

THROUGH A SPINSTER'S SPECTACLES.

[BY ELTA MATHESON]

The campaign is over, and the deadly calm which follows a cyclone has fallen upon us. The wrecking companies have bid for the debris and are hauling it out of sight as fast as possible. I notice among it some broken hearts, many blasted hopes, blighted ambitions and a multitude of dead issues, the spawn of political mesalliances, which it were well to bury deep and quickly.

Battle axes are sheathed; war paint dries in the can; torches can be had for next to nothing, and red light is given away at the dismantled headquarters.

The swan song of silver dies in the rustle of the corn shocks, and the oldest inhabitants are making themselves disagreeable and conspicuous, by telling how it all came about. Jack slaps Bill on the back, and gives vent to the little pleasantries with which we are so familiar—"Sore, are you, old man? Well, I told you—"

There is such quantity of those "I-told-you-so" people. I look with positive amazement on the humble positions occupied by these omnipotent gentlemen. It seems so queer that the ends of their trouser legs are always frayed, several buttons generally missing from their overcoats, and that they invariably want to borrow a dollar from the men to whom they are demonstrating their perspicacity.

They remind me of an old shoemaker in the town where I was born. After every battle lost by our troops, he used to say, "I knowed it—I knowed it. I cud a-told you so; now ef I had a-ben that general I'd of fetched a coloume up here—" indicating the position with his awl on the well-worn bench—"an I'd of brung a coloume down there—"

Nobody ever waited to find out what he would have done with the rest of his "coloumes," but everybody felt that a great strategic leader had been lost to no purpose but that men's soles might be saved.

After three months of intense excitement and uncertainty, as a nation, as cities and families, we find it exceedingly difficult to shake ourselves into the old familiar ruts again. Since shouting paeans of victory, it is hard to attune the vocal chords to the humble ditties of every-day life. Americans particularly have an abnormal appetite for excitement to which the age of electricity panders in a highly satisfactory degree. If the Dowager Empress has a few diplomats served up as soup for dinner with a missionary or two thrown in as entrees, we know it the next day in all its grewsome details. We like it, too; in fact it would probably be impossible to serve our daily news to us too highly spiced. We have no hankering after mush and milk—our palate has been seared by condiments.

The newspapers know this and endeavor to meet the demand; if a bunch of our "dailies" should be dropped over the side of some air ship into a quiet Dutch village, I can fancy the consternation of the worthy burghers. They would undoubtedly imagine that the entire population of the new world was being hurled into eternity by way of the bowie knife, sand bag, poison or dynamite. This is just another phase of our national restlessness. We fear ennui more than we do the plague, and the dread attacks young and old alike.

I sat in the boudoir of one of our society girls a week or two since, and Mariana in her moated grange could not have bewailed her lot more persistently. I am a friend of this girl's

mother, but the girl herself interests me. She is such a typical representative of the buds forced into premature maturity by the high pressure of modern social life.

She had just had her hair washed. "In water with a little speck of soda in it to make the hair fluffy," she explained, as she sat in the sunny window, picturesque in a Chinese gown with the fluffy hair in gorgeous disarray.

She was such a dainty picture of luxurious idleness, that I suddenly became conscious that the ends of my gloves were rather worn, my hat a last season's creation, and that my tout ensemble proclaimed loudly that I owed my entire here, because of the faint aroma about me of the long vanished glory of my family. I winked hard as hundreds of protesting ghosts of as many dead joys passed before my mental vision. Why do respectable ghosts not stay in their graves?

"Do make yourself comfortable, Miss Roxy. Mama will be in presently; in the meantime, talk to me." Young things have a way of confiding in me. It is the chief joy of my rather colorless existence.

"I suppose you are delighted at the prospect of another season's gayety, aren't you, Grace?" I began pulling off my worn gloves—I have rather a pretty diamond ring left—and settling myself in an easy rocker.

"Delighted? Well, not exactly. I don't know why I should be, Miss Roxy. Now you do over and over the things that you must do, and I suppose you get rather tired of it all, but then you get your salary, too. Now I do over and over the same things, because there is nothing else for me to do, and it is rapidly reducing me to imbecility."

"But, Grace, isn't there constant distraction in all these social affairs you go to? I see your name constantly."

She gave a scornful little laugh and turning to her desk near by, picked up a handful of little white envelopes.

"Do you imagine that these represent much excitement? I have eaten thro' one season of Balduff's salad and ices at over a hundred afternoons, until the monotony of it all drives me distracted. I have felt sometimes like chewing up the paper cases on the scallops and marron glaces, just by way of variety, you know."

"Well, I am certainly surprised. I thought if there was a satisfied person in this city it should be you; what is the trouble?"

"There isn't any trouble specially. Life is disgustingly smooth sailing for me. If the coachman were even passable looking, I would elope with him. You see," lifting her shining mane and letting it drop several times, "I was educated and accomplished with as much pains as if I were to have a foreign mission—and I came back here—to what? Listen to this," pulling out the contents of one of the little white envelopes, "Mrs. H—at home—4 to 6. Cards.' or this, 'Mrs. B—at home—3 to 5. Kensington.' and this, 'Mrs. X. Y. Z. At home, 2 to 4. Reception.' The rest repeat the same story. I see the same women at all of them, and after the first few times the same clothes. If Mrs. A—wears that electric blue costume this year, I shall certainly speak about it to her. The fact is that society is just a huge woman's club, and there is no denying it." Then she added with a frank laugh: "A girl's idea of society is to take it with a liberal peppering of black coats."

"O, that is it? Poor child! But don't you go to balls—and are there no society men in Omaha?"

"I go to precious few balls, Miss Roxy, and men seem to have shaken

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