meet her at the depot. He did not give any explanation in his telegram, only that it was important to come at once. She hastened to get herself in readiness, and in a short time after dinner took a seat in the omnibus, with little Arthur in her lap, on her way to the depot. As the omnibus turned the corner, Brown stepped into a hack and followed, leaving word at the hotel to send any message that might come after him.

* * * * *

After the crash and shock I had known nothing whatever of what had happened, or how much time had passed. I was conscious of painful sensations running through my sleep and strange visions tinging my dreams, but of anything tangible I could form no idea. Once or twice I had come partly to myself, and had become indistinctly conscious of forms sitting around, and of someone holding something to my lips to drink. I had tried to raise my arm, but could not. I had tried to turn myself over, but had no power; so I sank off to sleep again, giving up the puzzle hopelessly.

Upon waking up for the first time thoroughly, I found it was a bright, fresh morning, well on towards the middle of the day. I was in a neat little cottage resting in bed, but how I came there or how long I had been there, I could not tell. I saw that my arm was bandaged up, and felt also wrappings around my head. After a considerable time spent in looking leisurely around and wondering what it all meant, I closed my eyes again. A footstep caused me to open them once more, and I saw Edward Blank bending over me.

His fine eyes were filled with tears as he gazed down upon me, crushed and battered as I was, lying there swathed and bandaged, hand and foot, helpless as an infant.

"Oh Tom!" said he in a voice as soft and tremulous as a woman's. "Thank God, you are found at last!"

"Edward! Found! How found? What is it all about?"

"Forgive me, Tom, forgive me for God's sake, or I shall die," continued Edward, imploringly.

Like a rush of waters when a barrier has given way, came the flood of thought upon my returning memory. Everything connected with my unfortunate speculation, all my feelings of remorse and despair, the journey and the accident, stood out before me in a series of vivid pictures. As the fatal truth came surging full upon me, the thought that I lay there not only crushed in body, but ruined in fortune, hopes, and friends, caused me to close my eyes and groan aloud.

"Can you forgive me, Tom, for all the wretchedness of which I have been the unhappy cause?"

"Certainly, Edward, I freely forgive; you acted in good faith, you did not seek to deceive me, you were deceived yourself. But how can I forgive myself for the wicked foolishness of which I have been guilty. I, who all my life have been so severe on others that hoped to take a short cut to wealth, and gain money without work or saving; I, who have been the constant champion of honesty and truth, what excuse have I to offer when I deliberately gambled with the money of another, and, after the first stake was lost, coolly lied to my own brother in order to get more money and continue the game!"

"It was I that tempted you."

"Nay, it was my own heart. Would God I had died when the crash came."

"Talk not so, Tom, or you'll break my heart. Who knows what is in the future for either of us."

"There is nothing in the future for me; loaded with debt, bankrupt in reputation, I cannot bear to return among my friends. Had I been killed, that would have put an end to my troubles, and my poor wife and darling little boy could have lived nicely on the proceeds from the insurance on my life."

The doctor came in at this moment. As my eyes were flashing and a hectic flush mounting in my cheeks, he forbade any further conversation at this time, and Edward, after pressing my hand, withdrew. An opiate calmed my agitation, and after a time I sank into a quiet sleep.

CHAPTER XXV.

FINALE.

In the afternoon, upon awakening, I felt much calmer and better. Edward came in to see me, but we talked little, he sitting by my bedside clasping my hand. The doctor had told him, in my presence, that I had been pretty well shook up, but he thought with good nursing I would come out all right. I had had one arm and two ribs broken, and had been badly cut about the head. I had passed through a serious crisis, but was now on the high road to convalescence.

Edward, though trying to be quiet, was nervous and uneasy; he evidently had something on his mind, which he wished to tell me, and yet seemed undecided just how to do it.

"And how did you leave Matilda and little Arthur?" asked I, after a pause.

"Well, quite well."

"She must be worried by my not writing. Of course, she knows nothing of the accident."

"Not a word."

"That is best. When you write, don't frighten her, Edward; tell her I have been some hurt, but am getting much better, and will soon be all right again. My hand is so hurt, or I would write her myself."

"Perhaps it won't be necessary to write for—"

"For what, Edward? You seem to have something to say, and yet can't quite say it."

"Yes, I was going to tell you—that is—anyhow, I've got to go now, but will be back after awhile, and let you know all about it." And he arose, and left the room.

I wondered what he could have to tell that he seemed to hesitate so much about, but contented myself with lying quiet, and listlessly gazing out of the window at the waving branches of a tree. A feeling of indifference had come over me, and a desire to let myself float down with the tide of events, so to speak. I had felt rather a sensation of chagrin and disappointment when I had found myself still alive, but knowing I was likely to live for some time to come, I had no plans for the future, or any desire to form any.

A noise and altercation outside my room attracted my attention.

"It is no use, sir," said a female voice, which I recognized as having heard often by my bedside, when in my dreamy state; you can't go in. The doctor says he must be kept quiet, and I ought to know too what's best for him. Haven't I nursed him ever since he was hurt?"

"Pshaw! Sarah, I'm not going to eat him

up, or run away with him," replied the strange voice of a man, coaxingly.

"Can't help it, sir, you mustn't disturb him."

"I'm not to be bamboozled, young lady, by any games; I must, and shall see him."

"Games! you rude, wicked man, what do you mean?"

"Mean, girl! I mean that I am an officer of the law and have an order for his arrest. Step aside, and let me enter."

A heavy tread, and the door swung open. I raised my eyes, and met those of the detective.

"Ah!" said he, quickly, upon seeing my condition; "the story of the smash-up, then, was true. Any-how, I have him safe."

I gazed at him inquiringly, trying to make it all out.

"Don't disturb yourself, sir," said he, in a softened tone; "it's all right. The folks will be here in a few minutes."

I said nothing, but still followed him with my eyes, as he took a seat by the window. More sounds of footsteps outside, and Edward soon eagerly entered.

"Good news, Tom," cried he, "we'll make a man of you again, before long."

"Why, what now?" inquired I, languidly.

"You're five thousand dollars richer than you were before the accident."

"Why I haven't been killed, have I?"

"No, but you have been smashed up. The railroad company, I have just heard officially to-day, intend to make you an offer in settlement of five thousand dollars cash. Somebody must have been threatening a big suit on your account."

"Indeed! why, Edward, I can pay all my debts."

"Yes and have a good round sum over." I paused a second, ruminating on this unexpected good luck.

"This man here, Edward, seems to have some business with me, will you see what it is?"

"Eh! well sir, what can we do for you?"

The detective drew him one side and whispered in his ear. Edward's countenance fell, and he knew not what to say.

"Brown, Brown," said he, after a moment's pause, "let me see! there was a boy with a telegram for you at the depot. The message just missed you at Cincinnati, and they were fortunate enough at the hotel to get it aboard this train."

"Telegram for me."

"Yes. Here he comes now across the fields, the same as I did myself. The stage is slow and the roads bad, and I wouldn't wait."

At this moment a boy appeared from the window at a short distance. Brown looked out and sung out to him and in a few moments had the message in hand. A cloud of disappointment and disgust overspread his countenance as he read. He crumpled it in his hand and uttered a hasty exclamation.

"What's the matter, now?" asked Edward.

"Matter enough. I should judge! I've lost a thousand dollars clean and had all my pains for nothing—that's all. Read that."

Edward took the paper and read:

"CHARLES E. BROWN, *Grand Hotel, Cincinnati, O.*

"A conscious-stricken porter has confessed the theft and restored most of the funds. Return at once.

"(Signed) HENRY BREWSTER."

"Isn't that enough to make a minister swear?" said Brown savagely.

"Well it's enough to make us all rejoice. So complete and thorough a vindication leaves nothing further to be said."

Brown put on his hat and withdrew. In a short time we saw him walking across the fields towards the depot.

"A friend of yours, Tom, is coming up in the stage, and will be here in a few moments."

"Ah!" said I, "havo I any friends left?"

"Ay! indeed you have; no man more. You'll be surprised, I think, at this one."

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks——"

"What! Who?" cried I, painfully trying to raise myself on my elbow.

A rustle of a dress caused me to turn my head, and behold, Matilda was at the door, hurrying toward me.

"Shall I believe my eyes? Matilda?"

"Tom, oh, Tom! Thank God for this!"

With my head upon her shoulder and my unhurt arm around her neck, my whole frame thrilled with joy and I felt that at that moment I could have died happy!

"And never yet, since high in paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came our pleasure unto mortal kind,
Than lived thro' her, within that precious hour,
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again.——"

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