

THE ADVERTISER.

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OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE COUNTY.

AT THE PICTURE-GALLERY.

We went to see the pictures, Tom and I.
Because, in truth, we both are fond of art;
And then, besides—well, I will tell you why;
We wished to learn each painter's style by heart.

We lingered all the afternoon, we two,
It was so pleasant in the softened light.
Around and round we went, each gem to view.
And often almost kneeled for better sight.

Judging by haltings, and long, eager looks,
By rustling converse with our guide and friend,
The catalogue had seemed the book of books,
And life a stretch of paintings to the end.

Picture by picture, page by page, we went,
Dubbed this one "perfect," and that other "poor."
You never saw two critics so intent,
I don't know what folks thought of us, I'm sure.

Yet, do you know? some things drive others out.
If you had asked me ere another day
About the pictures on those walls, I doubt
If I had known a single word to say.

In fact, that evening, in our homeward walk,
We settled much concerning Tom and me,
And not one word was said, in all our talk,
Of pictures or of painters—don't you see?
—*Harper's Bazar.*

SAM SPERRY'S PENSION.

For more than two years it was the joke of Bloomington Center—that bright hope, that idle dream, that fond, delusive fancy, known as "Sam Sperry's Pension."

The wits who congregated in the bar-room and grocery of the Bloomington Center Post-office sometimes had only a sad consciousness of utility in their best efforts; the column of facelies in the local newspaper frequently pallid on the senses; but Sam Sperry's lank and stooping figure as he descended faithfully, twice every week, from his lone home on the distant mountain, to "learn the news from Washington," bore with it an aroma of never-failing interest and diversion.

"Any facial dokkerments arrived for me?" Sam was accustomed to inquire, on entering the Post-office, with an air of ill-concealed consequence; and on being answered in the negative, the look of sudden surprise and incredulity which overspread his features was always as fresh and real as it had been during the first six months he had undergone the blow. His recovery was as complete and instantaneous, when, seated on the counter with the "boys," he derided the very existence of his proud Nation's capital in terms of the most reckless sarcasm, or, in a softer mood, induced by certain grateful potatoes, palliated the weakness of official judges with a forbearance which his listeners found even more irresistibly entertaining.

"They think they're comin' it over me, down there to Washington," Sam observed on one occasion, rolling his eyes upon his near neighbor on the counter with a look which was dark without menace, and at the same time forcibly introducing the sharp point of his elbow to that gentleman's ribs—"they think they're comin' it over me, down there to Washington. And all the time they're hangin' off about my pension, what's accumulatin' down there?—what's accumulatin'?" Here Sam's companion was actually obliged to move an inch or two away in order to escape the too severe emphasis of that emaciated elbow. "Back pay!" chuckled Sam; "that's what's accumulatin'—back pay! Let 'em hold off ten or a dozen years longer, and I'll be swimmin' in back pay—I'll be fairly waller-in' it."

With which the deeply confidential aspect of Sam's face changed to a triumphant simper, and, turning to nudge another companion (as he supposed) on his right, he inadvertently thrust his elbow through the wrappage of a large parcel of sugar, the contents of which were scattered over the grocery floor.

Sam's expression of dismay was pitiful.
"Have it charged to your back pay, Sam," cried an uproarious, though cheerful, voice.

Sam took up the cue, and ever after that his descent from the West Mountain, which had before been significant of a small invoice of skunks' fur, blue-berries, and the like, at the Bloomington grocery, missed the hampering weight of those hardly-acquired products, and Sam's business transactions at the counter—the understanding, being good between the grocer and those jolly Bloomington boys—were rounded by a regally careless: "Charge it to pension, Ned—reg'lar pension or back pay, I don't care which."

Rarely, very rarely, Sam really did find a document waiting for him at the Post-office, marked with the mysterious seal of the Department of the Interior, and opened it with fingers of trembling expectation, only to find a printed sheet of painfully worded statistics, to the effect that "besides the two hundred and ninety thousand filled claims, others were constantly being entered, but that in due time each would receive careful consideration," etc. His first heat of desperate indignation yielded later to tears of unaffected sentiment, as he murmured: "Pension! I guess so, boys!—the grass 'll be growing over my grave before I see any pension," and later still to smile and hope again.

The gunshot wound in his right hand upon which Sam had based his claim on the National bounty was of small account compared with the harm which he had suffered, both in body and soul, from the soldiers' camp life, the Southern marshes and the Southern prisons. "I don't know what Sam might 'a

been, or what he might not 'a been," said Judge Holcomb, a prosperous citizen of Bloomington. "For my honor, boys, he 'sposed uncommon bright, though he wa'n't never what ye'd call pertick'lar tough or long-winded. But I can tell ye one thing, Sam Sperry wa'n't never the same man after he come out of that Southern prison."

Even after this asseveration I do not know that any of the frequenters of the Bloomington bazar remarked that the boyish head on Sam's bent shoulders, with its rings of close-curling light hair, was of a Byronic cast, or that his eyes, when not filmy from the effects of ague or rum, were of such a perfect and heavenly blue as is seldom seen in the undimmed orbs of children. Sam was their lynch, their by-word, their theater-comique; they would have paid twice the price of his lordly though prudent negotiations at the counter rather than miss the zest afforded by his semi-weekly appearance. With a touch of real pity, too, perhaps, for their old comrade, they cajoled with him in his forlorn hope, encouraged in him at all times the freest expression of his sentiments, flattered him and regaled him. And often, alas! the feet which had come shuffling down the mountain awkwardly enough and loosely enough, retraced their steps in a still more desultory and uncertain manner, and chance passers-by have told how Sam, pausing at length by some way-side fence, frequently nudged the post with his elbow, as though having just committed to it some gravely confidential or facetious remark.

There was one person whom Sam's weakness and derelictions failed to inspire with appreciative mirth. In the neighborhood of Sam's house on the mountain there were two other homes. One was possessed by Isaac Travers with his belligerent wife and numerous small children; in the other Mary Ellsworth dwelt alone with her mother.

Years ago, Sam and Mary had gone down hand in hand to the school kept in the little hamlet at the foot of the mountain. Mary still keeps the green-covered "speller" in which she and Sam studied their lessons together. And they were at the head of the class always, the mountain boy and girl—always at the head of the class, and always first and most imperious in play; Mary small, brown-eyed, sharp-witted, and Sam handsome and tall, with his cherubic curls and saucy red lips.

Then Sam's parents died, and he went over to help John Ellsworth in his mill, and the work prospered under his strong, blithe hand. And as the days passed by, Sam and Mary shrank coyly away from the affectionate intimacy of their childhood, and ended by falling as deeply in love with each other as though they had now for the first time exchanged glances across the rapturous bounds of manhood and maidenhood. Their love, having such tender root in the past, sent out bright branches of hope for the future, and was as strong as life with them both. Mary would have borne anything for Sam; and Sam, who was of a quick and impetuous nature, found his equilibrium in the sweet firmness of Mary's character, and adored her for the loving sarcasm with which she rebuked his pet faults—such bright and captivating faults as Sam's were then.

Sam and Mary were engaged when the war broke out; and the two men of John Ellsworth's household went away, and the two women waited in their solitary home on the mountain, cheered by letters at first; afterward their only hope lay in some chance returning figure along the road that came winding up from the villages below. John Ellsworth never came back along that dear familiar road; and when Sam returned one day, weak, ague-shaken, demented, but still fondly, foolishly faithful, Mary, called of God to endure this greater sorrow than any death could bring, spent the solitude of one black night in terrible rebellion, and when the morning dawned, laid her broken heart at the foot of the cross, and rose with a calm "I will—for evermore."

Sam went back wondering to occupy the long-deserted home of his childhood; but it was Mary's hand that brought him bread and meat, that made his bed, and swept the floor, and furnished his poor home with every comfort.

Sam knew that it was all changed somehow. The tongue once so winningly sarcastic was now ever too deeply compassionate. He sorrowed over it with the vague sorrow of a child. But he trusted Mary. She knew; she would set it all right in time. The light, the hope, the promise of his youth, so helplessly, so mysteriously lost—they were all kept waiting for him somewhere in Mary's great dark eyes.

But when Sam came tottering up the hill, on his return home, he had brought with him a parcel the contents of which he had not revealed to any eye. It contained his wedding clothes, new and sleek, of the finest black broadcloth. In the pathetic loneliness of his home he acquired the habit of fondling these, of gazing over them, even of trying them on before the glass; and then, as he stood in his best mood, with his bonny hair carefully curled, one never saw so sweet and weak a face. Sam longed yet ever hesitated to appear before Mary in these splendid habiliments. That strange trouble on his mind deterred him. He was never so shy, so conscious of his lost estate as when in "Miss Mary's" presence—never withal so strangely happy and content. One evening as he sat before her, the wedding garments he had left at home filled all his thoughts.

"I—I never cared for any girl but you, Mary," he exclaimed abruptly, with a spark of the old fire in his eyes. "I—I never could."

"No, Sam," Mary answered, gently, "I don't believe you ever could."

"You—you promised to marry me once," said Sam, that brief fire changing, for another instant, to a look of solemn wonder and reproach.

A deathly pallor crept over Mary's face. Then she came close to Sam, and laid her hand on his, and looked into his eyes with all the beautiful tenderness and pity of her deeply tried soul.

"I shall always be true to you, Sam," she said. "There are some things we can't understand. We must be patient. But that—what we hoped for once—now—in this world—that, dear Sam, must never be!"

"Yes, Mary," Sam answered, sweetly obedient, thrilled through and through by the touch of her dear hand, "that must never be." And he repeated the words simply all the way home: "That must never be." It was all right, somehow. "Mary knew." But he folded the wedding clothes and put them away that night as one who should never need to take them down again.

After this the ruined life clung still closer to that strong and patient one, and the little services which Sam was accustomed to perform for Mary, when not suffering with the ague, or following after the fond hallucination of his "pension"—the fetching of wood and the drawing of water—these lost to his poor, adoring mind every base and mental quality, and were like the offering of a devotee laid tremblingly at the feet of an angel.

And the time passed all too swiftly for the work of Mary's hands. Besides her ministrations to Sam and her mother, her generous thought for the wretched Travers family, the name of Mary Ellsworth, for the gracious help and sympathy which it implied, was known and loved in all the villages below; and, in times of sickness or sorrow, or added care, the journey up the mountain-side was cheap which could procure a day of those coveted services.

It was the affliction of unexpected company which had overtaken Judge Holcomb's wifeless home and refractory servants. Mary, with rare firmness, established there in a day her universal rule of peace. Among the other guests was a young actress from New York, the Judge's niece, blonde, handsome, magnificent. At evening, as Mary stood, before her return home, waiting an instant in the hall, so quiet and demure, with her dark hair parted in an old, old fashion, and her sad, lustrous eyes and her face breathing that ineffable refinement which the calm endurance of some hidden and exalted sorrow alone can give, the dashing young actress advanced upon her suddenly, and folded her with an impetuous gesture in her strong white arms. "I love you!" she whispered. "I love you! I love you desperately!"

The Judge's own wooing was less impassioned, when, some weeks afterward he left his smart horse and buggy at Mary's gate, and entered the house. "I formed a very favorable opinion of you, Mary," said this grandiose personage, "a good many years ago, and I've never had any cause to alter that opinion. In fact, I come in here to say that I should like to have you come down to my house in the capacity of a wife."

There was a grace, a perfect self-reliance, in Mary's old-fashioned manner, which relieved it from any imputation of staidness, as she answered, in much the same words that she had used in addressing Sam some time before, but with such a different tone in the ring of her clear voice: "I thank you, but that can never be." And the Judge drove away, amazed and disappointed, but, most of all, sorry for Mary.

Sam was the next caller. He had seen the smart buggy at Mary's gate. He entered, timid and hesitating, and sat for some time shifting uneasily about in his chair. At length: "I—I never cared for any girl but you, Mary, I—I never could," he repeated, earnestly.

And Mary answered, as she had done before. "No, Sam, I don't believe you ever could."

Sam drew his sleeve quickly across his eyes. "You—you ain't goin' to leave the old mountain, Mary?"

"Never!" Mary answered, and, as before, her tone quieted and consoled him.

After what seemed a long time, though the tears were still standing in Sam's blue eyes, "I forgot, Mary," he said, meekly, "I came in to say—you're young yet, and handsome, Mary—and if you had a better chance—I don't know what I—what we should do without you—but if you had a better chance—you—you mustn't—you know—Mary."

There he paused. Mary did not smile, but her heart yearned over Sam as a mother's might over a child who has tried in vain to be good and brave and unselfish. And Sam went away comforted.

It was the third bleak winter since Sam's return to the mountain, and he meanwhile growing weaker and sillier with each successive season, but ever faithful in his inquiries after his pension at the Bloomington Post-office. The Bloomington boys thought it a rare joke to impress upon his mind that the only reason why Miss Mary deferred giving him her hand in marriage was his continued inability to obtain his pension.

"Just wait till you get your pension, Sam," said Ned Hemingway, the storekeeper, delicately hinting on this point, "and then see!"

And Sam doubted utterly at first—away down in his heart doubted always; but as he lent himself more and more to the erratic fancy, it fired and consumed his brain.

One night, from the alternate chills and fevers which shook his frame, Sam fell asleep. Instead of his lone, dark room, the road winding from the mountain to the village rose before his eyes. That road, usually so tortuous and long, was straight and bathed in light. He traversed it. At the end a palace gate, and at the gate a white-winged angel stood, his pension in her shining hand. Sam gazed. Above those peaceful wings was Mary's face. She smiled as she had smiled upon him long ago. He woke, and slept no more that night.

With the morning he put on his wedding clothes. No doubt or hesitation possessed him now. There was a terrible exultation in his eyes. This time he did not stop, as was his wont, at Miss Mary's house. The road down the mountain-side was tortuous and long. There was no palace gate at the end; no pension. Those who watched Sam's face in this last instance of his ever-recurring disappointment say that a look came over it which had never been there before. He rested on the counter and drowsed, and almost fainted, but he would not drink. This provoked unbounded astonishment. Sam's dying flesh craved the cup with an awful thirst, but Mary's eyes were stronger, and Mary's eyes seemed to be upon him, and he would not drink. "It would choke me, boys," he tried to say, turning away weakly.

He manifested a desire to make his will. It was a rare occasion at the Bloomington grocery.

"It's all to go to Mary," he exclaimed, excitedly, "pension, back pay and all." The last flame of the fever was flickering and wasting in his eyes. He rested and dozed again. At noon he started for home; at four o'clock he had traversed only half of the lonely winter road; at the foot of the mountain—it was sunset—he staggered and fell down. We shrink from the records of fates so sad, We need not fear. One greater than we, and more compassionate by far, comforts the death of His lambs when they fall in the desolate places. The pain in Sam's body eased. Across his mind flitted a brief trouble.

"I wish Mary could know," he said, "that I wouldn't touch it—for her sake." And later and more solemnly: "I wish Mary could know—that I seem—now—to understand. I seem—now—to see—"

An old story tells of the prodigal who wandered, and who came back to his father's house; of the purpose, running through all the weakness and sin, of the wonder and suffering of our human lives to make us hungry, and to bring us home. So, over Sam's wasting face, there crept first the infinite, unbearable hunger of the soul, and then the quiet look of one whom God leads home; and the blue eyes, piercing now beyond the light of sun or moon, met unshrinkingly the shadows of the deepening night, and unshrinkingly the clear gaze of the solemn stars.

And Mary knew. When they brought Sam home to her in his wedding garments, she looked upon his face, and she knew that the bridegroom had, indeed, come back, clothed and joyful, to the bride; the lost spirit to the strength and beauty of its first estate. And she kissed the dead lips in that last act of perfect love and consecration, and knelt and thanked God.

A few days after Sam's death, Ned Hemingway, entering Mary's house, either from curiosity or worthier motives, with a stammered apology, and the words: "Of course it ain't o' no account, but I thought ye might like to keep it," handed Mary the will in which Sam had devised to her his pension. As he did this, the mirthful grocer cast down his eyes, and blushed to the roots of his hair. Mary took the little parchment, read it quietly, and just the shadow of a smile played about the beautiful tenderness of her lips. Then she turned to the grocer, and unconsciously transfixed him with her clear, thoughtful, half inattentive gaze.

"I think Sam owed you something," she said.

"Oh, no, no," stammered the grocer. "That's all right. The boys 'll see to that."

"I should prefer to have you give me the bill," Mary said; and still transfixed by that courteously compelling gaze, the abashed and reluctant grocer complied.

Mary keeps the will in which Sam gave her his pension, with a lock of hair that was always golden and boyish, and the green-covered spelling-book. Sometimes in the pauses of her toil she can smile her tender smile over these, she can weep blessed tears over them.

But if any one should say that hers had been a famished heart—famished for all the joyful possibilities, the wifehood, the motherhood, that might have been—the thought would pale before the tranquil glory of her eyes. There has come to the life of this lone watcher on the mountain a fullness such as few may know. The autumn winds that speak with their low wail of death to the dwellers in the valley land below, bring to her clearer sense sweet messages of home.—*Harper's Magazine.*

—A Good Dessert for a Change.—Make nice short dough like pie-crust, roll quite thin, sprinkle on some thinly sliced cooking apples, roll up not too tight, wrap in a thin clean cloth, tie rather loosely, and steam for nearly an hour and a half. Serve with sauce or cream and sugar, as you like best. Mix a pinch of soda in the flour thoroughly before the shortening.

—The Upper Mississippi lead fields include 2,000,000 acres—200,000 in Iowa, 400,000 in Northern Illinois, and 1,400,000 in Wisconsin. The value of the gross amount of lead produced in the fields since 1826 is about \$70,000,000.

FACTS AND FIGURES.

—Florida will send 20,000,000 oranges to market this season, although there were severe frosts last winter.

—Twenty-five thousand specimens of spiders in glass bottles have been arranged by Captain Holden, of Cincinnati.

—A paper mill at Holyoke, Mass., made 24,500 pounds of paper in twenty-four hours on one machine—the biggest run on record.

—The cotton States consume 42,252,214 bushels more wheat than they raise, and pay to the North for wheat, corn, oats and hay \$150,000,000 annually.

—The magnitude of the cattle interest in Colorado may be inferred from the fact that, according to a late estimate, there are 1,000,000 cattle being fed in the valleys of that State, and as yet the business is in its infancy.

—The relative value of silver and gold, as deduced from the proportion of the two metals, was eight to one from 1493 to 1580; forty-nine to one sixty years later; five to one from about 1856 to 1860—an average during the whole period of nineteen to one. At the present time it is about eleven and a half to one.

—The Pullman carshops at Pullman, near Chicago, have secured the order for the passenger train equipment of the New York, St. Louis & Chicago road, which, with that of some connecting roads, make a total of 200 cars, all of which are to be novel in construction and exterior finish, and models in many respects.

—Sidney Dillon, one of Jay Gould's partners, is about to build the costliest and most ornate private residence on this continent. It is to be erected at the corner of Fifth avenue and Seventy-sixth street, New York City, and the house, with the grounds surrounding it, will cover thirteen full city lots, four of which will be on Fifth avenue.

—In 1820 the third-class receipts on English railroads amounted to less than twenty-seven per cent. of the whole; now they constitute sixty-three per cent. Then thirty-two per cent. of the earnings was from first-class traffic, now only sixteen per cent. is gained from that source. The decline in second-class and the increase in third-class traffic has been partly caused by a practical abolition of second-class accommodation by leading roads. The railway officials thought that if second-class conveniences were done away most former second-class travelers would go first-class; as a matter of fact, they moved to the third-class carriages. In this country the effort to drive people of small means into Pullmans and palaces, by making second-class cars uncomfortable, in various ways has been more successful.

WIT AND WISDOM.

—A puglist should find no difficulty in boxing the compass.—*Detroit Tribune.*

—It is no use to attempt to put on style unless you have a good gait.—*Cambridge Tribune.*

—Politicians ought to make good telegraph repair men. They are used to pulling wires.—*Chronicle-Herald.*

—A fashion magazine says: "Steel trimmings are no longer the style." That settles it. Lay aside your bowie knives.—*Boston Post.*

—Why may a tipsy man fall into the river with impunity? Because he won't drown as long as his head swims.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

—Since the wreck of the Newark bank the James brothers feel that a greater than them has arisen in the land.—*New York Commercial Advertiser.*

—"A. M. R." asks this conundrum: "Why do the French eat less than any other Nation?" Because one egg is always uncut for them.—*Boston Transcript.*

—A lady writes that no man will stare long at a woman who does not stare back. That sounds well; but if she does not stare back, how is she to know whether the man has stopped staring or not?—*Hartford Times.*

—We hope something will be done to check the romantic notion of marrying men to reform them. It will be impossible to accommodate any more such couples at the almshouse, as that institution is full.—*Philadelphia News.*

—"What can I do for you to induce you to go to bed now?" asked a Lowell mamma of her five-year-old boy Monday evening. "You can let me sit up a little longer," was the youngster's reply.—*Lowell Courier.*

—We regret to inform our fair correspondent, Mrs. McRafferty of Stevenson street, that after diligent search we find there is no clause in the Constitution of the United States making it a penal offence for Mrs. O'Hoolihan, whose back yard is to the windward of Mrs. McR's, to sift ashes while the McRafferty linen is hung out to dry. It is just these inexcusable omission to protect the most sacred rights of our prominent citizens that are slowly but surely bringing about the downfall of this alleged Republic.—*San Francisco Post.*

—In the market: Young housekeeper—"Have you a calf's head? I think John would like one for dinner." "Yes, we have one nicely cleaned. Shall I send it up?" "And have you any quail? I think quail on toast would please him." "Some just in this morning." "And let me see, a loin of beef. Is it quite season for venison yet?" "No. Shall I send the calf's head, quail and loin of beef?" "Well, no, I guess not. You can give me a half a pound of pork steak."—*New Haven Register.*