

THE RED CLOUD CHIEF.

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RED CLOUD. . . . NEBRASKA.

THE DEATH'S-HEAD CANE.

A Pathetic Story as Told by a Stately Prima-Donna.

She appeared almost transfixed for the moment, seated before the old spinet, pausing in the midst of the soft nocturne to contemplate the old teak-wood walking stick with its swallow-tail death's head and leathern tassels and triple bands of gold inscribed with pompous flourishes—Madeline Mark, the stately prima-donna, upon whom now the world had turned its favoring eyes.

"Come! sit closer to me," she said. "The carriage will not be here this half hour. I will tell you of one who loved me, who gave up his life that triumph might be mine. Would to heaven I had been worthy!"

"That came was my father's. He was one of the brave few who survived Trafalgar, and whom the good queen decorated with her own hands. For an especial act of bravery she also gave him this token, and beautiful indeed was it then,—a solid gold head where now is a staring skull, more of an imperial scepter than the staff of a hero. That cane has witnessed all the divine comedy of our lives.

"I was just sixteen when I made my debut. I recall with what rapture I sprang from the stage after the third encore and felt my proud father's arms about me, his dear kiss of gratulation upon my fevered brow. But ah! with the coming of triumph came the monster which has crossed the threshold of many a happy home and driven peace into the hearth-flames. Ambition!—ah, what have I not to answer yet for thee!"

"As a risen star I was much sought by the court and the sincere alike. I was invited everywhere, received with flattering honors for so small an achievement, my father ever beside me. One night an incident occurred which directed the whole course of my future. It was at a reception of a great lady whose mansion faced a fashionable square. After quite an ovation I started down the marble stairway, dazzled at the magnificence about me. Just as I stepped by the great candelabrum, the fair hostess, who appeared indeed angelic at that moment, with whitest shoulders and dazzling jewels, glanced up and approached me. "Bless me!" she said. "The poor child has no cloak!" and, with perhaps a pompous desire to be thought gracious, she threw her own magnificent white mantle over my shoulders, walking by my side. Suddenly, in the great mirror, I caught sight of the great lady and myself side by side. It was a revelation. I became the deformed transformed. Under the enchantment of this one moment I grew tall, noble, heroic. Was I not her equal, and more beautiful than she? Wherein lay the difference between this one of the greatest ladies of the land and the struggling singer? A white silk cloak—nothing more!

"It was two years before I met the great lady again, and that was when my father and I were celebrating one of his rare Sabbaths of rest in the park. A swift regal carriage turned down from an unexpected nook, and my eyes met those of my benefactress. Ere I could shrink into ambush, as was my foolish impulse, she recognized me, saluted, then ordered her carriage drawn to the curbstone, beckoning me thither.

"My dear," she murmured, seductively. "I have watched your struggles these two years, and know the ambitions of your heart. I am going to give the initiative to the success you covet. Day after to-morrow night the prince of—will honor me at a reception given for him at my house. You will come, and perhaps I shall request you to sing. If you do, you may win a glance of favor from his highness, which, I need not say, means a passport into public favor. Come. Am I not very good?"

"In my speechless gratitude I made some inarticulate murmur of surprise and delight.

"Remember! Tuesday night at ten. Do not disappoint me!" And with a wave of the hand, and a smile half of patronage, half pity, the carriage rolled down under the intertwining trees.

"I stood still a moment, scarce realizing my good fortune; then I ran to my good father, and exultantly told him all.

"Father! father!" I exclaimed. "Think of it! I shall meet the great prince, and I shall sing for him. Why is not all the world mine now?"

"Delightful, my child!" he said, with that half joy that was so full of meaning. "And you shall go by all means!"

"The dress!" I said, at length; "where and how shall I ever obtain one fit to bear the scrutiny of a prince?"

"For a moment he looked baffled. Then he turned his face away, striking his palm with the gold-headed cane. "You shall go," he said, calmly.

"For the two days I worked like a battle-painter—like one who prepares for a great coup d'état. The lovely gown was procured; and even when I noted that the solid gold head of my good father's staff was replaced by this sorrowful death's-head, I did not even feel reproach at this one unspeakable sacrifice. I was to meet the great prince and to sing for him; to get a glimpse at myself in the great mirror once more; and, sweeter than all, to speak and be spoken to, not as a patronized menial, but as an equal. Ah! to these achievements of splendor what were the sacrifices of a single soul, though he were indeed my father?

"He had brought me a huge bunch of roses. Ah, yes; his daughter must have flowers, if not jewels. I found them places of favor upon my bosom, and one burning, scarlet bud for my hair. I reached up and kissed him for

his dear and generous thought. He turned his face aside and choked. It must have seemed to him like the kiss of betrayal, giving him over in hostage to the fangs of ambition.

"Come, my child," he said, softly. "The carriage is waiting. Let us not delay."

"But, once in the whirling midst of the assemblage of celebrities, the vision of the death's-head cane vanished before the magnificence about me. The great lady was so dazzled at my sudden transformation that instead of placing me in one corner, deputizing certain gallants to take turns in amusing me till I should be summoned to sing, she took my arm and led me once or twice up and down before the great company. This crowning act of diplomacy taught me the secret of worldly success.

"When at last I was called upon to sing, there was a generous flutter of interest in my behalf; the murmurs suddenly hushed as I ventured, with the timidity which gave my voice an added sweetness and tremor, upon the opening notes of a Spanish love song, and I felt the hot blood mount to my cheeks. Oh, how strangely sweet and tender were my own notes to me!—like the mellow colors of a rare picture taken from a garret, framed in white and gold, and set up in a place of favor in a royal salon.

"I had sung twice ere I noted the great prince's eyes upon me, and from that moment I sang but for him. When the soft cadence fell trembling at the close, I turned shyly. His highness had risen, and stood staring with that calm impertinence which is the prerogative of royalty only; but I struggled bravely under the glance, conquering. Then came the presentation and few interchanges of civilities, and offering his arm, he led me down before the staring army of rivals for the honor of his interest, and a moment later I found myself seated beside him amid the rare and odoriferous exotics of the conservatory.

"You sing divinely!" he said. "I brought you here, first, that I might tell you not second, that the remembrance of your sweet voice might not be marred by those whose efforts follow yours. Come! is not this a naive confession?"

"Your highness is very gracious," I murmured. "I can but thank you."

"For half an hour I walked in the clouds of glory upon some sublime pinnacle, and then supper was announced. To my surprise and added triumph, and to the dismay of my rival better, I was granted the privilege of accompanying him to the banquet; and thither, down through the lantern-lit vista of palms and flowers we wandered, chatting leisurely, my former awe somewhat diminished, my better qualities in command. Even at table I was at ease. Nothing seemed to overwhelm me now. The great silver candelabra, the ever-recurring surprises of epicurean art, the sparkle of cut glass, and the incense of rare flowers, seemed my due, as if I had been born amid them in some prenatal existence, and at last was restored to them. Suddenly—oh, how could it have happened!—I overturned a glass into the prince's lap. A slight shudder at the icy shock, and with the deftness of a magician the great man covered my disgrace, and leisurely bore on the thread of conversation as if nothing had happened. His tact made a profound impression upon me.

"Your highness," said I, a moment later, almost whispering like an eremite saying his beads before his patron saint, "you have taught me wherein lies a ruler's success; the tact which helps others to conceal their errors while bestowing their homage."

"He smiled, much pleased at the naïvete. "Ah, my dear lady," he said, softly. "I would rather you had poured it upon my head, in the manner of the vestals of old."

"When the guests were about leaving I was one of the first to receive the service of the maids, and soon loitered down the grand staircase as I had done some two years before. I recall that far-off hour as an angel might recall the poor little triumph of earth—recall and smile pityingly. Suddenly, through the dazzling groups, I spied the prince. With a sign of recognition he arose and came toward me, abruptly leaving a bevy of the favored, who watched their defeat in angry consternation.

"Ah! and I shall have the added honor of escorting you to your carriage," he exclaimed, bowing; and so led me—oh, how thankful I was that I had a carriage!—from the brilliant corridor, out upon the wide marble steps before which was the long line of equipages awaiting the guests.

"At the first breath of the outer world I was struck with a terrible thought. Father! how could I conceal him from the great prince?"

"You are alone?" said his highness, interrogatively.

"No; my father is—is here—or, at least he—he was to be! I faltered; for, peering yonder, I spied my father opening the carriage door to receive me. Oh, how forlorn, ignoble, like the whipped dog he looked! I shuddered, and a secret, wicked pride surged the blood into my temples. If the earth would only part and swallow him, and so save me from utterest downfall, the climax of this haughty, imperial role in the drama of worldly ambition.

"Is your father not here then?" said the prince.

"No," I choked, wincing under the lash of my own falsehood. "But—my—er—coachman is very trustworthy, and—" but we now stood beside the carriage door, beside that pale face and attenuated figure. I gave him one glance, noting the illumination of pride and love in his supernatural eyes, then I turned away. That caricature of a former greatness, that mere semblance of a man, that whipped-dog attitude—no, no, no. I could not look him in the eyes again, much less make him known to the great man who now bent and kissed my finger-tips which trembled in his grasp, and whispered a word or two in my innocent ears which must have shot the hot blood into my poor

I bowed my head at the recital of this pathetic history, so vivid, so real, from the great singer's lips, heightened by the unguileful changes of that mobile face and made music by the intense clearness of that tremulous voice. When I looked up Madeline had turned and, with eyes full of tears, regarding that death's-head came hanging before her, she struck on the old spinet the opening chord of the great opera whose fair heroine she was soon to revive with such irresistible pathos.

"Hark!" she said, pausing. "what is that rumbling?"

"It is the carriage," said I.—Charles Edward Barnes, in Demorest's Magazine.

HUSKING TIME.

Harvest Home Discourse By Rev. Dr. Talmage.

Gathering the Grain That Is Ripe For the Harvest—The Final Garnering of the Great Crop of Souls.

In a recent sermon at Brooklyn Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage discoursed upon the harvest season. The text selected was "As a Shock of Corn Cometh in in His Season," Job v. 26, Dr. Talmage said:

This is the time of the year for husking corn. If you have recently been in the fields you know that the corn is all cut. The sharp knife struck through the stalks and left them all along the fields until a man came with a bundle of straw and twisted a few of these wisps of straw into a band, and then gathered up as much of the corn as he could compass with his arms, he bound with his wisp of straw, and then stood in the field in what is called a shock.

About corn as an imported cereal or corn as a metaphor, the Bible is constantly speaking. You know about people in the famine coming to buy corn of Joseph, and the foxes on fire running into the "standing corn," and about the oxen treading out the corn, and about the seven thin ears of corn that in Pharaoh's dream devoured the seven good ears, and the "parched corn," handed to beautiful Ruth by the harvesters of Bethlehem, and Abigail's five measures of "parched corn" with which she hoped to appease the enemies of her drunken husband, and David's description of the valleys "covered over with corn," and "the handful of corn in the ear," and "the full corn in the ear," and Christ's Sabbath morning walk through corn fields, and the disciples "plucking ears of corn," and so I am not surprised to find corn husking time referred to in my text: "As a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

There is a difference of opinion as to whether the orientals knew anything about the corn as it stands in our fields; but recent discoveries have found out that the Hebrew knew all about Indian maize, for there have been grains of corn picked up out of ancient crypts and exhumed from hiding places where they were put down many centuries ago and have been planted in our time and have come up just such Indian maize as we raise in New York and Ohio; so I am right when I say that my text may refer to a shock of corn just as you and I bound it, just as you and I threw it, just as you and I husked it. There may come some practical and useful and comforting lessons to all our souls, while we think of coming in at last "like a shock of corn coming in in his season."

It is high time that the King of Terrors was thrown out of the Christian vocabulary. A vast multitude of people talk of death as though it were the banner of disasters instead of being to good man the blessing of blessings. It is moving out of a cold vestibule into warm temple. It is migrating into groves of redolence and perpetual fruit-roseate June. It is a change of emblems for garlands. It is the unsmiting of the iron handcuffs of earthly incarceration into the diamond wickets of a bridal party; it is the suggestion of my text, it is husking time. It is the tearing of the rough sheath of the body that is bright and the beautiful soul may free. Coming in "like a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Christ took up a funeral procession at the site of Nain by making a resurrection for a young man and his mother. I would that I could break up my sadness and halt the long funeral procession of the world's grief by some cheering and cheerful view of the last position.

We all know that husking time was a time of frost. Frost on the fence, frost on the stubble, frost on the ground, frost on the bare branches of trees, frost in the air. Frost on the hands of the huskers. You remember we used to hide between the corn rows so as to keep off the wind, but you remember how shivering was the body and how painful were the hands. But after awhile the sun was up and all the frosts went out of air and hilarities awakened the joy and joy from one corn shock

went up, "Aha, aha!" and was answered by joy from another corn shock. "Aha, aha!" So we all realize that the death of our friend is the nipping of many expectations, the freezing, the chilling, the frosting of many of our hopes. It is far from being a south wind. It comes out of the frigid north, and when they go away from us we stand benumbed in body and benumbed in mind and benumbed in soul. We stand among our dead neighbors, our dead families, and we say: "Will we ever get over it?" Yes, we will get over it amid the shoutings of heavenly reunion, and we will look back to all these distresses of bereavement only as the temporary distresses of husking time. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Light, and but for a moment," said the apostle, as he clapped his hands, "light, and but for a moment." The chill of the frosts followed by the gladness that cometh in "like a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Of course the husking time made rough work with the ear of corn. The husking peg had to be thrust in and the hard thumb of the husker had to come down on the swathing of the ear, and then there was a pull and there was a ruthless tearing, and a complete snapping off before the corn was free, and if the husk could have spoken it would have said: "Why do you lacerate me? Why do you wrench me?" Ah! my friends, that is the way God has arranged that the ear and husk shall part, and that is the way he has arranged that the body and soul shall separate. You can afford to have your physical distresses when you know that they are

only forwarding the soul's liberation. Every rheumatic pain is only a plunger of the husking peg. Every neuralgic twing is only a twist by the husker. There is gold in you that must come out. Some way the shackle must be broken. Some way the ship must be launched for the heavenly voyage. You must let the Heavenly Husbandman husk off the mortality from the immortality. There ought to be great consolation in this for all who have chronic ailments, since the Lord is gradually and more mildly taking away from you that which hinders your soul's liberation, doing gradually for you what for many of us in robust health perhaps He will do in one fell blow at the last. At the close of every illness, at the close of every paroxysm you ought to say: "Thank God that all is past now; thank God that I will never have to suffer that again; thank God I am so much nearer the hour of liberation." You will never suffer the same pain twice. You may have a new pain in an old place, but never the same pain twice. The pain does its work and then it dies. Just so many plunges of the crowbar to free the quarry stone for the building. Just so many strokes of the chisel to complete the statue. Just so many pangs to separate the soul from the body. You who have chronic ailments and disorders, are only paying in installments that which some of us will have to pay in one payment when we pay the debt of nature. Thank God, therefore, ye who have chronic disorders that you have so much less suffering at the last. Thank God, that you will have so much less to feel in the way of pain at the hands of the Heavenly Husbandman when "the shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Perhaps this may be an answer to a question which I asked one Sabbath morning, but did not answer: Why is it that so many really good people have so dreadfully to suffer? You often find a good man with enough pains and aches and distresses, you would think, to discipline a whole colony, while you will find a man who is perfectly useless going about with easy digestion and steady nerves and shining health, and his exit from the world is comparatively painless. How do you explain that? Well, I noticed in the husking time that the husking peg was thrust into the corn and then there must be a stout pull before the swathing was taken off the ear, and the full, round, healthy, luxuriant corn was developed; while on the other hand there was corn that hardly seemed worth husking. We throw that into a place all by itself, and we called it "nubbins." Some of it was mildewed, and some of it was nice-nibbled, and some of it was great promise and no fulfillment. All cobs and no corn. Nubbins! After the good corn had been driven up to the barn we came around with the corn basket and we picked up these nubbins. They were worth saving, but not worth much. So all around us there are people who amount to comparatively nothing. They develop into no kind of usefulness. They are nibbled on one side by the world, and nibbled on the other side by the devil, and mildewed all over. Great promise and no fulfillment. All cobs and no corn. Nubbins! They are worth saving, I suppose many of them will get to Heaven, but they are not worthy to be mentioned in the same day with those who went through great tribulation into the kingdom of our God. Who would not rather have the pains of this life, the misfortunes of this life—who would not rather be torn and wounded and lacerated and wrenched and husked and at last go in amid the very best grain of the granary than to be pronounced not worth husking at all? Nubbins! In other words, I want to say to you people who have distress of body and distress in business and distress of all sorts, the Lord has not any grudge against you. It is not derogatory, it is complimentary. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and it is proof positive that there is something valuable in you or the Lord would not have husked you.

You remember also that in the time of husking it was a neighborhood reunion. By the great fireplace in the winter, the fire roaring around the glorified back logs on an old-fashioned hearth, of which the modern stoves and registers are only the degenerate descendants, the farmers used to gather and spend the evening, and there would be much sociality, but it was not anything like the joy of the husking time, for then all the farmers came, and they came in the very best humor, and they came from beyond the meadow, and they came from beyond the brook, and they came from regions two and three miles around. Good spirits reigned supreme, and there were great handshaking, and there was carnival, and there was the recital of the brightest experiences in all their lives, and there was a neighborhood reunion the memory of which makes all the nerves of my body tremble with the emotion. The husking time was the time of neighborhood reunion, and so Heaven will be just that. There they come up! They are here in the old village churchyard. There they come up! They come up from all sides—from Potter's field and out of the solid masonry of Westminster Abbey. They come up! Their better nature husked off. All their spiritual despondencies husked off. All their hindrances to usefulness husked off. The grain, the golden grain, the God-fashioned grain, visible and conspicuous. Some of them on earth were such disagreeable Christians you could hardly stand it in their presence. Now in Heaven they are so radiant you hardly know them. The fact is, all their imperfections have been husked off. Now, in Heaven all their offensiveness has been husked off. Each one is as happy as he can be. Every one he meets as happy as he can be. Heaven one great neighborhood reunion. Stand at the gate of the granary and see the grain come in; out of the frosts into the sunshine, out of the darkness into the light, out of the tearing and the ripping and the twisting and the wrenching and lacerating and the husking time of earth

into the wide open door of the King's granary, "like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Yes, Heaven is a great sociable, with joy like the joy of the husking time. No one there feeling so big he declines to speak to some one that is not so large. Archangel willing to listen to smallest cherub. No bolting the door of caste at one heavenly mansion to keep out the citizen of a smaller mansion. No clique in one corner whispering about a clique in another corner. David taking none of the airs of a giant-killer. Joshua making no one halt until he passes, because he made the sun and moon halt. Paul making no assumption over the most ordinary preacher of righteousness. Naaman, captain of the Syrian host, no more honored than the captive maid who told him where he could get a good doctor. O my soul, what a country! The humblest man a king. The poorest woman a queen. The meanest house a palace. The shortest lifetime eternity. And what is more strange about it all is we may all get there.

"But," says some one, "do you really think I would be at home in that superior society if I should reach it?" I think you would. I know you would. I remember that in the husking time there was great equality of feeling among the neighbors. There at one corn shock a farmer would be at work who owned 200 acres of ground. The man whom he was talking to at the next corn shock owned but thirty acres of ground, and perhaps all that covered by a mortgage. That evening, at the close of the husking day, one man drove home a roan span so frisky, so full of life, they got their feet over the trace. The other man walked home. Great difference in education, great difference in worldly means; but I noticed at the husking time they all seemed to enjoy each other's society. They did not ask any man how much property he owned or what his education had been. They all seemed to be happy together in those good times. And so it will be in Heaven. Our Father will gather His children around Him, and the neighbors will come in, and the past will be rehearsed. And some one will tell of victory, and we will all celebrate it. And some one will tell of great struggle, and we will all praise the grace that fetched him out of it. And some one will say: "Here is my old father that I put away with heartbreak; just look at him, he is as young as any of us!" And some one will say: "Here is my darling child that I buried in Greenwood, and all the after years of my life were shadowed with desolation—just look at her!" She doesn't seem as if she had been sick a minute." Great sociality. Great neighborhood kindness. Go in and dine.

All the shocks of corn coming in in their season. O, yes, in their season. Not one of you having died too soon, or having died too late, or having died at hapazard. Planted at just the right time, plowed at just the right time. Cut down at just the right time. Husked at just the right time. Garnered at just the right time. Coming in in your season.

I do not know how you are constituted, but I am so constituted that there is nothing that so awakens reminiscences in me as the odors of a cornfield when I cross it at this time of year after the corn has been cut and it stands in shocks. And so I have thought it might be practically useful for us to-day to cross the cornfield, and I have thought perhaps there might be some reminiscence roused in our souls that might be salutary and might be saving. In Sweden a prima donna, while her house in the city was being repaired, took a house in the country for temporary residence, and she brought out her great array of jewels to show a friend who wished to see them. One night, after displaying these jewels, and leaving them on the table, and all her friends had gone, and the servants had gone—one summer night—she sat thinking and looking into a mirror just in front of her chair, when she saw in that mirror the face of a robber looking in at the window behind her and gazing at those jewels. She was in great fright, but sat still, and hardly knowing why she did so, she began to sing an old nursery song, her fears making the pathos of the song more telling. Suddenly she noticed, while looking at the mirror, that the robber's face had gone from the window, and it did not come back. A few days after the prima donna received a letter from the robber, saying: "I heard that the jewels were to be out that night, and I came to take them at whatever hazard; but when I heard you sing that nursery song with which my mother so often sang me to sleep, I could not stand it and I fled, and I have resolved upon a new and honest life." O my friends, there are jewels in peril richer than those which lay upon that table that night. They are the jewels of the immortal soul. Would God that some song rolling up out of the deserted nursery of your childhood, or some song rolling up out of the cornfields, the song of the huskers twenty or forty years ago, might turn all our feet out of the paths of sin into the paths of righteousness. Would God that those memories wafted in on odor or song might start us this moment with swift feet toward that blessed place where so many of our loved ones have already preceded us, "as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Lost speed.—Mr. Gotham—Did your ship break the record this trip?

Sea Captain—No, we met with too many interruptions.

Icebergs?—

"No, only bars, and schooners, and things. We lost speed every time we hit one."—N. Y. Weekly.

Typographical Note.—"I've got a 'phat' take this time," said the compositor, as he took his two hundred and fifty pound girl on his hip.—Des Moines Argonaut.

—She—"Has Brown a baby at his house?" He—"I guess not. I heard him praising another man's baby a short time ago."—Brooklyn Life.