

HER FINAL DECISION.

BY MARGUERITE STABLER.

NOWHERE, perhaps, in this cosmopolitan country is the nation within a nation, the city within a city, the wheel within a wheel, so complete as in the little Italy of San Francisco.

Here not only are the people, the language, the religion, the manners and customs, but even the trades, with the tricks thereof, as essentially Italian as if the intervening seas were but a dream.

The one invasion that cannot be beaten back by racial prejudice is the effect of the new-world climate and civilization upon the Italian type of beauty.

When the Signora Alvaradi was sent to this coast to represent his country, he did not count on the effect of the American influence upon his own household.

Then, collapsing into a fit of hysterics, the signora charged up the whole matter to Providence, and bewailed the injustice of its workings.

"Why, oh, why," she wailed, "should Providence have afflicted me with such a wicked, willful, undutiful daughter?"

"It's a wonder the shock did not kill you," purred one of the comforters; "right in your own house, a duel—Santa Maria! Whereupon the whole sisterhood of comforters fell to weeping with sympathy.

When the heavy step of the signora crunched the gravel walk, the women ran out breathlessly to hear the result of his interference.

"Its all right," he said, "at least until this evening. Caspar is under guard with two men sitting on his chest, and the American is cooling off in his own quarters. I have pledged them my word that Natalia shall settle the affair to-night. Where is she?"

"No, they are not dead," came the reluctant answer, "but your mother is almost—"

Upon reaching the library the girl stood like a prisoner at the bar of her father's wrath and her mother's despair.

"Do you realize, my daughter, that you narrowly escaped being the cause of the death of both these men?" began the signora in thundering tones.

"Knowing the consequences could be nothing but disastrous to all concerned," finished the indignant signora.

The girl made a deprecatory gesture, and turned as if to leave the room, but her father's stern tones arrested her.

that you promised to marry him?" he questioned.

"The girl's eyes dropped before his charge, but she nodded assent. "And isn't it equally true that you promised Caspar last week that you would marry him?" chimed in the mother with a volley of tears.

The drooping little target of these accusations suggested at the moment anything but a wicked, willful, undutiful daughter. With no attempt at self-justification, she meekly acquiesced to all they said, casting furtive glances toward the door.

"This, then, is the last of your trifling." The signora's tones were as measured and formal as if he were pronouncing a death sentence. "Both Caspar and Thompson have promised to keep their hands off each other's throats to-night, but only on condition that they have your decision before ten o'clock."

"And you will wear Signora Caspar's camellias to-night, won't you, daughter?" pleaded the little signora, changing her tactics.

Under cover of this temporary truce the culprit made her escape. Alone again in her room, the cause of all this trouble sank into a limp little heap upon the floor, and waited for the earth to open at her feet and swallow her.

When Thompson, who was so fine looking after his blond American type, had asked her under the soft mellow moonlight to be his wife, her impulse at that moment had been that she could offer no finer thing, so she had told him so promptly and heartily.

And now she was reaping the reward of her lack of stability of character. These two men had almost killed each other for her sake, and her mother had almost died of the shock.

"Povero padre!" she sighed, recalling her father's anxiety to hush up the affair and meet his guests as if nothing had happened. She lighted the candles that flanked her mirror, and began slowly taking the pins out of her hair, thinking the while, more earnestly and seriously than she had ever done in her life.

But it was always diverting to deft fingers to fashion puffs and ringlets, especially when the result is so eminently satisfactory. By the time the last hair-pin was tucked out of sight, and the last artful curl allowed to stray at just the right angle, the eyes in the mirror had lost much of their sadness.

She held her head a trifle higher and her shoulders just a wee bit straighter as the meaning of the camellias grew upon her. Of course she loved Caspar, and would never dream of marrying anyone else.

"My love is like a red, red rose!" Had she slept, and was she dreaming? Was she to be haunted all her life by the echo of Jack's whistle?

The window opened softly. "Oh, Jack, go away," a timid little voice pleaded. "I'm going to marry Caspar."

But Jack was American, and inventive in his way. The martyr-spirit flagged under fire. Ten minutes before her life had been dedicated to the love of Caspar.

"I told them they should know my decision to-night," she murmured, soothingly, to her conscience, "and they probably will"—San Francisco Argonaut.

She—Then you believe in nothing? He—I believe in everything I can understand. "O, well, that amounts to the same thing."—Stray Stories.

But, as she turned, the card that had been sent with them fluttered to the floor. "Mr. John Harrison Thompson" it read, as if in silent appeal for the discarded one. Something in the injustice of sending Thompson's rose as an answer to Caspar arrested her.

"Poor Jack," she whispered. Then raising her eyes to the window where the soft moonlight streamed over the floor, "It was just such a night that I—that he—"

She did not dare finish the thought for fear the memory of that night would break down her dutiful resolve. Still, just for the sake of the argument, she mused, suppose that she had chosen Jack.

"In a minute, Alfredo," she answered again, as she cast about for some token for Thompson. She could not bring herself to pen the cruel words, for he had believed so confidently in her. She might take one of the stiff, scentless white things she had in her hair to send him.

"Run every step of the way, Alfredo!" she commanded the stiff old servant, as if it were through his fault that she was late, "it is almost ten now, and you must not be late."

"Oh, my dear daughter," the little signora murmured, weeping anew at the sight of Caspar's camellias, this time for joy, "I knew all the time that you would make the right choice. You are too much your mother's own daughter not to see the right course at last."

The old signora also drew her aside, and whispered: "I am glad to forgive all the past anxiety your foolishness has given us, in my content at knowing you have at last decided, and so wisely."

"It must have been a mistake," they began to whisper in disappointed tones. Natalia, although she felt a battery of curious eyes always upon her, received the showers of felicitation that were bestowed upon her, and was correspondingly light-hearted and happy.

"No neighbor had seen the oxen and their disappearance became the sensation of the neighborhood. They had either been lost for good, frozen to death in the deep snow or else had wandered off across the prairie to some distant farmer's barn."

"It was January 31. There had been a thaw for several days and much of the snow on the prairie had disappeared, leaving only one foot in depth, except in the deep hollows of my ranch."

"Drawing in my reins, I alighted, walked about ten feet from my horses, and, lo! there were my oxen alive, yoked together, standing in four feet of snow, with just enough of their bodies visible above the snow to make a movement visible."

"They had been caught between the stumps of two trees and there they had been for 30 days, unable to move, and saved from freezing to death only by the deep snow that so mercifully had covered them."

"They had eaten everything within reach, including the leather harness, most of the wood of the sled pole, the bark of the tree trunks, the twigs and sticks lying around and the roots of the trees to a depth of three feet. There they had stood for 30 days. They were living thin skeletons. Every bone was visible. Yet they were able to walk home, and after careful feeding for another 30 days they were as strong as ever, and were faithful animals on my farm for ten years afterward."

HAD AN EXCUSE.



(1) Guss was going to meet his best girl, thinking how well his new high hat looked.



(2) Now we know why Guss' girl waited in vain for an hour. Guss had gone to get his golf cap.

OXEN BURIED BY BLIZZARD.

Memorable Incident of the Severe Winter of 1885 on the Minnesota Prairies.

A clergyman vouches for the truth of a story which would otherwise be incredible. The winter of 1885 was the coldest in the experience of Minnesota farmers and the live stock suffered terribly, says the Chicago Chronicle.

"Meanwhile a blinding blizzard blew up, sweeping over the prairie at the rate of 50 miles an hour, and piling up the snow in drifts from eight to ten feet deep."

"Turning the heads of my oxen homeward in the very teeth of the blinding storm I urged them on across the open space between the timber and my house. But oxen, however, willing, are never rapid, and ten oxen milled themselves as the heavy beasts pushed onward."

"I knew that my oxen could feel their way home, and fully expected them to appear at my barn by nightfall, if, perchance, they were not blinded by the storm or lost by the increasing drifts."

"The storm abated and I started out with my hired man to find my missing cattle and my load of wood. We floundered through the snow toward the timber, but the oxen were nowhere to be seen. We hunted all night long and arrived home just in time for breakfast, puzzled and mystified."

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APPLE-TIME.

We list loves to go to gran'ma's Apple time, When the trees list loaded awful An' we climb.

'N get list all the beauties, Ev'ry one; Up fore day to help 'em gather— Awful fun!

Gre't big Baldwins, yaller Midas, Sour crabs, 'Nen when we see extry beauties, We list grab!

Apple-ple, 'n' apple-dumplin's, Cider, too! 'Nen we have to have a doctor Fore we're through.

We list loves to go to gran'ma's, An' to climb, When the trees list awful loaded, Apple-time, —St. Nicholas.

LAPPS ARE INDEPENDENT.

Nominally They Are Subjects of the Czar, Virtually They Are Free as the North Wind.

In the Russian empire is a race of people who are supposed to be under the czar's rule, but who are practically independent, for the simple reason that the Russian soldiers cannot get at them. Everybody has heard of Lapland, in northern Europe, but there are two kinds of Lapland. One is on the very edge of the continent, in a country so barren and desolate that about the only living creatures in it are the reindeer on which the northern Lapp exists, the wolves, which live on the reindeer, and the Lapp himself.

In this territory, says the New York Tribune, the herder Lapps roam at will. The country is more passable in winter than in summer, for it is traversed by numerous rivers and marshes, which can be crossed only when frozen over, unless the traveler carries his boat on his back. But with the coming of winter the Lapps utilize the icebound rivers as thoroughfares in their travels. They know the best foraging grounds and the places where shelter may be afforded for a week's



THE HOME OF A LAPP.

encampment. The resting places of these nomads within the arctic circle depend upon the moss patches—the food of the reindeer. When it has been eaten off the ground they must strike camp and go elsewhere. As a herd of 100 deer will soon strip half a dozen acres of the moss growth, it does not take long for them to eat up everything around the settlement, even the shoots of the birch and willow trees, as far up as they can reach. So away goes the band, and the place may be deserted for several years, as it requires three or four seasons for the moss again to spread over the ground from which it has been eaten.

This is why the Lapp wanders through valley and over plain, as does the tribesman of the desert. He must move to live, but this sort of life has sharpened his wits, and he is as shrewd at driving a bargain as the proverbial Yankee or Scotchman.

It is not strange that the aged women are ugly when it is remembered that years of bending over the fireside with the inevitable pipe have smoked them within and without almost into living mummies. When placed in her pulk during the family migration, grandmother is as buried in furs as the youngest baby, and when the tent is put up at the new encampment she is the first to be carried in. The fact is that the true Lapp looks after his old better than his young. He may be a thief, liar and vagabond, but this can be set down to his credit. After the aged come the reindeer, then the younger women and children.

The average Lapp of the north country hates water as much as a cat does. Such a thing as a wash is almost unknown. In the winter families of a dozen or more live in their little snow covered huts, crowded together like sardines in a can. The water they need for cooking and drinking comes from the snow, and fuel is so scarce that the idea of melting snow for bathing would be considered a crime. Consequently when spring comes they leave their tents with their skins nearer the color of leather than a human tint—the results of combining dirt and smoke. The Eskimau has been called the dirtiest race on earth, but it is a question if the Lapp cannot give an Eskimau points and beat him in this respect.

LAZIEST PEOPLE ON EARTH.

They Live on the Gold Coast of West Africa and Are Known as the Fantis.

In most civilized countries laziness is looked upon as a vice. If a man does not work neither shall he eat, is the rule in such nations. But in tropical lands, where nature is very kind, food can almost always be had for the mere gathering. This will explain why the Fantis, of the west African Gold Coast, will not work. A penny a day will enable a Fantis to live like a fighting cock. Why, therefore, should he distress himself? If he wants any little extra, such as tobacco



CARRIED THE BARROWS ON THEIR HEADS.

or strong drink, it is even then hardly necessary that he should work for it, for is there not his wife? He believes in a fair division of labor—the wife earns the living, and he consumes it. A hundred Fantis will do less than a dozen English navvies, and do it badly without a white overseer. Under a Fantis overseer, they soon begin to shirk the work and lie basking in the sun, and by and by the overseer joins them. Every burden is carried on the head. Set them to carry stones from a heap and they will carry them one by one on their head, walking to and fro, no matter what the distance. A contractor for some buildings at Cape Coast introduced wheelbarrows. The Fantis rose to the occasion. They carried the barrows on their heads!

PUG DRESSED LIKE A BABY.

How Teddie's Mistress Managed to Carry Him Back and Forth on Street Cars.

This is a real true dog story. He is a pug, and a great pet of his mistress, who is very fond of his fine pedigree. One day she discovered that Teddie could not see as well as usual. She felt as sad as if he were a brother or sister, and a famous oculist was consulted, who told her to bring her pet dog to him. They started, but a great obstacle presented itself. Conductor after conductor insisted that the dog should not ride on his car; so it was only after getting on and off about a dozen times that the doctor's office was reached.

Teddie was as quiet as could be while having his eyes examined, and his mistress was told she must bring him every day for a month, and all would be done for him that was possible. So Teddie's mistress went to a neighbor who had a small baby, and borrowed an outfit that was not too dainty. Teddie kept very quiet while being dressed in the long white dress; then a cloak and muslin cap, and over the face a long white veil.

Thus they started. Immediately upon entering a car, if it was filled, up would jump a man to give the lady carrying a little baby a good seat. Teddie never wagged his little curled-up tail once, neither did he even bark. Each day the trip was taken with the same result—a good seat and a very quiet baby.

One day the doctor's office was filled with people waiting their turn, when a lady turned politely to Teddie's mistress and said: "My turn comes next, but I will wait for you on account of your baby. It is so very tiresome to wait with a baby."

The doctor opened his door at that moment and called them both in his private office. He said: "I will show you the very best patient I have, and took Teddie carefully in his arms. He threw back the white veil and disclosed the dog's little pug nose and pert little face, looking out cutely from under the frills of the cap.

Teddie can see pretty well out of one eye now. His mistress expected a huge bill for the expert's service, but instead she received a receipted bill from the good doctor, with a note saying that as Teddie was the first patient he had ever treated of royal dog blood, he esteemed it a great honor to have been the means of helping him.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

Japanese Village in Volcano.

A little Japanese village, 30 miles from the town of Kumamoto, is situated in the crater of a volcano, which may some day become active again. The village, lying 900 feet below the top of the volcano, the walls of which are very steep, is quite hidden from sight. Its 2,000 inhabitants seldom leave the place.

Easy.

Rich but Indulgent Uncle—Harry, my boy, give me a list of the tradesmen you owe.

Spendthrift Nephew—Er—uncle, here's a list of the fellows I don't owe. —Chicago Tribune.

The Result.

Johnny—Papa, what does it mean when you say a man is good at repartee?

"It means he hasn't any of 'em." —Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.