

TO AN EARLY VISITANT.

Sweet star-dower, from your couch of green... You lift a face of modest mien...

AUNT MONA.

My Aunt Mona, if her own words might be believed, had hardly been well for a day throughout her life...

How is it, I wonder, that people who have every essential good in life to make them comfortable must create discomfort for themselves?

And she might have been so bright and happy. The wife of Thomas Butterfield, substantial yeoman and farmer...

Aunt Mona did not sit patiently down and endure her suffering; she had too much spirit for that. I don't believe there was a doctor within a hundred miles who had not heard the dismal story of her manifold and ever increasing ailments.

She had tried allopathy, homoeopathy, hydropathy; she had consulted various kinds of practitioners—botanic, eclectic, magnetic and mesmeric. She once traveled to London to consult a renowned spiritual medium.

But now a wonderful thing occurred. There came into the village hard by a man of medicine, and he set up his tent there for a day or two. He called himself the great "Physio-Eclectic-Magnetic Healer," and he came heralded by a mighty flourish of trumpets and by bills as large as life, professing to cure everything.

"I have enjoyed poor health for twenty years," began Aunt Mona, in a sighing tone, while the great doctor, sitting before her, looked and listened attentively.

"Of course," murmured the great Magnetic Healer. "Go on, madam."

complaint is malformation of the right auricle, and—there may be—something a little amiss with the left ventricle. I think perhaps there is. You feel out of spirits, now don't you, often, especially in damp, gloomy weather, and a sort of distaste to everything?"

"Why, doctor, no one before ever told me this!" exclaimed Aunt Mona, in ecstasy. "It is exactly how I do feel."

"Yes, yes, my dear madam. I could describe your every sensation just as well as though I myself were the sufferer. How is your appetite?"

"Well, it is not to be relied on; but it's mostly very poor. Some days I eat well enough; others I can't touch a thing, and I live then upon strong green tea, or perhaps coffee, and toast and butter."

"A most deleterious practice, my dear madam. Order is Nature's first law, and it behooves us to be regular in our diet. This capriciousness of appetite arises from the derangement I speak of, and can be easily remedied. Do you sleep well?"

"Good gracious! no, doctor; not as a rule. How can you expect it? And if I do sleep I dream. The other night I had a dreadful dream. I thought I saw the ghosts of my two dead brothers who were drowned ten years ago. They were beckoning to me. I awoke in the worst fright possible, screaming and crying."

"And had you gone to bed supplest that night—upon nothing but green tea?"

"Well, no. That night I had managed to eat a morsel of supper, and drink a drop of our old ale. Hot pork chops and apple fritters we had, I remember."

The doctor coughed. "Yes, they beckoned to me distinctly," continued Aunt Mona, returning to the ghosts of her two brothers. "It was a sign, I know, doctor; a warning that I must soon follow. I feel that I am not long for this world."

"My dear lady, do not despair, I implore you. A life valuable as yours must not so early be lost to the world; a sun so brilliant must not go down ere it has attained its meridian splendor. In the hands of an ordinary physician your case would, indeed, be hopeless; but my skill may perhaps avail, even for you. I fear, madam, that you are inclined to hysteria. In simpler phrase, that you are nervous."

"No, doctor, I cannot say that I am. I should be if I gave way to my feelings, but that is what I never allow myself to do. My husband at times tells me that I am hysterical, but when I'm dead and gone he'll know better. He will realize then that I was the patientest, uncomplainingest mortal woman that ever breathed. Being so hearty himself, he cannot understand that other people have ailments; and so—and so—all that I know is that I am frightfully ill and get no sympathy."

And with the last words Aunt Mona covered her face with her handkerchief and sobbed aloud.

Much affected, the great Magnetic Healer turned away, as if to conceal his emotion. Then, returning to his chair, he spoke in a consoling tone. "Dry your tears, dear lady. I have the gift of prescience, which assures me that you will live and not die. Although my great reliance in the cure of disease is my wonderful mesmeric and magnetic power, yet in addition to these, I am possessed of an unrivaled medicine, the secret of whose preparation was communicated to me while in the spiritual trance state by the great Galen himself. Take heart. It shall cure you."

"Oh, if it could!" cried aunt, dropping her handkerchief. "What medicine is it?"

"It is called the 'Elixir of Life and Universal Panacea.' This small bottle of medicine which I will give you," he added, producing a little white vial filled with a lemon colored liquid, "is sufficient to cure any mortal disease, and—"

"It don't look much of it," interrupted aunt.

"My good lady, it will last you your life time. You may take one drop on rising in the morning, one drop at noon, and one drop before retiring at night. Continue this course for a fortnight, then one drop every other day until you are cured will be sufficient."

Pocketing his fee of two guineas the renowned Magnetic Healer bowed us out, my aunt clasping the treasured bottle.

"What a mercy I went to him!" she cried. "If he had but come here a few years ago! What do you think of him, Maria?"

Now, the truth was I did not think much of him. My impression was he had been fit to burst out laughing all the time, but it would not do to say so. "If it cures you, Aunt Mona, it will be a good thing."

Uncle Butterfield took an opportunity of tasting the "Elixir," and privately assured his friends, amid bursts of laughter, that he could testify to the truth of its being Elixir—Paregoric Elixir, much diluted and flavored—but that, and nothing else.

But now a dire misfortune befel the golden remedy. Some few days later Johnny, the youngest of the little ones, aged seven, saw the vial on his mother's dressing table, got hold of it and drank the whole at a draught.

perfect days—cloudless, serene and balmy—which only the month of June can bring to earth. I took my sewing and started over to my Aunt Mona's. We lived nearly half a mile distant, in the old Manor House. As I tripped lightly over green meadows, past fragrant orchards and blooming gardens, laden with the perfumes of "incense-breathing June," I said to myself, "Surely, upon such a day as this, even Aunt Mona must be well and happy."

Ah, vain delusion! The idea of health and happiness connected with Aunt Mona was simply ridiculous. "Mamma is never happy unless she is perfectly miserable," said her eldest daughter one day—saucey Kate—and no words of mine could better express the state of things.

Passing through the garden I found Louisa and Kate sitting under the arbor of roses and honeysuckles, shelling a dish of early green peas for dinner, and chatting and laughing very merrily. Phillis, the dairymaid, was churning in the outhouse and keeping time with the rise and fall of her churn-dasher with the most blithesome of soft melodies. The cat lay in the warm sunshine purring with satisfaction; the canary chirped gleefully in his cage, and little Johnny came running to meet me with sparkling eyes and a merry laugh and a handful of June roses. All this peace, this rural content, this bright happiness, found an echo in my own heart.

"Where is your mamma?" I said to Sarah, who in her best kitchen, for I had gone in the back way. "Gone and moaning somewhere about, as she always is, Miss Maria," replied the old nurse, who had lived with them for years and had a habit of saying what she pleased.

In a little room opening from the dining parlor I found Aunt Mona, an old woman shawl round her shoulders, and crouching disconsolately over the grate, in which roared a fire more befitting January than June.

"How do you do, aunt?" I said. "Are you any worse than usual?" She turned toward me a face of despair and woe. Really it was enough to give one the blues only to look at it.

"Ah, my dear, don't ask. I am miserable." "But what makes you so?" Aunt Mona gave a deep sigh and bent over the fire again. On the tripod stood a porcelain saucenpan, whose contents she was languidly stirring with a spoon.

"Why, aunt, what are you doing there? Is that a witch's caldron?" "It is a decoction of herbs, to be taken inwardly," meekly sighed she. "I got the recipe from the old herb doctor. I sent for him here yesterday, and he gave it me. I am going to try it," she added, resignedly; "and if it does not cure me, I shall just give up medicine, and lie down and die."

"Give up medicine, and arise and live," I answered. "I firmly believe, aunt, that medicine is killing you; medicine and groaning together."

This aroused Aunt Mona. "Maria, how can you talk so, when nothing but medicine has kept me alive these twenty years?" she exclaimed, in righteous indignation.

"You have lived in spite of medicine, Aunt Mona, and because your constitution is so thoroughly good. Papa says—"

"I don't want to hear what your papa says, Maria. Brothers always choose to be rude; even when I was a child he'd hurt my feelings. He is so healthy himself that he has no pity for me."

"You have no pity for yourself, Aunt Mona. Who but you would sit over a fire this lovely June day?" "I am cold, Maria."

"Get up then, aunt, and run about out of doors in the sunshine." "It's cruel of you to talk so," she whined. "How can I stir that awful spine in my back? I can stand it from your uncle—he talks to me so like your papa—but I can't from you. Mon are so hard hearted! Don't you ever marry one of them, Maria."

She tapped her foot on the ground, and stirred on and sighed. Chancing to look out at the window I saw Uncle Butterfield coming down the garden path with that pretty widow Mrs. Berrow, who was one of aunt's great friends and had no patience with her. Aunt looked up.

"There's your uncle, Maria, with that widow Berrow, as usual! If he is settling up her husband's property it's no reason why she should be running after him always. If I wasn't the most unsuspecting woman on earth I should be jealous. But I shall not be in the way long—that's one comfort."

A burst of clear, ringing laughter at this moment reached us. It was soon followed by that most comely woman's entrance, "fair, fat and forty." As she stood by Aunt Mona's side, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, in the exuberance of health and the prime of a beauty which time had improved rather than impaired, the contrast was too painful. I think my uncle must have felt it for he sighed as he turned away.

"Mrs. Butterfield," said the widow, in her soft, musical voice—that "excellent thing in woman"—"I was hoping, upon this beautiful morning, to find you better."

Aunt Mona gave no immediate reply, save a glance that was not a friendly one. It said as plainly as glance could say, "You don't hope anything of the sort; you want me to die and be out of the way."

"My wife seems to be growing worse," said Uncle Butterfield. "That two sovereign fee, paid to the great magnetic what-d'ye-call-him, a month ago, didn't seem to do you much good, did it, Mona? It had better have been put in the church poor box."

"A kind, loving husband ought not to speak of money paid to relieve the sufferings and to save the life of his poor, dying wife," replied Aunt Mona, reproachfully. "You know that Johnny, dreadful child, drank the elixir up. But I shall not be a trouble or expense to you long, Thomas. I feel that my days are numbered."

"They have been numbered ever since I knew you," smiled uncle. "The days of all of us are, for that matter."

that's got money, too," she added, significantly and spitefully. "Yes, money to make up for all you've had to pay for me." "I am glad to see you in so desirable a frame of mind," said Mrs. Berrow, laughing merrily. "You show a truly noble, unselfish nature in providing, even before your death, for your husband's second marriage."

"Now, Caroline Berrow, I think you had better not say more," spoke aunt. "I know how unfeeling you can be. It is not the first time you have made game of my illness. As to you, Thomas, you can be looking out for somebody to replace me. I and my sufferings will soon be released from this world of trouble."

"Have you any particular person in view?" asked uncle, gravely. "Any one you would like as a mother to your children? Of course I should have to think a little of them in choosing a second wife."

I don't much think Aunt Mona expected the ready acquiescence; she looked startled. Mrs. Berrow ran out to Kate and Louisa, who were coming in with the basin of peas, and uncle followed her. Presently the two girls came in. Aunt Mona was then growing hysterical.

"Listen, children," she cried—and proceeded to tell them what had passed. "You see your father is so anxious on your account," she added, sarcastically, "that he can't even wait for me to die before providing you a stepmother. I will let you choose. How would you like Mrs. Berrow?"

"Very much, indeed," said Kate. "I think she is just as good and sweet and pretty as she can be!" cried Louisa. "Mamma, I like Mrs. Berrow almost as well as I like you. But I suppose this is all nonsense," broke off the girl, laughing.

"To tell you the truth, Mona," interposed my uncle, who had again come in, "I have thought of Caroline Berrow. It is impossible to keep such ideas away when one's wife is in your state of health," he added, with deprecation. "She would make a most excellent stepmother."

"Yes, I see you have been thinking of her," returned Aunt Mona, rising from her chair in a fever of hysterical anger. "You have got your plans well laid out, husband, and you have infected the children with them. Oh, that I should live to be insulted like this! I Maria, you are a witness to it. It is cruel, cruel! And I will live a hundred years if I can, just to spite you."

With the tears streaming down her still pretty face Aunt Mona, leaving her decoction of herbs to its fate, sallied away. I felt most uncomfortable. The young girls must have been jesting, but for the first time I thought my uncle heartless. Mrs. Berrow, standing now outside the open window, had partly heard what passed.

"Mona only told me yesterday that she could not live a week," quoth she. "She kissed me last Sunday when I was going to church and said she should not live to see another," spake uncle. "Yes, and she has not yet bought us new dresses, or hats, or ribbons this summer," chimed in Kate. "She said it would be useless, we should so soon have to go into mourning for her. It is too bad for mamma to be so melancholy."

"And now she is going to live a hundred years," sighed Mrs. Berrow, in anything but a pleasurable tone. "But I must wish you all good morning. I have not ordered my dinner at home yet."

"Uncle Butterfield," I said, feeling indignant, as the echo of her light footsteps sounded on the path and the two girls ran after her. "I—I have no right, I know, to speak so, but do you not think you are heartless to Aunt Mona—unfeeling?"

"I am sorry for it if I am," replied my uncle, "but I'm only taking your aunt at her word. For years she has been telling me she was going to die and that I had better be looking out for a second wife. I don't see that I could choose a nicer one than Mrs. Berrow."

"Has she bewitched you, Uncle Butterfield?" "I don't think so, my lass. All the world recognizes her for a delightful woman. The children must have a mother if their own is taken from them. What should I do without a wife in a house like this? As to planning out beforehand, you must thank your aunt for that."

He set off down the garden with his long strides to overtake Mrs. Berrow. Sending the girls back, he accompanied her home. I could have beaten them both.

Up stairs ran I, somehow not caring to face the girls, to Aunt Mona's room, expecting to find her drowned in hysterical tears and sorely in need of consolation. Not a bit of it. She sat before a mirror, arranging her still abundant and beautiful hair, which, during these years of illness, real or imaginary, she had worn plainly tucked under a cap. There was a fire in her eye, a flush upon her cheek and a look of determination in her face, which suggested anything but well for the prospects of the Widow Berrow.

"I've heard every word you have been saying below," she exclaimed, glancing at the open window. "I thank you for taking my part, Maria. You seem to be the only friend I have. The idea of that mean, low-lived, contemptible Widow Berrow being here in my place and the mother of my children! If I were dead and buried and she came as Thomas' wife I'd rise from my grave and haunt her. But, I'm not dead yet; no, and I don't intend to be while that miserable jade walks the earth. I suppose she paints and powders to make herself look young and fair, for she's every day as old as am, and when we were girls together she was not half as handsome as I was. Mark you that, Maria."

"She does not paint or use powder, aunt; I am sure of that, though she does look so fresh and young."

"She is eight-and-thirty this summer, and she does not look eight-and-twenty," snapped Aunt Mona. "And I, with my years of suffering, look eight-and-forty."

"Yes, aunt, and your perpetual sufferings have brought on the look of age. If I were you I'd throw them off and grow young again. You might if you would. I remember how fresh and

pretty you used to be and how proud Uncle Thomas was of you."

"I will be so again," cried aunt, resolutely, in an excess of temper. "If it's only to disappoint that uppity, woman, I'll throw off all my ailments, though I die in the effort, and be as young as she is."

"Aunt—Aunt Mona—I want to ask you not to be offended at some plain truths I am going to tell you. Your illness, during all these years, has been more imaginary than real; your natural nervousness has rendered you an easy prey to quack doctors and patent medicine vendors, who have had no regard to your health, but only to your husband's money. You have given way to your fancies and gone about like an old woman, the greatest figure imaginable. Look at your gown this morning; look at the cap you have now put on! You might be well if you would."

"Perhaps, after all, old Stafford may be right when he tells me I have no organic disease," said she, sadly. "Yes, indeed he is, and now I want you to promise me never to take another drop of medicine unless prescribed by him."

"I never will!" "And oh, Aunt Mona, try to be cheerful, and to make home a happy place for your husband and children. Think how terrible it would be to lose their love."

"It seems to me that I have lost their love," was the despairing reply. "No, I hope not; no, indeed, Aunt Mona. They are just a little tired of your constant complainings, and I must say I don't wonder at it. Even the servants are tired. Think how long it is since you had a cheerful word upon your lips or a smile upon your face! If you would only be the loving wife and mother again, things would come right."

"All the same, Maria, you cannot deny that Caroline Berrow has turned out a deceitful crocodile. Think of her display of friendship for me, up to this very morning! Think of her setting her ugly widow's cap at your uncle before I am dead!"

"But you know, aunt, you have been as good as dead—in speech. Telling them you were dead, that you shall be in your coffin the next!" "Well, child," she said, rather faintly, "I have been ill; I have suffered."

"Put your sufferings off, aunt; you can, I say, if you like, and circumvent—pardon the word—the widow and her cap-setting. Think how much you owe to God for all the many blessings He has showered down upon you—and how ungrateful it is to return Him nothing but repinings."

Aunt Mona, brushing out her still beautiful hair, paused. A flush stole over her face. "I never thought of it in that light, Maria," she softly said. "I will think of it; I will try."

And she began forthwith. That very evening she dressed herself up and went to the pony reading concert, taking Kate and Louisa. Uncle Butterfield was there, sitting beside Mrs. Berrow. My mother, all unconscious of the treason, crossed the room to sit with me; I went to Aunt Mona. We all went home together as far as our several ways led us, and though uncle did see the widow home aunt did not begin moaning again.

How wonderfully from that time her appearance and manner changed, you would hardly believe. She grew young again; she grew cheerful. Cheerful and more cheerful day by day. Her dress was studied; her servants, household and children were actively cared for. She took to visit again and to go to church on Sundays; she invited friends to little parties at home. The pills, and herbs, and physics and decoctions were pitched away, and the bottles sold by old Sarah. Uncle Thomas was charmingly sunny tempered in the house, as he always had been; but he did not give up his visits to the Widow Berrow.

"But he will in time, Maria," said aunt, privately to me, a world of confident hope in her voice. "Only yesterday he smoothed my hair down with his gentle hand and said I looked as young and pretty in his eyes as I did the day we were married."

"Yes, aunt, you are winning him back, you see. I knew it would be so."

"And oh, child, I am so much happier than I used to be, with all my pains and my nerves and my lowness of spirits gone!"

It was a month or two after this, all things having been going on in the nicest possible way, that Mrs. Berrow one cold morning, for December had come in, presented herself in Aunt Mona's parlor, a smile on her ever pleasant face. I was there, helping Aunt with the things intended for the Christmas tree. She had not had a tree for years. Not been "able" to have one, she used to say. Uncle Thomas had told her laughingly this year not to spare the money over it.

Mrs. Berrow, coming in, I say, with her bright face, went straight up to aunt and kissed her. Aunt Mona did color a little at that.

"I am come to ask you to my house for the 6th of January," she said, "you, Mona, and your husband and the two girls. Your mamma has already her invitation, Maria, and yours, too," she added, nodding at me.

"Is it a tea party?" questioned Aunt Mona, stiffly. "No; a breakfast. And I hope you will attend me to church beforehand—and see me married."

"Yes, my dear. I have been engaged these many months past," she answered, with equanimity. "It is to my cousin Stanton—a very distant cousin, as you know. We should have been married before but for that business which took him to Spain. And when he got there he found he was obliged to go on to Valparaiso. There he was detained again. Altogether it is nearly six months since he left England, but he is back now."

"And you have been engaged to marry him all that while!" gasped aunt, in her surprise. "All that while, and longer. Since last April. Your husband has known it from the first."

"Oh, Caroline!" "And has been transacting all kinds of business for us both preparatory to the marriage."

"Then—that—that nonsense that you and Thomas talked together—about—about your succeeding me a joke?"

"Why, of course it was, you silly thing. As if your husband could have cared for me or I for him—in that way. He has never cared, he never will care, for any one but his wife, Mona."

Aunt Mona burst into happy tears and put her face down upon her old friend's neck to sob them away.

We all went to the wedding on the 6th, and Uncle Butterfield, looking so bright and sunny, gave the bride away. But neither of them told Aunt Mona what I learned—that the plot was concocted between them to bring her to her senses.

And it did it, as you have seen. And there never was a woman more free from "nerves" and imaginary aches and pains than Aunt Mona is now. "I thank God for every day of my life, Maria," she whispers to me sometimes. And I think we all do.—N. Y. Herald.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

The Presbyterian Church of England requires its foreign missionaries to come home once every seven years.

Connected with Mr. Spurgeon's church in London are twenty Sunday-schools, five hundred teachers and five thousand eight hundred and fifty-three scholars.

The Baltimore Methodist Conference, one of the oldest Methodist Conferences in the country, has just concluded its annual session. It reports 38,784 members and 4,268 probationers, 179 local preachers, and 358 churches valued at \$2,472,050, on which there is an indebtedness of \$330,000.

A grandson of the late Rev. Dr. Armstrong, one of the first missionaries of the American Board to the Sandwich Islands, was christened recently at Saybrook, Conn. "Kulani," a Hawaiian name (signifying "From the skies") chosen by King Kalakaua I, who was a playmate of the child's father.

The receipts of the American Board for January amounted to \$51,160. For the first five months of the financial year the donations aggregated \$131,569.26; the legacies \$35,860.87, a total of \$167,430.13. This is an advance beyond the average for the corresponding months during the preceding three years of about twenty per cent.

The number of Protestants in France does not exceed 650,000. Of this number 560,000 belong to the Reformed Church, 80,000 to the Lutheran, and 10,000 to other bodies. In Germany Austria there are 367,000 Protestants, of whom 249,000 are Lutherans and 118,000 of the Reformed Church; but these figures represent only ten per cent. of the population of that country.

Good use is made of converts in China as colporteurs and teachers. In the presbytery of Shantung several approved men have spent the entire year, during several months, itinerating and circulating books and tracts in regions extending over from two hundred to three hundred miles inland. They received and expected no compensation beyond the plainest food, not exceeding in cost \$3 per month for each person.

The Bishop of Manchester said at an ordination service, the other day, that it was better to be experts in godliness than in controversy. He said he was not ashamed to confess that he could not get up any interest in many of the questions of the day. He cared little for the shape or color of vestments, the form of bread used in communion, candles on the altar lighted or unlighted, or anything of the sort. They did not concern the weightier matters of the gospel.

A year or so ago a Dr. E. W. Kirby, of Philadelphia, organized a new branch of Methodist, called "The Methodist Church of the Future." The conference was composed of some ten or twelve ministers, and there were several congregations. At the second meeting of the conference, held recently, several of the ministers and delegates, representing four churches, together with the secretary, left the conference, because of dissatisfaction with the rulings of the President, Dr. Kirby, and organized an association of independent Methodist churches in correspondence with the Maryland association.

Germany, with a population of 42,000,000, has 60,000 schools and an attendance of 6,000,000 pupils; Great Britain and Ireland, with a population of 34,000,000, has 58,000 schools and 3,000,000 pupils; Austria-Hungary, with a population of 37,000,000, has 60,000 schools and 3,000,000 pupils; France, with a population of 37,000,000, has 71,000 schools and 4,700,000 pupils; Spain, with a population of 17,000,000, has 20,000 schools and 1,600,000 pupils; Italy, with a population of 28,000,000, has 47,000 schools and 1,900,000 pupils; and Russia, with a population of 74,000,000, has 32,000 schools and 1,100,000 pupils.

A thanksgiving service has been held at Isandula, in Natal, and at other places where there are Anglican churches. At Isandula, the scene of the great disaster to the English troops, the burial office was said and the communion administered by the Bishop, who said he had three objects in holding that service at Isandula: (1) That the bodies of Christian men should not be left without one word of peace and love being said over their graves; (2) that the protecting hand of Providence might be recognized, and (3) that a practical outcome of the work might be the establishment of a mission. It is proposed to erect a church on the spot where the service was held.

A Mother-in-Law in Earnest.

About two months ago an industrious young man living in the south part of Fall River took to himself a wife. The wedding pair shared the home of the bride's mother. At the end of the week the mother demanded the custody of her son-in-law's earnings, which were immediately surrendered to her by the young man. This continued for a few weeks, when the son-in-law began to think the mother's exactions were unreasonable. Trouble in the family was the result. The young husband hired a tenement nearer the center of the city, where he has resided for about three weeks, keeping bachelor's hall, as the bride will not leave her mother.—Providence Journal.