

MR. VERLEY'S NIECE.

“AND don't you know when you will pass through this part of the country again, Mr. Verley?”

“No I don't,” said the old bachelor, decidedly.

He was something of a bear to answer so crustily when Barbara Smith stood in the doorway, with the shadowy lashes drooping over the soft brown eyes, and roses melting into deep carmine on her rosy cheek, until her muslin dress was plain in comparison. Such a pretty, big-eyed, loving little Barbara as she was, in all the blonde freshness of her eighteen summers, and the soft sigh that fluttered from her lips as the one-horse carriage drove away, was checked instantly.

Barbara had no idea of becoming a victim to unrequited love, though she had rather fancied Mr. Verley during his brief sojourn at her father's house.

Mr. Verley drove away through the rustling green draperies of the summer lanes, whistling sadly as he drove.

“I shall be in very good time for the 12-30 train,” he meditated to himself. “Punctuality is the soul of business, and I never was one of the behind-hand tribe, thank Providence. Besides, I think it was becoming dangerous to remain in that place any longer. I am thirty-nine to-morrow, and that is just twenty years too old for me to go making a fool of myself. Fanny me getting married! No you don't, Joseph Verley, my friend!”

As he settled himself comfortably in the crowded railroad car, and opened a letter, the subject again occurred to his mind with curious persistence.

“The letter of my poor brother's executor came just in time, or I should certainly have fooled away more time than would have been sensible or profitable. Poor dear Harold; I don't see what on earth possessed him to fall sick and die on his way home from Venice and leave his daughter on my hands too. Why could he not have left a son instead of a daughter? I never did understand a woman's ways, and what's more I don't want too. I am to meet her at Speedville, and take her home with me. ‘O!’ groaned Mr. Verley referring despairingly to his letter. “And what I'm going to do with her when I get there, I'd like to know! I suppose she's a great creature, with ringlets and ribbons, and just as likely as not an Italian lover talking sentiment to her—a creature that reads Byron, and keeps an album, and eats slate-pencils and chalk. I'll send her to a boarding-school, that's what I'll do with my niece—and perhaps when she has graduated there the schoolmaster can suggest some means of getting rid of her. Of course she'll have a dozen large trunks, and a bonnet box and a parrot's cage—that's the way women generally travel, I believe. I am glad I am out of the way of Barbara's fascinations now.”

Mr. Verley looked out of the car window, with a sort of calm desperation at the prospect before him.

“I suppose she'll want a piano, and maybe a poodle dog, and there's no knowing what else. I don't see why Harold wanted to die and leave his daughter to my care just now. Speedville station—twenty-seven miles further. I wish it was twenty-seven hundred miles—that's what I wish!”

And with this vindictive sentiment in his mind, our hero tied a red silk handkerchief over his head, and tried to lose himself in a series of brief, troubled dreams, wherein the vision of a tall, nice young lady figured conspicuously.

“Are we here already?” he stammered starting to his feet, as the conductor bawled out “Speedville Station,” and seizing umbrella, valise and traveling shawl, with the bustling bewilderment peculiar to people just aroused from sleep, he alighted.

Speedville was rather a large-sized village, situated at the junction of several railroads, with an imposing American Gothic structure for a depot. Into this building Mr. Verley walked, looking right and left for the young lady whose guardianship he was to assume.

“Of course,” he responded mentally, “she'll be on the lookout for me; women are proverbially curious.”

But Harold Verley's daughter was not on the lookout for her uncle. When the crowd incident to the evening train had subsided and the people had gone their different ways, the only remaining occupants of the depot, were Mr. Verley, a lame old man who sold peanuts and apples, and a decent-looking colored woman with a brilliant Madras turban on her head, who took care of the building.

Neither of these could be his niece, so Mr. Verley, after a little perplexed hesitation, addressed himself to the colored woman, who was busily polishing the window with a piece of crumpled newspaper.

“Ahem! I was to meet my niece here to-day, and I don't see her.”

“Your niece, sir? what is her name?” “Verley.”

“O yes sir; she has been here these two hours, bless her dear heart; she's asleep now.”

“Asleep?” gasped Mr. Verley; but the stewardess only answered him by bustling into the inner apartment and bringing out what appeared to be a compact bundle, with a pink face at one end of it, and a mass of long trailing embroideries at the other.

Joseph Verley recoiled as far as the angle of the wall would permit him.

“Why—it's a baby!”

“To be sure it is, sir,” said the woman “and as fine a little girl as ever I saw; bless her sweet blue eyes.”

“But isn't there a nurse or some such person here, who would take charge of her?”

“There was a nurse brought her on, sir, a queer foreign-looking thing, with a yellow skin and hair as black as night and big gold hoops in her ears; but she talked something about the next steamer—I couldn't understand her lingo, sir—and went right back to New York on the two o'clock train.”

Joseph Verley stood aghast, staring at the rosy baby as it lay crowing in the woman's arms, and wondering which of his lucky stars he should call on to aid him in this unlooked-for emergency. A full-grown young lady niece would have been bad enough—but a baby!

“So this is my niece,” he muttered. “And what am I going to do with her?” He turned suddenly to the colored woman.

“What time does the next train for Winfield leave?”

“In an hour, sir.”

“Would you be kind enough to take care of the child till then? I suppose I must take it home with me; for I can't very well drown it, or throw it under the car wheels.”

“Sir!” ejaculated the astonished stewardess.

But Mr. Verley turned on his heel and strode out of the depot, scarcely able at first to comprehend the disaster that had befallen him.

The train was at the depot when he returned, and the woman awaited him with the sleeping infant in her arms.

“Asleep, eh?” commented Mr. Verley.

“Well that's lucky.”

“Where's the nurse, sir?” inquired the woman.

“The nurse? What nurse?”

“Why, I suppose you went to get a nurse?”

“Never one thought of it!” ejaculated Joseph madly smiting his forehead. “Here—give the thing to me quick, the train is moving.”

He had hardly time to spring on board as the locomotive gave an unearthly shriek while the baby followed suit in both respects.

He staggered to his seat, holding the umbrella and child in one hand, while in the other his valise swung backward and forward.

“There! there! bless its little heart!” he exclaimed, imitating the colored woman “We won't cry—so we won't.”

But the baby evidently had an opinion of its own on the subject and would cry in spite of the various blandishments practiced by the bewildered uncle—such as shaking the umbrella handle, swinging his watch, and trotting both knees.

People began to look around, reproachfully; young men shrugged their shoulder and young ladies giggled.

“Hush! hush! there's a darling!” whispered Mr. Verley.

But still the baby wept and wailed, and gnashed its gums, for of teeth it had but two. Mr. Verley began to look round in the car in search of some matronly dame of whom he could seek counsel, but in vain. They were only three ladies in the car, and they were young, with round hats and dimpled cheeks.

“They don't know anything about it,” groaned Mr. Verley, in anguish of spirit. “Oh, why didn't I have common sense enough to go and get a nurse? I suppose there is no danger of a baby bursting its lungs; but I should think if there was such a contingency, this baby was in a fair way of meeting it. “Well, roar away, my young friend; I can stand it as long as you can.”

Vain boast, as futile as vain, as Mr. Verley very soon discovered. The baby not only cried, but it screamed, it kicked it doubled itself over in more ways than a contortionist's wildest dreams could imagine, and became apparently frantic with passion. The perspiration broke out in huge beads on Joseph's brow; his face flushed, and still the ears thundered on.

“What's to become of me?” he pondered, holding desperately on to the struggling infant by the sash that encircled its little waist, and watching its purple face with a species of detestation. “I don't wonder Harold died. I shall die in a week if this thing goes on. And it seems so easy for Barbara Smith to take care of her little brothers and sisters. If Barbara was here—”

And Verley pulled the baby up into a sitting posture with a sudden jerk.

“I'll do it,” quoth Mr. Verley, “I'll take the back express at four in the morning and go straight there. Ah you may stop crying you little hypocrite; but it won't do any good; I'm not to be caught twice in the same trap.”

Barbara Smith was watering her tub roses in the bright morning sunshine, as Mr. Verley drove up, with the valise and baby in the carriage.

“Dear me, Mr. Verley,” she ejaculated, blushing “celestial rosy red.” “Why, what a sweet baby!”

“Yes, very sweet,” he responded dryly. “It is my niece that I was to meet at Speedville.”

“Why, I thought that she was a young lady?”

“So did I but it seems she's not. Bar-

bara, what do you suppose brought me back?” he added, speaking very fast for fear the baby would cry.

“I don't know,” faltered Barbara, crimsoning still more. “Perhaps you forgot something.”

“Yes, I did.”

“What was it?” said Barbara, a little disappointed.

“I forgot to ask you if you would marry me!”

“Dear me! was that all!” said the young lady demurely.

“Isn't that enough? Say, Barbara, will you?”

“I'll think it,” answered Barbara, evasively.

“No, but tell me now. Quick—the baby's waking up.”

“Well then—yes.”

Barbara had taken the little thing in her arms, and disappeared before it had time to utter its waking yell.

A week afterward Mr. Joseph Verley took the 12:30 return train with his wife and niece, the happiest of reclaimed old bachelors, and it was all the unconscious baby's work.

A Dutch Account Book.

ONCE upon a time three lived a jovial Dutchman, whose first name was Hannels Von Shrimpstieffel. He had a wife. He also had a little grocery, where beer and such personal property was sold. He gave credit to a parcel of dry customers, and kept books with a piece of chalk on the head board of his bedstead.

One day Mrs. Shrimpstieffel, in a neat fit, took it upon herself to clean house and things. So she did, and she cleaned the headboard, and with soap and water settled the old man's accounts by wiping away every chalk mark.

Pretty soon before long the vender of things came into the house and saw what ruin his frau had wrought. Then he said:

“Mein Gott, Frau Shrimpstieffel, what you make a ruined man of me, I guess not? You made wipe away all dem names and figures what I owe dem fellers what's going to pay me before they get ready, and I lose more as sweet hundred tollar!”

His frau left the room in fear and disgust. When she returned he had recovered the head board with chalk marks. Then said she:

“Hannels you have make them all right again, don't it?”

“Veil, meine teurer frau, I make the figures all right, but I puts down some petter names as dem odder fellows vot you wiped out!”

On one occasion a young and zealous lawyer, not over punctilious in his allusions to the court, nor very formal in his manner, was urging a question before a judge, and in the course of his argument, by way of illustration, wished to suppose a case.

“We will suppose, your honor,” said he, “that your honor were to steal a horse.”

“No, no, no,” interrupted the Judge. “Not at all, not at all! Tain't a supposable case.”

“Very well begging your honor's pardon,” proceeded the eager lawyer, with more zeal than prudence, “very well, then supposing that I steal a horse—”

“Ah, yes, yes, yes,” said the Judge; “that's a very different thing. Very likely, Mr. S., very likely. Proceed, Mr. S.”

Mr. S. proceeded to take a seat, amid the shouts of his brethren, and had the good sense to take the joke in good part, and repeat it often to his friends.

A father, living near Cincinnati, was one evening learning his little boy to recite his Sunday-school lesson. It was from the 14th chapter of Matthew, wherein is related the parable of the malicious individual who went about sowing tares, etc.

“What is a tare, Johnny?” inquired the parent. Johnny hesitated. “Tell me, my son, what a tare is.”

“You have had 'em, you know, father,” said Johnny, casting down his eyes and wriggling his foot.

“Had 'em!” repeated the astonished parent, opening his eyes rather wide; “why, what do you mean, Johnny?”

“When you didn't come home for three days last week,” replied Johnny, “I heard mother tell Aunt Susan that you was off on a tare!”

The school was brought to a close rather abruptly, and Johnny retired supperless to bed that evening.

A story is told of a drowsy D. D., who preaches in the Disciple's Church, Charlottesville, Va., and has a nice dog. The dog always accompanies the divine to church; and the other Sunday, in the middle of the sermon, the dog got up and yawned in sympathy with the congregation, and straightway took his master's hat to him in the pulpit. The doctor continued his sermon, and the impatient dog produced the old man's cane and placed it beside the hat with an appealing wag of the tail. The doctor took the hint, and remarking that the dog was probably right, dismissed the congregation. All of which is queer if true.

Every evil to which we do not succumb, is a benefactor.

SCIENTIFIC READING.

Varnish-Making.

THE beautiful black varnish which is so much admired the world over, is the production of a tree which grows wild in Japan and China as well. It is cultivated in plantations, and is so much improved by the treatment it receives that a cultivated tree affords three times more of this valuable product than the wild one. The tree has some resemblance to the ash, with leaves shaped like those of laurel, of a light green color, and feel downy to the touch. It is of no great beauty, but it is valuable as the source of a very lucrative manufacture. These trees are capable of supplying the varnish when they have attained the age of seven or eight years. The varnish is gathered in the following manner:

About the middle of the summer a number of laborers proceed to the plantations of these trees, each furnished with a crooked knife, and a large number of hollow shells, larger than oyster shells. With the knives they make incisions in the bark of the trees above two inches in length, and under each incision they force the edge of the shell, which easily penetrates the soft bark, and remains in the tree. This operation is performed in the evening, as the varnish flows only in the night. The next morning the workmen proceed again to the plantation; each shell is either wholly or partially filled with the varnish; this they scrape out carefully with their knives, depositing it in a vessel which they carry with them, and throw the shells into a basket at the foot of the tree. In the evening the shells are replaced, and the varnish is again collected in the morning. This process is repeated throughout the summer, or until the varnish ceases to flow. It is computed that fifty trees, which can be attended by a single workman, will yield a pound of varnish every night. When the gathering is over the varnish is strained through a thin cloth, loosely suspended over an earthen vessel.

Sweeping the Ocean Bottom.

Science is busily at work exploring air, earth and sea. During the past summer and autumn, an expedition has made many remarkable discoveries in dredging the bottom of the sea from the Bay of Biscay to the Faroe Islands, from a depth of a few fathoms near the shore, to nearly three miles out at sea. It ascertained that there is a stratum of water from 150 fathoms upward, a stratum of ice cold water from 300 fathoms downward, and a stream of intermixture between the two. It was formerly supposed that no animal could exist lower than 300 fathoms, but various forms of animal life have been brought up from the profoundest depth of the ocean, many species have been found altogether new to science. Some of the animals brought up from the depth of 1270 fathoms, or nearly a mile and a half, had perfect eyes, while the color of their shells indicate the influence of light.

Rain.

Mr. James Glassier, F. R. S., of England, in a recent lecture, said that the whole of the rain had its origin and fall 800 feet from the earth. Desiring to discover the influence of the moon on the elements, he found, after a long series of investigations, that on the ninth day of the moon there was much more rain than on any other day, and that on the first and last week of the moon there was the least amount. He had taken account, from 1815 to 1869 of every day on which there had been an inch of rainfall, and he had found that on July 26, 1857, the rainfall amounted to three and seven-tenths inches—the largest amount that had fallen in one day at the Royal Observatory. From careful observations made by him, he had no doubt that the moon did exercise an influence upon rain. Another of his investigations was as to the time of day that rain fell most, and he had found that the largest quantity of rain fell at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Weight of Woman's Clothing.

A writer in Good Health says that the average weight all the year round, of that portion of woman's clothing which is supported from the waist, is between ten and fifteen pounds; and that if a woman was sentenced to carry such a weight about in this way for a number of years, for some great crime, the punishment would be denounced as an inhuman one; yet thousands of women daily endure such a punishment voluntarily, because it is the custom, and because they do not know the bad effects likely to follow it. The writer earnestly counsels women not to adopt an attire similar to that worn by men, but to have their clothing suspended from the shoulders, by which dangerous pressure on abdominal muscles would be avoided.

Sleep.

Every man must sleep according to his temperament. Eight hours is the average. If he requires a little more or a little less, he will find it for himself. Whoever, by work, pleasure, sorrow, or by any other cause, is regularly diminishing his sleep, is destroying his life. A man may hold out for a time, but Nature keeps close accounts, and no man can deceive her. The want of sleep is frequently the cause of insanity.

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For information relative to the Patenting of lands, call on or address S. B. GALBRAITH, Attorney-at-Law & County Surveyor Bloomfield, March 8, 1876.— 11.