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Afterward.

The sun may cease its shining, dear,
The birds forget to sing,
And o'er the earth the angry clouds
Fierce winds and rain may fling;
But, when the storm is over, dear,
The birds will come again,
And sunshine bright will fill the place
Where darkest night has been.

The fairest, sweetest roses, dear,
That grow along the way
May only bloom to turn to thorns
Before another day;
But thorns that are the sharpest, dear,
Some hidden sweetness hold—
Perchance ere long they'll bloom again
As brightly as of old.

The heart may grow a-weary, dear,
With burdens, cares, and fears,
And Life, that once has meant so much
May hold but griefs and tears;
But noble are the victories, dear,
When grandly, bravely won,
And sweeter is the final rest
When work has been well done.

A LADY GUARDIAN.

"India has not taken all traces of civilization out of you, Dick."

"Why should it? Anglo-Indian society is—well, if it cannot boast of so many dukes, marquises, and earls as your Belgravian circles, it is at least as exclusive."

"And as artificial, I have no doubt."

"Possibly. Where will you find nature nowadays? Robinson Crusoe's island does not exist. Nothing can stop a railroad contractor or an advertising agent."

"Or the ubiquitous tourist. But do you know I have a notion that nature pure and undefiled is to be occasionally discovered where it might be least expected?"

"And where is that?"

"In human nature."

"Paradoxical as of old, Jack," laughed Captain Richard Trevor.

"Practical, it would be nearer the truth to say. My philosophy is based on observation."

"And fashioned by your own kindly heart, which I am afraid often invests human nature with good qualities which it does not possess."

Presently the latter rose, and, stretching himself lazily, inquired what Trevor intended to do with himself that evening.

"Oh, I shall go to my rooms and pack up! You know I start for Clevelands to-morrow. I shall probably stay a fortnight or so with my mother."

"Well, but packing up won't take you more than half an hour. Come with me to Mrs. Lansdowne's."

"And who is Mrs. Lansdowne?"

"To know Mrs. Lansdowne is to know everybody—that is to say, everybody worth knowing. It is her 'at home' to-night, and she will be delighted to catch a newly-imported lion. I will introduce you as a most redoubtable warrior, who with his own right hand has cut off the heads of at least twenty Afghans."

"Then I don't go," returned Trevor decidedly. "I hate being made a show of."

"Then," laughed Walsham, "you shall appear simply in the capacity of my friend."

"That is better."

Mrs. Lansdowne, Trevor discovered, was a lady whose whole aim in life appeared to be the making of fresh acquaintances. She was a little dark-haired woman, with bright eyes and mobile features, and, though not handsome, was decidedly prepossessing.

"You have just come from India, Mr. Trevor? I am so glad, because Professor Mopus is here this evening."

Trevor bowed, but did not look particularly exhilarated by the intelligence.

"Of course you have heard of Professor Mopus, the great Indian explorer? His book on the Himalaya Mountains is the book of the season—most interesting. You will get on together famously."

"I have never been to the Himalayas," replied Dick, rather tartly.

"Well, but you've both been in India," went on the undaunted Mrs. Lansdowne. "You'll find the professor charming. Ah, there he is!"

And Mrs. Lansdowne darted towards a short fat man with a bald head and a black beard, who was talking with great vigor to an admiring knot of listeners.

"For Heaven's sake, Jack, get me away from here! The woman's a perfect ogress!"

Walsham laughed, and, slipping his arm in his friend's mingled with the crowd; and, some fresh arrivals coming in at the moment, Mrs. Lansdowne's attention was fully occupied, and she thought no more of Trevor and the professor.

"I breathe more freely," ejaculated Trevor when a compact mass of at least a dozen persons separated him from the indefatigable lady. "What an infliction she must be to her husband—if she has one!"

"He takes it very easily—draws cheques and says nothing. You'll find him somewhere about, looking rather miserable. He's an inoffensive creature who does as he is told; and what more can a wife want?"

Trevor was wearied by the incessant din—for, as it seemed to him, everybody was trying to talk down everybody else—and gladly hailed the haven of a recess wherein was a seat from which he could see the greater part of the room.

"Do you not want to be introduced to some of the celebrities?" inquired Walsham airily, as he seated himself by the side of his friend.

"I hate celebrities," rejoined Trevor. "I never know whether to be awestruck or familiar when I'm with them."

"Well, then, what do you say to beauty? There are—yes, I should say at least two beautiful women in the room."

"I detest beautiful women. They are invariably vain."

Walsham gave a low whistle.

"Dick," said he, "you were confiding enough to me this afternoon, but I don't think you confessed everything. You have been hard hit in India—some dusky damsel—eh?"

"Pooh—nonsense!" returned Trevor, his brown cheek assuming a warmth of color which betrayed him. "You're out, so far as dusky damsels are concerned. The fact is—well, I don't know why I should not own at once that I have been made a fool of."

"Every man is once in his life, and generally oftener," remarked Walsham.

"Once is quite enough for me. Here's the whole story. Our regiment was—previous to being ordered to India—quartered for about three months at Maidstone. It's the old tale—love, parting, tears, kisses, vows. Eight years go over, and I come back with a mad belief that there is truth and constancy in woman, and—

"You find her Mrs. Smith or Robinson—fat, and interested in nothing but Tommy's whooping-cough and Polly's measles."

"Well, it was something like it. I must confess I was thoroughly freed from my illusion."

"Of course you were—nor will it be the last time, old man."

"Indeed it will — that way. I've made up my mind not to marry."

Walsham did not reply, but elevated his eyebrows in a quizzical fashion, and then said, apparently *a propos* of nothing—

"Yes, she is an extremely handsome girl."

Dick started. While he had been narrating his disappointment, his eyes had wandered to a group of half a dozen men surrounding a young lady who was talking with great animation.

"You ought to know Miss Merivaile. She is a neighbor of yours at Clevelands," went on Walsham.

"I don't remember the name."

"Ah, very likely! They came to live there since you went away. She is an awfully clever girl, is a believer in Darwin and Herbert Spencer, and has written a pamphlet on the electoral disabilities of women."

"Good Heaven, Walsham, what a pity! I think strong-minded women intolerable,"

"Well, some are, I admit; but there are exceptions. Come—let me introduce you to Miss Merivaile, and you shall judge for yourself,"

Trevor hesitated. He had a horror of "blue-stockings." At the same time he could not but own that there was nothing of the "blue-stocking" in the appearance of the young lady in question.

Walsham however disregarded his feeble protests, and the next moment he was plunged into a conversation with Miss Merivaile, for Walsham had luckily selected a moment when the group hitherto surrounding the lady had broken up.

"We are discussing the question of the relief of the poor, Captain Trevor," said Miss Merivaile. "What are your views on the subject?"

"'Pon my word," rejoined Dick, somewhat aghast, "I—er—really know nothing about it. The beggars in the street are an awful nuisance; but I find it saves trouble to give them a few pence at once, rather than to have them cackling after you for half a mile or more."

"Ah, that is the way thoughtless persons pauperise the country! Nothing is more pernicious than indiscriminate almsgiving."

Captain Trevor drew himself up a little stiffly. He rather objected to be classed as a "thoughtless person," especially by a young lady at least five years his junior. But, though he was nettled, he could not help thinking how well that earnest expression became Miss Merivaile's eyes.

"Do you intend to stay long in England?" asked Miss Merivaile urgently.

"Probably two or three years."

"Then I should advise you to put up for guardian on the Clevelands Board. I was elected last year and intend to come forward again."

Trevor stared. Did he actually hear Miss Merivaile say she was a guardian of the poor? Surely there must be some mistake!

"I—I beg your pardon; but I don't quite understand."

"Oh, there's no difficulty in understanding the duties! Unfortunately we guardians are allowed so little latitude by the Local Government Board that everything is simply a matter of routine."

Dick gasped for breath. His ears had not deceived him.

"But do you mean to say that you—a lady"—he very nearly said a "female"—"are a guardian of the poor?"

"Certainly," returned Rhoda Merivaile serenely. "I am also a member of the Clevesdon School-Board."

Worse and worse! Trevor was dumbfound, his confusion being increased by the amused smile which was dancing in Miss Merivaile's eyes.

"I—I am afraid that my notions are rather old-fashioned, Miss Merivaile," he stammered.

"You mean that you do not approve of women taking an active interest in the social and moral progress of the poor?"

"Well—er—I am not sure that I have thought very much about the matter. I confess that years ago it seemed to me the chief object in life which young ladies had was to get married; but I suppose all that's changed now."

Dick Trevor looked up suddenly, and their eyes met. Was it his imagination or did he see a faint blush on the fair cheek of Rhoda Merivaile's?

"Not quite, I think," she answered calmly. "There is still much to labor and hope for in the improvement of woman's ideas."

"Well," said he, "I dare say you are right; but I hope you will not find fault with me if I prefer the woman of the old school, whose ambition it was to be the best cook, the best needlewoman—in short, the best wife in the world."

"In other words, that she may be a useful slave to her husband," Miss Merivaile remarked quietly.

"Substitute 'companion' for 'slave,' and I agree with you. I can scarcely imagine a lady-doctor, or—or——"

"Or a lady-member of a Board of Guardians," put in Miss Merivaile.

"I would rather say an authoress," said Trevor, a little awkwardly.

"Well?" said Rhoda, with a provoking composure which did not lessen his embarrassment.

"What I was about to say was that I did not think ladies whose time and attention were so fully occupied with the affairs of other people could interest themselves sufficiently in domestic matters to make good wives."

It was not a very gallant speech in the circumstances, and Trevor felt it was not, for he added immediately afterwards—

"Forgive me if I speak my thoughts too plainly."

"I am grateful that you have been honest enough to say what you think. I hope some day you may have reason to change your opinion."

Trevor would have proceeded further in his apology, for there was a seriousness about the young lady's manner which made him think he had, despite her words, really offended her. However, at that moment Mrs. Lansdowne came up and bore away Rhoda in triumph to the pinaforte.

"Let us go, Walsham," whispered Trevor, after five minutes of Beethoven "My neighbor Miss Merivaile may be very nice; but she is too clever for my taste. Just imagine what it would be to be her husband!"

The next day Dick Trevor was speeding towards Devonshire in the Flying Dutchman.

"It is pleasant to be here once more, mother," said he after his arrival. "The old place has not changed a bit, excepting that the box-trees are perceptibly larger."

"Well, dear, why should it? Your father was perfectly contented with it as it is, and so am I. But Clevesdon is not what it was. There has been a great deal of building; a railway has been brought to the place; there is a large manufactory which fills the valley with smoke from its dreadful chimneys, and there is actually a Boarding-school. Really, if I had not lived in Clevesdon for so many years, I should be inclined to move."

"What a shame! By-the-way, mother talking of School-Boards, I hear that we rejoice in the possession of a lady-member."

"Yes, indeed," returned Mrs. Trevor emphatichlly. "It is perfectly ridiculous and most unlady-like, I call it, on Miss Merivaile's part. I'm thankful to say I did not vote for her. You cannot imagine what a scandle it caused."

"No doubt," returned Dick. "But did she hold meetings and speak?"

"Of course—and actually contradicted the Rector to his face! I cannot think what women are coming to nowadays. I'm sure such boldness would not have been tolerated when I was young.

Dick felt very much inclined to argue the point with his mother, despite the fact that not forty-eight hours before he had enunciated sentiments to Miss Merivaile herself not very far removed from thus just expressed by Mrs. Trevor. But he altered his mind, and, once more stepping into the garden, sauntered to the stables, and spent the remainder of the morning in a "horsy" conference with Roger, the old coachman.

"Pooh!" he muttered, as he walked home. "What an idiot I am to interest myself in a strong-minded woman—I, who hate the very name!"

And, as if to emphasise this assertion, he strode along the rode at a furious pace, oblivious of everything and everybody, or he must have noticed a quietly dressed lady, with a decidedly countrified air, who passed him with a sidelong glance from her bright eyes.

Nothing happens but the unforseen; and so it came about that a bicyclist, trying to pass a carriage-and-pair in a narrow part of the road, went too near to the horses and caused them to take fright. The shouts of the coachman made Dick Trevor turn around. He caught sight of the lady standing, as though paralyzed, in the path of the advancing animals, and with a soldier-like promptness rushed to her assistance.

His aid however was scarcely needed, for the driver managed to recover the control of his horses, and all danger was passed by the time he had reached her. Still the incident served to bring them together, and Trevor consequently found himself face to face with the lady.

"You have had a narrow escape," he was beginning, when he suddenly stopped. "Miss Merivaile!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

But the lady did not return his salutation. She looked pale—the result no doubt of the fright. It was natural; but what was not natural was that she did not appear to recognize him,

"I had the pleasure of meeting you at Mrs. Lansdowne's a week or so ago."

"Indeed! I think you must mistake me for Rhoda. I remember she wrote home that she had been visiting there."

"If you are not Miss Rhoda Merivaile, you must surely be her sister. I never saw so extraordinary resemblance," said Dick.

"Yes," replied the lady, with a strong Devonshire accent. "I am thought to be greatly like Rhoda."

"The likeness is wonderful; and yet, now I look at you, I can see a difference. Your hair, for instance, is differently arranged. But I ought to introduce myself, especially as I understand we are neighbors. My name is Trevor — probably you know my mother?"

"Oh, yes; and I have heard of you Captain Trevor!"

Captain Trevor felt pleased. There was a delightful *naivete* about Miss Merivaile's sister which attracted him far more than the composure—the result of what he termed "self-conscious cleverness"—of the lady-guardian.

He walked by her side chatting about nothing in particular—at least, he could not remember afterwards what he had said; but he knew the electoral disabilities of women were never once alluded to, nor was the condition of the poor ever hinted at.

Presently they arrived at an old-fashioned ivy-covered house, from the garden of which came the sweet scent of wallflowers—for it was in the early spring; and Miss Merivaile stopped at the gate.

"I hope," said Captain Trevor "we shall be friends."

"I hope so too."

"By Jove, she's charming!" thought Dick. "Might I take the liberty of calling?" said he aloud.

"I dare say aunt would be pleased to see you."

"I see—two sisters living with their aunt! Wonder if there's an objectionable brother?" reflected the Captain.

He would have liked to linger, for she was very pleasant to talk to; but she put out her hand, and he was compelled to take it and say "good-bye."

"She has all the good qualities of Rhoda Merivaile without the least tinge of the blue stocking!" exclaimed the gallant captain enthusiastically as he walked—this time slowly—home.

Hitherto Clevesdon had been insufferably dull—even the mild excitement of anticipating Rhoda's speeches in the newspaper had failed him; but now here was an irresistable attraction.

"I suppose her sister hasn't returned from town yet. Wonder what her Christian name is? No matter; I am bound to hear it when I call."

And call accordingly Captain Trevor did—and not once but thrice. He made the gratifying discovery that Lucie Merivaile was as domesticated as the most exacting Cœlebs could wish.

A fortnight passed, and by the end of that time it had become quite part of Trevor's daily occupation to call at Laurel Lodge; and, as Miss Dangerfield—Lucie's aunt—was deaf, it naturally fell to the lot of her niece to entertain the visitor.

"You met Rhoda in London, Captain Trevor?" said Lucie, as they strolled up and down the lawn after a game at lawn-tennis, in which the young lady proved herself to be more than proficient.

"Yes, I had that pleasure. In fact, I cannot congratulate myself sufficiently upon my good fortune in so doing, as I was enabled to recognize you when we first met."

"And how did you get on with her?" said Miss Merivaile, taking no notice of the implied compliment. "Did she not frighten you?"

"Almost, I must confess. Isn't it rather dreadful when she is at home? I suppose she is at work all day long, and looks daggers at any one who makes the least noise?"

"Of course she doesn't like to be disturbed when she is busy—no one does. But we get on very well together."

"Ah, that is the advantage of opposite tastes! I suppose your sister never interferes in household affairs?"

"Well, she is a good deal engaged in other ways," laughed Lucie; "and making puddings does not quite go with making speeches."

"My own opinion, Miss Merivaile. But does not having seen you fourteen times at least justify me in calling you 'Lucie'?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, Miss Merivaile, may I say how charmed I am that you do not go in for the 'amelioration of the working-classes'—I believe that is the phrase—like your sister?"

"Oh, I would not be too sure about that! Rhoda; you know, might persuade me to become a guardian like herself—which, by-the-way, reminds me that I must say good-bye to you."

"Good-bye!" he repeated with a puzzled expression.

"Yes; Rhoda is coming home, and I am going to Paris for three months."

Three months! It was an eternity.

"I hope the time will be sufficient for Rhoda to convince you of the correctness of her views on the woman's rights question," she added demurely.

"But, Miss Merivaile——"

"There—I must go to aunt now. I have much to do, as I start to-morrow."

But he detained her hand and she was forced to stay.

"Miss Merivaile" said he hurriedly, "one word. I have something to say which, now that you are going away, I can no longer keep to myself. I love you. Will you be my wife?"

She started and turned away her head. When she looked at him again her face was white.

"No, no!" she exclaimed faintly. "You must not ask me to be that, Captain Trevor."

"Why not? Am I too late?" His suppressed feelings gave almost a fierceness to his tone, and, as though he were conscious of it, he added, in a gentle voice, "I have been too precipitate and frightened you. Forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive. I should rather ask you to forgive me. I never suspected——"

She paused and turned away her head.

"You never suspected I loved you?" he said quickly. "But, now that I swear that I do, what is your answer?"

"I cannot give any answer but 'no,'" she replied; and then she turned and ran into the house.

"Dick stood motionless for a moment gulped down something which would stick in his throat, and walked slowly to the garden gate.

Dick Trevor was terribly dejected. Like most impulsive men, he was as easily depressed as exhilarated; and for the next three days after his repulse life was in his eyes a miserable mistake.

Nor was there any consolation when Rhoda Merivaile arrived. While walking to Clevesdon, he saw her in the distance coming towards him. He knew her directly, in spite of her smoke-colored glasses and short-cut hair, and would have avoided her if he could; but there was no possibility of so doing without appearing rude.

"How do you do, Captain Trevor?" said she, when they got within speaking distance.

He started. The voice was so like Lucie's that, had he had his eyes closed he would certainly have said it was hers.

"Thank you, I am quite well."

"I have just come from a relief committee at the workhouse," said she, in a matter-of-fact tone. "I trust that we shall see you on the board next year."

"I think not," he returned. "Confound the board!" he muttered to himself. "It's a perfect nuisance."

"I should be very pleased to lend you the reports of the Local Government Board for the last ten years. You'd find no difficulty in making yourself acquainted with the subject."

"I'm much obliged," he began.

"Don't mention it. I'll send them to you this evening. I have an appointment at home with the School-Board visitor, so I'm sure you'll excuse my running away. Good afternoon."

"Good Heaven!" ejaculated the unfortunate captain, gazing in blank astonishment at the energetic little lady's retreating figure. "The woman's determined to make a guardian of me, whether I will or not. If this goes much farther, I shall have to fly to town. And to think that she is sister to the most lovable, the most unaffected, the most—— Oh, hang it!"

Miss Merivaile was as good as her word, for about seven o'clock that evening a servant arrived with a pile of books bound in stiff paper covers of a repellent blue. Dick gave a sigh of despair when he saw them.

"Shall I take them to your room, sir?" asked his man.

"Put them anywhere, Simmons—in the"—"fire he was going to add—"yes, take them up-stairs."

And up-stairs they were accordingly carried.

During the next two days he kept within doors, for fear of meeting his self-appointed tutor. But this only made matters worse. There was a horrible fascination about Rhoda Merivaile which made him long to see her again. Besides, he had another reason. After his first burst of despair consequent upon Lucie's refusal came a reaction. Perhaps he had been too sudden. Lucie had not said she loved anybody else. At any rate, if he interrogated Rhoda cautiously, he might find out the true state of the case. And so he took care to be out about the time when he thought he should be likely to meet her.

His judgment was not at fault, for, after smoking a couple of cigars, he saw the lady-guardian tripping along at a most business-like pace.

He raised his hat when she approached, and she bowed in acknowledgment but did not seem inclined to stop.

"Miss Merivaile!" said he, hastening after her.

"I'm afraid I haven't time to speak to you this morning, Captain Trevor," she answered, scarcely looking round. "I have a most important meeting I must attend, and I am rather late."

"Oh, certainly!" said Dick gruffly.

He returned home in great ill-humor, and, with a determination not to think any more about the name of Merivaile.

Two months successfully he contrived to meet Rhoda, but each time she was in as great a hurry as ever. Then he took a desperate resolution. He would call at Laurel Lodge and exact some information from Miss Dangerfield, in spite of her deafness. He selected a time when he thought Rhoda would be away, and was accordingly ushered into the presence of Miss Dangerfield, who received him cordially.

"You have almost deserted us, Captain Trevor," said she.

"I have been lately a good deal engaged," he shouted.

"I am very glad to hear it," nodded the old lady. "There is nothing like being married and settled. And who is the lady?"

"Confound it, she thinks I told her I was engaged!" murmured the captain. "How ridiculous."

When Miss Dangerfield made a mistake, she always, like most deaf persons adhered to it pertinaciously; and the consequence was that, although Trevor bawled out an explanation as loud as he could, he failed to remove the lady's impression of his engagement.

"How is Miss Lucie?" said he at last, changing the conversation in despair. "Has she written lately?"

"Oh, yes she is always writing!"

"The affectionate dear girl!" ejaculated Dick *sotto voce*. "I wonder now if I could get her address in Paris out of the old woman? I feel sure, if I saw her once more, I could persuade her to alter her mind."

But to ask where Lucie was staying was an impertinence, especially after Miss Dangerfield's annoying blunder. No; he would have patience and wait until her return.

"And when do you expect Miss Merivaile back?" he shouted.

"The day after to-morrow, most likely."

The day after to-morrow Dick's heart gave a great bound. Why, that was no time at all! Gaily he took his leave, and walked home in the best possible spirits.

He allowed two days to go by before he again visited Laurel Lodge.

"I will surprise her," he thought, and, telling the servant not to announce him, he walked into the drawing-room.

Lucie—there could be no doubt that it was Lucie—was sitting with her face towards him, reading. She wore the same dress which he remembered she had on when he last saw her, and she sat in an attitude of neglicent grace very differently from the angularity and bolt-uprightness of her sister.

"Is it you, aunt?" said she, hearing him enter, but without looking up.

"Miss Merivaile!"

She started and a delicate pink suffused her cheeks—but only for an instant. "Captain Trevor!"

It was now Dicks turn to start. What had Lucie done to make her so strangely like Rhoda? Ah, he could see it now! She had had her hair cut short. That was all.

He took one step towards her. She turned away from him for two or three seconds; and, when he saw her face again, she too was wearing the odious smoked glasses.

"By Jove, it's the other one, after all! And yet," he muttered. "Miss Merivaile," he exclaimed aloud, in desperation, "in mercy's name, tell me who you are! Are you Lucie or Rhoda?"

"Both," returned the young lady quietly. "It is only a little joke, Captain Trevor. I apologize for deceiving you, but I could not resist refuting practically your opinion that women who interest themselves in public matters could not find time for domestic duties."

"And you have converted me entirely. I will never again contradict you on that point. But, Rhoda—that is, I mean Lucie——"

He stopped. There was a look on the girl's face which checked his utterance. He drew a long breath.

"I see," said he bitterly. "It is an honor I did not expect, to afford you so much amusement. Of course what you said in your impersonation of Lucie Merivaile was also a joke. It was very amusing—oh, exceedingly funny!

Rhoda Lucie—for such was her full name—remained silent. She had risen while he was speaking, and was standing with her eyes fixed on the floor.

"Good-bye," said he holding out his hand.

She hesitated, and then held out hers.

"Can you forgive me?" she murmured.

"There is nothing to forgive," said he simply. "You were quite at liberty to jest, if it so pleased you. I was fool enough to be deceived—that is all."

"Am I the only one who deceived?" said she calmly, though he could feel her fingers throb as she asked the question.

"I do not understand you."

"Is it not deception when a man who is engaged to one lady makes love, or pretends to make love, to another?"

He stared at her in a bewildered fashion, and then a sudden light broke in upon him, and he burst into a shout of laughter.

"I se now what you mean. Your aunt told you I was engaged."

"She simply told me what you told her."

"But I never said so. It was all a mistake, caused through her deafness. Lucie—I like that name best—were you in earnest when you said 'no' to my question?"

"Yes; I did not think——"

"I should fall in love? Your jest has ended seriously—for me," he added, with a sigh.

"I had hoped that Rhoda Merivaile would have dispelled the illusion," said she quietly. "She tried to do so."

"And failed miserably."

He was looking into her eyes as he said the words, and noted an expression in them which caused a flame of hope to leap into his heart.

"Rhoda," said he suddenly; "supposing I were to put to you the question I asked of Lucie? Come—I will try you! Will you be my wife?"

"Shall I be intensely practical and strong-minded in my reply," said she, with a glad smile playing about her lips, "and say, 'yes'?"

It is said that at least four hundred and fifty thousand meteors fall from the heavens and strike the earth every hour during the year; and yet, when a man goes home with a damaged hat, and tells his wife that he was struck by a meteor, she will not believe him!

DAUGHTER (home from school): "Now, pa, are you satisfied? Just look at my testimonial—'Political economy, satisfactory; fine arts and music, very good; logic, excellent.'" Father: "Very much so, my dear—especially as regards your future. If your husband should understand anything of housekeeping, cooking, mending, and the use of a sewing machine, perhaps your married life will indeed be happy."

CURIOUS FEATURES OF ACTUAL LIFE.

The Goose Bone and the Weather it Predicts.

The Goose Bone may be called "Kentucky's weather prophet." In many farm houses it will be found hanging in the hall, and old men who have it for years says that the genuine bone never fails. The real bone can only be obtained from a goose that was hatched out in the spring; the month of May is said to be the best. The goose must not be killed until Indian summer has passed away. After cooking, remove the breast bone, scrape it clean, and then wash it in warm water and let it dry for a day or two. When it has been thus prepared, hold it up to the sun, or in front of a lamp in a dark room is better, and the discolorations can be easily deciphered, and to one who knows the bone the reading is as plain as a book. A bone shown to a reporter recently was taken from a goose hatched out in May. A row of dots found along the keel of the bone indicates the temperature, and the darker the spots the colder will be the weather. Some light, cloudy discolorations that spread out over the keel of the bone are indications of falling weather, and the darker their discolorations the more rain or snow there will be. The marks dividing the bone indicate the three winter months, December commencing at the front.

A careful reading of the bone indicates much more regular weather than was had last year and not so severe. There will not be many days in which running water will freeze. The coldest weather will occur during the first half of January, and along between the 7th and 12th there will be several days of freezing. It will be the severest part of the whole season. Near the point of the bone the discoloration is a little heavy, thus showing that the first days of winter will give proof of the season's change. This will be followed by rising temperature and falling weather for Christmas.

January will be ushered in cold, and the cold will strengthen as the days lengthen, the coldest day of the winter falling about the 26th of the month. This severe weather will be brief, followed by rising temperature and heavy thaws, and the last half of the month will see many rains and snows.

During February there will not be any very cold weather, but it will be a rather disagreeable month, with snow and rain. A few cold days is all that the month will contribute to the winter. An early and decided thaw is among the promises of the bone. The heavy snows of January, under the influences of the February thaw, will overflow the mountain streams, and disastrous floods may be looked for.

Altogether, the winter will be what is known as an open season, and a good wheat year.

Novel Plea for Divorce.

Mary Hodge, a pretty young woman of 20 years, who, on the 21st of August, 1883, was married by Alderman Flinck to Henry Fuchias, sued in the Superior Court to have the marriage set aside, claiming that it was brought about by fraudulent representations on the part of the defendant. Her story is that when her parents learned that Fuchsius, who lived near them, and who had been but three months in this country, sought her society, they forbade her seeing him. Meeting her one day, Fuchsius asked her to take a walk with him. Then he said he was about to go West, and would make money and so conduct himself that her father would not oppose the marriage, and on his return he would claim her hand. He asked her to engage herself to him before his departure, and they would go to the City Hall and be formally betrothed. She consented, and at the City Hall she signed a paper, but there was no ceremony of marriage. She said noting to her parents about it, until soon after Fuchsius told her she was his wife. She told him she would never be his wife, and would commit suicide rather than acknowledge him as her husband. Judge Truax recently gave judgment in her favor on the report of the referee annulling the marriage.

The Summit of Mount Whitney.

Captain Keeler in a descriptive account of a recent trip through the mountains of Inyo County, thus portrays the Summit of Mount Whitney, Nevada, one of the grandest mountain piles on the face of the earth: "The entire surface of the summit proper, variously estimated at from four to five acres in extent, is covered with granite blocks and slabs, enough to build two or three St. Peter's, or even one of the pyramids; the incline is slightly to the west. Looking down from the apex brought a shudder over me—a vertical fall of some 4,000 feet down to the lake that looks like a spot of silver. Now, when you crawl up to the edge to look off this awful steep, the very flesh seems to crawl on your bones. It is truly startling to look into some of the yawning chasms surrounding this grand elevation—nearly three miles above the sea! The sky was not perfectly clear, but we could see Lone Pine distinctly, and Owens Lake was plainly outlined so far as it lay in our view. The whole valley looked more like a sea than *terra firma*. One interesting fact strikes you the moment you cast your eyes around you from this height—you know every object is below you.

Feminine Credulity.

On the water side of Vera Cruz stands a stone image who bruised countenance tells a queer tale of feminine credulity. From time immemorial it has been believed that if a marriageable woman shall hit this image squarely in the face with a stone she will immediately obtain a husband and an advantageous settlement in life. The inventor of the fable was evidently acquainted with the fact that women are not expert in throwing stones. Were it not for this lamentable inability, the poor image would have been totally demolished years ago. As it is, the battered face has lost all semblance of features, and heaps of small stones lying all about attest the industry of the Mexican maidens.

According to recent experiments made by Dr. Fischer, a German chemist, it is shown that ordinary stoves do not use more than 20 per cent. of the fuel they consume for heating purposes. There is still a field for the inventor in this direction.

Teheran Tea Houses.

At all hours the tea houses are in full blast. The reader may be surprised to learn that the national beverage of Persia is not coffee but tea. One would naturally suppose that a country so near Araby the Blest and the aromatic groves of Mocha would, like the Turks, prefer coffee. Of course, a great deal of coffee, prepared in the Turkish way, is consumed by the Persians, but the fact remains that they are essentially a tea drinking race, drinking it in vast quantities, flavored with lemon or tourchee, which is the prepared juice of the lime, and sweetened almost to a syrup. The habit is probably the result of the commercial intercourse which at an early period existed between Persia and China, and which, as is now well known, gave an impulse to the arts of Persia, of which evidences appear at various stages of her æsthetic history. At Teheran the tea houses take the place of the coffee houses of Constantinople. One meets them at every turn, of every rank, but all alike resorts for rest, leisure and entertainment. There one may see public dancers, who by law are now invariably men, although women of questionable repute contrive to evade the laws sometimes and exhibit in the harems.

The male dancers are brought up to this vocation from boyhood, and invariably wear long hair in imitation of women, and shave their faces smooth. What interests an intelligent European more at these tea houses than the dance are the recitations from the poets. The songs of Hafiz may be heard there and entire cantos from the great epic of Ferdoonsee, repeated with loud, sonorous modulation, heard sometimes at quite a distance at the more inspiring passages, and listened to with enthusiastic rapture. Here, too, one may hear the "Arabian Nights'" tales given without any attempt at expurgation exactly as in a recent translation.

The reader will recollect that the characters in the "Arabian Nights" are constantly and at every opportunity quoting long and appropriate passages from the poets. This may to the European appear an affectation of a freak of poetic license on the part of the author of these tales. On the contrary, he was simply giving us another of those traits of Oriental character, the record of which has given to those inimitable narratives immortality as the finest picture ever given of the East, which, after thousands of years, is only just beginning to feel the transforming influence of Western civilization.

Great Salt Lake.

Great Salt lake is in fact not a branch of the sea at all, but a mere shrunken remnant of a very large fresh water lake system, like that of the still existing St. Lawrence chain. Once upon a time, American geologists say, a huge sheet of water, for which they have even invented a definite name, Lake Bonneville, occupied a far larger valley among the outliers of the Rocky mountains, measuring 300 miles in one direction by 180 miles in the other. Beside this primitive Superior lay a great second sheet—an early Huron—(Lake Lahontan the geologists call it) almost as big and equally of fresh water. By and by—the precise dates are necessarily indefinite—some change in the rainfall, unregistered by any contemporary, made the waters of these big lakes shrink and evaporate. Lake Lahontan shrank away, like Alice in Wonderland, till there was absolutely nothing left of it. Lake Bonnevill shrank till it attained the diminished size of the existing Great Salt lake. Terrace after terrace running in long parallel lines on the sides of the Wahsatch mountains around, mark the various levels at which it rested for awhile on its gradual downward course. It is still falling, indeed, and the plain around is being gradually uncovered, forming the white, salt-encrusted shore with which all visitors to the Mormon city are so familiar. But why should the water have become briny? Why should the evaporation of an old Superior produce at last a Great Salt Lake? Well, there is a small quantity of salt in solution even in the freshest of lakes and ponds, brought down to them by the streams of rivers, and, as the water of the hypothetical Lake Bonneville slowly evaporates, the salt and other mineral constituents remained behind.

Thus the solution grew constantly till at the present day it is extremely saline. Professor Geikie, to whose work the present paper is much indebted, found that he floated on the water in spite of himself; and the under sides of the steps at the bathing places are all encrusted with short stalactities of salt, produced from the drip of the bathers as they leave the water. The mineral constituents, however, differ considerably in their proportions from those found in true salt lakes of marine origin and the point at which the salt is thrown down is still far from having been reached. Great Salt Lake must simmer in the sun for many centuries yet before the point arrives at which as cooks say, it begins to settle.

The Fall of Theebaw.

The great capital, with its palace citadel half a mile square covered with gilded roofs, its pagodas and its public buildings, lay as if asleep. The gates were thrown open and there was a population of a hundred thousand quietly at gaze while the white men, with music playing, went forward to arrest their King. The palace was occupied, the city guarded and on the following day the General was "accorded an audience" and entered the palace by the staircase reserved exclusively to royalty. He found the King, "a stout young man, undersized but dignified," and his Queen, a "woman with a clever face and an evil mouth," almost alone, body guards and councillers having fled, and signified to him his deposition. The King spoke little, except when promptedby his wife, but seemed chiefly anxious about his own life, and when informed that he must visit Calcutta assented. Accordingly, in the afternoon, he and his Queen and a number of women seated themselves in carts drawn by oxen and so were dragged to the wharf under the gaze of that huge populace, which neither wept nor cheered nor cared. As soon as they were on board the steamer started for Rangoon, where the last Emperor of Delhi died on a mat in a cottage, a state prisoner; and so departed from history the House of Alompra, which only sixty-two years since reigned over Burmah, Assam, Pegu, Arakan and Tenasserim, demanded tribute of Siam and promised to become dominant throughout Indo-China.

NEWS IN BRIEF.

—Bartley Campbell, the playwriter, is in poor health.

—A hen's nest has just been patented in Washington.

—A water famine is said to be prevailing in Vienna.

—Insurance rates in Galveston have advanced 50 per cent.

—Roast elephant is a sacred dish in Tonquin and Annam.

—Organ-grinders are said to average about $4 a day in receipts.

—Russian prisoners were first sent to Siberia in 1710 by Peter the Great.

—Ups and downs come with very regular alternation to the elevator boy.

—Dembert, a baker in Gainesville, Fla., has just fallen heir to $1,000,000.

—A beef recently slaughtered at Temple, La., weighed, it is said, 2020 lbs.

—The robes, frills and insignia of Knights of the Garter cost about $4,500.

—Mormons are settling in southeastern Oregon in considerable numbers.

—The will of Mr. Miner, of Philadelphia, reads: "Emily R. Miner is my heir."

—Official reports say that the production of genuine brandy has ceased in France.

—The Western Union sends a thousand million words a year of press telegrams.

—Fulton market, New York, sells 40,000,000 pounds of fish and rejects 8,000,000 annually.

—Mr. Irving's Brooklyn engagement was the best, in point of receipts, ever played in that city.

—Henry III. compelled all persons having a yearly income of £10 to be knighted or pay a fine.

—Lapeer, Michigan, has a little two-year-old button collector that has already swallowed seventeen.

—Donn Piatt is reported to be building a $10,000 Catholic Church at Macaa Cheek, near his country home.

—Mary Anderson is said to send most of the flowers she receives to the hospitals and charity schools of London.

—Belle Boyd, the "spy," is reported to be now living near San Antonio, Texas, the wife of a ranchman there.

—Joseph Cairn Simpson, of San Francisco, has sold his horse Anteeo to the Santa Rosa Stock Company for $10,000.

—Fencing is now the favorite recreation of Viennese belles, the Empress Elizabeth, as usual, having set the fashion.

—The mail from San Francisco for Australia last week filled about 900 sacks. The most of it was from Europe.

—A bale of Persian raw silk was received in Paterson, N. J., recently, said to be the first ever imported into America.

—Bismarck's average weight has been reduced from 237 pounds to that of 195 pounds by Dr. Schwenninger's regime.

—An Augusta (Me.) railroad man went to bed the other night with his hearing perfect, and arose in the morning deaf.

—Rummelsburg, near Berlin, is the largest goose market in the world. They handle 20,000,000 a year of the succulent bird.

—At the German Gymnasium for girls in London, the highest jump is four feet ten inches. The Indian clubs weigh four pounds.

—The Pennsylvania Editorial Association is to meet in annual session at the Lochiel House, Harrisburg, on Wednesday, January 23d.

—South Carolina is said to be the only State that has no divorce laws. Her Legislature recently defeated a bill regulating divorces.

—One of the notable bridges of the world crosses an arm of the China sea at Sangang. It is five miles long and has three hundred arches.

—The carp was originally a native of Central Asia. It was introduced into Austria in 1227, into England in 1504 and into this country in 1830.

—The amount of gold in the United States at the present time is estimated to be $578,000,000, being an increase of $300,000,000 within five years.

—Mme. Gerster is reported to have contracted with Mr. Mapleson for her appearance in the title part of Delibes new opera "Lakme" next spring.

—The "Jim" river in Dakota is said to be the longest unnavigable river in the United States, if not in the world, its distance being nearly 1,000 miles.

—News