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MY MAPLE.

BY WILLIAM C. RICHARDS.

That maple yonder, which my father planted
The very year—he tells me—I was born;
How many summers have their bounty granted
To round its crest like Plenty's golden horn?
Yet, prythee, Muse, withhold the challenged
number
That, summing up the rings which clasp its
bole,
Would also tell how long my life's poor lum-
ber
Has borne, too ill, the fruitage of a soul!
If it were twenty years alone, or double,
I might not chide the telling of its growth;
For then life's harvest would not show its stub-
ble
Such bloom of promise spread itself o'er
both!
But in yon tree, despite its verdant roundness,
I mark, alas! the fringes of decline—
How'er its sturdy limbs disclaim unsound-
ness,
And they are only just as old as mine!
To-day I see it in its crimson glory,
Its crown of rubies flashing far and wide;
And, much I doubt, it recks not of the story
That lies beneath the dazzle of its pride.
Enough for me to know that, in like manner,
It is bearing to the windy war,
With conquering Fate its red, defiant banner,
Life's winter holds me to its ruthless law!
So let me change, indulgent Muse, my question
Touching the maple in its robes of gold;
For human weakness, waiving the suggestion,
That means no less than that I'm growing
old!
And put it thus; since we have grown togeth-
er,
Have I to others yielded, like the tree,
Beauty in sunshine and in stormy weather,
Like its soft shelter, my sweet sympathy?
And when, as it is willed, the tree so nourished,
Falls to the cadence of my funeral bell,
Will my twined life in God's dear eyes have
flourished
As the mute maple's, in men's sight, so well?

PAUL LACY'S HELP.

THE SEDGES was to become a bache-
lor's hall. Miss Esmeralda Lacy de-
clared she could not and would not stay in
such a howling wilderness any longer; if
her brother Paul wanted to. Such a great
castle of a house, and not a neighbor
within three miles—it was intolerable!
The lady was as good as her word. One
fine Spring morning she deserted the
Sedges, and went East to her father's
house, leaving brother Paul and the little
maid, Ellie Cary, its sole inmates.
"But, Esmeralda, if you go away on
such short notice, how am I going to
live?" he had asked.
"Ellie can cook," was the answer.
Ellie Cary was but fifteen years old, a
lissome, blue-eyed smiling little girl—a
born housewife. At ten years old she had
been bound to an aunt of Paul Lacy, but
the aunt, dying, and Paul having already
gone West, and built a house, Ellie was
taken thither by Miss Esmeralda to help
keep it. The lady stayed just six months.
She was lonely, she was homesick, she
wanted to be away, and away she went.
That evening Paul Lacy moved in rather
a downcast mood. In coming West,
clearing land and making for himself a
home he had had many drawbacks. He
had never accepted a log cabin life. His
first work was to build a substantial
house at the riverside. Drawing-room,
library and conservatory were all elabo-
rately completed but for the first two
years the library was to serve as a family
sitting-room, the furnishing of the great-
er part of the house being postponed un-
til its master could give the subject full
attention—could expand and embellish
as he wished.
He had in his employ three men who
lived in a log hut but half a mile away,
and whose labors he employed constantly
at improving the estate. Clumps of
willows grew along the river, stately oaks
crowded the knolls, the prairie land rose
and fell in beautiful undulations. Gar-
den, orchard, vineyard and farm demand-
ed Paul's constant attention and exer-
tions. He needed the comforts of a home.
It was rather hard of his sister to leave
him, he thought. Ellie was a mere child;
he might as well be left alone, he said.
All his past troublesome experiences
crowded over him, and an oppressive
weariness and discouragement fell upon
him. All hopefulness quite deserted him.
The great mastiff, Sultan, got up from
the hearth-rug and laid his muzzle on
his master's knee.
"Old fellow, you are faithful," Paul
said.
He stroked the great brute's clumsy
head, and fell again into a reverie.
It was the evening of his thirtieth
birthday. He had been in the west three
years. Though highly educated and bred
in luxury, he had developed a power to
fight the world with marked success.
He was called an able fellow, yet no
bankrupt felt more generally defeated
than Paul Lacy felt that night. Quite
upset by a woman's whim, and all dis-
couraged for want of a woman's help.
"Ellie," he said, the next morning,
"you must get along as best you can to-
day. I am glad now that I have no dairy
to attend to. To-night I will ride to
Monroe and try to get a housekeeper."
Ellie nodded silently and watched him
ride away from the house on his black
ally, Bird. Her white forehead knit it-

self, and a little flash came into her blue
eyes. But Ellie didn't waste any time
in thinking of her troubles. She had
baking and ironing to do; she flew away
to the kitchen.
When Paul Lacy came home at noon,
wearied by hard labor by his own hands
in the vineyard, he found an exquisi-
tely neat and comfortable dinner prepared,
and Ellie, pretty as a pink, in her ging-
ham dress, ready to wait upon him.
"You have done nicely, child," said
he.
Ellie turned away her head and pout-
ed.
"Child!"
She did not like that. She would be
sixteen the next day.
"How stupid he is!" she exclaimed
going out into the kitchen, and stamp-
ing her little foot. "I won't work for a
housekeeper!"
That night Paul harnessed the bays to
the spring wagon, and went off to Mun-
roe. And when he had gone, Ellie sat
down in the library and cried. But at
ten o'clock Paul came home alone.
"No success, Ellie! I'll go to River-
ville to-morrow night and see what can
be done there."
The next night he was usually tired.
Ellie had laid out his dressing gown and
slippers and his easy chair, and the news-
papers, still in the mail wrappers, look-
ing unusually tempting; but he resisted
these allurements and started for River-
ville, a distance of five miles.
In about half an hour he returned.
He had not had time to go to Riverville,
but there was a woman's figure in the
wagon—a large, tall woman. Ellie
watched her getting out of the wagon.
The new-comer had on a brown merino
dress and plaid shawl. She had a cotton
bandage tied about her face. Her hands
were covered with cotton gloves, and she
carried a carpet-bag. Paul brought her
into the library.
"I found some help, Ellie. This woman
was coming on foot to offer her ser-
vices when I met her. What did you
say your name was?" he said to the
stranger.
"Ellen Duroc," answered she, in a
coarse voice.
Poor Ellie instantly conceived the ut-
most repugnance to her.
"Take her to her room, Ellie," said
Paul. "She will not be needed to-night,
and she says she is suffering from tooth-
ache. Give her a glass of cordial; it
will help her teeth and make her rest
well," he added, in the kind tones which
had long ago won Ellie's heart.
With a heavy heart, Ellie showed the
woman to her bedroom. The latter sat
down in a chair, but showed no signs of
removing any of her clothing before Ellie
retired. She did not even drink the cor-
dial, but said:
"If you'll set it on the table, I'll take
it in a minute."
Ellie came away, thinking there was
something strange in the tall, shawled,
hooded figure sitting in the rocking chair.
The woman's eyes looked so disagreeably
black and sharp above the bandage.
"I would work myself to death, rather
than have her here," said Ellie, going
about the house, fastening doors and
windows, after learning that Paul had
retired.
When she went to her chamber she
found the mastiff Sultan lying on the rug
beside her bed. The dog was fond of
her, but he had never come to her room
before. Being tired she made no attempt
to send him out, but let him be there.
And after awhile, finding that she could
not sleep, she was rather glad to have
him there.
In spite of all efforts she could not
sleep. More than she at first knew, the
appearance of the stranger had excited
her. She could not cease to think of
her. In the darkness she saw those fierce
black eyes, that bandaged face, that mys-
teriously enveloped figure. Why had
Paul Lacy detected nothing unusual?
The appearance of this woman seemed
to her most repugnant and suspicious.
Ellie's cheeks burned feverishly in the
darkness. She heard the clock strike
twelve. A moment afterward she heard
a step, a slow creeping step, in the hall.
Her head started from the pillow to lis-
ten; the sound ceased. But her heart
beat so furiously that any inconsiderable
noise would have been drowned. But
now the house seemed quite still; and
the darkness was intense. Ellie strained
eyes and ears, but saw nothing, heard
nothing.
"It's just nervousness," she said, after
a while, lying down again. "If any-
thing was wrong, Sultan would bark."
Sultan did not stir, and she could not
see his bright ball open eyes.
But sleep would not come, and Ellie
continued to hear faint unusual sounds.
Something seemed to whisper in her ear,
"There is danger." Her heart beat heav-
ily.
Suddenly she heard, most distinctly a
cautious step upon the stair. It was no
dream nor mere fancy.
"Robbers!" gasped Ellie, as she start-
ed up.
One entrance of her room opened up-
on the stairs—another into chambers
communicating with a distant staircase,

whereby she could reach Paul's room.—
The step was coming steadily up as she
leaped to the floor and flew to the oppo-
site entrance.
As she groped for the door handle she
heard the step enter the room. The door
she was trying would not open; it was
locked on the other side. Sick with hor-
ror, she looked over her shoulder and
saw in the gloom, a tall figure noiselessly
entering the apartment. It turned
toward her. Shriek after shriek burst
from her lips.
There was a groan, a leap, a bulky
form flying through the darkness, a fall,
and then a horrible silent struggle. The
floor shook, the windows shivered in their
panels. A hollow groan. Then all was
still. Ellie, in her terror seemed to have
lost her senses, when she heard a strong
voice calling her:
"Ellie!"
With three bounds, Paul, with a light
in his hand, reached the top of the stair-
case.
By the distant locked door stood the
quivering white form of the young girl,
and prone upon the floor, before him, lay
the dead figure of a man, with the great
mastiff over him. Sultan gave the up-
turned throat one shake and walked to
his master.
"Ellie, are you hurt?" were Paul's first
words.
"No," she faltered.
"He was a robber," said Lacy, holding
the light to the dead face. "All my valu-
ables are collected for removal in the
room below."
He turned down stairs, Ellie and the
dog with him. In the basket upon the
table were two watches, money and table
silver. The unbroken thought in both
minds made them turn toward the door
of the new servant.
Paul knocked, then opened the door.
The apartment was unoccupied. The
female disguise was strewn about, and
beside the bed stood a pair of unmis-
takable men's boots. There was a
pistol case open upon the table, a scent
of liquor in the room. The new servant
had been a man.
Paul opened the carpet-bag. It con-
tained burglar tools, a flask of whiskey, a
case of jewelry, probably stolen, and a
black mask.
"We have just escaped being murdered
in our bed. If I had not been worried
so for help, I should have been more
cautious," said Paul.
"O, please don't get any one else,"
sobbed Ellie, even then not forgetting
her grievances. "I will keep house for
you."
They went back to examine the dead
man. He was a dark evil-looking fellow,
with a black beard upon his chin, which
the bandage had concealed, and a scar
across his cheek. At day break his body
was given in charge of the officers at
Monroe, and proved to have been a most
dangerous character.
And what did Paul Lacy do for help?
In three days Ellie abundantly proved
to him that she could manage the house-
hold. At the end of that time, there ar-
rived, through Miss Esmeralda's not un-
kind exertions, a stout and faithful negro
girl, and Paul Lacy married pretty Ellie,
and made her Chloe's mistress. If he
had searched the world over, he could
not have found a better wife—as time
has proved.

The Charade.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "COBWEBS," ETC.

SO THAT was the pretty widow," so-
liloquised Harry Barclay, as he smoked
a cigar, before retiring. "She's posi-
tively pretty; in that respect her friends
don't exaggerate; but I've no doubt she's
an awful flirt. It would be a good thing
to teach her a lesson."
For our hero, in spite of his many
undeniable good qualities, was rather
conceited, as, indeed, most men with his
fortune and position would have been.
But who was the pretty widow? She
was a Mrs. Conway, who, at 18, had mar-
ried a handsome foreigner, who soon
proved himself to be a heartless spend-
thrift and debauchee. Before twelve
months, however, she was happily re-
leased, her husband having fallen in a
duel, at a German watering place, the
result of a quarrel originating at a gam-
ing table. Three years after, Mrs. Con-
way returned to America, and now, at
twenty-two, was even more beautiful
than she had been at eighteen.
Harry Barclay had been introduced to
the pretty widow that evening at the
opera-box of Mrs. Musgrave; and the
next evening he was to dine at the Mus-
grave's and meet her again. He had
heard the praises of the pretty widow
sung so persistently by Mrs. Musgrave,
ever since the latter had learned that her
old school-mate was coming home, that
he was rather bored with the subject;
and when, at the dinner, he was asked
to take her out, he gave an almost im-
perceptible shrug of the shoulders. The
pretty widow saw the shrug. "My fine
fellow, you shall pay for that," she said,
to herself. Now our heroine was not
heartless by nature. But no woman likes
to see a man shrug his shoulders at her.

Mrs. Conway was as witty as she was
beautiful, and that evening she surpassed
herself. She was the life of the party.
Harry confessed to himself that he had
never met so charming a lady. All his
prejudice against widows vanished. He
went home more than half in love.
The pretty widow and Harry, after
this, met almost daily. Very soon he
was wholly in her power. For the first
time in his life, he, who had conquered so
many hearts, was no longer master of his
own. But the widow still said, as she
had said at first, "I must take the con-
ceit out of him; I owe it to my sex."
Harry had always a quiet way, with
women, of assuming that he was first.
It was, perhaps, one of the secrets of his
success. He acted in this manner
toward the pretty widow. He took it
for granted that he was to have the
choice of dances with her; that he was
to take her down to dinner; that he was
to be her favorite escort on every occa-
sion. For awhile she let him have his
way. It suited her that he should de-
ceive himself. But one evening she heard
their names freely coupled together, as
if they were engaged. "Things have
gone far enough now," she said to her-
self. "I must give him his coup de grace."
So the next night, at a ball, when Har-
ry came rushing up to her, the moment
she entered, and claimed the first dance,
she looked at him, with a lift of the eye-
brows, and said:
"But I am engaged."
"Engaged?" Old campaigner as he
was, Harry now committed a blunder, but
we all blunder when we are in love.
"Engaged, but excuse me I am first," he
said.
"You think so, always, I know," said
the pretty widow coolly, opening and
shutting her fan.
Harry flushed to the forehead.
"But you have always given me the
first dance. I—I took it for granted."
"Never take anything for granted, Mr.
Barclay," retorted the widow, significant-
ly. Then, with a bow, she took the arm
of a rival suitor and moved on.
Harry stood as if turned to stone.
Every particle of color had left his face.
"What a precious fool I've been," he mut-
tered, angrily, after awhile. "I might
have known it. I said it the night I first
met her, the heartless flirt."
After that, Harry and the widow were
not so inseparable. He bowed to her
when they met, but he never asked her
to dance, and if he received an invitation
to dinner he declined, if he had any rea-
son to suppose she was to be there.
"So the pretty widow and Harry have
quarreled," said society. "Neither can
be constant long; it isn't in them."
But now a strange thing happened.—
The pretty widow began to feel ennu-
i. She missed something. It was a long
while before she would admit that it was
the cessation of Harry's attentions which
made life so dull for her. It was still
longer before she ceased being angry
with herself for being so weak, as she
called it.
She was too proud to make overtures.
She was too thoroughly and unaffectedly
womanly also, even if she had not been
too proud. But somehow the color faded
from her cheek, and the light dimmed
in her eyes. She grew irritable and ca-
pricious. Her friends noted it, and an-
noyed her by asking her what was the
matter. Only Mrs. Musgrave was silent.
Mrs. Musgrave suspected the truth.
"I have it," said that sage lady one
day. "Left alone these two will never
get together again; both are too proud
to make the first advance. I must be
their good fairy."
In a few days Mrs. Musgrave announ-
ced a Christmas charade party, and wrote
a note to Mrs. Conway, summoning her
to a consultation. The pretty widow
came, and then Mrs. Musgrave said, "I
have thought such a capital word, 'Court-
ship,' because the first half will enable
us to have a fine spectacle, where you
shall enact the queen, receiving her
court, and then a scene shall follow as if
on board ship, which will be full of hu-
mor. For the full word, 'Courtship,'
you shall also act. I know of no one so
quick, and I have myself written the
charade."
Mrs. Conway entered fully into the
spirit of it, and it was not until she had
agreed to act in both the first and last
scene that she bethought herself to ask
what the scene was to be, and who were
to act in it beside herself.
"Oh!" answered Mrs. Musgrave, "but
one other actor. And only one person is
fit to act with you, in all our acquaint-
ances; the rest are too dull."
"And this person?" asked Mrs. Con-
way, her heart misgiving her.
"Harry Barclay, of course. But never
mind now. Let us consult about the
costumes for the first scene."
The pretty widow would have declined
if she had dared; but she could not de-
cline without entering into explanations;
and explanations were impossible.
The next thing Mrs. Musgrave had to
do was to see Harry. He stammered out
a half refusal, pleading want of dramati-
c talent.
"Nonsense," said Mrs. Musgrave "you
are the brightest of us all. Of course, I

know you don't like Mrs. Conway, but
there were no other two to cast in the
part; you'll oblige me now, won't you?"
But the ordeal proved more trying
than either Mrs. Conway or Harry had
imagined. When the latter came to read
the part assigned him, he sat down and
wrote to Mrs. Musgrave, saying that it
was simply impossible for him to go
through with it. The love-making, to
tell the truth, was rather decided. Mrs.
Conway had already remonstrated.—
But Mrs. Musgrave had answered, "pshaw
my dear, don't be a prude; you know
it's necessary to be plain spoken, or the
stupid people will never know what we
mean; there's nothing unlady-like in it,
is there?" And when the pretty widow
had been compelled to answer in the ne-
gative, her friend had continued: "Then
go on with it, for if you don't it will look
personal to Mr. Barclay, which would
make people talk. You ought, you know,
to have declined at first."
Artful Mrs. Musgrave! To do her
justice, few were a match for her; and
if Harry had sent his note, she would
have had some equally answerable reply.
But Harry did not send his note.—
"Confound it," he said, when he came to
read it over, "the whole thing is a pre-
tense. To discuss it is only to make
matters worse. If that unprincipled
flirt of a widow can be impudent enough
to go on with it, I'll not show the white
feather." And he tore the note, viciously
into a thousand pieces.
The rehearsal proved less embarrassing,
however, than Harry had expected. She
met him, at the first one, as if nothing
had happened. She smiled affably, asked
his advice about one or two minor
points, and displayed rare tact through-
out. Face to face with her, listening to
her exquisite voice, Harry felt all her old
magnetism over him returning. As he
had no notion of being jilted again, he
was glad when the rehearsal was over.
The next rehearsal was even more try-
ing, but it was also more delightful.—
Nothing could be more winning than
the manner of the pretty widow. But it
was at the third and last, that Harry
finally lost his balance, for he fancied,
and his heart beat at the very thought,
that she really meant more than real act-
ing. There were looks and tones, all of
course, proper for the scene, that made
his pulse thrill with delirious happiness.
He forgot all about her want of heart.—
His answering looks and tones kindled
with real passion. The other actors, who
were standing around, broke into ap-
plause. "Dear me," cried Mrs. Musgrave,
"it couldn't have been better, if you had
both meant it. We must have it again."

In Albany, a few days since, an old
rogue beat a young one. A man stepped
up to a juvenile boot-black, opposite the
Stanwix, and had a "shine." He gave
the youth a \$5 bill.
"Hain't got change enough, cap'n,"
said the "shiner," displaying about \$3 in
shin plasters.
"How much have you?" asked the
stranger.
"Lemme see," said the boy, counting
his money, "jess \$2.50."
"Give me that and I will wait till you
get the change," replied the stranger.
The youth grabbed the \$5 bill, gave
his customer the two-fifty, and as he
"scotched" he was overheard to say to a
chum, "Jim, if I ain't back in a few
minutes tell that ere cucumber that I
have got run over and smashed finer
nor mince meat. He hain't much stuck
—oh! no."
As the boy departed the stranger told
"Sim" that he would be in the office of
the Stanwix, across the way, where the
"shiner" would bring him the change.
In a few minutes the boot-black came
running back with the perspiration
streaming down his face.
"Jim," said he to the boy, "where's
that ere fraudulent deekin. Bust me if
he hain't showed a 'queer' bill onto me."
Taint worth the paper its printed on,
and he danced about as if he had lost a
large fortune. Jim told him the stran-
ger was at the Stanwix, but ten minutes
search failed to reward the youth. The
biter that was bit returned to his post
with a downcast look, and was heard to
say:
"Jim, that ere villain must belong to
the Whisky Ring. He was too soon for
this duck. Them skates—that ere cal-
ker for the old woman, and a dozen pen-
ny-grabs for this hair pin to smoke on
Christmas day, is gone up the flue, and
that ere son-of-a-gun has stuck me \$2.50
when I thought I had a soft thing on
his \$5 bill. But I've learnt one thing,
and that is not to count my chickens
agin afore the hen has laid the eggs to
set on. Shine 'em up, mister? Only
ten cents."

A rural editor, wishing to be severe
upon an exchange, remarks:
"The subscriber of the ——— in this
place, tried, a few days ago, to carry
home in a copy of that paper; but, on
reaching home, found that the con-
tented he had changed it to soap."

Always open for conviction—a thief.