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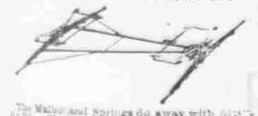

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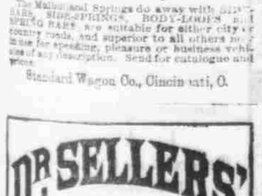

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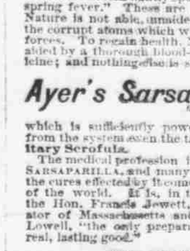

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CHAPTER III.

Certainly Herne Bay was hardly to be recognised. A great inland wave from the outside world had transformed its quiet sea-washed shore into a fashionable promenade.

"Who is that creature in the crimson jersey and Tam o' Shanter, with the Japanese umbrella?" drawled Mrs. Somerset East, looking up languidly from the depths of her sky-blue sun-bonnet at the dark-eyed personage stationed behind her basket-chair, who happened to be a foreign prince incog. for the season. He levelled his eye-glass in the direction of her ladyship's outstretched parasol.

"That's the Leopardi. How did you fail to recognize her? She is a fine creature," he incautiously admitted.

"Ye-e-es, but how vilely she dresses, like a *vicandiere*, and, do you know, *mon ami*, I really have been told on the best authority that the creature smokes—smokes! only fancy. Is it not revolting and horribly disgusting—so unwomanly, you know."

A laugh was his highness's safe and neutral reply. His private opinion was the "creature" looked deuced handsome, and so she did in her own loud *outre* fashion.

"Fleur de Marie is certainly pretty," admitted Mrs. Somerset East, raising her eyebrows, "but still I consider her *tant soit peu fade*, don't you know, white as marble and as cold, I hear. What a famous Galatea she would have made. By the way, I haven't seen her on the beach this morning. Ah, yes, there she comes. Who is that man walking by her side? Do you know him, Rene? He haunts her like a shadow. He doesn't look like one of her own set. Do you know him?" asked the fair critic, turning round and whispering.

"Yes; I met him at Lord Nockatown's in the spring. He's well known on the turf; did a big thing at Ascott last June, made quite a pot, I believe, on 'Tetrarch.' He goes by the name of Nick Newen."

"Is that Cuthbert Newen?" exclaimed Mrs. Somerset East, turning round to stare as only a pretty and well-born woman can do with impunity. "Ah, I know his father, grand as Lucifer. It's to be hoped his son is not thinking of marrying that pretty little prima donna; but of course he won't."

"They say she refused Sir Harry Lothair last season."

"Don't believe it," was the lady's prompt response. "I can't imagine how man can run after that sort of women, however pretty they may be. Just look at Newen—why, positively, he peers into her face in a way I would never allow, I know, and looks as if he would like to swallow each word that falls from her lips. Just see, they are moving away now. No, they are turning back this side—hush!" and Mrs. East raised her Chinese pagoda-like parasol, and lowered it over her eyes that she might stare through its broad fringe of lace at the Fleur de Marie, whom in her heart of hearts she envied, and whose costume and *coiffure* she invariably copied, although, as the young singer passed, she drew in her silken skirts and gathered them round her feet.

Yes, it was true, as the fashionable magpie had said, Newen had haunted her like her shadow ever since her arrival at the Dolphin a fortnight before.

He knew it, but he also felt that he had nevertheless advanced not one step nearer to her real self, in spite of his best efforts, in spite of walks and talks and excursions into the country, and moonlit converse on the pier, where the world gathered to enjoy the coolness of the night hours, to the sound of dream-like music, and stirring of plashing waves.

He was looking—nay, peering into her face, trying to read in her calm blue eyes the expression he had so earnestly tried to call forth, but in vain.

He only so far could flatter himself she was his friend, and that in a most aggravatingly frank fashion. Platonics are very unpalatable to a lover, and such, undoubtedly, was Newen.

Yes; from that first evening, that first look from eye to eye, he had felt she was his fate for weal or woe.

Now, however, he was not so sanguine.

Either this Fleur de Marie had already given her love to another, or else she was a most finished coquette, only feigning indifference to fan the flame of his passion. He would not own to himself that she might be every way free and yet refuse him. Such a thought hurt his pride. Anyhow, he was determined to put an end to the uncertainty on the first opportunity. He longed to throw himself at her feet.

"All the world seems here, and I know no one," said Fleur de Marie, turning her face towards the gay-colored moving mass, ebbing and flowing like a human tide on the sands below—for they were now standing on the promenade.

"Why, here is one of your friends coming down from the cliff," he replied, catching sight of Lorita, surrounded as usual by a body-guard, with whom she was laughing and talking noisily while she descended the slope, using her parasol as a walking stick.

"She is no friend of mine, Mr. Newen." There was no scorn or malice in the tone, only, perhaps, a shade of sadness, for which her cavalier could not account.

"Can you say as much for her companion, mademoiselle?"

The words had scarcely left his lips when he regretted his speech. "She will think me impertinent," he thought, and so she evidently did. He saw her sweet face flush from brow to chin at his words, then she turned to him and replied quietly:

"I shall cancel that remark of yours from my memory,. It's unworthy of you, Mr. Newen. Come, Miss Hurst, it is past one o'clock; the band has ceased playing, and it is hot. Let us go back to lunch."

There was nothing for Newen to do but to raise his hat and drop behind. As he did so, the Leopardi and her party passed the little group, looking back over her shoulder with a smile of unmistakable meaning, and a glance at Newen out of her bold black eyes which heightened her rival's color.

There were half-a-dozen men with this woman, but one walked by her side, carried her gloves and handkerchief, and seemed to engross all her attention.

Only this one did Fleur de Marie notice. His face was turned away, but she felt that he had seen her as he went by, and the bright flush faded from her cheeks, leaving her very pale.

Lorita Leopardi had been forced to own, although only to herself, that, on the stage, Fleur de Marie was as far above her as the still shining stars are above the passionate, restless sea; but off the stage she had her revenge, the sweetest to her because the bitterest to another—a royal revenge! Had she not stolen her rival's lover, so that now he was ready to do any mad thing for her sake or at her bidding?

And Lorita enjoyed this triumph as only coarse natures such as hers can.

But Lorita had little power of discrimination. It never occurred to her to suppose that Love, once pure and true, may scorch its wings in the fire of an unworthy worship, and fall to earth; and yet that love may rise to new life from the ashes of folly. She judged others, and the feelings of others, by her own standard.

Gabriel walked by her side silent and sullen.

Less as were his morals, and blunted as his sense of delicacy had been by his earlier career, he was conscious now of some shame for his cowardly avoidance of Fleur de Marie.

He had half a mind to go back and speak to her, for in his truest heart, though perhaps he hardly knew it then, he still felt there was no woman in the world like his old love and girl-comrade, Mysie O'Farrell.

How beautiful she was, fair as a lily and as pure, and she cared for him—for him, debased, false, coarse, given up as he was to every vice that ever sent a man's soul to perdition. She cared for him—aye, even now, he knew he had only to go back and ask to be forgiven, and she would smile that soft, slow, wonderful smile, and grant him the token of forgiveness.

He had only to go back—but ah, that was the rub. The "onlys" are often as difficult to get over as death in this world. Only to go back—to bid good-bye to this black-browed beauty by his side, and yet he could not.

She held him in bondage, twisted him round her finger, piped her own tune to which he must dance perforce, kept him about her like any spaniel, to fetch and carry; now petted him, now neglected. Yes, held in bondage by the power of her beauty, such as it was.

He was no more to her than fifty others who carried her fan, "stood" her suppers, threw her bouquets, gave her gold, and yet when she would, she could cajole him into the belief that while she accepted gifts and gold from others, from him she took only love.

And Fleur de Marie, sweet Mysie O'Farrell, was all his own, as true as death, and as pure as angels. And yet—yet what?

One by one Lorita's followers had dropped away in despair of getting a word or a look, while Gabriel monopolized her attention. At the door of the Dolphin they came to a standstill. His rooms were at the Brunswick.

She looked at him, tapping her foot petulantly on the stone steps.

"If you want to lunch with me, can't you say so? But I don't think I want you. You are stupid and dull to-day, and why is it? You can be so brilliant when you choose. I like to be amused, so, as you have lost your tongue, go and buy me a new book, and be quick back, like a good boy—I like to read while I am eating. It's a case of double digestion. Go!"

"Then may I stay when I return?"

"Well, we'll see; depends on the book you bring. Mind, it must be chock full of fun. I like to be kept on the broad grin. Go on," and she playfully dealt him no gentle blow on the knuckles of his outstretched hand with her parasol.

"If you send me about my business when I do come back, I shall take the book with me, mind."

"All right, wait and see. We'll square matters when you bring the book. Don't be long," and she turned into the hotel.

CHAPTER IV.

Life in the busy little bay was like a fashionable scrap-book all through those memorable months of July and August—sketches, portraits, finished pictures, woodland scenes, "bits" of shore and boats, with a changing sky overhead, each page a contrast to the last.

Herne Bay was keeping carnival, only at the wrong time of the year.

In the shadow of the cliffs sits a woman, and at her feet lies a man with a sunburnt, handsome face that rests on folded hands and is upturned to hers with a look she could not help understanding, were not her eyes on the water instead of on him.

His elbows are sinking deeper into the shingle, and his six-feet long body is stretched at its length, as near to her chair as he dare approach.

He is thinking how pretty she is, and wondering what she sees in those endless waves to bring that wistful expression to her pretty eyes and that sudden quiver to the parted lips. And she—oh, sad to tell!—has for the moment forgotten his existence, which accounts for the start that recalls her to present company as he speaks.

"Have you quite made up your mind to go back to town to-morrow?" he asks, as a prelude to what he means to lead up to, a proposal.

"Yes, indeed," was the reply. "I have taken a very long holiday—nearly six weeks. Here we are in September. I must begin work again at once, or I shall be getting into Mr. Brevet's black books, not to speak of Signor Brunetti. I have much to do before the winter season commences."

There is a pause. He finds conversation an uphill affair to-day.

"Do you care for the life you lead? That sounds rather an impertinent question, but I hope we are friends enough to allow of something beyond conventionalities between us. I know most women would declare themselves more than content with your brilliant present and prospects, and, certainly, the career of a *prima donna* is enviable in a way; it must be paradise to a small material mind set on vanity in all its forms. But you are not like any other woman I have ever met. You are not vain, you are not a lover of luxuries, the worship which waits to make you its object does not turn your head. You can see London at your feet and yet remain calm."

"Oh, you do not know me, Captain Newen. I do heartily enjoy my success, and I do not think I could, of my own free will, abandon the career of a singer for anything under the sun," replies Fleur de Marie candidly, smiling down calmly into his upturned face in which there is so much for her eyes to read if she could.

"No," she repeats softly, as if some question within her had risen to confront her—"no, I do not think I could leave the stage now with my foot scarcely firm on the first step of fame's ladder, not for anything."

He draws himself up close to her chair and resting on his elbows, whispers almost inaudibly:

"Or for any one?"

But her quiet blue eyes are looking out dreamily over the sunlit sea, and her thoughts are as far away. So she answers in the same half-mechanical tones:

"Or anyone?"

She is thinking, perhaps, that the one for whom she would willingly make any sacrifice would never demand it even if he loved her, which he does not—at least not now.

A hand is laid gently on her own that lies in her lap.

She starts and draws back, flushing indignantly as she rises to her feet.

But something in the face of the man who had dared such a liberty arrests her steps.

"I was fool enough to flatter myself you would do as much for me. I would sacrifice wealth, position, everything in your service. Have I been willfully blind or have you wittingly deceived me? Am I a fool or are you a coquette, as cruel as cold?"

He springs to her side and seizes one of her hands almost rudely.

She is too utterly surprised to withdraw it.

"Tell me, swear to me by all that is holy that you knew not that I loved you!"

"You forget your manners, Captain Newen," is the cold reply, "but I shall answer your question, after which I hope you will detain me no longer. I was quite ignorant of the nature of your—your feelings towards me, or, believe me, it should sooner have put a stop to our constant companionship. Indeed, I am very, very grieved and sorry about it. You always were so frank and pleasant with me that I never doubted you were more or wished to be more, than a friend, and I am so disappointed. It always is so. I must not lose any friends, it seems, for I lose them all just when I am beginning to value them most."

She is standing with face averted, unconsciously tracing a name on the sand with her parasol.

He, too, is watching her, but without particular attention, being self-absorbed and blind for the moment to outside things.

Suddenly, as he absently follows her action with his eyes, he sees the word resolve itself into G A B R I, and then she, too, comes back to reality, and, remembering she is not alone, hurriedly obliterates those five foolish letters, and glances aside under her drooping lashes to make sure he has not guessed at the rest.

Their eyes meet.

"So that is my rival, Fleur de Marie?"

She does not answer, only looks down with heightened color at the place where those letters were traced.

"I am glad to know that you are not free," her companion resumes, after a long never-to-be-forgotten pause, "because I might have nourished possibly a secret hope of some different reception in a time to come. Now I can understand ——"

"But, indeed," interrupted Fleur de Marie, with crimson cheeks and trouble averted eyes, "I am—that is—I never said I was not free. I am quite unfettered by any engagement. Why should you suppose that I am bound to another—that you have a rival?"

"You did not contradict me just now, mademoiselle, when I pointed to those letters on the sand and said, 'That is my rival.' Gabriel! I guessed it long ago, and then I ceased to think so, never seeing you together."

"I am not bound to Gabriel. I am nothing to him," she answered with a strange quiver in her voice.

"But is he nothing to you?"

She turns and faces him with angry eyes.

"What right have you—how dare you question me thus closely as to my feelings towards this or any other man? You are a gentleman, but sometimes I think you forget your part. I have given you your answer. Let us at least part friends, since part we must."

"Must we part? Oh, forgive me, Fleur de Marie, for my rudeness and impertinence. I was so sanguine of success. I have been living all these weeks past in a fool's paradise, and because you were kind, and always seemed so glad to see me, I flattered myself I had made myself something nearer and more necessary than a friend. Forgive me. My punishment is hard enough as it is. Be still my good angel, and let me stay within reach of your hand, within sound of your voice, for I love you, Marie, for I would rather have your friendship than the worship of another woman less perfect. I would ——"

"Hush! You must not talk so wildly. I am sorry, more sorry than you can tell, for all this that has happened. Your love kills a most pleasant friendship. Yes, do not interrupt me. I do not believe in platonics. You must go away—right away now."

"I will. I will throw myself off that cliff into the sea if you send me out of your sweet presence a banished man."

"Hush! you will go because you love me. You are a man of the world, and for my sake, you understand, you must not haunt me or follow my steps wherever I go. Besides, it would only make you more miserable if you did."

"You might learn to love me in the end."

"Love is not a lesson to be learned, I think. It is an inspiration, a fate; it comes unbidden, and abides forever."

"Unless it dies a violent death," puts in her companion, for some instinct tells him that is how it has been with her.

"Then the ghost haunts the heart it once gladdened, if the heart is not broken at its fall."

"Then you never will love me at any time, or under any circumstances what ever?" he asks anxiously.

"Sincerely speaking, I believe not. I have found your friendship most pleasant, and regret to say good bye."

"Then we will call it *au revoir*. Listen to me for one moment, Fleur de Marie. I shall not detain you long—I will leave you and go right away as you desire. I shall exchange into the Prince's Own, which is ordered out in November. I have friends and relations in India. I will join them, and make a home there. I shall not persecute you with letters, not one word till another year has passed over our heads. Then, if you will allow me, this time, this day, next September, I shall write once, my first and last letter to you, asking you again to be my wife, and you will kindly give me a final answer."

"Do not, I pray you. Why deceive yourself? I tell you my answer will be the same," she answers rather impatiently.

"Somehow I do not believe it. Maybe I am too sanguine. Anyhow, I shall write. Hope never nurs a man yet, and if you again refuse I shall have only myself to blame and you to respect. Farewell till we meet again, sweet Fleur de Marie. I have a strange presentiment we shall yet be man and wife. Stranger things have happened."

"None less likely."

"Ah well, I will not argue further. I feel we shall meet again. Farewell.—Think of me sometimes when your singing brings flowers to your feet. Remember, I am no fair-weather friend. I am waiting for you when the world has ceased to smile, and your so-called friends turn aside to worship at some fresh shrine. If you are in trouble, write to me; if you want a home, come to me. You do not believe in platonics, you say? but what I offer is not friendship, but love. Farewell."

There are tears in the blue eyes, sad trouble in the beautiful face, as she turns and stretches out both of her hands, unable to speak for sorrow that she has nothing to give, only a God-speed.

At last she says brokenly:

"Good-bye, friend. See, I believe in your friendship, because you have the courage to go. I will remember your words and if I am in trouble I will call you to my side. But my love—no, no, that I can never give you. See I will trust you, I will tell you," and she comes nearer to him, and whispers: "That name you saw just now half traced on the sand I have obliterated; but nothing, not even the wild vain tears I have shed, can wash those letters from my heart. It is true as you guessed; Gabriel is my best, my only beloved; the love I have for him is a part of my being. It was born when we sang together and starved together in the London streets, it has grown with my growth, and though its blossoms have been blighted by neglect, nothing can root it out from my heart. I am free, it is true. Gabriel is lost to me, I fear forever; but still I am bound, not by a promise, but by the force of my own feelings. The faculty for loving is dead in me, since another has robbed me of his object. I now live only to give voice to my sorrow in song. My life is like an unfinished story, the author of which died and left his work incomplete, or cared not to complete it. It is some consolation to sing, and thus give vent to—but I will not weary you. I have said enough. You see how it is. I am not able to love you. I have trusted you with my heart's secret; it will, I know, be sacred to you as your mother's name. Now, I shall send you away. I know of old what the pain of parting is when one loves. Why prolong it?"

He holds her little white hand, that is soft as a silken glove, for one moment in his own broad, brown palm, looking at it in loving wonder, then he touched the slight fingers with his lips, and left her with one long, long look, but never a word.

Up the narrow winding path he goes towards the town, slowly, with steps that drag wearily, and head bent down.

Once only, when he comes to the summit of the cliff, he turns and sees her, the woman who has just pronounced his ban of exile, standing as he left her, with her fair face seaward, leaning over the back of her twisted willow chair with its gay-colored cushions, while the fading sunlight falls on her dead-gold hair, and touches the rare-cut crystals at her neck.

"I fancy, somehow, she will yet be my wife. Stranger things have happened. It will not be for love, at least, not first love, and no second quality is worth much. But, ah, there are a thousand and one other motives which move a man or a woman to marriage. I will win her in spite of herself; but not now, not yet—in a year's time, maybe."

CHAPTER V.

A year had passed. The London season was at its zenith. That turn in the tide of fashion which brings the pleasure-boats back to town laden with loveliness, talent, and wealth, had set in with sunshine of the brightest. London lay basking lazily in the sweet air of June, with pleasure at her head, and poverty at her feet.

All the outlets of gaiety are thrown open. On one of the June evenings, perhaps the balmiest out of the thirty, the Opera House at Covent Garden was crowded from gallery to pit with an enthusiastic and expectant audience. The playbills, fluttering from hand to hand, announced a powerful caste for the performance of "Aida," with Signora Leopardi, Signor Gabriel, and Fleur de Marie in the title *role*.

The hum of voices grew still as by the spell of a raised finger; the sea of moving figures cease to sway to and fro; the orchestra was silent.

Presently the music broke forth once more, as if impatient of control, and the voice of a woman was borne on its swelling bosom, on waves of infinite sound, now rising, now falling, now pathetic, now passionate, till at last, dying away by degrees, it left upon the hearts of the hearers that burden of pleasurable pain which is so strange a sensation, and can only find expression in a quivering sigh.

The short interval of silence was followed by such a burst of applause as is not often heard. The public literally brought the house down with their vehement cries of "Fleur de Marie! Fleur de Marie!"

Never had her voice sounded so spiritual, and yet so sad. It was as if each note were a spoken tear.

She was, however, not listening to the roar of many voices, or the hurricane of clapping hands. She did not heed the flowers that fell at her sandaled feet. She felt as one walking in a dream. She only thought:

"What does it all avail, since he loves me no longer? What is fame to me, since I fail to look fair in his eyes? Oh, Gabriel, Gabriel, one hedgerow wild blossom thrown by your hand at this moment would mean more to me than the costliest and rarest of these exotics, which are cast, after all, to my voice, and not to me."

She knew where he was, and how he was looking at her as one looks at the Venus de Medici or any other famous bit of beauty, critically and casually. She saw all this from under her drooping eyelids, as she stood enduring the world's applause. He was leaning against a side scene, whispering and laughing with the Leopardi, with passion in his dusky eyes, and a rose between his teeth. He was toying idly with it as he had trifled with her. Presently he would cast it aside, withered and bruised.

This woman, her rival, had won him in the lottery of life as one wins a gold lump at a game of cards. Therein lay her triumph.

Fleur de Marie passed out, followed by men in the opera's livery, laden with the flowers the world had given her. Cries arose of "Leopardi! Gabriel!" "Gabriel, Leopardi!" He led her on the stage, bowing right and left.

"He shares his success with her and not with me," cried Fleur de Marie, as she closed the door of her dressing-room and threw herself into a chair, while fan and flowers dropped to the ground.

"I see how it is! He loves me no longer. It is useless—nay, it is breaking my heart to go on like this. There is no hope for me now, because she has won him. How cruel she is! Could she not be content with half London at her feet? She does not care for anyone save herself—and I have only this one to love. I will go right away! I cannot endure to see him daily, to sing with him nightly, and be no more to him than the dancing-girl in the ballet. I will go right away. All this fretting will injure my voice, and then I shall starve. I cannot see another, and one so unworthy, spoil Gabriel's life, blight his fame, as she will, assuredly she will. How cruel she is! but oh, I wish Gabriel might come back to me as in those dear old days. What has fame given me after all? Only a heartache and a few flowers;" and with these thoughts Mysie O'Farrell gathered her wraps about her, and swept down the steps to her brougham, which was waiting in the midst of a crowd to bear her to her home.

* * * * * * *

The afternoon was drawing to a close. It was barely four o'clock, but the streets were dark, and the lamps were lighted. At one of the lower front windows of a house in Warrington-crescent sat a woman in a black silk dress, with a face most disconsolate.

Certainly the outlook was dreary, and the room in which she found herself was weird with the flickering, fitful firelight. She rose from her seat behind the curtain, when the sounds of singing in the street arrested her attention—she drew up the blind and peered out into the street. She only saw a dirty, gaily-dressed pair of beggars standing by the pavement, both little Savoyards, brown and handsome. Their vocalisation was so atrocious that the listener mechanically put her finger to her ear and winced—but still she remained where she stood, for something in the sight of those two ragged, screaming children recalled old days to her. She opened the window and cast out a handful of coppers to them.

The boy crossed the street, hat in hand, and the girl helped him to gather them up, bowing and gesticulating their thanks to the giver. Then the watcher saw them put their dusky heads together, and count their earnings with smiling faces.

"Ah, how happy they are! dirty, despised, homeless, often penniless, but how happy! Just as I was once."

She drew down the blind once more. As she did so the servant entered, bearing a salver covered with a pile of letters.

Poor little Mysie O'Farrell! Less than five years ago she was only a stray street singer, and now each post brought petitions from half the opera directors in Europe and America, begging her to give them if only a couple of nights, with promises of fabulous remuneration.

She now took up the heap of letters wearily. Suddenly she started, as her eyes fell on a bold, untidy handwriting, scrawled across a foreign envelope, which bore the post-mark "Bombay."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "he has not forgotten. I fancied he would. But no; this is the very day, September 20th, he said he would write."

She opened the letter, and hurriedly read its contents; it was not long, but characteristic.

"HOTEL BOMBAY, August 18—

"I have waited patiently and in silence, through the year. Now, I ask you once more and for the last time, for I would not weary a woman: Will you be my wife? I love you better than myself; I prize your happiness more than my own. I never have seen any one at all like you before. If you decide to put your hand in mine, and trust your heart to my keeping, I shall try and deserve the confidence. I know I have come too late to win your first love, but I believe you care for me. If you are unhappy, if fame fails to satisfy you, if you have any affection for me, come. I am ready to receive you, under any consideration. I have a home out here fit for a princess, but if the climate does not suit your health, you shall return to, and reside in England. I only ask you to be my wife. All the rest will follow. I love you enough for two, and I know I can make you happy. Of course you would quit the stage.

"CUTHBERT NEWEN."

"What a strange letter," thought Mysie with a laugh, "more like a business transaction than a proposal. What shall be my reply? Shall I answer it in person? Shall I quit the stage while yet I am popular, and go out to India and marry this man? Have I strength sufficient to stifle ambition? Should I be happy, or, at least, content as his wife? If I could only be sure! I long to get away out of Gabriel's presence. I cannot bear to see him always by the side of that woman. Perhaps, if I were absent from him, if I never saw his face or heard his voice, I might forget him. He never will love me again, that I know. I will have a long think over it all"—and an hour passed. At last she drew her writing-table towards her, and wrote as follows:

"20 WARRINGTON-CRESCENT, Maida Vale.

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN NEWEN,—I received your letter. As you know well, I have little to offer you in the way of romantic love, but I feel a most sincere regard for you, and I take pleasure in your society. If you think I can make you happy with this affection, I am ready to marry you any time after the coming Christmas, and to leave the stage. Believe me, yours very sincerely,

"MYSIE O'FARRELL."

When this note was addressed and sealed, the writer paused for a moment, and then, once more dipping her pen into the ink, began:

"MY DEAR MR. BREVET,—You have always been such a true friend to me, that I feel you ought to be the first to hear of my final decision. You advised me some time ago to leave the stage for awhile, and to go away for a change. You know I was fretting, and fretting sure it would injure my voice. Well, I am going away to India, and I am leaving the stage—only not for a while, but altogether. I have promised to marry Captain Cuthbert Newen. Thanking you once more for all your great goodness to me, I remain, I hope always, your grateful friend,

"MYSIE O'FARRELL."

As she finished this letter she glanced thoughtfully at the open sheet before her.

"How strange that the whole course of a life can be changed by a dozen strokes of the pen," she thought. "If I tear up these papers I still shall remain Mr. Fleur de Marie—if I put them into the post, a few months more will make me Mrs. Newen."

And she did put them into the post, with her own hands, on the following day.

When the next season came round the world wondered what had become of their favorite, Fleur de Marie, till the fame of her beauty, as the wife of Cuthbert Newen, came over the sea with a batch of rare Anglo-Indian gossip. Then society heard she had settled down in Calcutta, where she reigned like a queen, with her court around her.

So Fleur de Marie faded out of men's memory as some dream is forgotten in the hurry and glare of noon, and as the years went by her fame alone survived oblivion.

[*To be Continued.*]

"Knickknacks."

A lady living in the country near a pike, the highway relates the following incident, for the truth of which she vouches. An emigrant wagon came along one day and stopped in front of the house. It was a sorry-looking turnout, consisting of a rickety old covered wagon drawn by a lame horse and a bony, old, blind mule. A woman wearing a faded calico dress and a man's straw hat was driving. She reined her team up under a tree in front of the house and came up to the porch on which I was sitting.

"How de do?" she said, with a marked twang.

"Good day," I replied.

"You the madam here?"

"I am the lady of the house."

"Awful hot, aint it?"

"Yes, it is. It must be very warm travelling."

"It's fairly bilin'. I stopped to ask a little favor."

"Indeed," I replied, "I shall be glad to oblide you if I can."

"Thanker, mom. Well, you see, my man's sick out yander in the wagon."

"What is the matter with him?" I asked.

"Oh, I dunno. He's jest natchelly pulin'. That's all. He can't seem to eat plain, substantial food, but is allers wantin' his little knickknacks, so I've stopped to ask if you've got anything in your cubberd like a little right sour buttermilk or clabber an' some cold greens or cabbage an' soda biskits with a slice o' real fat bacon to go with 'em."

I had none of the "dainties" or "knickknacks" named, but I found in my pantry a hard boiled egg, a bowl of cold turnipe, and a dish of baked beans, which the "pulin'" man ate with great avidity, giving me the impression that no great anxiety need be felt regarding his physical condition.—[Youth's Companion.

Perils of Legislative Life.

There can be no question that a great many men do deteriorate very much morally when they go to Albany. The last accusation most of us would think of bringing against that dear, dull, old Dutch city is that of being a fast place; and yet there are plenty of members coming from out-of-the-way villages or quiet country towns on whom Albany has had an effect as Paris sometimes has on wealthy young Americans from the great seaboard cities.

Many men go to the Legislature with the set purpose of making money