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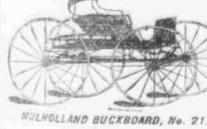
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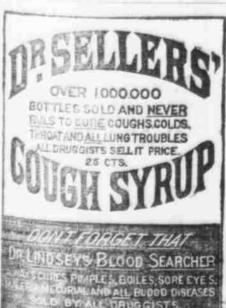
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ARY OR COMMISSION.

A MAID FORLORN.

CHAPTER IV. oncealment, could hear all that passed Major's spoken determination not to quit his seat until dinner was announced, her heart died within her. The anteroom—closet rather—was stuffy, above all things, dark; and if there was one thing in the world

Yet even at this pass she put her faith in the man who had beguiled her into her prison, trusting to him to bring her safely out of it again, and that with-out delay. But when this man coolly left the drawing-room—and left her to her fate-and she heard his footsteps dying away through the hall, her faith melted like the morning dew the poet sings of, and her indignation knew no

ond door and Craven's eager efforts to release her, and therefore abused him heartily whilst standing, cold, half-frightened, in her detested shelter. Would she have to stay there in "durance vile" until dinner was served? She supposed so; unless, indeed, something very unforeseen—nay, marvelous—should happen, now he had so cruelly

bosom. Emancipation seemed near. Opening the door cantiously, she peeped out, and saw the Major in the sullen glow of the firelight wrapped in inno-cent slumber. "Now or never" was her motto. Still cautiously she came forth,

window in all safety The Major still shored on tranquilly, enchantingly sweeter music M as Rivers had never beard-but, atas, as she reached the second window, her heavy serge gown caught in one of those frag ie abominations of the present day-a weakly chair done in gold and ebouy, a woven seat of rushes—and the delicate article came to the ground, dragging

and turned his head in her direction. The malicious fire blazed brightly, and she knew she was seen, indistinctly,

To ffy was the one thought uppermost in her mind, and, the conservatory door being nearest, she made for that. The Major followed in hot pursuit, crying "Thievest"—cowardice, unfortunately, ing one of his many vices. She sired door; it resisted her; in her agita-tion she had turned the hundle the wrong way, and, in spite of his gonty foot, the Major was gaining on her Here the kindly gods came to her aid; the Major stumbled over the prostrate

chair, the broken flower-pot, and the other trifles, and came heavily to his knees. Picking himself up however from amongst the debris, he continued his chase, nothing daunted, muttering an imprecation. Cecil, having turned the refractory handle by this time and entered the conservatory, got harriedly behind a huge shrub, rich in leaves, that adorned one corner, and with the calmness of despair awaited Fate.

mumbling and grumbling. He too en-tered the conservatory, looked eagerly around him, and found it, as he believed, to his consternation-empty! No sign of any human thing betrayed itself to his astonished eyes, and the

in disgrist. "Nothing to show for my trouble. Must have been a ghost. Couldn't have been dreaming, as I never sleep before dinner, never. Ghost, of course! These wretched old houses are always full of 'em—at least, so I'm told. Haven't seen one till to-night.

his arm-chair and Morpheus again, leaving Cecil, terrified but safe, behind ing-room fire-puzzled and uncertain how to proceed—the Major so far rouses

Craven is somewhat taken aback, but has sufficient presence of mind left him

to enable him to ask blandly in turn: "Well, my dear fellow, the most extraordinary thing has happened. A few moments since some one, who refused

Frice, \$1756 upward answers the Major, testily, but disconnectedly. "I saw it with my own eyes. I wasn't asleep, you know"-sternly, "I never do that sort of thing out of my bed; but I confess I was in deep thought attracted my attention. I looked up, and there was a figure just beyond. mear the curtains—a dark figure"-re-flectively. "It couldn't have been a

winding-sheet, because it was quite The housekeeper, no doubt," says Craven, with an air of settled convic-

lins she fair hair?" catechises the "Not exactly, though it might be considered so by this light," says Craven, suppressing the second fact that every hair in Mrs. Richards's head that is not

Richards's favorite dress, a wine-colored silk of curious texture, that literally

crackles as she goes. "Oh, well, it wasn't the housekeeper! It was a lady, in my opinion"-mysteriously—"the ghost of a lady. It reminds me strongly of somebody." The Major pauses, and Craven's blood runs cont.
"No doubt"—thoughtfully—"it was the ghost of one of your grandaunts, who both died here." Craven breathes

"You don't surely believe in ghosts?" he says, laughing, feeling intense relief, and imagining Cissy safe in Mrs. Rich-

"Why not?" retorts the Major. "Nothing is impossible. And I tell you I watched her minutely, and, as I watched, she reached the door over there, paused a moment, and then disappeared. I searched every hole and corner ed. I searched every hole and corner in the conservatory"—the Major firmly believes he has done so—"but could discover no sign of a living occupant; and the door leading to the garden was locked on the inside. She must have gone through the key-hole, or else melted into thin air; that's the usual thing, isn't it? The only thing that staggers me," he adds, "is the color; she ought to have been in white, oughtn't she?-graveclothes and that-eh?"

"Sometimes they vary," answers Craven, gravely. "I suppose even our de-funct relatives have their funcies; and I have heard of people appearing after many years in the garments they last wore, or at least most affected, when in life. Perhaps my grandaunts looked with scorn upon gaudy raiment. It went into the conservatory, did you say?"—carelessiy. "Very curious! No doubt you are right; most old families have their skeletons; it is rather respectable than otherwise, and pride feels no pain. I think, do you know, I shall just take a look in there myself." He saunters slowly down the room, lest the Major should guess at his inward anxiety, and has hardly got through the glass door when two cold nervous little hands fasten, on his arm and a voice whispers with tremulous

Let me out of this at once-at once." "How imprudent of you." he whispers back," to come here!" "How unkind of you," she retorts, "to leave me there!"

He begins a vehement explanation, still in a whisper, and, peace being re-stored, he draws her to the door opening on to the steps that lead to the ground beneath; and, having passed through they bolt the door, this time on the outside, and once more feel free. The reaction agrees with Cecil; she stops short on the top step, he standing a little below her, and laughs aloud. "If he had found me then," she says, "after his hard run, nothing would have cleared me. What should I have done?" "I know what I should have done, returns Craven. "I should have strangled him then and there. It would have been the only way out of it, and I should not have hesitated for a moment. "Peor old man; he little knows what a violent death he has escaped! But are you sure be has heard nothing about

"Certain. He does not allow his man to say even 'good-morning' to bimthinks it infra dig. -so of course he hears no gossip; and, as you know, he leaving here the first moment it

Whether this last remark suggests other thoughts, who can say? But on the instant Miss Rivers turns her face heavenward, pauses a little, and then lays her hand upon his shoulder. What, have you noticed nothing?" she says, with suppressed excitement. "See, see—it has ceased to snow."

"So it has," he returns slowly, the enthusiasm that ought to belong to the occasion being absent from his tone.
"What a way you say that!" she exclaims, severely, scrutinizing his face in the dim light. "Just as if you did not care, as if you were not a bit glad. Why"-after a pause "I actually think you'are sorry!"
"Don't think it; be sure of it," re-

sponds the young man gloomily. Perhaps at this point it occurs to Cecil- who in some matters is a wise child-that his tone is dangerous. At all events, she declines to continue the conversation, and begins again to de-scend the steps slowly. But presently they become aware that the snow has arisen as high as the second step from the bottom, and the portico of the halldoor is thurty yards distant; and how shall velvet shoes and silk stockings and dainty little feet wade through it all without getting wet? What is to happen next?" she asks,

making a comical gesture of despair with her hand. "I forgot all about the snow, and that I must walk through it o get indoors again. Oh, that tiresome "Can I- Would it- May I carry you

across?" he demands, with a proper amount of hesitation. "Oh, no!" — shrinking back. "I shouldn't like that at all."

"Well, I didn't suppose you would, you know!" he returns, somewhat aggrieved. "But I see nothing else to be done, and it will only be for a moment." "Dear me, it isn't that," says Cissy, honestly, divining his thoughts. don't mind that so much as- Are you sure-positive-you would not let me

"Let you fall," he says-"a child like you! I am not such a puny fellow as you seem to imagine." le draws houself up to his full height,

which is magnificent, throws up his chin rather scornfully, and in this attitude certainly looks as fine a specimen of manhood as one need wish to see. Miss Rivers, though piqued, has to ad-"Child!" she says, indignantly, "I'm not a child. I was eighteen last month.

How long does one continue to be a child, I wonder?" "I beg your pardon"-meekly. "I re-

tract my words. Let me say rather that I think I am sturdy enough to bear the weight of a middle-aged lady of your size." I'm heavier than you think"-doubt-

How do you know what I think? But indeed you need not be afraid; I have often before carried women over the snow and swollen streams and that, and never yet broke down beneath my

"Ob, indeed, have you?" says Cissy, with just one flash from her violet eyes. "How considerate of you! Youremind me forcibly of one of your own stalwart knights in the gallery upstairs. Do you spend your winters then in carrying distressed damsels over stony and snowy places? How slow you must find your summers!" "Well, not quite! I do a few other

things," answers Mr. Craven, mildly, "I mean, I have helped my sister once or twice, you know, when she was in a dilemma, and—" "And your cousins and your aunts, no doubt," interrupts Miss Cissy, still

briskly, refusing further discussion You will catch your death of cold if ready nearly frozen. Come."

vet slippers that I give in. And indeed.

as though to end all controversy, he here takes her bodily up in his arms and bears her safely over the snow into the warmth and light of the grand old As she regains her feet. Cecil laughs

a little and shakes her head, as though to rearrange the soft bright bair that a moment since brushed across his cheek as he carried her. Then she leans against the side of the inner door and ght profoundly, as though thankfu

ly short and so cruelly sweet to him is at an end. After which, with her most matter-of-fact air, she says sedately-"Now go at once and change your It will be quite as bad for you to catch cold as for me."
"Not quite. You have a mother, a sister, and"—with a slight contraction of the brows—"of course many others,

to whom your sickness would be pain. "Well, yes!" returns Cissy, slowly. "But I- There is no one in the world I believe who would feel very much regret if I died." "Oh, don't say that!" she exclaims,

earnestly. "It is not true."

"Is it not? I know of no one."

"I do." She colors crimson, stays a moment, and then, as though compelled to finish her sentence, goes on calmly-"I know some one who would be very sorry indeed." "Do you mean yourself?" he asks,

"Yes." She answers him honestly. because she can see no reason why she should not do so. He has been very kind to her. Surely she would be un-grateful to feel no sorrow at his death! Then she smiles carelessly, and says, with the most unsympathetic air, "So now you are bound to go and make yourself comfortable, as it would be an act of unpardonable rudeness on your part to make me 'very sorry indeed.' Was not that what I said?"

She has moved into the second hall, and is now standing within the full glare of the lamplight. Craven, who has followed her, thinks she is the most charming picture his eyes have ever seen; and it may be that his eyes tell

"One moment," he says, seeing she is about to disappear. "You allowed just now that, if anything were to happen to you, your mother and-some others -would grieve for you. Are there-do not think me rude; I have no right to ask the question, I know-but are there many others?" "Yes, a great many," she responds

promptly, some surprise in her tone and in her large eyes, which she has opened to their fullest extent and has fixed up-"Why do you ask?" 'There is safety in a multitude,'" quotes the young man, with a rather forced smile. 'Is there no one in par-

ticular?" "Do you mean a lover?" she asks, slowly, blushing again, a soft sweet blush, yet evidently much amused.
"Dear me, no! I have any number of friends, but not one lover—at present. My last was a dear old thing of about sixty, excellently preserved; but he died eight months ago, and ever since I have been the actual 'Maid forforn.' Ronnie" -regretfully - "has two lovers just now; but I have none.'

Mr. Craven does not appear to sympathize with her affliction. On the con-trary, he grows more cheerful with every word she utters, and at her last "And you-do you care for no one?"

he asks, forgetful of everything but his Miss Rivers, who is still palpably amused, thinks this question just a little too much, and telling herself it is her turn now, determines to punish him for it. So she hesitates, opens her lips as though to speak, checks herself sud-denty, looks down, turns a ring round and round upon her finger, and finally says, very consciously— "I am afraid I do."

This is a crushing blow. All Craven's content dies on the spot. He glowers, knits his brow, and looks utterly mis-"Somebody, then, is very fortunate," he answers, rather unsteadily "But there are two of them," explains

Cissy, shaking her head in a perplexed fashion, "and I can not quite decide which I love best."

"Love!" he echoes, in a desperate tone.

"Yes; I feel I adore them," she confesses, with unaffected and growing arder. "So would you if you knew them. I sometimes tell myself it is un-

lucky to love them as I do, with all my "But you can not love two men equally!" he excla ms, agnast at this daring declaration. "It is impossible!" Cissy, as though thoroughly confounded by his words, moves back a step or

two, and raises one hand in bewilder-"Two men!" she says, disdainfully. "Of what are you thinking? Are you so behind the times as to imagine I should do such a rococo thing as to love a man? No, indeed, I was but think-

ing of-mamma and Ronnie." As though aware of her victory, she finishes this saucy speech with a merry laugh, and moves away from him in the direction of Mrs. Richards's parlor, She looks so arch, yet so provoking; so mischievous, yet so charming, that Craven, while acknowledging himself shamefully taken in, laughs, too, in Listen to me," he says, hastily. "If

the Major goes to bed early, which, of course"-in disgust-"he won't do, because he ought—may I hope for a cup of tea from Mrs. Richards?" "I am sure"—demurely—"she will be delighted to give it to you." Then, seeing the disappointment in his face, she adds kindly, and with a pretty smile, Yes, do come. You will be quite wel-

And for once in his life the Major, though unconsciously, does the right thing, or, rather, the gout does it for im; he goes to bed early, and leaves his grateful host to follow his own de-

The next morning, what a change appears! Yesterday the world was white, but dull. To-day it is white, too, but sparkling, as though with immumerable deamonds. The snow has ceased to fall, the sun is saining bravely, lighting up with a million rays each spray and bough, on which the snow still lingers. The fir-trees have shaken off a little of their chilly burden, and now show again in parts some evidence of green. A few bards, though in a somewhat weak and melancholy fashion, are chanting a hymn of praise, and preening langually their draggled plumage. Cissy is so delighted with them that she opens wide her bedroom window and throws out to them the thin slice of broad and butter sent up to her with her tea half an hour be ore. They fly down to it, to her intense satisfaction, and chatter about it, and fight over it, before it comes to an end.

At the foot of the staircase, as she runs down to breakfast, she encounters Craven, who has been waiting for her. "Was I not right?" she says, gayly, giving him her hand. "The weather has changed. See what a delicious morning it is! No doubt my being able to get home to-day, is there?"

"I hardly know if the horses can trav-"I shall walk if I cannot go any other "If it comes to that, and you must go. you certainly sha'n't walk," he returns. "I suppose, with care, a horse can be in-duced to go so far." Then reproach-

fully-"In what haste you are to be He is looking so honestly grieved at the thought of her departure that her "Only in haste to see the two at home," she says gently—"not to leave this house, where every one has

one moment think me ungrateful." She says this so sweetly that he is comforted, and, when she has so far given in to his wishes as to breakfast with him, and has made herself specially charming throughout the meal, he is almost himself again. Directly break-fast is at an end, because he sees and understands her hurry to be gone, he orders the dog-cart to be brought round; and Cissy, once more enwrapped in her furs, is handed into it. Craven, seating himself beside ber, takes the reins, the groom jumps up behind, and together

they start for home. The drive, though slow, and in parts difficult, is a rather silent one; but, just as they enter the gates of Branksmere, "What a long time it seems since last "I told you you were bored to death,"

he replies, with a curious smile, "though you were too good-natured to acknowldge it. See how heavily the time drag-Nonsense! You know I did not mean that. I was only trying to explain to myself how in so short a time I could learn to regard you in such a friendly light. It seems absurd, doesn't it? Two short days—hardly two—and

yet I feel quite as if you were my broth-

"Not in the least like your brother." says Craven, hastily. Your brother would be far handsomer a fellow than I can ever hope to be. I don't feel a bit ke your brother.

"Well, then, you seem to me like a very old friend"—smiling.
"I am glad of that. It tells me I am not quite out in the cold," he answers, heartily; and then they pull up at the heall-door, and the groups jump down hall-door, and the groom jumps down, and Cecil has barely time to reach the ground when Ronnie comes running out and, catching her in her arms, holds her until her mother releases her.

The liberated prisoner is embraced and kissed and examined with tearful eyes; and then, turning, flushed and smiling, toward Craven, she says, brightly This is Mr. Craven, mamma. You

must thank him for his kindness to me."

Mamma is secretly rather taken aback, as she has been picturing an imaginary Mr Craven to herself as a stout, middle-aged gentleman of fatherly aspect, not in the least like the tall, fashionably dressed young man who stands smiling genially down upon her now, hat in hand.

She conceals her surprise very successfully, however, and murmurs a few words of earnest gratitude; and then they all go into the house and up to the drawing-room fire, where explanations follow, and where Cissy-who is in wild spirits-makes them all laugh a good deal at her version of the adventureespecially Ronnie, who has found it intolerably dull without her.

You will, of course, stay to lunchsays Mrs. Rivers, pleasantly eon," says Mrs. Rivers, pleasantly. "Your man can put up your horse for an hour or two." She rings the bell; and Mr. Craven, who is singularly amenable to pressing on this occasion-hardly indeed requiring it, as he gives in at the first request stays on for many hours, only tearing himself away with open reluctance as the daylight fades and thoughts of

When the young man has gone, Ron-

the Major and his duties as host crowd

nie turns to her sister, and placing her arms round her, gives her a good hug.
"I couldn't half do it while he was looking," she says, "though I think him very nice, nevertheless."

"He was very kind, at all events," says Cissy, gratefully, "Wasn't it a wonderful adventure?" "It might have been a terrible one," replies her mother, with a shudder. Oh, mamma, and who do you think was there besides me?"

"Major Jervis!" "Major Jervis! And he saw you?" asks Mrs. Rivers, in a horror-stricken "Yes-but- And yet he didn't see me!" continues Cecil. And then also gives them the entire history of her escape from the Major and her terror

on the occasion.

When she has finished her recital, her mother draws a breath of deep relief. "You are sure Mr. Craven won't betray you?" she asks, still a little nerv-"Quite sure! Mamma, how could you think him a traitory"
"I didn't, my dear. I was merely anx-

s," answers Mrs. Rivers, hastily, Then she rises and quits the room for some domestic purpose "What nice eyes he has!" says Ronnie when the girls are more again. "And how he uses them—though only on one object, I grant! I firmly believe, though he has been here to-day for nearly two hours, he would not, if put on his oath, know me from mamma, or mamma

"I don't think he is such a stupid young man as you seem to think," re-turns Cissy, mildly. "And it is folly what you say, dearest; any one can see that mamma is at all events a year or two older than you. "I am not accusing him of stupidity. I have no doubt be is a second Socrates.

rejoins Ronnie, meekly. "I merely meant to say he never took his eyes off you from the time he came till he went away. I was but as dross in his sight. Well, never mind! I wonder, by the bye, when we shall see him again? "Some time next year, perhaps." It is now close on Christmas.

"Some time to morrow, I should say." "Ronnie, how can you be so absurd? What could bring him here again so soon?" says Cecil; but she blushes vividly as she puts the question.
"Well, you. I suppose," rejoins Ronnie, unabashed. "Little hypocrite that

you are, why don't you confess what you know in your secret heart? What do you think he meant by asking mamma if she wanted some books to read? Simply an excuse to put in an appearance here early in the morning. Now, mark my words, it will be early. And I shouldn't at all be surprised if he ordered up the whole library, book-shelves and all, for your delectation. My own opinion is," adds Miss Rivers, laughing, "that this poor young man is head-over-ears in love with you." Cecil leans back in her chair and And what do you think his name is?"

she asks, still laughing. "It is Duke!" "Then you are bound to marry him." says Ronnie, merrily. "You always de-clared you would marry a Dake if you ever met one. You certainly can't go back from it now." "I have another idea, too," remarks ecil. "I think—indeed I feel sure—he

is Maria's young man!"
"No!" cries Ronnie. "But yes, course. He is un bon parti, and just all we ever heard of the happy man who has been laid as de for her. Poor Maria! I am afraid it was a luckless day for her when you lost your way in Well, it is all mere supposition about

Maria," says Cecil. "O' course, Mr. Crayen may not be the man assigned for her by the Major.' "Of course not. But I prefer thinking he is the man. It makes it all so comfortable. You said you would like to cut out Maria, if only for vengeance sake; now you can do it. You said you would marry a Duke; now, too, you can

Cecil, softly. "Have you heard from him?"
"I had one letter from Sir Sydney."

answers Ronnie, slowly.
"One? Well, of course, you could hardly have had more. To me it seems a long time since we came here. I feel indeed as if I had been away from you and mother for a twelvemonth— But go on, Ronnie, tell me about your let-

"It was short, and not particularly sweet. It began 'My dear Miss Rivers,' and it ended 'Always yours most sin-cerely.' It was filled with London gossip, and that is all I can tell you of it until we go upstairs; then you can see the original of what I have been telling

I think Always yours most sincere ly was very nice indeed, says Cissy.
"Yours sincerely, would be common-place, and quite nothing, but the 'al-ways' and the 'most' make such a dif-"I am so glad to have you back!" re-

turns Ronnie, gratefully, throwing her arms round her sister. "Do you know, Cissy, what is your principal charm? You always know just what is the right thing to say." Ronnie's surmises prove true. The very next morning brings Mr. Craven again to Branksmere; and for the mat-ter of that every other morning sees

him there too—until a week has passed over their heads. The day is lovely—clear and bright, and full of sunshine. All sign of snow is gone from the ground; only a thin sparkling frost, that sits lightly on tree and shrub, makes one certain it is winter still, and not early spring. From the sea comes up a moaning—sad, but sweet. A few birds, taking courage from the calmness of day and the warmth of the welcome god of light, who, up above in the blue heavens, sits enthroned, "diffusing radiant bliss around," hop from bough to bough on the bare trees, and twitter meek little

own temerity. Indoors the fires are burning brightly. The logs are crackling on the top coals; the great white Persian cat blinking lazily on the hearth-rug, and pretty Cecil, with a huge black fan in her hand, is sitting on the rug too, her head resting against her mother's knee. It is now the seventh day since her return home, and they are all sitting in the small morning-room—the room in the house they most affect, it is so snug and cozy,-with Duke Craven in their midst, but as near to Cecil as circum-

songs, as though half afraid of their

"By the bye," says Craven, suddenly, a propos of something just said by Ron-nie, "the Major is with me again, in spite of his dread or that awful ghost he encountered some days ago. He has heard of your having taken up your residence here, Mrs. Rivers, and declared his intention, this morning at breakfast, of calling apon you without loss of time. Shouldn't wonder if he came "Old Horror." says Rounie, irrever-

his glasst near to face. I don't believe he would be in such a hurry to call."continues Mr. Craven, smiling at Cissy, who smiles back at hun, and says, with affected lear-If he had found me substantial flesh and blood that night instead of barren bones, what should I have done?

"I know what I should have done, says Ronnie, viciously. "If he had caught me on that occasion, I should have beaten him black and blue. Death would have been his portion that night. He should never, with my consent have lived to tell the tale." She looks such a ridiculously fragile

creature to be the author of this awful speech that everyone laughs. "I don't think even the Major would be afraid of you," remarks Craven. "Do you know, I'm not sure why I think it, but it seems to me that Jervis is rather put out at your setting down here"-he is speaking now in a low confidential tone to the girls alone, Mrs. Rivers having gone into the next room to write a letter. "He appeared disconcerted when he spoke of your being here, though why I can't imagine."

At this both girls exchange glances; the glances mean: "Ah! Didn't I tell you so? He is Maria's young man!" However, he is such a grumpy old chap always, I dare say it was miagination on my part thinking so," Craven goes on, carelessly, "Miss Occil, did u really mean it, the other day, when you said you adored honey? Because Mrs. Richards—I can't fancy how she knew of your love for it-desired me to tell you thus afternoon she has more than she knows what to do with, and wants to know if she may send you

"Dul she really say that?" asks Cecil eagerly. "Now isn't she an old dear? Give her my love, please, Mr. Craven, and say she may send me some honey as soon as ever she likes, and tell her too, I shall give her a kiss for it the very next moment we meet."
"Happy Richards!" says Mr. Graven.

in a low tone, with an indescribable glance that is half amused, and half earnest, and wholly loving. Ronnie laughs; and then, Mrs. Rivers returning to the room, Craven rises and takes his departure. He has not been gone half an hour when the servant an-nounces—"Major Jervis."

Mrs. Rivers rising, receives him very courteously, and the girls give him their hands with a passably good grace. "Had no idea until the day before yesterday that you and the young ladies had come to reside down here." begins the Major, when he has ensconced himself in the most gomfortable chair in the room and drawn himself close up to the fire. He always calls the girls the young ladies," to Ronnie's intense dis-

"We rather tired of town life," says Mrs. Rivers, finding she must say some-

"Ah, vea! It is disappointing at times," replies the Major, with a meaning glance at Ronnie, who takes no notice of it or him. "By the bye, I saw our common friend Sir Sydney Walcott, in Picced lly last week, looking uncom monly well and happy. You will all be glad to hear good accounts of him; he was such an intimate friend of yours." "Very int mate. I know few people I like so well as Su Sydney," says Mra Rivers, caimly, but she colors as she You have made the acquaintance of Mr. Craven, I hear "remarks the Major, presently. "I am staying with him, you

Yes. He himself told us so just now."
Ah! been here already? Sharp work!" says the Major, and Cecil, who is carnessly regarding him, sees that he starts a little, and that a slight frown contracts his forehead. "Early visiting; wasn't it—eli?"

"Is it early?" asks Mrs. Rivers, lan-uidly. "We hardly thought of that. guidly. "We hardly thought of that. You see, we know so few people down here as yet that we make more th usually welcome any one who is kind enough to break in upon our moneto-

"And he is just the sort of person to make more than usually welcome." returns the Major, with an unpleasant smile. "He is about the best catch down here, or anywhere else that I know of; but yet not to be caught. I think—not to be caught. Ha, ha!"
"I have heard he is very well off," says Mrs. Rivers, coldly.

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A MINK FARM.

What a Bloomin' Fresh Englishman Discovered in the West. "There are some mighty green men in this world," said the passenger from the west to a Chicago Herald man, "and I struck one of 'em a week or two age. If I hadn't I wouldn't be here now. I went out into Western Nebraska and homestended a quarter section. I hadn't seen the land, but took it supposing it was all right. But when I got there I found it already inhabited. About 150 acres of the 160 were covered with a prairie-dog town. Well, I concluded to settle down and see what I could do, and I am nighty glad now that I did. About two weeks ago I was up to the raffroad station trying to get trusted for some bacon and flour and terbacker, an' feelin' right smart discouraged. I was out of money and grub, and the winter was comin' on fast, an' I couldn't see my way out of it but to eat prairie dogs, an' they're mighty hard to catch. But that day was the turning-

know if he was out in the fur country "'Furs,' says I, 'there hain't no fchanged my tune. 'Furs,' says L there hain't so better fur country than this on 'arth Just come out to my place till I

point in my luck. While I was at the

station an Englishman got off the cars an'

said as how he was out West lookin' for a

place to make an investment. Said he'd

peard o' the fur business, an' wanted to

show you my fur farm." "And he went out with me, and I show ed him the prairie-dog town, an', as luck would have it, it was a bright, sunny day, an' the dogs was out scootin' around by

"Talkin' about furs,' says I, what d'ye think of that? I've been six year growin' those mink, an' hain't sold a hide. It's all natural increase. Guess they's 'bout seven thousand of 'em now, an' double every year. How many will there be in ten years? "You oughter see that Englishman's

eyes open as he took out his pencil ap figured it up. He made it 7,165,000 minh. well, says I, call it 5,000,000 to be on the safe side. It won't cost \$1 to keep 'em. either, an' if they're worth a cent they're worth \$1 apiece. There's millions in it. "Then we got right down to business, an' in less than an hour I had sold out for \$7,000 cash, an' the next day I paid \$820 for the bomestead at the land office.

Step into the buffer, with me, partner, and Ancient History Modernized. "Pa," asked Willie Jones, as he was studying his history lesson, who was Helen of Troy?"

got my patent, transferred it to him, and

took the first train for the the East.

"Ask your ma," said Mr. Jones, who was not well up to classic lore. "Helen of Troy," said Mrs. Jones, who was sewing a new beel on the baby's shoe, "was a girl who used to live with us; she came from Troy, N. Y., and we found her in an intelligence office. She was the best girl I ever had until your father

"Did pa ever strike Bridget?" said Willie, pricking up his cars. "I was speaking paragorically," said Mrs. Jones. There was silence for a few momenta then Willie came on another epoch in

struck Bridget."

"Ma who was Mare Antonyt" "An old colored man who lived with my a. What does it say about him there?" "It says his wife's name was Cleopatra." "The very same. Old Cleo' used to

wash for us. It's strange how they came to be in that book." "History repeats itself," murmured Jones vaguely, while Wills looked at his ma with wonder and admiration that one small head should carry all she knew.

Presently he found an other question to sak. "Say, ma, who was Julius Cesar" 'Oh, he was one the pagans of history." said Mrs. Jones, trying to thread the point of her needle.

"But what made him famous" persisted Willie. "Everything," answered Mrs. Jones. complacently. "He was the one who said Rat thou brute, when his horse wouldn't take his onts. He dressed in a sheet and pillow case uniform, and when his enemies surrounded him he shouted, Gimme liberty, or gimme death, and ran away Bully for him," remarked Willie, shut-ting up the book of history. "But say,

ma, how came you to know so much Won't I lay over the other fellows tomorrow? "I learned it at school," said Mrs. Jones. with an oblique glance at Mr. Junea, who was listening as grave as a statue. I had superior advantages, and I paid attention and remembered what I heard."

"Well, I say ma, who was Horace!" "Your pe will tell you about him, I am tired," said Mrs. Jones. Then she listened with pride and ap-proval while Mr. Jones informed his son that Horses was the author of "Tip Trumpet," and a rare work on farming, and the people's choice for a president, and only composed Latin verses to pass

away the time and motive himself. Mrs. Custer Meets Mr. Conkling. A third person of distinction to whom I was presented was Mr. Conkiling Instead of being impressed the moment I asw him with the recollection of his speeches in public life and his career as a statesman, was toolish and triffing enough to notice the rare copphires in his shirt front and to feel a sense of relief on finding that his nose has Ita limits. Inwardly malediction on the caricaturists who have such power to give having impressions with their exaggerated penalis through such widely circulated mediums as the comic papers. I found Mr. Conkling as tall and as handsome as his friends have represented him; but his hair and Vandyke beard are snow white now. You can scarcely imagine how the deliberate, dignified, eloquent sentences fall on my ear amid the ripples of laughter around the and the many gilb tongues all ratiling on as fast as they could chitter. I contrasted the tinkle of many ten bells vehemently ringing with the sounds of a deep-toned church bell heard above them all. Every deliberate sentonce was well worth the

Catching a Thief. A thief in Wilmington, N. C., found his

lines cast in hard places when he tried to cuter a house through a chimner the other night. The lady of the house got up to find out the cause of the noise, and as the night was cold kindled a big wood fire right below where the thief was stuck. After being smoked and roasted for 8 couple of hours the thre-enter was pulled

Catching the First Train. "Any bears about this neighborhood?" asked a young New York sportsman, as he got off the train at a small station in Pennsylvania. While waiting for an an-awer he rested his gun easily on his area and expectorated over his left shoulder. "B'ar?" repeated an old settler. "Yon're jest in time, stranger. The woods is full of 'em. Are we arter b'ar?"

"N-o, not to-day. W-when does the n-next train go e-e-ast ?" Drops of water falling continuously upon a two-inch oak plank would wear a

"Non no," replied the young man,

hole through it in about thirty-five years, The Re Marketing's

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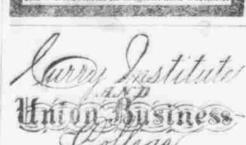
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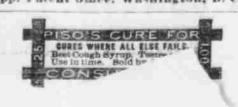
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BY THE DUCKESS.

When Cissy-who, in her enforced n the next room-had listened to the

which Cissy strenuously objected, it was the dark.

To calmly forsake her, desert her in her hour of need! Could anything be more abominable, more base, than such conduct! She knew nothing of the sec-

abandoned her. Even as she so decided, the unforeseen, the marvelous did actually occur. A noise outside attracted her—not that H was very attractive in itself—a breath. a snort, a- Was it, could it be a snore? It was. A veritable, under able prolonged snore.
Miss Rivers laid her hand upon her

and began her journey, through the long, unlighted room, coping to make her escape without discovery. Two doors lay before her, one leading into the half, one into the conservatory. Keeping well in the shadow, she skirted the wall, and possed the first

igs of little value, but undoubted crash that followed. With a load snort, the Major awoke

door leading to the steps and the open air was locked on the inside: yet surely t was this way the figure-the-what-Ugh; nobody after all!" he growled. Well, it's a new experience, but I can't say I think much of it. Tame, very tame. Ugh, ugh, what a draughty hole!"—and so back, still grumbling, to

When Craven comes up to the drawhimself for the second time as to ask languidly:
"Whom have you got in the house besides the servants?"

answer me, walked deliberately This room!" repeats Craven, inno-"Yes, here-there-over on that spot."

"Eh'"-incredulously. "Is your houseweeper a very slim young woman?"
"Well, not so very slim," admits Mr.
Craven, suppressing the fact that both s arms would not meet round Mrs.

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you stay here arguing any longer. Your hands"-touching one of them-"are al-Well, then, if I must"-still wavering. "Remember, it is only out of regard for your great-grandmother's velafter all, if I took them off, could I No: you could not"-decisively; and,

el yet—the snow is so deep in some parts," he replies, avoiding her eyes. way," says Cissy, with quick determination and some faint doubt of him ex-

been so kind to me, and where I have been quite happy. You must not for

do it. It is all like the fulfillment of a positiv dream " But what about you, dearest, sake