

Throwing Stones.

How easy 'tis for us to give
A sermon to our friends,
Whose sharp and burning eloquence
Our neighbors' faults condemn!
How clear and deep our logic is,
Our argument, how strong!
And our conclusions—oh, what force
And power to them belong!

Meanwhile, we did not touch upon
Our own peculiar "cranks."
We'd rather teach our neighbors
And condemn their freaks and pranks!
Our piccolos—oh, but they
Are very, very few!
Correcting them is not the task,
We've set ourselves to do.

We have the whole thing upside down:
We've caught the wrong end first,
Tis by this very meddling
The whole world is accurst.
Let each other mind his own affairs,
And leave his friends alone;
And while we're in a house of glass
Don't let us throw a stone.

A FADED LEAF.

I can hardly believe it even now. If there was one person in this world whom I should have thought was safe from the remotest chance of matrimony, that person was Aunt Hetty—dear, placid, middle-aged Aunt Hetty. And yet I have just seen her drive away from the door hand-in-hand with her handsome husband, and looking as sweet and bonny as any young bride of nineteen, notwithstanding her silver hair. It has all happened so quickly and in such a wonderful, fairy-tale kind of a fashion that I feel as if it had taken my breath, and as if I must really sit down and rest a bit and think the matter over.

I have lived with Aunt Hetty ever since mother died. When I came to her I was quite a little tot, and now I am six and twenty, so you may imagine it is good many years ago. Auntie must have been a young woman then, but somehow she has always seemed middle-aged to me. She was always so calm and gentle and did everything in such a business-like way that I regarded her a different kind of being from my restless excitable self. I have had my little flirtations now and then, but Aunt Hetty seemed too grave, too wise, too good altogether, ever to be mixed up into anything so frivolous as a love affair. It only shows how we may live with people in the same house, almost in the same room, for years together and yet know little or nothing of their feelings. I remember almost as if it were yesterday, fancying one day, about a year ago, that auntie was dressed more carefully than usual. I don't know what the difference was—only an extra bit of lace or ribbon or something of that sort, but I said to her in fun: "Why auntie dear how smart you are! One would think you were going to a wedding!"

"No, dear," she said, "I am not going to a wedding, but this should have been my own silver-wedding day." And the dear lip quivered for a moment and a tear came into her soft gray eyes. "Your silver wedding, auntie! Forgive me; I didn't know!"

"No, dear," she said, "of course you could not. It is a very old story now."
"But how was it, then, that you were not married after all, auntie?" I enquired. "But perhaps I ought not to ask. Don't tell me if it pains you."

"No, dear," she said; "it was a painful story once, but the pain has gone out of it now. And I think I should like to tell you. Perhaps some day it may save you from making a mistake as I did. It is a very simple story—just a lover's quarrel, a few hasty words—all said and over in five minutes; but they altered my whole life."

"A lover's quarrel, auntie! Then I am sure the fault was not on your side!"

"You are wrong, dear. The fault was on my side. I was proud and angry and obstinate; a word would have given me back my lover, but I would not say it. We parted in anger and we have never met again!"

"You, auntie!—the most patient of living beings—you proud and angry and obstinate! I can't believe it!"
"Yes, Ruth; it is true, nevertheless. Sit here on the hassock at my feet and I will tell you my story. It won't take long."

I sat down accordingly and with her hand resting on my shoulder and now and then wandering lovingly over my hair, she began:

"It happened when I was only eighteen—younger than you, Ruth, and full of life and spirit—very different from the faded old maid you have always known me. I was engaged to be married. My lover was four years older than myself; he was a mate of a ship and a fine dashing young fellow named Edward Blake. We had been engaged six months and were to be married a month later. The day was fixed, and Edward had arranged to give up the sea and take a situation on land. We were as happy as any two young people could possibly be, but, unluckily, just a month before the time fixed for our wedding day, a picnic was got up by some of our friends, and Edward and I were of the party. There was a handsome young fellow there named Percy Sandys, the son of a neighboring clergy-

man. He was fresh from the college, and full of fun and frolic. I chanced to be placed next to him at luncheon, and not knowing, as I afterwards discovered that I was engaged, he was specially attentive to me. I did not care for his attention in the least; but I was in high spirits and only bent on the enjoyment of the moment, and I did not check him as perhaps I ought to have done. Presently I caught sight of Edward's face, and saw that he was looking terrible cross and angry. Foolishly, I thought it rather good fun to make him jealous; and, on purpose to tease him, I pretended to take all the more notice of Mr. Sandys. When we had finished luncheon the party scattered and strolled about the woods in various directions. I naturally expected Edward to accompany me, but he rather rudely, as I thought, held aloof, and to punish him, I paired off with Mr. Sandys. When the party got together again Edward looked so savage that I thought it better not to provoke him any further.

"I shook off Mr. Sandys, and walking away with Edward, began to scold him for his unreasonable jealousy. Of course I did not think I myself was in fault; nobody ever does. A loving word would have made me penitent directly. Unfortunately he was white hot with anger and began to reproach me in a way that roused my temper, too, for I was quick enough to take offense in those days, Ruth, though I have learned better since. I can remember as if it were yesterday thenook in the woods where we stood, the sunshine glinting through the trees and lighting up Edward's flushed face and angry eyes. He reproached me bitterly—more bitterly, I think than I deserved. He called me a heartless coquette and I called him little-minded and told him he had made himself ridiculous by his unreasonable jealousy. We got hotter and hotter and finally he declared that if I did not admit that I had been wrong, and promise to behave differently for the future, all must be over between us. I did not care a straw for Mr. Sandys and would fifty times sooner have had Edward with me, but I would have died sooner than have told him so then. So I gave him a bitter answer and we both grew angrier still. His last words, uttered with all the intensity of passion, ring still in my ears. I can tell you them word for word: 'Hetty, if you let me go now, understand clearly you will never see my face again.' I did not quite believe him. Perhaps, if I had, I should still have let him go. At any rate, I was far too angry to give way then. 'Go by all means, if you wish it,' I said, and in another moment he was gone. I had been tearing to pieces, in my passion, a little spray of hawthorn he had given me in the day. I had pulled off the leaves one by one, and when he left me the bare stem was left in my hand, with one leaf only remaining. See, here it is, the last relic of my first and last lover. God grant that in your whole life, my Ruth, you may never weep such tears as I have wept over that one faded leaf."

Aunt Hetty took from her desk the little prayer-book she always carried, a quaint little red-covered book, with a gilt clasp and showed me just within it a tissue-paper pocket attached to the cover. This she opened and showed me the faded leaf.

"This little book," she said was Edward's first gift to me, and this old dry leaf is my only relic of the day when we parted in anger in the wood, never to meet again in this world. Stay! I have one more treasure, see!"

She drew from her bosom a quaint old locket and put it in my hand. It was a miniature painting, representing a young man in an old fashion costume. It was a handsome face, but stern and proud-looking; and I could well believe that the original would have behaved as Aunt Hetty had described.

"But did you really part like that, auntie?" I said. Did you ever see him again?"

"Never! He did not go back to the picnic-party, but joined an outward-bound ship the very next day, leaving a brief note for my mother, stating that we had fortunately found out in time that we were unsuited to each other, and had therefore by mutual consent, put an end to our engagement."

"But that was very cruel, auntie."

"I thought so then. Perhaps it was a little, but afterwards I blamed myself far more than him. I had given the provocation, and I knew in my heart of hearts that one word of regret on my part would have made all right between us. But I was too proud to say it. I let him go with my eyes open and I have been justly punished."

"But have you never heard of him since, auntie?"

"Once or twice, in early years, but only indirectly. He had no relatives in our part of the country. I that he gave up the sea, and obtained a commission in some Indian regiment. When last I heard of him he was a captain, but that was many years ago, and I do not know whether he is alive or dead. So ends

my poor little romance. There is one thing I should like to ask, Ruth, and that is partly why I have told you my story. You have seen my relics. They have been my greatest treasure in life, and I should like them put in my coffin when I die. Will you remember this dear?"

I could not answer for tears, but I kissed her hand and she was content. Two months ago, tired of our humdrum country life, auntie and I resolved for once, to visit foreign parts. Accordingly, we went to Boulogne and took up our abode in a quiet boarding-house in the Ruedes Vieillards. Our domicile was a quaint old house, said to have been originally a nunnery and afterwards to have been occupied for a short time by the great Napoleon when meditating a decent upon England. A broad gateway, flanked on either side by disused field-guns, planted upright in the ground by way of gate-posts, led into a pleasant courtyard, with seats under the shade of a spreading tree and made musical by the splash of a modest fountain.

There were a good many visitors staying in the house, but they were mostly in families or parties, and we did not amalgamate much with them. Our vis-a-vis at table was a tall elderly gentleman of soldierly appearance, who was always spoken of as the major. He had evidently been a very handsome man indeed, he was handsome still. His hair and mustache were perfectly white, forming a marked contrast with his complexion, which was extremely dark, as if tanned by long residence under a tropical sun. I think I was first attracted to him by noticing that his French was even worse than our own. When he ventured, as he occasionally did, to address an order to the white-capped waiting maids in their own language, the difficulties he got into were dreadful, and he generally ended by getting rather angry with himself and them. Once or twice I ventured, very timidly, to help him out of a difficulty of this kind, and in this manner a slight acquaintance had sprung up between us. It had, however, proceeded no further than a friendly good morning, or a casual remark across the dinner-table. With other visitors the Major fraternized even less. After breakfast he regularly smoked one cigar under the tree in the courtyard, after which he started off for a solitary ramble, and did not reappear until dinner time. So matters stood until the first Sunday evening after our arrival, when we went as in duty bound, to the little English church in an adjoining street. We were ushered into one of the pews appropriated for strangers, and a minute or two later the Major was shown into the same pew, and sat down silently beside us. The service proceeded in the usual course, and the sermon was nearly over, when the Major, by an accidental movement of his elbow, knocked down auntie's little red prayer-book which was on the sloping ledge before her. He stooped to pick it up, and was about to replace it, but as it came in view in the full glare of the gas light his eye chanced to fall upon it, and he started as though he had seen a ghost. He laid down the book on the desk before him, but it seemed to fascinate him. He looked at the book to Aunt Hetty and from Aunt Hetty to the book, as if trying to satisfy himself on some point, but without success. The sermon came to an end at last, and the benediction followed, but I fear the Major had little share in it. He took advantage of the moment when all heads were bowed to do a very unmanly thing. He slyly put up his eye-glasses, and opening auntie's prayer-book, took a rapid peep at the name inside. It was very quickly done and might have escaped notice, but I was watching him closely. I could even read the name myself. It is a bold, manly handwriting. "To Hester, June 28, 18—." I stared aghast at such an act of impertinence, and glanced at Aunt Hetty to see whether she would resist it, but she had probably not noticed the offense for she made no sign.

The congregation began to disperse, and we passed out in our turn. The Major close behind us. We were scarcely fairly in the street when he spoke to auntie.

"Madam, I am going to ask you a very singular question, but let me assure you that I have a deep personal interest in asking it. Will you tell me how you came by that red prayer-book that you use?"

I shall never forget auntie's answer, given as quickly as if it were the most commonplace matter, though I could tell by the faint blush on her usual pale cheek how deeply she was moved.

"You gave it to me yourself, Major Blake, six and twenty years ago."

The Major's face was a study. Surprise, delight, and incredulity seemed struggling for the mastery. He took off his hat and stood bareheaded. I hardly know why, but that one little gesture seemed to tell me, better than the most passionate protestations would

have done, that the old love had been kept a treasured and a sacred thing. And I think, from the faint sweet smile that gathered round her mouth as she looked up at him, that the same thought came to auntie.

"And you are Hetty!" he said. "Yes I know you now."

"You had forgotten the six and twenty years, Maj. Blake. I knew you from the first."

"And would you really have let me go without a word or a sigh?" he asked. "Why not?" she replied. "How could I know you would wish to be reminded of old times?"

"Reminded! I have never forgotten. I tried my hardest to forget, and couldn't although you preferred another!"

"Another! what other?"

"Young Sandys. Did you marry him?"

"I have never seen him since."
At this stage of the conversation it struck me that I was decidedly *de trop*. Maj. Blake had replaced his hat, and, side by side with auntie, was walking slowly homeward. I had hitherto followed behind, but, reaching a convenient street corner, I let them proceed alone, and went off, without beat of drum, for a stroll in an opposite direction. When I reached the boarding-house, half an hour later, I found auntie and the Major sitting in the courtyard under the shade of the great tree. The Major courteously lifted his hat at my approach and said:

"Miss Danvers, your aunt and I are very old friends; indeed, many years ago we were engaged to be married, but an unfortunate misunderstanding separated us. We have lost many happy years of life together, but I hope some may still remain to us. I trust we shall have your good wishes."

I looked from one to the other.
"You dear, darling auntie, then you really are going to be married after all. Of course I wish you joy, and Maj. Blake too, from the very bottom of my heart!"

"I don't know," said auntie, shaking her head doubtfully. "I'm afraid we are two old fools."

"Nay, dear," said the Major, raising her hand gallantly to his lips. "Perhaps we were young fools, but that is six and twenty years ago. Let us hope we have learned true wisdom now."

I don't know how the secret oozed out, but before twenty-four hours were over every one in the boarding-house, even to white-capped Adele and her assistant maids, knew that the handsome English Major had met an old love in the person of the gentle little lady with the sweet smile and the soft gray hair, and that after a separation of six-and-twenty years they were again engaged to be married, and they were promoted to the rights and privileges of engaged lovers accordingly. And lovers they unmistakably were, though in a very quiet way. No lover of twenty could have been more devoted than this weatherbeaten warrior to his faded bride; no girl of seventeen more proud and happy in her lover's devotion than dear old auntie. They ought, by every rule, to have been ridiculous but somehow nobody seemed to think them so and I really believe they had the heartiest sympathy of ever one in the house.

I must pass over the homeward journey, and the astonishment of our friends at Fairfield, when auntie returned, engaged to be married. Some few of them had known Maj. Blake as a young man, but to most of them he was a stranger. Many were the questions and long the explanations before everything was accounted for to everybody's satisfaction, but it was done at last. And then came the preparation of the trousseau, and at last, this very morning, the happy pair have been made one, and auntie is off to the Isle of Wight to spend her honeymoon. And last night just before we went to bed, she called me into her own room, and, taking out the little red prayer-book, said:

"Ruth, dear, I am going to give you this little book as a parting remembrance. You know how I have treasured it, and you won't value it less, I am sure for having been so dear to me. And if, when Mr. Right comes, Ruth, you are ever tempted to be wilful, or wayward, or pain a heart that loves you truly, think of your old Aunt Hetty, and don't forget the moral of the faded leaf."

—If you want to keep a town from thriving don't erect any more dwellings than you can conveniently occupy yourself. If you should accidentally have an empty building, and any one should want to rent it, ask three times the value of it. Demand a Shylock price for every foot of ground that God has given you stewardship over. Turn a cold shoulder to every mechanic and business man who seeks to make a home with you. Look at every new comer with a scowl. Run down the work of new workmen. Go abroad for wares rather than seek to do business in your midst. Fail to advertise, or in any way to support a newspaper, that people abroad may not know whether business is going on in your town or not. Wrap yourself with a coat of impervious selfishness. There is no more effectual way to retard the growth of a town than actions like those enumerated."—Horace Greeley.

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