

# The Democrat.

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## CONTENTMENT.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Little I ask; my wants are few;  
I only wish a hut of stone  
(A very plain brown stone will do)  
That I may call my own;  
And close at hand is such a one.  
In yonder street that fronts the sun.  
Plain food is quite enough for me;  
Three courses are as good as ten;  
If nature can submit on three,  
Thank Heaven for three. Amen!  
I always thought cold victuals nice;  
My choice would be vanilla-ice.  
I care not much for gold or land;  
Give me a mortgage here and there,  
Some good bank-stock,—some note of hand  
Or trifling railroad share.  
I only ask that Fortune send  
A little more than I can spend.  
Honors are still toys, I know,  
And titles are but empty names;  
I would, perhaps, be Plendido,  
But only near St. James;  
I'm very sure I should not care  
To fill our Governor's chair.  
Jewels are bawbles; 'tis a sin  
To care for such ungrateful things;  
One good-sized diamond in a pin,  
Some, not so large, in rings,  
A ruby, and a pearl or so,  
Will do for me;—I laugh at show.  
My dame should dress in cheap attire;  
Good heavy silks are very dear;  
I own perhaps I might desire  
Some shawls of true Cassimere,  
Some narrow crapes of China silk,  
Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.  
I would not have the horse I drive.  
So fast that folk must stop and stare;  
An easy gait,—two, forty-five,  
Suits me; I do not care.  
Perhaps, for just a single spurt,  
Some seconds less would do no hurt.  
Of pictures, I should like to own  
Titians and Raphaels three or four,  
I love so much their style and tone,  
One Turner, and no more,  
(A landscape,—foreground golden dirt,  
The sunshine painted with a squirt.)  
Of books a few—some fifty score  
For daily use, and bound for wear;  
The rest upon an upper floor;  
Some little luxury there.  
Of red morocco's gilded gleam,  
And vellum rich as country cream.  
Busts, cameos, gems,—such things as these  
Which others often show for pride,  
I value for their power to please,  
And selfish curls deride;  
One Stradivarius, I confess,  
Two Meershaums, I would find possess.  
Wealth's wasteful tricks I would not learn,  
Nor ape the glittering upstart fool;  
Shall not carved tables serve my turn,  
But all must be of hubi?  
Give gasping pomp its double share,  
I ask but one recumbent chair.  
Thus humble let me live and die,  
Nor long for Mida's golden touch;  
If Heaven more generous gifts deny,  
I shall not miss them much,  
Too grateful for the blessings lent,  
Of simple tastes and mind content I.

## THE LITTLE WIDOW.

MR. AGUSTUS Revlington looked all through the spiry clouds of cigar smoke that were floating lightly through the room—looked at Tom Spencer with such a cool, contemptuous, pitying glance that that young gentleman actually laughed outright as he finished speaking, and then immediately speaking again: "Upon my word, Custy, old boy, but you are as good at a play, and the rarest of it is I believe you honestly mean every blessed word you say."  
"Of course I mean every word I say, why shouldn't I, when my life is a practical illustration of the theory I have held to—that a man is a fool to fall in love?"  
Spencer leaned meditatively back in his chair.  
"Let's see, Gus; how old are you? I'm thirty-five, you know, and I can remember when I was a little shaver you were quite a young man. How old are you, now?"  
Mr. Revlington replied, very promptly: "Old enough to know human nature pretty thoroughly. That is fifty-three next May-day."  
Spencer looked admiringly at him—bale hearty, handsome, with his gray, prominent beard, bushy hair, and wide-awake blue eyes—handsome enough to play a woman's heart, yes, backed too, by a long fortune.  
"Fifty three. You never look it, Gus. You're as young as I am—and never in love, are you? The saints preserve you when you do take the madness. I'll hit him!"  
Mr. Revlington smiled with calm superiority.  
"I'll risk it, Tom. And more, I'll conceal the soft impeachment when I'm first attacked."  
Tom laughed at this dignified earnest-

"Good. I'll wager a basket of champagne she'll come in the form of a widow too—one of those dimple-cheeked, rosy-mouthed little widows, whose eyes will discover your vulnerable spot by the species of magnetism they are sure to possess. I declare I'm quite excited over it, Gus. Let's drink to the health of the future Mrs. Revlington, likewise the little Rev."  
"Stop just where you are, Spencer. A joke's a joke, but—"  
Tom had tossed off his Clicquot lightly.  
"But when it comes to a possible reality, it is another thing, eh?"  
He laughed and lighted a second cigar.

"If you please, sir is this engaged?"  
It was the sweetest, silverest voice Mr. Augustus Revlington had heard in all his life, with all his experience among well bred women, who talked in low gentle tones, sweet as the notes of a bell. It was her voice, so wondrously enchanting, that it made him look quickly up from his paper to see a gracefully lady-like girl—no, hardly a girl, for there was maturity in face and form that was far more charming than the blushes and consciousness of a girl.

A young lady, draped in clinging, stylishly-cut garments of some soft, black fabric—cashmere Revlington knew it was for he was no mean connoisseur in women's toilets—with small, perfect hands, wearing dark pearl kids; with a dainty little hat trimmed in lavender and jet, a thick black veil thrown over her head and face—almost as if she were anxious to hide herself.

She halted inquiringly before his seat as she spoke.

"Engaged? No, Madam."

Mr. Revlington bowed as he answered her, and removed his handsome traveling satchel to the floor. Then, as she sat down with a prompt, musical "Thank you," he caught himself wondering why he had said "Madam." "She surely cannot be unmarried," he thought, remembering her sweet voice; "sure enough she's a widow. A fellow with half an eye would know that—young, pretty, in light mourning; that means not inconsolable."

He turned to his paper again, and began to read the stock report, thinking what a fragrant perfume this aristocratic little lady had brought with her. Then she suddenly, but half deprecatingly, spoke to him again.

"I am sorry to trouble you, sir but if you will be good enough to place my shawl and package in the rack?"

"I beg pardon for my stupidity, madam. Can I be of further service?"

He asked it with a vague desire to hear her speak, but wishing that horrid veil were off, so he could see the fair face he knew must accompany such a figure, voice and manner.

"Only to tell me when we come to Edgemoor Park."

"Edgemoor Park. Certainly—I stop there myself."

Somehow that made them acquainted; and Mr. Revlington laid down his paper and a most delightful conversation ensued between this sweet voiced woman and Augustus Revlington, the invulnerable.

"I am going on a visit, you see, to Edgemoor Park, and it seems so strange to think I am an entire stranger to the family whose guest I am to be. They were friends of my husband."

Mr. Revlington was triumphant at this proof of his skill in reading facts.

"Then you are a widow? I thought as much."

She answered, very quickly.

"For three years. Isn't it very warm in here?"

A sudden thought occurred to Mr. Revlington—an inspiration direct from heaven, surely.

"Not very warm—but your heavy veil oppresses you perhaps."

His heart actually quickened its beats as the little kidded hands unfastened the sparkling jet-pins that held the veil. Was her face as enchanting as her manner? And then, of a sudden, there rushed over him, like a flood, the remembrance of Tom Spencer's laughing prophecy. A pretty little widow, with magnetism in her building—and here was the widow and the charming, well-bred tones, at all events! Was she dimpled and rosy? If she was—and Mr. Revlington smiled and sneered at the same minute, then he was actually guilty of staring at the sweetest face he had ever seen in his life—a pure, pale face, with scarlet lips he experienced a sudden desire to kiss, with roughish eyes, gray and liquid, and shadowed by thick, dark lashes and brows just the hue of her wavy hair.

His heart certainly was demoralized playing him traitor, or something, for it beat faster than it had for many a day. Suppose—just suppose—that what that ridiculous Spencer had said was true! Only suppose, for the sake of an argument, that this delicious little widow should take a fancy to him! And, in the very face of all his past declarations, despite his fifty-three years—thirty of them experience among the fair sex—Mr. Revlington caught himself quivering with de-

light at the thought. Such a little darling as this would be to pet, such a fascinating creature to present to one's friends as "My wife, old fellow, you know." Such a radiant face to have opposite one at the table—morning and night.

Only—what on earth would Spencer say? Say? why, turn green with jealousy that he had not won this peerless, gray-eyed beauty himself—the selfish fellow! Then a horrible feeling, not unlike jealousy, flushed up in his heart as he remembered Edgemoor Park, where Spencer's folks lived. And this little divinity was going to visit at Edgemoor Park.

"Did I understand you to say you would visit at Edgemoor Park—at your late husband's relatives?"

Mr. Revlington had assuredly understood as much; but he asked the question, perhaps, with the vain hope of having been mistaken. She raised her eye-brows and smiled.

"Yes at the Spencers. Do you know the family?"

Mr. Revlington felt as if a stream of cold water had been suddenly poured down his back. Did he know the Spencers?

"Yes, I know them—rather an old fellow, one of them. You'll see him, of course. I suppose you have heard of Tom?"

"Yes I think I have. Handsome, isn't he?"

Mr. Revlington shrugged his shoulders.

"He might suit some tastes—not mine, and I may venture to say, not yours; I am older—somewhat older than you—and let me warn you that Mr. Thomas Spencer is a renowned lady-killer—a boaster of his success in winning hearts. I hope you will not—"

She laughed and blushed so deliciously, and gave Mr. Revlington such a look.

"I had not heard such a report of Mr. Spencer. It's terrible, isn't it? she said, with a smile.

"A wful!—although, perhaps, an old bachelor like myself am—"

She gave a delightful little start of surprise.

"Are you a bachelor? Why I thought surely you were a married gentleman.—You are so—"

She hesitated half confusedly, half laughingly. Mr. Revlington looked ardently at her.

"So—what, if I may ask, madam?"

"Well—so—so nice, I was just going to say—"

Heaven! this beautiful woman thought he was "nice!"

Mr. Revlington forgot Tom Spencer. Edgemoor Park—every thing except that he only wished she had thought him something more than "nice!"

"I am proud of your opinion; I only wish I were in the happy condition you imagine me."

She cast her eyes down then, and played with the handle of her satchel.

"I am quite sure it is your own fault that you are unmarried."

"Do you think so, really? If I thought it, I would be an engaged man before—"

He hesitated, actually appalled at his own sudden boldness and interest.

"Take my advice Mr.—O, I would like to know your name."

He handed her his card, and wondered at the roguish mischief that shot suddenly in her eyes.

"Mr. Revlington? Why, I've heard of you before."

He bowed, and at the same time looked exceedingly happy.

"Thank you. And, knowing me, do you still adhere to the opinion you have regarding—ah—appertaining to—my success, if I contemplate marriage?"

It was his boldest stroke, and his heart went pitapat most rapidly.

"Indeed I do; and if there is a lady in the world you love, take my advice, and tell her. Is there one?"

Her sudden, archly-challenging question almost routed his sense of propriety, but he answered very eagerly:

"Only one in the wide world, madam, whom I ever dreamed of admiring. A perfect little darling, with the sweetest face and brightest eyes—"

The train came to a standstill, and the guard bawled, unfeelingly in the face of this burst of rhapsody:

"Edge—h—ill P—ar—k!"

Mr. Revlington arose and handed her parcels to her.

"I am interested, Mr. Revlington.—Can't you call at Mr. Spencer's while I am there? I would be so glad to see you."

It seemed as if he was treading on air perfumed with fragrance wafted from Araby the blest.

Invited to see her—actually invited to see her, this peerless, perfect, bewitching woman! And under Spencer's nose, too. What would Tom say? Of course he'd be for trying his arts on her the first thing; but, from indications, it would be "no go." This charming widow had manifested an interest in himself, and it would be his fault if it stopped there.

Go to see her? If business went to smash by his absence. And he took her dainty little hand very cordially, as they

stood on the platform—the only passengers for Edgemoor.

"If you will make me happy by giving me your name—"

She laughed and showed her pretty teeth, then a brighter, happier light sprang into her eyes as Tom Spencer rushed up and caught both her hands.

"Florrie! Hallo, Revlington! You by this train?"

Mr. Revlington bowed dignifiedly, and "Florrie" turned her bright laughing face to him.

"Mr. Revlington has been very good to me, Tom. Introduce me won't you, please?"

Tom laughed more at the odd expression of Mr. Revlington's face than any thing else.

"Of course, with pleasure. Mr. Revlington, this is Mrs. Estcourt, known more familiarly as Florrie, to me, who has come to visit my family, prior to making one of it in a few weeks. You will get cards, Gus, in good time."

"And you'll be sure to come, Mr. Revlington?" I do hope you'll take my advice about the sweet girl you were speaking of; and thanks for your kindness.—I'm quite ready, Tom, dear."

Mr. Revlington bowed mechanically, and watched them walk off, with more of home sick pain in his heart than had ever affected it before.

Then he went about his business like a sensible man, and by the time the bewitching widow wrote her name Florrie Spencer he had come to the conclusion that perhaps, after all, Tom had the worst of it.

## THE DISINHERITED SON.

"He has made his own bed," said Major Martindale, "and he must lie on it."

Major Martindale tolled up a certain obnoxious letter, as he made his mental remark, and, laying it on a little gilded letter-rack beside him, in company with a tailor's bill, a ticket of some forthcoming amateur concert, and a printed circular concerning "insurance policies," went deliberately on with his breakfast.

He was a handsome elderly gentleman, slightly bald, with bright brown eyes, straight Roman features, and one of those square, firmly-molded mouths which betoken a decided tendency to have one's own way. And as he drank his coffee, and daintily manipulated his French rolls, broiled birds, and fresh strawberries, seryed in a garniture of their own leaves he mused over the contents of this same letter.

"It's a great mistake to allow a servant to bring in one's correspondence at meal-times," reflected Major Martindale. "It's almost certain to interfere with one's digestion. I'll never read another letter at breakfast-time. What could possess my son to go and get married in this abrupt, nonsensical sort of a way? Says he 'I'd like to be impossible to gain my consent. Well he had a good reason for his fears. He'll find it still more impossible after marriage than before. He knows my ideas, and if he don't choose to conform to 'em, it's his business, not mine."

And so, after finishing his strawberries and daintily cleansing his filbert-nailed fingers in a ruby-colored finger-bowl, Major Martindale wrote three words on a thick gray sheet of note-paper, inclosed it in an envelope, affixed a stamp, and gave it to the servant to post. And the three words were these: "Consider yourself disinherited."

That was the way in which Major Martindale disposed of his only son.

Not that he did not love Harry—the bright, frank boy, who was all that was left of his young wife, the one romantic dream and tender memory of his life-time—but he liked his own way better. And it is surprising how obstinate a man can be when he once turns his attention to the business.

"Disinherited! O, Harry! And for me!"

Mrs. Harry Martindale, a pretty, blue-eyed woman, with light hair that showed itself around her face like sunshine little dots of dimples in her cheek and chin, and a proud, fresh mouth like a baby's, looked piteously up into her husband's face as she spoke.

Harry Martindale shrugged his shoulders; the momentary cloud passed away from his face, as he bravely answered: "Never mind, Areal. We can afford, you and I, to be independent of a crusty old gentleman's money. I'll see about the clerkship in St. Louis."

"Half the world away from me, Harry."

"It won't be for long, pet. Cheer up! I'll send for you when I get well established, and we'll have a little bird's nest of a home, without asking any favors of my father."

Ariel smiled through the dew-drops that sparkled in her eyes. She was easily consoled. A girl's heart at eighteen is blessedly elastic.

Major Martindale elected to go to Atlantic City for the hot weeks that season. Why, he did not especially particularize to himself. Saratoga was dull;

at Newport one was half a mile away from the beach; Long Branch had palled upon his fastidious taste. So to Atlantic he went, rather enjoying the very perceptible nets and squares spread for him by the various widows, old maids, and gushing damsels who were there engaged in the great husband-hunting campaign.

"I wonder if they think I am a fool," said the Major, as he strolled on the beach with a cigar in his mouth.

But one day the Major found himself forced to give up a picnic on account of a strange and unusual feeling of lassitude and languor, and the next he was in bed.

"This looks serious," said the Major to himself. "I've heard of a low fever hanging about; but I never thought of it's attacking me."

The doctor came, twirled his watch-chain, wrote a prodigious Latin prescription, and shook his head.

People made haste to vacate the rooms in the immediate vicinity of No. 99, and the Major began dimly to comprehend, through a mist that was slowly gathering around his brain, that it was likely to go hard with him.

"I will stay and nurse him, doctor, I have had the fever, a year or two since, and do not fear it, and I am handy with such people."

"But my dear, you've no idea what you are undertaking."

"Yes, I have," answered the soft, low tones; "and we must not let him die for want of care."

"Is your aunt willing?"

"Quite so."

"Then you may try; but, take my word for it, you'll back down at the end of the first week."

Major Martindale heard these words suppose as it were, out of the clouds, as he might have heard the thunder of the waves on the beach outside, or the ringing of the church bells, without at all connecting them with himself. Strange what a world of dreams and shadows his soul and brain had entered into.

But one day he came back out of the darkness and the immensity and the restless whirling to and fro of the waves of life, weak, and white, and helpless as a baby.

And there, sewing by the window, sat a soft-eyed young girl, all in white, with glimmering hair, long lashes, and delicately rounded features.

"Pardon me," hoarsely uttered the major, with a little *souvenir* of his old-fashioned courtesy and politeness; "but I don't know who you are."

"Hush!" said the young lady, gently. "You must not talk. I am here to nurse you."

And then he found himself taking a draught from her practiced fingers, and then drifting off asleep.

"I have been very ill, haven't I?" said he, when the doctor came at noon, as usual.

"You have been as close to the Valley of the Shadow more than once as a man can be in this life," Dr. Delagood answered, gravely.

The major shuddered a little—head-achingly old Sybarite as he was. The idea of death appalled him, and he scarcely cared to hear how near he had been to the solution of the great problem.

"But you pulled me through," said he, with a long breath.

"Yes, I and your patient little nurse, who has just gone for half an hour's sleep."

"Who is she, doctor?" asked the major, anxiously.

"She is the niece of one of the lady boarders. Martin, I think they call her. Her aunt went away as soon as the fever declared itself—in fact, it riddled the hotel pretty nearly—but this girl would not allow any one to suffer for want of care and nursing, so she courageously remained to take care of you."

"Why did she do that?" asked the major a little lump rising in his throat.

"Why did Florence Nightingale go out to the Crimea? Why are all women born heroines at heart?" retorted the doctor.

"God bless her!" muttered the major.

And then he turned his head on one side, and a big drop or two splashed down upon him as he spoke.

"And I of you," answered the girl, in low, tender accents.

"Are you much attached to your aunt?—Mrs. Fessenden, I believe her name is."

"Yes, said the girl, half doubtfully, "I suppose so; I never saw her before she asked me to spend the season with her at Atlantic City last month."

"Is that all you have seen of her?"

"That's all."

[Continued on Eighth Page.]