

.....THE ABSENCE OF AGATHA

"And your soul from this old chamber
Missed in fifty little things!"
—Owen Meredith.

"It is from Helena." Mrs. Ardell laid down the letter and twirled her pince-nez between her taper finger tips. "She wants Agatha to pay her a visit. 'Agatha!' exclaimed May in astonishment. 'What does she want with Agatha?'"

May was the beauty of the family. "She does not speak a word of French or Spanish!" declared Ida, who had gone in for the languages. "Nor sing a note!" cried Grace, whose voice was her particular pride. And the three, in quite honest ignorance of the ill-breding their amazement implied, stared across the table at Agatha. Her mild little mother looked at her, too, but with covert tenderness. Her father lifted his gentle, absent gaze to the countenance of his youngest and least accomplished daughter. And Harry, the son of the house, paused in his eager efforts to dispose of all the buttered toast on the table long enough to remark that Agatha could make crackin' good cake, you bet! But this eulogy passed unheeded.

Mrs. Ardell reread the letter of invitation, this time aloud. Mme. de Villiers wrote that she had always entertained delightful memories of the visit Agatha had paid her when the latter was quite a little girl. If the young lady was as dear as the child she had been she would love to have her spend a few weeks with her.

"We called, you remember, mamma, since she established herself in Chicago," May, "faultily faultless" of feature, and complacently conscious that her new kimono was becoming, looked languidly toward her mother. "She has a great, gloomy old barrack of a house. I don't believe there's a bit of furniture in it less than a hundred years old. I wouldn't visit there for the world."

"My sister is trying to make her northern residence as much like as possible to the Louisiana home of which she was so fond, until unbearably sad memories caused her to abandon it!" put in Dr. Ardell.

"She has even bought lots adjacent to her own that she may have a walled-in garden, I've been told," supplemented Grace.

"Well, I shouldn't have gone had she asked me!" put in Ida with decision. "She has lots of money, but she can't be expected to die for many a year, and—"

"Ida!" interrupted the doctor, sternly. She colored and became silent. Mrs. Ardell spoke with amicable haste. "We have not allowed Agatha to say a word. Do you wish to go, Agatha?"

"Would I?" glowing with delight at the possibility. "Indeed, yes. I had such a lovely time when I visited Aunt Helena in New Orleans. Of course, that's a long time ago. I was only ten then. Now, I'm twenty-two—"

Harry snickered. "That's three years younger'n Grace, and five years younger'n Ida, and—"

"Harry, leave the room!" cried May crimsoning.

But Harry only winked at her and helped himself to more toast.

"Agatha shall go if she wishes," said the head of the house, rising.

"Even if the change is only from a western suburb to the South Side, it will do her good."

"Why, she is always well." May lifted her brows slightly. "Aren't you, Aggie?"

"Of course," chimed in Ida. "No studies to tax her mind."

"No long hours of practicing," agreed Grace. "I'm going to my lesson now."

"My Spanish conversation class meets at 11," said Ida rising.

"O, I'd almost forgotten my appointment with the dressmaker!" ejaculated May.

Even Harry announced that he was "goin' fishin' with a feller," and disappeared.

Agatha, the little brown sparrow of the house, the Martha who "was solicitous about many things," had been gone ten days when old Dr. Ardell brought a young physician home with him to dinner. His name was a familiar one to the household. His fame as the most promising young surgeon of the city had been exploited. The conservatism of the elder medical man had melted into liberal praise when he spoke of the intellectual power and scientific achievements of the younger. His welcome was assured. He was flatteringly received by the three young ladies and their mother. Not one of them, however, was prepared for his dashing presence and personal charm. May rejoiced that her hair was elaborately coiffured, and her gown cut to show her round throat to advantage. Ida kept the conversation scintillating and rather unintelligible, by her brilliant remarks made in different foreign tongues. And after dinner Grace played her noisiest and sang her loudest for his especial delectation. But throughout the dinner and the social evening that followed, Dr. Ryder was frequently perplexed by the reference to Agatha. These began when his host made a little testy remark about the soup.

"You know Agatha is not at home," his wife reminded him. "She always attended to that."

Ida spoke of having been allowed to take a rare reference book home from the public library on payment of a deposit. "I might as well take it back at once," she concluded, with a rueful laugh. "I had forgotten Agatha was

not here to copy out the pages I wish to study." Grace, turning her music upside down to find a particular piece, apologized for its untidy condition by saying that when Aggie was absent they did not know where to find things. When Dr. Ryder asked about the internal management of a certain city hospital it was his host who replied: "If my youngest girl were here she could tell you about that. She visits there."

Mrs. Ardell smilingly protested her ignorance of a certain book. "My sight," she said, "will not permit me to read much. Agatha always reads aloud to me." Harry added his unconsidered tribute to his sister when Dr. Ryder had helped him to unravel a snarl of fishing tackle over which he was floundering.

"Jimminy!" he exclaimed. "You're most as smart as Ag! I ain't had a real easy time since she went away."

"Where is she?" asked Ryder, his curiosity aroused.

"Over to Aunt Helena's, on the South Side—De Villiers her last name is."

"Not from New Orleans?" quickly. "That's it. Do you know her?"

"I used to know her well, indeed, once. I was only a boy then. I'm a Southerner myself, you know. She was good to me."

"She an' Ag pull it off together. The other girls ain't got much use for her, no more'n I," here he choked over his joke, "have got any use for the other girls, see?"

"Good night," said the host, shaking hands heartily when the hour for

farewells came. "Hope Agatha will be back when you come next!"

But she was not there on his subsequent visits, and he called frequently. So frequently in fact, that May had two new gowns in process of creation, that Ida admitted to her own heart that she had always admired the Saxon style of beauty, and that Grace was practicing the precise amount of tenderness advisable to bestow in a single glance when she sang a melting song.

The truth of the matter was that Mme. de Villiers was ill, and Agatha could not leave her.

"Of course if you need me more, mother dear," she wrote, "I'll come home. But she is rather dependent on me, although there are so many servants here. The old house is delightful, and the garden will be a miracle of beauty one of these days."

No one went over to see her except Harry. In triangular Chicago friends who live south, north or west may meet seldom, if ever. Harry's information concerning his visit was meager and unsatisfactory.

"She's livin' in a rummy old palace. She's lookin' fine—gittin' to beat you slick, May. The lunch was a buster—that's so. I had a boss time! Say, I told her about the new feller you girls had got!"

"Who? No? What did she say?"

"Didn't say nothin'. Jest got red-der'n alls out, an' laughed—an' laughed!"

But there came a day when Mrs. Ardell was left long to her own companionship, and in her loneliness a sense of maternal jealousy smote her with cruel pain. Agatha might grow to care more for this aunt of hers—she must come home at once!

Agatha came promptly.

"Well, you've improved!" May looked critically at the little face which was not pretty except for its fine teeth, clear, happy eyes, and shining brown hair. Grace and Ida instantly

besieged her with selfish demands. They told her, too, about their new and distinguished acquaintance.

"Do fix up tonight," May said. She felt passe beside her youngest sister. The consciousness made her irritable. "Don't be a dowdy. He is coming. Look as well as you can."

"I will," promised Agatha, cheerfully.

And she did. It was not only the charming gown of cerise foulard and chiffon which her aunt had given her that brought out her best points. Her father had missed her and inferred it. Her mother was happy to have her back and said so. Harry had given her his latest slang—with a bear hug thrown in—which was delightfully reassuring. And even the selfish appeals of the girls had testified their satisfaction in her return. Then—there was a remembrance away back in a corner of her heart which would in itself have lent her demure distinction.

So not even May could find fault with her appearance when Dr. Ryder was announced. It was really with a reflected sense of gratification that she duly presented him.

"I have met Dr. Ryder before," said Agatha. But she was a poor actor. She turned rosily red.

"Where?" asked Dr. Ardell.

"In New Orleans, twelve years ago." It was the young physician who answered. "My father's garden joined that of Mme. de Villiers. I was eight-then—Miss Agatha much younger. We had some beautiful times—didn't we?"

"And this," asked Mrs. Ardell in gentle surprise, "is your first meeting since?"

"Not exactly. Tell them the truth, Agatha!"

Agatha looked up at him imploringly. "You do!" she entreated.

"Well, when Harry told me my old friend lived in Chicago, and when I learned the little girl I used to know—whom you all missed so much—was visiting there, I went over. Since Mme. de Villiers has been ill I've been attending her. Now, dear."

Agatha lifted her hand. She turned shyly the little golden ezellet on the third finger until a blazing diamond was revealed.

"Engaged!" gasped the beauty of the family.

The mother was kissing Agatha—her father shaking Ryder's hand. "And she only speaks English!" panted Ida to Grace.

"And does not sing or play!" came a horrified whisper in return. Harry's ecstatic convulsions would have earned him the title of "The Human Jack-knife."

"Bully!" he cried. "I'll go live with you, Ag. Gee—whiz!"—Chicago Tribune.

SOLVING A PROBLEM.

Germany's Treatment of Tramps Is Here A Described.

Why do we never see a tramp in Germany? There are poor people enough and many must be out of a job now and then. Yet Germany is a nation without tramps. Is America a poorer country, that we count our tramps by the tens of thousands? I once visited a so-called "tramp colony" near Bielefeld, Westphalia, guided by an expert in such matters, Dr. Hinzpeter, who was for many years tutor to the emperor. Here I was told the secret of tramp extermination. Germany allows no man to prowl about the country without giving an account of himself. If he is looking for work he must make it clear that he has means of support during his search. If he has no means of support the government offers him these means, but on the important condition that he works in return. The government thus relieves the tramp, but sees to it that the particular individual does a job by way of equivalent. Now, if that tramp is an honest man he will be grateful for the opportunity of tiding over his hard times and earning something into the bargain. On the other hand, if the tramp is merely a loafer, intent upon living at the expense of his fellows, the government gives him such a taste of work that in the future tramping will have vastly less charms for him.—The Independent.

Instruction to Campers.

To prevent the destruction of the vast area of forest land in the northern part of Ontario the Canadian government has issued a card of instruction to campers, telling how and where to build fires and how to prevent damage, an ounce of prevention being apparently properly valued in that region.

Spaniards in Florida.

Florida was originally settled by the Spaniards, and in the same way that the Old Swedes' Church in Delaware recalls its pioneer settlers and French names in Wisconsin recall the French settlement of that State, St. Augustine, Tampa, Ferdinand and other Spanish geographical names recall the fact that the Peninsula State was under Spanish rule for a great number of years. But there are not many Spaniards in Florida. The last census returned the number of such as 389 only, a very small total when one considers the proximity of Florida to the former Spanish possessions in the West Indies. There are, of course, a great many Cubans in Florida, particularly in and about Key West, but their presence there was in no wise due to the Spanish traditions of Florida; on the contrary, many, if not most, of the Key West Cubans went there as refugees from Spanish misgovernment in their own country.

Very Delicate Machinery.

Machines in a watch factory will cut screws with 580 threads to an inch. These threads are invisible to the naked eye, and it takes 144,000 screws to make a pound. A pound of them is worth six pounds weight of pure gold.

WHERE DOES THE SUN'S HEAT GO?

Can Energy Be Completely Disipated in This Universe?

According to the ordinary view the sun is constantly radiating heat in all directions, and, I think, it is generally supposed that only a small portion of this heat encounters material bodies—at any distance, however great. If so, the question arises, What becomes of the residue? Physical research leads us to believe that heat cannot be destroyed, but only transformed; yet many persons seem to think that this heat vanishes like a ghost without transformation and without producing any effect. This may be so, but it is so much opposed to physical analogies that we should be slow to accept it unless on the basis of definite observations which, I think, it will be admitted are not at present forthcoming.

Nor can we confine the question to the sun. The loss of radiant heat must (on the theory which I am now considering) extend to all the stars. A larger portion of the heat of some of them is no doubt intercepted by other bodies, but some of it must escape—vanish. The whole universe is losing heat; or at least it is losing motion, for the supply of heat may be temporarily kept up by the conversion of motion into heat (as, for example, by a bombardment of meteors).

But that a good part of the radiant heat vanishes, thus lessening the total amount of force—of heat and its equivalents—in the universe, seems to be a common opinion. This theory, however (for of course everything on the subject is theory), will strike many of your readers as unsatisfactory for physical, not metaphysical or theological reasons. But if this heat be not lost, what becomes of it?

If the sun's rays and those of the stars always met with some material body, however great its distance might be, the problem would be solved; there would be no loss of heat to the universe. The sun may at present be radiating more than it receives, and, consequently, cooling; but in traveling through space it may reach other regions in which these conditions will be reversed. But it seems plain that if this be the case, the greater part of the bodies which encounter the solar heat are dark bodies, or else that there is an absorption of light in passing through the ether.

Such an absorption of light and heat by the ether—as maintained, I believe, by the great observer Struve—would equally solve the problem; for the light and heat thus absorbed could not be lost, and would probably be given back by the ether to material bodies in some manner not yet traced. Otherwise, it would change the properties of the ether.

A third possible alternative is that radiation, like gravitation, acts on a material body in any direction and follows it in all its movements, there is no expenditure of force in the directions in which no material body is encountered. On this theory also there would be no loss of heat. There would only be an interchange of the same kind as if every heat ray ultimately encountered a material body.—W. H. S. Monck, in Knowledge.

Muir Glacier Not Destroyed.

"The tales of the complete destruction of the great Muir glacier in Alaska are absolutely without foundation," said A. O. Hewitt, who has returned to Minneapolis from the Territory.

"There can be no doubt that an earthquake or an upheaval of some sort did visit the glacier, for huge icebergs have been torn from it and are now banked up in the sound about it, making navigation impossible within four or five miles of the deposit. The glacier was distinctly visible through our glasses, and it appears to be fully as large as ever, with the main portion intact. This is the fourth trip I have made to the Muir, and were there any great change in its magnitude or shape I would notice it at once."

"From an artistic standpoint the shaking up has improved the glacier. Heretofore the ice itself has invariably been hidden beneath the snowlike deposit, but now the mass stands out like an enormous diamond, reflecting every shade of the seas and heavens from its brilliant sides. It will require more than an earthquake to interfere with the domestic economy of the great Muir glacier."—New York Times.

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A MUSICIAN OF NOTE.

Miss Ethel Harraden, better known in private life as Mrs. Frank Glover, is a musician who has achieved much distinction as the composer of a number of tuneful melodies. Less well known than her sister, Miss Beatrice Harraden, the author of "Ships That Pass in the Night," she is equally clever in her particular bent. Miss Harraden began composing at the tender age of 5, and was only 7 when her first composition was published. Speaking recently of her work, Miss Harraden said: "Amongst my most successful songs have been 'If at Your Window, Love' and 'As We Love Today,' the poetry of both these being by Mr. Robert Hichens; a setting of Longfellow's 'Rainy Day,' for which I gained the ten-guinea prize; also a setting of Longfellow's words, 'Ships that pass in the night,' which



MRS. FRANK GLOVER.

words gave my sister Beatrice the title of her world-famed book; and 'Sweet Amabel,' words by my sister Gertrude. A little one-act operetta, 'His Last Chance,' libretto by my brother Hubert, and music by me, was played at the Gaiety theater for nine months; and it is still a favorite amongst amateurs, and is frequently being performed. At the London exhibitions, held at Earl's court in 1897, I was invited to send on loan to the section of the 'Women's Work of the Victorian Era' an original manuscript of a song and orchestral piece."

LABOURCHE ON COCKFIGHTS.

Why He Despises It Is Very Plain to be Seen.

There is no word so often misapplied as "sportsman," says London Truth. A man who owns a racehorse is called one, although he may never have ridden a horse in his life. A man who backs one man to pummel another, who knows the rules of the prize ring, is called one. And now Mr. Herbert Vivian aspires to become one of the fraternity by reviving the noble sport of cock-fighting. It is evident, however, that he is not aware of the law. A cock is held to be a domestic animal, and he would bring himself under the cruelty to animals act of 1849. But he would also come under the clause in that act that imposes a penalty of £5 on any one who keeps, uses, or acts in the management of any place for the purpose of baiting any bull, bear, badger, dog, cock, or any other kind of animal, whether of domestic or wild nature, or shall permit any such place to be used as aforesaid. Under this clause there have been a good many convictions, and it has, moreover, been held that any one who encourages or assists at a cock-fight is liable to imprisonment for cruelty to animals. I saw a cockfight nearly fifty years ago in Mexico, and it seemed a very brutal performance. The then president was an ardent supporter of cock-fighting, and he was by way of owning the best cocks in the country. He invited me to go with him to see a fight. Every man was betting, and his excellency covered all stakes set against his cocks. I lost above £100 to him myself.

The Italian government is so impressed by the recent terrible railway collision near Rome that it is taking steps for the holding at Rome next spring of an exhibition of appliances and inventions for preventing railway collisions.

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The Chinese Invaders..

At Different Times They Attempted the Conquest of Manila.

The history of the Chinese as invaders and warriors is replete with deeds of reckless valor, as well as of keen intellect. When the Spanish discovered the Philippine islands they also discovered that Chinamen had already invaded the islands and were a powerful political and commercial factor. In 1574 Li-Ma-Hong, a Chinese naval officer and filibuster, arrived before Manila with 62 ships. He made a landing, but after 10 months of hard fighting he had to withdraw.

Other invasions followed, but were not successful. In 1602 over 20,000 Chinamen had quietly settled in Manila, and thousands were scattered over Luzon. In 1602 they concluded they would take the island and started an insurrection, but it was not a success and

nearly every one of them was killed. By 1639 the island was again full of Chinamen, and another attempt was made to throw out the Spaniards. This war lasted only six months, and, owing to the failure of reinforcements to arrive on time, over 50,000 Chinamen lost their lives, and, of course, the rebellion was a failure. In 1662 a Chinese fleet appeared before Manila and demanded tribute. In 1762 England captured Manila, but the success of the undertaking was largely due to her Chinese allies. Not only in Luzon, but in nearly all the islands of the archipelago, may be found records of efforts of Chinamen to make conquests of the country. In every instance they failed because their forces were outnumbered, but their persistence shows them to be made of no weak stuff.