A NOVEL DEALING WITH COTEMPORARY LIFE.

WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.

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CHAPTER XXII.

MARRIAGE NOT A LA MODE.

London had come to life again; the meeting of Parliament had summoned fathers of families from distant climes and cities—from Algiers and Athens, from Constantinople and Cairo; the light blazed at the summit of the clock tower; cabs and carriages rattled into Palace yard. And here, at a table in the ladies' dining room of the House of Commons, sat Mrs. Ellison and her friend Louie Drexel, along with Lord Musselburgh and Vincent Harris, the last named playing the part of host. This Miss Drexel was rather an attractive-looking little person, brisk and trim and neat, with a healthy complexion, a pert nose, and the most astonishingly clear blue eyes. Very frank those eyes were; almost ruthless in a way; about as ruthless as the young lady's tongue, when she was heaping contempt and ridicule on some conventionality or social supersitition. "Seeva the Destroyer" Vincent used gloomily to call her, when he got a little bit tired of having her flung at his head by the indefatigable young widow. Nevertheless she was a merry and vivacious companion; with plenty of independence, too; if she was being flung at anybody's head it was with no consent of her own.

"You don't say!" she was observing to her companion. "Fancy anyone being in Canada in the winter and not going to see the night tobogganing at Rideau Hall!"

"I never was near Ottawa," said Vincent, in answer to her; "and, besides, I don't know the Viceroy."

"A member of the British Parliament—traveling in Canada; I don't think you would have to wait long for an invitation," said she. "Why, you missed the loveliest thing in the world—just the loveliest thing in the whole world!—the toboggan slide all lit up with Chinese lanterns—the black pine woods all around—the clear stars overhead. Then they have great bonfires down in the hollow—to keep the chaperons from freezing—poor things, it isn't much fun for them; I dare say they find out what a good thing hot coffee is on a cold night. And you were at Toronto?" she added.

"Yes, I was at Toronto," he answered, absently; indeed, at this time he was thinking much oftener of Toronto than this young lady could have imagined—wondering when, or if ever, a message was coming to him from the friendly Scotch banker there.

Mrs. Ellison was now up in town making preparations for her approaching marriage; but so anxious was she that Louie Drexel and Vincent should get thrown together, that she crushed the natural desire of a woman's heart for a fashionable wedding, and proposed that the ceremony should be quite a quiet little affair, to take place at Brighton, with Miss Drexel as her chief attendant and Vincent as best man. And of course there were many consultations; and Mrs. Ellison and her young friend were much together; and they seemed to think it much pleasanter, in their comings and goings, to have a man's escort, so that the Parliamentary duties of the new member for Mendover were very considerably interfered with.

"Look here, aunt," said he, at this little dinner, "do you think I went into the House of Commons simply to get you places in the ladies' gallery and entertain you in the ladies' dining room?"

"I consider that a very important part of your duties," said the young widow, promptly. "And I tell you this, when we come back from the Riviera, for the London season, I hope to be kept informed of everything that is going on—surely, with a husband in one House and a nephew in the other."

"But what I want to know is," said Lord Musselburgh on this same occasion, "what Vin is going to do about the taxation of ground rents. I think that is about the hardest luck I ever heard of. Here is a young man, who no sooner gets into Parliament than he is challenged to say whether he will support the taxation of ground rents; and lo and behold! every penny of his own fortune is invested in ground rents! Isn't that hard? Other things don't touch him. Welsh disestablishment will neither put a penny in his pocket nor take one out; while he can make promises by the dozen about the abolition of the tea duty, extension of factory acts, triennial Parliaments, and all the rest of it. Besides, it is only a question of money. He knows he has no more right to tax ground rents than to pillage a baker's shop; he knows he oughtn't to give the name of a patriot to people who merely want to steal what doesn't belong to them, and I suppose he has his own ideas about contracts guaranteed by law, and the danger of introducing the legislation of plunder. But what is going to do? What are you going to do, Marcus Curtus? Jump in and sacrifice yourself, money and principles and all?"

"You are not one of my constituents," said Vincent, "and I decline to answer."

Day after day went by, and week after week, but no tidings came of the two fugitives. In such moments of interval as he could snatch from his various pursuits (for he was writing for an evening paper now, and that occupied a good deal of his morning time) his imagination would go wandering away over the surface of the globe, endeavoring to picture them here and there.

Then the momentous wedding day drew near; and it was with curious feelings that Vincent found himself on the way to Brighton again. But he was not alone. The two Drexel girls and Lord Musselburgh were with him, in this afternoon Pullman; and Miss Louie was chattering away like 20 magpies. Always, too, in an oddly personal way. You—the person she was addressing—you were responsible for everything that had happened to her, or might happen to her, in this country; you were responsible for the vagaries of the weather, for the condition of the cab that brought her, for the delay in getting tickets.

Nor did Mrs. Ellison's plans for throwing those two young people continuously and obviously together work any better in Brighton; for Vincent had no sooner got down than he went away by himself, seeking out the haunts he had known when Maisrie and her grandfather had been there. Wretchedness, loneliness, was destroying the nerve of this young man. He had black moods of despair; and not only of despair, but of remorse; he tortured himself with vain regrets, as one does when thinking of the dead. If only he could have all those opportunities ever again, he would not misunderstand or mistrust!

He ought to have been attending to his groomsman's duties, and acting as escort to the young ladies who had gone down; but instead of that he paid a visit to Germanplace, to look at the house in which the two Bethunes had lodged; and he slowly passed up and down the Kemp-Town breakwater, striving to picture to himself the look in Maisrie's eyes when her soul made confession; and he went to the end of the Chain Pier, to recall the tempestuous morning on which Maisrie, with her wet hair blown about by the winds, and her lips salt with the sea-spray, had asked him to kiss her, as a last farewell. And his promise—"Promise me, Vincent, that you will never doubt that you are my dearest in all the world; promise me that you will say to yourself always and always, 'Wherever Maisrie is at this moment, she loves me—she is thinking of me.'" He had made light of her wild words; he could not believe in any farewell; and now—now all the wide, unknown world lay between him and her, and there was nothing for him but the memory of her broken accents, her sobs, her distracted appealing eyes.

Mrs. Ellison affected not to notice his remissness; nay, she went on the other tack.

"Don't you think it is a pity, Vin," she said on one occasion when she found him alone—and there was a demure little smile on her very pretty and expressive face: "Don't you think it is a pity the two marriages couldn't be on the same day?"

"What two marriages?" he demanded, with a stare.

"Oh, yes, we are so discreet!" she said, mockingly. "We wouldn't mention anything for worlds. But other people aren't quite blind, young gentleman. And I do think it would have been so nice if the four of us could have gone off on this trip together; Louie despises conventions—she wouldn't mind. Many's the time I've thought of it; four make such a nice number for driving along the Riviera; and four who all know each other so well would be quite delightful. If it came to that, I dare say it could be arranged yet. I'm sure I should be willing to have our marriage postponed for a month, and I have no doubt I could persuade Hubert to agree, then the two weddings on the same day would be jolly—"

"What are you talking about, aunt!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, well," she said, with a wise and smiable discretion, "I don't want to hurry on anything, or even to interfere. But of course we all expect that the attentions you have been paying to Louie Drexel will lead to something—and it would have been very nice if the two weddings could have been together."

"You don't want any money, aunt; that isn't what you've come for?"

It was her turn to look surprised.

"There was a young lady on board the steamer I last crossed to New York in," he proceeded to explain, in rather a scornful fashion, "a very pretty young lady—most engaging, and civil and courteous. I wasn't aware that I devoted myself to her particularly; I thought she was rather a nuisance, in fact; however, when I got to New York, her husband called upon me and wanted some money because of the attentions he declared I had paid to his wife; and I have no doubt that charming and most delightful young lady had all the time been looking forward to her share of the plunder. It can't be money that you want, aunt?"

"I'm sure I don't know what has come over you of late, Vin," the pretty young widow said, in a sad fashion. "You seem to have got so soured about human nature; and it isn't the least like you, Vin; nor is it natural at your age. Now a nice, bright, cheerful companion like Louie Drexel!—where could you find a girl who would make you a better, or more suitable, wife? Mind you, I wish you distinctly to understand that Louie has not spoken a single word to me on the subject—"

"Well, I should hope not!" said Vincent, with a touch of indignation.

"Oh, don't be angry! Do you think a girl doesn't interpret things?" continued Mrs. Ellison. "She has her own pride, of course; she wouldn't speak until she is spoken to. But I can speak; and surely you know that it is only your interests I have at heart. And that is why we have been so glad to see this affair coming along—"

"Who have been glad to see it?" he asked again.

"Well, Hubert, for one. And I should think your father. Of course they must see how admirable a wife she would make you, now you are really embarked in public life. Clever, bright, amusing; of a good family; with a comfortable dowry, no doubt—but that would be of little consequence, so long as your father was pleased with the match; you will have plenty. And this is my offer, a very handsome one, I consider it: even now, at the last moment, I will try to get Hubert to postpone our marriage, if you and Louie will have your wedding on the same day with us. I have thought of it again and again; but somehow I didn't like to speak. I was waiting for you to tell me that there was a definite understanding between you and Louie Drexel—"

"Well, there is not," he said calmly. "Nor is there ever likely to be."

"Oh, come, come," she said insidiously, "don't make any rash resolve, simply because I may have interfered a little too soon. Consider the circumstances. Did you ever hear of any man getting into Parliament with fairer prospects than you? Your friendship with Mr. Grandison is of itself enough to attract attention to you. You have hardly opened your mouth in the House yet; all the same I can see a disposition on the part of the newspapers to pet you—"

"What has that got to do with Louie Drexel?" Vincent asked bluntly.

"Everything," was the prompt reply. "You must have social position. You must begin and entertain—and make your own circle of friends and allies. Then I shall want you to come to Musselburgh House—you and your wife—so that my dinner parties shan't be smothered up with elderly people and political bores. You can't begin too early to form your own set; and not only that, but with a proper establishment and a wife at the head of it, you can pay compliments to all kinds of people, even among those who are not of your own set. Why shouldn't you ask Mr. Ogden to dinner, for example?—there's many a good turn he might do you in time to come. Wait till you see how I mean to manage at Musselburg House—if only Hubert would be a little more serious, and profess political beliefs even if he hasn't any. For I want you to succeed, Vincent. You are my boy. And you don't know how a woman who can't do anything distinguished herself is proud to look on and admire one of her own family distinguishing himself, and would like to have all the world admiring him too. I tell you you are losing time; you are losing your opportunities. What is the use—what on earth can be the use," continued this zealous and surely disinterested councilor, "of your writing for newspapers? If the articles were signed, then I could understand their doing you some good, or if you were the editor of an important journal, that would give you a position. But here you are slaving away all these mornings—for what? Is it the money they give you? It would be odd if the son of Harland Harris had to make that a consideration. What otherwise, then? Do you think half a dozen people know that you write in the ——?"

"My dear aunt," he answered her, "all that you say is very wise and very kind; but you must not bother about me when your own affairs are so much more important. If I have been too attentive to Miss Drexel—I'm sure I wasn't aware of it, but I may have been—I will alter that ——."

"Oh, Vin, don't be mean!" Mrs. Ellison cried. "Don't do anything shabby. You won't go and quarrel with the girl simply because I ventured to hope something from your manner toward her—you wouldn't do such a thing as that——"

"Certainly not," said he, in a half-amused way. "Miss Drexel and I are excellent friends——"

"And you will continue to be so!" said Mrs. Ellison imploringly. "Now, Vincent, promise me! You know there are crises in a woman's life when she expects a little consideration — when she expects to be petted—and have things a little her own way; well, promise me now you will be very kind to Louie—kinder than ever—why, what an omen at a wedding it would be if my chief attendant and the groomsman were to fall out——"

"Oh, we shan't fall out aunt, be sure of that," he said good-naturedly.

"Ah, but I want more," she persisted. "I shall consider myself a horrid mischief-maker if I don't see that you are more attentive and kind to Louie Drexel than ever. It's your duty. It's your place, as groomsman. You'll have to propose their health at the wedding breakfast; and of course you'll say something nice about American girls—could you say anything too nice, I wonder?—and you'll have to say it with an air of conviction. For they'll expect you to speak well, of course; you, a young member of Parliament; and where could you find a more welcome toast, at a wedding breakfast, than the toast of the unmarried young ladies? Yes, yes; you'll have plenty of opportunities of lecturing a sleepy House of Commons about Leasehold Enfranchisement and things of that kind; but this is quite another sort of chance; and I'm looking forward to my nephew distinguishing himself—as he ought to do, when he will have Louie and Anna Drexel listening." And here this astute and insidious adviser ceased, for her future husband came into the room to pay his last afternoon call.

Whether Vincent spoke well or ill on that auspicious occasion does not concern us here; it only needs to be said that the ceremony, and the quiet little festivities following, all passed off very satisfactorily; and that bride and bridegroom (the former being no novice) drove away radiant and happy, amid the usual symbolic showers. It was understood they were to break their journey southward at Paris for a few days; and Vincent—who had meanwhile slipped along to his hotel to change his attire—went up to the railway station to see them off. He was surprised to find both the Drexel girls there.

"Now, look here, Vin," said the charming, tall, pretty-eyed, and not inexperienced bride, "I want you to do me a favor. If a woman isn't to be humored and petted on her wedding way—when, then? Well, Louie and Anna don't return to town until to-morrow morning; and what are they to do in that empty house with old Mrs. Smythe? I want you to take them in hand for the afternoon — to please me. Leave that wretched House of Commons for one more evening; in any case you couldn't go up now before the 5 o'clock express.

A PITY THERE COULDN'T BE TWO MARRIAGES.

And then she turned to the two young ladies. "Louie, Vincent has promised to look after you two girls; and he'll see you safely into your train to-morrow morning. So you must do your best to entertain him in the meanwhile; the afternoon will be the dullest—you must find something to amuse yourselves with——"

Miss Drexel seemed a little self-conscious, and also inclined to laugh.

"If he will trust himself entirely to us," said she, with covertly merry eyes fixed on the bride, "Anna and I will do our best. But he must put himself entirely in our charge. He must be ruled and governed. He must do everything we ask——"

"Training him for a husband's duties," said Lord Musselburgh, without any evil intention whatever; for indeed he was more anxious about getting a supply of foot-warmers into the carriage that had been reserved for him.

Then the kissing had to be gone through; there were final farewells and good wishes; away went the train; there was a fluttering of handkerchiefs; and here was Vincent Harris, a captive in the hands of these two young American damsels—who, at first, did not seem to know what to do with him.

But very soon their shyness wore off; and it must be freely conceded that they treated him well. To begin with, they took him down into the town and led him to a little table at a confectioner's and ordered two ices for themselves and for him a glass of sherry and a biscuit. When that fluid was placed before him he made no remark; his face was perfectly grave.

"What's the matter now?" Louie Drexel asked, looking at him.

"I said nothing," he answered.

"What are you thinking, then?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"But I insist on knowing."

"Oh, very well," he said. "But it isn't my fault. I promised to obey. If you ask me to drink a glass of confectioner's sherry I will do so—though it seems a pity to die so young."

"What would you rather have, then—tea or an ice?"

She got an ice for him; and duly paid for the three—much to his consternation, but he had undertaken to be quite submissive. Then they took him for a walk and showed him the beauties of the place, making believe to recognize the chief features and public buildings of New York. Then they carried him with them to Mrs. Ellison's house, and ascended into the drawing-room there, chatting, laughing, nonsense-making, in a very frank and engaging manner. Finally, toward 6 o'clock, Miss Drexel rang the bell, and ordered the carriage.

"Oh, I say, don't do that," Vincent interposed, grown serious for a moment. "People don't like tricks being played with their horses. You may do anything else in a house but that."

"And pray who asked you to interfere," she retorted, in a very imperious manner; so there was nothing for it but acquiescence and resignation.

And very soon—in a few minutes, indeed—the carriage was beneath the windows; coachman on the box, footman at the door, maidservant descending the steps with rugs, all in order. It did not occur to Vincent to ask how those horses came to be harnessed in so miraculously brief a space of time; he accepted anything that might befall; he was as clay in the hands of the potter. And really the two girls did their best to make things lively—as they drove away he knew not, and cared not, whither. The younger sister was rather more subdued, perhaps; but the older fairly went daft, as the saying is; and her gaiety was catching. Not but that she could be dexterous in the midst of her madness. For example, she was making merry over the general inaptitude of Englishmen for speech-making; and was describing scenes she had herself witnessed in both Houses of Parliament, when she suddenly checked herself.

"At all events," she said, "I will say this for the House of Commons, that there are a number of very good-looking men in it. No one can deny that. But the House of Lords—whew! You know, my contention is that my pedigree is just as long as that of any of your lords; but I've got to admit that some of them more nearly resemble their ancestors—I mean their quadrumanous ancestors—"

"Louie!" said the sister, reprovingly.

And she was going on to say some very nice things about the House of Commons (as contrasted with the Upper Chamber) when Vincent happened to look out into the now gathering dusk.

"Why," said he, "we're at Rottingdean; and we're at the foot of an awfully steep hill; I must get out and walk up."

"No, no, no," said Miss Drexel impatiently. "The horses have done nothing all day but hang about the church door. You English are so absurdly careful of your horses; more careful of them than of yourselves—as I've noticed myself at country houses in wet weather. I wonder, when I get back home, if the people will believe me when I tell them that I've actually seen horses in England with leather shoes over their feet to keep the poor things warm and comfortable. Yes, in this very town of Brighton——"

But here Miss Louie had the laugh turned against her, when he had gravely to inform her that horses in England wore overshoes of leather, not to keep their feet warm, but to prevent their cutting the turf when hauling a lawn roller.

"But where are we going?" said he again.

"Oh, never mind," she answered pertly.

"All right—all right," he said, and he proceeded to ensconce himself still more snugly in the back seat. "Well, now, since you've told us of all the absurd and ludicrous things you've seen in England, won't you tell us of some of the things you have admired? We can't be insane on every point, surely."

"But all the same, you know," Miss Drexel proceeded, "some of your countrymen have been very complimentary when they were over with us. Of course you've heard of the one who said that the biggest things he had seen in America were the eyes of the women?"

"What else could he say? An Englishman prides himself on speaking the truth," he made answer, very properly.

By this time, however, he was beginning seriously to ask himself whether those two young minxes meant to take him—a runaway expedition carried out with somebody else's horses. At all events they were going to have a fine night for it. For by now it ought to have been quite dark; but it was not dark; the long-rolling downs, the wide strip of turf along the top of the cliffs, and the far plain of the sea were all spectrally visible in a sort of gray uncertainty, and he judged that the moon was rising, or had risen in the east. What did Charles and Thomas, seated on the box, think of this pretty escapade? In any case his own part and lot in the matter had already been decided; unquestioning obedience was what had been demanded of him. It could not be that Gretna Green was the objective point?—this was hardly the way.

At last they descended from those gray moonlit solitudes, and got down into a dusky valley, where there were scattered yellow lights—lamp lights and lights of windows. "This is Newhaven," he thought to himself; but he did not say anything; for Miss Drexel was telling of a wild midnight frolic she and some of her friends had had on Lake Champlain. Presently the footfalls of the horses sounded hollow; they were going over a wooden bridge. Then they proceeded cautiously for a space, and there was a jerk or two; they were crossing a railway line. And now Vincent seemed to understand what those mad young wretches were after. They were going down to the Newhaven Pier Hotel. To dine there? Very well; but he would insist on being their host. It was novel and odd—and in a certain way fascinating—for him to sit in a restaurant and find himself entertained by two young ladies—find them pressing another biscuit on him, and then paying the bill; but, of course, the serious business of dinner demanded the intervention of a man.

What followed speedily drove these considerations out of his head. The enterprising young damsels having told the coachman when to return with the carriage, conducted their guest to the hotel, and asked for the coffee-room. A waiter opened the door for them. The next thing that Vincent saw was that, right up at the end of the long room, Lord Musselburgh and his bride were seated at a side table, and that they were regarding the new comers—especially himself—with some little amusement. They themselves were in no wise disconcerted, as they ought to have been.

"Come along!" the bridegroom said, rather impatiently. "You're nearly half-an-hour late, and we're famishing. Here, waiter, dinner at once, please! Vin, my boy, you sit next Miss Drexel—that's all right!"

At this side table covers were already laid for five. As Vincent took his place, he said:—

"Well, this is better than being had up before a magistrate for stealing a carriage and a pair of horses!"

"Sure they didn't let on?" the bride demanded, with a glance at the two girls.

"Not a word!" he protested. "I had not the remotest idea where or what we were bound for. Looked more like Gretna Green than anything else."

"The nearest way to Gretna Green," said she, regarding Vincent with significant eyes, "is through Paris—to the British Embassy."

Now although this remark (which Miss Drexel affected not to hear—she was so busy taking off her gloves) seemed a quite haphazard and casual thing, it very soon appeared, during the progress of this exceedingly merry dinner, that Lady Musselburgh, as she now was, had been wondering whether they might not carry the frolic a bit further; whether, in short, this little party of five might not go on to Paris together by the 11 o'clock boat that same night.

"Why, Louie, you despise conventionalities," she exclaimed. "Well, now is your chance!"

Miss Louie pretended to be much frightened.

"Oh, but I couldn't do that!" she cried. "Neither Nan nor I have any things with us."

"The idea of American girls talking of taking things with them to Paris!" the bride said, with a laugh. "That is the very reason you should go to Paris—to get the things."

"Do you really mean to cross to-night?" Vincent asked, turning to Musselburgh.

"Oh, yes, certainly. The fixed service—11 o'clock—so there's no hurry, whatever you decide on."

For he, too, seemed rather taken with this audacious project; said he thought it would be good fun; pleasant company, and all that; also he darkly hinted—perhaps for the benefit of the American young ladies—that Paris had been altogether too pallid of late, and wanted a little crimson added to its complexion. And, indeed, as the little banquet proceeded, these intrepid schemes widened out, in a half-jocular way. Why should the runaway party stop at Paris? Why should they not all go on to the Mediterranean together, to breathe the sweet airs blown in from the sea, and watch the spring emptying her lavish lap-ful of flowers over the land? Alas! it fell to Vincent's lot to demolish these fairy-like dreams. He said he would willingly wait to see the recruited party off by that night's steamer, and would send any telegrams for them or deliver any messages, but he had to return to London the next morning without fail. And then Miss Louie Drexel said it was a pity to spoil a pleasant evening by talking of impossibilities, and that they had already sufficiently outraged conventionalities by running away with a carriage and pair and breaking in upon a bridal tour. So the complaisant young bride had for the moment to abandon her half-serious, half-whimsical designs, and, perhaps, she even hoped that Miss Drexel had not overheard her suggested comparison between the British Embassy at Paris and Gretna Green.

At 9 o'clock the carriage came round, and at 9 o'clock the younger people, having got their goodbys said all over again, set out for home.

"I suppose we ought to keep this little expedition a secret," said Vincent, as they were climbing up from the dusky valley to the moonlight above, which was now very clear and white.

"Why?" said Miss Louie.

"Rather unusual—isn't it?" he asked, doubtfully, for he knew little of such matters.

"That's what made it so nice," she answered, promptly. "Don't you think they were charmed? Fancy their being quite alone in that big hotel, waiting for a steamer! We had it all planned out days ago. Didn't you suspect in the least—when you knew they were going by Newhaven and Dieppe, and that they would have to wait till 11 to-night? I'm sure they would have been delighted if we had gone over to Paris with them, and down to the Mediterranean; but I suppose that would have been a little too much—just a little too much!"

And if Miss Drexel was vivacious and talkative on her way out, she was equally so on the way back; so that Vincent, in such cheerful company, had little reason to regret their having captured and run away with him. Then again the night was surpassingly beautiful—the moonlight gray on the land and white on the sea; the heavens cloudless; the world everywhere apparently silent and asleep. Not that they were to get all the way home without a little bit of an adventure, however. When they reached the top of the height just west of Rottingdean, Louie Drexel proposed that they should get out and walk along the cliff for a while, leaving the carriage to go slowly on by road. This they accordingly did; and very soon the carriage was out of sight; for at this point the highway is formed by a deep cutting in the chalk. It was pleasant to be by themselves on such a night—high up on this lofty cliff, overlooking the wide, far-shimmering, silver sea.

Presently there came into the stillness a sound of distant voices; and shortly afterward, at the crest of the hill, a band of strayed revelers appeared in sight, swaying much in their walk, and singing diverse choruses with energy rather than with skill. They were in high good humor, all of them. As they drew near, Vincent perceived that one of them was a soldier; and he seemed the center of attraction; this one and that clung to his arm, until their legs, becoming involved, carried them wide away, when two other members of the group would occupy the twin places of honor. The soldier was drunk, too; but he had the honor of the flag to maintain; and he made some heroic effort to march straight.

Now what with their insensate howling and staggering they were almost on Vincent and his two companions before they were aware; but instantly there was a profusion of offers of hospitality. The gentleman must drink with them at Royal Oak. The gentleman declined to drink and civilly bade them good night. At the same moment another member of the jovial crew appeared to have discovered that there were also two young ladies here; most probably he had a dim suspicion there might only be one; however, it was this one, the one nearest, he insisted should also go down and have a glass at the Royal Oak. It was all done in good fellowship, with no harm meant; but when at the same time this particular roysterer declared he would have his sweetheart come along o' him and caught Miss Louie by the arm he had distinctly overstepped the bounds of prudence.

"Hands off!" said Vincent, and he slung the fellow a clip on the ear that sent him staggering until his legs got mixed up somehow, and away he went headlong on the grass.

Then he said in a rapid undertone to the two girls—

"Off you go to the carriage—quick!"

He turned to the now murmuring group.

"What do you want?" he said. "I can't fight all of you; I'll fight the soldier—make a ring, to see fair play—"

He glanced over his shoulder; the two girls had disappeared; he breathed freely.

"But, look here," he said in a most amicable tone, "you've had a glass—anyone can see that—and it's no use a man trying to fight if he's a bit unsteady on his pins; you know that quite well. And I don't want to fight any of you. If you ask me in a friendly way, I'll go down to the Royal Oak and have something with you; or I'll treat you, if you like that better. I call that fair."

And they seemed to think it fair, too; so they picked up their companion (who looked drowsy) and helped him along. But they hadn't gone half a dozen yards when two dark figures appeared at the top of the chalk cutting; and these, when they came quickly up, Vincent to his surprise discovered to be the coachman and footman.

"Where are the young ladies?" he demanded, instantly and angrily.

"Miss Drexel is on the box, sir—she sent us to you," said the coachman—staring with amazement at the revelers, and no doubt wondering when the fighting was about to begin.

"Oh, go away back!" said he. "Get the ladies into the carriage and drive them home! I'm going to have a drink with these good fellows—I'll follow on foot."

"I'm quite sure, sir, Miss Drexel won't go," said the coachman.

But here the soldier stepped forward. He had arrived at some nebulous perception of the predicament; and he constituted himself spokesman of the party. They had no wish to inconvenience the gentleman. He hoped some other night—proud to see such a gentleman—wouldn't interfere with ladies—not interfere with anybody—all gentlemen and good friends—no use in 'nimosity—no offense meant, no offense taken——

This harangue might have gone on all night had not Vincent cut it short by requesting to be allowed to hand his friends five shillings to drink his health withal; and away the jocund brethren went to obtain more liquor—if haply they could induce the landlord of the Royal Oak to serve them.

And here, sure enough, was Miss Louie Drexel seated sedately on the box, whip and reins in hand; and there was Miss Anna, in the white moonlight, at the horses' heads. When Vincent and his two companions were in the carriage again, he said to the elder of them—

"Why didn't you drive away home?"

"Drive away home?" said she, with some touch of vibrant indignation in her voice. "And leave you there?" I was just as near as possible going back myself, with the whip in my hand. Do you think I couldn't have lashed my way through those drunken fools?"

*(To be continued next Sunday.)*

If your complaint is want of appetite, try Angostura Bitters before meals. TTSSu

# TEACHING OF ST. PAUL

## What He Meant by Saying Our Conversation is in Heaven.

## IT'S A MATTER OF CITIZENSHIP.

### Duties and Privileges That Go Along With That Relation.

### KEEPING UP A GOOD GOVERNMENT

[WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.]

St. Paul was a very positive and confident Christian. He knew perfectly well what he believed, and why he believed it. To him the unseen universe was as real as the ground beneath his feet. He was as sure of the existence of God as he was of the existence of Paul.

And he was pretty well acquainted with Paul. He knew that Paul was a good, faithful Christian, and though he was fully aware of his infirmities and faults, and not unmindful that even saints might become castaways, still he had no hesitation in telling a good many people that if they would follow his example it would be better for them. "Brethren," he says, "be followers together of me, and mark them which walk, so as ye have us for an example, for our conversation is in heaven."

That is a good deal for a man to say of himself. But it was true, and it was just what those people needed, and he said it. I wish we could say as much.

We do not know much, it is true, about the conversation of heaven. We have but the vaguest idea what it will be about. Probably it will be wider in its range than any of us think. We are quite ignorant of the language of heaven. We do not even know for certain that people in the next life will talk at all. It is just as likely that thinking will take the place of speaking, and that the conversation of heaven will be some sort of mind-reading.

THE PHYSICAL CHANGE.

Evidently there will be a decided change, out of earth into heaven. For one thing, we will leave our earthly bodies behind us. St. Paul reminds of that just in this connection. "The Lord Jesus Christ," he says, "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." The celestial body, he tells us in another familiar paragraph, will not be this terrestrial body which we have now. There will be no flesh and blood in heaven. That will be a great change.

But, after all the changes, we know pretty well what sort of conversation will *not* be heard in heaven. We know that the conversation of heaven will be perfectly reverent and perfectly pure, and perfectly charitable. Nobody will talk unkindly about their neighbors in heaven. And we ought to know that if we are ever to take our part in any heavenly conversation, we must begin now. We must have our conversation in heaven, now.

"Conversation" is a word which has a narrower meaning now than it once had. In the days when the Bible was translated into English, the word indicated the whole manner of a man's life. His "conversation" was what we would call his behavior. Thus it is used in another place in the New Testament, where we read, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." It means not speaking only, but living.

WHAT ST. PAUL MEANT.

The word, however, which St. Paul wrote meant neither living nor speaking, except as it included both. St. Paul said nothing about "conversation" in either its narrower or its wider signification. The word which he used means "citizenship." "Our citizenship is in heaven. We may cross out that old word "conversation" from the sentence, and write this new word "citizenship" in the place of it.

And so we get our text: "Our citizenship is in heaven." What does it mean?

Well, we know what Roman citizenship meant in the days of St Paul. It was a privilege which men who had it were very proud of. St. Paul had asserted his citizenship upon a memorable occasion among these very people of Philippi to whom he was now writing; and they would all remember what a fright that declaration had given to the city authorities who had beaten and imprisoned him. They came themselves to the town jail and took out Paul and Silas with profound apologies, because Paul was a Roman citizen.

Now, St. Paul is telling them that there is another and a better citizenship which is in the possession of them all. "Our citizenship is in heaven." And that is true of us also.

You know that when our Lord went about preaching, the main subject that He preached about was the kingdom of heaven. And when He sent out the 70 evangelists, in the midst of His ministry, He gave them that same message. They were to show the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven. And when His earthly ministry was over, and after His resurrection He tarried yet for 40 days, teaching the apostles who were to carry on His work, this, you remember, was what He talked about with them, "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

WHAT THE KINGDOM IS.

Exactly what Christ meant by the kingdom, it is not easy to say. He said a great deal about it, sometimes in sermons, sometimes in parables. From some of these sayings it has been inferred that the kingdom means the moral government of God. From others, it has been maintained that the kingdom means the ecclesiastical government of the church. Probably it means both, and more than both.

God is the King, that we know. And we are the subjects, that we know also. And when you know who the king is and who the subjects are, you know at least enough to begin with about the kingdom.

Now citizenship in a case like this, when the citizens are separated from their country, when the subjects are settled in a land which is not obedient to their king, involves two duties: The duty of loyalty and the duty of light-bearing.

Our citizenship is in heaven, and our first duty is to live here like citizens of heaven. We must be loyal citizens. We must be ever mindful where we belong, and who our king is, and we must be watchful to make our conversation, in all the meanings of that word, accord with our citizenship. The scholars of King James' day translated "citizenship" into "conversation;" and we must do that, too, in our daily living, in the "epistle" which men read more plainly and more often than any epistle which any of the apostles wrote—the epistle of our daily conduct.

A COLONY IN RUSSIA.

It is like the case of an American colony in Russia. They live there, but their citizenship is here. They have duties in both places. They are to render unto Cæsar—or the Czar, as they call the name in Russia—such tribute as belongs to him; and they have other tribute to pay, also, which must be paid, whether the Czar gets his or not. Their allegiance is first and all the time to the laws of their own country. You know very well what people think of disloyal citizens. You know the just opinion which we all have of American citizens who try to be half-English, or half-French, or anything else but true, sincere, whole-hearted Americans. That is one of a great number of instructive parables which the text naturally suggests.

Let us remember every morning that we are citizens of heaven. We pray the Lord's Prayer, I hope, every morning; and that petition, in which we ask that God's kingdom may come, might well serve as a reminder. We are citizens of heaven. And here in this foreign country, where our lot is for the present cast, we are to live this day as becomes our dignified position. We will have many words to speak to-day, and we will try to speak them so as not to cast discredit upon our heavenly citizenship. We will have many temptations to persuade us to the right or to the left of the straight path to-day, and we will try to meet them as a man who belongs to an ancient and noble family meets a persuasion to do a cowardly, or mean, or disreputable act. We will try to remember to-day, in all our speaking, and doing, and even thinking—we will try to remember who we are. We are citizens of heaven.

THE DUTY OF CITIZENSHIP.

But every good citizen is on the side of good government. He is not content to govern himself and his own home in the right way. That is not enough. Neither does he consider that he is doing the remainder of his duty when he laments the misgovernment with which he is surrounded, and keeps up a constant and indignant complaining. That is not enough, either. The type of a bad citizen is that righteous patriarch, Lot, who lived a good many years in the worst governed city on the face of the earth and complained about it every day, "vexing his righteous soul from day to day," St. Peter tells us, "seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds;" and yet in all those years made no converts to the cause of good government and decency. When the end came there were not five righteous men in the town where Lot lived, not even in his own family. Something was the matter there. Some of the fault, I am afraid, was Lot's.

The good citizen is a missionary of good citizenship. He sets at work to make things better. That is what I meant when I said that besides the duty of loyalty, the citizen has the duty of light-bearing. It is the business of the citizen of heaven to make earth as much like heaven as he can. The conversation of heaven will be a great improvement upon much of the conversation which is heard in our houses; the manners of heaven will be as much an advance upon our manners as ours are upon the etiquette of Central Africa; the customs of heaven, the laws of heaven, the justice of heaven, the culture of heaven, will prove considerably better than the best which we have now; and we want the best—we want every improvement there is. It is the duty of citizens of heaven, where they do all these things—and everything else—so infinitely better than we do here, to bring the ways of heaven down upon this misgoverned earth, and let the light of heaven shine into all the neglected places.

THE UPLIFTING OF THE WORLD.

That is what Christ was always saying. That is the heart of what He meant by His "gospel of the kingdom," which He preached. He meant the uplifting of the world. He meant the setting of the right in wrong's place everywhere. He meant that the citizens of heaven, though they were but a small company of people, dwelling as a weak colony in the midst of a vast empire whose allegiance was paid into the treasury of the devil should little by little, and year by year, and century by century, make things better, "leaven the whole lump," teach purer customs, wiser laws, uplift men's ideals, and finally get the will of their own King done on earth as it is done in their own kingdom in heaven.

We think sometimes that with all the loyalty and all the light-bearing, the kingdom of God is very slow in its conversion of the kingdoms of this world. We read that the knowledge and obedience of God will one day cover the earth as the waters cover the bottom of the sea. But that mighty and blessed flood delays its coming, and what water there is seems pretty shallow, the sand-bars of selfishness lie just beneath its surface, and the rocks and reefs of unrighteousness thrust up their ugly heads in a thousand places.

But St. Paul was thinking, as he wrote, of the world in which he lived, the tears came into his eyes as he thought about it. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ;" men having gods whose altars are the tables of banquets, and whose service is an affair to be ashamed of, minding earthly things, and going on to sure destruction.

That was a hard time for a citizen of heaven. But the citizens of heaven kept their courage. They continued loyal and kept their lights burning. They ceased not day and night, trying to get the world governed by the laws of heaven. And we have but to compare the days of the administration of the Emperor Nero with the days of the administration of President Harrison, to measure the success of their endeavors.

We are the citizens of heaven. Steadily and surely we are getting converts into our colony, and bringing the world over to our side. Everybody who is for the right is of our number. One day we will have a majority in this evil world. For our citizenship is in heaven, and our King is the King of heaven; who "is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

GEORGE HODGES.

## NEW CO-OPERATIVE SCHEME.

### A Colony of Farmers Secure 3,000 Acres of Choice Land in Alabama.

A colony of about 25 families from the North, for the most part farmers, have recently secured about 3,000 acres of choice farm land in Cullman county, Ala., on which to locate a co-operative farm. It is to be organized as a joint stock company, with a capital stock of $200,000, limited to 200 shares of $1,000 each. No person can purchase, own or control more or less than one share of the capital stock.

The labor is to be performed by themselves and their families at stipulated wages, the profits to be distributed as dividends. They propose to introduce manufactures as soon as practicable, as they possess a tract of valuable timber as well as an inexhaustible supply of coal. This county is the only farming territory in any of the Southern States in which there are no negroes.

## BEAUTY BELONGS TO WOMAN.

### Qualities of Strength Are the Most Admirable Traits for Men.

A woman should be thankful that she is beautiful, says Rose