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NO. 22.

THE OLD PORCH STOOP.

I am sitting on the old porch-stoop... For memories crowd thick and fast...

One, Five and Nine.

"I say again, Edmund, I will not read it. Keep it and glow over it as the evidence of your ingratitude and my misery."

Still he held the letter toward me, silently, with the same strange smile lighting up his boyish face.

"Why do you torture me?" I cried, restraining myself with an effort. "You have robbed me of my treasure. You have destroyed the sole aim of my life. Let that content you."

"You are mad," he said, with an irritating calmness. "If you would read the letter you might better understand the full extent of the wrong I have done you."

I tore the letter from his hand and flung it upon the glowing grate. It sprang into a flame and rolled off upon the floor in three leaps of ash.

He was leaning against the open door of the roomy steel safe which was built into the wall. Whether something in his attitude, or some whisper from my will heart, suggested it, I know not, but a cold, terrible thought crept upon me as I gazed at him.

"Edmund," I said, calmly, "leave me. As you hope to live another hour, get out of my sight."

"No, I will not," he returned firmly, "until you know the contents of the letter you have so foolishly destroyed."

"Do you love her, Edmund?" I asked in a smothered voice.

"Yes, dearly," he replied, with the old strange smile crowding his lips.

"Then love each other in the next world, for you shall never meet again in this," I cried, seizing him in my arms and forcing him toward the safe.

"Forgive me, Edmund," I cried, in an agony of shame and remorse. "I was wrong. I know now what was best to do. Take her, I am too sinful, too selfish to be worthy of her love."

"I forgive you," he answered, with his kind smile, "all but your self-condemnation; and I cannot take her in the sense you mean. I told you we loved each other, but it was only as relatives may love. For Arthur, she is that sister whom, as you know, I lost in childhood."

Late in life I had met the woman who I believed might secure to me the contentment I had always longed for, but never known.

seen them together, day after day, only too happy as they seemed to appreciate each other. Only of late the dream of such union had entered my mind.

The thought had rankled in me like the sting of a scorpion. I had become moody and ill, separating myself from both of them that I might not witness the happiness I had lost.

I had been sitting with my eyes bent upon the floor; as I raised them they rested full on the portrait of Edmund, which hung upon the wall before me.

With fingers weak as a child's, I turned the index plate controlling the bolt, and pulled at the knob. The door remained immovable. I had lost the combination by which I had fastened it.

My insane fury had banished every number of it from my mind. Overcome with the horror of my position, I staggered to a chair and sat down. My repentance had come too late. I must be a murderer in spite of myself.

I was aware that once having lost the arrangement by which I had locked the door, it might be the task of days, perhaps weeks, to recover it again.

Once again I ran to the door and tried every combination I fancied might be the true one, but the great metal panel remained as firmly closed as before.

Half an hour had already gone; but thirty minutes of life was left to the poor creature I had so madly sacrificed to my jealousy.

To the latest day of my life I shall remember the awful experience of those few, short moments. All my love for the poor boy came back with redoubled intensity. I forgot his baseness to me; I forgot all but the years we had lived together as brothers.

They were the numerals, one, five and nine, that I had fastened upon me, and which I had so madly sacrificed to my jealousy.

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Connecticut Gypsies.

There are gypsies to be met with in this world even yet—genuine gypsies. They are as nomadic as ever. They are as black-eyed and as dark-skinned. They tell fortunes as of yore.

I saw some in Connecticut last summer. They camped in a large field, and built their fires, and hung pots over crooked sticks, and pitched their tents in picturesque fashion.

Three men sat on the ground doing nothing, and watching an old woman stir a great kettle of stew. A baby was playing with a red silver teapot, and a little girl was spreading a picnic sort of table, with a nice white damask cloth laid over rag carpet to keep the damp off.

Not one of that tribe could find out anything about us, or even decide which of us was the mother of the little child we had with us, and who stared in astonishment at the funny little brown babies who took everything so coolly, and frightened a very large old gypsy, with tinker written in every feature, by quoting nursery rhyme appropriate to the occasion, which the tinker gypsy evidently thought was a mystic spell.

We all had our fortunes told. There was the "dark-complexioned gentleman with a good heart toward you; but your'n, my dear, is gone—if I must speak the truth—to a light party."

My dear, and our carriage to ride in, and unlimited wealth and long life. I am still looking for a gent, my dear, as isn't so very dark, nor so very light, nor he isn't so very tall—which I wish to tell you the truth and not deceive you—nor so very short, but a good provider, and one who can make home happy."

I regret that I thought this rearrangement of the solar system too expensive, and retired contented with my "good provider." Ignorant, tricky, cheating, abiding, thieving creatures they were, of course; but they were very picturesque.

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A Pleasant Situation.

Our young friend Parker went out the other evening to visit the two Miss Smiths. After conversing with them a while, Miss Susan excused herself for a few moments, and went up stairs. Presently Parker thought he heard her coming, and slipping behind the door, he suggested that the other Miss Smith should tell Miss Susan that he had gone.

But it was not Mr. Smith in his slippers. As he entered he looked around and said to his daughter: "Ah, ha! So Parker's gone, has he? Good riddance. I don't want any such lantern-jawed, red-headed idiot fooling around here. He hasn't got the sense of a rutabaga turnip, nor money enough to buy a clean shirt with. He gets none of my daughters, and I'll shake the life out of him if I catch him here again, mind me!"

Just as he concluded Susan came down, and not perceiving Parker, said: "Thank goodness, he's gone! That man is enough to provoke a saint. I was awfully afraid he was going to stay and spend the evening. Mary Jane, I hope you didn't ask him to come again."

Then Parker didn't know whether to stay there or bolt, while Mary Jane looked as if she would like to drop into the cellar. But Parker finally walked out, rushed to the entry, seized his hat, shut down the steps and went home, meditating upon the emptiness of human happiness and the uncertainty of the Souths.

The Glow-Worm Bird.

In India it is said that a species of sparrow builds its nest of grasses, which it weaves very skillfully into the shape of a bottle, and suspends it firmly to the branches of a tree, with its entrance directed toward the ground.

Not one of that tribe could find out anything about us, or even decide which of us was the mother of the little child we had with us, and who stared in astonishment at the funny little brown babies who took everything so coolly, and frightened a very large old gypsy, with tinker written in every feature, by quoting nursery rhyme appropriate to the occasion, which the tinker gypsy evidently thought was a mystic spell.

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Memories of Mount Vernon.

We wandered all through the sad, silent mansion. We looked at the spindle-legged furniture, and at a rusty key on the wall, the key of the Bastille. We saw Washington's vest and small clothes in the glass case, and a lock of his hair and original letters by his hand and Lafayette's. We saw pretty Eleanor Kustis' wedding gift harpsichord, that her stepfather brought from foreign lands for a surprise when she left her girlhood's home. The pretty Eleanor is buried long ago. All traces of her pink and white beauty have left the earth; here stands the dusty harpsichord, brought back by strange hands to her old home. The room that later casts me the most is the tiny attic chamber where the devoted widow passed her days after her husband's death.

The large chamber below was closed after his decease. None entered it from that time on. A rug and single bed Mrs. Washington had moved to the attic room, and here, winter and summer, she watched with longing, crazy eyes the tomb that held her dead. There was no place for stove or grate, all day, in the room under the roof, she sat by the small window (her feet in winter on a zinc foot stool filled with coals), with a shawl wrapped about her bent form, true Martha Washington, first lady of the land! First, in elegance in times of peace; in courage in time of war; in faithfulness in time of death. All women look with tender eyes at the small marble resting-place than at the grander casket by their side. One bears upon it a draped flag, cut in the stone, a shield and crouching eagle; the other only the words—"Martha, consort of Washington." Yet these words dim the hearts of lonely widows, and bind all true and fervent womanhood close to the form that sleeps so dreamlessly beside the one she loved truly and long.

Mr. Thomas Coutts died, aged 91, in 1822. He did not found the house, but he built it; the same it enjoys. Lady Burdett, the mother of Baroness Burdett Coutts, was his third daughter by his first wife, an excellent woman of very humble origin. He left the whole of his immense wealth, after providing handsomely for his daughters, to his second wife, Miss Mellon, a celebrated actress, and she no doubt in accordance with his wishes, bequeathed it to his grand daughter, Why lady Burdett Coutts was thus selected has not been explained. As soon as Mrs. Coutts became a widow she became a central figure in English society. The London papers of 1824, when she emerged from widowhood, devoted much space to her doings. "Mrs. Coutts entertained at dinner last night H. R. H. the Duke of York, the Duke of Wellington, the Duke and Duchess of Argyll," etc., and she figures in half a dozen novels of that day, notably in Disraeli's "Vivian Gray." Five years later she married the Duke of St. Albans, but a life annuity of £20,000 a year was all he or his family got by the marriage. The lady knew full well how to hold the purse-strings, for in her youth every penny had been of importance to the struggling actress.

In the early part of her career the Baroness Burdett-Coutts was, like Queen Victoria—to whom men in the pit of the theatre used to write notes to say they had caught the glance of her eye, and were ready to consent to become prince consorts—dreadfully pestered by would be suitors, and a certain Mr. Dann became such an insufferable nuisance to her that she had to seek a legal remedy.

There is little doubt that her money has made her an old maid, but she probably finds compensation in the fact that it has also made her the most popular woman in London, with which city she has always closely identified herself; for Lady B. Coutts, with all her millions, has no country seat, except a villa, inherited from the Duchess of St. Albans, at Highgate, in sight of the metropolis. Her town house is an immense bay-windowed mansion in Stratton street, a cul de sac which runs along side the walls of Devonshire House in Piccadilly. Its windows command a fine view of what is called the Green Park of Buckingham Palace. The mansion contains quantities of very costly objects of art, including a cabinet said to have been appraised at 18,000 guineas.

She entertains a great deal, and gives perhaps larger dinner parties in her vast dining-room than any other person in London, but neither her dinners nor her balls are exceptionally recherche. Still she sees all the most interesting people. She is an intimate friend of Mr. Gladstone, who in 1871 advised the Queen to raise him to a peerage, and he and his family passed several weeks with her in town some years ago when his lady household was not available.

Lady Burdett-Coutts is now about sixty; she is tall and thin, with a very amiable expression of countenance and pleasing manner, the latter being utterly devoid of the slightest arrogance or pretension. To whom Lady Burdett Coutts' enormous wealth will go is not known. Her brother, Sir Robert, a queer old bachelor, with £200,000 a year, but she has nephews and nieces who are by no means wealthy, and who consider themselves eminently eligible for dumping legacies.

The fish which contends for the distinction of the Brazilian portion of South America is one of terrible voracity; there is hardly any animal that ventures into the water but that suffers from its attacks. The victim of the piranha is generally surrounded by large shoals of prey, the whiskers act as watchmen sentries to guide it.

When the four tigers were loose in their play ground, and the door closed behind them, they at once began to play, and very beautiful were their movements as they ran after each other, tumbled and gambled like young kittens before a fire, their coats looking like satin in the warm sun.

All of a sudden a new, and to them, a most interesting object, made its appearance. This was a young and very white zebu calf of a few days old; which

came out of its shed, that was situated in full sight of the cage, only a few feet's off.

The moment he saw it one of the tigers crouched to the ground, and remained stationary and statue-like, watching the innocent-looking baby zebu. He was all fixed and statue-like, perfectly motionless, except the very tip of his tail, about two inches of which kept jerking from side to side, signifying great anxiety, expectation, and readiness for immediate action.

Their comrades had seen something at this, and they instantly assumed various attitudes, indicating their intense desire to kill this young zebu calf and eat him.

This group of four magnificent tigers, all intent upon one and the same object, was grand in the extreme. It was also very interesting to observe that the mother of the young zebu seemed to look instinctively that her calf was in danger, as she seemed to warn it in her own peculiar way.

He walked into the Health Office and said he wanted a burial permit. When asked for the physician's certificate, he said he didn't have any; but it was all right—he was dead.

The jauntiness and cheerfulness of the applicant striking the clerk as somewhat peculiar in connection with the solemnity of the errand, he questioned further and asked the name of the deceased.

"Her name? Oh! Why! It's Dorothy Ann Buggy—my wife, you know. Yes," continued Mr. Buggy, with unobtrusive cheerfulness, "she's gone last and it makes me feel awful bad when I think of it; seems as though I'd lost a friend. Why, I ain't felt so since I lost my dog last summer—shot, you know, by the police—but, as Mrs. B. always said, I ain't a very knocked over, and consequence after I'd buried him—the dog, you know—and shed a tear or two, I braced right up again. No use giving up, you know, and so when I get the old woman buried I shall go right along as though nothing had happened. It's kind o' sorrowful to think of, though, and I wish the job was over. But she shall have a good send-off, if I have to go without a spring suit to do it—that's the kind of a hairpin I am; nothing mean about me. You ought to see the coffin, nice black one with silver-plate-lined and a plate with her full name and address on it. I mean her age; and the nails! It's full of them. Bessed the job myself; told the carpenter I wanted it right; regardless of cost—within limits, you know, within limits. Ah!" reflected the widower, with something like a sigh, "she was a remarkable woman—one in ten thousand. So observing; took so much interest in my welfare; always had something to say when I came home—used to tell me all the news of the world, as though I can hear her now, especially when I was coming in quietly so as not to disturb anybody. But it never was any use; I don't remember now of ever getting in once—specially late at night—that she didn't hear me. Some women would be dead sulky like, then, and never said nothing. But that wasn't her. Here you are, drunk again, you old fellow! I'll say it. Very outspoken, was Dorothy, and I must say she was purty clear headed and generally got things about right. She'd a remarkable sense of humor, too, had Dorothy, and I remember I nearly laughed myself to death one night at something she said when I come in. I disremember just what it was, but I know she got awful mad at my laughing, and said I was a long gangling old fool—I am a little lengthy in the legs, you know. But I never minded her; I knew she meant well, though she was a little queer sometimes in her way of carryin' out her meaning." Dear 'ear! well, it can't be helped; but I wouldn't have had it happen for \$25."

"No!" said the clerk, much affected. "Fact. Well, if you won't give the permit without a certificate I guess I'll mosey round and get one, for she won't keep much longer. I don't see any use in it though, for she's dead as a heron."

And wiping the perspiration from his brow and remarking that it was warm today but looked like rain, he departed to procure the necessary certificate.

Take It Easy.

House-cleaning must go. And our only purpose in the few desultory remarks is to join in this method of it, and there is no necessity for cleaning a whole house in three days. Necessity doesn't cover it,—there's no sense in it. Even in the case of the fortunate few who do not have to give any personal attention to the work, the confusion and discomfort of the household cannot be avoided when the job is done on the plan of the old-fashioned grand rabbi. Proceed gradually, and attempt no more each day than can comfortably be completed between breakfast and supper. It will be only a pleasant surprise to the "man of the house"—no matter what the sex—to find the apartments that were dingy and dusty in the morning fresh and bright in spring array at nightfall, and no other signs of "house-cleaning" visible. Aside from the agreeableness of this method it is a great saving of somebody's nerves and muscles. The straining and overdoing, the exposure to drafts and cold, the wear and tear of temper, the wholesale and universal discomfort of the plan of tearing up a whole floor, or the entire house, and getting it settled when uncertain weather or more uncertain help will permit, are almost enough to reconcile a man to "living in the dirt."

It has been estimated that the loss to commerce by the blockade at Odessa alone has been from \$50,000,000 to \$60,000,000.

The New York Bible Society distributed by gift and sale, during April, 5,72 Bibles and Testaments, among 2,648 families, 220 vessels, and 7,904 emigrants at Castle Garden.