

A WINTER HYMN.

Winter reigneth over the land,
Freezing with its icy breath;
Dead and bare the tall trees stand,
All is chill and drear and death.

Yet it seemeth but a day
Since the Summer flowers were here,
Since they stalked the balmy hay,
Since they reaped the golden ear.

Sunny days are past and gone;
So the years go speeding past;
Onward ever, each new one
Swifter speeding than the last.

Life is waning; life is brief;
Death, like Winter, standeth nigh;
Each one, like the falling leaf,
Soon shall fade, and fall, and die.

But the sleeping earth shall wake,
And the flower shall burst in bloom,
And all nature rising, break
Glorious from its wintry tomb.

So, Lord, when slumber blest
Comes a bright awakening,
And our flesh in hope shall rest
Of a never-fading Spring. Amen.

W. W. H.

BESSIE'S FOLLY.

BY WALTER F. JACKSON.

A lovely young girl in a dark blue riding habit runs lightly down the shallow steps, and, scarcely touching her escort's extended hand, springs into the saddle of the magnificent black steed in waiting.

"Isn't he a splendid creature?" she says, patting the proudly arched neck with one gauntleted little hand. "I don't believe he is half as vicious as they say he is, captain."

"Perhaps not," replied her companion. Then, glancing at the thoroughbred's little limbs, flowing mane and great, fiery eyes, he added: "Since you are determined to ride him, Miss Bessie, let us hope so, at least."

With the last words, he swings himself into the saddle of his own horse, and the two are about to ride away, when they are checked by a deep, musical voice saying behind them:

"Miss Bessie, you surely do not intend to ride that brute?"

Bessie Raymond's dimpled cheeks crimson. She looks back at the speaker, a tall, elegant figure, standing on the hotel's broad piazza, with brown eyes almost aflame.

"You can see for yourself," is her sharp reply. "Did I not tell you last night that I meant to do so?"

"But"—with a slight elevation of his dark brows—"I thought you were jesting. When you spoke of trusting yourself upon his back, I warned you that his record was a bad one, and advised you if you valued your life to keep away from him."

"Advised!" Bessie's red lip curls. "You may call it advice, Dr. Lane, but it was given in the tone of a command. The fact that you are a friend of my father's gives you no right to control my actions, and you need not attempt to assume it. Will you kindly remember this in the future?"

The physician smiles—a smile that makes the girl secretly wither.

"I have no desire to control your actions," he says tranquilly. "It is true that your father, when he learned I was to spend a few weeks in this place where you are summering, begged me to look after your welfare as might an elder brother or an old family friend; and that I have tried to do; though I never yet presumed to do more than advise you. As you find even that distasteful, however, I beg to assure that henceforth I will annoy you no more."

"Is there a tone of mockery in his low, deep voice? It seems to the girl that a laughing demon is looking at her out of his sphinx-like gray eyes.

Her own grow darker, and her little teeth close on lips that have now become saffron.

"Thank you," smiling pearly. "You can be generous, it seems. But"—turning to her companion—"we waste time. Let us go."

"One moment," interposes the physician. He comes down the steps and appeals to the man. "Harrell," he says. "You know something of that brute. Can you not dissuade Miss Raymond from riding him?"

The young officer shrugs his shoulders helplessly.

"I have done my best, my good sir, and failed. You need have no fears, however. Though Black Hawk is an ugly brute, I flatter myself that I can control him. Miss Bessie is in no real danger while under my charge, you may rest assured."

"Is she not?" says the other, with his cool, slow smile.

Then, turning to Bessie, who accords him but a slight inclination of her haughty little head, he slowly turns away.

A little later, as the two horses go cantering down the gravelled drive and out into the winding mountain road, Bessie lifts her angry dark eyes to her cavalier's blonde face, saying passionately:

"What a bear he is! In some way he is always making one feel so small. How does he do it? What—what makes him so hateful?"

Captain Harrell laughs.

"You appear to like him even less than I do, Miss Bessie. Surely, you have a better reason for it than that which appears on the surface." The girl's cheeks grow scarlet.

"He is a grim, icy, masterful sort of a creature," she says, "haughty as Eblis and self-willed as a Czar. How could any one fancy such a man as that?"

"How indeed," asserts Captain Harrell.

He smiles a little as he speaks. He believes that wounded self-esteem is at the bottom of Bessie's dislike of Dr. Lane. The slavish homage that most men pay to the little beauty is a homage in which the physician has had no part. He is not one of the humble, sighing kind. Whatever he may secretly feel, he has always treated the young lady with a cool, courteous indifference that she has found calling in the extreme.

"He is hateful," she cries, her eyes full of angry tears—"odious."

"I am truly glad you think so," the captain says. "For do you know"—leaning toward her with an air of eager pleading—"I had begun to fear that it

was different with you—that—that, in fact, you cared for him."

"I!" exclaims the girl, starting violently and giving the reins a quick jerk. Black Hawk snies and throws up his maned crest with a snort. "I!" she repeats, in a choked voice. "You must be—"

"Take care!" cries the captain. "I—My God!"

He makes a desperate clutch at the steed's bridle, but he is too late. With a rear and a plunge, Black Hawk takes the bit between his teeth, and, with flattened ears and glaring eyes, hurls himself up the road like a living thunderbolt.

An ejaculation of horror breaks from the officer's lips. It is echoed by a shriek from Bessie. The bridle having been torn from her grasp, she is clinging with both hands to Black Hawk's streaming mane, while she looks back with dilating eyes, crying affrightedly:

"Oh, help me, captain! Save me!" Harrell stares after her helplessly. He is for the time incapable either of speech or action. Then his eyes instinctively turn to the right where a bridle path leaves the road, cutting through a dense growth of oak and hickory. This path, straight as a bow-string, reaches the curving road about a quarter of a mile farther on, shortening the distance to that point nearly a third. Urging his horse forward with whip and heel, Harrell dashes into it, muttering through colorless lips:

"If I fail to reach there in time to stop him, may Heaven have mercy on her! She will certainly be thrown when he goes plunging down the steep descent beyond."

The thought turns him cold. He leans forward, straining his eyes down the path along which his horse is flying. On—on they rush—away, away, away!

But stop! Here is the road. Is he too late! No. Back yonder he hears a loud rattle of hoofs, and through a cloud of upwhirled dust catches a glimpse of black and blue. Black Hawk is coming—coming like the wind. With nerves far from steady, Harrell slips from the saddle and runs out into the road. As he does so, he hears a clatter of hoofs on his right, but he does not turn to look. His shrinking gaze is on the maddened steed rushing down upon him.

Just at that moment his quivering heart sends him reeling backward, pale and gasping. The sight of that avalanche of brute force charging straight toward him has well-nigh paralyzed him. Not even for her can he rush upon the certain death that here seems to await him.

A faint cry breaks from Bessie's lips. Though he has faded her she beholds a second figure, that has suddenly appeared upon the scene, leaping from the back of a horse near the roadside, and bounding into the way before her. As he wheels there, confronting the blazing-eyed, foam-decked demon dashing toward him, she sees the pale granite-like face of Dr. Lane.

With that smile upon his lips that she knows so well, and a glint as of steel in his deep gray eyes, he springs straight at Black Hawk's froth-dripping jaws, clutching the bit with hands of iron.

A short but furious struggle follows, the black rearing and plunging, and striving, but vainly, to strike down the physician with his terrible hoofs. While the result is still in doubt, the doctor more than once being lifted from his feet, an swung to and fro like a pendulum, Bessie manages to slip from the saddle to the ground. "Loose him!" she cries, her voice quivering with the anguish of fear. "Loose him for Heaven's sake! He will kill you, doctor!"

A low, fierce laugh and a savage jerk at the bit is Dr. Lane's only reply. At the same moment, however, Black Hawk ceases to struggle, and stands before him with a bowed head, meek and trembling.

"There!" says the victor, passing his hand soothingly over the shining black muzzle. "I think the evil spirit is exorcised for the time."

"Doctor," says a sweet and humble voice beside him.

He looks round. A very white little Bessie, her face enframined with a tangle of soft brown curls, her lovely eyes wide and brimming, stands with clasped hands looking up at him.

"Well?" he smiles.

She draws a long deep breath, her mouth quivering wistfully.

"Why did you follow us?" she falters. "Why did you risk your life for me?"

At this the rock like calm of his face is broken. A burning glow sweeps into his cheeks, while his eyes grow tender and dazling.

"Because"—in tones whose passionate sweetness makes her heart leap—"I love you, little one."

His cheeks are no longer pale. The lilies give place to mantling roses.

"You love me?" she murmurs, dreamy-voiced. "You do, really?"

"Better than life," is the fervent response. "More than tongue can tell."

The dark lashes sink over her half-dazed eyes.

"Oh, if I had known!" she utters tremulously. "I thought you despised me, believing me nothing but a human butterfly; and it made me so hard and bitter against you; because—because—"

"Oh!" covering her tingling cheeks with both hands, "I mustn't tell you that. But won't you—do, please—try to forgive me for—for treating you so badly?"

"If only you will be kind to me through all the future," he says, with grave tenderness.

She gives him a glance so lovely in its promise that an answer in words seems quite unnecessary. At least, such is the view that Captain Harrell, coming up at this juncture, takes of the matter.

Poor Harrell! Though Bessie cuts short his stammering apologies, and is very kind and gracious to him, the shame he suffers makes him sick and sore. It will be many a day before he forgets the result of that morning ride with Bessie, now Mrs. Dr. Lane, among the Carolinian mountains.

It is well to be eminent, but to feel eminent is a misfortune.

EXCUSES.

Have you ever thought what very dangerous things are excuses? They are so much more convenient to give than real reasons, and we unconsciously lose sight of the fact that they easily lead to misrepresentation. If a plausible excuse will cover the true motives of an action that we would rather conceal, we have little compunction in giving it, and we would be startled sometimes if we realized how nearly it borders on deliberate untruth. It is better to be silent and leave the reasons for a course of conduct to the inference of others, than to try to palliate judgment by offering well-sounding excuses we know to be fallacious.

It has been said that woman, in her inherent desire to please, more readily excuses herself than does a man—who, with that fine indifference characteristic of our "lords of creation," and perhaps based on the power they feel in their right of creation, disdain to make use of such innuendoes! How true this may be, I do not know; but I am very sure, both men and women are too much given to making statements as to "why and wherefore," that are very wide of the mark. They do it in all innocence every day; they say, "I do so and so for such and such a reason." It is "a good excuse," but when they consider the matter closely, they find they do "so and so" from very different causes. They do not mean to falsify, but it is done.

In "polite society," the excuses given for refusing invitations, etc., are perhaps the most harmless kind, for it is well understood that the real reasons are not expected; it is generally the case in fashionable society that the appearance is everything. What sounds like a good excuse is proper, and reality is ignored. With this is a vulgar to be conscious of any unpleasantness—anything unsightly, and it may be added, anything true—genuineness is a jewel, ever rarer than consistency.

Making excuses sometimes places one in an exceedingly awkward position. A clerical gentleman once subscribed for a paper through the agency of a lady friend. At the expiration of his subscription, his friend did not solicit it again, but—being a kindly soul who likes to do a good deed in a quiet way, and thinking, perhaps, he did not feel able to renew—sent the money for it herself, without his knowledge. So the paper still came to him, he thinking it was sent by the publisher to elicit his renewal. As he had first received the paper through the lady friend, he wrote to her asking her to order it stopped for him, as "he had so many other periodicals to read he did not have time to give this one any attention!"

His amiable friend, recognizing the situation, and to give him a small lesson in careful use of excuses, forthwith ordered the paper to be sent to some other address, and communicated with the quondam subscriber to the effect that it had been a present to him, but if not read by him, of course it was useless to send it longer, etc. Imagine his chagrin? To be sure, the periodical was quite acceptable as a gift, but not wishing to invest his money that way, he had given what seemed a "good excuse" for its discontinuance. If the circumstances had not been just as they were, he would doubtless never have reproached himself for claiming as a reason, that which was only a cover to the true one. Would it not have been better for him to have retained the excuse?

Those of us who are so in the habit of making excuses on all occasions, would find, by testing the matter, that we could very easily dispense with them. When you cannot give the real reason, remain resolutely silent; and even if you can give the real reason, it is generally better taste, unless called directly to account, not to do so. The best excuses in the world are, in fact, silence and truth. Some letter writers are lavish in their use, and it is an unconscionable bore to have to wade through two or three pages of excuses before coming to anything of interest. If circumstances were such that you found it an impossibility to reply to your friend's letter in the time limited by polite custom, give your reasons in as few words as possible and dismiss the subject. It is the height of rudeness, unless under unusual circumstances, to ignore a letter for months, and then answer by a superfluity of excuses for the remissness. Your friend knows that you could have sent some acknowledgment, if you had considered it a matter of sufficient importance, so the excuses are a tiresome redundancy, the omission of which would make a more readable letter.

"I haven't time" is an excuse that has been harped upon until it is utterly meaningless; it is the rarest instance that it is given with truth. So many women say, "I haven't time to read," "I haven't time to write letters," "I haven't time to do this or the other thing." It is almost invariably a pretense, and simply means, "there are other things I would rather do than read or write letters, etc." We are very prone to give our time to what most pleases us.

A girl will see and do fancy work until her form is stooping, and her complexion sallow, and say, "I haven't time to walk and take out-door exercise." She has the time—each day has twenty-four hours for her, as well as anyone else—but she prefers devoting her time to dress and such vanities, so she does it. It is all a matter of preference, and I am sorry to say, the majority of women choose the least important things, and have not "time" to preserve their health and cultivate their minds. The woman who will persistently do this, under the cover of flimsy excuses, seems possessed of a mild, but most injurious form of lunacy. It is hard to know how to reach them, they are utterly incorrigible and exasperating. Eleanor Kirk says it does no good to call them "fools," for she has tried it.

I believe we would be amazed if we knew how very few excuses we could get on with. Since I have come to consider the matter I have noted that almost invariably an excuse may just as well be dispensed with; above all things, do not let us form the habit of saying, "I haven't time!" The most provok-

ing and deluded creature on earth is the woman who devotes her soul and body to frivolities, and, when questioned as to why she doesn't do something else, sweetly murmurs, "I haven't time!" I cannot express what I think of her in polite English; but it recalls to my mind the words of the poet—

"O, frailty thy name is woman!"

HELEN C. HOLLOX, in *Woman's Work*.

PERSONAL.

Mrs. JOHN B. GOUGH is in a critical condition from spinal trouble and is almost helpless.

The Princess of Wales has given no countenance to the high-puffed sleeves. Her Royal Highness and her daughters have never worn them.

JUSTIN H. MCCARTHY is just thirty years old. He has published eleven books and seven plays. He is tall and thin, with a very small head. He has traveled much in Persia, and has an intimate acquaintance with the literature of that country.

RUSSEL SAGE is quoted as saying: "I never lent a dollar which was returned to me unless legally secured. I never backed a man for a loan for a situation who didn't turn out to be as mean as he could. I now let other men run the philanthropy business."

Mrs. WHITELAW REID, wife of the American Minister to the Republic of France, is regarded in Paris as an ideal diplomat. Her house is sumptuous, her hospitality, both official and personal, unbounded, her dressing costly and in perfect taste, her manners simple, kindly and elegant, and her French irreproachable.

QUEEN ELIZABETH of Roumania, who is perhaps even better known by her pen-name of Carmen Sylva than by her royal title, has not earned her literary title by the sacrifice of other duties. She is constant in her efforts to better the condition of the women of her kingdom, visits among the poor, and is the idol of the children and work-people in the neighborhood of her home at Kastell Pelesch. There is a pretty story current of the tender nursing she bestowed upon a peasant's child, who sickened and died of diphtheria, drawing its last breath in the Queen's arms. Carmen Sylva is especially fond of wearing the pretty Roumanian peasant dress, while keeping her *villaggsatura*.

ADMIRERS of Wilkie Collins will be interested in learning that a neat, unadorned marble cross has been erected over the novelist's remains, in the northern part of Kensal Green Cemetery. On the base of the memorial, underneath the name and date of birth and death, appear the words, "Author of *The Woman in White* and other Works of Fiction." The grave is only separated by a few yards from Sydney Smith's tomb, which, like that of Leigh Hunt, also situated in the north side of the grounds, gives evidence of faithful tending. On the monument of the latter the full name of the poet is inscribed—James Henry Leigh Hunt—with the unconventional and unique epitaph: "Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

A writer, H. C. Adams, Ph. D., in *The Chautauquan* for January gives a graphic description of "How the People are Counted" and says that women seem to be better adapted than men to the nimble work of managing the machines used in the Census Office. He quotes from the Superintendent of the Census as follows:

"The average number counted by the women clerks was 3,500 families or 47,950 persons; and by men clerks 6,587 families or 32,935 persons. Thus it will be seen that the women averaged nearly one-half more than the men. It is also worth noting that of the forty-three who counted more than 10,000, thirty-eight were women and only five men."

From an article on "What it Means to be a Stenographer" in the *Business Woman's Journal* for December we copy the following:

"A young lady who goes into an office with the intention of learning the business and making herself necessary to her employers can always find plenty to do. In many offices where there is not much stenographic work, the stenographer is expected to do other office work, such as sending out circulars, registering letters, etc.; and the one who does such work cheerfully and is always ready to turn her hand to anything, is the clerk who will be retained, when, on account of hard times or for any other reason, the office force is cut down.

"I am acquainted with a young lady, a good stenographer, who lost a very desirable position for the simple reason that she was not willing to do anything except her stenographic work. Talking to her employers in regard to her discharge, they said: 'We have no fault to find with Miss A.—a shorthand work. She is the best stenographer we have ever had in our office, but the trouble is that she is not willing to do anything else. When we ask her to direct envelopes or fold circulars, or to answer the telephone, she either refuses or does it so grudgingly as to make us feel very unpleasant. If we had enough shorthand work to keep her busy all the time we would not ask her to do these things, but she has three or four hours of leisure every day and we consider her time belongs to us while she is in the office.'"

"In this manner the employer was correct in his views and the young lady made a fearful mistake in not being accommodating."

The Star of Bethlehem.

The so-called star of Bethlehem is again visible this year, being its seventh appearance since the birth of Christ. It comes once in three hundred and fifteen years, and is of wondrous brilliancy for three weeks, then it wanes, and disappears after seventeen months. It will be a sixth star added to the five fixed stars in Cassiopeia, while it remains in sight.

The manner of expression is derived from the right, and always subordinate to it.

A Bright Young Woman.

There is a bright young woman now crossing the ocean on a Cunarder who is having lots of fun out of a voyage she has fairly earned. A year ago, when the Paris exposition first began to be talked of here, she suggested to her father the propriety of letting her go over this summer with a party of friends to see the exposition and improve her French in Paris. Her father with a masculine blindness to golden opportunities, declined on the threadbare plea that he couldn't afford it.

"Very well," said his daughter, with unexpected amiability. "Will you give me the money I usually spend for a summer trip toward it if I earn the rest myself?"

"Yes, I'll do that," said her father readily.

"Will you give it to me now?" asked the daughter. Her father looked a little suspicious. Finally he replied: "Yes, I'll give it to you now, if you'll promise not to spend it and strike me for a fresh supply next summer."

The bargain was made and the long headed young woman took the check and went calmly on with her plans for multiplying it, closely though secretly watched by her somewhat skeptical parent.

Like most other girls, she had her share of feminine accomplishments. She sang a little, embroidered a little, carved wood a little. But, unlike most other girls, she did one thing well and that was to paint china. She had studied the art very carefully and turned out many unique and artistic Christmas and wedding presents for her friends. But she was often disappointed in her most carefully-executed work by some blunder in the firing, and so, she knew, were many of her friends who painted less skillfully than she. How to remedy this had long been a problem with her, and for some time she had cherished a scheme of having a furnace and doing her own firing, and perhaps her friends too, for friendship's sake.

The scheme she now proceeded to carry out, risking in it the capital her father advanced. But she had confidence enough in her own mechanical and business capabilities not to feel that it was a very great risk. She employed a reliable dealer, who built for her a compact and convenient little kiln in the cellar of her father's brown stone front. She experimented thoroughly with her own work before she took any other. When she found she could trust her own skill she let her friends know that she would fire their china for them at the same rates she had formerly paid herself. It was not long before she had patrons. The girls she knew came at first because it was so easy to run over to her house with a frail bit of porcelain and not run the risk of sending it. She did each piece as if it were her own, carefully and lovingly, knowing from experience the startling changes produced on the delicate coloring by a degree too much of heat.

Her friends brought their friends. Soon she could wait to light the furnace till she had enough china for a day's work. She made from \$5 to \$10 every day that she worked. She paid the expenses of running the furnace, and when she was ready to start for Europe had money enough for all her expenses, including a new Paris gown and an extra check of \$100 besides from her proud father, who talks of taking her into his business when she comes back.

Decorated wood baskets for a parlor or bedroom are very pretty. Procure a common splint market basket about twenty inches wide, and cover the slats with metallic or lustra paints, using two shades, and alternating the colors on the slats. Line with light blue cambric or any color to match outside, and tie the bows of broad satin ribbon to the handle at each side.

Many chambers are furnished with "votter" fabrics. A Frenchman is the only person in the world who can handle cotton to perfection. Goods can be dyed in the sun so perfectly that they will not fade by any amount of exposure to the sun. In furnishing a nice chamber the entire furniture, bedspread, bolster and all, are covered with the same material.

Plucky Maude Andrews. Maude Annet Andrews is a plucky Georgia woman, who has made her way into a prominent place in journalism. She was born in a small village and her education was desultory. The desire to write, however, burned strong in her from earliest girlhood, and when finally she sent her first verses to "Life" and "Puck," and both papers accepted the MSS, she determined to start for New York and enter the largest field in America. She wrote the New York correspondence for the "Atlanta Constitution," but the remuneration for these letters alone was not sufficient compensation, and failing to obtain regular work here, she was obliged to return to Georgia. She went to the office of the "Constitution" and asked bravely but modestly for a place on the staff. She was so quiet and courageous that she got what she asked for and she is now one of the best known of women journalists. The trial article which she submitted to Mr. Grady, the editor, was the MS. of the poem of the Jester, which was afterward accepted by the "Century."

The shortest way to do many things is to do only one thing at once.

A government of the people would not be afraid of the "upper ten."

It never complains that it doesn't know how to take some people.

Remember that impertinence isn't wit any more than insolence is brilliancy.

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FURNITURE FASHIONS.

Common camp chairs are made very ornamental by covering with plush and finishing the edge with tiny silk tassels.

A beautiful toilet set is of pale blue plush, with a painted border of apple blossoms, and a finish of antique lace around it.

In parlor decorations every window should have lace drapery to start with. Whether lace or heavy draperies is used lace is essential.

A handsome cover for a round table is of plush, with a border of wide-flow-ered ribbon, with the design outlined with gold tinsel cord, the edge finished with gold fringe.

A present caprice is to cut off the corners of rooms with curtains or screens. Madras, satin or silk and wool fabrics may be used in the manufacture of these devices.

Chair cushions of plain plush are much used. They may be finished with heavy silk cord and tassels at the corners, or simply tied to the chair at the four corners with wide ribbon bows.

Light carpets are just now used for parlors. In figures anything that will bring soft effects are used. Halls and stairs are carpeted in shades of terra cotta and blue, but parlors and chambers are mostly light.

Another is made with a square of madras, with the design outlined with tinsel cord, either all over or in a four-inch border, as preferred. Line with satin of a contrasting color, and simply hem the edge.

The use of rugs is continually increasing. No house with or without carpets is complete without rugs. Rooms seem unfurnished without them. These may be as rich and costly as the purse will allow.

The damask figures in breakfast and tea cloths may be outlined with cotton or silk, either all over or as a border, and add greatly to the beauty of the table. If there be a sideboard it has its embroidered scarf of some wash-material.

Scarfs for draping easels, picture frames, mirrors, etc., are of bolting cloth, which is a gauzy material of exquisite texture, made of the strongest silk threads. Silk embroidery is very pretty for the decoration, but painting is far handsomer.

In chamber draperies the coin spot is used most. Coin spots vary in size from that of a ten cent coin to twenty-five cents, fifty cents and a dollar. They are trimmed with either white cotton ball fringe or tassel fringe, and come four inches below the sill of the window, tied back with cotton or r piece of white ribbon.

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Decorated wood baskets for a parlor or bedroom are very pretty. Procure a common splint market basket about twenty inches wide, and cover the slats with metallic or lustra paints, using two shades, and alternating the colors on the slats. Line with light blue cambric or any color to match outside, and tie the bows of broad satin ribbon to the handle at each side.

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