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ON A DYING INSECT.

Thou fluttering mite of gauzy green,
That by untoward flame to-night
Art rudely summoned from a scene
That for some days hath shed delight
On thy small senses—what has been
Thy profit from this sunny world,
Ere into darkness and oblivion hurled?

A few short flights on shimmering wings,
A few warm ecstasies in air,
A golden glow, a glimpse of things
Not understood, and everywhere
A great, glad life that soars and sings:
Was it not well? Who asketh more
To carry to the all-forgetting shore?
—John Hall Ingham, in Lippincott's.

The Vigilance Committee.

By W. R. Rose.

It was a moonlight night and the roadway shone white and clear between the straggling fences. A number of men, a dozen, perhaps, were coming up the hill from the village in the valley with its twinkling lights. They were plodding along in a little group and busily talking as they advanced. Presently they paused at a gateway and crowded a little closer. The house within the yard was old and weather beaten. It was a story and a half building. There was a porch along the front with two windows beneath it, one for each side of the door. Through the window at the left shone a faint and flickering light.

The group of men at the gate lingered irresolutely for a few moments, talking in eager whispers. Then a tall young man with a smooth and kindly face broke from the party and led the way up the gravelled walk to the front door. When he reached the little porch he paused and held up his hand. Then he went to the window through which the faint light flickered and went in.

That Abner Moxham was a hard man nobody in Winterfield doubted. He was unscrupulous. He was close in his dealings; he lived quite alone in the old cottage on the south hill. He was tall and lean and yellow, and his sixty years had touched his hair with white, and filled his tanned cheeks with wrinkles. He cared nothing for the matters that interested the villagers. He took no interest in politics nor in public improvements, and very little in religion. Occasionally he would stray into the white church whose steeple was the tallest in the village, and sit quite by himself through the service. Then he would hurry away without a word to his fellow worshippers. The young pastor had called on him once, but it was not believed that he had repeated the visit. In fact, he never stated clearly what occurred while he was there. It was said that Abner was the possessor of a small library of books that were calculated to destroy all faith in orthodox views, and that he pored over them a great deal of his time. Where the old man's income came from no villager knew. That it was limited everybody felt sure. His way of living was so simple, his clothes were threadbare, and the purchases he made in the village were not of a character to suggest the possession of even a moderate income. He came and went and bothered no man, yet was a thorn in the flesh of the gossipy hamlet.

And then his standing as an object of neighborly interest was suddenly and greatly increased by the rumor that he had brought a boy home to live with him. Abner had a habit of disappearing for a week or more at a time. He might have been supposed to be in his cottage during these absences if it hadn't been for the fact that he was seen to take the train. But where he went Winterfield didn't know.

It was reported once by Ezra Kimball, whose business took him to the great city every month, that he ran across Abner there one morning, but that the old man didn't look at him and hurried along.

"And what's queerer," said Ezra, "is that he was talking to two swells at a carriage door as I came up, and the lady gave him her hand and the man took off his hat to him. Then they drove away."

But Winterfield pool-pooled this picture and assured Ezra that he must be dreaming.

When the boy arrived it was early evening and he was so muffled up that his face could not be seen. He was a little fellow of perhaps eight, and Abner had hurried him away before the curious stationmaster could get a good look at him. It was a full mile from the station to the old cottage on the hill, and in the dusk of the evening Jim Perkins had met the tall old man trudging up the hill with the lad on his back.

When Winterfield heard of this addition to the Moxham household it

frowned ominously and shook its sagacious head. It was no place for a boy. It couldn't be a home for anybody. The boy was to be pitied. In fact, the village must keep a sharp lookout for his welfare.

It was a day or two later that the child and old Abner appeared at the postoffice, and the postmistress got a good look at the little fellow.

She stared at him out of her little window.

"That a delicate appearin' child you have there," she said.

"Yes," Abner replied, as he reached for his letters. If it hadn't been for his mail the old man's visits to the village would have been greatly decreased in number. He received more letters than any man in Winterfield, a fact that thoroughly convinced the villagers that he must be engaged in some nefarious pursuit where letter writing was a part of the swindle.

The little postmistress yielded up the letters reluctantly.

"Needs a lot o' good care," she said with her beady black eyes on the boy.

"Yes," Abner agreed, as he turned away.

"Most unwholesome child I ever saw," the little postmistress explained to Mrs. Baxter, the wife of the village banker. "He looks scared and abused, and I'm just sure that old miser's home's no place for him."

"Somebody ought to look after the poor little vagabond," said the banker's wife. "What have we got humane societies for?"

The boy was rarely seen in the village. He was delicate in appearance and seemed timid. He kept close to the old man and resisted all attempts to draw him away.

"He's thoroughly cowed," said the little postmistress to the young minister as she held that worthy with her glittering eye. "Looks to me like a child that's been half starved and beaten and had all the spirit taken out of it. Somebody with authority ought to investigate—and right away, too, or it may be too late."

The young minister flushed a little and seemed about to speak. Then he abruptly checked the impulse and picked up his letters.

"I think," said the little postmistress, "that it's your duty to interfere, Mr. Browning."

The young minister smiled.

"It isn't always easy to see one's duty clearly, Mrs. Twitters," he said.

"And while you are waiting for clearer vision the worst may happen," said the little postmistress.

The minister's face grew grave.

"I hope not," he said, and turned away.

The little postmistress gave a sniff as he passed through the door, a little sniff that was expressive of profound contempt for the dilatory ways of masculine humanity.

Then came a time when the boy was not seen for several weeks and public anxiety grew intense. Nor did the old man appear. He was there in the ancient cottage. The milkman and the baker and the grocer saw him on their rounds. But they saw nothing of the boy.

"How is the little fellow?" the grocer volunteered to ask one day.

"He's all right," the old man gruffly replied.

"I haven't seen him out," the grocer persisted.

"No," said the old man, and closed the door behind him.

At the expiration of three weeks Selectman Briscoe sought out the young minister.

"Parson," he said, "I'm here at the request of several of our most reputable citizens. They think something should be done about Old Man Moxham and that boy."

"What do you propose?" inquired the young man.

"We thought maybe you could suggest something."

The young minister was silent for a moment.

"We must be careful," he said.

"Of course."

"We have no proof that anything is wrong."

"It looks mighty queer."

The young minister hesitated.

"Out where I spent a year or two after I left college," he said, "they would have made this the subject for a vigilance committee's attentions. When a social duty of this sort was under consideration a rope was usually at hand where it could be found when wanted."

"Of course," said the selectman hastily. "We don't intend to go that far."

The young man smiled.

"But the vigilance committee idea suits you?"

"The idea of a committee to visit the old man suits me."

"Good," said the young man. "There can be no harm in that."

"And you'll join us?"

"Yes."

"To-morrow night?"

"We'll meet at the church at 8 o'clock."

"Very well."

The selectman paused.

"And will you lead us?"

"If you desire it," said the young minister.

And so it happened that the first vigilance committee that Winterfield had ever known plodded determinedly, although at a leisurely pace, up the long hill in the bright moonlight, and finally entered the old man's yard and halted before the ancient cottage. And it was the tall young minister who advanced and peered through the lighted window.

There was a brief pause.

Then the tall young minister turned to the others.

"Come," he said in a whisper.

He rapped lightly on the door. Waiting but a moment he opened it and passed in, with the others following him.

The door opened immediately into the big living room of the cottage, a comfortable apartment with a great fireplace with a log burning on the huge andirons, a log that sent out the flickering light that had illuminated the window.

The old man was there, seated in a low chair by the fireplace. He looked up as the committee entered, but showed no surprise.

He only nodded and then held up his hand with a slight warning gesture.

The boy was in a cushioned chair by the old man's side. His head with its long light hair was pillowed against the old man's shoulder. He sat at such an angle that the committee could see the little white face, and the long white hands, and the closed eyes. The boy was asleep.

But even as they stared at this picture the child stirred uneasily.

"Daddy," he cried, "daddy?"

It was a cry of terror.

"Yes, yes, dear boy, I am here," said the old man gently as he patted the white cheek. The big eyes opened wider and rested on the old man's face. The pale lips parted in a sigh.

"I had a bad dream, daddy," he murmured.

"Yes, dear boy. But it was only a dream."

"I dreamed they were beating me again, daddy."

"They will never beat you again, dear boy."

The child was silent for a moment. Then he sighed again. This time it was a sigh of contentment.

"Daddy," he softly said, "it's like heaven to be sick, isn't it?"

The old man stroked the white hands tenderly.

"There's a little pain again in my shoulder, daddy," said the boy. "If you'll rub it just a little it will go away and then I can sleep."

The old man reached across and gently stroked the ailing arm and the tired eyelids slowly closed.

Presently the stroking ceased and the old man looked up. The committee were grouped about the door, each man with his hat in his hand and they were all very still.

"The child has been ill," said the old man softly. "He has had a fever, the result of his malarial surroundings and of ill treatment. But he is much better, and will, please God, live to be a strong and healthy child. I have nursed him through this illness, because I felt competent to do it—I am a graduate of a medical school—and because in his timid and nervous condition the sight of a strange face would have greatly retarded his recovery." He paused and gently shifted the child's head into a more comfortable position, and then one of the little hands crept into the brown and rugged one and stayed

there. He looked up again, but before he could speak the tall young pastor had stepped forward.

"Mr. Moxham," he said, in his deep, low tones, "these gentlemen are a self-appointed committee who have called upon you in a neighborly way with the desire of proffering such aid as you may require. They have been worried and even alarmed by your non-appearance in the village and are here because they felt it was high time that they asserted their humanity. We are not a demonstrative people in Winterfield. We act slowly, but when we do act we are thoroughly in earnest. And I speak for each member of this committee, sir, and for all the village, too, when I say that if there is aught we can do to help you in any way you can command us to the utmost limit of our resources."

He paused and the old man slowly nodded.

"I thank you, Mr. Browning," he said, "and I thank you all, gentlemen. But at present there is nothing I need. Should any occasion arise, I will be glad to call upon you." And his head dropped again over the child.

There was a moment's pause.

"Good night, sir," said the tall young minister.

There was a little murmur of good nights behind him.

"Good night and my thanks," said the old man.

And the Winterfield vigilance committee passed out.

It was the young pastor who broke the silence as they strode down the hill.

"We have misjudged this old man," he said. "I believe I am free to say so. It was a dreadful domestic calamity that brought him to this state. It humbled his pride, it crushed his ambition. He crept away here to hide his wounded soul. And yet he has not entirely forgotten his fellow creatures. A great institution for the care of child waifs flourishes in the city through his liberality. And I hold in my hands a goodly sum for the benefit of our village poor, a thank offering for the recovery of his daughter's child. Yes, that is her child. And under Providence I fervently hope to see it the means of drawing him back among his fellow men." He paused and half turned. "Oh, my brethren," he said, "never let charity lose its place in your hearts."

They trudged on in silence until the parsonage was reached.

They paused at the gate.

"Gentlemen," said the selectman, as he glanced around, "I move that the Winterfield vigilance committee do now adjourn sine die."

Then each man went his way.—Cleveland Plain-Dealer.

Zestful Frankness.

Unexpected frankness now and then gives a special zest to the humor of a situation in Congress. When "Gabe" Douck was the representative from the Oshkosh district of Wisconsin, a pension bill came before the House, to his great vexation of spirit; for, while his personal convictions were directly opposed to it, his political interests were strong enough to whip him into line. On the day the bill came up for final disposal a fellow-member met Bouck in the space behind the last row of seats, walking back and forth and gesticulating excitedly, bringing his clenched right fist down into the hollow of his left hand, to the accompaniment of expletives which would hardly look well in print.

"What's the trouble, Gabe?" inquired his friend. "Why all this excitement?"

"Trouble!" snorted the irate lawmaker. "Trouble enough! That pension bill is up, and all the cowardly nincompoops in the House are going to vote for it. Its sure to pass—sure to pass."

"But why don't you get the floor and speak against it—try to stop it?" suggested the other.

"Try to stop it?" echoed Bouck. "Try to stop it? Why, I'm one of the cowardly nincompoops myself."—Francis E. Leupp, in the Century.

A Determined Woman.

Mrs. James A. Creager was a young woman of twenty, living in Arcadia, Kan. Last September she announced that she was going to die at a certain time. She made all preparations for her funeral, selected her pall-bearers, the text for her sermon and the hymns she wanted sung. Two weeks ago, on the day set, she went to bed and said she was dying. Physicians were called in, and they rendered a verdict that she was perfectly well and able to be about. They had hardly left the house when she died.—New York Commercial Advertiser.

THE WORLD OF CRAFT.

Same Methods Used Everywhere, But the Members Are Differently Named.

"Have you ever noticed," inquired the observing man who had just returned from a hurried trip to England, "that there is little difference in street mendicants the world over, except in name?"

Being assured that the auditor had not, the observing man continued his exposition. "I took occasion while on my trip to make some investigation of the street 'beggars,' as we call them in Chicago, as they appear in other cities. I never realized before just how gullible people in general are until I made this investigation. In every city I was 'struck' on the street by two or more beggars, and I found their hard luck stories agreeing in all essential details with those put forward by the Chicago members of the tribe. From the well-dressed individual who professes acquaintance with you and asks for the loan of a dollar or a sovereign, as the case may be, to the plain out and out beggar who whines over a three days' fast, their methods are identical. The only difference I could discover is in the names given to these gentry by the people of the different cities where they operate. Here in Chicago we go to the root of the matter and call the whole class 'street beggars.' In New York, on the other hand, people differentiate between mendicants who appear at the back door with a basket and ask for assistance and those who meet one on the street with a more or less plausible tale of distress. These latter are known as 'graffers' in the East. That term is unknown in London. There they are called 'tapsters.' A 'tapster' is on the whole more ambitious than a 'graffer' or a 'street beggar.' The latter will never strike you for more than a couple of dollars under any pretext, but the London 'tapster' of the 'swell' class makes no bones of asking for the loan of a sovereign.

"It is somewhat flattering for a stranger to judge by your outward appearance that you carry such sums about with you that the matter of a sovereign or two makes no difference to you, but otherwise it seems to me the English members of the craft carry the matter too far. Neither are their schemes so well differentiated as those used by their American brethren, and it is very easy to detect them when one of them accosts you. No American ought ever to be taken in by one. Their work is too coarse."—Chicago Chronicle.

The Villain at Home.

There is a redeeming trait in every man—if it can only be found. Some of the vilest scoundrels I have met in New York are angels at home. The deep-dyed villain in public often has a family that is pure and chaste. His home is his castle, safeguarded by his love and his absolute silence regarding his occupation.

There is a certain lawbreaker in New York who has managed to keep out of jail by a powerful political pull. The entire community knows that he is a lawbreaker. He has defied the police-force for twenty years. He comes and goes as publicly as any banker in the city, and General Greene can lay hands on him at any time of day. In the ordinary routine of the newspaper business I made close acquaintance of this man. For years I looked upon him as a heavy villain. One night I went to his home and learned that he had a wife and three of the loveliest children you ever saw; one a young woman of eighteen, just out of college, the second a girl of twelve and the third a boy of nine. Every feature of the home indicated a refined elegance that was most amazing. Here was the lawbreaker's cloister. When he entered the portal he put sin behind him. The children thought him a saint.—Victor Smith, in New York Press.

An Advertising Giant.

An eye surgeon who had stood high among his fellows for twenty years at Louisville and Chicago began to advertise in the newspapers two years ago. Last year he spent \$30,000 in newspaper advertising. The result is that he has an enormous practice. He is not less skillful that he was during the eighteen years when he did not advertise and was not frowned on by the profession.

Small Minds.

Keep clear of personalities in conversation. It is only small minds that occupy themselves with such trifles.—Philadelphia Telegraph.