

THE SUPREME TEST.

There are friends who come in when black sorrow's your guest,
To weep with you over your dead;
Friends who seem, in the midst of your heartache's unrest,
To know just what ought to be said.
But the Prince of them all, when grim Trouble stalks by,
And your heart can do nothing but bleed,
Is the fellow who comes when there's no one else nigh
And whispers: "How much do you need?"

Father, tenderly bless all the friends I have known
Who came in the depths of my woe,
Just to stand by my side when I felt so alone,
That I might their sympathy know;
Oh, I love every one for each handclasp and tear,
And aye shall I wish them godspeed;
But a crown for the one who, when none else was near,
Said softly: "How much do you need?"

—Los Angeles Herald.

THE CRY ON THE TRAIL.

IN the high, bare sitting-room of a lonely ranch-house, with brown, unpainted walls, and doors and windows open to the pine-clad mountain side, a man sat at a small deal table reading over a pile of cherished letters. They were written by a woman; dated from a house on Beacon street, Boston, and they dealt with books, with music and with art. To the reader, who was hard-pressed in the battle of life, they seemed to let him into a great treasure-house, while he longed for the more constricted walls of a home; the simpler beauties of a fireside. Ah, they were so intellectual, these letters, and try as he would, he could read nothing between their lines! As he turned over the pages, a tiny child of three years old, with a large rent in her pinafore, ran in from time to time from the open air. At sight of her, the cry in the heart of the man for the woman was stronger than ever. Both of them needed her—man and child, they needed her so much.

At length he took his pen and began to write to her. All her letters addressed him as "Dear Mr. Geraldson;" his letters to this date had been invariably superscribed to "Dear Miss Vining." But now he broke through the veils of reserve. He wrote to her as the dearest woman on earth, calling her his love. He threw aside all the topics with which he had dallied so long, and wrote simply of himself—of his own hopes and fears. He told her how for years he had been wanting to ask her to come out to him; how his poverty had forbidden his doing so; and how, in spite of all his efforts, he had remained poor and struggling, without anything to give her. Two months ago he had believed that at last his chance had come. He had gone up into the Trinity mountains to take up an offer of partnership in a promising "prospect" he had received from a friend. But on the long stage journey from Redding through the heat and dust, he had fallen in with an unfortunate Englishman, very tick with typhoid, who had implored him to stand by him and see him on his legs again. Circumstances had been such that it had been impossible in common humanity not to stay with this man and his little mite of a motherless girl. So he had nursed and tended him, and had experienced the satisfaction of pulling him through the worst danger. But the poor fellow, who was terribly impatient, had attempted to get out of bed in spite of every warning, and had died suddenly one day from the passage of a clot of blood to the heart, when his nurse and little daughter had left him for a breath of fresh air.

"And so," went on the letter, "I found myself with the child on my hands. I haven't the heart to do anything but keep her. For though apparently she has no relatives or friends, she's a splendid little piece of stuff, and it would be a crime to send her to any institution. And the sequel of this is, my dear friend, that the venture which was to bring me fortune, to give me the right to ask you for yourself, has come to naught. By the time I had fixed everything up, my friend, unable to wait for me, had taken in another partner on the deal. I went prospecting near Weaverville, but luck was against me. Then both the little girl and myself fell sick with malaria, and so I came home to my pine trees again."

Here Geraldson's pen fell from his hand, for the fever had in its grip, and he was shaking miserably. Later on he managed to put the letter into an envelope addressed only with her name, for after all, he thought, he should never send it, and he left it on his table, thinking that when he had strength again he would go on writing, just for the sake of the consolation it was merely to pretend that he could tell her everything. But the letter was never finished. He grew rapidly weaker, till one morning he found himself so sick that he could scarcely drag himself to the couch on the veranda to scan the landscape for the help that never came. For Lone Pine Ranch

was isolated as only mountain ranches can be, and no one might set foot on it for weeks together. Now as he lay helpless, unable to move, lost sometimes in suffocating blackness, the child brought him water in the tiny cup—drops that tantalized rather than quenched his thirst—and he wondered what would become of her, and in his last coherent moments told her to run out along the trail and call with all her might. That was the last thing he could do. Soon after he ceased to move, and did not hear the desolate wail that resounded through the empty house.

But Geraldson was not to lose himself forever in the dark water of unconsciousness. Once more he felt himself alive, and, on the verge of sleep, lay with leaden eyelids, unwilling to awake, till a memory of little Margery, whom he had last seen weeping in a corner of the room, forced him to open his eyes. To his surprise his bedclothing covered him very neatly. The sheet was folded under his chin in a strange, comforting, new way, so that a sense of peace and security fell on him, and he lay very still, sure for some unaccountable reason that Margery was all right. Waking was wonderfully pleasant. In the dim light of the darkened room a slender white hand glided over the smooth sheet to make it a trifle smoother. He held his breath and half closed his eyes that he might watch it. It went away. Too weak to turn his head, he waited till it fluttered down again with a cup of milk. There was no woman in the district with such a hand, and full of the wonder of it, he fell asleep.

He dreamed of beautiful things—white flowers, white doves, white hands. Waking stronger for long rest, his first movement was one of curiosity. A woman, in a blue sunbonnet that completely shaded her face, was pouring something into a glass at the washstand. Was it possible that ugly bonnet could go with those slender fingers? He asked for a drink of water. To his joy, the same hand appeared again.

"Is it evening?" he asked, when she had taken away the cup.

"No, it is morning," returned a voice that was little more than a whisper.

"Then please will you be so kind as to let in some light?"

"Light is not good for you just yet," was the answer, in subdued tones.

Geraldson was not strong enough to dispute this point, and he lay quiet, inwardly vexed at the bonnet. Ideas came to him slowly. At last he asked, brilliantly: "Will you please tell me who you are?"

"I am a nurse."

"A nurse?" He considered for some time.

"How did you come here?"

"That is very simple. Your little girl was crying on the trail, and I came in and found you."

"And you stayed and nursed me—how wonderfully good of you!"

"Not at all." The voice was cold. "You would have done the same yourself."

"Oh, but not in the way you are doing," he returned, modestly.

After that he pondered for a long time. She had "happened to be passing," as though a road that led to nowhere were a much-frequented thoroughfare. That in itself was a miracle, and her beautiful hands, her movements, so unlike those of a mountain woman, were something to brood upon.

"But why did you come here?" he asked, after a long silence. "No one ever comes here."

"I came to see my brother."

He dared not ask her any more. He could only suppose that while he had been away some stranger had come into the district. But any attempt at connected thought was too much for him, and again he fell asleep.

When he was breathing quietly, the woman with the beautiful hands threw off the bonnet as though she were tired of the troublesome disguise, and, leaning

her chin upon her hand, gazed intently at his pallid face. Still she kept the bonnet on her lap, ready to don it at the moment he should show signs of waking, for she was determined that he should not recognize her—should never know that it was she, Elsie Vining, who had saved him. She had taken the initiative, come out from the East, because mere letters were not enough, and she had felt at last that she must have something more tangible than those impersonal epistles. She had discovered him in his extremity, and had brought him back to life. But her joy in this was chastened. She knew now why his letters had been so cold. She had been no more than an abstraction, an intellectual phase in his life. He had not even thought it necessary to tell her of the important events that were taking place with him. He had concealed—say, rather, ignored, as of no possible interest to her—the fact that he had married and had a little daughter. He had never even told her that his wife was dead, as she could only suppose she must be. It was plain that he had not cared as she had cared. He had not remembered—perhaps had never experienced—those moments when they had met in Boston five years ago, in which it had seemed to her so much had passed without words between them that even in the letters—for all their impersonality—it had appeared permissible to read between the lines meanings tender and magnetic. She had taken too much for granted! She blushed to the roots of her hair, and hid her face in the bonnet as though it were a veil. Outside the open window she could hear the little child singing to herself. Had he loved the mother very much, she wondered? Love! What had she to do with love? It was high time she should take her departure. She went restlessly out of the room and into the kitchen, where the nurse, for whom she had sent to San Francisco, had already begun a feminine revolution in the bachelor order of things. As she worked, this young woman glanced out of the window at Margery at play beneath the trees, remarking that the child was the very image of her father. The other briefly assented, and immediately went out into the open air and looked at the little girl from a short way off. "I suppose there is a likeness," she said to herself, "but I can't see it." It was strange, she thought that she should never have heard of Geraldson's marriage. How blind she had been not to suspect some affair of the heart, which would account for his sudden departure for the West. Of course, he had loved another woman. She wondered if the child were very like her. At that moment Margery came running up, and, forcing down the primal instinct that had prompted her to turn away, she held out her arms, drew the "other woman's" child to her breast, and kissed her.

The little creature looked up at her with her fearless eyes. "You're the lady, aren't you?" she said.

"The lady—what lady?"

"The lady daddy talks about that's coming to be my mummy."

Outwardly quiet, she kissed her again, but it was as though a door, not quite closed, had violently shut, never to open again. She went back into the house, into Geraldson's room; but when she saw him look toward her, pathetic in his helplessness, her heart beat so quickly she could not bring herself to say good-by at once, and sat down in the shadow, angry at her own weakness.

"Nurse," said Geraldson, "won't you draw up the blind?" Mayn't I see your face?"

"The light would hurt your eyes," she murmured. "I put on my bonnet because I was going away."

"Going away?" Dismay was in his voice.

"Yes, I am obliged to go. There's another nurse here to look after you."

"But I don't want another nurse," he cried. "And you've done so much for me. I can't even thank you. I don't know what your name is. I've never seen you, even?"

She said nothing, but slowly measured something into a glass. He could not see that she was trembling.

"May I have a drink?" he asked, as she put down the tumbler.

She had intended to go now immediately. She felt she had lingered too long, but she could not refuse his request. She held the cup to his lips, and he drank slowly, looking at her hands, which would flutter away so soon, like white birds of passage. He was very weak, and the tears came into his eyes. The hands were so beautiful—so like her hands.

She took the cup and rinsed it carefully and slowly. At the same moment little feet pattered along the passage and baby hands beat upon the door. She opened it and carried little Margery to the bedside, telling her to be very quiet. But Geraldson had turned his face to the wall, and took no notice. Having looked at him gravely, the child seated herself upon the floor, and began to examine a heap of treasures in her lap. Suddenly she held out a chubby hand with an envelope.

"A letter!" she said, emphatically, to the strange lady. "A letter!"

"Is it for me, dear?"

"Esa, for 'oo!" She ran across the room and held it out, triumphantly. The eyes under the sunbonnet glanced at it with indifference. Then at the name on it—a name with no address—the beautiful hands clutched it eagerly. A moment after a touch on Geraldson's shoulder forced him to turn.

"Here is a letter," said the quiet voice, "to a Miss Vining. The address is not finished. Do you wish it mailed?"

At the thought of her so far away, so inaccessible, Geraldson's eyes filled again.

"No, no," he muttered, turning to the wall again, "it isn't to be posted. I haven't any right!" The next minute he begged her, half-querulously, to give it to him, that he might put it under his pillow. But the room was empty. She had gone.

Outside, on the veranda, she paced up and down with the unopened envelope in her hand. He had wanted it back. She had known that even as she had closed the door, but it didn't belong to him. With her name upon it, it certainly belonged to her. But ought she to read it? Ought she? Well, she didn't care—she must! It was hers, after all. Tearing it open, she saw the tender inscription, and all her scruples vanished like the wind. Then she read it to the end and kissed it many times, and walking up and down, longed, yet hesitated, to go back into the darkened chamber.

Geraldson lay awake without any desire to take up the thread of life again. All his difficulties pressed upon him, and he felt listless and dispirited in his gloomy room. But a soft sound, the drawing of the blind, the flooding of the room with sunshine, caused him to turn with a faint revival of interest. The light was the light of sunset, just bright enough to make everything clear, and some one with shining hair was standing near the window. Surely he knew that poise of the head. Only one woman carried her head just like that. And yet he must be dreaming!

"Who are you?" he cried, eagerly.

A clear voice rang through the stillness. "I've brought an answer to your letter."

"My letter to her? But it wasn't addressed. It wasn't—"

"There wasn't any need to send it. You see, Elsie Vining isn't in Boston just now."

"Not in Boston! Then where is she? Where is she?"

She came toward him. He saw her in the level sunlight as men see visions.

"Don't you understand, Gerald? Don't you understand?"

It was her voice. He raised himself on the pillows.

"Elsie! Elsie!" he cried.

She dropped on her knees beside him. She gave him her hands and her face.—San Francisco Argonaut.

COLOR AND VALUE OF OPALS.

Gems Must Be Bright and Without Streaks or Spots.

Veins of opals are usually met with in soft formations, where nothing above ground indicates their presence. The search for them, therefore, often requires considerable time. But it is not extremely difficult, for opals are generally found near the surface. Indeed, it was thought for a long time that they were not to be found as deep as twelve feet below the surface. This opinion has, however, given way in the light of evidence, because opals of great value have been discovered at a depth of fifty feet.

The value of opals depends upon several considerations, of which the principal one is the color. It is important that they should be bright and not present streaks or spots alternating with uncolored substance. The most valuable are those which have red fires or mixtures of red and yellow, blue and green. Opals of a single tint are of little value, unless the tint is particularly striking and the figure beautiful. Indeed, one of the essential qualities of the opal is the arrangement of the figure, which sets off strikingly the hue of the stone.

When the figure is quite regular and distinct it is the more valuable, much less so when the grain is quite small and irregular. Sometimes the color appears as a single blaze or with figures regularly spaced. It may then be of a fine ruby red, and is much sought after, but oftentimes the uniform tint is only green or reddish and has but little brilliancy to speak of.

The cutting is very important for the opal; thus a thick stone will be much less beautiful than a thin stone, which, on losing part of its volume, loses also the figure. The foundation tint contributes much to the beauty. It ought to be transparent, slightly milky, and harmonize fully with the different reflections of the opal, which, when it is really beautiful, presents a variety of hues infinitely pleasing to the eye.—Jewelers' Circular.

Not Surprising.

"Miss Fluffy has a very soft voice, hasn't she?"

"Naturally; it comes from a very soft head."—Detroit Free Press.

The trouble is, the average member of the Legislature imagines that his interests are the interests of the people.



The nerves of eyes and stomach show remarkable interdependence. A late medical writer finds that eye-strain causes digestive disturbances, seasickness and even constipation, and that stomach disorders affect vision, while hemorrhages into the stomach are sometimes followed by blindness.

Attention to the precautions taught by scientific sanitation will render the west coast of Africa perfectly healthful and in the future Europeans and Americans can go there for an agreeable winter climate, as they now go to the Canary Islands. This is the report brought back by Professor Boyce, who was sent out with a commission by the Liverpool Tropical School of Medicine.

A prehistoric cave dwelling has recently been discovered near Winznau, on Lake Lucerne, in Switzerland. A party of antiquarians had the entrance passage into the cavern cleared of obstructions and a grotto or series of caves was laid bare. A fine collection of stone implements, including knives, ax heads and spears, gigantic shells rudely ornamented, evidently drinking vessels and dishes, was discovered. In one chamber of the cavern the explorers found the remains of the bones of many extinct animals.

For the last nine years the Egyptian service of antiquities, an English organization, has been engaged upon some important works with a view to the restoration of the great Temple of Ammon at Karnak, near Luxor, in upper Egypt. The director of the works, M. G. Legrain, during the course of his researches recently came upon a pit which had been filled with statues and monuments of all kinds belonging to the Ptolemaic epoch; thence he has exhumed up to the present time 8,000 statues in gilded bronze and more than 500 in granite, basalt, beryl, limestone, petrified wood and other materials. Almost all the discoveries bear historical inscriptions.

The baobab tree, which has been transplanted from Africa to Asia and America, has a fruit whose pulp—"monkey bread"—is eaten by negroes, and seeds that are prized by natives of Madagascar for the oil that is abstracted by crushing and boiling in water. A French chemist has been investigating. He finds that the round seeds grow to a diameter of three-fourths of an inch, that their kernels contain fifty-three per cent of oil, with much nitrogenous matter, and that the Madagascar oil is a whitish solid which begins to melt at about 25 degrees C. The odor recalls Tunisian olive oil. The oil does not become rancid, and is suggested as a valuable product in place of coconut oil and in fine soaps and unguents.

The usual laws of distillation are proven by the electric furnace experiments of Moissan and Farrelley to hold good in the case of mixtures of metals. With mixtures of copper with zinc and with cadmium, the zinc and cadmium were quickly expelled, and lead separated from copper in the same way, but after longer distillation. Some mixtures of copper and tin gradually lost their copper, others their tin, while others distilled without change of composition. Mixtures of lead and tin showed a gradually decreasing proportion of lead until only pure tin was left. A remarkable peculiarity noted in tin is the wide range of temperature in which the metal is liquid as it melts at 226 degrees C. while its boiling point is above that of copper and lead.

We should like to see the use of ear-plugs more general, says an authority on swimming, for many cases of ear trouble are brought into activity by the rush of water during diving or swimming. Nor do we favor the teaching of swimming to very young children. They are easily frightened and quickly exhausted. Hundreds of people who can swim reasonably well in bathing costume have never tried to swim fully clothed. When forced to do so unexpectedly their sense of impotence is so great that many lose their heads, and drown almost as quickly as those who have never swum a stroke. It should also never be forgotten that swimming, though a healthy and desirable amusement, is to be classed as a violent exercise, and one in which, apart from any question of drowning, no one out of condition can indulge with impunity for any length of time.

Too Much for Him.

"And why," she asked her husband, "do you think that my hat shouldn't cost any more than yours?"

He smiled in what he imagined was a superior way. "It's a question of heads rather than of hats," he said. "It seems to me that the head of the bread winner deserves the best that's going."

And he tapped with his forefinger on his high white forehead.

She followed his eloquent gesture. "But there's nothing in that," she mildly said.

Then he gave it up.—Cleveland Plaindealer.