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The First Cloud.

"It was to meet such difficulties as this that tintines—" "Brother!" I wrote the first sitting at my desk, and said the last aloud, impatiently—well there, angrily—for Mattie had bounced into the room, run to the back of my chair, and clasped her hands over my eyes, exclaiming—"Oh, Dick, what a shame! And you promised to come up and dress!" "I do wish you would not be so childish!" I cried, snatching away her hands. "There's a blot you've made on my manuscript."

"No, Dick, what a shame!" she cried, "I'm not cross," I said coldly, "but engaged in a serious work of a mercantile and monetary nature. You seem to think men ought always to be butterflies."

"Please, Dick dear, don't be angry with me. I can't help feeling very young and girlish, though I am your wife. I do try, oh, so hard, to be womanly; but, Dick, I am only eighteen and a half."

"Thirteen and a half, I should say," I said scornfully, just as if some sour spirit were urging me to say biting, sarcastic things, that I knew would pain the poor girl; but for the life of me I could not help it.

"What are you going to do?" I said roughly. "Wait for you, Dick dear," she replied. "You need not wait. Go on, I shan't come. Say I've a headache—say anything!"

half a dozen officious people held me back, while the men with the fire escape hurried to rear it against the house; but it would not reach because of the garden in front, so that they had to get the wheels of the escape over the iron railings, and this caused great delay.

"Let me go!" I wanted to those who held me. "Let me go! Some one—some one is in the house!"

"You can't do any good, sir," said a policeman, roughly. "The escape men will do all that can be done."

"It's no good," he said: "we must try the back of the house."

"I can't enjoy myself, Dick," she said gently, "unless you come too. Let me stay."

"Will you come and fetch me, Dick?" she said softly.

"Yes—no—perhaps—I don't know," I said roughly, as I repelled her caresses. And then, looking wistfully at me, she went slowly to the door, glided out, and was gone.

"Change your things and go after her," something seemed to say; but I repelled it, threw my writing aside, kicked off my boots, snatched my slippers out of the closet, thrust the easy chair in front of the fire, threw myself into it, and then, with my feet on the fender, and my hands in my pockets, I sat, morose, bitter and uncomfortable, gazing at the glowing embers.

"She had no business to go!" I exclaimed. "She knew I was up all last night writing that miserable book, and was out of sorts, and she ought to have stayed."

"Poor little darling!" I said at last; "I'll wait up till she comes home, and then tell her how sorry I am for my folly, and ask her forgiveness. But as a man can I do that! Will it not be weak? Never mind," I exclaimed, "I'll do it! Surely there can be no braver thing than to own one's self in the wrong. Life is short to blurr it with petty quarrels. And suppose she were taken ill to-night—my darling whom I love with all my heart? Or suppose she went too near the fire and her dress caught alight? There, how absurd! Thank goodness, she is in silk, and not in one of those fly-away muslins!"

I sat on, musing, till suddenly there was a buzz outside the house, and then the rust of feet, I fancied I heard the word "fire!" repeated again and again, and turning to the window, there was a glow which lighted up the whole place.

I dashed down the stairs and out of the door, to find the road thronged, for a house a little lower down was in flames, and to my horror I had not taken a dozen steps before I found it was our friend's the Wilsons'.

There was no engine, but a crowd of excited people talked eagerly; and just then the fire escape came trundling along the road. It was quite time, for the house as I reached it was blazing furiously, the flames darting out in long fiery tongues from the upper windows, while at several there were people crying piteously for help.

I fought my way through the crowd, and tried to run up to the house, but

and while they rested there I made a vow I hope I shall have strength to keep; for real troubles are so plenty it is folly to invent the false.

At last, when I was free, I took the rose out of her hair and placed it in my pocket-book; while, in answer to the inquiring eyes that were bent on mine, I merely said,—

"For a memento of a dreadful dream."

By the way, I never finished that pamphlet.

Washington's Quarrel With Payne.

"It was in that era," said Mr. Brockert, the white whiskered auditor of Alexandria, "in which Washington had his quarrel with Lieutenant Payne. We were standing at a window on the second floor of the market house and looking down into the great open court which it surrounds. The court is filled with hundreds of little wooden booths, where the farmers bring their produce and display it for sale on every market day. The meat stalls are in the building itself, but the whole is of comparatively recent date, and in Washington's time the place was an open market space."

"The cause of the trouble," continued Mr. Brockert, "was political. There was a contest for the Virginia Assembly, and Payne held one political theory, while Washington held another. Payne was himself a candidate for the Legislature against Fairfax, of Alexandria. Washington supported Fairfax, and when he met Payne he had a hot political discussion with him on the spot which you see just below you. Payne considered himself insulted by one of Washington's remarks and knocked him down. The moment the assault was over the story went like lightning through the town that Colonel Washington was killed, and his troops, who were stationed with him at Alexandria at the time, rushed in. They would have made short work with Payne if Washington had not prevented them, and pointing to his black eye, told them that it was his affair and he knew how to manage it. They thought this meant a duel, and the next day the town was on the qui vive in regard to the affair. The following morning Payne got a note from Washington asking him to come to the hotel; Payne, expecting a duel, did so, but he found Washington with his head tied up, in an amicable mood. He said as Payne entered, and I doubt not he had his words cut and dried before hand: 'Mr. Payne, to err is human. I was wrong yesterday, but if you have had sufficient satisfaction let us be friends.' There was a decanter of wine and two glasses on the table, which Washington had ordered to smooth over the trouble. The two pledged themselves to new friendship over this, and history relates that they remained strong friends to the day of Washington's death. Colonel Payne was one of the pall-bearers at Washington's funeral."—Cleveland Ledger.

Looking Out for the Cars.

"All women are alike in the fear of the cars," said an Illinois Central conductor. "They carry their caution to absurd extremes. That reminds me of a little story. Down in the southern part of the State we have up at road crossings some of the old-fashioned signs, 'Look out for the cars when the bell rings.' At one of the crossings the other day two women came up, driving an old horse hitched to a buggy. They looked all about and couldn't see any cars, so happened to read the sign. 'Stop,' said one, 'I hear a bell.' They both listened, and sure enough they heard a bell tinkling. One of the women got out, and amid considerable excitement took hold of the horse's bridle. The other tightened her grip on the lines, set her jaws, and prepared for the worst. They looked anxiously up the track for the train, but still couldn't see it, though they could hear the bell a little plainer than before. They waited and waited. Five minutes passed, then ten, and still no train. The old horse went to sleep, while the women's nerves, from long straining, threatened to throw them into hysterics. Nearer and nearer came the bell against which the sign warned them, and so they stood still. In about a quarter of an hour an old brindle cow came walking down the pasture by the side of the track, chewing her cud and monotonously jingling her bell. One of the women cried from nervousness, and the other one got mad at the railroad company, and said they were nothing but mean old monopolies, anyway."

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The Lime-Kiln Club.

President Gardner in Trouble About the Cooking Stove.

As the hour for opening the meeting arrived and the triangle sounded its warning notes Sir Isaac Walpole ascended to the President's desk and said:

"Gem'len, it am my painful dooty to riz up heah an' inform you dat Brudder Gardner will not be present dis evening' fur de first time since Paradise Hall was opened to de club. Yesterday was de day fixed upon by him an' de ole woman for settin' up de coal stove. Deyst not out in de bes' of sperits, nebber dreamin' ob de dark shadder which hovered o'er dat cabin roof, an' ripp'd off de shingles wid his bloody claws."

At this point the excitement and confusion in the hall became so great that Giveadam Jones had to slam Elder Toots into the wood-box and throw Humble Smith over three benches before order was restored.

Resolved, Dat we sympathize wid our beloved President to de fullest extent ob de law, and dat his absence to-night am deemed an irreparable loss to de entire nashun."

Rapid Growth of a Cent.

A cent seems of little value, remarks an exchange, but if it is doubled a few times, it grows to a marvelous sum. A young lady in Portland caught her father in a very rash promise, by a knowledge of this fact on her part.

She modestly proposed that if her father would give her only one cent on one day, and double the amount on each successive day for just one month, she would pledge herself never to ask of him another cent of money as long as she lived. Paterfamilias, not stopping to run over the figures in his head, and not supposing it would amount to a large sum, was glad to accept the offer at once, thinking it also a favorable opportunity to include a possible marriage dowry in the future. On the twenty-fifth day he became greatly alarmed, lest if he complied with his own acceptance he might be obliged to be "declared a bankrupt on his own petition."

But on the thirtieth day the young girl demanded only the pretty little sum of \$5,368,709.12! The astonished merchant was only too happy to cancel the claim by advancing a handsome cash payment for his folly in allowing himself to give a bond—for his word was considered as good as his bond—without noticing the consideration therein expressed, and by promising to return to the old custom of advancing smaller sums daily until otherwise ordered.

She Shamed the Burglar.

One night lately, at the Home of the Merciful Saviour for Crippled Children, in Philadelphia, between the hours of 1 and 2, Sister Sarah was aroused by hearing a chair fall over below stairs. Hastily putting on her wrapper, lamp in hand, she descended to the parlor. Her first glance revealed an open window at the back part of the room. A small part of this parlor is curtained off. The curtain was parted, and Sister Sarah thought it moved. Approaching it, she found herself face to face with a white man, tall and stout. Fixing her eyes upon him she said: "The Chinese have a saying that to some men hearts have been given, and to some a gizzard instead of a heart." And with a look of scorn she continued: "You have come to a house as a thief where there are only crippled children and a few women to take care of them." The man drew his hat over his eyes and leaped out of the window.

Among the Egyptians the cat was held sacred to Isis, or the moon, and worshipped with great ceremony. In the mythology of all the Indo-Europeans nations the cat holds a prominent place, and its connection with witches is well known.