THE PRICE OF PEACE.

BY MRS. HENRY L. PRATT.

In all my travels, from Maine to Rhode Island, I've never come across a couple more unlike than what Mr. and Mis' Nims was.

Mr. Nims was one of these shut-up-to-himself men, and he'd glum 'round for days over some little matter that a word would 'a' set right if he'd only been plain-hearted.

Mis' Nims was all the other way—talk it out and done with it; a little hasty and imprudent, maybe, but she is well-meaning, Mis' Nims is, and as good a woman to neighbor with as I want to see.

I hev thought whether or no being of different persuasions didn't work to keep 'em apart. See, she was brought up an orthodox, and he favored the Methodists. She joined with him and laid out to do her part amongst 'em, but she never was to home with the Methodists.

Then, another thing, she hated a dog, and Mr. Nims must always have a great clumsy hulk, good for nothing but to bark and eat and lie around under foot, while Mis' Nims, she marn't have even a kitten, though she set everything by a cat. And so it went.

One day I stepped in to borrow Mis' Nims' cutting-board, and just as I got to the door I heard her say: "You ain't going to turn Charley in amongst my flowers, be ye?"

He didn't condescend any reply—not as I could hear.

"Now, Mr. Nims," says she, "he's stepped on my pansy-bed and broke off a dahlia a'ready. Ain't there any other place on this whole farm where you can put him? I don't want him here," says she.

Mr. Nims' countenance didn't change more than a wooden Indian.

"I do," says he. "There's a good bating of grass to be fed down, and I calculate to leave Charley here for a spell," says he. And he budged off as stiff as though he'd swallowed a a ramrod.

Mis' Nims didn't say a word more, but she gave that old dog a push that sent him out of doors with a yelp; and I didn't blame her a mite, nuther.

I brought the cutting-board back as they was a-settin' down to dinner, and Mis' Nims asked me to draw up to the table. She had an excellent dinner—Mis' Nims is an elegant cook—but not one identical word did he speak, only to ask if I'd have another potato.

She seemed chipper enough, but I see a shadow pass over her countenance when the old horse sneezed right under the window where her piney bed was, and the dog, that had got back under the table by that time, yopped out as though somebody had accidentally trod on his tail.

Mr. Nims was a great hand for raising colts, but she was a terrible scary creature; and I expect riding after half-broken colts has given her a fit of the newralogy many's the time.

He was dreadful set in his way—same as the general run of men air—and it was like fighting the east wind to try to move him out of it. Them two used to remind me of a pair of napajawed scissors that you can't cut with. Some might have put the heft of the blame on to her; and I s'pose she did nag him some, and flash out when she'd better have kep' still.

I run in one day to borrow a sleeve pattern, when I heard Mr. Nims speaking out kind o' gruff, and I halted, for I didn't wish to intrude. (I never wear squeaky shoes myself). I didn't find out what went before, but the first I heard was this:

"I can't please you," says he. (It beat me if he'd ever tried.) "You don't like my hired men, you ain't satisfied with my breed of cows, the color of the corn barn don't suit ye, and I'm thinking you'll be happier if we divide and separate. You've always thought more of your brother Asa than you do of me, and you can be free to go to him, so you'll be well fixed."

"Why, Mr. Nims!" I heard her kind o' gasp out, and I surmised by the sound that she let fall a teacup. I I looked to hear her burst out in her quick way, and I'll warrant ye he supposed she'd flare up, and that would be the end on't. But she seemed dumfounded. By 'n' by she said, quite quiet:

"I'm sure Asa would be pleased to have me there. He misses Sarah Jane, and so do the children. There has to be somebody at the head to make things so. But what would you do, Elisha?"

I had to smile, for she scarcely ever called him Elisha.

"I can look out for myself," says he, and stalked off to the barn.

I went right in, and said I guessed I could tell what was in his mind. He was calculating to make a home for his mother, and get along they two together. Old lady Nims never was any too particular, and now she had the shaking palsy. So I could see Mis' Nims set right to thinking how things would go to wrack and ruin under such no management. She is an awful nice housekeeper herself, and set a great store by her things. She made an arrant up chamber pretty soon, and was gone quite a spell. When she came down her eyes were some red, but she stuffed it out and went on as matter-of-fact as the cows coming home.

"I've got to flax around," says she, "and get Elisha's new shirt done; and there's the pickle-vinegar needs scalding, and the brine, too. And I was laying out to put up a few more quinces. Elisha is very partial to quince sauce."

The next day I went over to offer my help, and she seemed glad to have me there. I guess she felt she must let out a little to somebody, and she knows I'm no hand to run and tell. She told me they were going to Squire Hosley's to get his help about a division of the property. She wanted to wait till after Monday, so she could get one more wash done, but Mr. Nims had laid out to begin cutting corn Monday; and Saturday suited his time best. Pretty soon she said: "I hope you'll look in and do what you can to see that Elisha is comfortable," says she.

I had my thoughts, but I kep' 'em to myself, and only said I should admire to do anything I could.

Then she hushed up and said no more.

Squire Hosley's wife is second cousin to me, and she had been after me to help about her sewing. So I thought I might as well go there Saturday as any day.

The squire's office is at one side of the house, with a door opening into the orchard and another door opening into a little back room. Mis' Hosley uses this for a sewing room. So there I was. I had set the door into the office on the jar—the room being so small and close.

It was still work that I was upon, mending stockings and the children's clothes, and I couldn't help but hear all that was said in the office.

Mr. Nims made the explanation of what they wanted, and said it was understood between them that he kep' the house and farm. I'll warrant ye! I knew he'd never yield an inch of his ground. He was a man who wanted all the land joining his, and to plant in your garden.

"The bed and table stuff is hers," said he.

"Oh, no, Elisha!" says she, "I don't consent to that. Sarah Jane had a good setting-out, and Asa's house is full. Besides, if I find I need more things I can make 'em, and your mother's eyesight plagues her. She can't do as she could once," she says.

"The bed and table furnishings are hers," Mr. Nims repeated. "What she didn't make she bought with her butter money."

"No, 'Lisha," Mis' Nims began; but Squire Hosley interrupted her. I see they was beginning to wear on his patience.

"Why not put the property in two piles and draw cuts, if you've no choice. That would be fair," says he.

I knew by the way I heard her snuff that Mis' Nims hadn't give up, though she said no more—not then; but from that they went on to wrangle over every stick of furniture. She should have no use for this, that and the other thing. An' no more wouldn't he.

I could hear the squire drum on the table, and I knew he was getting restless. Finally he made an end of the talk by saying: "Why not let Mr. Nims keep the downstairs furniture, and she take what is above? How would that do?"

Well, they demurred, each one being afraid the other would be cheated, but at last, seemingly, let it go, and worked their way on to the live stock.

"Three cows for her," says he. "Two will be full and plenty for me. She was always more for a dairy than what I was," he says.

"Why, 'Lisha, you are going to make beef of old Brindle," says she, "and that leaves only four."

"I've concluded not to beef her, she is such a favorite of yours," says he.

That was a great piece of news. Mrs. Nims had felt awful cut up about having Brindle fatted and killed, for she called that cow the best for butter in the herd. But Mr. Nims appeared firm.

"And the pigs," he began. "I don't want any pigs! I've no use for 'em. What can I do with pigs down to Baker street?"

And she burst out crying. She had set a good deal by that litter o' pigs, bringing 'em up by hand, as you might say, for the old mother died when they were eight days old.

After that it was still as death for a minute, then Squire Hosley spoke up.

"My good friends," says he, "if you can't agree about living apart, my best advice is that you agree to go on living together."

For a minute or two all was still again, and the old clock ticked up like the Day of Judgment. By 'n' by Mr. Nims spoke rather low:

"What do you say, Louisy?"

"I was thinking whether we hadn't oughter drive over to your mother's and see how her cough is. I'm some worried about that cough," says she.

"I'm agreeable to that," says he.

As I was leaning forward, I caught sight through the crack of the door of him mopping up his face with his old red handkerchief; so I see he had felt it some. Squire Hosley, he said nothing.

Well, I made my way home middling early, and was keeping a watchout as they driv into the yard betwixt sundown and dark, and I see her stop and pat the yellow dog that was flopping his tail on the top step of the piazza. Old Bose was so tickled that he jumped 'round as graceful as a cow; and I knew by the looks of the back of Mr. Nims' neck that he took it in. After awhile I made an arrant to carry over a dish of Dutch cheese, and there they were, eating their supper as cheerful as a basket of chips.

"Set up and have a cup o' tea," says she. "We've had quite a ride this afternoon," says she. "We've been to see Mother Nims, and Elisha drove 'round by the bridge. It is all of a mile further, but he knows how skittish I be about crossing the ferry in Uncle Seth's old scow. I'm silly, I s'pose. Elisha and I, we think mother is getting too old and feeble to live alone, and we have about persuaded her to break up and come to us."

She run on for a spell, but that was all she said concerning their arrangements. And—would you believe it?—from that day to this Mis' Nims has never opened her mouth to me on the subject, though she knows I never repeat. And now, to see them two jogging 'round together after ol' Charley, as content as ducks in a millpond, nobody mistrusts it took e'ena'most a separation to unite them.

Nobody knows but me and the old squire. It won't get out from him—he is as close-mouthed as a fish. And I was never one to talk.—Outlook.

—The second war with Great Britain began June 18, 1812, and ended on February 17, 1815. It involved the enlistment of 471,622 volunteers and the service of 85,000 regulars, a total of 576,622.