

The Borgia Bronze

By ROBERT C. V. MEYERS

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THE week before starting for his usual Mediterranean sail Hartley took from the little gold-inlaid desk in his wife's boudoir the letter of instructions. There had been a look of haunting sorrow in Elise's face the day she gave him the letter, and, as though reproaching herself for something, she urged his head down to her pillow and let his cheek rest close to hers for a moment before dismissing him.

When he left the room, her mother followed him. "Elise has such strong individuality," said Mrs. Dale. "Her wishing to return to the original donors the pretty things she has had given her from time to time is just like her; it is the same as telling her friends that their gifts were precious to her and that it would seem almost sacrilegious for any one else to enjoy them after she is gone."

Hartley knew that the lady desired him to think that his wife put no intentional slight upon him in sending away from him her prized possessions.

But he had known the truth all along, ever since the day Elise accepted him, and he came upon her an hour after her word had been given him with an old bronze jar and Caldwell's letter in her lap. She was very white as she handed him the sheet, whereon he read the aspiring words of his rival. He gave her back the letter, looking into her eyes, and she threw it away from her, laughing lightly. Then he held out to her the case of shining adornments which he had been collecting for the day when she should have promised to be his wife, for he had never doubted that she would be his. A month later she married him.

He looked down at the letter of instructions spread out upon her dainty desk.

"The jewels my husband gave me," he read, "are to revert to him."

He smiled. Yesterday he had handed the baubles to her sister and been effusively thanked.

"So like you," Mrs. Dale said, "to wish Marguerite to have them. You know how dearly Elise appreciated them and how sweet it was of her to wish you to have them again. They were too valuable for her to dispose of otherwise. Besides, she loved you so."

The letter of instructions went on mentioning article after article, each to go back to the presenter of it, her wedding gifts and all, nothing to come to him but the jewels he gave her the day she consented to marry him.

"I purchased with a price," he said. "I gained a faithfulness up to the value I placed upon it, and she honored the name I gave her. There is nothing to complain about." And Caldwell's name was not among the others. How well she had guarded her poor secret, even speaking of the man as he forfeited the respect of his friends with a sort of pitying contempt which she must have tried to make believe was genuine.

No, Caldwell's name was not mentioned in the letter of instructions, and yet Caldwell had once given her a present.

He left the desk and, going to a cabinet in a corner, brought forth a low, squat vase of bronze.

Elise had told him the history of the bronze. It was called a poison jar. Caldwell had given it to her in Rome. It was said to have come from a Borgia collection, probably had been known to Lucrezia of that remarkable house.

Hartley fingered the dull, sinister looking thing, whose green and black



SHE URGED HIS HEAD DOWN.

blotches, etched by time, had engaged the enviousness of artists whom Elise had to the house. He turned it upside down and manipulated the base, lightly running his finger nail round it a score of times till it slowly revolved and disclosed a little compartment, the existence of which few would suspect.

Out of this compartment Elise had abstracted Caldwell's letter of love that time he came upon her with the casket of jewels in his hand, an hour after she had said she would be his wife.

The place was vacant now—nothing

there but a continuation of the canker that seared the outside.

What a romantic fellow Caldwell must have been! Quite an old time Elizabethan lover who feared his fate too much.

Why had Elise kept the bronze all this time? She had an artistic eye and admired its coloring.

Besides, had she not been wise in having no desire to revive old memories in Caldwell by sending the thing back to him?

There was one other thing she could have given back to Caldwell.

Hartley felt in his pocket and took out a paper folded and refolded till it was but an inch square. He fitted it in the compartment in the base of the bronze. It wedged in like a part of the metal. He had found it in a locket they took from his wife's neck when she was dead, a simple piece of jewelry her father had given her as a child and which she always wore in remembrance of him, for she had loved him.

He had opened it and found the paper pressed over the portrait of her father.

He took the paper from the bronze jar. Ought it to have been buried with her, as was done with the locket? No; she had been his wife, and this was a love letter from another man.

Rather had she been cruel or kind to Caldwell or himself in showing the letter that time to her affianced husband, though could she have done otherwise when that accepted husband chanced upon her with the letter not yet hidden from him? And was he doing a loyal or kind thing to her in reading it a second time? There were hard lines about his mouth as his eyes scanned the hastily scrawled words: "I am poor, but you, too, are poor. Why must wealth be such a power and love be so defenseless? I love you as no man ever loved before. I will work for you, slave for you!"

He folded it again. Why had Elise kept it? And what a crazy jilted Caldwell must be to take a jilting as he had done, and scarcely a jilting either, for Elise had answered him not a word (he would swear to that, for he knew Elise's honor), only accepting another man who spoke first. And Caldwell had gone down. What a wreck the man was, avoided by one time intimate, debasing his talents, welcoming the maddest excitement at no matter what cost to fame and conscience! And yet one friend remained to him, old Senator Nicholson, the friend of the president, the early chum of his father. Old Nicholson held out, offering his hand when others stood aloof. Only two days ago the papers announced the gaining of a consulship by Nicholson for Caldwell, which might yet save him and re-establish him in the good opinion of the world. And Caldwell had boasted at the club that he ignored the appointment. Could love do so much to debase a man?

Caldwell had been loved by Elise. The man had been weak enough to let himself sink because he thought his feeling had not been reciprocated by her.

"But am I strong enough to let another man know how little I was prized? And yet?"

If Caldwell were set on his feet again and accepted the consulship!

"But Elise does not mention his name in the letter of instructions. Did not her feeling for him wear away when she discovered how weak he was? Still she kept his letter, and it is the province of a woman to elevate what she loves. What she loves!"

Suddenly he wheeled toward the gold inlaid desk and let down the lid. He could not write the letter at Elise's desk.

He took the bronze jar and left the rosy room, locking the door behind him, and passed on to the library. There he threw the curtains wide, letting in the sunshine, and, seating himself in his accustomed chair, wrote and addressed a few lines to Caldwell.

Caldwell was at the club when the note was handed to him. He was at his worst.

He opened Hartley's note. He burst into a strident laugh. Mrs. Hartley wished to return to the original donors all the gifts with which they had honored her, and, among others, his old time remembrance had been noticed. That jar! He recollected the day in Rome, the lying old descendant of the Caesars who sold the thing to him. Elise had admired it in the little black shop window, its shape and its color. They had passed on to the great cathedral, where Mrs. Dale awaited them and dismissed him. He had hurried back to the little shop to buy the bronze, which the old fellow lovingly displayed to him, vouching for its antiquity and showing him the hollow in the base. It seemed that a great chance opened to him. Mrs. Dale's treatment of him in the cathedral told him that her daughter would see him no more alone. Elise had besought him to send her no more letters, which her mother insisted upon opening. Hartley had arrived and been welcomed by Mrs. Dale. He bought the jar and in the hollow wedged his letter of adoration, fearful, yet hopeful. He sent the bronze to Elise, was assured that it was placed in her hand and never heard a word from her. The next month she was married to Hartley.

So Elise would have him receive his gift back? That told him even at this late day how little she had ever cared for him, how false she had been from the first. She had kept the jar, unconscious of holding any communication with him by sending it back to him, and Hartley knew of the thing and would return it now. Curse the man! He should have nothing that had once been his. He would go for the bronze. He would go at once.

In half an hour he was on the way to Elise's former home. Hartley received him in the library.

Caldwell's head was high, his bloodshot eyes like those of an animal at bay. He noted Hartley's lack of funeral garb and thought how little the man had cared for

his wife, for he looked well, positively calm and easy, and she had not been dead a month.

There were few words between them. "I owed it to the nature of your note," Caldwell said, "to answer it at once and in this way."

He knew his speech was weak and that it so impressed the other.

Hartley nodded and pointed to the little jar on the table. At that moment he could have struck the man down, the risks of disipation on him were such a blur on Elise's memory. Call that love! Love should ennoble, not debase.

Yet Elise might save this man. He owed it to the love he bore the memory of his wife that Caldwell should not blame her further.

"That is yours, I believe," he said, again indicating the bronze. Caldwell was searching in his mind for words for the widower.

"You have," he said stiltedly, "sustained a great loss."

Hartley's face reddened, but, "Loss is common," he said quietly enough.

"Yes," quickly followed up Caldwell, "never morning worse to evening but some heart did break," the poet says."

It pleased him to be vulgarly flippant, to make the cold man in front of him wince.

"It takes a good deal to break a heart," returned Hartley, and Caldwell smiled at the stab, as he thought it.

"Your wife," he said, "suffered little, I hope."

"Her physicians so assured me," answered Hartley, and Caldwell smiled at a little silence ensued, which neither seemed willing to break. At length Caldwell spoke.

"Shall you take your yacht across this summer?" he asked.

"I do so every year," was the response.

"I fancied," Caldwell said, "that the loss you have had—"

"Might change my plans?" interrupted Hartley. "I sail next week. And now I



HARTLEY'S HAND CLOSED.

shall thank you for coming in person in response to my note concerning Mrs. Hartley's letter of instructions. Shall I send the bronze to you?"

"On second thought," said Caldwell, "I believe I will not take it. I care very little for it, and—that is, you may make my never disposition of it you please."

The wretchedness of the speech struck Hartley. Had the man cared anything for Elise, after all? If he had not, then not for the world should he have the bronze.

Caldwell's eyes were on the little jar. His mind swung back to the old days in Rome, Elise by his side. Again he was bartering with the shopkeeper for the jar, saw the little aperture where poison was said to have been once concealed, and in that aperture he had crushed his wild declaration of love.

"No," he said; "I will take it," and placed his hand on it.

But Hartley's hand closed over his hotly. For a moment the men looked fiercely into each other's eyes.

"Elise!" Hartley's lips murmured mutely; "Elise!" And his fingers relaxed. Caldwell caught up the bronze.

"I hope," he said, "your usual trip abroad will hold its usual distractions."

And he was gone, leaving Hartley in his chair, his gaze fastened on the spot where the bronze had rested.

His face was white and drawn. His fingers tightly clutched the arms of the chair.

"Elise!" he murmured; "Elise!" Caldwell went along the streets in wild-est humor. He had been to the man Elise had chosen in his stead. He had his revenge. Elise's husband had never cared for her, and she had been a woman who craved love.

He tossed the bronze from hand to hand. He would further humiliate her memory. He would give the silly jar to some be-totted passerby, some humble, poverty-stricken soul who would at once dispose of the thing for a few cents with which to buy liquid warmth and wealth. But he reached the club before doing so. He got into an unoccupied alcove in the reading room and set the jar before him on the table. Only a little while ago! And this was the end! Oh, those days in Rome! Those days in Rome!

"And what a fool I was!" He took up the bronze.

"How did old Ananias say was the way to get at the secret?"

He fingered the base of the jar.

"Loss is common," he laughed. "Never morning worse to evening but some heart did break!"

And old Nicholson! He would write of once, declining the consular appointment. See, here was the almost imperceptible threadlike groove in the bottom of the jar! You ran your finger nail lightly round it till you heard a faint click.

Could it be possible the old dago had told the truth and that this thing had been a poison jar?

"Poison! Love was a poison, insidious, deadly."

He heard a faint click. The base of the bronze in his hand slowly revolved till it hinged round and showed the interior of the false bottom.

He gasped. A paper folded and folded till it was an inch square lay there. He dared not touch it.

He trembled from head to foot. Elise's voice was in his ears. He saw her face. Suddenly he reached and drew out the paper. He cried out and tore at it and spread it open.

It was his old declaration of love. He gazed at it for a moment; then crushed it to his heart.

Had she never found it—never guessed at it?

No, she had never discovered the secret of the jar. Hartley had come with his specious wealth, her mother was anxious for the match. Elise had thought, he was the sport of the poster man—she had treasured this little bronze, the one gift he had ever offered her. She never knew; she had loved him, she had loved him. And, oh, to reclaim himself for sake of her love and his! For she loved him, she loved him, she loved him!

And he, too, murmured her name: "Elise!"

An Animal Story For Little Folks

The Innocent Elephant

Jumbo was so innocent, so guileless and unsuspecting that if you told him his tail was on in front he would get mixed and be tempted to believe it. He was also absentminded.

"Why," said the monkey, "the other day I told him that he was a fire engine and that his trunk was the hose, and he never knew the difference and squirted water all over the place till the keeper came and pounded him."

"Let's have some fun with him now," suggested the parrot.

"By the way," said Jumbo absently, "who is that peculiar looking fellow with the straw sticking out of his chin, by the post there?"

"Why, that's a 'Hey, Rube,'" said the parrot.

"A hay Rube?" asked Jumbo.

"Yes, a 'Hey, Rube.' If you'd been in the circus longer you'd have known what a 'Hey, Rube,' is."

"Is it good to eat?" queried the innocent one.

"Most assuredly," said the monkey.



AROUND THE TENT HE TORE.

"He ought to be good," thought Jumbo, "if he's hay."

He looked longingly at the jay with the grassy whiskers.

"When no one is looking I will eat him," he said.

By and by the chance came Jumbo stole up close to the farmer, who was looking intently at the lady bareback rider. Reaching out his long trunk, he wound it about the "Hey, Rube," threw back his big head, opened his little mouth and dropped the astonished "Rube" into it.

But, oh, how different it seemed from the hay he had been used to! It kicked and struggled; it hurt his jaws; it choked him. He felt as the whale must when he had Jonah inside. He must get rid of it at once.

Around the tent he tore, looking for a way out, while the feet of his novel dinner dangled from his lips, and the people scrambled to get out of the way. After a deal of striving he broke through the tent and managed to cough his unwilling meal out on the green sod.

He never heard the end of his mistake. All of which shows, Bill, that there are different meanings to the same word.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch

HOW TO PUNISH A CHILD.

Means by Which You May Cause Him Profound Remorse.

Have you ever given a child the privilege of choosing his own punishment—either a whipping or the deprivation of some beloved treat, solitude in his chamber or some other form, and had him prefer the whipping, "to have it over with?" Doesn't this prove it to be the lesser punishment, something to be borne with stoically, as a necessary evil, perhaps, but forgotten the next moment in some pleasure or recreation?

If, however, upon mature deliberation it seems expedient to apply the rod, let it, by all the regard you have for your child's self respect, be done

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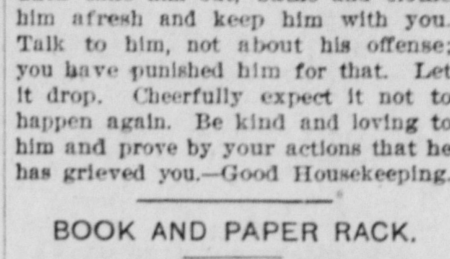
In the privacy of his own room and not even hinted at before other children. There seems to be a strain of cruelty in the makeup of some children that delights in another's punishment. If a child must be punished in this way, if every other expedient has been tried and found wanting and it seems that he will learn the desired lesson in no other way—for let it be understood that punishment is given for no other reason than reform—then shut him up in one room and yourself in another until your anger has had time to cool and he to reflect. Then, with calm face, a prayerful and sorry heart and a dignified demeanor, go to him and do the job thoroughly and well.

Keep him closeted until the fierceness of his emotion has worn away. Then take him out, bathe and clothe him afresh and keep him with you. Talk to him, not about his offense; you have punished him for that. Let it drop. Cheerfully expect it not to happen again. Be kind and loving to him and prove by your actions that he has grieved you.—Good Housekeeping.

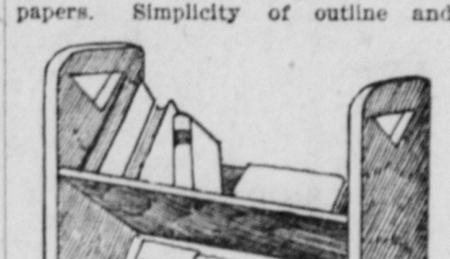
BOOK AND PAPER RACK.

An Example of This Combination in Mission Style.

The arts and crafts movement has resulted in the production of various contrivances for holding books and papers. Simplicity of outline and



adaptability are the distinguishing points about these racks, particularly those colored in the soft brown hue characteristic of mission designs. The rack here pictured is an example. It is a combination book and magazine holder and is admirably adapted to its special use. A rack of this kind can easily be made at home by using the illustration as a pattern.—Brooklyn Eagle.



Some people are so chilly as to give the impression of having been born in a cold storage warehouse.

Calendars do not grow on date trees.



CALENDERS DO NOT GROW ON DATE TREES.

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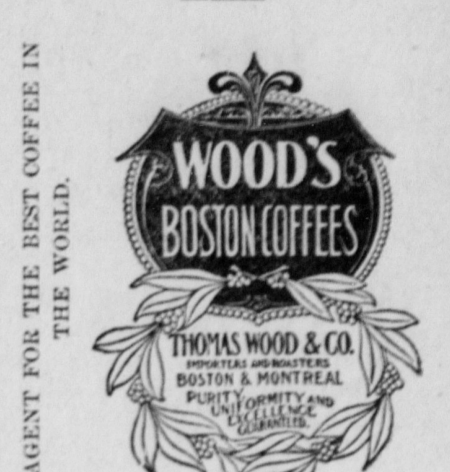
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