The New Northwest.

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VOLUME X.—NO. 8. PORTLAND, OREGON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1880. PER YEAR—$3 00

HARRY HARCOURT'S DREAM.

BY ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY.

Harry Harcourt was not given to dreaming on ordinary occasions; in fact, he seldom dreamt at all for he was a sound sleeper, with a stomach like an alligator's and a conscience like a baby's. An easy conscience and good digestion are the best promoters of healthy sleep the world over, and we do not wonder that Harry Harcourt slept well. Harry Harcourt had a hobby. Most practical and impractical people have hobbies. My hero's hobby was the imaginary financial, political, legal and every way possible superiority of men's responsibilities over women's duties in raising a family and providing for the household.

Mrs. Harcourt was a pale little woman with a large family. Pale little women are very apt to be mothers of big families. They are like decaying apple trees—exceedingly fruitful because of their predisposition to early death.

Mrs. Harcourt's children were boys, ruddy, rollicking, jolly little romping fellows, whose knees would peep through their trousers and whose elbows would get ragged in spite of their pale mother's unremitting assiduity.

"If I had nothing more to do than you have, Mrs. Harcourt, I am sure I could keep the children's jackets and trousers in order!" said Harry Harcourt, one day, when Ben and Billy came rushing into the great unfurnished farm-house, driving a tandem team of the other boys, and tracking mud upon the newly-mopped floor.

The boys waked the baby, who had just fallen asleep after an hour of incessant rocking, while the mother had wearily plied her needle; and they upset her work-basket in a heap as they galloped across the room in high glee.

Harry always said "Mrs. Harcourt" when he meant to be extremely dignified.

Mrs. Harcourt was not always as meek as she looked, as her husband had many a time discovered to his cost. She had a will of her own when aroused, and Harry Harcourt had once more unwittingly aroused her by riding his strongest hobby directly athwart her sense of justice when she was nervous from over-exertion.

"If I had nothing more to do than you have, Mr. Harcourt, or if *I* had the control of my own earnings as you do, I'd once in a while be able to buy the children something new to wear, so they wouldn't always have to depend upon patches!"

"That's all a woman knows about economy. You'd break me up in three months if you had a free swing at the finances. New clothes for the children, indeed! Let 'em wear their old ones!"

"That's what they have been doing all along, Mr. Harcourt, and they were mostly made up of old clothes in the first place. If I was only free from all the unpaid drudgery that you impose upon me without any remuneration whatever, I would earn money and buy clothes for the children as fast as they are needed; but I have to be cook, nurse, laundress, dish-washer, dairy-maid, scullion, mop rag, needle-woman, and general scapegoat all the time, and all for the sake of being supported! It wasn't so when I was a schoolma'am. I had my own money then, and no thanks to anybody for it, either!"

After delivering herself of this tirade, Mrs. Harcourt shook the screaming baby till it grew silent from sheer exhaustion, and then laid it back in the cradle, while she renewed her efforts with her needle.

She was patching a pair of old and dirty trousers which had reached the vexatious age that required patch upon patch to make them presentable.

"I could do more work than you do, Mrs. Harcourt, and get along with less money, and carry a ball on my shoulder all the time, at that!" said Harry Harcourt, contemptuously.

"Could you, now?" asked the pale little woman, with a bitter smile.

"Of course I could. Women have no responsibilities. I support my family and bear all the burdens of life. I can remember, too, since reflections are in order, Mrs. Harcourt, that there was a time when I had no cares nor responsibilities, no wife nor children to bother me, and nothing under the sun to ruffle my temper."

"Would you like to be rid of me, Harry?"

The indignant husband did not answer in words, but he gave vent to a prolonged whistle and left the room, banging the door after him with a vim that jarred the whole house and set her nerves a-tingling like so many stinging bees in swarming time.

The baby sobbed itself into a grieved and uneasy slumber, the tandem team and rollicking drivers carried off into the woodshed, and the house was still again.

In a little while the trousers were mended, but the overturned contents of the upset work-basket fairly appalled her as she contemplated the promiscuous pile—socks, out at toes and heels and ragged in the ribbing; shirts, minus buttons, with sleeves torn at the elbows, and wristbands frayed at the edges; jackets, with linings torn and pockets worn into shreds; more trousers, a torn mitten, two school-books to cover, and a lunch-bag to supply with a new strap. It was almost supper time, too, and this was Saturday.

Mrs. Harcourt was far too conscientious to do any work on Sunday that could be avoided, and all this mountain of "work, irresponsible work" must be finished before she could sleep. Monday would bring another school day, and it would also bring about the inevitable washing. The children must "look like other children" if their mother lost her life in the effort to keep them scrubbed and fed and whole and clean.

Mrs. Harcourt tiptoed softly out of the room. The baby was nervous, like herself—no wonder, poor thing—and was easily awakened from its fitful slumbers.

There was no kindling wood ready for the kitchen stove, but Mrs. Harcourt was used to that. She split a piece of pitch pine into splinters and soon had a roaring fire and a red-hot oven. In her haste to prepare the meal before the baby should awake and cry, she burnt her meat and scorched her potatoes and burned a heavy crust on her biscuit.

So the supper was indigestible—an unusual thing—but Harry Harcourt ate heartily as usual, and as usual retired early to rest, leaving his pale-faced wife to wash the dishes and scrub the children, and, after they were safe in bed, apply herself to finishing the huge basket of mending before the mantel clock should chime the hour of midnight.

Harry Harcourt felt a little anxious and a trifle mean as he watched her furtively and saw how very pale and weary she was; but he was not the man to unbend from his fancied dignity, nor did he really believe that his wife deserved his sympathy. He lay upon his back in the bedroom adjoining, leaving the door slightly ajar.

Stitch, stitch, stitch, went the weary fingers of his pale-faced wife, as the hours went on, her feet in the meantime keeping up a ceaseless rock, rock, rock, with the swaying cradle.

Harry Harcourt was uneasy. Perhaps it was his supper; perhaps it was his conscience. But his stomach and his conscience were alike imperyious to ordinary disturbances, and I leave the reader to guess the cause of his uneasiness. He raised up on his elbow and gazed out into the room where his wife was sewing.

Stitch, stitch, stitch; rock, rock, rock. Would the stitching and the rocking never stop?

"But pshaw!" thought Harry Harcourt. "What right have I to be uneasy? A woman's work is nothing. Let her stitch and let her rock. It's what women are made for."

Still, he could not help reclining there and watching her.

The clock struck eleven, and still her silent, weary work went on; and, as Harry Harcourt gazed, he fancied that her entire brain and body became transparent, and he could see himself reflected in her thoughts as he had never seen himself before.

"Yes, yes," she soliloquized, and her mental words thrilled him like electricity, "Harry thinks he is the head of this family, and its only provider, stay and support. But, bless him, he doesn't know. I guess I'll retire from the firm and give him a much-needed lesson."

And she bent low over the cradle and kissed the sleeping baby, and even while he gazed at her she disappeared.

What had become of her?

Harry Harcourt arose from his couch and put on his clothes and approached the cradle reverently and cautiously. Near it was her low rocking-chair, and by its side the heaped up work-basket, and her scissors, spools and thimble. On the floor, which was yet damp from the after-supper mopping it had received when the children and himself were in bed, lay a promiscuous array of old clothes, washed, ironed, patched and mended by her patient fingers. He gathered up the worn garments one by one, and, as he touched them, felt that they were warm with the wasted life forces of his pale-faced wife.

The night passed away, and morning, roseate and radiant, beamed in at the uncurtained window where Harry Harcourt sat watching. The baby awoke and began its usual wailing cry. He tried hard to pacify it with the nursing-bottle his wife had provided the night before, but it refused to be comforted. He remembered seeing its mother shake it into a few extra screams, followed by a season of quietude, but when he tried the experiment it did not succeed.

What was he to do?

The older children were up by this time, clamoring and hungry and cold. He knocked them to the right and the left with his open hands and scolded them into trembling silence.

"Where's my mamma?"

The unanswerable question was repeated over and over till Harry Harcourt grew frantic with suspense and grief and bewilderment.

The pile of mending had not all been completed, and the many missing buttons made it very inconvenient for him to dress the children properly for Sabbath school.

The breakfast was a complete failure. The children could not eat his primitive cookery, and the baby's wailing cries racked his nerves—strong and healthy as he was—till he was desperate enough to almost strangle it.

Dinner was a more perplexing meal for him to prepare than breakfast. He whipped Ben and Billy to make them wash the dishes, and whipped them even harder when they broke half of them into a shapeless mass by letting the dish-pan fall.

Monday came at last, and after a sleepless night with the wailing baby, Harry Harcourt went once more through the perplexing work of the morning in the kitchen.

And then came the washing.

A wearier, crosser man than Harry Harcourt never sat down to a cold dinner.

The children skulked in the corners and fairly forgot to play at tandem teaming. In a few days their clothes wore out again, and he could not patch them, nor could he get away from the house to earn or even buy new ones. His own garments grew buttonless, and his food was insupportably indigestible.

When Harry Harcourt looked in the glass, he found himself growing pale, like his vanished wife.

"No wonder she grew white and thin, poor thing," he sighed, sadly. "I shall die before many days if I have to carry all this responsibility on my shoulders without assistance."

"Nobody ever helped mamma," said Billy, and he dodged behind the cradle to avoid being buffeted for his temerity.

"That is true," thought Harry Harcourt.

And then his health began to fail, and his strength forsook him, and his back ached, and his temples throbbed, and his feet grew sore and weary, and he felt himself sinking, sinking, sinking into his grave.

"What will become of the poor children when I am gone?" he thought, the next Saturday evening, as he wearily stitched, stitched, stitched till midnight. "But I deserve no better fate than my present lot, and I have no reason to complain if I do suffer. I never appreciated Fanny. Poor thing! If I only had her back I'd give her the free and equal possession and use of everything on the plantation. She should have help—plenty of it—and all the money she needed to spend, or save, as her own sense would dictate, and I'd never call myself the responsible head, provider and supporter of the family, nor accuse her of having nothing to do—no, *never*. But it's too late now. She's gone, and I am left to carry the load that I would never acknowledge was a load while she had to carry it."

The baby cried harder and louder than ever, and Harry Harcourt felt himself sinking lower and lower in health and strength, till finally he fell sprawling upon the floor, from which he arose at last rubbing the "crazy bone" of his right elbow, and staring around the room in a state of semi-consciousness.

"What in the world's the matter, Harry Harcourt?" asked his pale-faced wife, in alarm.

"Are you really there, Fanny?" he asked, eagerly. "I thought you were dead, darling!"

"No, Harry, I'm not dead yet, but I shall be before long at this rate," was the despairing reply. "I've been mending the children's clothes for three hours while you've been snoring."

"And you haven't been away at all?"

"*I* been away? Why, Harry, you must be crazy! How could *I* get away, I'd like to know? With all these backs to clothe and all these mouths to feed, to say nothing of washing, ironing, churning, scrubbing and taking care of the baby. I've too many responsibilities here to think of going away, unless death calls me. And, to tell you the truth, Harry, I don't think it will be very long before I am called, for my strength is failing rapidly and I have frequent sinking spells. I have felt a half dozen times to-night as if I would sink through the floor. But then it isn't any matter. Maybe when I am gone you can get a wife who can manage better and spare you the humiliation of seeing your children out at the knees and elbows."

"Wife, your husband has been a confounded, selfish, short-sighted idiot, and you've been a silent, suffering angel!" exclaimed Harry Harcourt, clasping her in his strong arms, and seating himself in her rocking-chair with her head resting on his bosom. "I've had a dream, dear, and I've lived through a whole week of your daily life in the last three hours, and I swear to you, by all that's holy, that if I live till Monday morning there shall be strong help provided for you in the kitchen, and you shall have all the money you want to buy clothes for yourself and the children. And I'll never say again that you have nothing to do. Why, there isn't a man in America who could live as long as you have and do the work that you have done for ten years, or ever since we've been married."

"The work is the very smallest part of my trials, Harry. I've been a mother to all these children in the time, you know."

Harry Harcourt hadn't thought of that before; but he considered it now. And he became at once a strong and earnest advocate of equal rights for men and women with the added right to women of protection from hard labor while bearing children.

If you want to hear an unanswerable argument upon the woman question at any time, you've only to say in my hero's hearing that women are supported by men, while men make the living. In short, he has swapped his old hobby horse of masculine supremacy for the new and perfect one of feminine equality. His erewhile pale-faced wife has regained her old-time girlish grace and ruddiness, and there is no better managed household in all the land than hers. Harry Harcourt did not buy the thousand-dollar horse he had set his heart upon, but he restored in its stead the happy, loving heart that had well-nigh been estranged from him through his former acts of greed and selfishness.

A NEGLECTED LETTER.

[In looking through some old letters to-day, we came across the following, which had escaped our notice at the date of its receipt, and remained until the present time. We are very sorry that the oversight occurred, and do not wonder that "D. C." did not send an account of the second discussion. Any suitable explanation and apology will be sufficient atonement for our neglect.—ED.]

FREEPORT, W. T., June 5, 1879.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW NORTHWEST:

Thinking that a few lines from this part of the heritage of men might not be amiss, I write for the first time to any paper. Mrs. A. S. Duniway delivered two lectures at the church in our village a short time ago on the inequality of citizenship. Though previously unannounced, they were well attended and productive of results—first, to set all parties to thinking; second, to stir up the old traditions against women in the mind of Professor Elyea. The Professor challenged Mr. J. M. Hawthorn, an unassuming old man, to a discussion of the question of woman's rights. Mr. H. accepted, and a large audience was present at the appointed time. By the Professor's request, Mr. H. affirmed, and, affirming, claimed the right to select two judges, choosing Mrs. Davolt and Mrs. Catlin, and allowed the Professor to select Mr. Pile as President. Mr. H. opened with a twenty-five-minute speech, confining himself strictly to arguments and demonstrations. The Professor followed with a speech of over an hour's length, keeping wide of the subject, and seeming to depend entirely on eloquence. Mr. H. then occupied fifteen minutes when the Professor objected to his time. He therefore submitted the question, without summing up, for decision on its merits. The judges gave the case to the affirmative.

I have just learned that a reverend gentleman has notified Mr. Hawthorn that he will meet him in debate on the question, and also that the latter gentleman has accepted the offer. I will write a second time if this meets your favor, though I am a novice at writing for the press as well as in the suffrage question.

Yours for the perfect equality of man and woman in all the relations of life, D. C.

A Boston paper gives an account of a remarkable woman born in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, and now ninety-three years old. When she was but twenty-four, having two young children, her husband was brought home to her from his wrecked vessel an invalid for life. He saw nothing but destitution staring him and his family in the face. Then it was that her wonderful energy was equal to the occasion. She started a store, very small at first, but its profits gradually increased, and she says that many a day she has taken in over a hundred dollars. For fifty-nine years she made monthly visits to Boston in small sail-boats to replenish her stock. For fifty years she took care of her invalid husband, who was not able even to dress himself. She educated her two boys and started them in business. She also adopted, clothed, fed, educated, and placed in good positions in the world twenty orphan boys and girls, besides visiting and taking care of the sick at all hours, day and night.

From the October *National Citizen*: "The Methodist Conference at Cincinnati in May passed a resolution permitting women to wear ribbons, and to dress as they please. In other words as they found the women did wear ribbons and dress as they pleased, the church graciously fell in line. The church follows, seldom leads. It was the most bitter opponent of woman in the temperance work thirty years ago, but now it loves to support and sustain her in that work."