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BRIGHTER DAYS.

By T. B. ALDERSON.

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"A pound of nails, tenpennys, sir?" inquired the hardware man at Acton. "No," came the voluble response. "The biggest you've got; spikes, if you like!"

The storekeeper had never seen much of his present customer, Alan Duryea. He had heard of him, however, as a man of some note in the literary field with a very liberal income. A year back he had purchased an old, but fine mansion, next to another of its kind. These had belonged to two brothers who had lost their fortunes. The one Duryea had purchased was surrounded by a great stone wall, with a gate in that part of it along the next lot. There Duryea had lived through the winter having little to do with the people of the village.

There was no mystery to his life. He was young and rather good looking, but he had won his way in the world through hard work and at the cost of numerous sacrifices to comfort and enjoyment. He was not soured, although very irritable at times, and had gone into seclusion because he fancied that all by himself he could better think and write. He had been disappointed in the results, and now there arose a new and unexpected source of irritability. The big house next to his own was being renovated, and Duryea learned that it was to be occupied as an orphanage of a country church organization.

One day a dozen or more noisy children flocked into the newly renovated house. They were under the charge of two matrons who did not seek to curb their playfulness, and the incessant babel of juvenile boisterousness became a decided affliction to Duryea. The next day he discovered that some one had pushed open the gate that connected the two residences. Hence the nails and hammer.

For over half a year Duryea had been gathering material and making exhaustive notes along a line of interest and likely to be of great profit to him. He now removed manuscript and memoranda to a room on the other side of the house to evade being near the disturbing element. He continued, however, to use the library overlooking the next lot, when he was not at work. He was seated there one morning when he glanced out of the window as an unusual commotion awoke the echoes.

A new figure had appeared upon the scene. It was that of a young lady who was led by the two nurses among the group of children. She wore a bandage across her eyes and groped like a blind person with her arms. But there was the poetry, of beauty, of perfect grace in her every movement and a radiant flush and smile upon her face expressed the deepest tenderness and love for the adoring throng about her. They called her name—"Our Darling Mercy!" They kissed her hands and clung to her dress, and amid the babel Duryea discerned that she was their former teacher, who had returned after an absence of a month seeking to overcome fast-approaching sightlessness.

Duryea was infinitely touched at the sight of such helpless loveliness, a winner of hearts, even in her great affliction. He went to his room on the other side of the house, but could not get down to work; finally flung his cigar into the waste basket and returned to the library. The children, however, had gone in to their studies, Duryea dozed in his chair. A crash awoke him. The little ones in the next yard were out at play again and some one had flung a ball. It had gone through a window, arousing Duryea, who observed a faint of smoke in the air. He forgot his momentary anger at the accident, hurried from the room and traced the smoke across a hall and into his new writing apartment.

"Just in time!" exclaimed Duryea, as he caught up the blazing waste basket, hurled it through the window and extinguished some papers on the desk, the edges of which had ignited. "If that ball had not aroused me, where would my work of months be now?"

He felt a trifle more kindly toward his unconscious young tormentors, and as a physician whom he knew, later came out of the house next door. Duryea, at the gate of his own home, hailed him.

Dr. Warden told him of Miss Mercy Paxton, whose sweet attractiveness had remained a pleasing memory in Duryea's mind.

"We fear for her eyes," pronounced the physician, "and are doing the best we can for her. She should have a specialist, but the treasury of the home is depleted."

"Come in," insisted Duryea. "I want to talk with you." And what he had to say was under pledge of secrecy that he would furnish the money to care for the afflicted young lady.

And the next morning at daylight, Alan Duryea went into the garden, drew out the nails that held the partition gate and left it open for all the little wanderers who chose to roam over his beautiful garden.

His somber nature had changed under the influence of the sweet, patient sufferer, and he realized that in taking away the barrier he had opened the gate to love.

ASCRIBE POWER TO FLOWERS FASCINATED THE FAIR SEX

Almost Every Country Has a Superstition Concerning Value of Their Use at Times.

There are many superstitions concerning flowers. In fact, almost every country has its own. In Malaya it is the custom when a child is born to place thorns upon the floor so that demons and other evil spirits, which are supposed to take bodily form, may be scared away, or, if present, may be injured. Garlic and cayenne are thought by the Hindus to possess special powers to expel monsters. In China a trailing creeper is used if a person is supposed to possess an evil spirit, with which to exorcise the demon. The plant chosen has a most unpleasant odor and is known as "the foul stink plant." In olden times if the milk would not churn properly in the north of England, it was the custom for the dairy maid to stir the cream with a spig of mountain ash, and beat the cow that gave it with another spig, as a means of driving away the spirit which was supposed to prevent the butter "coming."

It Comes High.

Ellihu Root told at a dinner a prohibition story: "It is astonishing," he said, "what a high value is placed on whisky, now that prohibition has come in."

"Two men were out sailing down in Florida. They had a bottle with them, and Jim was taking a drink when a gust of wind capsize the boat."

"Tom clung to the bottom of the craft all right, but Jim, handicapped by the bottle, was a good deal knocked about in the seething waters."

"After a time his strength began to fail him, and, swimming with one hand and holding the bottle high with the other, he shouted, despairingly:

"Tom, I'm afraid I can't make it!"
"Tom shouted back:
"Well, Jim, if you can't make it, throw it!"

Airplanes Aid Fishermen.

Airplanes are now being put to a novel use in New Zealand, where a service has just been started in connection with the fishing fleets. The planes fly at an altitude of two or three hundred feet over the water and "spot" the shoals for the fishermen working below. The fishermen are warned of the presence of the shoals by a special radio-telegraphic apparatus. Airplanes have already been used in rounding up cattle, for overtaking motorists, and even have helped to effect the arrest of law-breakers, but this seems to be the first time they have been put to such a prosaic use as catching fish.

No Time to Lose.

Timothy approached his lady love timidly, bearing a big fish, which announced its presence subtly, but unmistakably.

"Oh, what a fine cod!" exclaimed Maria, "Wherever did you get it?"
"A man at the market gave it to me last week for helping him," replied Tim. "I've been keepin' it for your birthday."

"But my birthday ain't till tomorrow," the girl told him coyly.

"I-I know, Maria, but I sort o' wondered if you'd mind keepin' it today, as—well, me and—the fish is gettin' kind of impatient."

Didn't Know He Sang.

A Nashville young woman employed in a music store in Indianapolis tells the following:

"One day a lady came into the store to buy some music, and after I had played several pieces to her, I told her I would play one of Caruso's. After I had played the piece, she said: 'Caruso, Caruso; why I have heard a great deal about him and Friday, but I never knew that he sang!'"

Love's Ultimatum.

There had been a long silence in the dim-lit room. The atmosphere was tense.

"Edith," said the young man at last, breaking the silence, "I have a question to ask you—an important one."

"Y-y-yes, Tom?" faltered the young lady.

"I—I—I—well, anyhow, my name's going to be printed in the paper soon, and I—I—I wondered whether it would be among the deaths, or—among the marriages along with yours?"

No Place to Go.

O'Hara stood surveying the body of his friend, lying in state. Then he began to smile.

"What is there funny about it?" demanded an outraged friend.

"'Twas only last week as Clancy was saying to me how there ain't no heaven and no purgatory. An' here he lies now, poor divil, all dressed up and nowhere to go."—The American Legion Weekly.

Comparisons.

"I am glad to give this opportunity to learn a good business to a returned soldier. But you will have to begin at the bottom."

"That is a lot better than going over the top."

The Retort Courteous.

He—Don't you try to make a fool of me.
She—Not after your boasts of being a self-made man and doing the job much better than I could.

Danger All Around.

"Here is a rum go!"
"For heaven's sake, don't let the prohibitionists find you in such a predicament!"

Marat, Repulsive in Person and Manners, Was Noted for His Attractiveness to Women.

Jean Paul Marat, one of the leading and most infamous figures of the French Revolution, was described by a contemporary as "beyond any question the ugliest man in the whole of France—and not merely ugly, but positively repulsive in person, habits and manners." And yet, in his early years, he was the most popular physician in Paris, not because of supposed professional skill, but on account of his attractiveness to women, the most wealthy and beautiful women of France daily crowding his consultation rooms, pushing, almost fighting, to get a word or perhaps a smile from him. That he turned a cold shoulder to their attentions seemed only to inflame their ardor, and at one time he contemplated flight, so embarrassing became their attentions. Even when he contracted a loathsome skin disease while hiding in the sewers of Paris, fair women continued to adore him.

Lamplighter on Wheels.

If will occasion surprise to some to learn that the suburban districts of London, England, are still lighted by gas, and that each lamp has to be lit by lamplighters by means of a long stick that turns the lever in the lamp. To facilitate the lighting of Barnes, one of these districts, a soldier, or to be more correct, a demobilized lancer, uses his bicycle for his rounds. So adept has he become at lighting that he never has to dismount, in fact as he wheels round the lamp-post he guides his machine with one hand and strikes the lever with his stick by the other. He saves some hours by this method, and gives added pleasure to the people who welcome the old soldier in his khaki trousers and his war-torn features.

Sure Cure for Insomnia.

Mrs. Koppikat was a hypochondriac and whatever complaint another had she always had, or had it quite recently.

"The other day a friend of hers dropped in, and in the course of conversation remarked:
"I've been suffering terribly of late from insomnia."

Mrs. Koppikat hadn't the faintest idea what insomnia was, but she was not to be outdone.

"So have I," she answered, "something dreadful!"

"And what did you do for it?" inquired the friend eagerly.

"Why, my dear, I find the only thing that does me any real good is to go to bed and sleep it off."—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

Valuable Engineering Aid.

Use of the delicate sound-ranging instruments developed during the war for checking up on the work of diamond drills in rock is proposed by American engineers, according to Popular Mechanics Magazine. The geophone and similar instruments have been found accurate in locating the source of boring sounds through hundreds of feet of rock. By taking sound readings in three directions at every 100 feet of the drill's progress, the course of the hole could be readily plotted without stopping the operation.

Shakespearean.

Father, in the hall, has been standing for half an hour while Millicent and Harold bid each other good-night in the doorway.

"Parting," quoth Harold, "is such sweet sorrow that I could say good-night till—"

At this speech Father gave a Shakespearean inspiration of his own and tramped down the stairs.

"Seems to me," he asserts, "that there is too much adieu about nothing here."

Want to Be Americanized.

The people of the Virgin Islands are begging to be Americanized. Now that they are under the American flag, they have a right to be dissatisfied with the old Danish laws and customs. One of these makes it necessary for a man to have an income of \$300 a year in order to vote. This law gives only about 800 people in the islands a chance at controlling legislation.—Exchange.

They Demand to Be Shown.

"Some of the most successful beauty specialists are as homely as a mud fence."

"Quite true. But human nature is not to be fooled always."
"No?"

"You will observe that a professor of physical culture has to exhibit a pretty fair muscular development of his own before he can hope to get any clients."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

On Even Terms.

An old codger, dialling the remarks of the chairman at a political meeting, shouted: "Young man, I was a Republican before you were born."

"What of that?" came back the chairman. "I will be a Republican after you are dead. Sit down!"—Exchange.

Mild Coloration.

"Isn't that parlor socialist likely to become an out-and-out red?"
"I think not," answered Miss Cayenne. "He'll probably always stay just as he is, a sort of shrimp pink."

Getting "Worther and Worther."

"Is life worth lying?"
"I think that question has been answered for good and all. The coat has been more than doubled and we all bang on."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

SPIRITS

To kill time try hard to be busy.

The tea tree is an evergreen.

Tigers are found only in Asia.

Set the goal and then start for it.

A favorite has no friends.

The first wealth is health.

Melt have strength, but women have tact.

Hands that grasp too much hold little.

No great man ever minds criticism.—Ruskin.

If one feels agreeable he can generally be so.

Loafing, to be enjoyed, must be unpremeditated.

A successful fool always has plenty of fool admirers.

He who has lost all confidence can lose nothing more.

Most women would rather be mistaken than praised.

Belgium is making eager inquiries for semi-finished steel.

More than likely you were considered a handsome baby.

Ceremonies differ, but true politeness is ever the same.

Wee wee' hours are the longest when one has insomnia.

Fools occasionally find opportunities, but wise men make them.

Lots of people come to grief by meeting trouble half way.

One ton of water may be colored by a single grain of indigo.

Jonah was a conundrum, and the whale had to give him up.

The elevator may be lowered, but the boy who runs it is hired.

The fool politician fights trifles; the wise one one soft soap.

Genius may not be infinite attention to details, but business is.

Some men are born fighters and some fall victims to typhoid.

Germany is considering the possibility of electrifying its railways.

A pawnbroker who is always advancing is naturally progressive.

Nearly all men believe that honesty in moderation is the best policy.

On the street cars, the fat men always seem to get the inside seats.

Farmers are the only men who can help each other with their work.

Once accumulate a big fortune and if it lasts a century it lasts forever.

Never judge the size of a woman's foot by the price she pays for shoes.

Knowledge is more than power—it is the machinery which makes power.

A bookworm has sometimes been as lazy as if the bookworm were to bite him.

The millionaire who dresses as well as his clerk is more or less eccentric.

Shortly after the wedding many a man discovers that he is a fool.

An old bachelor says the surest way to destroy weeds is to marry a widow.

A woman will pardon want of some quicker than she will want of manly.

Electric fog wires have been invented that can be heard for fourteen miles.

Cheerfulness is an excellent wearing quality. It has been called the bright weather of the heart.—Samuel Smiles.

British East Africa is in the market for American-made web-drilling machinery.

If people like each other well enough they will argue. They're not afraid to.

The class that is not out for business has no business to be out.—Matthew Lawrence.

Facts are stubborn things, but they are as stubborn as the uplifter to whom they are an obstacle.

The American tractor of all American machinery seems to have the largest field in Sweden.

Some of the stones that don't don't gather moss because they are when for stepping stones.

When Nature takes a man sometimes she's a little bit making hay.