

A MISTAKE.

A tadpole sat on a cool, gray stone, And sadly thought of his life; "Alas, must I live all alone!" said he, "Or shall I lose you a wife?"

A wise old frog on the brink of the stream Leaned over and said, with a sigh: "Oh, wait till you're older, my dear young friend, You'll have better taste by and by!"

"Girls change you know, and the polly wog slim, That takes your fancy to-day, May not be the polly at all you'd choose, When the summer has passed away!"

But the tadpole rash thought he better knew, And married a pollywog fair; And before the summer was over he sat On the brink of that stream in despair.

For, would you believe it? His fair, young bride Proved to be but a stupid frog, With never a trace of beauty and grace Of young Miss Pollywog.

And although the tadpole himself had grown Stout and stupid, to the way of a wife! He only saw the faults of his wife, As others sometimes do.

To all young tadpoles, my moral is this: Before you settle in life, Be sure you know in what way you doubt, What you want in the way of a wife!

—Mary H. Olmsted, in Golden Days.

MELINDY.

BY WILLIE WALKER CALDWELL. You're a fool, Melindy, to throw away such a chance!"

"That's what I tell her," said the second of the three women as she plucked her well-faded stick into the box of snuff she was holding in her other hand.

They were sitting on tilted split-bottomed chairs in the shade of a big walnut tree, which graced even the rough log cabin in standing on the edge of the otherwise bare common.

The irregular mountain chain facing the cabin, its seductive shadows alternated with patches of glimmering sunshine; the quiet tree-begirt village on the left; and on the right rolling green meadows, with here and there a strip of woodland, waving with slow grace in the cool breeze, made up a picture good to look upon.

But the women were too deeply engrossed with their snuff-boxes and their subject (even if familiarity and other things had not blighted their sense of joy in the beauties of nature) to observe the faint picture, though in a dim, half-conscious way it often whispered to them of God and Truth and Purity—things of which they had almost ceased to dream.

Two of the women were past middle age, and wore that unmistakable look of hardened shamelessness and shattered energies which told their story at a glance. The third one was young, and, judging from her face, had not yet become inured to sin and shame.

"Women like us," continued Mollie, the first speaker, "don't have no chance anyhow; and since the Good Bein' give Melindy her purty face, seems to me she got a right to make a fortune out of it if she can."

"Who said anything about a good fortune?" scoffed Melindy.

"Well," responded the second woman, who was the girl's mother, "he offered a plum support, and promised me you might wear all the fine clothes you wanted."

"I don't keer if he said two thousand dollars a year," replied the girl.

"Yes, an' he said me'd marry Melindy some day, if his sisters ever got married and moved away from here—and I know they will," eagerly continued the mother.

"I see him marrying me now," replied Melindy, flushing hotly; "and I don't know as I'd keer to marry such an old, ugly, deceivin' critter as he is, even if he was worth a cent."

"It seems to me like you wuz puttin' on a mighty heap of airs, Melindy," said the visitor, "specially after what your mother's done for you, and her expectin' you for to be her support in her old days, too."

"Done for me!" exclaimed the girl, springing from her chair and facing them with blazing eyes. "Done for me! 'Twould have been a mercy if she had never brought me into this world, to have everybody p'intin' at me and turnin' up their noses at me; and men, such as old Squire Thompson, a-biddin' for me same as if I wuz a filly at the horse fair!"

"She's a queer girl, Mag, and I can't make her out," said Mollie, dipping snuff viciously, as they watched her pink gingham skirts dispart along the path which led to the woods near by.

"Yes, she is kinder queer," replied the mother, calmly, as she also took another dip; "but she's young yet, and she's purty much had her own way ever since she wuz born. She'll come to her senses before many months, when the winter time comes and there ain't no meat nor wood in the house."

Somewhere among the tainted streams which were cumbered in Melindy's blood there had entered one purer than the rest, and by one of those unexplained forces of heredity its influence was more plainly visible than might ever be again under similar circumstances.

This subtle force gave to her a face of purity, to her air a touch of grace, and to her manners a semblance of refinement. It led her to avail herself of her limited advantages of education, and put into her heart aspirations after better things than those she had known. Born to shame and poverty, reared amidst degrading surroundings and destined from the first to a career of vice, Melindy had not been given a fair chance in life. Twice her mother might have secured a home for her with respectable people, where she would have been decently taken care of and inured to hard but honest labor, had not her mother's prejudice to virtuousness and strict countenance led her to fiercely reject such offers for her daughter, who promised to grow up too pretty to need to work for a living. Melindy, also, as a child, had felt that her present life—while she could leave in the sun or shade all day, hunt wild flowers or pick berries, swim, fish, or climb mountains as the mood came to her—was far preferable to hard work and strict control, even though coarse bread and meat were her daily fare and gaudy calico her clothing.

At fourteen, Melindy was tall and slim, with feet and hands too big, limbs too long, a tan of reddish brown hair and a clear, healthy skin, tanned and roughened by exposure and a lack of care. Her large brooding eyes softened by drooping lids and

long lashes, a straight nose and even white teeth, redeemed her face.

At seventeen she was beautiful, and began to feel the self-importance derived from the knowledge of that fact. Her mother had guarded her thus far with the feeling that she was still a child. Now, seeing her beauty to be greater than she had supposed it would be, she valued her accordingly.

About this time a suitor, rich and respectable enough to command the mother's consent, appeared. Fortunately, Melindy was neither young, handsome, nor fascinating. He trusted to his money to buy the mother and to her to control the girl.

Melindy did not like him; her self-love was offended by his mode of procedure, and her natural combatsiveness led her to resent being made an object of barter by her mother.

These feelings awoke within her the half-dormant sense of womanly purity, and once aroused it proved a wonderful ally to her unconquered will. Her mother's tears, entreaties, complaints and threats availed nothing, though they made her very miserably and finally determined her to run away from home. She had heard of a woman boarding at the hotel who wanted a servant to take back to the city with her. Having secured the place, she slipped out one morning, while her mother was still sleeping, joined Mrs. Winter and took the north bound train for her new home. She felt a good deal frightened and a little regretful when she realized that she was rapidly leaving familiar scenes and faces behind her. After shedding a few surreptitious tears she huddled in the corner of her seat, she began to feel the excitement of her adventure and to realize that it was a glorious thing to have her life in her own hands to make it what she pleased.

Mrs. Winter who kept a second-class boarding house for clerks, mechanics and other young business men of moderate salaries, was a kind-hearted, easy-going woman and for two or three weeks she allowed Melindy to get gradually acquainted with her new life and duties. The boarders were much amused by her provincial idioms and her awkward country manners but they liked to look at her pretty, fresh young face, and did not laugh at her more than they could help. Most of the young men alternately flattered and teased her whenever they met her away from Mrs. Winter's presence, and several of them were inclined to be impertinently familiar with the poor girl, who hardly knew how to command respect.

One day, after Melindy had been several weeks in the house, Mrs. Winter was ill, and unable to preside at the dinner-table, so Melindy was entrusted with the duty of serving the meat, dessert, etc., from a side table. One young man, a certain Mr. Tomlins, who had annoyed Melindy more than the others, came late and was left in the dining-room alone with her. While eating his dessert he amused himself teasing her until she became really confused and distressed. As he rose to leave the dining-room he walked around by her table, and in pretended kindness put his arm about her and patted her cheek familiarly, as he said: "Poor little country girl; she is really teased. Well, I didn't mean any harm, and you mustn't mind me. You're such a little darling a fellow can't help noticing you, you know," and he stooped to kiss her.

Melindy's face turned scarlet, more with anger than shocked modesty, and, turning, she pushed him from her with all her strength. The attack was so unexpected, and the young man fell heavily across a chair, his head striking the wall. He lay there partially stunned for a moment, Melindy standing over him, contempt and disgust in her face. As consciousness came back to him, and he took in the full meaning of her expression, Tomlins grew furious, and springing to his feet he seized Melindy by her shoulders and shook her until her teeth chattered.

"Stop that, you impudent coward!" a clear voice rang out, just as Melindy became thoroughly frightened at realizing that Tomlins was drunk as well as angry, and in another minute the unlucky youth was again sprawling on the floor.

"This is none of your affairs, Grafton," growled Tomlins, "and I don't want any of your interference."

"It is my affair," "I'll not stand by and see a man do violence to a woman while I can lift a hand in her defense."

"She struck me first," he answered, "or I'd never thought of harming her."

"If I did," said Melindy, "and I didn't strike him first," turning to Mr. Grafton; "I only pushed him off—it was because he was very impudent."

"I only tried to kiss her," put in Tomlins, "and the saucy jade needn't be putting on airs, for I don't doubt many a fellow has kissed her before now."

"That is not so, Mr. Grafton," Melindy answered, her voice getting husky, "and I guess I don't have to kiss them if I don't please to."

"You are right, Melindy," said Grafton, repressing a smile; "and I am surprised at Tomlins here. I do not believe he would have forgotten to be a gentleman if he had not taken too much whiskey this morning. Go to the young man, who had dropped into a chair, "bed is the best place for you just now."

From that time Melindy regarded Mr. Grafton with sincerest respect and admiration, and he took a kindly interest in the friendless girl, whose feet seemed set among pitfalls. Several times he loaned books to read, instead of the yellow-backed French novels and sensational papers which were found on the tables in most of the young men's rooms, and which he had seen Melindy reading. Two or three times he gave her tickets to a matinee, such as he would have taken his sisters to see, or to a popular concert, when he learned that Saturday afternoons were hers and that she did not know what to do with them.

These kindnesses, which grew out of the natural impulse to helpfulness, which is the unfulfilling desire of a noble heart, more truly in man, even, than in a woman, made a still deeper impression on Melindy. The other inmates of the house were kind, too, and they often gave her small tips, but it was the only one who seemed to care that she should go to the right places and read the right books, and who bestowed respect and consideration, such as Melindy had never before known, with his kindness. His tall, supple figure, which he clothed neatly, but somewhat carelessly as to cut and fit, his clear gray eyes, dark hair, high bred countenance, and dignified, yet gentle manners seemed to Melindy the perfection of manly beauty and grace, and his name Donald Grafton, the most musical she had ever heard.

It was some weeks before she acquired the meagre facts concerning him known to Mrs. Winter, which were these: He was a Virginian by birth, the only son of a widowed mother of limited means, and was practically acquiring the profession of machinist, after a college education looking to

that end, in one of the big city machine shops.

It was not long before Melindy began to dream of the dignified young Virginian by day, and to build air castles for him by night. At first she had no part in these day dreams. He was simply the hero of the romances of her imagination, and she delighted to make him perform mighty deeds of valor and chivalry, such as she read of in some of the books he loaned her.

After a while she began to imagine herself his trusted servant, and thought how delightful it would be to minister to his comfort always, and to share in a reflected degree some of the success and glory with which she delighted to surround him in her thoughts.

About the middle of December, Donald was sick enough to be compelled to spend several days in his room. Melindy, who was exceedingly thoughtful for his comfort, one day she went to renew his fire, and, after having done so, she said, apologetically: "I'll wait a bit to take off the blower."

Donald felt lonely and bored, and responded, cordially: "Well, sit down, Melindy, and talk to me awhile, I am lonesome anyhow."

The color surged into her face and her lips parted in a pleased smile as she sat down at a respectful distance. "Tell me what you think of the city, Melindy," said Donald, feeling that he had not acted wisely, but anxious to ignore the awkwardness of the situation.

"I haven't gotten much acquainted with it yet, sir, but I like the house, and Mrs. Winter, and—everybody," after an instant's hesitation.

"Don't you get homesick for the country sometimes, and for your people?" "I haven't any people except a mother, Mr. Grafton, and I despised the stupid little town we lived in. But I think sometimes," she added, as her face kindled, "that I'd give anything to see the blue mountains smiling in the sunshine, and the long soft shadows here and there, where the cool, shady gorges are, full of tall ferns and white laurel blossoms, with the clear, singing brooks running through them."

"Are you your mother's only child?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Melindy, playing with her apron string. "Then she must miss you very much, and you must want to see her sometimes."

A hard look settled about the young face as she answered: "I don't know how she feels, Mr. Grafton; but I know that I hope never to see her again."

"But that isn't right, Melindy. She's your mother, and you ought to love her."

"Mrs. Winter says the same, sir; and she says that God says so, in His book. But I don't think you and her can understand about a mother like mine—that don't care nothing for you except to make money out of you; and I don't believe God expects me to love her either."

"I don't know your mother, Melindy. I don't know your mother, but whether you love her or not, you ought to write to her sometimes and send her part of your wages, and maybe you could help her to be a better woman."

"Do you think so, sir? Then I'll do it. I'll do anything you tell me," she added, eagerly, as she looked up at him in undisguised admiration, for you have been a good friend to me."

"I'm glad to have befriended you, Melindy; and I'll help you any time I can."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Grafton; but you'll go away some time, and I don't know what I should do without you, sir."

Just then, to Donald's relief, Mrs. Winter came in. Melindy, where she was, and her mostly departed rendered an answer unnecessary. On the next day Donald felt languid, sick and nervous. Melindy again came in after her morning duties were ended to replenish the fire. This time the blower was not needed, so after straightening the room a little and receiving no notice from Donald, who lay on his back before the fire with closed eyes, she stopped near the foot of the couch and said, in low, beseeching tones: "Would you like me to shake up your pillows for you, Mr. Grafton? I can make you more comfortable."

With a languid assent he sat up to allow her to rearrange his pillows, which she knew how to do quickly and deftly. As she did so, the graceful and slightly voluptuous curves of her figure, the soft pink flushed cheek and the full red mouth were temptingly near him. He thought she lingered over her task, and, resenting the temptation which willingly or not she threw in his way, he closed his eyes, settled back on his pillows as quickly as possible, and said somewhat irritably: "That will do, Melindy, and I don't want anything else this afternoon except to be alone."

He saw her eyes filled with tears, and her lips quiver as he watched her, under half shut lids, turn slowly away and leave the room.

All that afternoon her pretty pleading face haunted him, and when he fell asleep his image, now dim and ethereal, now life-like and very human, filled his dream. She looked so grieved and humiliated, and so physically lovable that evening, when she came up to bring his tea that it was only by a strong effort of self-restraint that he controlled the impulse to put his arm around her and caress her into smiles and happiness again.

The dangerous knowledge that he could do so had come to him that afternoon. If another ingredient is needed in the cup of temptation, which the devil mixes for a man when he puts a young and beautiful woman in his power, it is the consciousness that her happiness is bound up in his favor and that she will find joy in yielding to his desires, though it means the sacrifice of all he asks without thought of his own or fear of re-coming. Few men can resist the cup so flavored, and with the incense of adulation filling their nostrils and turning their heads even before the cup has touched their lips.

Lying awake that night Donald saw how near he had come to the edge of a precipice and realized that the self-restraint upon which he prided himself, backed by all the remembered admonitions of his dear, wise mother, to help him through the days which must intervene before he should be strong enough to go home.

But Donald Grafton's Scotch blood gave him something of that stubborn defiance to that which his sense of right condemned him characterized John Knox. He knew, too, what his mother expected from him, and he remembered the evening when both his sisters being absent from home, he sat on a low chair by his mother's side in the firelight, and as she stroked his hair with soothing, gentle fingers, as he had loved her to do since his earliest recollection, she told him of his father, who had been killed in the Civil War before his children were old enough to remember him. She had told him of his bravery and heroism and of his gallant death while leading his company to the charge at Chancellorsville; of his lofty principles and knightly

chivalry, of his loving heart and pure life. "If you are to be a worthy son of your father, my dear boy," she had said, "you cannot sow any wild oats as most boys do, for there was not a smirch on your father's manhood, nor a stain on his honor. If I can persuade you to exemplify to the world as he did during his brief life, what a God-like thing is a noble manhood; and if you shall some day crown a true woman's life as he blessed and crowned mine, then I have not lived my lonely widowhood life in vain." Donald's soul kindled as he recalled his mother's words, and once again he vowed never to grieve and disappoint her.

For the next three days Donald talked very little to Melindy, and was always engaged in reading or writing when she was in his room. On the fourth day he was to start home. His train left at mid-day, and he spent the forenoon making purchases for his mother and sisters, returning to the boarding-house just in time to lock his trunk and take a hasty lunch. He called to Melindy, who was dusting the room at the head of the steps: "I have a package for you," he said, when she came, "but you must not open it until Christmas Day."

As she took the package out of his hands and looked up at him, trying to say thank you, she burst into tears.

"Why Melindy, what's the matter?" asked Donald. "Has Tomlins been annoying you again, or has Mrs. Winter been scolding you?"

"Neither, Mr. Donald; it's because you are going away. Christmas won't be any pleasure about her. But whether you love her or not, you ought to write to her sometimes and send her part of your wages, and maybe you could help her to be a better woman."

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Lying awake that night Donald saw how near he had come to the edge of a precipice and realized that the self-restraint upon which he prided himself, backed by all the remembered admonitions of his dear, wise mother, to help him through the days which must intervene before he should be strong enough to go home.

But Donald Grafton's Scotch blood gave him something of that stubborn defiance to that which his sense of right condemned him characterized John Knox. He knew, too, what his mother expected from him, and he remembered the evening when both his sisters being absent from home, he sat on a low chair by his mother's side in the firelight, and as she stroked his hair with soothing, gentle fingers, as he had loved her to do since his earliest recollection, she told him of his father, who had been killed in the Civil War before his children were old enough to remember him. She had told him of his bravery and heroism and of his gallant death while leading his company to the charge at Chancellorsville; of his lofty principles and knightly

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He saw her eyes filled with tears, and her lips quiver as he watched her, under half shut lids, turn slowly away and leave the room.

All that afternoon her pretty pleading face haunted him, and when he fell asleep his image, now dim and ethereal, now life-like and very human, filled his dream. She looked so grieved and humiliated, and so physically lovable that evening, when she came up to bring his tea that it was only by a strong effort of self-restraint that he controlled the impulse to put his arm around her and caress her into smiles and happiness again.

The dangerous knowledge that he could do so had come to him that afternoon. If another ingredient is needed in the cup of temptation, which the devil mixes for a man when he puts a young and beautiful woman in his power, it is the consciousness that her happiness is bound up in his favor and that she will find joy in yielding to his desires, though it means the sacrifice of all he asks without thought of his own or fear of re-coming. Few men can resist the cup so flavored, and with the incense of adulation filling their nostrils and turning their heads even before the cup has touched their lips.

Lying awake that night Donald saw how near he had come to the edge of a precipice and realized that the self-restraint upon which he prided himself, backed by all the remembered admonitions of his dear, wise mother, to help him through the days which must intervene before he should be strong enough to go home.

But Donald Grafton's Scotch blood gave him something of that stubborn defiance to that which his sense of right condemned him characterized John Knox. He knew, too, what his mother expected from him, and he remembered the evening when both his sisters being absent from home, he sat on a low chair by his mother's side in the firelight, and as she stroked his hair with soothing, gentle fingers, as he had loved her to do since his earliest recollection, she told him of his father, who had been killed in the Civil War before his children were old enough to remember him. She had told him of his bravery and heroism and of his gallant death while leading his company to the charge at Chancellorsville; of his lofty principles and knightly

FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN.

Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher has just entered upon her eighty-fifth year and is remarkably well preserved and vigorous. All the little adornments of her toilet are the work of her own hands—the graceful lace caps trimmed with ribbons and the soft, fleecy lace arranged at the neck and wrists.

The most stylish gowns this winter will have a long basque or jacket; the round waists seems to have entirely dropped out of fashion's notice.

Never sweep dust from one room to another nor from upstairs to the lower part of the house. Always take it up into a dustpan wherein you have previously placed some tea leaves, which prevent the dust from