

We Love the Absent Best,
Oh, the absent are the dearest
To a mother's loving heart;
And the depth of our affection
Is not known until we part.
We may view our sleeping darlings,
With a watchful pride and care;
And may breathe an earnest blessing
O'er each dusky head and fair.

But if there remains a pillow
Too uncrumpled, and too white;
And the chair a-near the bedside
Hold no garments for the night—
If we miss the shoes and stockings,
A torn jacket, or a dress—
If we miss a "Good-night, mother!"
And a dear one's warm caress—

Then our hearts yearn with affection
For the rovers from our nest,
And we feel of all our darlings
That we love the absent best.
Ah, the absent are the dearest—
Mothers hearts will answer you!
The dear lips by far the sweetest
Are the lips we cannot kiss!

THE ECCENTRIC BACHELOR.

F— was a living specimen of the typical old bachelor, a personage more often met with in the pages of fiction than in real life; lean and sharp-visaged of aspect, crusty and cynical of temper. He was, moreover, an avowed oddity; one of the privileged class who, by virtue of this reputation, can do what others dare not without exciting surprise or giving offense; whose eccentricities are met with a shrug of the shoulder and the remark, "What else could you expect of an oddity like him?"

He was an unpopular man, receiving scant sympathy; yet capable, nevertheless, of kind and generous acts, performed on the condition that they were to be kept strictly secret and that he was never to be thanked for them. Woe betide the recipient of a favor to whom it was brought home that he had mentioned the same to any one, or extolled the kindness of his benefactor! The unlucky wight once detected in thus giving vent to his gratitude had taken the surest method of cutting himself off from further help. He never got another chance.

Our old bachelor enjoying, as we have said, the privileges of eccentricity, it excited no surprise when on one occasion, after an absence from home, he wrote to inform his servants—an old couple who had lived with him for years—that on his return he would be accompanied by a widow lady who was likely to make a long stay in his house, and for whom apartments were to be got ready.

"And a pretty upset she'll make!" exclaimed the dismayed old housekeeper.

"A fussy, middle-aged party, no doubt; ordering and interfering and wanting to have everything her own way; which she won't get, John, as long as you and I can prevent her. She'll be a clever madam if she gets her foot inside my storeroom while there's locks and bolts to keep her out, I can tell her!"

"Don't you make too sure," said John. The old man could not resist now and then teasing his helpmate, as a little set-off against sundry naggings on the part of that good old lady. "Maybe it's a mistress of the house and of yourself that's coming to it. Them widders are great at wheedling. It's time, if the master is ever to marry, that—"

"Ah, stop your croaking now!" cried Mrs. John. This dire suggestion was too overpowering for her feelings.

The appointed day arrived; and when the cab drove to the door, the two old domestics, with very sour faces and their backs very much up, went to receive their master and his unwelcome guest. Their first glimpse of the latter showed them they might have spared their fears and hostile intentions. Out from the cab, before their astonished eyes, sprang a girlish figure, whose bright, happy face contrasted curiously with her mourning garments.

"Mind the step, uncle!" ("Oh, his niece, she is!") she cried, tripping up to the hall door. "Don't trouble, please," with a smile to the old housekeeper; "that bag is too heavy for you; I'll carry it."

And when the stranger came down to breakfast next morning with a morsel of a cap perched on the top of her golden braids of hair (not my idea of a widow's cap," said the dame to her husband; "and would you believe it, John, singing away like a bird while she was dressing!") she looked more absurdly young; more like a girl in her teens than an experienced, settled matron.

The advent of his pretty niece made some change in the habits of the old gentleman. He had friends at dinner more frequently than of yore; and in addition to the elderly fogies that formed his usual society, younger guests were invited, suited to the years of his visitor. With great amusement, her uncle observed the attraction her comeliness and winning ways were for these. "Swarming round—like flies about a honey-pot! Scenting, I dare say, a fat jointure. All widows are supposed to be rich; and just because she is a widow, and for no other reason, making up to her, the

fools!" This to himself with a cynical chuckle. Aloud: "Nice little woman, that niece of mine. Plenty of good looks; but hasn't a sixpence—not a sixpence to bless herself with."

It was wonderful how the old house was brightened up by the presence of its blithe young inmate. But by none was its pleasant influence more felt than by the domestics, who had vowed such hostility before her arrival. The old woman especially was devoted to her; loving her for her own sake as well as for the kindly help and good offices she was always receiving from the deft and willing hands of the young girl. In the storeroom—that sacred retreat which her foot was never to invade—the latter was to be found on "company-days," busy and happy as a bee; with sleeves tucked half way up her plump arms, her heavy crape skirts stowed away under one of the old lady's capacious Holland aprons, and laplets pinned high over her head, while, laughing merrily at the queer figure she had made of herself, she worked away at cakes and sweets, taking a world of trouble off the housekeeper's hands.

"And so thoughtful she is, and gay; bless her!" his wife would tell old John. "She'll come tripping up to me, and 'Now, do as you're bid,' she'll say, playfully, forcing me down into my big chair. 'Sit you down and rest, there's an old dear, and take your tea. I'm not a-going to let you do a turn more.' And then she'll work away, her tongue going all the time as fast as her fingers; running on about her mother and her home, her flowers and pets, dogs and birds, and what not, but never a word about husband or married days. And if I touch upon them or ask a question, she'll get quite silent and strange-like in a minute, and turn off the subject as if it burned her. Perhaps for all she's so merry outside she's fretting in her heart for him that's gone, and can't a-bear to talk of him."

"Nothing of the sort!" cried old John. "Don't you go think such stuff. She'd take a husband to-morrow; mark my words. And it's my opinion there's a young gentleman comes to this house that has a fairish chance. He's desperate sweet upon her. I haven't eyes in my head for nothing, and I see plain she doesn't dislike him, or hold herself up distant from him, as she does from others."

Old John was right. Matters were in due time so far satisfactorily settled between the young couple that an appeal to the uncle was deemed expedient. The old gentleman received the announcement with a half-pleasantry, half-satirical grimace.

"Ha, I thought so," he muttered. "But are you aware, my friend, that there is no money in the case? The lady hasn't sixpence, and—"

"I know it," indignantly interrupted the suitor. "You have made that remark before. I want no fortune with my wife, my own being ample; and my love—"

"Oh, spare your raptures, young sir. Not so fast. Don't be too sure of the prize; for when you hear what I have to tell you there may be, perhaps, a change in your views. I have no time to go into the matter now; but come to-morrow, and be prepared to hear what will surprise you," and the old gentleman went off, nodding back—malevolently, the lover thought—over his shoulder, leaving the poor fellow in a state of most uncomfortable suspense and uncertainty.

What could this dark hint mean? and why was he not to make sure? Could it be possible there was any doubt, any mystery as to the demise of the loved one's husband? He could not help calling to mind her confused and singular manner at times; a certain want of frankness; an evident embarrassment at any allusion to the past. The possibility of an obstacle made the young man realize as he had not before done how deeply his affections were engaged. He spent a miserable night, awaiting in vain conjecture and sleepless anxiety the tidings which the morrow might bring forth.

In order to explain matters it will be necessary to go back for some months previous to the arrival of the young lady at her uncle's house; as well as to change the scene from it to a country cottage in a remote part of England—the home of the widowed sister of the eccentric bachelor. In it we find him pacing up and down the small drawing-room and listening to the querulous complaints that its occupant, a confirmed invalid, is uttering from the sofa on which she lies. "I think but little of my bodily sufferings," she is saying; "they cannot now last long. Every day I feel more plainly that the end is not far, and my doctor tells me the same. The distress of mind that torments me is what is so hard to bear."

"And what may that be about, if I might ask?"

"The future of my child when I am gone. All I have, as you know, dies with me. She will be penniless, and the thought of what is to become of her, cast on the world without a home, haunts me night and day. It is too dreadful!"

"A girl—and young—and not bad-looking. Where's the fear? Somebody'll marry her. Men are such fools!"

The sick woman could not forebear a smile. "Ah, but there are no men, no fools here! In this remote corner we see no one, and the poor child, taken up with nursing me and tied to a sick room, has made no acquaintances. It is killing me to see her young life sacrificed and to think of the future."

The mother's tears began to flow. Her hearer, never very amiably inclined toward the weaker sex, or, at least in this company, increased his quarter-deck pacings in much discomfiture as these symptoms of "water works turned on" became apparent. His hurried steps soon subsided, however, to a steady march up and down the little drawing-room, while with frowning brow and occasional chuckles, he seemed to be concocting some scheme. After a few minutes he came to a sudden halt before the invalid's sofa. "Can the girl act?" he asked, abruptly.

"Act! How do you mean? I—"

"Oh, you needn't look frightened; I'm not going to propose sending her to the Gaiety or the Criterion."

"Well, except in the little make believe plays and dressings-up that children delight in—all children are, I think, actors born" ("Ay, and men and women too," growled the cynic)—"except that sort of thing she never has seen or had any opportunity of acting. Why do you ask?"

And in reply her brother unfolded the plan he had been concocting—namely, that his niece, laying aside her "frippery and her trinkets and other girl's nonsense," was to put on the mourning garb and act the part of a widow, in which assumed character she was to come to stay with him in his London home.

"But I don't understand—"

"And you're not wanted to understand," he snarled. "It's my whim; and it may be for the girl's advantage. If she's willing, and can hold her tongue, I'll come back for her when she's ready. And I'll pay for her outfit. Crape and weepers. Ho, ho, ho!"

When the first surprise at her uncle's strange proposition was over, the young girl jumped eagerly at the prospect of a change from the dull home she never yet had left. She was young and spirited; and at an age when love of variety and a longing to see the world and plunge into its unknown delights are natural. The playing the widow she thought would be excellent fun. There was a spice of adventure in it, and it would be like the private theatricals and acting charades she had read of and imagined so pleasant. The old gentleman's reasons for wishing her to do so was a puzzle; but then who could wonder at anything he did? absurd oddity that he was! Perhaps it was to avoid having to provide a chaperon for her; he hated ladies so, elderly ones especially.

The result of the scheme we have seen; and the scheme itself was what its originator proceeded to divulge to the would-be husband when that individual presented himself with considerable misgiving and agitation on the appointed morning.

"As the lady has not turned out to be what you took her for, is not in fact, a widow, perhaps the whole matter may be off. A disappointment, no doubt," wound up the uncle with one of his grin chuckles; "but 'twas only right to tell you in time. Young man, if you can pardon the deceit, take her."

"Well," exclaimed the young man to his fiancée, when, all things cleared up and satisfactorily arranged, the engaged pair were talking over the queer circumstance that had brought them together, "I always knew your uncle was eccentric, but this surpasses anything I could have imagined even of him."

The Champion Cat Story.
It is about time to ring down the curtain on cat stories, but before the bell sounds there is just time for a good one. A man now living in Kingston emigrated to the West many years ago and bought a house which had stood unoccupied for a considerable time. The first night he heard sounds which convinced him that there were rats in the cellar, and on investigation he found that hundreds of the creatures were depositing themselves there. Having eaten a quarter of beef down to the bone, they were playing tag among shelves and boxes. He offered to introduce the family cat but she declined to be presented. The next day she was missing and the family supposed they had lost her; but on the fourth day a familiar "meow" was heard, and there was tabby at the head of a column of three dozen cats in light marching order, their backs up and their tails rampant. The front door was opened and the detachment moved down the cellar stairs in good order. The next morning a flour barrel full of dead rats was buried behind the house. —*New York Tribune.*

When the Isthmus shall have its two canals and its ship railway, it will be about as difficult to make up one's mind which route to take as it was for the man to come to a decision who sat up all night deliberating whether to first take off his shirt or his pantaloons.

The mistakes of women result almost always from her faith in the good and her confidence in the truth.

MESMERISM IN COURT.

Remarkable Spectacle in Paris—How a Prisoner was Acquitted.

The court of appeals in Paris has been the scene of a most curious and remarkable spectacle. A young man named Didier was lately arrested for an offense in the Champs Elysees and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. In prison he was examined by Drs. Mottet and Mesnet, two well-known specialists in mental diseases, who reported that he lived in a state of constant somnambulism, the attacks of which can be provoked at will. The case was heard on appeal, and the judges were about to withdraw to consider their verdict when the doctors offered to confirm the statements made in their report by practical experiments on the spot. The bench consented, and then occurred the following painful scene, described by the Paris correspondent of the *London Standard*: Dr. Mottet, followed by the magistrates and the prisoner, retired into a side room. Here, by the usual mode of rapid passes of the hands before his eyes and a strong, fixed gaze, the unhappy "subject" was mesmerized. Didier was then left in charge of two of the municipal guards on service, the doctors and the judges returned to the court, and the door of the room was shut. Dr. Mottet now called the prisoner by his name. The next second a fearful noise was heard. It came from the sick young man. A few minutes before a touch of the finger would have almost knocked him over, so feeble and emaciated was he. Now, under the influence of magnetism, he was like a raging lion. Upsetting the guards who held him by the wrists, he rushed at the door, broke it open, and knocking down everybody in his way, ran up to Dr. Mottet. Here he suddenly stopped, and fixing his eyes on his mesmerizer trembled from head to foot in a manner terrible to see. Shrieks of horror then ran through the court. The doctor then set to work. "Undress yourself," said he to the prisoner. In a second Didier stripped himself of nearly all his garments. "Dress yourself again," said the doctor, and again the prisoner obeyed with the same lightning rapidity. The experiment appeared conclusive. Dr. Mottet then asked the "subject" by blowing on his face. Didier fell to the ground as if shot. The doctor, however, soon brought him round again. "Why did you undress yourself before these gentlemen?" asked Dr. Mottet; "that was very improper." Didier, gazing with vacant astonishment, replied "What! I undressed myself? Impossible." And the young man clung to the doctor for protection like a child. The bench, however, was not convinced, and appeared to look on the whole affair as a comedy. Dr. Mesnet, in his turn, now operated on the prisoner. Having mesmerized him he ordered him to write from memory a letter addressed to him while in prison. Didier replied: "Cannot, because I am in prison." The doctor insisted, whereupon the prisoner sat down to a table and wrote, word for word, the letter in question, without a single mistake. While he was writing it Dr. Mottet took a long needle out of his instrument-case and plunged it into the young man's neck, but he felt nothing. By this time, however, the bench had seen enough of these painful experiments, and some of the audience crying out "Assez! assez!" the sitting came to an end. The court, considering the prisoner was not responsible for his acts, quashed the verdict of the lower court, and the unhappy man was discharged.

Training Circus Horses.

"How long," asked the reporter, "does it take to break a horse in?"

"From eighteen months to two years for good and sure pad-riding. Care has to be taken that he does not sly or break his gait, but goes round the circus-ring at an even pace, so that the performer can do whatever he wants, by time. If this is not secured the performer can never tell where he is going to jump. Much, however, depends upon what the horse is being trained for, all the best horses being used for a special performance. In most cases the riders, if they are experienced, train their own animals, and thus, when they are ridden, they understand much better what is required of them. Ducrow, Mme. Dockrell, Melville, Sebastian, Stickney, Cooke, Reed and the like, all train their own horses, and own them. This system of private training has only been in practice a few years. Managers of a circus, under the old custom, were always expected to furnish pad-horses, and those required for two and four-act performances, so that a performer, going from one company to another, would always find a horse ready for him to mount, and in a short time horse and rider would be able to understand each other. Nowadays, some of the crack stars have as many as eight or ten horses of their own, most of them trained for a special performance. They are very valuable, most of them being full-blooded and imported from England and France. Great care has to be taken of them, as they are extremely liable to take cold after a ring performance."

Bird Language.

In the course of a very able paper on this subject the Bishop of Carlisle says: "A dog sometimes looks as though he was thinking a thing out, and dog stories are very wonderful; but after all, the cleverest dog that ever lived yet has not been able to get beyond 'bow-wow,' and we may safely predict that no dog will ever acquire even the simplest elements of human knowledge.

"But what, let us ask, is the real barrier between the dog's mind (if the term may be used) and the simplest elements of human knowledge? It consists in this fact—that the vocal organs of the dog are so constructed that it is impossible for him to articulate a word. His vocabulary, however, already extends a long way beyond 'bow-wow.' To begin with, there are as many different meanings to 'bow-wow,' or to the 'wow' (short and sharp) alone, as some one said a lady could give to the word 'dear,' according to its position in a sentence and the emphasis with which it was pronounced. But besides saying 'bow-wow,' the dog whines. And there are many different meanings (which, however, we are sometimes too stupid to understand) in the whining of a dog. We have no fear that dogs or any other of the brute species will furnish competitors for the prizes to be attained by human knowledge; for we observe a barrier between man and brute, fixed, and intentionally fixed, by creative power. When we find in the lower creations, as among birds, the power of articulation, there the intelligence is absent which could employ that power for its own development; and where, as in dogs, we find conspicuous tokens of intelligence, there the power of articulation is totally absent. Parrots can be taught to repeat any words, but they never can make up for themselves any new phrase out of the materials in the shape of words that they may have acquired. The natural utterance of many birds, though conveying no meaning to themselves, is distinctly articulate, and sometimes is identical in sound with words that have a meaning to us. But it is the nightingale that possesses the power of articulation to the fullest extent among the species below us. There are races of men whose languages do not employ so many sounds as there are in the nightingale's song. Vowels, consonants of various kinds, sibilants included, even double consonants, as X, Z, are recognized in it by the human ear."

Tavern Signs.

Many tavern signs exhibit touches of quaint satire. The Quiet Woman and the Silent Woman, with pictures of a headless woman; the Honest Lawyer, with his head under his arm, the Load of Mischief and the Man Laden with Mischief, each depicting a man chained to a woman, with the word "wedlock" on the padlock of the chain. The Green Man and Still has long been a puzzle; sometimes a man dressed in a sort of Robin Hood green garb, but leaving the still unexplained. A French writer wishing to enable other Frenchmen to understand this sign, translated it into "L'homme est vert et tranquille." Other attempts to explain it have not met with much success. One of the World's End tavern bears a pictorial representation of a horseman in the equestrian costume of George II. brought to a dead stop by a precipice, all beyond being a chaos of sky and cloud. Many tavern signs are believed to be traceable to the conception of names which originally had widely different meanings, such as Boulogne Mouth into Bull and Mouth, Cœur Dore ("Golden Heart") into Queer Door, Basshanals into Bag of Nails, Peg and Wassail (connected with an old wassail-bowl custom) into Pig and Whistle, George Canning into George Cannon, and perhaps the most extraordinary of all. God Encompassed Us into Goat and Compasses. Gaming-houses in the last two centuries occasionally exhibit signs denoting the kind of play mostly carried on there. In one case the owner (a Frenchman) adapted the French names for some of the suits at cards; his successor in the same house, an Englishman, not understanding the names employed, transformed them into Pig and Carrots and Pig and Chequers.

Then and Now.

Fifty-three years ago a Philadelphia paper recorded a wonderful change in the amount of coal brought to that city from the mines, as follows: "About 60,000 tons of coal have been brought to Philadelphia this season from the Schuylkill mines, of which nearly one-half was shipped to Boston, Providence and New York. The above amount is an increase of one-quarter over last year. Eight years ago only 350 tons were brought to market. It is now passing into general use." The present annual product of the Pennsylvania mines exceeds 20,000,000 tons. More than fifty years ago Morris and William Wurtz, who were enterprising merchants, went to the wilderness of Luzerne county, Pa., and bought a tract of coal land at a low price. They formed the Delaware and Hudson Coal company, to which they sold their land for \$140,000. This company now delivers 2,000,000 tons per annum for several millions of dollars, according to the market price of coal.

Blackbird.

Singing loud and singing gay
Mid the dewy dawning,
Blackbird welcomes in the day
Under his green awning;
Welcomes in the rising day,
While the shadows haste away,
Singing loud and singing gay
Mid the dewy dawning.

Singing sweet and singing clear
While the day is waning,
Blackbird spreads a pensive cheer
Through the light remaining;
Spreads a calm and pensive cheer
Through the stillness far and near,
Singing sweet and singing clear
While the day is waning.

—*Anne Evans.*

HUMOROUS.

A great ink-convenience—The printing press.

The *Rome Sentinel* calls a poster a stuck-up thing.

"What do you take me for?" said the arrested man to a detective. —*Boston Post.*

The man who has his sisters and his cousins cannot be too careful of his haunts.

A man never looks so much like a red-headed villain as when he is told by the photographer to "look pleasant."

Said a bachelor philosopher: "My friend conducted his future wife to the altar—and here his leadership came to an end."

Lives there a man with soul so dead who never to his neighbor said: "Well, is this cold enough for you?" —*Yonkers Gazette.*

"What," asked the teacher, "was the greatest obstacle Washington encountered in crossing the Delaware?" And the smart, bad boy thought for a minute and then made answer: "The toll-man."

It has been discovered that the skin of a cat prevents neuralgia. It is also asserted that throwing bootjacks at the felines tends to develop and strengthen the muscles of the arm. —*Philadelphia Chronicle.*

"What is the first thing to be done in case of fire?" asked Professor Stearns. "See the insurance company," promptly answered the boy at the foot of the class, whose father had been burned out once or twice. —*Burlington Hawkeye.*

In review of the past lesson at a Sunday-school the question was asked: "What did God do on the seventh day?" Answer: "He rested." "What else did He do?" Promptly a little eight-year-old boy: "He read His newspaper."

"Why, I'm so glad you've come. Did you know that I've been worrying about you, John, all the evening?" "That's just what I married you for. It is pleasant to think that there is some one home worrying about you." Somehow this view of the matter didn't exactly coincide with her ideas of marital amenities. —*New Haven Register.*

While a Chicago girl was leaning over the railing of the veranda one night, singing "I'm Waiting, My Darling, for Thee," her long-legged lover sneaked out of the shrubbery. "Birdie!" "Amanda?" They embraced. "Have you missed me?" she murmured. "Missed you, my angel? does the lonely dove miss—" But there came a dull, hollow thud, as if some one had hit an old stump with a maul, and he shot out in the darkness, while a voice as deep as a bass horn said: "Birdie has gone, Amanda, and you can turn the gas out in the parlor and go to bed."

A SCALEY STORY.

A major loved a maiden so,
His warlike heart was soft as do,
He oft would kneel to her and say:
"Thou art of life my only do."
"Ah! if but kinder thou would'st be,
And sometimes sweetly smile on Me."
"Thou art my life, my guiding star,
I love thee near, I love thee far."
"My passion I cannot control,
Thou art the idol of my Sol."
The maiden said: "Oh, do I ask you,
How can you go on thus? Oh, La!"
The "major" rose from bended knee,
And went her father for to see.
The father thought no match was finer,
This "major" once had been a "minor."
They married soon, and after that
Dwelt in ten rooms all on "one flat."
So happy ends the little tale,
For they lived on the grandest "scale."