

## First and Second Best.

By Arthur Henderson.

The escape was a narrow one. As the English mountaineer and his guide were crossing the wide snow field which extends from the club hut to the seros of the Vardon glacier, the treacherous snow broke under the feet of the former and he fell into a concealed crevasse. His guide could do nothing but hold on grimly. It was a fight for life!

Fortunately another mountaineering party was vending its way slowly upward from the distant valley. Dawn had just broken in the high Alpine world. The guide saw the black dots advancing and shouted for aid.

In ten minutes, by the help of the newcomers, the imprisoned man was safe on firm ground again, unhurt. The rescuers were another Englishman and his two guides intent on a climb up the Pic Mory.

"I owe you more than I can repay," began the saved man with hearty cordiality. Then he stopped abruptly. "Ah! It is you—Northey!"

The speaker's voice faltered, and a curious dismay stole over his face.

The other drew himself up sharply, as if the recognition were an unexpected blow. There was a minute of tense silence. Into each man's memory swept a swift vision of the past—a lithe, slender girl with red-gold hair, a girl who brought sunshine to the lives of all around her. Margaret Northey was even now below in the hotel in the Alpine valley. Her husband had parted from her three hours ago when he started on his climb; Masterton had not seen her for eighteen months.

A singular, quick resolve came into Arthur's Northey's eyes. "I believe I have saved your life, more or less," said Northey rather unsteadily.

"Undoubtedly," Masterton nodded gravely.

"Of course there is no obligation," Northey went on hurriedly. "But perhaps it makes it easier—gives me a chance, in fact—I mean, I should like to speak to you straight out. We have not met for so long I had no idea you were in the Alps."

"Neville Masterton watched the speaker intently. He at least seemed quite at ease. "Go on," he said, smoothly.

"You see"—Northey bent down to brush the loose snow mechanically from his leggings—"I have been married now—just a year."

"Yes, I know."

"And the girl I have married is worlds too good for me. And she—there seemed some difficulty in continuing."

"Yes?"

"—was really in love with some one else when she married me."

"Indeed!" The listener's tone was even and very quiet.

"I cannot explain it all," Northey continued, with frank wistfulness. "Except that I had waited years for her, and she knew that I loved her, there was no reason why she should ever care for a commonplace chap like me in return. The other man was clever and fascinating. He went abroad and never came back to ask her to marry him, as she thought he would."

Despite his effort to speak soberly, a note of wondering contempt rang out in the low-toned voice. It was so utterly incredible that any one should not want—her!

"I shall talk out bluntly," cried Northey, with quick vehemence. "My wife was in love—with you. She confessed it to me plainly before we were married. She wished me to understand honestly on what terms she came to me, because she did not love me. She asked if I would take the risk. For six months she had sent me away from her. During that time it was just hell for me; I neither saw her, nor wrote to her, nor heard of her. Then we met again and—were married."

Masterton stirred uneasily.

"Why are you telling me all this now?" he demanded slowly.

"Because I am still to her mind 'second best,'" said Margaret's husband, with rough earnestness. "It is God's own truth! Ah, how I wish it were not! To her you are 'first best' still—that is, as she thinks of you—as you were to her once. I believe she loves you still."

"I do not think you can be right," muttered Masterton, astounded.

"Cannot you see what I want?" asked Arthur Northey desperately. "You made her love you; then you left her without a word—alone—careless of what she might suffer. Now we have met you here by accident; now is your opportunity to make amends. Constancy with a woman to the absent is easy, because her imagination does not contemplate any disturbing change. To the variable present it is difficult; it can become impossible, if you will. You can make your reparation—now. Go down below there"—he pointed to the distant valley—"and show her that you have changed. Let her see that her love is misplaced; make her turn to me in contrast. Sometimes she has been so near to loving me, and then some remembrance, some little incident, has made her draw back. Change this! It is for her own happiness that I ask you to do it. Own the game now—for her!"

Masterton stared across the dazzling snowfield. He had never been really in love with the girl. His path and hers had joined for a while and separated again without disturbance to his part. They had been so

unloved for each other, of most of his life she knew nothing. And yet it was so trivial a thing to hear that she still wanted him? The thought stung his pride. For the first time that morning Masterton's eyes met his rescuer's boldly.

"Perhaps I will," said he with a half-puzzled laugh. "I promise nothing, but—I'll see."

Later that morning Margaret Northey sat under the trees in the little hotel garden. The book lying on her knees was unopened. She hoped Arthur would have a successful climb, but the weather looked doubtful. He was very devoted to her; she thought of his clean-cut, sturdy face as he had bidden her good-by in the flickering candlelight. Was she always giving him all she could in return?

A man's footstep crunched on the gravel. A familiar voice was greeting her airily. She sprang to her feet dumbfounded as her eyes met Neville Masterton's. The color surged to her forehead and then died away until she was pallid as the dress she wore.

"This is unexpected luck," he said. "For me!"

With an immense effort at self-control she shook hands. He smiled inscrutably, then quietly drew forward another chair and sat down beside her. He was keenly conscious of her involuntary shrinking from



She said she did not love me, him. The diamond sparkling on the ring-finger of the rather tremulous little hand roused him evilly.

"So you have got married, Madge?" he said.

Her face ignored the usage of the old nickname—none the less she was thoughtfully conscious of it.

"It was a year ago," she answered with a directness he found rather disconcerting.

"Alterations make one reminiscent," he remarked lightly. "What good times we used to have. Do you remember?"

"Nobody ever quite forgets."

"But we have to buy the pleasures of memory very dear. Even now you are not quite happy?"

He watched her furtively. Her aloofness challenged him.

"How do you know?" she asked after a little pause.

Masterton laughed shortly. "I can read it in your eyes," he said.

She bent over her closed book. Those eyes were wide and dark with fear. Then her voice altered with resolution.

"Tell me about yourself, Neville," she said gently. "I have heard you are doing so well now at the bar. I am so glad. Some day I shall be proud to think that I have known you. It was a bad time while you waited for the work—wasn't it?—but now success has come."

Her faith in him pleased his vanity. He was not unkindful of the part he was to play in the drama; but there was no hurry. It was pleasant to make love to her first.

"But now I have no incentive for work, for life—for anything," he cried. "Madge, when two people have once been what we were to each other their lives can never separate for good. Love such as ours was can never die. All is not over between us yet."

"Not over!" she echoed blankly. Her face was as marble.

"It shall not be over!" he cried passionately; the impulse of the moment, the allurements of her beauty, sweeping all else from his brain. "Come away with me from that dull husband. In twenty-four hours we can be in Paris, with a new world, a fresh life before us two alone. You know you never loved him; you love me instead. It is a bond which cannot be broken. Madge—come!"

He stood before her, intense, pleading, dramatic. His attitude was not unmanly. His face was lit by a great desire—a savage seeking after something holier than he would ever know.

turned upon him with large eyes of passion and cheeks aflame. "How dare you!" she blazed in fierce wonder, "you—, you—! And I thought I loved you once!" Her words came like the crack of a whip.

The complete contempt in her tone scared him. He stared at her in baffled silence.

"When I married my husband I thought perhaps I was making a mistake. Now it is a mistake, for which I thank God."

"Yet he is 'second best' to you still," he insisted sullenly.

"And who is 'first best' you?" she cried with withering scorn. "You are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with him. Listen! I thought I loved you, and you threw me over and went away. I was a mere girl, in my imagination I had made an idol of you, and I worshipped commoner clay than any heathen image. I was ill, I thought I should go crazy. Then he came to me, and again and again he asked me to marry him. He begged me to give him the right to take care of me, to protect me. He has slaved for me, he has spoiled me—his one great anxiety has always been that I should never repent my choice. I know this is so, though he has never even breathed it to me. He has brought me back to faith and hope again."

"And to love?" queried Masterton suddenly.

For an instant Margaret Northey was still. Then she smiled in a sort of queer derision at this man. "Yes, to love," she added softly.

"Then why do you allow him to think himself 'second best' still?" demanded Neville Masterton slowly.

She sank back into her chair with a little moan. "Oh! Why have you come back into my life for this?" she whispered, shaken by the strain.

The afternoon twilight was gathering fast in the valley. The peace of exhaustion which had possessed Margaret Northey's soul since Masterton left her had given place to a broad anxiety at the prolonged absence of the climbers. A terror of some unknown disaster haunted her uneasily. What if it should be too late? If she never had the opportunity to tell him how she cared?

A sudden stir agitated the porch. Voices clamored, horror struck. A battered guide was speaking falteringly, one hand was muffled in a blood-stained bandage.

The big stone fell, madam. The Her is badly hurt. The good God knows alone how we got him to the hut at last. There he is now. I have come for aid."

A burst of hail beat down on the cobbled village street, even to reach the hut that night would require every endurance and skill on the part of vigorous men. The girl-wife was undaunted. She was drawing her wraps around her ere the guide and finished his tale.

Other guides pressed forward eagerly with offers of service. A sense of helpless ness gripped her. An English voice was speaking coolly at her side. "If you will allow me, Mrs. Northey, I will see you safely to the hut."

Masterton's face was haggard in the lamplight. A sad little smile played contently round the corners of his mouth.

"We will be a while again if you will trust me," he urged solemnly. "Just once more to-night."

This time Margaret Northey did not hesitate. Frank forgiveness never pursued. She turned to him with readiest confidence. "Will you take me to him, Neville, please?" she said.

Hours later one large star had struggled through the snow clouds and was sending its gleam across the bluish pallor of the glacier. Flickering lanterns were guiding Masterton back across the slanting snowfield, his errand of service done. He had been restored to her for this.

In the little interior of the hut, sheltered from the storm, the wood fire crackled cheerily. Northey lay bruised and weak, watching his wife. Her fair beauty seemed strangely out of place under those smoke-begrimed rafters. She moved with a new lightness of step. A great contentment comforted her which was never to depart in all the years to come.

"Is it real that you have braved all this for me, dear?" he asked her suddenly. "Or will you vanish with the morning—in the dream?"

She bent over him with hurried breathing. Of the soft assurance of her presence there could be no doubt.

"Why did you come?" he murmured, still insistent; then she spoke:

"Because you love me; and I love you—Best of All."

"I don't see why a man mayn't kiss his wife before the guides," said Arthur Northey straightway. So he did.

Prohibiting Objectionable Odors. The Automobile Club de France is about to start a series of tests of various motors to determine which are the worst offenders in the matter of emitting offensive smoke. The club has a laboratory and is inviting competition by which some apparatus may be devised for the absorption of the odorous fumes.

Where Meerschaum is Found. Meerschaum, the composition of which is silica, magnesia and water is often found along the German seashore, and the pure white lumps are supposed by the superstitious natives to be petrified sea foam, from which it takes its name. The Turks used it as a substitute for soap.

## GRINDSTONES—SHORT-LIVED.

Rain and Sun Bad For Them, and Some Last But Six Months.

"Most persons," said the hardware drummer, "have the idea that if there is one thing in life a man doesn't have to buy twice it is a grindstone. The fact is that they are among the best sellers we have."

"The life of a grindstone is not very long. From two to three years on a farm and from a year to a year and a half in a blacksmith shop put most of them to the bad. It sometimes happens if a man draws a poor stone that it will be out of service inside of six months."

There are a good many things about a grindstone that most persons don't know. For instance, a mistake most farmers make is in leaving the stone uncovered. When it was a boy the usual place for the grindstone was out by the orchard, where it would be handy for the men in the fields. The wise man nowadays houses his grindstone.

Let a good drenching rain come along and the stone will absorb a lot of moisture. Often it never becomes wholly dry again.

Some persons have the idea that getting the sunshine on a moisture-laden stone will bring it out all right. Usually the sun has a damaging effect. The defect will not be noticeable for a time, but the stone becomes soft and crumbles.

Most of the grindstones used in this country come from Ohio and Indiana. Cleveland is the great center of the industry. Grindstones are made of a quartz like sandstone. Every grinding leaves new points of the stone protruding, and they never as a rule, wear perfectly smooth.

Another reason why a stone is cast aside after a couple of years' service is that it wears down considerably and too many revolutions become necessary to sharpen the tools. The wear is usually most on the softest part of the stone, and it acquires a jagged motion that is not pleasant.

There is practically no difference in the quality of the stones turned out, and the difference in price, ranging for the ordinary ones from \$5 to \$7, is due to the character of the frame and the quality of the wood used. Many of the stones sold to the big ranches and farmers are equipped with power attachments to be run by windmill force or gasoline engine.

The farmer is the best customer for grindstones. In later years the blacksmiths and machinists have pretty generally taken to the use of emery wheels. These cost more, but they last a great deal longer.

## New Orleans "Lagniappe."

Residents of New Orleans and Northern readers of Cable's stories of the city are familiar with the interesting and gracious custom of small tradesmen of giving lagniappe. The word, commonly pronounced "lan-yap," refers to the small present which the dealers make to their customers as a sort of inducement to call again, says Youth's Companion.

The custom is so firmly established that the people are in the habit of waiting for their little present after they have made their purchases, and children ask for "Mrs. Hort in her boot." The "Garden of the Pacific" describes a singular custom in Valparaiso. The Chileans however call the gift a yappa, which one might expect to find in the word used in Louisiana.

I used to frequent the fruit market which was well stocked. The fresh figs were the largest and sweetest that I had ever seen or tasted, and I made a point of daily bringing some home for breakfast.

The first time I selected the number which I wanted the girl placed them between leaves in my basket, and then laid another half-dozen on the top. I supposed that she wished me to buy an extra quantity, and shook my head in the negative. She smilingly explained that it was for a yappa. As I had nothing more to pay, I was agreeably impressed by the custom.

"The Chileans exact the yappa as their due. We were in a confectionery shop one day, when a small child came in and held up a centavo half penny—for some sweets. The man handed them to her. She held up her other hand and lapped out, 'Mi yappa,' and got it."

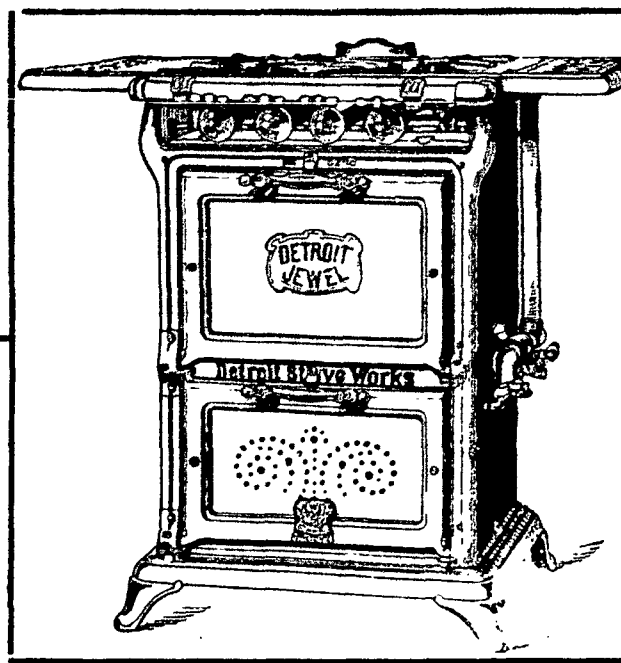
Dressmakers Work Like Artists. How is your gown created? I might as well ask an empire maker how he creates an empire, or a poet how he makes a poem. There are a thousand ways. Let me note down here a historic incident. It occurred only a few months ago, but it can never be omitted in any history of our art. The Countess de Grunfuhle wanted a gown to wear at her daughter's wedding.

"It must be something," she said, "something—not a mere gown—something that is a mother's pride and glory, and, as well, her anguish at parting with a beloved daughter even to the best of men—it must be something."

The artist's eye was upon her; there was something sadder, tragic, awful in this great lady as she went to and fro in an agony of doubt, apprehension, of indecision. It reminded him—the artist told me—of some great empire thronged round with fiery foes. And he cried aloud: "Byzance!"

Not for a moment did the countess think he was mad. She saw the light of genius in his eyes. She comprehended.

He had created the Byzantine gown. And yet did he create it? At all events she collaborated. And so gowns are made.



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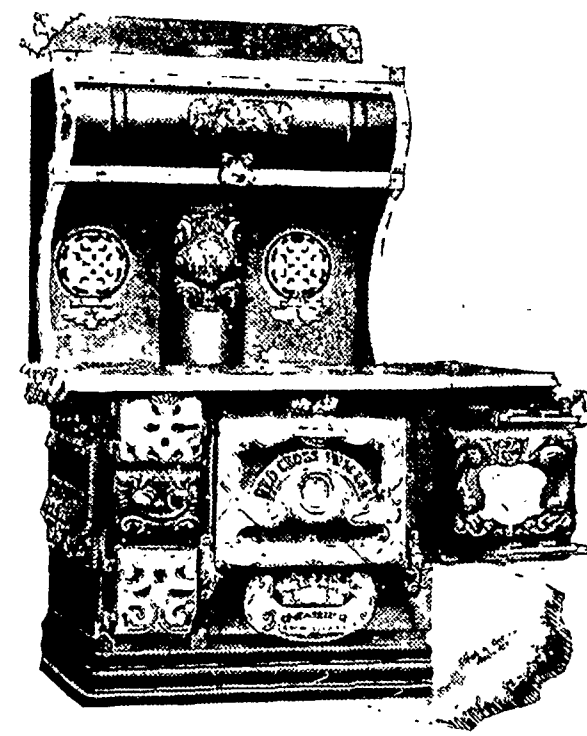
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