

Unresponsive.

He loved me, but I loved not him, I know not why. It was a whim...

ONLY A BUTTON.

A cheerful south room with a bay window full of blossoming plants, a bright fire glowing behind a burnished grate...

She was a plump, fair-faced young matron of some four or five and twenty, with bright auburn hair, soft blue eyes...

"Fanny," said Mr. Chickery, looking up from his newspaper, "did you call on those Carters to-day?"

"No, I never thought of it." "And they leave town to-morrow morning; and Carter is absurdly sensitive to all slights, fancied or real."

"Well, I did intend to," pouted Mrs. Chickery, "but one can't think of everything."

"You cannot it seem?" "It appears to me you are making a mountain out of a mole hill," said she, rather tartly.

"It may affect my business very seriously. Carter's house carries great influence with it."

Mrs. Chickery was silent, patting the velvet carpet with her foot in a manner that indicated annoyance.

"I shall have to leave very early to-morrow morning," said her husband, presently.

"To go to Scenersville about Aunt Elizabeth's will?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I wouldn't, Frank."

"Why not?"

"It's such a bitter cold weather to travel in; and Aunt Elizabeth is such a whimsical old woman, it's as likely as not she'll change her mind about making a will when you get there. I would wait a little, if I were you."

Mr. Chickery smiled.

"That would be your system of doing things but not mine."

"My system, Frank! What do you mean?"

"I mean that you believe in putting things off indefinitely, and not always in the wisest manner. I wish you would break yourself of that habit. Believe me, it will some day bring you to grief."

Mrs. Chickery contracted her eyebrows.

"I don't believe in being lectured, Frank."

"And I don't very often lecture you, my dear; pray give me credit for that."

"You didn't think you were marrying an angel when you took me I hope?"

"No, my love. I thought I was marrying a very pretty little girl, who few faults might easily be corrected."

"Faults! Have I any great faults, Frank?"

"Little faults may sometimes entail great consequences."

"If you could any more I shall go out of the room."

"You need not, for I am going myself to pack my valise. By the way, there's a button off the shirt I want to wear to-morrow. I wish you would come up stairs and sew it on for me."

"I will, presently."

"Why can't you come now?"

"I just want to finish this book; there's only one more chapter."

Fanny opened her volume so resolutely that her husband thought it best not to contest the question.

Sitting all alone in front of the bright fire, Mrs. Chickery gradually grew drowsy, and before she knew it she had drifted off into the shadowy regions of dreamland.

She was roused by the clock striking 11.

"Dear me! how late it is!" she thought, with a little start. "I must go up stairs immediately. There, I forgot to tell the cook about having breakfast at 5 o'clock to-morrow morning, and, of course, she's abed and asleep by this time. I will be up early enough to see to it myself, that will do just as well."

Laying this salve on her conscience, Mrs. Chickery turned off the gas and crept drowsily up the stairs.

"Fanny, Fanny, its past 5 and cook hasn't come down stairs yet. Are you sure you spoke to her last night?"

Mrs. Chickery rubbed her eyes and looked sleepily around.

"Oh, Frank, I forgot all about speaking to her last night," she said, with conscience-stricken face. "But I'll run right up; she can have breakfast ready in a very few minutes."

She sprang out of bed, thrust her feet into a pair of silk-lined slippers, and threw her shawl over her shoulders.

Mr. Chickery bit his lip and checked her.

"No need, Fanny," he said, a little bitterly. "I must leave the house in fifteen minutes or miss the only through train. It's of no use speaking to cook now."

"I'm so sorry, Frank."

Mr. Chickery did not answer; he was apparently absorbed in turning over the

various articles in his bureau drawer, while Fanny sat shivering on the edge of the bed, cogitating how hard it was for her husband to start on a long journey that bitter morning without any breakfast.

"I can make a cup of coffee myself over the furnace fire," she exclaimed, springing to her feet.

But Mr. Chickery again interposed. "Sit down, Fanny, please. I would rather you would sew this button on the neck of my shirt. I have packed the others—those that are fit to wear. I have shirts enough, but not in repair."

Fanny cringed as she remembered how often in the course of the last month or two she had solemnly promised herself a day to the much needed renovation of her husband's shirts. She looked around for her thimble.

"I left it down-stairs last night. I'll get it in a minute."

The housemaid had just kindled a fire in the sitting-room grate; it was blazing and crackling cheerily among the fresh coals, and Fanny could not resist the temptation of pausing a moment to warm her chilled fingers, and watch the greenish purple spires of flame shoot merrily up the chimney, until she heard her husband's voice calling her imperatively.

"Fanny, Fanny! what are you doing?"

"Oh, dear!" thought the wife, as she ran up-stairs, "I wish Frank wouldn't be so cross. He's always in a hurry."

Little Mrs. Chickery never stopped to think that the real reason was that she, his wife, was never "in a hurry."

The needle threaded, the thimble fitted on, an appropriate button was next to be selected.

"Oh, dear, Frank, I haven't one the right size!"

"Sew on what you have, then; but be quick!"

But Fanny was quite certain there was just the right button somewhere in her work-basket, and stopped to search for it.

"There, I told you so!" she cried triumphantly, holding it up on the end of her needle.

"Well, well, sew it on quick!" said Mr. Chickery, glancing at his watch nervously.

"That's just your worrying way, Frank; as if anybody could sew a button on well in a hurry. There! my needle has come unthreaded."

"Oh, Fanny, Fanny!" sighed her husband, fairly out of patience at last. "Why didn't you do it last night, as I begged of you? I shall miss the train, and what little chance we had of a place in Aunt Elizabeth's will will be sacrificed to your miserable habit of being behind-hand."

Fanny gave him the shirt and began to whimper a little, but Mr. Chickery had neither the time nor the inclination to pause to soothe her petulant manifestation of grief. He finished his dressing, caught up his valise with a hurriedly spoken "good-by," and ran down stairs two steps at a time into the street.

"There he goes," murmured Fanny, "and he's gone away cross with me, and all for nothing but a miserable button! I wish there wasn't such a thing as a button in the world!"

(A wish which we must misdo, many another wife than Mrs. Chickery has echoed, with perhaps better reason.)

Mrs. Chickery was sitting down to her little dinner, with a daintily browned chicken, a tumbler of currant jelly, a curly bunch of celery ranged before her, when, to her surprise, the door opened and in walked her lord and husband.

"Why, Frank, where on earth did you come from?" cried the astonished wife.

"From the office," very coolly answered Mr. Chickery.

"But I thought you were off for Scenersville in such a hurry?"

"I found myself just five minutes too late for the train, after having run all the way to the depot."

"Oh, that was too bad."

"Chickery began to smile a little as he began to carve the chicken."

"Yes, I was a little annoyed at first; it did seem rather provoking to be kept at home by only a shirt button."

"What are you going to do?"

"Why, I shall make a second start to-morrow."

"I'll see to it that your breakfast is ready this time. To the second, and all your wardrobe in trim," said Fanny, rather relieved at the prospect of a chance of retrieving her character.

"You need not. I have engaged a room at a hotel near the depot. I can't run any more risks."

He did not speak unkindly, and yet Fanny felt that he was deeply displeased with her.

"But Frank—"

"We will not discuss the matter any further, my dear, if you please. I have resolved to say nothing more to you about reforms. I see its useless, and only tends to foster an unpleasant state of feeling between us. Shall I help you to some more macaroni?"

Fairly silenced, Fanny ate her dinner with what appetite was left her.

Three days afterward Mr. Chickery once more made his entrance, just at dusk, valise in hand, while Fanny sat enjoying the ruddy light of the coal fire and the consciousness of having performed her duty in the mending and general renovation of her husband's drawerful of shirts—a job which she had long been dreading and postponing.

"Well, how is Aunt Elizabeth?" questioned Mrs. Chickery, when her husband, duly welcomed and greeted, had seated himself in the opposite easy-chair.

"Dead," was the brief reply.

"Dead! Oh, Frank! Of her old enemy, apoplexy?"

"Yes."

"Was her will made?"

"It was. Apparently she had expected me on the day she herself appointed; and on my non-arrival on the only train that stops she sent for the village lawyer, made her will, and left all her property to the orphan asylum in Scenersville, with a few bitter words to the effect that the neglect of her only living nephew had induced her, on the spur of the moment, to alter her original intention of leaving it to him. She died the next morning."

"Oh, Frank, how much was it?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

There was a moment or two of silence, then Mr. Chickery added composedly:

"You see, Fanny, how much that missing button has cost me."

Mrs. Chickery sat like one condemned by the utterance of her own conscience. Not alone the one missing button, but the scores—nay, hundreds—of trifling omissions forgetfulness and postponements which made her life one endless endeavor to "catch up" with the transpiring present, seemed to present themselves before her mind's eye. What would this end in? Was not the present lesson sufficiently momentous to her to teach her to train herself in a different school?

She rose and came to her husband's side, laying one tremulous hand on his shoulder. "There shall be no more missing buttons, my love," she said earnestly.

He comprehended all that she left unspoken, and silently pressed the little hand in his own, and not a word more was said upon the subject.

But it was not forgotten. Mrs. Chickery set herself resolutely to work to uproot the rank weeds growing in the garden of her life. And she succeeded, as we all may do when we resolve to do a wise thing.

INN-KEEPERS ABROAD.

Their Little Swindles and a Way to Circumvent Them.

The pitfalls which the inn-keepers prepare for the Americans are as whimsical and curious as they are numerous. He who speaks only the English language has no show whatever, and his best course is to submit with good humor, and go his way. The ready device of not understanding what you mean, although you may be employing the most variegated and vigorous imprecations known to Anglo-Saxon ears, in common everywhere. And what can you say against a blank stare, or do against an outstretched "addition" with your trunk on the omnibus, and your train, or steamer, about to start? Perhaps, anticipating this very situation, you have demanded your bill some hours before. It will serve you little. You may ask, and ask again, and it will be denied you till the last moment. This is a favorite and effective trick, and nearly always wins. Now and then, of course, it doesn't.

For example a friend of mine the other day came to settle for his night's lodging at a bed-buggy little hole in the wall near the railway station here in Nouchatel called the Hotel des Alps. In addition to the charge for apartment, service, lights, etc., was the item "undejeuner." I will put into plain English that which followed:

"What is this?" said my friend, with a simulation of bad French, though he spoke the language like a native.

"That, Monsieur? That is breakfast."

"Breakfast! but I had no breakfast."

"That is very true; but monsieur might have had it if he desired."

"The devil I might."

"Yes, monsieur."

"But I didn't order any breakfast."

"That was no fault of the house, monsieur."

"Do you mean to tell me that you wish to charge me for breakfast if neither ordered nor ate."

"This breakfast was prepared all the same, monsieur."

"But I took the room only, and was to pay simply for what I got."

"It is a rule of the house, monsieur, to charge every one for breakfast."

"Then you pretend that you provide a regular table d'hotel breakfast every morning and charge for it whether your guests take it or not?"

"Yes, monsieur. See the menu? Here it is," and the firm, yet polite landlord produced his regular "a la carte." My friend turned it upside down. Then he carefully perused it. Then he said:

"How much of this do you serve as your regular breakfast?"

"Very well, receipt the bill, and as I am to pay for a breakfast, please God I will eat it. Bring me a fillet of beef with mushrooms, a half chicken grille, a small omelette, and a pint of Chablis. I shall wait over until the next train."

Minerhost of the Hotel des Alps looked first stupefied and then disgusted, and, finally grasping the situation, he ran into his office, altered his bill in conformity with the facts, and, hurrying back, cried: "Here, monsieur. Here is your bill quite correct—six francs, thirty-five centimes—and you will just have time to catch your train."

Work of the Big Volcanoes.

At Vesuvius in the celebrated eruption of A. D. 79, it is said to have thrown out more lava and ashes than would build another mountain of its own size; its ashes were carried to Constantinople and into Syria and Egypt, while stones of eight pounds weight were cast into the streets of Pompeii, six miles distant. Etna, in 1680, disgorged more than twenty times its own mass, and nearly ninety years later poured forth a flood which covered eighty-four square miles of surface and measured nearly one hundred million cubic feet. After the eruption of the same mountain in 1810 the molten sea kept moving at the rate of a yard a day for about nine months, and did not become thoroughly cold and solid for ten years. From thirty to forty million cubic feet of matter have repeatedly been discharged from the greater volcanoes. Tunguragua, in the Andes, in 1797, filled up valleys one thousand feet wide and six hundred feet deep.

Cotopaxi has projected from its crater a block 109 cubic yards in bulk a distance of nine miles, while its roar has been heard for more than 600. Java's volcanoes are perhaps the most noted of the world, their eruptions destroying from one to four thousand lives at a time. Earthquakes have been attended with more widely fatal results, as a rule, than volcanic upheavals. In Ceclia, in 1298, 60,000 persons perished from one shock or series of shocks; in 1456, Naples furnished 40,000 victims, and in 1626, 70,000. The Lisbon earthquakes of 1531 and 1755 each destroyed from 30,000 to 60,000 lives. The havoc wrought in Yeddo, Japan, in 1703, is known to us, of course, only by tradition, but the figures from this source reach the appalling height of 200,000 souls. So, it will be seen, the disaster which visited New Zealand in June will have to make a startling record if it is to be placed in the first class of destructive convulsions.

A Seashore Romance.

When Kenneth Farley reached Vineta, a little seashore on the Jersey coast, it was after a rainy drive of several miles from the railroad. He was quite wet through, and was in no very gentle mood when the landlady told him he was too late for supper, and demurred about lighting the kitchen fire anew to cook him anything, he fairly lost his temper.

As the landlady moved off, saying she would see what could be done, he uttered an angry expletive, and, striding up to the fireplace where some logs were burning brightly, gave a vicious kick at one of them.

"Devil take it," he said. "I wish I had never come to this beastly place."

A half-uttered sigh startled him. He had thought himself alone in the room, but looking around, he saw that a large, deep arm-chair, at the side of the fireplace, sheltered an occupant.

Kenneth turned a guilty scarlet. Here was a lady—undoubtedly a real lady—who had caught him swearing in her presence. To make matters worse, from one point of view, at least, she was both young and pretty. He stammered, pulled his moustache, and then began nervously to apologize.

"I hope you will excuse me," he said. "I have used language very unbecoming in a gentleman; but I did not know there was a lady present."

It was a lame excuse, he felt, and he was not surprised at the result. For the dark-violet eyes were slowly lifted to his face with a calm, unfathomable look, while a low musical voice replied: "If you will excuse my saying it, I think gentlemen have no right to use such language, either in or out of a lady's presence. I did not know that gentlemen," with emphasis on the word, "did it."

Kenneth turned more red than before at this sharp reproof, and got out of the room as quickly as possible, for at that moment, fortunately, his supper was announced, and he had an excuse for leaving.

Kenneth Farley had not a susceptible nature. He was 28; he was rich and good-looking; but very few women had found even passing favor in his eyes. But it often happens that men who have escaped heart-whole for years are suddenly precipitated into the abyss of love. It happened so to Kenneth now.

He had risen early to stroll about, for the storm was over and the sun shone brightly; and when he returned to the house breakfast was being served. Miss Onslow—for that, as he had found on looking at the hotel register, was the name of the young lady—was already seated at the table, but when he bowed somewhat hesitatingly she answered only with a slight, cool inclination of the head.

The six weeks which Kenneth had intended to give to the seashore lengthened into eight; for by this time he had become madly in love, and he could not tear himself away. Several times he decided to go, but at the last moment he changed his mind. Yet he felt his chance grow less and less every day; the more so as the hotel was now full, and Miss Onslow had plenty of suitors.

The bathing season had opened, when one morning he met Miss Onslow going to the beach very early; in fact, before the guests at Vineta generally had left the beds.

"Are you for a dip to-day?" he said, eagerly. "May I not go in with you? Isn't the surf grand? Aren't you almost afraid of it?"

For there had evidently been a storm out at sea; a cyclone, perhaps, so high ran the waves, so loud roared the breakers.

"Thanks!" she said coldly. "But I'd much rather go alone. And I'm not the least afraid!"

A deep flush overspread Kenneth's face. At first he felt like turning on his heel and striding away. But love was stronger than pride.

"You have never forgiven me, I know, for my conduct that first night. You are unjust."

"Mr. Farley," she said, indignantly, her dark eyes giving a quick, angry flash, "when were you appointed my mentor?"

A look of pain crossed his face as with a sudden appealing gesture he cried: "Oh, Ethel—Miss Onslow—have pity! Don't you know I love you?"

She drew back with a quick, nervous start. But he went on passionately: "I have loved you since the very hour we met. Do not let a first impression bias your mind forever. You are dearer to me than my life. Let me try to earn your esteem. Give me a chance—"

"Impossible!" she interrupted, in a cold, hard voice.

"Then," he said, bitterly, as he turned and left her, "I have nothing more to say."

He walked on and on, along the strand, and to the curving cape which sheltered Vineta from the north winds, resolving to leave for home that very night.

At last, flinging himself down on the wet sand, he watched the tempestuous waves, which seemed to embody the tumult in his mind.

Quite an hour passed, and still he lay there. Presently something caught his eye; a black object tossed by the waves, but slow drifting out to sea.

"Good heaven!" he cried, springing to his feet, and tossing off his coat in desperate haste. "What if—"

For he remembered Ethel. What if it were she out there at sea and drifting to her death!

This awful supposition chilled his blood. Heedless of the risk he ran he plunged into the sea and swam out toward the object. It rose and fell with the motion of the waves. But there was no longer any doubt as to what it was. It was a woman's figure, prone upon its back and seemingly insensible.

Was she floating or was she dead? A terrible agony took possession of Kenneth's mind. "Ethel!" he cried in ringing tones. "Ethel! Ethel!"

There was no answer. She was too distant to hear. Faster and faster the apparently inanimate figure drifted out to sea!

It was Ethel, he knew now. The surf had been too strong for her, and swept her off her feet, and she had only saved herself from drowning by throwing herself upon her back. She could not swim, but she could float. Her strength was almost gone when Kenneth reached her. She had heard, but was too weak to answer his wild appeal; she could not,

even now, reply to him; she was barely able to turn her head.

Desperation had lent him the strength of a giant. He had battled the waves successfully where another would have failed. As he reached her her eyes for one moment rested on his face. Then the long strained muscles relaxed, and only his protecting arm kept her above water, otherwise she would have sunk forever.

It was one of heaven's and love's miracles that he ever reached the shore; but he knelt at last on the beach, holding her in his arms and kissing her to consciousness again.

She opened her eyes and met the look of passionate adoration fastened on her face.

"You are mine!" Kenneth said, in a low, scarcely audible voice. "I will save you from death. I will never give you up!"

Perhaps it was her weakness; perhaps a secret tenderness she had long striven against; perhaps a sense of injustice to him and this noble return he had made for it; but whatever it was she allowed him to hold her there in his arms, and she smiled when he kissed her.

Art of the Aztecs.

It is a long time since students of American antiquities had their attention first called to the strange little heads which have been dug up in immense quantities in Mexico, upon the plain called the Path of the Dead, at Seotihuacan. They are generally quite small, from one to two inches long, and invariably have a neck or handle attached to them behind, not to represent the human neck, but merely as a convenient means of fastening them to some sort of a body made of other material. At least that is the inference from the appearance. These little terra cotta heads have been often commented upon and have been used as arguments in favor of this or that view of Aztec origin or custom, but no systematic study of them has been made, although they exist in great numbers in various museums. The Academy of Natural Sciences has some of them, which were once in Peal's museum; at the Smithsonian there is a large collection, and at the National museum in the City of Mexico a still larger. There they are labeled inquiringly, "Idols or ex-votos?"

In the last number of the "American Journal of Archaeology," Zelia Nuttall, perhaps a daughter of the author of the "North American Sylva," has a very interesting paper upon these heads. In it an attempt is made to classify them and to show that they represent individuals, men or women, among the Aztecs, and that the strange head dresses upon many of them correspond exactly with those described by the Spanish eye witnesses as worn at different times—sometimes according to caprice of fashion, sometimes at religious festivals, or in the exercise of military or judicial functions. In classifying them it is found that they correspond to three orders of development. The earliest are simply like masks, without backs to the heads or ornaments of any sort; those of the middle class have rounded heads, with grooves and holes for the adjustment of head dresses, which were afterward affixed, while in the latest class the head dresses, including very elaborate and extraordinary arrangements of curls and puffs of the hair, are represented in the molded clay, as well as feathers and skins, gold and precious stones.

Extracts are given from Spanish writers, who describe the figures of their idols and of their priests and victims, the military classes and the fashionable women, and they are found to correspond with what is found molded in these terra cottas. Moreover, it is shown that to this day the manufacture of small wax and clay figures, which are dressed as dolls, is carried on extensively, and that at Puebla are made by Indians of the Aztec race truly wonderful groups of fine clay figures not half an inch in height. The skill of the Indian potters of Guadalajara is lauded throughout Mexico, and the writer has often been told of certain individuals there who, after a moment's observation only, can reproduce in clay with extraordinary fidelity not only the features of a stranger, but the whole figure, with details of a complex modern costume.

The conclusion, therefore, is come to that the little heads are in all probability portraits of persons. The heads are always in repose, and in some the eyes are closed, which, in the picture writings, means death. The same head dresses are found upon faces young and smooth, or with sunken cheeks and elongated jaws. A deity would not be so represented, but a conventional character having been decided upon he would be always portrayed accordingly. The heads are made of too many varieties of clay for them to have all come from the same place. They are intended to be attached to bodies made of some perishable material. They may be arranged in classes, representing either different periods or merely exhibiting greater or less skill of workmanship. They wear in common a limited variety of headgear, and the reasons given by recent writers for assigning the clay heads of Seotihuacan to remote and unknown periods cease to exist, as the evidence of trustworthy writers show that closely similar headgear was worn by the Mexicans at or about the period of the Spanish conquest.

The Lumber World says that oiling wood with linseed oil, or even with coal oil or kerosene, will protect it from worms.

One of the curiosities of the animal kingdom is the eulachon or candle-fish. (Thaleichthys pacificus) of the North-eastern Pacific. It is about fourteen inches long, resembles the smelt in appearance, and is caught in large quantities in the early spring. It is the fattest of all known fishes, for which reason its dried and smoked flesh is highly esteemed as a warming food for winter by the Indians, by whom the oil also is dried. So fat is the fish that when dried it burns with a bright flame until entirely consumed, forming a candle much among the Indians, either with or without a wooden wick passed through the body.

PHILOSOPHIZING ON CANES.

What They Were, What They Are, What They Mean, and How Handled.

"You can hardly conceive any class of society that does not wear canes," said the philosopher. "Neither can you fix a time when the staff, the forerunner of the modern cane, was first introduced. The shepherd, the hunter, the fisherman, the wayfarer, the corporal, the marshal, the pedagogue, the mendicant, the king, the sorcerer—all wore and wear now a staff or cane. Did it ever occur to you that the shepherd's staff is as much the origin of the modern dude's cane as the shepherd's dog is the precursor of the fleet greyhound, and watchful spitz, the intelligent poodle, the fighting mastiff, and the tender black-and-tan? Why, the curve on the bishop's traditional staff is indicative of nothing else than—pardon the slangy expression—to hook back an erring sheep into the fold."

"The staff of old was not only the pilgrim's support on his weary voyage and his weapon of defense against the animals of the forest and the foot-pads of the highway; it was the means by which he jumped ditches and water-courses. Then it became from a matter of comfort one of luxury. The old Greeks carried canes as tokens of dignity. Don't you recollect from your school days how Socrates used his cane as an aid in teaching his scholars. He didn't whip them, of course, but Xenophon tells us how his old teacher used to stop his pupils on the streets of Athens and made them answer questions before he let them pass. Rome honored her first Scipio by giving him the surname of the staff in recognition of the support he was to his old father."

"Then, in olden times, the staff became the necessary attribute of the wayfarer, as Jean Paul says: 'Friendship is a bludgeon on a voyage, love a cane for the promenade.' Modern time, which subjects everything to the ever-changing fashion, has robbed the time honored staff of every vestige of dignity and converted it into the cane. Like the snuffbox of old and the cigar of today, the cane has become the favorite means to give something like grace to men who do not know what to do with their hands, at the same time to make awkward panes in a dragging conversation endurable. For any number of people the cane, be it only the insignificant one of the dude, has become a necessary requisite. Take the cane away from them and they seem to be all elbows and hands protruding unaccountably far from the coatsleeves. People will wear a cane under their arm