

A RUSSIAN LEGEND.

The Russian peasants tell today
A legend old and dear to those,
How, when the wise men went their way
To find the babe at Bethlehem.

They paused to let their camels rest
Beside a peasant's lowly door;
And all intent upon their quest
They talked their sacred errand o'er.

"Come with us," said the eager three;
"Come seek with us the Heavenly Child;
What prouder honor can there be
For mortals, sinful and defiled?"

"And bid each child in Sunday clothes
Bring of his treasures the most rare,
Huddles of myrrh and costly dozes,
With ointment for the Christ King's hair."

"Who knows what blessing may befall
If they but touch his garment's hem;
And only once for them and all
Will Christ be born in Bethlehem!"

"Alas! I have so much to do,"
The mother answered with a sigh;
"I cannot journey now with you,
But I will follow by and by."

The wise men frowned and rode away,
Leaving the children all aglow,
And pleading through that busy day,
"When may we go? When may we go?"

And while their cheeks flushed rosy red,
They shouted in a chorus sweet,
"And may we touch his pretty head?
And may we kiss his blessed feet?"

But women still will bake and brew,
No matter what sweet honors wait;
And petty tasks they still must do,
Though angels tarry at the gate!

And when the frocks are sewn with lace,
And tied with ribbons smart and trim;
When each tear stained and tired face
Was bathed and tied its hood within;

When the small rooms were cleanly swept
And chairs set primly in a row,
Betokening a house well kept;
Then wearily she turned to go.

The sky was purpling in the west,
The silent night was hurrying on;
The three wise men had onward sped,
The star from out the east had gone!

What could the foolish mother do?
She turned her footsteps home again;
And never, all her sad life through,
Did she behold the three wise men.

Alas! Through weak deluding, she
Her sweetest privilege had missed;
Nor did her children ever see
The Holy Babe they might have kissed.
—May Riley Smith.

CROSS CURRENTS.

"You are such a very independent creature."

"I am not a creature, but an able bodied woman, with all my wits about me. Why should I make believe to be the weak kneed specimen of feminine foolishness that is your ideal woman?"

"Oh, never mind me, do just as you like," cried Mr. Bartlett, testily, as a voice from the inner room called, "What are you two quarreling about now?"

"It is only Mr. Bartlett talking nonsense, mother," said Agnes, gayly; "he thinks I can't go up to town for a day's shopping without a chaperon."

"Is that all? Why, my dear Gus, Agnes always goes about alone. Indeed, there is no one to go with her, so she has to; she has never come to any harm yet," and Mrs. Oldham looked up appealingly from her sofa.

Mr. Bartlett promptly subsided, as he always did, when any remark of his had brought Mrs. Oldham's poverty into full view. Neither Agnes nor her mother ever troubled themselves about the narrowness of their income, but it was a painful subject to Gus, who would willingly have shared his abundance with them. He returned to the charge an hour later, when he and Agnes were out in the garden.

"You might let me come with you tomorrow," he said, persuasively; "I could see you over the crossings, at any rate."

"Oh, the policeman does that," answered Agnes, merrily. "You are dying to know what I do with myself, of course, but I don't mean to encourage you in inquisitive habits, so I shall go alone."

"I wish to goodness you had some one to look after you," growled the young man. "Don't you think, for your mother's sake, you could put up with me?" he went on, in a pleading tone.

"That is either the third or fourth time that you have proposed to me in the last month," said Miss Oldham, calmly. "If you do it again before Christmas I will have you bound over to keep the peace."

"I wish you would not chaff a fellow so. I am quite in earnest."

"So am I! I may marry some day, but it is not my fault, it is yours, I'm sure, if you don't be a sensible boy, Gus, and leave off sentiment. It does not suit your figure," and Agnes laughed, mischievously.

Gus was used to snubbing, and bore it with a fair amount of fortitude. He and Agnes had been playfellows since childhood, and he had, as he thought, fallen in love with her on his return from Oxford. He had lately got into a habit of proposing or half proposing to her after every one of her numerous squabbles, and always met with the same laughing but unqualified refusal. Agnes looked on him as a brother, and was extremely fond of him, but Gus Barton was not the sort of man to inspire a clever, practical woman with any very deep affection, and she could never even take his devotion seriously, which was depressing for Gus.

"Florrie, allow me to introduce our squire, Mr. Augustus Bartlett of that ilk—Miss Marsh, Gus!" and Agnes finished the introduction with a sweeping curtsey.

Mr. Bartlett looked distressed. "I did not know you were bringing a friend down," he said, "and I've only got the dog cart here. I suppose you had better drive, and let me walk?" he added.

"Should you be very much surprised if you heard that the greengrocer's cart is waiting for Miss Marsh's luggage?" cried Agnes. "I would have told you she was coming, only you were so disagreeable yesterday. We can pack in the dog cart all right," and so they did.

Gus invariably met Agnes at the station when she returned from her visits to London, but on this occasion he was much astonished, for she had never brought a friend back with her before, and this friend was both pretty and charming. She very much enlivened the evening at the cottage, whither Gus

stroled as usual after dinner, and, generally speaking, made a good impression on her friends; but for all that Mr. Bartlett was not quite happy in her society. He could not help thinking that there must be something uncanny in her sudden appearance, or else (and this brilliant idea rather took his fancy) Agnes had brought her down for him to fall in love with.

"Just as if anything, or anybody, could make me give up Aggie!" he thought to himself as he went home-wards. "It would serve her right if I did have a little flirtation;" then, as a brilliant idea struck him, "I declare, I'll ask Nugent down, and he can look after Miss Marsh while I take care of Aggie." Which determination was promptly acted on, for Gus wrote a letter that night, and sent it off by early post as soon as he came down the following morning.

"What do you think of our squire, Flo?"

"Fine, well grown young man, with a restful absence of ideas," answered Miss Marsh, carelessly.

"He has some ideas, but they are mainly practical," said Agnes. "He is an excellent landlord, besides being a dear good boy, but he certainly is not brilliant."

"How does he come to reign all alone in this forlorn way?" inquired Florrie.

"Has he no belongings?"

"None to speak of. His mother died when he was a baby, his father three years ago. I think mamma looked after him more than any one else, though he has some aunts and cousins. He and I are just like brother and sister."

"That must be rather pleasant, as you have no proper brother. Why, surely, that is he coming up the lane? And there is some one with him! Fancy finding two young men in a country village like this!"

Miss Marsh had been at the cottage three days, and was enjoying the fresh country air thoroughly; and having a keen interest in her fellow creatures, she had been studying Gus because there was no one else to study. Now her attention was distracted by the new comer, who was, indeed, a very agreeable and interesting specimen of humanity.

Richard Nugent had been at college with Gus, but had been far more successful in the schools, and less in the cricket grounds, than his friend. Now he was a hard working London curate, while Gus was enjoying the less laborious position of a wealthy country gentleman, but their friendship was as great as ever.

"Mrs. Oldham, will you come up to the Grange to-morrow?" said Gus one afternoon, as he lay on the grass at her feet. "Nugent and I want to have some tennis with the girls, and you can look on and chaperon."

"Very well, I will come with pleasure, but you must send the pony carriage for me, you know."

"Of course; send for you and send you back. You will stay to dinner, won't you?"

"You must consult the girls about that," said Mrs. Oldham, "for I have an idea that they may be busy; they are reading through a good deal, you know."

"Miss Marsh went in to write letters, didn't she? I don't know where Agnes has gone," remarked the young man, rising from his lazy attitude and looking about him. "Oh, there she is, with Nugent, right at the end of the field. How can people be so energetic this weather?"

Agnes and Mr. Nugent did not seem to find the heat oppressive; they are strolling quietly along the shady side of the field, talking, and were so much interested in their conversation that it was quite a long time before they returned to the lawn. Agnes was hearing of a world that was new and strange to her, but which seemed the exact thing she had desired for years.

In the quiet village there was but little for an energetic woman to do; but the life Mr. Nugent spoke of had opportunities for every one. Real hard self denying labor among the poor, depressing at times, but cheered and lightened by the fellow feeling of many workers, all struggling towards a noble and worthy aim, was the very work she would have chosen had the choice been given her. Now she heard of it from one of the workers, and her face glowed with enthusiasm as she listened, while Mr. Nugent could not help longing to have such ready sympathy and appreciation near him to soothe and cheer him in the troubles and disappointments which were a necessary accompaniment of the work.

"Why don't you come to London and work with us, Miss Oldham?" he asked. "You have strength and energy. Why waste them on trifles when you might be doing real good with them?"

"I don't think my mother could live in London," said the girl, slowly, "and we could not afford it, either. But I shall work some day, and meanwhile, I dare say, it is good to have to exercise patience. And I am young enough as yet," she added, with a smile, as they returned to the lawn to join the others.

The afternoon at the Grange was a success. Mrs. Oldham sat in a low chair under a great cedar tree, and enjoyed herself quietly; indeed, the view and the sight of the four merry young people was pleasure enough for her. The tennis court was a very good one, and Gus and Florrie played Mr. Nugent and Agnes with great effect. When they were tired Florrie insisted on being taken all over the house, and gave the master of its intense pleasure by the interest she took in his old pictures, china, furniture and curios generally.

"You can't think what a pleasure this is to me!" she said, when they were examining some exquisite wood carving in the library. "We London people live in stucco houses, and buy our artistic properties in Regent street, but here they are all growing, so to speak."

"Everything here has grown with the place, if that is what you mean," replied Gus. "There is nothing modern, and everything has a history. My people have lived here since Queen Elizabeth's time, and though we aren't either rich or clever, at any rate we are not mushrooms."

"Why should you be rich?" asked

Florrie. "If you were a millionaire this house would not be grand enough for you, and you would spoil it by altering it, whereas now it is perfect."

Gus was pleased. He loved his home and all his ancestral treasures heartily. He loved all the old associations which had grown up in the 300 years since the Grange was built, and he was well aware that there were few families in England who could boast of such a line of worthy gentlemen as those from whom he was descended. Agnes did not care for any of these things, and was at that moment having a long conversation with Mr. Nugent about the evil results of foreign immigration in the east of London, a subject which interested her, but which Gus simply did not understand. He was satisfied if his tenants and laborers were well housed and fairly prosperous (and it must be owned that he was an admirable landlord), but the distress he did not see had no pathos for him; it was no business of his, and he lacked the imagination which brought it all vividly before the energetic couple under the cedar tree.

That evening Agnes stood at her window and looked out on the peaceful moonlit fields, and longed to be in the busy human hive she had been hearing about. Then her face dimpled into a merry smile.

"Dear old Gus!" she said, "he has fallen into the trap, and they will be thoroughly happy. I don't think I know any one so fitted to be his wife as Flo."

Meanwhile Mr. Bartlett was thinking what a very successful day it had been, and how nice it was to get Agnes up to the Grange; and it never dawned on his innocent mind that he had not exchanged a dozen words with her the whole afternoon.

"So you really go to-morrow," said Gus, as he and his friend sat smoking, the last evening of Mr. Nugent's holiday. "We shall miss you very much, old fellow, but you must come again."

"I should like it above everything," was Mr. Nugent's answer. "If I can get away for a few days in the winter, will you have me?"

"I shall be delighted; come as soon as you can, and stay as long as you can. One thing you must come for, and I hope it is not very far distant now," proceeded Mr. Bartlett, with something very like a blush.

"What is that?"

"My wedding!"

"My dear boy, I'm delighted to hear it, but I did not know that you had got to that point yet," cried the clergyman, who had watched his friend's intercourse with Miss Marsh with strong approval.

"Well, that's the thing! I don't know what comes over girls, but though I have asked her half a dozen times, she has not said 'Yes' yet," replied the unconscious Gus.

"You have certainly lost no time," said his friend; "perhaps she thinks she ought to know you better."

"I don't know how she is to do that, considering that we have known each other all our lives, and lived close to each other, too."

"But she only came here just before I did," exclaimed Mr. Nugent, "or I am mistaken. Don't you mean Miss Marsh?"

A sudden light glowed on Gus's face; then faded as rapidly as it had come. "No! I don't mean Miss Marsh," he said slowly. "I never thought about her; I have always intended to marry Agnes."

It was Mr. Nugent's turn to look puzzled. "I am glad you told me that," he said. "For I was entirely mistaken. I thought from your manner with her that you cared for Miss Marsh, not Miss Oldham; and it was just as well, perhaps, that you uncovered me."

"I won't spoil the dear lad's happiness," he thought, an hour later, when he was alone; "and yet, who would have guessed it? I thought she was free, and that he cared for the other girl. I suppose she was only civil to me because I am his friend," and he betook himself to bed, and after a night's tossing and tumbling, went back to London by the earliest possible train, without taking a formal farewell of the ladies of the Cottage.

Agnes was angry, very angry; she had been most cavalierly treated, as she considered, and longed for some one on whom to vent her ire.

"What did he mean by running away without even a word of thanks for the civility they had shown him? He must have thought she was making eyes at him—just as if she cared a fig about him, or looked upon him from any other point of view than that of a guide to the East of London! How horribly conceited men were! Oh, there comes Gus! he might have left us alone for one day," and she went to open the door, and quarrel with her visitor if possible. Gus was a little bit cross, too, for Florrie had had to join her relations in Normandy, and he and the Oldhams were left alone, and things were flat in consequence, though he fancied he should like it.

"It's very nice being together again, isn't it, Aggie?" he said as he entered.

"I don't think so at all," she answered, promptly. "I dare say you don't miss Mr. Nugent, but I am very dull without Florrie, and so are you, I should think," she proceeded, rather spitefully.

"I only want you, as you know," he said, not as pleasantly as usual. "Nugent has promised to come and marry us, and I really think you might make up your mind to it soon."

"Marry you! Never! I have told you so a dozen times at least" (which was an exaggeration) "and now, after flirting with Florrie all the summer, you have the impudence to ask me again, and to ask Mr. Nugent to marry us, just as if we were engaged. I don't wonder he went away! I'm not surprised at all now!" and Agnes suddenly flung herself on the sofa and burst into tears.

As to Gus, he stood and gazed at her, open mouthed. For one thing, he had never seen her cry since she was a tiny child; for another, a new idea had penetrated his slow brain, and the world seemed upside down.

"Florrie! had he flirted with her? No, he had only been blind. He had had a strange new feeling for some time, which had alternately made him happy

and miserable, and which must have been"—

Here his meditations were interrupted by Agnes, who had left off crying and recovered her temper.

"Don't stand there with your mouth open, Gus," she cried; "you do look so silly. Just make up your mind, once and for all, which of us you really care for, and take the next boat for Dieppe. The Marshes will be there till the end of the week."

Mr. Bartlett took her advice, and a few days later Mr. Nugent, who was trying to work off his bitter disappointment, got a letter from Dieppe with the astonishing intelligence that Gus and Florrie were engaged, and that his friend's affection for Agnes was of a totally different kind to what he had been led to believe. "In fact," the letter concluded, "Agnes knew me better than I did myself, and was perfectly right when she brought me down to stay with her. Don't forget that you have promised to marry us."

Hard work was very pleasant to Mr. Nugent that winter; he threw himself into all the multifarious duties of a town parson, with an energy which had its root in a happy heart. To be sure, nothing had been said or settled, but for all that he knew well enough that he would not be working alone for long, and then there was Gus' wedding to look forward to. Before the wedding came off his prospects had a very satisfactory change, and it was as vicar instead of curate that he asked Agnes to be his wife.

"We shall have work enough, and to spare," he told her, when the momentous question had been answered, "but you will not fear that; will you, my darling?" To which Agnes answered something about working with him, which cannot be publicly repeated.—M. Payne Smith.

Did Jeanne d'Arc Burn?

The reproduction, with Sarah Bernhardt in the leading role, of the play of "Jeanne d'Arc" in Paris, has given occasion for a renewal of the old controversy as to whether Jeanne was ever really burned at the stake or whether her place was not taken by some one else and she set free. One M. Lesigne has brought together in a book all the facts tending to show that Jeanne never was burned, and that she actually married a country gentleman in Lorraine and raised a large family, of whom there were direct descendants as late as a century ago.

The stories were first put into circulation in 1833 in a publication called *Mercure Galant*, and were then based upon discoveries made by a certain Father Vignier among some old manuscripts in Metz. The first document was a record of the visit of Jeanne, the Maid of Orleans, to her relatives in that city, and subsequently there was discovered a marriage contract of Robert des Armoises with "Jeanne d'Arc, the Maid of Orleans," the marriage having taken place at Arlon, where the Duchesse Elizabeth of Luxembourg made a splendid fete of the occasion.

The story in which the "Maid" and her husband conveyed certain land was also found, and subsequently at Orleans in the public archives there were discovered various entries in the public accounts that went to show that moneys had been paid to her or for her to her relatives at various times after she was supposed to have been burned at the stake. These documents have made it absolutely certain that somebody who was known as "Jeanne d'Arc" and "the Maid of Orleans" was living and somewhat of a public character for many years after the original Jeanne had presumably been reduced to ashes. The advocates of the original Jeanne, however, insist that the woman to whom the documents refer must have been a different one, either an impostor or a woman whom some connection with the army had caused the people of her acquaintance to designate by the title of the dead heroine.—New York Sun.

Billy Florence's Joke.

"It was at Brougham's lyceum, afterwards Wallack's theatre, at Broome street and Broadway," said W. J. Florence recently. "The orchestra leader, George Leder, got it into his head that it would be a good idea to have an orchestra which would sing at intervals. So he went back on the stage and got a number of young actors, put us in dress suits and placed us in the orchestra with instructions how to go through the motions of playing the different instruments and when to stop and sing. It was a great success, but we youngsters objected. We held that we had not been engaged for that purpose, and that we were there to learn how to act. So we determined to put an end to it. My instrument was a clarinet. You know what a frightful noise can be made with it, if necessary. Well, one night, when we were in the orchestra, at a quiet portion of the music I blew on the clarinet a squeak that could have been heard a mile off. Leder shook his fist at me and said, 'Wait till you get off, but the audience roared with laughter for a long time, and would even occasionally burst out in guffaws during the afterpiece. Of course I pleaded to Leder that the instrument went off of its own accord, but he knew better. However, that was the last of the singing orchestra in that theatre.'—New York World.

Bulls of a German Professor.

The prize medal for absent mindedness during lectures must be awarded to a German professor named Johannes Amer, who recently died in Vienna. One of his pupils had a list of his remarkable sayings, among them the following: "Julius Caesar, disguised as a slave, swam naked across the Tiber." "Alexander the Great was born in the absence of his parents." "The Swiss are a mountainous nation, but in Scotland the climate does not begin till October." "Hogs were invented in Asia Minor." "Thus arose a general war on page 94." "The third Tunic war would have been much sooner had it commenced a little earlier." "Covered with countless wounds Caesar fell dead near the statue of Pompey; with one hand he drew his toga over his face while with the other he called for help."

WOMEN BEHIND THE DESK.

From a Man's Point of View—How One Woman Treats Another.

It pains me to learn that woman in office is somewhat of a failure; at least in New York. It seems that she carries into her official life certain traits that are characteristic of her sex, but which are not in harmony with business affairs. In the first place, the woman official is severely offensive to women, from whom she exacts more than the legal pound of flesh and for whom she shows a contempt and lofty toleration that are outside the limits of law. The cause of this attitude of woman against woman has as yet eluded the search of science and confounded the theories of philosophy; and, to conclude, even I have no solution to offer. And yet, if we consider the matter closely, we shall find a reason, if not a cause. A man appears before a woman in office already crushed; it has absorbed all his courage to face official femininity, and if he does not receive all the snubs and the contempt that he is prepared for he is more disappointed than surprised.

The woman behind the desk is an awe inspiring object to the bravest man; she is her sex plus authority, Charlotte Corday and Minerva combined. She is not the more imposing by reason of her office, but the office is imposing because she fills it, because the office is herself. Such a woman may insist on anything unhindered of man. He is even content, at her command, to concede that the earth is flat for the time being. He appears before her so much majesty in a commanding attitude; he waits her pleasure patiently before receiving the postage stamp for which he applies, cash in hand; he stifles his haste to obtain his letters until she sees fit to give them to him. For these reasons the official woman does not go out of her way to annoy or to torture man; she accepts him as a worm, and because he is weak she refrains from treading on him, and goes no further than to turn a deaf ear to his application for letters or stamps, and to gorgonize him with her Tennysonian "stony stare."

A woman approaches the official woman guarded window in a different attitude, in fact in a belligerent attitude, and the monarch of all she surveys receives her in an equally belligerent spirit. Two hungry dogs approaching the same bone will give a fair idea of the situation. The passive indifference shown to that humble creature, man, no longer exists; the adversaries both have their lances in rest, and each is looking for the weakest spot in the armor of the other. There is an ominous silence, during which the fashion of garments and fashion of features are criticised; there is an ominous sniff, a snapping of eyes, an elaborate exhibition of a chip on the shoulder for opponents to remove violently, a lofty staring at tops of heads instead of into eyes, an aggressiveness of excessive over-politeness, the fine malice of preventing to the utmost the consummation of the object that both have at heart, the overzealous desire to make a fault and find it, to imagine an insult and resent it, to compel insolence that breeds the insult. Naturally, the women who are not officials complain of the women who are officials, and the woman behind the window complains of the woman in front of it.

This is the serious danger that confronts the woman who aspires for public office—the weight that drags her down when in office. The fault is hers individually, but it is the failing of the sex generally—the impossibility of a woman treating a woman in any other way than as a rival or an antagonist. The woman in office cannot escape from herself. She refuses to see, or cannot see, any difference between a free, if tax paying, public and her own family circle. She carries her home characteristics into public affairs, regarding men as the possessors of obnoxious latch keys, and women as the victims of them. Her clients are punished for her toothaches and responsible for her dyspepsia. That she is compelled to hold lowly office is the fault of the world, and the world must suffer for it. She knows that she is better than other women, and demonstrates her superiority to anticipate their doubt, or the doubt that she has invented for them. This is not gallant, but, unfortunately, it is true. There can be no question that, with time, the faults indicated will be remedied; but, until they are, woman in office will be a constant exasperation to woman out of office. It is true that woman out of office is equally exasperating to woman in office, and the proverbial man's inhumanity to man is thus furnished with a parallel in woman's antagonism to woman.—"Chatterer" in Boston Courier.

New Jersey's School Fund.

New Jersey has a school fund of \$4,000,000, and does not know what to do with it. It can not be used for anything but the public schools, and not very much of it is allowed to go there, only a part of the annual income being available, so jealousy has the state constitution guarded its sacredness. Meantime, it is piling up every year, and the commissioners are at their wits' end to find an investment for it. The original idea was to have a fund large enough to entirely support the public schools throughout the state, but that, it is said, would take \$70,000,000; and, besides, it is generally believed that it is better for the school system to have the local schools directly provided for by local taxes. People take more interest in something they have to pay for.—Exchange.

How Ice Cutters Rescue Horses.

The danger of cutting ice before it has attained a thickness of eight inches or more is great, and numbers of horses have been lost by their breaking through the ice while working the plows. Old ice men say, however, that by putting a slipnoose around the animal's neck before it goes under the ice, the work of getting it out is not great. The action of the noose stops the animal's breathing, and soon causes the body to become inflated with wind so that it will float on the surface, when it is easily hauled out upon the ice.—Boston Record.

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