NURSERY TOWN.

Did you ever go to Nursery Town?
(You have seen it o'er and o'er,
With its people running in and out
Through many an open door.)

A heart is a passport to the place,
But lore is of little use;
The staple products are sugar plums,
And the classic is Mother Goose.

Do you know the language of Nursery Town?
It is sweet as the eve of a dove,
It is "foreign" to all but the citizens,
And is learned in the school of love.

Have you ever heard of the curious laws
They make in Nursery Town?
There the wise and strong take the lowest place,
And the weakest wears the crown.

All day, all night, the nobles serve;
And this you may set down:
Heaven is not very far away,
From the gate of Nursery Town.
—Mary F. Butts, in Good Housekeeping.

UNDER A LAMPPOST.

By Emeric Hulme-Beaman.

THE fog of a November evening had lifted, making way for the cold and clammy touch of night.

Geoffrey Bellairs, pausing halfway across the London bridge in an aimless walk, leaned on the parapet and shivered, keenly conscious of the discomfort of the atmosphere.

He was thinly—even meagerly—clad. His single-breasted coat was buttoned tightly over his chest and the collar of it was turned up; the coat was aggressively threadbare—a very eloquent testimony to the condition of the wearer; its sleeves had shrunk, exposing a long expanse of wrist, unadorned by linen cuffs and the edges of it were frayed.

But if his attire did not sufficiently testify to the fact, one glance at Geoffrey Bellairs' face—with its sunken cheeks, its hollow eyes, its unshaven chin, its haggard, weary expression—was enough to proclaim him insistently a traveler on the high road of destitution. Indeed, he was already within more than measurable distance of this goal.

He had truly sunk low. The preception of contrast between what he was and what he had been smote him with a sudden inclination to break into a mirthless laugh, but the laugh was as suddenly checked upon his lips and he started forward with a quick exclamation.

A hansom had driven rapidly towards him, when, as it seemed without warning or reason, the horse had shied at a passing obstacle, and, taking fright, would have broken the next instant into a wild gallop, had not Geoffrey Bellairs, by a prompt instinct taken in the possibilities of the situation before they had time to develop themselves, and, acting on the impulse of an old athletic habit of earlier days, sprung forward and seized the horse's bridle as it passed him.

For a yard or two he was dragged along beside the animal; but the weight of his body brought it to a sudden standstill alongside a lamppost, close to the curb-stone. The whole incident had begun and ended within the limit of a few seconds, and the horse stood motionless, while the driver on the box called out his gruff thanks to the man who had, at considerable risk to himself, averted a possible accident.

Bellairs did not heed him. There was a lady seated inside the hansom. He bent forward, prompted by an old instinct of courtesy, to address to her a polite inquiry.

"I trust," he began, "that you are not——" then he stopped midway in his sentence, for the light of the lamppost shone full on the face of the lady. She was young, pretty and richly dressed.

"Eleanor!" he exclaimed.

It may have been the cold night air, or the fright occasioned by the behavior of the horse, that sent a little hysterical shiver through the lady at the sound of his voice. Or it may have been the sudden utterance of her name by one whom she had imagined a stranger.

She leaned quickly forward as Geoffrey Bellairs stepped back, and gazed uneasily at the man standing under the lamppost, with his coat collar turned up and his cap pulled over his eyes; a strange, half-frightened recognition leapt into her face as her glance rested upon him at an instant with mute amazement.

"What! Is it you, Geoff?" she exclaimed in a low voice.

He was already turning away. She put out a detaining hand, delicately gloved, as though she would have tried to stop him. He noticed the gesture, and by an impulse—almost of defiance—turned again and faced her.

"Yes—it is I," he said.

"Geoffrey—Capt. Bellairs!" she murmured, with eyes still half incredulous and cheeks flushing.

"I hope you were not hurt?" he inquired formally.

She hesitated for the fraction of a second, then for reply threw open the folding doors of the hansom.

"Will you please—get in?" she said, in a tone between imperiousness and entreaty.

Bellairs glanced swiftly at his clothes, shrugged his shoulders, looked at her, and shook his head.

"I see—I know!" she replied hurriedly. "But you must get in—I want to speak to you."

He wavered. The thing had come upon him somewhat suddenly. Of all women in the world, and at such a moment, he had least expected—least, it may be, desired—to see this one woman. He gave a reckless little laugh.

The driver was a little surprised to see this ragged man suddenly step inside the hansom. The lady made room for him beside her with a dainty, half shy movement of invitation, and, as Geoffrey Bellairs sat down, she pushed open the trapdoor above and told the cabman to drive on.

"You wanted to speak to me?" said Bellairs looking straight out before him.

"Yes."

There was a moment's silence.

"Capt. Bellairs!"

"Miss Nugent——?"

"This—this is horrible."

"I am here at your—request," he replied.

"I didn't mean that—I meant——"

Bellairs leaned back and gave a hard little laugh.

"I know what you mean. Don't trouble to explain yourself." Then he looked at her. "You have not changed, Eleanor. You are prettier than ever. It is two years—quite two years—since we met last and—parted."

"Yes."

"At Lady Maxwell's ball."

She inclined her head.

"I've been traveling downhill a bit since then, you perceive!"

"Is it so—so bad as all that?" she inquired, with an inflection of anxiety.

"Yes. I have nearly reached the end; I am quite candid, you see—I have got beyond the stage of false pride, otherwise, I should not be sitting here, beside you, in this rig-out. And—to be candid—I do not know why I am sitting here."

"You look most awfully hard-up." her voice faltered.

"I look what I am. But had you not better stop the hansom and let me get out before we reach the West End?"

"No—not yet."

He raised his eyebrows.

"You wanted to speak to me?"

"Yes."

Bellairs gave a curious laugh.

"How monosyllabic you are!" he observed. "You used not to be," he added.

"I have not quite recovered from the shock of—of——"

"Discovering your old admirer in this somewhat undignified plight? No wonder! I was rather a smart chap once. But that's all over since—since—— Well, what is the use of whining? I did not want to see you, Eleanor. I never wished to see you again. You cannot be surprised, I think."

"I suppose I should have no right to be."

"I suppose not. Under the circumstances it is, perhaps, less surprising still. The world is a funny place. One night a palace, the next London bridge. A queer-long affair, and even so be[illegible] under sometimes, you know. I never myself laid claim to distinction of being considered one of the best—or even the second best," he added candidly. "I fear I crush your skirt?"

He moved ostentatiously a little further from her.

"Don't!" she murmured.

"I cannot conceive why you asked me to get in here," he exclaimed impatiently. "I am no longer a fit plaything for a dainty miss. My ball room days are over! I am quite brutally matter of fact. I don't mind telling you that I am hungry. If that doesn't make you despise me—I give it up!"

The girl stifled something that seemed like a little sob.

"Hungry! Oh, Capt. Bellairs!"

"Kindly drop the 'captain,' please. I am no longer a credit to the service," he said, almost roughly. "Besides, I hate anything in the shape of pity."

"And you have quite forgotten the—the old days?" she murmured.

"Yes. It doesn't do to remember them—when a man is down to bedrock. Then you are not yet married?"

She started slightly.

"No."

"Nor engaged? I take the liberty of an old acquaintance, you see."

"Nor engaged," she said slowly.

Bellairs looked at her.

"That is strange!" he remarked; "for, 'pon my soul, Miss Nugent, I never saw a prettier girl."

"You have not forgotten how to flatter, at any rate!" she replied, with a nervous laugh.

"I didn't mean it as flattery; but you remember the occasion of our parting?"

"Yes—I remember it."

"I asked you to marry me. You refused. You were wise," he added, smiling bitterly. "A girl should never marry a man she does not care for."

"It was not that."

Bellairs turned suddenly.

"Not that?" he repeated.

"I couldn't. I—you——" she faltered and stopped, confused. There was a moment's silence. Bellairs' eyes were fixed strangely on her face.

"What do you mean?" he said, in a hard tone.

"Well, surely you know!" she answered, appealingly. "It was—impossible. You were so—so poor!" she gulped at the word.

The hansom turned a corner sharply and grazed a curbstone with a jolt. Bellairs' arm touched hers. His hand closed suddenly on her wrist.

"Then you—you cared for me all the time?" he exclaimed passionately, facing her with burning eyes.

Her response was inarticulate. Bellairs flung her wrist from him almost fiercely.

"My God!" he groaned. "And if I had only known—only known!"

She touched his sleeve with a little, timid, frightened gesture.

"I—I thought you knew. I thought you would—come back!"

He laughed hoarsely.

"If I had known I would never have gone! I would never have been what I am now—what you see me! But it's too late to rail; it's over and done with; there can be no going back—the road's too long!"

"Please don't say that! Please try and—and—forgive me! I wanted to tell you—my father—I hardly know how to——" she stammered.

"Well," he said, in an altered voice, "what do you wish to tell me, Miss Nugent? You father——?"

"Is dead. Do you not understand? I—I am rich."

"I congratulate you," he said curiously. "That, however, is the more reason that—I should relieve you of my society—instantly. I presume you are driving to your mother's house? You can hardly expect me to—er—escort you to the hall door!"

He rose, and, pushing open the trap, called to the driver to stop. The hansom pulled up.

"You are not going to leave me—like this?" she entreated.

"I have no alternative."

"Must you force me to confess—everything Capt. Bellairs?" she exclaimed in desperation. "I, too, have been miserable—for two years—and now!"

He looked at her, and a sudden tenderness crept into his wan eyes.

"God bless you, Eleanor, little girl," he said gently. "Good-by!"

"No, no!" she faltered.

But he had already opened the door of the hansom and stepped out on to the wet pavement.

"Drive on!" said Bellairs to the cabman.

And, as the hansom disappeared into the murky darkness beyond, Geoffrey Bellairs stood still and watched it with a smile upon his face.
—London Sketch.

A MODEST REQUEST.

Young Woman Wanted Regiment Detained So Her Brother Could Have His Birthday Box.

At the outlook of the Spanish war Secretary Alger found himself besieged by applicants for office, who brought all sorts of requests, appeals and demands, some of them impudent, some stupid, some amusing, says Youth's Companion. One man presented a card from Abraham Lincoln to the secretary of war in 1862, which had secured an audience then, and should, the applicant insisted, entitle him to consideration in 1898. Another based his claims on the statement that he was a friend of the Prince of Wales.

As there were many times more applicants, says Gen. Alger in his book, "The Spanish-American War," than there were offices, and each disappointed candidate blamed the war department, the number of petitions grew burdensome.

One request, however, from a young lady in Boston, was too entertaining to be a nuisance. Her note-paper, handwriting and rhetoric vouched at least for the culture of the writer. Her request was simple and plainly worded. With much unfeigned earnestness she set forth her case.

The press dispatches had announced that the volunteer regiment of which her brother was a member was to leave Cuba on a fixed date. But the brother's birthday would come two days after the date assigned for his embarkation. A birthday box of cake, jellies, pies, and so forth, had been forwarded to him, and would not be received if the regiment left on the date announced.

She naively asked that the regiment be detained until the box arrived, as she was sure it would make no difference to the government, whereas it would be, "Oh, such a disappointment to my brother!"

She Kept Her Word.

A few days ago the unusually clever Mr. Martin was talking at the dinner table in his usual clever manner about the inconsistency of women.

"These young ladies who protest that they are never going to marry!" he broke out. "Everybody knows they will belie their own words at the very first opportunity."

He paused and evidently hoped that Mrs. Martin would come to the rescue of her sex, but the discreet woman held her tongue.

"Why, Mary," he continued, "you remember how it was with yourself. I have heard you say more than once you wouldn't marry the best man alive."

"Well, I didn't," said Mrs. Martin.
—Chicago Chronicle.

Easily Pardoned.

Impartiality is supposed to be one of the prime requisites of a good school-teacher, and indeed it is a quality which most of them possess. But even the schoolmistress is human, and may measure out justice with due regard for extenuating circumstances.

A little Cambridge girl was discovered whispering in school, and the teacher asked: "What were you saying to the girl next to you when I caught you whispering?"

The little culprit hung her head for a moment, and then replied: "I was only telling her how nice you looked in your new dress."

"Well, that—yes—I know—but we must—the class in spelling will please stand up!"—Christian Register.

Gentle Reminder.

Wife—I never expected I'd have to work like this when I married you.

Husband—Indeed! I was under the impression that you liked to work.

"What gave you that impression?"

"The work you did in order to get me to propose."—Chicago Daily News.

Such Is Life in a Great City.

A hack stood by the curb on one of the busiest streets in New York city. There was no driver on the seat. Thousands of people passed by without noticing it until the expert eye of a mechanic in a carriage-maker's establishment saw a device that interested him. It was a new method of encasing the windows. He stopped abruptly, turned with a sudden interest, and, stepping to the hack, peered through the open window of the door. Instantly some one else, also hurrying past, stopped, followed him, and craned over his shoulder. Two or three others followed. The mechanic, feeling the jostling of a growing crowd, edged out of it and went his way. For over an hour after that, according to the New York Post, the hack was surrounded. People pushed and jostled and craned. They reached the open window in turn, peered in, and struggled again to freedom, saying nothing. If anybody had possessed sufficient benevolence to have called out: "This cab is empty. It is just an ordinary, idle cab. There is nothing to see," he would have broken up this foolish eddy and restored the movement of the passing multitude to its even flow. This spectacle, which is common enough in its way, was rendered doubly curious by the fact that just around the corner on Chambers street a woman lay prostrate on the sidewalk, close to the base of the building. A little black bonnet, covered with torn paper flowers, was askew upon her head. Her eyes were closed, her mouth open. A fly hovered about her swollen lips. No one noticed her. Here was certainly some cause for a crowd to form, but those who passed scarcely gave her a glance. What more repulsive sight did they expect to find in the waiting cab?

Taking No Chances.

"I think," said the first business man, "I'll go home to lunch to-day. A new cook arrived at our house just after breakfast, and she has the reputation of being a good one."

"Why not wait for your usual six o'clock dinner?"

"She may be gone by that time."—Philadelphia Press.

Compensations.

Madge—It must be just lovely to be a millionaire.

Marjorie—O, I don't know. There isn't half as much pleasure in buying things when you know you can afford them.—N. Y. Times.

Plenty of Smoke There.

It appears that the numberless jokes and anecdotes on the subject of soft-coal smoke and the minute and varied directions for avoiding smoke altogether have at last touched some spring of action. People who have long burned soft coal, in spite of their disgust at its offensiveness, have begun to see what they can do about it. At Grand Rapids, Mich., for instance, as far back as the memory of man goeth, there has been an anti-smoke ordinance. This fall, as in all the cities of the country, the air got more smoky than usual. But when the city government took up the matter officially, and tried to enforce the ordinance, the carping critics pointed out that a large share of the smoke came from the city's own waterworks. Now, nothing will do but the city shall have a smoke-consumer put into its waterworks, and the aldermen spent a 90-minute session recently deciding which make was the best. The most remarkable case of all, however, is at Indianapolis. In that city, as one of its newspapers expresses it, "public sentiment asks a reduction of the smoke nuisance, particularly in the down-town districts." To official threats the manufacturers calmly retorted that they could not find any device which would dispose of their smoke without costing too much. Evidently, the mayor and the board of public works reflected, these men must be taught. But where should they look for an instructor? Incredible though it may seem to those who have visited the Windy city, Chicago was found to be the seat of this particular branch of learning. To Chicago, therefore, an official train will carry the mayor, the commissioner of public safety, the chairman of the board of public works and seven of the offending manufacturers. There, in the shade of towering chimneys, in an atmosphere which deposits a grimy film on collars, cuffs and writing paper wherever exposed, the dark secret of how to burn coal without smoke will be cleared up at last, to the great benefit of Indianapolis, and, incidentally, of the whole civilized world.

The railroad commissioners of Massachusetts, after investigating the causes which led to the accident to President Roosevelt in Pittsfield, in September, make these sensible remarks: "A carriage and a car rightfully in the street should be handled in reference to each other and to known conditions. A motorman has no right when crossing a street to assume that at the sound of his gong all other travel will surrender the right of way to him. On the other hand, a driver on approaching a street railway track should not forget that a car may appear at any time with limitations upon the power to guide it, and sometimes upon the power to control it." Carefulness on both sides, and mutual concessions and consideraton are good rules for all motormen and all drivers of carriages.

The work on the New York subway was lately brought to a standstill at one point by a doll's five cent hat. All was ready for an extensive blast. People in the vicinity were fleeing at sight of an Italian waving a piece of red cloth fastened to a stick. The workman in the trench waited for the signal to send off the blast. But the signal did not come. Something had happened. A three-year-old girl was being dragged to a place of safety by two poorly-dressed women, when the green-feathered hat of her pitiful doll fell into the street. The Italian dropped his flag as he heard the child scream with grief and saw the catastrophe. He seized the hat, rushed across the street, gave it to the mother, and in a moment the flag waved and the arrested work went on.

Reassuring Him.

She had been shopping, and he was naturally disturbed.

"I hope you didn't spend much money while you were down-town to-day," he remarked.

"Not a cent, except car fare, George," she answered, reassuringly. "I had everything charged."—Chicago Post.