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THE VILLAGE DEAD.

Beautiful is yonder hill-side,
Where the field-larks sing and hover,
And the bees to their own music
Wheel among the fragrant clover.
There, beneath the rounded hillocks,
Side by side, like friends and neighbors,
Lie the Sleepers of the Village,
Calmly resting from their labors.
Side by side to church and market
Once they wended; blithe their greetings
By the roadside, at the muster,
At all festivals and meetings.
By their graves we quote their sayings,
Quick rejoicer, mirthful sally,
Born of hearts once gay and buoyant,
Now but cold coils of the valley.
And remember, ye who mourn them—
Ay, remember, and be ready—
To their realm ye are approaching
With a rapid pace and steady.
You white headstones preach, though silent,
Yonder earth for you is yearning,
And the turf that shall imbue you
But awaits the sexton's turning!
Age and childhood, strength and weakness,
To the dust go down together,
For of Life and Death the balance
Kicks the beam with but a feather.
And upon whose clay encoffined,
Kindred clay shall soonest rattle,
We can know no more than soldiers
Who shall first go down in battle.

MY LAST DANCE.

[Written expressly for the HERALD.]
BY HAL.
Here are tickets to the ball at Bell's, to-morrow evening, I said, as I placed the tinted envelope into the little hand of cousin Alice; 'it's to be a grand affair, they say; we must go, of course.'
'I wish they would not come so often, cousin Hal,' she said, raising her brown eyes from the gilded page.
'Not many more for us, my little bird; two more weeks, and then—you know, I retorted gaily as I imprinted a kiss on the pointing, cherry lips, and hurried up to prepare for dinner.
But who was Cousin Alice? Well, she was my cousin, at least I called her so; she was as dear as any cousin could be. Her parents died when she was quite young, and father being her guardian and nearest relative, she came to live with us.
I was then nineteen years of age, and just entering college. I saw but little of her till I came home at the end of my Freshman year, and she had grown so pretty and interesting, that I could not help spending my evenings at home with her, instead of going off on excursions with my fellow students.
When I returned to Harvard, the innocent face of my little cousin went with me, and I could but speculate on the future of such attractions as I saw she possessed, little dreaming that the *cousinly love* I felt for her would ripen into a deeper and more ardent affection.
I came home at the end of my Sophomore year, and when she came bounding from the door to greet me with a kiss, I thought I had never seen such a lovely little fairy before.
My vacation was passed most pleasantly in driving and boating, and the evening of my departure drew near.
On the last evening of my stay, she sat at the piano, as usual, warbling, as only a her exquisite voice could, a Spanish love-ditty, and my heart felt the thrilling influence of the affection I strongly cherished, as her rich, trembling voice lingered on the last words:
'And through the lone and dreary hours,
I wait, I long for thee.'
I could refrain no longer, but as she turned from the piano, I clasped her hand in both mine, pleaded, 'for me, dear cousin?' She understood all, and, raising her tearful eyes to mine, replied, 'for you.' That was all; 'twas enough.
In two years I graduated and entered as cashier in a branch of the National Bank, at the time of my story; and that is where I left you, gentle reader, when I wandered off to tell you who cousin Alice was, and what to me.
At dinner, the ball was thoroughly discussed, and it was decided that everything must succumb to its claims on our presence; though it was evident to us all that Alice did not enjoy the subject. She never danced, except at my request, while I, on the other hand, enjoyed nothing more, and gratified my inclination on every possible occasion.
The evening came, bright and inviting, and Alice came down into the parlor looking so beautiful and brilliant in her ball costume, with the glitter of her diamonds, and the darting rays that came from the softness on her bosom.
As she smiled her greeting, my heart

bounded with mingled emotions of love and pride.
A few minutes' drive brought us to Bell's, where the arrival of earlier guests was betokened by the bustle of servants and of carriages. The front was beautifully illuminated in colors, and a dazzling flood of light poured from the painted windows of the saloon. The stir of the guests as we entered, made the diamonds and jewelry of the ladies emit flashes of light that might almost rival a meteoric shower.
The gaze of all seemed to turn upon Alice, as we passed toward Mrs. Bell and her daughter, and I felt conscious of the envious looks that were bent on me as the groups of young men parted to admit us a passage.
The music soon began, and the flying feet of the dancers were whirling by us, as I led Alice to her place for the first set. She tried to enjoy it, but the failure was too evident to me, and, after a long while, we turned to a bay-window to take refreshments.
The cool breeze that was coming in, with the ices and other refreshments, made it more than pleasant. It was pleasant, too, to sit and gaze on her rare beauty, and catch the tender accents of love and confidence that fell from her lips.
The soft notes of music again floated through the saloon; 'twas Strauss' *'Beautiful Blue Danube'*, and the effect was electrical upon the dancers, who began to arrange for another waltz. At that moment, Alice drew a shawl closely around her and shuddered.
'What is the matter, dear cousin?' I said, with feelings of alarm.
'Nothing, only I am feeling chilly,' she replied.
'One more set then, and we will go home; 'twill drive off your chill, too, I urged.
'Just as you like,' came the languid reply.
We took our places, and were soon whirling through the intricate mazes of a new waltz. A bright flush gradually spread over each cheek, and I looked down into her brown eyes, as she rested her head upon my shoulder, and thought her lovelier than ever, and tried to think she was enjoying the dance. Light feet tripping here and there; bright faces and fairy forms fitting like butterflies in the morning sun; merry tones of laugh and jest; all were passed with hardly a glance: I was enraptured with the one picture before me, the face reclining, 'half at rest, upon my breast.'
The music ceased, and the dancers turned to their seats; but as I turned to the bay-window, where we sat before, the little head that had been pillowed on my shoulder, sank helplessly upon my breast. With an exclamation of horror, I raised her only to see the deep pallor that had settled over her face. In an instant the ladies were by my side with every available means of restoration; but all our efforts were fruitless, further than to bring back a slight pulse.
A physician came in, and, after some consultation, she was borne to the carriage. She was breathing, but almost imperceptibly, and not a word or look relieved our fears. Mother met us at the door with tears and a look of despair that told us that the neva had reached her; she never left the side of her loved one till the end. My heart was filled with fearful forebodings as we laid her on a sofa, and the anxious looks of the physicians bending over her told me there was little hope. All night we sat and watched the pale face, and, at morning light, it quivered and brightened a moment, and, as the physician bent over her again, the soft eyes half-opened. A thrill of hope and joy ran through my aching heart, but only to be blasted; the eyes closed, and the sleeper was with the angels. As the morning sun rose clear and bright, her spirit took its flight to bark, forever in the rays of the *Sun of Righteousness*.
Oh! what anguish filled my soul as I gazed upon the silent one, never to smile upon me again! Never, again, to turn those melting eyes to my face with all the eloquence of a matchless love! Never, again, to hear the glad greeting that told me how dear I was! But, without a look or word of recognition or comfort, she left me!
Sad and sorrowful we bore her to her resting place, and, as the hollow sound of earth upon the coffin lid fell upon my ear, my heart sank, crushed, into the depths of speechless woe.
I am growing old now, and the world holds no ties to bind me here; the music of the dance has ceased to entice my heavy footsteps to tread its mystic mazes; the smile of beauty, the sparkle of humor, or tone of love, and but a dull response in my laden breast.
To-day I stood by her grave, strewn with fresh flowers, and adorned with a single marble shaft, whose motto, a harp with broken strings, tells the simple tale.
The thoughts of other days rush over me,

and a crushing weight of sorrow settles on my wounded heart, and bows my head in the anguish of a memory that can never die.
But I think, too, of the happy greeting on the other shore; the unclouded sky of immortal spirits, that shall spread over our meeting; the eternal melodies that shall float on the spicy breezes 'in the home, in the palace of God.'
My soul, freshwinged by love, then turns to the everlasting hills, whence cometh my help, and longs to bid adieu to things of earth, and fly to where human hearts so sorely tried, shall find, after all its weary tossings upon time's waves, a home where it may rest,
—remembering not
The moaning of the sea!
INVITED TO DINNER;
OR,
HOW HE WAS MARRIED.
BY SHIRLEY BROWNE.
'And he really owes all this money?' said Mrs. Castletorpe.
She was a tall, portly, old lady, with a false front of intensely brown curls, a fresh complexion, and spectacles that seemed to gleam at you like twin moons every time she looked your way—and she always wore black satin, with a neckerchief of white tulle, and a heavy gold chain wound round and round her neck and falling in glittering festoons across her chest.
Yes, ma'am, said Mr. Andrey, her legal adviser, 'I'm afraid he does.'
Then, said Mrs. Castletorpe, he's a downright liar.
Very likely, ma'am, said Mr. Andrey, dryly. Young men have misrepresented facts before now, and will again, I am afraid.
But he told me that the last eight hundred dollars would settle all his debts—and here is a washerwoman's bill, a tailor's account, a bootmaker's little memorandum, and thirty dollars borrowed of Higgins, the jeweler, on a set of ruby shirt studs; to say nothing of these other bills, and Mrs. Castletorpe nodded her head towards a pile of slips of paper that lay under an ivory weight, at her left hand. Why it's perfectly disgraceful! He has deceived me! He has perjured himself, out and out!
Mr. Andrey looked wooden and impenetrable. To him every phase of human roguery and duplicity seemed not only possible, but probable.
But I won't stand it, cried the old lady, growing more and more excited. I'll teach him a lesson!
You will cut off supplies, ma'am? said Mr. Andrey, interrogatively.
No—oh, no! said Mrs. Castletorpe, scratching her nose with the point of her crochet needle. I'll let him have five hundred dollars I promised him. I am a person of my word, whatever he is, with an accent of infinite scorn. But, Andrey, I haven't told you about the worst debt of all!
Indeed, ma'am?
His landlady's daughter—a poor, little, blue-eyed thing, with her head hanging down, and the prettiest yellow hair I ever saw—came here yesterday. He owes her a heart!
Borrowed, ma'am? said Lawyer Andrey, with a twinkle of his dark eyes.
Well, yes, assented Mrs. Castletorpe, grimly. Engaged himself to her while he boarded there. Dropped her completely when he was able to remove to more aristocratic quarters. Broke her poor, little heart. *Blas!* he shall mend it again.
Do you think it is probable, ma'am? asked Mr. Andrey, rather dubiously.
I will make it probable! said Mrs. Castletorpe, resolutely. You're not engaged to dinner for to-morrow evening, are you, Mr. Andrey?
I believe not.
Pray, give us the pleasure of your company, then, said Mrs. Castletorpe. At six precisely. To meet my nephew, Jerome, and a select few of his friends.
Full dress? asked the lawyer.
Oh, of course! said Mrs. Castletorpe, briskly.
And Mr. Jerome Mordaunt, lounging over a French novel in the elegant seclusion of his apartments, was puzzled at the note he received from his rich aunt.
'DEAR JEROME: Come to dinner at six to-morrow night, and we will have a little talk over your affairs. The five hundred dollars will be ready. Your affectionate aunt. CONSOLATION CASTLETORPE.'
The old lady is coming to her senses, eh? said he, folding the billet into the shape of a cigar lighter. Well, I'm glad of that. I couldn't have kept up the campaign much longer without ammunition! I'll be there punctual to the minute, dear Aunt Conny may be quite sure!
He was as good as his word. At six, to the second, he bowed himself debonairly into Mrs. Castletorpe's old-fashioned dining-room—old-fashioned, but eminently comfortable. A fire of anthracite coal glowed and crackled in the grate; wax candles shone with white lustre in silver candleabra, and a large centre-piece of

flowers decked the middle of the board; while solid silver, glass ornamented with a monogram, and painted china were arranged to the best advantage. Mrs. Castletorpe was rich, and she liked to show it.
Oh! it's you Jerome, is it? said she. Pray walk in. Take that seat at the head of the table. You are my guest of honor to-night. Jones, to the old butler, show in my other friends.
And while Jerome Mordaunt was marveling at this unusual politeness could portend, old Jones threw open the folding doors, and in marched Lawyer Andrey, followed by Sutchen, the tailor, in his Sunday's best, Mrs. Riordan, the washerwoman in a surprising mob-cap, Lastley, the conspicuous little bootmaker, Higgins, the jeweller, Pricken, the cigar-merchant, and Spill, the wine dealer. While last, but not least followed Mrs. Nuttingdale, the boarding-housekeeper, and her pretty, blushing daughter, Ruth.
Mrs. Castletorpe stood in stately dignity at her end of the table, while Jones marshaled the miscellaneous crowd of guests to their seats. Jerome sprang from his chair with a low, muttered exclamation at first, but seated himself again. Evidently he was 'in for it,' to use a popular and most expressive phrase, and the only way was to make the best of a bad bargain.
The dinner progressed. Fish succeeded soup—game and entrees followed fish—elephant side dishes came and went, and with the grapes, pine-apples, and leeks, came rare wines and champagne. Mrs. Castletorpe rose with the dignity of a hostess of the old school.
A healthful, ladies and gentlemen, said she. Fill your glasses all. Are you ready? Then I propose the health of the man who pays his debts!
It was drunk with acclamation. Only Jerome Mordaunt colored, and hesitated. Jones said the old lady, please hand these five hundred dollars—in small bills, Jones, take particular notice—Mr. Mordaunt, gentlemen and ladies, to the guests, pray present your little accounts; my nephew is ready to audit them!
Mr. Mordaunt opened and shut his mouth two or three times, in a feeble, gasping way, like an exhausted fish; but he uttered no audible remonstrance. He knew it would be of no use.
Of course, he said, I shall do as my aunt advises.
One by one the hungry-eyed guests advanced, presented their little accounts, and retired, with satisfied countenances, until not a personage was left except Lawyer Andrey, Mrs. Nuttingdale and her daughter, and the hostess.
Now for the last settlement of all, said Mrs. Castletorpe, with an inexorable countenance. Jerome, I believe you are under an engagement to marry this young lady?
Jerome Mordaunt, face to face with poor, pale, trembling little Ruth Nuttingdale, could not deny it.
Jones, pursued Mrs. Castletorpe, and the Reverend Mr. Tyson to walk in. Here is a wedding ring, my own forty good years ago, and I hope none the less lucky for that. Stand up like a man, Jerome—and you close to him, my dear. Now we are quite ready, Mr. Tyson, if you please.
And almost before Jerome Mordaunt realized what was going on, he was married, safe and sound, to Mrs. Nuttingdale's blue-eyed daughter, Ruth.
I congratulate you, my dear, said Aunt Castletorpe, with a sounding kiss. I wish you all joy as my nephew Jerome—and here's a check for one thousand dollars to begin life with.
Thank, dearest aunt, smiled the blushing bride.
And now you are square with the world, so far as I know, Jerome, said the old lady, austere, to her nephew. See that you remain so for future, for you'll get no more help from me. And now I'll bid you all good night, for it's getting late, and I need my after-dinner nap.
And so closed Mrs. Castletorpe's dinner party, with an impromptu wedding.

THE FATHER-IN-LAW.

'Engaged to be married!' slowly uttered Theresa Middleton, with unmistakable accent of envy in her voice. 'And to think that little Blanche Follett should have been the first of the graduating class to wear an engagement ring!
It was rather strange. The three girls sat side by side on the broad veranda of the Acapulco Hotel at Long Branch, enjoying the soft shadows of sunset over the foam-crested breakers—Theresa Middleton tall handsome, and stylish, with jetty hair, large, dark eyes, and yellow roses in her hair; Sophie Dean, slight and graceful, a type of the most exquisite blonde loveliness and Blanche Follett, the fairest of the group, an insignificant, chestnut-haired lassie, pretty enough when one came to examine her features, but nothing beyond the average.
Yet Blanche had captured a 'fish of gold' in the matrimonial waters, while the other two girls cast their nets in vain.
'How soon are you to be married, Blanche?' asked Sophie.
'I don't know. As soon as Guy's father returns from Europe, I suppose.'
'And you are to have your trousseau from Paris. Oh, dear, I wish it was I!' said Theresa, enviously. 'You schooling little thing! who would have suspected you of captivating a rich husband?'
'I don't care whether he is rich or not,' said Blanche, frowning up. 'I only know that I love him. That is enough.'
'It wouldn't be enough for me,' said Theresa, shrugging her shoulders. 'I must have cash as well as caresses! But come, girls—it's time to dress for tea. Those handsome young Cubans will sit opposite us again, and even a handkerchief flirtation is better than nothing. Blanche won't join us, but we don't care for that.'
'What a funny old man, all in snuff color that sat next us this afternoon at dinner!' laughed Sophie. 'And how he stared at us! I shouldn't wonder if he were some rich widower.'
'Horrid old fog!' said Theresa. 'Do you know, girls, he has taken the room next to ours? I saw them carrying an antediluvian trunk in there a little while ago. Depend upon it, he's the first cousin to Methusalem! I'm sure I don't know what such wretched old creatures want at a place like Long Branch. Why don't they stay at home, and nurse their rheumatism in their own back garrets?'
'Hush, Theresa,' whispered Miss Follett, glancing around. He is sitting on the other bench, just beyond. He will hear you.'
'Who cares if he does?' said Miss Middleton, insolent in the pride and flush of her young beauty.
The gray-haired old man, who had been sitting with both hands clasped over his gold-headed cane and his eyes intently fixed on the changing glories of the sunset-sea, looked up here.
'I suppose, young lady,' said he, 'you think that the old have no business to exist. Perhaps when half a century or so more has rolled over your own head, you may think differently on the subject.'
Theresa colored and tossed her head, Sophie Dean tilted as she rose and shook out her flounced muslin robes preparatory to going up stairs; but Blanche Follett lingered behind after the other two had swept away, and glanced pleadingly up in the old man's face.
'I hope they have not hurt your feelings, sir,' said she, wistfully. 'They mean no harm, only they are young and foolish.'
'No, my dear, no,' said the old man kindly. 'You at all events, have a gentler nature, and more womanly temperament.'
The August moon was at the full that night, and long after midnight Sophie and Theresa was practising on the guitar, and singing sentimental songs for the next days' declaration of the young Cubans, who had said that they 'ador'd the music of the guitar,' when a waiter tapped at their door with a message.
'Please, miss, No. 40's compliments, and 'o has a bad headache, and can't sleep, and wouldn't the young ladies oblige him by leaving 'hoif a-singing.'
'What nonsense!' cried Theresa, sharply. 'Every one is free to do as he or she likes in a hotel, I believe.'
'Theresa,' pleaded kind-hearted little Blanche, 'if the old gentleman has a headache—'
'Pshaw! A regular fussy old bachelor,' said Sophie, petulantly, 'to spoil our practicing in this way.'
For Blanche was resolute in insisting that the guitar should be put away, and so the two pretty girls went grumbling to bed.
'What do you think?' exclaimed Sophie, coming in the next morning, dripping and radiant from her bath. 'Old 40 is sick! The doctor was there half an hour ago, and I just saw the waiters carrying in ice for his head.'
'Some horrid fever!' cried Theresa, turning pale. 'I mean to change to some other hotel at once. Blanche—where is Blanche? Why, she's gone, I declare! How provoking, when we are in a hurry to decide upon the matter!'
It was more than an hour before Blanche Follett returned, and when at length she entered the room, Theresa and Sophie were half through the task of packing their trunks.
'Blanche!' cried the former, petulantly, 'where have you been?'
'In the next room, with the sick old gentleman, doing my best to nurse him.'
'Blanche!' shrieked Theresa.
'Well? was the edna response.
'Are you mad?' cried both the girls in a chorus.
'No—o-ly human. If it was my father, I should want him to be alone and undisturbed in a hotel like this!
'Let him send for his friends,' said Theresa, sullenly.
'Who can tell who or where they are?'
'Search his trunk—that's the way. You all act like so many fools!' said Sophie, sharply.
'I suppose they will do so, if he does not get better soon. In the meantime, he needs a daughter's care—and the memory of my own dear dead father prompts me to the mission.'
'Blanche, you are crazy!' cried out Miss Dean. 'What do you suppose Mr. Archfield would say to your risking your life thus?'
'I do not think there is any risk,' said Blanche, calmly. 'Moreover, I believe Guy would bid me do my duty, at any and all hazards.'
'I'm glad my sense of duty isn't quite so superfluous,' said Theresa, scornfully. 'You can do as you please, but Sophie and I intend removing at once to the 'Mermaid House.'
'And if you are sensible, you will do the same,' added Miss Dean.
But Blanche shook her head. 'No,' she said, quietly. 'I have made up my mind.'
'Well, then,' said Sophie, 'I wish old Snuff Color would die and done with it. For it won't be half so pleasant without you Blanche.'
Old Snuff Color, however, as Sophie irreverently termed him, did not die. On the contrary, after that one day of peril the scales of chance seemed to turn in his favor and permanent recovery set in.
'My dear,' said he to Blanche Follett, 'I have much to thank you for. Before you today I never knew the soft touch of a daughter's hand upon my brow, the music of a daughter's footsteps around my bedside. Nor shall I consent to part with them now. I mean to keep you always, my child.'
Blanche colored and started at these incomprehensible words.
'Does he mean to adopt me?' she asked herself. 'Oh—no, surely that cannot be possible—is he going to propose to me.'
But the old gentleman's next sentence completely solved the riddle.
'For I do not think you have once suspected,' he added, with a quiet smile, 'that all your secret charitable offices have been rendered to—Guy Archfield's father.'
Blanche was more frightened than ever. Surely the old man was insane.
'Mr. Archfield, senior, is in Europe,' she said, hesitatingly.
'Ho, my dear,' the old man answered dryly; 'but he returned on the *Ariston*, and he is here by your side. I telegraphed to Guy this morning; he will be here in half an hour to confirm my words. Let Blanche will you give me a daughter's kiss, now?'
'My own Blanche, you have won his heart,' said Guy Archfield. 'The only doubt I ever entertained about our marriage—his consent—is solved at last. He honors you as you deserve.'
And the priest of all Blanche Follett's wedding gifts was the *posure* of diamonds, given by her wealthy and eccentric old father-in-law.
And Theresa Middleton and Sophie Dean cried out in a chorus, as they had cried before many a time:
'Blanche is the luck of girl!'
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