

# Some Pointed Questions

Does your urine contain any sediment? Is the lower part of your back sore, weak and lame? Does your urine have a whitish, milky color? Is there a smarting or scalding sensation in passing it? Does it pain you to hold it? Do you desire to urinate often, especially at night?

If you have any of these symptoms, your kidneys are diseased and your life is in danger. More people die of such disorders than are killed in wars.



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# AN AMERICAN ASPIRANT

BY JENNIE BULLARD WATERBURY

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[CONTINUED.]

thought that men were friends and neighbors, not liars?"

"Pah!" ejaculated Desmoulin. "One must live, mademoiselle," he added sullenly. The winning card was in the enemy's hand with a vengeance.

Over his stormy soul there swept a whiff of better days, days when he had stolen in, a little lad, among the sanctuary lamps, to prostrate himself before the image of the Virgin or a patron saint—days wherein he, before his version of life had burned his promise of peace and righteous attainment very low indeed, had dreamed dreams, too, of a land wherein love was a golden afternoon and—Pah, the game was up.

"Be silent, Priscilla. Come here, my daughter."

Priscilla took up her old stand behind her father's chair.

"Mademoiselle is melodramatic," Desmoulin began, in a stinging voice. "If she were Mlle. Brilla, for instance—"

"Silence!" hissed Stormmouth violently. He had been gazing at Priscilla with a puzzled expression, which set the blood firm in her eyes and cheeks. He was breathing a little unevenly.

Desmoulin checked himself. Perhaps the game was not up yet. Who knew but that these foreigners, with their strange methods and novel plans of action, were in need of a social uplift after all? He would wait a little.

Judge Delno opened a book which lay on a table beside him. "I find," he remarked, after close perusal of a clause it contained, "that in France the penalty for compound felony is a fine. They draw it milder than in New York. There the penalty may consist in a forfeiture of estates."

"You have no evidence," returned Desmoulin, having by this time recovered all his suavity of demeanor and palpably stung into action, chamelon-like changing his color—"you have no evidence, sir, that that letter is not a bogus one."

"Pardon me. I have that evidence." The retort cut across Desmoulin's speech like a knife blade across a deer's throat.

"What evidence?"

"Your own signature."

"Ah!" The "ah" was slow and sullen. "The letter you hold in your hand was not written by me. De Lacaze



wrote it. I stood at his elbow. Inadvertently he signed my name."

"Is that so?"

De Lacaze bowed his head silently. It was a poor move, he considered, a dastardly inefficiency, unworthy of the tempered steel of most of his methods, which it would have taken an expert to unravel or even suspect; but when the game was such a tempting one and the subject matter so delicious he considered that he might as well conduct his obvious strategy with visible ambiguity. She was so eminently desirable, that little maiden in the pink morning gown, with a flush like a strawberry stain in the smooth contour of her cheek, with that storm of revulsion in her flashing passionate eyes, the palpitating rise and fall of her breast. He set his teeth in his under lip hard. "Yes, monsieur, I wrote it," he continued quietly. "As mon ami states, he stood at my elbow. He has ever had a keen interest in my welfare. He has in more than one case dictated my letters, being more cognizant of ways and means foreign than myself, who have never quitted the shores of my beloved France." The latter sentence was accompanied by an ironical glance at Desmoulin which was not lost upon Judge Delno.

"Which proves," remarked the judge ironically, "that you indited both letters, count, since they are both in the same handwriting."

There was a pause.

De Lacaze answered nothing. If silence were the game, he would play the game of silence.

"Friendship!" cried Stormmouth gaily. "Oh, beautiful and faithful friendship, how many sins are committed in thy name! In America, for instance, a man conducts his own love-making. I should counsel you to pursue that policy, count."

"One would be dull indeed," returned De Lacaze, with a snarl and a diabolical pertinence in the covert insinuation, "did not one perceive that the advised policy is your own, monsieur?"

"Precisely," rejoined Stormmouth. He stemmed peremptorily the venom of the counterthrust with a placidity which forced its import to glance off his own weakness, leaving it apparently as polished and unassailed as its propounder's impassive countenance.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Taking into consideration," recommended Judge Delno, after a short lull in the proceedings, in which they one and all made an effort at self control and remembered that there were women present, one of whom represented the bone of contention in the case—"taking into consideration the fact that our ways are as totally opposed as the poles, I shall put a few questions which it would afford me a keen satisfaction for many reasons, not all of which are entirely personal, if you would answer, count." He ignored Desmoulin, to the visible perturbation of that worthy.

"What questions?"

"Are you aware that in the marriage you propose there is evidence of true nobility—nobility disassociated generally from marriages of this sort? Your demand is apparently entirely disinterested? You give all, you demand nothing?"

The count rubbed his hands together violently. "It is understood in France," he finally stated blandly, "that the family of the fiancée offers with her a sum sufficient to insure her husband against disaster—since, obviously, he assumes with marriage its expenses, its responsibilities, its reforms." He paused. "That sum is called a dot."

"The aforesaid dot to be reserved for the wife in case of misfortune befalling her husband?"

"Not so. That dot to be paid down to her suitor's bankers, under the assumption that the income to be drawn from it will be hers as well as his."

"Admirable! And what is his is hers?"

The count cleared his throat. "Unfortunately for the woman," he murmured, a trifle awkwardly, "the law in France is what we call *raide*."

"Unelastic," translated Stormmouth humorously, if not literally.

"The wife's property is invariably subservient to the will of her husband," continued the count, with a scowl.

"Justly," remarked the judge suavely, "if she receives in the marriage contract a sum equivalent to the sum advanced by her parents to be accreted to her. The?"

"Pardon, monsieur. When an American woman of property unites herself with a distinguished French family, she receives the title only in exchange for her personal property."

"And her husband's property—what of that?"

"That stands in her husband's name—with her own."

"You mean to say, then, that she buys his title with her money, her purity and her youth, demands no security against possible disaster and is supposed to be thankful and contented that her choice still respects her for such an evidence of individual imbecility?"

"Monsieur puts it harshly. Why does monsieur presume that a Frenchman desires to unite himself with a foreigner? In so doing the Parisian renounces his personal satisfaction for all time. A foreigner, to a Parisian born and bred, is a specimen both uninteresting and incomprehensible. A Parisian understands and is understood by his own class, by his own customs, by his own heart. It is rarely, unless in middle age, if monsieur will take into consideration most Franco-American unions, that the Parisian is the first to give evidence of a desire to sacrifice himself to a foreigner, even though that foreigner be as young and beautiful as Miss Delno." The count laid his hand upon that portion of his anatomy which is popularly supposed to represent the place where the heart should be. He bowed very low indeed, possibly to make up somewhat for the bald cruelty of his proposition.

"I will put it more harshly still. Your title, it is obvious, is your only claim? You propose to offer it for a consideration?"

"Monsieur is pleased to strip my proposition of its bloom."

"Pah! It has no bloom. It is as starved of ultimate promise, as devoid of the beauty of hope and aspiration, as barren of the sacredness Americans associate with the divine duties, the tender promise of true conjugal union, as you are devoid of any sense of honor to make it. You call yourself a nobleman. Know, then, there is not a savage in our far west who understands so little the law of exchange as do you. He chooses his squaw out of his tribe. He may give her nothing in exchange for her gawgaws and her maidenhood but a tomahawk and a pair of arms with brawn in them and a soul teeming with the strength of his savage forefathers, but he knows the law—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. He takes his bride to his heart the way a lion takes his mate. He gives her his manhood or his protection—call it what you will. In any case he stands between her and lesser brutes who would snatch her from his arms. A fig for your vaunted civilization! Give me, were I a girl, a virgin man out of one of our western forests, with the stir of life's combat in his veins, without a son, only his birthright, the keen desire in him to succeed the weak. Give me a man among men, not a fop, who seeks to sell his debts, dispose of his title and yet still retain it, figure up his bride as a means of financial reinstatement, to be coerced and finally abused and thrown out when stripped of her helpfulness in the time of need?"

"But, monsieur—"

But Judge Delno, like a warhorse with the sound of the battery in his ears, continued. "Civilization!" he cried. "What has it taught you, you foreigners, with your vaunted age we lack, with your vaunted art we are struggling to acquire, with your vaunted vice which unhappily we in our younger generation are striving to attain? It has taught you to lay low your manhood and put in its place a thing called self, a self which digs a grave for and buries and raises a headstone to personal integrity. When birds nest, they nest with birds. When cattle mate, they mate with cattle. When a French-

man demands his right to claim a

bride, he offers a stone for bread, a rotten carcass in exchange for incarnate purity."

A clear voice broke in abruptly. It was the voice of Desmoulin.

"Who asks us to sell our titles for your lure? The American. Who comes out of the east and west with his ducats clanking loudly and his bragging voice declaring he will buy art, heart and emotions? The American. He never thinks how we regard him. He acts from the standpoint alone of how he regards us. How we laugh! Mais, how we laugh! We have lived; he has yet to grow. We have suffered. He is longing to throw himself into the fray and to be gored alive rather than to wait for time to ripen him. If we choose to gore him, who can blame us? It is what he has demanded, what he has cried for, like a sick child whimpering for the moon."

"To continue with the case in hand," interrupted Stormmouth. For the first time he admired Desmoulin. After all, in this Frenchman's misused soul there dwelt a spark of that fire which assails the lowest of human creatures at times, that fire which flames out into vital protest in silent hours and demands the truth as a feverish invalid calls for water to quench his thirst. For the first time Stormmouth judged the American abroad from the French standpoint. It was not a pleasant standpoint to this virile specimen of its best blood, its best methods, its noblest intentions; but, endeavor as he might, he could not deny the fact that Desmoulin's accusation held a semblance of truth as regarded a small number of his compatriots who had visited France, bought up its titles and estates and lost a considerable record for keen patriotism or national fidelity in the process. He knew that the exception was not the rule. He, in justice, could not blame Desmoulin for thinking otherwise.

"I refuse," the judge calmly announced, "to permit my daughter to enter into any such alliance—unless," turning toward Priscilla, "she loves you."

Priscilla, her eyes ablaze, had been leaning over the back of her father's chair.

She grew visibly pale as she raised her spirited young head at his call. She stepped forward slightly and leaned one little hand upon Judge Delno's shoulder, as though for support—for support in the argument which had been hammering against her temples for weeks, and which under existing circumstances at last took an adequate stand in all its acquired strength—a stand which established conviction in the hearts of those for and against her protest, who listened to its young propounder no less volens.

"It has occurred to me, count," she said very gently, with that fearless method of attack which makes American girlhood the vital and bonny thing it is to home masculine hearts which respect it and foreign masculine hearts which seek to oppress it and to lay its young strength and vigor and brightness so very low in demanding of it its worst—"it has occurred to me more than once lately that the main part of what I in my inexperience should call desirability in matrimony has been left out of your proposition. Until now I have not spoken. It seemed to me useless. It seemed to me you would not understand it. It is so very sweet and dear. Its name is love. With us—American girls—it comes or it does not come, but when it comes it comes for good, and when it comes there is not much ambition in it, I think. Sacrifice, too, goes out—a word we have forgotten. Sometimes I know girls marry

titles and are happy, but not on account of the title. In those cases the title is merely an accessory to their happiness, just as it should be to yours. Their husbands welcome it for both their sakes as a fortunate circumstance in life which, unworthily enough, bids people lacking dignity of character to bow down to them.



She stepped forward slightly.

"You asked me, you have asked me more than once, whether you could place your proposition before my father. I did not know the nature of the proposition. As it stands I decline it. Had it stood otherwise I in all probability should have refused it, not because you have nothing—if I had loved you I should not have considered that—but because you had not the manliness to tell me the truth and risk yourself from that standpoint alone. We love in that land of ours you so little understand the men who lay down their lives to save them ultimately. The men who save their lives temporarily, only to lose them in the end, as we consider it, American girls seldom love for long."

Sometimes out of the dead level of the commonplace there springs to life a little flower of a familiar aspect. We gaze at it wonderingly, with astonished, enraptured eyes. Happy are those of us who have plucked it in the morning of our days to wear it in our bosoms for all time, cherishing, with its soft pressure against our hearts, memories as of primroses and hawthorn in the spring-time. If we have not plucked it and let it dwell with us, its downy head, like the

same pleading of a little child

tempting the edges of our griefs, one day when we are worn and old it lifts itself again out of the marsh of our misdeeds and confronts us when we least expect it. This time, when it makes its beauty evident, with a choking, unquenchable pain which tears at our heartstrings like inevitable loss, we recognize, too late, that the time has passed during which we might have culled it worthily and worn it openly.

Perhaps such a feeling came to life in De Lacaze's soul, that soul so sordid with its owner's mistranslation of life as to have forgotten for years that such a characteristic as personal probity existed. Perhaps not. The judge, as he watched his face closely, sternly resentful, thought he saw something fit across it at Priscilla's words which resembled a flicker of acute pain. Then he considered that he had been mistaken. The count rose and confronted Priscilla.

"I love you, mademoiselle," he said, with his old fashioned inclination, so odd to American eyes, so correct in French titled circles, misunderstood or otherwise.

"Forgive me," returned Priscilla gently, "but I do not love you, count."

"There have been women who have learned to love," persisted the count, "women such as you, mademoiselle."

Priscilla flushed very suddenly and deeply.

"I cannot," she answered, very low.

"You could not try, mademoiselle?" De Lacaze's little withered countenance was almost wistful now. He experienced no awkwardness in pleading his suit before a roomful of people. It was customary in cases of this sort, he supposed. To Priscilla the situation was not only ludicrous, but full of anguish. She saw Stormmouth's face, with its stern mouth and powerful brows, as though through a mist. Desmoulin was pulling his mustache violently. He knew De Lacaze was playing his last card. The transaction had glided from him like quicksilver. The present issue was maddeningly conclusive.

"It is impossible," said Priscilla.

"Why impossible?"

Priscilla shook her head. Then she turned toward her father. "Oh, send him away!" she cried. "It is hard for me—and for him!"

The count drew himself up with a little stiff movement which betrayed a record of military training.

"Assez, mademoiselle. I have lost," he affirmed curtly to Desmoulin. Be it said to his credit, he accepted his defeat with no little courage, considering what it involved for him.

"I will hold these papers," remarked Judge Delno, with precision, "against M. Desmoulin until he admits his collusion in them." He pointed to the two letters. "The fine incurred by the commission of the crime they confirm is 1,000 francs," he added pitifully.

Then quite unexpectedly he drew a slip of paper from his pocket. "I find upon search," he remarked blandly, the lids of his eyes unlifted, his suave voice carrying the weight of an ominous calm, its volume increasing as he continued, "that the aforesaid property in Touraine was confiscated some 20 years since by your father's creditors, and also the property in Lombardy; that, although what you state is true in regard to the village of Chambouriez, in the Vosges—that your grandfather sold it for 10,000,000 francs—what your aforesaid relative received was \$10,000 all told."

"I am at a loss"—the judge's voice here took on a quality which his colleagues were wont to dread—"to discover any sum accredited to you at your banker's, where, I have been informed, you do not possess a checkbook. At the office where you are employed as reporter I have received this recommendation, or, as M. Desmoulin calls it, renseignements: 'De Lacaze. Wherevithal? Nil. Income? Nil. Intelligence? Unequal. Ability? Undeniable. Salary, 400 francs a month.'" He paused. "At your club," he added dryly, "your debts are reported to exceed your winnings." There was a fine smile in the judge's eyes as he laid the paper down. "So slim a case had hardly been worth crossing the Atlantic for," he mused. Stormmouth could have conducted the matter without his assistance.

Desmoulin had been moving toward the door. He started as though he had been shot as a man barred his exit—the man designated as "The Rat," Stormmouth's garcon from Duand's, with his well known smooth face and little ferret eyes. Desmoulin recognized him as his

direst foe. He it was, he now remembered, before whom he had laid his nefarious proposition as regarded De Lacaze. He recollected at this moment that this man held him by the throat as effectually as those papers of Judge Delno, which might encompass his ruin.

Before the occupants of the room could acquire even recognition of the arrival of this last overpowering witness and visible acknowledgment that the game was up, Desmoulin, with a brief Gallic exclamation which was as salient as it was rife with an awful purpose, had thrown himself against the astonished newcomer and was dragging him frantically through the doorway out on the landing. There he fastened him by the throat against the wall and pummeled him roundly. Then, before Stormmouth or Dixie could come to "The Rat's" rescue, Desmoulin had seized him bodily in his arms and had thrown him, with a dull crash, far down the stairs. "The Rat" had been so suddenly attacked—expectant only of a large remuneration for putting in an appearance upon the scene where, he had been assured by Stormmouth, his presence would be sorely needed—that, taken unawares, he was unprepared to defend himself.

When, bruised and shaken, happily with no bones broken, but with his countenance mashed from Gallic exuberance to a mass of pulp, one eye nearly gouged out, his throat encircled by a purple rim, shaking from head to foot, he was gathered up, he stuck his van-