NORTHERN TRIBUNE.

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THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION.

They stood beside the garden gate,
Beneath the elm tree's spreading shade;
It was the solemn hour of eve,
The witching time for lovers made.

He watched the radiant orbs of night,
As one by one they gemmed the sky;
He gazed upon her comely form,
Her lovely neck and lustrous eye.

She nestled closely to his side,
No word she spoke, but only pressed,
With trustful look and gentle mien,
Her graceful head against his breast.

He gazed upon the glossy hair,
Which well adorned that shapely head;
He looked upon her dainty feet,
And then these little words he said:

"Could she be his?"—and, as he asked,
He fondly stroked that glossy hair:
"Oh, yes"—the farmer said he'd take
Two hundred dollars for the mare.
—*Detroit Free Press.*

THE DEACON'S REWARD.

"Josiah," said Mrs. Middleton, "you will certainly end your days in the poor-house!"

The Deacon was reading his paper, quite unconscious, in his flurry and haste, that he had got it upside down. Mrs. Middleton, a tall, gaunt woman of sixty, who, by all outward indications, ought certainly to have been an old maid, was viewing him severely through her spectacles.

"I hope not, my dear," said the Deacon. "I hope not. What should put such an unpleasant idea as that into your head?"

"Don't be a hypocrite, Deacon!" said Mrs. Middleton, severely.

"A hypocrite, Eliza?"

"Yes, a hypocrite!" said the lady, energetically, nodding her head. "What is it but hypocrisy, I should like to know, to sit here and pretend you haven't just given half a cold chicken to that wretched tramp who is limping off across the swamp-lot?"

The top of the Deacon's bald head turned very red.

"He looked so cold and hungry, Eliza," said he. "You should have seen him eat and drink!"

"Eat and drink, eh?" satirically repeated Mrs. Middleton. "What did you give him to drink. I'd like to know?"

"Only a bowl of cold coffee, my dear," said the Deacon, deprecatingly.

"And that red comforter he had round his neck?"

"Really, my dear," stammered the detected culprit, "after the nice new muffler which Miss Mitchell gave me for Christmas, I did not need the old red comforter. And the poor wretch was blue with cold!"

"Blue, indeed!" shrilly echoed Mrs. Middleton. "I wish he'd been black and purple, and all sorts of colors, before he had ever come here! But it don't make any difference who it is, or what ridiculous trumped-up story he tells—anything will take *you* in! Here we are, in debt; the very house over our heads mortgaged; the land running down for want of proper attention, and you are shoveling out our household goods to every wretched, lazy, idle loafer and vagabond that comes along!"

"My dear! my dear!" feebly remonstrated the Deacon.

"Don't tell *me* said Mrs. Middleton, waxing still more wrathful as she meditated upon her wrongs. "All the country knows it! There isn't a beggar nor a tramp but knows he is sure of a supper and a shilling, if he comes here and gets your ear!"

"My dear, we are told in the Good Book—"

"We are told in the Good Book," angrily interrupted Mrs. Middleton, "that charity begins at home. Or if not these very words, it's the same thing. There's Lame Peter Pike, the fiddler. I'm fairly sick of the sound of his squeaking old tunes. I don't believe our barn would ever have burned up if it hadn't been for his old pipe the night he slept there."

"It was the sparks from the locomotive, my dear, which—"

"Sparks from the locomotive, indeed!" cried the lady. "The meals you've given him; the nights' lodgings he's had in our barn; and once five dollars towards buying him a new violin when his got cracked by the frost—and served him right! I vow and declare, Deacon, I've no patience with you! You are ruining us! Yes, *ruining!*"

Deacon Middleton shifted uneasily in his chair, and grew very red. If that Xantippe spouse of his had only known of the coins slipped at odd times into the old fiddler's horny hand; the cold meat and mugs of cider surreptitiously sent into the barn for Lame Peter's benefit; the ten-dollar bill at Christmas to help buy him a warm coat! If—

"But there's got to be an end of all this!" said Mrs. Middleton, excitedly. "I've had a lock put on the buttery door, and I'm going to buy Hobart Hogley's big dog, that is as savage as a meat axe, and *then* we'll see."

"Very well, my dear," said the mild Deacon.

"I'm tired of keeping free tavern for all the wretches between here and Mount Kearsarge," reiterated Mrs. Middleton.

"Yes, my dear," said the Deacon.

"Haven't you *anything* to say for yourself?" cried Mrs. Middleton.

"What should I say, my dear?" gently questioned the Deacon.

And the lady flounced indignantly out of the room.

But the good man's face grew very sad and dejected when she was gone.

"It's true enough," said he to himself, as he laid the newspaper on the table and let his spectacles fall slowly into their case. "We are ruined, although poor Eliza didn't realize it when she spoke the words. Old Nickerson is clamorous for his money, and the interest is all behind, and the mortgage is going to be foreclosed next month. I really don't see," the poor Deacon added, knitting his brows together after a puzzled fashion, "how I have been careless or improvident, but somehow everything has gone wrong. There was last summer's dry spell, and then that sickness among the cattle, and the fall of prices in grain, and the loss of twenty tons of hay in the barn that burned up—nothing but one continuous run of ill-luck! And there's no use trying to fight against fate any longer, so far as I can see. We must just let the old place go—the place where my father was born before me—and try to rent a little house somewhere, and support ourselves by raising small fruit and vegetables for the summer hotels, as best we may. I don't mind it so much myself, but I don't know how to tell Eliza."

And one or two tears—the agonizing tears of old age—escaped from under the Deacon's eyelids, and, trickling slowly down his cheek, fell with a noiseless plash upon his knee.

"I'm a poltroon to despair," said the good old man to himself. "What does the Bible say? 'I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Can't I comfort myself with *that?*"

Instinctively he reached out his hand for the old family Bible, with the marbled cover and the defaced gilt binding on the back; but at the same moment there was a knock at the door, and in came Lawyer Spruce, a dapper little man, with twinkling blue eyes, hair just frosted with gray, and a suspicion—only a suspicion—of a red nose!

The Deacon's heart sank within him; he eyed the lawyer as a dying stag might eye the hungry vulture already swooping above him. But with the instinct of inborn hospitality, he offered him a chair.

"Thankee, Deacon, thankee," said the lawyer. "But I can't stay. I've come to see you on some business connected with Mr. Peter Pike, commonly known as 'Lame Pete, the fiddler.'"

The Deacon opened his mild eyes.

"Eh?" said he. "Is he sick, poor soul?"

"He's dead!" said the lawyer.

"Is he?" said Middleton. "Poor fellow—poor old fellow! I always thought a deal of Lame Pete. Well, well, we must bury him decently, and see that he don't lack a neat tombstone. I'll give my share towards it," and he put his hand into his pocket.

The lawyer smiled shrewdly.

"You're mistaken, Deacon Middleton," he said, "altogether mistaken. Mr. Peter Pike has not died penniless. He has left enough to bury him, and a little besides."

"Indeed!" said the Deacon. "I am glad to hear it."

"He must have been a rather eccentric character," said the lawyer. "He has left quite a sum in the savings bank—four thousand dollars!"

"You don't say so!" said Mr. Middleton. "Four—thou—sand dollars, eh? That is a deal of money. If *I* had four thousand dollars, now—"

"You have!" said the lawyer.

"What?" roared the Deacon.

"That is precisely what I came to tell you," said Mr. Spruce. "We found a dirty, crumbled paper in one of his pockets, which proved to be a legally executed will, and which makes you his sole heir and legatee."

"Me!" shouted the Deacon. "His heir! But I'm no sort of relation to him."

"No, nor anybody else," said the lawyer. "But that don't interfere with the validity of the will."

"Bless me!" said the deacon. "Why, that's enough to raise the mortgage on the old farm!"

"Of course it is," nodded Lawyer Spruce. "He says in the will that you are the best friend he ever had, and that now you will understand how sincerely grateful he was for all your kindness."

"Poor old Pete! Poor old Pete!" said the Deacon, wiping the moisture out of his eyes. "Four thousand—dollars! Well, I wonder what Eliza will say!"

For the good Deacon had received his reward at last. And there was no danger of his ending his last days in the poor-house.—*N. Y. Ledger.*

—Oscar Wilde seems to be played out as an æsthetic apostle. He worked the art dodge in America for all it was worth, and has now abandoned it. He surprised his friends at a reception given to Mr. Whistler, the artist, by appearing as an ordinary individual dressed in a commonplace suit and shorn of his beautiful locks. Over here he is regarded as crazy.—*London Times.*

—It is proposed to send a canal from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, thence across the Valley of Moses and the plains of Esdraelon, to the Mediterranean at Acre, converting the Dead Sea into a living lake, make Jerusalem a seaport in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zachariah, and bring Gilead and Damascus into communication with civilization.—*Detroit Post.*

—In recording the death of Mrs. Betsy (Lee) Sherman, at the age of eighty-two years, the St. Albans (Vt.) *Messenger* says she had a distinct recollection of President Arthur's father, as he used to come, leading his little son Chester by the hand, on Sundays, and preach in the Fairfield (Vt.) school-house where she first taught school.

—A Boston author has sued his publisher because his book did not sell.

A Phenomenal Snake Story.

Last night's Denver & Rio Grande train brought three men who had just passed through an ordeal that is terrible to contemplate, and their many wounds go to show that the story they tell is but too true and horrible in its details. The men are E. W. Smith and George H. White, Jr., of Pueblo, and Thomas McGough, of Colorado Springs. They detail the account of their adventure about as follows. Nine miles from the mouth of Cottonwood Creek, up the stream, is a barren wilderness of scrubby undergrowth, and bowlders and rocks and stones. To stand on the verdant shore of this sea of waste land one would naturally conclude that they were that many miles away from nowhere, and, for ought they knew, were the first to discover this blank sea of waste, barren, worthless flyspeck on the shirt-front of creation. The men were on a fishing expedition and started Wednesday morning from the mouth of the Minnehaha stream to wend and wade their way toward its source, when they reached the spot above mentioned. Here night overreached them, and having a lunch, they built a fire and made themselves as comfortable as possible on the surface of a scraggy mossed rock. Being tired and footsore, as soon as their scanty repast was eagerly devoured they were soon revelling in dreams that, perhaps, are more or less pleasant to the mind while flitting in the realms of such fancies. One of the party had not been tangled with Morpheus long until he was awakened by something chocking him, and, feeling, found his strange collar was cold and slimy. It was a very fine specimen of the black species, which was girding his throttle in its anything but loving embrace. The monster was soon dispatched, and the party were about to lie down again after ridding themselves of his snakeship, when they found by the aid of the dying embers and the assistance afforded by the quarter moon that they were literally surrounded by the venom-tongued trailers. Two of the party proposed to decamp for a more congenial clime, but when about to leave the rock they found themselves trampling on a living sea of serpents. The hissing and rattling became more audible, and it was but a few minutes until it was as loud as ordinary toned voices. The men, finding they were thus surrounded, broke branches from the stubby undergrowth of pines and commenced lashing the writhing sea of darting, hissing snakes. Realizing that they had an all-night job, they added fuel to the fire and secured the largest sticks obtainable, and commenced the killing in earnest. The light and noise seemed to awaken the whole barren waste into a tempest of hissing and rattling. Each began the slaughter with redoubled vigor, vainly trying to fight their way to the stream, some hundred yards away, down a slanting hill. They would gain a few paces of the distance, only to be driven back again to the rock. The rattling and hissing became so loud that their voices were not audible unless close by. The sound was something like four or five wheat separators in operation at one time. It was terrible. The hair on their heads was standing straight and stiff like the wires on a patent hair brush. Their hands and arms were blood-stained to the elbows, and the stench from the snaky battlefield was sickening in the extreme. One hour after the first snake was killed no less than 5,000 lay slain, and they kept coming thicker and faster. The sound became hideous, and soon the moon disappeared and the three fishermen felt that hell had sweetest charms than the place it seemed their fate to die in. Two of the men were bitten, and their legs and arms began to swell and pain badly, and they frequently had to rest and permit one to do the killing of three. The hours wore slowly by and the slaughter was kept up as best they could. At last morning came and lifted the curtain of night from a most appalling scene. For fifty feet all around the huge rock lay a heap of stunned, squirming and dead snakes. As far as they could see all around the barren waste was a seething tide of reptiles that came toward the rock with maddening fury. Concluding that they might as well earn death by a dearer fate, they made ready to run for the stream; thinking that if they gained the other side they would have a better chance to care for their wounds. Leaping as far as possible from the rock they ran, frantic, struggling, bitten and wild with pain, they plunged into the water and reached the other side, completely overcome by the terrible ordeal just passed through, and, after some time, bandaged their bleeding and swollen limbs.

By nine o'clock they were sufficiently recovered to continue to Cottonwood Springs, where they took the first train for Leadville to secure medical aid, arriving here last night. The unfortunate men are now under the care of Dr. D. H. Dougan. They describe the snakes as being specimens of all kinds, such as adders, vipers, copperheads, rattlers, milk, house, green and black, and among them was two hoop-snakes, and a racer, which they declare was no less than twenty-two feet in length. The doctor says the men are not fatally bitten, but it will be some time before the swelling and pain will disappear. They leave on to-night's train for their respective homes, feeling that they have had enough fishing and an abundance of snakes for one excursion.—*Leadville (Col.) Chronicle.*

—The adulteration of Chinese teas with American catnip leaves is not so objectionable, inasmuch as the action of the added ingredient is quieting on the nerves and induces sleep.

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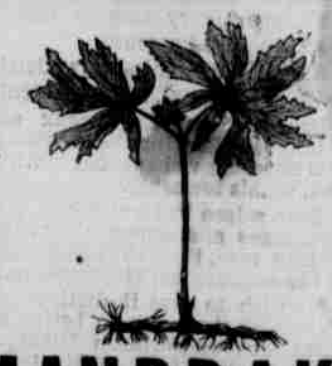

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