

What would she say now, did I dare
To claim her
As mine, or with the old fond name
Did name her?

What would she say now, did I dare
Remind her
Of that dear old past she's left
Behind her?

Would she be worth, I wonder, now
The beauty,
Did I recall her promises,
Her duty?

Ah, once she gave me "little wife,"
She said "poor"
Yet time brings change, and the years
Have sped so!

To me she once gave kisses sweet
In plenty,
Then she was sick, but now she's six
And twenty!

—M. N. R. in Boston Globe.

TRIAL BY FIRE

The Major was one of the many well-to-do Englishmen who came to California with a younger son's portion and a small monthly allowance, and hope to make a fortune on a vineyard or a wheat ranch. The plan always looks feasible in England, and the agent assures his victim that the thousand pounds will buy a ten-acre plot, plant vines, build a decent bungalow, and tide him over until the vines shall bear and bring him a harvest of good American gold.

The Major was going the way of many of his English friends. The one thousand-pound legacy was gone, and the monthly allowance of twenty pounds which, viewed from a distance, seemed large, always grew painfully small as it neared California and the debts it was supposed to cover. The Major's little mountain vineyard had been destroyed by phylloxera, and he was living on the uncertain promise of a number of green shoots, called respectfully "the olive orchard." But the Major was not unhappy. When he was not tilling the soil he sat on his little veranda, with his briarwood pipe between his teeth, and studied the long, narrow, picturesque Napa Valley far below.

It may be that the Major's failure to succeed in the grape business was not the fault of the country, but that his genial, unpractical nature was the true obstacle to success. The Major was, in fact, the most helpless Englishman who ever came to California to take care of himself. The poor fellow became so convinced of this after a short trial that he engaged a man to act as valet to himself and incidentally cook the meals for both. The Major was a solitary bachelor then. The gods alone know in what unpropitious moment he picked up Pete, to hang about his neck, a millstone of inefficiency. Pete's poverty must have been his recommendation, and the Major's poverty the excuse for keeping him. Pete had about as much knowledge of laying out and caring for a man's wardrobe as the Major had of running a ranch. The consequence was that the Major often presented himself at his friends' houses in the most surprising garb, a combination of white duck trousers, black frock coat and russet hunting boots being one of Pete's masterpieces. In his capacity as cook Pete was not one whit more efficient, and often suffered mental agony, over the ponderous directions of the Major's French cook book, which were like the hieroglyphics of the ancients to his clouded intellect. Considering the diet of sour bread and tinned meats which Pete provided, it is only less than marvellous that his benefactor was still alive.

When the Major married Ellie Smith, a pretty San Francisco girl, Pete was promoted to be manager of the ranch, and expended his grooming talents on the pet mule. The Major's wife was "artistic." She had studied sketching, and did some really clever bits. Her admiring husband was sure that she possessed the divine afflatus, and consequently much time was devoted to art and little time to ranching.

But this was not without protest from one individual. Not that he was disturbed by lack of work, but poor Pete was often than not the unwilling model for Ellie's clever studies. One day Pete posed for "The Man With the Hoe." His temper was particularly tried on that occasion, for he had taken up his tool with the honest intention of weeding the primitive vegetable garden. Though he had scudded through the back yard and climbed the rear fence, he had not counted on meeting his young mistress in the barnyard. He began to wrestle with the weeds, and pretended not to see her. His education, however, had not included a sight of Millet's picture, or he would have fled down the mountain side in utter despair.

"Stop, stop, Peter, right there. Don't move an inch," called the sweet voice that drove him to madness. "Kenneth," Ellie called to her husband, "look. Isn't it wonderful? The lights, the pose, the very landscape like—"

"The Man With the Hoe," shouted the Major, gleefully. "I'll get your paints, Ellie. Hold on, Pete, and before that honest son of toil had time to collect his scattered senses he found himself posing in a very uncomfortable attitude, with the Napa Valley lying at his feet and the Major's familiar phrases ringing in his ears—"Fine pose," "Jolly good subject," "delicious coloring."

After Pete had posed for a hundred or more indifferent works of art without names he began to think of deserting his master and leaving him to a just and awful fate. But this stupendous blow was averted by the arrival of Brompton Edwards, another Englishman, who had come to learn practical ranching under the direction of his father's old friend, the Major.

After a week had been given up to driving his protégé about the valley and introducing him to the English colony, the Major returned to his daily routine of pruning olive trees and digging out worm-eaten grape vines. Ellie soon discovered in the young man's clean-cut features and fine, athletic figure an entirely new field for art study, and Edwards found the time pass more pleasantly as a model than as an embryo rancher. They were together during most of the daylight hours. When Brompton was not posing for a wild Norseman or a Greek hero he was sitting very close to Ellie, critiquing, in soft, caressing tones, the sketches of himself which she had been doing. Without actually straying from the oath of duty, Ellie was treading on

dangerously treacherous territory. She quite frankly admitted to herself that she was pretty and charming, and, being of that mind, she did not repress comparisons between her husband and the younger man.

Edwards had arrived at a state where a warm-hearted but vain young woman needed a friend and a powerful strength to hold up a good, powerful, unrelenting color for her to gaze into. Pete could have held up the mirror with right good will, but he did not know how. In those days he followed the Major around with dog-like devotion, and only glowered when Ellie came out to the orchard one morning with her paints and succeeded in bringing upon herself a scolding from her over-indulgent husband. She held her head very high and still, and marched over the hill some distance away, where she seated herself and pretended to sketch, but was in reality nursing her injured feelings to keep them alive. The Major watched her disappear with a pained expression on his good-natured face, and then went dejectedly into the house. Pete was deeply incensed against Ellie, and made another solemn vow to desert the ranch. It was the ninety-and-ninth time that he had done so, and this time he sealed the vow with an oath.

The long grass on the Napa hills was burned and crisp, and Ellie was dabbling yellow ochre and burnt umber over her canvas with vicious strokes. She was not trying any attention to her work, however, for an athletic form stood between her and the landscape, and she was indulging in a very foolish day-dream. To do the little woman justice, she was not in love with Brompton, but her vanity had been stimulated to such wonderful activity by his youthful gallantries that she fancied he was deeply infatuated with her. She wondered if he would ever tell her that he loved her. If she could have some test of his love, what a satisfaction it would be.

Over on the mountain side, a half-mile away, Pete leaned on his hoe and watched a thread of fire crawling, like a red snake, through the underbrush of chaparral and manzanita. He knew only too well that no human power could stop it, and that within a few minutes the gentle breeze would cause a flying spark to fall upon the long, dry grass, and puff—the crawling snake would become a great swelling, galloping mass of flame and smoke, and would pass over the very place where Ellie sat sulking and dreaming. Pete had firmly determined to leave the ranch. He had washed his hands of these people. He would not—but the grass was on fire, and Pete made a dash for the house, yelling at the top of his lungs for the Major.

The volume of smoke was rising high when Ellie rose to her feet and sniffed the air. Before she could gather up her pet to a thin rim of fire ran along the top of the little hill above her. The small birds and insects rose from the ground with a whirr and scattered down the hillside. Ellie glanced quickly backward, and saw the fire licking up the grass as it bore down upon her, and the smoke rolling heavenward in dense, sooty clouds. She did not lose her presence of mind, but remembered a small plowed field a short distance away, where the flames could not reach her, and ran nimbly down the hill, with her fluttering skirts gathering cockle-burrs and stickle-weed as she sped.

When she was fairly on the plowed ground and gasping for breath she saw the young Englishman tearing along the hill at a fantastic rate. Through the smoke he looked pale and frightened. Ellie felt a thrill of satisfaction; here was the longest proof of his love—he thought she was in danger and had come to her rescue. A deep blush mounted to her cheeks, and her heart beat to suffocation. But he did not seem to see her. It was evident to her that he was crazed with fear and would plunge into the fire in search of her. Merciful God! he would be burned!

"Brompton!" she screamed; "dear Brompton, I am here—safe!"

The fire was very close, and she had to throw herself flat upon the ground to escape being burned. She gave one more despairing cry as she felt the hot breath scorch her clothing: "Brompton, Brompton, Brompton!"

A great wave of smoke and flame swept around the edges of the plowed ground, and for a minute nothing could be seen or heard. Fortunately for Ellie, the dry grass burned like tinder and the fire was soon roaring down the hill toward the valley.

When Ellie, choked and frightened, lifted her head she saw the thin, long, scantily clad legs of her husband bounding over the blackened earth toward her. His duck trousers were smeared with soot, and he had a wet blanket about his shoulders. He could not speak, but caught Ellie in his arms and burst into stifled sobs.

Back of them was heard the voice of Brompton Edwards. "Hello, there, Major," he called; "I had a very narrow squeak of it. My hammock and books are burned to tinder by this. By Jove, old fellow, you are burned yourself, aren't you? Your wife was safe enough. I knew she could take care of herself."

But Ellie buried her head in the wet blanket with a shudder and burst into tears of shame and contrition.

"Well, well," gasped Pete, who had stumbled up the hill with a bundle of wet sacks. "I never was so plagued scared in my life. Thought you'd be burned sure, Miss Ellie. Me an' the Major'll have a fine time next week clearing."

For Pete had reconsidered his ninety-and-ninth vow. Indeed, it was only a week later when he was speculating if there was ever a happier couple than the Major and his Ellie. And Pete beamed as he thought of the ignoble part Brompton Edwards played on the day of the fire—Stella Walthall Belcher, "The Slek Man."

It was the Czar Nicholas who first hit upon the phrase, "The Slek Man," to describe the Turkish Empire. He made use of it in his confidential communications with Sir Hamilton Seymour, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, when he sought to ascertain through him whether the Great Britain would interfere to prevent the dissolution of the empire in valid being hastened. This was in the early part of 1853.

Water Softened by an Earthquake.

James H. Grayson, living at Saline City, Ind., reports that his well which all along for years before the recent earthquake afforded only the hardest kind of water, has ever since yielded only soft water—almost equal to rain water, for domestic purposes.

Group and Personal

The group and personal life of the Major and his friends was a very interesting one. The Major was a very popular man, and his friends were very numerous. He was a very kind and generous man, and his friends were very loyal to him. He was a very successful man, and his friends were very proud of him. He was a very happy man, and his friends were very glad to be with him.

An amusing episode may be spent at a group party. The Major and his friends were very much amused by the Major's story. The Major was a very good storyteller, and his friends were very interested in his stories. The Major was a very popular man, and his friends were very loyal to him.

About the time the Major was a very popular man, and his friends were very loyal to him. The Major was a very kind and generous man, and his friends were very proud of him. He was a very successful man, and his friends were very glad to be with him.

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This form of entertainment may be made pretty and picturesque by giving a garden or out-of-door effect to the room. The Major was a very popular man, and his friends were very loyal to him. The Major was a very kind and generous man, and his friends were very proud of him.

Proposal parties are now and clever when properly introduced. The Major was a very popular man, and his friends were very loyal to him. The Major was a very kind and generous man, and his friends were very proud of him.

At the signal of the hostess every man selects a girl and asks her to marry him, pressing his suit until he is forced to leave by the jingle of the hostess's bell. He then proposes to another girl, and so on until he has laid his heart at the feet of everyone in the party. The girls distribute the cards and mittens, a heart for a well-to-do confession of love, a mitten for a less impressive tale.

Lord Strathmore's Mysterious Castle

Large and lively parties are those which Lord and Lady Strathmore are accustomed to gather round them at Glamis Castle. Yet (writes a correspondent) whether owing to the many legends connected with the place, or to the rather mysterious and serious demeanor which characterizes the present lord of the castle, there is always an element of (shall I say?) uneasiness about the guests of Glamis, especially those who are staying there for the first time. Unexpected things do certainly happen there; witness an anecdote told me by a young lady visitor to the castle who was one of a large party assembled there an autumn or two ago. The reason was an abnormally wet one, and on rainy afternoons the house-party used to amuse themselves in the billiard-room, playing (to quote an expression of Disraeli's in "Lothair") with billiard-balls games that were not billiards, and so willing away a few hours in pleasant fashion enough.

On one of these afternoons, as the assembled guests were in the middle of an exciting and particularly noisy game of billiard-balls, they suddenly became aware that their host was standing in the midst of them, with that grave, aloof and melancholy look on his face which is so familiar to all who know him. "I want you," he said to the by this time perfectly silent and expectant guests, "all to go upstairs to your bedrooms now at once, and kindly to remain in them until you hear a bell ring, when you will be quite at liberty to come down again." Without more ado the visitors, including my informant, silently stole away, like the Arabs of the poem. In due time the bell rang, and the party reassembled to finish the game. But the incident was certainly an odd one.

Rule for Success

"What is your rule of business—your maxim?" we ask of the Wall Street baron. "Very simple," he answers. "I pay for something that I can't get, with money that I haven't got, and then sell what I never had for more than it ever cost."

A Year of Terrible Omens

"Town Topics." A comet, named after Professor Perrine, its discoverer, is added to the omens of this terrible year of earthquakes, floods, eruptions, cyclones, fire, murders, coal famine and the increase of the prices of beef, milk and bread. At first telescopic, the comet is approaching the trembling earth with such automobile speed that it is now plainly visible. What further horrors it portends, the Lord only knows.

Man has taken waving out of the home and put it into the factory, and he has taken even the manufacture of all high-class articles from the hands of the family. He has solved the lighting problem, doing away with the troublesome kerosene lamps, and has developed the modern lantern, capable of throwing out as much light as a dozen kerosene lamps. He has solved the heating problem, doing away with the old-fashioned open hearth, and has developed the modern furnace, capable of throwing out as much heat as a dozen open hearths. He has solved the cooking problem, doing away with the old-fashioned open hearth, and has developed the modern stove, capable of throwing out as much heat as a dozen open hearths.

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The tendency of all occupations to leave the home has never been regarded as dangerous, yet it means that man is robbing woman of her sphere. He is freeing labor in the home and calling for more of it upon the market-place and in the factories. He is leaving the home open with the assurance that he will be needed there more than in the household, because man has stepped into her place in the laundry, the kitchen, and the sewing-room. He is doing his work better than she ever did it, because he is working on the principles he has found to underlie good results in any trade—division of labor and organization.

When he has undertaken a domestic problem, he has looked it squarely in the face, and if the equipment was not equal to the demands of the situation, he has invented new and improved machinery. He has learned the value of co-operation between man and man, and between man and machine, whereas woman is as strongly individualistic with regard to her breadwinning and washin' as though there were no such thing as advance possible.



1. WHY DON'T THEY WAIT?

What a woman tells her friends for new servant is a day or two after hiring her.



2. WHY DON'T THEY WAIT?

What she tells them she is about two weeks later—"Judge."

Unconventional Criticism

In a paper contributed by Mr. High Clifford to "Blackwood's Magazine," in which he relates some of his experiences in attending upon Malayan royalties, we find this amusing passage about the literary tastes of the Sultan of Perak: "When his nephew related to him the plot of Mr. Stephen Phillips' 'Paolo and Francesca,' a performance of which he had witnessed, the Sultan shook his head. 'That is an evil tale of a very degrading character,' he said. 'It is not fitting that such a story should be told, far less acted, more especially in the presence of ladies.' And when he was informed that the incident was historically accurate, that only served to increase the gravity of his disapproval. 'That such a thing should have happened is very shameful,' he said, 'and surely it were better to suffer it to be forgotten. Why revive these ancient scandals? And why should our pity be asked for folk so utterly depraved?'

One morning, new arrival years ago, Henry Goodere, solicitor, had a call from one of his most distinguished clients, the Marquess of X., who, conversing with him a commonplace, and on the occasion of his visit, had given him a novel and singular idea. The Marquess was a young fellow, but looking more like an old man, and having the air of a man who had been through a great deal of life. He was a very good-looking man, and he was a very successful man. He was a very kind and generous man, and his friends were very loyal to him.

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