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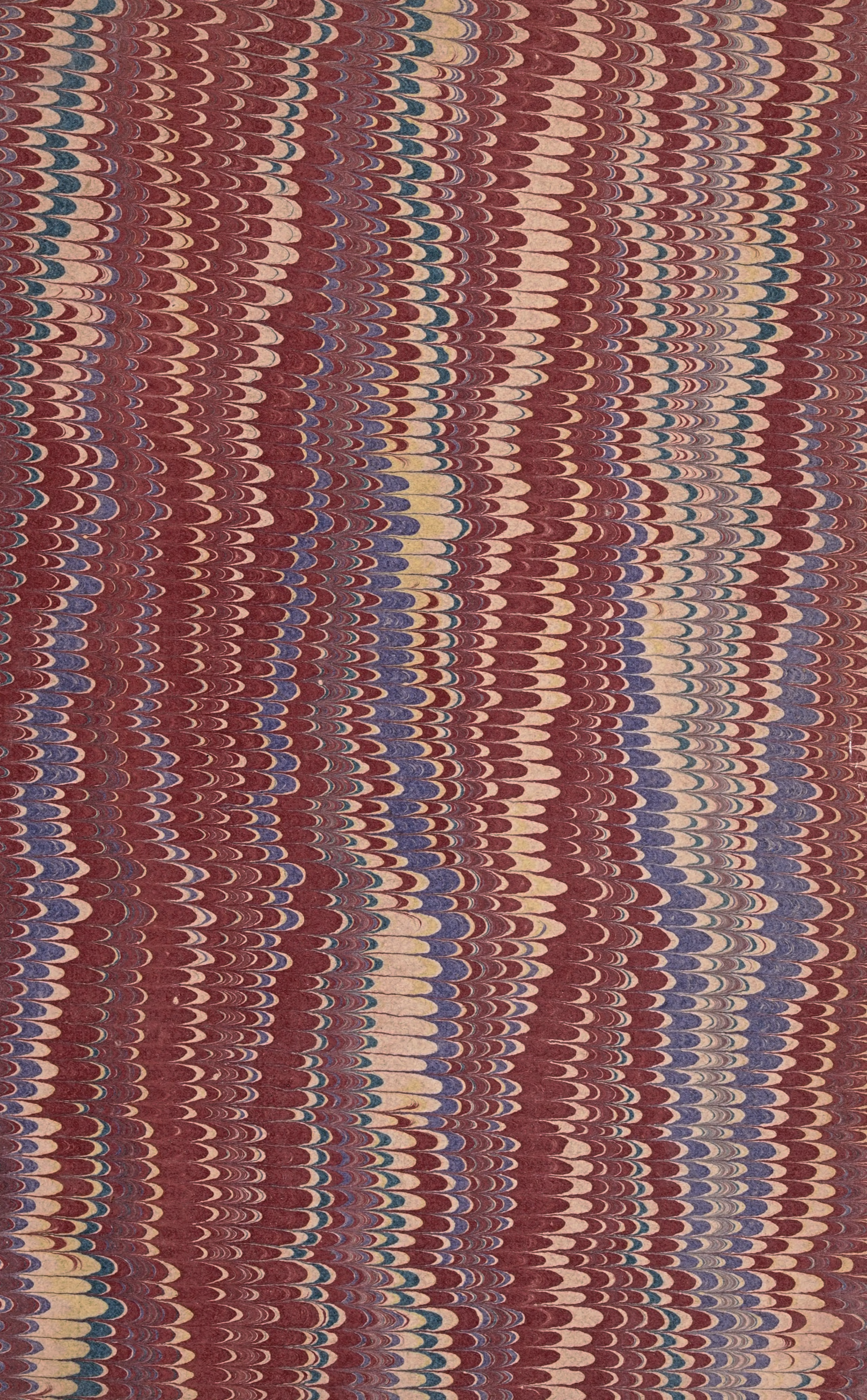
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ROMANCES.

Farm and Fireside Library. June, 1894. No. 112.
Published monthly by
Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, Springfield, Ohio.
Subscription Price, \$3 per year.

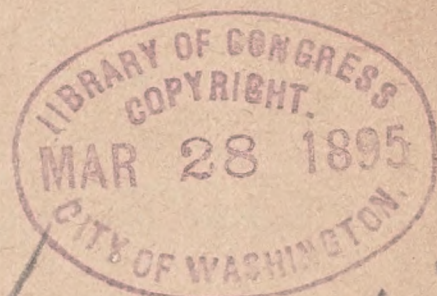
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SPECTACULAR ROMANCES

BY

WILLIAM HOSEA BALLOU,

Author of "A Ride on a Cyclone," "The Bachelor Girl," "The Upper Ten," "An Automatic Wife," etc.



47876

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REALISM IS NOT FICTION;
IT IS JOURNALISM.

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TO
One Sweet Memory,

CARITA.

The song-bird sang a wondrous ode of praise,
To God, whose light, whose lustrous morning blaze,
Set fire to clouds, to forests, nooks and hills
And all the wastes of Earth, the rocks and rills.

Her song now low and sweet, now loud and clear,
As chimes of bells or the bold chanticleer,
Broke through the woods, the clouds, until it stirred
The Blest Abode, where God and angels heard.

And on the topmost twig of the tall tree,
An angel found her, thrilled with melody,
And marked for her a token o'er the sod—
Then bore the wondrous song-bird forth to God.

—WM. HOSEA BALLOU.

This Volume is Offered.

Chat with the Reader.

A DESIRE to place before the public, specimens of the various styles, or better, perhaps, types of short stories for comparison and recreation, has led the author to present this volume of his creations. In so doing he offers several new types of his own as indicative of the trend of the modern mind and as best adapted to the data of the marvelous civilization of to-day. Many of these stories are in imitation of the style of his novel, "A Ride On A Cyclone," which is generally conceded to have met with the approval of modern readers who are sufficiently surfeited with past types of heroes, heroines, plots, worn-out descriptive matter, threadbare delineations of character, commonplace realism, passionism and vulgarity. These stories comprise "The Ideal Girl," "An Aerial Courtship," and

CHAT WITH THE READER.

“Love on a Log,” etc. “The Mystery of Mrs. Weak,” will be found to imitate prevailing English styles of short stories. “The Age,” “The Owl-Trapper’s Christmas,” “The Pioneer Maid,” are in imitation of the common American magazine styles. “One Southern Girl,” will stand as the pure and simple type of realism. The storylets placed between the stories are in accordance, perhaps, with a new idea of the author and will relieve the reader’s mind from the tension which follows a close attention to longer stories. In “The Jewess,” the author presents an elaborate and truthful defence of the Hebrew. In this novel, as in “A Ride On A Cyclone,” the heroine demonstrates the masterful intellect of woman, the existence of which novelists in general have parsimoniously overlooked. Of course, the author is prejudiced in favor of his own peculiar type of fiction. He believes that in this age of intense mental activity, fiction should be fiction, in order that the mind may be absolutely drawn by it from its every day pursuits. It is only in the stupendous plot that such absolute relief can be had. Around such a plot must be woven corresponding

CHAT WITH THE READER.

great creative ideas and actual pictures of the most immense advances of our unparalleled civilization. The author believes, too, that he should consecrate all his energies to collate the advances of mind, both in the human and the lower animal world. In order to so better do he has attempted to master some knowledge of law, medicine, science, in all its branches, applied science, philosophy, geography, ethnology, changing methods of conducting commerce and business, politics and whatever concerns the industries of mind. This cannot be done merely by reading books and newspapers ; but by extensive travel, examinations of papers of the great law cases in the higher courts, of collections of naturalists and travelers and in talks with peoples of all descriptions. This may seem like a considerable amount of occupation ; but it is what the author has scrupulously performed from boyhood with almost the sole purpose of making his work worth one's time to peruse, and to print the results in an accurate and condensed form. He has no quarrel with the newspapers which sometimes deny his facts without the same laborious investigation. When he knows that he has the

CHAT WITH THE READER.

facts as well as the evidence to substantiate them, he believes it his duty to present these facts in the most condensed form for the use of the reader, without elaboration or evidence, in order that the interest of the plot may not be hampered and that the peruser may not be bored by superfluities.

W. H. B.

NEW YORK, September 30, 1892.

The Ideal Girl.

MISS ANGEL FOOD lived on the apex of the peak of Mount Sheridan, ten thousand feet above the sea. Mount Sheridan is in Wyoming and was named after the General on account of its severe usage of antagonists who have tried to climb it. Miss Food's only companions were some mountain sheep and goats, some ptarmigans, a family of grizzlies and a few black buffaloes. She was sitting on a rock one day enjoying the Indian summer, when Mr. Scoop, a New York reporter, walked up and took a seat at her side.

“Good morning, Mademoiselle!” he said, briskly. He took off his white plug hat, dried his forehead with a handkerchief and lighted a cigarette.

“Good morning!” she replied, in the sweetest voice he had ever heard.

“ Hope you don't mind,” he remarked, puffing away vigorously.

“ Not at all. I don't find smoke offensive and it is a pleasure to see you enjoy it.”

“ Mademoiselle, you overpower me with such courtesy. The modern nuisance is not the smoker but the lady who objects to the practice of smoking. Would you flatter me with your name? ”

“ Angel Food.”

“ Astonishing! Let me make a note of it.—Found a girl on Mount Sheridan, ten thousand feet above the sea, by the name of Angel Food. Extraordinary! And she doesn't object to smoking. Wonderful!—I say Miss Food, would you mind telling how the deuce—I beg pardon—how you ever got up here? ”

“ I never got up here.”

“ But you are here.”

“ True ; I have always lived here.”

“ Goodness! wait until I put that down. Could you let me see a late newspaper? I have been traveling through the mountains some days and have lost track of civilization.”

“ I do not subscribe for any publications. I

never saw a newspaper, book or any printed matter in my life."

"Not so fast, please. I want to get that marvelous statement down. Are you married?"

"No sir, you are the first man I ever saw."

The reporter stopped to whistle a moment, and began to look around for a telegraph office. There was none within five hundred miles, and for a moment he perspired until he remembered that there were no reporters within a thousand miles.

"Could I be presented to your parents?" he ventured.

"I have never known any."

"Come now, my dear Miss Angel Food. The New York papers admire reasonable sensations, but this is a little brisk, even for the Metropolis."

"Are you from New York, and a reporter?"

"Yes."

"How did you get to the top?"

"Natural result of being a reporter."

"I mean to the top of the mountain?"

"Walked up."

"But you are the first person that ever climbed

this mountain; the first human being I have ever seen."

"Mademoiselle, pause a moment while I write it down. You must sign the statements and make affidavits. May I ask if you have any companions?"

"Plenty of them—goats, ptarmigans, grizzlies"——.

"Grizzlies!" yelled Mr. Scoop, springing upon the top of the highest rock. "Did you say grizzlies?"

"Yes; be calm. I am on the bear side of the market and we live amicably together."

"But what will become of me?"

"Oh, they never squeeze shorts, and reporters have liberties on account of their profession. Calm yourself, pray."

The reporter sat down and gazed around. Four hundred peaks rose from eight thousand to fourteen thousand feet high, in the vast expanse about him. Some were crowned with perpetual snows. At his feet rolled the waters which made their way to the Gulf of California, the Gulf of Colorado and the Gulf of Mexico. To the north

was the Yellowstone Park and its geysers, throwing up steam and water hundreds of feet. Within the scope of vision were fifty thousand square miles, which the rarity of the atmosphere brought out distinctly. He made a note of it, and turned to the beautiful being untainted by civilization.

“Sweet mountain maid,” he murmured, “who are you? What are you? Tell me the story of your life.”

She turned and looked with curiosity on this mortal like herself, yet so utterly her opposite in sex and education.

“I have no story to tell,” she said. “Perhaps my story is yet to be. Are you not to write it?”

For a few moments he was lost in thought. Then he took up his pencil and continued the interview. “And so,” he remarked, “you know nothing of the life of the modern girl?”

“Nothing!”

“You never went to a boarding school and with your girl chum had a clandestine champagne supper in your room at night with two young men

admitted through your window by means of a rope? ”

“ Never ! ”

“ You haven't chewed gum or slate pencils ? ”

“ I never saw such articles. ”

“ Never went to the opera or theatre night after night at the expense of poor fellows who spent all their salaries for boxes, flowers, carriages and Delmonico dinners ? ”

“ I know not what you mean. ”

“ Never trifled with a man's affections until he implored your hand in marriage, and then drove him out to suicide or cynicism, with the assurance that you would be his sister but not his wife ? ”

“ You are the first young man I ever saw. ”

“ Who pays for your bonnets, Paris gowns, your jewelry ? ”

“ I weave my garments from the sage bush. ”

“ Who pays for your maid, your groceries, your mansion, your liveries ? ”

“ I do my own work, live on the milk of the goat, live in the hollow of the rock with its sides of quartz, and walk, not ride. ”

“ Could I get you to correspond with me when I leave ? ”

“ If you are an honorable man.”

“ Would you write to me as you really think and feel ? ”

“ When I know you are honorable I will write to you as if I were consigning my thoughts to oblivion.”

“ Is there a soda fountain or an ice cream palace or oyster saloon about where we can refresh ourselves ? ”

“ I never drink or eat at such places.”

“ Then there can be none about. Such shops could not amass a fortune without at least one girl customer. What is your dot ? ”

“ Sir ? ”

“ How much are you worth ? ”

“ I own this mountain. It is filled with gold, and the walls of my room sparkle with nuggets.”

“ Sweet maid, be mine, I pray you.”

“ I will.”

“ When ? ”

“ To-day.”

“ You do not desire to send abroad for a trousseau ? ”

“ I have my own made by my hand.”

“ You do not desire a year in which to break as many hearts as possible, and a promise to keep the engagement secret so you can flirt in security ? ”

“ I would break no hearts, nor flirt. Let us sign a legal contract of marriage in the absence of a priest.”

“ But, sweet friend, you know nothing about me. I love you at sight, because you are ten thousand feet above your sex in general.”

“ I need to know nothing about you, except that I love you. Love is independent of circumstances and environment. It should have no reason for its existence, no consideration at all, except the fact. We are as we are without one plea. The cactus clings to the lofty sands, ground of the rocks, but we know not why. Love is like the cactus, because it is unreasonable of growth. I love the reporter because he knows all the world. He loves me, because I never knew there was a world. Are you satisfied ? ”

“ I am, my Angel ; but because I know all the

world, let me stay here with you and forever forget its evil?"

"No, dear; take me all over the world, because it is all new to me."

"I beg you to consider and let me stay."

"I pray you to take me or go alone."

"Alas! here is a woman that appeals to reason as she is, but like woman, must be unreasonable at the last."

"Ah, me! I was happy until a man brought me a world of unhappiness. I will flee and hide forever in my palace."

Mr Scoop looked around, but only his guides were visible, just climbing over the crest a hundred feet away. The beautiful ideal had fled and disappeared. After a vain search, Mr. Scoop descended and in four days of mad haste reached a telegraph office. His story appeared in a New York daily the next day. At noon he received the following dispatch from the proprietor of the paper:

"Return to New York at once. We want a champion liar for the affidavit room."

One Southern Girl.

MISS BLASE ENNUI was the belle of Virginia, a girl of conquest, beautiful, brilliant in conversational powers, and refined. She went fishing in the society of the world for its most interesting men. With animal men, those with coarse faces and eyes full with lust, she had nothing to do. If a man was a genius, or distinguished as a *litterateur*, a scientist, a diplomat, a statesman, or even as a resistible flirt, he was fish for her net and she caught him, played with him until she was tired, and then, if possible, attached him to her long train of devotees. She was bored by men who loved the cup to excess, who ate too heavily, who had only wealth and time on their hands, who were egotistic, who talked about themselves, or posed before the drawing-room mirrors,

or strutted about displaying person, jewelry or vulgarity. She liked best, men of masterful intellect, wealth enough to maintain position, men who, while observing the proprieties of life, were not too conventional, men who ministered to the tastes of ladies and herself in particular in the items of flowers, amusements, dinners, dances and conversation. Whenever she met a man who outdid the others, her standard was raised accordingly, and she kept him in her net, close on the bosom of her intimacy and friendship until she met one more surpassing. When men proposed marriage she did not insult them by saying, "I cannot love you, but will be your sister," or, "I pity you so much, it grieves me to disappoint you," or, "You will meet some sweet, lovely girl who will make your life far happier," or, "Had I known or suspected in the faintest degree that you cared for me I would have spared you this." On the contrary her answer was, "Leave me utterly for two years, and, if you still feel in the same bilious temperament, come back to me." It is safe to say that no man ever came back after so long a time, and the more he pondered on the

word "bilious," as applied to him, the madder he got at first and the more convinced he was later of her good sense.

There came a time in the life of Miss Blase Ennui when she recognized the fact that she must marry very soon or lose her golden opportunity. She was not blind to the fact that men like the best years of a woman's life, which she had squandered in study of the male character for her personal amusement and pleasure. Still, she believed that hers was a ripe, golden womanhood, and if she could meet a man of a little higher type than she had yet known, she would tie him fast in her net.

Such an individual as she pictured pressed his face against her glass of time at last. Mr. Self Content was a most extraordinary example of his own name. He cared not what happened, for what had happened, or for what might happen. Whether it rained or snowed, shined or was sultry, was all the same to him. He had, like herself, traveled everywhere. He had advanced with the progress and culture of the age. He was a reasonable devotee of society. He had perfect taste in

matters of dress, forms and proprieties of life. He was not obtrusive, nor a bore, nor given to excess in anything. He made use of his talents to the very limit of their capacity for good. He could sing a song divinely, paint a landscape exquisitely, write a creative poem or essay, make the leading postprandial speech, take the seat with credit of any professor of a university, fill the presiding office of the Senate or House with dignity, outwit any known diplomat, edit a great newspaper, plead at the bar with a Choate, or umpire a game of base-ball to the satisfaction of the players and spectators. Once he filled the place of Edwin Booth in *Hamlet* so loftily that the great actor was not missed, and again acted as substitute for Dixey in the part of *Adonis* in such a manner as to make Henry Irving forget his own existence.

Miss Blase Ennui was entranced at the first meeting, so was Mr. Self Content. As he grew in her estimation, she failed to advance beyond his first and piercing reading of her whole high character. She determined to marry this man. He had no determinations in life of any description,

except to fill out each hour as becomes a man. He looked at all women with his hands in his pockets, as it were. He always did his best and the proper thing; and because of this, whether he pleased or displeased, were results quite indifferent to him. He had his ideas of life and of the motives which govern conduct. He carried out his idea strictly, and easily reasoned that those who differed from him were wrong. It may be said, that in his case he was right, for those motives which govern the conduct of women in general have been demonstrated as without reason.

Miss Blase Ennui was, however, fixed in the principles which govern the conduct of girls from her section. Although she loved, she did not propose to vary her conduct—the conduct which was taught every girl of Virginia—on his account. Among other things, she believed it the duty of the lover to follow whither she went, be it to the resort in summer, to Washington in winter or abroad between times; also, that in correspondence the lover should tell what was in his heart, while she should only write what might be read by the whole world, and if she ever demanded her letters

he must send them, but not expect the return of his own.

The couple, while together, were content with each other. They made no effort to conceal their mutual happiness in each other's presence. He constantly sought her society, murmuring "come what comes." She ever accepted his companionship with the thought, "go and he will follow."

She became tired of Washington when society did, and went to Newport. At the parting each merely said a pleasant word, as if "it," whatever "it" is, was quite understood. There was no suggestion of correspondence, but she was not surprised to receive a soulful letter from him shortly after arriving at Newport. During the next week she got another soulful letter, but he said nothing about following on to Newport. Surprised, she wrote him a note of the most approved Virginia style, merely interrogating him as to when she might expect him. In the course of a few days she received another soulful letter giving a *bona fide* reason for the impossibility of his presence at Newport, saying that he had accepted a diplomatic

office at Washington to meet the ambassadors of several nations, and would be detained indefinitely. Miss Blase Ennui was, of course, a trifle disappointed. "What was the necessity of a man so honored," she thought, "accepting even the highest diplomatic office of the government? Was not the wooing of her more important?" However, there were plenty of interesting men at Newport, and feeling sure of her fish, she swam in the sea of adulation which extends from shore to shore of modern society. She knew he would be faithful, and what matter how she passed her time? Being so busy, it was natural that she should forget to write him for several weeks; then she answered his soulful letters à la Virginia style, committing no other sentiments on paper than would float, like a feather, before the public if ever published or shown to others. She received another soulful letter from Mr. Self Content, but thereafter became surprised that he wrote so few letters. After a time she answered in her own airy style, paying no heed to his passionate utterances. "Of course," she thought, "if he will not follow he doesn't deserve a direct reply, and if he did, he knows it is not

proper in Virginia to commit a girl's self on paper."

Mr. Self Content contented himself in Washington and imagined that he saw through this girl, her whole motives and her Virginia style. He, in truth, cared very little about matrimony personally, and made up his mind to dispense with the luxury of a modern wife. Still, he felt it his duty to expose the shallow pretense of Virginia customs to this surpassing woman and let her go her way in peace, never to cross his path again if he could prevent it. He concluded to write to her once more, in such terms as would imply no necessity on her part for an answer. The substance of his letter was as follows :

" We come from two distinct civilizations, you and I. Yours is the Virginia one, mine the New York. In your section the man is expected to follow his loved one whither caprice takes her, await the termination of her endless flirtations, and when she has wrecked as many of the lives of mankind as will satisfy her greed, receive the wreck of her own follies as his wife. I come from

a reciprocal civilization which demands of the woman her full share of the love-making and which indicates to the man that he is worthy of some effort on her part to win him. I would even sacrifice without a murmur this high office of the government to be at your side, were it not for your utter selfishness as is indicated in these brief, idealess notes which come as answers to the very emotions of my heart. You know my history. You know absolutely that I am an honest, honorable man. You ought to know that any expression you might put on paper would be as safe in the hands of an honorable man as if you thrust them in the fire. Even if Robert E. Lee did teach to the girls of the South never to put on paper what they would not have the whole world see, he erred in part. Your notes to me have only one import, and to the effect that I am dishonorable and unworthy of your confidence. I will not tolerate such a reflection on my character, not even to win the jewel of women. It ought to stand to the lasting disgrace of any woman to marry a man to whom she would not write any thought she might utter. With Thomas Carlyle, I say to you,

as he did when W. H. Mallock, author of 'Is Life Worth Living?' called on him: 'I am glad to have seen you as a curiosity, but I desire never to meet you again.' In the hope that at Newport you will breathe the air of reciprocation," etc., etc.

Down on the beach at Newport, Miss Blase Ennui read the cold-blooded letter. There were dozens of men around her, interesting, it is true, but she felt in her heart of hearts that, though the customs of Virginia and the teachings of Lee are correct, Nature's noblemen were scarce and that there was only one Mr. Self Content whom she pictured sailing past forever beyond her call in that dimmest of ships on the farthest horizon.

After a moment's thought she took a Southern girl's privilege and penned a reply:

"I have been very much interested in your letter," she wrote, "and have fixed the date of our marriage for next Christmas. The time to adjust differences between engaged people is after the ceremony.

Sincerely,

BLASE ENNUI."

“She sticks to that blasted signature, ‘sincerely,’” muttered Mr. Self Content, contentedly, “but I wouldn’t fail to be present at that ceremony for the Secretaryship of State itself.”

A Modern Episode.

“ WHERE do you attend church ? ”

“ At the Unity.”

“ Are you a member ? ”

“ Oh, dear, yes ! and you should have been there at my baptism. Mamma had a gorgeous bonnet and apparel imported from Paris especially for the occasion. Why, when she took the bonnet and held it aloft while my head was being sprinkled, you should have heard the suppressed exclamations of admiration in the audience. After service all the girls went into ecstasies over it.”

“ How do you like the Sunday-school there ? ”

“ Oh, it is delightful ! I have a class and mamma arrays me bewitchingly, and the young men look over my way more than they do at

Beryl McVeigh, which makes her too awfully mad for anything. You just ought to join us."

"I think I will. I have seriously contemplated it for some time and now am convinced it is my duty."

Slept in Two Beds.

MR. SACK departed for a hotel after a night at the Club. He had imbibed so freely that he preferred sleeping at the hotel, as he surmised that his sweet wife and idol awaited him at home with a pair of tongs. He was mellowed and happy. There were two beds in the room assigned to him. Under the pillow of the bed he selected he placed his watch and pocket-book containing eight hundred dollars. He had not been asleep long before he awoke in a wild delirium of thirst and took a glass of ice-water. Unconsciously he got into the other bed. At noon, when he arose, he looked under his pillow. Of course his valuables were not there. Rushing down-stairs he breathlessly sought the landlord.

“Where in——is the rascal that slept in the other bed in my room,” he gasped.

“Don’t know,” yawned the landlord.

“Don’t know? Why, he has robbed me and fled,” yelled Mr. Sack. “Come right up-stairs. He has taken my watch and eight hundred dollars.”

The pair hastened to the room. “Why,” said the landlord, “You must have been visited by thieves. Where did you put ’em.”

“Right under this,” said Sack, going to the first bed and raising the pillow; there lay the valuables just as he had left them.

“Why, damme,” he muttered, suspiciously. “I must have slept in two beds last night. I say, landlord! Order anything you want but don’t tell the fellows. What would the old woman say to this?” Then he went home and told his wife he had been reading poetry and got carried past the station to Poughkeepsie.

An Aerial Courtship.

ALMOST the entire city was in flames. On the top of the roof of a dwelling-house sat Mr. Charles Kingman, a young *litterateur* of wide celebrity. He was seated on a bench placed there for the occupants of the house to use during hot summer nights. A few squares around him were still untouched by the fire, but it was evident that these, in the very center of the sea of flame, must soon be consumed. Mr. Kingman calmly smoked a cigar and watched with interest the sublime spectacle of many square miles of fearful sheets of fire. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was about ten in the evening. Occasionally he thrust his hands in his pockets and sauntered aimlessly around taking a mental image of the picture.

“What a chance for a descriptive bit of effort

here," he mused. "Hang it! how unlucky to have no friends along who are capable of appreciating such grandeur."

Over on a neighboring roof he heard the sound of a falling scuttle-door. He glanced in the direction and observed a young woman emerge. She looked around in a stupefied way, saw him and sprang to meet him.

"Oh, sir, is it not terrible! Can you not save me? Are we cut off from all hope of rescue?"

"Terrible, Miss? It is terribly sublime, if you will permit the expression. Come and sit down with me and enjoy the spectacle."

"But we shall perish in a few minutes. See, the flames are approaching us on four sides with fearful rapidity. We shall perish!"

"What of it?"

"Are you not afraid?"

"Of what?"

"Death."

"Got to die some time, Miss."

"Miss Markham. Hester Markham."

"Well, Miss Markham sit down. There, now, make yourself comfortable and enjoy the spectacle.

Did you ever see such an ocean of flame? and look away up in the zenith. There are myriads of sparks and timbers floating in flames miles high—isn't it glorious?"

"You are a brave man and compel me to be calm. Yes, it is the most sublime spectacle Chicago ever witnessed. So we must die enjoying it."

"Perhaps not."

"Oh, sir! is there hope of escape?"

"One chance in a million."

"Please tell me what it is."

"It is wonderful how a woman's curiosity is paramount even in times of excitement. Do you really wish to be saved from a glorious death like this?"

"More than I ever wished for anything in my life."

He turned and scrutinized the girl closely. He first gazed at the back of her neck, to see if the base of the hair pleased him. A sallow neck underneath the hair at this point invariably turned him from a woman. Miss Markham, however, was an exception. She had not overlooked the back of her neck, where the hair grew luxuriously,

low down, and was as beautifully arranged as in front. Then he examined the face, the contour of the head and the bumps over the eyes. They were all pleasing objects. She was quite beautiful and evidently possessed of a lofty intelligence, and refined.

“Miss Markham,” he said, “I have a theory. Will you do exactly as I say, crush out all fear, and take your chances with me?”

“I will,” she said, in a desperate tone that convinced him.

“Then my first duty is to tie you to the bench.”

He took a long rope, evidently of the new fire-escape pattern, and lashed her firmly and quickly to the bench. Then he sat very close to her and lashed himself, leaving the arms and legs of each entirely free. He glanced at his watch.

“I estimate,” he said, “that in five or ten minutes the great whirlwind which is sweeping those cinders and burning *debris* miles through the air, will have its vortex very near us. Do not be scared, but gather calmness from me.”

He lighted a fresh cigar and puffed away in great enjoyment. The weed was delicious.

“Won't you let me hold your hand,” she said, “it will give me some of your bravery. It will ease away the terrors of death.”

There was a sudden and fearful rush of hot wind. It swept along with cyclonic strength, knocking over chimneys and walls. As the square in which the pair were sitting was engulfed in a sea of flame, the whirlwind gathered up the bench and its occupants and in an instant they were sailing in the air, far above the vast area of fire. At the moment of departure the man clasped the girl in his arms, placed her head on his breast and whispered, softly: “We have escaped. Have no fears now.”

“I no longer fear,” she said. Disengaging herself she looked back and tears came to her eyes. “Yonder is the destruction of all my hopes in life, all I valued, my worldly wealth, my friends, my relatives and kin.”

“And your husband?”

“No; I am not married; only out in society a year.”

“How is it that one so lovely, and so brave a

girl as yourself has escaped matrimony even a year?"

"Perhaps I have been foolish, but I love a man I have never seen."

"What is that I hear?"

"I have been reading the works of an author and love him though he is unknown to me."

"That is somewhat extraordinary. Might I inquire his name?"

"It is but a foolish passion. I ought not to have referred to it."

"Can you not trust me after the events of to-night?"

"With all my heart; besides we are likely to break our necks when we strike the earth. We cannot float forever at this altitude—and it won't make any difference then."

"I see you are becoming philosophic, which excites my admiration. I assure you our necks are safe. We shall descend into Lake Michigan and paddle ashore. His name, please?"

"Charles Kingman."

"Extraordinary! May I inquire what qualifications you possess for the wife of a *litterateur*?"

“ I am thoroughly in sympathy with his work. I think in the same line he does and complete all his undeveloped lines of thought.”

“ But it is usual for men of genius to marry fools. You are too good for the wife of a *litterateur*.”

“ I can tell you why they marry fools.”

“ Why ? ” taking her hand.

“ Because girls think it policy to express opposition views to such men, and they, having so much opposition, draw themselves into their shells as it were.”

“ That is right. I always felt, though I knew the young ladies were displaying their intelligence, that I never could or would marry a woman who paraded with my enemies and opposers. I get nothing but opposition in life and certainly would not marry into a nest of it. No wonder such men marry fools in preference. I thought I should not marry at all because I never met a girl who sympathized with me.”

“ You ? a genius or a *litterateur* ? ”

“ So you say.”

“ I ? ” withdrawing her hand.

“ Yes. Let me hold your hand, dear. I feel the cold air of the lake. We are settling fast.”

“ I said you were a genius? ”

“ You said you loved Charles Kingman and gave such reasons for it and have conducted yourself so bravely and shown yourself to be such a true and helpful companion to him that he loves you in return.” Taking her in his arms.

“ Are you Charles Kingman? ” she whispered, rapturously.

“ Yes, dearest,” cutting the ropes and drawing her completely on the bench.

Splash!

The man calmly paddled with one hand. Daylight broke. They were not in the lake, but in the mouth of a river. A big house stood on the shore. As the bench approached a gentleman in clerical attire came out and met them on the beach.

“ Are you a clergyman? ” queried Mr. Kingman.

“ I am,” was the reply, helping them ashore.

“ Just the man we want,” said Mr. Kingman.

“ We came over from Chicago on purpose to get married.”

The Tramp.

CHAPTER I.—THE LAW.

“Go on now! Don't take up any of the precious time of this corner.”

“Thanks, Mr. Policeman, for it's the first words a mortal has spoken to me to-day.”

It is a wretchedly dressed creature, wandering about the street—a male—why call it a man? Are men made of rags ; with grinded, torn hands ; faces bruised and sore ; pockets and stomachs empty? Not now. Only when the dust of ages is permeated with that of their bones, when antiquarians excavate a lantern or tub and write down a Diogenes or a Socrates are they called men.

CHAPTER II.—AN EXCEPTION.

“ Please, sir, give me a dime for lodging. I have had nothing to eat for two days. I can stand it without food for a little longer, but I must have sleep.”

“ Here, man, don't lie ; take this quarter and buy whiskey. That's what you want.

The “ man ” grasped the money ferociously. He spent a little of it for bread, and entered a vile cellar. Men—animals were crowded on bunks trying to sleep. Some were groaning, others cursing, many smoking a cheap, nauseating compound for tobacco. A sickening odor pervaded the foul place.

“ How much ? ”

“ Ten cents. Only one bunk left—number twelve. Cash in advance.”

CHAPTER III—THE MESSENGER.

The victim settled in the narrow, filthy bunk. Exhausted, slumber stilled him instantly. The dim light burned lower. Malarial, disease-germed

air, spectre-like, wrought havoc. Morning came at last.

“ Here, policeman, one man for the morgue to-day—number twelve ”

“ Any record? ”

“ Naw! didn't leave his card.”

“ Another case of starvation. Can't even sell him to the medics. No flesh on his bones. Dump him on the heap.”

The Owl-Trapper's Christmas.

“MOTHER, we may have to eat baked owl for our Christmas dinner this year! There seems to be no chance for any other meat.”

The mother smiled. “Even owls may be unable to get out in these snows; and if there were plenty of them to be had, besides those you have secured, I doubt if you would be able to pick any flesh from them. An owl is a combination of bones, feathers and muscles. The very thought of eating one is disgusting.”

“But listen to this!” The boy produced a torn and battered newspaper, the only one that had entered the house for several months. “Here are the head lines of a Chicago paper, the article itself being torn out:

““ OWL SOUP.

TEWARDS OF CHICAGO HOTELS—HOW THEY OUTBID TAXIDERMISTS
IN THE MARKET—BUYING OWLS AND USING THEM FOR
SOUP—SUSCEPTIBLE GUESTS WHO GET TURTLE
SOUP BREWED OF OWLS.’”

The mother's worn and anxious face again lighted with smiles. She could neither resist nor dampen the buoyant spirits of her hopeful son. When there was nothing but a potato to eat, he roasted it in the ashes and acted as if he had dined like a king. With clothing so patched and ragged that the fierce winds found many entrances in, he tramped through the snows unconcerned, and by the light of a blood root in the humble abode at night, dilated on his future at the academy and university. The good dame stopped in her house-keeping—not a very extensive labor in her case—and said quietly: “My dear, perhaps it would be best to kill your owls and attempt to eat them Christmas, if for no other reason, because it is difficult to feed them and us.”

A pained expression passed over the boy's face. On his owls, which he had trapped during the long and weary November and December, he based his

hopes of securing money for at least a year's study at the academy. His hobby was a source of amusement for all the Little Salmon River neighborhood. He had acquired the sobriquet of "owl-trapper" for his persistent labor. Day after day he had tramped through the deep snows with an old army musket across his shoulders, and at night was often seen returning with a string of dead owls on his back, the gun fastened across his breast by a rope passed around his neck, while under each arm he carried his entrapped live owls—often four at a time.

Little Salmon River rises in a big forest in Oswego County, N. Y. It makes its way to Lake Ontario where the surf pounds on the huge rocks in Mexico Bay. Along this coast, so beautiful in summer, so grand and wild in winter, when the ice piles up in immense masses to a height of a hundred feet or more, and resembles land-locked bergs, there are occasional marshes overgrown with dense forests. The blizzards of the North and Northwest sweep down on this coast in winter and bury it deep within their snows, which still rise above the farm fences in the spring, long after the

robins have reached the latitude of Syracuse, thirty miles to the south.

Near the coast stood the humble abode of the Child family, whose scion was called the "owl-trapper." Along the snow-buried highways the farmers were only able to feed and water their stock, occasionally hauling wood from the forests, and idling away the long winter around the kitchen stove. The corn had long since been husked. The last of the pumpkins had been dressed for the winter pies. The apples had all been prepared, and dried on the walls, except a few in jealously-guarded barrels in the cellars. Now and then a few hardy men attacked the hemlocks in the forest with cross-cut saws, and prepared a few logs for spring hauling to the mill. The little hamlet next to the lake on the Little Salmon's estuary, boasted of a church, and one store, where the most daring of the idlers gathered in early evenings, chewed cheap plug, and expectorated with unerring aim on the box stove, much to the ill-concealed disgust of the proprietor and postmaster, who suffered silently in exchange for the small amounts paid for oil, tobacco, stamps,

and codfish. The little shipping in the estuary, composed of fish-boats, yawls and skiffs, with possibly a sloop belonging to some outside pleasure seeker, was frozen solidly in the ice and buried in the snows, only distinguishable by an occasional mast showing its top ball in the air. At the mouth of the estuary the enormous ice banks broke into high-lifted heads, and showed a terrific conflict for supremacy between the current-borne ice of the river and the surf-borne ice of the lake.

The Child cottage was attached to a single acre of land, which yielded a frugal supply of potatoes for the winter use of the widow and son. The widow came under the all-present "poor but respectable" class so common in this country. A small building in the rear of the cottage served as barn room for a sleek cow, which yielded sustenance to the family, and during the winter comprised, with the potatoes, its sole support. It was a case of the survival of the fittest between the cow on one side and the widow and son on the other. If the milk of the cow were not used almost solely to make butter, there would be no fund to purchase hay; so the skim milk and the

buttermilk was all the widow could claim for food, and the remainder was churned for butter, and the butter went to pay for the cow's hay.

It is sufficient to say that Mrs. Child was the widow of a once-noted and prosperous Methodist preacher. With the approach of old age, the parson, as usual, was classed as a "supernumerary," and reduced in pastorate and salary. Then he was "superannuated," and left to secure his own charge, which resulted in the "opportunity" to preach in the independent little church and get what he could out of the liberality of his constituent hearers. A half dollar at collections, an occasional ham at pig-sticking, a load of doubtful wood, a chance at abandoned windfalls in the orchards, or at potatoes likely to be caught in the frost, comprised his salary—unless the annual donation could be added. The donation was a community affair, at which the whole neighborhood filled his house and church, and brought chicken pies, pans of baked beans, bags of doughnuts, slices of bacon, cakes and pies, and ate everything visible, except, perhaps, half a cake, leaving the parson's wife to clean up the crumbs and crusts. The parson died.

The widow exchanged his span of horses of uncertain age and speed, together with the rickety buggy, for the almost abandoned cottage and lot on which a village attorney held a mortgage. The man got the horses and buggy for his slender claim to the title ; the widow got the property and the mortgage. The man thought she ought to throw in the cow, but even the grief-stricken widow made a reservation in favor of that animal. The attorney holding the mortgage informed her that he took cows for interest in the absence of cash.

The widow, however, had one piece of property that was genuine. It was her fifteen-year-old boy Jim, the owl-trapper. There was no mortgage on him, and it did not take him more than a year to wipe out the mortgage with money that he earned, assisted by his stout little hands and heart. The village loafers liked him, notwithstanding the fun they made of him. They could not understand how a small boy could work nights and mornings, study in the district school all day, read volumes of histories and biographies, and still "knock out" a mortgage and support his mother and a cow. The loafer is not supposed to understand the stuff of

which men are made. A person whose only ambition is to chew tobacco, expectorate further than his fellows on another man's stove, and lounge around a bar waiting for another man to treat, naturally does not grasp such intricate problems. Perhaps to such a person's credit there is blood, which tells. Perhaps the son of a clergyman inherits blood brewed from the cauldron of universities and enriched on the forum, at the bedsides of the sick and dying; blood made heroic on the field of battle, the sands of Palestine, in the midst of contagion, and in the fights with sin. I will not say. I only know that he who works wins, whether he be a son of poverty or of wealth.

Out on the vast plains of snow, skirting the forests, climbing the ice mounds, went Jim, the owl-trapper.

Owls! What are owls?

Is there value in these bunches of feathers and muscles that make the nights hideous and the forests terrible? So queried Jim. The only answer was in the affirmative, debate it as he might. There was no work to be had. As the snows deepened and poverty tightened, his attention was

attracted to the corner where hung the old musket, rusty and interwoven with cobwebs. He took it from its long resting-place, cleaned it until it shone, and exchanged with the grocer for ammunition out of his slender savings. Out in the forests he tramped, his little feet and legs sinking far into the soft snows, which at times and places reached to his chin. He came home at night with four ruffed grouse. He tramped to a distant and large village the next day, and returned with a dollar and a half which he had received for his birds. It was a great triumph, a fortune in his grasp. He repeated the operation until grouse grew scarce and difficult to secure.

One day he looked out of the forest over a large field. He had been hunting rabbits with indifferent success. His attention was attracted to a stump on a mound in the centre of the field on which was a big white object. He walked toward it to satisfy his curiosity. It assumed form as he approached. It arose in the air and flew out of gun range. He had never seen such a bird before. He pursued it in wonder. The field was surrounded by four stone walls. The

bird alighted on one of these beside its mate. As he approached, the two birds flew and joined two others at the wall at the end of the field. He crawled near, but the four birds flew to a point where two others were sitting on the wall opposite to the first site. He flushed eight in all, which seemed to fly only from stump to wall and from wall to stump. He could see now that the birds were owls, larger than turkeys, with big heads, without eartufts, some pure white, others speckled with black on the tips of their feathers. He went home with his rabbits and his suggestion. The blacksmith sold him a light steel trap, which he set on the stump that very night. He argued that this stump was a favorite watch-tower for these birds, and the first one to alight would be his prey. He argued rightly. The next morning he took home to share the barn with the amazed cow a large and beautiful owl, which tried to set its powerful talons in his arms and legs, and to snap him with his beak. He soon had the entire flock of owls, and they were beauties at which the neighborhood marveled, and which his mother both feared and admired. At the village where

he sold his game he found a book in the academy library that described them as snowy owls which descend from the Arctic regions in winter in quest of rabbits and grouse. The book also told of museums filled with stuffed birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, fishes and with other curiosities ; and zoölogical gardens where these animals were kept alive. The first suggestion was supplemented by others, which taught him that both stuffed and live animals had a value. Then he purchased from the bookstore a work on taxidermy, and began to practice on stray winter species such as woodpeckers, chickadees, creepers, pine finches, pine grosbeaks, crossbills, bluejays, nutchatches, etc. He succeeded in learning how to skin birds and preserve the skins with arsenic. It was more difficult to mount them, and he gave up the project, with a few exceptions, because he learned from his book that there is a cash value for skins, as well as mounted birds. He learned, also, that of all birds, live owls, and their skins, are most valuable and marketable, and he undertook to hunt for them instead of grouse. The live owls required fresh meat to keep them alive, and often

he had to tramp all the way to the distant village to secure refuse from the butcher shops. He wrote to the principal taxidermists and zoölogical gardens of New York, Philadelphia and Boston, concerning his prizes, and then the heavy winter shut the little hamlet out of the busy world. One answer alone reached him. It was from Central Park, New York, and was not encouraging. It stated that the Park did not purchase its curiosities, but occasionally some gentleman of wealth made purchases and donated them to the menagerie.

The middle of December was at hand at the time of the opening of this story. The snows were so deep, and the air so cold, that Jimmy could scarcely reach the village once a week, and often but once in two weeks, for bird food. Still he tramped, caught owls in his trap alive, and shot others. His museum had become a burden on the mind of his mother, but still he persisted, and lived contentedly on milk and potatoes. At last his mother was compelled to deny him milk, and potatoes formed his only diet. Still the brood of owls increased, and the collection of skins

enlarged. There were snowy owls ; horned owls, dark brown in color, with long ear-tufts, and of size but little inferior to that of the snowy owls ; screech owls, no larger than a dove, with little ear-tufts and brown mottled feathers ; acadian owls, still smaller, about the size of a robin, with seal-brown coats, and as beautiful as a bird can be ; barn owls, with long slender legs and slim napes, which the farmers declare to be old Nick himself in wings ; short-eared owls, with no tufts at all ; long-eared owls, with long tufts, the last two being about half as large as the horned owl, but of different habits (the short-eared owl is a field bird and the long-eared owl a wood bird) ; hawk owls, with rings around the eyes, resembling the hawk, but with larger heads ; and even a pair of great gray owls, the largest and rarest of North American species, with very large heads and bodies—feather bodies of course—birds that live in the Arctic regions, and seldom visit the States except in the most severe winters, when they are driven south for food.

Christmas arrived at last, and Jimmy was in despair, not only about the family larder, but that

of his owls and the cow. All were pinched for food, and, of late, the question of a Christmas dinner settled down into the question of any kind of a dinner.

About noon on that day the postmaster's store was enlivened by the appearance of a real, live stranger. He was a fine, vigorous old gentleman, carefully muffled in sealskins and robed with a heavy buffalo-skin overcoat. A blizzard was raging that appalled the most courageous, and even the old gentleman himself wondered how he ever reached this buried locality, how he could get out and almost why he came.

"Can you tell me," he inquired, respectfully, "where Mr. James Child lives?"

There was a pause of mute astonishment, and then some of the loafers guffawed. The postmaster flushed in half shame and remarked: "I reckon you mean Jimmy, the owl-trapper, as he is called hereabouts. He isn't spoken of that away in which you speak, no disrespect tho'," he added, apologetically. "He lives with his ma, in the little cottage down the road yender, beyont the tavern, a quarter mile I reckon it."

After the stranger had bowed his thanks, with perhaps a trifle of amusement visible even behind his heavy mufflers, and had gone, the loafers hotly discussed the situation for the rest of the day ; in fact the sensation has never since ceased to be a subject of reference. But the result of the talk on that day was, that " Jim war smart arter all said an' done."

Meantime the stranger made his way slowly and with much labor to the Child cottage. The storm was so terrific that even Jimmy had not ventured out, and was discussing with his mother the propriety of experimenting with owls as food for hungry stomachs.

" Better kill a few Jimmy, dear," said she. " Perhaps they won't be so bad in a pie, and you can save the skins."

" But mother, dear, you have no flour to make the crusts with."

The good woman sighed. " That is true, Jimmy," she admitted. " We will have to make soup of them."

" Very well," said the now distracted boy, " I will go and kill two."

There was a startling rap at the door. "Come in," sang out Jimmy, glad at even an interruption and delay.

The door opened and the stranger walked in. He stood hesitatingly an instant, and asked, "Is this where Mr. James Child lives?"

The mother smiled. "That's you, Jimmy, I guess. Won't you take off your wraps, sir, and draw up to the fire? It's a fearful day out, and I didn't suppose any one could stand it."

The gentleman removed his buffalo furs and overshoes, and took the proffered chair near the stove. "Yes," he said, "it is fearful weather. No sensible man would venture out in it; but men have their hobbies and passions, you know, and I have mine. I came up to the village near here from New York. Our train was two days getting over the last thirty miles. I have been snowed in at the village, but finally concluded to come here, if for no other reason, because I wanted entertainment of some kind. Lively entertainment it was, too. I guess, if you can accommodate me, I will remain with you a few days until the storm is passed."

The widow and Jimmy looked at him and each other in dismay. "But, sir," gasped Jimmy, "we have nothing to eat except potatoes. I was about killing some of my live owls"—he paused and blushed—"for dinner."

The stranger laughed heartily. Then, seeing the pain he had caused, he stopped abruptly, and taking out a wallet containing a large roll of bills, selected a ten-dollar note.

"Here," he said to the boy, "if your mother will take my account in advance, run over to the store and spend it all for things eatable. Why, bless my soul! the idea of killing your owls! I would rather have my own head cut off."

The mother and son laughed with joy. "Run, Jimmy," said she, "and do as he tells you. You have saved us from despair," she added to the stranger. "It would destroy Jimmy's hopes to kill his owls."

"His hopes?"

"Why, yes, sir. He's an ambitious boy, and has been trapping live owls and saving the skins of the dead ones to get some money to prepare him for college. He paid off the mortgage on this

house and lot, so we own it, and has learned all the district school can teach him besides. I let him have his own way, so when he becomes a man he cannot blame me for obstructing his future."

"He must be a smart lad, indeed," said the old gentleman, gravely; "a chip of some old block, isn't he?"

"Why I guess so. His father was a smart clergyman in his prime, and occupied some big pulpits before they left him to shift for himself and us."

"What was his father's name?"

"James Henry Child."

"You don't say!" mused the old gentleman. "Why I taught a class in his Sunday-school in Troy when I was a young man. He was then our best speaker. And thus our old war-horses are left alone to perish!"

Jimmy, the grocer, and his fat son, came at this point, straining under the burden of flour, hams, codfish, and all the rest of it. Jimmy's eyes were bulging out with joy and anticipation. While the widow prepared the meal the stranger conversed with Jimmy, who was eagerly eating cookies.

“I want to see your owls,” said the stranger.

“Shall I bring them in or will you go to the barn?”

“To the barn.”

Jimmy cautiously opened the barn-door. As the old gentleman's eyes gradually became accustomed to the dim light, he was amazed at the spectacle before him. There were owls on the floor, on the rafters, on the cow's back, and on the manger, snapping at the intruders, raising their wings threateningly and glaring through their great round eyes. The stranger gazed and gazed, his evident delight knowing no bounds. The rarer species, such as the snowy, great grey, and hawk owls, filled him with amazement and made him almost boyish in his pleasure.

“Now let me see your skins?” he asked.

They returned to the house and Jimmy showed him a room, the floor of which was covered with owl skins. They sat down to dinner and when Jimmy was sufficiently fed to talk well the old gentleman asked, “How many owls have you?”

“There are seventy-five alive, and over one hundred skins.”

“Have you any idea of their value?”

“No, sir.”

“Well,” remarked the stranger, “I should say that the live owls average \$10 each, that is \$750 in all; that the skins are worth about \$2.50 each or \$250 in all, a total of \$1000. Come to think, a pair of great gray owls are worth, alive, \$250. Now I am one of the patrons of Central Park. Some patrons donate great paintings, some mammals, or woods, or birds' eggs, or stuffed birds, or some other thing which is their hobby. Mr. Vanderbilt presented it with great paintings which cost a fortune; and so has the Stewart estate and others. Mr. Morris K. Jessup had all of the world's monkeys, apes and their kin collected by the Wards of Rochester, and stuffed at an expense of perhaps more than \$200,000. My hobby is hawks and owls, particularly live ones. Now if I deposit for you the sum of \$1,250 in the bank at the village, I think you can afford to let me have your collection. In addition, if you will help me to get them safely to New York, I will pay you well for your time and also your expenses.”

The old gentleman beamed kindly on his audience, but it was suffused with tears of joy. The widow was holding her son in her arms. Even the Christmas dinner was forgotten for the moment.

One Way to Marry.

HENRY T. HENRY was in love with an English rector's daughter. The rector, Sir Hugh Gentry, was forty years old. His daughter, Miss Mary, was the loveliest girl of the parish, for whom the fond parents entertained the highest hopes in the matter of matrimony. It scandalized his pathetic soul that his daughter should smile on Henry, who had a peculiar record. Henry was, it is true, the wealthiest gentleman of the parish, but had a fondness for fast horses. Not only was his love of the race track a commodity of gossip in English society, but his prowess, as a man of great physique. He often chastised men, with wagging tongues, with his well trained knuckles, which were feared

as if they were a trip-hammer. However, he loved Mary Gentry more than all his horses, dogs, guns, companions and himself.

Mary loved him as truly. The twain agreed that if she could countenance his sporting proclivities, he could put up with her religious devotion. With these startling differences of taste and a scandalized parent in the way, they determined to marry in spite of the—well, the devil. Mr. Henry thought he could manage the irate sire if Mary would leave the matter to him.

And Mary confidingly left it to him.

The day of elopement was set. The family of the rector were gathered around the peaceful fire-side one stormy afternoon. Sir Hugh was studying the points for his next Sunday's sermon when he was startled by the tramp of a horse. He glanced out of the window in time to see Henry spring from a magnificent charger and command it to stand still. The door opened and the great athlete stalked in. Taking the young lady by the hand he walked in before the astonished rector.

“Mr. Gentry,” said Henry, calmly, “I come to wed with your daughter.”

“Really, sir,” thundered the rector, in sudden anger, “this is a new form of proposal.”

“It is no proposal at all. It is a statement of fact. Will you perform the ceremony at once or compel me to find another clergyman?”

“Out of my house,” roared Sir Hugh, “I had rather see you married to the scaffold than my daughter.”

The reply was enough for Henry T. Henry. He pinioned the arms of Sir Hugh, took him out of doors and tied him to a tree. Meantime Mrs. Gentry had aroused the servants. Henry went in for his bride, and as he passed out with her was met at the door by two stout men armed with clubs. In an instant he knocked them down, pushed his way through the screaming females and mounted his steed with Miss Mary seated firmly behind him. They rode to the nearest clergyman and were married without further incident.

Sir Hugh nursed his wrath for some time,

and then, overcome by the daring consummation of the affair, made peace with his son-in-law. Henry T. Henry, after his marriage, lived a decorous life, and the couple were the happiest in England.

Easter Buds.

“OH, if we only had some roses!”

“What a solemn garb for Easter; nothing but evergreens, artificial flowers and house-plants!”

“But we will have some geraniums anyhow!”

“Yes and we can borrow a few calla lilies!”

“Now girls, it is all well enough to talk about house-plants, but we all know that they can only stand around, as it were, without taking an active part in the beautiful services. If we had plenty of roses, as they do in New York, we could make all kinds of things, crosses, bells, hearts, banks and inscriptions.”

It will be observed by the very acute, that four young ladies had spoken five times in as many minutes. Further observation will be in effect that one speaker began and ended these exclamations.

She was Miss Marie Wentworth, the leading belle of the village of Wentworth. Of course her family was the oldest as it had named the place, and her father was the magnate, as he possessed the most money, the most fashionable residence and had the largest business interests, and besides, touched the key which unlocked the political prestige. Miss Marie was the beauty of Wentworth and had she not known it by intuition and reflections from her own mirror, there were plenty of people to tell her all about it. The other three girls were respectively Misses Maud Langdon, Kathryn Griggs and Lily Doane, her pet coterie, who, as it will be observed, had adopted the fashionable spelling of their Christian nomenclature, except Miss Langdon, who had neglected to change her name from Maud to Maudlyn. It is unnecessary to say that they were discussing the decorations for Easter of the local Episcopal Church, or Grace Church, as it was termed, and had met in its drawing-room several weeks in advance of the calendrical day.

“I have an idea!” exclaimed Miss Wentworth, delightedly. “We are but four, it is true, but we

have a total of at least twenty-five admirers, young men who allege a willingness to die for us. I propose that we serve a notice on all the young people for a meeting here to-morrow night. When we get them corralled we will inform the young men that the price of our future friendship is their personal effort to get us plenty of roses with which to deck the church. They ought, as a whole, to be able to cover the interior of the sanctuary."

"Oh, won't it be glorious!" exclaimed in delight the remaining three.

"Certainly," said the demure Miss Langdon. "They can raise money sufficient to purchase in New York all the flowers necessary."

Wentworth, it may be stated, was a northern New York village where Easter invariably witnessed deep snows. In the west, Wentworth would have been a regularly incorporated city, as it contained some 9,000 inhabitants, but the laws of New York State forbade municipal ambition in villages of such size.

On the next evening, the young men and women of the church convened. The proposition was very cleverly put to the young men to whom it seemed

on first consideration a very easy matter to purchase a New York conservatory and remove its contents to Wentworth. Mr. Henry Havens was the richest young man of the place and the cynosure of all feminine eyes. His will was consequently much of the law of the church youth. When the proposition was put he immediately arose and remarked:

“We can settle this question in a few minutes to the satisfaction of all. I know in advance what the result will be, for I have New York florists’ bills and experiences to look to for information. I refrain from advance comment,” he added, with an almost imperceptible sneer. “I will simply telegraph to the leading florist of the metropolis, and his answer will reach us before the meeting has adjourned.”

The idea was received with favor, and the young man’s stock had a decided advance. While the telegram was awaiting an answer, the assemblage gradually broke into couples, quartettes and groups. There was one young man who walked about in a restless way, his eyes alternately showing determination and despair. He was Mr. Charles

Francis Preston, a rising young lawyer of the place, and it was known that his ambitions included a series of high offices from the County Judgeship to that of the Supreme Justiceship of the United States. There was one ambition dearer to him than all else. He was desperately in love with Miss Marie Wentworth, and she knew it and almost felt at times the force and magnetic workings of his affection on her own heart. He was not very well off in this world's goods and her attention was distracted by the ardent wooing of Mr. Henry Havens, the unmarried aristocrat and star of Wentworth. The respective families were in favor of a union between the Wentworths and Havens, and all together there was but a little, a very little straw in favor of the aspiring young Preston. He slipped out of the drawing-room into the great dark auditorium of the church, into which only the light of the drawing-room penetrated through the open door, and sat down in a cushioned pew. He mused in deep thought for some time when suddenly he heard voices and saw in the body of the light issuing through the open door, the forms of Miss Wentworth and Mr. Havens.

The couple walked directly down the aisle beside him and as they passed he was compelled to hear several sentences that cut him like a knife and yet eased his despair.

“ You know, Marie,” the young man was saying in almost contemptuous tones, “ that this whole scheme is ridiculous and absurd. The answer will prove what I say, that the flowers cannot be got, and if they could, would cost a fortune. The idea of compelling me to secure them as the cost of your love is preposterous. If the sum involved is all, say so and I will draw you a check to-night.”

“ Mr. Havens !” gasped the girl, indignantly. “ As if my father hasn't wealth enough ! Your check indeed ! I have set my heart on these flowers and I thought for my sake you would be willing to make some sacrifice, say nothing for the church. When a woman is once married it is doubtful in this cold age if she can expect her husband to make sacrifices for her desires and I propose to see in advance what I can expect of a man. There, now, I shall return to the drawing-room at once.”

Mr. Preston arose, his head in a whirl. “ Make

sacrifices for that woman!" he thought. "Why, I would like to live for the sake of doing nothing else. If I had that man's money I would take the first train to New York and buy out a conservatory. I wonder if she would give me an opportunity?"

He returned to the drawing-room and went to her side. She was sitting quite alone, her face still flushed with silent indignation. She gave him her hand in almost gratitude but instantly withdrew it as his very touch seemed to thrill her with the intensity of the love and magnetism that was devouring this admirer.

"Miss Wentworth," he said in a low voice, "I owe you an explanation. I was sitting in the sanctuary and obliged to listen to some of your conversation with Mr. Havens. Overwhelmed with desire to get you the flowers you want—it seemed so little to do for you—I was powerless to reveal my presence."

"And you think it but a little to do for me?" she replied, almost tenderly, ignoring his explanation.

"Oh, so little!" he said, eagerly, "and I will

try and do it for you," he continued with the earnestness of despair.

He turned away abruptly as the announcement of the arrival of the telegram was made at that instant.

"That is real love!" she thought, and the great pleasure of it did not leave her thereafter.

Mr. Havens arose with the telegram in his hand. His face bore a triumphant expression and he glanced at Miss Wentworth with a perceptible leer. "I will ask the rector to read this telegram," he said.

The rector read as follows: "At this season of the year it would ordinarily cost \$8,000 for roses sufficient to decorate your entire church on the scale suggested. It being near to Easter time, all flowers in this region have been purchased in advance, and you could not secure them at any price."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the assemblage and the young people dispersed laughing at the absurdity of the scheme of the four girls. In fact the whole village had more than a week of fun at their expense and they kept out of

sight, Miss Wentworth feeling particularly sore, embarrassed and disappointed. She would not see Mr. Havens, the partial cause of her trouble, and as for Mr. Preston, she heard he had gone out of town.

One morning, about a week before Easter, Miss Wentworth, in answer to a summons from the rector, entered the sanctuary of Grace Church. To her utmost astonishment and delight, there were the aisles, pews and altar covered with masses of rose buds of all colors, species and descriptions, and odors of the moss, cloth-of-gold, Marechal Neil, La France, Jacks, and all the rest of them beat upon her wondering senses in overwhelming deliciousness. The buds were all arranged in pasteboard boxes. On a box at her feet was an envelope on which her name was written. Hastily she opened it and found a simple card labled :

TO MISS MARIE WENTWORTH.

THIS CHURCH FULL OF ROSES, WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF A
FRIEND.

Tears of joy, surprise and pleasure suffused her eyes. Here was triumph over Mr. Havens and a chance to turn the laugh on the village. Running into the rectory she caught the good rector's arm and beseechingly asked an explanation.

"Here Preston," called out the rector, "take Miss Wentworth into the church and tell her all about it."

Mr. Preston came bashfully from an inner room, whither he had fled at her approach, his face crimson as a winter sunset.

"This is your donor, Miss Wentworth," said the good man, and he gently pushed them through his private entrance into the church and left them.

For some moments not a word was said. They simply looked at each other and the flowers alternately. Then the young man spoke.

"Perhaps I had best leave you to summon your companions and arrange the decorations."

"No," she replied, gently but firmly, "I want to hear all about it first."

"There is but little to tell," he replied. "On the night after the assembly I went to that smiling area which skirts the Gulf of Mexico. Not far

from Pensacola I found the vast farm of my old uncle who was living in a semi-tropical paradise.

To him I stated the case while the charming old fellow pressed my hand again and again and chuckled all over with laughter and pleasure.

“ ‘ Now, my boy,’ said he, ‘ I can help you out. You can cover that church with roses inside and out. There are hundreds of square miles of roses along this coast in bloom all the while. The more roses we cut off the stems the more buds appear and bloom, very like the sea anemone, you know. A little salt will keep roses fresh for several weeks. I’ll tell you what. You can charter a car for a comparatively small sum. I and my help will pack it full of rose-buds, with their stems in salt, and you can take them North safely to bloom on Easter day.’

“ I knew before I left Wentworth that uncle had acres and acres of roses, and had hoped for some scheme to help me get some flowers here. Gladly I tried his suggestion. When the car reached Wentworth it was still a week before Easter and the rose-buds were in superb condition and had not opened. It can now be arranged to have

them all blossom on Easter day. On the night of my arrival, I had the buds surreptitiously removed into the sanctuary. No one save the rector and ourselves know anything about it. No one need ever know anything about it. You can call in your friends and simply say you managed to get the flowers and arrange them according to your own sweet will. Now will you let me depart?" The last sentence was spoken in tremulous fear that she would let him go.

"Not yet, Mr. Preston. I am not so mean, I hope, as to let your kind intentions be carried out. Further, I shall tell every one the whole story, and Charles," she said, abruptly and impulsively, grasping his arm with her beautiful little hand, "I shall say that you are the dearest, sweetest and grandest man in the world."

"Marie!" he exclaimed, his face white with emotion. That was all, save that in an instant they were in each other's arms and passionate kisses caused the reddest roses to blush in a symposium of rapture.

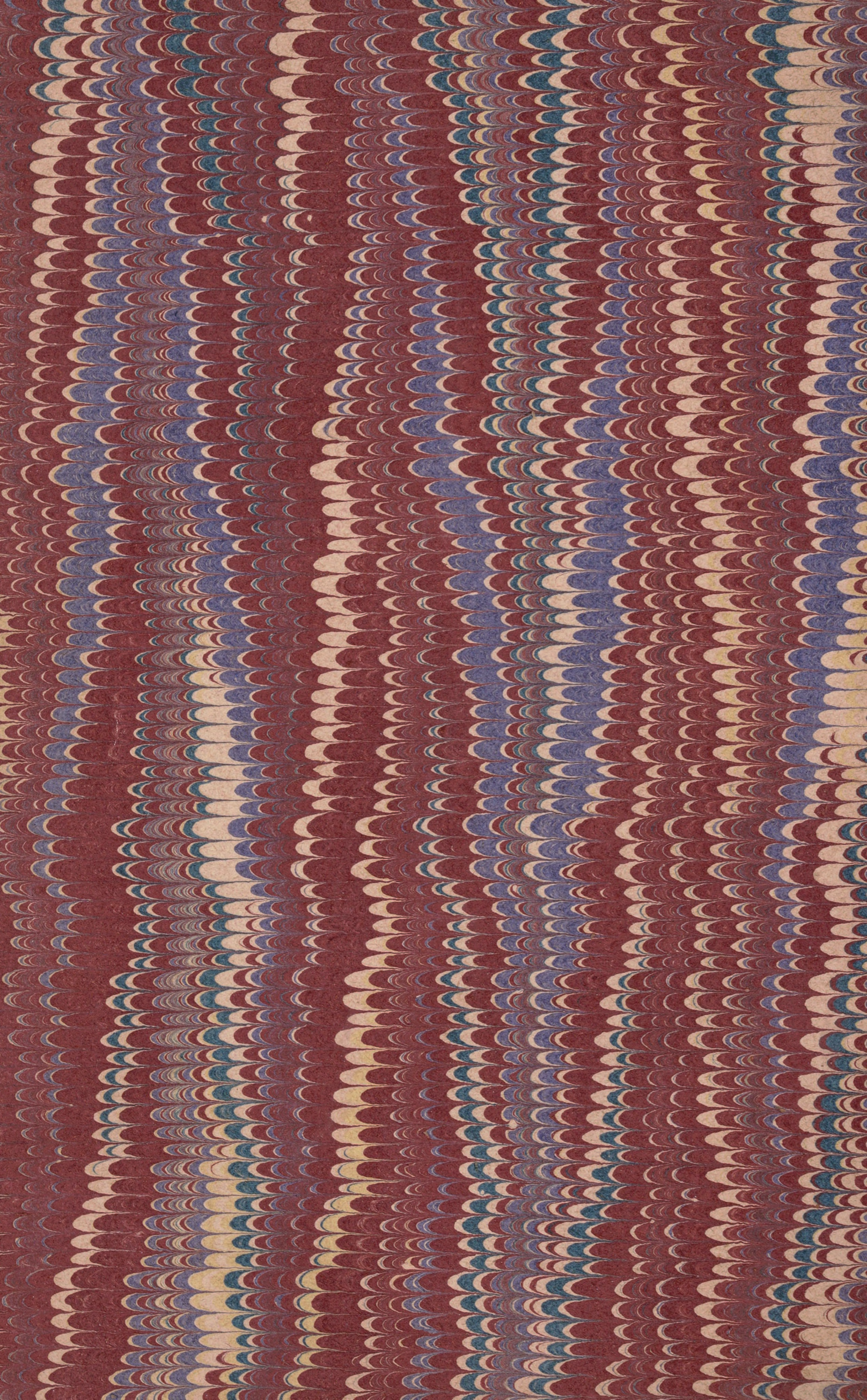
"Sweet one," he murmured at last, "can we not be married on Easter day in the midst of these

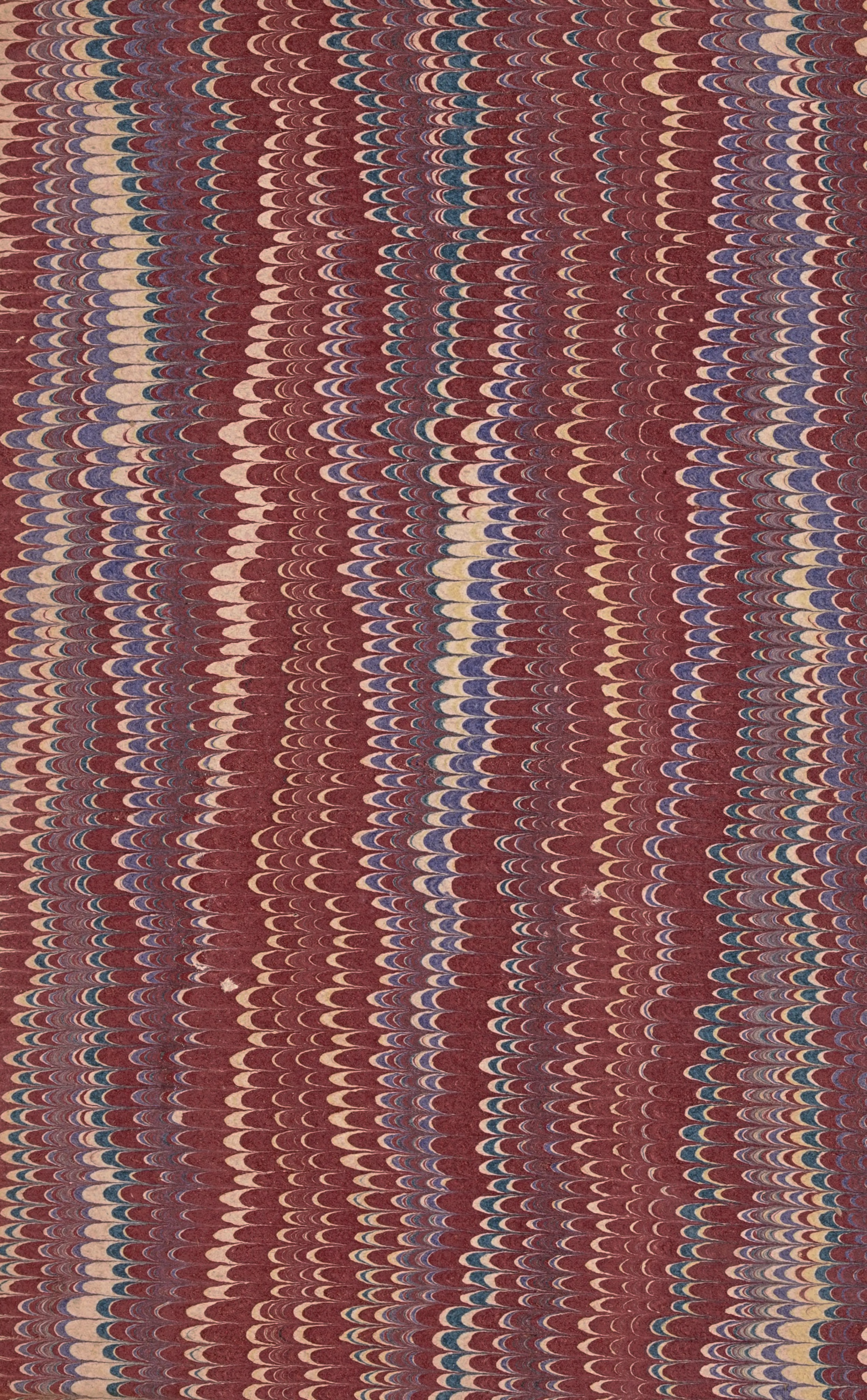
flowers and pass our honeymoon in that paradise on the Gulf coast, at my uncle's?"

She turned her face and saw all the rose-buds nodding approval, heard their promise to open and blossom on her wedding day and listened to their far-off companions calling her to come.

"It shall be done," she said.

On that beautiful Easter morn roses blossomed on her bridal gown where her companions placed them, blossomed all over the sanctuary and altar where they were married, blossomed in the special car that bore them to the perfumed sea, and blossomed all through the rapturous honeymoon that began on the morn which celebrates the ascension of our blessed Lord.





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