Ste. Genevieve Fair Play.

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THE MODERN MEETIN'-HOUSE.

BY WILL S. HAYS.

Howdy, Davy! light an' hitch; thar's no one
home but me;
Thar ain't a man a livin' sir, I'd sooner like ter
see;
For Nance and Liddy's gone to see a sick man
on the hill,
An' Hiram's gone to get his grist at Jason Turner's mill.

I was in town las' Sunday, an' my heart an' me agreed
To go to meetin'—ef you'll wait I'll tell you what I seed:
The bells wor tollin' lively on the balmy mornin' air,
An' folks wor in a hurry, like the rushin' to a fair.

The meetin'-house was built of stone, the steeple pinted high,
The windows they wor painted all the colors ov the sky;
An' runnin' up the steeple was a great long lightnin' rod—
I kinder thought the members *lacked a confidence in God.*

The big bell sorter hushed hitself an' then hit rang some more,
An' people come in carriages an' got out at the door;
The women fixed thar dresses like they meant to make a call—
Thar faces showed they warn't athinkin' ov *their souls at all.*

Well, Davy, thar I stood an' thought—'twas wicked I suppose—
Some go to church to close their eyes, an' some to keep thar close:
I overhead ole Missus Swell to Massus Stebbins say,
"My darter Becky's *dress* wa'nt done—she *won't be here* to-day."

I stood thar hesitatin' like what sort ov move to make;
I felt that I should go inside for *my* salvation's sake;
I started meekly in the house, I knew it wan't no harm,
With my old broad-brim hat in han' an' jeans coat on my arm.

I went along, 'bout half way up the velvet carpet ile,
The men an' women *shut thar gates*, an' they begin to smile;
I see I one open just a bit, went in and pulled it to,
When Brown, the banker, riz an' said, "*This ere's a rented pew.*"

I got out ov his "rented pew" an' sot down near the door,
Expectin' for sum man ter say "*This ere's a rented floor.*"
A fine-dressed stranger he cum in—the members didn't wait,
But every feller jumped at him an' *opened wide his gate.*

The parson riz an' raised his han's, with cold an' haughty air,
An' everybody in the house stood up an' heard his prayer.
I don't know how it is with *them*—somehow I always feel
I'm doin' God injustice when I get too proud to kneel.

Then all sat down an' stared about, then at the parson's face,
While he put on his specs an' sed, "Let's sing Amazin' Grace."
An orgin busted loose up-stairs—the musick hit was say.
Hit tickled them as couldn't sing, an' them wot hed to pay.

The musick quit, the parson riz—they passed the hats 'roun' next,
An' when the deekins got them down—the parson took his text.
He preached about two hours 'bout the Faith in God to keep—
The women folks were noddin' while thar husbands wor asleep.

One gal sed to another, "Hev you sed my bow to-day?"
She'd nod her hed an' then say back, "The party hit was gay."
One whispered loud enough behind her fan fur me to hear,
"That bonnet Sofy Tag's got on is one she had last year."

The parson quit an' then sot down—the orgin played agin;
I thought it that was servin' God the tunes they played was thin;
I've heern the bands at circuses jest play the self-same air.
The parson, when the orgin quit, dismissed 'em all with prayer.

Now, Davy, ef the angels seed what I did, I believe
Thar warn't a one, among 'em all, but what ball'd in thar sleeve;
For God don't smile on Christians who His blessin's will abuse;
He hain't no use fur orgins, an' He don't like rented pews.

He rings no bells to tell 'em that the Sabbath's come once more;
The angels had no carridges to drive up to His door.
Such Christians might as well look up to God, an' sweetly smile
An' say, "I send my soul, dear Lord; I'm comin' after a while."

Our Master up in Heaven, Davy, sees—hears everything;
He likes to see His children kneel—an' loves to hear 'em sing;
For what He lives the angels sing an' Christians get their dues—
His music costs Him nothin', an' He has no rented pews.

Thar ain't no use o' foolin' 'long the road down to the grave;
Thar is no way o' dodgin' when you've got your soul to save.
Fine churches, orgins, carridges, clothes, rented pews, an' "pelf,"
Don't count that day—it lays between yer Maker an' yerself.

RIGHTED AT LAST.

I.—THE LOCUM TENENS.

One lovely summer night, a few years ago, an old-fashioned little vehicle was being dragged up a steep ascent among the Cotswold Hills by a sturdy little pony, who stopped every now and then of his own accord, as though perfectly well aware of how many "rises and dips" lay before him, and of the consequent necessity of not losing his wind by over-exertion at this stage of his journey. The two men who were walking on either side of the four-wheeler occupied these moments of rest, the one in cheering and patting the pony, the other gazing round upon what was to him altogether an unfamiliar scene. Long sloping meadows on one side, parted from each other by low stone walls, a few cottages—stone, too, even the roofs—dotted here and there, a long way off a tall cathedral spire, and over all the rapidly gathering gray shadows of coming night; and on the other side high, jagged, yellow cliffs, crowned by tier after tier of mighty trees, whose topmost boughs caught the last golden light of the setting sun beyond, whose friendly branches sheltered myriads of song-birds.

"What a glorious view we shall get yonder!" cried the stranger, pointing to a turn on the hillside, to be reached after another stiff ascent of half a mile.

"Ay, sir," responded the man, "they do say as the lookout there is as good as any in the country—or out of it either, *I* should think. Master, he say to me when I were a-drivin' him down here the last time the other day, 'Jim,' says he, 'it's my belief I sha'n't see nothin' finer in the way of views in all my travels than this here Gat's Back and that there Nest by the beck;' and he's a traveled man, is master, and knows what he's a-sayin' of too."

These last words were flung out a little defiantly, as if to warn the young man who was coming as *locum tenens* to Maybeck that though for a twelvemonth or so he might be invested with the invalid rector's power, and preach in his pulpit, and live in his house, and look after his flock, still he had better take care and not let his pride at such a position run away with him, and especially he had better not set up an opinion in opposition to "master."

But Godfrey Bree was noways inclined to gainsay his conductor's hearty praise; instead of so doing, he, so unaffectedly, showed a delight in the fair views that lay round about them at every turn that by the time Maybeck rectory was reached he had won golden opinions of "Jim," who informed his wife that night, over their supper, "that whatsoever the new man might be, papish or chapel disposed, he knowed a nice sight when he see it, and that spoke in his favor!"

A quiet, lonely meal, some few minutes' study of the room where it was served, an introduction to and commencement of a warm friendship with Flops, the old rector's spaniel, and then the curate strolled out into the garden, possessed with the half-satisfied, half-restless feelings that attend so many changes of men's lives. This was his first parochial charge—the eight years of his life since he had left college having been passed in the very different work of teaching in a grammar school—and how different it all seemed! Here, as yet, he knew no one; he had come to this little quiet spot mainly for the sake of rest from overwork, and rest, even to stagnation, he seemed likely to get. He knew no one; indeed, according to Jim's account, there were not many folks to know; a poor population of under a hundred to attend to, three "gentlefolks' houses" to call at, inhabited by a retired officer of the army, the squire of the place, and a certain Mr. Arlington, of whom nobody knew much; these constituted his parish, and constituted for him something very like solitude.

So, at least, Godfrey Bree thought that first night, and wondered how ever he should tide over his twelvemonth' charge, how he should bear the monotony of life in this out-of-the-world hamlet. All alone; the stillness was oppressive, and irritated him into action of some sort; he opened the gate, and set off walking briskly down hill, intending by the clear light of the mid-summer moon to explore a mile or two of country before he went to rest.

On his way back he saw a pretty picture, and under the shadow of a sweet-scented lime staid some moments gazing at it. A little back from the road, parted from it by a low hedge, stood one of the three "gentlefolks' houses;" a long window was wide open, a lamp lighted within, a background of many flowers, and a girl with yellow hair, seated in the full light, resting her face upon her hand as she read aloud to some hearer unseen. The curate was near enough to catch the sound of a sweet, clear voice, and loitered with a passing wish for a full sight of the fair face—may his loneliness excuse his intrusive glances!—but at that moment up rushed Flops, hot from the illegal pursuit of a rabbit; and with a joyful bark the ill-mannered dog rushed straight in at the open window, and made herself very much at home by jumping with her dew-damped paws on the reader's light summer dress. Scarcely knowing whether to retreat or advance, he hesitated a moment, and then had no choice but to go forward; for the girl came out upon the lawn, and catching sight of his figure beneath the limes, cried out:

"Oh, James, here is this dog of yours again! Please take her home, and keep her safe. I like to have her; but papa—I—I beg your pardon," as the curate drew near; "I thought I was speaking to the servant from the rectory."

In great confusion and awkwardness, Godfrey Bree made his apologies and explained who he was, mentally chafing at the accident which brought him forward in such a *malapropos* manner. But the look he ventured at the young lady nearly repaid him for all his annoyance. The face was worthy of the voice—sweet and grave and womanly beyond even his ideal; and her manner, gentle and self-possessed, well matched her face.

He could have gone on explaining and apologizing for an hour, but a sharp voice from the house called "Emily!" and, handing the intruding Flops over to the curate's keeping, the girl hurried back to her father, and the young man retraced his steps to the rectory. On the whole, it seemed to him that Maybeck was a far more habitable place than he had thought it to be an hour ago.

II.—THE INEVITABLE DILEMMA.

A habitable, cheery, sociable little place the village was in truth, in spite of the smallness of its population, which seemed rather ridiculous when first faced by this stray man from a busy town; and before a week was over Godfrey Bree had made so much use of his time that he had seen the inside of most of the cottages, and learned from the lips of their feminine occupiers such budgets of domestic trials, such perplexing confidences of family histories, such volumes of details concerning all the children of every household, as set him often wondering what in the world men with large parishes could do if they had a proportionate increase of matters to listen to.

But that was only his first week, before he knew how to manage properly; after a while he contrived to avoid such floods of gossip, and yet maintain his character as a kindly listener and good adviser.

He made his call, too, at the squire's, and saw the whole family—master, mistress and four fat daughters, two like the father, two like the mother—all ready to welcome a young and gentlemanly man as a pleasant temporary change in place of the old invalid clergyman.

And he called at the retired officer's, and listened with patience while his ill-used host set plainly before him how infamously he and his claims had been slighted and insulted by a radical government.

The major wound up as the squire had done, by begging this excellent new listener to drop in at 6 o'clock whenever he wished for a homely dinner, and some one else's company beside his own.

Lastly, he made his visit to Mr. Darlington's, postponing his call there from day to day for reasons scarcely intelligible to himself.

He was ushered into the same bright room of which he had caught a glimpse a week before, met and welcomed by Miss Darlington herself, whose delicate beauty gained, as so many kinds of beauty do not, by being seen in broad daylight. A lovely complexion, clear large gray eyes that smiled as brightly as her lips, a perfect figure, and a soft, sweet voice. She needed no adjuncts of dress or personal adornment to enhance her many charms; and either she was aware of this, or had other reasons for the noticeable simplicity of her attire, which seemed scarcely in keeping with the costliness of the furniture and ornaments of the room in which she was seated. At first the curate, who was thoroughly unaccustomed to ladies' society, was puzzled to know in what other particular, besides her charming face, she differed so much from most others of her sex; but after a few visits at the Hall had brought before his eyes a considerable display of West-country fashionable attire, he became aware of Miss Darlington's peculiarity, and set it down in his own mind as a piece of very pardonable vanity—an error, if error at all, in the right direction.

The first few minutes of that morning's call led the young man into an unknown land, where hitherto his steps had never strayed. I don't mean that he fell headlong in love all in one brief half hour, or even for weeks suspected that he was in danger of doing so at all; but dreams and longings for a home of his own henceforth troubled him as they had never done before; a weariness and distaste of his old life came over him, and he began to think he never could go back to the pursuits and work he had been so loath to leave.

One more trifling circumstance struck of ever inheriting more than the solitary thousand pounds he already possessed?"

The poor fellow took himself to task for his folly; but it was late in the day to do that. Then he told himself he must see and master the quick-growing passion—which only shows how ignorant he was on such matters; and then, as if the very Fates were against him, Mr. Darlington met with some slight accident which kept him within-doors, and he was constantly sending for the curate to dine or lunch with him, "out of pity." So the chains were riveted faster than ever as winter drew on apace.

III.—IN WORSE CONFUSION.

One November afternoon an urgent message had gone across to the rectory for Mr. Bree to dine at the White House—so Mr. Darlington's cottage was called.

Mr. Bree had declined to go, half glad to be out of danger's way for once—"his lads were coming up to the night-school, and he should be busy till 8 o'clock. Upon which came another message that Mr. Darlington would put off dining till 8, if Mr. Bree would go then. So the over-persuaded curate gave in, and went something against his will.

Against his will for two reasons. First, he was afraid of his secret escaping from him before he had well made up his mind what course he ought to take; and next, because his more frequent interviews with Mr. Darlington had not strengthened his liking for that gentleman. At times such flashes of bitterness broke from him, such rough, harsh speeches, as made one wonder what in the world was out of joint with this man, who lived to all seeming in such wealth and comfort; and after such speeches, if they had happened at dinner, it was certain Mr. Darlington attempted to raise his spirits by drinking freely of the wines which he used to boast were among the best in the country.

On this November evening Godfrey could see, the moment he entered the dining-room, that his host was in no particularly happy frame of mind.

He received his guest, however, with many expressions of welcome, and vented his ill-temper on the dinner, which he declared had been spoiled in the cooking; then, as though ashamed of so much fault-finding, he turned the conversation to descriptions of the Lake country, which he knew well, and of which he spoke with such happy fluency that it was difficult to believe him to be the same man who had sat grumbling at the head of his table a few minutes before.

Having achieved this point he suddenly subsided, and playing listlessly with a wine-glass, begged to know whether Mr. Bree had discovered any wonderful genius among the clod-hoppers he was teaching, or what made the occupation so particularly engrossing.

The young man colored at the sneering tone, but answered with perfect good temper that his pupils were none of them very apt, but that he conceived it to be his duty to help them if they wished to learn.

"Well, every one to his taste," said Mr. Darlington, coldly. "I suppose you are something like myself at times, driven to seek uncongenial companions rather than none at all, in such a dismal corner of the earth as this is—dismal, that is when the fishing season is over," he added, hurriedly, and flushing slightly.

Uncertain how to take such a speech, the curate was for answering hotly; but at that instant he caught Emily Darlington's glance, frightened and entreating. The appeal from her was a delight to him, and for her sake he answered, courteously:

"Indeed, you would be surprised if you knew how much one gets interested in such unpromising pupils. I know the people here so well now, that Maybeck seems to me one of the most important spots of the earth, though I don't happen to care for trout fishing. No, thank you, no more wine."

"Happy you, if you can make yourself contented," responded his host; "to me it appears as though such drudgery as your evening's work must be awfully uncongenial to a man like yourself, accustomed to something better—though in the same line!"—this with another sneer.

("Oh, Emily," thought the curate, "if that man were any one but your father, I should not wait at his table to hear another such speech!")

"Teaching is 'my line,' as you say," he answered, "and I like it heartily. Perhaps you will excuse me for saying that I consider it as much my duty to teach the lads about here what little they are anxious to learn as I should consider it my duty to fulfill any other trust committed to me honestly and fairly."

"Bah! trust!" muttered Mr. Darlington, and again the curate caught the aloud for hours some days; singing to him if he was so disposed; his constant companion in walks or drives; his devoted attendant during those hours when he was ill, or fancied himself to be so; and yet no one who watched her—as the curate soon delighted in doing—could fail to perceive that there was some false note in the harmony of that household, some slight, invisible barrier between the love of this father and daughter.

Meanwhile, as his acquaintance with the Darlingtons grew closer, the weeks were creeping on. The harvest was gathered in far and near, and the woods down the steep hill-sides were glorious in red and golden garments.

Letters from abroad told Godfrey Bree that Mr. Herbert, the rector, was slowly but surely regaining his health, and trusted to be able to resume his parish work during the following summer; "and that means," thought Godfrey, ruefully, "that I shall be wanted here no longer." That day the curate first faced a very awkward question: "Would Mr. Darlington, with all his seeming friendliness, be disposed to give up his daughter to a man who had no better prospects for years to come than a curacy, or possibly a country grammar school—who had no prospect, moreover, him during that first interview—for he naturally paid more heed to manner than to dress, and noticed a slight, but certain, change in Miss Darlington's manner from the moment her father entered the room.

The latter received Mr. Bree with all possible courtesy, and detained him for nearly an hour in friendly conversation, explaining, rather unnecessarily, his own reasons for living in such a secluded part of the country; "natural indolence, I must confess, and a genuine dislike to being elbowed about in the world;" then, gauging his visitor's taste and knowledge of matters, artistic, political, and social, rapidly and skillfully, he ended, by congratulating himself on having a neighbor with so many similar tastes to his own, and expressing a hope that they might see much of each other.

But during that hour Miss Darlington scarcely spoke, and when Godfrey Bree looked toward her he fancied a shadow had come over her face—an anxious, slightly distressed look, for which he could not account, which changed her curiously, making her look grave and older than her

And as it was that morning so was it ever afterward. Apart from her father, the curate always found her bright and cheerful, though perhaps less given to mirth than most girls of twenty; but with Mr. Darlington, always subdued, always quiet; watching him with eager anticipation of his wishes or wants; reading when she was bidden—he would have her read daughter's eye, glancing nervously toward him, as though imploring a change of conversation. So striking farther afield for a subject, he went on:

"I had a pupil once, five or six years ago, for whose sake I used often to wish myself a rich man, so that I could have pushed him on in the world. For so young a boy, he promised wonderfully well, and many a plan we made to work him up and getting him through Oxford or Cambridge. But it all came to nothing; downright poverty forced his mother to take him from school. Somehow a berth was found for him in a ship that traded between here and China—he hated the sea, poor little chap! And the other day I took up a stray newspaper for a minute, and the first thing I saw was that the Queen had gone down in the Chinese seas with poor Charlie Merlin and every other soul on board."

"Charlie!"—it was Miss Darlington began speaking. Her father interrupted her harshly:

"Ring the bell! I—this glass is snapped;" and he pushed the broken glass away. "You need not remain, Emily; we shall be in the drawing-room presently;" but his voice as he spoke was unsteady, and his hand shook terribly as he poured out more wine.

Miss Darlington hurried from the room without a word; but as Godfrey held the door open for her he could see that her face was white, and her eyes full of tears.

Scarcely knowing whether to connect her evident distress with what he had been saying, he felt perplexed as to what to do when he resumed his seat; but after two or three minutes' dead silence Mr. Darlington asked, slowly,

"What was the name of the boy you just spoke of?"

"Charlie Elwin Merlin."

"And he lived—"

"At Newby by York."

"Oh!" Then, still more slowly, "At Newby by York; a place I have never seen. I thought you were an eastern counties man—that you had lived all your life at St. Osyth's?"

"Not quite all. I have many relations in Yorkshire—my only living relatives, cousins, are all in different parts of that county. After Christmas I mean to have a holiday, and run up to see them for ten days."

"Oh, and then you will see this Mr.—these people who interest you?"

"Perhaps I shall," said the curate, sadly; and then he got up and said he would be going home, for he did not care to anticipate or discuss so sad a meeting as his would be with that sorrowing mother. He was vexed with himself for so carelessly introducing the subject; and so, resisting Mr. Darlington's invitation to remain longer, he went off to bid Miss Darlington good-night in the drawing-room at once.

She was not there; but half a dozen candles were flaring in a strong draught, the dark curtains were pulled aside, and the window stood wide open. While he hesitated, a voice without said:

"Mr. Bree, is papa coming? What, are you going already?" Then she stepped in, with a dark shawl gathered about her head and shoulders; but, though she closed the window, she kept well within the shadow of the curtains, holding up one hand to shield her eyes, as though the light dazzled her.

"Wait one moment," she said, softly, as he offered to bid her good-night; then going on rapidly, a deep flush replacing her usual pallor: "Will you forgive me, Mr. Bree; but will you—may I give you something for that poor lady you spoke of? Perhaps, if—if she has other children she will want it now. Oh, no; pray do not think it any liberality; papa gives me so much more than I ever use." The last words broke into something very like a sob. "Please go," she whispered; "and pray do not name who sent this."

He could but go, more puzzled than ever by the evening's visit. "This" he found on examination to be a bank-note for fifty pounds.

IV.—PRUDENCE GOES TO THE WINDS.

Over and over again did the curate ponder the circumstances of his last visit to the White House—last it seemed likely to be, for no invitation to go again reached him between that night and Christmas, and wearily the time dragged along, each day opening on the hope that he might meet Miss Darlington once more, and closing with a regret that that one object was still unachieved. Among his poor folks he often heard her named, and by the many gifts that were shown to him, it seemed as though she must have shut herself up to work for her neighborhood. One day an old paralyzed woman, whose home Emily had often brightened by her presence, told the curate "that her young lady was a-goin' right away; she come last night and told her so herself; and, oh, how she should miss her, that she should!" and then the poor old creature shed ready tears, and pitied herself for being about to lose so kind a friend.

After that Godfrey heard the coming departure spoken of by many, together with a dozen reasons for the removal—nearly all of them flavored with one piece of what he feared was the truth. It seemed to be pretty well known that Mr. Darlington's habit was mastering him quickly, and that he was rarely to be seen, toward the latter part of the day, in any better than a half intoxicated state.

Well might poor Emily come alone to the little church, looking so worn and pale that her bright girlhood seemed altogether to have left her.

The curate's heart often ached as he caught sight of the sweet sorrowful face; and mighty were his longings that he had the right to take her from her unshared troubles even to the modest home which was the best he could ever offer her.

But now he had no hold on such a hope. As darkness gathered about that other household, the shadow fell on him, too. Do what he would, he could not feel light-hearted or glad that Christmas-time.

"If I could only see her again," he thought, as he finished a weary walk in the misty garden, on the eve of Christmas-day, by pacing down the plantation, through the grave-yard, and so into the church. And behold, while the wish hovered unspoken on his lips, there stood Miss Darlington in the narrow aisle, glad, waiting perhaps to see him, for she came forward with heightened color and outstretched hand.

"At last!" he exclaimed, hurrying forward to meet her. "I thought I never was to speak to you again."

"Nay," she answered, "I would not go without bidding you good-by. I had not much time to help with the church this year, but I staid purposely after the Daveneys and Wilsons left, because I did so hope you would come in."

The curate forgot his last month's wearyings in delight at this avowal. His prudence was scattered to the winds, and before he was half aware of what he was doing he was pouring out the story of his love, entreating her, if she might not yet share his home, to let him know and help her to bear her troubles.

"My darling," he said, "what is it that is changing you so? what is it that is taking you away from us? and why have you never let me see you of late?"

A stream of questions that the poor girl could not answer, for she was crying bitterly, unable for some minutes to speak a word.

Grievously perplexed at the effect of his words, Godfrey stood anxious and impatient, while she fought a battle with her tears and conquered them; then, not venturing a look toward him, she drew away a step, and almost unconsciously toying with a holly wreath, spoke at last, tremulously and nervously:

"I have done very wrong. I only waited—indeed, I only waited to hear if you had sent—my poor gift—to your—your friend."

He told her half impatiently that the gift had gone almost as soon as she gave it, and as secretly as she had desired.

"Then I do thank you more than I can tell," she said, once more voluntarily giving him her hand. "And," she added slowly and earnestly, "I ask you one thing more—forget you ever spoke to me as you have just done. There are reasons why I must not and"—she faltered a moment—"why I will not listen to such words. No, no, please don't make me cry again;" for he was at her side, trying to stop her words. What lover, indeed, would be likely to be put off with such entreaties as these? Not he, thought Godfrey; hear him she should; and he made her find her hat and leave the gray little church, while he eagerly and passionately pleaded his cause with her as slowly they moved on toward the home she was so soon to leave.

But all in vain. "It cannot be." "It must not be." "I cannot tell you why." These were the only answers he could wring from her. No argument, no entreaties could change her, though, poor girl, she had not strength or skill enough to conceal that it was her will and not her heart that was rejecting him.

"Will you never give me any other answer?" he asked, as they neared the White House.

"I dare not think I ever shall," she answered.

"And will you forgive me the pain that my presumption has caused you?" he asked, jesuitically. "I had almost forgotten till now how rich you were and how poor I am."

"How can you! That is cruel!" she broke out. "Indeed you don't know how cruel you are. Ah, Godfrey!" for he held her, all unseen, in the quiet, shadowy lane, close in his arms for one moment, while he said:

"Then I will wait. Whatever it be that keeps you from me cannot last forever. Whether it should last for months or years, I'll wait. I'll have no wife if I cannot have you, Emily;" and then he released her and left her without another word, striding off for a six-mile walk, along the old Roman road close by, to cool his hot head and recall what few senses the last hour had not deprived him of altogether.

V.—AFTER WAITING COMES REWARD.

The next day brought its work of services, and "Lady Margaret's dole of certain shillings and woolen garments and loaves of bread to six poor women of the parish of Maybeck," Godfrey Bree had plenty to keep him occupied till the time came for his lonely Christmas dinner, for he had declined joining the family gathering at the Hall, and Major Garrett had gone to spend his Christmas from home.

But the dinner was dismal; not even Flops's companionship could make it otherwise. The one thought would obtrude itself, "How long would it be thus with him? How many Christmas-tides must he pass alone? Would his rash love have ever the ending he longed for?" Brooding and depressed, the minutes lagged along heavily. The excitement of the afternoon before was telling on him now, when every word that had passed filled his memory, to the exclusion of all else.

He started, as a nervous woman might have done, when a peal at the door-bell rang through the house, and hastened to relight the lamp (he had been sitting idly in the firelight) as Jim's wife opened the door to tell him that Mr. Darlington was waiting to speak with him, but would not come into the house.

"Now for it!" thought the curate, rousing himself for the anticipated fray, for he never questioned what must have called forth the visit. His mind was too full of that one idea, and he stepped out into the hall, where a cold wind was rushing about, slamming the doors and whistling mournfully through all the house.

"Pray come in, Mr. Darlington," he begged, going out on the steps and standing, shivering beneath the dark, wintry sky.

"No, thank you," said the other, shortly, "I am merely come to say good-by; we shall be off to-morrow or the next day. I should be too busy to see you if you called. This place is all very well in the summer. What's that?"

"Nothing," said the curate, peering into the darkness. "What do you mean? I wish you would come in."

"But it's confoundedly cold in the winter; that's why we are leaving," went on Mr. Darlington, rapidly. "And I hate the country to walk in, one is so apt to meet all sorts of people. You're not inclined for a walk are you?"

"Certainly not," said the curate; "and really I think it would be best for you to go home if you will not come in with me. It's bitterly cold, and beginning to snow."

The flakes were coming down thick and fast as he spoke.

"Then I will be off," said Mr. Darlington. "Good-night and good-by! Have you heard—I beg your pardon; I thought I was talking to some one else. Good-night!"

He went off down the garden path, muttering strangely to himself, and Godfrey Bree stood watching his dark figure as long as it could be seen, little thinking that the departing man was hurrying carelessly on to meet his death.

But so it was. When the church-bells were ringing merrily, and men gathered their children about them on their bright hearths that Christmas night, unknown to them all a life went out in their very midst! Late, after all the cottagers had gone to rest, the servants from the White House roused Mr. Bree and Jim from the rectory to help them in their search for their master.

And they found him at the bottom of the stone quarry—dead. Dead! with broken, crushed limbs, but the white cold face unhurt even by a scratch, the eyes awfully wide open and staring now, that in life had never looked you fairly in the face.

An intensely cold day early in the following week, and the curate stood reading a short note that had just been given to him. It was from Emily Darlington, whose father he had buried that morning.

"I am going," the writer said, "to leave this very afternoon. I cannot see you, I cannot write to you again till I have waked from this horrible dream; for so it seems to me. Be content to wait, perhaps for months; then I will write again."

So, with the best patience he could muster, he did her bidding, and waited, not knowing where or with whom she was; hearing no word of or from her; watching sadly the rapid breaking up of her deserted home, the close-shuttered dreariness of the rooms in which he had so often seen her; hearing the endless surmises as to her fortune, which was unanimously decided to be large; and her future, about which no one knew anything, but all had plenty to say, until, at last, even in the little gossiping village, the subject was worn out, and the horror of the accident (if accident it was, and that God only knew), died away from men's minds, and left them free to discuss the incoming tenants of the White House.

The curate's love story had been well kept from the small world about him; none knew how anxiously he was waiting among them for the last chapter of that history.

It came at last, the letter she had promised—written to him from an old town just beyond the hills which lay before him as he read the pages.

"I am not at all the same person who went away five months ago," she wrote. "Then I was very rich; now I am very poor. I have only my dead mother's money to call my own; it is not a hundred a year. You see, I try to tell you the worst first, and yet not all the worst. How shall I write the truth about him, my father? He was always so good to me, and yet I never could be happy with him—not quite; and now I am going to make you hate him. You thought, perhaps, he had been born to plenty of money, or had earned it in some business or profession. Unhappily it was not so. He was only a junior partner in a firm of lawyers. His senior was an old man, and a very rich one, who had but one relative, a niece, to inherit his property. I think a marriage was once thought of between my father and this lady; but she preferred a man of her own choice, fitting in some respects, but most obnoxious to her uncle. A private marriage between them enraged Mr. Laurence into disinheriting his niece; and at his death, a few years later, it was found that he had left upwards of thirty thousand pounds to my father, making no mention of his then widowed niece in his will. That much all the world knew, and even then cried shame upon the old man for his harshness. But they did not know what my dear mother discovered when too late—that my father had secretly helped on the distasteful marriage, and had then, alas! done all in his power to foster the estrangement between the uncle and niece, even—how could he do it!—keeping from her the knowledge of her uncle's illness, fearing lest at the last moment she should come between him and his expected fortune; and, worst of all, he told his dying partner that his niece refused to come though he had sent entreating her to do so. I could tell you much more; but surely this is too much. It almost breaks my heart to have to write it. It quite broke my mother's heart when she knew all the truth. The fortune was a misery and a shame to her, as it has been to me. I thank God I am rid of it now, as all that wretched inheritance from my poor father has gone to its rightful owner, Mrs. Merlin. Would it were possible that any deed of mine could atone to her for all the misery my father's act brought her! But I can do no more. I have kept my promise to my mother, who told me the full truth only to impress on me the need of acting as I have done with the money as soon as I had the power, and I only tell you to justify myself. Surely I need not ask your pity for my father and for me. Is it not an awful thing to say his death lifted a load from my heart, although he was so good to me, and I loved him so when I was a child? Now you know why your story about Charlie Merlin troubled us so. Now I have told you all. Remember you are not bound to me by any word of promise. It was riches kept us apart, when you spoke to me on Christmas-eve. I dared not tell you then what you know now. If our poverty stands between us now, so be it; no single thought of mine shall ever reproach you." Then a bit of girlish weakness stole in: "But I should like to see you once."

"Once!" cried the curate, joyfully; "say, that she shall!" And he might also have added, "and forever," for the next day's meeting was but the first of many, and, the weeks were but few before these two joined homes as well as hearts, and set out to face the world together, not over-rich, but strong in youth and love—one of them at least living a new life, freed from the heavy burden that another's sin had bound upon her earlier years.

Salt with Guano.

A few years ago, when making notes of an agricultural trip through the State of Delaware, it was clear that the continual use of phosphates was exerting an injurious effect on wheat culture. There was no doubt a few successive crops were benefited; but after a while the result was a nearly total failure of wheat, and for miles in our journey through the State we heard the same complaint, that since the introduction of phosphates wheat culture in Delaware was declining, and that people were looking rather to peach and other fruit culture, than to old-time farming, for the chief source of profit.

This experience was in regard to phosphates; but we have heard the same remarked of a continuous use of guano. No one seems to be able to give any reason why it should be so. It seems strange that what is so valuable for a few years should be a final injury. It appears now, by the investigations of Mr. Mechi, a very celebrated English farmer, that the same result has been noted there, and found to be, in the first place, from the too frequent error of having "too much of a good thing;" and in the next, that whenever these fertilizers are used, it is necessary that some other common article be used with them. Mr. Mechi is one of those rare instances where a man of great culture, reared wholly in a city, and made rich by city business, has proved eminently successful as an agriculturist. He invented a patent razor-strop, by which he became both famous and wealthy; and in time he purchased a farm near London, and thus commenced his agricultural career. He read extensively all the works on agriculture, and the sciences relating to it, but he was careful to put all he read into practice and note the results. He took hold of a piece of land so poor that it was abandoned as utterly worthless, and no one would have it as a gift for the taxes, and he made it one of the most productive farms in England, and showed, by carefully kept figures of profits and losses, that he had made it not only a good farm, but an immensely profitable one. What such a man says is worthy of attention; and it struck us, on reading his experience with phosphates and guanos, that it was just applicable to the case of our Delaware friend.

He finds, he says, that there is in most soils a fair supply of phosphate, and that what are called phosphatic manures are not valuable so much from the phosphates as from some of the other elements they contain. By continuous application there becomes too much phosphate in the soil, and thus it is the overdose which is the injury.

He has found, however, that by using common salt with guano and phosphate much of the injury by frequent use is avoided. He sows from two to four bushels per acre, and finds that in this case he can continue with the artificial manures years after with good results.

We have ourselves had much experience with common salt, and have found good results from it, alone and unmixed with anything else, especially in dry or light soils, and believe that much more profitable use might be made of it than is generally done.—*Feeney's Press.*

PUNGENT PARAGRAPHS.

A COURT-HOUSE—Her father's.

A PIN has as much head as a good many authors, and a great deal more point.

AN ungrateful man in Hartford complained that his hand ached with cutting coupons from bonds.

THE photographer who tried to make an affirmative out of two negatives has become disgusted with grammar.

THE new Sultan of Morocco has broken up the harem of his father, and will keep only one wife.

THE Rev. Mrs. Roberts, of Kittery, Me., had the pleasure of conducting the ceremony at the marriage of her son last week.

JOSH BILLINGS says: "There ain't enuthing that will kompletely kure lazyness though a second wife has been known to hurry it some."

A LADY teacher inquired of the members of a class of juveniles if any of them could name the four seasons. Instantly the chubby hand of a five-year-old was raised, and promptly came the answer, "Pepper, salt, vinegar and mustard."

A YOUNG Lady of Lyons, Iowa, recently said: "Some men are always talking about patronizing their own town—always harping on that duty—and yet they go abroad to get married, while here we all stand waiting! I do hope that some of these men who marry Eastern women will get cheated!"

OLD COL. S——, one of the State Senators of Minnesota, tells this of himself: He was going down to St. Paul to join the session, when a train-boy passed through the car, and approaching the old Colonel, and shoving his wares into his lap, sung out: "Buy a deck of cards?—only half a dollar." Turning to the lad with an expression of countenance calculated to impress him with the enormity of the offense, the Colonel solemnly and slowly said: "My son, I never play cards, I am a member of the church." "Oh!" exclaimed the disgusted urchin; "I thought you was a member of the Legislature."

JOHN G. SAXE lectured in Bloomington, the other night. After the poet had retired to the privacy of his room, and was enjoying his first nap, a loud knocking aroused him. Opening the door he was met by a mellow individual with a bottle in one hand and fifty cents in the other, who announced himself as "Colonel J., the hero of Fort Pillow," and requested that as he had been unable to attend the lecture, the poet "go it over again." Saxe thought it funny at first, but when the boozy Colonel persisted in his demand the joke lost its point. He lost his temper,

"And even swore
That he never before
Had met in his life, such a terrible bore,"

and ended by ejecting his military visitor, of Fort Pillow fame, into the street.

Insects in Clouds.

Dr. B. A. Gould, writing to the *American Journal of Science* from Cordoba, in the Agentine Republic, describes the passage of a swarm of locusts. His attention was first attracted by the myriads of large grassoppers which filled the air, invaded the houses, and covered the ground, from which they rose like thick clouds of dust, when disturbed by the approach of man or beast. Looking to the eastward he saw what was apparently a long trail of dense black smoke, extending over one hundred and sixty degrees of the horizon, and reaching an altitude of about five degrees. How wide this swarm was there was no means of judging. The insects were evidently transported by the wind, which blew from the north with a velocity of about ten miles an hour, and gave the train of locusts all the wreathed and branched forms of drifting smoke. This was before ten a. m.; how long they had been passing, the author knew not, but the head of the column had passed far out of sight, and certainly twenty miles of its length were visible over the pampa. They continued to pass in apparently undiminished numbers until daylight failed.

The phenomenon was repeated on another occasion, the insects returning from the south borne on a wind which moved at five or six miles an hour. When first seen they were distant from the observer not less than a dozen miles, and moving directly toward him, but soon the wind hauled from south to southeast. The effect of the change of wind could be seen as it successively reached the different parts of the long procession. The author was able to fix the height of the swarm by sighting against the peaks of the Sierra and ascertaining the following day the distance at which they had passed. The height of the dense nucleus seems to have been no less than two thousand feet, its width being not more than from six to seven miles, the whole environed by a penumbra of stragglers. On the day when the author wrote his communication the wind had returned to the south, and "since I began this page," he says, "they have come upon us in full force, literally darkening the sun, and at this moment of writing there is probably not a square inch of our grounds unoccupied by them. The sunlight on the floors present a singular aspect, the crowded little shadows streaming rapidly across it and interrupting the greater part of the light."

Training Schools for Boys.

The proposition to establish training schools for boys, now the subject of serious consideration in the large cities of the East, is one which closely concerns the welfare and future of the entire country. A correspondent of the Philadelphia *Star* suggests that there be established mechanical schools for the purpose of instructing boys in the