The Lancaster Intelligencer.

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Lancaster Intelligencer.

SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1880.

Imp, or Angel?

My aunt Urania is a woman of great energy and penetration. If she sets herself to discover a secret, she never rests until she has enlightened herself down to its inmost recesses. When my pretty friend Elizabeth Terry was holding us all in suspense as to her intentions with regard to the interesting widower who now speaks of her so effectionately as "my present wife" (significant not only of a certain past, but of a positive future), Aunt Urania invited the wary Elizabeth to take a long country drive. "And, my dear, I'll have it out of her, if we don't get back till midnight," she said. They were gone only two hours, and my aunt entered with a triumphant face, the grays all in a lather from the victorious haste of her return, while in strong constrast was Elizabeth's serene unconsciousness.

"How did you do it?" I inquired, at the first possible moment. "Did she confess it all?"

"Confess! my dear, not a word. She hasn't an idea that she betrayed herself. I only asked her, quite casually, how many children Mr. Williams has, and she answered '*Three*,' with *such* a look, *such* a sigh!"

The event proved my aunt's acuteness, and made her more than ever to us all an object of admiration and terror.

It was rather unfortunate for me that Aunt Urania put off her projected journey to Europe for six months—the six months which decided my fate in life. I should have enjoyed them much more and managed my affairs much more smoothly, uninspected by her keen eyes, unadvised by her keener tongue. I shall always believe it showed a very persistent state of feeling both in Harry and me not to retire discomfited from so watchful a sentinel.

"Yes of course, your attachment to the child is very natural, my dear," she would say, "as I said to Mrs. Dubois only yesterday. 'Nothing,' I said, 'can be more natural. Susan Bardmore, Henry Bent's first wife, was like a sister to my niece; no friends could be more intimate; and of course she feels very much for the little boy.'"

"I wish you wouldn't talk so, aunty!" I exclaimed. "Henry Bent's *first* wife! I never heard that he had more than one!"

"Oh no, not *as yet*, my dear, but it is only a question of time; and pretty generally a very abrupt question, and short space allowed for an answer. Of course he must have somebody to look after that child; I never saw in all my life a child that needed it more. The most saucy, spoiled little wretch—a perfect little imp."

"Aunty! He is a perfect little angel," said I. "As for care, Coralie keeps him in beautiful order, and he is entirely healthy and happy here in the country. And it is all very well to say, 'Of course he must have somebody to take care of the child, of course he must marry,' when you know that if he had no child, you would say, 'Of course he must marry, poor fellow! he is all alone; if he had even a child to care for it would be different.' For my part," I added, "I *hate* second marriages."

"Oh, you do," said Aunt Urania; and then ensued a pause, broken by a thumping at my door with little closed fists.

"Let me in, let me in, Nora," said the dear little voice, in just his mother's old sweet, imperative way. And the dancing eyes that laugh up at me out of that fair little face are Susie's very eyes. "I want you, my own Nora," said the little darling. "There is a little calf in the barn, and papa says I may go to see it, but you must take me."

"Hoity-toity!" said Aunt Urania. "That is a pretty way to talk to a lady. *Must* take you, indeed."

"Papa didn't say just that, did he, Bardie?" I asked, annoyed to feel myself coloring under aunty's keen eye.

"He said I musn't go unless I had the best of care; and I know he meant you, because Coralie is very careless; he said she was yesterday, when I got my boots wet. And the old cow butts at me if I go near her. So you *must* come, Nora, darling; Bardie wants yo *so* bad!"

Who could resist those eyes?—that coaxing voice? I had followed just such eyes and voice all my life, and I followed them now.

So did Aunt Urania, with her most investigating spectacles perched on her nose.

"Well, Bardie," she remarked, cheerfully, "if you say we must, and papa says we must, why, we must."

Bardie stood stock-still, with an evil look on his face.

"I didn't mean *you*," he said.

"Oh, my dear little boy, that wasn't polite," I whispered; but he only gave me a hug, and turned to aunt with a seraphic smile.

"You'd better not go. The cow is quite a dangerous one," he said, in a very civil tone, "and she doesn't like red things; they make her furious. She runs right at them, and tosses them."

"What is the child ttlking about? Toss what? I'm not a red thing, I hope."

"About your legs," said Bardie, very distinctly. "You hold your dress up so high that the cow will get mad. I shouldn't wonder if she killed you."

Aunty vouchsafed no reply, but strode majestically on, scorning to veil by one-half inch of concession the somewhat unnecessary conspicuousness of her long scarlet stockings. Bardie looked at her very hard.

"A very cross dog lives in the barn," he remarked. "He bites people. Not young ladies, Nora darling, nor children—he is real good to little boys; but other people he bites."

I could not speak, and I did not dare to laugh. Aunty's face was awful.

"I am going to the barn," she said, briefly.

We made our way through the ducks and hens, skirting perilously a yard full of pigs, and tremblingly passing a small window in a shed, were protruded a great head, with short horns and soft beautiful eyes, but a low rumbling note proclaimed that it was the bull, the terror of our field walks and grove picnics. Not that we had ever really encountered him in the body, but in the spirit he always seemed to haunt the next field, or be screened by the shadiest tree.

"Oh, Bardie, I don't like the looks of him," I whispered.

"Take hold of my hand; I'll take care of you," said the little knight; and we passed the monster, that looked yearningly at us in our freedom, and gave a resounding bellow that shuddered through and through me.

Bardie laughed at my fears.

"What are you 'fraid of, Nora sweet? He has got a big ring in his nose, and can't do anything. Anybody can lead him about. Papa said once that if you could only put a ring on a person, you could lead him by his nose."

"*What's that?*" said Aunt Urania, from behind.

We entered the barn, full to overflowing with sweet new hay, and fragrant with its perfume, and with the breath of the patient cow, that lay contentedly in her corner, with her head raised in watchful care of her little weak-legged scrawny offspring. I had never seen a very young calf before, and was disappointed.

"*Veal!*" pronounced Aunt Urania. "And not particularly good at that, I should say."

Bardie did not understand the prophecy.

"Isn't it lovely?" he cried. I wish papa would buy it for me, the dearest little thing! What makes it look so funny and wet?"

"Its mother has been giving it something which is good for all little children, Bardie," said my annt. "Particularly for little boys. A good licking!"

Bardie understood this time, and looked vengefully at her. Then snapping the fingers of his minute hand to the old dog, that lay near flapping a heavy good-natured tail against the hard boards, he uttered a low but perfectly distinct "St, boy!"

Up jumped the obedient Bruce with a clumsy leap, and ran, barking loudly, to the door, where he supposed the unseen enemy to be lurking. Aunt Urina fidgeted.

"Did you do that, you little rascal?" she asked, not quite sure, however, for she had been watching my successful effort to climb to the top of a great mountain of hay, where I now sat amid the fragrance of dried clover leaves and felt in paradise.

It was an admirable point of view, but not a convenient place to render assistance in an emergency. And thus it happened that I could see the cow, growing uneasy at the hubbub, rising to her feet, and finally, with a threatening look, advance a step or two with lowered horns. I could see it all, but was powerless to help, and could only scream.

"Aunty! Bardie! the cow! the cow!"

Quick as a wink Bardie slipped past the angry animal, and, as he expressed it "shinned up" the haymow, where he perched himself triumphantly beside me Dignity and age alike forbade the exercise of *shinning* to aunty, notwithstanding Bardie's opinion of her length of limb. She wavered, tried for one brief moment to "look the animal in the eye," but a forward movement on the cow's part put that idea to flight, and she turned and fled, pursued only a few steps by the disturbed mother, who "saw her to the door," with a loud moo of dismissal, echoed in distant thunder from the small window wherein gleamed the bull's excited eye; pursued also, I am ashamed to say, by a derisive laugh from Bardie, who stood on one leg, balancing himself with a pitchfork, and shrieked out. "I told you she hated red things. Isn't it fun!"

We snuggled down in the hay, and let the cow quiet herself by a vigorous return to her nursery duties, and then I whispered a little admonition to Bardie on the subject of his behavior to aunty. It was by no means the first time I had rebuked my small charge, and he took it very penitently; though when I found myself saying, "It isn't like mamma's little boy to act so, "I came to a full stop, with a sudden remembrance of Susie's inveterate naughtiness when Aunt Urania was in the question.

He liked to hear about mamma, the sweet, bright, unknown image, whom nobody but I had ever brought to his mind, and he lay with his head in my lap, listening to my stories of our childish play and adventures, until the pleased smile grew vaguer and softer, and the long lashes drooped lower, and he slept, looking more than ever like a wandering cherub of heavenly rearing.

Then, as I sat, doubly prisoned by the foe beneath and the friend above, I heard a quick, unexpected footstep, and Henry Bent entered the barn with an amused and perturbed face.

The cow had settled to a comfortable nap, the flies droned in the sunshine, and in the quiet noon hush he would have turned away without discovering us, but that low girlish giggle, of which I instantly felt ashamed, revealed our retreat.

He looked up laughing. "Oh there you are, safe enough; but where is my small boy?"

"Here, too," I said, in a very low tone, and he vaulted upon the hay, and saw the pretty sleeping boy; and his face softened into the mingled sadness and brightness which I often noticed upon it as he looked at *her* child.

"I met Miss Scudamore just now with a terrible tale of danger and misbehavior. It is all right I see. But what does possess the child to behave so badly to her? He is a perfect lamb with you"

"He has it by inheritance," I said, with a smile that ended in a sigh. "He never looks so like his mother as when the irresistible naughtiness comes over him, which Aunt Urania has the unfortunate talent for evoking."

The same smile was reflected in his face, the same in his voice.

"True," he said: "you see, as I do, the wonderful likeness in everything."

"Why do you never talk to him of Susie?" I said with a desperate plunge into the difficult subject, for I had never before mentioned her name to him since the baby was left motherless. "It is not right, Harry, to let him grow up in ignorance of that sweetest of creatures. He is as you say, her living image; he ought to know and love her, yet he hardly knew what the word *mother* meant until he came here to me."

"I could not, I could not," he answered much moved. "I am glad you do. I knew you would do him good this summer. I can not tell you the comfort it is to me to have him in the country and with you. I knew you must love the little fellow, for you loved his mother well."

"Loved her, yes," I said, my tears suddenly bursting forth. "I can't get used to doing without her, Harry; I can't get over it."

"I see," he said. "We are fellow-mourners, Nora."

The little head stirred; one or two of my tears had fallen on the sweet baby face and wakened him. He sat up and rubbed his eyes, amazed.

"What a funny place!" what long cobwebs!" he said. "Oh, I remember now, the cow. Is she all right again? Why, papa, where did you come from?"

"I came from the city, Bardie. When I reached there this morning, I found the man I wanted to see was ill, and wouldn't come to town for three days, and so I posted back to you."

"That was right," said Bardie. "To me and Nora."

"Yes, to you and Nora," said Harry, with a kind smile at me. "But, Bardie, the first person I met was Miss Scudamore who told me a very sad tale. I am afraid my little boy was very saucy and disrespectful"

"Oh, papa, it was too funny to see her run with her red stockings. I told her not to come. I told her the cow might kill her. But Miss Scudamore, why she *scudded more* than ever," and he went into a fit of mirth at his first attempt at a pun.

I responded to the sally with a weak-minded laugh, but his father looked awful.

"No more of this, sir," he said, in a voice of strong displeasure "If you cannot behave properly to the ladies in this house, I will send you away with your nurse, and not let you come here again. I will not expose them to the pertness of a naughty little boy."

Bardie cowered under the severe glance, and clung to me. I looked piteous.

"Do not encourage him, Ellinor," said Harry, in a softer tone. "It is a great misfortune to a motherless child to grow up among strangers and servants, who spoil him, and then dislike him because he is spoiled." But he stroked the little penitent head, and then suggested that a hay-rick was not the coolest place on a summer noon, and that dinner must be nearly ready.

"Yes, papa; but first I want to ask you something. Will you take us, me and Nora, to drive this afternoon? The horses aren't haying to-day, and we want to go so much. Please do."

Harry laughed and stole a glance at my face, which I dare say revealed annoyance as well as amusement.

"Not to-day, Bardie. I am going to take you over to the hotel to play croquet with the littie Temples."

"Will you come too, Nora?" asked Bardie.

"No, dear; I called there last night," I said; and I drew a long breath at the idea of a quiet afternoon. Bardie safe, and Harry away—away for the long evening, my heart whispered. Sophy Temple and croquet, tea at the hotel, and a long evening walk, and who can tell what else! And with a jealous pang for Susie, I thought, "If only I might have Bardie, I wouldn't care,"

So, after Aunt Urania had settled herself for an afternoon nap, I changed my dress and rested awhile, watching from my window until I saw Harry and Bardie walking across the fields; Coralie followed and I said to myself, "I thought so, he will be untrammelled!" and I carried my water-color box and sketching stool out to a beautiful spot at the end of the rambling old garden, where a low stone wall divided the straggling flower borders from the pasture beyond. They were shady trees and soft overgrown clumps of bushes and undergrowth, so that the retreat, though not very far from the house, was entirely secluded, and it commanded a lovely little glimpse of wood and river, with soft blue hills beyond, and in the foreground the white spire of the village church shooting up through the greenery.

Such a quiet afternoon to sketch and paint! No little tormenting fingers to meddle and "joggle," no perpetual little tongue to ask unceasing questions: only the silence, and the summer music sweeter than the silence; the soft whispers in the trees, the droning bees, the chirp of a bird; even the spring of the grasshopper in tall grass at my feet was distinct in the golden hush. Yes, that hazy light was beautiful, the opportunity perfect. Why could I not make use of it? why could I not paint instead of sinking back, after a few listless efforts, with a heavy heart and clasped hands, and let the full weight of my lonely life fall on my spirits? My father, always away, glad to be free from any charge of me; Aunt Urania—well, she meant kindly, and was good to me, but what a bore! Susie, my chosen friend, my heart's sister, who had led and loved me from childhood, gone into the land of shadows, and none to take her place in my life forever. Even her sweet little boy would be taken from me no doubt before long, and given to some other woman—some Sophy Temple! And Harry— But just at that stage of my reverie, when I felt the choking in my throat and the hot tears in my eyes, I heard the same well-known step close beside me, and Harry Bent, flushed and breathless, threw himself on the ground at my feet.

"I thought I should find you in this lovely spot. May I not come too?" he entreated.

"I thought you had gone with Bardie."

"Yes, I left him there playing with the little Temples. I made a brief call on the ladies, and then gave Bardie the slip. I wanted to get back, and only hope he will not discover my retreat. Everybody is lazy to-day except you, Nora. You have your work laid out in a very notable way, though after all I do not see that you have done much."

"Some days are unlucky," I answered. "I did not feel in the mood. But I will sketch now," and I began to work in earnest, partly to get rid of the searching eyes which seemed to read my troubled thoughts.

"Rest instead, Ellinor, and let us talk awhile."

"Yes, talk: but I can work too. I want to make this picture; the view is so lovely it haunts me."

"Ah!" said Harry, "there is a picture which haunts me—a picture I lately saw, and I can think of nothing else; a woman, young fair, and with the sweetest motherly face; and a little child."

"A Madonna?"

"Perhaps so. The child was alseep. Such repose, such confidence in his whole attitude and expression! Evidently the the one right spot on earth to him was his place in her arms. And she looked like a brooding dove. Nora, I can never tell you what I felt when I came upon you so suddenly to-day with my little sleeping boy, nor what a revelation from heaven came to my heart that thus it might be—must be. I said we were fellow-mourners: can we not be fellow comforters?"

I could not speak; the sobs I had suppressed, the trouble I had been fighting, had their own way now.

He looked at me in doubt snd distress. "What is it, dear Ellinor? Do I hurt you? Do I shock you? Have you no heart to give me? No, I will not ask anything now. Calm yourself, sweet child; rely upon me. I will not say another word if it distresses you like this."

"I must speak," I cried, with a desperate effort. "Harry, Harry, how can you ask such things of me, when you *know* that you can never care for anybody again as you did for Susie?"

"I know," he answered.

"When you know that I am no more to be compared to her than this little common flower at my feet is to be compared to an exquisite half-blown rose, petal after petal laden with sweetness, down to its secret golden heart?"

"Yes," he answered, picking the little common flower, and holding it to his lips. "It is not the rose, But it is heart's-ease. It has its own mission, its own perfume."

"And do not speak of Bardie," I cried, more passionately than ever. "Do not tempt me with him. I wish he and I could go away together to some secret place, and I could have him always."

"Dear, you may have him always. No other woman ever shall."

A long pause ensued. I determined to grow calmer before speaking again. It was so hushed that we could hear the stirring of some little rabbit in the bushes behind. He looked at me entreatingly. I shook my head.

"No, no, Harry; do not ask me, do not tempt me. I am not much of a girl, I know, but I am worth more than that. I ought to be first in the man's heart who marries me. No, do not speak. You know I can not be first with you, and so I can not marry you. Oh dear!" I sighed, "there is nobody on earth with whom I am first, nobody who loves me best of all."

The stirring of the rabbit became violently excited, and with a great crushing of leaves and parting of branches, and rending of little blouse, Bardie tore himself from his lair, and flung himself upon me. "Yes, yes, my darling Nora," he cried, with tears, kissing my head and face and hands, "*I* love you best of all, my own Nora—*I* want you. Go away, papa. Marry *me*—marry Bardie, Nora dear!" and he threw his arms around me and buried his head in my neck.

"Yes Nora," cried Harry, clasping his arms round us both, "marry Bardie; marry us both. We *do* want you; we can't possibly live without you. There is nobody on earth, there never will be, whom we love half so well. Sweet Nora, say yes, and make Bardie and me perfectly happy."

They had conquered. My heart yielded to both father and child, and I made a full surrender, with my head on Harry's shoulder, and my arms around his child, and my tears all kissed away; and a wonderful fense of home and belongings, and fullness and content, glowed through and through me, and I felt as if Susie's smile came down in the sunbeam, irradiating the whole scene and blessing the new part I was to take in the lives which her death had left wrecked and stranded.

Aunt Urania came to meet us as we returned to the farm-house, putting on her spectacles of discovery as she came. But it needed no glasses to see what had happened. Dewy eyes, dishevelled tresses, happy agitated faces, told the whole story, even without the help of the ecstatic child in a wofully torn blouse crowing over his victory, and hardly waiting to get within ear-shot before betraying the secret in his clear high voice:

"She's going to marry me, Miss Scudymore; she promised she would." And then, as an afterthought, he added, "Oh, and papa too."

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"I have been afflicted for twenty years with an obstinate skin disease, called by some M. Ds' psoriasis and others, leprosy, commencing on my scalp, and in spite of all I could do, with the help of the most skilful doctors, it slowly but surely extended, until a year ago this winter it covered my entire person in form of dry scales. For the last three years I have been unable to do any labor, and suffering intensely all the time. Every morning there could be nearly a dustpanful of scales taken from the sheet of my bed, some of them half as large as the envelope containing this letter. In the latter part of winter my skin commenced cracking open. I tried everything, almost, that could be thought of, without any relief. The 12th of June I started West in hopes I could reach the Hot Springs. I reached Detroit and was so low I thought I should have to go to the hospital, but finally got as far as Lansing, Mich., where I had a sister living. One Dr.— treated me about two weeks, but did me no good. All thought I had but a short time live. I earnestly prayed to die. Cracked through the skin all over my back, across my ribs, arms, hands, limbs, feet badly swollen, toe nails came off, finger nails dead and hard as bone, hair dead, dry and lifeless as old straw. O, my God! how I did suffer.

"My sister, Mrs. E. H. Davis, had a small part of a box of Cuticura in the house. She wouldn't give up; said, 'We will try Cuticura.' one was applied on one hand and arm. Eureka! there was relief; stopped the terrible burning sensation from the word go. They immediately got the CUTICURA RESOLVENT, CUTICURA and CUTICURA SOAP. I commenced by taking one tablespoonful of Resolvent three times a day, after meals: had a bath once a day, water about blood heat: used Cuticura Soap freely; applied Cuticura morning and evening. Result, returned to my home in just six weeks from time I left, and my skin as smooth as this sheet of paper.

"HIRAM E. CARPENTER,
"*Henderson, Jefferson County, N. Y.*

"Sworn to before me this nineteenth day of January, 1880. "A. M. LEFFINGWELL,
Justice of the Peace.

We hereby certify that we are acquainted with the aforesaid Hiram E. Carpenter and know his condition to have been as stated. We believe his statement to be true in every particular.

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Attorney and Counsellor-at-Law, " "

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