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SPELLED DOWN.

His name was Ephraim Blodgett; not specially renowned.
Except as champion speller in all the country round.
Orthographical aspirants were apt to fare quite slim
At any spelling match where they encountered Ephraim.

The spelling book he had by heart, and eke the dictionary,
And science, at his tongue's end, laid its queer vocabulary.
The dubious monosyllable he'd floor with perfect ease,
And go through words sesquipedal like lightning through a cheese.

You couldn't weave a spell, with any common alphabet,
By which to capture Ephraim, or put him in a sweat;
And his admirers frequently remarked of Ephe that he
Could spell the China-glyphics off from a chest of tea.

The people ceased to find, in spelling-schools, their wonted fun.
What show was there against this orthographic Gatling gun,
That mowed down all before it with a rattling fusillade
Of consonants and vowels punctiliously arrayed?

Just at the culmination of Ephriam's renown
He took part in a spelling school in an adjoining town;
Full soon the sole survivors of that orthographic war
Were Ephriam and a school girl, his sole competitor.

With equal ardor, 'twixt those two, raged the uncertain fight,
Where victory might perch at last was quite indefinite.
With equal nerve they came to time and accurately placed
The insidious silent letter and the diphthong Janusfaced.

In vain the weired and mystic spells upon that girl were cast,
The cabalistic letters dropped from her lips so fast.
Vain likewise for a long time was the effort to suppress
Ephe's "airy tongue that syllabled" tough words with such success.

The audience was excited. "Stick to him, Sis!" some cried,
And "Go it, Ephe!" his partisans defiantly replied.
But Ephraim was the hero of a hundred spelling schools,
And, on the whole, his prestige made him favorite in the pools.

In fact, though, they were laying for Ephraim. He got
The word at last that dropped him as if he had been shot;
The word that choked the Welshman when mortar from a trowel
Confused his tongue at Babel. A word without a vowel.

An ashen hue crept o'er his face when Ephraim heard her spell
"D-m-n-r-k-gg-m-c-k-ll."
"Spell-bound upon a ragged edge of consonants!" gasped Ephe.
They buried him with his spelling-book and a feeling of relief.

—Buffalo Sunday Courier.

FATAL FORTUNE.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

One fine morning, more than three months since, you were riding with your brother, Miss Austell, in Hyde Park. It was a hot day and you had allowed your horses to fall into a walking pace. As you passed the railing on the right hand side near the eastern extremity of the lake in the park, neither you nor your brother noticed a solitary woman loitering on the foot path to look at the riders as they went by.

The solitary woman was my old nurse, Nancy Connell. And these were the words she heard exchanged between you and your brother, as you slowly passed her:

Your brother said, "Is it really true that Mary Brading and her husband have gone to America?"

You laughed (as if the question amused you), and answered, "Quite true."

"How long will they be away?" your brother next asked.

"As long they live," you answered with another laugh.

By this time you had passed beyond Nancy Connell's hearing. She owns to having followed your horses a few steps to hear what was said next. She looked particularly at your brother. He took your reply seriously; he seemed to be quite astonished by it.

"Leave England and settle in America!" he exclaimed. "Why should they do that?"

"Who can tell why?" you answered. "Mary Brading's husband is mad—and Mary Brading herself is not much better."

You touched your horses with your whip, and in a moment more you and your brother were out of the old nurse's hearing. She wrote and told me what I here tell you by a recent mail. I have been thinking of those last words of yours in my leisure hours more seriously than you would suppose. The end of it is that I take up my pen on behalf of my husband and myself to tell you the story of our marriage and the reason of our emigration to the United States of America.

It matters little or nothing, to him or me, whether our friends in England think us both mad or not. Their opinions, hostile or favorable, are of no sort of importance to us. But you are an exception to the rule. In bygone days at school we were fast and firm friends; and—what weighs with me even more than this—you were heartily loved and admired by my dear mother. She spoke of you tenderly on her death bed. Events have separated us of late years. But I can not forget the old times; and I can not feel indifferent to your opinion of me and my husband—though an ocean does separate us, and though we are never likely to look on one another again. It is very foolish of me, I dare say, to take seriously to heart what you said in one of your thoughtless moments. I can only plead in excuse that I have gone through a great deal of suffering, and that I was always (as you may remember) a person of sensitive temperament, easily excited and easily depressed.

Enough of this! Do me the last favor I shall ever ask of you. Read what follows, and judge for yourself whether my husband and I are quite so mad as you were disposed to think of us when Nancy Connell heard you talking to your brother in Hyde Park.

II.

It is now more than a year since I went to Eastbourne, on the coast of Sussex, with my father and brother James.

My brother had then, as we hoped, recovered from the effects of a fall in the hunting field. He complained, however, at times of a pain in his head, and the doctors advised us to try the sea air. We removed to Eastbourne without a suspicion of the serious nature of the injury that he had received. For a few days all went well. We liked the place; the air agreed with us; and we determined to prolong our residence for some weeks to come.

Our sixth day at the seaside—a memorable day to me, for reasons which you have still to hear—my brother complained again of the old pain in his head. He and I went out together to try what exercise would do toward relieving him. We walked through the town to the fort and one end of it, and then followed a footpath running by the side of the sea, over a dreary waste of shingle, bounded at its inland extremity by the road to Hastings, and by the marshy country beyond.

We had left the fort at some little distance behind us. I was walking in front, and James was following me. He was talking as quietly as usual, when he suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence. I turned round in surprise, and discovered my brother prostrate on the path, in convulsions terrible to see.

It was the first epilectic fit I had ever witnessed. My presence of mind entirely deserted me. I could only wring my hands in horror and scream for help. No one appeared either from the direction of the fort or the high road. I was too far off, I suppose, to make myself heard. Looking ahead of me, along the path, I discovered, to my infinite relief, the figure of a man running toward me. As he came nearer, I saw that he was, unmistakably, a gentleman—young, and eager to be of service to me.

"Pray compose yourself!" he said, after a look at my brother. "It is very dreadful to see; but it is not dangerous. We must wait until the convulsions are over, and then I can help you."

He seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might be a medical man. I put the question to him plainly.

He colored and looked a little confused.

"I am not a doctor," he said. "I happen to have seen persons afflicted with epilepsy; and I have heard medical men say that it is useless to interfere until the fit is over. "See," he added, "your brother is quieter already. He will soon feel a sense of relief, which will more than compensate him for what he has suffered. I will help him to go to the fort—and, once there, we can send for a carriage to take him home.

In five minutes more we were on our way to the fort—the stranger supporting my brother as attentively and tenderly as if he had been an old friend. When the carriage had been obtained he insisted on accompanying us to our own door, on the chance that his services might still be of some use. He left us, asking permission to call and inquire after James' health the next day. A more modest, gentle and unassuming person I never met with. He not only excited my warmest gratitude; but he interested me at my first meeting with him.

I lay some stress on the impression which this young man produced on me—why, you will soon find out.

The next day the stranger paid his promised visit of inquiry. His card, which was sent up stairs, informed us that his name was Roland Cameron. My father—who is not easily pleased—took a liking to him at once. His visit was prolonged at our request. He said just enough about himself to satisfy us that we were receiving a person who was at least of equal rank with ourselves. Born in England, of a Scotch family, he had lost both parents. Not long since he had inherited a fortune from one of his uncles. It struck me as a little strange that he spoke of this fortune with a marked change of melancholy in his voice and manner. The subject was for some inconceivable reason, evidently distasteful to him. Rich as he was, he acknowleges that he led a simple and solitary life. He had little taste for society, and no sympathies in common with the average young men of his age. But he had his own harmless pleasures and occupations, and past sorrows and suffering had taught him not to expect too much from life. All this was said modestly, with a winning charm of look and voice which indescribably attracted me. His personal appearance aided the favorable impression his manner and conversation produced. He was of the middle height, lightly and firmly built; his complexion pale; his hands and feet small, and finely shaped; his brown hair curling naturally; his eyes large and dark, with an occasional indecision in their expression, which was far from being an objection to them, to my taste. It seemed to harmonize with an occasional indecision in his talk, proceeding, as I was inclined to think, from some passing confusion in his thoughts, which it always cost him a little effort to discipline and overcome. Does it surprise you to find how closely I observed a man who was only a chance acquaintance, at my first interview with him? Or do your suspicions enlighted you, and do you say to yourself: She has fallen in love with Mr. Roland Cameron at first sight. I may plead in my own defense that I was not quite romantic enough to go that length. But I own I waited for his next visit with an impatience which was new to me in my experience of my sober self. And, worse still, when the day came I changed my dress three times before my newly developed vanity was satisfied with the picture which the looking-glass presented to me of myself.

In a fortnight more my father and my brother began to look on the companionship of our new friend as one of the settled institutions of their lives.

In a fortnight more, Mr. Roland Cameron and I—though we neither of us ventured to acknowledge it—were as devotedly in love with each other as two young people could well be. Ah, what a delightful time it was, and how cruelly soon our happiness came to an end.

During the brief interval which I have just described, I observed certain peculiarities in Roland Cameron's conduct which perplexed and troubled me, when my mind was busy with him in my lonely moments.

For instance, he was subject to the strangest lapses of silence when he and I were talking together. At these times his eyes assumed a weary, absent look, and his mind seemed to wander away, far from the conversation and far from me. He was perfectly unaware of his own infirmity; he fell into it unconsciously and came out of it unconsciously. If I noticed that he had not been attending to me, or if I asked why he had been silent, he was completely at a loss to comprehend what I meant. It puzzled and distressed him. What he was thinking of in these pauses of silence it was impossible to guess. His face, at other times singularly mobile and expressive, became almost a perfect blank. Had he suffered some terrible shock at some past period of his life, and had his mind never recovered from it? I longed to ask him the question, and yet I shrank from doing it. I was so sadly afraid of distressing him, or, to put it in plainer words, I was so truly and tenderly fond of him.

Then, again, though he was ordinarily, I sincerely believe, the most gentle and most lovable of men, there were occasions when he would surprise me by violent outbursts of temper, excited by the merest trifles. A dog barking suddenly at his heels, or a boy throwing stones in the road, or an importunate shopkeeper trying to make him purchase something that he did not want, would throw him into a frenzy of rage which was, without exaggeration, really frightful to see. He always apologized for these outbreaks, in terms which showed that he was sincerely ashamed of his own violence. But he could never succeed in controlling himself. The lapses into passion like the lapses into silence, took him into their own possession, and did with him, for the time being, just as they pleased.

One more example of Roland's peculiarities, and I have done. The strangeness of his conduct, in this case, was noticed by my father and my brother, as well as by me.

When Roland was with us in the evening, whether he came to dinner or to tea, he invariably left us exactly at nine o'clock. Try as we might to persuade him to stay longer, he always politely but positively refused. Even I had no influence over him in the matter. When I pressed him to remain—though it cost him an effort—he still retired exactly as the clock struck nine. He gave no reason for this strange proceeding; he only said that it was a habit of his, and begged us to indulge him in it without asking for an explanation. My father and my brother (being men) succeeded in controlling their curiosity. For my part (being a woman) every day that passed only made me more and more eager to penetrate the mystery. I privately resolved to choose my time, when Roland was in a particularly accessible humor, and then to appeal to him for the explanation which he had hitherto refused, as a special favor to myself.

In two days more I found my opportunity.

Some friends of ours, who had joined us at Eastbourne, proposed a picnic party to the famous neighboring cliff called Beachey Head. We accepted the invitation. The day was lovely, and the gipsy dinner was, as usual, infinitely preferable (for once in a way) to a formal dinner indoors. Towards evening our little party separated in twos and threes to explore the neighborhood. Roland and I found ourselves together, as a matter of course. We were happy, and we were alone. Was it the right or the wrong time to ask the fatal question? I am not able to decide; I only know that I asked it.

III.

"Mr. Cameron," I said, "will you make allowance for a weak woman?—and will you tell me something that I am dying to know about?"

He walked straight into the trap, with that entire absence of ready wit or small suspicion (I leave you to choose the right phrase) which is so much like men and so little like women.

"Of course I will," he answered.

"Then tell me," I asked, "why you always insist on leaving me at nine o'clock?"

He started and looked at me, so sadly, so reproachfully, that I would have given every thing I possessed to recall the rash words that had just passed my lips.

"If I consent to tell you," he replied after a momentary struggle with himself, "will you let me put a question to you first? and will you promise to answer it?"

I gave him my promise, and waited eagerly for what was coming next.

"Miss Brading," he said, "tell me honestly, do you think I am mad?"

It was impossible to laugh at him; he spoke those words seriously—sternly, I might almost say.

"No such thought ever entered my head," I answered.

He looked at me very earnestly.

"You say that on your word of honor?"

"On my word of honor."

I answered with perfect sincerity; and I evidently satisfied him that I was speaking the truth. He took my hand and raised it gratefully to his lips.

"I thank you," he said, simply. "You encourage me to tell you a very sad story."

"Your own story?" I asked.

"My own story. Let me begin by telling you why I persist in leaving your house always at the same hour. Whenever I go out I am bound by a promise to the person with whom I am living at Eastbourne to return at a quarter past nine o'clock."

"The person with whom you are living?" I repeated. "You are living at a boarding house, are you not?"

"I am living, Miss Brading, under the care of a doctor, who keeps an asylum for the insane. He has taken a house for some of his wealthier patients at the seaside, and allows me my liberty in the day time, on the condition that I faithfully perform my promise at night. It is a quarter of an hour's walk from the house to the doctor's, and it is a rule that the patients retire at half past nine o'clock."

Here was the mystery which had so sorely perplexed me, revealed at last! The disclosure literally struck me speechless. Unconsciously and instinctively I drew back from him a few steps. He fixed his sad eyes on me with a touching look of entreaty.

"Don't shrink away from me!" he said. "You don't think I am mad."

I was too confused and distressed to know what to say; and at the same time, I was too fond of him not to answer that appeal. I took his hand and pressed it in silence. He turned his head aside for a moment. I thought I saw a tear on his cheek. I felt his hand close tremblingly on mine. He mastered himself with surprising resolution; he spoke with perfect composure when he looked at me again.

"Do you care to know my story?" he asked, "after what I have just told you?"

"I am eager to hear it," I answered. "You don't know how I feel for you. I am too distressed to be able to express myself in words."

"You are the kindest and dearest of women!" he said, with the utmost fervor, and at the same time with the utmost respect.

We sat down together in a grassy hollow of the cliff, with our faces toward the grand, gray sea. The daylight was beginning to fade, as I heard the story which made me Roland Cameron's wife.

IV.

"My mother died when I was an infant in arms," he began. "My father, from my earliest to my latest recollections, was always hard toward me. I have been told that I was an odd child with strange ways of my own. My father detested anything that was strongly marked, anything out of the ordinary way in the characters and habits of the persons about him. He himself lived (as the phrase is) by line and rule, and he determined to make his son follow his example. I was subjected to severe discipline at school, and I was carefully watched afterward at college. Look back on my early life, I can see no traces of happiness. I can find no tokens of sympathy. Sad submission to a hard destiny, weary wayfaring ever unfriendly roads—such is the story of my life from ten years old to twenty.

"I passed one autumn vacation at the Cumberland lakes, and there I met by accident a young French lady. The result of that meeting decided my whole after life.

"She filled the position of nursery governess in the house of a wealthy Englishman. I had frequent opportunities of seeing her. We took an innocent pleasure in each other's society. Her little experience of life was strangely like mine; there was a perfect sympathy of thought and feeling between us. We loved, or thought we loved. I was not yet twenty-one, and she was not eighteen, when I asked her to be my wife.

"I can understand my folly now, and can laugh at or lament over it as the humor moves me. And yet I can't help pitying myself when I look back at myself at that time—I was so young, so hungry for a little sympathy, so weary of empty, friendless life. Well, everything is comparative in this world. I was soon to regret, bitterly regret, that friendless life, wretched as it was.

"The poor girl's employer discovered our attachment, through his wife. He at once communicated with my father.

"My father had but one word to say—he insisted on my going abroad and leaving it to him to release me from my absurd engagement in my absence. I answered him that I should be of age in a few months, and that I was determined to marry the girl. He gave me three days to reconsider that resolution. I held to my resolution. In a week afterwards I was declared insane by two medical men, and I placed by my father in a lunatic asylum.

"Was it an act of insanity for the son of a gentleman, with great expectations before him, to propose marriage to a nursery governess? I declare, as heaven is my witness, I know of no other act of mine which could justify my father, and justify the doctors, in placing me under restraint.

"I was three years in that asylum. It was officially reported that the air did not agree with me. I was removed, for two years more, to another asylum, in a remote part of England. For the five best years of my life I have been herded with madmen—and my reason has survived it. The impression I produce on you, on your father, on your brother, and all our friends at the picnic, is that I am as reasonable as the rest of my fellow creatures. Am I rushing to a hasty conclusion when I assert myself to be now, and always have been, a sane man?

"At the end of my five years of arbitrary imprisonment in a free country, happily for me—I am ashamed to say it, but I must speak the truth—happily for me, my merciless father died. His trustees, to whom I was consigned, felt some pity for me. They could not take the responsibility of granting me my freedom. But they placed me under the care of a surgeon, who received me into his private residence, and who allowed me free exercise in the open air.

"A year's trial of this new mode of life satisfied the surgeon, and satisfied every one else who took the smallest interest in me, that I was perfectly fit to enjoy my liberty. I was freed from all restraint and was permitted to reside with a near relative of mine in that very lake country which had been the scene of my fatal meeting with the French girl six years before.

V.

"I lived happily in the house of my relative, satisfied with the ordinary pursuits of a country gentleman. Time had long since cured me of my boyish infatuation for the nursery governess. I could revisit with perfect composure the paths along which we had walked and the lake on which we had sailed together. Hearing by chance that she was married in her own country, I could wish her all possible happiness, with the sober kindness of a disinterested friend. What a strange thread of irony runs through the texture of the simplest human life. The early love for which I had sacrificed and suffered so much, was now revealed to me, in its true colors, as a boy's passing fancy—nothing more!

"Three years of peaceful freedom passed; freedom which, on the uncontradicted testimony of respectable witnesses, I never refused. Well, that long and happy interval, like all intervals, came to its end—and then the great misfortune of my life fell upon me. One of my uncles died and left me the inheritor of his whole fortune. I alone, to the exclusion of the other heirs, now received, not only the large income derived from the estates, but £7000 in ready money as well.

"The vile calumny which had asserted me to be mad was now revived by the wretches who were interested in stepping between me and my inheritance. A year ago I was sent back again to the asylum in which I had been imprisoned. The pretense for confining me, was found in an 'act of violence' (as it was called) which I had committed in a momentary outbreak of anger, and which as was acknowledged had led to no serious results. Having got me into an asylum, the conspirators proceeded to complete their work. A commission in lunacy was entered against me. It was held by one commissioner, without a jury, and without a lawyer to assert my interests. By one man's decision I was declared to be of unsound mind.

"The custody of my person, as well as the management of my estate, was confided to men chosen among the conspirators who had declared me mad, and I am here through the favor of the proprietor of the asylum, who has given me my holiday at the seaside, and who humanely trusts me with my liberty, as you see. At barely thirty years old I am refused the free use of my money and the free management of my affairs. At barely thirty years old I am officially declared to be a lunatic for life."

VI.

He paused; his head sank to his breast; his story was told.

I have repeated his words as near as I can remember them; but I can give no idea of the modest and touching resignation with which he spoke. To say that I pitied him with my whole heart is to say nothing. I loved him with my whole heart, and I may acknowledge it now.

"Oh, Mr. Cameron," I said, as soon as I could trust myself to speak, "can nothing be done to help you? Is there no hope?"

"There is always hope," he answered, without raising his head. "I have to thank you, Miss Brading, for teaching me that."

"I am glad to hear it," I said; "how have I taught you to hope?"

"You have brightened my dreary life. When I am with you all my bitter remembrances leave me. I am a happy man again, and a happy man can always hope. I dream now of finding what I never yet had—a dear and devoted friend, who will rouse the energy that has sunk in me under the martyrdom that I have endured. Why do I submit to the loss of my rights and liberty without an effort to recover them? I was alone in the world until I met with you. I had no kind hand to raise me; no kind voice to encourage me. Shall I ever find the hand? Shall I ever hear the voice? When I am with you the hope that you have taught me answers, 'Yes.' When I am by myself the old despair comes back and says, 'No.'"

He lifted his hat for the first time. If I had not understood what his words meant, his look would have enlightened me. The tears came into my eyes; my heart heaved and fluttered wildly; my hands mechanically tore up and scattered the grass round me. The silence became unendurable. I spoke hardly knowing what I was saying; tearing faster and faster at the poor, harmless grass, as if my whole business in life was to pull up the greatest quantity in the shortest possible space of time!

"We have only known each other a little while," I said, "and a woman is but a weak ally in such a terrible position as yours. But, weak as I may be, count on me now and always as your friend—"

He moved close to me before I could say more, and took my hand. He murmured in my ear:

"May I count on you one day, as the nearest and dearest friend of all? Will you forgive me, Mary, if I own that I love you? You have taught me to love, as you have taught me to hope. It is in your power to lighten my hard lot. You can recompense me for all that I have suffered; you can rouse me to struggle for my freedom and my rights. Be the good angel of my life. Forgive me, love, rescue me—be my wife?"

I don't know how it happened. I found myself in his arms—and I answered him in a kiss. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, I dare say I was guilty, in accepting him, of the rashest act that ever a woman committed. Very good. I didn't care then—I don't care now. I was then, and am now, the happiest woman living!

VII.

It was necessary that either he or I should tell my father of what had passed between us. On reflection I thought it best that I should make the disclosure. The day after the picnic I repeated to my father Roland's melancholy narrative, as a necessary preface to the announcement that I had promised to be Roland's wife.

My father saw the obvious objection to the marriage. He warned me of the imprudence which I contemplated in the strongest terms. Our prospect of happiness, if we were married, would depend entirely on our capacity to supercede the proceedings of the lunacy commission. Success in this arduous undertaking was, to say the least of it, uncertain. The commonest prudence pointed to the propriety of our delaying the marriage until the doubtful experiment has been put to the proof.

The reasoning was unanswerable. It was, nevertheless, completely thrown away upon me.

When did a woman in love ever listen to reason? I believe there is no instance of it on record. My father's wise words of caution had no chance against Roland's fervid entreaties. The days of his residence at Eastbourne were drawing to a close. If I let him return to the asylum an unmarried man, months, years perhaps, might pass before our union could take place. Could I expect him, could I expect any man, to endure that cruel separation, that unrelieved suspense? His mind had been sorely tried already; his mind might give way under it. These were arguments that carried weight with them in my judgment. I was of age and free to act as I pleased. You are welcome, if you like, to consider me the most foolish and the most obstinate of women. At sixteen days from the date of the picnic Roland and I were privately married at Eastbourne.

My father—more grived than angry, poor man—declined to be present at the ceremony, in justice to himself. My brother gave me away at the altar.

Roland and I spent the afternoon of the wedding day and the early part of the evening together. At nine o'clock he returned to the doctor's house, exactly as usual; having previously explained to me that he was in the power of the court of chancery, and until we succeeded in setting aside the proceedings of the lunacy commission there was a serious necessity for keeping the marriage strictly secret. My husband kissed, and said good-by till tomorrow, as the clock struck the hour. I little thought, while I looked at him from the street door, that months on months were to pass before I saw Roland again.

A hurried note from my husband reached me the next morning. Our marriage had been discovered (we never could tell by whom), and we had been betrayed to the doctor. Roland was on his way back to the asylum. He had been warned that force would be used in case he resisted. Knowing that resistance would be interpreted, in his case, as a new outbreak of madness, he had wisely submitted. "I have made the sacrifice," the letter concluded, "it is now for you to help me. Attack the commission in lunacy—and be quick about it."

We lost no time in preparing for the attack. On the day when I received the news of our misfortune we left Eastbourne for London, and at once took measures to obtain the best legal advice.

My dear father—though I was far from deserving his kindness—entered into the matter heart and soul. In due course of time we presented a petition to the Lord Chancellor, praying that the decision of the lunatic commission might be set aside.

We supported our position by quoting the evidence of Roland's friends and neighbors, during his three years' residence in the Lake country as a free man. These worthy people (being summoned before the lunacy commission) had one and all agreed that he was, as to their judgment and experience, perfectly quiet, harmless and sane. Many of them had gone out shooting with him. Others had often accompanied him in sailing excursions on the lake. Do people trust a madman with a gun, and with the management of a boat? As to the "act of violence," which the heirs at law and the next of kin had made the means of imprisoning Roland in the madhouse, it had amounted to this: He had lost his temper, and had knocked a man down, who had offended him. Very wrong, no doubt, but if that is a proof of madness, what thousands of lunatics are still at large.

Another instance produced to prove his insanity was still more absurd. It was solemnly declared that he had put an image of the Virgin Mary in his boat when he went out on his sailing excursions! I have seen the image; it was a very beautiful work of art. Was Roland mad to admire it and take it with him? His religious convictions leaned toward Catholicism. If he betrayed insanity in adorning his boat with the image of the Virgin Mary, what is the mental condition of most of the ladies in Christendom, who wear the cross as an ornament about their necks?

We advanced these arguments in our petition after quoting the evidence of the witnesses. And, more than this, we even went the length of admitting, as an act of respect to the court, that my poor husband might be eccentric in some of his opinions and habits. But we put it to the authorities whether better results might not be expected from placing him under the care of his wife, who loved him, to shutting him up in an asylum among incurable mad men as his companions for life.

Such was our position as far as I am able to describe it.

The decision rested with the Lord Justices. They decided against us.

Turning a deaf ear to our witnesses and our arguments, these merciless lawyers declared that the doctor's individual assertion of my husband's insanity was enough for them. They considered Roland's comfort to be sufficiently provided for in the asylum, with an allowance of £750 a year, and to the asylum they consigned him for the rest of his days.

So far as I was concerned, the result of this infamous judgment was to deprive me of the position of Roland's wife; no lunatic being capable of contracting marriage in law. So far as my husband was concerned, the result may be best stated in the language of a popular newspaper which published an article on the case:

"It is possible," said the article—I wish I could personally thank the man who wrote it—"for the Court of Chancery to take a man who has a large fortune, and is in the prime of life, but is a little touched in the head, and make a monk of him, and then report to itself that the comfort and happiness of the lunatic have been effectually provided for at the expense of £750 a year."

Roland was, however, determined that they should not make a monk of him, and, you may rely upon it, so was I.

But one alternative was left to us. The authority of the Court of Chancery (within its jurisdiction) is the most despotic authority on the face of the earth. Our one hope was in taking to flight.

The price of our liberty as citizens of England was exile from our native country, and the entire abandonment of Roland's fortune. We accepted those hard conditions. Hospitable America offered us a refuge, beyond the reach of mad doctors and Lord Justices. To hospitable America our hearts turned as to our second country. The serious question was how were we to get there?

We had attempted to correspond and had failed. Our letters had been discovered and seized by the proprietor of the asylum. Fortunately we had taken the precaution of writing in a cypher of Roland's invention, which he had taught me before our marriage. Though our letters were illegible, our purpose was suspected as a matter of course, and a watch was kept on my husband night and day.

Foiled in our first attempt at making arrangements secretly for our flight, we continued our correspondence (still in cypher) by means of advertisement in the newspapers. This second attempt was discovered in its turn. Roland was refused permission to subscribe to the newspapers, and was forbidden to enter the reading room of the asylum.

These tyranical prohibitions came too late. Our plans had already been communicated, we understood each other, and we we had now only to bide our time. We had arranged that my brother had a friend of his, on whose discretion we could thoroughly rely, should take it in turns to watch every evening for a given time to an appointed meeting place, three miles distant from the asylum. The spot had been carefully chosen. It was on the bank of a lonely stream, and close to the outskirts of a thick wood. A waterproof knapsack, containing a change of clothes, a false beard and wig, and some biscuits and preserved meats, were hidden in hollow tree. My brother and friend always took their fishing rods with them and presented themselves engaged in the innocent occupation of angling to any chance stranger who might pass within sight of them. On one occasion the proprietor of the asylum himself rode by my brother on the opposite bank of the stream and asked politely if he had had good sport!

For a fortnight these staunch allies of ours relieved each other regularly on their watch, and no signs of the fugitive appeared. On the fifteenth evening, just as the twilight was changing into night, and just as my brother (whose turn it was) had decided on leaving the place, Roland suddenly joined him on the bank of the stream.

Without wasting a moment in words the two at once entered the wood, and took the knapsack from its place of shelter in the hollow tree. In ten minutes more my husband was dressed in a suit of workman's clothes, and was further disguised in the wig and beard. The two men set forth down the course of the stream, keeping in the shadow of the wood until the night had fallen and the darkness hid them. The night was cloudy; there was no moon. After walking two miles, or a little more, they altered their course, and made boldly for the high road to Manchester, entering on it at a point thirty miles distant from the city.

On the way from the wood Roland described the manner in which he had effected his escape.

The story was simple enough. He had assumed to be suffering from nervous illness, and had requested to have his meals in his own room. For the first fortnight the two men appointed to wait upon him in succession, week by week, were both more than his match in strength. The the third man employed, at the beginning of the third week, was physically a less formidable person than his predecessors. Seeing this, Roland decided when evening came on committing another "act of violence." In plain words, he sprang upon the keeper waiting on him in his room and gagged and bound the man. This done, he laid the unlucky keeper (face to the wall) on his own bed, covered with his own cloak, so that anyone entering the room might suppose that he was lying down to rest. He had previously taken the precaution to remove the sheets from the bed, and he had now only to tie them together to escape by the window of his room, situated on the upper floor of his house. The sun was setting, and the inmates of the asylum were at tea. After narrowly missing discovery by one of the laborers employed in the grounds, he had climbed the garden enclosure, and had dropped on the other side—a free man!

Arrived on the high road to Manchester, my husband and my brother parted.

Roland, who was an excellent walker, set forth on his way to Manchester on foot.

By the first train the next morning I traveled to Manchester and took a lodging in the suburb of the city known to my husband. A prim, smoky little square was situated in the immediate neighborhood, and we had arranged that whichever of us first arrived in Manchester should walk around that square between twelve and one in the afternoon, and between six and seven in the evening. In the evening I kept my appointment. A dusty, footsore man, in snabby clothes, with a hideous beard, and a knapsack on his back, met me on my first walk round. He smiled as I looked at him. Ah! I knew that smile through all disguises. I was in my husband's arms once more!

* * * * * * *

My story is told. I am writing these lines from a farm in the west of the United States. Our neighbors may be homely enough, but the roughest of them is kinder than a mad doctor or a lord justice.

Roland is happy in those agricultural pursuits, which have always been favorite pursuits with him; and I am happy with Roland. Our sole resources consist of my humble little fortune, inherited from my dear mother. After deducting our traveling expenses, the total sum amounts to between £700 and £800.

We expect my father and my brother to pay us a visit next summer; and I think it just possible that they may find our family circle increased by the presence of a new member in long clothes.

In the meantime, the moral of our story seems to be worth serious consideration. A certain Englishman legally inherits a large fortune. At the time of his inheritance he has been living as a free man for three years—without once abusing his freedom, and with the express sanction of the medical superintendent who has had experience and charge of him. His next of kin and heirs at law (who are left out of the fortune) look with covetous eyes at the money, and determine to get the management and the ultimate possession of it. Assisted by a doctor, whose honesty and capacity must be taken on trust, these interested persons in this nineteenth century of progress, can lawfully imprison their relative for life in a country which calls itself free, and which declares that its justice is equally administered to all alike.—*All The Year Round.*

A TRAGICAL TALE OF THE TROPICS.

Jean Jacque Knife was a jolly tar
Aboard of the steamship "Golden Star"
That belongs to the line of what d'ye call,
And sails from New York to Aspinwall.

Kitty Bo Peep was a dusky maid,
Whose father was in the banana trade;
Oranges, too, were in his way;
And the Bo-Peeps lived at Panama Bay.

One day Jean Jacque Knife left his ship,
And across the Isthmus he took a trip;
And in his wanderings who should he see
But Kitty, asleep, 'neath a mango tree!

Under a mango tree, fast asleep,
With her head on her arm, lay sweet Bo Peep;
She looked like an angel—minus wings—
In her snow white muslin and other things.

And Jean he took and shivered his eyes,
And swore an oath of tremendous size
That any party might take his hat,
If he'd ever seen a sight like that.

Kitty Bo-Peep started up in alarm;
And Jacque Knife offered to her his arm;
You'd thought he'd known her a year or two
If you'd only seen the kisses he threw.

'Twas love at first sight, I am sure, with he;
And ditto it was, I know, with she;
She promised to meet him and tell her love
That night, at nine, in the pine-apple grove.

And there, at that witching hour in June,
They whispered their love 'neath the round, full moon;
He held her fast in his manly arms,
And feasted his eyes on her dusky charms.

The ring-tailed monkeys sported around,
And the speckled snakes squirmed over the ground;
The crocodile paused in his wild career,
When he heard their low-toned voices near.

Ominous hour! sad to relate,
A cocoanut dropped on Jean Jacque Knife's pate;
It doubled him up—she gave a yell—
And down a cold corpus Jean Jacque fell.

Bo-Peep she shrieked for a glass of rum,
And an ounce of a kind of native gum,
Which the generous neighbors, quick as flash,
Kindly supplied her with—for cash.

She mixed them together, and every speck
She—drank, and fell on her Jean Jacque's neck
Then smoothed her hair, and laid by his side,
And, bidding farewell to Bo-Peep, died.

They buried them under the Ginkgo-tree—
Jean Jacque Knife and Kitty B. P.;
And around the foot of the Ginkgo's trunk
The mourners, I'm sorry to say, got drunk.

And over Jean Jacque's and Bo Peep's grave
The winds and the bald-faced monkeys rave;
This for a trysting-place they choose—
The aforesaid monkeys and kangaroos.

Stranger! if ever you pass that way,
Remember the lovers of Panama Bay;
Find the Ginkgo tree under which they sleep,
Where the gay gorillas their vigils keep.

—Brooklyn Sun.

A Daughter Gone Astray.

An old lady came up to the office Wednesday. She was worn and tired from climbing the winding stairs, and she sank almost breathless into the waste basket, putting the poems and stories it contained to the only press they will ever know. There was a troubled, anxious look on her face, a pair of green spectacles on her nose, and a general air of sorrow and exhaustion about her that appealed at once to our tenderest feelings. The feelings answered the appeal, and stepped respectfully forward. After the aged female recovered her breath, she asked:

"Is there a loryer's office in this buildin'?"

We answered in the affirmative, but were sorry to say that the legal gentleman was out of town.

"Out of town, eh? Well, I spose I'll have to find some other loryer. I kem in town a purpose to have this thing fixed up, an' I ain't a goin' back until I know whether there is any law an' ekity in this country."

We ventured to remind the dame that lawing was a losing business in the end, and should be resorted to only in the most aggravated cases.

"Aggregated cases!" she screeched, and the manuscript in the basket rattled violently. "Young man, it is the most aggregated case you ever heerd on. You ken never know the anguish of a mother's heart when her only dorter goes astray an' follers arter false idols."

"Your daughter has had trouble, then."

"No, it's me what's havin' the trouble; but she's a causin' it—she an' that tarnal sheep-faced preacher."

"Ah! a minister in the case! I think I understand. Such things are becoming too common, alas! too frequent. The cloth is being brought into disrepute by scoundrels who 'steal the livery of heaven to serve the devil in.' Poor girl!"

"Poor nothin'! She's a brazen huzzy to go back on her mother's teachin'. Lord knows I've allus tried to raise her right."

"But you must consider, my good woman, that your daughter had peculiar temptations. You must make allowance for the fact that the tempter came to her in holy garb, imposing on her confidence in the assumed character of a spiritual adviser, silencing the voice of her conscience with cunningly chosen scriptural quotations. You must not be severe on her."

"Well, Hanner was a 'bedient girl till he kem foolin' around. He kem to the house purty offen, but I didn't s'pose nothin' was wrong till a week ago, when Hanner tole me. Then I guv him a mighty big piece of my mind."

"He denied it, of course?"

"No, he didn't. He said he had did his dooty as a Christian. An' his congregation are all tickled over it, an' that's what makes me bile."

"Why, that is an aggravated case. That he should be guilty of such a thing, is bad enough; that he should call it the performance of a duty is worse, and that his congregation should uphold him in such vile practices, is beyond belief."

"Well, it's so, an' I want to get a loryer to issoo a conjunction or injectment or somethin' to stop it."

"I fear there is no legal redress, unless it is a matter of very recent occurrence. A bill has passed the Legislature governing such cases, but it won't work backwards."

"What is in that bill?" asked the old lady, her face lighting up with a new hope.

"It makes it obligatory upon the man to either marry the woman or support the chi—."

"What," shrieked the woman, springing up with a suddenness that sent the basket of unacknowledged genius half way across the room. "You barrel headed idiyot! My girl ain't no such fool as that! You editors think you're mighty smart, and you're allus s'posin things wusser'n they're. I've been a life long Methodist and I've tried to raise my dorter in the same faith, but that tarnal 'Piscopalyun preacher has got her to 'gree to jine his church. I'm her nateral gargeen, an' I ain't agoin' to 'low her to do it. Ef she can't get along with the same religion her mother's got, she shan't have any. That's the whole case, an' there ain't no marryin', nur s'portin', nur Beecherin' in it."

From the way the old lady bumped along down the stairs, we fear she was unduly agitated.

We shall never jump at another conclusion—no, not if it should lie within an inch of our nose, and pointed proofs were pressing against us on each side and behind.—*Brunswicker.*

What Catholics Mean.

Father Walker, of New York, declared a few days since that he would not administer the sacraments to Catholics whose children were in the public schools. Father Sassil, of Des Moines, writes to a paper there: "Say, therefore, the greatest shame, instead of gem, in the crown of America is the public schools." The vicar general now formally demands that the parochial schools of New York shall be supported by the State on the same terms and in the same way as the public schools, and this proposition even the New York *World*, though a Democratic organ, finds itself compelled to vigorously oppose.

It no longer will answer to ignore the fact that a determined, and apparently an organized and deliberately planned, effort is being made to break down the system of public schools. For some time after the Papal declaration of hostility to that system prominent Catholics were continually giving assurances that no attempt would be made in this country to enforce the doctrines of that declaration. They said, again and again, that the popular desire for free, non-sectarian schools in this country would be respected; that the few