

HER EXPLANATION.

So you have wondered at me—guessed in vain. What the real woman is you know so well? I am a lost illusion. Some strange spell once made your friend there, with his five diadems. Of fact, conceive me perfect. He would faint. (But could not see me always, as he felt.) His dream to see me, plucking asphodel, in saffron robes, on some celestial plain. All that I was he married and flung away. In quest of what I was not, could not be. Liliith, or Helen, or Antigone. Still he may search; but I have had my day. And now the Past is all the part for me. That this world's empty stage has left to play.

THE SILENT GUEST.

Past 9 o'clock, and a bitter night. It was raining as it had rained all day; a gathering wind lashed the hedge-rows and the shrieking boughs of the naked elms, and there was sleet in the wind. For his own reasons, Mr. George Masters was avoiding the highway, preferring instead to plunge in the darkness across the fields, falling again, and again in the ruts of sandy mud ridged with last week's snow, gray and sodden. He cursed through chattering teeth, as he made for the far, twinkling light of the "Hare and Billet." Pretty luck this for a man—on Christmas eve, too! He had spent the day, gloomy afternoon lying among the soaked gorse by the road-edge, with the sleet in his ears, and the steady rain winning through the shag-coat and the greasy brown coat beneath it, to the flannel waistcoat that sheltered his pistols. Chilled to the soul, with no dry thread on him, he had waited faithfully till "Squire Hales' horse-hoofs splashed the mud over the gorse bushes, and then the numbed finger-tips crept under the flannel waistcoat. He half rose among the furze as the red roqueleure went past him, to the plash of the hoofs and the jangle of the bridle-reins. But when he saw the two servants turn the corner, with holsters before them, he sank back into his wet nest, a prey to natural annoyance. The horses went on toward Shooter's Hill, and a dripping figure stood in the way they had come, shaking a helpless fist and cursing all things below the beetling sky. Then George Masters tramped across the strip of furze-clad common and flung himself through a gap in the hedge of the turnip-field. He broke into a heavy run when he saw the light from the kitchen of the "Hare and Billet" blinking before him. The unfortunate footpad unhasped the gate, and stepped forward to stand with the host of the "Hare and Billet" in one gathering puddle. "Gone by," said Mr. Masters, bitterly, "gone by—to Greenwith by this time, likely—with his two bloody-minded serving-men behind him—a cowardly white-livered, gold-laced hound." "You're wet, George," said the landlord; "come in under a roof." Re-proof of George's bitterness of speech was in the tone—the tone of a man who had his own disappointments to contend with. They came up the bricked path to the back door and passed in under the lean-to roof of the shed. It was quite dark, and they moved shuffling among the barrels of lard, the firewood, and farm tools that covered the earth floor. The landlord raised the heavy wooden latch of the door leading to the house, and they passed up the two steps into the big room—kitchen and tap-room in one—and shut out the night and the cold. A pleasant kitchen with tiled floor and a comforting mass of red coals glowing in an iron basket sticking out of the wall. A kitchen with blackened settles, long benches, and tables ringed with many ale-cans. A quiet kitchen where only one man was, and he, the host, in the big arm-chair asleep. The landlord roused him with his foot, and he sat up, rubbing a beery eye with a calloused fist. "Mr. George is coming in here to sleep to-night," said the landlord, "I tell it to his majesty the king won't trouble a poor fellow a Christmas eve. He'll be as quiet as a quart of ale—and spend his coat over that chair-back—man wet and main dry, Mr. George he, I take it." "He'll sleep in his chair, then," returned the hostler. "There's a man above us now, in the bed, a real gentleman he is, with his sword and his ruyal—come in when you was out, when the heavy rain come on. I showed him up to the bedroom and kindled the fire, and he lies there, burning two of the big wax candles; and if he don't drink the bottle of claret, it's opened, and will have to be paid for, too. Terry don't like him, Terry don't like him howling—he's whined like that ever since the old gentleman come. Hark to 'un again, now the wind's quiet." The landlord fastened by the front door was baying howl upon howl. A kick at the panel, and a command to "lie down" from the landlord, appeared to soothe him for the moment. But the long whines soon broke out again. The dog wailed to the wind, which answered with fierce gusts of passion, and hurled sheets of sleet against the lattice panes. When the dog was silent for a while and the wind paused to gather itself for new effort, the rain pattered gently, the clock ticked to the chorus of a choir of crickets—and East Wickham's belfry jangled to the distance. The men in the kitchen were sitting in the shadow of an idea. "He don't seem to be moving," said the hostler, breaking the silence. "He's not awake now, for sare." The others looked at him with sudden interest, as if the presence upstairs had passed through their thoughts.

"There's a purse above stairs, I make no doubt, and a gold sneezin'-box up there, as'll keep awake, if they're any sense." Bill went on, grinning at the subtlety and success of his conversation, but not looking at his companions. "There's something I don't like, Wil-lum," Mr. Masters remarked, "about old gentlemen's purses." "I wouldn't like," put in the landlord, apparently addressing a pewter measure, "an ole gentleman to lose his purse here. Gives the house a bad name—that sort of thing—and a good name,—" a good name to a house of entertainment is better than rubles." Having delivered himself of this sentiment, he spread his hands over the arms of his Windsor chair and leaned forward with an air of awaiting suggestions. But none came. He coughed, looked at Mr. Masters, and went on, "There was a dear old gentleman come here, let me see, why it was as near as possible a year ago." "It was a year ago," put in George. "Well, he come here (I'll have to go out and kick that dog, and 's this the Deptford Road, he says, 'my men?' and you says, 'Matter o' twenty mile, master, and a bed road for a lonely traveler to leave a comfortable public behind on.' And he says, 'My horse is at the gate-post and he'd be better in the stable,' and he walks in mad orders candles and supper." "Did he have them?" asked the hostler, breathlessly. "He had all he ordered, and more," said the landlord, slowly, "but he went out that night, after all." He looked at his companion; appreciated the reminiscence in the eye of George, the child-like admiration for superior achievement in that of Bill, and pursued: "Yes," he went on, "an' when he went, he left his gold watch and sneezin'-box, and nineteen guineas in a red silk bag. He didn't wait 'em where he was going." "Where was that?" "Don't I tell you? Deptford." They all laughed gayly, and the landlord took out a stone bottle and thick glass rummers from the corner cupboard. "His Majesty, King George, wot you're so fond of—here's his health, and our gracious Queen Charlotte, and long to reign over us!" George gave the toast, and they drained their glasses. "Giniver!" said the hostler, and added tentatively, "a man could do anything wot's drunk, Giniver." "Anything short of murder, he could," asserted George; "but it's nothing short o' murder would do for that dog o' yours, Tom." Indeed, the dog's long-drawn howl still disturbed their Christmas festivities. Moved by this incongruity, the landlord went out and kicked it. A gust of wind and rain found way into the room, and Mr. Masters coughed again violently, and shivered and swore. "Can't you shut the door?" he asked; "this ain't no weather for a poor man with his living to get, and his pockets as empty as the day he was born." "Well," said the landlord, "our pockets was empty enough last Christmas here, afore that ole gentleman called." And still no sound from the room upstairs. "There's another purse up there this night," remarked the footpad, "waiting for them as is sportsmen enough to take it, as two bold lads did last Christmas eve." The chill wind must have made its entry still felt in the room, for the landlord shivered again, and the footpad wiped the palms of his hands upon his knees. "And another old man," he said, "I was the man that did it, and I suppose it'll be my job again. That dog howls fit to wake the dead. I don't like this indoors work, with doors and curtains, and stairs a-creaking, and having to wash your hands this weather. I'm a man that earns his living in the open air, I am, where things is straightforward, and nothing can't come creeping up behind you without your seeing it." The landlord suddenly lifted the wooden latch of the inner door, held his candle above his head, and peered into the darkness. "No one there," he said; "and I could have sworn that minute I heard a breath. I don't like your talk to-night, George. Wake the dead, and washing of your hands indeed; sin' it's enough to—" He stopped abruptly to pour out more spirit. "Oh, let him talk, master," cried the hostler, "it puts heart into a man, it do—talking over old times." George chuckled grimly, and when he had drained his glass, he said cheerfully: "Ay, that does it. It all comes back to me. It was him as held the light by the door when I run in; and it was me as— He bled very free, he did, very free." "Yes, I held the light, though much against my wish, mind you—thank them as be," said the landlord, regarding his grimy fingers with satisfaction; "thank them as be, my hands is clean." "They won't be clean long, then. It's me what holds the light to-night," said George, firmly, and he took the candle and walked to the foot of the stairs. "Not a sound," he said. The landlord had risen—the shock-headed man shifted his big shoulder on the bench where he lay, and the expression rose in his face of a terror awaiting with eager nose the rush from cover of his first rat. "If," said he, hesitatingly—"if it comes to that, you can both hold the light—sooner than see them guineas should set up and ride off in the morning. I saw a young man what would as lief hold a bill-hook as a candle any day of the week." And he looked so savage that the landlord was unaffectedly shocked.

But George came back to the table for another dram, and after it had been tendered him, remarked that that young man would not want for a backer. Then he knocked the damp priming out of his pistol on the table-edge and filled the pan. "I'll just listen once again, if so be he's soundly off," and he disappeared cautiously up the winding stairs, turning back to add: "and don't any of you come creeping up behind me, for I don't like it." The other two looked anywhere but at each other, without speaking. There was no sound from above after the footpad had ceased to creak under the dog howled, a long, low baying that never ceased. The hostler fetched a bill-hook from the lean-to shed and employed the time in taking off his boots. After a glance at the other, he sat down with the bill-hook hidden by his coat-flap. Both men started at the first creak of the stair. George stood at the stair-foot, blinking in the sudden light. "He's a sleeping like the dead," he whispered. "Can't even hear him breathe. His candles is burning yet; I see them through the key-hole. Come on!" All three stood together for a moment at the bottom of the stairway. There was a moment's hesitation, while the landlord and Mr. Masters adjusted the procession behind Bill, who had planted his foot on the bottom stair. At this inopportune instant, the tall clock in the corner struck 1, with a shrill metallic stroke, and Bill withdrew his foot suddenly, dropping the bill-hook. It fell to the red tiles of the floor, which gave back clang on clang. Aglance at this mishap, the host pushed his clumsy-fingered servant back into his place in the corner; Mr. Masters and himself reseating themselves with a hastily assumed appearance of genial domesticity. But no startled guest appearing on the stairs after ten minutes of complete silence, the procession re-formed in its old order, and went up. Outside the bedroom door they held their breath and listened—not a sound but the ticking of the clock below, the rushing of the wind without, and the moaning plaint of the dog. A stealthier man than the hostler, the landlord thrust a sleek hand forward to grasp the latch of the door. It was unsecured, and opened a little way under his gentle pressure. Through the foot of opening they could see the two waxen candles flame in the sockets as they burned by the sleeping man. By their light his legs modeled themselves under the white counterpane. His face and shoulders were in the deep shadows of the faded green curtains of the half-tester. At the sight of the bed the heart of the hostler became suddenly sick with him. With white lips and shaking knees he vacated his place in the procession, and pushing past the landlord, who was still poised himself at the stairhead, he made his way to the room below. At that moment, could their limbs have borne them, his companions would have followed him. They huddled together in the corner of the landing, holding their breath and listening until the taproom door opened and shut; and they knew themselves alone with the sleeper. For the terror of those strained minutes, it might have been the old man behind the curtains who was the ambushed watcher. The wind had lulled, and the rain, falling ceaselessly and silently, made no sound on the thatched roof. For awhile the dog was silent in the yard. This was an old man, scant of breath, or surely his breathing could have been heard in the dreadful calmness of the night. The landlord, with his shoulders raised, had stolen on tip-toe into the room. One of the candles was now guttering and daring preparatory to going out; the fragment of the other burned on with a long, red, smoking wick, lighting up the bright point of the rusty case-knife clenched in his fingers. He glanced upward at the brutal features of the footpad. Their eyes met with the same thought in each. It was the recollection of that other night, when they had stolen into that room to rob another helpless, sleeping old man of sleep and life. The great silence was not to be borne. The footpad put out his hand and thrust the landlord forward by the shoulder. He drew back, stumbling heavily. As he recovered himself, they both sprang forward toward the bed and tore back the old green curtains. Behind these, his poor white face thrown back over the pillows, lay the old man, his thin hands rigidly grasping the edges of the sheet drawn up close under his chin. They leaned over the bed and half drew back. "By God! 'tis very like him," said the landlord in a whisper. George had his hands on the sheet and pulled it back roughly. "It is him, by God!" he cried. For, as he pulled back the sheet, the last candle flared up and died down and went out. Its last light shone on the sleeper's throat, gashed across—horribly gaping—red and wet. This was no stranger, but the man they had murdered a year ago; they had left him just so last Christmas morning. There was a heavy fall on the floor in the dark, and some one rushed to the stair, screaming loudly. The dog in the yard whined with pleasure to hear a human voice, and then once more there was the silence of death in the "Hare and Billet."

at the "Old Fox." Marching with them were the unsteady white gaiters of two Grenadiers furloughing in the village. A wet and miserable dog, who dragged a broken chain, leaped forward in delight at their coming, and through the unlatched door the party poured into the house. A Grenadier drew his bayonet, and the crowd hustled one another to follow him. In the best bedroom the landlord lay dead on the floor—dead beside the white counterpane and unpressed pillows of an empty bed. Something wrong with his heart, folk said. By the gate of the straw-yard the constable picked up a brass-barreled pistol; and wandering about on the wet straw they found a man with cropped black hair and a heavy jaw, who gibbered and said he was his Sacred Majesty, King George, and God bless him.—San Francisco Argonaut. COALING A BIG STEAMER. Very Crude Methods Yet Prevail—Coat of the Work. All the ships of the transatlantic lines are coaled by practically the same crude method. Barges of about 350 tons capacity are brought alongside of the ship, booms are rigged, and by tackle controlled by a donkey engine steel buckets are lowered to the barge, filled by four men with shovels, and hoisted to a projecting platform, where two men dump the bucket and shovel the coal into the porthole. It is then taken by other men and stowed away in the ship's bunkers. Five and a half of these buckets is equal to a ton, and tally by count of the buckets is the only record to show how much coal the steamer has taken aboard. In coaling the steamship St. Paul of the American Line forty-eight men are employed inside the ship. The average amount of coal bunkered is 3,000 tons, the time required to unload and stow is about forty hours, and the total average cost of the work is \$1,000. These figures, varying only with the coal consumption of the ship, will apply to the vessels of other transatlantic lines. Efforts to reduce this expense have been productive of many ingenious mechanical devices, and the inquiry is often raised why none of these is in general use. The answer is given in the statement by a representative of one of the transatlantic lines: "We have had many offers to deliver coal to our steamers at the rate of anywhere from 50 to 500 tons per hour, but what is the use when we cannot take care of it inside any faster than we do now?" In a modern ship fuel must be stored wherever room can be found that is not required or available for other purposes. Coal cannot be received on board faster than it can be stored away in bunkers, which, in the case of a modern liner, is at the rate of about one and one-half tons per man per hour. More primitive methods prevail in ports of less importance than those at either end of the Atlantic lines. In the West Indies coaling is almost exclusively done by negro women, who pour in a ceaseless stream over the gang planks, each carrying about 100 pounds of coal in a basket poised on her head. In Mediterranean ports the work is done by men instead of women, but for the most part with the same primitive instruments—shovel and basket. Protected by Their Color. For years naturalists have been studying the part which color plays in protecting animals from their enemies. Protective coloration is the technical term which is given to such cases of protection. Last November Abbott Thayer, the artist, gave an open-air talk, demonstrating his theory of protective color, to naturalists gathered from all over the country. He placed three objects of about the size and shape of sweet potatoes, horizontally on wires a few inches above the ground. They were covered with a sticky material, and then dry earth from the road where they stood was sprinkled over them to give them the same color as their background. The two end ones were then painted white on the under sides, and the white color was shaded up and gradually mixed with the brown of the sides. When viewed from a little distance, these two end ones, which were white below, disappeared from sight, while the middle one stood out in strong relief, and appeared much darker than it really was. Mr. Thayer explained that terrestrial birds and mammals, which are protectively colored, have the under parts white, or very light in color, and that the color of the under parts usually shades gradually into that of the upper parts. This is essential in order to counteract the effect of the shadow side, which otherwise, as shown by the middle potato, makes the object abnormally conspicuous, and causes it to appear much darker than it really is. This device of nature is operative throughout the animal kingdom, the marine world offering scarcely any exception to its universality. Makes One Exception. A California temperance association limits the beverages of its members to wine, beer and cider, "except when laboring under a sense of discouragement, and then whisky shall be allowed." They are wily to be the most discouraged temperance people in the State. There Was Another. Jack—I hear you had a narrow escape from a grizzly in the mountains this summer. Ella—Yes, indeed. It was the tightest squeeze I ever had. Jack (putting his arm around her)—Well, that grizzly is not the only member of the "press association."



CHANGE IN WOMAN'S ATTIRE.

To the delight of artists and other lovers of nature the growing tendency in woman's attire is to allow the female form to assume more and more the lines of nature. The inartistic effects in woman's fashions which gave the figure unnatural proportions are being gradually eliminated, and looseness, flowing lines and gentle curves are the order in new gowns. This interests not only the women and the modistes who made their gowns, but men who have for years jeered at and ridiculed, secretly perhaps in many cases, the absurdities of woman's fashions, tight corsets, wasplike waists, bulging hips and other abominations. Women have for years gone on imagining that



they were making themselves beautiful by just these means and getting farther and farther away from nature and her lines. The climax was reached ten years ago, with the bustle and the hump it produced, and since then there has been a gradual return to natural lines until now the new fashions are almost ideal. More women are now well rounded and proportioned, and it is attributable to nothing save the spread of the athletic fever among women and the consequent abolition of the tight corset and tight gowns. The American public had become accustomed to the deformities which the prevailing styles seemed to inflict upon women, but they were none the less inartistic and objectionable. The new fashion, being on the lines of a return to natural lines, is indeed welcome and a marked improvement.

A Modest Diana. Mrs. Eugene Belden, a resident of the Boston suburbs, has proved that a woman can point a gun straight and bag large game. During the past two seasons she has killed in the Maine woods as many deer as the law will allow. Her husband is an enthusiastic sportsman. Some time ago he persuaded her to try shooting bottles thrown in the air. She was successful in breaking most of them and was soon eager to try her skill at something with more risk and excitement about it. She always dresses so that she can get about just as easily and noiselessly as a man. Her costume consists of corduroy knickerbockers and cap, a heavy sweater and high boots. The first year that Mrs. Belden was in the woods she stood in the runways and waited for the guides to scare up the game, but afterward she exchanged this somewhat tiresome method for the fascination of the still hunt.

She Uses Her Light. A man said to me not long ago, "What has got into the girls? Has it become the fashion to economize? All the nicest girls I know are talking of the value of money and how much is wasted unthinkingly. Are we poor bachelors to take courage and believe that we can afford one of these beautiful luxuries in wives?" Alas! It is anything but a hint to take courage, for this heavenly phrase of the new woman means that when she has learned that she can support herself, so that in case her riches take wings she need not be forced to drudge at an ungenial employment, or to marry for a home—it means that she will be more particular than ever in the kind of a man she marries. For in fitting herself for marriage she is learning quite as well the kind of husband she ought to have. And she will not be as apt to marry a man on account of his clothes, or because he dances divinely, as once she might have done. I do not mean to say that the new woman will not marry. In point of fact she will, if properly urged by the right man. But she will not marry so early, so hurriedly nor so ill-advisedly as before. And therefore the men whom new women marry will do well to real-

ize the compliment of her choice, for it will mean that, according to her light, he has been weighed in the balance and not found wanting. Of course, the other women marry on that principle, too. The only difference between the new woman and her sisters is in the amount of her light and the use she makes of it.—Woman's Home Companion.

College Women as Wives. Women of a higher education bring to motherhood and wifehood a better preparation than do those of smaller opportunities. The reasons for this are both physical and mental. They are, as a rule, older, physically mature, and the opinion is held by some physicians that, for the sake of the physical perfection of the race, no woman should marry until she is 25. They have a wider knowledge of physiological and psychological laws—or they have the ability to acquire it—which must bring forth beneficial fruit in the rearing of their children. They know more profoundly the responsibilities of motherhood, and their realization of the importance of details in the training of a child disposes them to look upon what might seem drudgery to other women as glorified, educational opportunity. Besides, when an educated woman is mated with an educated man there is intellectual companionship between them and each has sufficient respect for the other's mental and moral sanity to make possible a government for the home and the children, not by "managing" each other, keeping clear of a pandering to each other's foibles and prejudices, but by frank and fearless discussion as to what is reasonable and right.

Entirely Too Formal. Dolly Swift—Young Mr. Pensmith, the editor of the Weekly Visitor, has just made me a written offer of marriage. Sally Gay—He is a handsome fellow. What will be your answer, dear? Dolly Swift—He is handsome, I'll admit, but I shall be forced to decline him with thanks. He is too horribly business-like. After requesting an early answer, he added: "Please write briefly, to the point and upon but one side of the paper. Sign your full name, not for publication, but merely as a guarantee of good faith, and do not forget to inclose a postage stamp if you desire a reply." Sally, a man like that would calmly smoke while the baby fell downstairs.

Director of Art. The youngest and first woman director of an art institute is Miss May Ball of Valparaiso, Ind., who now occupies the chair of the fine arts at the Northern Indiana Normal College, located at that place. After being graduated from the Chicago Institute of Fine Art Miss Ball



gave instruction at Millford, Ill., until she accepted her present position. Although a young woman, her rare qualifications and exceptional artistic talent has already won her a name in the world of art. Her father, Erasmus Ball, is cashier of the First National Bank of Valparaiso.

Kittens' Heads for Bonnets. Cute little kittens with small, dainty heads, will soon be in great demand if a fad lately introduced continues to grow. An enterprising milliner, anxious to appease the numerous Audubon societies, decorated several bonnets with kittens' heads in lieu of birds and the innovation was a decided success. Already she has received more orders than she can fill, and her agents are scouring the town for suitable kittens. Black and mottled, though occasionally a white head, is used on a dark velvet bonnet. Kittens are more artistic than owls and the milliner defends her practice as much less barbarous than the use of birds, for the decapitation of cats will save many a hapless feline the miseries inflicted by malicious youngsters.—Chicago Chronicle.

Drive an Express Wagon. For five weeks Clara Priddy, aged 20, living near New Castle, Ind., conducted her father's express business. Priddy operates a stage line from Gads to New Castle, carrying the mail, merchandise and passengers. This business was his only means of livelihood. He was taken ill with typhoid fever. No one could be got to take his place. His daughter Cora, however, resolved to take charge of the business, and she did, driving to New Castle each morning in all kinds of weather, assisting in loading heavy cargoes of merchandise and caring for her team.

