

Charlie's Plan.

Charles Somers was only an errand-boy in a great West-end firm of art upholsterers and decorative hangings—a pale, big-eyed child, with brown hair, drooping over his forehead, and a sensitive little mouth, merely one of the bits of human machinery which made the great, glittering whole revolve so smoothly.

At the shop nobody gave him a second thought or a second look; but here at home he was “Charlie,” the youngest and the pet. His chair in the window-seat was kept sacred to him; his little shelf of books was undisturbed, and the ugly little terrier-dog by the fire was petted and caressed, and treated to occasional bones, because it was “Charlie’s.” For even errand-boys occasionally have homes and mothers!

“Why don’t you eat your pie, Charlie?” said Mrs. Somers, watching the progress of his supper with true maternal anxiety. “I baked it on purpose for you, and you are letting it get cold.”

“Just wait a minute, mother,” said Charlie, who had darted away from the table, and was scratching away with a lead-pencil on a bit of buff wrapping paper. “One minute! There Elsie! I thought I could carry the pattern in my eye. What do you call that?” triumphantly holding up the piece of paper.

Elsie Somers—a tall girl, who was stitching away at a roll of pearl-white flannel, carefully enveloped in old linen—leaned over to look at his trophy.

“Oh, how exquisite!” said she “Charlie, where did you get such a pretty pattern?”

Charlie chuckled, and laying down the paper cut deep into the turnover apple pie, and rewarded himself with a mouthful thereof.

“Could you embroider it, Elsie,” said he, “in deep, deep blue—almost black—on an olive-satin ground, or old gold?”

“Could I?” said Elsie. “Of course I could. But what does all this mean? What are you talking about, Charlie?”

“Just this,” said Charlie, swallowing a second mouthful of apple pie. “Three times two is six, ain’t it? And twice six is twelve, and twice twelve is twenty-four, and ten times twenty-four is two hundred and forty.”

“Charlie,” cried Elsie, “are you crazy?”

“Not a bit!” nodded Charlie. “Now listen—you and mother were crying as I came in, because the rent was overdue and the landlord was insolent; and I was wishing I was big enough to pitch the fellow down stairs, or to earn enough to settle with him, and move our traps somewhere else. Now here’s the way to earn two hundred and forty shillings. Twenty into that goes twelve times, don’t it? That’s twelve pounds. Say half of it clear profit.”

“Charlie,” said Mrs. Somers, “I think you must be dreaming.”

“No, I’m not,” said Charlie, chasing the last delicious crumbs of the apple-turnover around the plate, with evident relish, before he pushed it back.

“Only hear me out. There was a lady customer at our shop to-day, Mrs. Vivyan, of Lowndes Square, looking at that very pattern of curtain—light blue flower-de-luce, all wreathed with dark blue vine-leaves, on old gold satin, for four windows. Hand-embroidered, Mr. Sellers said—imported from Paris. And she would have taken it at ten shillings a yard, only Lady Southwood had just ordered it for her boudoir. At least that was what Sellers said. And couldn’t it be matched? Mrs. Vivyan wanted to know. And Sellers said, no, not possible. Now, Elsie, if you’ll embroider the design from these scribbles of mine—I’ll go to Mrs. Vivyan and sell it for you.”

“Oh, Charlie!” cried Elsie, with a gasp at the comprehensiveness of the idea. “But where on earth should we get the material—twenty-four yards of satin?”

“Get the Old Miser to lend it to you,” said Charlie, succinctly.

Elsie shrank back.

“I couldn’t ask him,” said she.

“Then I will,” said Charlie, “if you try the experiment, Elsie. Come—nothing ventured, nothing won. Say yes.”

“Yes,” whispered Elsie.

And away scampered Charlie, to unfold his schemes to an old wood-engraver who lived in the top story of the house, and who, having been nursed through a tedious attack of inflammatory rheumatism by Mrs. Somers and her daughter, was popularly supposed to care somewhat more for them than for the other lodgers.

He was old, and he was shabby, and he had a small account at the savings-bank, which three facts had won him the appellation throughout the tenement house of the Old Miser, but his real name was Jenkins.

“Lend you five pounds, eh?” said Mr. Jenkins, looking up at the lad through his goggles like a huge specimen of the lobster tribe. “Humph! that’s a pretty cool request, ain’t it? What should I lend you five pounds for?”

“Because we need it,” Charlie answered, valiantly.

“And because Elsie and mamma are so—so poor! And because—”

“Because,” said Mr. Jenkins, quietly, “they were good to me when I was sick and alone. That’s the best reason of all. Well, what are you going to do with the five pounds?”

“Speculate, sir,” said Charlie, bravely.

And then he explained his ideas.

“There are the germs of an enterprising business man about you, young fellow,” said Mr. Jenkins. “Yes, I’ll lend you the money—or, rather, I’ll lend it to your sister.”

Mrs. Vivyan was sitting in her boudoir, writing cards of invitation to a musical party, wherewith she was intending doubly to enchant the senses to an especially favored few, when the blue-ribboned maid showed in a little lad, with a bundle under his arm.

“He would insist upon seeing yourself, ma’am,” said Matilda, the maid.

“Would you be so good as to look at these curtains, ma’am,” said Charlie, without allowing the grand lady time to express any surprise at his appearance. “It’s the wild vine and flower-de-luce pattern—peacock blue on old gold, you know.”

And as he unfolded the glittering fabric, exquisitely embroidered in the artistic pattern, Mrs. Vivyan uttered an exclamation of delighted surprise.

“It’s exquisite!” she cried. “It’s superb! Even more beautiful than the other. Did Mr. Sellers get it for me after all, then? And how much do they ask for it?”

“It’s ten shillings a yard,” said wise little Charlie, “and there are twenty-four yards. Enough for four windows.”

“I’ll take them,” said Mrs. Vivyan, promptly. Tell Mr. Sellers—”

“Please I don’t come from the shop,” said the boy valiantly. “My sister embroidered the curtains. I saw how much you were pleased with the pattern last month, and I copied it as nearly as I could, and Elsie—that’s my sister—worked it. And if you are suited with it we shall be very glad, ma’am.”

Mrs. Vivyan took off her jeweled eye glasses and stared at the boy.

“I never heard anything so extraordinary in my life!” said she. “Do you mean to tell me that that exquisite work was done by your sister—here, in this country?”

Charlie’s face beamed with pride.

“Every stitch of it, ma’am,” said he. And he carried back with him the rich lady’s cheque for twelve pounds.

But this was not the end of it. The next day a card came up—Mr. Vivyan’s card, and Mr. Vivyan himself followed it, to Elsie’s secret dismay.

“If I could only have had time to brush out my hair!” thought the girl, not knowing how lovely she looked in the picturesque disorder of her fair, yellow tresses, as she sat at the everlasting embroidery frame.

The gentleman raised his hat as courteously as if she had been a princess of the blood.

“I am Mrs. Vivyan’s emissary,” he said. “She wishes to order a banner-screen to match the curtains, and she hopes that you will undertake the commission.”

“Gladly,” cried Elsie with sparkling eyes.

And the two sat down together to design the pattern, as enthusiastic as two children.

“He’s the pleasantest gentleman I ever saw,” said eager Elsie, when Charlie asked her about the visitor when he returned from the shop. “But I thought you said that she wore eye-glasses and a false front of hair, Charlie?”

“So she did,” said Charlie. “But all ladies wear those wiggly concerns now-a-days.”

“He must be a great deal younger than she,” said Elsie, thoughtfully.

“Married her for her money, probably,” said Charlie, as he sat down to his supper.

Elsie began her banner-screen the next morning. Old Mr. Jenkins had been repaid his loan with interest, the landlord was paid, a score of petty debts had been settled in various directions, and still there remained a little residue in the family treasury. No wonder that the golden-haired girl sung at her work.

Mr. Vivyan called the next day to take Miss Somers to a “Needlework Exhibition,” where there was a device of water-lily buds, something similar to the flower-de-luce stalks.

Afterwards he bought a book of old engravings, with illuminated borders, for her to look at; and there was the Renaissance to discuss, and the growing pattern on the old gold satin to criticize.

And one day Mrs. Vivyan herself wrote a note to Elsie:

“I want you to come and look at my conservatory *protieres*,” she said. “They are stiff and ugly, and I know that you could remodel them. I have heard so much of your artistic skill that I am beginning to have great faith in you.”

And Elsie entered the rich lady’s carriage, and was driven to Lowndes Square. Mrs. Vivyan welcomed her with the sweetest grace and cordiality.

“My dear,” she said, “I am glad to see you.”

Elsie glanced timidly at her. Oh, how old and wrinkled she seemed, to be his wife!

“Your husband told me—” she began.

“My husband!” repeated the elder lady. “I have no husband, child. I have been a widow for fifteen years. It isn’t possible that you mistook Herbert for—my husband! It isn’t possible, my little shy beauty, that you are ignorant that he loves you?”

Elsie turned first red, then pale; she might have fallen if her arm had not been gently drawn through a stronger one.

“Mother,” said Mr. Vivyan, “you have spoken too abruptly. Miss Somers is taken by surprise.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Vivyan, smiling, “go and look at the conservatory *protieres*. I will wait for you here.”

The end of it is easily to be conjectured. Mrs. Somers’ pretty daughter is queen of the Lowndes Square house and a pretty country abode in Kent, and Mrs. Vivyan senior has subsided into a graceful dowager.

Mrs. Somers toils no longer now, and little Charlie has exchanged the drudgery of the shop for school.

And all this romance grew out of a tangle of flower-de-luce blossoms and wild vine-leaves!

So truth is oftentimes stranger than fiction.

In a Russian Prison.

In the cells of the upper and middle tiers are put the least compromised criminals. All the cells are of the same size—ten feet long, seven feet broad and twelve feet high. The doors have each two openings—one large enough for the daily food and drink to be put in through it and the other of smaller size, to serve as spy hole for the jailors. The doors are also each fastened with two padlocks—the key of one being in the jailer’s custody, while that of the other remains in charge of the commandant of the fortress. The dish from which the prisoner eats is pushed through grooves cut in a plate of iron which projects from the interior of the door, at the height of about four feet from the floor. The dish cannot, therefore, be removed by the prisoner, who must take his food standing against the door—and this with a spoon which is attached to the plate. The drinking water is put into a sort of jug hinged to the door. When the prisoner wishes a drink he must get down upon his knees and turn the vessel upon its hinges or pivots. Food is supplied at eleven o’clock in the morning and six in the evening, and ordinarily consists of oatmeal gruel and a quarter of a kilogram of meat; besides this there is a daily allowance of a kilogram of rye bread.

The prisoner’s bed consists of a plank, six by three, with a straw mattress, a sheet so strong and coarse that it is impossible to tear it, and a covering of felt—all of which articles are taken away during the day. The dress consists of a gray woolen jacket quite short and tight-fitting; short pantaloons of the same color, and long felt boots. For women the jacket is supplied, and a gray shirt added. The prisoners must get up at six o’clock and go to bed again at eight. It has been ascertained, by means of the secret observations which are constantly taken through the peepholes, that, as a general rule, the prisoners spend their long hours from their rising until their breakfast in pacing to and fro in their cells; after this they are wont to remain quiet for an hour or so, only to give way next to an excess of desolate despair which their pitiable situation may well inspire.

Queer German Decisions.

The highest court of Germany decided a queer case in a queerer manner. A butcher’s wife obtained a divorce on the ground of desertion. He appealed, declaring that she had driven him from home by injurious and defamatory expressions, and was, therefore, the really guilty party. The court, however, nonsuited him, and held that, since “both parties belonged to the lower classes, where such expressions were common, there was nothing defamatory in them.” A Berlin saloon-keeper entertained some guests after the legal hour for closing. A policeman appeared among the *convives*, when the publican exclaimed: “Gentlemen, the policeman got in through the window.” The officer brought him up for defaming him in the discharge of his duty, but the policeman was acquitted. “The intention of ridiculing the officer was clear,” said the judge, but the expression itself was not wisely chosen. For, since it would have been the duty of the policeman to come in through the window, instead of through the back door, as he actually did, if he had had no other means of ingress, the charge of the publican, though false, was not defamatory.

About Women.

Something that will interest and amuse.

The only possible secrets between two married people should be those which are confided to either one of them by others. While some people, who call themselves worldly wise, will laugh at the idea of such perfect confidence as this implies, others still, especially the newly married, who have but small worldly experience, will be shocked that I should suggest the keeping of any kind of secret by either wife or husband from the other. I am not prepared to say that these last are not the wiser of the two. Only, in that case, when any confidence is proffered to either husband or wife, the recipient of it should make his or her position clearly understood.

Possibly there is a certain hardness toward old friends in requiring them either to dispense with the sympathy we have been wont to give them, or else to submit their weakness and trial to the cold judgment, the cynical consideration of a man or a woman who has for them no tender toleration born of loving intimacy. Yet it would be better to refuse ever to listen to another confidence while the world stands than to receive a secret to keep when its custody would be a wound to one whose happiness should be our first object. Some wives and some husbands are large-minded enough and free enough from jealousy not to be troubled by the knowledge that a confidence has been bestowed in which they cannot share, and then there can be no harm in such a confidence.

But no personal secret can fitly belong to one only of the two people of whom love and law have made one flesh. The very ideal of marriage had been realized by that old judge, who had knelt for so many years to say a last prayer at night beside his wife, and when at last she had left him, his lips were dumb and without her he could not even open his heart to God.

One frequent cause of trouble in married life is a want of openness in business matters. A husband marries a pretty, thoughtless girl, who has been used to taking no more thought as to how she should be clothed than the lilies of the field. He begins by not liking to refuse any of her requests. He will not hint, so long as he can help it, at care in trifling expenses—he does not like to associate himself in her mind with disappointments and self-denial. And she, who would have been willing enough, in the sweet eagerness to please her girlish love, to give up any whims or fancies of her own whatever, falls into habits of careless extravagance, and feels herself injured when, at last, a remonstrance comes. How much wiser would have been perfect openness in the beginning.

“We have just so much money to spend this summer. Now, shall we arrange matters thus or thus?” was a question I heard a very young husband ask his still younger bride not long ago; and all the womanhood in her answered to this demand upon it, and her help at planning and counseling proved not a thing to be despised, though hitherto she had “fed upon the roses and lain among the lilies of life.” I am not speaking of marriages that are no marriages—where Venus has wedded Vulcan—because Vulcan prospered at his forge—but marriages where two true hearts have set out together, for love’s sake, to learn the lessons of life and live together till death shall part them. And one of the first lessons for them to learn is to trust each other entirely. The most frivolous girl of all “The rosebud garden of girls,” if she truly loves, acquires something of womanliness from her love, and is ready to plan and help make her small sacrifices for the general good. Try her and you will see.

But if you fail to tell her just how much you have, and just what portion of it can be properly spent, and what portion should be saved for the nest-egg in which her interest is not less than your own, then you cannot justly blame her if she is careless and self-indulgent, and wishes to-day to want to-morrow.

There are thousands of little courtesies, also, that should not be lost sight of in the cruel candor of marriage. The secret of a great social success is to wound no one’s self-love. The same secret will go far toward making marriage happy. Many a woman who would consider it an unpardonable rudeness not to listen with an air of interest to what a mere acquaintance is saying, will have no less scruple in showing her husband that his talk wears her. Of course, the best thing is when talk does not weary—when two people are so unified in taste that whatever interests the one is of equal interest to the other, but this cannot always be the case, even in a happy marriage; and it is not better worth while to take the small trouble of paying courteous attention to the one who depends on you for his daily happiness than even to bestow this courtesy on the acquaintance, whom it is a transient pleasure to please?—*Louise Chandler Moulton, in Our Continent.*

Scraps.

A three year old little girl at Rochester, N. Y., was taught to close her evening prayer, during the temporary absence of her father, with, “and please watch over my papa.” It sounded very sweet, but the mother’s amusement may be imagined when she added, “And you’d better keep an eye on mamma too!”

A Boston type-maker, who occasionally dumps old type into his melting kettle, has several times been scared half out of his wits by violent explosions in the molten fluid, and now, after investigation into the cause thereof, he requests the printers of New England not to buy any more pistol cartridges into their old type.

A celebrated vocalist, whose demeanor and acting were as awkward and ungainly as his voice was beautiful, said one day to Charles Bannister: “Do you know what made my voice so melodious?” “No,” replied Bannister. “Why, then, when I was fifteen, I swallowed by accident some train oil.” “I don’t think,” rejoined Bannister, “it would have done you any harm if, at the same time you had swallowed a dancing master.”

“Why, Franky, I never knew you before to ask for preserves a second time.” Franky didn’t say much, but his little brother Tommy, who was innocent of the ways of bad boys, spoke up, with a guileless smile on his pure, little face, and said: “That’s because Franky lost the key he made to open the pantry. That’s why he never used to want much preserves at the supper table. He used to get all he wanted before supper, but now he can’t open the pantry.” After Franky’s father had administered the proper corrective, and the stricken youth was left alone in the shed to repent of his crime, Tommy remarked to himself, as he sat down to study his Sunday school lesson: “I expect poor Franky is sorry he didn’t give me some of them preserves when I asked him for them. He will know better the next time.”

Convicts at Dartmoor Prison, in England, make skeleton keys out of the bones of their meat. Nothing could be more appropriate. Their escape by this means reminds us of one of those skeleton leaves.

To get up a dimer of great variety, cooks should be allowed a wide range.

Men who have money to loan take the greatest possible interest in their business.

A gentleman had his picture taken recently; cost him \$200, and still he is not happy. A fellow took it out of the hall when the latch was up.

The reason that aesthetics so admire the story is that he can stand for hours on one leg and look as though he didn’t know anything and didn’t want to.

It is an undeniable fact that nearly all centenarians are poor and have been poor all their lives. If you wish to live to a good old age, young men, never advertise.

The Blood-Stanching Weed.

During the French expedition to Mexico General Martroy was informed by a native that a plant grew in his district which was largely used in the domestic surgery of the Mexicans, and he advised the General to lay in a stock of it for use in the French camp. It goes by the name of “the blood-stanching weed”—the exact native word has not been placed on record. This plant has the property, when applied after being chewed or crushed, of almost instantly arresting the flow of blood from a wound. General Martroy brought home some specimens of this plant to France, and cultivated it in his garden at Versailles, where it has thriven excellently ever since, blossoms every year and produces a sort of fruit. Meanwhile its transplantation to European soil has not robbed it of the quality for which it was originally recommended to its introducer. Its recognized botanical name is *Tradescantia erecta*. Although it is quite the reverse of an ornamental plant, and is not distinguished by any beauty of shape or color in its flowers, it fully deserves, if we may trust our informant, to be widely cultivated on account of its rare medical value. The practicability of its acclimatization is now placed beyond all doubt. Its effect in stanching bleeding is said to surpass all means hitherto applied to this purpose, and it is in any case to be procured cheaply and easily. Experiments have been made with it in Vienna, and the *New York Press*, of that city, advises its regular cultivation for medical use.

William Taylor tells of a young preacher who took his audience on this wonderful flight of fancy: “Yes, my friends, the mind of man is so expansive that it can soar from star to star, from satchelite to satchelite, and from seraphene to seraphene, and from cherrybeam to cherrybeam, and from thence to the center of the doom of heaven.”

Pious Reflections.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens,” was the solemn admonition of Him who sublimely bore the burdens of the entire world.

—Preserve your conscience always soft and sensitive. If but one sin force its way into that tender part of the soul and dwell easy there, the road is paved for a thousand iniquities.

Our lives should be like the days, more beautiful in the evening, or like the spring, aglow with promise, and like autumn, rich with golden sheaves when good words and deed have ripened on the field.

“Let love be without dissimulation.” Let your profession of it be sincere and not hypocritical. Do not wear a mask, pretending to be one thing, while you are another. “Love not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Men may not appreciate your labors, nor reward you for your toil, but you may rest assured that labor faithfully performed, with an eye to the divine glory, shall not fail of its reward. If it is not rewarded here, it will be hereafter. Then be patient; labor on; do your duty, and leave the result with God.

There are two sides to a question, but, where our feelings are concerned, we are apt to look at but one, and that the one that justifies us. We forget that others have also a right to their opinions, and they view the matter in an entirely different light. It is well to consider both sides before deciding what is right.

They say that I am growing old, because my hair is silvered, and there are crows’ feet on my forehead, and my step is not so firm and elastic as before. But they are mistaken. That is not me. The brow is wrinkled, but the brow is not me. This is the house I live in. But I am young, younger than I ever was before.

THE LABOR OF LOVE.—A century ago, in the north of Europe, stood an old cathedral, upon one of the arches of which was a sculptured face of wondrous beauty. It was long hidden until one day the sun’s light striking through a slated window revealed its matchless features. And ever after, year by year, upon the days when for a brief hour it was thus illumined, crowds came and waited eagerly to catch but a glimpse of that face. It had a strange history. When the cathedral was being built, an old man, broken with the weight of years and care, came and besought the architect to let him work upon it. Out of pity for his age, but fearful lest his failing sight and trembling touch might mar some fair design, the master set him to work in the shadows of the vaulted roof. One day they found the old man asleep in death, the tools of his craft laid in order beside him, the cunning of his right hand gone, his face upturned to this marvelous face which he had wrought—the face of one whom he had loved and lost in early manhood. And when the artists and sculptors and workmen from all parts of the cathedral came and looked upon that face they said: “This is the grandest work of all! Love wrought this!” In the great cathedral of the ages—the temple being builded for an habitation of God we shall learn some time that love’s work is the grandest of all.

How to Spoil a Husband.

Henpeck him.
Snarl at him.
Find fault with him.
Keep an untidy house.
Humor him half to death.
Boss him out of his boots.
Always have the last word.
Be extra cross on wash-day!
Quarrel with him over trifles.
Never have meals ready in time.
Run bills without his knowledge.
Vow vengeance on all his relations.
Let him sew the buttons on his shirts.
Pay no attention to household expenses.
Give as much as he can earn in a month for a new bonnet.
Tell him as plainly as possible that you married him for a living.
Raise a row if he dares to bow pleasantly to an old lady friend.
Provide any sort of pick-up meals for him when you don’t expect strangers.
Get everything the woman next door gets whether you can afford it or not.
Tell him the children inherit all their mean traits of character from his side of the family.
Let it out sometimes when you are vexed that you wished you had married some other fellow that you used to go with.
Give him to understand as soon as possible after the honeymoon that kissing is well enough for spooney lovers, but that for married folks it is very silly.—*Christian Advocate.*