FERN FANNY

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Every writer has his parish. To mine, I need offer no apology for presenting,

First, a new story which has never before appeared in print;

Secondly, the "hundred-dollar-a-column story," respecting the remuneration of which, skeptical paragraphists have afforded me so much amusement. (N. B. – My banker and I can afford to laugh!) This story having been published when "The New York Ledger" was in the dawn of its present unprecedented circulation, and never having appeared elsewhere, will, of course, be new to many of my readers;

Thirdly, I offer them my late fugitive pieces, which have often been requested, and which, with the other contents of this volume, I hope will cement still stronger our friendly relations.

FANNY FERN.

A BUSINESS MAN'S HOME; OR, A STORY FOR HUSBANDS

CHAPTER I

"There's your father, children."

The piano was immediately closed by the young performer, and the music-stool put carefully away, that the new-comer might have an unrestricted choice of seats; a wide space was immediately cleared before the grate which had been carefully replenished with coal but half an hour before; a stray cricket was hastily picked up and pushed beneath the sofa, and an anxious glance was thrown around the room by Mrs. Wade as her husband entered the room.

"Too much light here," said the latter, as he turned down the gas burner. "I hate such a glare. Waste of coal, too; fire enough to roast an ox, and coal seven dollars a ton;" and Mr. Wade seized the poker and gave the grate a vindictive poke.

Mrs. Wade sighed – she had too long been accustomed to such scenes to do any thing else. It was not the first time, nor the second, nor the hundredth, that her unwearied endeavors to make home cheerful had been met with a similar repulse; the young people, so gay but a moment before, skipped, one by one, out of the room, closing the door noiselessly behind them as culprit-like they glided away.

"Heigh-ho," muttered Mr. Wade, as he threw himself down, boots and all, on the sofa, "heigh-ho."

"Does your head ache?" asked his patient wife.

"I want my tea," growled Mr. Wade, without deigning a reply.

Mrs. Wade might have answered – most women would – that it had been ready this half-hour. She might also have said that she had just come up from the kitchen, where she had been to see that his favorite dish of toast was prepared to his liking. She might also have said that she did not like to order tea till he had signified his wish for it – but as I said before, Mrs. Wade had been too long in school not to have learned her lesson well. So she merely touched her forefinger to the bell, for Betty to bring in the tea.

It was strong and hot – Mr. Wade could not deny it; – the milk was sweet; so was the butter, the toast was unexceptionable, and enough of it; the cake light, and the sweetmeats unfermented. Poor, ill-used Mr. Wade – he was in that most provoking of all dilemmas to a petulant temper, there was nothing to fret about.

"There's the door bell," he exclaimed, inwardly relieved at the idea of an escape-valve; "now I suppose I shall be talked deaf by that silly Mrs. Jones and her daughter, or bored by that stupid Mr. Forney; it's very strange that a man can not enjoy his family one evening free from interruption."

No such thing – Mr. Wade was cheated out of a fresh growl; the new arrival being a carpet-bag, and its accessory, Mr. John Doe, a brother-growler, whom Mr. Wade would rather have seen, if possible, than a new gold dollar. Mr. John Doe, as sallow as a badly-preserved pickle, and about as sweet – a man all nerves and frowns – a walking thunder-cloud, muttering vengeance against any thing animate, or inanimate, which had the temerity to bask in the sunshine. Mr. John Doe, a worse drug than any in his apothecary's shop, who believed in the eternal destruction of little dead babies; turned the world into one vast charnel-house, and reversed the verdict of Him who pronounced it "very good."

"Ah – how d'ye do – how dy'e do?" said Mr. Wade, with an impromptu lugubrious whine, as Mr. Doe ran his fingers through his grizzled locks, and deposited his time-worn carpet-bag in the corner; "it is pleasant to see a *friend*."

"Thank you, thank you," replied Mr. Doe, lowering himself as carefully into his chair as if he was afraid his joints would become unriveted; "there's no knowing how many more times you may have to say that; these sudden changes of weather are dreadful underminers of a man's constitution. Traveling, too, racks me to pieces; I can't sleep in a strange bed, nor get any thing I can eat when I wake, my appetite is so delicate; – sometimes I think it don't make much difference – we are poor creatures – begin to die as soon as we are born – how do you do, Mr. Wade? You look to me like a man who is going to have the jaundice, eye-balls yellow, etc. – any appetite?"

"Not much," said Mr. Wade, unbuttoning his lower vest button, under which were snugly stowed away a pile of buttered toast, three cups of tea, and preserved peaches enough to make a farmer sick – "not much; – a man who works as hard as I do, gets too exhausted to eat when it comes night, or if he does, his food does not digest; how's your family?"

"So, so," muttered Doe, with an expressive shrug; "children are a great care, Mr. Wade, a great care – my John don't take that interest in the drug business that I wish he did; he always has some book or other on hand, reading; I am afraid he never will be good for any thing; your book-worms always go through the world, knocking their heads against facts. I shouldn't wonder, after all my care, if he turned out a poor miserable author; sometimes I think what is to be, will be, and there's no use trying."

"Is not that fatalism?" quietly interposed Mrs. Wade, blushing the next moment that she had so far departed from "The Married Woman's Guide," as to question an opinion which her husband had indorsed by his silence. "Children are a great care, 'tis true, but it always seemed to me that the care brought its own sweet reward."

Mr. Doe wheeled round to look in the face this meek wife, whose disappointed heart, turning to her children for that comfort which she had in vain looked for from her husband, could ill brook that the value of this coveted treasure should have such depreciating mention.

"Pshaw! what signify words?" said her husband. "I hate argument; besides, women can't argue – every body knows that; and every body knows that if a man wants his children to do, or be, one thing, they are sure to do, or be, just the opposite. I've no doubt it will turn out just so with ours; there is no counting on 'em. In my day, if a man was a farmer, his son was a farmer after him, and never thought of being any thing else. Nowadays, children have to be consulted as to 'their bent.' Fudge – fiddlestick; their bent is for mischief and dodging work, and a tight rein and a good smart rod is the best cure for it."

Just at this point Mr. Doe gave a dismal groan, and doubled himself up like a jack-knife. "A touch of my old complaint," said he, holding on to his waist-band. "Rheumatism – it will carry me off some day. Mrs. Wade, if you will be so good as to look in my carpet-bag, you will find a plaster which I never travel without; and I will trouble you, Mrs. Wade, to have my bed warmed, and a fire in the room where you intend I should sleep; and if there should be any cracks in the windows, will you have the goodness to nail up a blanket over them? and I would like a very warm comforter, if you please, and a jug of hot water at my feet, if it would not be too much trouble."

"Of course not," said Mr. Wade, settling himself very comfortably down into his ample easy-chair; "of course not; Mrs. Wade, won't you attend to it?"

"And, Mrs. Wade, if you'd be so kind as to put the feather bed uppermost, and give me cotton sheets instead of linen; I should also prefer a hair to a feather pillow: I consider feathers too heating for my head; I am obliged to be careful of my head."

"Certainly," repeated Mr. Wade. "Mrs. Wade will see to it." And as she moved out of the room to execute these orders, these two despondent Siamese drew their chairs closer together, to bemoan the short-comings of two of the most long-suffering wives who ever wore themselves to skeletons, trying to please husbands who were foreordained not to be pleased.

CHAPTER II

Mother's room! How we look back to it in after years, when she who sanctified it is herself among the sanctified. How well we remember the ample cushioned chair, with its all-embracing arms, none the worse in our eyes for having rocked to sleep so many little forms now scattered far and wide, divided from us, perhaps, by barriers more impassable than the cold, blue sea. Mother's room – where the sun shone in so cheerily upon the flowering plants in the low, old-fashioned window-seats, which seemed to bud and blossom at the least touch of her caressing fingers; on which no blight or mildew ever came; no more than on the love which outlived all our childish waywardness – all our childish folly. The cozy sofa upon which childish feet were never forbidden to climb; upon which curly heads could dream, unchidden, the fairy dreams of childhood. The closet which garnered tops, and dolls, and kites, and whips, and toys, and upon whose upper shelf was that infallible old-fashioned panacea for infancy's aches and pains – brimstone and molasses! The basket, too, where was always the very string we wanted; the light-stand round which we gathered, and threaded needles (would we had threaded thousands more) for eyes dimmed in our service; and the cheerful face that smiled across it such loving thanks.

Mother's room! where our matronly feet returned when *we* were mothers; where we lifted our little ones to kiss the wrinkled face, beautiful with its halo of goodness; where we looked on well pleased to see the golden locks we worshiped, mingling lovingly with the silver hairs; where, as the fond grand-mamma produced, in alarming profusion, cakes and candies for the little pets, we laughingly reminded her of *our* baby days, when she wisely told us such things were "unwholesome;" where *our* baby caps, yellow with time, ferreted from some odd bag or closet, were tried on our own babies' heads, and we sat, wondering where the months and years had flown between then and now; and looking forward, half-sighing, to just such a picture, when we should play what seemed to us now, with our smooth skins, round limbs, and glossy locks, such an impossible part.

Mother's room! where we watched beside her patient sick-bed through the long night, gazing hopelessly at the flickering taper, listening to the pain-extorted groan, which no human skill, no human love, could avert or relieve; waiting with her the dawning of that eternal day, seen through a mist of tears, bounded by no night.

Mother's room! where the mocking light strayed in through the half-opened shutters, upon her who, for the first time, was blind to our tears, and deaf to our cries; where busy memory could bring back to us no look, no word, no tone, no act of hers, not freighted with God-like love. Alas! – alas for us then, if, turning the tablets, they showed us this long debt of love unappreciated – unpaid!

No blossoming plants luxuriated in the windows of Mr. Wade's house; no picture attracted attention upon the walls; with the exception of a huge map of the United States in the hall, their blank whiteness was pitilessly unrelieved. The whole house seemed to be hopelessly given up to the household god – utility. If Mrs. Wade ever had any womanish leaning toward the ornamental, she had long since learned to suppress it; and what woman, how poor soever she may be, does not make some feeble attempt to brighten up the little spot she calls home? Beautiful to me, for this reason, is the crude picture, the cheap plaster-cast, or the china mug with its dried grass, or the blue ribbon which ties back the coarse but clean white curtain under humble roofs. Who shall say that such things have not a moral influence – a moral significance? Who shall say that there is not more hope of that young man on the walls of whose bachelor attic hangs a landscape, or a sweet female head, though not "by an old master?" Who that has been so unfortunate as to sojourn in that mockery of a home, called a boarding-house, has not, when passing through the halls, and by the open doors of rooms, formed favorable or unfavorable opinions of its occupants from these mute indications of taste and character? Let no one, particularly if he has children, wait till he can command the most costly adornments; have

one picture, have one statue, have one vase, if no more, for little eyes to look at, for little tongues to prattle about.

If Mr. Wade had but understood this! If he had but brushed from his heart the cobwebs of his counting-room – for he had a heart, buried as it was under the world's rubbish; if he had not circumscribed his thoughts, wishes, hopes, aims, by the narrow horizon of his ledger. If – If! Dying lips falter out that word regretfully; – alas! that we should learn to live only when we come to die!

I have said Mr. Wade had a heart, ossified as it now was by the all-absorbing love of gain. At the age of seven years, he was left, with a younger brother, the only legacy to a heart-broken, invalid mother, who found herself suddenly thrown upon the world for that charity that she had been accustomed to bestow. To say that she found none, would be false; the world is not all bad; but there were months in which Mr. Wade, then a bright, handsome lad, was glad to carry home to her and his little brother, the refuse food of the neighbors' kitchens. They who have felt in early youth the griping hand of poverty, unfortunately learn to attach undue value to the possession of money. Day after day, as the boy witnessed his feeble mother struggling vainly with her fate – day after day the thought, for *her* sake to become rich, haunted his waking dreams and his boyish pillow. With his arms about her neck, he would picture the blessings and comforts of a future home, which his more hopeful eyes saw in the distance. The road to it, to be sure, was rough and thorny, but still it was there; no cloud of adversity could wholly obscure it to the boy's vision; and even in the darkest night, when he woke, in fancy the lamps gleamed brightly from its curtained windows; and so the boy smothered down his swelling heart, when the refuse food was tossed carelessly into his beggar's basket, and was thankful for the little job which brought him even a penny to place in *her* hand, as an earnest of what should come – God willing; and at night, when the younger brother shivered with cold, John would chafe his chilled feet, and, taking him in his arms, soothe him to blissful slumbers. That the world should ever chill such a heart! That the armor buckled over it in so righteous a cause, should contract around it and prove but its shroud!

Nobly the boy struggled: they who are not fastidious as to the means, seldom fail of securing the result they aim at. John Wade's pride never stood like a lion in his path; he heeded not the supercilious glance or careless tone of his employers, so that he received the hard-earned reward of his toil. At length, from loving money for what it would bring, he learned to love it for its own sake; and when death removed from him those for whom he toiled, he toiled on for love of the shining dross. Pity that gold should always bring with it the canker – covetousness.

CHAPTER III

"I have a great mind to go to bed," said Susy Wade, yawning; "I'm not sleepy, either, but I don't know what do do with myself; there's that tiresome Mr. Doe down stairs – he croaks, and croaks, and croaks, till I feel almost as sick as he pretends to. Now he will keep mother nursing up his rheumatism, as he calls it, till ten o'clock, when he is no more sick than she is, nor half so much; mother never complains when any thing ails her; but I am not like mother; I am not patient a bit. Were it not for mother, Neddy, I should like to sail way off across the ocean, and never come back; I get so tired here at home, and I know she does, too, though she never says any thing; sometimes she sighs such a long sigh, when she thinks nobody hears her; I should rather she would cry outright; it always makes me feel better to have a good cry. I wish that our father was like Carey Hunt's father."

"So do I," said Neddy, fixing his humming-top – "so do I – they have such fun there. Tom told me that his father played games with them evenings, and showed them how to make kites, and brought them home story-books, and read them aloud, and sometimes the whole family go out together to some place of amusement. I wonder what makes our father so different from Tom Hunt's father? Tommy always runs down street to meet his father when he comes home, and tells him what has happened on the play-ground; I wonder why our father never talks to us about such things? I wonder how father felt when he was a boy – don't you suppose he ever played?"

"I don't know," said Susy, mournfully; "I'm only fifteen, but I mean to get married just as soon as I can, and then I won't have such a gloomy house, and you shall come and live with me, Neddy."

"But mother – " said Neddy.

"O, mother shall come to see us all the time," said Susy; "won't we have fun?"

"But perhaps your husband will be a sober man, like father, and won't want company, only people like Mr. Doe."

"But my husband will be young, you little goose," said Susy.

"Well – wasn't father young when mother married him?" said the persistent Neddy, whirling off his top.

"I suppose so," said Susy, with a sigh, "but it don't seem as if he ever was. Where's the Arabian Nights, Neddy, that you borrowed of Tom Hunt? let's read a story."

"Father made me carry it back," said Neddy; "he said it was nonsense, and I shouldn't read it."

"That's just why I like it," said Susy; "of course, nobody believes it true – and I'm so tired of sense! Isn't there any thing up in the book-rack there, Neddy?"

"I'll see," said Neddy, stretching his neck up out of his clean white collar – "I'll see – here's Moral Philosophy, Key to Daboll's Arithmetic, Sermons by Rev. John Pyne, Essays by Calvin Croaker, Guide to Young Wives, Rules for Eating, Walking and Talking, Complete Letter Writer, Treatise on Pneumatics, Buchan's Domestic Medicine. Which will you have?" asked Neddy, with a comical whine.

"Hush!" said Susy, "there's father's step."

Mr. Wade had come up to get his soft lamb's-wool slippers for Mr. Doe, that gentleman having experienced a chill in his left toe joint.

"Playing top," said he, contemptuously, looking at Neddy; "at your age, sir, I was wheeling stone for a mason, in the day-time, and studying arithmetic evenings. Where's your Daboll, sir? Study your pound and pence table; that's what's to be the making of you; how do you expect to become a man of business without that? You'll never drive a good bargain – you'll be cheated out of your eye-teeth. Get your Daboll, sir, and Susy, do you hear him say it. Tops are for babies, sir; a boy of your age ought to be almost as much a man as his father. How should I look playing top? God didn't make the world to play in." And Mr. Wade and his lamb's-wool slippers slipped down stairs.

"He didn't make it for a work-shop either," thought Susy, as she took down the offensive Daboll.

They to whom the word father comprises all that is reverent, tender, companionable and sweet, may refuse to recognize the features of this portrait as a true likeness of the relation for which it stands; they may well doubt – they whose every childish hope and fear was freely confided to a pitying, loving, sympathizing heart – they whose generous impulses were never chilled by the undeserved breath of suspicion and distrust – they whose overflowing love was never turned back in a lava tide to devastate their fresh young hearts – happy they for whom memory daguerreotypes no such mournful picture! Still, let them not for that reason doubt, that through the length and breadth of the land, are men and women who look back sorrowing on what they might have been, *but for their blighted childhood*!

"Blessed night!" the words often fell from Mrs. Wade's lips, as she closed her chamber-door, and, laying her weary head upon her pillow, sought oblivion in sleep.

"Blessed night;" the children did not hear it, for whose sakes she often repressed the rising sigh, and sent back to their fountain the scalding tears, and whose future, as her health and strength declined, she would have trembled to contemplate, but for her faith in God.

He did not hear it – one kind word from whom, one look, or smile, to say that he appreciated all her untiring efforts, would have brought back the roses of health to that faded cheek. He did not hear it, as he sat there over the midnight-fire, with groaning Mr. Doe, ringing the changes on dollars and cents, dollars and cents, which had come between him and the priceless love of those warm hearts.

Ay – Blessed night!

CHAPTER IV

"I think it must be time for Henry to come home," and the speaker glanced at a little gold watch on the mantel. "What a noise those children are making. I told them to keep still, but after all, I'm glad that they didn't mind me; the most pitiful sight on earth to me, is a child with a feeble body and a large head, who never plays. Let them romp – broken chairs are easier mended than broken spines; who would be a slave to an upholstery shop, or a set of porcelain; who would keep awake at night to watch the key which locks up a set of gold or silver? Who would mew children up in the nursery for fear of a parlor carpet? My parlor is not too good for my children to play in, and I hope it never will be. Now I will go down and take out some cake for tea; how glad I am Henry loves cake, because I know so well how to make it; who would have thought I should have had such a good husband, and such a happy home – poor mamma – and she deserves it so much better than I. Sometimes I think I ought never to have left home while she lived, but have staid to comfort her. Oh my children must be very – very happy; childhood comes but once – but once."

So said Mary Hereford, Mr. Wade's married daughter, as she picked up the toys, and picture-books, and strings, and marbles, with which her romping children had strewed her chamber floor.

Mary Hereford was no beauty. She had neither golden brown, nor raven hair; her skin was not transparently white, nor her eyes dazzlingly bright, nor her foot and hand miraculously small. She was simply a plump, healthy, rosy, cheerful little cricket of a woman – singing ever at her own hearth-stone – proud of her husband – proud of her children, knowing no weariness in their service. Many a beautiful woman has wrung her white hands in vain for the love which lent wings to this unhandsome, but still lovely little wife, dignified even the most common-place employment, and made her heart a temple for sweet and holy thoughts to gather.

"Yes, there comes Henry now," said Mary, and before the words were well out of her mouth, her husband held her at arm's length, and looked into her face.

"You have been sewing too steadily, little wife," said he; "I must take you out for a walk after tea. I shall get a sempstress to help you if these children out-grow their clothes so fast."

Mary laughed a merry little laugh; "No such thing – I am not tired a bit – at least not now you are here; beside, don't you work hard down in that close counting-room, your poor head bothered with figures all day? Do you suppose a wife is to fold her hands idly, that her husband may get gray hairs? No – you and I will grow old together, but that is a long way off yet, you know," and Mary shook her brown hair about her face. "Come – now for tea. I have such nice cakes for you; the children have been so good and affectionate; to be sure they tear their aprons occasionally, and perhaps break a cup or plate, but what is that, if we are only kind and happy? Oh, it is blessed to be happy!" And Mary would have thrown her arms around her husband's neck, but unfortunately she was too short.

The smoking tea and savory cakes were set upon the table – Followed the children, bouncing and rosy – fairly brightening up the room like a gay bouquet. With one on either knee, Henry Hereford listened, well pleased, to tales of soaring kites, and sympathized with disastrous shipwrecks of mimic boats, nor thought his dignity compromised in discussing the question, whether black, blue, or striped marbles were prettiest, or whether a doll whose eyes were not made to open and shut, could, by any stretch of imagination, be supposed by its youthful mamma to go to sleep. How priceless is the balm of sympathy to childhood! The certainty that no joy is too minute, no grief too trivial to find an echo in the parental heart. Blessed they – who, like little children, are neither too wise, nor too old to lean thus on the Almighty Father!

"Where's my umbrella, Susan?" said Mr. Wade, "it is raining, and I am in a hurry to go to my business."

"It is Sunday, Mr. Wade; did you forget it was Sunday?"

"Sunday!" ejaculated Mr. Wade, in well-feigned surprise, "we didn't have salt fish, I believe, for dinner yesterday."

"No," replied his wife, penitently, "but I believe it is the first time it has been omitted since our marriage."

"It *was* an omission," said Mr. Wade, solemnly, as he laid aside his hat and coat. "Sunday, is it, Mrs. Wade, I wish I hadn't got up so early – I suppose you are going to take the children off to church, are you not? I'd like to be quiet, and go to sleep till dinner time."

"Perhaps you would step over to Mary's some part of the day," suggested his wife. "She came here yesterday to leave some nice jelly that she had been making for me, and said you had not been there for nearly two months."

"No," replied Mr. Wade, "I had as lief encounter a hornet's nest as those children of Mary's; they are just like eels, slipping up and slipping down; slipping in, and slipping out; never still. Mary is spoiling them. The last time I was there I found her playing puss in the corner with them; puss in the corner, Mrs. Wade! – how does she expect to keep them at a proper distance, and make them reverence her, as your Bible calls it, if she is going to frolic with them that way? and Henry is not a whit better; they are neither fit to bring up a family. Mary used to be a sedate, steady girl, before she was married; I don't know that I remember having ever heard her laugh in her life, while she was at home; I can't think what has changed her so."

His wife drooped her head, but made no answer.

The cold, hard man before her had no key with which to unlock the buried sorrows of those long weary years which Susan Wade was at that moment passing in review.

"Yes; I can't think what has changed her so," resumed Mr. Wade; "I think it must be Henry's fault – she was brought up so carefully; but after all, a great deal depends upon the sort of man a woman marries. I dare say," added he, complacently, "*you* would have been a very different woman had you married any body but me."

"Very likely," answered his wife, mournfully.

"To be sure, you would; I am glad you have the good sense to see it; I consider that a woman is but a cipher up to the time she is married – her husband then invests her with a certain importance, always subservient to his, of course. Then a great deal depends, too, on the way a man begins with his wife. Now I always had a great respect for Dr. Johnson, for the sensible manner in which he settled matters on his wedding day; it seems that he and his wife were to ride horseback to the church where they were to be married. Soon after starting his bride told him, first, that they rode too fast, then, too slow. 'This won't do,' said he to himself; 'I must begin with this woman as I mean to go on; she must keep my pace, not I hers:' and so, putting spurs to his horse, he galloped out of sight; when she rejoined him at the church-door, she was in tears – in a proper state of submission – he never had any trouble with her afterward; it was more necessary as she was a widow; they need an uncommon tight rein. Sensible old fellow, that Johnson. I don't know that I ever enjoyed any thing more than his answer to a lady who was going into ecstasies at some performance she had seen, and wondered that the doctor did not agree with her; 'My dear,' said he, 'you must remember that you are a dunce, and, therefore, very easily pleased.' Very good, upon my word – ha – ha – very good; 'Doctor Johnson's Life' is the only book I ever had patience to read; he understood the sex; ha – ha – upon my word, very good" – and Mr. Wade rubbed his spectacles with such animation that he rubbed out one of the glasses.

"Two and sixpence for getting excited!" said he, as he picked up the fragments; "well – it is a little luxury I don't often indulge in; but really that old Johnson was such a fine old fellow – I like him. Now take the children off to church, Susan; I want to go sleep."

"I hope he may never be sorry for sending that pale, sickly woman out in such a driving rain as this," muttered Betty, as her mistress walked over the wet pavements to church. "If there's a selfisher man than Mr. Wade, I'd like to know it; well, he won't have her long, and then maybe he'll think of it. I would have left here long ago if it had not been for her; it's work – work – work – with him, and

no thanks, and that's what is fretting the soul out of her; she can't please him with all her trying. And Miss Susan and Neddy – cooped up here like birds in a cage, and never allowed to speak above their breath; they'll fly through the bars sometime, if he don't open the door wider; and Miss Susan getting to be a young lady, too – looking as solemn as a sexton, when she ought to be frisking and frolicking about like all other innocent young creturs. I used to get her down here, and make molasses candy for her, but she has out-grown candy, now – well, I don't know what will come of it all. At her age I was going to husking and quilting frolics, and singing-school; bless me – what a time I used to have coming through the snow-drifts. I really believe Isaiah Pettibone used to upset the sleigh on purpose. I suppose I might have married him if I had been as forrard as some girls – leastways I know he gave me a paper heart, with a dart stuck through it; but when I look at Mr. Wade, I say it is all right – ten to one he might have turned out just such a cranky curmudgeon. People say that for every bad husband in the world, there's a bad wife somewhere to balance it; I don't believe it – but, anyhow, if there is, I wish they'd each torment their own kind, and not be killing off such patient creturs as Mrs. Wade. I'll go up stairs and put her slippers to the fire, and then get something nice and hot for her to take when she comes back. I used to think that a poor servant-girl was not of much account in the world – I don't think so since I came here to live; I know it is a comfort to Mrs. Wade to feel that somebody in the house is caring for her, who is always doing for other people; and though she never says a word about her troubles, and I am not the girl to let her know that I see them, yet the way in which she says, 'Thank you, Betty; you are always kind and thoughtful,' shows me that, humble as I am, she leans on me, and pays me a hundred times over for any little thing I do for her. I think, after all, that God made nobody of so little account that he could not at some time or other help somebody else. There's the bell, now! Mercy on us! there's that croaking raven, Mr. Doe, coming here to dinner; he will be sure to eat up every thing good that I make for Mrs. Wade. I wonder how a man who is eternally grumbling and growling at every thing the Lord has made, can have the face to gormandize His good things, as Mr. Doe does. I'd either let 'em alone, or say Thank you – he don't do nary one."

CHAPTER V

The bleak winds of March were abroad, causing even the healthy and rugged to shrink from their piercing breath, and fold more closely around their shivering limbs the warm garments of winter; while the delicate invalid, warned by his irritated lungs, ventured not beyond the equable temperature of his closely-curtained chamber.

Mrs. Wade's accustomed place at the table was vacant; her busy fingers no longer kept the domestic treadmill in motion. Ah! how seldom we feel till the "mother" is stricken down, how never-ceasing is the vigilance, how tireless the patience that ministers to our daily wants; – dropping noiseless, like the gentle dew, too common and unobtrusive a blessing to be noticed – till absence teaches us its value.

Death had no terrors for Mrs. Wade. It was only when looking upon the children whom she must leave behind, that she prayed, with quivering lips – "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!"

If in the thorny path her woman's feet had trod, her daughter's trembling feet must walk! What human arm would sustain her? what human voice whisper words of cheer? And Neddy – the impulsive, generous, warm-hearted Neddy; quick to err – as quick to repent – what human hand would weigh justly in the scales of praise and blame, his daily deeds? What hand, save a mother's, in uprooting the weeds, would crush not the tender flowers? Oh, what mother, while pondering these things in her heart, and looking round upon the dear faces, in the near or distant prospect of dissolution, has not felt her heart-tendrils tighten around them, with a vice-like clasp that almost defied separation? Nature's voice is clamorous; but over, and above, and through its importunate pleadings, comes there to the Christian mother, the still, small whisper, "My grace is sufficient for thee!"

Mr. Wade at first refused to believe in the reality of his wife's sickness. Women, he said, were always ailing, and fancying themselves dying. But, as the parlor was vacated for the chamber, and the easy-chair for the bed, and the doctor's chaise stopped twice a day before the door, and Mrs. Hereford left her own little family to sit beside her mother, and Betty wiped her eyes with her apron every time she left the chamber door – and, more than all, when Mr. Wade's toast was not browned as *she* used to brown it, and his favorite pudding was wanting, and the lamp burned dimly on the lonely tea-table, and his slippers were not always in the right place – he resigned himself to what seemed inevitable, with the air of a deeply-injured man; and slept as soundly at night, in the room next his wife's, as if death's shadow had not even then fallen across the threshold.

At breakfast he drove Betty distracted with orders and counter-orders about egg-boiling and toast-making, after eating which, he drew on a pair of creaking boots and an overcoat, and mounted to his wife's room, to go through the ceremony of inquiring "how she was," holding the door open for the cold wind to blow upon the invalid, while he received the faint "Easy, thank you," from lips that contracted with pain, as the door closed after him in no gentle manner.

No thought of his children disturbed Mr. Wade's equanimity. He did not see, day by day, the sorrowful face of his daughter lifted to his, as if in search of sympathy; nor notice the tip-toe steps of the playful little Neddy, as he passed to and fro, with messages from Mrs. Hereford to Betty.

"It's infamous!" said the latter, slamming herself down in one of the kitchen chairs. "*Is* that man made of flesh and blood, or is he not? All last night, Mrs. Wade sat up in bed, with that dreadful distress for breath, tossing her arms up over her head, and that man snoring away like the seven sleepers. It's infamous! Now, I'm no eaves-dropper: I scorn it; but I was in the kitchen this morning, and the slide was open through the closet into the basement, and I heard Mrs. Hereford say to her husband, who had called to inquire after Mrs. Wade: 'Oh, James, James, how can I love or respect my father?' and she sobbed as if her heart would break; and then she told him that the doctor had ordered some kind of drugs to be burned in Mrs. Wade's room to help her breathing – something

expensive – I don't remember the name, and Mr. Wade said the doctor was an old granny, and it was a useless expense, and wouldn't give his daughter the money for it. When Mrs. Hereford had finished telling, I heard her husband say a word I never expected to hear out of his mouth, and he kissed his wife, and handing her his pocket-book, told her to get whatever was necessary. Oh, dear; the Bible says, 'Honor your parents;' but whether such a man as that *is* a parent? that's the question. Some of the ministers must settle it; I can't. But it never will be clear to me that bringing a child into the world makes a parent. I don't care what they say; it's clear as day-light that the Lord meant that after that they should see 'em safe through it, no matter how much trouble turns up for 'em. When I'm married, if I ever am, I'll say this to my young ones: 'Now look here; tell me every thing. If you are sorry, tell me; if you are glad, tell me; if you are wicked, tell me; and I never, never, will turn away from you, no more than I want God to turn away from me. And if you break God's laws and man's laws, as I hope you won't – if you love Him and me – still, I never will shut my door in your face, *no matter what you do*, no more than I want my Maker to shut heaven's door in mine.' Now, that's my notion of a parent. Whether I shall ever have a chance to carry it out or not – that's another thing; but as sure as I do, there's where you'll find me; and it's my belief that many a man has swung on a gibbet, and many a woman has cursed God and man with her last breath, for want of just that. As if food, and drink, and clothes was all a child wanted, or a wife either, for that matter; as if that was all a husband or a father was bound to furnish; as if that was all the Lord would hold him accountable for; as if that was – gracious Gradgrind, there's my toast burnt all to a crisp."

Thanks to Mrs. Hereford, who procured the herbs ordered by the doctor, the poor sufferer was temporarily relieved.

"Who is that, Mary?" she asked, as she distinguished a strange footstep in the hall.

"It is Miss Alsop," replied Mary.

No reply from the invalid, but a weary turning of the pale face toward the pillow, and a gathering moisture in the eyes.

"Come here, Mary – nearer – nearer" – Mrs. Hereford bent her head so low that her brown curls swept her mother's pillow.

"That – woman – will – be – your – father's – wife when – I – am – scarcely – cold."

"God forbid – don't, mother – don't;" and poor Mary's tears and kisses covered the emaciated face before her.

"You have a home – and a husband – and a kind one, Mary, but Susan and Neddy – it is hard to leave my children to her keeping. If I could but take them with me."

As she said this, Betty beckoned Mrs. Hereford out of the room, saying "that Miss Alsop wished to see her, to inquire how dear Mrs. Wade had passed the night."

"Tell her," said Mary, "that she is very ill, and that I can not leave her to receive visitors."

"If you please," said Betty, returning, "Miss Alsop says she is so weary that she will sit and rest for half an hour."

"Just half an hour before father comes home; then, of course, he will invite her to partake his solitary dinner; that's just what she came for; mother is right; how strange that I never should have thought of all this before!" and a thousand little things now flashed upon her mind in confirmation of what her mother had just said.

Miss Alsop was an unmarried woman of forty, and presented that strange anomaly, a fat old maid. Her teeth were good, her hair thick and glossy, and her voice softer than the cooing of a dove; one of those voices which are the never-failing herald of deceit and hypocrisy to the keen observer of human nature. For years she had had her eye upon Mr. Alsop, and actually claimed a sort of cousinly relationship, which she never had been able very clearly to establish, but upon the strength of which she had come, self-invited, twice a month, to spend the day. The first moment Mrs. Wade saw her, she was conscious of an instinctive aversion to her; but as she was never in the habit of consulting her own tastes or inclinations, she endured the infliction with her own gentle sweetness. No one who

witnessed her offering Miss Alsop the easiest chair, or helping her to the daintiest bit on the table, would have supposed that she read the wily woman's secret heart. Not a look, not a word, not a tone betrayed it; but when the weary day was over, and Miss Alsop had exhausted all her vapid nothings, and, tying on her bonnet, regretted that she must trouble Mr. Wade to wait upon her home, Mrs. Wade, as they passed through the door, and out into the darkness, would lean her cheek upon her hand, while tears, which no human eye had ever seen, fell thick and fast.

Not that Mr. Wade had any affection for Miss Alsop – not at all – he was incapable of affection for any thing but himself and his money; but Miss Alsop had a way of saying little complimentary things to which the most sensible man alive never yet was insensible, from the stupidest and silliest of women. What wonder that the profound Mr. Wade walked into the trap with his betters? and though he would not, for one of his money-bags, have owned it, he always left her doubly impressed with the value of his own consequence. Then – Miss Alsop knew how to be an excellent listener when occasion required, and Mr. Wade was, like all egregious stupidities, fond of hearing himself talk; and occasionally Miss Alsop would ask him to repeat some remark he had made, as if peculiarly struck with its acuteness, or its adaptation to her single-blessed-needs, upon which Mr. Wade would afterward pleasantly reflect, with the mental exclamation, "Sensible woman, that Miss Alsop!" Let it not be supposed that this depth of cunning was at all incompatible with obtuseness of intellect – not at all – there is no cunning like the cunning of a fool. Yes – Miss Alsop knew her man. She knew she could afford to bide her time; besides, were personal charms insufficient, had she not a most potent auxiliary in her bank-book, which placed to her spinster credit twenty thousand dollars in the "People's Bank?"

CHAPTER VI

Mrs. Wade sat propped up in bed by pillows, for the nature of her disease rendered repose impossible; dreadful spasms – the forerunners of dissolution – at intervals convulsed her frame. Pale, but firm, the gentle Mary Hereford glided about her, now supporting the worn-out frame – now holding to her lips the cup meant for healing – now opening a door, or slightly raising a window, to facilitate the invalid's labored breathing.

The fire had burned low in the grate, and when the gray light of morning stole in through the half open shutter, and the invalid would have replenished it, Mrs. Wade's low whispered, "I shall not need it, Mary," gave expression to the fearful certainty which her own heart had silently throbbed out through the long watches of that agonized night. Not a murmur escaped the sufferer's lips – there was no request for the presence of the absent sleeper, who had promised "to cherish through sickness and health;" no mention was made of the children, who had been trustingly placed in the hands of Him who doeth all things well, and who wearily slumbered on, unconscious that the brightness of their childhood's sky was fading out forever. The thin arms were wound around the neck of the first-born, about whom such happy hopes had once so thickly clustered, and peacefully as an infant drops asleep. Susan Wade closed her eyes forever; so peacefully that the daughter knew not the moment in which the desolate word – "motherless" – was written over against her name.

Motherless! – that in that little word should be compressed such weary weight of woe! It were sad to be written fatherless – but God and his ministering angels only know how dark this earth may be, when she who was never weary of us with all our frailties – she, to whom our very weaknesses clamored more loudly for love, lies careless of our tears.

"Henry!" said Mr. Wade to Mr. Hereford, "I had no idea, in fact – I didn't think" – and the embarrassed man tried to rub open his still sleepy eyes – "I didn't suppose, really, that Mrs. Wade would die yet; women are so notional, and that doctor seemed to be encouraging Mrs. Wade to be sick, as doctors always do – really I am quite taken by surprise, as one may say; I don't know any thing about these things – I should like to have you do what is necessary. I suppose it will not be considered the thing for me to go to the store to-day," and he looked for encouragement to do so in the face of his disgusted son-in-law.

"I should think not, decidedly," said Mr. Hereford, dryly.

"Of course it would not be my wish," said Mr. Wade, "when poor Susan lies dead; but one's duty, you know, sometimes runs a different way from one's inclination."

And *vice versâ*, thought Henry, but he merely remarked that he would take any message for him to his place of business.

Mr. Wade could do no less than accept his offer, so, after eating his usual breakfast with his usual appetite, he paced up and down the parlor; got up and sat down; and looked out at the window, and tried in various ways to stifle certain uncomfortable feelings which began to disturb his digestion. It was uncomfortable – very. The awe-struck face of Betty as she stole in and out, the swollen eyes of the children, the pallid face of Mrs. Hereford, who was trying to give them the consolation she so much needed herself, and the heavy step of the undertaker over-head performing his repulsive office. And so the day wore away; and the form, that a child might have lifted, was laid in the coffin, and no trace of pain or sorrow lay upon the face upon which the death-angel had written Peace!

Why did *he* fear to look upon its placid sweetness? No reproach ever came from the living lips – did he fear it from the dead?

How still lay the once busy fingers! What a mockery seemed the usual signs and sounds of domestic life! How empty, purposeless, aimless, seemed life's petty cares and needs. How chilling this total eclipse of light, and love, and warmth! Blessed they, who can ease their pained hearts by sobbing all this out to the listening ear of sympathy. But what if the great agony be pent up within

the swelling heart till it is nigh bursting? What if it be pent up thus in the gushing heart of childhood? What if no father's arms be outstretched to enfold the motherless? What if the paternal hand never rests lovingly on the bowed young head? What if the moistening eye must send back to its source the welling tear? What if the choking sob be an offense? What if childhood's ark of refuge – mother's room – echo back only its own restless footsteps? O, how many houses that present only to the careless eye, a blank surface of brick and mortar, are inscribed all over with the handwriting, legible only to those whose baptism has been – tears!

But why count over the tears of the orphans, why tell of their weary days and sleepless nights – of honest Betty's home-spun attempts at consolation – of Mr. Wade's repeated refusals of Mrs. Hereford's invitation for them to spend that part of the day with her in which he was absent at his business? Why tell of the invisible web the cunning Miss Alsop was weaving? Why tell of her speedy success? Why tell of the soft-eyed dove transformed by Hymen to the vulture? Why tell of *his* astonishment, who prided himself upon his lynx-eyed and infallible penetration of the sex, at being forced to drain to the dregs that bitter cup he had held so unsparingly to the meek lips upon which death had set his seal of silence? Why tell of that pitiful old age, which, having garnered the chaff, and thrown away the wheat of a life-time, finds itself on the grave's brink with no desire for repentance, clutching with palsied hands the treasure of which Death stands ready to rob it!

VISITING AND VISITORS

"When are you coming to spend the day with us?" asked a lady of my acquaintance of another. "Spend the day with you, my dear!" replied the latter; "I should be tired to death spending the day with you; maybe I'll take tea with you sometime."

I have often pleased myself imagining how the wheels of society would creak greased with such honesty as that! and yet how many, if they but dared to speak their real sentiments, would make a similar response. Now, I respect that old lady; she had made good use of her years; she probably knew what it was to talk at a mark for hours on the stretch, to some one-idea-d statue, who, with crossed hands and starched attitude, seemed remorselessly exacting of her weary tongue – Give – Give! She knew what it was to long for dinner to reprieve her aching jaws, or, at least, afford them a diversion of labor. She knew what it was to be gladder to see one's husband home on such a day, than on any other day in the year; and she knew what it was to have those hopes dashed to earth by that inglorious sneak selfishly retreating behind his newspaper, instead of shouldering the conversation as he ought. She knew what it was to have the hour arrive for her afternoon nap (I *won't* call it "siesta,") instead of which, with leaden lids, and a great goneness of brain and diaphragm, she must still keep on ringing changes on the alphabet, for the edification of the monosyllabic statue, who – horror of horrors! – had "concluded to stay to tea." She knew what it was in a fit of despair to present a book of engravings to the statue, and to hear that interesting functionary remark as she returned it, that "her eyes were weak." She knew what it was to send in for a merry little chatterbox of a neighbor to relieve guard, and receive for answer, "that she had gone out of town!" She knew what it was to wish that she had forty babies up stairs, with forty pains under their aprons, if need be, that she might have an excuse for leaving the statue for at least one blessed half-hour. She knew what it was to have the inglorious sneak later to tea on that wearisome day than ever before; and on his entrance, blandly and coolly to unfurl a business letter, which, with a Chesterfieldian bow, he hoped the statue would excuse him for retiring to answer; and she knew what it was, five minutes later, to spy the wretch on the back piazza reveling in solitude and a cigar. She knew what it was, when the statue finally – (for every thing comes to an end *some time*, thank heaven) – took protracted leave – to cry hysterically from sheer weariness, and a recollection of pressing family duties indefinitely postponed, and to think for the forty-eleventh time, what propriety there was in calling her the *weaker* sex, who had daily to shoulder burdens which the strongest man either couldn't or —*wouldn't* bear. And so again, I say – sensible old lady – would there were more like her!

And yet we would fain hope that, like ours, this is but one side of her experience. We would hope that she knew what it was to throw her arms about the neck of a friend from whom she had no disguises; whose loving eyes scanned – not the wall for possible cobwebs, nor yet the carpet for darns, nor yet the mirror for fly-specks; but *her face*, to see what sorrow Time, in his flight, had registered there, which by sympathy she could lighten; what joy, which, by sharing, she could increase. We hope she knew what it was to sit side by side with such a one at the frugal meal – sweeter far than the stalled ox, for the love that seasoned it. We hope she knew what it was to lounge, or sit, or stand, or walk, or read, or sew, or doze even, in that friend's presence, with that perfect love which casteth out fear. We hope she knew what it was to count the hours as they passed, not for their irksomeness, but as a miser tells his hoarded gold; jealous, lest even the smallest fraction should escape. We hope she knew what it was when she unwillingly closed the door upon her retreating form, that shutting it never so securely, kind words, good deeds, loving looks and tones, came flocking in to people the voiceless solitude as with shining troops of white-robed angels.

And we hope she knew what it was to give the cup of cold water to the humble disciple for the Master's sake. We hope that the door of her house and heart were opened as widely for the destitute orphan, in whose veins her own blood flowed – who could repay it only with tearful thanks – as for

those who could return feast for feast, and whose tongues were as smooth as their wine. And finally and lastly, lest we ourselves should be making too long a visit – we hope the old lady had no “best chamber,” with closed blinds; pillows as ruffled as the chambermaid’s temper; forbiddingly polished sheets; smothering canopy; counterpane all too dainty for tumbling; and pincushion, whose lettered words one must not invade, even at the most buttonless extremity! Blessings on the old lady: we trust her carpets were made to be trod on – her chairs to sit down upon – and her windows to open. We hope her house was too small to hold half of her friends, and too hot to hold one of her enemies.

OUR FIRST NURSE

Now sit down, and I will tell you all about it. Charley and I were engaged. Youth comes but once, you know, and if we waited to be married until we could furnish a house in fashionable style – well, you see, we knew too much for that; we got married, and left other couples to grow gray, if they liked, on the distant prospect of damask curtains, gold salt-cellars, and trains of innumerable servants.

Charley did not know the meaning of a "club-house," and the shopkeepers flashed their diamonds and satins in vain in my face; I never gave them a thought. We had some nice books, and some choice engravings, presented to Charley by an old antiquary who had taken a fancy to him. You might have gone into many a parlor on which thousands had been lavished, and liked ours all the better when you came back. Still, it wanted something – that we both agreed; for no house can be said to be properly furnished without a baby. Santa Claus, good soul, understood that, and Christmas day he brought us one, weighing the usual eight pounds, and as lively as a cricket. Such lungs as it had! Charley said it was intended for a minister.

Well, now it was all right, or would have been, if the baby had not involved a nurse. We had, to be sure, a vague idea that we must have one, and *as* vague an idea of what a nurse was. We thought her a good kind of creature who understood baby-dom, and never interfered with any little family arrangements.

Not a bit of it!

The very first thing she did was to make preparation to sleep in my room, and send Charley off into a desolate spare chamber. Charley! *my* Charley! whose shaving operations I had watched with the intensest interest; mixing up little foam seas of "lather" for him, handing him little square bits of paper to wipe his razor upon, and applying nice bits of courtplaster, when he accidentally cut his chin while we were laughing. Charley! whose cravats I had tied to suit my fancy every blessed morning, whose hair I had brushed up in elegant confusion, whose whiskers I had coaxed and trimmed, and – well, any one, unless a bachelor or old maid, who reads this, can see that it was perfectly ridiculous.

Charley looked at me, and I looked at him, and then we both looked at the bran new baby – and there's where she had us. You might have seen it with half an eye, as she folded her hands complacently over her apron-strings, and sat down in my little rocking-chair, opposite the bed. I felt as though I was sold to the Evil One, as she fixed her basilisk eyes on me when Charley left the room. Poor Charley! He did not want to go. He neither smoked, nor drank, nor played billiards; he loved home and – me; so he wandered up stairs and down, sat with his hands in his pockets staring at the parlor fire till he could bear it no longer, and then came up stairs to get comforted. If you'll believe it, that woman came fussing round the bed after him, just as if he were infringing some of her rights and immunities.

What if he did bring me a sly piece of cake in his pocket? Who likes to live on gruel forever? What if he did open the blinds and let a little blessed sunlight in, when she tried to humbug us into the belief that "it would hurt the baby's eyes," because she was too lazy to wipe the dust from the furniture? What if he did steal one of her knitting needles, when she sat there, evening after evening, knitting round, and round, and round that interminable old gray stocking, my eyes following her with a horrid sort of fascination, till my nerves were wound up to the screaming point? What if I did tell him that she always set her rocking-chair on that loose board on the floor, which sent forth that little crucifying squeak, and that she always said "Bless me!" and was always sure to get on to it again the very next time she sat down? What if I did tell him that when she had eaten too much dinner, and wanted to take a sly nap, she would muffle the baby up in so many blankets that it could not cry if it wanted to, and then would draw the curtains closely round my bed, and tell me that "it was high time I took a nap?" I, who neither by stratagem or persuasion, could ever be induced to sleep in the

daytime? I, who felt as if my eye-lashes were fastened up to the roots of my hair, and as if legions of little ants were crawling all over me?

What if I did tell him that she got up a skirmish with me every night, because I would not wear a nuisance called a night-cap? What if I did tell him that she insisted upon putting a sticky pitch-plaster upon my neck, for a little ghost of a cough (occasioned by her stirring the ashes in the grate too furiously), and that when I outgeneraled her, and clapped it round the bed-post instead, she muttered, spitefully, that "a handsome neck would not keep me out of my coffin?" What if I did tell him that she tried on my nice little lace collars, when she thought I was asleep at night, and insisted on my drinking detestable porter, that its second-hand influence might "make the baby sleep?" What if I did, was he not my husband? Did I not tell him every thing? laugh with him? cry with him? eat out of *his* plate? drink out of *his* cup of tea, because being his, I fancied they tasted better than mine? and didn't *he like it, too?* Of course he did!

What if I did tell him all this? Poor Charley! *he* was forlorn, too; his cravats were tied like a fright all the time I was sick, his hair looked like any other man's, the buttons were off his pretty velvet vest, and he had not even the heart to get his boots blacked. Poor Charley!

Well; that nurse had the impudence to tell us one evening "that we acted like two children." "*Children!*" *We! Us!* the parents of that eight-pound baby! That was the last drop in our cup. Charley paid her, and I was so glad when she went, that I laughed till I cried.

Then we both drew a long breath and sat down and looked at the new baby —*our* baby; and Charley asked me about its little sleeping habits, and I told him, with a shake of the head, that I could not speak definitely on that point; and then we discussed, in a whisper, the respective merits of cribs and cradles, and the propriety of teaching it, at an early period, that impressive line of Mrs. Hemans:

"Night is the time for sleep;"

and then Charley got up, and exchanged his musical boots for a noiseless pair of slippers, and changed the position of the shovel, tongs, and poker, and oiled the creaking hinge of the closet door, and laid a chair over the squeaking board in the floor, that he might not tread on it, and with one eye on the baby, gently shaded the lamp; and then he looked at me, and gave a little sort of congratulatory nod, and then he drew off his vest and hung it over a chair, and then – out rattled a perfect tempest of half dollars, quarters, shillings, and sixpences, on the hearth! Of course, the baby woke (frightened out of a year's growth), and screamed until it was black in the face. In vain its poor, inexperienced papa kissed it, scratching its little velvet face with his rough whiskers the while! In vain we both walked the floor with it. The fire went out, the lamp went; and just at daybreak it came to us like a revelation, the sarcastic tone of that hateful old nurse, as she said, "Good-by; I hope you'll get along *comfortably* with the dear baby!"

And so we did. Do you suppose one night's watching was going to quench our love, either for the baby, or for each other? No – nor a thousand like it! for, as Dr. Watts, or Saxe, hath it, "it was one of the kind that was not born to die."

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND

Man may turn his back upon Revelation, and feed upon the dry husks of infidelity, if he will; but sure I am, that *woman* can not do without her Saviour. In her happiest estate, she has sorrows that can only be intrusted to an Almighty ear; responsibilities that no human aid can give her strength to meet. But what if earthly love be poisoned at the fountain? – what if her feeble shoulders bend unsupported under the weight of her daily cross? – what if her life-sky be black with gathering gloom? – what if her foes be they of her own household? – what if treachery sit down at her hearth-stone, and calumny await her without, with extended finger? What then – if no Saviour's arms be outstretched to enfold her? What if it be "absurd" (as some tell her) that the God who governs the universe should stoop to interest himself in her petty concerns? What if the Bible to which she flies be "a dead letter?" and "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden" – only "a metaphor?" What earthly accents can fall upon her ear as sweet as these – "A bruised reed will I not break?" Woman may be "weak;" but blessed be the weakness which leads her to lean on that Almighty arm, which man in his pride rejects; listening rather in his extremity, to the demon whisper – "Curse God and die."

Woman may be "weak;" you may confuse her with your sophistries, deafen her with your arguments, and standing before her in your false strength, exclaim like the unbelievers of old – "Away with him!" and still her yearning soul cries out, with a voice no subtlety of yours can satisfy or stifle – "*My* Lord and *my* God!"

TO LITERARY ASPIRANTS

My heart aches at the letters I am daily receiving from persons who wish to support themselves by their pens; many of these letters, mis-spelt and ungrammatical, show their writers to be totally unfit for the vocation they have chosen; and yet, alas! their necessities are for that reason none the less pressing. Others, unexceptionable in these respects, see no preliminary steps to be taken between avowing this their determination, and at once securing the remuneration accorded to long-practiced writers, who, by patient toil and waiting, have secured a remunerative name. They see a short article in print, by some writer; it reads easy – they doubt not it was written easily; this may or may not be the case; if so – what enabled the writer to produce it in so short a space of time? Long habit of patient, trained thinking, which the beginner has yet to acquire.

You are taken sick; you send for a physician; he comes in, stays ten minutes, prescribes for you a healing medicine, and charges you three or four dollars. You call this "extortionate" – forgetting the medical books he must have waded through, the revolting dissections he must have witnessed and participated in, and the medical lectures he must have digested, to have enabled him to pronounce on your case so summarily and satisfactorily. To return to our subject. These practiced writers have gone through (as you must do), the purgatorial furnace which separates the literary dross from the pure ore. That all who do this should come out fine gold, is impossible; but I maintain, that if there is any thing in a literary aspirant, this process will develop it, spite of discouragement – spite of depression – nay, on that very account.

Now what I would say is this. Let none enter this field of labor, least of all shrinking, destitute women, unless they are prepared for this long, tedious ordeal, and have also the self-sustaining conviction that they have a God-given talent. The reading community is not what it once was. The world is teeming with books – good, bad, and indifferent. Publishers have a wide field from which to cull. There is a great feast to sit down to; and the cloyed and fastidious taste demands dishes daintily and skillfully prepared. How shall an unpracticed aspirant, whose lips perhaps have not been touched with the live coal from the altar, successfully contend with these? How shall the halt and maimed win in such a race?

Every editor's drawer is crammed – every newspaper office besieged – by hundreds doomed to disappointment; not two thirds of the present surfeit of writers, born of the success of a few, obtain even a hearing. Editors have any quantity of MSS. on hand, which they know will answer their purpose; and they have, they say, when I have applied to them for those who have written me to do so, neither time nor inclination to paragraph, punctuate, revise and correct the inevitable mistakes of beginners, even though there may possibly be some grains of wheat for the seeking.

To women, therefore, who are destitute, and rely upon their pen for a support, I would say, again, Do any thing that is honest that your hands find to do, but make not authorship, at least, your *sole* dependence in the present state of things.

Now, having performed this ungrateful task, and mapped out faithfully the shoals and quicksands, if there are among you those whose mental and physical muscle will stand the strain with this army of competitors – and, above all, who have the "barrel of meal and cruse of oil" to fall back upon – I wish you God speed! and none will be happier than she, who has herself borne the burden and heat of the day, to see you crowned victor.

SUMMER TRAVEL

Take a journey at this elevation of the thermometer! Not I. Think of the breakfastless start before daybreak – think of a twelve hours' ride on the sunny side of the cars, in the neighborhood of some persistent talker, rattling untranslatable jargon into your aching ears; think of a hurried repast, in some barbarous half-way house; amid a heterogeneous assortment of men, women, and children, beef, pork, and mutton; minus forks, minus spoons, minus castor, minus come-atable waiters, and four shillings and indigestion to pay. Think of a "collision" – disemboweled trunks, and a wooden leg; think of an arrival at a crowded hotel; jammed, jaded, dusty, and dolorous; think of your closetless sentry-box of a room, infested by mosquitoes and Red Rovers; bed too narrow, window too small, candle too short, all the world and his wife a-bed, and the geography of the house an unexplained riddle. Think of your unrefreshing, vapor-bath sleep; think of the next morning, as seated on a dusty trunk, with your hair drooping about your ears, through which the whistle of the cars, and the jiggle-joggle of the brakeman, are still resounding; you try to remember, with your hand on your bewildered forehead, whether your breakfast robe is in the yellow trunk, or the black trunk, and if in either, whether it is at the top, bottom, or in the middle of the same, where your muslins and laces were deposited, what on earth you did with your dressing comb, and where amid your luggage, your toilet slippers may be possibly located. Think of a summons to breakfast at this interesting moment, the sun meanwhile streaming in through the blind chinks, with volcanic power. Think of all that, I say.

Now if I could travel *incog.* in masculine attire, no dresses to look after, no muslins to rumple, no bonnet to soil, no tresses to keep smooth, with only a hat and things, a neck-tie or two, a change of – of shirts – nothing but a moustache to twist into a horn when the dinner bell rings; just a dip into a wash-basin, a clean dicky, a jump into a pair of – trowsers, and above all, liberty to go where I liked, without being stared at or questioned; a seat in a chair on its hind-legs, on a breezy door-step, a seat on the stairs in a wide hall, "taking notes;" a peep everywhere I chose, by lordly right of my pantaloons; nobody nudging somebody, to inquire why Miss Spinks the authoress wore her hair in curls instead of plaits; or making the astounding discovery that it was hips, not hoops, that made her dress stand out – that now, would be worth talking about: I'll do it.

But stop – I should have to cut my hair short – I should have to shave every morning, or at any rate call for hot water and go through the motions; men would jostle rudely past me, just as if they never had said such pretty things to me in flounces; I should be obliged, just as I had secured a nice seat in the cars, to get up, and give it to some imperious woman, who would not even say "thank you;" I should have to look on with hungry eyes till "the ladies" were all served at table; I should have to pick up their fans, and reticules, and handkerchiefs whenever they chose to drop them; I should have to give up the rocking-chairs, arm-chairs, and sofas for their use, and be called "a brute" at that; I should have to rush out of the cars, with five minutes' grace, at some stopping place, to get a glass of milk, for some "crying baby," with a contracted swallowing apparatus, and be pursued for life by the curses of its owner, because the whistle sounded while his two shilling tumbler was yet in the voracious baby's tight grip. No – no – I'll stay a woman, and what's more, I'll stay at home.

A GENTLE HINT

In most of the New York shop windows, one reads: “Here we speak French;” “Here we speak Spanish;” “Here we speak German;” “Here we speak Italian.” I suggest an improvement – “Here we speak the *Truth*.”

A STORY FOR OLD HUSBANDS WITH YOUNG WIVES

"I was an old fool! Yes – I was an old fool; that's all there is about it. I ought to have known better; *she* was not to blame, poor thing; she is but a child yet; and these baubles pleased her ambitious mother's eye. It was not the old man, but his *money*– his *money*– I might have known it. May and December – May and December – pshaw! how could I ever have believed, that Mary Terry could *love* an old fellow like me?" and Mark Ware surveyed himself in the large parlor mirror.

"See! – it reflects a portly old man of sixty, with ruddy face, snow-white hair, and eyes from which the light of youth has long since departed." And yet there is fire in the old man's veins too; see how he strides across the carpet, ejaculating, with fresh emphasis, "Yes, I was an old fool! – an old fool! But I will be kind to her; I'm not the man to tyrannize over a young girl, because her mother took her out of the nursery to make her my wife. I see now it is not in reason for a young girl like her to stay contentedly at home with my frosty head and gouty feet. Poor little Mary! No – I'll not punish her because she can not love me; she shall have what she wants, and go where she likes; her mother is only too proud to trot her out, as the wife of the rich Mark Ware. If that will make them both happy, let them do it; may be" – and Mark Ware paused – "may be, after she has seen what that Dead Sea apple – the world – is made of, she will come back and love the old man a little – may be – who knows? No woman who is believed in, and well treated, ever makes a bad wife; there never was a bad wife yet, but there was a bad husband *first*; that's gospel – Mark's gospel, anyhow, and Mark Ware is going to act upon it. Mary shall go to the ball to-night, with her mother, and I will stay at home and nurse my patience and my gouty leg. There's no evil in her; she's as pure as a lily, and if she wants to see the world, why – she shall see it; and though I can't go dancing round with her, I never will dim her bright eyes – no – no!"

"That will do, Tiffy; another pin in this lace; now move that rose in my hair a little to the left; so – that will do."

"That will *do*!" Tame praise, for that small Grecian head, with its crown of braided tresses; for the full, round throat, and snowy, sloping shoulders; for the round, ivory arms, and tapering, rose-tipped fingers; for the lovely bosom, and dainty waist. Well might such beauty dazzle Mark Ware's eyes, till he failed to discern the distance betwixt May and December.

Mark Ware had rightly read Mary. She was guileless and pure, as he had said; and child as she was, there was that in her manner, before which the most libidinous eye would have shrunk abashed.

When the young bride first realized the import of those words she had been made to utter, "till death do us part," she looked forward, with shuddering horror, at the long, monotonous, weary years before her. Her home seemed a prison, and Mark Ware the keeper; its very splendor oppressed her; and she chafed and fretted in her gilded fetters, while her restless heart cried out – anywhere but home! Must she sit there, in her prison-house, day after day, listening only to the repinings of her own troubled heart? Must the bee and the butterfly only be free to revel in the bright sunshine? Had God made her beauty to fade in the stifling atmosphere of darkened parlors, listening to the complaints of querulous old age? Every pulse of her heart rebelled. How could her mother have thus sold her? How could Mark Ware have so unmagnanimously accepted the compulsory sacrifice? Why not have shown her the world and let her choose for herself? O anywhere – anywhere – from such a home!

There was no lack of invitations abroad; for Mary had flashed across the fashionable horizon, like some bright comet; eclipsing all the reigning beauties. No ball, no party, no dinner, was thought a success without her. Night after night found her *en route* to some gay assemblage. To her own astonishment and her foolish mother's delight, her husband never remonstrated; on the contrary, she often found upon her dressing-table, some choice little ornament, which he had provided for the occasion; and Mary, as she fastened it in her hair, or bosom, would say, bitterly, "He is anxious that I, like the other appendages of his establishment, should reflect credit on his faultless taste."

Mistaken Mary!

Time passed on. Mark Ware *was* "patient," as he promised himself to be. His evenings were not so lonely now, for his little babe kept him company; the reprieved nurse, only too glad to escape to her pink ribbons and a "chat with John at the back gate." It was a pretty sight – Mark and the babe! Old age and infancy are always a touching sight together. Not a smile or a cloud passed over that little face, that did not wake up all the father in Mark Ware's heart; and he paced the room with it, or rocked it to sleep on his breast, talking to it, as if it could understand the strong, deep love, of which it was the unconscious object.

"I am weary of all this," said Mark's young wife, as she stepped into her carriage, at the close of a brilliant ball. "I am weary of seeing the same faces, and hearing the same stupid nonsense, night after night. I wonder shall I *ever* be happy? I wonder shall I ever *love* any thing, or anybody? Mamma is proud of me, because I am beautiful and rich, but she does not *love* me. Mark is proud of me" – and Mary's pretty lip curled scornfully. "Life is so weary, and I am only eighteen!" and Mary sighed heavily.

On whirled the carriage through the deserted streets; deserted – save by some inveterate pleasure-seeker like herself, from whom pleasure forever flees. Occasionally a lamp twinkled from some upper window, where a half-starved seamstress sat stitching her life away, or a heart-broken mother bent over the dead form of a babe, which her mother's heart could ill spare, although she knew not where to find bread for the remaining babes who wept beside her. Now and then, a woman, lost to all that makes woman lovely, flaunted under the flickering street-lamps, while her mocking laugh rang out on the night air. Mary shuddered, and drew back – there was that in its hollowness which might make even devils tremble. Overhead the sentinel stars kept their tireless watch, and Mary's heart grew soft under their gentle influence, and tears stole from beneath her lashes, and lay like pearls upon her bosom.

"You need not wait to undress me," said Mary to the weary-looking waiting-maid, as she averted her swollen eyes from her gaze – and taking the lamp from her hand, Mary passed up to her chamber. So noiseless was the fall of her light foot upon the carpet, that Mark did not know she had entered. He sat with his back to the door, bending over the cradle of his child, till his snow-white locks rested on its rosy cheeks; talking to it, as was his wont, to beguile his loneliness.

"Mary's forehead – Mary's eyes – Mary's mouth – no more like your old father than a rosebud is like a chestnut-burr. *You* will love the lonely old man, little one, and perhaps *she* will, by-and-by; who knows?" and Mark's voice trembled.

"She will – she does" – said Mary, dropping on her knees at the cradle of her child, and burying her face in Mark's hands; "my noble, patient husband!"

"You don't mean that?" said Mark, holding her off at arm's-length, and looking at her through a mist of tears; "you don't mean that you will love an old fellow like me? God bless you, Mary – God forever bless you! I have been very – very lonely," – and Mark wept for sheer happiness.

The gaping world, the far-sighted world, the charitable world, shook its wise head, when the star of fashion became a fixed star. Some said "her health must be failing;" others, that "her husband had become jealous at last;" while old stagers maliciously insinuated that it were wise to retire on *fresh* laurels. But none said – what *I* say – that a true woman's heart may always be won – ay, and kept, too – by any husband who does not consider it beneath him to step off the pedestal of his "*dignity*" to learn how.

BREAKFAST AT THE PAXES'

"Morning paper, John?"

"Didn't come this morning, mem; I inquired at the office as I came up with the breakfast, mem; none there, mem."

How provoking! What is breakfast without the morning paper? Coffee and eggs are well enough, but they don't tell a body whether the Pacific has arrived, or Greeley's head is safe on his non-resistant shoulders (I wish that man *could* fight); or whether breadstuffs have "riz," as every housekeeper knows they ought to; or whether Olmsted's new book is selling as it deserves (were it only for that racy little morceau about his ride with Jenny, the mare); or whether the "Onguent warranted to raise a moustache and whiskers in six weeks" is still on the sprout; or whether Griswold is proven a saint or a sinner; or whether the amiable young man, who advertised the other day for "board in a family where there are no babies," has found his desert-s; or whether the philanthropic firm of M'Mush & Co. are still persisting in that "ruinous sacrifice," for the benefit of a credulous public in general, and themselves in particular; or whether Barnum's head is *really* under water, or whether he has only made a dive to grab some new mermaid; or whether the Regular Male Line viâ (nobody knows where), is an heir line; or whether there are any lectures to be delivered to-night worth foregoing a cosy fireside, and freezing the tip of one's nose to hear. How am I going to find out all this, I should like to know, without the morning paper? (Long life to the inventor of it!)

Oh! here comes Mr. Pax with one – good soul – he has been out in his slippers, and bought one. Now I shall find out all about every thing, and – who did what. See what a thing it is to have a husband! No, I shan't either: may I be kissed if Pax has not sat down to read that paper himself, instead of giving it to me. Now I like that; I dare say he thinks because he is connected with the Press that he should have the first reading of it. Am not I connected with the Press I'd like to know? I guess you'd have thought so, had you seen me squeezing into the Opera House the other night to hear Everett's lecture.

Perhaps he is going to read it aloud to me – I'll sip my coffee and wait a bit. Good Pax! how I have maligned him; what an impatient wretch I am. I think impatience is a fault of mine. I wonder is it a fault? I wonder if I can help it, if it is? I wonder if people weren't made that way the year I was born? Yes; Pax must be going to read me the paper; that's it. Good Pax – how well he looks in that Turkish breakfast-jacket; he has really a nice profile and pretty hand. I can't say that he has a very saintly under lip, but I have known more saintly *looking* ones do naughtier things! Yes; I'll sip my coffee – he is undoubtedly going to read the paper to me; no, he isn't either; he means to devour the whole of it solus. I won't stand it – hem – no reply – hem – none so deaf as those who won't hear.

"Pax!"

"Well, dear" (without raising his eyes).

"Pax! what is there interesting in that paper?"

(Pax still reading intently.) "Nothing, my dear, absolutely nothing."

Humph! wonder if it takes a man a whole hour to read "nothing?"

Now, do you suppose I whined about that? cried till my eyes looked as though they were bound with pink tape? Not I. I just sat down and wrote an article about it for the "**Weekly Monopolizer**," and when it is published, as published it will be, I shall be disinterested enough to hand Pax my paper to read first! Then – when he reads the article, and looking up reproachfully, says: "Mrs. Pax!" it will be *my* turn not to hear, you know; and when he gets up, and laying his connubial paw on my shoulder, says: "Mrs. Pax, do you know any thing about this article in the Weekly Monopolizer?" I shall reply, with lamb-like innocence: "Nothing, my dear, absolutely nothing!"

Won't that floor him?

GIRLS' BOARDING-SCHOOLS

Had I twenty daughters, which I regret to say I have not, not one of them should ever enter a "Boarding-school." I beg pardon; I should say "Institute;" schools are exploded; every two-year-older learns his A B C now at an "Institute," though that institute, when hunted down, may consist of a ten-feet-square basement room. But this is a digression.

To every mother who is contemplating sending her daughter to a boarding-school I would say: Let neither your indolence, nor the omnipotent voice of fashion, nor high-sounding circulars, induce you to remove her from under your own personal care and supervision, at a time when the physique of this future wife and mother requires a lynx-eyed watchfulness on your part, which no institute ever has – ever will supply. This is a point which I am astonished that parents seem so utterly to overlook. Every mother knows how fatal wet feet, or insufficient clothing, may be to a young girl at the critical age at which they are generally sent away to school. It is not enough that you place India-rubbers, thick-soled shoes, and flannels in the trunk which bears the little exile company; they will not insure her from disease *there*. It is not enough that you say to her, "My dear, be careful of your choice of companions," when she *has* no choice; when her bed-fellows and room-mates – the latter often three or four in number – are what chance and the railroads send; for what teacher, with the best intentions, ever gives this subject the attention which it deserves, or which a mother's anxious heart asks? That the distant home of her daughter's room-mates is located within the charmed limits of fashion; that a carriage with liveried servants (that disgusting libel on republicanism), stands daily before their door; that the dresses of these room-mates are made in the latest style, and their wrists and ears decked with gold and precious stones – is an affirmative answer to these questions to satisfy a true mother?

No – and it is not the blushing country maiden, with her simple wardrobe, and simpler manners, whom that mother has to fear for her child's companion or bed-fellow. It is the over-dressed, vain, vapid, brainless offshoot of upstart aristocracy, who would ridicule the simple gingham in which that country girl's mother studied geography, and which fabric she very properly considers quite good enough for her child, and which is much more appropriate in the school-room than silk or satin. It is this child of the upstart rich mother, whose priceless infancy and childhood have been spent with illiterate servants; with the exception of the hour after dessert, when she was reminded that she had a mother, by being taken in an embroidered robe to be exhibited for a brief space to her guests. It is this girl, whose childhood, as I said, has been passed with servants, peeping into the doubtful books with which doubtful servants often beguile the tedious hours (for there are bad servants as well as bad masters and mistresses) – this girl, lying awake in her little bed, hearing unguarded details of servants' amours, while her mother dances away the hours so pregnant with fate to that listening child. It is such a girl, more to be pitied than blamed, whose existence is to be recognized by her thoughtless mother only, when her "coming out," delayed till the latest possible period, forces her reluctantly to yield to a younger aspirant her own claims to admiration. This girl whose wealth, and the social position arising from it, so dazzles the eyes of proprietors of "Institutes" that they are incapable of perceiving, or unwilling to admit, her great moral and mental delinquencies; it is *such* a companion that a true mother has to fear for her pure-minded, simple-hearted young daughter, leaving for the first time the guarded threshold and healthful atmosphere of home.

And when after months have passed – and insufficient exercise,[1] imperfect ventilation, and improper companionship, have transformed her rosy, healthy, simple-hearted child, to a pale, languid, *spineless*, dressy young woman, with a smattering of fashionable accomplishments, and an incurable

[1] Is a formal, listless walk, in a half-mile procession, to answer the purpose of *exercise* for young, growing girls confined at least ten hours a day over their lessons, and crowded at night into insufficient sleeping-rooms? – from which the highest prices paid for tuition, so far as my observation extends, furnish no immunity.

distaste of simple, home pleasures – will it restore the bloom to her cheek, the spring to her step, the fresh innocence to her heart, to say, “but the school was fashionable and *so* well recommended?”

CLOSET MEDITATIONS, NOT FOUND IN JAY OR DODDRIDGE

Shall I ever be unhappy again? Six big closets with shelves and drawers! What a Godsend! You laugh! you are unable to comprehend how such joyful emotions can spring from so trivial a cause.

Trivial! Did you ever board out? Did you ever stand in the midst of your gas-lighted, damask-curtained, velvet-chaired, *closetless* hotel (yes —*hotel*) apartments, with a six-cent ink-bottle between your perplexed thumb and finger, taxing your brain, as it was never taxed before, to discover an oasis where to deposit it, when not in use?

Trivial? Did you ever live for a series of years with your head in a trunk? Did you ever see your ghost-like habiliments dangling day after day from pegs in the wall? Did you ever turn away your disgusted eyes, as the remorseless chambermaid whirled clouds of dust over their unprotected fabrics? Did you ever, as you lay in bed of a morning, exhaust your ingenuity in devising some means of relief? Did you ever, exulting in your superior acumen, rush out, and purchase at your own expense, a curtain to cover them? Did you ever jam off all your finger nails trying to drive it up? (for what woman ever yet hit a nail on the head?) Did you ever have that dusty curtain drop down on your nicely-smoothed hair, nine times out of ten when you went to it for a dress? Did you ever set fire to it with a candle, when in an abstracted state of mind?

Trivial? Did you ever implore a white-aproned waiter, with tears in your eyes, and twenty-five cents in your hand, to bring you an empty cigar-box to keep your truant slippers in? Did you ever stifle with closed windows, because if you threw them up, you would throw out your books, which were piled on the window lodge? Were you ever startled in the middle of the night, by the giving way of a solitary nail, on which were hung a bag of buttons, a bag of hooks and eyes, a child's satchel, a child's slate, a basket of oyster crackers, a bag of chess-men, and – your hoops?

Trivial? Did you ever partially carry out the curse which was passed on Eden's tempter, the serpent, as, with a long-handled umbrella, you explored, for some missing shoe, the unknown regions under the bed? Did you ever sit on your best bonnet? Did you ever step into your husband's hat? Did you ever tear a zig-zag rent in your favorite dress, and find, on looking for pieces of the same to mend it, that you had given them away to your washwoman, with other uncounted needfuls, because you had no place to keep them? Did you ever stand in dismay over your furs and woolens in spring, and your muslins, grenadines, and bareges, in autumn?

Trivial? Ah! – you never witnessed the cold-blooded indifference with which hotel-keepers, and landlords generally, shrug their shoulders, as surveying your rooms, and taking a *coup d'œil* your feminine effects, you pathetically exclaim, with dropped hands and intonation – "No closets!"

A FEMININE VIEW OF NAPOLEON AS A HUSBAND

It is said that writers of books seldom read many. The "Confidential Letters of Napoleon and Josephine" had not been published when that remark was made. The Napoleon-mad author, Mr. Abbot, says, in his Preface: "We are familiar with him as the warrior, the statesman, the great administrator – but here we behold him as the husband, the father, the brother, moving freely amid all the tender relations of domestic life. His *heart* is here revealed," etc. I suggest to Mr. Abbot (for whom, apart from this extraordinary hallucination, I have a great respect), the following amendment of the above sentence, viz.: his *want of heart* is here revealed; but let that pass.

I have devoured the book at a sitting, and it has given me, as do stimulants generally, mental or otherwise, a villainous headache. With the sad fate of the peerless Josephine fresh in my mind, I read with an impatient pshaw! the burning billet-doux, addressed to her by the man who could coolly thrust her aside for his mad ambition. Hear what he once said:

"Death alone can break the union, which love, sentiment, and sympathy have formed. A thousand and a thousand kisses."

Also,

"I hope very soon to be in your arms; I love you most passionately (*à la fureur*)."

Also,

"I hope in a little time to fold you in my arms, and cover you with kisses burning as the equator."

Also, this consistent lover begs from her whom he afterward deserted,

"Love without bounds, and *fidelity without limit*."

How very like a man!

Well, I turned over the pages, and read with moistened eyes, for the hundredth time, the wretched state farce enacted at the divorce; and with fresh admiration perused the magnanimous and memorable reply of the queenly Josephine, to the brilliant but cold, intellectual but selfish, imperious yet fascinating Napoleon. Ah! then I would have led away his victim, spite of herself, out of sight, sound, and hearing of this cold, cruel man, who, when it suited his whim, caprice, or convenience; who, when weary of the tame, spiritless Maria Louise, returned secretly to the intoxicating presence of the bewitching Josephine; whom, though repudiating, he yet controlled, down to the lowest menial in her household, down to the color of their jackets and hose; quite safe, in always appending, with gracious condescension, permission "to please herself," to one whose greatest pleasure, he well knew, was to kiss his imperial shoe-tie.

My love and pity for her merge (momentarily) into contempt, when she abjectly begs for the crumbs of his favor, that fall from happier favorites; for (to quote the touching words of her who would have shared his exile had not death prevented, when the woman for whom she had been cast aside, by a retributive justice, deserted him in his extremity) "he could forget me *when he was happy*!" Ay, it was when pleasure palled, when friends proved false, when the star of his destiny paled, when he *needed* the noble Josephine, that he sought her.

And *she*? When pealing bells and roaring cannon announced to France that her rival had presented her husband the long-desired heir; *she*, upon whose quivering heart every stroke of those joyous bells must have smitten like a death-knell; *she*, the deserted wife, hung festal wreaths over the grave of her hopes, gave jewels to the messenger who brought her the news of *his* happiness, and ordered a *fête* in honor of the young heir. Match me that, who can, in the wide annals of *man's* history? But, oh! when midnight came on, and garlands drooped, and bright eyes closed, and tripping feet were stilled, when the farce was played out, and the iron hand of court etiquette was lifted from off that loving, throbbing, bursting heart, it thus poured itself out to Napoleon:

"She (Maria Louise), can not be more tenderly devoted to you than I; but she has been enabled to contribute more to your happiness, by securing that of France. She has then a right to your first

feelings, to all your cares; and I, who was but your companion in times of difficulty, I can not ask more than a place in your affections far removed from that occupied by the Empress Louise. *Not till you shall have ceased to watch by her bed, not till you are weary of embracing your son, will you take the pen to converse with your best friend. I will wait.*"

The answer to the touching letter, from which this is an extract (and every *woman* with a heart, who reads it, can measure the height and depth of its anguish), was the following *verbal*, the following *delicate* message, through Eugene!

"Tell your mother I would have written to her already, *had I not been completely absorbed in the pleasure of looking upon my son*."

About eleven o'clock that evening she received the much-coveted line from his own hand; in which he seemed to have been able at last to remember somebody beside himself; and for which the all-enduring, all-forgiving Josephine adores as a god, "the man who, *when he willed*, could be the most delightful of men." Nobody will deny the matchless tact of the lines which dried poor Josephine's tears:

"This infant, *in concert with our Eugene*, will constitute my happiness, and that of France."

But the man "who could be so delightful when he willed," did not, any more than the rest of his sex, always will it. Motes and butterflies seek the sunbeams, and the friends of poor Josephine's happier days, forsook her for those whom Fortune smiled upon. Malice, always on tiptoe to whisper into the tortured ear, told her of the "happiness" of the inconstant Napoleon; and with the birds, flowers, and fountains of Malmaison mocking her tears, her crushed heart thus sobs itself out to the emperor:

"I limit myself in asking one favor; it is, that you, yourself, will seek means, *sometimes to convince me, and those who surround me*" – (mark how strong and deathless must be the love that could thus abjectly sue) – "that I have still a place in your memory, and a large share of your esteem and friendship. These means, whatever they may be, will soothe my anguish, without the danger, as it seems to me, of compromising that *which is more important than all together, the happiness of your majesty*."

Well, what was the answer of "his majesty" to the tortured Josephine, in whose heart, his majesty boasted that "he held the first place, and her children by a former husband next, and that she did right thus to love him!" What was his majesty's answer to her, whom he wished to "cover with kisses burning as the equator," "whom he would wish to imprison in his heart, lest she should escape;" "the beautiful, the good one, all unequaled, all divine," to whom he had "sent thousands of kisses, burning as his heart, pure as her own," whom "he loved *à la fureur*?" What was his majesty's answer to the weary, weeping, faithful watcher at Malmaison?

"I have received your letter of the 19th of April; it *is in a very bad style*."

Could any thing be more coolly diabolical? O, foolish Josephine! with all your tact and wisdom, not to have found out that man (with rare exceptions) is unmagnanimous; that to pet and fondle him is to forge your own chains; that the love which is sure is to him worthless; that variety is as necessary to his existence, as a looking-glass and a cigar; and that his vows are made, like women's hearts, to break.

And yet, how surely, even in this world, retribution follows. The dreary rock of St. Helena; the dilapidated, vermin-infested lodgings; the petty, grinding, un-let-up-able tyranny of the lynx-eyed foe; the unalloyed, unassuaged anguish of hydra-headed disease; the merciless separation from the child, who had dug poor Josephine's premature grave; the heaped up, viper, newspaper obloquy which had always free pass to Longwood, when bristling bayonets kept at bay the voices which the ear of its captive ached to hear; the dreary, comfortless death-bed; the last faltering request denied; as if malice still hungered for vengeance when the weary heart it would torture had lost all power to feel. Josephine! Josephine! thou wert indeed avenged!

"FIRST PURE."

I would that I had time to answer the many kind letters I receive from my unknown friends, or power, as they seem to imagine, to reform the abuses to which they call my attention. The subject of licentiousness, upon which I have just received a letter, is one upon which I have thought much and often since my residence in New York. I could not, if I would, ignore it, when at every step its victims rustle past me in the gay livery of shame, or stretch out to me, from beneath tattered garments, the hand, prematurely old, which should, alas! wear the golden pledge of honorable love. But they tell me this is a subject a woman can not understand, and should not write about. Perhaps so; but woman can understand it when, like a blighting mildew, it strips bud, blossom, and verdure, from her household olive-plants; woman can understand it when she weeps in secret over the wrong which she may not whisper even to herself; woman can understand it when the children of the man whom she thought worthy of her maidenly love and honor, sink into early graves, under the inherited taint of his "youthful follies."

And yet they are right; virtuous woman does *not* understand it; would that she did – would that she sometimes paused to think of her share of blame in this matter; would that she know how much her ready smile, and *indiscriminate hand of welcome* has to do in perpetuating it; how often it blunts the sting of conscience, and confirms the immoral man in that detestable club-house creed, that woman's virtue depends upon opportunity. Would that mothers would sometimes ask, not – is he a gentleman, or is he accomplished? but, is he moral? is he pure? Pure! Young New York holds its sides in derision at the word. Pure! is he in leading strings? Pure! it is a contemptible reflection on his manhood and free will. Pure! it is a word for old women and priests.

I once expressed my astonishment to a lady, that she should permit the calls of a gentleman whom she knew to be licentious. "That is none of my business, you know, my dear," she replied, "so long as he behaves himself properly in my presence;" and this answer, I am afraid, would be endorsed by too many of my readers. As well might she have said, that it was none of her business that her neighbor's house was in flames, or that they had the yellow fever or the plague. That a man sings well, dresses well, or talks well, is, I am sorry to say, too often sufficient to outweigh his moral delinquency. This is poor encouragement to young men who, not having yet learned to think lightly of the sex to which their mothers and sisters belong, are old-fashioned enough to wish to lead virtuous lives; and some of whom, notwithstanding, have the courage and manhood in these degenerate days to *dare* to do it.

As to a reform in this matter, I think virtuous women must begin it, by turning the cold shoulder to every man of their acquaintance whom they know to be immoral, and I think a woman of penetration will not be at fault, if she takes pains to sift a man's sentiments in conversation.

Perhaps you will tell me (though I hope it is not so), that this would exclude two thirds of every lady's gentlemen acquaintance. Be it so; better for those ladies, better for their daughters, if they have any, better for the cause of virtue; at least, it would not take long, at that rate, to thin the ranks of vice.

I wonder does man never think, in his better moments, how much nobler it were to protect than to debase woman? – ay, protect her – if need be —*even from herself*, and ignoring the selfish creed that she has a right to, and is alone responsible for, her own self-disposal, withdraw her, as with a brother's hand, from the precipice over which misery or inclination would plunge her, and prove to the "weaker sex" that he is in the noblest sense the stronger. That, indeed, were God-like.

HOLIDAY THOUGHTS

Well – New Year's and Christmas are both over: there is a lull equal to that after a Presidential election. What is to be done for an excitement now? Every body is yawning: the men on account of the number of complimentary fibs that they foolishly felt themselves called upon to tell the ladies, on their New Year's calls; and the ladies, because they were obliged to listen as if they did not know them all stereotyped, to be repeated, *ad infinitum*, at every house on their visiting rounds; the matron, because her handsome carpet is inch-deep in cake crumbs; and her husband, because bills are pouring in from butchers, bakers, grocers, milkmen, tailors, dressmakers, and jewelers, like the locusts of Egypt. Well – we shall not say any thing against New Year's and its jollities, while it frees the poor hack of a clerk, and gives him one day of happiness and rest; while it throws over the indefatigable cook's shoulders the cloak for which she has been vainly toiling and hoping; while it wings the feet of so many bright-eyed children, and lights up the prim parlor of so many hopeless old maids. We shall not say any thing against New Year's, when, after long months of wrong and estrangement, it stretches out the tardy hand of repentance, for which even the Bible bids us to wait, ere we forgive; we shall not say any thing against New Year's, though it reminds us that hands we used to grasp so warmly, are crossed forever over pulseless hearts; though memories sad, but sweet, come thronging thick and fast, of "Happy New Years," from lips upon which Death has set his final seal. And yet *not* final; thank Him who giveth, and Him who taketh, *not* final; for even here we trace their noiseless footsteps – even here we see the flitting of their shadowy garments – even here we smile in dreams, at the overshadowing wings of the angels who "have charge to keep us." No, no —*not* final: our love o'erleaps the dark river, to greet the sister, amid whose orange wreath there crept the cypress vine; to clasp the child, who quickened our heart-throbs ere we saw the lips that called us (alas, for so brief a space), by that blessed name – "Mother." No, no —*not* final; – else were this fair earth to us a satisfying birth-right; else had the midnight stars no eyes of flame to search the guilty conscience; else had the shimmer of the moonbeam, the ripple of the wave, the crash of the thunder, the flash of the lightning, the ceaseless moan of the vexed sea, no voice to waken the never-dying echo of the immortal in our nature. No – God be praised —*not* final!

But we had not intended a homily. To return to the observance of New Year's: for our own taste, we should prefer the sugar, which custom so lavishly heaps upon New Year's cake, spread more sparingly upon our slices of "daily bread;" in other words, we should prefer to distribute the compressed courtesies of our friends on this day, equally, through the weeks and months of the year. As to the absurd custom of excluding the daylight, to receive one's visitors by the glare of gas, it is a tacit admission of artificial charms, which one would think even "fashion" would be slow to make. The inordinate display of edibles on such occasions, seems to us as useless as it is disgusting; a cup of coffee, a slice of cake, or a sandwich, being, in our humble estimation, sufficient for any gentleman who is able to distinguish between a private house and a restaurant.

A HEADACHE

Now I am in for it, with one of my unappeasable headaches. Don't talk to me of doctors; it is incurable as a love-fit; nothing on earth will stop it; you may put that down in your memorandum-book. Now, I suppose every body in the house to-day will put on their creakingest shoes; and every body will go up and down stairs humming all the tunes they ever heard, especially those I most dislike; and I suppose every thing that is cooked in the kitchen will boil and stew over, and the odor will come up to me; and I have *such* a nose! And I suppose all the little boys in the neighborhood, bless their little restless souls, will play duets on tin-pans and tin-kettles; and I suppose every body who comes into my room to ask me how I do, will squeak that horrid door, and *keep* squeaking it; and I suppose that unhappy dog confined over in that four-square-feet yard, will howl more deliriously than ever; and Mr. Jones's obnoxious blind will flap and bang till I am as crazy as an omnibus-driver who has a baulky horse, and whose passengers are hopping out behind without paying their fare; and I suppose some poor little child will be running under the window every now and then, screaming "Mother," and whenever I hear that, I think somebody wants *me*; and I've no doubt there will be "proof" to read to-day, and that that pertinacious and stentorian rag-man will lumber past on his crazy old cart, and insist on having some of my dry goods; and I feel it in my bones that oysters and oranges, and tape, and blacking, and brooms, and mats, and tin-ware, will settle and congregate on this side-walk, and assert their respective claims to my notice, till the sight of an undertaker would be a positive blessing.

Whack! how my head snaps! Don't tell me any living woman ever had such a headache before – because it will fill me with disgust. What o'clock is it? "Twelve." Merciful man! only twelve o'clock! I thought it was five. How am I to get through the day, I would like to know, for this headache won't let up till sundown; it never does. "Read to me." What'll you read? "Tom Moore!" as if I were not sick enough already! Moore! with his nightingales, and bulbuls, and jessamines; and loves and doves, and roses and poesies – till the introduction of an uneducated wildcat, or the tearingest kind of a hyena in his everlasting gardens, would be an untold relief. No – I hate Moore. Beside – he is the fellow who said, "When away from the lips that we love, we'll make love to the lips that are near." No wonder he was baptized *more*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.