

Clark Charles Heber

Out of the Hurly-Burly: or, Life in an Odd Corner



Charles Clark

**Out of the Hurly-Burly:
or, Life in an Odd Corner**

«Public Domain»

Clark C.

Out of the Hurly-Burly: or, Life in an Odd Corner / C. Clark —
«Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	7
CHAPTER II	11
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	19
CHAPTER V	23
CHAPTER VI	28
CHAPTER VII	33
CHAPTER VIII	37
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	39

Charles Heber Clark

Out of the Hurly-Burly; Or, Life in an Odd Corner

DEDICATION

I have resolved to dedicate this book to a humorist who has had too little fame, to the most delicious, because the most unconscious, humorist, to that widely-scattered and multitudinous comedian who may be expressed in the concrete as

THE INTELLIGENT COMPOSITOR

To his habit of perpetrating felicitous absurdities I am indebted for "laughter that is worth a hundred groans." It was he who put into type an article of mine which contained the remark, "Filtration is sometimes accomplished with the assistance of albumen," and transformed it into "Flirtation is sometimes accomplished with the resistance of aldermen." It was he who caused me to misquote the poet's inquiry, so that I propounded to the world the appalling conundrum, "Where are the dead, the *varnished* dead?" And it was his glorious tendency to make the sublime convulsively ridiculous that rejected the line in a poem of mine, which declared that a "comet swept o'er the heavens with its trailing skirt," and substituted the idea that a "count slept in the haymow in a traveling shirt." The kind of talent that is here displayed deserves profound reverence. It is wonderful and awful; and thus I offer it a token of my marveling respect.

"Fun is the most conservative element of society, and it ought to be cherished and encouraged by all lawful means. People never plot mischief when they are merry. Laughter is an enemy to malice, a foe to scandal and a friend to every virtue. It promotes good temper, enlivens the heart and brightens the intellect."

PREFACE

It seems to be necessary to say a few words in reference to the contents of this volume as I offer it to the public. Several of the incidents related in the story have already appeared in print, and have been copied in various newspapers throughout the country. Sometimes they have been attributed to the author; but more frequently they have been given either without any name attached to them, or they have been credited to persons who probably never saw them. The best of the anecdotes have been imitated, but none of them, I believe, are imitations. I make this statement, so that if the reader should happen to encounter anything that has a familiar appearance, he may understand that he has the original and not a copy before him. But a very large portion of the matter contained in the book is entirely new, and is now published for the first time; while all the rest of it has been rewritten and improved, so that it is as good as new.

If this little venture shall achieve popularity, I must attribute the fact largely to the admirable pictures with which it has been adorned by the artists whose names appear upon the title page. All of these gentlemen have my hearty thanks for the efforts they have made to accomplish the best results; but while I express my appreciation of the beautiful landscapes of Mr. Schell, the admirable drawings of Mr. Sheppard and the excellent designs of Mr. Bensell, I wish to direct attention especially to the humorous pictures of Mr. Arthur B. Frost. This artist makes his first appearance before the public in these pages. These are the only drawings upon wood that he has ever executed, and they are so nicely

illustrative of the text, they display so much originality and versatility, and they have such genial humor, with so little extravagance and exaggeration, that they seem to me surely to give promise of a prosperous career for the artist.

It is customary upon these occasions to say something of an apologetic nature for the purpose of inducing the public to believe that the author regards with humility the work of which he is really exceedingly proud – something that will tend to soften the blows which are expected from ferocious and cruel critics. But I believe I have nothing of this kind to offer. If I thought the book required an apology, I would not publish it. Any reviewer who does not like it is at liberty to say so; and I am the more ready to accord him this permission because I am impressed with the conviction that he will hit as hard as he wants to whether I give him leave or withhold it. All I ask is that the volume shall have fair play. If it is successful as an attempt to construct a book of humor which will contribute to innocent popular amusement without violating the laws that govern the construction and orthography of the English language, and as an effort to give pleasure to sensible grown people without offering entertainment to children and idiots, it deserves commendation. If it is a failure in these respects, then it ought to be suppressed, for it certainly has no mighty moral purpose, and it is not designed to reform anything on earth but the personal fortunes of the author.

MAX ADELER.

CHAPTER I

The Founder of New Castle – Search for Quietness – Life in the City and the Village – Why the Latter is Preferable – Peculiarities of the Village – A Sleepy Old Town – We Erect our Family Altar

If Peter Menuit had never been born, it is extremely probable that this book would not have been written. Mr. Menuit, however, had nothing to do with the construction of the volume, and his controlling purpose perhaps was not to prepare the way for it. Peter Menuit was a Swede who in 1631 came sailing up the Delaware River in a queer old craft with bulging sides and with stem and stern high in the air. Moved by some mysterious impulse, he dropped his anchor near a certain verdant shore and landed. Standing there, he surveyed the lovely scene that lay before him in the woodland and the river, and then announced to his companions his determination to remain upon that spot. He began to erect a town upon the bank that went sloping downward to the sandy beach, and his only claim to the immortality that has been allotted to him is that he created what is now New Castle.

It would be pleasant, if it did not seem vain, to hope that New Castle will base its aspirations to enduring fame upon the circumstance that another humble personage came, two hundred years and more after Menuit's arrival, to live in it and to tell, in a homely but amiable fashion, the story of some of its good people, and to say something of a few of their peculiarities, perplexities and adventures.

We were in search of quietness. The city has many charms and many conveniences as a place of residence; and there are those who, having accustomed themselves to the methods of life that prevail among the dense populations of the great towns, can hardly find happiness and comfort elsewhere. But although the gregarious instinct is strong in me, I cannot endure to be crowded. I love my fellow-man with inexpressible affection, but oftentimes he seems more lovable when I behold him at a distance. I yearn occasionally for human society, but I prefer to have it only when I choose, not at all times and seasons without intermission. In the city, however, it is impossible to secure solitude when it is desired. If I live, as I must, in one of a row of houses, the partition walls upon both sides are likely to be thin. It is possible that I may have upon the one hand a professor of music who gives, throughout the day, maddening lessons to muscular pupils and practices scales himself with energetic persistency during the night. Upon the other side there may be a family which cherishes two or three infants and sustains a dog. As a faint whisper will penetrate the almost diaphanous wall, the mildest as well as the most violent of the nocturnal demonstrations of the children disturb my sleep; and when these have ceased, the dog will probably become boisterous in the yard.

If there is not a boiler-making establishment in the street at the rear of the house, there will be a saw-mill with a steam whistle, and it is tolerably certain that my neighbor over the way will either have a vociferous daughter who keeps the window open while she sings, or will permit his boy to perform upon a drum. There is incessant noise in street and yard and dwelling. There is perpetual, audible evidence of the active existence of human beings. There is too much crowding and too little opportunity for absolute withdrawal from the confusion and from contact with the restless energy of human life.

It has always seemed to me that village life is the happiest and the most comfortable, and that the busy city man who would establish his home where he can have repose without inconvenience and discomfort should place it amid the trees and flowers and by the grassy highway of some pretty hamlet, where the noise of the world's greater commerce never comes, and where isolation and companionship are both possible without an effort. Such a home, planted judiciously in a half acre, where children can romp and play and where one can cultivate a few flowers and vegetables, mingling the sentimental

heliotrope with the practical cabbage, and the ornamental verbena with the useful onion, may be made an earthly Paradise.

There must not be too much ground, for then it becomes a burden and a care. There are few city men who have the agricultural impulse so strong in them that they will find delight, after a day of mental labor and excitement, in rasping a garden with a hoe in the hope of securing a vegetable harvest. A very little exercise of that kind, in most cases, suffices to moderate the horticultural enthusiasm of the inexperienced citizen. It is pleasant enough to weed a few flowers or to toss a spadeful or two of earth about the roots of the grapevine when you feel disposed to such mild indulgence in exercise; but when the garden presents tasks which must be performed no matter what the frame of mind or the condition of the body, you are apt, for the first time, to have a thorough comprehension of the meaning of the curse uttered against the ground when Adam went forth from Eden. It is far better and cheaper to hire a competent man to cultivate the little field; then in your leisure moments you may set out the cabbage plants upside down and place poles for the strawberry vines to clamber upon, knowing well that if evil is done, it will be corrected on the morrow when the offender is far away, and when the maledictions of the agricultural expert, muttered as he relieves the vegetables from the jeopardy in which ignorance has placed them, cannot reach your ears.

I like a house not too old, but having outward comeliness, with judicious arrangement of the interior, and all of those convenient contrivances of the plumber, the furnace-maker and the bell-hanger which make the merest mite of a modern dwelling incomparably superior in comfort to the most stupendous of marble palaces in the ancient times. I would have no neighbor's house within twenty yards upon either side; I would have noble shade trees about the place, and I would esteem it a most fortunate thing if through the foliage I could obtain constant glimpses of some shining stream upon whose bosom ships come to and fro, and on which I could sometimes find solace and exercise in rowing, fishing and sailing.

Village life is the best. It has all the advantages of residence in the country without the unpleasant things which attend existence in a wholly rural home. There is not the oftentimes oppressive solitude of the country, nor is there the embarrassment that comes from the distance to the station, to the shops and to the post-office. There are the city blessings of the presence of other human beings, and of access to the places where wants may be supplied, without the crowds, without the mixed and villainous perfumes of the streets and without the immoderate taxes. With the conveniences of a civilized community, a village may have pure and healthful air, opportunity for parents and children to amuse themselves out of doors, cheap fare, moderate rent, milk which knows not the wiles of the city dealer, and a moral atmosphere in which a family may grow up away from the temptations and the evil associations which tend to corrupt the young in the great cities.

More than this, I like life in the village because it brings a man into kindlier relations with his fellows than can be obtained elsewhere. In the city I am jostled at every step by those who are strangers to me, who know nothing of me, and who care nothing. In the village I am known by every one, and I know all. If I have any title to respect, it is admitted by the entire society of the place, and perhaps I may even win something of affection if I am worthy of it.

In the country town, too, you may have your morals carefully looked after. There are prying eyes and busy tongues, and you are so conspicuous that unless you walk straightly, the little world around you shall know of your slips and falls. You may quarrel with your wife for ever in the city and few care to hear the miserable story; but in the village the details of the conjugal contest are heralded about before the day is spent.

The interest that is felt in you is amazing. The cost of your establishment is as well known as if it were blazoned upon the walls. You cannot impose upon the people with a pretence of splendor if you have not the reality; one gossiping old woman who has discovered the sham will make you an object of public scorn in an hour. The village knows how your children are dressed and trained; how often you have mutton and the extent of your indulgence in beef. The cost of your carpets is a

matter of common notoriety; your differences with your servants are discussed at the sewing-circle, and the purchase of new clothing for your family is a concern of public interest. The arrival of your wife's winter bonnet actually creates excitement in the village society, and you are certain, therefore, to get the full worth of your investment in that article of dress, while the owner obtains unlimited satisfaction; for winter bonnets are purchased for the benefit of other people chiefly, not for the convenience and happiness of the wearers.

Every man is something of a hero-worshiper; and if in the city I find it difficult to select an idol from among the many who thrust their greatness upon me, I am not so embarrassed in the village. Here I will probably find but one man who is revered as the embodiment of the worshipful virtues. He has larger wealth than any of his fellow-villagers; he lives in the most sumptuous house in the place; he belongs to the oldest family, and his claim to superiority is admitted almost without question by his reverent townsmen. It gives me joy to add my voice to the chorus of admiration, and to feel humble in that presence wherein my neighbors have humility. Sometimes, of course, I cannot help perceiving that the object of this adoration is, after all, a very pigmy of his kind. I am compelled to admit that his fortune seems large only because mine and Jones's are small; that his house is a palace only for the reason that it dwarfs my little cottage; that if unassisted brains carried the day, and strutting was felonious, he would certainly occupy a much less magnificent position. I know that in a greater community he would be wholly insignificant. And yet I admit his claim to profound respect. It pleases me to see him play his little part, and to observe with what calm, luxurious confidence in his own right and title to homage he passes through life. And I know, after all, that the greater men, out in the busy hurly-burly of the world, are not so very much greater. A good deal of their claim to superiority, too, is a miserable sham; and doubtless, if we could see them as closely as we see our village grandee, we should find that they also depend much upon popular credulity for the stability of their reputations.

My pompous village nabob, too, is honest. I am sure of this. He helps to conduct the government of the community, but he does his duty fairly and he is a gentleman. I could love him for that alone, and for that feel a deeper affection for life in his village. When I go to the city and perceive what creatures wield the power there, when I watch the trickery, the iniquity, the audacious infamy, of the cliques that control the machinery of that great government, and when I look, as I do sometimes, into the faces of those who are thus leagued for plunder and power, only to see there vulgarity, ignorance, vice and general moral filthiness, my soul is made sick. I can turn then with pleasure to the simple methods with which our village is governed, and honestly give my respect to the guileless old gentleman who presides over its destinies.

We wish for quietness, and in New Castle it can be obtained, I think, in a particularly concentrated form. When Swede and Dutchman and Englishman had done contending for possession of the place, there was peace until the Revolution came, and with it ships of war and privateers, and such hurrying of troops and supplies across from New Castle to Frenchtown, from the Delaware to the Chesapeake, as kept the old town in a stir. There was then an interval of repose until the second war with England, when these busy scenes were re-enacted. Later in the century a mighty stir was made by the construction of a railroad, one of the earliest in the country, to Chesapeake Bay; then, as the excitement died away, the old town gradually went to sleep, and for nearly forty years it slumbered so soundly that there seemed to be a chance that it would never wake again. But time achieves wonderful things, and perhaps the day will come when the vicinity of the old town to the bay, the depth of water at its shores and the facilities offered for manufacturing and easy transportation, may make the village a great industrial centre, with hundreds of mills and multitudes of working-people. But as we join ourselves to the community there is no promise of such an awakening. We have still the profound repose and the absence of change that make the place so dear to those who have known it in their childhood. There are the paved streets where the grass grows thickly; the ancient wharves protruding into the stream, deserted but by the anglers and the naked and wicked little boys who go in to swim;

the tumbling stone ice-piers, a little way out in the river; the old court-house, whose steeple is the point upon which moves the twelve-mile radial line whose northern end describes the semi-circular boundary of Delaware; the rickety town-hall, the ancient churches and the grim old houses with moss-covered roofs, the Battery, with its drooping willows and its glorious vista of river and shore beyond, and the dense masses of foliage, shutting out the sky here and there as one passes along the streets.

Into such a house as I have described, not far from the river, and with our neighbors at a little more than arm's length, I have come with wife and family, with household gods and domestic paraphernalia generally, to begin the life which will supply the material wherewith to construct the ensuing pages. It may perhaps turn out that the better part of that existence will not be told, but perchance it may be that the events related will be those which will possess for the reader greatest interest and amusement.

CHAPTER II

A Very Dangerous Invention – The Patent Combination Step-ladder – Domestic Servants – Advertising for a Girl – The Peasant-girl of Fact and Fiction – Contrast

A step-ladder is an almost indispensable article to persons who are moving into a new house. Not only do the domestics find it extremely convenient when they undertake to wash the windows, to remove the dust from the door and window-frames, and to perform sundry other household duties, but the lord of the castle will require it when he hangs his pictures, when he fixes the curtains and when he yields to his wife's entreaty for a hanging shelf or two in the cellar. I would, however, warn my fellow-countrymen against the contrivance which is offered to them under the name of the "Patent Combination Step-ladder." I purchased one in the city just before we moved, because the dealer showed me how, by the simple operation of a set of springs, the ladder could be transformed into an ironing-table, and from that into a comfortable settee for the kitchen, and finally back again into a step-ladder, just as the owner desired. It seemed like getting the full worth of the money expended to obtain a trio of such useful articles for a single price, and the temptation to purchase was simply irresistible. But the knowledge gained by a practical experience of the operation of the machine enables me to affirm that there is no genuine economical advantage in the use of this ingenious article.

Upon the day of its arrival, the servant-girl mounted the ladder for the purpose of removing the globes from the chandelier in the parlor, and while she was engaged in the work the weight of her body unexpectedly put the springs in motion, and the machine was suddenly converted into an ironing-table, while the maid-servant was prostrated upon the floor with a sprained ankle and amid the fragments of two shattered globes.

Then we decided that the apparatus should be used exclusively as an ironing-table, and to this purpose it would probably have been devoted permanently if it had suited. On the following Tuesday, however, while half a dozen shirts were lying upon it ready to be ironed, some one knocked against it accidentally. It gave two or three ominous preliminary jerks, ground two shirts into rags, hurled the flat-iron out into the yard, and after a few convulsive movements of the springs, settled into repose in the shape of a step-ladder.

It became evident then that it could be used with greatest safety as a settee, and it was placed in the kitchen in that shape. For a few days it gave much satisfaction. But one night when the servant had company the bench was perhaps overloaded, for it had another and most alarming paroxysm; there was a trembling of the legs, a violent agitation of the back, then a tremendous jump, and one of the visitors was hurled against the range, while the machine turned several somersaults, jammed itself halfway through the window-sash, and appeared once more in the similitude of an ironing-table.

It has now attained to such a degree of sensitiveness that it goes through the entire drill promptly and with celerity if any one comes near it or coughs or sneezes close at hand. We have it stored away in the garret, and sometimes in the middle of the night a rat will jar it, or a current of air will pass through the room, and we can hear it dancing over the floor and getting into service as a ladder, a bench and a table fifteen or twenty times in quick succession.

The machine will be disposed of for a small fraction of the original cost. It might be a valuable addition to the collection of some good museum. I am convinced that it will shine with greater lustre as a curiosity than as a household utensil.

Perhaps we may attribute to the fantastic capers of this step-ladder the dissatisfaction expressed by the servant who came with us from the city; at any rate, she gave us notice at the end of the first week that she would not remain. She is the ninth that we have had within four months. Mrs. Adeler

said she was not sorry the woman intended to go, for she was absolutely good for nothing; but I think a poor servant is better than none at all. Life is gloomy enough without the misery which comes from rising before daylight to fumble among the fires, and without living upon short rations because one's wife has no time to attend to the cooking.

I am not sure, at any rate, that it would be a very great advantage to have thoroughly good servants, for then women would be deprived of the very evident pleasure they now take in discussing the shortcomings of their domestics. The practice is so common that there must be supreme consolation in the sympathy and in the relief to the overcharged feelings that are permitted by such communion.

Place two women together under any circumstances, and it makes no difference where the conversation starts from, for it will be perfectly certain to work around to the hired-girl question before many minutes have elapsed. I have seen an elderly housekeeper, with experience in conducting the talk in the desired direction, break in upon a discussion of Pythagoras and the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and switch off the entire debate with such expedition that a careless listener would for some moments have an indistinct impression that the conversation referred to the inefficiency of Pythagoras as a washer and ironer, and to the tendency of that heathen philosopher to take two Thursdays out every week.

And when a woman has an unusually villainous servant, is it not interesting to observe how she glories in the superior intensity of her sufferings as compared with those of her neighbors, and to perceive how she rejoices in her misery? A housewife who possesses a really good girl is always in a condition of wretchedness upon such occasions, and is apt to listen in envious silence while her companions unburden their souls to each other.

Mrs. Adeler intimated that these accusations were slanderous, but she ventured to observe that the practical question which required immediate consideration was, How shall we get another girl?

"There is but one method, Mrs. A.: it is to advertise. Do not patronize the establishments which, in bitter irony, are styled 'intelligence offices.' An intelligence office is always remarkable for the dense stupidity of everybody connected with it. But a single manifestation of intelligence gleams through the intellectual darkness that enshrines the souls of the beings who maintain such places. I refer to the singular ability displayed in extracting two-dollar bills from persons who know that they will get nothing for their money."

Mrs. Adeler admitted that it would perhaps be better to advertise.

"How would it answer to insert in the daily paper an advertisement in which sarcasm is mingled with exaggeration in such a way that it shall secure an unlimited number of applications, while we shall give expression to the feeling of bitterness that is supposed to exist in the bosom of every housekeeper?"

She said she thought she hardly caught the idea precisely.

"Suppose, for instance, we should publish something like this: 'Wanted: a competent girl for general housework.' The most strenuous effort will be made to give such a person complete satisfaction. If she is not pleased with the furniture already in the kitchen, we are willing to have the range silver plated, the floor laid in mosaic and the dresser covered with pink plush. No objection will be made to breakage. The domestic will be permitted at any time to disport in the china closet with the axe. We consider hair in the breakfast-rolls an improvement; and the more silver forks that are dropped into the drain, the more serene is the happiness which reigns in the household. Our girl cannot have Sunday out. She can go out every day but Sunday, and remain out until midnight if she wishes to. If her relations suffer for want of sugar, she can supply them with ours. We rather prefer a girl who habitually blows out the gas, and who is impudent when complaint is made because she soaks the mackerel in the tea-kettle. If she can sprinkle hot coals over the floor now and then, and set the house afire, we will rejoice the more, because it will give the fire-department healthful and necessary exercise. Nobody will interfere if she woos the milkman, and she will confer a favor if she

will discuss family matters across the fence with the girl who lives next door. Such a servant as this can have a good home, the second-story front room and the whole of our income with the exception of three dollars a week, which we must insist, reluctantly, upon reserving for our own use.'

"How does that strike you, Mrs. Adeler?"

She said that it struck her as being particularly nonsensical. She hoped I wouldn't put such stuff as that in the paper.

"Certainly not, Mrs. A. If I did, we should cause a general immigration of the domestics of the country to New Castle. We will not precipitate such a disaster."

The insertion of a less extended advertisement, couched in the usual terms, secured a reply from a young woman named Catherine. And when Catherine's objections to the size of the family, to the style of the cooking-range, to the dimensions of the weekly wash and to sundry other things had been overcome, she consented to accept the position.

"I hope she will suit," exclaimed Mrs. Adeler, with a sigh and an intonation which implied doubt. "I do hope she will answer, but I am afraid she won't, for according to her own confession she doesn't know how to make bread or to iron shirts or to do anything."

"That is the reason why she demanded such exorbitant wages. Those servants who are entirely ignorant always want the largest pay. If we ever obtain a girl who understands her business in all its departments, I cherish the conviction that she will work for us for nothing. The wages of domestics are usually in inverse ratio to the merit of the recipients. Did you ever reflect upon the difference between the real and the ideal Irish maiden?"

Mrs. A. admitted that she had not considered the subject with any degree of attention.

"The ideal peasant-girl lives only in fiction and upon the stage. We are largely indebted to Mr. Boucicault for her existence, just as we are under obligations to Mr. Fennimore Cooper for a purely sentimental conception of the North American Indian. Have you ever seen the *Colleen Bawn*?"

"What is that?" inquired Mrs. Adeler, as she bit off a piece of thread from a spool.

"It is a play, a drama, my dear, by Mr. Dion Boucicault."

"You know I never go to theatres."

"Well, in that and in many other of his dramas Mr. Boucicault has drawn a particularly affecting portrait of the imaginary peasant-girl of Ireland. She is, as depicted by him, a lovely young creature, filled with tenderest sensibility, animated by loftiest impulses and inspired perpetually by poetic enthusiasm. The conversation of this fascinating being sparkles with wit; she overflows with generosity; she has unutterable longings for a higher and nobler life; she loves with intense and overpowering passion; she is capable of supreme self-sacrifice; and she always wears clean clothing. If such charming girls really existed in Ireland in large numbers, it would be the most attractive spot in the world. It would be a particularly profitable place for young bachelors to emigrate to. I think I should even go there myself."

Mrs. Adeler said she would certainly accompany me if I did.

"But these persons have no actual existence. We know, from a painful experience, what the peasant-girl of real life is, do we not? We know that her appearance is not prepossessing; we are aware that her lofty impulses do not lift her high enough to enable her to avoid impertinence and to conquer her unnatural fondness for cooking wine. She will withhold starch from the shirt collars and put it in the underclothing; she will hold the baby by the leg, so that it is in perpetual peril of apoplexy, and she will drink the milk. All of her visitors are her cousins; and when they have spent a festive evening with her in the kitchen, is it not curious to remark with what certainty we find low tide in the sugar-box and an absence of symmetry about the cold beef? The only evidence that I can discover of the existence in her soul of a yearning for a higher life is that she nearly always wants Brussels carpet in the kitchen, and this longing is peculiarly intense if, when at the home of her childhood, she was accustomed to live in a mud-cabin and to sleep with a pig."

But I do not regret that Mr. Boucicault has not placed this person upon the stage. It is, indeed, a matter for rejoicing that she is not there. She plays such a part in the drama of domestic life that in contemplation of the virtues of the fabulous being we find intense relief.

CHAPTER III

The View Upon the River; a Magnificent Panorama – Mr. and Mrs. Cooley – Matrimonial Infelicities – The Case of Mrs. Sawyer; a Blighted Life – A Present: our Century Plant and its Peculiarities

We have a full view of the river from our chamber window, and it is a magnificent spectacle that greets us as we rise in the morning and fling the shutters wide open. The sun, in this early summer-time, has already crept high above the horizon of the pine-covered shore opposite, and has flooded the unruffled waters with its golden light until they are transformed for us into a sea of flame. There comes a fleet of grimy coal schooners moving upward with the tide, their dingy sails hanging almost listless in the air; now they float, one by one, into the yellow glory of the sunshine which bars the river from shore to shore. Yonder is a tiny tug puffing valorously as it tows the great merchantman – home from what distant land of wonders? – up to the wharves of the great city. And look! there is another tug-boat going down stream, with a score of canal-boats moving in huge mass slowly behind it. They come from far up among the mountains of the Lehigh and the Schuylkill with their burdens of coal, and they are bound for the Chesapeake. Those men lounging lazily about upon the decks while the women are getting breakfast ready spend their lives amid some of the wildest and noblest scenery in the world. I would rather be a canal-boat captain, Mrs. Adeler, and through all my existence float calmly and serenely amid those regions of beauty and delight, without ever knowing what hurry is, than to be the greatest and busiest of statesmen – that is, if one calling were as respectable and lucrative as the other.

That fellow upon the boat at the rear is playing upon his bugle. The canal-boat bugler is not an artist, but he makes wonderful music sometimes when he blows a blast up yonder in the heart of Pennsylvania, and sets the wild echoes flying among the cañons of those mighty hills. And even now it is not indifferent. Listen! The tones come to us mellowed by the distance, and so indistinct that they have lost all but the sweetness which makes them seem so like the sound of

"Horns of Elfland, faintly blowing."

That prosaic tooter floating there upon the river doubtless would be surprised to learn that he is capable of such a suggestion; but he is.

Off there in the distance, emerging from the shadowy mantle of mist that rests still upon the bosom of the stream to the south, comes the steamboat from Salem, with its decks loaded down with rosy and fragrant peaches, and with baskets of tomatoes and apples and potatoes and berries, ready for the hungry thousands of the Quaker City. The schooner lying there at the wharf is getting ready to move away, so that the steamer may come in. You can hear the screech made by the block as the tackle of the sail is drawn swiftly through it. Now she swings out into the stream, and there, right athwart her bows, see that fisherman rowing homeward with his net piled high in tangled meshes in the bow of his boat. He has a hundred or two silver-scaled shiners at his feet, I'll warrant you, and he is thinking rather of the price they will bring than of the fact that his appearance in his rough batteau gives an especially picturesque air to the beauty of that matchless scene. I wish I was a painter. I would pay any price if I could fling upon canvas that background of hazy gray, and place against it the fiery splendor of the sunlit river, with steamer and ship and weather-beaten sloop and fishing-boat drifting to and fro upon the golden tide.

There, too, is old Cooley, our next-door neighbor on the east. He is out early this morning, walking about his garden, pulling up a weed here and there, prowling among his strawberry vines and investigating the condition of his early raspberries. That dog which trots behind him, my dear, is the one that barked all night. I shall have to ask Cooley to take him in the house after this. We had enough of that kind of disturbance in the city; we do not want it here.

"I don't like the Cooleys," remarked Mrs. A.

"Why not?"

"Because they quarrel with each other. Their girl told our girl that 'him and her don't hit it,' and that Mr. Cooley is continually having angry disputes with his wife. She says that sometimes they even come to blows. It is dreadful."

"It is indeed dreadful. Somebody ought to speak to Cooley about it. He needs overhauling. Perhaps he is too ignorant a man to have perceived the true road to happiness. Of course, Mrs. A., *you* know the secret of real happiness in married life?"

She said she had never thought much about it. She was happy, and it seemed natural to be so. She thought it very strange that there should ever be any other condition of things between man and wife.

"Mrs. Adeler, the secret of conjugal felicity is contained in this formula: demonstrative affection and self-sacrifice. A man should not only love his wife dearly, but he should tell her he loves her, and tell her very often. And each should be willing to yield, not once or twice, but constantly and as a practice, to the other. The man who never takes the baby from his wife, who never offers to help her in her domestic duties, who will sit idly by, indulging himself with repose while she is overwhelmed with care and work among the children, or with other matters, is a mean wretch who does not deserve to have a happy home. And a wife who never holds up her husband's hands in his struggle with the world, who displays no interest in his perplexities and trials, who has never a word of cheer for him when he staggers under his heavy burden, is not worthy the name of a wife. Selfishness, my dear, crushes out love, and most of the couples who are living without affection for each other, with cold and dead hearts, with ashes where there should be a bright and holy flame, have destroyed themselves by caring too much for themselves and too little for each other."

"To me," said Mrs. Adeler, "the saddest thing about such coldness and indifference is that both the man and the woman must sometimes think of the years when they loved each other."

"Yes, and can you imagine anything that would be more likely to give a woman the heartache than such a recollection? When her husband comes home and enters the house without a smile or a word of welcome; when he growls at his meals, and finds fault with this and that domestic arrangement; when he buries his nose in his newspaper after supper, and never resurrects it excepting when he has a savage word of reproof for one of his children, or when he goes out again to spend the evening and leaves his wife alone, the picture which she brings up from the past cannot be a very pleasant one.

"Indeed, my dear, the man's present conduct must fill the woman's soul with bitter pain when she contrasts it with that which won her affection. For there must have been a time when she looked forward with joy to his coming, when he caressed her and covered her with endearments, when he looked deep into her eyes and said that he loved her, and when he said that he could have no happiness in this world unless she loved him wholly and truly. When a man makes such a declaration as that to a woman, he is a villain if he ever treats her with anything but loving-kindness. And I take the liberty of doubting whether he who leads a young girl into wedlock with such pledges, and then acts in direct violation of them, ought not to be prosecuted for obtaining valuable consideration upon false pretences. It is infinitely worse, in my opinion, than stealing ordinary property."

Mrs. Adeler expressed the opinion that death at the stake might be regarded as an appropriate punishment for criminals of this class.

"But there is a humorous side even to this melancholy business. Do you remember the Sawyers, who used to live near us in the city? Well, before Sawyer's marriage I was his most intimate friend; and when they returned from their wedding-trip, of course I called upon them. Mrs. Sawyer alone was at home, and after a brief discussion of the weather, the conversation turned upon Sawyer. I had known him for many years, and I took pleasure in making Mrs. Sawyer believe that he had as much virtue as an omnibus load of patriarchs. Mrs. Sawyer assented joyously to it all, but I thought I detected a shade of sadness on her face while she spoke. I asked her if anything was the matter – if Sawyer's health was not good.

"'Oh yes,' she said, 'very good indeed, and I love him dearly. He is the best man in the world; but – but –'

"Then I assured Mrs. Sawyer that she might speak frankly to me, as I was Sawyer's friend, and could probably smooth away any little unpleasantness that might mar their happiness. She then said it was nothing. It might seem foolish to speak of it; she knew it was not her dear husband's fault, and she ought not to complain; but it was hard, hard to submit when she reflected that there was but one thing to prevent her being perfectly happy; yes, but one thing, 'for oh, Mr. Adeler, I would ask for nothing more in this world if Ezekiel only had a Roman nose!'

"It is an awful thing, Mrs. Adeler, to think of two young lives being made miserable for want of one Roman nose, isn't it?"

Mrs. A. gently intimated that she entertained a suspicion that I had made up the story; and if I had not, why, then Mrs. Sawyer certainly was a very foolish woman.

My wife's cousin, Bob Parker, came down a fortnight ago to stay a day or two on his way to Cape May, with the intent to tarry at that watering-place for a week or ten days, and then to return here to remain with us for some time. Bob is a bright youth, witty in his own small way, fond of using his tongue, and always overflowing with animal spirits. He came partly to see us, but chiefly, I think, because he cherishes a secret passion for a certain fair maid who abides here.

He brought me a splendid present in the shape of an American agave, or century plant. It was offered to him in Philadelphia by a man who brought it to the store and wanted to sell it. The man said it had belonged to his grandfather, and he consented to part with it only because he was in extreme poverty. The man informed Bob that the plant grew but half an inch in twenty years, and blossomed but once in a century. The last time it bloomed, according to the information obtained from the gray-haired grandsire of the man, was in 1776, and it would therefore certainly burst out again in 1876. Patriotism and a desire to have such a curiosity in the family combined to induce Mr. Parker to purchase it at the price of fifty dollars.

I planted the phenomenon on the south side of the house, against the wall. Two days afterward I called Bob's attention to the circumstance that the agave had grown nearly three feet since it was placed in the ground. This seemed somewhat strange after what the man said about the growth of half an inch in two decades. But we concluded that the surprising development must be due to the extraordinary fertility of the soil, and Bob exulted as he thought how he had beaten the man by getting a century plant so much larger and so much more valuable than he had supposed. Bob said that the man would be wofully mad if he should call and see that century plant of his grandfather's getting up out of the ground so splendidly.

That afternoon we all went down to Cape May, and for two weeks we remained there. Upon our return, Bob remarked, as we stepped from the boat, that he wanted to go around the first thing and see how the plant was coming on. He suggested gloomily that he should be bitterly disappointed if it had perished from neglect during our absence.

But it was not dead. We saw it as soon as we came near the house. It had grown since our departure. It had a trunk as thick as my leg, and the branches ran completely over three sides of the house; over the window shutters, which were closed so tightly that we had to chop the century plant away with a hatchet; over the roof, down the chimneys, which were so filled with foliage that they

wouldn't draw; and over the grapevine arbor, in such a fashion that we had to cut away vines and all to get rid of the intruder.

The roots, also, had thrown out shoots over every available square foot of the yard, so that I had eight or ten thousand century plants in an exceedingly thriving condition, while a branch had grown through the open cellar window, and was getting along so finely that we could only reach the coal-bin by tramping through a kind of an East Indian jungle.

Mr. Parker, after examining the vegetable carefully, observed:

"I'm kind of sorry I bought that century plant, Max. I have half an idea that the man who sold it to me was a humorist, and that his Revolutionary grandfather was an octogenarian fraud."

If anybody wants a good, strong, healthy century plant that will stand any climate, and that is warranted to bloom in 1876, mine can be had for a very reasonable price. This may be regarded as an unparalleled opportunity for any young agriculturist who does not want to wait long for his vegetables to grow.

CHAPTER IV

Judge Pitman – His Experiment in the Barn – A Lesson in Natural History – Catching the Early Train – One of the Miseries of Living in a Village – Ball's Lung Exercise – Mr. Cooley's Impertinence

My next-door neighbor upon the west is Judge Pitman. I heard his name mentioned before I became acquainted with him, and I fancied that he was either a present occupant of the bench, or else that he had gone into retirement after spending his active life in dispensing justice and unraveling the tangles of the law. But it appears that he has never occupied a judicial position, and that his title is purely complimentary, having no relation whatever to the nature of his pursuits either in the past or in the present. The judge, indeed, is merely the owner of a couple of steam-tugs and one or two wood sloops which ply upon the river and upon Chesapeake Bay. He spends most of his time at home, living comfortably upon the receipts of a business which is conducted by his hired men, and perhaps also upon the interest of a few good investments in this and other places.

A very brief acquaintance with the judge suffices to convince any one that he has never presided in court. He is a rough, uneducated man, with small respect for grammar, an irrepressible tendency to distort the language, and very little information concerning subjects which are not made familiar by the occurrences of every-day life. But he is hearty, genial, sincere and honest, and I very soon learned to like him and to find amusement in his quaint simplicity.

My first interview with the judge was somewhat remarkable. I came home early one afternoon for the purpose of training some roses and clematis against my fence. While I was busily engaged with the work, the judge, who had been digging potatoes in his garden, stuck his spade in the earth and came to the fence. After looking at me in silence for a few moments, he observed,

"Fine day, cap!"

The judge has the habit of conferring titles promiscuously and without provocation, particularly upon strangers. To call me "cap." was his method of expressing a desire for sociability.

"It is a beautiful day," I observed, "but the country needs rain."

"It never makes no difference to me," replied the judge, "what kinder weather there is; I'm allers satisfied. 'Twon't rain no sooner for wishin' for it."

As there was no possibility of our having a controversy upon this point, I merely replied, "That is true."

"How's yer pertaters comin' on?" inquired the judge.

"Very well, I believe. They're a little late, but they appear to be thriving."

"Mine's doin' first rate," returned the judge. "I guannered them in the spring, and I've bin a-hoein' at 'em and keepin' the weeds down putty stiddy ever since. Mons'ous sight o' labor growin' good pertaters, cap."

"I should think so," I rejoined, "although I haven't had much practical experience in that direction thus far."

"Cap.," observed the judge, after a brief interval of silence, "you're one of them fellers that writes for the papers and magazines, a'n't you?"

"Yes, I sometimes do work of that kind."

"Well, see here: I've got somethin' on my mind that's bin a-botherin' me the wust kind for a week and more. You've read the 'Atlantic Monthly,' haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, my daughter bought one of 'em, and I was a-readin' it the other night, when I saw it stated that guanner could be influenced by music, and that Professor Brown had made some git up and come to him when he played a tune on the pianner."

I remembered, as the judge spoke, that the magazine in question did contain a paragraph to the effect that the *iguana* was susceptible of such influence, and that Mrs. Brown had succeeded in taming one of these animals, so that it would run to her at the sound of music. But I permitted Mr. Pitman to continue without interruption.

"Of course," said he, "I never really believed no such nonsense as that, but it struck me as kinder sing'lar, and I thought I'd give the old thing a trial, anyhow. So I got down my fiddle and went to the barn, and put a bag of guanner in the middle of the floor and begun to rake out a tune. First I played 'A Life on the Ocean Wave and a Home on the Rollin' Deep' three or four times; and there that guanner sot, just as I expected 'twould. Then I begun agin and sawed out a lot o' variations, but still she didn't budge. Then I put on a fresh spurt and jammed in a passel o' extra sharps and flats and exercises; and I played that tune backward and sideways and cat-a-cornered. And I stirred in some scales, and mixed the tune up with Old Hundred and Mary Blaine and some Sunday-school songs, until I nearly fiddled my shirt off, and nary time did that guanner bag git up off o' that floor. I knowed it wouldn't. I knowed that feller wa'n't tellin' the truth. But, cap., don't it strike you that a man who'd lie like that ought to have somethin' done to him? It 'pears to me 's if a month or two in jail'd do that feller good."

The lesson in natural history which I proceeded to give to the judge need not be repeated here. He acknowledged that the laugh was fairly against him, and ended his affirmation of his new-born faith in the integrity of the Atlantic Monthly by inviting me to climb over the fence and taste some of his Bartlett pears. The judge and I have been steady friends ever since.

I find that one of the most serious objections to living out of town lies in the difficulty experienced in catching the early morning train by which I must reach the city and my business. It is by no means a pleasant matter, under any circumstances, to have one's movements regulated by a timetable and to be obliged to rise to breakfast and to leave home at a certain hour, no matter how strong the temptation to delay may be. But sometimes the horrible punctuality of the train is productive of absolute suffering. For instance: I look at my watch when I get out of bed and find that I have apparently plenty of time, so I dress leisurely, and sit down to the morning meal in a frame of mind which is calm and serene. Just as I crack my first egg I hear the down train from Wilmington. I start in alarm; and taking out my watch, I compare it with the clock and find that it is eleven minutes slow, and that I have only five minutes left in which to get to the dépôt.

I endeavor to scoop the egg from the shell, but it burns my fingers, the skin is tough, and after struggling with it for a moment, it mashes into a hopeless mess. I drop it in disgust and seize a roll, while I scald my tongue with a quick mouthful of coffee. Then I place the roll in my mouth while my wife hands me my satchel and tells me she thinks she hears the whistle. I plunge madly around looking for my umbrella, then I kiss the family good-bye as well as I can with a mouth full of roll, and dash toward the door.

Just as I get to the gate, I find that I have forgotten my duster and the bundle my wife wanted me to take up to the city to her aunt. Charging back, I snatch them up and tear down the gravel-walk in a frenzy. I do not like to run through the village: it is undignified and it attracts attention; but I walk furiously. I go faster and faster as I get away from the main street. When half the distance is accomplished, I actually do hear the whistle; there can be no doubt about it this time. I long to run, but I know that if I do I will excite that abominable speckled dog sitting by the sidewalk a little distance ahead of me. Then I really see the train coming around the curve close by the dépôt, and I feel that I *must* make better time; and I do. The dog immediately manifests an interest in my movements. He tears after me, and is speedily joined by five or six other dogs, which frolic about my legs and bark furiously. Sundry small boys, as I go plunging past, contribute to the excitement by whistling with their

fingers, and the men who are at work upon the new meeting-house stop to look at me and exchange jocular remarks with each other. I do feel ridiculous; but I must catch that train at all hazards.

I become desperate when I have to slacken my pace until two or three women who are standing upon the sidewalk, discussing the infamous price of butter, scatter to let me pass. I arrive within a few yards of the station with my duster flying in the wind, with my coat tails in a horizontal position, and with the speckled dog nipping my heels, just as the train begins to move. I put on extra pressure, resolving to get the train or perish, and I reach it just as the last car is going by. I seize the hand-rail; I am jerked violently around, but finally, after a desperate effort, I get upon the step with my knees, and am hauled in by the brakeman, hot, dusty and mad, with my trousers torn across the knees, my legs bruised and three ribs of my umbrella broken.

Just as I reach a comfortable seat in the car, the train stops, and then backs up on the siding, where it remains for half an hour while the engineer repairs a dislocated valve. The anger which burns in my bosom as I reflect upon what now is proved to have been the folly of that race is increased as I look out of the window and observe the speckled dog engaged with his companions in an altercation over a bone. A man who permits his dog to roam about the streets nipping the legs of every one who happens to go at a more rapid gait than a walk, is unfit for association with civilized beings. He ought to be placed on a desert island in mid-ocean, and be compelled to stay there.

This will do as a picture of the experience of one morning – one melancholy morning. Of course it is exceptional. Rather than endure such agony of mind and discomfort of body frequently, I would move back to the city, and abandon for ever my little paradise by the Delaware.

I hardly think I shall get along so well with my neighbor on the other side, Cooley, as I do with Pitman. He is not only exceedingly ill-natured, but he inclines to be impertinent. Several times he has volunteered advice respecting the management of my garden and grounds, and has displayed a disposition to be somewhat sarcastic when his plans did not meet with my approval. I contrived, however, to avoid a breach of our amicable relations until the other day, when his conduct became absolutely unendurable.

I observed in the last number of Ball's *Journal of Health* some suggestions concerning a good method of exercising the lungs and expanding the chest. They were to this effect:

"Step out into the purest air you can find; stand perfectly erect, with the head up and the shoulders back, and then, fixing the lips as though you were going to whistle, draw the air, not through the nostrils, but through the lips, into the lungs. When the chest is about half full, gradually raise the arms, keeping them extended with the palms of the hands down, as you suck in the air, so as to bring them over the head just as the lungs are quite full. Then drop the thumbs inward, and after gently forcing the arms backward and the chest open, reverse the process by which you draw your breath till the lungs are empty. This process should be repeated three or four times immediately after bathing, and also several times through the day."

This seemed reasonable, and I determined to give it a trial. For that purpose I went out into the yard; and pinning the directions to a tree, I stood in front of them where I could see them. Just as I began, Cooley came out; and perceiving me, he placed his elbows upon the fence, rested his chin upon his arms and watched me with a very peculiar smile upon his face. I was exceedingly annoyed and somewhat embarrassed, but I was determined that he should not have the gratification of driving me away from my own ground. I made up my mind that I would continue the exercise without appearing to notice him. In a few moments, however, he remarked:

"Training for a prize-fight, Adeler?"

I made no reply, but continued the exercise. When I had gone through the programme once, I began again. As I arrived at that portion of it where the instructions direct the arrangement of the lips, Mr. Cooley, by this time somewhat incensed at my silence, observed,

"Whistle us a tune, Adeler. Give us something lively!"

As I paid no attention to this invitation, Cooley embraced the opportunity afforded by the upward motion of my arms, in accordance with the directions, to ask me if I was going to dive, and to offer to bring me out a tub in case I cherished such a design.

Then I completed the exercise and went into the house without giving Cooley any reason to suppose that I was aware of his presence. The next day I performed the ceremony at the same place, at the same hour. On the third day Cooley evidently expected me, for as soon as I appeared he came up to the fence and assumed his old position. He had with him a couple of friends, whom he must have summoned for the express purpose of tormenting me. When I had gone through the movements once, Cooley said:

"See here, Adeler, I don't want to do you any harm, but let me advise you as a friend to go to an asylum. I have known much worse cases than yours to be cured. It isn't kind to your family for you to remain at large. You're afflicted with only a mild form now; but if you don't do something, you'll have a violent paroxysm some day, and smash things. Now, take my advice, and put yourself under treatment."

Silence upon my part.

"How would you take it now," inquired Cooley, in a tone indicative of yearning tenderness, "if I should get over the fence and chain you to the pump while I go for the doctor? I really think you are getting dangerous."

"Mr. Cooley," I said, "I wish you would attend to your own business. I do not wish to quarrel with you, sir, but I will not have any interference on your part with my affairs. If it will make you any happier to learn what I am doing, I will tell you, seeing that you are so much interested in the matter, that I am exercising, under medical direction, for the benefit of my lungs."

"Exercising for the benefit of his lungs!" moaned Cooley. "His mind is entirely gone."

"Yes, sir," I said, angrily, "I am exercising for the benefit of my lungs, according to the directions of Dr. Ball, and I will thank you to keep your tongue quiet about it."

"He has them awfully bad," exclaimed Cooley, with a pathetic look. "There is no such man as Dr. Ball, you know," he remarked, in a confidential tone, to one of his companions.

"I wish you distinctly to understand that I will not tolerate this impertinence much longer, sir," I exclaimed, indignantly. "What right have you to interfere with me upon my own ground, you ruffian?"

"His intellect's completely shattered," said Cooley, with a mournful shake of his head, to his companions. "Poor Mrs. Adeler! It will be a terrible blow for her and for the children. My heart bleeds for them."

"Mr. Cooley," I said, "I want no more of this. I shall discontinue Dr. Ball's exercise at this place for the present, but I will tell you before I go that I consider you an insolent, unendurable idiot, and I will repay you some day or other for your outrageous behavior to me."

"Sad, sad, indeed!" said Cooley to his friends. "Strange how he clings to that fancy about a man named Ball, isn't it?"

One of Cooley's companions observed that the deranged were apt to get such notions in their heads, and he supplemented this statement with the remark, "This is a very interesting case – very."

Then I went into the house, and from the window saw Cooley and his companions walk away laughing. Not even the unpardonable insolence of Cooley can disguise the fact that the affair has a certain comic aspect; and when I became calmer, I confess that I appreciated this phase of the occurrence with some keenness, even though I happened to occupy an exceedingly unpleasant position as the victim of the joke. But I shall be even with Cooley for this. I will devise a scheme for tormenting him which will cause him to rue the day that he interfered with my pulmonary gymnastics. Dr. Ball's recipe, however, I think I will toss into the fire. I will expand my lungs by learning to sing or to play upon the flute. My family can then participate in my enjoyment. A married man has no right to be selfish in his pleasures.

CHAPTER V

A Little Love Affair – Cowardice of Mr. Parker – Popular Interest in Amatory Matters – The Magruder Family – An Event in its History – Remarkable Experiments by Mrs. Magruder – An Indignant Husband – A Question Answered

Miss Bessie Magruder is the object upon which the affections of Mr. Bob Parker are fixed at the present moment. He met her, I believe, while she was attending school in the city last winter, and what with accompanying her to matinees, taking her to church and lingering by her side in the parlor oftentimes in the evening with the gas turned low, the heart of Mr. Parker gradually was induced to throb only for the pretty maid from New Castle. She has been very gracious to him during all the time that he has devoted himself to her, and has seemed to like him so well that there is really no reason for doubting that when the climax of the little drama is reached and the question asked, she will droop her eyelids, crimson her cheeks with blushes and whisper "Yes."

But Mr. Parker's courage has not yet been quite equal to the presentation of the proposition in a definite form. When I asked him the other day, good-humoredly, if he had explained himself to Miss Magruder, he told me confidentially that he had not. At least a dozen times he had prepared the question in a graceful and effective form, and after committing it to memory he had started out with a valiant determination to declare his passion in that precise language the very moment he should encounter Miss Magruder.

"The words seem all right enough when I'm not with her," sighed Bob. "The very way I wrote 'em out appears to express exactly what I want to say, and as I go along the street I repeat 'em over and think to myself: 'By George, I'll do it now or die!' But as soon as I see her it seems ridiculous to blurt out a speech like that the first thing. So we begin to talk about something else, and then it seems 's if I couldn't break right in abruptly on the conversation. Then I get to wondering how she'd feel if she knew what I was thinking about. Then very likely somebody comes in, and the chance is gone and I have to put it off. It worries me nearly to death. I'll go down there some day soon and plump it right out without saying another word first; I will, by George!"

It is an odd circumstance that every man who finds himself in the position occupied by Mr. Parker should entertain the conviction that he is the first human being who ever suffered such embarrassment. Bob, my dear boy, you are traveling an old, a very old road, and all those rough and stony places whereupon you endure distress, and where your timid feet stumble, have been passed for hundreds of centuries by love-sick wayfarers who were as eager, as unwise and as cowardly as you!

It is very curious to observe how quickly the partiality of a young man for a maid is perceived by their acquaintances, and with what zest the gossiping tongues tell the tale. Women, of course, display deepest interest and acutest perception in such matters. A movement made in the direction of courtship by a young fellow sends a strong ripple of excitement circling over the surface of the little world in which they live; and there is something wonderful in the rapidity with which the involved questions of suitability, social standing and financial condition are considered and settled. It is soon perceived whether the business is a serious one upon both sides; and as the two chief actors proceed slowly toward the moment when their hearts shall be unfolded to each other, sharp eyes are watching them, and though they think they are keeping their secret very fast from their friends, every step of their progress is perceived, and the gentle excitement of suspense increases and intensifies day by day among the watchers until it culminates in the formal announcement that they are engaged.

So they remain objects of general and tender consideration until that other grand climax – the wedding – is at last attained; and the bride, with her orange blossoms and her veil, with her satin, her

silver-ware and her sweetness, becomes the central figure of a happy festival whose gayety is tempered by the solemn thoughts which will come concerning that great unknown future whose threshold is being passed. And then, when all this is over, when the lights are out, the wedding garments folded away, the practical domestic life begun and the period of romance passed, the interest which followed the pair from the first blossom of their love expires, and, as far as sentiment is concerned, their day – a time full of pleasant things, of grateful happiness in the present and joyful expectation for the future – is done for ever. Thenceforward their lives will be but prosy and dull to the world, however full to them the years may be of serenity and peace.

I have been making some inquiries concerning the Magruder family, in order to satisfy my wife that Bob's prospective relations are "the right kind of people." The expression, I know, is vague; and now that we have learned something of the Magruders, my inability to determine precisely what qualifications are necessary in order to make people of the right kind forbids the formation of a definite opinion upon my part concerning them. But Mrs. Adeler will decide; women are always mistresses of such subjects.

Mr. Magruder is apparently a man of leisure and of comparative wealth; his social position is very good, and he has enough intelligence and cultivation to enable him to get along comfortably in the society of very respectable persons. Mrs. Magruder, it seems, is rather inclined to emphasize herself. She is a physician, an enthusiast in the study and practice of medical science, and a woman of such force that she succeeds in keeping Mr. Magruder, if not precisely in a state of repression, at least slightly in the background. He married her, according to report, shortly after her graduation; and as he was at that time an earnest advocate of the theory that women should practice medicine, a belief prevails that he became attached to her while under her treatment. She touched his heart, we may presume, by exciting activity in his liver. He loved her, let us say, for the blisters she had spread, and demanded her hand because he had observed the singular dexterity with which it cut away tumors and tied up veins.

But if what Dr. Tobias Jones, our family physician, tells me is true, the sentiments of Magruder upon the subject of medical women have undergone a radical change in consequence of an exuberance of enthusiasm on the part of Mrs. Magruder. Dr. Jones entertains the regular professional hatred for Mrs. Dr. Magruder, and so I have my private doubts respecting the strict accuracy of his narrative.

He said that a few years ago the Magruders lived in Philadelphia, and Mrs. Magruder was a professor in the Woman's Medical College. At that time Magruder was in business; and as he generally came home tired, he had a habit of lying on the sitting-room sofa in the evening, for the purpose of taking a nap. Several times when he did so, and Mrs. Magruder had some friends with her down stairs, he noticed upon awaking that there was a peculiar feeling of heaviness in his head and a queer smell of drugs in the room. When he questioned Mrs. Magruder about it, she invariably colored and looked confused, and said he must have eaten something which disagreed with him.

Ultimately the suspicions of Magruder were aroused. He suspected something wrong. A horrible thought crossed his mind that Mrs. Magruder intended to poison him for his skeleton – to sacrifice him so that she could dangle his bones on a string before her class, and explain to the seekers after medical truth the peculiarities of construction which enabled the framework of her husband to move around in society.

So Magruder revealed his suspicions to his brother, and engaged him to secrete himself in a closet in the room while he took his usual nap on a certain evening upon the sofa.

When that night arrived, Mrs. Magruder pretended to have the "sewing circle" from the church in the parlor, while her husband went to sleep in the sitting-room with that vigilant relative of his on guard. About nine o'clock Mr. Magruder's brother was surprised to observe Mrs. Magruder softly stealing up stairs, with the members of the "sewing circle" following her noiselessly in single file. In her hand Mrs. Magruder carried a volume. If her brother-in-law had conceived the idea that the book might contain the tender strains of some sweet singer amid whose glowing imagery this woman

reveled with the ecstasy of a sensitive nature, he would have been mistaken, for the work was entitled "Thompson on the Nervous System;" while those lines traced in a delicate female hand, upon the perfumed note-paper, and carried by Mrs. Magruder, so far from embodying an expression of the gentlest and most sacred emotions of her bosom, were merely a diagnosis of an aggravated case of fatty degeneration of the heart.

I give the story literally as I received it from that eminent practitioner Jones.

When the whole party had entered the room, Mrs. Magruder closed the door and applied chloroform to her husband's nose. As soon as he became completely insensible, the sewing in the hands of the ladies was quickly laid aside, and to Magruder's secreted brother was disclosed the alarming fact that this was a class of students from the college.

If Dr. Jones is to be believed, Professor Magruder began her lecture with some very able remarks upon the nervous system; and in order to demonstrate her meaning more plainly, she attached a galvanic battery to her husband's toes, so that she might make him wriggle before the class. And he did wriggle. Mrs. Magruder gave him a dozen or two shocks and poked him with a ruler to make him jump around, while the students stood in a semi-circle, with note-books in their hands, and exclaimed, "How very interesting!"

Magruder's brother thought it awful, but he was afraid to come out when he reflected that they might want *two* skeletons at the college.

Mrs. Magruder then said that she would pursue this branch of the investigation no further at that moment, because Mr. Magruder's system was somewhat debilitated in consequence of an overdose of chlorate of potash which she had administered in his coffee upon the previous day for the purpose of testing the strength of the drug.

Mrs. Magruder then proceeded to "quiz" the class concerning the general construction of her husband. She said, for instance, that she had won what was called the heart of Mr. Magruder, and she asked the students what it was that she had really won.

"Why, the cardia, of course," said the class; "it is an azygous muscle of an irregular pyramid shape, situated obliquely and a little to the left side of the chest, and it rests on the diaphragm."

One fair young thing said that it didn't rest on the diaphragm.

Another one said she would bet a quart of paregoric it did, and until the dispute was settled by the professor, Magruder's brother's hair stood on end with fear lest they should go to probing around inside of Magruder with a butcher-knife and a lantern, for the purpose of determining the actual condition of affairs respecting his diaphragm.

Mrs. Magruder continued. She explained that when she accepted Mr. Magruder he seized her hand, and she required the class to explain what it was that Mr. Magruder actually had hold of.

The students replied that he held in his grip twenty-seven distinct bones, among which might be mentioned the phalanges, the carpus and the metacarpus.

The beautiful creature who was incredulous concerning the diaphragm suggested that he also had hold of the deltoid. But the others scornfully suggested that the deltoid was a muscle; they knew, because they had dissected one that very morning. The discussion became so exciting that thumb-lancets were drawn, and there seemed to be a prospect of bloodshed, when the professor interfered and demanded of the girl who had begun to cry about the deltoid what was the result when Mr. Magruder kissed her.

"Why merely a contraction of the orbicularis oris muscle; thus," said the student as she leaned over and kissed Mr. Magruder.

Magruder's brother, in the closet, thought maybe it wasn't so very solemn for Magruder after all. He considered this portion of the exercises in a certain sense soothing.

But all the students said it was perfectly scandalous. And the professor herself, after informing the offender that hereafter when illustration of any point in the lesson was needed it would be supplied

by the professor, ordered her to go to the foot of the class, and to learn eighty new bones as a punishment.

"Do you hear me, miss?" demanded the professor, when she perceived that that blooming contractor of the orbicularis oris did not budge.

"Yes," she said, "I am conscious of a vibration striking against the membrana tympanum, and being transmitted through the labyrinth until it agitates the auditory nerve, which conveys the impression to the brain."

"Correct," said the professor. "Then obey me, or I will call my biceps and flexors and scapularis into action and put you in your place by force."

"Yes, and we will help her with our spinatus and infra-spiralis," exclaimed the rest of the class.

Magruder's brother in the gloom of his closet did not comprehend the character of these threats, but he had a vague idea that the life of that lovely young saw-bones was menaced by firearms and other engines of war of a peculiarly deadly description. He felt that the punishment was too severe for the crime. Magruder himself, he was convinced, would have regarded that orbicularis operation with courageous fortitude and heroic composure.

Mrs. Magruder then proceeded to give the class practice in certain operations in medical treatment. She vaccinated Magruder on the left arm, while one of the students bled his right arm and showed her companions how to tie up the vein. They applied leeches to his nose, under the professor's instructions; they cupped him on the shoulder blades; they exercised themselves in spreading mustard plasters on his back; they timed his pulse; they held out his tongue with pincers and examined it with a microscope, and two or three enthusiastic students kept hovering around Magruder's leg with a saw and a carving-knife, until Magruder's brother in retirement in the closet shuddered with apprehension.

But the professor restrained these devotees of science; and when the other exercises were ended, she informed the students that they would devote a few moments in conclusion to study of the use of the stomach-pump.

Dr. Jones continued: "I shall not enter into particulars concerning the scene that then ensued. There is a certain want of poetry about the operation of the weapon just named, a certain absence of dignity and sentiment, which, I may say, render it impossible to describe it in a manner which will elevate the soul and touch the moral sensibilities. It will suffice to observe that as each member of the class attacked Magruder with that murderous engine, Magruder's brother, timid as he was, solemnly declared to himself that if the class would put away those saws and things he would rush out and rescue his brother at the risk of his life.

"He was saved the necessity of thus imperiling his safety. Magruder began to revive. He turned over; he sat up; he stared wildly at the company; he looked at his wife; then he sank back upon the sofa and said to her, in a feeble voice:

'Henrietta, somehow or other I feel awfully hungry!'"

"Hungry! Magruder's brother considered that, after that last performance of the class, Magruder ought to have a relish for a couple of raw buffaloes, at least. He emerged from the closet, and seizing a chair, determined to tell the whole story. Mrs. Magruder and the class screamed, but he proceeded. Then up rose Magruder and discussed the subject with vehemence, while his brother brandished his chair and joined in the chorus. Mrs. Magruder and the class cried, and said Mr. Magruder was a brute, and he had no love for science. But Mr. Magruder said that as for himself, 'hang science!' when a woman became so infatuated with it as to chop up her husband to help it along. And his brother said he ought to put in even stronger terms than that. What followed upon the adjournment of the class is not known. But Magruder seems somehow to have lost much of his interest in medicine, and since then there has been a kind of coolness between him and the professor."

I shall repeat this extraordinary narrative to Mr. Parker. He ought to be aware of the propensities of his prospective mother-in-law beforehand, so that he may not encounter the dangers which attend her devotion to her profession without realizing the fact of their existence. Admitting that Jones

adheres closely to truth in his statement, we may very reasonably fear that Mrs. Magruder would not hesitate to vivisect a mere son-in-law, or in an extreme case to remove one of his legs. A mother-in-law with such dangerous proclivities ought not to be accepted rashly or in haste. Prudence requires that she should be meditated upon.

"I want to ask you a question," observed Mr. Parker, as we sat out upon the porch after tea with Mrs. Adeler. "I notice that you always say 'is being done,' and not 'is doing.' Now, which is correct? I think you're wrong. Some of those big guns who write upon such subjects think so too. Grind us out an opinion."

"The subject has been much discussed, Bob, and a good many smart things have been said in support of both theories. But I stick to 'is being done,' first, because it is more common, and therefore handier, and second, because it is the only form that is really available in all cases. Suppose, for instance, you wished to express the idea that our boy Agamemnon is enduring chastisement; you would say, 'Agamemnon is being spanked,' not 'Agamemnon is spanking.' The difference may seem to you very slight, but it would be a matter of considerable importance to Agamemnon; and if a choice should be given him, it is probable that he would suddenly select the latter form."

"Just so," exclaimed Mr. Parker.

"You say again, 'Captain Cook is being eaten.' Certainly this expresses a very different fact from that which is conveyed by the form, 'Captain Cook is eating.' I venture to say that Captain Cook would have insisted upon the latter as by far the more agreeable of the two things."

"Precisely," said Mr. Parker.

"And equally diverse are the two ideas expressed by the phrases 'The mule is being kicked' and 'The mule is kicking.' But it is to be admitted that there are occasions when the two forms indicate a precisely similar act. You assert, I will say, that 'Hannah is hugging.'"

"Which would be a very improper thing for Hannah to do," suggested Mr. P.

"Of course it would; but there is an extreme probability that you would indicate Hannah's action under the circumstances if you should say, 'Hannah is being hugged.' It is in most cases a reciprocal act. Or suppose I say, 'Jane is kissing'?"

"And her mother ought to know about it if she is," remarked Bob.

"It is nearly the same as if I should say, 'Jane is being kissed,' for one performance in most cases presupposes the other. It will not, however, be necessary for you to attempt to prove this fact by practice anywhere in the neighborhood of the Magruder mansion. If you find it necessary to explain to Miss Magruder my views of this grammatical question, it will be better to confine your illustrations to the case of Captain Cook. But you can safely continue to say, 'is being built.' Nobody will object to that but a few superfine people who are so far ahead of you in such matters that they will be tolerably sure to regard you as an idiot whichever form you happen to use, while if you adopt the other form in conversation with your unfastidious acquaintances, you will be likely to confuse your meaning very often in such a manner as to impress them with the conviction that your reason is dethroned."

CHAPTER VI

The Editor of Our Daily Paper – The Appearance and Personal Characteristics of Colonel Bangs – The Affair with the Tombstone – Art News – Colonel Bangs in the Heat of a Political Campaign – Peculiar Troubles of Public Singers – The Phenomena of Menageries – Extraordinary Sagacity of the Animals – The Wild Man of Afghanistan

The editor of our daily paper, *The Morning Argus*, is Col. Bangs – Colonel Mortimer J. Bangs. The colonel is an exceedingly important personage in the village, and he bears about him the air of a man who is acutely conscious of the fact. The gait of the colonel, the peculiar way in which he carries his head, the manner in which he swings his cane, and the art he has of impressing any one he happens to address with a feeling that he is performing an act of sublime condescension in permitting himself to hold communication with an inferior being, combine to excite in the vulgar mind a sentiment of awe. The eminent journalist manifests in his entire bearing his confidence in the theory that upon him devolves the responsibility of forming the public opinion of the place; and there is a certain grandeur in the manner in which he conveys to the public mind, through the public eye, the fact that while he appreciates the difficulties of what seemed to be an almost superhuman task, which would surely overwhelm men of smaller intellectual calibre, the work presents itself to his mind as something not much more formidable than pastime.

The appearance of Colonel Bangs is not only imposing, but sometimes it inclines to be almost ferocious. The form in which he wears his whiskers, added to the military nature of his title, would be likely to give to timid strangers an idea not only that the colonel has a raging and insatiable thirst for blood and an almost irresistible appetite for the horrors of war, but that upon very slight provocation he would suddenly grasp his sword, fling away the scabbard, and then proceed to wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind. But I rejoice to say that the colonel has not really such murderous and revolutionary inclinations. His title was obtained in those early years of peace when he led the inoffensive forces of the militia upon parade, and marshaled them as they braved the perils of the target-shooting excursion.

I think I am warranted in saying that Colonel Bangs would never voluntarily stand in the imminent deadly breach if there happened to be a man there with a gun who wanted him to leave, and that he will never seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth unless the cannon happens to be unloaded. Place Colonel Bangs in front of an empty cannon, and for a proper consideration he would remain there for years without the quiver of a muscle. Charge that piece of ordnance with powder and ball, and not all the wealth of the world would induce him to stand anywhere but in the rear of the artillery.

The *Argus* has never appeared to me to be an especially brilliant journal. To the intelligent and critical reader, indeed, the controlling purpose of the colonel seems to be to endeavor to ascertain how near he can bring the paper to imbecility without actually reaching that condition; and it is surprising how close a shave he makes of it. When we first came to the village, a gleam of intelligence now and then appeared in the editorial columns of the *Argus*, and this phenomenon was generally attributed to the circumstance that Colonel Bangs had permitted his assistant editor to spread his views before the public. On such occasions it was entertaining to observe in what manner the colonel would assume the honors of the authorship of his assistant's articles. Cooley, for instance, meeting him upon the street would observe:

"That was an uncommonly good thing, colonel, which appeared in the *Argus* this morning on The Impending Struggle; whose was it?"

Colonel Bangs (with an air of mingled surprise and indignation). "Whose was it? Whose was that article? I suppose you are aware, sir, that *I* am the editor of The Morning *Argus*!"

Cooley. "Yes; but I thought perhaps – "

Colonel (with grandeur). "No matter, sir, what you thought. When an article appears in my own paper, Mr. Cooley, there is but a single inference to be drawn. When I find myself unable to edit the *Argus*, I will sell out, sir – I will sell out!"

Cooley (calmly). "Well, but Murphy, your assistant, told me distinctly that he wrote that editorial himself."

Colonel (coming down). "Ah! yes, yes! that is partly true, now I remember. I believe Murphy did scratch off the body of the article, but I overhauled it; it was necessary for me to revise it, to touch it up, to throw it into shape, as it were, before it went into type. Murphy means well, and with a little guidance – just a l-e-e-t-l-e careful training – he will do."

But Murphy did not remain long. One of the colonel's little nephews died, and a man who kept a marble-yard in Wilmington thought he might obtain a gratuitous advertisement by giving to the afflicted uncle a substantial expression of his sympathy. So he got up a gravestone for the departed child. The design, cut upon the stone in bas-relief, represented an angel carrying the little one in his arms and flying away with it, while a woman sat weeping upon the ground. It was executed in a most dreadful manner. The tombstone was sent to the colonel, with a simple request that he would accept it. As he was absent, Mr. Murphy determined to acknowledge the gift, although he had not the slightest idea what it meant. So the next morning he burst out in the *Argus* with the following remarks:

"We have received from the eminent sculptor, Mr. Felix Mullins of Wilmington, a comic *bas-relief* designed for an ornamental fireboard. It represents an Irishman in his night-shirt running away with the little god Cupid, while the Irishman's sweetheart demurely hangs her head in the corner. Every true work of art tells its own story; and we understand, as soon as we glance at this, that our Irish friend has been coqueted with by the fair one, and is pretending to transfer his love to other quarters. There is a lurking smile on the Irishman's lips which expresses his mischievous intentions perfectly. We think it would have been better, however, to have clothed him in something else than a night-shirt, and to have smoothed down his hair. We have placed this *chef d'œuvre* upon a shelf in our office, where it will undoubtedly be admired by our friends when they call. We are glad to encourage such progress in Delaware art."

This was painful. When the colonel returned next day, Mr. Mullins called on him and explained the tombstone to him, and that very night Mr. Murphy retired from the *Morning Argus*, and began to seek fresh fields for the exercise of his talents.

Colonel Bangs affords me most entertainment in the *Argus* when an election is approaching.

Your city editor often displays a certain amount of vehemence at such times, but his wildest frenzy is calmness, is absolute slumberous repose itself, when compared with the frantic enthusiasm manifested by Colonel Bangs. The latter succeeds in getting up as much fury over a candidate for constable as a city editor does over an aspirant for the Presidency. He will turn out column after column of double-ledged type, in which he will demonstrate with a marvelous profusion of adjectives that if you should roll all the prophets, saints and martyrs into one, you would have a much smaller amount of virtue than can be found in that one humble man who wants to be constable. He will prove to you that unless that particular person is elected, the entire fabric of American institutions will totter to its base and become a bewildering and hopeless ruin, while the merciless despots who grind enslaved millions beneath their iron heels will greet the hideous and irreclaimable chaos with fiendish laughter, and amid the remnants of a once proud republic they will erect bastiles in which they will forge chains to fetter the wrists of dismayed and heart-broken patriots. He will ask you to

take your choice between electing that man constable and witnessing the annihilation of the proud work for which the Revolutionary patriots bled and died.

The man who runs against the candidate of the *Argus* will be proved to be a moral and intellectual wreck, and it will be shown that all the vices which have corrupted the race since the fall of man are concentrated in that one individual. The day after election, if his man wins, Colonel Bangs will decorate his paper with a whole array of roosters and a menagerie of 'coons, and inform a breathless world that the nation is once more saved. If he loses, he will omit any reference to the frightful prophecies uttered during the campaign, keep his roosters in the closet, and mildly assert that the opposition man is not so bad, after all, and that the right party must triumph next time for certain. Then Colonel Bangs will keep his enthusiasm cool for a year, and during that period will rest his overwrought brain, while he edits his paper with a pair of predatory shears and a dishonest paste-pot.

It is extremely probable that we shall lose our servant-girl. She was the victim of a very singular catastrophe a night or two since, in consequence of which she has acquired a prejudice against the house of Adeler. We were troubled with dampness in our cellar, and in order to remove the difficulty we got a couple of men to come and dig the earth out to the depth of twelve or fifteen inches and fill it in with a cement-and-mortar floor. The material was, of course, very soft, and the workmen laid boards upon the surface, so that access to the furnace and the coal-bin was possible. That night, just after retiring, we heard a woman screaming for help, but after listening at the open window, we concluded that Cooley and his wife were engaged in an altercation, and so we paid no more attention to the noise. Half an hour afterward there was a violent ring at the front-door bell, and upon going to the window again, I found Pitman standing upon the door-step below. When I spoke to him, he said:

"Max" (the judge is inclined sometimes, especially during periods of excitement, to be unnecessarily familiar), "there's somethin' wrong in your cellar. There's a woman down there screechin' and carryin' on like mad. Sounds 's if somebody's a-murderin' her."

I dressed and descended; and securing the assistance of Pitman, so that I would be better prepared in the event of burglars being discovered, I lighted a lamp and we went into the cellar.

There we found the maid-servant standing by the refrigerator, knee-deep in the cement, and supporting herself with the handle of a broom, which was also half submerged. In several places about her were air-holes marking the spot where the milk-jug, the cold veal, the lima beans and the silver-plated butter-dish had gone down. We procured some additional boards, and while Pitman seized the sufferer by one arm I grasped the other. It was for some time doubtful if she would come to the surface without the use of more violent means, and I confess that I was half inclined to regard with satisfaction the prospect that we would have to blast her loose with gunpowder. After a desperate struggle, during which the girl declared that she would be torn in pieces, Pitman and I succeeded in getting her safely out, and she went up stairs with half a barrel of cement on each leg, declaring that she would leave the house in the morning.

The cold veal is in there yet. Centuries hence some antiquarian will perhaps grub about the spot whereon my cottage once stood, and will blow that cold veal out in a petrified condition, and then present it to a museum as the fossil remains of some unknown animal. Perhaps, too, he will excavate the milk-jug and the butter-dish, and go about lecturing upon them as utensils employed in bygone ages by a race of savages called "the Adeler." I should like to be alive at the time to hear that lecture. And I cannot avoid the thought that if our servant had been completely buried in the cement, and thus carefully preserved until the coming of that antiquarian, the lecture would be more interesting, and the girl more useful than she is now. A fossilized domestic servant of the present era would probably astonish the people of the twenty-eighth century.

"I see," said Mrs. Adeler, who was looking over the evening paper upon the day following the accident, "that Mlle. Willson, the opera-singer, has been robbed of ten thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in St. Louis. What a dreadful loss!"

"Dreadful, indeed, Mrs. A. These singing women are very unfortunate. They are constantly being robbed, or rolled over embankments in railway cars, or subjected to deadly perils in some other form; and the astonishing thing about it all is that these frightful things invariably occur precisely at the times when public interest in the victims begins to flag a little, and the accounts always appear in the papers of a certain city just before the singers begin an engagement in that place. It is very remarkable."

"You don't think this story is false, do you, and that all such statements are untrue?"

"Certainly not. I only refer to the fact because it shows how very wonderful coincidences often are. I have observed precisely the same thing in connection with other contributors to popular entertainment. But in these cases sometimes we may trace the effects directly to the cause. Take menageries, for example. The peculiar manifestations which frequently attend the movements of these collections of wild animals through the land can be attributed only to the wonderful instinct of the beasts. If I am to judge from the reports that appear occasionally in the provincial newspapers, it invariably happens that the animals come to the rescue of the menagerie people when the latter begin their campaigns and are badly in want of advertisements for which they are disinclined to pay.

"Regularly every season these ferocious beasts proceed to do something to secure sensational allusions to themselves in the papers. If the rhinoceros does not plunge through the side of the tent and prowl about until he comes home with an entire Sunday-school class of small boys impaled on his horn, the Nubian lion is perfectly certain to bite its keeper in half and lunch upon his legs. If the elephant should neglect to seize his attendant and fling him into the parquet circle, while at the same time it crushes the hyena into jelly, the Bengal tiger is very sure not to forget to tear half a dozen ribs out of the ticket agent, and then to assimilate ten or twelve village children who are trying to peep under the tent. Either the brass band, riding upon the den of lions, finds the roof caving in, and at last is rescued with the loss of the cymbal player and the operator upon the key bugle, and of a lot of legs and arms snatched from the bass drummer and the man with the triangle, or else there is a railroad accident which empties the cars and permits kangaroos, panthers, blue-nose baboons and boa-constrictors to roam about the country reducing the majorities of the afflicted sections previous to the election.

"You may find hundreds of accounts of such accidents in the rural press during the summer season; and whenever I read them, I am at a loss to determine which is more wonderful, the remarkable sagacity and the self-sacrificing devotion of these beasts, which perceive that something must be done and straightway do it, or the childlike confidence, the bland simplicity, of the editors who give gratuitous circulation to these narratives."

"Talking about menageries," observed Mr. Bob Parker, "did I ever tell you about Wylie and his love affair?"

"No."

"Wylie, you know, was the brother of the porter in our store; and when he had nothing to do, he used to come around and sit in the cellar among the boxes and bales, and we fellows would go down when we were at leisure and hear him relate his adventures.

"One time, several years ago, he was awfully hard up and he accepted a situation in a traveling show. They dressed him up in a fur shirt and put grizzly bears' claws on his feet and daubed some stuff over his face, and advertised him as 'The Wild Man of Afghanistan.' Then, when the show was open, he would stand in a cage and scrouge up against the bars and growl until he would scare the children nearly to death. The fat woman used to sit near him during the exhibitions just outside the cage, and by degrees he learned to love her. The keeper of the concern himself, it appears, also cherished a tender feeling for the corpulent young creature, and he became jealous of the Wild Man of Afghanistan."

"And the professor of avoirdupois – whom did she affect?"

"Well, when the visitors came, the keeper would procure a pole with a nail in the end, and he would stir up the Wild Man and poke him. Then he would ridicule the Wild Man's legs and deliver

lectures upon the manner in which he turned in his toes; and he sometimes read to the audience chapters out of books of natural history to show that a being with a skull of such a shape must necessarily be an idiot. Then he would poke the Wild Man of Afghanistan a few more times with the pole and pass on to the next cage with some remarks tending to prove that the monkeys therein and the Wild Man were of the same general type."

"And all the time the fat woman would sit there and smile a cold and disdainful smile, as if she believed it all, and hated such legs and despised toes that turned in. At last the Wild Man of Afghanistan had his revenge. One day when all hands were off duty, the keeper fell asleep on the settee in the ticket-office adjoining the show-room. Then Mr. Wylie threw a blanket over him and went for the fat woman. He led her by the hand and asked her to be seated while he told her about his love. Then she suddenly sat down on the keeper."

"And killed him, I suppose, of course?"

"Wylie informed me that you could have passed the remains under a closed door without scraping the buttons of the waistcoat. They merely slid him into a crack in the ground when they buried him, and the fat woman pined away until she became thin and valueless. Then the Wild Man married her, and began life again on a new basis."

"Was Mr. Wylie what you might consider a man of veracity?"

"Certainly he was; and his story is undoubtedly true, because his toes did turn in."

"That settles the matter. With such incontrovertible evidence as that at hand, it would be folly to doubt the story. We will go quietly and confidently to tea instead of discussing it."

CHAPTER VII

The Battery and its Peculiarities – A Lovely Scene – Swede and Dutchman Two Hundred Years Ago – Old Names of the River – Indian Names Generally – Cooley's Boy – His Adventure in Church – The Long and The Short of It – Mr. Cooley's Dog and Our Troubles with It

The closing hours of the long summer afternoon can be spent in no pleasanter place than by the water's side. And after tea I like to take my little group of Adellers out from the hot streets over the grassy way which leads to the river shore, and to find a comfortable loitering-place upon the Battery. That spot is adorned with a long row of rugged old trees whose trunks are gashed and scarred by the penknives of idlers. Their branches interlock overhead and form one great mass of tender green foliage, here sweeping down almost to the earth, and there hanging far out over the water, trembling and rustling in the breeze. Beneath, there is a succession of hewn logs, suggesting the existence of some sort of a wharf in the remote past, but now serving nicely for seats for those who come here to spend a quiet hour. Around there is a sod which grows lush and verdant, excepting where the tread of many feet has worn a pathway backward to the village.

In front is as lovely a scene as any the eye can rest upon in this portion of the world. Below us the rising and the ebbing tides hurl the tiny ripples upon the pebbly beach, and the perpetual wash of the waves makes that gentle and constant music which is among the most grateful of the sounds of nature.

Away to the southward sweeps the Delaware shore line in a mighty curve which gives the river here the breadth and magnificence of a great lake, and at the end of the chord of the arc the steeples and the masts at Delaware City rise in indistinct outline from the waves. To the left, farther in the distance, old Fort Delaware lifts its battlements above the surface of the stream. And see! A puff of white smoke rises close by the flag-staff. And now a dull thud comes with softened cadence across the wide interval. It is the sunset gun. Far, far beyond, a sail glimmers with rosy light caught from the brilliant hues of the clouds which make the western heavens glorious with their crimson drapery; and while here as we gaze straight out through the bay there is naught in the perspective but water and sky, to the right the low-lying land below the island fortress seems, somehow, to be queerly suspended between river and heaven, until as it recedes it grows more and more shadowy, and at last melts away into the mist that creeps in from the ocean. It is pure happiness to sit here beneath the trees and to look upon the scene while the cool air pours in from the water and lifts into the upper atmosphere the oppressive heat that has mantled the earth during the day.

I do not know why the place is called "the Battery." Perhaps a couple of centuries ago the Swedes may have built here a breastwork with which to menace their hated Dutch rivals who held the fort just below us there upon the river bank. (We will walk over to the spot some day, Mrs. Adeler.) And who can tell what strange old Northmen in jerkin and helmet have marched up and down this very stretch of level sward, carrying huge fire-lock muskets and swearing mighty oaths as they watched the intruding Dutchman in his stronghold, caring little for the placid loveliness of the view which the rolling tide of the majestic river ever offered to their eyes!

But some of those people could appreciate this beautiful panorama. Some of them did not forget the grandeur of nature while their little passions raged against the Dutchmen. It was Jasper Dankers who came here from Sweden in 1676, and looked out from this Battery; returning home, he wrote in his diary in this fashion:

"The town is situated upon a point which extends out with a sandy beach, affording a good landing-place. It lies a little above the bay where the river bends and runs south from there, so that you

can see down the river southwardly. The greater portion of it presents a beautiful view in perspective, and enables you to see from a distance the ships come out from the great bay and sail up the river."

The sandy beach is gone, and the ships which float upward from the bay are not such craft as Dankers saw; but the stream has its ancient majesty, and the wooded banks, I like to think, present to our eyes nearly the same sweet picture that touched the soul of that old Swede two long centuries ago.

Another thing has changed – yes, it has changed many times. The Indians, Mrs. A., called the bay Poutaxat and the river Lenape Wihittuck. The stream, too, was named the Arasapha, and also Mackerish Kitton – A title pretty enough in its way, but oddly suggestive of mackerel and kittens. But the Swedes came, and with that passion which burned in the bosoms of all the early European immigrants for prefixing the word "new" to the names of natural objects, they entitled the river New Swedeland Stream. Then the Dutch obtained the mastery here, and it became the South River, the Hudson being the North River, and finally the English obtained possession, and called it Delaware.

What a pity it is that they didn't suffer one of the original titles to remain! The Lenape would have been a beautiful name for the river – far better than the Gallic compound that it bears now. The men who settled this country seem to have had for Indian names the same intense dislike that they entertained for the savages themselves, and as a rule they rejected with scorn the soft, sweet syllables with which mountain and forest and stream were crowned, substituting too often most barbarous words therefor. Even Penn and his Quakers disdained the Indian names. How much better Pennsylvania would have been treated if that grand old State had been called Susquehanna or Juniata or Allegheny! And would it not have been wiser if the city, instead of bringing its name from Asia, had sought it among its own surroundings, and had grown to greatness as Wissahickon or Wingohocking? The Indian names that still remain here and there to designate a stream, a district or a town are the few distinctly American words in existence. We have thrown away the others, although they were a very precious part of the legacy which we received from the race we have supplanted. One such word as Wyoming is worth an entire volume of such names as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Maryland and the like; and I have always wondered at the blundering folly of the man who, with such musical syllables at hand ready to be used, dubbed the town of Wilkes Barre with that particularly poor name.

While we were sitting by the river discussing these and other matters, Cooley's boy, a thoroughly disagreeable urchin, who had been playing with some other boys upon the wharf near by, tumbled into the water. There was a terrible screaming among his companions, and a crowd quickly gathered upon the pier. For a few moments it seemed as if the boy would drown, for no one was disposed to leap in after him, and there was not a boat within saving distance. But fortunately the current swept him around to the front of the Battery, where the water is shallow, and before he was seriously hurt he was safely landed in the mud that stretches below the low-water mark. Then the excitement, which had been so great as to attract about half the population of the village, died away, and people who had just been filled with horror at the prospect of a tragedy began to feel a sense of disappointment because their fears had not been realized. I cannot of course say that I was sorry to see the youngster once more upon dry land; but if fate had robbed us of him, we should have accepted the dispensation without grievous complaint.

We did not leave all the nuisances behind us in the city. Cooley's dog and his boy are two very sore afflictions which make life even here very much sadder than it ought to be in a place that pretends to be something in the nature of an earthly paradise. The boy not only preys upon my melon-patch and fruit trees and upon those of my neighbors, but he has an extraordinary aptitude for creating a disturbance in whatever spot he happens to be. Only last Sunday he caused such a terrible commotion in church that the services had to be suspended for several minutes until he could be removed. The interior of the edifice was painted and varnished recently, and I suppose one of the workmen must have left a clot of varnish upon the back of Cooley's pew, which is directly across the aisle from mine. Cooley's boy was the only representative of the family at church upon that day, and he amused himself during the earlier portions of the service by kneeling upon the seat and communing with Dr. Jones's

boy, who occupied the pew immediately in the rear. Sometimes, when young Cooley would resume a proper position, Jones's boy would stir him up afresh by slyly pulling his hair, whereupon Cooley would wheel about and menace Jones with his fist in a manner which betrayed utter indifference to the proprieties of the place and the occasion, as well as to the presence of the congregation. When Cooley finally sank into a condition of repose, he placed his head, most unfortunately, directly against the lump of undried varnish, while he amused himself by reading the commandments and the other scriptural texts upon the wall behind the pulpit.

In a few moments he attempted to move, but the varnish had mingled with his hair, and it held him securely. After making one or two desperate but ineffectual efforts to release himself, he became very angry; and supposing that Jones's boy was holding him, he shouted:

"Leg go o' my hair! Leg go o' my hair, I tell you!"

The clergyman paused just as he was entering upon consideration of "secondly," and the congregation looked around in amazement, in time to perceive young Cooley, with his head against the back of the pew, aiming dreadful blows over his shoulder with his fist at some unseen person behind him. And with every thrust he exclaimed:

"I'll smash yer nose after church! I'll go for you, Bill Jones, when I ketch you alone! Leg go o' my hair, I tell you, or I'll knock the stuffin' out o' yer," etc., etc.

Meanwhile, Jones's boy sat up at the very end of his pew, far away from Cooley, and looked as solemn as if the sermon had made a deep impression upon him. Then the sexton came running up, with the idea that the boy had fallen asleep and had nightmare, while Mrs. Dr. Magruder sallied out from her pew and over to Cooley's, convinced that he had a fit. When the cause of the disturbance was ascertained, the sexton took out his knife, and after sawing off enough of Cooley's hair to release him, dragged him out of church. The victim retreated unwillingly, glancing around at Jones's boy and shaking his fist at that urchin as if to indicate that he cherished a deadly purpose against Jones.

Then the sermon proceeded. I suppose a contest between the two boys has been averted, for only yesterday I saw Jones and Cooley, the younger, playing hop-sotch together in the street in apparent forgetfulness of the sorrows of the sanctuary.

Judge Pitman tells me that one of the reasons why Cooley and his wife disagree is that there is such a difference in their height. Cooley is tall, and Mrs. Cooley is small. Mrs. Cooley told Mrs. Pitman, if the judge is to be believed, that Cooley continually growled because she could not keep step with him. They always start wrong, somehow, when they go out together, and then, while he tries to catch step with her, she endeavors to get in with him. After both have been shuffling about over the pavement for several minutes in a perfectly absurd manner, they go ahead out of step just as before.

When Cooley tried to take short steps like hers, his gait was so ridiculous as to excite remark; while if she tried to make such long strides as his, people stopped and looked at her as if they thought she was insane. Then she would strive to take two steps to his one, but she found that two and a half of hers were equal to one of his; and when she undertook to make that fractional number in order to keep up with him, he would frown at her and say,

"Mrs. Cooley, if you are going to dance the polka mazourka upon the public highway, I'm going home."

I do not receive this statement with implicit confidence in its truthfulness. Pitman's imagination sometimes glows with unnatural heat, and he may have embellished the original narrative of Mrs. Cooley.

I shall probably never receive from any member of the Cooley family a correct account of the causes of the unpleasant differences existing therein, for we are on worse terms than ever with Cooley. His dog became such an intolerable nuisance because of his nocturnal vociferation that some practical humanitarian in the neighborhood poisoned him. Cooley apparently cherished the conviction that I had killed the animal, and he flung the carcass over the fence into my yard. I threw it back. Cooley returned it. Both of us remained at home that day, and spent the morning handing the inanimate brute

to each other across the fence. At noon I called my man to take my place, and Cooley hired a colored person to relieve him. They kept it up until nightfall, by which time I suppose the corpse must have worn away to a great extent, for at sundown my man buried the tail by my rose-bush and came in the house, while Cooley's representative resigned and went home.

The departed brute left behind him but one pleasant recollection; and when I recall it, I feel that he fully avenged my wrongs upon his master. Cooley went out a week or two ago to swim in the creek, and he took the dog with him to watch his clothing. While Cooley bathed the dog slept; but when Cooley emerged from the water, the dog did not recognize him in his nude condition, and it refused to let him come near his garments. Whenever Cooley would attempt to seize a boot or a stocking or a shirt, the dog flew at him with such ferocity that he dared not attempt to dress himself. So he stood in the sun until he was almost broiled; then he went into the water and remained there, dodging up and down for the purpose of avoiding the people who passed occasionally along the road. At last the dog went to sleep again, and Cooley, creeping softly behind the brute, caught it suddenly by the tail and flung it across the stream. Before the dog could recover its senses and swim back, Cooley succeeded in getting some of his clothing on him, and then the dog came sidling up to him looking as if it expected to be rewarded for its extraordinary vigilance. The manner in which Cooley kicked the faithful animal is said to have been simply dreadful.

I should have entertained a positive affection for that dog if it had not barked at night. But I am glad it is gone. We came here to have quietness, and that was unattainable while Cooley's dog remained within view of the moon.

CHAPTER VIII

The Morning Argus Creates a Sensation – A New Editor; Mr. Slimmer the Poet – An Obituary Department – Mr. Slimmer on Death – Extraordinary Scene in the Sanctum of Colonel Bangs – Indignant Advertisers – The Colonel Violently Assailed – Observations of the Poet – The Final Catastrophe – Mysterious Conduct of Bob Parker – The Accident on Magruder's Porch – Mrs. Adeler on the Subject of Obituary Poetry in General

A rather unusual sensation has been excited in the village by the *Morning Argus* within a day or two; and while most of the readers of that wonderful sheet have thus been supplied with amusement, the soul of the editor has been filled with gloom and wrath and despair. Colonel Bangs recently determined to engage an assistant to take the place made vacant by the retirement of the eminent art-critic, Mr. Murphy, and he found in one of the lower counties of the State a person who appeared to him to be suitable. The name of the new man is Slimmer. He has often contributed to the *Argus* verses of a distressing character, and I suppose Bangs must have become acquainted with him through the medium of the correspondence thus begun. No one in the world but Bangs would ever have selected such a poet for an editorial position. But Bangs is singular – he is exceptional. He never operates in accordance with any known laws, and he is more than likely to do any given thing in such a fashion as no other person could possibly have adopted for the purpose. As the *Argus* is also *sui generis*, perhaps Bangs does right to conduct it in a peculiar manner. But he made a mistake when he employed Mr. Slimmer.

The colonel, in his own small way, is tolerably shrewd. He had observed the disposition of persons who have been bereaved of their relatives to give expression to their feelings in verse, and it occurred to him that it might be profitable to use Slimmer's poetical talent in such a way as to make the *Argus* a very popular vehicle for the conveyance to the public of notices of deaths. That kind of intelligence, he well knew, is especially interesting to a very large class of readers, and he believed that if he could offer to each advertiser a gratuitous verse to accompany the obituary paragraph, the *Argus* would not only attract advertisements of that description from the country round about the village, but it would secure a much larger circulation.

When Mr. Slimmer arrived, therefore, and entered upon the performance of his duties, Colonel Bangs explained his theory to the poet, and suggested that whenever a death-notice reached the office, he should immediately write a rhyme or two which should express the sentiments most suitable to the occasion.

"You understand, Mr. Slimmer," said the colonel, "that when the death of an individual is announced I want you, as it were, to cheer the members of the afflicted family with the resources of your noble art. I wish you to throw yourself, you may say, into their situation, and to give them, f'r instance, a few lines about the deceased which will seem to be the expression of the emotion which agitates the breasts of the bereaved."

"To lighten the gloom in a certain sense," said Mr. Slimmer, "and to –"

"Precisely," exclaimed Colonel Bangs. "Lighten the gloom. Do not mourn over the departed, but rather take a joyous view of death, which, after all, Mr. Slimmer, is, as it were, but the entrance to a better life. Therefore, I wish you to touch the heart-strings of the afflicted with a tender hand, and to endeavor, f'r instance, to divert their minds from contemplation of the horrors of the tomb."

"Refrain from despondency, I suppose, and lift their thoughts to –"

"Just so! And at the same time combine elevating sentiment with such practical information as you can obtain from the advertisement. Throw a glamour of poesy, f'r instance, over the commonplace details of the every-day life of the deceased. People are fond of minute descriptions. Some facts useful for this purpose may be obtained from the man who brings the notice to the office; others you may perhaps be able to supply from your imagination."

"I think I can do it first rate," said Mr. Slimmer.

"But, above all," continued the colonel, "try always to take a bright view of the matter. Cause the sunshine of smiles, as it were, to burst through the tempest of tears; and if we don't make the *Morning Argus* hum around this town, it will be queer."

Mr. Slimmer had charge of the editorial department the next day during the absence of Colonel Bangs in Wilmington. Throughout the afternoon and evening death-notices arrived; and when one would reach Mr. Slimmer's desk, he would lock the door, place the fingers of his left hand among his hair and agonize until he succeeded in completing a verse that seemed to him to accord with his instructions.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.