

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

SHORT SIXES

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H. C. Bunner

Short Sixes / Stories to be Read While the Candle Burns

THE TENOR

It was a dim, quiet room in an old-fashioned New York house, with windows opening upon a garden that was trim and attractive, even in its Winter dress – for the rose-bushes were all bundled up in straw ulsters. The room was ample, yet it had a cosy air. Its dark hangings suggested comfort and luxury, with no hint of gloom. A hundred pretty trifles told that it was a young girl's room: in the deep alcove nestled her dainty white bed, draped with creamy lace and ribbons.

“I was *so* afraid that I'd be late!”

The door opened, and two pretty girls came in, one in hat and furs, the other in a modest house-dress. The girl in the furs, who had been afraid that she would be late, was fair, with a bright color in her cheeks, and an eager, intent look in her clear brown eyes. The other girl was dark-eyed and dark-haired, dreamy, with a soft, warm, dusky color in her face. They were two very pretty girls indeed – or, rather, two girls about to be very pretty, for neither one was eighteen years old. The dark girl glanced at a little porcelain clock.

“You are in time, dear,” she said, and helped her companion to take off her wraps.

Then the two girls crossed the room, and with a caressing and almost a reverent touch, the dark girl opened the doors of a little carven cabinet that hung upon the wall, above a small table covered with a delicate white cloth. In its depths, framed in a mat of odorous double violets, stood the photograph of the face of a handsome man of forty – a face crowned with clustering black locks, from beneath which a pair of large, mournful eyes looked out with something like religious fervor in their rapt gaze. It was the face of a foreigner.

“O Esther!” cried the other girl, “how beautifully you have dressed him to-day!”

“I wanted to get more,” Esther said; “but I've spent almost all my allowance – and violets do cost so shockingly. Come, now – ” with another glance at the clock – “don't let's lose any more time, Louise dear.”

She brought a couple of tiny candles in Sèvres candlesticks, and two little silver saucers, in which she lit fragrant pastilles. As the pale gray smoke arose, floating in faint wreaths and spirals before the enshrined photograph, Louise sat down and gazed intently upon the little altar. Esther went to her piano and watched the clock. It struck two. Her hands fell softly on the keys, and, studying a printed programme in front of her, she began to play an overture. After the overture she played one or two pieces of the regular concert stock. Then she paused.

“I can't play the Tschaikowski piece.”

“Never mind,” said the other. “Let us wait for him in silence.”

The hands of the clock pointed to 2:29. Each girl drew a quick breath, and then the one at the piano began to sing softly, almost inaudibly, “les Rameaux” in a transcription for tenor of Faure's great song. When it was ended, she played and sang the *encore*. Then, with her fingers touching the keys so softly that they awakened only an echo-like sound, she ran over the numbers that intervened between the first tenor solo and the second. Then she sang again, as softly as before.

The fair-haired girl sat by the little table, gazing intently on the picture. Her great eyes seemed to devour it, and yet there was something absent-minded, speculative, in her steady look. She did not speak until Esther played the last number on the programme.

“He had three encores for that last Saturday,” she said, and Esther played the three encores.

Then they closed the piano and the little cabinet, and exchanged an innocent girlish kiss, and Louise went out, and found her father's coupé waiting for her, and was driven away to her great, gloomy, brown-stone home near Central Park.

Louise Laura Latimer and Esther Van Guilder were the only children of two families which, though they were possessed of the three "Rs" which are all and more than are needed to insure admission to New York society – Riches, Respectability and Religion – yet were not in Society; or, at least, in the society that calls itself Society. This was not because Society was not willing to have them. It was because they thought the world too worldly. Perhaps this was one reason – although the social horizon of the two families had expanded somewhat as the girls grew up – why Louise and Esther, who had been playmates from their nursery days, and had grown up to be two uncommonly sentimental, fanciful, enthusiastically morbid girls, were to be found spending a bright Winter afternoon holding a ceremonial service of worship before the photograph of a fashionable French tenor.

It happened to be a French tenor whom they were worshiping. It might as well have been anybody or any thing else. They were both at that period of girlish growth when the young female bosom is torn by a hysterical craving to worship something – any thing. They had been studying music, and they had selected the tenor who was the sensation of the hour in New York for their idol. They had heard him only on the concert stage; they were never likely to see him nearer. But it was a mere matter of chance that the idol was not a Boston Transcendentalist, a Popular Preacher, a Faith-Cure Healer, or a ringleted old maid with advanced ideas of Woman's Mission. The ceremonies might have been different in form: the worship would have been the same.

M. Hyppolite Rémy was certainly the musical hero of the hour. When his advance notices first appeared, the New York critics, who are a singularly unconfiding, incredulous lot, were inclined to discount his European reputation.

When they learned that M. Rémy was not only a great artist, but a man whose character was "wholly free from that deplorable laxity which is so often a blot on the proud escutcheon of his noble profession;" that he had married an American lady; that he had "embraced the Protestant religion" – no sect was specified, possibly to avoid jealousy – and that his health was delicate, they were moved to suspect that he might have to ask that allowances be made for his singing. But when he arrived, his triumph was complete. He was as handsome as his pictures, if he *was* a trifle short, a shade too stout.

He was a singer of genius, too; with a splendid voice and a sound method – on the whole. It was before the days of the Wagner autocracy, and perhaps his tremolo passed unchallenged as it could not now; but he was a great artist. He knew his business as well as his advance-agent knew his. The Rémy Concerts were a splendid success. Reserved seats, \$5. For the Series of Six, \$25.

On the following Monday, Esther Van Guilder returned her friend's call, in response to an urgent invitation, despatched by mail. Louise Latimer's great bare room was incapable of transmutation into a cosy nest of a boudoir. There was too much of its heavy raw silk furniture – too much of its vast, sarcophagus-like bed – too much of its upholsterer's elegance, regardless of cost – and taste. An enlargement from an ambrotype of the original Latimer, as he arrived in New York from New Hampshire, and a photograph of a "child subject" by Millais, were all her works of art. It was not to be doubted that they had climbed upstairs from a front parlor of an earlier stage of social development. The farm-house was six generations behind Esther; two behind Louise.

Esther found her friend in a state of almost feverish excitement. Her eyes shone; the color burned high on her clear cheeks.

"You never would guess what I've done, dear!" she began, as soon as they were alone in the big room. "I'm going to see *him* – to speak to him – *Esther!*" Her voice was solemnly hushed, "to *serve* him!"

“Oh, Louise! what *do* you mean?”

“To serve him – with my own hands! To – to – help him on with his coat – I don’t know – to do something that a servant does – any thing, so that I can say that once, once only, just for an hour, I have been near him, been of use to him, served him in one little thing, as loyally as he serves OUR ART.”

Music was THEIR art, and no capitals could tell how much it was theirs or how much of an art it was.

“Louise,” demanded Esther, with a frightened look, “are you crazy?”

“No. Read this!” She handed the other girl a clipping from the advertising columns of a newspaper.

“I saw it just by accident, Saturday, after I left you. Papa had left his paper in the coupé. I was going up to my First Aid to the Injured Class – it’s at four o’clock now, you know. I made up my mind right off – it came to me like an inspiration. I just waited until it came to the place where they showed how to tie up arteries, and then I slipped out. Lots of the girls slip out in the horrid parts, you know. And then, instead of waiting in the ante-room, I put on my wrap, and pulled the hood over my head and ran off to the Midlothian – it’s just around the corner, you know. And I saw his wife.”

“What was she like?” queried Esther, eagerly.

“Oh, I don’t know. Sort of horrid – actressy. She had a pink silk wrapper with swansdown all over it – at four o’clock, think! I was *awfully* frightened when I got there; but it wasn’t the least trouble. She hardly looked at me, and she engaged me right off. She just asked me if I was willing to do a whole lot of things – I forget what they were – and where I’d worked before. I said at Mrs. Barcalow’s.”

“Mrs. Barcalow’s?”

“Why, yes – my Aunt Amanda, don’t you know – up in Framingham. I always have to wash the teacups when I go there. Aunty says that everybody has got to do *something* in *her* house.”

“Oh, Louise!” cried her friend, in shocked admiration; “how can you think of such things?”

“Well, I did. And she – his wife, you know – just said: ‘Oh, I suppose you’ll do as well as any one – all you girls are alike.’”

“But did she really take you for a – *servant*?”

“Why, yes, indeed. It was raining. I had that old ulster on, you know. I’m to go at twelve o’clock next Saturday.”

“But, Louise!” cried Esther, aghast, “you don’t truly mean to go!”

“I do!” cried Louise, beaming triumphantly.

“*Oh, Louise!*”

“Now, listen, dear, said Miss Latimer, with the decision of an enthusiastic young lady with New England blood in her veins. ‘Don’t say a word till I tell you what my plan is. I’ve thought it all out, and you’ve got to help me.’”

Esther shuddered.

“You foolish child!” cried Louise. Her eyes were sparkling: she was in a state of ecstatic excitement; she could see no obstacles to the carrying out of her plan. “You don’t think I mean to *stay* there, do you? I’m just going at twelve o’clock, and at four he comes back from the *matinée*, and at five o’clock I’m going to slip on my things and run downstairs, and have you waiting for me in the coupé, and off we go. Now do you see?”

It took some time to bring Esther’s less venturesome spirit up to the point of assisting in this bold undertaking; but she began, after a while, to feel the delights of vicarious enterprise, and in the end the two girls, their cheeks flushed, their eyes shining feverishly, their voices tremulous with childish eagerness, resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means; for they were two well-guarded young women, and to engineer five hours of liberty was difficult to the verge of impossibility. However, there is a financial manoeuvre known as “kiting checks,” whereby A exchanges a check with B and B swaps with A again, playing an imaginary balance against Time and the Clearing House; and by a similar scheme, which an acute student of social ethics has called “kiting calls,” the girls

found that they could make Saturday afternoon their own, without one glance from the watchful eyes of Esther's mother or Louise's aunt – Louise had only an aunt to reckon with.

“And, oh, Esther!” cried the bolder of the conspirators, “I've thought of a trunk – of course I've got to have a trunk, or she would ask me where it was, and I couldn't tell her a fib. Don't you remember the French maid who died three days after she came here? Her trunk is up in the store-room still, and I don't believe anybody will ever come for it – it's been there seven years now. Let's go up and look at it.”

The girls romped upstairs to the great unused upper story, where heaps of household rubbish obscured the dusty half-windows. In a corner, behind Louise's baby chair and an unfashionable hat-rack of the old steering-wheel pattern, they found the little brown-painted tin trunk, corded up with clothes-line.

“Louise!” said Esther, hastily, “what did you tell her your name was?”

“I just said ‘Louise’.”

Esther pointed to the name painted on the trunk,

Louise Lévy

“It is the hand of Providence,” she said. “Somehow, now, I'm *sure* you're quite right to go.”

And neither of these conscientious young ladies reflected for one minute on the discomfort which might be occasioned to Madame Rémy by the defection of her new servant a half-hour before dinner-time on Saturday night.

“Oh, child, it's you, is it?” was Mme. Rémy's greeting at twelve o'clock on Saturday. “Well, you're punctual – and you look clean. Now, are you going to break my dishes or are you going to steal my rings? Well, we'll find out soon enough. Your trunk's up in your room. Go up to the servants' quarters – right at the top of those stairs there. Ask for the room that belongs to apartment 11. You are to room with their girl.”

Louise was glad of a moment's respite. She had taken the plunge; she was determined to go through to the end. But her heart *would* beat and her hands *would* tremble. She climbed up six flights of winding stairs, and found herself weak and dizzy when she reached the top and gazed around her. She was in a great half-story room, eighty feet square. The most of it was filled with heaps of old furniture and bedding, rolls of carpet, of canvas, of oilcloth, and odds and ends of discarded or unused household gear – the dust thick over all. A little space had been left around three sides, to give access to three rows of cell-like rooms, in each of which the ceiling sloped from the very door to a tiny window at the level of the floor. In each room was a bed, a bureau that served for wash-stand, a small looking-glass, and one or two trunks. Women's dresses hung on the whitewashed walls. She found No. 11, threw off, desperately, her hat and jacket, and sunk down on the little brown tin trunk, all trembling from head to foot.

“Hello,” called a cheery voice. She looked up and saw a girl in a dirty calico dress.

“Just come?” inquired this person, with agreeable informality. She was a good-looking large girl, with red hair and bright cheeks. She leaned against the door-post and polished her finger-nails with a little brush. Her hands were shapely.

“Ain't got onto the stair-climbing racket yet, eh? You'll get used to it. ‘Louise Lévy,’” she read the name on the trunk. “You don't look like a sheeny. Can't tell nothin' 'bout names, can you? My name's Slattery. You'd think I was Irish, wouldn't you? Well, I'm straight Ne' York. I'd be dead before I was Irish. Born here. Ninth Ward an' next to an engine-house. How's that? There's white Jews, too. I worked for one, pickin' sealskins down in Prince Street. Most took the lungs out of me. But

that wasn't why I shook the biz. It queered my hands – see? I'm goin' to be married in the Fall to a German gentleman. He ain't so Dutch when you know him, though. He's a grocer. Drivin' now; but he buys out the boss in the Fall. How's that? He's dead stuck on my hooks, an' I have to keep 'em lookin' good. I come here because the work was light. I don't have to work – only to be doin' somethin', see? Only got five halls and the lamps. You got a fam'ly job, I s'pose? I wouldn't have that. I don't mind the Sootprintend; but I'd be dead before I'd be bossed by a woman, see? Say, what fam'ly did you say you was with?"

This stream of talk had acted like a nerve-tonic on Louise. She was able to answer:

"M – Mr. Rémy."

"Ramy? – oh, lord! Got the job with His Tonsils? Well, you won't keep it long. They're meaner 'n three balls, see? Rent their room up here and chip in with eleven. Their girls don't never stay. Well, I got to step, or the Sootprintend'll be borin' my ear. Well – so long!"

But Louise had fled down the stairs. "His Tonsils" rang in her ears. What blasphemy! What sacrilege! She could scarcely pretend to listen to Mme. Rémy's first instructions.

The household *was* parsimonious. Louise washed the caterer's dishes – he made a reduction in his price. Thus she learned that a late breakfast took the place of luncheon. She began to feel what this meant. The beds had been made; but there was work enough. She helped Mme. Rémy to sponge a heap of faded finery – *her* dresses. If they had been *his* coats! Louise bent her hot face over the tawdry silks and satins, and clasped her parboiled little finger-tips over the wet sponge. At half-past three Mme. Rémy broke the silence.

"We must get ready for Musseer," she said. An ecstatic joy filled Louise's being. The hour of her reward was at hand.

Getting ready for "Musseer" proved to be an appalling process. First they brewed what Mme. Rémy called a "teaze Ann." After the *tisane*, a host of strange foreign drugs and cosmetics were marshalled in order. Then water was set to heat on a gas-stove. Then a little table was neatly set.

"Musseer has his dinner at half-past four," Madame explained. "I don't take mine till he's laid down and I've got him off to the concert. There, he's coming now. Sometimes he comes home pretty nervous. If he's nervous, don't you go and make a fuss, do you hear, child?"

The door opened, and Musseer entered, wrapped in a huge frogged overcoat. There was no doubt that he was nervous. He cast his hat upon the floor, as if he were Jove dashing a thunderbolt. Fire flashed from his eyes. He advanced upon his wife and thrust a newspaper in her face – a little pinky sheet, a notorious blackmailing publication.

"Zees," he cried, "is your work!"

"What *is* it, now, Hipleet?" demanded Mme. Rémy.

"Vot it ees?" shrieked the tenor. "It ees ze history of how zey have heest me at Nice! It ees all zair – how I have been heest – in zis sacré sheet – in zis hankairchif of infamy! And it ees you zat have told it to zat devil of a Rastignac – *traitresse!*"

"Now, Hipleet," pleaded his wife, "if I can't learn enough French to talk with you, how am I going to tell Rastignac about your being hissed?"

This reasoning silenced Mr. Rémy for an instant – an instant only.

"You *vood* have done it!" he cried, sticking out his chin and thrusting his face forward.

"Well, I didn't," said Madame, "and nobody reads that thing, any way. Now, don't you mind it, and let me get your things off, or you'll be catching cold."

Mr. Rémy yielded at last to the necessity of self-preservation, and permitted his wife to remove his frogged overcoat, and to unwind him from a system of silk wraps to which the Gordian knot was a slip-noose. This done, he sat down before the dressing-case, and Mme. Rémy, after tying a bib around his neck, proceeded to dress his hair and put brilliantine on his moustache. Her husband enlivened the operation by reading from the pinky paper.

“It ees not gen-air-al-lee known – zat zees dees-tin-guished tenor vos heest on ze pob-lic staidj at Nice – in ze year – “

Louise leaned against the wall, sick, faint and frightened, with a strange sense of shame and degradation at her heart. At last the tenor’s eye fell on her.

“Anozzair eediot?” he inquired.

“She ain’t very bright, Hipleet,” replied his wife; “but I guess she’ll do. Louise, open the door – there’s the caterer.”

Louise placed the dishes upon the table mechanically. The tenor sat himself at the board, and tucked a napkin in his neck.

“And how did the Benediction Song go this afternoon?” inquired his wife.

“Ze Bénédiction? Ah! One *encore*. One on-lee. Zese pigs of Américains. I t’row my pairls biffio’ swine. *Chops once more!* You vant to mordair me? Vat do zis mean, madame? You ar-r-r-re in lig wiz my enemies. All ze vorlt is against ze ar-r-r-teest!”

The storm that followed made the first seem a zephyr. The tenor exhausted his execratory vocabulary in French and English. At last, by way of a dramatic finale, he seized the plate of chops and flung it from him. He aimed at the wall; but Frenchmen do not pitch well. With a ring and a crash, plate and chops went through the broad window-pane. In the moment of stricken speechlessness that followed, the sound of the final smash came softly up from the sidewalk.

“Ah-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ah!”

The tenor rose to his feet with the howl of an anguished hyena.

“Oh, good gracious!” cried his wife; “he’s going to have one of his creezes – his creezes de nare!”

He did have a *crise de nerfs*. “Ten dollair!” he yelled, “for ten dollair of glass!” He tore his pomaded hair; he tore off his bib and his neck-tie, and for three minutes without cessation he shrieked wildly and unintelligibly. It was possible to make out, however, that “arteest” and “ten dollair” were the themes of his improvisation. Finally he sank exhausted into the chair, and his white-faced wife rushed to his side.

“Louise!” she cried, “get the foot-tub out of the closet while I spray his throat, or he can’t sing a note. Fill it up with warm water – 102 degrees – there’s the thermometer – and bathe his feet.”

Trembling from head to foot, Louise obeyed her orders, and brought the foot-tub, full of steaming water. Then she knelt down and began to serve the maestro for the first time. She took off his shoes. Then she looked at his socks. Could she do it?

“Eediot!” gasped the sufferer, “make haste! I die!”

“Hold your mouth open, dear,” said Madame, “I haven’t half sprayed you.”

“Ah! *you!*” cried the tenor. “Cat! Devil! It ees you zat have killed me!” And moved by an access of blind rage, he extended his arm, and thrust his wife violently from him.

Louise rose to her feet, with a hard, set, good old New England look on her face. She lifted the tub of water to the level of her breast, and then she inverted it on the tenor’s head. For one instant she gazed at the deluge, and at the bath-tub balanced on the maestro’s skull like a helmet several sizes too large – then she fled like the wind.

Once in the servants’ quarters, she snatched her hat and jacket. From below came mad yells of rage.

“I kill hare! give me my knife – give me my rivvolvare! Au secours! Assassin!”

Miss Slattery appeared in the doorway, still polishing her nails.

“What have you done to His Tonsils?” she inquired. “He’s pretty hot, this trip.”

“How can I get away from here?” cried Louise.

Miss Slattery pointed to a small door. Louise rushed down a long stairway – another – and yet others – through a great room where there was a smell of cooking and a noise of fires – past white-

capped cooks and scullions – through a long stone corridor, and out into the street. She cried aloud as she saw Esther’s face at the window of the coupé.

She drove home – cured.

Owing to the

Sudden Indisposition of

M. Rémy,

There will be no

Concert

This Evening

Money Refunded at the

Box Office

COL. BRERETON'S AUNTY

The pleasant smell of freshly turned garden-mould and of young growing things came in through the open window of the Justice of the Peace. His nasturtiums were spreading, pale and weedy – I could distinguish their strange, acrid scent from the odor of the rest of the young vegetation. The tips of the morning-glory vines, already up their strings to the height of a man's head, curled around the window-frame, and beckoned to me to come out and rejoice with them in the freshness of the mild June day. It was pleasant enough inside the Justice's front parlor, with its bright ingrain carpet, its gilt clock, and its marble-topped centre-table. But the Justice and the five gentlemen who were paying him a business call – although it was Sunday morning – looked, the whole half dozen of them, ill in accord with the spirit of the Spring day. The Justice looked annoyed. The five assembled gentlemen looked stern.

“Well, as you say,” remarked the fat little Justice, who was an Irishman, “if this divilment goes on – “

“It's not a question of going on, Mr. O'Brien,” broke in Alfred Winthrop; “it has gone on too long.”

Alfred is a little inclined to be arrogant with the unwinthropian world; and, moreover, he was rushing the season in a very grand suit of white flannels. He looked rather too much of a lord of creation for a democratic community. Antagonism lit the Justice's eye.

“I'm afraid we've got to do it, O'Brien,” I interposed, hastily. The Justice and I are strong political allies. He was mollified.

“Well, well,” he assented; “let's have him up and see what he's got to say for himself. Mike!” he shouted out the window; “bring up Colonel Brereton!”

Colonel Brereton had appeared in our village about a year before that Sunday. Why he came, whence he came, he never deigned to say. But he made no secret of the fact that he was an unreconstructed Southron. He had a little money when he arrived – enough to buy a tiny one-story house on the outskirts of the town. By vocation he was a lawyer, and, somehow or other, he managed to pick up enough to support him in his avocation, which, we soon found out, was that of village drunkard. In this capacity he was a glorious, picturesque and startling success. Saturated with cheap whiskey, he sat all day long in the bar-room or on the porch of the village groggery, discoursing to the neighborhood loafers of the days befo' the wah, when he had a vast plantation in “Firginia” – “and five hundred niggehs, seh.”

So long as the Colonel's excesses threatened only his own liver, no one interfered with him. But on the night before we called upon the Justice, the Colonel, having brooded long over his wrongs at the hands of the Yankees, and having made himself a reservoir of cocktails, decided to enter his protest against the whole system of free colored labor by cutting the liver out of every negro in the town; and he had slightly lacerated Winthrop's mulatto coachman before a delegation of citizens fell upon him, and finding him unwilling to relinquish his plan, placed him for the night in the lock-up in Squire O'Brien's cellar.

We waited for the Colonel. From under our feet suddenly arose a sound of scuffling and smothered imprecations. A minute later, Mike, the herculean son of the Justice, appeared in the doorway, bearing a very small man hugged to his breast as a baby hugs a doll.

“Let me down, seh!” shouted the Colonel. Mike set him down, and he marched proudly into the room, and seated himself with dignity and firmness on the extreme edge of a chair.

The Colonel was very small indeed for a man of so much dignity. He could not have been more than five foot one or two; he was slender – but his figure was shapely and supple. He was unquestionably a handsome man, with fine, thin features and an aquiline profile – like a miniature Henry Clay. His hair was snow-white – prematurely, no doubt – and at the first glance you thought

he was clean shaven. Then you saw that there was scarcely a hair on his cheeks, and that only the finest imaginable line of snowy white moustaches curled down his upper lip. His skin was smooth as a baby's and of the color of old ivory. His teeth, which he was just then exhibiting in a sardonic smile, were white, small, even. But if he was small, his carriage was large, and military. There was something military, too, about his attire. He wore a high collar, a long blue frock coat, and tight, light gray trousers with straps. That is, the coat had once been blue, the trousers once light gray, but they were now of many tints and tones, and, at that exact moment, they had here and there certain peculiar high lights of whitewash.

The Colonel did not wait to be arraigned. Sweeping his black, piercing eye over our little group, he arraigned us.

"Well, *gentlemen*," with keen irony in his tone, "I reckon you think you've done a right smart thing, getting the Southern gentleman in a hole? A pro-*dee*-gious fine thing, I reckon, since it's kept you away from chu'ch. *Baptis'* church, I believe?" This was to poor Canfield, who was suspected of having been of that communion in his youth, and of being much ashamed of it after his marriage to an aristocratic Episcopalian. "Nice Sunday mo'ning to worry a Southern gentleman! Gentleman who's owned a plantation that you could stick this hyeh picayune town into one co'neh of! Owned mo' nigghehs than you eveh saw. Robbed of his land and his nigghehs by you Yankee gentlemen. Drinks a little wine to make him fo'get what he's suffehed. Gets ovehtaken. Tries to avenge an insult to his honah. Put him in a felon's cell and whitewash his gyarments. And now you come hyeh – you come hyeh – " here his eye fell with deep disapproval upon Winthrop's white flannels – "you come hyeh in youh underclothes, and you want to have him held fo' Special Sessions."

"You are mistaken, Colonel Brereton," Winthrop interposed; "if we can have your promise – "

"I will promise you nothing, seh!" thundered the Colonel, who had a voice like a church-organ, whenever he chose to use it; "I will make no conventions with you! I will put no restrictions on my right to defend my honah. Put me in youh felon's cell. I will rot in youh infehnal dungeons; but I will make no conventions with you. You can put me in striped breeches, but you cyan't put my honah in striped breeches!"

"That settles it," said the justice.

"And all," continued the Colonel, oratorically, "and all this hyeh fuss and neglect of youh religious duties, fo' one of the cheapest and most o'nery nigghehs I eveh laid eyes on. Why, I wouldn't have given one hundred dollahs fo' that niggeh befo' the wah. No, seh, I give you my wo'd, that niggeh ain't wo'th ninety dollahs!"

"Mike!" said the Justice, significantly. The Colonel arose promptly, to insure a voluntary exit. He bowed low to Winthrop.

"Allow me to hope, seh," he said, "that you won't catch cold." And with one lofty and comprehensive salute he marched haughtily back to his dungeon, followed by the towering Mike.

The Justice sighed. An elective judiciary has its trials, like the rest of us. It is hard to commit a voter of your own party for Special Sessions. However – "I'll drive him over to Court in the morning," said the little Justice.

I was sitting on my verandah that afternoon, reading. Hearing my name softly spoken, I looked up and saw the largest and oldest negress I had ever met. She was at least six feet tall, well-built but not fat, full black, with carefully dressed gray hair. I knew at once from her neat dress, her well-trained manner, the easy deference of the curtsy she dropped me, that she belonged to the class that used to be known as "house darkeys" – in contradistinction to the field hands.

"I understand, seh," she said, in a gentle, low voice, "that you gentlemen have got Cunnle Bre'eton jailed?"

She had evidently been brought up among educated Southerners, for her grammar was good and her pronunciation correct, according to Southern standards. Only once or twice did she drop into negro talk.

I assented.

“How much will it be, seh, to get him out?” She produced a fat roll of twenty and fifty dollar bills. “I do fo’ Cunnle Bre’eton,” she explained: “I have always done fo’ him. I was his Mammy when he was a baby.”

I made her sit down – when she did there was modest deprecation in her attitude – and I tried to explain the situation to her.

“You may go surety for Colonel Brereton,” I said; “but he is certain to repeat the offense.”

“No, seh,” she replied, in her quiet, firm tone; “the Cunnle won’t make any trouble when I’m here to do fo’ him.”

“You were one of his slaves?”

“No, seh. Cunnle Bre’eton neveh had any slaves, seh. His father, Majah Bre’eton, he had slaves one time, I guess, but when the Cunnle was bo’n, he was playing kyards fo’ a living, and he had only me. When the Cunnle’s mother died, Majah Bre’eton he went to Mizzoura, and he put the baby in my ahms, and he said to me, ‘Sabrine,’ he sez, ‘you do fo’ him.’ And I’ve done fo’ him eveh since. Sometimes he gets away from me, and then he gets kind o’ wild. He was in Sandusky a year, and in Chillicothe six months, and he was in Tiffin once, and one time in a place in the state of Massachusetts – I disremembh the name. This is the longest time he eveh got away from me. But I always find him, and then he’s all right.”

“But you have to deal with a violent man.”

“The Cunnle won’t be violent with me, seh.”

“But you’re getting old, Aunty – how old?”

“I kind o’ lost count since I was seventy-one, seh. But I’m right spry, yet.”

“Well, my good woman,” I said, decisively, “I can’t take the responsibility of letting the Colonel go at large unless you give me some better guarantee of your ability to restrain him. What means have you of keeping him in hand?”

She hesitated a long time, smoothing the folds of her neat alpaca skirt with her strong hands. Then she said:

“Well, seh, I wouldn’t have you say any thing about it, fo’ feah of huhting Cunnle Bre’eton’s feelings; but when he gets that way, I jes’ nachully tuhn him up and spank him. I’ve done it eveh since he was a baby,” she continued, apologetically, “and it’s the only way. But you won’t say any thing about it, seh? The Cunnle’s powerful sensitive.”

I wrote a brief note to the Justice. I do not know what legal formalities he dispensed with; but that afternoon the Colonel was free. Aunt Sabrine took him home, and he went to bed for two days while she washed his clothes. The next week he appeared in a complete new outfit – in cut and color the counterpart of its predecessor.

Here began a new era for the Colonel. He was no longer the town drunkard. Aunty Sabrine “allowanced” him – one cocktail in the “mo’ning:” a “ho’n” at noon, and one at night. On this diet he was a model of temperance. If occasionally he essayed a drinking bout, Aunty Sabrine came after him at eve, and led him home. From my window I sometimes saw the steady big figure and the wavering little one going home over the crest of the hill, equally black in their silhouettes against the sunset sky.

What happened to the Colonel we knew not. No man saw him for two days. Then he emerged – with unruffled dignity. The two always maintained genuine Southern relations. He called her his

damn black nigger – and would have killed any man who spoke ill of her. She treated him with the humble and deferential familiarity of a “mammy” toward “young mahse.”

For herself, Aunty Sabine won the hearts of the town. She was an ideal washerwoman, an able temporary cook in domestic *interregna*, a tender and wise nurse, and a genius at jam and jellies. The Colonel, too, made money in his line, and put it faithfully into the common fund.

In March of the next year, I was one of a Reform Town Committee, elected to oust the usual local ring. We discharged the inefficient Town Counsel, who had neglected our interests in a lot of suits brought by swindling road-contractors. Aunty Sabine came to me, and solemnly nominated Colonel Brereton for the post. “He is sho’ly a fine loyyeh,” she said.

I know not whether it was the Great American sense of humor, or the Great American sense of fairness, but we engaged the Colonel, conditionally.

He was a positive, a marvelous, an incredible success, and he won every suit. Perhaps he did not know much law; but he was the man of men for country judges and juries. Nothing like his eloquence had ever before been heard in the county. He argued, he cajoled, he threatened, he pleaded, he thundered, he exploded, he confused, he blazed, he fairly dazzled – for silence stunned you when the Colonel ceased to speak, as the lightning blinds your eyes long after it has vanished.

The Colonel was utterly incapable of seeing any but his own side of the case. I remember a few of his remarks concerning Finnegan, the contractor, who was suing for \$31.27 payments withheld.

“Fohty yahds!” the Colonel roared: “fohty yahds! This hyeh man Finnegan, this hyeh cock-a-doodle-doo, he goes along this hyeh road, and he casts his eye oveh this hyeh excavation, and he comes hyeh and sweahs it’s fohty yahds good measure. Does he take a tape measure and measure it? NO! Does he even pace it off with those hyeh corkscrew legs of his that he’s trying to hide under his chaiah? NO!! He says, ‘I’m Finnegan, and this hyeh’s fohty yahds,’ and off he sashays up the hill, wondering wheah Finnegan’s going to bring up when he’s walked off the topmost peak of the snow-clad Himalayas of human omniscience! And this hyeh man, this hyeh insult to humanity in a papeh collah, he comes hyeh, to this august tribunal, and he asks you, gentlemen of the jury, to let him rob you of the money you have earned in the sweat of youh brows, to take the bread out of the mouths of the children whom youh patient and devoted wives have bohne to you in pain *and* anguish – but I say to you, *gen – tel – men– (suddenly exploding)* HIS PAPEH COLLAH SHALL ROAST IN HADES BEFO’ I WILL BE A PAHTY TO THIS HYEY INFAMY!”

Finnegan was found in hiding in his cellar when his counsel came to tell him that he could not collect his \$31.27. “Bedad, is *that* all?” he gasped; “I t’ought I’d get six mont’s.”

People flocked from miles about to hear the Colonel. Recalcitrant jurymen were bribed to service by the promise of a Brereton case on the docket. His performances were regarded in the light of a free show, and a verdict in his favor was looked upon as a graceful gratuity.

He made money – and he gave it meekly to Aunty Sabine.

It was the night of the great blizzard; but there was no sign of cold or wind when I looked out, half-an-hour after midnight, before closing my front door. I heard the drip of water from the trees, I saw a faint mist rising from the melting snow. At the foot of my lawn I dimly saw the Colonel’s familiar figure marching homeward from some political meeting preliminary to Tuesday’s election. His form was erect, his step steady. He swung his little cane and whistled as he walked. I was proud of the Colonel.

An hour later the storm was upon us. By noon of Monday, Alfred Winthrop’s house, two hundred yards away, might as well have been two thousand, so far as getting to it, or even seeing it, was concerned. Tuesday morning the snow had stopped, and we looked out over a still and shining deluge with sparkling fringes above the blue hollows of its frozen waves. Across it roared an icy wind,

bearing almost invisible diamond dust to fill irritated eyes and throats. The election was held that day. The result was to be expected. All the “hard” citizens were at the polls. Most of the reformers were stalled in railroad trains. The Reform Ticket failed of re-election, and Colonel Brereton’s term of office was practically at an end.

I was outdoors most of the day, and that night, when I awoke about three o’clock, suddenly and with a shock, thinking I had heard Aunty Sabrine’s voice crying: “Cunnle! wheah are you, Cunnle?” my exhausted brain took it for the echo of a dream. I must have dozed for an hour before I sprang up with a certainty in my mind that I had heard her voice in very truth. Then I hurried on my clothes, and ran to Alfred Winthrop’s. He looked incredulous; but he got into his boots like a man. We found Aunty Sabrine, alive but unconscious, on the crest of the hill. When we had secured an asylum for her, we searched for the Colonel. The next day we learned that he had heard the news of the election and had boarded a snow-clearing train that was returning to the Junction.

It was a week before Aunty Sabrine recovered. When I asked her if she was going to look for the Colonel, she answered with gentle resignation:

“No, seh. I’m ’most too old. I’ll stay hyeh, wheah he knows wheah to find me. He’ll come afteh me, sho’.”

Sixteen months passed, and he did not come. Then, one evening, a Summer walk took me by the little house. I heard a voice I could not forget.

“Hyeh, you black niggeh, get along with that suppeh, or I come in theah and cut youh damn haid off!”

Looking up, I saw Colonel Brereton, a little the worse for wear, seated on the snake fence. No ... he was not seated; he was hitched on by the crook of his knees, his toes braced against the inside of the lower rail. His coat-tails hung in the vacant air.

He descended, a little stiffly, I thought, and greeted me cordially, with affable dignity. His manner somehow implied that it was *I* who had been away.

He insisted on my coming into his front yard and sitting down on the bench by the house, while he condescendingly and courteously inquired after the health of his old friends and neighbors. I stayed until supper was announced. The Colonel was always the soul of hospitality; but on this occasion he did not ask me to join him. And I reflected, as I went away, that although he had punctiliously insisted on my sitting down, the Colonel had remained standing during our somewhat protracted conversation.

A ROUND-UP

I

When Rhodora Boyd – Rhodora Pennington that was – died in her little house, with no one near her but one old maid who loved her, the best society of the little city of Trega Falls indulged in more or less complacent reminiscence.

Except to Miss Wimple, the old maid, Rhodora had been of no importance at all in Trega for ten long years, and yet she had once given Trega society the liveliest year it had ever known. (I should tell you that Trega people never mentioned the Falls in connection with Trega. Trega was too old to admit any indebtedness to the Falls.)

Rhodora Pennington came to Trega with her invalid mother as the guest of her uncle, the Commandant at the Fort – for Trega was a garrison town. She was a beautiful girl. I do not mean a pretty girl: there were pretty girls in Trega – several of them. She was beautiful as the Queen of Sheba was beautiful – grand, perfect, radiantly tawny of complexion, without a flaw or a failing in her pulchritude – almost too fine a being for family use, except that she had plenty of hot woman's blood in her veins, and was an accomplished, delightful, impartial flirt.

All the men turned to her with such prompt unanimity that all the girls of Trega's best society joined hands in one grand battle for their prospective altars and hearths. From the June day when Rhodora came, to the Ash Wednesday of the next year when her engagement was announced, there was one grand battle, a dozen girls with wealth and social position and knowledge of the ground to help them, all pitted against one garrison girl, with not so much as a mother to back her – Mrs. Pennington being hopelessly and permanently on the sick-list.

Trega girls who had never thought of doing more than wait at their leisure for the local young men to marry them at *their* leisure now went in for accomplishments of every sort. They rode, they drove, they danced new dances, they read Browning and Herbert Spencer, they sang, they worked hard at archery and lawn-tennis, they rowed and sailed and fished, and some of the more desperate even went shooting in the Fall, and in the Winter played billiards and – penny ante. Thus did they, in the language of a somewhat cynical male observer, back Accomplishments against Beauty.

The Shakspeare Club and the Lake Picnic, which had hitherto divided the year between them, were submerged in the flood of social entertainments. Balls and parties followed one another. Trega's square stone houses were lit up night after night, and the broad moss-grown gardens about them were made trim and presentable, and Chinese lanterns turned them into a fairy-land for young lovers.

It was a great year for Trega! The city had been dead, commercially, ever since the New York Central Railroad had opened up the great West; but the unprecedented flow of champagne and Apollinaris actually started a little business boom, based on the inferable wealth of Trega, and two or three of Trega's remaining firms went into bankruptcy because of the boom. And Rhodora Pennington did it all.

Have you ever seen the end of a sham-fight? You have been shouting and applauding, and wasting enough enthusiasm for a foot-ball match. And now it is all finished, and nothing has been done, and you go home somewhat ashamed of yourself, and glad only that the blue-coated participants must feel more ashamed of themselves; and the smell of the villainous saltpetre, that waked the Berserker in your heart an hour ago, is now noisome and disgusting, and makes you cough and sneeze.

Even so did the girls of Trega's best society look each in the face of the other, when Ash Wednesday ended that nine months of riot, and ask of each other, "What has it all been about?"

True, there were nine girls engaged to be married, and engagement meant marriage in Trega. Alma Lyle was engaged to Dexter Townsend, Mary Waite to John Lang, Winifred Peters to McCullom McIntosh, Ellen Humphreys to George Lister, Laura Visscher to William Jans, (Oranje boven! – Dutch blood stays Dutch,) Millicent Smith to Milo Smith, her cousin, Olive Cregier to Aleck Sloan, Aloha Jones, (niece of a Sandwich Islands missionary,) to Parker Hall, and Rhodora Pennington to Charley Boyd.

But all of these matches, save the last, would have been made in the ordinary course of things. The predestination of propinquity would have settled that. And even if Ellen Humphreys had married John Lang instead of George Lister, and George Lister had wedded Mary Waite – why, there would have been no great difference to admire or to deplore. The only union of the nine which came as a surprise to the community was the engagement of Rhodora to Charley Boyd. The beauty of the season had picked up the one crooked stick in the town – a dissolute, ne'er-do-well hanger-on of Trega's best society, who would never have seen a dinner-card if he had not been a genius at amateur theatricals, an artist on the banjo, and a half-bred Adonis.

There the agony ended for the other girls, and there it began for Rhodora Boyd. In less than a year, Boyd had deserted her. The Commandant was transferred to the Pacific Coast. Rhodora moved, with her mother, bed-ridden now, into a little house in the unfashionable outskirts of Trega. There she nursed the mother until the poor bed-ridden old lady died. Rhodora supported them both by teaching music and French at the Trega Seminary, down by the Falls. Morning and evening she went out and back on that weary, jingling horse-car line. She received the annual visits that her friends paid her, inspired by something between courtesy and charity, with her old stately simplicity and imperturbable calm; and no one of them could feel sure that she was conscious of their triumph or of her degradation. And she kept the best part of her stately beauty to the very last. In any other town she would have been taught what divorce-courts were made for; but Trega society was Episcopalian, and that communion is healthily and conservatively monogamous.

And so Rhodora Boyd, that once was Rhodora Pennington, died in her little house, and her pet old maid closed her eyes. And there was an end of Rhodora. Not quite an end, though.

II

Scene. — *The Public Library of Trega.* Mrs. George Lister and Mrs. John Lang are seated in the Rotunda. Mr. Libriver, the Librarian, advances to them with books in his hands.

Mrs. Lister. – Ah, here comes Mr. Libriver, with my “Intellectual Life.” Thank you, Mr. Libriver – you are always so kind!

Mrs. Lang. – And Mr. Libriver has brought me my “Status of Woman.” Oh, thank you, Mr. Libriver.

Mr. Libriver, *a thin young man in a linen duster, retires, blushing.*

Mrs. Lister. – Mr. Libriver does *so* appreciate women who are free from the bondage of the novel. Did you hear about poor Rhodora's funeral?

Mrs. Lang (*with a sweeping grasp at the intellectual side of the conversation*). – Oh, I despise love-stories. In the church? Oh, yes, I heard. (*Sweetly*). Dr. Homly told me. Doesn't it seem just a little – ostentatious?

Mrs. Lister. – Ostentatious – but, do you know, my dear, there are to be eight pall-bearers!

Mrs. Lang (*turning defeat into victory*). – No, I did *not* know. I don't suppose that ridiculous old maid, that Miss Wimple, who seems to be conducting the affair, *dared* to tell *that* to Dr. Homly. And who are they?

Mrs. Lister (*with exceeding sweetness*). – Oh, I don't know, dear. Only I met Mr. Townsend, and he told me that Dr. Homly had just told *him* that he was one of the eight.

Mrs. Lister. – Dexter Townsend! Why, it's scandalous. Everybody knows that he proposed to her three times and that she threw him over. It's an insult to – to —

Mrs. Lang. – To poor dear Alma Townsend. I quite agree with you. I should like to know how she feels – if she understands what it means.

Mrs. Lister. – Well, if I were in her place —

Enter Mrs. Dexter Townsend.

Mrs. Lang	}	Why, Alma!
Mrs. Lister.		

Mrs. Townsend. – Why, Ellen! Why, Mary! Oh, I'm so glad to meet you both. I want you to lunch with me to-morrow at one o'clock. I do so *hate* to be left alone. And poor Rhodora Pennington – Mrs. Boyd, I mean – her funeral is at noon, and our three male protectors will have to go to the cemetery, and Mr. Townsend is just going to take a cold bite before he goes, and so I'm left to lunch —

Mrs. Lang (*coldly*). – I don't think Mr. Lang will go to the cemetery —

Mrs. Lister. – There is no reason why Mr. Lister —

Mrs. Townsend. – But, don't you know? – They're all to be pall-bearers! They can't refuse, of course.

Mrs. Lang (*icily*). – Oh, no, certainly not.

Mrs. Lister (*below zero*). – I suppose it is an unavoidable duty.

Mrs. Lang. – Alma, is that your *old* Surah? What *did* you do to it?

Mrs. Lister. – They *do* dye things so wonderfully nowadays!

Scene. – A Verandah in front of Mr. McCullom McIntosh's house. Mrs. McCullom McIntosh seated, with fancy work. To her, enter Mr. William Jans and Mr. Milo Smith.

Mrs. McIntosh (*with effusion*). – Oh, Mr. Jans, I'm so delighted to see you! And Mr. Smith, too! I never expect to see you busy men at this time in the afternoon. And how is Laura? – and Millicent? Now *don't* tell me that you've come to say that you can't go fishing with Mr. McIntosh to-morrow! He'll be *so* disappointed!

Mr. Jans. – Well, the fact is —

Mrs. McIntosh. – You haven't been invited to be one of poor Rhodora Boyd's pall-bearers, have you? That would be *too* absurd. They say she's asked a regular party of her old conquests. Mr. Libriver just passed here and told me – Mr. Lister and John Lang and Dexter Townsend —

Mr. Jans. – Yes, and me.

Mrs. McIntosh. – Oh, *Mr.* Jans! And they do say – at least Mr. Libriver says – that she hasn't asked a man who hadn't proposed to her.

Mr. Jans (*Dutchily*). – I d'no. But I'm asked, and —

Mrs. McIntosh. – You don't mean to tell me that Mr. Smith is asked, too? Oh, that would be *too* impossible. You don't mean to tell me, Mr. Smith, that you furnished one of Rhodora's scalps ten years ago?

Mr. Smith. – You ought to know, Mrs. McIntosh. Or – no – perhaps not. You and Mac were to windward of the centre-board on Townsend's boat when *I* got the mitten. I suppose you couldn't hear us. But we were to leeward, and Miss Pennington said she hoped *all* proposals didn't echo.

Mrs. McIntosh. – The wretched c – but she's dead. Well, I'm thankful Mac – Mr. McIntosh never *could* abide that girl. He always said she was horribly bad form – poor thing, I oughtn't to speak so, I suppose. She's been punished enough.

Mr. Smith. – I'm glad you think so, Mrs. McIntosh. I hope you won't feel it necessary to advise Mac to refuse her last dying request.

Mrs. McIntosh. – What —

Mr. Smith. – Oh, well, the fact is, Mrs. McIntosh, we only stopped in to say that as McIntosh and all the rest of us are asked to be pall-bearers at Mrs. Boyd's funeral, you might ask Mac if it wouldn't be just as well to postpone the fishing party for a week or so. If you remember – will you be so kind? Thank you, good afternoon.

Mr. Jans. – Good afternoon, Mrs. McIntosh.

Mrs. Sloan. – Why, that surely isn't one of the new napkins! – oh, it's the evening paper. Dear me! how near-sighted I am getting! (*Takes it and opens it.*) You may put those linen sheets on the top shelf, Bridget. We'll hardly need them again this Fall. Oh, Bridget – here's poor Mrs. Boyd's obituary. You used to live at Colonel Pennington's before she was married, didn't you?

Bridget. – I did that, Mum.

Mrs. Sloan (*reading*). – “Mrs. Boyd's pall-bearers are fitly chosen from the most distinguished and prominent citizens of Trega.” I'm sure I don't see why they should be. (*Reads.*) “Those invited to render the last honors to the deceased are Mr. George Lister – “

Bridget. – 'Tis he was foriver at the house.

Mrs. Sloan (*reads*). – “Mr. John Lang – “

Bridget. – And him.

Mrs. Sloan (*reads*). – “Mr Dexter Townsend – “

Bridget. – And him, too.

Mrs. Sloan (*reads*). – “Mr. McIntosh, Mr. William Jans, Mr. Milo Smith – “

Bridget. – And *thim*. Mr. Smith was her siventh.

Mrs. Sloan. – Her *what*?

Bridget. – Her sivinith. There was eight of thim proposed to her in the wan week.

Mrs Sloan. – Why, Bridget! How can you possibly know *that*?

Bridget. – Sure, what does it mean whin a gintleman calls twice in th' wake an' thin stops like he was shot. An' who is the eight' gintleman to walk wid the corpse, Mum?

Mrs. Sloan. – That is all, Bridget. And those pillow-cases look shockingly! I never *saw* such ironing! (*Exit, hastily and sternly.*)

Bridget (*sola*). – Only siven of thim. Saints bless us! The pore lady'll go wan-sided to her grave!

Scene. —*The Private Office of Mr. Parker Hall. Mr. Hall writing. To him, enter Mr. Aleck Sloan.*

Mr. Sloan. – Ah, there, Parker!

Mr. Hall. – Ah, there, Aleck! What brings *you* around so late in the day?

Mr. Sloan. – I just thought you might like to hear the names of the fellows Rhodora Pennington chose for her pall-bearers. (*Produces list.*)

Mr. Hall (*sighs*). – Poor Rhodora! Too bad! Fire ahead.

Mr. Sloan (*reads list*). – “George Lister.”

Mr. Hall. – *Ah!*

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “John Lang.”

Mr. Hall. – Oh!

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “Dexter Townsend.”

Mr. Hall. – Well!

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “McCullom McIntosh.”

Mr. Hall. – Say! —

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “William Jans.”

Mr. Hall. – The Deuce!

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “Milo Smith.”

Mr. Hall. – Great Cæsar's ghost! This is getting very personal!

Mr. Sloan – Yes. (*Reads, nervously.*) “Alexander Sloan.”

Mr. Hall. – Whoo-o-o-o-up! You too?

Mr. Sloan (*reads*). – “*Parker Hall.*”

(A long silence.)

Mr. Hall (*faintly*). – Oh, lord, she rounded us up, didn't she? Say, Parker, can't this thing be suppressed, somehow?

Mr. Sloan. – It's in the evening paper.

(Another long silence.)

Mr. Hall (*desperately*). – Come out and have a bottle with me?

Mr. Sloan. – I can't. I'm going down to Bitts's stable to buy that pony that Mrs. Sloan took such a shine to a month or so ago.

Mr. Hall. – If *I* could get out of this for a pony – Oh, lord!

THE TWO CHURCHES OF 'QUAWKET

The Reverend Colton M. Pursly, of Aquawket, (commonly pronounced 'Quawket,) looked out of his study window over a remarkably pretty New England prospect, stroked his thin, grayish side-whiskers, and sighed deeply. He was a pale, sober, ill-dressed Congregationalist minister of forty-two or three. He had eyes of willow-pattern blue, a large nose, and a large mouth, with a smile of forced amiability in the corners. He *was* amiable, perfectly amiable and innocuous – but that smile sometimes made people with a strong sense of humor want to kill him. The smile lingered even while he sighed.

Mr. Pursly's house was set upon a hill, although it was a modest abode. From his window he looked down one of those splendid streets that are the pride and glory of old towns in New England – a street fifty yards wide, arched with grand Gothic elms, bordered with houses of pale yellow and white, some in the homelike, simple yet dignified colonial style, some with great Doric porticos at the street end. And above the billowy green of the tree-tops rose two shapely spires, one to the right, of granite, one to the left, of sand-stone. It was the sight of these two spires that made the Reverend Mr. Pursly sigh.

With a population of four thousand five hundred, 'Quawket had an Episcopal Church, a Roman Catholic Church, a Presbyterian Church, a Methodist Church, a Universalist Church, (very small,) a Baptist Church, a Hall for the "Seventh-Day Baptists," (used for secular purposes every day but Saturday,) a Bethel, and – "The Two Churches" – as every one called the First and Second Congregational Churches. Fifteen years before, there had been but one Congregational Church, where a prosperous and contented congregation worshiped in a plain little old-fashioned red brick church on a side-street. Then, out of this very prosperity, came the idea of building a fine new free-stone church on Main Street. And, when the new church was half-built, the congregation split on the question of putting a "rain-box" in the new organ. It is quite unnecessary to detail how this quarrel over a handful of peas grew into a church war, with ramifications and interlacements and entanglements and side-issues and under-currents and embroilments of all sorts and conditions. In three years there was a First Congregational Church, in free-stone, solid, substantial, plain, and a Second Congregational Church in granite, something gingerbreadly, but showy and modish – for there are fashions in architecture as there are in millinery, and we cut our houses this way this year and that way the next. And these two churches had half a congregation apiece, and a full-sized debt, and they lived together in a spirit of Christian unity, on Capulet and Montague terms. The people of the First Church called the people of the Second Church the "Sadduceeceders," because there was no future for them, and the people of the Second Church called the people of the First Church the "Pharisee-mes". And this went on year after year, through the Winters when the foxes hugged their holes in the ground within the woods about 'Quawket, through the Summers when the birds of the air twittered in their nests in the great elms of Main Street.

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