SECOND PART.

THE PITTSBURG DISPATCH.

PAGES 9 TO 12.

PITTSBURG, SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1889.

A SERIES OF SHORT STORIES

By J. Marsden Sutcliffe,

ENTITLED

THE ROMANCE OF AN INSURANCE OFFICE,

Being Passages in the Experience of Mr. Augustus William Webber, Formerly General Manager of the Universal Insurance Company.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

An Old Man's Darling.

I.

It was the close of market day, in the early autumn, at Chelderton Magna, a thriving little town in the West of England.

Most of the farmers had already set out for their homes, while those who still remained behind were either looking to their saddle girths or seeing to the yoking of their horses preparatory to their departure, well satisfied with the day's business. For in this year of which we are writing, crops had been above the average, and the war with Russia had sent prices up to a figure that in these days of foreign competition and cheap food provoke a sigh in the breast of the agriculturalist, who looks back upon the period as a veritable Golden Age that has vanished, leaving no prospect of return.

Notwithstanding the general exodus, the snug little parlor of the Golden Lion was well filled. It was the hour when the local tradesmen were accustomed to meet to discuss the news, which they took good care to have well flavored with the odors of steaming punch and fragrant tobacco.

There was Meekin, the draper, Pringle, the editor of the Chelderton *Times*, Hamlin, the jeweler, Higgs, the miller, Misselton, the job master, and that well-known disciple of Æsculapius, Dr. Radcliffe, with several others, all comfortably settled in their places under the smiling presidency of honest old John Lovatt, who, as he was wont to inform new comers, had "lived in Chelderton, man and boy, for 70 years, and had kept the Golden Lion more'n 40 years." A hale old man, and an honest fellow to boot, was old John Lovatt.

Such gatherings as the one going forward in the little parlor of the famous hostelry were of nightly occurrence. But it was on the evening of market day that the inn parlor was to be seen in all its glory; for then the company was not only more numerous, but the kindly feelings springing out of common interests that inspired the band of convivialists would come uppermost as the day's transactions fell under discussion and questions were asked each man of his neighbor touching the trade that had been done that day.

Sometimes it would happen that the financial embarrassments of some among their customers would form the staple of their conversation, and many a hard-pressed farmer, who wondered a few days after one of these meetings how it came about that all his creditors began simultaneously to dun" him, might have found a clew to the mystery that perplexed him in these informal gatherings in the inn parlor of the Golden Lion.

The tenor of the conversation on the evening in question, since it bears on the story, may be gleaned by the reader himself if he will condescend to be a listener.

"I was obliged to threaten him with proceedings if he didn't pay up," Mr. Meekin was saying. "We agreed upon that last market day. Well, when he came in today, I quite expected a new version of the old tale: that he was holding his wheat and did not care to sell till the top price was reached, and then I should have it down in a lump. But no, he came in blustering hot, and with a great oath flung down his check and told me he would see me ——. But there, it is no good repeating all the bad language he used. He is a terrible man to swear, is Martin Robson, when he is put out."

"Was it much?" asked Higgs doubtfully. He was not one of Mr. Martin Robson's creditors, but he was as much interested in the discussion as though he were.

"It was a hundred and twenty odd pounds," replied Mr. Meekin, looking contemplatively at the ceiling, and watching a ring of smoke that he had just projected from his mouth eddying upward till it broke, and trying to look as unconcerned as though checks for "a hundred and twenty odd pounds" were an hourly occurrence at his establishment.

"Have you presented it?" asked Mr. Pringle, joining in the conversation for the first time, with his curiosity as the local news purveyor suddenly roused.

"Trust Meekin to do that," said Dr. Radcliffe, with a merry twinkle in his little ferrity eyes.

"I sent it round at once," said Mr. Meekin loftily, accepting the doctor's covert sarcasm as the highest praise that could be passed on his business habits.

"And it was honored?" asked Mr. Pringle, still pursuing his interrogatories.

"They took it like a baby takes milk," answered Mr. Meekin.

The conversation at this point became more general, and it soon appeared that something like a meeting of Mr. Robson's creditors was assembled at the Golden Lion. All had the same tale to tell. In accordance with the agreement arrived at last market day, they had written to Mr. Martin Robson, of the Red House farm, demanding payment, and the debtor had called upon them that day, one by one, and discharged every claim in full, flinging out terrible oaths withal at the heads of "a set of beggarly tradesmen," as he described them, who had shown themselves so "suspicious of the honor of a gentleman." A rough calculation was made on the spot by Mr. Meekin, assisted by the assembled tradesmen, which ended in Mr. Meekin astonishing the company with the information that Mr. Robson, of the Red House farm, had paid away that day "nigh on a thousand pounds."

"Where on airth can he have got it from?" demanded old John Lovatt, eagerly. "Higgs do you know anything about it?"

But the miller could throw no light on the knotty problem. He had made Mr. Robson an offer for his wheat at the beginning of the week, but the offer had been declined; Mr. Robson declaring his intention to "hold" until prices went up still higher.

"Not that his wheat was worth £1,000," added Higgs in explanation.

"What puzzles me is this," said Mr. Meekin; "he has paid us all by checks on Englefield's bank."

"That is true," murmured Hamlin, "and we all know he used to bank with Matthewson's."

"Perhaps he has come into a little fortin'," said Higgs, laughing softly at his little joke. All Chelderton Magna knew that Martin Robson had been going steadily downhill for years past, having succeeded in dissipating the considerable means to which he succeeded on the death of his father, known in all the country-side for a careful, saving man. It was known, moreover, that the tenant of the Red House farm had no expectations, so that the miller's remark produced the effect he intended. There was a general laugh, which soon subsided, however, in face of the problem that was so mightily exercising the minds of the gossips. If Mr. Robson had not been blessed with a lucky windfall, how had he contrived, after keeping his creditors at bay with all kinds of specious excuses for months past, to come into Chelderton Magna, and scatter his checks about, like the leaves from their own trees were being shed in this autumn time? And then, too, there was the transfer of Mr. Robson's account from Matthewson's bank to Englefield's. That also required an explanation. Light was thrown on the question at last, and it came from the oracular lips of Mr. Pringle, who, as editor of the Chelderton *Times*, was supposed to know everything.

"You have grown silent all at once, Mr. Pringle," said old John Lovatt. "I do believe that you could clear up things a bit if you tried."

"Perhaps I could, if I tried, but there is no knowing," answered Mr. Pringle, with a laugh.

"Come, out with it," said old John Lovatt, adding, with a wink at the company, "I can see you know something."

"No no," said Mr. Pringle deprecatingly, "you are wrong, John. I really cannot say I know anything at least, not to call knowing—you understand," glancing around at the company. "I just heard a whisper the other day, and though I laughed at it at the time—the thing was so very absurd—I begin to think now there must be something in it. But it is only a whisper, mind."

"But you don't tell us what the whisper is," said Mr. Meekin, who had sat open-eyed and open-mouthed, looking at Mr. Pringle with growing astonishment as he delivered himself of this exordium with pompous slowness and deliberation.

"Cannot you speak out plainly?" said Dr. Radcliffe, who knew Pringle's way of making a communication, and judged that he had really something to say. "Man alive, you are as slow as one of your own leading articles."

There was a general laugh at this shaft, which had the effect of putting Mr. Pringle on his mettle.

"Well, if you will have it," he said, "I heard that Mr. Englefield is going to marry Madeline Robson."

"Mr. Englefield going to marry Madeline Robson!" said John Lovatt, slowly repeating the astonishing communication in a puzzled, distracted tone.

"I ridiculed the rumor when I heard it, exclaimed Mr. Pringle, "but what I have heard to-night lends some color to the statement."

"Going to marry Madeline Robson!" cried John Lovatt again, still unable to take in the news.

At this moment the door of the parlor was suddenly thrown open, and a young, showily-dressed man entered, and, exchanging salutations with the company, took his seat and called for a long clay and "whisky cold, if you please."

The conversation that had centered round the affairs of Martin Robson, of the Red House farm, suddenly ceased with the arrival of the newcomer, and the talk veered round to the all-sorbing topic of the war.

The latest arrival in the inn parlor was familiarly known in Chelderton Magna as "Tom Leyton, the vet." Mr. Leyton had settled down in Chelderton some two years before his introduction to the reader, and though it was an up-hill fight with him at first, he was reported to be doing well in his profession. He possessed that hail-fellow-well-met air that seems in some mysterious manner to link itself on to men who affect the stables, and was highly popular with the Cheldertonians as well as with the farmers, among whom his practice chiefly lay. He was tall, well-built, with a fair skin, and features that would be best described as more striking than handsome or pleasing. The rumor ran that he was the accepted suitor of Madeline Robson, of the Red House farm, which may perhaps account for the sudden silence that fell on the room when he entered.

"What is this you were saying about Miss Robson?" suddenly asked Mr. Leyton, addressing himself to the host of the Golden Lion, when he had lighted his pipe and taken a preliminary sip of his whisky. "I heard you saying something about her marrying as I came in. Who is she going to marry?"

John Lovatt shifted uneasily in his seat at this sudden challenge, but contented himself with puffing more vigorously at the long churchwarden that he held in his hand, while beating about in his mind for an answer to this unlooked-for demand.

"Plague the pipe," he said, recovering his tongue at last; "it won't draw."

"Have a fresh one, and then answer my question," said Mr. Leyton, coolly.

But John Lovatt was not in the mood to be hurried into a repetition of the remark that the young veterinary had overheard. "He's a deal too peppery a fellow for me to put my head into that noose without thinking over it first," Lovatt remarked afterward.

"As Mr. Lovatt does not seem inclined to be communicative," said Mr. Leyton, when the awkward pause continued, "perhaps some other gentleman will kindly oblige," embracing several members of the company with a swift eager glance as he spoke.

"I do not know why there should be any concealment about it," said Mr. Pringle. "We were not talking treason, though you happened to overhear a remark that was not meant for you. To cut the matter short, some of us have heard that Mr. Englefield, the banker, is going to marry Martin Robson's daughter, and Mr. Lovatt was expressing his astonishment as you entered. That was all."

"Yes, that was all," exclaimed John Lovatt, in a burst of admiration at Mr. Pringle's dexterity in rescuing him from what he felt was an awkward dilemma.

"Who has set this about?" demanded Mr. Leyton, speaking with greater heat than the occasion seemed to warrant. There was a heavy cloud of anger on his brow, which boded ill for the author of the rumor in the event of its being traced hom.

"Haven't you been in the market to-day that you have not heard it yourself?" responded Mr. Pringle evasively.

"No, I have not," said Mr. Leyton, hotly. "But that is neither here nor there. Miss Robson is my promised wife: and I should like the man who says that she is going to marry anyone else to say it to my face."

"Well, you ought to know if anyone does," said Mr. Meekin in a soothing tone.

"So I ought, and so I do for that matter," replied Mr. Leyton. "It is a lie, and you may tell your informant so."

"Just so," said Mr. Meekin, still bent on pouring oil on the troubled waters of the young man's passion. "I was just about to say when you came in that if anybody knows everything that goes on at the Red House farm it is yourself, Mr. Leyton."

"That is all nonsense," cried Dr. Radcliffe. "You needn't make a fool of yourself, Leyton. People will talk, and as long as Mr. Robson doesn't pay up the affairs of the Red House farm are likely to get talked about."

"But I don't see what Mr. Robson's difficulties have to do with Miss Robson marrying Mr. Englefield," said Mr. Leyton. "I think her name might be kept out of it."

"You see it is in this way," said Mr. Pringle, who was not disposed to leave the lead in the conversation to the doctor. "We all know that Mr. Robson has been in his time a very embarrassed man. No unkindness is meant, but we all know it."

"Go on," said Mr. Leyton, "I am listening. What of it? What has Miss Robson got to do with it?"

"Well you see, when Mr. Robson, who is head over ears in debt, comes to market today, and to everybody's surprise pays up, all in a minute, to the tune of quite a thousand pounds, and Englefield's honor his checks, why you see it is as simple as the multiplication table. People will talk."

"But Mr. Robson does not bank with Englefield's," exclaimed Mr. Leyton, contemptuously. "He banks with Mattheson's."

"Did bank with Matthesons, you mean," said Mr. Pringle. "But he has been paying his bills to-day with checks on Englefields. He has paid a thousand pounds to-day to gentlemen present in this room. How much more he has paid no one knows."

"Am I to understand, Mr. Meekin," said Mr. Peyton, "that Mr. Robson is no longer indebted to you?"

"Neither to me nor anyone else in Chelderton that I am aware of."

"Then he has paid everything?" said Mr. Leyton, unable to suppress his astonishment.

"That is so, and with checks on Englefield's."

Mr. Leyton was fairly nonplussed. He was not ignorant of Mr. Robson's embarrassments, seeing that on several occasions he had lent him money to meet his weekly wage bill, which sums were still owing. He knew of no way by which Mr. Robson could have satisfied the claims of his creditors, and the more he pondered upon the problem the more puzzled he became. The transfer of Mr. Robson's account from Mattheson's bank to Englefield's added to the mystery. What could it all mean? People will talk, as Mr. Pringle had observed, and the young veterinary was much too shrewd not to perceive that Martin Robson's apparent accession to something like fortune had supplied the gossips of Chelderton with a choice morsel. Once the news got abroad that Mr. Robson had liquidated all claims, paying with checks on Englefield's, and the local busybodies would not be slow to jump to the conclusion that the banker had become enamored of Miss Robson's beauty and was about to marry her. And rack his brains as he

might, Mr. Leyton could not prevent the suspicion rising in his mind that for once the gossips might be right. Martin Robson's windfall perplexed him sorely, and eagerly though he beat about for an explanation, he could find none more probable than that Mr. Robson had bartered Madeline's hand away in consideration of release from his financial difficulties.

This thought maddened him, as he sat ruminating upon the strange news in the inn-parlor, and he resolved that he would have his doubts laid to rest by riding over to the Red House farm and seeking an interview with Madeline herself at once. Having armed himself with this resolution he hastily gulped down the contents of his glass, and made for the door without the formality of waiting to wish his neighbors good night.

"Going?" asked Mr. Pringle, observing the hasty movement.

But the loud slamming of the door behind the retreating figure was all the answer that Mr. Leyton vouchsafed to give.

"A hot-headed youth, that," exclaimed John Lovatt, as the sound of footsteps died away on the street.

"It is easy to see that he believes it," added Mr. Pringle, laughing at his own discernment; and, then added, jocosely, "Miss Robson is not the first who has thought it 'better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.'"

II.

Mr. Englefield, the bare suspicion of whose rivalry in the affections of Madeline Robson had exercised so disturbing an effect on Mr. Leyton, was an elderly widower of 60 odd years.

The late Mrs. Englefield, who had died soon after Mr. Leyton settled in Chelderton, had been an ailing woman since the birth of her first child, which had only survived its birth a few hours. Other children had followed; but the poor mother had the unspeakable sorrow of bearing her maternal anguish in vain. When the last hope of presenting her husband with living offspring died away, a deep and settled melancholy brooded over her gentle spirit, and weakened her already frail constitution. She blamed herself for their childless state, and she passed away at last, dying less from the encroachment of disease than from a heart that was broken by the shattering of its main ambition.

These facts—at least in their broad outlines—were known to Mr. Leyton; and when once the possibility of a marriage between the elderly banker and Madeline Robson found a lodgment in his mind it took root rapidly. There was a feasibility about the idea that filled him with alarm.

Madeline Robson was dowered with great beauty, of the sort that might tempt an even graver man than Mr. Englefield into the indiscretion of marriage with a woman who was socially his inferior and nearly 40 years his junior. She was well-educated and possessed of ladylike manners, qualifying her to grace a higher position than would fall to her lot as the wife of an insignificant veterinary surgeon. But that which would probably constitute her chief charm in Mr. Englefield's eyes was her rude health, and the probability that she would become the mother of healthy children to whom would pass the Englefield wealth. Tom Leyton had no reason to doubt Madeline's affection for himself, but he was not so confident of her firmness of purpose, when the double temptation was brought to bear upon her—of gaining for herself the high position that Mr. Englefield could give her, and of lifting her family, and particularly her father—to whom she was passionately attached—above the reach of the cares of sordid poverty of which she had had much bitter experience. Mr. Leyton believed that Madeline was capable of making any sacrifice for the sake of her father, and when that sacrifice came to be gilded with the splendors of Oakhill, where the banker lived au prince, he feared that the bait might prove too strong.

It was this fear that caused him to quit the Golden Lion in hot haste to ride over to the Red House farm, that he might learn the truth without delay. He knew that long before he could reach the farm, which lay some distance out, the household would have retired to rest; but he also knew that a handful of gravel thrown at the window of the room where Madeline slept would bring her to his side. Often in the long summer nights, when returning from a distant visit, had he tried the same expedient, and tasted the sweets of a stolen interview, as they wandered arm in arm down the lane that led to the homestead. It had seemed to him that those kisses were sweetest that were enjoyed in this clandestine way—stolen under the bright light of the moon when the rest of the household were in bed.

But when Mr. Leyton arrived at his own house he found a visitor awaiting his arrival, who for the time put all thought of Madeline out of his head.

"Bless my life, Osborne, is it you?" he cried, with a touch of schoolboy manner in the cordiality of his greeting. "I am awfully glad to see you. You have come to make a good long stay, of course."

"Only till Monday," Osborne replied. "The fact is I have sold my practice, and offered my services to the Government. I leave for the Crimea next week."

There was a tinge of sadness in Osborne's tone as he spoke, and Mr. Leyton, scanning his friend's face closely, could see that his mouth was tremulous with emotion difficult to control. It was clearly impossible, he thought, to ride over to the Red House farm to-night. The projected interview must stand over till a more convenient opportunity. Mr. Leyton at once countermanded the order he had given to have his horse saddled, and made arrangements for the comfort of his guest.

There was no man for whom Mr. Leyton entertained so warm a regard as for George Osborne, and the impending departure of his friend for the East, while it added a new cordiality to the welcome he extended to him, filled his mind with strange and unaccountable forebodings. For, though it is not in the nature of youth to take a gloomy outlook upon the future, Leyton knew that it was among the contingencies of "glorious war" that he might never look on the face of his friend again.

After supper was dispatched, and the two men had lighted their pipes, and were snugly ensconced before the brightly burning fire, Osborne broached the errand which had brought him down to Chelderton.

"You know, Leyton, he said, "that the only ties I have to life are my old father, and my little Emily, who is now a sweet, bonnie little thing of 5. I may return all right—please God I shall. But there is no knowing."

"I hope so, most fervently," Leyton cried. "Indeed there is no doubt of it. Come, George, you were not wont to be hipped. There is no good looking at the dark side of things. But why have you sold your practice? You were doing well, were you not?"

"Yes, I was doing well, so far as the practice was concerned. I have sold it for a good long sum. But since I lost my wife 12 months ago, the house, the work, the whole thing, has grown hateful to me. Everything reminds me of her. I must go somewhere—do something—not to forget, for that is impossible—but to ease the continual pain of remembrance." And his eyes grew misty as he spoke, and for some moments silence reigned in the room, while Osborne strove with the feelings which nearly mastered him. Presently he spoke again.

"I have made my will and appointed you sole executor. Will you act?"

"Of course I will, if the need should ever arise," said Leyton. "But this is uncanny talk. Cheer up, you will come back all right."

"I have a premonition otherwise," said Osborne, earnestly. "Don't attempt to argue about it. I have a presentiment that evil will come of it; I cannot define it; it is too vague, but there it is."

"Then why go?" asked Leyton.

"Because I must. Say no more, old fellow. I don't expect you to understand me. I scarcely understand myself; only I cannot live on as I have been living the past 12 months. Something impels me to go to the war. There I shall find—if not forgetfulness and peace—at least distraction, and I may do some good. At the same time, I cannot rid myself of an uncomfortable feeling that something terrible is going to happen if I go. Yet I must go. I don't feel as if I were a free agent. I must go, and that is all about it."

Leyton looked what he felt—astonished and perplexed; but he knew his friend well and how vain it would be to attempt to turn him aside from his purpose.

"Only tell me in what way I can serve you and send you away with an easy mind, and it shall be done," he said, filling up a pause in the conversation, as Osborne sat with his gaze fixed on the glowing embers in the grate and his mind abstracted from his surroundings, wrapped in moody reflections.

"I forgot to tell you," he said, suddenly waking out of his trance, "that I have placed little Emily and my father in a pretty little cottage at Sonning. Poor old gentleman! his mind is nearly gone. He scarcely knows me now! They will be two children together. I want you, Leyton, if you will, to keep an eye on them both while I am away. Will you go and see them sometimes?"

"Certainly I will," replied Leyton, heartily. "Command me in anything."

"God bless you, old fellow," said Osborne, grasping his friend's hand, while the tears rushed to his eyes.

"Will you go to Sonning with me on Monday?" he asked again. "I would like to introduce little Emily to you myself. She will take to you better in that way." Then he added, huskily, "If anything should happen, she will trust you as she would me."

"Make no more words about it, I will go with you with pleasure."

And Leyton kept his promise. When Monday came he accompanied his friend to the quiet little village in Berkshire, staying there two nights. On Wednesday he went down with his friend Osborne to Portsmouth and bade him farewell, and, after seeing the fleet sail from Spithead, he returned to Chelderton.

For the first time since Saturday Leyton's thoughts were now free to return to Madeline Robson. And yet with the mental pictures he was weaving of the beautiful siren who had won his heart another face would obtrude itself on his mind. It was the face of George Osborne's father—the face of an old man who had entered on the last stage of senile decay. Where had he seen that face before? His memory would not serve to help him to an answer to the question that persisted in forcing itself upon his attention. The face continued to haunt him until he reached home, where he found a dainty little note awaiting him from Madeline. He opened the missive with eager, almost trembling hands, as if he dreaded to learn its contents. But there was nothing in the note to breed fresh alarm, or to give a fresh lease to the old fears. It was couched in Madeline's habitual style of restrained affection, and simply announced her father's intention to give a harvest home supper, followed by an impromptu dance, on Thursday, and expressed Madeline's anxiety that her lover would not fail to be there.

Leyton thought that Madeline had never looked more ravishingly beautiful than she appeared on the night of the harvest supper, and though she seemed a little careworn, there was nothing in that circumstance to excite his fears; for with the sordid anxieties that mingled with the menage of the Red House farm, Madeline had too often had good reason for losing the natural sprightliness of her disposition. A sudden pang smote Tom Leyton's heart at the thought of losing her, and he found himself wondering how he could bear it, if he were compelled to surrender so much loveliness. For Madeline Robson was more than a beauty; she was a handsome woman of a brunette type. Her features, though not absolutely faultless in their contour (human features rarely are except in novels), were good, and when lighted up with the animation imparted by a warm heart and an active intelligence, they appeared incapable of improvement. She had the commanding presence of a tragedy queen, which her fully developed figure and the proud poise of a queenly head on magnificent shoulders enabled her to sustain with natural grace. She wore a rich dress of dead gold silk, simply trimmed, with a low-cut bodice, that harmonized admirably with her dark skin.

When Leyton arrived at the Red House farm she gave him her cheek to kiss, beneath which the warm color glowed like the sun-ripened blush that burns in the velvety skin of the peach. But Leyton's jealous fears were stirred anew, as he noted the luxurious prodigality with which the Robsons had made their preparations for the evening's entertainment. He found himself again confronted with the old question that had tormented him when he heard of the rumor connecting Madeline's name with that of the wealthy banker. To what source was Martin Robson's sudden prosperity to be ascribed? The more he pondered the question the more feverishly anxious he grew for the hour of explanation.

The opportunity came at last. At the close of one of the dances Madeline put her arm in his and proposed an adjournment to the garden. Leyton went in search of a shawl, which Madeline lightly threw over her shoulders, that glistened like old ivory polished to great brilliancy, and then they went forth into the balmy air of a warm autumn night.

"Let us sit here," said Madeline, when they reached the summer house, in a distant part of the garden.

"My own!" said Leyton, fondly, as he seated himself by her side and leaned forward to kiss her cheek. But with a quick movement Madeline's lips met his, and she nestled closer to him until she lay with her head upon his breast, while the rich mellow light of the harvest moon bathed her face and neck in soft effulgence of glorious light.

The air was still, save for the sounds of revelry within the old farmhouse, which sounded faint like the strains of far-off music—so still that they could hear the beating of their own hearts.

"Oh! Tom, if this could only last," Madeline cried, after they had remained for some time in a silence more eloquent than speech. And a heavy, weary sigh broke from her.

"Why should it not last?" Leyton asked caressingly.

"Why are you so poor, Tom? And why must the heart go one way and the hand be given where the heart loves not?" And Madeline burst into a stormy passion of tears at the prospect she had thus conjured up.

Then it was true! The gossips of the Golden Lion were right after all! Mr. Englefield had sought Madeline Robson for his bride, and she had been promised to him!

Madeline had often rehearsed this scene with her lover in her own thoughts, studying what she would find to say when the time came to make the disclosure, and how she would gather courage to say it, and how Tom would take it. But when the time came all her prearranged plans broke down. The overmastering sense of love, and the pang at her heart as she reflected that these were the last moments she would ever pass with her lover, the last moment of peace she would ever know, prompted her to speak as she did. The pain at the woman's heart taught her to make the disclosure in the only way that could soften the blow to her lover and win some measure of his sympathy, even while she felt that in his heart he must despise her for her pusillanimity.

Madeline continued to weep convulsively, and it was long before Leyton could calm her sufficiently to learn the story from her lips. She told him at length amid many sobs and tears, while her bosom recked nothing of the night air that played upon it, and heaved wildly with the violence of her emotions. It was the old story, more often enacted in real life than many readers will perhaps be disposed to think—a marriage of convenience; redemption from all the sordid cares of poverty at the sacrifice of a daughter's happiness.

Not at first had Madeline consented. Mr. Robson had reasoned persuasively, commanded, threatened and wept by turns: but not until the old man went on his knees before his own child, had Madeline faltered in the firm negative that she had given to her father's proposal. Then at the sight of the old man, with his long snowy locks waving to and fro in the agitation with which he besought her, while the tears rained down his cheeks, to step in between him and despair and earn his lasting gratitude and his dying blessing, had she succumbed and given her word at last. Even then her consent was made conditional: that Mr. Englefield should be told that she was already plighted to Tom Leyton, and that she should be allowed to tell him herself.

"And you did tell him?" asked Leyton, hoarsely.

"I did, indeed, Tom. I told him that I loved you and that I did not and could not love him, for I should love you always."

"And what did he say?" said Tom.

"He said that he thought more highly of me for the confession, and that he was quite aware of the sacrifice I was making, but that he didn't doubt that so good a daughter would make an excellent wife."

"Anything else?" asked Tom bitterly.

"Oh, Tom, I don't deserve your anger, though I must seem in your eyes very wicked. Believe me that I have stood out against it as long as could, but there is no help for it—none. Oh, why was I ever born?" And Madeline's tears broke forth afresh while she covered the hand of her lover with passionate kisses.

Leyton rose at last and made as though he would go. Madeline flew to his arms with a bitter cry, and as the light shawl that she was wearing fell from her, Tom gathered her to his breast and kissed her—kissed her on brow and cheeks and lips, kissed her shoulders and neck—and then tore himself away. With one powerful wrench he had released himself from her embrace and flung her aside and was gone. The still evening air heard the sound of a bitter, mocking laugh as he went. But Madeline heard it not.

An hour afterward search was made for her, and she was found where Tom had left her, too stunned to think or to realize what had happened, conscious only of a dull, dead pain at her heart.

A month later Madeline went forth from the fine old church at Chelderton Magna on the arm of her husband. Madeline Robson had become Madeline Englefield.

As the joy bells rang out their merry peal, Tom Leyton gnashed his teeth in bitter despair and savage anger, vowing to himself that the day would come for vengeance on the man that had robbed him of his promised bride.

"When that day comes I will have my vengeance, and will not spare," he muttered to himself. "He has won her, but he shall not keep her. He is as proud as Lucifer, and I swear before God to bring his pride low. 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' as the old law says. All that I suffer now he shall suffer too—and more—for to his suffering shall be added shame—shame!" he added, fiercely.

Even as he spoke his sternly rigid mouth relaxed into a sinister smile, as a light broke across his mind, kindled by the reviving touch of memory.

He saw before his mental vision the worn, aged face of George Osborne's father, and that other face so strangely like. The resemblance had baffled him before, but he knew it now, and in the bare act of memory he saw the germ idea of possible vengeance later. But, as it turned out, Tom Leyton, in his schemes of vengeance "reckoned without his host." For, though circumstances so far favored him, that within 12 months of her marriage to the wealthy banker at Chelderton, Madeline Englefield became Madeline Leyton, the Higher Vengeance that sometimes seems to sleep was not slow to avenge the sin; and partly by that activity displayed by that enterprising private inquiry agent, Mr. Doggett, and partly by a curious network of circumstances, justice was enabled to take count of a heartless and cruel crime.

[To be Concluded Next Saturday.]

PULLING SNAKES' TEETH.

How Skillful Dentists Remove the Fangs of Poisonous Serpents.

"An odd phase of animal dentistry," said a chemist to a New York correspondent, "is the removal of the fangs of poisonous snakes. Formerly these were broken off by using a piece of wood and a hammer. This gave satisfaction in most instances, but not always. On several occasions cobras whose fangs had been broken off have struck keepers or neighboring animals with serious and even fatal results. The reason lies in the fact that the glands which secrete the virus are separate from the fangs. They are practically little poison bags situated in the gum and connected with the fangs by short tubes. The fangs are channelled so as to be half hollow. When not in use they are folded back, and close the tubes by their position. When the reptile employs them, they are thrown forward, the tubes are opened and the glands excited to the utmost. It was found that when the fang is extracted, it pulls away with it the tubes and the glands in whole or in part. The present practice is based upon this fact.

"The serpent is securely fastened, the best method being to hang him up by a stout cord tied around the neck. The waist is fastened to a bar to prevent squirming. The mouth is forced open, or when the snake opens it in rage is held open by a piece of wood placed far back between the jaws. The dentist clutches the fangs with his forceps as far down upon the roots as he can possibly reach, and pulls slightly, twisting the instrument. The fangs come out without much difficulty, and with them are always the poison tubes, and almost always large pieces of the poison glands. The wounds thus occasioned heal in about four days, leaving a small, smooth scar. The glands seem after this to become absorbed by the reptile's system. The cobra is the easiest snake to operate upon, being heavy, slow and stupid: the fer du lance of the West Indies is the most difficult, being light, quick and very fierce. The rattlesnake, copperhead, moccasin, adder and viper come in between the two extremes. It is wonderful how similar all these snakes are so far as their death-dealing apparatus is concerned. They all seem to have been turned from the same general model."

THE AMERICAN A.

A Club Formed for the Promotion of Its Proper Pronunciation.

Charles Dudley Warner in Harper's.]

In an intellectually-inclined city (not in the Northeast) a club of ladies has been formed for the cultivation of the broad A in speech. Sporadic efforts have hitherto been made for the proper treatment of this letter of the alphabet with individual success, especially with those who have been in England, or have known English men and women of the broad-gauge variety. Discerning travelers have made the American pronunciation of the letter A a reproach to the republic, that is to say, a means of distinguishing a native of this country. The true American aspires to be cosmopolitan, and does not want to be "spotted"—if that word may be used—in society by any peculiarity of speech, that is by any American peculiarity.

It is in vain that scholars have pointed out that in the use of this letter lies the main difference between the English and the American speech; either Americans generally do not care if this is the fact, or fashion can only work a reform in a limited number of people. It seems therefore necessary that there should be an organized effort to deal with this pronunciation, and clubs will no doubt be formed all over the country, in imitation of the one mentioned, until the broad A will become as common as flies in summer. When this result is attained it will be time to attack the sound of U with clubs, and make universal the French sound.

In time the American pronunciation will become as superior to all others as are the American sewing machines and reapers. In the Broad A Club every member who misbehaves—that is, mispronounces—is fined a nickel for each offense. Of course in the beginning there is a good deal of revenue from this source, but the revenue diminishes as the club improves, so that we have the anomaly of its failure to be self-supporting in proportion to its excellence. Just now, if these clubs could suddenly become universal, and the penalty be enforced, we could have the means of paying off the national debt in a year.

HE WOULDN'T SAY DEAREST.

Little Lord Fauntleroy Spanked by His Mother for a Queer Reason.

Boston Letter to Chicago Tribune.]

The envious, whose howls are always elicited by other people's success, assert that Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett is affected. It is quite true that she has her oddities.

A lady here in Boston tells of an occasion when she chanced to occupy rooms at a hotel—it was several years ago—immediately adjoining others tenanted by Mrs. Burnett and her family. She had scarcely taken possession of her apartment when she heard a scampering of small feet through the partition wall, and then came a child's cry of "Mamma—Mamma!"

Whereupon ensued a series of audible slaps and squeals, and finally a woman's angry voice, saying: "How often shall I have to tell you to call me 'Dearest,' and not 'Mamma?'"

The humor of this lies in the fact that, according to Mrs. Burnett's account so often repeated to her friends, the boys fell of their own accord into a pretty way of calling their mother by their father's pet name for her. It will be remembered that Little Lord Fauntleroy—himself copied, so Mrs. Burnett says, after her son Vivan—does likewise. One cannot help wondering if the youthful nobleman of the romance was likewise spanked into calling his mamma "Dearest."

The Right Man in the Right Place.

Washington Post.]

The appointment of Mr. Dennis T. Flynn to be postmaster at Guthrie, Oklahoma, has greatly increased our respect for the political sagacity of the present administration. We believe there could be no more graceful recognition of the great body of settlers in Oklahoma than the appointment of a man whose name is Dennis.

Rolled Into the Moss.

Kansas City Globe.]

G. W. Miller, an Arkansas City gentleman, fell from the first Santa Fe train as it pulled into Guthrie. He rolled over once or twice and was the possessor of the first Guthrie town lot. For once a rolling man gathered 150x50 feet of moss.

A FIELD OF GLORY *at Colliers, W. Va., where a number of notable prize fights have taken place, is graphically described by O. M. S. in an illustrated article in to-morrow's* Dispatch.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS *is the title of Carpenter's letter in to-morrow's* Dispatch, *in which he portrays nature and man in the heart of the Himalaya Mountains.*

A HEROINE IN PETTICOATS.

Remarkable Experiences of a Pittsburg Lady During the War—Adventures in Field and Prison Pen.

[WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.]

If you are not built that way you do well not to aspire to situations where you are forced to play the hero or heroine—situations that cause nations to boil. Dumas' hero, the Count of Monte Christo, gives thrilling experiences sufficient to make the reader uncomfortable, though conscious that the creation is a figment of the imagination, but a lady in Allegheny City, Mrs. Lottie McCaffrey, known to old-time newspaper men as Mrs. Lottie Bengough, and previously as Miss Lottie Riley, can tell a story that, with little embellishment, would rival Dumas', leaving the diamonds and improbable situations out, for hers is a story of sober fact and not fiction, attested not only by herself, but by documentary evidence and that of living witnesses in this city and in various parts of the Union.

But before telling Mrs. McCaffrey's story, it may be well to introduce her to the reader. Her maiden name was Riley. Her father's name was William Riley. She has a sister living in New Castle, Jane Riley Graham, distinguished for scholarship acquired under the tutelage of Dr. John Black, father of Colonel Sam Black. A brother, Harvey Riley, began active life under General Albert Sidney Johnson, when he went to Utah to suppress Brigham Young, Amelia & Co. Harvey subsequently served in various capacities, semi-military and civil, and was at one time in charge of a street railway company in New York. Of the military bent in the family and in a great measure elucidative of Mrs. McCaffrey's narrative, it is pertinent to remark in this place that of brothers, brothers-in-law and other immediate relatives, there were 14 enlisted in the Union army during the Civil War.

When quite a young girl, Mrs. McCaffrey enlisted for three years, or "during the war," to serve an apprenticeship to the art of typesetting, and she speaks feelingly and animatedly of her associates, many of whom have laid down the composing stick here and may now be scrambling for fat takes upstairs, "where the wicked cease from troubling," and where, it is supposed, none are ever under the necessity of "carrying the banner."

Some Here, Others Over Yonder.

As a compositor, Mrs. McCaffrey's associates were the Hon. Russell Errett, James M. McEwen, William Anderson, "Judge" William Ramsey, D. B. Ferguson, B. B. Hunnecutt, Bartley Campbell, Captain Smith, David L. Fleming and others well known 25 years ago, but generally out of harness now. Mrs. McCaffrey says the happiest period of her life was the time she spent as a compositor working among 33 to 35 men, who always treated here with the deference due a woman. She was the only woman in the office, and says she extorted fair treatment simply because she never presumed on account of her sex to ask for privileges not accorded to all. She states that she never scrambled for fat takes, but took the lean with the fat, and set manuscript or reprint as the case might be. Once when asked to help break a strike she agreed to work if paid the wages demanded by the Typographical Union, and her persistence broke the strike the other way. Mr. McEwen tells of a time when a strike was made against her simply because she was a woman. He was a strenuous member of the union himself, but, as foreman at Haven's, demanded something more specific than an objection on account of sex. He states that Lottie had been black balled on her application for membership in the union, and as no member thereof would file charges against her he refused to discharge her, and a spirit of gallantry finally won the day in her behalf. As a newspaper compositor Mrs. McCaffrey states that she made as much money as the average compositor, $20 to $25 a week, and she evidently took better care of her earnings than the average printer, as she owns considerable real estate and her name would go a considerable distance on paper where she is known. Mrs. McCaffrey says her experience proves that women can get the same compensation as men for work, but to do it they must do the work as men do, and if they neglect to cultivate the necessary physique, they will fail. Many times, she states, she was 18 hours out of 24 on her feet and at times they were so swollen that she stopped with Hughey, on the Sixth street bridge, and taking her shoes off walked over barefoot. Frequently when some male compositor felt "tuckered out," she took his cases and subbed for him, and when Josiah Copely finally asked her to set type for 35 cents a thousand, because other women would do it for that money, when 45 cents was paid to men, she walked out of the office and finally fell in with Mr. McEwen, at Haven's, and there formed a friendship with him that is likely to subsist until mortality puts on immortality. She got $18 a week there, and remained two years with Haven's, when she was enabled to fix herself so as to be able to work for herself and has been her own employer since.

Married Into the Profession.

When 18 years of age Mi