

SISTER MARTHA.

By AUGUSTA LARNED.

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"Don't you know me, Vinie?" he whispered, bending toward her ear. Puzzled lines ran in her forehead and then suddenly the light sprang into her eyes. "Why yes, of course I know you—you are George Bligh." Then she paused, as if trying to frame a question for which the words would not come, and said at last:

"Where am I, George?"
"You are here in my house, Vinie. I brought you here in my arms away from the fire."

"Oh, yes," said she, growing brighter. "I remember now. I was alone in the house; Ann had gone to meeting. Then I saw the people all running and heard them calling, 'Fire!' And I don't seem to remember what happened after that."

Her gaze was wistful and questioning now as it rested on the captain's face. There seemed so many things she wished to ask, but for which she could not frame sentences.

"You are not afraid to trust me, Vinie?"

"Oh, no, George," with a little smile about her pale lips. "Why should I be afraid? I have always trusted you."

"I guess, Vinie, I've been most crazy with love and remorse all day. Ever since your Sister Martha came here this morning; seems as though I had slipped my anchor and was going right out of my senses."

"Sister Martha?" she repeated with a questful look. "I don't know what she said, but I've been thinking of you George for fifteen years, and yet I was like one paralyzed that couldn't put out a hand to beckon. They tried to make me distrust you, but I never did. They told me strange stories of perfidy and a dissolute life, but I always believed you were true to me until they came between us. I thought you might go wrong at times, George, because you are a quick and passionate man, but I knew your heart. I saw your real self. It makes me glad to tell you the simple truth at last. It is just as if we were both dead and in heaven talking over the past, and clearing up old misunderstandings with the light of eternity on our faces. I am a poor, broken wretched creature, George—a miserable little bit of seaweed that the tide has left high and dry on the shore. But to speak with you once more, to tell you that I always believed in your better nature is a precious privilege."

He put down his dark head on the edge of the couch, as if ashamed to let her see his emotion.

"It was a damnable conspiracy to separate us, Vinie. I never can tell you the whole story, as it has been told to me, because my lips are sealed by a promise made with my hand on the Testament. But it was all made up of fraud and lies. And they made me think you believed the lies, and thought I had been trifling with you to lead you to ruin, and that you hated me like poison, but now I know I was all out in my reckoning, Vinie. It's as if I'd been out to sea years and years without seeing the sun. No notion where the north star was, either, compass varied so. Kept drifting hither and yon, like an old abandoned hulk on the current. Tried to go by dead reckoning, but I was all wrong. Tried to clutch things that hadn't no comfort in them."

"But when you saw the old house blazing, George, you forgot all that had come and gone?"

"Vinie," said he, solemnly, "I felt as if I could snatch you right out of the clutches of death."

"But I wasn't worth saving, George—such a poor creature, all broken and spent, tied to the chair or to the bed. George, you might as well think of a dead woman as of me."

At that moment the old parrot awoke on his perch, shook himself, dabbed fiercely at his breast, feathers and piped out, "George, kiss Polly."

Vinie burst into a little, weak, hysterical laugh, and the captain raised her pale hand and laid it on his lips. "Vinie," he said, "I swear I'll devote my whole life to you if you'll let me. I'll cleanse my mouth of every foul word and my heart of every drop of gall. I'll let nothing come in between you and me. I'll watch over you as if you was a saint right out of heaven and no wind shall strike you roughly, you poor, long suffering, patient Vinie. I'm not the heathen folks would make me, for right here on my knees I feel as if I could pray and thank the Lord for giving you back to me."

"What's that?" said Vinie, raising her head. They listened to a kind of moaning and scratching at the door, like

a hungry dog pleading to be let in. "Cap'n Bligh! Cap'n Bligh!" wailed a distracted voice. "Where's Miss Mayhew? Some say you kerried her off out the burnin' house and some say you didn't. I can't find her. She's lost. Oh, Cap'n Bligh, open the door!"

Ann had stumbled into the dark entry and Captain Bligh took up the light and held it as she came limping forward in a disheveled state pitiable to witness.

"Merciful man!" she exclaimed as soon as her eyes fell on her mistress. "If you aint a-laying right here on Cap'n Bligh's sofa, of all places in this town the most improperest."

The tone of wailing had changed to one of sharp rebuke, like a distracted mother who, as soon as she has found her lost child, begins to shake him.

"I couldn't find you nowhere, and I thought you was smoke suffocated. I tried to rush right into the kitchen part when it was all of a light blaze. They held me back by main force, and I guess I fit and scratched like a tiger cat. Them insurance men, if they choke me, can't make me say how it ketches. I don't know to save me whether it was the chinaberry burnin' out or ashes in a bar'l. I sometimes hed put ashes in a bar'l, but was always keeful about them bein' cold and no sparks. If them insurance men use slow torture they can't make me tell; I don't know."

"Twas preparatory lecture night and I was kind of hurried to get my dishes done and be off, for I hain't missed a preparatory lecture never since I came to the Mayhew place, and that was when Vinie was little; and the lecture room was warm, and I sat in a dark corner up against the wall, and the minister's voice went right on without a change. I knew he was sound in doctrine and I could trust him, so I guess I must have dozed off, for I set right up with a start when the church bell clanged and somebody screeched fire! and all the folks began scuttlin' out of the room and I after them as hard as I could pelt, for I hain't missed a fire no more than a meetin' for over forty years. When I heard somebody say it was the old Mayhew place, seemed as though my head shot away from my legs, and I come right down on a kerbstone on all fours, and give myself a bruise I guess I shall kerry to my grave."

"When I got home I see at once my part of the house was gone and all that jelly I hed put up. It kind of haunted me, that jelly did. The firemen were upon the roof hewin' away with axes and sousing water down the walls. Mother Mayhew's chany and silver had all been took out of the corner cupboard that was plum up agin the burnin' part and kerried nobody knows where, and my clothes, they do say, are scattered all over Littlefield. When I tried to find Miss Mayhew I went kind of blind, distracted like, and bumped up agin Frank Halley, and he said the captain had took her to Tucker's. So over there I went and there wasn't a soul to home; everybody had run to the fire. So I navigated all over the house and opened Miss Tucker's presses and even looked under the beds, and I did the same at Woods', but it wa'n't no use. So says I to myself she's fainted somewhere in a corner and been overlooked and Captain Bligh's got to answer for it. So I came straight here and found her layin' on the sofa and lookin' as contented as a kitten in a basket of wool. Now Captain Bligh I want you to pick her right up and kerry her home again. Her room hasn't had a scorch and the bed's aired and her things laid out for the night."

The captain had a pleasant twinkle in his eyes as he stood looking at Ann, and he add slowly and with a great show of deliberation:

"But suppose your mistress has consented to stay with me?"

"You can't hev her!" cried Ann fiercely, like an old hen fighting for its one chick. "And what a place this is to ask a lady to stay in! A man of your property should be ashamed of himself, Cap'n Bligh. It's downright heathenish, if I do say it."

"Don't be an old fool," the parrot put in casually, as if making a mere passing remark.

Ann jumped as if she had been bitten in a sensitive part.

"Oh," she cried snappishly, "I'd jest like to wring the neck of that old swearin' bird, as you've filled up full of bad language."

"Don't get angry with poor old poll, Ann. She learned those bad tricks at sea. The sailors taught them to her."

"I don't like anything seafarin'," said Ann, with her nose in the air, "an old Mis' Mayhew never did either. We always agreed on them pints, though we did differ some. She knew seafarin' men is ungodly, most parts, and prodigious swearers. I guess she'd turn over in her grave if she could see her darter a-layin' there on that there sofa."

The captain gave a laugh that sounded

happy and confident, and to Ann's astonishment she saw that Miss Mayhew was smiling, too, and a little girlish blush had stolen into her cheek. "Suppose Ann," said she softly, "we were to ask the captain to come home and live with us. If we were to make him comfortable and happy he might forget all he has suffered in his lonely life, and all the evil that has been done him by unkind tongues."

"Well, Leviny Mayhew, I never did bear the beat of that. It's just as if you was thrown yourself at the captain's head—as if you were offerin' yourself."

"No, Ann," and she raised her voice a little so that every word might be clearly understood, "he asked me and I've accepted, seeing as he thinks I'm worth taking, though I don't understand how he can; but it's all settled between us now. I like our house better than this one. I would rather live there, and I shall beg the captain to come home and stay with us before long."

Ann had listened to this speech with her mouth open and consternation painted on her face. "Merciful man!" she exclaimed, "I'm beat all out and don't know whether I'm standin' on my head or heels. He's axed you and you've accepted! Well, if there's spooks I should think Mis' Mayhew would be walking into this room. But, of course, if you want him and think it's proper to take him at your time of life and his'n, with them nervous spells of yours comin' on, when it's hot water bags in a jiffy, and the squeak of a mouse sets your head to jumpin', why, I've nothing more to say. I ain't one to meddle or make. But I don't hev no profane parrots around me, and when the insurance folks builds up my part of the house, I want the cap'n to know that I'm cock of the walk and has no master orderin' on my quarter deck. I don't black boots, nor lift trunks, nor run arrens, nor stand sass from no man, I don't care who he is. If you want him in your part of the house, Miss Mayhew, why, take him; and may suthin' bad and black light on his head if he don't treat you well." Here Ann broke down in a fit of passionate sobbing and tears.

At the end of a few weeks Littlefield was startled by hearing that Captain Bligh and Vinie Mayhew had been married very quietly on a November morning and were spending their honeymoon at home. It would be difficult to say at just what day and date Ann Baskett was won over to become, with the exception of his wife, the greatest admirer and advocate of the captain in the town. Fierce had been her contention for the body and soul of her mistress, the one creature she had taken into her strong nature and cherished like her own flesh and blood. The captain in time won a place in her loyal and strong soul almost equal to that she gave to her. Gradually the fragile lady, under the wonderful magic of love, began to come back to the ways of health, driving beside her husband, living much in the open air, and on rare occasions entering her neighbors' doors.

People wondered at the marvelous tenderness and devotion so long latent in the heart of this man, who for years had been an enigma to all around him whose sole thought now was how to make one frail woman happy, cherishing her with his strength and watching over her with a care more than maternal. Life sweetened and brightened for these two who so long had wandered on lonely and barren paths. The old house under the elms seems to smile on the passers as if it had renewed its youth, and at times the door swings open to the entrance of guests, thus fulfilling that ideal of hospitality that always lay so close to Miss Mayhew's heart. You may see her almost any day, still at her window, returning the greetings of the school children, still fashioning those dainty little garments for the babies of her poor neighbors.

Life in the old Mayhew house is a simple and unostentatious as of old. Under the gentle prompting and influence of his wife the captain has found new use and exercise for his energies. His fortune has become fruitful in the best sense, and is blessed to others. The old house where he lived so many years alone has been enlarged and altered and turned into a hospital for incurables—supported mainly by his gifts, and just beyond through the trees you may see the walls of a beautiful new free library building rising rapidly. And if you are a stranger and ask for details you will find that it has been endowed by Captain Bligh, one of the most public spirited men in the town.

Ann, in the new kitchen, built for her under the supervision of Captain Bligh—so comfortable, so convenient, so far surpassing the ideal of any kitchen she had ever known—Ann in her own dominions, with the old parrot beside her, to whom in his repentant and meek dotage she has become reconciled, speculates on the strange events in her life; and one of the insoluble knots to Ann's understanding is Mrs. Martha Whitcomb, who

aid Sister Martha that day she departed so suddenly for home, and why has she never congratulated Captain and Mrs. Bligh on their marriage, and paid another visit to the old Mayhew home-stead?

THE END.



HEALING VIRTUE OF MUSIC.

References Made by Bacon and Shakespeare to the Virtue of Soft Sounds.

Modern physicians attest to the power possessed by soft music, when skillfully applied, of inducing contentment, alleviation of pain and sleep. The idea is, however, by no means a new one. In his "Natural History, Century VIII," Bacon writes as follows: "Some noises help sleep, as the blowing of the wind, the trickling of water, humming of bees, soft singing, reading, etc." Tones (whereby we may understand loud and distinct sounds) are not so apt to procure sleep as sounds less distinct, such as the purling of water, humming of bees, a sweet voice of one that readeth, etc., the reason being that distinct tones "strike and erect the sense more than the other; and overmuch attention hindereth sleep."

In Shakespeare's plays we find several references made to the virtue of music as producing sleep, alleviating pain and restoring a disordered mind to healthy condition. In "Midsummer Night's Dream," act 4, scene 1:

Oberon:
Titania, music call, and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Titania:
Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep.

In "King Henry IV," act 4, scene 4:
King Henry:
I pray you take me up and bear me hence
Into some other chamber; softly, pray,
Let there be no noise made, my gentle friends,
Unless some dull and favorable hand
Will whisper music to my weary spirit.

Warwick:
Call for the music in the other room.
In the maiden's song in "King Henry VIII," act 3, scene 1:

In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or, hearing, die.

Burton, in his "Anatomy of Melancholy," has dwelt upon the curative power of music.

Three Young Men and Their Quest.

The wise old Hassan sat in his door, when three young men pressed eagerly by.

"Are ye following after any one, my sons?" he said.

"I follow after Pleasure," said the eldest.

"And I after Riches," said the second.

"Pleasure is only to be found with Riches."

"And you, my little one?" he asked of the third.

"I follow after Duty," he modestly said.

And each went his way.

The aged Hassan in his journey came upon three men.

"My son," he said to the eldest, "methinks thou wert the youth who was following after Pleasure. Didst thou overtake her?"

"No, father," answered the man. "Pleasure is but a phantom that flies as one approaches."

"Thou didst not follow the right way, my son."

"How didst thou fare?" he asked of the second.

"Pleasure is not with Riches," he answered.

"And thou," continued Hassan, addressing the youngest.

"As I walked with Duty," he replied.

"Pleasure walked ever by my side."

"It is always thus," said the old man.

"Pleasure pursued is not overtaken. Only her shadow is caught by him who pursues. She herself goes hand in hand with Duty, and they who make Duty their companion have also the companionship of Pleasure."

Mind Your P's and Q's.

This expression is generally believed to have arisen from the former barroom usage of scoring up against customers the amount of beer for which they had been trusted—p standing for pint and q for quart. Scores of this sort were settled weekly, and the application of the saying is self evident. But Charles Knight suggests the more plausible explanation that the expression arose in the printing office, where many other terse and quaint phrases have had their origin. The forms of the small p and q in Roman type have always proved puzzling to the printer's apprentice. In the one the downward stroke is on the left of the loop or oval and in the other on the right. Now when types are reversed, as they are in process of distribution, the young printer is often puzzled to distinguish the p from the q. Especially in assorting pi—a mixed heap of types—where the p and the q have not the form of any word for a guide, it is well nigh impossible for an inexperienced person to distinguish one from the other at first sight. If this be true, the letters should be written in lower case and not in capitals, thus, "Mind your p's and q's."

Laws of the Medes and Persians.

Several references are to be found in the Scriptures relating to the laws of the Medes and Persians. The phrases which have become so familiar to Bible and other readers regarding the unchangeableness of

these laws are taken from the books Esther and Daniel. When the enemies of Daniel were afraid of his popularity they formed a conspiracy against him, obtaining an idolatrous decree which Daniel was accused of breaking. They pressed the king to sign the decree, saying, "Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." It is not to be understood by this, however, that a royal decree was in every case irrevocable or beyond the possibility of modification or repeal, but rather that edicts could not be capriciously altered, and that the despot was bound and regulated by his own decisions and precedents. How a decree could be neutralized, even though it could not be reversed, is shown in the Book of Esther.

Pot Pourri.

Pot pourri, a French term, which, when applied to music, signifies a selection of favorite pieces strung together without much arrangement so as to form a sort of medley. It is also the name of a mixture of sweet scented materials, chiefly flowers dried and usually placed in a vase with perforated lid, in order that their perfume may be diffused through rooms in which it is placed. It also signifies a dish of different sorts of viands, and corresponds in this sense to the hotch potch of Scotland and the olla podrida of Spain.

Barrenness.

According to Muthall, one woman in twenty and one man in thirty are barren—that is, 4 per cent. of population. It is found that one marriage in twenty is barren, say 5 per cent. Among the nobility of England, 21 per cent. have no children owing to intermarriage of cousins, no less than 4½ per cent. of the present nobility being married to cousins.

MODERATE DRINKING.

Its Tendency Is to Impair the Vital Forces—Alcohol Is a Poison.

That the immoderate use of intoxicants and stimulants is injurious to health and unfavorable to longevity admits of no debate. That moderate drinking has a like tendency many will question, and yet we believe such to be the case. In the first place it is not easy to decide where moderate drinking ends and immoderate drinking begins. The one insensibly glides into the other. There are 10,000,000 drunkards in the United States, and of these 1,000,000 die off every year. If their ranks were recruited, in ten years the race of drunkards would be extinct. But the ranks are filled up. Whence come the new recruits? Certainly not from the total abstainers; from the moderate drinkers every time.

The peril of what is called moderate drinking lies in its tendency to cross the line and become drunkenness. If, however, this peril is escaped, we still believe that even the moderate use of strong drink is a physical evil ever tending to impair the vital forces and to diminish the expectation of long life. Alcohol is a poison, and poison in small doses may not be fatal, but certainly cannot be wholesome. Alcohol injures and disfigures the blood globules and prevents the proper elimination of carbon. In hot climates the most moderate use of alcoholic stimulants has been found to be decidedly injurious.

Dr. Moseley, in his work upon tropical diseases, says: "I have ever found from my own knowledge and custom, as well as from the custom and observation of others, that those who drink nothing but water, or make it their principal drink, are but little affected by the climate and can undergo the greatest fatigue without inconvenience."

Said Sir Charles Napier to the Ninety-eighth regiment, when he reviewed it at Calcutta, on the 11th of May, 1840: "Let me tell you that you are come to a country where, if you drink, you are dead men. If you be sober and steady you will get on well, but if you drink you are done for."—Rev. J. S. Gilbert's Knights of Honor Reporter.

Points to Consider.

Many obscure passages in the Bible are cleared up the moment you get acquainted with its author.

The best preacher is the one who comes the closest to living his own preaching.

Talk about conversion to the sinner and about entire sanctification to believers.

Divine consolation is so exceedingly precious as not to admit of a rival in our hearts.

The great desideratum of the present day is not more Christians, but a better brand of Christians.

There are two things for live men and women to do—to receive from God and give out to their fellows.

Many a Christian has ruined his influence with the unconverted by descending to coarse, silly jokes.—New York Observer.