

LOOKING BACKWARD.

He never thinks a man is truly great until he's dead.
And then he wipes away a tear and quotes what he has said.
He talks about the nations that long since have passed away.
And mourns when he compares them with the nations of to-day.

He talks about his boyhood and the fun that folks had then;
He talks about the actors that we never shall see again.
He vows that everything worth while long since has gone before,
And life to him is just one grand, sweet funeral—nothing more.
—Washington Star.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

ROBERT MALCOLM had never been called "Bob" by any one until his recently acquired wife, with a coquettish pretense of shyness, had so addressed him.

He had known her but a short time when he won her. And now, at the end of six blissful months, he was sitting in his splendid library, perplexed and miserable, and gloomily eyeing the embers of a grate fire and trying to persuade himself that the shadow which threatened to wreck his future could be explained away if only he had the courage to ask her.

On coming home that afternoon he had gone to the sitting room and had found it empty. Turning to leave he saw a piece of note paper lying on the floor, as though it had been brushed off her desk as she rose in a hurry. In stooping to replace it, his eye caught two words, the beginning of a letter—"Dear Tom." Dear Tom! Could it be that there was a dear Tom in her life of whom he knew nothing? The letter read:

"Dear Tom—If I were to be asked why I am writing to you I should have to admit that I am yielding to an impulse. My whole life has been made up of impulses, and I never battled with them but once—alas, the very time I should have yielded. You know well what I mean, that night you renounced me, renounced me while your blood was on fire with love for me, which I knew and felt and revelled in when your eyes dumbly begged me to refuse to be renounced and your lips told me it would be better to part. Ah, if I had only yielded then to the impulse to tell you I loved you well enough to share your poverty and the task of caring for your poor, helpless father. How well I remember that dear, delightful, cruel summer in Dorking."

"You came, dear, and you stepped into my heart with that first smile on your brave, sunny face. Then, afterward, Aunt Sarah, when I told her of our betrothal, said in her icy, sneering tones: 'I congratulate you upon your secretion. It is a fitting thing that your early poverty be merged into middle-aged and elderly poverty. As Tom Spencer's wife you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have before you such a life as your mother has led, only intensified, since your life will be encumbered by his helpless, paralytic old father.'"

"Tom, dear, do not utterly despise me when I tell you that her words had their weight. I did not fear the poverty, for I knew you were bound to succeed, if only, dear one, you were not hampered in your career by your father. I knew you were fond of him, and that while he lived you would keep him with you—that even I could not influence you to send him away. So when you told me we had better part I offered no protestation. I knew your heart was aching and that you needed comforting words from me. I knew I had only to speak one word to break down the barrier and have you take me to your heart forever. I did not speak that word. Though my heart cried out to you I could not tell you that I loved you well enough to share your burden. I did not speak that word. I am married now. My husband loves me, and I am rich beyond my fondest expectations. I have all those things which my luxurious and expensive tastes craved—yet I am not happy. This is indeed my farewell, dear one. You know now—every word in this letter has told you—what you are to me. You will not misunderstand—you will not come to me. It is over, Tom, and—"

Here the writing ended abruptly. Robert Malcolm was a loyal man, and though the evidence was against her he refused to believe his wife guilty of all that the letter implied. He told himself that if he dared to ask her for an explanation she would give it, and it would be satisfactory. To ask her to confess a dishonorable act was also to confess a lack of confidence in her.

While he was sitting there the door opened noiselessly. A slight girlish figure stole across the thick carpet and behind his chair. Two soft small hands were clasped before his eyes and a voice whispered:

"Gone who it is."
His heart gave a great bound and he took the hands down and kissed them. Finally, as if satisfied with what he saw, he asked:

"Have you been shopping?"
She seemed surprised at the trivial question following so closely upon the preceding, she had undergone, and she said:

"Yes, Mr. Bluebeard? Gracious, how you scared me. I expected you to say in capital letters, 'I have been in your face.'"

"Have you been shopping?"
Small Boy—No, he's just gone fishing.

commonplace tones, "Have you been shopping?"

With a sigh of content and love and relief he threw his arms round her and drew her close to him for a moment. Then she seated herself opposite him in a low chair, where the firelight fell on her face, bringing out all its charm.

In the magnetism of her presence her husband became almost happy once more—until the memory of that letter came back to sting him.

Suddenly he asked her: "Adele, were you ever in Dorking?" She opened wide her eyes and answered:

"No, dear, why do you ask?"
"Just curiosity." Then, after a pause, he added: "Did you ever know a man named Tom Spencer?"

She laughed softly and, folding her dainty hands, replied: "Now am I indeed on the rack. Why torture my innocent soul with the curiosity to know the reason for placing me in the witness box?"

At her irrelevant answer his doubts rose again, and he rather sternly repeated his question, with a request for a direct reply.

"Tom Spencer—Tom Spencer—where have I seen or heard that name?" she queried softly, as if to herself. "I certainly don't know any Tom Spencer, but I believe I have heard the name somewhere."

"And now, you dear cross ogre, are there any more conundrums for me? Because, if you have finished, I will go and dress for dinner."

He laughed and watched her disappear through the door. A month passed, and during this time Robert Malcolm tried to detect a flaw in his wife's devotion to justify him in the doubt which would creep in whenever he thought of that letter. But it was in vain that he sought an explanation in her manner. There was nothing about her to suggest that wealth had palled upon her, or that without poverty and Tom Spencer her life was a blank. She was as ever airily affectionate, daintily tyrannical, flippant and serious in one breath, with that "infinite variety" which was her greatest charm. One night when they had returned from a dance he decided to make a full confession to her and to ask her for an explanation. She had thrown herself into an easy chair and looked even fairer than usual.

Making a final effort he began, and rapidly he told her all—all about the letter, his doubts and despair and the unhappiness he felt whenever he thought of the matter. While he was talking she was looking down and twisting the rings on her slender fingers. When he finished she looked up at him with a slow, amused smile creeping over her face.

"Now I understand those questions you asked me about Tom Spencer. Yes, that was the name—and I know why the name seemed familiar to me."

"Well, what of Tom, Spencer? Who is he?"
"He is a creature of my own imagination, and once having created Thomas I straightway forgot him. When you asked me that day I wondered where I had heard the name."

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Only this, Bob—but first you must promise not to laugh at me." She stopped, looking at him anxiously. He nodded impatiently, and she went on: "Some time ago I conceived the idea of being literary. I thought out a story and decided that I would depart from the usual routine and have it told in a series of letters. You got hold of the beginning of the story. I was called away that day, and never thought again of my literary venture."

He drew her up to him and then, with his arms around her, he asked in a husky whisper:

"Adele, will you forgive me?"
For answer she put her arms round his neck and then replied softly:

"If you'll promise never to doubt me again."

The promise and the forgiveness were consummated in one long kiss.

A week later in a local paper Robert Malcolm happened on the following:

"Dorking, April 23.—Mr. William Spencer, an old and respected citizen of this city, died yesterday afternoon. The deceased had long been a sufferer from paralysis, but his death was unexpected. He leaves one son, Mr. Thomas Spencer, with whom he lived, to mourn his loss."—Waverley Magazine.

As Usual.
Small Boy—It's gone on a two weeks' fishing trip.
Inquiring Friend—Do you think he'll catch anything?
Small Boy—No, he's just gone fishing.

SCIENTIFIC BEET CULTURE.

A Department of Berlin Agriculture School Devoted to It.

A department of the agriculture high school at Berlin was recently established which is devoted entirely to the study of the scientific culture of beet sugar. Beet sugar cultivation on an industrial scale in Germany dates from but little more than fifty years ago, says a consular report, and to ward the end of the '60s there was established in connection with the agricultural high school a small working laboratory which, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Scheibler, devotes its somewhat restricted facilities to the cause of scientific sugar production.

There were then in Germany about 150 more or less primitive sugar factories, which worked up annually 700,000 tons of beets. These had multiplied in 1900 to 300 factories, which consumed 13,200 tons of beets, or an average of more than 33,000 tons each establishment. Meanwhile, the requirements of the time had far transcended the capacity and facilities of the institute founded by Prof. Scheibler, and the new spacious and completely equipped establishment now opened and dedicated to its work epitomizes firstly the present state of the sugar industry in Germany. It is recognized here above all that the abolition of export bounties by the Brussels conference ended definitely a long and important chapter in the history of beet-sugar production and that the industry, deprived of that form of artificial stimulus, must henceforth work out its own future upon new and independent lines. It is to be a battle in which scientific methods, profound study and skillfully applied, alone can win. To concentrate all the high which science can give upon the task of producing most economically from given area of land the largest weight of beets with the highest percentage of saccharine element, to harvest the crop, extract, cleanse and evaporate the juice, and to conduct each step of the process down to the marketing of the refined sugar with the utmost skill and avoidance of waste—this is the lesson which the new institute is designed and equipped to teach.

Dr. Max Wolf, of Heidelberg, has photographed a remarkable nebula in the constellation Cygnus, which, on account of its shape, he calls the "American nebula." It is the first time that such an object has been named for any of the natural divisions of the earth. Dr. Wolf's photograph shows a really striking likeness to an outline map of North America. The softly glowing nebula represents the form of the continent surrounded by the dark background of the heavens as by an ocean. The narrowing toward the south, the huge gap of the Gulf of Mexico, and the graceful curve of the coast of Central America and the isthmus are to be seen.

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