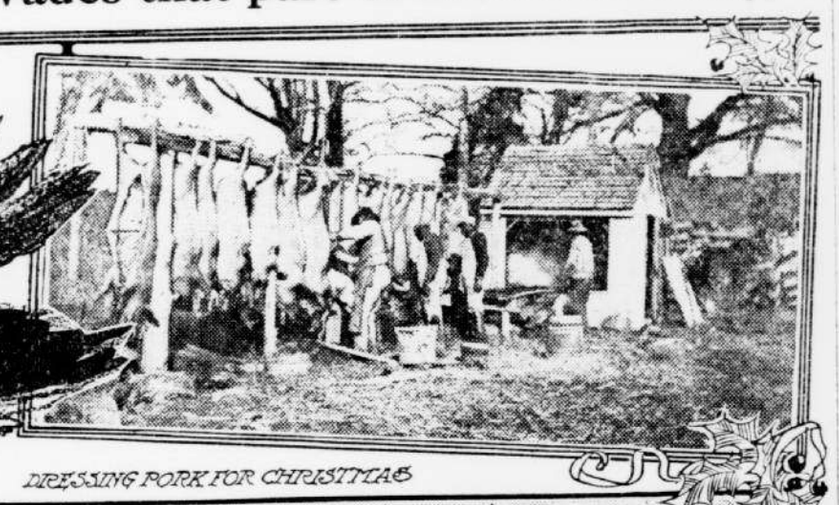
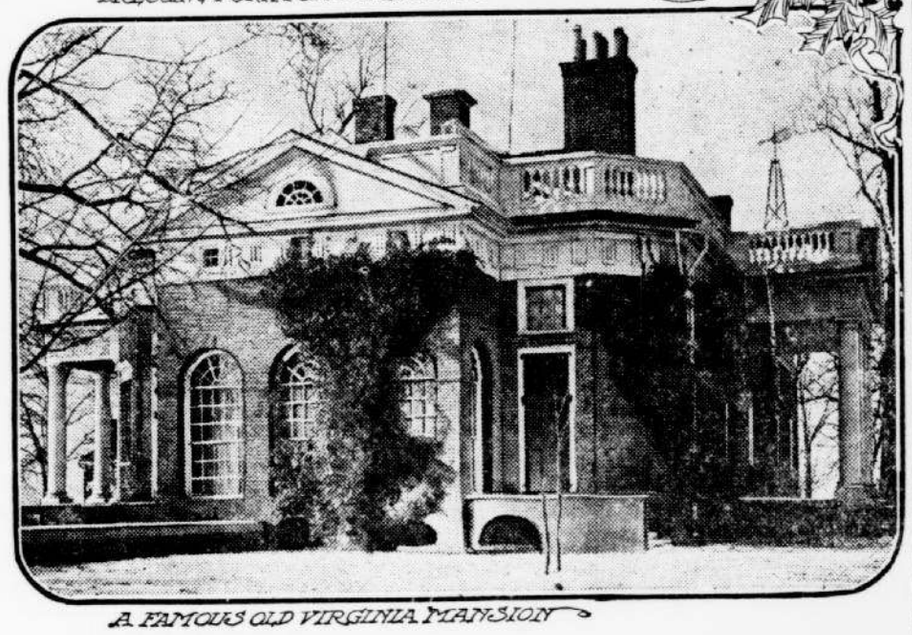
YULETIDE IN "OLE VIRGINNY"

By J. M. BELL

How folks in the tidewater section of state that mothers presidents celebrate during Christmas season. Some of the spirit of Merrie England 150 years ago pervades that part of America today.



DRESSING PORK FOR CHRISTMAS



A FAMOUS OLD VIRGINIA MANSION

THE visitor to an old plantation in tidewater Virginia, at Christmas time will no doubt be agreeably surprised to find that many of the old customs survive and are regularly observed, not only on the large plantations, but on the smaller farms, and even in the negro quarters. So all get their full measure of gifts and turkey.

Perhaps the first sign of Christmas is the killing of the fat hogs, which have taken on flesh rapidly since they were put up and hardened on good, sound ear corn. Hog-killing time means a generous supply of "fresh," in other words sausage, spareribs, chine, cheese-souse, pig's feet, and, of course, that fresh pork ham baked during Christmas week. This is flanked by a baked ham two years old and sugar-cured. It will all furnish mighty good eating for visitors who drop in for a little while, but have not time to stay to the regular dinner.

Those who have spent years on a tidewater Virginia, plantation know just what hog-killing time means to host and hostess. All through the countryside, from the humblest negro holding to the largest river estate, preparation for Christmas begins with hog-killing time, for then the corn is gathered, the woodpile is ready, and farm work in general is in such condition that all are in pretty good shape for the holidays.

That Christmas Gobbler.

Two weeks before Christmas, the turkey gobbler (generally one of the year's raising) is singled out from the flock, put up in a slatted coop in the back yard, fed on shelled corn till he is in proper condition, killed the day before Christmas, hung up on the north side of the porch and next day, when cooked in the old-time kitchen by an old-time negro "kitchen queen," forms the piece-de-resistance for the big dinner. The Christmas menu rejoices in roast turkey stuffed with oysters, bread crumbs, etc. A sugar-cured ham (from one to two years old), crisp celery, Irish and sweet potatoes (the latter candied), salsify and spinach (all grown in the home "gyardin,") macaroni, and, of course, cranberry sauce for the turkey. The dessert consists of jelly (plenty of wine for seasoning), blanc mange, both white and chocolate, meringues, fruits, such as Malaga grapes, rosy-cheeked apples, bananas and oranges. Wine is served at table and a toddy of whisky, sugar and water, with a dash of nutmeg, will most likely be taken by the gentlemen beforehand at the sideboard. Roquefort cheese and coffee end the feast.

This menu is indicative of a typical plantation dinner; others will be in proportion to the taste and means of the diners, but it can be safely asserted that nowhere would a guest or a stranger sit down to a meager feast on this day, for even the negroes have prepared most liberally for the great occasion.

Christmas Decorations.

The good old custom of decorating the houses for Christmas still obtains, and the generous supply of holly, running cedar and pine, growing in the Virginia woods, is used. Mansion, farmhouse and cottage are all decorated. Mantels, halls, and even bedrooms are witnesses to the season of jollity. Family portraits of ancestors, now long laid at rest, are honored with a wreath of green and the red berries of the holly, a Christmas greeting from the stern canvas.

What are the social customs that emphasize this season in Tidewater, Virginia? On Christmas morning a glass of egnog or toddy is taken by the gentlemen as they go into breakfast. After this meal, the company will separate. It is possible that some of the party will go to the Colonial church in the neighborhood for morning service. The ancient brick edifice will always have been decorated by loving hands for this season. Wreaths of evergreen intertwine on walls, chancel and pulpit.

The morning service over, the congregation exchange Christmas greetings outside. Some presents are taken to church for neighbors who live at a distance; happy, inexpensive recollections of the season, but appreciatively indicative of the momentous occasion. Back from church, home folks and guests are ready for dinner.

Hunting Parties.

The east Virginians have ever shown a penchant for hunting, and chasing the fox behind a good pack of hounds has always been a sport par excellence. This sport still exists in the country districts, and in spite of wire fences, now almost universal, you will hear the baying of the hounds and the cheering of the mounted hunters as they pursue the crafty fox through fields and woods on a Christmas morning.

The Christmas dinner is more or less a formal function and it is likely that the family and the guests will be in place when the blessing is asked by the host. Even the allurements of the hunt will not make the men overlook the time-honored custom of being in place when the stuffed gobbler is served.

The Country Dance.

In the evening all join in the old-time country dance. The very name suggests quadrilles, lancers, two-steps, waltzes and even, perhaps, the schottish. These delightful recreations, still observed, come from the "mother country," and have flourished in east Virginia for three centuries.

Nothing is more joyous than a Christmas dance on a Virginia plantation, where observance of the season is inherited, where the servants are negroes, the fiddlers are negroes and thoroughly familiar with the dear old dance music so fondly remembered by those of ante bellum days. Invitations have brought out the countryside, whose social position deserves the courtesy. The "great house" is decorated with all the evergreens of the season. Bright fires are burning and the servants are on hand to wait on the "wite fokes."

The night is a starry one, and a rime of frost has settled over the landscape. Outside there is a rumble of vehicles over the slightly frozen road leading to the house, buggies, carriages, perhaps a four-mule wagon, with its gay crowd of young people, the black jehu guiding his team and coming in a rapid trot. There may be one or two automobiles.

The big front door is thrown open, a blaze of genial light welcomes the incoming guests, who shake hands with the host and hostess standing within the portals. Upstairs go the "gyrls" to the "ladies' room," while the gentlemen go to the room assigned them. All is bustle and happy preparation for the coming dance.

Nine o'clock chimes from the timepiece on the parlor mantel. The lively bevy of maidens are trooping down the broad stairs. What visions of loveliness are these highbred Virginia girls!—and they charge the very atmosphere with coquetry. Young gentlemen offer hurried requests for the dance. Then the real revelry begins with the fiddler's call of "Choose yo' pahdnahs fo' de fus' quaddrill."

"Turkey in the Straw."

There is a graceful sweep of skirts across the well-waxed floor, a clasp of hands as the couples fall in place. The scraping of violins to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw," and the head fiddler calls "fohwud fo'." One dance follows another with short intermission, until supper is announced at 12 o'clock. Then the musicians play a march for the couples as they make their way to the big dining room.

Around the lengthened mahogany table is spread a feast fit for the gods. Cold turkey, turkey salad, pickled oysters, cold ham, celery, olives, beaten biscuit, thin wafers, fruits, cake and black coffee. At 1:30 dancing is resumed. There have been quip and jest around the hospitable board. Love affairs begun, and harmless jealousy can be easily discerned. The "lancers" is the next figure. A couple steals off after the set is over, a secluded lounge in the hall offers opportunity for the "sweet nothings," or maybe true love called forth by the propitious time and place.

The negro servants stand around the hall door and watch with fascinated gaze the many couples as they go through the dances. Happiness fairly gleams on their dark faces.

The night is waning, already the roosters have crowed for "three o'clock." From now on until "de brek er day" the dancing keeps up, and when the first red streak appears on the horizon the violins play "Home, Sweet Home." It seems that the fiddlers fairly excel themselves as they draw their bows for this, the last waltz. The dancers swing to the steady rhythm of the music. The music ceases. The dance is over and one more old-time Virginia Christmas gathering is a memory. The host and hostess speed the parting guests, and presently the "great house" is quiet.

The Customs Inherited.

The customs inherited from English ancestors will never be forgotten in this section of "Ole Virginny," where the plantation owner was a very king, where the smaller farmers had their own peculiar pleasures, and where even the negroes (following the example of "de wite fokes") have always made merry in the Yuletide season, following the time-honored customs which have existed so long that like the common law, "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary."

Changes have taken place in this favored section, many of the oldest families have sold their ancestral homes and moved to the cities. The numerous well-known estates have passed into the hands of wealthy persons from the North and West, but in spite of changes, the spirit of Christmas animates the natives of all classes and is caught by the "strangers within the gates," for the Northern and Western folks that have settled and made their homes with us in nearly every case enter into the social life of the communities in which they reside, and during the holiday season join hands with the natives—all in humor for the week of frolicking.

FISHERMEN SAVED MOOSE.

A bull moose was seen lately, pursued by a bear, close to the town of Pinedale in the state of Wyoming. Two men, fishing in Fayette lake early one morning, were greatly astonished to see him emerge from the timber at a high rate of speed and rush toward the water. A few seconds later, however, they were able to grasp the reason for this singular conduct, as a large black bear came into view at the same spot, but on beholding the men he at once took fright and made into the woods. After splashing round in the lake for some time the moose came out, blew the water from his nostrils and stood only a few yards away from the fishermen, eying them serenely. He was of unusual size and had a magnificent set of horns. He skirted the shore of the lake at a leisurely gait for about a mile and then darted into the woods.

MISSION STATION AT BARAKA

Pleasing Sights Witnessed by Christians in the Heart of Darkest Africa.

Very charming it is at this station in the old house among the old trees looking out upon the river and beyond this to sunset, Jean Kenyon Mackenzie writes in the Atlantic. And very encouraging it is to a missionary from a young station to see these Mpongwe Christians, the fruit of half a century of missionary labor, who have come to be a people of pleasant and orderly life, living in their gray bamboo houses after no mean fashion, with books upon their shelves and clean linen upon their beds. Some of the houses are papered and some have cement floors; in some there are pictures of miscellaneous royalty upon the walls and fading photographs of the family when they were bride and groom.

Of a Sunday the little church is full of a decent congregation who have come up to the house of God with pleasure and with pride, dressed, I suspect, with a good deal of conscious vanity, and observing solemn rules of conduct with great good cheer and complacency. Do not despise this joy in form and order; the house after having been swept is furnished after a new fashion that passeth not away, and how shall the owner conceal his delight? I call at the houses of Christians and go about to the village prayer meetings just for the pleasure of seeing these comely Mpongwe women move about in their enriched circumstances—themselves enriched in mind and heart and spirit beyond all counting.

Looking for Improvement.

"Bliggins says he's an anarchist."

"Hope he is."

"Why?"

"Even anarchists have some feelings. When they find they're compelled to associate with a man like Bliggins, maybe some of them will reform."

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of the Sunday School Course in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

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LESSON FOR DECEMBER 17

THE HOLY CITY.

LESSON TEXT—Rev. 21:1-7, 22:5.

GOLDEN TEXT—Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people—Rev. 21:3.

As we approach the end of the year, our minds turn from the imperial city, where last we have any authentic record of Paul, to the eternal city in which he has so long resided. In lesson ten we studied Jesus Christ in his resurrection glory, the source of all power, King of Kings and Lord of Lords for the redemption of the human race. In Lesson 11 we studied the glorified Christ who is actually working through his churches as the representatives of his kingdom upon earth. The succeeding chapters describe in symbols and pictures the discipline and training of God's people during the long generations that followed. In the lesson for today, we have a vision of the final triumph of Christianity when it shall have accomplished its work of redemption in this world.

I. The New Heaven and the New Earth (vv. 1-7). John in vision saw the consummation of the work of Christianity, the visible answer to the prayer which Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven." Heaven, as well as earth, has been invaded and polluted by sin, but both alike are to be made new. (I Peter 3:10, 11, 13). The true Jerusalem, of which Solomon's was but a type, is of heavenly and divine origin. It comes down out of heaven from God. We know nothing of the inhabitants of the universe of which we are a part, but here we have some scriptural indication of that place where God's children are to be with him eternally. The kingdom of God is among you, but it is eventually to be with God and Jesus in a peculiar and beautiful way. John's announcement came from out of heaven and out of the throne. (1) It was a tabernacle of God with men; rather he shall tabernacle with men. He is to pitch his tent among us (John 1:14 R. V. marg.) It is to be done eventually and permanently. This dwelling of God among us lies at the foundation of the blessedness and glories which are to follow. (2) They shall be his people. Israel had been his people; all nations are to be his people in the fullest sense. (3) God himself shall be with them, not only his tabernacle but he, himself visibly, personally. (4) He shall be their God, acknowledged in all his infinite claims, and he to them all that God is of love, power, wisdom, holiness and glory. (5) He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will not be a single grief or heartache, unsatisfied longing or tear, for God shall wipe them away, and they will stay wiped away. (6) Death shall be no more. Of all the enemies, death is the last one which shall be taken from the earth. It is sweet to know that this last enemy is to be conquered. (7) There shall be no mourning, crying or pain any more. Every sorrow, agony, remorse, gloom, disappointment gone forever; death, tears, mourning all passed away. It is hard for us to comprehend the majesty and sweep of this great and glorious promise. (See I Cor. 15). But this kingdom of heaven is to be on the earth. The ideal and goal of the material world will produce this "new heaven." There was no more sea separating, turbulent, hostile, a means of separation and destruction, of wrecks and hurricanes that sometimes shut out the stars, therefore, as a symbol and a type it has no place in the renewed earth.

II. The Coming Light and Glory (vv. 22-27). The intervening verses are a wonderful description of the foundation walls and gates of the city. There will be no temple in that city for it will not be needed. Instead of the temple which stands for the temple of earth there is to be the presence of God, himself, but the lamb is also in the midst of it. Nothing can more forcefully impress upon us the deity and preeminence of Jesus Christ, the atoning lamb, slain before the foundation of the world. This city is to be a city of light and glory. It will not be an illumination by gas nor electricity, for the glory of the Lord shall lighten it. The thing our great cities need today to expose their sin is light, but there will be no sins to be exposed when the light of God's eternity shines upon his blessed holy city. All nations shall walk in the midst of that light. Kings shall bring their glory into it. Everything that is regal and bright and wondrous will be in that city. The city stands wide open at all times; no need of walls or excluding gates. There shall be no night there. In God, the father of light, there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning (James 1:18).

Summary. What are the lessons for our day from this vision of the new heaven and the new earth? First: That the golden age of the Bible has not yet taken place. There are better times to come than anything the world has yet seen. Second: We have here the positive assurance of the success of our leader and the victory of Christianity in its conflict with evil. Third: The golden ideal of heaven is the means by which we can test our daily lives and the whole course of our conduct. The question we should constantly ask is, "Are we going to this heavenly ideal?" Fourth: The gates of that city are open; an angel is at each gate, and shall keep out all evil.

God desires that all men everywhere should repent, and is not willing that any should perish.

When the final assize shall have passed, no one will say that God did not give him a chance nor seek to inspire him to a place of eternal joy at his right hand.

WILL TAKE RADICAL ACTION IN GREECE

TELEGRAMS FROM ATHENS SAY A REVOLUTION HAS BROKEN OUT IN THE CYCLADES.

GREEKS IN EGYPT RESIST

Wireless Messages From Constantine to Berlin Are Intercepted—Complete Demobilization of Army and Wire Facilities Are Demanded.

London.—The Foreign Office stated that the British government was consulting with Great Britain's allies in an effort to reach a very radical solution of the Greek problem.

Telegrams from Athens say a revolution has broken out in the Cyclades, a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

The Greek battleship Hydra, which is under the control of the allies, has intercepted the Greek advices, by wireless messages from King Constantine addressed to Berlin.

All the Greek communities in Egypt, it is added, have renounced their allegiance to King Constantine.

The last reports from Athens say that the note of the entente governments to Greece undoubtedly will be presented at once. The note will be short, in the nature of a preliminary to a second note, which will contain more detailed demands.

It is indicated that the demands on Greece may require complete demobilization of the army, restoration of control by the entente over the posts, telegraphs and railways and the release of imprisoned Venizelists.

Advices from the British minister indicate that conditions are more calm. Large numbers of allied nationals continue to leave Athens.

Birds Subject of Treaty.

Washington.—Ratifications of the treaty between Great Britain and the United States for the protection of insectivorous birds on both sides of the Canadian boundary, which was signed August 16, were exchanged at the State Department by Ambassador Spring-Rice and Secretary Lansing. It is the first treaty of the kind ever negotiated.

Embargo on News Print.

Washington.—A bill designed to place a two-year embargo on exports of news print paper was introduced by Representative Campbell of Kansas and referred to the Commerce Committee. Penalties ranging from fines of $1,000 to $20,000 an imprisonment of not more than 10 years would be provided.

Boycott in Toledo.

Toledo, O.—Two hundred Toledo housewives, members of the Housewives' League, began a boycott on butter and eggs. All members are pledged to refrain from the use of the two articles for 30 days and longer if deemed necessary to force down the price.

Governor Whitman Acts.

Albany, N. Y.—The appointment of a committee of five, under the chairmanship of George W. Perkins, to investigate the causes of the high cost of living, and to recommend such legislation as may result in lower prices of food, was announced by Governor Whitman.

Frau Schratt Excluded.

London.—A Zurich dispatch to the Wireless Press says that the Catherina Schratt, who for years was an intimate of Emperor Francis Joseph, was refused admittance to the emperor's death chamber the day after he died and was requested to leave the castle immediately.

He Leaves $49,566,895.

New York.—Charles W. Harkness, who at the time of his death on May 1 last was said to be the third largest holder of Standard Oil stock, left an estate worth $49,566,895. His brother, Edward S. Harkness, willed $36,182,000, is the chief beneficiary.

Beeves Sell at $12 Per 100 Pounds.

Kansas City.—Twelve dollars per 100 pounds was paid for beef steers here. This is the highest price ever paid in the open market here for this grade. There were 22 head in the shipment, averaging 1,462 pounds each.

To Seize Farm Lands.

London.—In order better to secure food supplies, King George has signed an order in council empowering the Board of Agriculture to take over unoccupied or occupied land for cultivation.

Carranza Has Protocol.

Queretaro, Mex.—Alberto J. Pani, one of the Mexican members of the American-Mexican Commission, arrived here and immediately presented the protocol signed by the commissioners to General Carranza. He was closeted with General Carranza some time.

War Plant Explodes.

London.—Twenty-six women were killed and about 30 injured by an explosion in a munition factory.

Seek To Solve Shortage.

New York.—American railways placed orders in November for the construction of 56,500 freight cars, representing an expenditure of about $85,000,000, which establishes a new record, according to the Journal of Commerce.

$250,000 Cotton Fire.

Columbia, S. C.—Cotton valued at approximately $250,000 in the plant of the Columbia Compress Company here was destroyed by fire.

THE TEST

By EARL REED SILVERS.

Eleanor Rileigh had been at the seashore for scarcely thirteen days. Her vacation was rapidly approaching its close and Eleanor was troubled. She did not want to go back again to the hustle and bustle of the city; she wanted to stay at Sewcliffe, where she could see Ned Shanley every morning, noon and night. Yet Eleanor had begun to care very much for Ned, and in her heart of hearts she admitted to herself that she hoped Ned had begun to care for her.

It had been a wonderful week. During the first part of her stay at Sewcliffe Eleanor had simply sat around the hotel parlor. Ned came in the proper guests, did the proper things in the proper way. But after a week ago Ned had appeared and after that things were different.

Eleanor sat idly over the breakfast table. She looked rather longingly out toward the broad piazza, but the chair by her thoughts was headed to be vacant. It was late for "eats," but directly after the meal he was fair on the steps of the hotel.

"Hello, little lady in white," was his method of greeting. "What shall we do today?"

"Just stay around, I guess." Her blue eyes rested questioningly on his. "Don't you care to?"

"I sure do." There was the slightest hint of tenderness in his voice. "It looks the last time we will be together in Sewcliffe."

"We've had a wonderful time, haven't we?" She seated herself behind him on the porch.

"Just fine." He spoke enthusiastically. "But we're going to keep right on having good times, aren't we?"

"Do you mean after we go back to the city?"

"Of course."

She smiled a little twisted smile which bordered on the pathetic.

"Oh, you know how things always are after summer vacation. People forget."

"But we're not going to." He spoke earnestly. "Surely we'll see each other in New York."

"But how about all the girls you have told me about; girls in your own set, like Gladys Romaine and Beverly Baldwin?"

"They don't count now," he said.

"But they will count," she persisted. "You'll want to go to dances and house parties just as you used to, and you'll forget all about this summer—and me."

He smiled away her doubts.

"I couldn't forget about you," he said.

"All right, let's don't talk about it." She laughed lightly, but her eyes were troubled.

Side by side they made their way into the ballroom, and it was not until after midnight that Eleanor reverted to the conversation of the early evening.

"This is our last time together," she said softly.

"What do you mean?" He looked up quickly.

"After tonight you mustn't see me any more." She tried to speak casually, but there was a tremor in her voice which all her attempt at bravery could not conceal.

"Oh, you don't mean that," he protested. "I thought we were going to see each other lots."

"No, I—guess it's all over, after tonight."

He rose and stood so that the light from the moon shone directly into her face.

"Are you engaged?" There was a hurt look in his eyes.

"No."

He sighed relievedly.

"Then there isn't any reason why I can't see you."

"There is. Won't you please take my word for it and not try to?" she pleaded.

He glanced down half angrily. Her eyes were bordered with tears, and, as he watched, one large drop quivered in the moonlight and rolled down her cheeks. In an instant he was sitting beside her, her head pillowed on his shoulder.

"Oh, you mustn't see me any more," she sobbed. "My name isn't Eleanor Rileigh at all; it's just plain Ella Reilly, and I'm a stenographer down town."

He raised her face to his.

"And do you think that will make any difference?"

"Yes, it will." Her hand rested on his arm. "If you were only like people I know, things would be all right. But you're not, you're rich."

"You mustn't talk like that, dear," he said softly. "I love you; that's all that matters."

Through a veil of tears she smiled up at him.

"And you care, no matter what I am?" she asked happily.

"Yes more than all the world."

Hastily she wiped the tears from her eyes.

"I'm glad, Ned," she announced, and her tone was a caress, "because I'm not a stenographer, after all."

The expression on his face betokened bewilderment.

"Then why did you tell me that?" he asked wonderingly.

"Because I wanted to test you, dear, and you've proven true to my ideal of you."

They both smiled happily, and the obliging moon disappeared behind an equally obliging cloud.

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Death Rate Among Poets.

Poets that can be killed by the ridicule of those who do not understand them are better dead, and they have never succeeded in saving their lives by their explorations. The world will never kill a poet because he is an imagist or a vers libriste, but there is one thing that it surely will do: it will kill an imagist or a vers libriste because he is not a poet, and that side of the matter seems to be strangely overshadowed by those who speak for the New Movement.—The New Republic.