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LIFE.

Life is a sheet of paper white,
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.
"Lo, time and space enough," we cry,
"To write an epic!" so we try
Our nibs upon the edge—and die.

Muse not which way the pen to hold;
Luck hates the slow and loves the bold;
Soon comes the darkness and the cold.

Greatly begin! Though thou have time
But for a line, be that sublime,
Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

—Lowell.

MISS VILET.

The large hotel is filled to overflowing with guests who have hurried away from the south at the first hint of over warm weather. At an early hour in the day, the piazzas are thronged.

We hear a steady tramp of feet and as we move aside to let a gay troop of young people pass us, one calls out, "We are on our ninth round now!" They have estimated that the distance four times around the piazza makes a mile. Behind them, with slower gait, comes a pale faced man with bowed head and hands clasped behind. Doubtless his thoughts are upon his northern home where, perhaps, he has left his wife and babies. Possibly his mind is filled with a desire to clasp them once more in his arms, the hope inspiring him with new zeal to make a greater effort to regain his lost health. He throws back his shoulders and as he draws in a long breath or two, I fancy his eyes brighten and he feels new life surging through his veins.

A little figure approaches the entrance to the hotel. Her faded sunbonnet lies carelessly on her shoulders and leaves exposed a small, brown face of unusual beauty. From her bare arms hang various small baskets fashioned curiously as only the Carolina mountaineer makes them. "Well, what have you brought this morning, Topsy?" an old habitue of the place calls out.

She disdainfully ignores the question and turns her small shoulders squarely from before the young man, then moves toward a group of ladies. "Would you all like to buy some bawkskets?" she asks, holding up her wares.

The ladies take what she offers, eager to have something to carry home as souvenirs of the place. The pale-faced man approaches and she glances up at him, holding at an arm's length the one remaining trinket.

"Only five cents, sah," she says with a fetching little smile, showing a row of small white teeth. The stranger bestows a glance of interest upon the child.

"I will take it," he says, and as he fumbles for the change he asks: "Who weaves the bawkskets?"

"Dad makes 'em," she answers, adding, with an assumption of dignity, "but I takes de awdahs."

"You must be very busy," the gentleman returns kindly, "if you always make as ready sales as you have this morning."

"Well, de wuk slacks up w'en de norfers go home, an' den me an' dad res' up," she says with the air of an overworked millionaire.

The young man who had greeted her on her arrival starts around the piazza. She gazes after him disapprovingly and then addresses the pale man: "My name ain't Topsy," she says confidentially, "Ise Miss Vilet."

Thereafter Miss Vilet appeared several times each week and became a familiar figure around the hotel. She generally sought out this pale faced man, who seemed to take an interest in her which she returned. One morning she brought her baskets filled with trailing arbutus. The blossoms were speedily bought by the guests, except one bunch, which she jealously guarded. The dainty pink petals shone between her small fingers as she attempted to cover them over and as often as a purchaser selected this particular cluster she shook her head decidedly. "Dis 'ere one's 'served," she said: "'T's keepin' it fer de gem'man."

When "de gem'man" approaches for his survey of her stock, she held the blossoms out to him. "Dey's de bery nices' I could fin'," she said, her cheeks dimpling deeply.

He put his hand in his pocket but she intercepted the movement.

"I gib 'em to you," she explained, and quickly ran away.

"You're very highly favored," a bystander called out lightly.

The pale man seemed to treasure the little gift and looked for the child to come again. She had saved a special place for him as before. He remonstrated with her.

"You will ruin your trade, Miss Vilet, and I must insist on your allowing me to buy your posies."

Her large eyes filled with tears and her lips trembled as she replied: "You kin buy de bawkskets, sah; dey's dad's trade, but de beauties is my gif'."

The gentleman said no more. His room was ever fragrant with early blossoms, but we noticed that he gave most extravagant orders for basket work and screen frames.

"Miss Vilet is an amazing politician," one of the young men ventured.

One day I was out on one of my usual rambles, sketch book in hand, "seeking whom I might devour,"

negro at work near a tiny log cabin. I implored him to pose for me, but he declared he was too busy.

"You'll make just as much money by sitting still," I argued, "as by working all day."

He seemed tempted to yield to the inviting offer. "I'll ask her," he said, and disappeared within the cabin. He came out looking very dejected. "She won't 'low it," he said sullenly.

I thought what a virago of a wife he must have and I delighted in it, for the lazy young rascals need spurring on. Close behind him followed the child whom I had learned to know. Miss Vilet approached apologetically. "I's right sorry, miss," she said gravely, "but Dad's got his awdahs fer de gem'man, an' I ain' gwine to dis'pint 'im."

No one could gainsay this conclusive statement.

After this I often made my way to Miss Vilet's cabin. Her father had completely lost his identity. He was simply Miss Vilet's Dad," and she kept him well employed, for he was far too prone to while away the hours thrumming on his banjo. In answer to my inquiries as to her aspirations Miss Vilet said: "I's gwine to be a wash lady."

"Well," I said, thinking to instill a healthful principle in her plastic young mind, "do not hang your handkerchiefs on a barbed wire fence, as is customary here. It may be a saving of clothespins, but it is bad on the linen."

"Deed I doesn't do dat way," she answered wittingly. "I dun dries de hank'chers on de rose bushes."

I then gave the case up as futile.

Contrary to her usual custom Miss Vilet failed to appear for several days, so I started out one morning to seek the cause. Just without the cabin Miss Vilet was seated on a little rise of ground. "Dad's struck," she said laconically as I drew near.

"Struck!" I repeated curiously.

"Yes; said as how I dun gib him too much wuk to do."

"You don't mean to say that he has left you?" I exclaimed.

"I reckon he has, miss."

At her side was a large screen frame and her small fingers were struggling with the unyielding cane.

"The reason you have not come to the hotel is because you have been trying to finish the gentleman's screen?" I asked.

She nodded her head. Just then a man appeared in the pathway leading his horse.

"It's de gem'man," Miss Vilet cried.

The pale man hesitated when he saw me. I appreciated his feeling of embarrassment. "You came to learn the cause of Miss Vilet's non-appearance?" I asked, advancing toward him.

"Yes; I have missed her little offerings, he answered with his hat in hand, and as the moving air caught up his waving hair I noticed what a noble brow he had.

"She has been a veritable godsend to me," he continued, smiling.

I explained that the child's father had disappeared from the sphere of his too active occupation.

"Miss Vilet proved a too severe task-mistress," he said, "but what a coward he must be to desert such a child."

This idea seemed new to Miss Vilet. "Dad didn't mean ter," she said heroically, while her lips quivered pitifully; "but he's pow'ful lazy."

Mr. Denton, as the pale man was named, assured Miss Vilet that she need not hasten to fulfill his order, but to wait till "dad" came back.

As the child was alone I often visited her, and it happened that I had frequent meetings with Mr. Denton. At first I felt some misgivings about these meetings, but I quelled my conscience with the thought that his wife could not but yield when she knew that we met on the common ground of a mutual interest in a forlorn little child. One day as we were walking down the leafy mountain path Mr. Denton said:

"Suppose we make a combination, Miss Saidie, and have Miss Vilet for our charge for always."

His deep eyes were upon my face, but I sprang from him, resenting what I considered an insult.

"Your wife, Mr. Denton," I cried, "have you no thought for her?"

He understood the now.

"Wife I have never had, nor yet shall, unless you be mine," he said gravely.

It was my turn now to sue forgiveness, and the blood mounted to my face in shame that I had ever for a moment mistrusted him. My hands involuntarily went out to him.

We heard a call from above, and looking up we descried Miss Vilet descending the turfy bank. Her face was filled with excitement.

"Dad's come back," she cried breathlessly, "an' he ain' gwine away no mo', an' he's gwine to finish the gem'man's screen to-morrer."—Detroit Free Press.

A COIN 1,800 YEARS OLD.

It is a Shkel Struck by the Hebrews to Commemorate a Victory.

There is in this city a relic of the days when the Hebrews were oppressed in Palestine by the Romans, says the New York World. It is a shkel struck in the year 131 A. D.—nearly 1,800 years ago—in honor of the taking of Jerusalem and other places from the Romans by the Hebrews under the leader Simon Bar-Cochabas, who was then proclaimed ruler of the Hebrews.

The New York Coin and Stamp Company is the owner of this interesting antiquity. Manager Proseky interpreted its curious characters and symbols to a World reporter.

"On the obverse," he said, "is a conventional representation of the beautiful gate of Solomon's temple. It is, perhaps, the only picture of that edifice extant. The Hebrew characters signify Simon or Simeon. Above is a star, alluding to Simon's surname, Bar-Cochabas or Cochab, which signifies 'the son of a star.'

"The reverse bears the inscription, 'second year of the deliverance of Israel.' The two emblems are the ethrog and lulab. The ethrog is a citron. The lulab, or bunch of palm branches, in olden times was used in the temple, in the house of prayer when the Hallel psalms were recited, and was seldom out of people's hands in the day time. About the base of the lulab is a basket. It is the golden basket with which wealthy Israelites used to adorn their lulab, much as rich church-goers now adorn their prayer-books. Of the four or five coins like this now known no two are exactly alike. Perhaps a separate die was used for each. No satisfactory explanation of the fact has yet been offered. This shkel was the last coin struck by the Hebrews as a nation.

On looking at the shkel closely a series of half effaced devices were found.

"That's another chapter of the coin's history," Mr. Proseky said. "These coins were struck to carry the news of victory. Here is a proof of the fact. Under the palm branches and Hebrew letters you will find the device of Antioch plainly outlined. The Israelites evidently had the money in their possession, but recoiled it to spread the news. It was really the first type of the newspaper, bearing the tidings of victory and deliverance to the oppressed.

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