



THE VETERAN
A MAN OF THE STREET
BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD

DRAMATIS PERSONAE—Henry Holt (a blind veteran of the civil war.)
Maria Holt (his wife).
Molly (their daughter), a child.
A Lady (name unknown).
People in the street.
TIME—The afternoon of a bleak December day.
SCENE—The main shopping thoroughfare of an American city. A crowd blocks the sidewalk in front of a large dry-goods store in whose windows glitters a splendid holiday display. A wax dummy enveloped in brocade and ermine confronts another in evening dress of white satin and rose chiffon. Gorgeous fabrics of silk and velvet drape the sides of the window. These are all akin in tint; the colors of the window resemble a cluster of roses, shading from blue to blush and jaecominot. In the rear is seen the interior of a luxuriously appointed little room; it is labeled: "A boudoir," and is arranged to advertise the prevailing fashions in furniture and upholstery. The room is furnished in rose and silver. Its dressing-table is covered with the elegant conveniences of a lady's toilet, costly in value and dainty in design. Tall candles of pink wax burn in silver sconces at the sides of the long mirror. The draperies of rich lace are carefully looped back from the glass, to avoid contact with the flaming candles. The mirror reflects the street.
A lady, plainly dressed in black, is trying to push her way through the crowd, but is blocked by the women who are studying the show window. She casts a quick glance between the ermine and the chiffon dummies, across the splendors of the rose and silver decorations. Her eyes rest upon the mirror, and an expression of trouble crosses her countenance. In the glass she perceives the reflection of two women. They stand close together, the woman holds the man's arm; both are thinly dressed and are seen—in the mirror—to shiver. The man is pale and undersized; he has a consumptive



"OH, I'M SO SORRY FOR YOU!"

look; his hands are cold and blue; he raises a flute to his lips, then puts it down, and tries to warm his fingers.
The woman has a delicate face; she holds out a cap, somewhat timidly or proudly, as if she shrank from the act. Now and then a passer drops a nickel or a penny into the cap. The woman removes her other hand from the man's arm, and wraps his fingers in her shawl to warm them.
The Man—Cold, Maria?
Wife—Not so very, Henry.
Husband—Tired, girl.
Wife—Standing hurts me a little. But I don't mind.
Husband—It is pretty cold. It comes hard—draggin' you out. If I could come by myself! Oh, Lord, if I could get about alone!
Wife—Now, Henry! Dear Henry! Why you know I don't mind it—much. I like to come along of you. I think it does me good to get the air. Only the stormy days—and you ain't fit to play when it storms, yourself. You will have to give it up this winter, I'm thinkin'.
Husband—I'll take Molly next time. You're best out, Maria. Molly—she can take me in tow like a little lady. She's the smartest of the blood, Molly is. I'd feel bad if we shouldn't make out a Christmas for 'em, this year, Maria. Somebody may send a turkey—but that don't go into little stockin's.
Wife—If I get another dress to make over we can manage. Don't you feel anxious, Henry! That fat customer I had wears out dreadfully on her side seams. I calculate she'll need another cheap wrapper soon.
Husband (more cheerfully)—Yes, that's one thing about it. You can always sew when you can get the job. And Molly can tend to me. I guess we'll manage.

turns the silver from the cap into Henry's pocket.
Her eyes fill. Henry plays and sings:
"Let us die to make men free;
For God is marching on."
Lady, (unexpectedly returning)—Never mind my train. I've given it up. I can't bear this! I must know something about you—why, what's the matter? Why, you poor woman! What ails you?
Maria Holt (bursting into tears)—Oh, it's the words you said! It's the words you said! Nobody else—for so long—and we have had such a hard pull!—Oh, don't mind me! Oh, I am ashamed—Henry, Henry, I'm ashamed of myself! I don't know whenever he's heard me cry before—have you, Henry? But it's the words you said!
Lady (much moved)—The words I said?—Oh—That! Such a little common human—oh, you poor woman!
Henry Holt puts down his flute. His pinched face works pathetically. He rolls his eyes helplessly towards Maria. Then, with the most exquisite motion by which knight or gentleman could express reverence or tenderness for women, the street musician gropes for the cheek of his wife, and strokes it with the palm of his blue hand.
A crowd has begun to thicken around Henry, Maria and the lady; but neither of the three appears aware of it.
The man caresses his wife as ingenuously as if she and he were alone in the world. He shows no consciousness of the presence of observers.
Lady—Tell me all about it! Tell me how it happens. Why are you like this? You are Americans—
Henry (interrupting)—New England, born and bred.
Lady—You don't look as if you ought to be doing this. You look above begging on the street.

Henry—Ma'am?
Maria—Oh, madam! Don't you see Henry, she don't understand. She didn't mean it. She ain't that kind of lady. Madam—
Henry—Begging?
His face flushes from white to purple. His flute drops to the pavement. His wife picks it up and wipes it with her shawl. She speaks in a crooning tone.
Maria—There, there, dear! She don't know. She don't understand. Madam! My husband is a musician. He is not a beggar. He works hard for a living. Try it and see—all weathers.
Maria Holt raises herself with dignity and with a trembling forefinger points at her husband's eyes.
Lady—Blind?
Maria nods silently.
Lady (overcome)—Oh, I beg your pardon! Oh, you poor people! I beg your pardon with all my heart!
The Street Musician (bowing with a fine grace)—Madam, you have it from mine.
Lady—Tell me how it came about—this great misfortune. Do you mind telling me? I will try not to hurt your feelings so stupidly again.
Henry Holt (drawing himself erect)—Yes, ma'am, I will tell you. It happened thirty years ago, but it don't need thirty words to tell it. Seems to me, ma'am (smiling) if you'll excuse me, you're the one that don't see of us two!
The street musician lifts his purple fingers to his sightless eyes and then, with a superb gesture, points in silence to a faded decoration pinned upon his shrunken breast. It is the badge of the Grand Army of the Republic.
The crowd about the group has slowly increased. Silver begins to fall into the street-player's cap. There is a gap among the women at the show window.
Maria Holt looks through this gap. Her own eyes raise themselves to the ermine opera cloak with instinctive feminine attention; she glances at the pink and silver room. The blind man's pale face turns blankly in the same direction. To him, alone of all the people before the window, the luxurious display appeals without arousing interest. The dummy in ermine and the dummy in chiffon regard him scornfully.
The First Woman in the Crowd—It's a hand organ, I guess. Isn't there a monkey? I dote on monkeys.
Second Woman—It isn't a monkey. It's only a little man with a flute. Let's move on to the millinery window.
First Woman—Wait, I've got ten cents.
Second Woman—I've spent every cent I've got in the world on that ermine plume and my jet trinkets. I've got to borrow of you to get home. I feel kind of ashamed, too—seems to mean. Let's move along, and they'll think we didn't see him.
Lady—Did you lose your eyesight in the army?
Henry Holt (cheerily playing Yankee Doodle. Finishes the strain conscientiously before he speaks)—Excuse me, ma'am, it seems to be silver that's coming in. I know it by the note it strikes. I want to earn what I take. I don't beg. I am a musician. I used to play in bands. I've always been fond of music. Yes, ma'am. I lost my eyes in the war; one of 'em.
Maria Holt—The other followed, come five years. That was when we was first married, so I know. I was young then, a slip of a girl. It came dreadful hard on us.
Lady—Is he quite blind?
Henry—I am quite blind. One eye don't look it, they say. Some folks think I'm shamming, but they're folks that don't know anything. I got a piece of a sholl at Antietam.
Lady—But the United States does not leave its blind soldiers to be—play on the streets—on public sympathy—for a living. What is your pension?
Henry (smiling)—I don't get the pension for serious disability. What I get just about pays our rent. It don't clothe nor feed us. I don't get a blind man's pension. But we get along sometimes quite well. It depends some on whether my wife can get a job, and then there's the weather. I ain't so strong as I was before the war. I don't stand bad weather. I have the pneumonia—and that's expensive. There's a hitch about my pension, you see. I used to think it would come round. But we've given up bothering, haven't we, Maria?
Maria (apathetically)—Yes, it only riles you up and disappoints you. Nothing comes of it.
Lady—Weren't you honorably discharged?
Henry (proudly)—Madam?
Lady—Well—of course—but I mean—
Wife—It's something about a surgeon. He died.
Henry (recovering himself and smiling)—So he doesn't find it convenient to testify. His testimony is lacking.
Lady—Ah! A flaw in your pension papers?
Veteran—That's about the size of it. Lady (gently)—Hard!
Veteran—Well, yes. But we're kind of used to it. It is hard, though—sometimes.
Lady—How many children have you?
Henry (eagerly)—There's Molly!
Maria—And the two little ones. We had two older boys. They died. Her drainage was bad where we lived. We tried to save on rent those days. We don't—since.
Lady—Do you make a living? Do you suffer? Have you clothes? A fire? Food enough? How many battles did you serve in? Now give me your street and number. I must look into this matter. How many battles, did you say?
Veteran (putting his flute down from his mouth and counting on the steps with his gold fingers)—Fair Oaks, Malvern Hill, Bull Run, Antietam. It was at Antietam I got the sholl.
Lady—This is pitiful. It is not right. The country—patriotic people ought to do something!
Veteran—Oh, folks are kind enough. I get a turkey most every Christmas. Last year we had cranberry sauce and fixings.
Lady (otto voce)—He gives his

youth, his manhood, his health, his eyesight for his country, and he gets a turkey and cranberry sauce on Christmas.
Veteran—Ma'am, there was thirty-five thousand of us the last time I inquired. I'm only one of the delayed list. Don't take it to heart so. We're kinder used to it. Some weeks we get on very well. It depends so much on the weather!
Man from the Crowd—How do you know that he ain't one of the fraudulent claims? There's been a good sight more than thirty-five thousand of them.
Lady—I don't know, but I don't believe it; and I can look him up.
Gentleman from the Crowd—I'll spare you the trouble. I know the man. I'm a neighbor of his, in a way. I teach in his ward. His children come to my school. I know about the family. They are honest people. It is all just as he says.
Lady—I will see you again. You shall hear from me. I will remember—and the children! The holidays are coming along.
Maria—Yes. We do mind it when we can't make Christmas for the children. That's the hardest. Now, he talks about Molly. I don't see how I can let that child go on the street with him. Her little winter sack's worn to rags. It's past mending, and I've cut over all the flannels I've got. It's no place for Molly, anyhow, but I ain't very strong. Madam—(she whispers).
Lady—Oh! (She wrings the woman's hand).
Henry (mechanically counting on the steps of the flute)—Fair Oaks, Malvern Hill, Bull Run, Antietam—
Lady (extending her hand, for which the street player gropes)—So, good-by; now, I shan't forget you. Your country hasn't forgotten you, either. I don't believe it!
Veteran (smiling alightly)—Don't you, ma'am?
Lady—Well, I don't blame you for looking that way!
Maria—Ma'am, he sings, too. You ought to hear him sing before you go. My husband is a born musician. He gives his money's worth. You ought to know about that.
Henry (flattered)—Now, madam! My wife is so foolish about me. Women are, you know. (Plays and sings):
My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty!
Of thee I sing.
Lady, with emotion, turns away from the singer and disappears in the crowd.
TIME—December a year later.
SCENE—The same street, the same shop. The show window is superbly decorated. Its signs and top are hung with gaily waving streamers and bunting.

Henry plays and sings:
Oh, though the world turn a cold shoulder,
I'll take up my march and I'll fight.
For wife and for home and for children—
They need me from morning till night—
They love me from morning till night.
Molly—Isn't that a new song, father?
Henry—Yes, I composed it last week. After those things came from the lady. I felt so encouraged. I never can write poetry when I'm down.
Molly—So it's one of your own poems, father?
Henry—Yes, it's one of mine.
Molly (proudly)—It is a pretty poem! Sing it again, father.
Henry (sings)—
"Oh, the wife, and the home, and the babies!
I love them from morning till night."
Molly (in an undertone)—Mother said it was just as well that new baby died. But she cried when she said so.
Henry (dully)—Yes, that's the worst of such things.
Molly—But it's been so much easier, since we had the baby, father.
Henry—God bless her!
Molly (quaintly)—Yes, I should think He'd enjoy that.
Henry plays:
God rest ye merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay.
For Jesus Christ our Saviour—
Molly (interrupting softly)—Father, the people at the window are turning this way. They're looking at us. I see through the crowd of 'em. Oh, father! There's a baby Christ in the window!
The Street Player (wistfully)—Is there, Molly?
Molly (plaintively)—I wish you could see him, father!
Henry (slowly turning his blank eyes toward the window)—It seems as if I did, Molly. (He removes his faded hat, and bends his uncovered head before the window. Several men in the crowd seeing the action of the blind player, do the same.)
Molly—It's such a pretty little Jesus, father! And there's presents hung round over His head. I wonder if He'll get any. Do you s'pose the lady will send us any more come this Christmas?
Father (beginning to play restlessly)—I guess likely, Molly. But I'd rather get 'em myself. (He plays eagerly).
For Jesus Christ our Saviour—
Molly—Father! Father! Look, look!
Henry—Molly, be still! I shan't care you a snapper if you go on like this. (Sternly) I shall lose my reputation as a musician, Molly! (To himself) She says, look, look! Lord, if I could look! I never see the child lose her wits so before.
Molly—Father, father! It's the lady! Here is the lady!
Henry Holt (wistfully)—I wish I could see her—once.
The lady advances rapidly. The

The Veteran (confusedly)—Fair Oaks, Bull Run, Malvern Hill, Antietam.
The Crowd—For their sakes!
Molly—Father! I cannot hold the cap. It is so heavy it will break me!
The Lady—Come, come, Henry! Give them a song!
The Veteran (trying to compose himself)—Ma'am? Yes, I'll try. Molly? Here, little girl. Molly? I wish your mother was here. Ma'am? Yes, I will try again. (Sings)
My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty—
Chokes, and begins once more, tremulously:
My Saviour, 'tis of Thee—
He stops, and removes his hat again.
"Madam, I've lost my head. I don't know which is which."
The Lady (smiling through her tears)—It doesn't matter. Either will do.
The face of the street player falls into his hands. His bowed figure bends before the lady. With a fine gesture she steps aside. The crowd parts. The light from the head and face of the child in the manger falls in a broad white ray upon the veteran. The soldier can be heard sobbing.
A Voice from the Crowd—Lord, I could cry myself!
The Lady—Let us pass, good people, if you please.
Molly—Father, father! What will mother say? The lady says she'll lead you home. May I run on before? I only want to stay a minute to see that cunning little Jesus—there! Good-by, little Jesus! (Throws a kiss at the child in the window and returns.)
The lady and the veteran follow slowly, smiling as they go.
[THE END.]
NEPTUNE HELD HIS JOB.
Convinced His Master That There Must Be Two Parties to a Discharge.
Not long after the war old Neptune Burgess drifted up in Illinois from his plantation home in the south, and was so well satisfied with "God's country," as he was pleased to term it, that he settled permanently in McLean county, becoming a fixture upon the farm of Ezra Miles, a well-to-do planter.
Neptune was gray-haired and laxy when he bargained for this place, and time did not improve his value as a servant. He was good natured, faithful after his fashion, and apparently much attached to Mr. Miles, but nothing could persuade him to imitate the bee in industry.
One year passed and another, and still Neptune remained, while his contentment was a real comfort to behold. Nothing in the world troubled him except a delay in serving his meals, and as this rarely happened his serenity practically remained unbroken.
The negro was coal black when he first entered Mr. Miles' home, and he seemed to take on deeper shades as his hair whitened. But the latter was the only sign he gave of advancing age. He was thin, tall, erect and active—when moving toward the house at dinner time. Day after day, though, he became lazier; yet there were those who knew him that declared he had reached the lowest possible descending point in the first year. Mr. Miles even, who was one of the most forbearing men in the world, could finally stand it no longer and resolved on drastic measures. Coming up with the darky in the barn when he said sternly:
"See here, Nep, you are not worth your salt. You are discharged. Get yourself off at once."
The old negro, who had been leaning out of a window looking dreamily upon the landscape, now turned about, regarded Mr. Miles full curiously for a moment, and then shook his head negatively.
"Kain' do it, Marse Ezry. It tecks two ter meck er barg'in, 'n' I ain't er gwine ter sling erway er job 'n' hit nigh onto twenty year, comin' nex' Jinnerwerry. I laik de place mighty well, 'n' reckons I'll stay outwell I dies." Here Neptune turned to go away, having rejected what he considered an undesirable proposition.
"Come back here," cried Mr. Miles, angrily. "If you talk to me that way I'll thrash you."
The negro halted, moved half about, and answered, reflectively:
"Dat you kin do, Marse Ezry, because it on't tecks no ter do de lammin'; but it sho'do tek two ter meck a barg'in, 'n' I ain't s'k er blame fool 's ter frow up dis er place."
And stay old Neptune did to the end of his days, persuaded to the last that the right of the employe to remain was, as potent as that of the employer to discharge.—Chicago Tribune.
Strictly Honest.
Housekeeper—Half the things you wash are torn to pieces.
Washerwoman—Yes, mum; but when a thing is torn in two or more pieces, mum, I count them as only one piece, mum.—N. Y. Weekly.
Convincing Proof.
Morton—Are you sure that Penman is really reconciled with his wife?
Crandall—Yes, I am sure of it, for she reads what he writes and he eats what she cooks.—Truth.



"MADAM, I'VE LOST MY HEAD. I DON'T KNOW WHICH FROM WHICH."



FOR FREEDOM'S SAKE AND THOSE BLIND EYES HE GAVE FOR IT.

and children's wear, all of white, exquisitely trimmed with costly lace. Holiday gifts for very young children are scattered among the baby clothes. The rear and floor of the window are given up to a solemn spectacular effect. There is a grotto; and a manger rudely carved in rock. Oxen are chewing their hay on one side. On the other kneel the three Magi in gorgeous turbans and draperies; they present myrrh, frankincense and gold. Humble Jewish figures—a man and a woman—lean over the manger. The woman is young and fair. In the manger lies a sleeping babe. A powerful electric jet, concealed below, throws a glory upon the face and head of the child. All the light in the window comes from this jet. A crowd is collected before the window. The people talk softly. Rude men and delicate ladies stand side by side. Not an oath is heard nor a peevish exclamation. Many people look silently into the window.
The street player comes to his stand upon the curb-stone. His wife is not beside him.
A little girl leads him by the hand. She is decently dressed and of a modest appearance. The player wears a woolen jacket of the kind called cardigan beneath his thin coat. He looks less cold than formerly; but his face wears an expression of deep anxiety. He speaks:
Henry Holt—Molly, did you say mother seemed quite bright, when you went back, after you left me on that corner to wait for you? She's been so long getting up! It worries me.
Molly—As bright as silver, father! She told me to tell you. She said she was sure she'd be out again by Christmas. Play something jolly, father!

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