

A MATTER

OF SKILL.

By BEATRICE WHITBY.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"It is so long a time since I had the extreme pleasure of seeing you, Lady Jones, that for the moment, I hardly knew you," she apologized. "It seemed so stupid, but, unfortunately, I left my spectacles on the garden seat below the magnolia, and without them I am nearly blind; I am, indeed."

"My eyes fail me, too, Miss Mitford, but I'm sorry to say I don't wear spectacles, but these awkward pinches which my girls prefer, though they fall from my nose as often as I shake them there."

"But I notice that your—ahem—your glasses are suspended from your neck by a chain, which is so very convenient. My spectacles frequently get mislaid. It is impossible," with a gentle sigh, "to attach spectacles."

Mr. Jones, to do him justice, was behaving with tact; he looked as though he was in the habit of paying afternoon calls with his mother, and appeared quite at home on the tiny chair in the corner, where he had retreated on his arrival, and from whence, for the first few moments, he watched the scene in silence.

As soon as the elder ladies were fairly engaged in conversation, Helen turned and spoke to this unassuming guest; though she was conscious that her eyes rested more persistently upon her than was quite in accordance with good manners, she no longer appeared to resent it. If she had approved her, soiled, weary, and travel-stained, as she had appeared the previous day, it was not probable that his admiration would lessen on the second sight of the girl, who, for some inexplicable reason, had mended her manner as much as she had improved her appearance.

Yesterday he had fancied her gauche, constrained, shy; now she was gracious, self-possessed, and smiling, although there was something in her ceremonious civility which balked his endeavors to arrive at that easy, half-fellow-well-meet stage of intimacy which he usually adopted with those fortunate girls to whom he took a liking; yet he was not inclined to quarrel with her demeanor.

After all it was a change, and variety is refreshing. He had come for the purpose of inviting her to the ball, and he saw no reason for concealing his purpose, so he immediately approached the subject.

"My mother's brought you a card," he said, and then he urged her to accept the invitation.

Her smiling indifference to the whole question was rather astonishing to one whose desire, opinion or remark usually received the undivided attention of the honored lady to whom it was directed.

"You don't care for dancing?" he hazarded. "Perhaps you don't go to balls?"

"I was at a ball last week," she replied. "I am very fond of dancing."

"Perhaps you have had too much of it. One gets sick of anything."

She smiled at him without answering—a provoking smile, because it was ambiguous.

He thought those gray eyes of hers, with which she looked straight into his, were very clear and cold, but wonderfully pretty; he thought she looked like a rose herself in her pink cotton gown and her hands filled with roses; he thought he should like to own that cloth-of-gold bud with which she toyed half absently while she talked.

He wished she would be less unapproachable and more responsive.

"Perhaps," he began again, still searching for a cause for her refusal, "you don't care for a ball out of your own neighborhood? Do strangers bore you?"

"On the contrary, I like change, and therefore a change of faces."

"Then, why," doggedly, "won't you come to us?"

"I am so sorry," with that formal air of politeness that was artificial, he knew, and which annoyed him, "that I am unable to accept your kind invitation."

"I am most unlucky," he returned, with a smile; "you will accept nothing of mine—not even a lift in my dog-cart."

It was the first time he had alluded to their prior acquaintance, and she blushed a little when he did so, though she answered with that calm savoir-faire and self-reliance which seemed to place her at a great distance off and reversed their former position, to his advantage.

"Yesterday you were a stranger to me," she said, demurely.

"So is a cabman a stranger; but you drive in his cab all right."

"I pay a cabman."

"You could pay me, if you like."

"I have no money."

"I would have put it down," he said. "I would have taken out the fare in advance."

"You were very kind," with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, "to propose driving me, but you could hardly expect me to trespass upon your goodness by accepting your offer."

"It was no case of trespassing," he returned, answering the twinkle with a laugh. "The cart was there and the empty seat ready for you. Upon my word, I was miserable the whole evening at the thought of your walking home. I couldn't forget it; but it was your own fault."

A very steady and expressive glance from his companion disconcerted the speaker.

"If it wasn't your own fault, I don't know who was to blame," he added, with some defiance. "When it was half way home I nearly turned back to try my luck again with you; but, remembering your face as I had last seen it, I thought it wiser not to try."

"Had you come you would have been in a carriage in which I drove home."

"Not really? You don't mean it? I thought all the cabs and carts were well on their way back before you left the station."

"You had forgotten the carrier's cart."

He laughed; they were sailing unpleasantly near the wind; he must change the subject.

"So you came in the guise of a parcel? What a fortunate carrier! I am glad you were spared the walk, though I am inclined to think you deserved to suffer for refusing my escort!" then, with a sudden happy thought: "You pass through pretty country on the way here, don't you?"

"Exceedingly," with a disappointing lack of enthusiasm.

"You do not know the Rivers Meet Vale, near here?"

"You must see it."

"Yes; I should like to go there."

"It's a perfect bit of scenery. It beats anything I ever saw in any country, and I have done a tiresome bit of knocking about in my life. The rivers come in contact in a narrow valley between a brace of granite tors. There is a waterfall that you can hear the splashing and the roar half a mile off. Bowlders from the cliff have rolled down into the bed of the river, and the water lashes at them all day long and sends up clouds of spray which keeps the air cool, even in the hottest summer morning. The Osununda Regalis grows eight feet on the banks. Inland you get a view over the moor, and seaward you can see right away beyond Morte Point."

"How beautiful!"

"Indeed, it is beautiful."

Scenery was a stimulating and stirring topic. Mr. Jones felt that he had not hitherto fully appreciated the beauties of North Devon.

The morning after the ball we are going to drive up there for a blow," he continued. "We are all going, a large party. We shall take lunch and make a day of it. It's rather a difficult place to get at; the roads are execrable. You will come with us, won't you? You would love the Vale, and my mother would be pleased to have you."

Helen's eyes had sunk to the roses on her knee; she hesitated, and he eagerly pressed his advantage.

"I will get the carrier's cart, if that is the only conveyance you fancy; and if I mayn't drive you, at least I may walk by the horse's head and crack the whip occasionally?"

"May I leave it open?"

"No," he said, boldly; "that is just what you may not do. I hate uncertainty worse than misfortune. If you will consent, it will be very kind of you; but I will make up my mind to bear the disappointment."

"It must depend upon my aunt," with an accession of dignity that the young man did not seem to remark.

"I thought it depended on you," he said, frankly. "If it depends upon her, it is easily arranged, and forthwith he arose from his chair, quitted his nonplussed companion, and, turning his shoulder upon her, addressed Miss Elizabeth. He had hardly finished his petition for permission for Helen to join their Rivers Meet picnic before it was gratefully accorded.

"Whose picnic is it, Albert?" asked Lady Jones, rising as she spoke, preparatory to taking leave. "I hadn't heard a word of it. Dear me! I fancy you must have made a mistake, for I do not think we are invited."

"It's all right, mother," he replied, calmly. "The girls are going, and all the people in the house. It is our own picnic, but it's rather premature to talk of it, for the weather's so uncommonly unsettled down here in the west."

When the visitors had gone, the elder Miss Mitford waxed eloquent over their charms and flooded her discourse with their praises.

"Such genial and friendly people, love; the young man so handsome and so easy! If poor Lady Jones is not quite what we are accustomed to in polish, yet her deficiencies are concealed by good nature. People are sadly unkind about them. Jealousy, love, is at the root of all unkindness. Between ourselves, Helen, I think that nice young man has taken a fancy to you. You have no idea how he started when you were bidding his mamma goodbye—it was almost uncivil; but then he has such handsome eyes!"

"He is very self-satisfied and conceited," said the younger lady, with cold deliberation.

"Dear, dear, you astonish me, Helen! From your manner and general air I quite thought—well, well, I really could not tell you what I did think; old maids are fanciful."

"I wonder, if they are as fanciful as young ones," thought the girl, dipping her sweet face down in the basket of roses before her and smiling rather grimly.

CHAPTER V.

Upon the afternoon of that day which had been fixed for the ball at Newton Hall the Miss Mitfords, at Helen's request, had ten early; after which the girl, adjusting her big white hat, and, as a tribute to custom, fetching her gloves (which she put in her pocket instead of upon her hands), set off for her daily walk. She passed a moment at the gate to wave a farewell to her aunt, who was bent double over her carnation bed, the surface soil of which she was loosening with a fork.

"The tide is out this evening, auntie. I am going to the rocks—the distant rocks; it's a long walk. I may be late."

"Don't get drowned, love."

"No, auntie."

"Don't get your feet wet."

"No, auntie."

Half an hour later Helen had reached the shore. She loved the sea, the thousand lights and shades that tinged its surface, the restlessness, the eternal variety, the mystery of its troubled life. But that evening she had no time to watch the waves. She walked quickly along the sands, skirting the groups of nurse-maids and children, with her face turned westward toward the cliffs, which shelved down into a jutting peninsula. Here the low rocks reached far out into the sea, and then

stinking below the surface showed, like a black shadow, through the blue water. Thither she steered her way.

The bathing woman, who was standing as sentinel behind a long row of curious, sand-encrusted, faded garments which, secured by stones, lay supine on the yellow sands, addressed her as she passed:

"Where be 'ee going to, miss?"

"To the rocks."

"Then please to mind the tide; her comes in powerful fast and strong out yonder. Don't 'ee go out tu far, miss. It's safe enough if you'll be a bit careful."

Helen nodded. "She would be careful," she said, and strode on fast.

She trodden laboriously over the rough and broken shingle which intervened between the sands and those splendid rocks—her destination. Most girls would have been daunted by the obstacles of that long and painful walk, and would soon have turned back to join those comrades who were content with pleasures less difficult of access, but with Helen it was altogether otherwise. An impediment in her route was merely a thing to be surmounted; it was no barrier to stop her progress. When once that formidable possession of hers, her mind, was made up, her purpose, she had accustomed herself to consider, was inflexible.

She found the distance she had to traverse was far greater than she had anticipated, and it was long before she—tired, hot and footsore—reached the desired spot and sat down on the first low rock at hand to rest and look about her. The air was redolent of the breath of the sea; a bright breeze was blowing, which put a "sharp head" on the chopping waves, and cut them up into bustling, zigzag ridges that splashed and broke continually against the rocks and tossed and swayed the heavy layers of seaweed to and fro.

Save for Helen the place was deserted; the sea would chafe and fret so foolishly, it seemed to her, so sadly, too, as though memory would not let it rest though the sky was cloudless. Helen leaned back against the rock and watched the water, more thoughtful than was her wont. It was very cool in the shade of the cliff; the sea-gulls swooped lazily about the bay, and a fleet of fishing smacks, their tawny sails bright in the sunshine, were sailing past before the wind.

Presently she emerged from the shadow and began to cross the rocks, steering her course toward their furthest ledge, which formed a natural breakwater on the west of the reef. She was light and agile of limb, possessed a fairly steady head, and a ready eye, but the path she trod was a perilous one, for the seaweed which grew on the rocks concealed the pools, and was moreover, both slimy and slippery.

To avoid the catastrophe of spoiling her boots and stockings she took them off and put them upon an adjacent rock. Then, with an easy mind, and happy as a child, she waded through the tepid pools in which the green ribbon and pink-tree seaweed floated, where vividly green rock fish darted to and fro, and sea anemones unfolded their tinted limbs until they bloomed like the blossoms of a chrysanthemum in the sunshine. Her observant eye missed none of the beauties at her feet, but every now and then she remembered the dangers of the tide, and kept an outlook on the sea.

She was enjoying herself after a childish fashion; the warm, transparent water was tempting. She rolled her sleeves up high, and kneeling down before a pool she plunged her hand and arm down among the seaweed and the stones. She was laughing at the awkward flight of a tiny crab when a call—a clear, loud call—startled her to her feet.

She stood up, raised her dripping, white hand to shade her eyes, and stared in the direction whence the sound had come. Little Mr. Jones and the gentleman whom Helen had seen before in the yellow-wheeled dog-cart, were within twenty yards of her. It was the former of these two young men who had so unceremoniously halted her.

"Hey, hey! You mustn't stay there—don't stay there!" he cried. "The tide has turned; in two minutes those gullies behind you will be three feet deep. If you don't want a ducking, you had better hurry up. I can tell you."

Helen was dismayed; the situation was exasperating. She did not move; she stood a little, to be sure that those dreadful feet of hers were concealed, and then she cast a hurried glance around. Where was the rock upon which she had stored her belongings? Alas! she had not marked the place and now she could not find it.

(To be Continued.)

Little Farms in Japan.

Japan, and not France or Belgium, would appear to be the land of petite culture. According to a recent American bulletin a couple of acres is considered a large tract for farming purposes. Most of the farms are smaller, and on a little plot a surprising variety of crops is cultivated—a few feet square of wheat, barley, maize and millet; a plot of beans perhaps ten feet wide by twenty feet long, a similar area of potatoes and peas, and a patch of onions "about as big as a grave," beetroot, lettuce, turnips, sweet potatoes and other crops occupy the rest of the area. The farmer examines his growing crops every morning, just as an engineer inspects his machinery, and if any thing is wrong he puts it right. If a weed appears in the bean patch he pulls it up; if a hill of potatoes or anything else falls it is at once replanted. When he cuts down a tree he always plants another. As soon as one crop is harvested the soil is worked over, manured, and forthwith resown to another crop. It is estimated that nine-tenths of the agricultural land of Japan is devoted to rice, and is this is a crop requiring much water, the paddy fields are banked up into terraces, one above the other, and divided off into small plots twenty-five or thirty feet square, with ridges of earth between them to prevent the water from flowing away when they are flooded. All farming lands are irrigated by a system that is a thousand years old. Some of the ditches are walled up with bamboo wicker work and some with tiles and stone. Nearly half the total population of Japan is engaged in agriculture. Silk and tea, the two chief exports of the country, are raised almost by the work of women.

The brogue in Belfast is but a weak indication of what Dublin can produce.

FARMER'S FRIEND.

PUTTING DOWN THE WAGES OF HIS HIRED MEN.

Cool, Calculating Farmer Explains the Situation to His Wife—He Thinks He Will Gain Nearly \$5,000 by the Sixteen to One Scheme.

Farmer—I reckon this free silver's about the best friend of us farmers that's come our way since the war. Allowin' Bryan's elected all right this year, I calculate I'll be worth nearly \$5,000 more next year than now.

Farmer's Wife—Nonsense, Harve! I don't believe silver's going to make folks rich. One'll have to work for a livin' if Bryan's elected just as hard as I be isn't.

F.—I don't deny but what your head's level there, Jane. Some folks will have to work harder, but it won't be us farmers. We'll come out on top with free silver. That's sure's shootin'.

F. W.—What crazy notion's in your head now anyhow? D'you think farmers are smart enough to make laws that'll take money out of other folks' pockets and put it in theirs?

F.—P'raps not, but they're going to try it. I s'pose you don't see how free silver'll help us, but I do.

F. W.—If you'll take my advice, you'll not bother yourself to death tryin' to get rich by free silver. I'll warrant it won't work as you calculate.

F.—I'll tell you one way it'll help me, Jane. You know that if we get free coinage we will have silver dollars worth 'bout 50 cents—same's Mexican dollars now.

F. W.—I thought Bryan said that silver'd be worth just as much as gold when we get free silver.

F.—Yes, that's what he says in the last so's he won't scare the millhands and savings bank folks too much. But he don't talk that way out here, because he knows that ain't what we're after. We want cheap money so's prices of wheat, corn and pork'll be twice as high, same as in Mexico.

F. W.—Supp'n they are. Wouldn't you have to pay twice as much for clothes and groceries and everything else you'd have to buy? If you got \$2 instead of \$1, it'd be as broad as it's long. If that's the way silver's going to make you rich, you'll never get rich.

F.—But I wouldn't have to spend \$2 for every \$1 I spend now. You know we have at least two hired men the whole year and three to five more from April to November, besides the hired girl for most of the year. Do you reckon I'm going to raise their pay when we get free silver?

F. W.—I s'pose so. Why shouldn't you?

F.—Just because I wouldn't have to. P'raps after a year or so I'd give 'em \$2 or \$3 more a month, but nothing like double what they're getting now. I calculate I'd save between \$800 and \$1,000 in wages—not quite so much on John and Dave, because they board with us, and of course the prices of some of the things they eat would go up, but I'd save 'bout half on my day hands who live and board at home. That's how I s'gger it, and it's 'cording to the opinion of Governor Boles and other big silver people. They say farm wages is too high for profits and that silver'll bring 'em down.

F. W.—And so that's why you're for free silver, Harve Grimes; want to cheat your poor hired hands out of half their wages, men who now can hardly keep their families out of the poorhouse! I thought it was them Wall street shysters and goldbugs you're after with your free silver stock and that you're trying to square accounts with them rich fellers, but it seems—

F.—Hold up there, Jane! Free silver's going to save us 'bout \$1,000 on what I still owe on that \$4,000 mortgage. Who d'you think'll lose that?

F. W.—I don't care who'd lose it. Taint right to cheat anybody, but I wouldn't say a word so long's it's somebody who could afford to lose it, but when it comes to cheating your poor neighbors it's time to put a stop to it. I don't care if you never get that other farm paid for. I guess we won't starve on this old farm. I'm going to tell John and Dave and all the others just how free silver will hurt them, and I'll get them all to vote against Bryan. The idea of such farmers as you trying to elect Bryan to cut down the wages of your hired men! I'm ashamed of you, I am!

An Object Lesson in Silver

There is an American silver dollar. There are two Mexican dollars. There is more silver in each of them than in the American dollar. I bought both of them for that. What is the reason? The sole reason is that our dollar is a limited coinage, backed by gold. There is another coin. That is a French 5 franc piece. I paid 95 cents for that. It carries a little less silver than the American silver dollar. France and the United States are both gold standard countries. They keep in circulation a thousand millions of silver, and Mexico, China and Japan have not got one dollar of gold coin in circulation. The gold standard country can keep silver in circulation. The silver standard country can keep no gold. That is the example of every nation today. Gold all leaves the free coinage country. Gold and silver both circulate in the gold standard countries.—From a Speech by Senator Lodge.

Pat—How do you stand on the silver question, Molke?

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Pat—'Tis is it? Well, me laddy-buck, if you and the long phiskered cranks win I'm thinking that by next winter ivrybody's platform will be, "Nothin' to ate."—Detroit Journal.

BISMARCK'S ADVICE.

Is It Unprejudiced, and Can We Afford to Follow It?

Mr. Bryan appears to set great store by the letter which Governor Culbertson, of Texas, received from Prince Bismarck. The "people's friend" is willing to receive advice from the "Man of Blood and Iron," and the "champion of the American farmer" listens to that famous friend of American agriculture who shut the German ports to American pork in 1884 and to American potatoes in 1885, and who would gladly have united all Europe in a customs league aimed directly against all American produce. Bismarck's rather diplomatic letter is taken by Mr. Bryan in his recent speeches to favor the free coinage of silver by the United States. The devotion of Chancellor Bismarck to the cause of silver may be seen in the following historical fact, which appears to have escaped general notice:

Under his guidance as chancellor of the empire and minister of commerce for Prussia the equivalent of 1,080,000,000 marks (over \$270,000,000) in silver was demonetized between the years 1874 and 1881, and over 160,000,000 worth of the bullion into which these were melted had been sold by 1879. In that year, finding that the price of silver was becoming demoralized, so that his remaining 109,000,000 was depreciating, he stopped sales by a decree issued in May, 1879. These points were frankly stated by his delegates to the international monetary conference of 1881, when Germany likewise offered to suspend sales for a time in order that the price might not be further depressed. With these assurances before the monetary powers and with the decree of 1879 still in force, Bismarck saw an opportunity of dumping some German silver on the sly and promptly proceeded to do so. In 1885 the Egyptian government decided to change its coinage and invited bids for contracts to coin its silver plasters. The German mint secured the contract to make the coin and incidentally furnished \$3,189,600 of silver bullion to Egypt. The matter was kept very quiet or escaped general notice. Reference to it will be found, however, in the London Economist of Dec. 4, 1886, which saw in it a proof of Bismarck's lack of faith in silver.

With all his faults, Bismarck is a sturdy patriot. To help the German distiller he was willing to see trichinae in every American pig, and to protect the German farmer he smelled bugs on every American potato. Germany has to-day \$107,000,000 worth of silver whose value is declining. If the United States could be induced to follow the example of Egypt and give Germany a chance to do some more unloading, where is the harm, from the ex-chancellor's point of view, in writing a letter of not entirely disinterested advice?

Bryan's Rotten Egg Argument.

As a contribution to financial and economic thought the following utterance of Mr. Bryan, made in Kentucky on Tuesday, is the most remarkable yet offered even by him:

"If any man in this community would offer to buy all the eggs produced at 25 cents a dozen and was able to make good the offer, nobody would sell eggs for less, no matter what the cost of production, whether 1 cent or 5 cents a dozen. So with silver. Free coinage would establish the market price of silver at \$1.29, and nobody would sell it for a cent less."

Why limit the price of eggs to 25 cents and of silver to \$1.29? If the reasoning is sound, the price in each case might easily be doubled, and the consequent benefit to the human race correspondingly increased. And why stop with eggs and silver? Why not mark up the price of everything you wish to buy—offer to pay double or treble what is asked for it and keep on paying that price to all comers—hold it there? That's all you have to do—hold it there. "Nobody would sell it for a cent less," says Bryan, so long as you held it. "So with silver." And the man who is putting forth such thought as this is a candidate for the presidency of 70,000,000 of people in the closing year of the nineteenth century!

The Silverite Strong Man.

Just watch the great Mr. Bryan, the Silver Samson of the Platte, as he performs his world renowned feat of raising the bullion value of silver from 67 cents to \$1.29 per ounce with his big "free silver" hammer. My, ain't he strong.

The Bargain Counter Candidate.

"Some of the reports say that the women went wild over Bryan at different places along his route," remarked the horse editor.

"That's natural," replied the snake editor. "He is the bargain counter candidate."

"How so?"

"He wants to mark the dollar down to 53 cents."—Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

Pay in Full.

Ram's Horn: There is a great deal of honest wisdom and helpful suggestion in the following from the Religious Telescope: Brother, how about that preacher of ours? The year is almost up; he has tolled and preached faithfully; his salary is small enough, goodness knows, and even of that I am told there are \$27 unpaid. Now, how about that? Are we going to let him go off to conference, losing that much of his salary, every cent of which he and his family so badly need? Are we? If we do it, it seems to me that the Lord will trouble us; for he tells us plainly, "The aborer is worthy of his hire." I am free to admit that times are hard, and money scarce; but that only makes him need the \$27 that much more. Why, if a man were to sneak into my house tonight and steal the \$30 that I have laid up to pay my taxes, I would feel that I was almost bankrupt; and yet I am sure that I could stand that loss a good deal easier than our preacher can go to conference without the remainder of his salary. Then, too, we can raise it for him if we will. Come, take hold with me. I will give a dollar, you give a dollar, and then let us go around and see the brethren, talk to them as I have talked to you, and I know we can raise it. Will you? You will! Good for you. Oh, how much better we can sleep when our preacher goes off to conference happy because his salary is paid up in full!

To Make Darioles.

Savory darioles are suitable either for luncheon or supper and may be made with boiled or roast beef, veal or chicken. Mince the meat, season it with salt, pepper and a little nutmeg; add a small quantity of grated ham (potted ham will answer the purpose) and a few shreds of red pickled cabbage chopped up and moistened sufficiently to form into a paste with some liquid apscadically. Fill some individual molds with the mixture, and when set turn out and place each on a rather thick slice of tomato; serve around a pile of finely shredded lettuce dressed with mayonnaise. Almost any kind of laky fish can be used in the same way for filling dariole molds, but when this is done a hard boiled egg should be added in place of the ham and the aspic should be whisked until frothy with a small quantity of mayonnaise, before being mixed with the fish.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Nansen Not Divorced.

Mr. H. Werner writes as follows to the London Spectator: "Allow me through the medium of your esteemed paper to contradict the statement made by the Paris correspondent of the Daily Mail about Dr. Nansen's marriage. I know for certain that Dr. Nansen, before starting on his polar expedition, did not obtain a legal separation from his wife in order to permit her to marry again in the event of his disappearance or death, without being put to the trouble of proving his decease."

All the Comforts of Home.

A Parisian lawyer has ordered of one of the makers of horseless vehicles a conveyance to contain a dining room, two bedrooms, dressing room and kitchen. The cost is over \$500, and the owner's intention is to make excursions through all the most picturesque parts of France.—Exchange.

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Mike—Me? Sixteen to wan is moi platform.

Pat—'Tis is it? Well, me laddy-buck, if you and the long phiskered cranks win I'm thinking that by next winter ivrybody's platform will be, "Nothin' to ate."—Detroit Journal.

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