

The Ste. Genevieve Fair Play.
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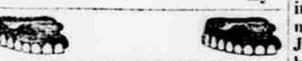
The Ste. Genevieve Fair Play.
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A. F. BELTRAMI,
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Selected Miscellany.

BAD TIME TO DIE.
 I would not die in Autumn, With oysters fit for eating When buckwheat cakes is coming on And candidates is treating.
 When sausage meat is frying, And hickory nuts is thick; O, who would think of dying, Or even getting sick?

ALL ABOUT IT.
 "Have you thought," said Phoebe, looking up suddenly, "that to-day begins the tenth year since mother died, and we are still safe?"
 "No, I had not counted the time. Father seems to be happy with us, and so indifferent to all outside people, that I have stopped borrowing trouble about that. Besides, he is seventy years old."
 "Mother was certain that he would marry again."
 "Yes; she had worried herself into the belief, thinking of your lameness; but if the last sword that she saw so plainly does fall at last, we can go away and live in a room or two together."
 "But what should we live on?"
 "The dinner of herbs, and contentment therewith." It would be but a lean stalled ox that we should leave behind us, you know."
 "We will never take anything from father's income. He is to old to spare any of his small luxuries."
 "What's the use of talking about it; the first ten years are the critical time for a widower. If he comes out of it unscathed, he's safe. We shall live and die in our old home."
 "Amen!" said Phoebe.
 Our mother had been a woman of great strength of character, unconsciously bearing up her husband in business and society. When she died he seemed to lose all interest in his old pursuits; he gave up his business, invested the property as safely as possible, and settled down to live on his income and nurse the growing infirmities of age.
 I was twenty-eight, and Phoebe three years younger on that black day when she impressed upon me her last words: "You are not children to be spared all annoyance, but women to endure it with silence and patience. Your father will marry again, and you will lose your home. I have no morbid feelings about it, for it will make him happier, and he cannot do without happiness so well as you can. I hope you will be capable of making duty take the place of it. Eleanor, you must take care of Phoebe as I would if I had lived. If you marry, take her with you; if not, marry her to the extent of making her a part of yourself. I prefer that you should go away if possible, leaving your father and his new wife to begin life again. Any reminder of me would be awkward to them and painful to you. I have left you the little property that was my own; keep it safe for the day of need."
 She had compressed so much emotion into these words that she never spoke again, and they sunk deep into my mind. We watched and waited for the fulfillment of her prophecy, nothing doubting, and if our father spoke a word of praise of any worthy spinster or widow, we began to plan for our exodus.
 As year after year went by, and my father seemed to ask no greater happiness than to sit opposite to Phoebe through the long evenings, listening to her sweet-voiced reading, and placing her crutches under her arms when she went up stairs, our jealous watch relaxed and the ground grew firm under our feet. On this tenth anniversary of our great loss my father was gone to St. Jo's; it was a long journey at his age, but he had received a letter from an old friend in trouble asking his aid. Phoebe had asked the name of the friend, but he had replied that it was no one whom he had ever heard of.
 I expected him early in the morning, and left my door ajar that I might hear the first sound of the bell. Just in the first dawn, the drowsiest hour in the whole night, I heard it touched lightly, as my father always did, having Phoebe on my mind. I threw a shawl over my night-dress and ran down to the door.
 "I am so glad you have come home safe! It must have been a tiresome journey," I said, as I leaned out of the door-way to kiss him.
 "Not at all tiresome, for I have brought home the friend whom I went to see. Won't you give her a kiss too?"
 In the semi-darkness I distinguished a tall lady in a traveling dress.
 "Who—who is it father?" I stammered, with my tongue sticking to the roof of my mouth.
 "My wife. I did not have time to write.
 My head seemed to spin round, and I fell back against the wall. I had never fainted in my life, but this cruel surprise was too much.
 "Don't take it so hard Eleanor, I

did it for the happiness of us all," said father in a tremulous tone.
 "Let her smell of this," said the lady, taking a little bottle from her traveling-bag.
 Her clear, even tones acted on me like cold water dashed in my face. My own mother's words sounded in my ears as if I had then heard them for the first time: "Your father cannot do without happiness, but you can make duty take its place."
 "Thank you very much," I said, "but I shall not need it. You must think it a sorry welcome to your new home if I faint away at the sight of you. It was the sudden touch of night air when I had just come from a warm bed. I am better, now."
 "The night air often has that effect. I always carry hartshorn with me, but I never had a similar occasion to use it. I saw a gleam of white teeth as my step-mother said this.
 "I should hope not," I thought, but I said, "won't you go into the sitting-room and take off your bonnet? The materials for a cup of tea are on the table; I will make it for you when I am dressed." I felt that my dignity might suffer if the morning light brightened and my step-mother saw me first in a night-dress and plaid shawl.
 Phoebe was asleep when I glanced into her room, and I had not the heart to wake her with such news. I dressed quickly and carefully, but pausing long enough to arrange my hair in its most becoming way, for the dim light had been sufficient to show that my father's wife was a woman of taste and refinement.
 As my hand touched the door of the sitting-room, father was saying, "she took it better, on the whole, than I expected."
 "She's a heroine, I think," her voice replied, "but you ought to have telegraphed, as I asked you to do."
 "Yes, I suppose so, but I could not leave you long enough, you know."
 "Oh dear! Love-making at seventy sounded 'stale, flat and unprofitable' to me, though I was certainly a prejudiced witness. I stepped back lightly and made a little scrape with my foot to give them warning.
 Let us make believe that this is your first sight of me," I said, offering my hand to my step-mother with a good imitation of cordiality. "You know a woman without a train and false hair is but a shadow of herself. Shall I make the tea now?"
 "If you please. I regret to give you so much trouble."
 She may have meant more than the tea, but I preferred to understand it in that limited sense: "Not at all. I always make it for my father when he comes home in the early train. It will be your work hereafter, and I shall not be disturbed. You see your lines have fallen on one stony place already."
 She was very quiet and serious as she met my sham smile, as if she knew as well as I did that to keep on talking thick and fast was my only defense from a flood of tears.
 "Have you—have you told Phoebe?" father asked in a tone that made me have the utmost mercy on him.
 "No; she was asleep. You speak as if it were bad news, whereas she will heartily rejoice at anything that makes you happier."
 He actually believed me (men are so easily deluded), and seemed from that moment to throw off any feeling of remorse concerning Phoebe and me, and to give himself up to his new passion.
 "Your room is in order if you like to lie down until breakfast."
 "I think I should like to lie down," said the lady, putting her hand to her head as if it ached. While she was collecting her wraps I looked at her fairly for the first time. She was a wonderfully preserved woman of fifty-five or thereabout, with a certain elegant neatness about her which must have been grateful to my father's taste. Her hair had white streaks in it, but preserved the brown shade; her pale white teeth and fair skin with few wrinkles in it showed that she had taken life easily. If she had not been my step-mother, I should have pronounced her a very handsome woman.
 "If you lie on this side you will avoid the cross lights from the windows," I said; which was true enough so far as it went, but it was my plot to prevent her lying down on the spot where I had last seen my mother. "You will find a blanket on the closet shelf if you need one. Shall I call you to breakfast in an hour?"
 "If you please."
 "It will be but a plain one, as our cook is very old fashioned, but you have had the wedding breakfast already, I suppose."
 She came up to me suddenly, with an intense look which was not a little embarrassing. "Don't overdo it so terribly," she said. "I think you have begun to hate me."
 "What an idea! On the contrary,

I don't wonder at all that my father wanted to marry you."
 "You are not at all like your father."
 "No. I am said to resemble my mother very closely." She gave me an expressive look, which I returned with a rather tremulous smile.
 When I went down father said, "You are not angry, Eleanor?"
 "Angry! No; why should I be?"
 "I don't know. I was a little afraid of you, you are so strong-minded. She's a splendid woman. We shall be happier for having her in the house. Have you told Phoebe?"
 "No; I will go now."
 "Oh, what is the matter?" burst out Phoebe at sight of me. "Has not father come home safe?"
 "Yes, yes—very safe."
 "I thought I heard some other woman pass this door with you. Who was she?"
 I threw myself across the bed and let the passionate tears, that had been burning my eyes for an hour have full flow. Strong-minded! I was the weakest of women just then.
 "Eleanor, don't tell me he is married and never let us know!"
 "Wood and married and all in the space of three days."
 "He has disgraced himself!"
 "No, no, Phoebe; don't think that. It is only the sudden shock that upsets me so. She is of suitable age, refined manner, and altogether, as Joe Gargery would say, 'a fine figure of a woman.' Father is very happy and very devoted."
 "That will be hardest to bear."
 "We won't bear it. It was mother's wish that we should go away."
 "But where?" said Phoebe, glancing at her crutches. "I cannot go far or fast." This had never melted me again.
 "Only down the street. We can hire those four little rooms that Mr. Green thought of letting. We have each the blessed thousand dollars that mother left us. We can't starve while they last, and perhaps something may turn up. She owned all this furniture, too."
 "I know, but it wouldn't do to take it away from father when he has used it so long."
 "We will go if we have to sleep on the floor." I said desperately.
 "Of course," said Phoebe, "but it is hard."
 The new mistress of the house certainly behaved with wonderful tact and dignity. She repressed our father's raptures when with us, and showed the utmost sympathy for Phoebe's. She was in no haste to tighten the reins of housekeeping, and seemed determined to win us over as she had won our father.
 "It is not as bad as it might be, but we must go all the same," I said many times a day to Phoebe to keep her heart up.
 Our step-mother arrived Wednesday morning, and within twenty-four hours I had engaged Mrs. Green's rooms at a small rent. It was with intense relief that I heard my step-mother say, "I have some furniture coming, but if it would trouble you or Phoebe to see any new arrangement in the house, we will store it in a spare room."
 "Thank you; it will not make the least difference to us. How much furniture have you?"
 "I saved enough from my old home to furnish a sitting-room, bed room, and kitchen. I was keeping house in three little rooms, and striving hard to get together a private school, when your father rescued me from poverty and loneliness. I was engaged to him many years ago, but it was soon broken." Her face flushed a little, and I am sure mine did so too. I had never asked a question of her or of my father about her past life.
 "I am so glad you have just the quantity of furniture that Phoebe and I shall need. You can spare us some of the old things that we have grown attached to?"
 "Spare some things! What do you mean?"
 "Only that we have a fancy to play at the kind of housekeeping you mentioned. I have hired four rooms near this house."
 "Then you mean to hate me after all, and I have turned you out of your old home. I thought you were beginning to like me. I assure you I will not make the least change, and you may manage the housekeeping to suit yourself. Your father and I will board with you." She said all this with heightened color and evident emotion.
 "I do like you—no one could help it." I came in upon you so suddenly because I thought a warning would prejudice you against me."
 "It is not wholly my own plan. Our mother insisted upon our going away when father married again."
 "She thought he would?"
 "She was certain of it, and we have always kept it in our thoughts as a probability."
 "I'm sorry I did it," she said im-

pulsively, "but the poverty was very hard to bear. Are you sure you cannot live with me?"
 "Sure," I said, smiling.
 "Then your father shall give you half his income."
 "Oh no he cannot spare us a dollar. Phoebe and I have some property of our own, and I depend on you to smooth our going away to his mind."
 "You have such a high, Roman way of doing things that I suspect you really mean to disinheret us both, and never see us again."
 "We will come to see you every day if you like."
 "I wish I might have seen your own mother," said my father's wife kissing my cheek. We both laughed at this absurd sentiment, and parted very good friends.
 Father actually made no objection to our departure; in fact, he had no thoughts for any one but his wife. Before the end of the week we were settled in our new home.
 "If we make believe very much," said Phoebe when we sat down to our first cup of tea, "we might be a newly married couple just beginning housekeeping."
 "That's the way I mean to look at it, and I (being the husband) will go out tomorrow in search of work."
 "And the 'weaker vessel' will stay at home and wash up the china."
 My step-mother's hint about a private school had leavened my thoughts, and I went out next day in search of scholars. I found poverty very hard indeed to bear. Those who had children to send thought my terms too high—those who had none were quite sure they were too low.
 My long morning walk secured only two, and those on condition of my finding others. As I dragged my self home tired and dispirited the most ancient of widowers would have found me an easy prey.
 Phoebe had made two yards of exquisite tating, which was worth fifty cents, and this with a cup of hot tea, revived me so much that I went on another tramp in the afternoon and almost by force secured a promise of three more scholars. Five would do to begin with, and I did begin the next Monday. I was wholly ignorant of the ways of children, though I shared with all other old maids certain theories as to their proper treatment. I have a natural love for them, and I got on far better with the children than with their parents, whose unreasonableness is past telling. My number in the course of six months rose to ten, but never exceeded it. It was a good discipline, and doubtless a means of grace, but Phoebe's tating brought us more money. My step-mother would have supplied our table entirely if I would have permitted it, and in the face of my absolute refusal to take anything from our old home she sometimes smuggled in a loaf of bread or cake. It was very hard to make both ends meet in the beginning of our housekeeping, but before the end of the first year, by severe calculation, we had compressed our expenses within our income.
 We dined in the old home every Sunday, and no one save ourselves knew that we tasted meat but once in the week.
 "What a queer sensation a new dress would be!" said Phoebe when we were making ready for church.
 "I have given more thought to original sin in the last year than in all my life before. If Evg had not made that little mistake, our income would be all sufficient."
 "Yes, we got married to suddenly for you to have the usual outfit."
 "I'm afraid I'm not meek enough yet; a new suit might puff me up too much, but I should like to look well in the eyes of her brother."
 "Her brother" was Dr. Winter, the only one left of our step-mother's family. She always spoke of him with the most admiring affection, and praised his skill in his profession, which he had used so little for his own profit that he was still a poor man, with a fortune always within his grasp. He had just returned from Paris, where he had been a volunteer surgeon in the hospitals, and we were invited to meet him.
 There was nothing in the least formidable about him; he was a pleasant looking man of forty, with a peculiarly soft touch in his hand, as if he found a patient in every one he shook hands with. He included us all in conversation with the simple ease of a man of the world, saying nothing that one could carry away and repeat as a witticism, but making the evening's hours go by on wings. He walked home with us, and Phoebe asked him to call. He promised to do so; "But he will never think of it again," said Phoebe.
 However, he came next day, and entered into a long conversation with her about her lameness and the possibility of its cure.
 "I have given up all such hopes long ago," said Phoebe wearily. "I suffered tortures when I was young

from the many experiments of doctors and the last disappointment was always worse than all the others. I have grown to be almost content as I am."
 "Please let me see her case. Like the quacks, I take no fee without a cure, but a new patient is too fascinating for me to resist. My trade is my passion; it has taken the place of wife and children."
 I held a night-vial with Phoebe, and she consented to submit to one more trial. After this he came to our rooms every day, and sorely interrupted the tating business, his first direction being to avoid the slightest wear and tear of muscle. I was sometimes summoned to assist at mercuric operations, but otherwise I saw very little of Dr. Winter. My work was nearly doubled by Phoebe's inclination, but I did not mind it in view of the possible end. The little economies of our house-keeping of course became known to him. Since Phoebe's income had ceased we sat down three times a day to bread and butter and tea. Our only variation was from white bread to brown, and it, Phoebe was to be under treatment much longer, I saw plainly that the butter would have to be given up. This was a matter worth mentioning beside another which seemed to be growing up black and terrible before my eyes. Phoebe could not meet Dr. Winter or hear his name without a sudden flush in her cheek and a brightening in her eyes, and all the sweet playfulness of her youth had returned to her manner. I used to hear the murmur of their voices for hours together as I taught my scholars in the next room. His manner to her was ever courteous, and after a fashion devoted, but that fashion seemed to be only professional. I borrowed much trouble as I watched and magnified all the signs of Phoebe's infatuation. Of what use would be her cure if she lost her heart to him, when he never thought of such a thing? He had better have left her to her crutches.
 There came one day when the great trial of walking unsupported was to be made. Dr. Winter had devoted the greater part of ten weeks to the case. He seemed almost as nervous as Phoebe herself, and a gleam of hope dawned upon me that she might not be disappointed after all; he certainly hovered about her with all the eagerness of a lover. It was a genuine hope, but down at the very bottom of my heart was a certainty that I should be happier if I had never known Dr. Winter and his pleasant ways.
 When Phoebe was arranged in her chair he helped her to rise slowly and take the first step on his arm; then, gently withdrawing himself, he whispered a word of two of encouragement in her ear, and through tears of thankfulness, I saw Phoebe was across the room without the slightest support. I fled into the kitchen, but not before I saw that she had the enthusiasm of her delight.
 When he had made her lie down, he came into the kitchen, where I was making toast for Phoebe's supper.
 "Can't you spend a little time to be joyful with us?" he asked.
 "The us sounded like a lover."
 "Phoebe must have something to eat, you know."
 "True, but Phoebe might have something better than black bread and white if you had not brought her away from your father's comfortable house."
 "Do you think the strong mindedness was all on my part?"
 "I hear so from my sister; she says she could have won over Phoebe in time, but you were difficult to make love to; and I agree with her. I wish you would tell me the real reason of your going from home in this unusual way, and suffering so many privations. Was it jealousy of our father's affection or dislike of your step-mother?"
 "Neither. I only followed the wish of my own mother; but even without that hope I should have seen that any reminder of her would be painful to my father in his new happiness. I don't think that I should have quarreled with your sister if I had remained with her, but there would have been in the nature of things, continually a bitter feeling. It is always better for the wind to blow between the houses of those who are related only by law. As it is, we are very good friends."
 "You are a rare woman," he said. "I had begun to think your type had disappeared from the earth."
 He began to walk up and down the small kitchen. "I—have—something—to—say—to—you" he said, hesitating between his words, and finally coming to a dead stop.
 "I thought I would help him a little:—
 "Is it about Phoebe? It is about you."
 "But—I thought you liked her."
 "So I do, but I love you."
 I have no idea how long I stood there motionless with the toasting-fork in my hand.
 "I am very poor," he said at last. "So am I," I said joyfully; "we are well matched."
 Phoebe came in after a while to see what was meant by the smell of burning bread, and a chill struck to my very heart as it flashed upon me that she might love Dr. Winter as well as I did.
 "I see," said Phoebe, "the doctor cures me and marries you. I am satisfied if you are. He told me his secret a month ago, and all my fuses and tremors, that worried you so much, were on your account."
 My step-mother was charming when she became my sister, and Phoebe disliked her time between us. [EX.