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MY NEIGHBOR'S STORY.

I have a neighbor. We occupy adjoining rooms in a shabby genteel boarding house, where the cheap lodging party consoles us for its discomforts. My neighbor is a grave, faded, silent woman of forty or thereabouts, always dressed in sombre colors, with a plain muslin cap concealing her gray hair, and a reserve of manner, which baffles curiosity and questions.

She has no visitors; she rarely leaves the house; the postman's arrival never causes a stir of joy or sorrow upon her countenance; and after each meal, she slowly retires from the dining room with her usual heavy, listless tread, and is not seen again until the bell summons us to the table once more.

If addressed, she answers quietly and firmly, glancing a moment at her interlocutor, and then looking down upon her plate as if she wished to let you understand that politeness alone induced her to reply.

Always punctual in her weekly payments, so mysteriously regular in her conduct, so averse to gossip, at first my neighbor was a great "card" in the house, and we shuffled and dealt her every day so soon as her back was turned.

"Who was she?" No one could tell. She gave her name as Mrs. Brown; and weeks lengthened into months, and months into years, and still, grave, faded silent, with her dark gowns and her measured footfall, the stranger lived in our midst as unknown as if she wore an iron mask, and did not speak our language.

Gradually the interest in her died away. The inmates of the boarding-house left off wondering about her, for no fresh food was served up for their eager swallow—she just staid at the same point, neither lessening nor increasing her self-concentrating style of life—so, sadly and wearily my neighbor's days dragged along in their unbroken calm and unwavering reserve.

She was still to me a subject of tho't. Whether it were because I was more perturbed than my fellow-boarders, or whether, being in the next room, I seemed nearer to her, and could hear her frequently pacing her narrow chamber for hours, not restlessly, but with a solemn, marked, continuous march, which often lasted till the gray dawn peeped through my shutters—whether this made a bond between us unfeeling by the others, I do not know; but certain it is, that long after the rest had ceased to notice her, I still watched, and strove to pierce the envelope which shut us out from her ideas, feelings, and sorrows.

After a night passed as I have described, she would appear at the breakfast table with no traces of tears or sleepiness—just the same haggard look around her large eyes, the same patient suffering wrinkling her faded mouth, the same entire hopelessness of carriage and air.

She asked no sympathy—she needed none. I saw very soon she was unaccustomed to the coarse fare which our landlady provided; others had remarked that soon after her arrival, and once, some one had said to her, "You don't relish your victuals, ma'am. You have been used to better, perhaps?"

She had fixed her sternest look upon the speaker. "You are mistaken," she said dropping her eyelids; "everything is better than I am in the habit of seeing."

And from that day the meanest dish on the humble board was always her choice, although she could not sometimes dispose of the contents, but would play with her knife and three-pronged fork, and rise from among us without having eaten enough to nourish a sparrow.

There was another singular incident which early in her stay caused much comment.

One morning she chanced to sit next our landlady, who, awkwardly enough, upset the ewer of boiled milk over the sleeve and hand of Mrs. Brown. It was not very hot, the milk—it never was—but Mrs. Plunkett started up with apologies, and, in spite of my neighbor's resistance, would wipe and rub the wet hand herself. In a few seconds all the boarders saw with amazement that the well-polished hand contrasted singularly with its fellow, which was brown and harsh; while the one clasped by Mrs. Plunkett, was delicate, fair, blue-veined and beautiful.

The boarders were almost content at being their coffee, since the split milk had secured the knowledge of this mys-

tery; but my neighbor drew her sleeve over her hand and retired. At dinner they appeared to have resumed their likeness; and worthy Mrs. Plunkett will to her last hour believe that the constant use of boiled milk (tepid) will produce the happiest results, upon the most unsatisfactory skins.

Last week I remarked that my neighbor was more than usually depressed.—Through the partition wall I frequently heard her sigh, and for three nights the footsteps kept up their regular beat with—

Each day she looked more worn, and my old eyes filled with tears as I watched her. Lately she had not turned with a vexed frown from my observation, as I had often had the pain of seeing her do, but once or twice she gave me an earnest glance from beneath her fatigued brow, while her arms dropped moodily and weakly beside her.

She seemed thinner, more fragile than ever. Her gown waist was pinned over more closely, each day; a willow-wand is scarcely sligher than her waist.

But, as I was saying—it was about eight o'clock in the evening, and I was sitting in my own room, intending to write a letter to my absent child in California, when a sob—so loud, so deep, so heart-breaking—came to me from my neighbor.

It was irresistible. I started up and went into the passage. A light shone below the closed door of my neighbor's room. I listened. All was still, except from the parlor down stairs, where one of the ladies was torturing the piano.

Again that heavy sigh. It was as if a long pent-up agony, like a mighty river bursting its bounds rushed sweepingly, distinctly, overwhelmingly into sound and action. Sob upon sob; tears falling in mad sorrow; and then a fall, as if a figure, gathered up to its full height had suddenly dropped prone upon the floor.

I felt the impropriety,—the intrusion— but I softly opened the door, carried away by a sympathy stronger than conventional rules.

There lay my neighbor. Her long hair untwisted, disheveled; her head buried in her arms gathered in a reckless heap, writhing in uncontrollable misery. Bitter sighs, half uttered words, and ceaseless moans. The room was bare; no curtains to the hard, comfortless bed; none at the solitary window. A stiff, un cushioned chair, a small trunk; not a book, not a sign of woman's presence; the most cheerless spot conceivable. But opposite to me there rested an object so strange to find in such an apartment, that it riveted my attention and kept me spell-bound.

A large packing-case held a picture in a splendid frame: the upper side had been removed only recently, for it yet leaned partly against the picture.

It was a portrait; a full length portrait of a beautiful woman; so brilliantly beautiful that I wondered if lips so red and eyes so dazzling could have ever existed. The dress was of a fashion of fifteen years back or more; the surroundings represented a drawing-room, handsomely furnished, and, reclining upon a sofa, with one arm half buried in its downy depths, lay this beauty—a sparkling petulance, a laughing grace enveloping her; and shining jewels decked her lovely person with a glorious fitness like dewdrops upon violet blossoms.

By the light of a sixpenny glass lamp, in which burned camphine, on the table, near I saw this luxurious picture, and the weeping, groveling woman in her coarse garments and her fierce sorrow on the floor at its feet. They seemed the antipodes of life, and yet it appeared to me that in the lofty dignity of the one, I could trace a dreary likeness to the lowly poverty of the other.

Was it so? Had these weaned, melancholy eyes, which now were veiled by her silver hair, ever been faithfully represented by those insolently beautiful ones? Was there truly a connection between the portrait and the poor owner of it?

Was it Magdalen weeping before her early self? The more I looked, the more I believed it. Withered, worn, shabby, old as she now was—this portrait had once, like a mirror, reflected the features of my neighbor.

What business had I there? What could I do for grief like this? The proud spirit which danced in every sparkle of the portrait's eye, the pretty scorn which shone in its air, might yet linger in my neighbor's breast. She was aroused. She was no longer patient, uncomplaining; some sorrow was stirring within her, which had overleaped her stoical calm.

I closed the door gently, and held my breath, lest I should disturb her.

"Poor thing!"

I could not write. In spite of my sixty years, boyish tears wet my cheek, and I listened—listened—and heard the low sobs die out: then came the heavy, grief laden footsteps.

"Who and what was my neighbor?" Her door opened: not as I opened it, but quickly violently, and she ran—she who always walked as if shod with lead—down the stair. I caught a glimpse of her: Her bonnet was dashed upon her head, and a shawl thrown around her.

In a moment I was after her I watched the course she took and followed.

Up one quiet street, down another, to the finest quarter of the city, flew my neighbor. At last we were almost driven over by carriages making their way in the same direction; and to my surprise, she stopped where they did.

A grand old house! Lights streaming from the hall and through each window chink. Files of servants in livery marshaling the guests, crowds of by-standers going into the entrance-door and gaping at the company, as coach after coach set down its richly dressed occupants upon the carpet which was spread for dainty feet.

I was quite bewildered.

"What does my neighbor here?" She stood three paces from me as I hid in the shade. The ragged boys jostled her, and a big Irishwoman thrust her aside. Her bonnet was pulled over her face, but I could see the dark eyes flashing now; and when a police officer shoved the crowd into order, and bade her "stand back," I saw her turn upon him with a gesture worthy the portrait; and then clasping her hands in agony, she shrank back, and leaned panting against the iron railing.

Presently she raised her bowed head and looked eagerly around; then she slipped through the mass and I followed after. She gained the back entrance, a deserted lane dimly lighted, and almost feeling in this darkness, open a small gate and pushed in.

I waited to hear her step forward, then pushed the gate gently, and found myself in a large garden. She was a few yards in advance cautiously making her way.

Nothing daunted, I did likewise. She threaded the alleys with perfect ease, avoiding the broader paths, and walking steadily on. At length she paused so abruptly, at a sudden turn that I was almost upon her heels. Immediately in front of us, with no impediment to our sight but the trunk of the tree behind which she partially screened herself, was spread out the whole company, whose simultaneous arrival was now accounted for.

The night was warm (though in mid-winter), the shutters were folded back, and in this sumptuous drawing room stood a bridal party.

The bride was of a soft and gentle beauty, very young, fair and tender, blushing timidly beneath her veil and orange blossoms, and looking up with mingled bashfulness and love at her bridegroom. We had arrived singularly, enough just as they took their places for the ceremony.

A stout, severe, elderly man, with bushy eyebrows, and an obstinate, harsh expression breaking through the present suavity of his look, supporting this young creature on her left. He was evidently her father or guardian, while as evidently I decided that the youth on the bridegroom's other side was her brother. He glanced suspiciously, stealthily from time to time at his sister, then nervously watched the motions of the older man, and seemed helplessly and anxious uneasy.

All this I took in at one look; for it has been my pleasure and habit for many a long year to study my fellow-beings, and I have acquired a quickness of perception which grows with what it feeds upon.

My neighbor grasped a drooping branch of the old oak, pressing her weak frame against its strength, and gazing with such painful intensity, such starting eyeballs, that she neither noticed me, nor, I believe, would have turned her look aside even had she perceived me.

The low rustling of rich skirts as the elderly ladies stood up—a soft fluttering of fans and laces as the younger ones settled themselves—a faint cough or two—then a breathless silence.

"Dearly beloved," "If any man can show just cause why these may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else forever hold his peace."

"I do!" rang out my neighbor's voice,

clear and shrill. It resounded through that great empty garden, it echoed from the ancient walls, it stunned me for a second.

A wild cry, a confused swaying of the crowd, the bride sinking in her bridegroom's arms, a momentary hush, and then some one sprang to the open windows, and all was hurry and pursuit.

I seized my neighbor's arm; she struggled, but I dragged her on; and while eyes were peering into the darkness, and rapid feet were close upon us, we gained the little gate and went safe. She was quieter now, only her hand was marble cold, and she muttered:

"My darlings, my poor forsaken darlings!"

I led her into the silent park which borders that portion of the city, and seated her on the bench.

The stars twinkled above our heads, restlessly, it appeared to me, and with a feverish, uncertain gleam. There was no calm anywhere. Did the tumultuous beatings of that sorrowful heart fill the atmosphere, and make even heaven's lights burn fitfully?

It was not noisy, it was not rough; it was a wild, silent, desperate throbbing.

"How came you here?" she said, at last, turning upon me. "You were with me in the garden?"

"I was. I followed you. You have made me eager to serve and comfort you."

"Comfort me! Listen. That house which we have just left was once mine. There I lived its proud and idolized mistress. That young bride is my daughter, my own fair-haired Emma. My petted boy, my darling Horace, you saw him, did you not? They clung to me, they were so young. Yes, I left them!"

She paused.

"I scarcely know your name, but lately I have seen that you feel for me, that you pity me. You are an old man. My heart is breaking to-night. God help me! I thought it had broken long ago. It is years since I have permitted myself the luxury of a friendly word. I never speak. When I was a woman beautiful and admired, men used to worship my wit, and bow down before my sarcastic eloquence. It is one of my penances now to be silent, to permit myself no relaxation from this strict vow. But to-night I must speak."

"Is she not lovely, my gentle Emma? Did you see the bridegroom? I know him. He is cruel, heartless, cold, selfish, unwarmly by a single virtue or even vice. He feels too little to be even wicked. All is calculation. Hard as adamant, unbending as the steadfast rock, he will crush my darling's timid spirit. He will not ill use her, but she will die from sheer want of sympathy. He will sneer at her girlish feelings and put down her rising thoughts."

"He is twelve years her senior, and marries her for her father's gold."

"How long is it since I deserted them? My brain wanders to-night," she put back her tangled hair, and beat upon her knee with her thin hand.

"I was very beautiful, very haughty, I could not brook control; and, in my wrath, meeting each day a will striving to be stronger than my own, I grew restive. Life to me was such a weary business. He came, did I love him? I do not know. Was it vanity or passion? a yearning after some powerful interest or a mere outburst of fretted pride? I cannot tell now. Then I thought it a love stronger than reason."

"Five years I reigned the tainted queen of dishonored homage. Who so bright, so grandly towering in the midst of her hollow glory?"

"One day a new light broke upon me. In full career, with not a charm impaired, with not a wrinkle to warn my cheek that time was fleeting past, with no tarnish on my lips or brow, in the plenitude of my meridian glory, I turned with disgust from revelry, and empty vicious joys."

"It was satiety. It palled upon me. I pined for my children's pure kisses. I hated the train of bold, bad men who worshipped and despised me. I loathed the painted, meretricious who formed my society. With fearless scorn I bade them farewell. I tore the jewels from my arms and brow, and gave the wages of sin to feed the poor and clothe the naked."

"It was a night like this, when, assembling the wicked, careless crowd for one last festival, more superb than ever, in robes so costly that the women about me 'paled in their ineffectual fires' before the dazzle of my beauty and magnificence, I took (mentally and forever) my leave of them."

"Never was my supremacy more loudly acknowledged. Eyes hung upon

mine. Men quailed before my bitter tongue, and then crept to my feet to smother themselves in the dangerous softness of my smile.

"How I hated them all! 'At early dawn I was miles away.—Straight as the lapwing to her nest I sought my children."

"I came to this city disguised."

"There was no mark of age then; midnight orgies had respected their fit associate, the devil had cared for his own. I stained my face, my royally beautiful hands. The feet which had been planted in their slender divinity upon the necks of my subjects, were hidden in coarse shoes. The figure was now swathed in rusty garments, which enabled me, unchecked, unrecognized, to dog the footsteps of my children and their attendants."

"One day Emma stumbled, and I caught her in my arms. The graceful, modest girl of twelve turned her blue eyes gratefully upon me. I trembled like those leaves which the wind now beats aside."

"Years have passed since then. I do not give myself the enjoyment, the passive delight of even a hut, where in perfect solitude I might brood over my life—my griefs."

"There is a refinement of penance to my mind in searching out such spots as the one in which I now live."

"To surround myself with commonplace, ignorant, prying people, whose very contact once would have disgusted me. They irritate me now; they are the hair-shirt and lusk which, devout Catholics administer to themselves."

"Do you realize my life? Do you understand it? This is my jar of ointment. I pour it out daily."

"The only relic I possess of what I was, is the cruellest stab which yet remains to be told."

"When I left my home, my children, my all, the stern, inflexible father of those children sent me my portrait, taken in the pride of my youthful maturity. He would not retain a vestige which spoke of me. I have it still. When the storm of vexed passions, of undying regrets rages highest within me, I open the box in which it stands."

"It is not the sight of my past beauty (for I need no disguises now) which wrings my very soul, but the memory of my innocence."

"She stopped. 'Away!' she cried, lifting up her arms; 'the hurricane is at hand now. Who can teach me to wipe out the past? Repentance will not do it, tears will not do it, penance will not do it!'"

"But prayer will," I whispered softly, folding both fiercely-nervous hands in my aged ones.

"Prayer!" she repeated scornfully.

"Prayer will not give me my children, my lost name, my proud position. Prayer cannot heal the bleeding wounds that make up my heart. Prayer cannot prevent what has happened this night—the sacrifice of my Emma. Prayer may save my soul, but it cannot help them."

Alas! Alas!

I almost hoped that I read aright; my neighbor's mind had gone astray as well as her poor, faltering footsteps.

"Farewell!" she said, rising abruptly; farewell! I thank you. Do not follow me. Ask no questions about me. They tell me you write tales for bread. If you can, make a warning of me. Farewell."

She walked straight down the path, far into the darkness. I saw the flow of her black gown and her steady march until the trees shut her out.

I began by saying "I have a neighbor; I should have said 'I had.'"

I looked for her in her usual seat next morning; she was not at the breakfast table.

"Where is Mrs. Brown?" I asked.

"Ah!" answered Mrs. Plunkett, "she left at daylight, bag and baggage; not much of it she has to move though—only a big flat box and trunk. The Lord he knows where she has gone. A queer soul, that Mrs. Brown. I am not sorry to lose her. Shall I fill your cup, sir?"

LITTLE GIRLS.—There is something inexpressibly sweet about little girls. Lovely, pure, innocent, ingenuous, unsuspecting, full of kindness to brothers, babies and everything. They are sweet little human flowers, diamond dewdrops in the breath of morn. What a pity they should ever become woman flirts, and heartless coquettes!

"Why," said an argumentative gentleman, "it is as plain as that two and two make four." "That I deny," retorted his antagonist, "for 2 and 2 make 22."

DREAMS.

A man who is the least inclined to superstition, may be excused if, at times, he gives some credence to either the brilliant or gloomy dreams which sometimes assail him. Modern philosophy, armed with its hopeless scepticism, has vainly sought to banish among the crowd of fables, these features which prove the intellectual existence of man during his sleep; on the other hand there were many respectable personages of antiquity, philosophers, as well as commanders of armies, with the most eminent writers of Greece and Rome, who thought it their duty to have faith in dreams, on which might depend the safety of the people, a city, or an army, so that, without blushing, we may become credulous after the manner of Zenophon, Simonides, Cassius, Caesar, Plato. But without wading so far back through the flood of time, to search for celebrated dreams, we need cite only a few, which approach nearer to the present period.

Maldonat, a Jesuit, had formed a design of undertaking a commentary on the four Gospels; for several nights he tho't he beheld a man, who exhorted him to go on speedily with the work, and assured him that he would complete it, but that he would not live long after it was finished. This man at the same time pointed out to him a certain part of his stomach, in which Maldonat experienced violent pangs, and of which he died, very soon after his work was concluded.

A man, who did not know one word of Greek, went to seek out Saumaise, and showed him some certain words which he heard in the night in a dream, and which he had written in French characters. He asked him if he knew what those words expressed? Saumaise told him in Greek, they signified, "Go thy ways, dost thou not see that death threatened thee?"

The dreamer returned to his house, which fell down the following night. A learned man of Dijon, being fatigued all day with studying one particular passage in a Greek poet, without being able to comprehend it, went at length to bed and fell asleep. He fancied himself transported in a dream to the palace of Christian, at Stockholm, where he visited the Queen of Sweden's library, and perceived a small volume; he opened it and read ten Greek verses, which solved all the difficulty he had labored under. His joy awakened him; he rose, noted down what he had just read, and, finding the adventure of so extraordinary a nature, he wrote to Descartes, who was then with the Queen in Sweden, and described to him all the particulars of his dream. Descartes replied to him, telling him that the most skillful engineer could not have drawn the plan of the place better, nor the library, than he had done in his letter; that he had found the book in question on the table he had pointed out; that he had therein read the verses mentioned by him, and that he would send him the work at the first opportunity.

Marshall Villars, at the age of sixteen, was a cornet in a cavalry regiment. One night he was on the advanced guard in the camp, and was warning himself before a wretched fire, when he heard a loud voice calling to him to join and mount his horse with his escort. The youthful warrior paid but little attention to this order, but still he heard the voice, and an invisible hand seized him by his cloak. Villars then obeyed, and scarce was he advanced a few paces distant with his men, than the place he had left blew up with a terrible explosion. It seems that the enemy, abandoning the territory, which was threatened by the French army, buried some barrels of gunpowder which they were unable to carry away. The soldiers belonging to Villars had lighted their fire precisely on the spot which concealed the barrels. The action of the fire commenced by drying the powder, and finished by its explosion. The protesting genius of Villars preserved him from this danger; and also saved with him a handful of brave fellows, who, without the fortunate star which guided him, might, perhaps, have perished.

The writer of this article has heard related the following adventure: "One night, after I had gone my last rounds, I betook myself to sleep, when all on a sudden I dreamed that one of my hot houses was on fire. This struck me forcibly; I rose and hastened to the hot house pointed out to me in my dream, when I had the happiness to arrive in time to prevent, without a doubt, a serious misfortune. A fire had actually broken out from one of the stoves, which were always kept burning day and night, and seemed likely, infallibly, to make considerable progress."

Without further search we may agree in the opinion, without discussing the cause, that dreams are not what superstition has stated them to be, neither are they what they are defined by modern Philosophy.

OLD TIME WINTERS.

So intense was the cold in England in the winter of 1664, that the river Thames was covered with ice sixty one inches thick. Almost all the birds perished.

In 1691 the cold was so excessive in Austria, that famished wolves entered Vienna and attacked beasts and even men.

Many people in Germany were frozen to death in 1695, and the winters of 1697 and 1699 were nearly as bad.

In 1709 occurred the famous winter known as the "old winter," by distinction. All the rivers and lakes were frozen, and even the sea for several miles from the shore. The ground was frozen nine feet deep. Birds and beasts were frozen dead in the fields, and men perished by thousands in their houses.

In the south of France the vine plantations were almost all destroyed; nor have they yet recovered from that fatal disaster. The Arabian Sea was frozen over, and even the Mediterranean.

In 1716 the winter was so intense that people traveled across the straits from Copenhagen to the province of Senia, in Sweden.

In 1720, in Scotland, multitudes of cattle and sheep were buried in the snow.

In 1740 the winter was scarcely inferior to that of 1709. The snow lay ten feet deep in Spain and Portugal. The Zuyder Zee was frozen over, and thousands of people went over it, and the lakes in England froze.

In 1747 the winter was very cold.—Snow fell in Portugal to the depth of twenty-three feet on a level.

In 1754 and 1755 the winters were very severe and cold. In England the strongest ale, exposed to the air in a glass, was covered, in fifteen minutes, with ice one-eighth of an inch thick.

In 1771 the Elbe was frozen to the bottom.

In 1776 the Danube bore ice five feet deep below Vienna. Vast numbers of the feathered and finny tribes perished.

The winters of 1784 and 1785 were uncommonly severe. The Little Belt was entirely frozen over. From 1800 to 1812, also, the winters were remarkably cold, particularly the latter in Russia, which proved so disastrous to the French army.

HEADING-OFF SATAN.—A missionary agent, preaching in Brooklyn, some time since, stated the case of a gentleman who commenced life with about \$600, and who was appealed to aid in the missionary cause. He gave \$100 for that object. Reasoning with himself as to his gift soon after, the thought entered his mind that he had given too much; but immediately conceiving it to be a suggestion of Satan, he gave another \$100; still troubled by the same adversary, he turns upon the arch-demon thus: "Now, Satan, if you don't be still, I'll give the whole." And he has kept on giving to this day, and has prospered both temporally and spiritually, without any hindrance from the aforementioned tempter.

EVERY DAY LIFE.—From morning till night is the human mind restless as the troubled sea. No sooner do men enter the world than they at once lose their taste for natural and simple pleasures so remarkable in early life. Every hour they ask themselves what progress they have made in the pursuit of wealth and honor. And on they go, as their fathers went before them, till sick and weary at heart, they look back with a sigh of regret to the golden time of childhood. Nature is not to blame for this. We are the offenders, and deserve to be unhappy.

MOUSTACHE.—Punch furnishes the last argument yet discovered against moustaches. He paints two rough Creole soldiers, with pipes in their mouths, and a thicket of hair all over their faces, meeting, and one complains to the other: "I tell yer what, Bill, I don't half like these moustaches. They do mop up such a lot of grog."

There is no greater instance of a weak and pusillanimous temper, than for a man to pass his whole life in opposition to his own sentiments, and not dare to be what he thinks he ought to be.