

WHAT SHALL I ASK?

What shall I ask to fill my cup of life... And I can say: "Enough, my soul; No more!"

My Strangest Case

BY GUY BOOTHBY.

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CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

"What a duffer I am, to be sure!" I said to myself. "If I begin to get notions like this in my head there is no knowing where I may end."

Thereupon I descended to the drawing-room, which I found empty. It was a true woman's room, daintily furnished, with little knick-knacks here and there, a work-basket put neatly away for the Sabbath, and an open piano with one of Chopin's works upon the music-rest.

"Do you know I feel almost inclined to offer you the proverbial penny," said Miss Kitwater's voice behind me, at the drawing-room door. "Is it permissible to ask what you were thinking about?"

"I am not of course prepared to swear it, but I honestly believe, for the first time for many years, I blushed."

"I was thinking how very pleasant a country life must be," I said, making the first excuse that came to me. "I almost wish that I could lead one."

"Then why don't you? Surely it would not be so very difficult?" "I am rather afraid it would," I answered. "And yet I don't know why it should be."

"Perhaps Mrs. Fairfax would not care about it," she continued, as we returned to the drawing-room together.

"Good gracious!" I remarked. "There is no Mrs. Fairfax. I am the most confirmed of old bachelors. I wonder you could not see that. Is not the word crustiness written plainly upon my forehead?"

"I am afraid I cannot see it," she answered. "I am not quite certain who it was, but I fancy it was my uncle who informed me that you were married."

"It was very kind of him," I said. "But it certainly is not the case. I fear my wife would have rather a lonely time of it if it were. I am obliged to be away from home so much, you see, and for so long at a time."

"Yours must be indeed a strange profession, Mr. Fairfax, if I may say so," she continued. "Some time ago I came across an account, in a magazine, of your life, and the many famous cases in which you had taken part."

"Ah! I remember the wretched thing," I said. "I am sorry that you should ever have seen it."

"And why should you be sorry?" "Because it is a silly thing, and I have always regretted allowing the man to publish it. He certainly called upon me and asked me a lot of questions, after which he went away and wrote that article. Ever since then I have felt like a concealed ass, who tried to make himself out more clever than he really was."

"I don't think you would do that," she said. "But, if you will let me say so, yours must be a very trying life, and also an extremely dangerous one. I am afraid you must look upon human nature from a very strange point of view!"

"Not more strange probably than you do," I answered.

"But you are continually seeing the saddest side of it. To you all the miseries that a life of crime entails are visible. The greater part of your time is spent among desperate men who are without hope, and to whom even their own shadows are a constant menace. I wonder that you still manage to retain your kind heart."

"But how do you know that my heart is kind?" I inquired.

"If for no other reason, simply because you have taken up my uncle's case," she answered. "Do you think when he was so rude to you just now, that I could not see that you pitied him, and for that reason you forebore to take advantage of your power? I know you have a kind heart."

"And you find it difficult to assimilate that kind heart with the remorseless detective of Public Life?" "I find it difficult to recognize in you the man who, on a certain notable occasion, went into a thieves' den in Chicago unaccompanied, and after a terrible struggle in which you nearly lost your life succeeded in effecting the arrest of a notorious murderer."

At that moment the gong in the hall sounded for lunch, and I was by no means sorry for the interruption. We found Kitwater and Codd awaiting our coming in the dining-room, and we thereupon sat down to the meal. When we left the room again, we sat in the garden and smoked, and later in the afternoon my hostess conducted me over her estate, showed me her vineyards, introduced me to her two sleek Jerseys, who had their home in the meadow I had seen from the window; to her poultry, pigs and the pigeons who came fluttering about her, confident that they would come to no harm. Meanwhile her uncle had resumed his restless pacing up and down the path on which I had first seen him, Codd had returned to his archaeological studies, and I was alone with Miss Kitwater. We were standing alone together, I remember, at the gate that separated the garden from the meadow-land. I knew as well as possible, indeed I had known it since we had met in the churchyard that morning, that she had something to say to me, something concerning which she had not quite made up her mind. What it was, however, I fancied I could hazard a very good guess, but I was determined not to forestall her, but to wait and let her broach it to me in her own way. This, I fancied, she was now about to do.

"Mr. Fairfax," she began, resting her clasped hands upon the bar of the gate as she spoke, "I want, if you will allow me, to have a serious talk with you. I could not have a better opportunity than the present, and, such as it is, I want to make the best of it."

"I am quite at your service, Miss Kitwater," I replied, "and if I can be of any use to you I hope you will tell me. Pray let me know what I can do for you?"

"It is about my uncle and Mr. Codd that I want to speak to you," she said, sinking her voice a little, as if she were afraid they might hear. "And what about them?"

"I want to be loyal to them, and yet I want to know what you think of the whole affair," she said, looking intently at me as she spoke. "Believe me, I have good and sufficient reasons for my request."

"I am to tell exactly what I think about their pursuit of this man"



AT THAT MOMENT MISS KITWATER MADE HER REAPPEARANCE IN THE GARDEN.

Hayle? And what chances of success I think they possess?" I said. "I am not thinking so much of their success," she returned, "as of the real nature of their case."

"I believe I understand what is passing in your mind," I said. "Indeed I should not be surprised if the suspicion you entertain is not the same as I have myself."

"You have been suspicious, then?" "I could scarcely fail to be," I replied.

"Perhaps you will tell me what you suspect?"

"Will you forgive me, in my turn, if I am abrupt, or if I speak my mind a little too plainly?"

"You could not do that," she answered with a sigh. "I want to know your exact thoughts, and then I shall be able to form my own conclusions."

"Well," I said, "before I begin, may I put one or two questions to you? You will, of course, remember that I had never seen or heard of your uncle and Mr. Codd until they stopped me on Ludgate Hill. They were and practically are strangers to me. I have heard their story of their treasure, but I have not heard what anyone else has to say upon the subject."

"I think I understand. Now what are your questions?" "In the first place, did your late father ever speak to you of his brother as being a missionary in China?"

She shook her head, and from the look upon her face I could see that I had touched upon something painful. This, at least, was one of the things that had struck her as suspicious.

"If he were a missionary, I am quite sure my father did not know it," she said. "In fact I always understood that he was somewhat of a scapegrace, and in consequence could never settle down to anything. That is your first, now what is your second question, Mr. Fairfax?"

I paused for a moment before I replied. "My second partakes more of the nature of an assertion than a question," I answered. "As I read it, you are more afraid of what may happen should the two men meet than anything else."

"Yes, that is just what I am afraid of," she replied. "My uncle's temper is so violent, and his desire for revenge so absorbing, that I dare not think what would happen if he came into actual contact with Hayle. Now that I have replied to your questions, will you give me the answer I want? That is to say will you tell me what you think of the whole affair?"

"If you wish it, I will," I said slowly. "You have promised to permit me to be candid, and I am going to take advantage of that permission. In my own mind I do not believe the story they tell. I do not believe that they were ever missionaries, though we have convincing proofs that they have been in the hands of the Chinese. That Hayle betrayed them I have not the least doubt, it seems consistent with his character, but where they obtained the jewels, that are practically the keystones to the whole affair, I have no more notion than you. They may have been honestly come by, or they may not. So far as the present case is concerned that fact is immaterial. There is still, however, one vital point we have to consider. If the gems in question belong equally to the three men, each is entitled to his proper share, either of the stones or of the amounts realized by the sale. That share, as you already know, would amount to a considerable sum of money. Your uncle, I take it, has not a penny-piece in the world, and his companion is in the same destitute condition. Now we will suppose that I find Hayle for them, and they meet. Does it not seem to you quite possible that your uncle's rage might lead him to do something desperate, in order to revenge himself upon the other? But if he could command himself he would probably get his money? If, on the other hand, they do not meet, then what is to be done? Forgive me, Miss Kitwater, for prying into your private affairs, but in my opinion it is manifestly unfair that you should have to support these two men for the rest of their existences."

"You surely must see that I would rather do that than let my father's brother commit a crime," she returned, more earnestly than she had yet spoken.

The position was decidedly an awkward one. It was some proof of the girl's sterling qualities that she should be prepared to make such a sacrifice for the sake of a man whom it was certainly impossible to love, and for that reason even to respect. I looked at her with an admiration in my face that I did not attempt to conceal. I said nothing by way of praise, however. It would have been an insult to her to have even hinted at such a thing.

"Pardon me," I said at last, "but there is one thing that must be taken into consideration. Some day, Miss Kitwater, you may marry, and in that case your husband might not care about the arrangement you have made. Such things have happened before now."

She blushed a rosy red and hesitated before she replied. "I do not consider it very likely that I shall ever marry," she answered. "And even if I did I should certainly not marry a man who would object to my doing what I consider to be my duty. And now that we have discussed all this, Mr. Fairfax, what do you think we had better do? I understood you to say to my uncle that you intend leaving for Paris to-morrow morning, in order to continue your search for the man Hayle. Supposing you find him, what will you do then?"

"In such a case," I said, slowly, looking at her all the time. "I should endeavor to get your uncle's and Codd's share of the treasure from him. If I am successful, then I shall let him go where he pleases."

"And supposing you are unsuccessful in obtaining the money or the gems?" "Then I must endeavor to think of some other way," I replied, "but somehow I do not think I shall be successful."

"Nor do I," she answered, looking me full and fair in the face. "I fancy you know that I believe in you most implicitly, Mr. Fairfax."

"In that case, do you mind shaking hands upon it?" I said.

"I will do so with much pleasure," she answered. "You cannot imagine what a weight you have lifted off my mind. I have been so depressed about it lately that I have scarcely known what to do. I have him awake at night, turning it over and over in my mind, and trying to convince myself as to what was best to be done. Then my uncle told me you were coming down here, and I resolved to put the case before you as I have done and to ask your opinion."

She gave me her little hand, and I took it and held it in my own. Then I released it and we strode back along the garden-path together without another word. The afternoon was well advanced by this time, and when we reached the summer-house, where Codd was still reading, we found that a little wicker tea-table had been brought out from the house

and that chairs had been placed for us round it. To my thinking there is nothing that becomes a pretty woman more than the mere commonplace act of pouring out tea. It was certainly so in this case. When I looked at the white cloth upon the table, the heavy brass tray, and the silver jugs and teapot, and thought of my own cracked earthenware vessel, then reposing in a cupboard in my office, and in which I brewed my cup of tea every afternoon, I smiled to myself. I felt that I should never use it again without recalling this meal. After that I wondered whether it would ever be my good fortune to sit in this garden again, and to sip my Orange Pekoe from the same dainty service. The thought that I might not do so was, strangely enough, an unpleasant one, and I put it from me with all promptness. During the meal, Kitwater scarcely uttered a word. We had exhausted the probabilities of the case long since, and I soon found that he could think or talk of nothing else. At six o'clock I prepared to make my adieux. My train left Bishopstowe for London at the half-hour, and I should just have time to walk the distance comfortably. To my delight my hostess decided to go to church, and said she would walk with me as far as the lych-gate. She accordingly left us and went into the house to make her toilet. As soon as she had gone Kitwater fumbled his way across to where I was sitting, and having discovered a chair beside me seated himself in it.

[To Be Continued.]

COMPLETED PROVERBS.

Ancient Axioms with Tails Tucked Onto Them That Give Them a Humorous Turn.

"Before you run in double harness, look well to the other horse," but see to it that the other horse doesn't have a chance to look well at you, writes L. de V. Matthewman, in Era.

"Pity is akin to love," but kinship does not always signify friendship.

"It is hard to pay for bread that has been eaten," but not so hard as to get bread to eat that has not been paid for.

"Only that which is honestly got is gain"—the rest is velvet.

"Labor overcometh all things," even the laborer.

"Employment brings enjoyment," when it brings the means to enjoy.

"A wise man is moved from his course neither by force nor entreaty," but the same often applies to a mule.

"Possession is nine points of the law," and frequently all the profits.

"Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" is the cry of those who are well in front.

"In matters of taste there can be no dispute," for every man is so firmly convinced that there is no standard by which his taste can be measured.

"Whatever is best administered is best" for the one who administers.

"Ignorance is the mother of impudence;" no father is named.

"A man who will not flee will make his foes flee," but what if his foes be made of the same metal?

"Let a child have its will and it will not cry," but its parents will.

Undiplomatic Diplomat.

There is a story of exemplary American kindness of heart and absolute lack of all the fine nothings of etiquette which are the very breath of courts and diplomatic life. The story concerns a former American minister to St. Petersburg at one of the elaborate and very formal receptions or levees which the emperor and empress give on New Year's day. All the diplomats stand in line in their order of precedence, and their majesties walk down the line to exchange greetings with each in turn. On this occasion the empress, now the dowager, was not present, having just given birth to one of the younger princesses. It seems also that the good wife of the American was at home occupied with a similar domestic duty. The emperor came down the line and asked after the health of each of the gentlemen present, at the same time exchanging the usual seasonable greetings. So when he came to the American he did not ask the usual question: "I hope you have good news from home?" Of course he had and our full-hearted representative could not keep it a secret. "Yes, thank your majesty, excellent news. It is a boy and weighs 12 pounds." — Chalmers Roberts, in World's Work.

When Mark Twain Flunked.

A few nights ago Mark Twain told to some friends a story about himself which he failed to incorporate in "Life on the Mississippi." On one occasion when he started on a trip down the river on a flatboat he was advised never to answer the questions asked by river men on other boats and never to bandy words with them, as he would be sure always to come out second best. He followed the advice religiously for a time, but one day he thought he saw a chance to get the better of a river man, who called out:

"Hey, that, what yer loaded with?" "Jackasses. Don't you want to come aboard?" yelled Mark Twain.

"That's what I reckoned, seein' as how they let their biggest donkey hev their run of the decks," came back. Twain made a dive below as all the river men in the neighborhood set up a derisive laugh at his expense.

The Mark of Genius.

Ascum—What's that boy of yours doing now? Poppers—He's got a job in the bank and he's going to be president of that bank some day.

"Bright, eh?" "Well, sir, he can sign his name so anybody on earth can make it out." — Philadelphia Press.



A WOMAN AT HOME

A CHEERFUL QUEEN.

The Summer Life of Carmen Sylva in the Mountains of Roumania Is an Ideal One.

Much has been written of Queen Elizabeth of Roumania (the poet "Carmen Sylva"), one of the interesting and admirable royal figures of Europe. The Century contains a little paper on her summer life in the mountains by Mme. Zoe de Bolatchano, once of her court, who gives this agreeable glimpse of her:

Sometimes, at a very early hour, I could hear the queen's clear, powerful voice caroling as joyously as a bird on awakening; or the sound of her footsteps approaching my cell would be followed by a succession of sharp little taps on the window with her parasol. I would jump up hastily, to find it full day, ashamed to have been caught napping while my sovereign was setting so admirable an example in industry and early rising; yet I was never permitted to feel that I was not at liberty to do as I pleased. On the contrary, the queen's maternal solicitude was aroused by my frail health, and she was unremitting in her efforts to spare me unnecessary trouble or fatigue.



QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.

In spite of this tender care, there were times when the malady that I was endeavoring to throw off asserted itself and confined me to my bed. It was during these depressing hours that I learned to know the full significance of the name Maica ranitor ("mother of the wounded") bestowed on the queen by the soldiers when she moved among them on the battlefield. Her presence by my couch, the soothing effect of her words, were restoratives that seldom failed to act like a charm. She did not always come alone, but sought to provide diversion for me by making my room a place where subjects of interest could be discussed.

On one occasion a lady who had introduced first one topic, then another, strove to uphold the theory, and with no small degree of eloquence, that a person who had been overburdened by sorrow in early years was not apt to be happy later on. "Do not believe that," exclaimed the queen, smiling brightly. Then, seizing upon a poetic figure of expression, she added: "Happiness is like the ocean. It bears you away from your past and its sorrow, provided you do not persist in looking backward."

CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS.

Why Parents Should Endeavor to Answer Them Instead of Snubbing the Inquirers.

Little folks are wont to ask the most terribly embarrassing questions at times, and the more intelligent the children are the more they will want to know, for the active little brain of a clever child is always asking the why and wherefore of everything. In dealing with children's questions be careful to discriminate between those which are asked from the desire to know and those which are the outcome merely of a childish love of talking. The latter are often best dealt with by saying, quite gently: "If you think a little, dear, you will be able to answer that for yourself." To questions of the former class reply if possible, as carefully as you would to an adult questioner. If the matter be beyond the child's comprehension or unsuitable for explanation to one of tender years don't make any foolish or evasive answer. Say simply: "I cannot explain that to you now, for you are not old enough to understand it. By and by, when you are older, if you come and ask me again, then I will do my best to tell you what you want to know." If parents would speak thus to their children, instead of snubbing, or laughing at their questions, they would keep their confidence, and by and by would be referred to for information which boys and girls are sure to want and which is best learned from a father's or a mother's lips.—Chicago Daily News.

Old Sweetheart Remembered.

Thirty years ago Miss Rachel Dickson and Peter Barclay, of Middletown, N. Y., were lovers. A quarrel separated them, and he went to Ringold county, Ia., where he married. His wife and two children died, and lately he followed them. In his will he left all his estate, valued at \$30,000, to his old sweetheart, who remained single.

CURE FOR THE BLUES.

Women and Men Who Take a Genuine Interest in Life Are Free from Chronic Depression.

Is there any one of the human family who does not suffer occasionally from that "loathed melancholy" called "the blues"? If such a person exists he is as rare as the great auk, and he never, never eats late suppers or looks a thought too often on "the cup that cheers."

From whatever cause the blue devils take possession of us; whether from derangements of the liver or nervous system, or from simple ennui, the cure for them is the same, unless, indeed, they are bred by organic disease which has taken vital hold on the system.

And this cure—an absorbing interest or occupation. People who ride their hobbies in season and out of season very rarely have the blues. Enthusiastic collectors are apt to be aggressively cheerful. If you suffer from depression of spirits, then take the advice of authorities on the subject and look about for an interest in life.

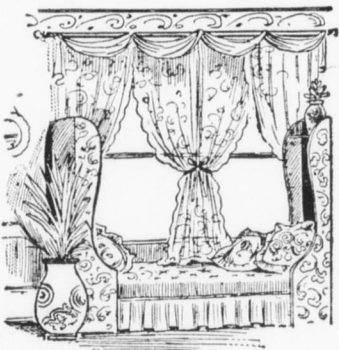
Ursula Gesterfeld, in one of her books, handles the blue devils without gloves. She frankly informs the victims that what is the matter with them is not that they are "too fine for earth's coarser uses," and that their delicate natures suffer from contact with the rude, boisterous world, but that they are abominably selfish, too absorbed in their own sensations to heed the fact that they are enveloping themselves in an atmosphere of gloom which must necessarily depress all about them. Her prescription is to smile, smile, smile in season and out of season; smile whether you feel like it or not, and gradually the mental state will adapt itself to the bodily expression.

A charming young woman was heard to say the other day: "I am too much in love over here to have the blues." "Too much in love?" echoed her astonished auditors, surprised at this frank revelation. "Yes," she replied, provokingly, "too much in love with myself. I regard myself as a mirror, don't you see, put on earth to reflect all the joy and gladness of the universe; and so I cannot think of letting myself become obscured and dimmed by such ugly clouds as the blues. Ah, never! I am too vain."—St. Louis Republic.

PRETTY WINDOW SEAT.

It Gives a Homelike Appearance and Adds to the Comfort of Small City Flats.

Our sketch shows a very pretty and quaint idea for treating a flat window. A bench, with the short legs underneath, is used. To this at each end an upright is firmly fixed, and two shaped sides are fastened to each, giving the appearance of the old-fashioned high-backed chairs. A flat cushion, which will lie along the seat and fit under the arms at each end, should be made, and a valance fastened along the side to hide the legs of the seat. Within the space at the top of each end formed by the uprights and the two arms light shelves may be fixed. Cover the whole of the woodwork with cretonne or tapestry, or, if preferred, it may be enameled or stained.—Chicago Daily News.



DAINTY WINDOW SEAT.

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SELECTION OF COLORS.

Tints for Blondes and Brunettes Should Be Chosen with More Than Ordinary Care.

The reason why certain colors, however beautiful in themselves, will not suit us all are various; nor do all shades of a color produce identical effects. It is an error to suppose, for instance, that yellow is necessarily unfavorable to blondes in all its shades. It is the orange tint, deep or slight, that is specially the brunette's tint; and only for her with a clear complexion. Orange, like red, contrasts with the dark hair and skin, and becomingly depends their effect. For the blonde the delicate yellow of ripe corn is exactly beautifying, making the fair skin whiter by contrast. Green, again, in moss and eau-de-Nil tints, most becoming to blondes, has some tones that are very favorable to brunettes—the emerald greens, not too bright—while the moss greens can be worn by either blonde or brunette, though most suited to the fair girl; and the lighter shades of green are not becoming to ruddy complexions of either the fair or dark type of skin. If you look hard at green for a few minutes you will find that the eye has a red color in it, as it were, which is reflected on all else that the gaze falls upon for a time. In the glances that are given at a costume while worn, this same effect is but slightly produced, and thus a rosy tone is diffused on the skin. Bright green, therefore, is becoming to the pale but clear skin, but not to the high or muddled complexion. Violet is only becoming near the face if the skin be quite free from yellow tints of its own, as few brunettes (and, sooth to say, not many blondes!) can claim to be.—Chicago American.