

MY FIRST CIGAR.

'Twas just behind the woodshed, One glorious evening, Far over the hills the sinking sun Pursued his westward way,

And in my lone seclusion, Safely ensconced in a chair, From all of earth's confusion, I smoked my first cigar.

My bright boyish faculties Wrapped in the radiant light, My eyes grew dim, my head was faint, The woodshed round me new.

Dark night closed in around me, My senses without a stir, Grim death I thought had found me, And spoiled my first cigar.

All, bright my noble brow, The waning light was late, My startled mother cried, in fear, "My child, what have you done?"

I heard my father's muffled laugh, It seemed so strange and new, I knew he knew I knew he knew I'd smoked my first cigar.

A QUEER CRAZE.

"WAL, 'twas curus the way it happened, and I ain't got tired tellin' about it yet. It was swelterin' hot that day, the sort of weather when folks would be glad to take off their flesh and sit down in their bones.

"There hadn't been a drop of rain for weeks, and every thing looked thirsty. I went about in the afternoon very sorrowful-like, sprinklin' the flowers and thinkin' that the time soon was comin' when some one else would be watein' 'em. Things had been gettin' harder ever since another Benben was lost on his last voyage, and I hadn't been able to pay the mortgage interest, and old Squire Jones was gone, and every thing in the hands of that wild son; and I'd got notice if the money wasn't paid by the 30th of June every thing would be seized.

"I didn't rightly know how I was goin' to make a livin' either. I went about in an elderly-nigh sixty—and when folks are as old as that they're like rats, and don't care about new homes. So I sat down very melancholy at the window, and looked out at the little scrap of a garden which I'd worked for years, and began to think of rain and water, and of a girl and no so bad-looking, and Polonius Sawyer used to come and see me and bring me a momentum, and he called it from every voyage. Lor', the house was just cluttered up with queer old things that Rube and he brought, that wouldn't bring a cent for no doo. Poor Polonius! He was wrecked on a strange coast, and no one knows where his grave is. I reckon he had a present for me with him; and I'll never get that one. Ah, no!

"I was a settin' very retrospective-like when I seen a man comin' across in the gate. No hot weather could quench that woman's ardor for visitin'. She had her sun-bonnet in her hand, and couldn't stay a minute, of course. But I knew her tricks and her manners, and began a-turbin' over in my mind what a livin' she'd been able to make. I'd been a navin' lately, and hadn't the usual supply in the house, but I wasn't goin' to deman myself before Hetty Vanburen. She's a mournful-lookin' woman at the best of times, with a husband who drinks and throws plates at his head, and six children, and a whole lot of children. Well, that's neither here nor there. She comes in with her mouth drawn down and her eyes turned up; and I sez:

"'Wotter's happened to you, Mrs. Van?' says I.

"'Why, I thought I must come and console with you,' she says, a-turbin' in over the word 'console' with a sort o' relish. 'He says as how he heard down town that Life Jones was a-goin' to sell you out, root and branch, and I thought it was only necessary to come over and see if you was all right. I don't get things straight more'n half the time, 'cos he 'sees through a glass darkly,' as the minister says.

"'I own I was took a-back on havin' the affair published afore I had time to think it over, as you might say.

"'It's real signifyin', sez I, kind o' bitter, 'to come over and take care with me once more; for you see opportunities in that line will be nipped in the bud if it's all true.'

"'Then it's true?' says I.

"'Yes! I sez, kind o' desperate; 'very soon, I 'tween you, the place that knows me will all know me no more!' and the tears come into my eyes. 'I'm a lone, lone woman, and where'll I drift to now?'

"'Twouldn't bring much at a vandoo,' she says, lookin' round very keen like.

"'No, I 's'pose not; rubbish most of it.'

"'But you've got some good linen as I'd like,' she says, in a manner I considered unfeelin', 'and this ere arm-chair's comfortable. I'm sort o' used to this arm-chair, and I wouldn't mind biddin' it in at private sale if you'd wait a bit for the money.'

"'I was sort o' disgusted at her selfishness—never seemin' to feel how used I was to the arm-chair, or how it hurt me to think of partin' with it.'

"'It's a melancholy world,' she says, the next minute. I think, perhaps, that she'd forgot about the condition. 'A pilgrim's progress of a mole, and blessed be them what's got nothin'. It sometimes wish I was out of it all when he gets the tantivy, and then I find myself lying at my head. I've got my wits, we ain't got a whole plate in the house, and we wouldn't have a thing to eat off it if it wasn't for that cement they call strata, as I means 'em with continual. And abuse—you wouldn't believe it, Miss Haddock; a-sollin' me to go to—devilish place, you know. Says I, you'd better be wistin' me in heaven, says I, coz I'd be more out of your way.'

"'Every one's got their cross,' I sez, sighing. 'I've got more'n my share,' she sez, drawin' down the corners of her mouth. 'I mean to go to the year, you was a wise woman never to let your wits to any male critter. Why it seems more like heaven to git over here to a little peace and quietness; and wotever I'm goin' to do when you're gone—'

"'I ain't gone yet,' sez I, sort o' snappin'—'cos I wouldn't be wistin' it for granted that there wasn't a chance for me. I kept clingin' to the hope that God was goin' to work some miracle for me. Now He did, and this is how it came about. I excused myself to go and put on the tea-kettle, and then I found I hadn't a blessed thing for tea. I had milk in the house, but nary an egg, and what kin a body do without eggs. I only had a couple of hens, and they was a-setting and steadily purposed to bring up a family. So, thinks I, I'll just throw out a sun-bonnet and step over to Neighbor Parker's and git some, and Miss Van will never surmise the state of my larder. Lor, I wouldn't a-had the neighbors know that I hadn't a bit of chipped beef in the house for a fortune.

"So I picks up a plate—a queer-looking thing, a monstrosity I call it—that Rube had brung home once. It had a snake like life curled up in the middle of it, and for fear it wouldn't be natural enough it was ris on the stuff, looked as if you could knock it off most, and I often wished I could, for I couldn't stomach the thought of eatin' off it while that varmint was coiled up there; an' as if that wasn't enough, there was snails all around it, and on the border about it, and beetles and various bugs colored like life, looking as if they'd just lighted there, and more curious still, if there wasn't two fish laid out with their scales a-shinin'. I never set much store by the thing, but grandma had a great liking for crockery, and she had a pitcher that matched it, so on her account I had never given it away. 'One good 'will be clearin' out all this rubbish as I suppose will go for a song.'

"'Well, I hurried over the track and caught Miss Parker skimpin' her milk, and she was very accomodating about the eggs. When I got to the road again there was a great train stoppin' the way. It was so long, thinks I, I'd never take the time to go round, but just step up the steps and down on t'other side. I was up without givin' it a second thought, when, Lor', the first thing that'd give a start like it was shakin' itself and the most diabolical snarl yet ever heard, and was off like the wind! And I was so skeered I tilted that there plate till the eggs rolled off and lay all smashed about my feet. I could have cried, but I hadn't no money to pay for the ride, and I stood starin' about in a daff way wonderin' what Miss Van was a thinkin', when the conductor came along.

"'You can't stand on the platform, my good woman,' sez he—'not allowed.' 'I'm lost here, on the wrong train—'

"'I mean, I don't want to be on no train at all!' sez I, quite mixed up. 'Put me at the next station, if you please!'

"'He looked at me sharp and then said:

"'Well we won't charge you nothin' for sittin' down, and I'll sort of pushed me into the car. I stood, after I got in, for a minute sorely seeling where I was, when a middle-aged gentleman got up and offered me his seat. He was so pertite I was quite surprised at the way he kept a-turbin' at me; and then he says something to his daughter, a young woman in sage green, sittin' next to me—something that sounded like 'real palacy,' and I supposed they were talkin' French.

"'The daughter was a good-lookin' young woman if she hadn't had hair all sky-errier, and a large sunflower in her hair, and she talked to me very friendly like. And at last I made bold to say:

"'Wotter is your pah a starin' at, do I look like a mad woman?'

"'He's a-lookin' at that plate,' says she. 'Would you like to sell it?'

"'Lor, I might as well sell it, I s'guess; and my heart was so full I up and tells them strangers somethin' of my troubles.

"'I have a fancy for that plate,' sez the gentleman, with a real feelin' manner. 'I think, perhaps you've got other things like it in your house, and I'd like to help you; who knows?'

"'Lor! thinks I, here's another man who likes rubbish as well as Rube did. So, of course, I invites 'em cordial. It would be nice to have a little money if I did have to turn out on the cold world. And, bless us, the man was right; and Langley, if he hadn't given me his card and a hundred dollars for the plate with all them reptiles a-collin' and squirmin' over it, I couldn't believe my eyes, and took the up-train and got back home in a perfectly dazed manner. Miss Vanburen, I might as well say, was with me, and she counted out that money, and looked at it as if it was fairly gold. I most 'spected it would be nothin' but leaves in the mornin'; but there it was, just the same, and then I remembered I'd have to turn out on the cold world. 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