BEAUTY'S SECRET

By ALAN MUIR

Author of "Vanity Hardware," "Golden Girls," Etc.

BOOK ONE.

[Commenced Sunday, May 2.]

"The story is not finished yet," he cried, impetuously. "But you are right in one thing: you can finish it. Look, this is the picture of the girl I love."

She bent to look, and as she did so a tear she could not keep back dropped on the cardboard. The next instant she uttered a cry and started to her feet. She had seen herself.

A moment she looked at him, and such was the struggle of surprise, delight, modesty and fear in her face that he was now as far from her secret as a moment before she had been from his. He thought she was angry.

"Miss Temple—Sophia," he said, "don't be angry. If I have offended you, I did not mean it. Surely you won't be angry!"

Still she made no answer, but only looked at him, for speech and action had forsaken her together; and he, foolish fellow, grew certain that she was displeased.

"I loved it so," he said, pleading. "I could not help it; and I wanted to tell you myself before I spoke to others about it. I wanted you to hear the story first from my own lips." He hung his head, ashamed to look at her. "I know I am presumptious. I feel sure already that you will tell me I am not the man you can love. I wish I had waited a little before speaking; the dream was so much better than this awakening; but I could keep myself silent no longer. Perhaps it is as well to know it at once. It will save——"

But as he spoke, her cheek came close to his own, and her little hand fell on his shoulder. Too womanly for coquetry or coyness, she gave her answer at once, and with such readiness that neither Percival nor Sophia were able to settle that night which kissed the other first.

CHAPTER II.

CAROLINE AND SIBYL MARRIED.

And so the third Miss Temple was engaged. Mamma made no objection. She did, indeed, when business came to be talked, remark to Mr. Brent that her daughter's fortune would not be large, and that she hoped he would be able to provide handsomely for his son. At this he waved his hand in a confident way, nodded and said: "That shall be all right." He did not at that time enter into any particulars, but Mrs. Temple, from what she knew of him, was quite satisfied with this assurance and the matter dropped.

It was soon known to the whole town that Sophia Temple was engaged to Percival Brent, and the announcement a little relieved our disappointment at the mysterious disappearance of the rector's flirtation with the widow. Indeed, some of us started the hypothesis that what we superficial investigators had mistaken for a flirtation was in reality nothing more than the settling of the preliminaries of the present affair. We said it must have been very pleasant for the two seniors to make the arrangements in that snug way; and thus we explained the little intimacy between them.

Pleasant was the early courtship of this happy pair. The very skies smiled on it. Never, I believe, was there such a February. Day followed day in the softest beauty. Mornings crisp with frost, soft, balmy noons, evenings with red skies and frosty air again. Their love making was full of satisfaction. Sophia found him an ingenuous young fellow, with real enthusiasm, full of active resolutions for life. True, she found it hard to be very warm over geology; but his general notion of living to use and honor delighted her. I think she would have been better pleased had he talked of getting into parliament or entering the church, rather than of achieving triumphs at the British association, an institution which at that time had not emerged from the age of weakness and scorn. Still, she was fully satisfied with him, and gave him all her love. And he, for his part—it could not be otherwise—was entranced with her. Warmth, purity, tenderness, principle, all the finer parts of character were hers; taste and no lack of humor, ready speech, lively fancy. As to her face, he worshiped it. He always said that her face was beautiful, because it was the image of her mind. Why narrate lovers' raptures? They were all in all to each other these happy days of early spring.

In March the two weddings came off; first Car's, and then Sibyl's. Egerton Doolittle had made a special request that the two should be celebrated on the same day; but to his request the great Goldmore declined to comply—possibly a lurking suspicion that the thing might look ludicrous led him to say no. Accordingly, we married Caroline and Egerton first; and a pleasant wedding it was, everything being done in most elegant style; and little Mrs. Barbara Temple looked not a day more than forty. And Rector Brent, between the occasion, the champagne and his own amorous disposition, cast so many glances at her, and these so warm, that it seemed as if he was being captivated anew. Car, I must say, looked splendid that morning; flashing with wit, fire in her eyes, and her attire faultless. She wore a bridal dress of brocaded satin, and her head-dress, which was somewhat original—those girls had a tasteful way of being slightly out of the common—pleased all the ladies; the men, I believe, looked more at the head which carried it. Her veil, streaming over her superb shoulders, made her dress complete, and we all pronounced her a lovely bride. She went through the service without any nervousness; indeed, I thought with slight audacity, as if she would challenge anyone to say she had made a foolish choice. Egerton Doolittle lisped his responses, and the two were man and wife together. Breakfast, as I said, went off well. Little Mr. Brent proposed bride and bridegroom, to which, with many a blush and titter, and hand sidled to his mouth, Egerton responded. He thanked them all. He believed that he was a very fortunate man. Here came a long pause. Fact was—confidentially—it had been his great aim in life to find a tremendously clever woman—a woman who would be able to point out whether any given work was erroneous or not. He did not like erroneous works. He might read an erroneous work without knowing it, and get his mind upset. He had married a wife who could and would tell him if a given work was erroneous, and he was very happy. He thanked everybody, and wished everybody in the room would soon be married like himself, except those who were married already. There was no need to wish *them* married, because—with a sly expression—they were married already. (Here champagne effects became slightly prominent.) He believed he had married a tremendously clever girl—woman he meant—wife he meant—and he was very thankful. He hoped his wife would try to make him happy—he meant he hoped he would try to make her happy—no, he meant that he *would* try to make her happy, and he hoped he would do it. Man was strong. Woman was weak. The man should use his strength to make the woman comfortable and happy, you know. As the poet had said, it was tyrannous to have a giant's strength, but it was excellent to—no, that was not it exactly. He forgot which came first. He would look it up, and send them the exact quotation by post. Anyhow, whatever the poet had said, if it was a manly act, he pledged himself to do it, but not otherwise, and he believed that was the safest way to leave it. Here he sat down with a kind of movement as if he were going to pieces, and we all applauded heartily.

Sibyl's wedding came a fortnight later, more sedate, and even more splendid. Archibald Goldmore loaded his young bride with presents so costly that, I think, to have had them, some of the girls would have married Methuselah. Goldmore looked dignified enough during the service, and not old; and he walked down the aisle with a vigorous tread, so that, on the whole, the disparity in years did not appear so great as we expected.

Sophia had been chief bridesmaid, of course; and, in spite of her sister's faultless beauty, in my eyes she looked the lovelier of the two. While they were kneeling, a sunbeam fell on her, and when it touched her head, heaven seemed choosing her as a bride at the same moment. Wonderful it was how the posture of prayer became that girl—the warmth and seriousness of her face seemed framed for worship, or for pure exalted love. But are the two sentiments alien?

No blunder about Goldmore's speech, you may be sure. All sober, proper, truly elephantine, and thoroughly Great British. The language in which his revered friend had proposed the health of himself and his wife was in the highest sense gratifying. On his wife's part and his own he thanked them sincerely. He felt, indeed, that the lady who had that morning bestowed her hand upon him was all, and more than all, that his revered friend had called her. He felt the honor she had conferred upon him. He could assure his wife, and her friends, that whatever lay in his power should be done to make her the return which she deserved. It was a satisfaction to them both to know that marriage would not part them from their friends, nor from that locality. It would not be long before they should be among them as neighbors; and he could only say, as one of the pleasantest incidents in that propinquity, that his wife and himself looked forward to seeing the present company gathered round their own table.

One thing was noticed at the wedding feast; little Mr. Brent, usually the loudest laugher in every company, appeared grave and abstracted; indeed, more than one person remarked a strange pallor about him which suggested a suspicion that he was struck with illness. Percival, happy with his Sophia, and with a thousand tender thoughts awakened by the ceremony of the day stirring in his breast, was not likely to observe anything except what enforced attention; and no cloud dimmed the brightness of the lover's joy. Had Percival noticed his father's face he—used to its expression—would have perceived that it was not illness which was impending. But Fate was kind to these loving two. It was for them a day of tender and undimmed delight—not a cloud, not a breath, not a doubt—only playful raillery, soft looks, gentle touches, sighs and all the train of lovers' little pleasures. Their love increased wonderfully that happy day; and it was well, for trouble was at hand.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT MISFORTUNE.

It was dark as father and son drove home, and Percival was greatly startled when, almost as soon as the horses began to move, the rector threw himself upon him, and, sobbing like a child, called out:

"I am a ruined man, Percy—a ruined man!"

The explanation which followed this announcement was in all its main features new to Percival, who had never known any particulars of his father's affairs. The facts, which may be briefly told, were these: Brent senior was the son of a father who had married twice, and the rector had now a half-brother nearly twenty years older than himself. This brother, under his mother's marriage settlement, had inherited all her property, which was very large. The father had a life interest in it, but at his death the whole passed absolutely to her only child. Rector Brent's father had ever been a careless and imprudent man, who, having married fortunately, lived on his wife's money. After her death he married again, as has been said, and his second wife died in the same month as himself; but his reckless and improvident character was plainly seen by the state in which his affairs were left. He might easily have saved, and saved handsomely, for the education and maintenance of his second son, our rector, but as a matter of fact he died so deeply in debt that even his furniture had to be sold to satisfy his creditors. Young Brent was then at Oxford preparing for the church, but it seemed as if his whole future must be altered. At this time his brother came forward, and although he had never been kindly used by the second Mrs. Brent, he now, with great generosity, resolved to help his brother; and he made him an ample allowance for his university expenses. Under these circumstances a very cordial friendship sprang up between the two, and this friendship had hitherto been unbroken. The elder brother did not marry, being studious; and if not a woman hater, certainly not a woman hunter. As time went on, and the younger brother's position and requirements grew, the elder increased the allowance he made him, and now for several years he had been giving the rector fifteen hundred per annum. This, he promised, should be continued to his death, when an ample provision would be made for himself and his son. This arrangement had gone on for many years undisturbed, but a short time before, to Rector Brent's great astonishment, his brother, then over seventy, told him he meditated marriage. The facts were soon out. A strong-minded Irish widow, of good family, with a file of tall, hungry, penniless sons, had marked him for her own. There followed, in the usual artful sequel, flattery and amiable persecution. The old man was cajoled, managed, and, in the last stages of the affair, bullied, until, without his brother's knowledge, he was actually married to the triumphant widow, who wrote to the rector, explaining the haste and secrecy of the transaction by the state of "our dear Henry's nervous system." The elder brother assured his junior that the marriage would make no difference in his allowance or his subsequent prospects; and for twelve months this promise was kept. But the old man was growing feeble, and his wife impatient. Her sons were expensive, and she wished to secure everything for them. By what means could not be ascertained, but she spirited her husband away to the south of France. Under the plea of bronchial disease and nervous prostration, she shut him up from society; and when, a few months before, the rector, growing uneasy, had gone to Cannes to see his brother, he was not admitted to the house, being comforted by the assurance that everything was being done to restore, or at least to compose, "dear Henry's nervous system." To tell the rest in a few words, on the morning of Sibyl's marriage the poor rector received a letter, written by his brother himself, in which, after some vague sentences about "loss of money," "failure of investments," and "increasing expenses," he plainly said that he inclosed the last check which he would ever be able to send. The letter closed with a postscript, in which the rector was reminded that already a great deal had been done for him, which genial stroke was due to the dictation of the accomplished Mrs. Brent. So our unhappy rector found himself placed in the position of the holder of a benefice worth scarcely a hundred a year, after outgoings, a costly establishment, luxurious habits, declining years, and a son who had been led to expect fortune as his inheritance.

The little clergyman behaved with singular dignity and straightforwardness. He told the whole story frankly, and seemed to develop fortitude for the trial. We were pleased to hear now from his lips some of those phrases about trust in God and resignation to the dispositions of providence at which we had sometimes felt inclined to smile when the sleek little fellow spoke them in the pulpit. Indeed, so deep was our commiseration for the rector's misfortune that we—who are neither a church nor, I fear, a very charitable people—summoned a meeting of leading parishioners, at which we resolved, by annual subscriptions, to raise enough to pay the curates; and thus, without directly pauperizing our clergyman, we hoped to enable him to hold his living. In this way Rector Brent was put in possession of about three hundred a year—not a bad allowance, you may say; but consider how he had lived hitherto. The carriage must be put down; the gardens must be laid out in grass; the cozy dinner parties must be given up; Rector Brent must, for the rest of his life, walk the ways of genteel poverty.

Among the first to hear the bad news was Mrs. Barbara Temple. That excellent little woman had a maxim for every change and chance, and upon hearing the tidings she remarked that such was the world—up and down. "If the 'ups' were always up," she continued, straying for an instant into philosophy, "the downs would never have a chance. There was only so much money, so much ease, so much luck, going. What one lost fell to the lot of another." At the same time she expressed and felt genuine sorrow for Mr. Brent and for his son, who had always appeared to her a most promising young fellow.

Shortly after hearing all this, Mrs. Temple rang for her maid, and sent for Sophia, who came in with a light dancing step, rare with her; her face was full of glee.

"I know what it is, mamma; you want me to look at your dress. But I saw it before you did. Frightful, it is! You shan't wear it, dear; not if I wear it myself."

"Sophia, you look very pretty this morning," the mother said, with much fondness and admiration, and a touch of sorrow too, as she thought of the disappointment the girl was about to have. "Never mind the gown; I have something to say to you."

Sophia looked wondering into her mother's serious face, as she took a seat beside her.

"Life is full of trials, Sophy," the kind-hearted little wordling began. "No one is fit to live who is not ready to meet small vexations and disappointments, that perhaps at first don't seem small, and meet them with a cheerful face. One great thing is to remember—what is undoubtedly true—that most disappointments have a bright as well as a dark side. Indeed, if one looks over one's life, it is surprising to notice how many mishaps which we either cried over or felt we would like to cry over, only we restrained ourselves, become on review matters of congratulation. Do you know, Sophy, I think sometimes, when I look back over my life, that what I called my misfortunes have in three cases out of four become either directly or indirectly sources of happiness after a year or two. I don't wish to talk boastfully, dear; but I think some of that is due to my own good common sense."

She drew herself up with a self-satisfied air, but instantly resumed her compassionate tone, while Sophia looked a little anxious, not knowing what was coming. She saw that her mother watched her closely, as she delivered herself of these philosophic morsels.

"I shall not delay what I have to say," Mrs. Temple went on, stroking her girl's hand kindly. "I have heard something this morning which renders your marriage with young Brent impossible."

"Mamma!" Sophia cried, in great agitation.

"These things happen, Sophy," the mother continued; "these things often happen. I never told any of you girls before, but I assure you the first man that proposed to me—and to whom I was on the point of being married—had to fly from England to avoid transportation."

"Mamma!" Sophia cried again, but now springing to her feet, with a face white with fear and pain. "Tell me; what is it? He can't, O, he *can't* have done anything wrong!"

"Nothing wrong, dear," she answered. "I only mentioned my case as in some respects like yours. No; the Brents are honorable people, but they are beggars this morning, Sophy—beggars."

Then, in as few words as she could use, the little woman, with most perfect lucidity, told the story of the disaster, remarking, when she came to the maneuvering widow, that the rector ought to have kept a sharper eye on his brother.

"Because we all know, Sophy, that there are always widows who will do these things if they can. I should as soon think of leaving my jewel box all night open on my front doorstep as of leaving a rich relation unguarded—if it was my policy to get his money. Now, don't cry, dear," she added, seeing her girl's tears flowing fast; "things might have been much worse."

"I am not crying now, mamma," Sophia said, sobbing, however, while she spoke. "I was frightened at first by what you said. At least, these are tears of relief, I mean. I really felt afraid of I don't know what. But it is only money Percival has lost—not character, not honor."

"O, no; his honor is untouched," the mother replied. "His character is as good as ever; and that will, of course, stand by him when he goes in search of employment. Besides, I am glad on your account, dear; for even the most transient connection of your name with a person who had done anything wrong would be disagreeable."

Sophia said nothing. She was drying off her tears with great brisknss and assiduity. It is a pleasant sight to see a pretty young woman wiping her tears away, and feathering herself into cheerfulness again.

"Excellent good sense, Sophia," the mother said, looking at her with great approval. "I always knew, with your sound judgment, you would come to this view of the matter; but I was prepared for a little temporary reluctance and a little girlish romance, and I was prepared to bear it kindly, dear, and to wait for the return of good sense, which I knew would not be delayed long. But you are a wise girl, Sophy; nothing like facing the inevitable boldly, and at once."

"But, mamma," Sophy said, "it is not such a great trial. Percival can work. We can both wait."

"O, then I have mistaken you!" exclaimed the mother. "Now, Sophy, my dear, you must not be absurd. This marriage is simply impossible. Wait as long as you may, the young man cannot make a fortune such as you should expect and require. You will see this some day."

"I promised him I would love him always," Sophia said, with artlessness which in another woman might have seemed affected; "and am I to break my word because my poor fellow is unfortunate? He has done nothing. Is he to lose his money and—and me too?"

At which dreadful prospect Sophia began to cry again, and worked at her eyes with her pocket handkerchief, which she had twisted into a sort of ball, as crying women do.

"It is a very nice, kind way of talking, Sophy," the little diplomatist said; "and it does you credit, dear. I almost think I like you better for it, sweet, sweet girl!" with a kiss at each adjective. "But we must be prudent, dear. Believe me, Sophy, nothing that is imprudent is ever kind in the long run. It may appear so; it never is—not kind even to those it seems most to benefit. In life, dear, everything depends on prudence."

"Mamma," Sophia cried, rising from her chair for the second time, "if you had told me that Percival had been disgraced, I think I should have died. If you had told me that the man who spoke to me as he spoke had any secret dishonor, I think I should have killed myself in grief and shame. I know the world would never have been the same to me again. But his fortune, his money—what is that? Mamma, I promised to love him and to marry him, and nothing but his own fault shall make me change. Not if he lost ten fortunes! It would be hard on him," she repeated, with another rub of her eyes, "to lose his money, and then to lose me."

Mother and daughter, there they sat. The mother was not angry, scarcely disappointed, quiet, confident, fully assured that the victory would be on her side at last. Were not time and money with her, and who with such auxiliaries ever lost a battle? And there sat the daughter, tearful, flushed, affectionate, longing to have her Percival beside her to console him. Ah, sweet Sophia Temple, some there were as well as Percival who for a few of those tender dewy kisses then budding on thy lips would have lost half the world, and scarcely sighed as it slipped away!

CHAPTER IV.

STILL ABOUT MISFORTUNE.

Percival called upon Sophia that afternoon, and, for some wise reason, Mrs. Barbara Temple allowed him to see her alone. Indeed, the little woman was never other than kind to her daughters, and, being sure that Sophia's madness could not last, she resolved not to seem tyrannical. So she let the boy and girl have it all to themselves.

Percival, impulsive in his wretchedness, told Sophia everything in a breath. He was stout-hearted enough to hide his grief pretty well, and he hastily assumed, as a kind of postulate of the whole conversation, that Sophia would think of nothing but of giving him up. Thus he raised in her a light sweet petulance, which caused her to leave his dark illusion unscattered for a while.

"I shall go out to Australia again, and begin life," he said with a manful air.

She could not look at him, or she would have been in his arms, so she stood half turned from him with downcast eyes, and he, watching her, felt his heart sink. He had faintly hoped for other things.

"Yes, I shall go out to Australia again," he repeated, so sadly that Sophia could hardly even for an instant hold herself back. "It is a fine climate," he added, trying to seem unconcerned again.

"You will meet some girl out there," she answered in the very exultation of her hypocrisy, "and you will like her very well."

"I shall never love any one again," he said gravely; and his voice grew unsteady at the last word. "Only you," he added, in a yet more shaking voice. That bit of unsteadiness finished Sophia off.

"Never do!" she cried—"never do. I ask nothing more of you; and then go round and round the world, and I shall wait here faithfully till you come back."

So her little bit of deceit was over, and she was sobbing in his arms, telling him that he was ten thousand times dearer to her now, because she could show her love to him; and that no other man should ever call her his own, with twenty other of those silly speeches made on such occasions; some of which, as declaring the nobler impulses of the heart that God has made, will be remembered, I doubt not, when ten thousand human frailties are blotted out of the book of his remembrance. And Percival, holding the lovely girl in his arms, felt how little he had lost, and how much he had gained in that very loss; and he realized something of the truth of Him who knew the human heart, and said that there are times when, in the very loss of life, we find life anew—life which cannot perish and which cannot be defiled.

There! They spoke no more, not another sentence for many minutes, but stood folded in each other's arms, mingling tears, enraptured, exchanging by a thousand fond pressures, heart against heart, emotions, vows, protestations, which the narrow channels of speech can never convey.

"You are all the world to me," he said at last.

"All the world, am I?" she answered softly. "O Percy, Percy!"

"And you will go on loving me, Sophia?"

"For ever and ever."

"Better or worse—richer or poorer?"

"Yes, till death us do part nothing else shall—never, Percy!"

So it went on, silence and speech alternating for full an hour. Mrs. Barbara Temple was a wise woman, but I somewhat doubt the astuteness of her policy on that particular afternoon.

CHAPTER V.

"GOOD-BY, SWEETHEART, GOOD-BY."

The two married sisters returned from their honeymoons about the same time, Sibyl looking haughty and discontented, but Caroline cheerful and well pleased. As to the bridegrooms, we could see no trace of change for better or worse in Goldmore; but Egerton was decidedly stouter, in excellent spirits, and, from an accession of confidence, more apt to make a fool of himself in company than ever.

The sisters soon met, and Sophia could not complain of any lack of sympathy on the part of her elders. They were both at first inclined to take prudent mamma's view; but when Sophia told them of her love and his constancy they were touched. The world had not yet got complete mastery over them, and they commended Sophia, kissed her, comforted her, and said some day she would be happy.

Commander-in-chief Mrs. Barbara Temple took care to have an interview with young Brent. She was kind and sympathetic, but she said it was her maternal duty to point out to him that—whatever Sophia might say—he was injuring her prospects if he kept up any understanding with her. "Engagement, of course," the little woman said, "is not to be thought of. But even an arrangement—a promise that each will secretly wait for each—would be a pernicious snare, full of danger to Sophia's prospects."

"Not," added Mrs. Worldly Wisewoman, "that these promises are ever kept. Facts are too much even for lovers. I have seen fifty of these understandings made in perfect good faith, and from motives that were quite pretty, but none ever came to anything. Still, I object to arrangements."

"Your daughter is as free as if she never saw me," Percival said. "I have made her promise that she will consider that there is not a shred to bind her to me. She is to feel that she may engage herself and marry, and never think that there is any intimation to be sent to me, except through the newspaper."

"And may I ask—don't think me rude, Mr. Brent, I am simply doing my duty—if you are as free on your side? If you marry, shall she hear of it through the newspaper, too?"

She looked at him sharply, almost humorously, as she put this penetrating question. O, we must pay a tribute to our little mother who had a tact that in wider fields of action might have smoothed the feelings of ruffled empires.

"Yes, I am quite as free as she," he answered. "We promised each other that we should feel so."

It was quite true. They had promised exactly in these terms, only the four lips that exchanged the treaty were immediately afterward engaged together sealing quite another sort of bond. Was this what Shakespeare meant by "plain and holy innocence," I wonder? And yet possibly Mrs. Barbara Temple guessed the true state of the case, but she was satisfied. There being no engagement, she felt sure that time, fickleness, and her great ally, this present world, would do all she wanted.

"I regret what has happened," she said gracefully, "and I regret it not alone on your account, but on my own. I should have been pleased with the connection. I hope you will prosper and be happy, for I am sure you deserve it."

Egerton Doolittle, having, after careful intellectual filtration, so to speak, got the facts of the Brents' case fairly deposited in his mind, expressed great commiseration for the two men, as he called them. He told Car that "we ought all to give our minds to the thing," and see what can be done. And after a long period of cogitation he informed his wife that he had hit on a plan which would restore the fortunes of the Brents, and—of this he made a great point—without their undertaking anything that could not be done "with clean hands."

"A gentleman under no circumstances should soil his hands," Egerton said; "and the great merit of what I propose is that it can be done with clean hands."

Car at first thought that this implied that the pursuit Egerton had in his mind was one morally defensible, or not felonious; but it appeared that he referred only to aristocratic notions and traditions.

"My plan is this," Egerton said, after three-quarters of an hour of preamble which had nearly fidgeted his wife into a fit. "I hear there is a new joint stock opera company going to be started. Let them take shares in that. It will be a gentlemanly, musical kind of thing, and the great point is it can be done with clean hands."

Caroline, not being able to see the practical value of this suggestion, Egerton resolved to open his scheme to his great brother-in-law, Goldmore. That elephantine millionaire was forced, for courtesy's sake, to listen while Doolittle, in a speech of extraordinary length and maddening circumlocution, brought out his preface; but, vexed as he was, he could not restrain his laughter when the young man wound up with the recommendation that Brent senior and junior should take shares in the forthcoming Italian Opera Joint Stock company.

"My great point is, Goldmore," said Egerton, "that it is a gentlemanly musical sort of thing, and one that can be carried on with clean hands. I think a gentleman should never soil his hands, Goldmore, don't you?"

"The difficulty is," replied the great man, overlooking this question, "where are the poor men to get money to buy their shares?"

"Get what?" Egerton asked.

"Money to buy their shares," repeated Goldmore. "Shares are not given away; you have to pay for them in hard cash. Now in the present case the difficulty is that there is no cash at all."

"Then I suppose you don't approve of my scheme?" answered Egerton, with some irritation. "Very well. One can only suggest. I withdraw the proposition. Still, I repeat, Goldmore, it is not every day of the week you can find a gentlemanly musical undertaking that can be carried out with clean hands."

So he took his leave. But his visit had some result, after all; for that afternoon Archibald Goldmore called upon young Brent, and asked for a little private conversation with him. Goldmore was very kind, inquired what his young friend was going to do, nodded his head approvingly over the details of the Australian scheme, and marked the young fellow out as a man that would rise.

"Let me say one thing to you, Mr. Brent," he said, as he rose to go. "I am in most respects a self-made man. I know the difficulties which even industrious and clever young fellows have to face who start without capital. Now, from what my wife tells me, you have gained the affections of my sister-in-law; and I may add that from what I have seen of you I am not surprised at it. As a member of the family, I take an interest in all that concerns them. Now, Brent, if a few hundreds will help to start you I can lend you the sum, and I shall require no security but your word. You shall pay me"—this he added pleasantly—"when you are half as rich as I am."

Brent colored very red with gratitude and pleasure; but for all that, his reply was not what the great man expected.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said; "it is so kind an offer. But I have already saved enough to start me. I had a liberal allowance, and never spent it all."

"A few hundreds extra will better your chance," remarked the other.

"Thank you a thousand times," the young fellow replied; "but if I can accomplish what I wish out of my own resources, I had rather do it. If I ever marry Miss Temple, I should like to feel that it was my own doing from first to last."

Goldmore looked at him with admiration.

"I respect the feeling, Mr. Brent," he said. "Only remember this: if your capital should run short, write to me, and you will find me no bad banker when the account has to be overdrawn."

"Thank you again," the young fellow answered. "And that offer I do accept. You understand me, don't you? If I can manage without any man's help I should be glad; but rather than fail, I should most gratefully avail myself of yours. I hope you don't think me proud to the point of silliness."

"Confound it," cried Goldmore, "I wish you were my son!"

And the great man marched away down the street as like the Tower of Babel as ever, only in a silk hat and other human fittings. But Goldmore is on the right side of things, for all his pomp and seeming hardness.

Little Mrs. Barbara Temple showed a singular mixture of astuteness and good feeling in her management of the affair from this time until Percival's departure. She took care to impress on the lover the fact that all engagement, understanding, hope, and whatever else could bind himself and Sophia together, was utterly at an end. She repeated several times that her duty as Sophia's mother was to see that her future was not embarrassed by foolish obligations hastily taken up, and perhaps retained from a sense of honor when inclination would cast them off. She told Brent that in all human probability Sophia would marry some one else in twelve months. Thus she put herself in the position of being able, with perfect honesty, to assure Sophia at any future day that Percival Brent neither did nor could expect her to wait for him. And having thus made her position good, with rare moderation, or rather far-sightedness, she did not prevent the young couple meeting occasionally during the few weeks that intervened between the breaking of the engagement and Brent's departure for Australia.

Mrs. Barbarba Temple went yet further in the way of good-natured concession. On the day when Brent came to take his final leave she continued to be out of the way, sending an apology by Sophia for her absence. It was a courageous act, but worldly wise, I presume, like all she did. I believe to the day of her mother's death Sophia never forgot this particular concession. It showed such trust in her daughter, such kind desire not to deprive her of any secret comfort which the parting might give. In fact, it was an act of womanly generosity and courage of which few mothers would have been capable. But have I not said already that our little mother was as truly queen of women as Agamemnon was king of men!

Sophia tried to be cheerful that dull May afternoon; for she saw that her poor fellow's heart was breaking. Indeed, he could hardly speak one word. She had to tell him of a magnificent present which she had made to him in secret, and which was now waiting for him in London. This was a set of foreign traveling boxes, furnished with everything the good little creature could think of as being possibly of use to her dear when he was far away. I wish I could give a catalogue of the articles in leather, glass, steel, silver; how she had slipped into one part a Bible and

[To be Continued.]

A Personal Collision Threatened Between Gen. Gordon and Maj. Bacon, Candidates for Georgia's Gubernatorial Honors.

Courier-Journal.

ATLANTA, May 19.—The joint discussion between Gen. John B. Gordon and Maj. A. O. Bacon, candidates for the Governorship of Georgia, which was opened at Eatonton on Monday, and continues in the leading towns all week, has already developed features of strong personality. Maj. Bacon, who was for ten years Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives, was one of the strongest supporters of Gen. Gordon in both his canvasses for the United States Senate. The retirement of Judge Simmons from the Gubernatorial race left what was supposed to be a walk-over for Bacon. The sudden appearance therefore of Gordon in the race, backed by his appeals to the soldier element, was a sore trial to Bacon, who regarded Gordon as being under political obligations to him. Bacon has made two previous races for the Governorship. When, therefore, at the Eatonton meeting Chairman Nesbitt, in introducing Bacon, declared himself a Gordon man, and further declared his belief that Bacon had the right "to run as often as he pleased," this was regarded as an insult which Bacon resented with a warm display of temper. Nesbitt tried to explain, when Bacon said: "I have not been accustomed to such treatment at the hands of gentlemen." Nesbitt replied: "Then you are not accustomed to the society of gentlemen." As quick as said, Bacon reiterated: "I have lived among your own blood, and associated with them that are of it."

In Gen. Gordon's speech he referred to the fact that Bacon resigned from the Ninth Georgia regiment and kept clear of bullets during the war. Bacon, in an excited manner, declaimed: "Who asserts it, who insinuates it, who repeats it after hearing me today, that I ever resigned any public trust, either in peace or in war, when I was physically able to serve, lies." All through the discussion the greatest feeling was exhibited. When the two gentlemen met in Sparta yesterday, there was much curiosity to see what course Gordon would take. Bacon opened by attacking the resignation of Gen. Gordon from the United States Senate. Gordon's turn now came to hurl the lie, which he did by saying: "There was a time when I did not resign; there is a record that is unsullied even in the estimation of the gentleman who has tried to blacken my name before you. It was made in a time that I didn't resign, for my country needed me." Gen. Gordon repeated the charge that Bacon had left the army during the war, and wound up by declaring that "I am going to be elected, and my friend will then get sicker than he did in 1862." Here Maj. Bacon interposed and said: "Since he has lent himself to my enemies to betray me, I absolve him from all friendship." It is not believed that this debate can go on without a personal collision, as the two men are full of mettle.

A Tough Story.

Cleveland Leader.

A young man staggered into the central police station last night shaking as if palsied. He leaned against the railing of the office and had to be carried to the turnkey's room, where he asked for lodging. He gave his name as John Sullivan, a native of Ireland, aged twenty-eight years. He said he had arrived in New York, a few days ago from the Isthmus of Panama, where he had worked upon De Lesseps' canal until he contracted the Panama fever, the scourge of that land. His home is in Chicago, and he was making his way thither by aid of the poor authorities in the cities along the road. His condition was such that Lieut. Johnson, summoned the district physician, who ordered the ambulance and sent the man to the City Hospital. Sullivan said that he had sailed from New Orleans with a gang of 350 men for Aspinwall, from whence they were sent thirty miles into the interior and set at work excavating for the canal. The fever broke out among the men and three hundred died, Sullivan and forty-nine others only surviving the ravages of the dread disease. Sullivan and two comrades walked to Aspinwall, took a steamer to Kingston, Jamaica, and walked to Port Antoine, where they became stowaways in the hold of a vessel bound for New York. For six days they had nothing to eat and drank the bilge water that lay in the hold.

The Creamery.

Aberdeen Examiner.

Mr. S. M. Johnson, superintendent of the work, has a force of laborers busily engaged upon the excavations for the creamery, while brick and lumber are being piled upon the premises for the building. The location is on North Meridian street, in the vicinity of the compress, the Adams manufacturing establishment, the Illinois Central shops, the ice factory, Berg's saw and planing mills, and the stave factory. There are steam whistles all around it.

The Steamer Nipsic Safe.

NEW YORK, May 22.—The United States steamer Nipsic, from South America, which was thought to have met with an accident passed Sandy Hook inward bound at 6:30 o'clock this morning.