

Holiday Journal.

Literature and Society.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1879.

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H. SHOEMAKER,

WORKING TWO WAYS.

BY WILLIS GREENE.

"PRETTY end is this of your love dreams," said Miss Lydia Lyl, severely. "Married only a twelve months, and lo! I find you dissolving in tears like a modern Niobe or an April snowdrift."
"It's very foolish of me, I dare say," assented Mrs. Percy Essex, with sparkling eyes and a suppressed quiver in her voice. "But you must not chide me, Lydia. I am so unhappy."
Miss Lydia frowned tragically.

"I have no sympathy for people who are eternally whimpering," said she. Mrs. Essex hung her head, and toyed nervously with the fringe of her scarlet wool breakfast shawl. She was a rose-cheeked, dimpled little matron, with dark, azure-gray eyes, a small, heart-shaped mouth, and hair of a dull chestnut brown, twisted in a sort of a coronal about her head.

"Come, now, leave off crying," added Miss Lyl, who was a severe looking spinster in a dress of mouse-colored serge with a string of Roman gold beads about her throat, and a voice like the reverberations of distant artillery, "and tell me the cause of all this tearfulness. I'm a veritable old mother confessor, you know."
But Violet Essex's head only dropped the lower, and a vivid coloring suffused her cheeks.

"No more silly nonsense, now," burst in Miss Lydia again. "Hold up your head and tell me what ails you, and how it came about. I'll stake my head that Percy's at the bottom of the whole affair."

Percy's wife assented by the rule of silence.

"No doubt he's grown penurious, or— or dictatorial, may-be."

"Oh, no!"

"Or dissipated, or extravagant, or even unkind."

"No."

"Perhaps he's jealous of you."

"Jealous of me—my Percy?" And Mrs. Essex laughed in spite of herself.

"Well, what ails you, then?" demanded Miss Lydia, completely non-plused.

"I scarcely know myself," admitted Mrs. Essex, "except that I am very unhappy, and that Percy has changed very greatly since our marriage."

"It is the usual way with men, my dear," commented Miss Lydia, dolorously.

"To be sure, I don't expect him to be a lover always," pursued Mrs. Essex. "But I certainly do expect him to treat me as well as he does other women' and not ignore me entirely when in their presence."

"The same old, old story!" put in Miss Lyl.

"I have borne his indifference all

along," continued Mrs. Essex, "until last night, when at Agatha Gainsboro's soiree, his actions were so pronounced as to be noticeable. There I sat stowed away in one corner like a piece of old furniture, while he flirted and danced and promenade with that hateful Susanna Pritchard, in her ruby silk and old cameos to set off her dark, oriental beauty, and hide her faded complexion and the crowfeet under her eyes. And oh, Lydia! you don't know how mortifying it was to sit there in that odd corner, and listen to old Mrs. General McGrail, who is as good as any newspaper in town, tell a select coterie of her friends how Percy and Miss Pritchard had been betrothed once upon a time, and would have been husband and wife ere this but for a foolish lover's quarrel that estranged and separated them."
"Decidedly humiliating," said Miss Lydia, contracting her straight brows. "Just what I thought myself," said Mrs. Essex.
"And told him I hope."
"Oh, yes; but only to have him say Mrs. General McGrail was an old fool, and that I was unreasonable and expected too much."

"Unreasonable fiddlesticks!" said Miss Lydia, shortly. "It's nothing more nor less than brutality in him, my dear, and you're a very great goose to submit to his treatment, to say nothing of crying about it."

"But what can I do?" asked Mrs. Essex, piteously.

"A great many things," said Miss Lydia, epigrammatically.

"I'm not the person to make trouble between husband and wife," said Miss Lyl, after a moment's hesitation; "but if I were in your place, I'd play my recreant lord a game of 'tit for tat,' in other words, I'd do precisely what he does, and if he didn't cry for quarter within a week's time, I've a wrong estimate of his sex."

"I—I—don't quite understand you," said open-eyed Violet.

"Don't you?" said Miss Lydia.

"Dear, dear! what a little stupid you are, to be sure! I mean when Percy flirts do you flirt; when Percy dances do you dance, and when Percy promenades or does anything else questionable, do you likewise."

Mrs. Essex wiped her eyes and stared hard at Miss Lydia.

"But—it would be unwomanly."

"Only so far as it is unmanly in him. My dear, there is a certain threadbare old saying worth a thousand of your new-fangled axioms: It's a poor rule that won't work two ways.' I think it suits the case admirably."

"I believe I will attempt it," said Mrs. Essex.

And that very night at the Bigelow "German," when Mr. Essex and Miss Pritchard were leaning against a variegated marble column in one of

[TO BE CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

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