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AN ODE FOR DEcoration DAY.

Bring flowers to strew again... Of blue, and of roses white and red... The dwellings of our dead, our glorious dead!

Alas how few came back... From battle and from wreath!... Alas how many lie beneath a Southern sky!

We mourn for all, but each death think of me... Precious to the heart than any of these... Some father, brother, husband, or some son!

Oh! gallant brothers of the generous South... For a day and brother for all time... I charge you by the memory of our youth!

And ye O Southern! be ye not undone... In generous thoughts and deed... We do so for the sake of every one!

Yes, bring fresh flowers and strew the soldier's grave... Whether be proudly lies beneath our Southern skies... Of where the Southern soldier's branches wave!

For the New Orleans Republican—Prepared from the original manuscript.

MY LIFE'S LESSONS.

BY M. P. BIGNBY.

CHAPTER V.

NEW STAGES IN LIFE'S JOURNEY—A WAITING-ROOM INCIDENT—DOCTORS DISAGREE—THE BROKEN SOLDIER AND HIS WIFE—HAGGARD—CLOUDS AGAIN—RETURN—THE RUMWAY COUPLE—OUR GENTLEMEN IN HOUSEKEEPING.

In setting out on our wedding trip I determined that the event should be attended by no vain display. I called a hack and we were driven to the Baltimore and Ohio railroad depot, just as might have been the case with any ordinary travelers.

It happened that we arrived at the depot at least twenty minutes before the departure of the train, and after having taken our seats in the waiting room, our attention was attracted by a fine-looking gentleman, about six feet high, whose well-shaped head, oval face and long beard rendered him conspicuous in the not very distinguished crowd that happened to be present.

As this gentleman was walking slowly and in an apparently thoughtful mood up and down the room, the door opened and a short, stout man, with a face like a full moon, entered.

Setting an eye upon the new comer, the tall gentleman approached him cordially and said: "Why, James, my dear fellow, where do you spring from? I haven't seen you for so many years."

The person addressed was evidently inclined to pomposity. He thought himself no common mortal, and was determined to demand of others the same respect that he paid unto himself.

"Who are you, sir, and by what right do you thus take the liberty of addressing me by my given name. I am Dr. Reed, Dr. James Reed, if you will, and if you ever speak to me again you will please remember these facts."

and a little annoyed at the inconsequential exhibition he had made of his own professional vanity.

"By the beard of Mahomet," exclaimed he, with a playful use of an oriental oath. "How could you expect me to know you? When I saw you last you had a face as smooth as mine, and now it might be employed without improving as a sign for a fur dealer. Out upon such a hairy face! It is enough to frighten little children in the streets. Heaven protect me from such a beard!"

"Come, now, brother Reed," said Dr. Brown, "you must be careful, or people will fail to give you credit for the physiological and professional skill you actually possess. You know, or at least ought to know, that the beard is a gift of our mother Nature, and that it was not provided with it for a special purpose. It is not ornamental it is a useful. The beard is a protector of health."

At this juncture the train-bell rang, and the morning locomotive gave note of a speedy departure.

I had become interested in the conversation of these disagreeing doctors, and I must give my Cora credit for having done so likewise. So, hoping to profit by the remainder of their discourse, we took our seats in front of them in the same car and awaited the result. Dr. Brown, it appeared, resided in Philadelphia, and Dr. Reed in Virginia. They had been separated by the war, and probably entertained very different views concerning its causes and consequences; but each had experiences which were instructive, and I, for my part, listened with attention.

"Now, my dear James," said Dr. Brown, "forgetful of the rebuke which that form of address had so recently provoked, 'tell me how you are getting on in the practice of your profession.'"

"Up to the time of the war," responded Dr. Reed, "I got along but poorly, but since the close of the unpleasantness my business has materially increased. I will give you a special instance, by which you can judge how my practice has improved."

Here Dr. Reed went on to relate how he usually spent the summer months at the Sulphur Springs, and how, during the previous summer at the springs, the pretty daughter of one of his neighbors—an old miser named Blouster—was completely captivated by a young merchant from New York.

Maggie thought that to bring home a handsome husband would soften her father's heart. But she reckoned without her lost. Old Blouster refused to be pacified. Indeed, he induced his daughter to accompany him into one of his strong upper rooms, and locking her in, kept her there a close prisoner.

There were no courts in the vicinity to which the young man could appeal, and he could not conveniently get a besieging army to attack Blouster in his castle, and as a knight of old, carry off his lady love. Blouster pretended to disbelieve the story of the marriage, and with a malicious persistence, as disagreeable as it was ridiculous, placed his house in a position to laugh a siege to scorn.

In front of the Blouster mansion were four large sycamores, which, with their well developed branches, protected it from the scorching rays of the Southern sun; but he determined to cut off some of the branches, in order that his field of observation might be extended, and the approaches more securely guarded. To yield up his child to a d-d Yankee was an evil compared with which even the fall of the Confederacy was but a trifle.

Young Wise, who was on the lookout behind some oaks in the vicinity, felt certain that the old man had broken his neck; he therefore rushed to the spot on a double mission of mercy and marital interest. Blouster was bleeding from the mouth, and it was evident that he had received severe internal injuries. With the aid of two negro women the young man removed the patient to the house, and I was sent for. The case was, however, a hopeless one from the first, and after lingering for about a week the old man died. "Now, for my service in the premises I received a fee of \$300, and it is clear that I would have had no such opportunity had the old and peculiar institution of slavery still existed. A darkey would have been ordered to cut off the branch, and he certainly would have had more practical common sense than to have saved himself off with the offending limb. To save fifty cents the miser undertook to do the work himself, and in doing so he lost his life, while I gained a nice fee and the young husband entered into peaceful possession of a blooming wife and a handsome fortune."

an ill-used daughter and a wronged husband. Venegance's selfish, wrongs are righted, and the proprietors are preserved. It exhibited the pompous doctor's view of the importance of emancipation.

Cora was quite interested in Dr. Reed and his talk. She was glad, she said, that the old miser had tumbled down from the tree and killed himself, and that true love had triumphed in the persons of Maggie and her lover, though she was inclined to censure Wise for not rushing more hastily to the rescue of her whose protection he had so solemnly assumed.

Dr. Brown was then questioned as to what he had been doing during the long years in which he and his friend had been separated.

The bearded professional replied: "Previous to the war I continued to reside in Philadelphia, practicing my profession with some degree of success. When the war came on I took the field as surgeon of a Pennsylvania regiment, and I have just now been to the War Department and pension bureau on behalf of some brave soldiers whose claims have been too long neglected. Besides, I was anxious to look through the army medical museum, where our old friend, Doctor Schaffner, is engaged as professor of anatomy. You remember that he was one of the corps of professors in the University of Pennsylvania when we both were students, and he is in reality the founder of the museum, which is now the most interesting place of the kind on this continent. Indeed, through the demonstrations he was enabled to make, I have learned more on the subject of comparative anatomy within two days than I ever before mastered in two full years."

Then sprang up between these two professional gentlemen a singular dispute concerning the position which the African occupies in the order of creation. Of this I took extended notes, but will not use them for the present.

While I was thus engaged, Cora seemed to be studying the character of a lady who happened to be in the car, and finally, pointing her eye to me, whispered that she was "not decent." I marvelled by what process of worldly wisdom she had arrived at this conclusion, for, as far as I was concerned, I could see nothing objectionable in the lady's conduct.

At length we reached Philadelphia, sometimes known as the City of Brotherly Love, but the first object which attracted our attention when we left the cars gave touching evidence, not of brotherly, but of wifely love.

Standing in front of the depot was a young and really beautiful woman, who propelled a small carriage in which the mangled remains of a soldier—her husband—sat. Both his legs, and his right arm, above the elbow, had been amputated, leaving him a sad wreck. To his wife he was an object of tender solicitude; to the public an object of compassion. She asked for alms in a most respectful tone, and sometimes, a favorable response, received an impertinent rebuke.

One gentleman asked her why she did not send the cripple to the Soldiers' Home, where he would have good care taken of him, while she, herself, could earn a living by her daily labor, instead of wandering about the streets like a worthless beggar.

"Sir," she replied, "you may be a husband and a father; if so, I feel that I have a right to your sympathy, and I demand it. When I became bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of my poor husband there, he was as sound and healthy, eye, and as good looking as you are. Would it be right, I ask you, would it be dutiful, would it be womanly in me to abandon him now in his great need, and go elsewhere to seek consolation and enjoyment? No, no," said she. As she did so she approached the cripple, and throwing her arms lovingly around his neck called him her dear William, and pressed tender kisses upon his lips. She then added: "I will never leave you nor forsake you. The vow I took before the altar made me thine till death."

This was spoken so tenderly, and carried with it an air of such sincerity, as to bring tears from the eyes of several spectators, unused though they were to the melting mood. Contributions flowed in generally, and the faithful wife felt that her efforts on behalf of her wounded husband were not only appreciated, but rewarded.

Cora and I determined to remain for a day or so at Philadelphia, so we took rooms at the Girard House, on Chestnut street, and after dinner engaged a carriage for a drive through Fairmount Park. The beauty of the drive was a surprise to both of us, for the scenery on the Schuylkill up as far as Belmont is beautiful indeed.

thicker was enlivened by nothing peculiar in the way of incident, for we had taken a night train and saw but little of the country through which we passed.

Niagara greeted our approach with its wondrous thunder, but the weather became wet and disagreeable just after our arrival, and Cora's sympathetic disposition seemed sadly affected thereby. Her sky was overcast. She pointed to her there was nothing "nice" about Niagara. It was a damp disagreeable place. The rain prevented her from going out in the day time; the noise kept her from sleeping at night. She was restless and dissatisfied.

In vain I urged that we should be all in all unto each; that as she was my sunshine I also should be hers.

She demurred. She did not believe there could be any sunshine at Niagara for anybody. For her no rainbow spanned the Falls. She wanted to leave and go back home at once. I could not account for her strange reluctance to remain, and began to fear that she was too sensitive a plant for every-day weather, and that I might find it difficult to make her as happy as I had wished.

I reasoned with her; told her that after the storm there would be fine weather; that she should not permit herself to be brought so utterly under the control of exterior influences; that we had joined hands for better and for worse and should bravely accept whatever fortune came.

But Cora was like Rachel without Rachel's care. She refused to be comforted. My utmost efforts failed to summon that hopeful cheer which so becomes the bride. It annoyed me to find her given up to humors as unwise as they were unkind, and we were on the verge of a quarrel before either was aware of the possibility of such an occurrence.

The clouds were yet lowering when we left the Falls, but we had scarcely got fifty miles away before the sun came out in his glory, and when we reached New York the weather was all that could be desired. We remained there all night, and when we entered the train the next day we found the cars were filled. Just opposite to where we were seated were a gentleman and lady, apparently just setting out on their bridal tour. They appeared to be excessively fond of each other, so much so, indeed, as to be utterly oblivious or indifferent to the presence of strangers.

A little before the train was ready to move, the conductor, accompanied by an old gentleman and a New York detective, advanced to the loving couple. The old gentleman was storming like a madman and demanded his daughter as earnestly as ever Shylock demanded duenna. He declared she was trying to run off with a Southern vagabond whom she had illicitly become acquainted with, and he was there to demand his rights and prevent her flight.

The lady screamed; declared that she was lawfully married to the gentleman beside her; that the marriage certificate was then in her possession, and that her husband, so far from being a vagabond, was a worthy and industrious merchant tailor of Richmond, Virginia.

Thereupon the detective requested her to show her marriage certificate, and as she was about to do so, a venerable gentleman, who afterward proved to be a judge of the Supreme Court, requested the detective to pause in his proceedings. He then asked the lady how old she was. She replied that she was twenty-two; that her husband, who had been a Southern prisoner, obtained employment after the close of the war in her father's dry goods store; that while she employed she became acquainted with him, that they were ultimately engaged, and that now they had completed their engagement by entering into the holy estate of matrimony. Her father, she added, objected to the match because he wished her to marry a man as old as he, and altogether unworthy of her love; one, indeed, whose wealth was his sole recommendation.

The old judge then turned to the father and the detective, observing that the law was altogether on the lady's side; that having arrived at the years of discretion she could make her own choice, and having made it she had passed beyond the control of her father, and was in duty bound to cleave unto her husband.

But the father would listen to nothing of this sort. He said that no outsider should interfere with his affairs, and thereupon attempted to seize his daughter's arm with a view of dragging her from the car.

rance, I yet found that much was needed. Cora, however, seemed pleased with my provident arrangements, and expressed herself delighted with the situation of the house and the quality of the furniture. As our meals were to be sent from a neighboring restaurant, she agreed to commence housekeeping without a servant, and in the course of a few days we found ourselves drifting along in the matrimonial current, with what appeared to be a complete return of sunshine and good feeling. Indeed, I began to reflect seriously on myself for condemning my Cora, simply because she had expressed a preference for a rich old man as a husband over a poor young tailor who happened to be his rival. The prefix of merchant to the trade designation of tailor, in the premises, I was willing to regard as probably a fiction. Under this change the cloud I had dreaded lost its darkness and a rainbow took its place.

Things having thus become settled down into every day quietude, I found that ten days of my furlough still remained. Just then it happened that a number of the treasury clerks had arranged for a little fishing and picnic excursion to Cooney Island and in consequence of my new prominence as a married man I was invited to join the party. Indeed, it was a married men's party, and the husbands were expected to take their wives along.

When I first proposed the matter to Cora she seemed to be delighted. A trip on the water, she said, was altogether better than rolling over the country in dusty cars. She was anxious, besides, to see Fortress Monroe and to show her skill in fishing in the deep waters of the sea.

Such were her views on Tuesday; so I made arrangements for our departure on Thursday with the rest. But on Wednesday an unexpected change came over the spirit of her dream. She said that in the visions of the night she had been disturbed by a renewal of the horrors of the Wawaset—a steambot disaster which had occurred nearly a year previously—and, accepting the vision as a warning, she had determined not to go. Now, this Wawaset disaster had been in reality a very serious affair. The boat had been burned on the Potomac, and many lives were lost. Cora, however, generously suggested that I should not forego the pleasure of the trip, because she, through a perverse idle fancy, had changed her mind. Indeed she urged me to go with a persistency which was suggestive of either a lack of faith in her own dream, or a possible willingness to become a widow. The rainbow began again to lose its colors, and as it did so the dark cloud returned.

CHAPTER VI. MY TRIP—A LITTLE GAME OF DRAW—THE BIRTHDAY FEAST—A LIGHT IN CORA'S CHAMBER—HOFFMAN'S ANODYNE—GRAY CLOTHES EXCHANGED FOR BLACK—THE PLETHORIC POCKET BOOK—MY REVENGE—THE END.

When Thursday morning arrived my interest in the proposed trip had greatly waned, and but that my wife urged me not to disappoint my fellow clerks, I would have abandoned all thoughts of going. She said there was no need of my remaining on her account, as she would spend most of the time during my absence at her mother's, and felt assured that a few days of sea air and sea bathing would do me good. Being careless about the matter it was late before I got away, and when I arrived at the steambot wharf the Lady of the Lake, with a gay party of excursionists on board, was just starting down the bay.

I, of course, had to return home, and when I reached the dear spot where my treasure was, the gentle Cora began to laugh at me. She said I had accused her of being superstitious, but it was evident now that I was quite as superstitious as she, if not more so. She had been deterred from going by a dream; I, by the shadow of a dream, a dream dreamed by another.

I told her there was no superstition in the matter; I would have gone had I not been about half a minute too late, and I would yet go on the morrow and meet the excursionists at their island rendezvous.

At this she appeared to be somewhat pleased. Fears and superstitions, she considered assured me, were well enough for women, but they were not the stuff of which true men were made. Though somewhat of a coward herself she did not want a coward for a husband.

Accordingly, I started bright and early on Friday morning, and late in the afternoon arrived at Cooney island. When I got ashore I found plenty of strangers there, but my treasury friends I was unable to discover. After wandering around for some time I returned to the spot at which I had landed an hour before, and took my seat in front of the hotel. There were three other persons sitting there, enjoying the sea breeze and their cigars, and as they were socially disposed I soon joined them in conversation. In seeming, at least, they were as pleasant a trio as one would choose to meet, and in my peculiar situation, even less attractive companionship would have been acceptable.

At length their conversation turned on games of chance, and after some plausible discussion they arrived at the solemn conclusion that life in this world is a mere lottery; that the prizes and blanks are distributed less by merit than by chance, and that all commercial speculation is essentially gambling in its worst form, being based on the desire of making gains at the cost of others, and conducted, as far as possible, on principles of simulation and deception. As a sequel I was invited to take a hand at a little game of draw, merely, as was urged, to pass away the time. I said that my acquaintance with the game was extremely limited, so limited, indeed, that it would scarcely afford any amusement to experienced players. But to this they replied that we all rest under a common obligation to afford each other instruction and amusement, and they trusted that in the game proposed this obligation would be faithfully carried out.

I, at length, with a sort of mental protest, assented to the proposition, and we thereupon retired to indulge in the mysteries of draw.

striving to furnish an equivalent for my lack of skill, and truth to say, I enjoyed my temporary triumph, and would, without any computations of conscience, have pooled the losses of my three friends, had fate so decided.

As the night advanced the stake increased, and the game became more and more lively. The tide of my successes turned, and with the ebb I lost, not only all that I had gained, but the whole of the hundred dollars I had taken with me to pay the price of my amusement during my proposed absence.

It was just the dawn of day as the game closed, and I felt, then and there, about as miserable as any reasonable man can feel. I remembered how I had left my young wife for the purpose of enjoying a week of selfish amusement; how I had squandered more than the savings of a month in a single night, and how, without seeing the friends I had come to join, I would be compelled, practically, to beg my way back to Washington.

We had been drinking a good deal during the night; and neither my brain nor stomach accepted the situation willingly. I stretched myself on a bed and tried to sleep, but remorse haunted my pillow, and if I lapsed into a temporary slumber the game was cruelly revived and I was constantly attempting the impossibility of beating fulls with fishes, and three with two pairs.

At length I arose unrefreshed, and going to the hotel keeper explained the condition of my finances, and asked a loan on my watch till I could go to Washington and return. He replied that the persons I had played with were little better than sharpers; that he had made signs to me not to play, but I had failed to heed them, and now I could only hope to turn my experience to account in future transactions with strangers.

With these practical remarks the worthy landlord told me to put my watch back into my pocket, and he would advance me the amount necessary to pay my fare back to Washington, which amount I could bring back or send back by mail, as best suited my convenience.

I accepted the money tendered, heartily thanked mine host, and taking the first boat, steamed back toward home, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies. It was but too apparent that my honeymoon had not turned out as satisfactorily as I had hoped. Here I was, away from my wife when I should be by her side; I had not so full a confidence in her as I own foolish conduct I was heartily ashamed. The truth is, I felt rather like a dull mourner at a funeral than a fresh bridegroom in the first month of marriage.

It was after dark when the steamer landed at the Seventh street wharf, and I had not a single nickel in my possession with which to pay my fare in a street car up to Pennsylvania avenue. I therefore walked, moralizing on the way. But the evening before I had all the money I required; and I threw it away with a reckless disregard of the proprieties; now I had not a cent, and the old adage, "a fool and his money are soon parted," seemed to frame itself on my tongue and in my ears by some involuntary process as mysterious as unwelcome. The unpleasant iteration became irksome. I tried to think of something else, but the attempt was vain. The humiliating accusation repeated itself, as if in changeable letters it had been written on my brain by a demon's hand.

In this frame of mind I approached the most famous of the Washington avenues, when I was startled by a slap upon my shoulder.

I looked up with commingled feelings of anger and curiosity, but at once recognized an old army friend, whose life I had the good fortune to save at the battle of Gettysburg.

"Why, Bob," said he, "what's the matter with you? Have you been attending your respected mother-in-law's funeral? Come, cheer up, old boy; put a little oil in your lamp and defy the fool fend!"

"Well, James," said I, "I am really glad to see you; but to tell you the truth, I am in no pleasant mood, and if I seek for the causes I find myself chiefly to blame. I am on my way home, and so, without further parley, bid you good evening."

you must be crazy, lubby; I didn't have a light."

"I put my hand to my forehead and mentally inquired whether I was indeed becoming crazy. That I saw what I supposed to be a light in my wife's room I felt certain, but in my half tipsy condition I held it to be just possible that I had been beguiled by some more distant jet of gas; for what possible reason could my darling Cora have for attempting to deceive me in so trifling a matter? The thing was ludicrously reasoned out. Cora was sober and I had been drinking. Cora was right and I was wrong."

"Well, darling," said I, "be kind enough to light the gas; I have a long story to tell you, and the truth is, an weary and wish for rest."

"As to the gas," said Cora, "there isn't a single match in the house to light it with."

"Not a match?" I replied. "Why, there was a full box when I left."

"I know there was," said Cora, "but I undertook to make a little fire in the stove this morning and the whole box became ignited and was destroyed."

Against such circumstantial testimony I could maintain no further doubts, so I concluded to divest myself of my clothing, in my old bachelor fashion, without the benefit of a light, and got to bed as best I could.

Proceeding to carry out this deliberate intent with as much speed as possible, I was at length startled by moaning sounds uttered by my wife, who appeared to be terribly in pain.

"What is the matter, darling?" I asked as tenderly as possible, for it occurred to me that her delicate sensibilities had been wounded by my untimely return, and the too evident traces of dissipation I had found it impossible to conceal.

"I can not imagine what the matter is," she replied, "but my poor stomach is tortured by the most painful cramps that ever mortal woman felt. O, such terrible gripes! I shall die unless I get relief."

The dangerous illness of my dear Cora, which I possibly had provoked, and the poignant sense of my own unworthiness, which grew sharper and sharper, as my brain threw off its insubstantial delusions, oppressed me with combined emotions of sadness and of shame. I pictured to myself the computations of conscience I should have felt had my darling wife sickened and died during my cruel absence; and her unexpressed moans, as they fell upon my ear, furnished all the startling shadows which the picture needed.

"What can I do for my precious Cora?" I inquired; for I was sadly ignorant of the ways and wants of womanhood and waited for any suggestion she might make.

Through her sobs and groans she replied: "Go to the drug store at the next corner and get a bottle of Hoffman's anodyne; it's an excellent medicine and I'm sure it will do me good."

CAPITAL HILL. MY DEAR COLONEL—Come and see me; I am so lonesome. My poor fool of a husband, of whom I am already heartily tired, has gone away fishing for a week, and I have thought how clever it would be in me, during his absence, to do a little fishing on my own account. Under the convenient mask of marriage I will be less exposed than formerly, and our stolen in-