## "ONLY ME!"

Fair stood the city by the sea,
Teeming with health and life,
Till fever-laden grew the air
And pestilence was rife.

By scores and hundreds people fled
Some refuge safe to find,
While helpless, hopeless, poor and sad,
The many stayed behind.

A few stood bravely in their place,
Daring the fever's breath,
Sending the printed record forth
Of each day's woe and death.

A little lad came to them there,
And told his sobs between,
How "brother Jim" had died that morn,
His brother, aged seventeen.

"Please put it in the paper, sir,
For he was always good,
And, since our father's death, to us
In father's place has stood."

Next day he came with wistful face:
"This time 'tis Dick and Joe,
They will be buried in one grave,
For they are twins, you know."

A week passed by; he came again,
With hat off "Excuse me, sir,
But heigh ho! I couldn't help
But tell you about her."

Once more he came with weary step,
Climbed the steep stair, and said
With quivering lip and faltering voice:
"Please tell them mother's dead!"

He turned about with puzzled look,
As if some question vexed,
Then murmured softly to himself:
"I wonder who'll go next!"

"How many still remain?" said one
Who spake with kind intent,
While on the poor boy's troubled face
A pitying look he bent.

The well-worn cap was pulled to hide
A face 'twas sad to see
On one so young; checking his sobs,
He said: "There's only me!"

—Mrs. C. H. N. Thomas, in Good Housekeeping

## A GLACIAL PERIOD.

### Which Is Followed by a Decided and Satisfactory Thaw.

"Here I am, mother. I found all the doors open, so walked straight up to my old room. A fellow doesn't stand on ceremony when he hasn't seen his maternal relative for a year. Here's your boy, mother."

Ralph Wakefield threw his valise in a corner, and walked quickly toward an elderly woman who was standing just inside the door of a pretty "middle chamber."

"Ralph Wakefield! How you do like to surprise folks. Two days sooner than you promised! Well, well! Now your pa *will* be set up."

Just this, and a hearty handshake. Nothing more. Doubtless, Mother Wakefield's heart would have thrilled with a new joy had she fallen on the neck of that handsome, manly son, and covered his face with kisses; but then—she would have thought the act "rather silly." On Ralph's part, had such a salute been offered, he would have returned it with interest; but there would have crossed his mind a dim suspicion that "mother was beginning to fail."

They lived in Connecticut.

"Pa's in the field, and Ruth is woodsing somewhere. You are going to have the spare room and be made company of. Ruth has taken yours."

"Who, pray, is Ruth?"

"Ruth Wise. I wrote you about her."

"So you did, mother, so you did. But I thought the visit would be ended before I came. An overworked school-teacher, the daughter of an old girl-friend of yours; come here for rest and change. I wish she hadn't! Mother, I'm disappointed; I'm vexed. I feel frustrated. I've worked hard over those old law-books in the dingy city for more than a year, without a play-day; and now that I'm fairly inside the bar, and a first-class partnership awaiting me in September, I wanted to have the strain let up on me entirely. I wanted you and father and the old farm all to myself this vacation."

"She'll not be in your way, Ralph. She almost lives out o' doors."

"But why did you give her my room?"

"Because she said the spare room was too nice to dry ferns in, and to keep mosses and rocks and toad-stools in. Fungi, she calls them. So I gave her your old quarters, that are used to such things. Take a peep at her books. She thinks the world and all of them few books."

"O Mother Wakefield, what have you done?"

Ralph, whose innate sense of propriety had restrained his eyes from wandering about the room no longer his own, now allowed them to rove over the titles of the volumes neatly arranged in the small book-case. Something between a sigh and a whistle was his first comment.

"Climatic Theories! Buckle, Mill, 'Revue Scientifique,' 'Deep Sea Explorations,' 'Spenser on the Unconditioned,' Darwin's 'Expression in Animals.' Great Egypt, what a list! Wise by name and wise by nature, I perceive. Mother, one thing is settled; I shan't like her."

"Nonsense, Ralph! You read all these things; why shouldn't she?"

"No reason, of course. Only I don't prefer masculine tastes in a woman."

"She's no masculine tastes, Ralph. She's bright and capable, and full of fun. And she's as handy to help in the kitchen as if she'd always lived on a farm. And she likes to talk about dress as well as any girl."

"Talk! Oh, you haven't heard her talk yet. Science is her vocation, and metaphysics her recreation. Philology, ethnology and the cosmos for breakfast; pre-historic man for dinner, and the survival of the fittest for supper! Mother, I wanted a good time. I wanted to work with father in the hay-field, and to eat my dinner without a coat, if I felt like it. I wanted to eat pie between meals sometimes, and to go to sleep afternoons on the lounge.

"Yes, indeed," said sympathetic Ruth. "And there are flying-machines to be perfected. Then think of faith-cure and hypnotism!"

"Humbugs!" groaned Father Wakefield.

"But there *are* mysteries which are not humbugs; every thing connected with electricity is mysterious. Think of the photophone, and all other phones. What a mystery is the phonograph; and—oh, so many other things!"

"Name some of them, please," said Ralph.

"They can hardly be named," she said, with a sort of reverent hush in her voice. "I call them the Reserves of nature. They are so fine, so subtle. What hints there are in what Ruskin calls the 'choices of the atoms,' shown in crystallization. What miracles are the lovely singing flames, as Tyndall shows them, and the light waves that have their choices, also. Think of the musical sounds that lie outside the gamut of our hearing, our present, this world hearing."

She stopped, her face radiant, her eyes sparkling. Ralph could not think of one sarcastic word to utter, but smiled upon the young enthusiast with heartfelt sympathy. And in spite of the fact that again, in their walks together, she treated him to the blankest of statistics, geological, paleontological and historical, the acquaintance ripened and mellowed with the golden days of the late summer in a very satisfactory manner.

One afternoon Ruth had gone to the wood alone, and returning, near sunset, to the meadow-bars, was surprised to find Ralph waiting for her in the shadow of a spreading maple. He held in his hand a New York paper.

"Laden, as usual," he said, looking at the bunch of greens in her hand, amongst which was sprinkled a brilliant red.

"Only some Lobelia Cardinalis," she said, "and a few sprigs of Artemisia Santonica, commonly called wormwood."

"I came to find you," he began, ignoring the high-sounding names, "and to read to you an account of a most extraordinary discovery. Greatest event of the age, and quite in your line. Transference of brain from one cranium to another. It's going to prove the great renovator of humanity. Transfusion of blood not to be named in comparison. Now listen. I'll just summarize. A Prussian soldier condemned to death for the murder of his Colonel; left in charge of surgeons; they remove his brain; chloroform, of course; did not kill him. Next thing, introduce the brain of a wine merchant who had died suddenly of heart disease, with brain in perfect health. The thing took root, grew, felt at home; man recovered; escaped execution. The best of it is that he was never afterward profane. Had the wine merchant's memory; used to ask old customers to buy of him. Mixed entities, you see. I hope you comprehend, Miss Ruth."

Now it happened that Miss Ruth, having cautiously picked up the paper from the piazza floor, where it had fallen while Ralph lay asleep on the bench, had read the identical story; had also ascertained by the editorial note appended, that it was doubtless a clever hoax, and that the great name of Virchow, which gave plausibility to the story, had no right there. She was, therefore, entirely prepared for the onslaught.

"I can comprehend, but can not approve," was the cool reply. "Would it not be a great impertinence, could I help, indeed, regarding it as a great wrong, if I, on departing from this present scene of action, were to be stopped on the threshold, turned back, and set to work again in a new organism? The immortal spark again imprisoned

'In the dark house of the body,
Cooking victuals, lighting fires,'

to eke out some other person's individuality? Never will I countenance such a nefarious scheme—never!"

"But," said Ralph, "take another view. I have arrived, we will say, at the age of fifty. My brain, from severe study, and the heavy responsibilities of public life, is beginning to show slight symptoms of weakness. I call in two skillful medical men, impecunious, but burning with scientific zeal. I acquaint them with my wishes. They have access to the hospitals. A little management brings about the desired result. I pass a few days in retirement, with head bandaged, we will say for neuralgia. I recover, and go out into the world, a man happily renewed and enriched by the presence of a young and healthy brain in my cranium. I am good for another thirty years of distinguished usefulness. Blessed science!"

"But you should consider the victimized entity. Go back to my own case. Think of the fine gray matter of my brain stolen to inform the sluggish protoplasm of an indolent, selfish or merely fashionable woman. Think of the struggles of my poor brain to be certain whether I was myself or the other woman. Imagine my part of the ego trying to assume entire control; would not the other woman, through habit, association or some tendency in the blood, be continually thwarting me? She might even wear bangs! Could my brain do any worthy work or have any enjoyment of itself behind bangs? No, fond as I am of science, I could never abet it."

They talked gaily together till the sun shied an arrow at them from under the lowest branch of the great maple, and Ruth rose to go.

"Please sit a little longer, Ruth. I have waited for days for a chance to tell you something, and you would not give it me. Will you, now?"

"I will listen, yes—a few minutes."

"I want to tell you how much I have learned and am learning from you. You have given me new eyes. You have transfigured Nature for me, and made me in love with her, and, Ruth, you and Nature are so much alike, that in loving her, I have learned"—

"Indeed, indeed we must go home."

"One minute, Ruth. Stay, do you know I sometimes think—I almost believe—that you have been, in a manner, deceiving me a little? Acting a kind of part; making me think you could never love any thing but science. Now, is it so?"

A rosy flush swept over Ruth's face, but she only shook her head and reached across the grass for her sun-hat.

"You are not kind, Ruth. You know what I want to say. Tell me, am I right?"

"I don't know, Ralph. If any one has deceived you, I think it must have been the—the other woman." She pulled desperately at the grass-blades, but would not look up.

"Well, then, if I were to tell the other woman that I forgive her for fooling me, and ask her forgiveness for having misunderstood her, tell her that I love her—love her dearly, and ask for a little corner of her sweet heart, I wonder if this woman's lips would answer me?"

It is supposed they did answer, but for several minutes the voices were too low for the birds to overhear. Then louder: "And Ruth, you do care for people in other ways than just as aggregates of molecules, don't you?"

"Oh, certainly. Those who *are* any thing else."

"And you don't care for ultimate particles?"

"No. But I dote on the fourth dimension—"

"Hush! And you've no faith in such absurd, unchristian stuff as reincarnation?"

"Well, really, I"—

"At all events, if you return to this globe two times, or two hundred times, you will be just the same Ruth that you are now."

"If I can."

"And marry me every time."

"O Ralph!"

The tea-table was laid on the cool piazza, as two unconscious-looking individuals walked up and took their places with apologetic smiles.

"Mother," said Ralph, when the meal was over and he had followed that busy matron about the house until he could obtain private audience, "mother, my predjudices are gone, decomposed, dissolved, precipitated, taken up into new combinations. Ruth and I have agreed to climb the hill of science together."

"I'm not surprised," the good lady replied, wiping her spectacles with an air of triumph. "I've been thinking for some time past that the Glacial Period was about ended."—Helen Bostwick Bird, in Woman's Journal.

I think I'll spend most of my time in the barn; take my meals on the back porch; baked apples and milk, beans, any thing you may have to spare. I can't face a young lady who prefers cave-dwellers to ordinary people, and who will look a whole Glacial Period at me across the table."

"Ralph, you ought to have more sense than to talk so. Folks might think you were afraid her learnin' would put yours in the shade," suggested Ralph's mother, wickedly. Then she reminded him that it was two hours yet till tea-time, and that there was a berry pie cut in the pantry, along with some nice root-beer made by Ruth's own hands.

"Root-beer! Ah, Sanscrit roots, I suppose."

"Try it. You'll taste dandelion and burdock plain enough, I'll warrant." They went down-stairs together.

And then—and then, in the chamber they had left, a little dressing-closet softly opened, and a neatly-combed head was thrust out.

"Oh, how small it makes you feel to overhear people talking, even when you can't help it! If I had only been dressed, and could have walked right out! And to think he never once looked at the upper shelf where the poetry is! How ignorant of him to suppose I can not enjoy these precious books without being a stiff, angular, 'strong-minded' old thing! I wanted to like dear Auntie Wakefield's only son, but now I can not. Such a narrow, conceited fellow! I've half a mind to fool him by acting the part of a frivolous, fashionable girl, without an idea in her head. I could do it. But he isn't worth the trouble. Better leave his majesty entirely to himself."

Nevertheless, it was a very courteous and agreeable young man whom Ruth found when, two hours later, she descended to the tea table and was formally introduced to Mr. Ralph Wakefield.

For several days their acquaintance made little progress. When not engaged in household duties the young lady wandered in the woods and fields, as had been her wont, or sat in her little room holding sweet companionship with the slandered books. When she talked with Ralph, it was usually about the dressing of a salad, the relative merits of currant jelly and raspberry jam, or the kind of geraniums that always prospered best under her care. Once when she asked his opinion as to the trimming most appropriate for the caps she was making for his mother—whether he preferred quilled ribbon or muslin frills—and he answered that he knew not one from the other, she was moved to tell him in the most innocent manner that she had some books up-stairs which he needed to read for instruction. All the young man's attempts to draw out any opinions she might have ended in failure. He received but the shortest and dryest of answers. Yet there was at such times something in her eyes and in her manner that puzzled him. She could not school her tell-tale features into proper immobility, and after a time Ralph's wonderment began to border on enlightenment.

Finding himself growing more interested in her every day, in spite of her reserve, he changed his tactics and entertained her with commonplace topics—his life in the city, his law studies, his ideas of jurisprudence, the acquaintances he had made, his outlook for the future. Gradually the amiability of each found full play; interest and confidence grew up on both sides, and, in spite of her grim resolves, Ruth found herself almost unconsciously acting once more something like her real self. Still, she fought against the change, and might have continued to fight, until

"October, with her hair aflame,
Flushed brow, and purple finger tips,
Across the Southern orchards came,
And touched the apple with her lips—"

had not an accident, a veritable accident, happened to her sewing-machine.

Strangely enough, Ruth began scolding, not the machine, but the work.

"Oh, the supreme folly of modern dress-making! I am so tired of hems and tucks, bands and ruffles, puffings and flutings! And now that the hemmer will not hem, and the gatherer will not gather, what can I do with this mass of trimming? Auntie, I hope that if I ever come into this world a second time a great wave of reform will have swept away all such flummery as muslin puffs and ruffles."

"Same of potato-bugs," murmured Father Wakefield, sleepily, from his chair.

A voice from the door-step. "I have no desire to re-appear on this sublunary stage when the curtain falls upon my present mortal existence; and I have no faith in Reichenbach's absurd doctrine of re-incarnation." It was Ralph.

Ruth, who had believed the young man was at the post-office, a mile away, gave a great start that threatened to overturn the unfortunate sewing-machine. But she was not to be disconcerted, and answered promptly:

"Are you sure of that? Now, I can not give this old world up so willingly. I like it. It is the only world I know any thing about. I want to know what will become of the Anarchists; and how long England will remain a monarchy. Then there is Japan, growing so interesting; and—and the North Pole."

"I'll excuse the North Pole," said Ralph, "but I do feel an interest in Pasteur's discovery, and the Bacon-Shakespeare cipher. And I confess to a yearning desire to know how the Philadelphia Public Buildings will look when completed."