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AUTUMN BLOSSOMS.

How was it that I came to be an old bachelor? Not because of hating women, I am sure, for I liked them very much, and never could have spoken to one rudely or discourteously for my life. As nearly as I know it was in this wise:

My father died, leaving a family of children, a wife and an old father and mother, of whom only myself was able to earn a shilling. He had never saved anything.

So, after the first great grief, when we had calmed down and were able to look matters quietly in the face, there was a wretched sort of prospect for us. I was only an accountant, and had a young fellow's habit of wasting my small salary in a thousand different ways. I had been paying attention, too, to Elsie Hall, who, young and childish as she was, had a way that some girls do have of leading their admirers into extravagance. Of all the trials of that never-to-be-forgotten time, I think the greatest was appearing niggardly in those baby blue eyes. I did not mind wearing plain suits, discarding kid gloves and renouncing the opera; but not to lay those bouquets and books, and music, and dainty bits of jewelry, and multitudinous trifles at Elsie's feet, was a very terrible ordeal. I passed it, though; and if ever a man had reason to be thankful I had, for the acquisitive little beauty jilted me in a month for Tom Tander, who was rich and lavish of gifts, and who ran away from her after a marriage of ten months.

I worked day and night, and managed to keep the wolf from the door. Sometimes I used to think how well it was for Elsie that she had not really loved me, for she could have had nothing but a dismal prospect of wearing out her youth in a dreary, hopeless engagement to one too poor to marry. That was until Tom ran off. Then I thought it would have been even better for her to have shared our humble and poor fare and the love I could have given her than to be deserted so. And I pitied her, as if she had not proven herself heartless. But I never went near her, of course; and I never spoke of her to my mother.

I grew no younger all this while, and every year seemed to add five to my looks. I had never been very handsome or very merry, and soon I became conscious of a peculiar middle-aged look, which settles down upon some people very early. Strangers, too, began to take me for the head of the family; and once, in a new neighborhood the butcher alluded to "my wife." I found out that he meant my mother, and only wondered that it was not dear old grandma.

She was eighty, and grandfather ninety, and they died one bright autumn day, before prosperity came to us, died within an hour of each other—for grandma just said: I think I'll lie down a bit, now Lemuel don't need me. I'm very tired.

Then she kissed me, and said: you have been a good boy to your grandpa, Edward. You'll have that to think of.

And when next we looked at her she was dead, with her cheek upon her hand like a sleeping child.

So two were gone and we were sadder than before. And then Jean, my eldest sister, married at sixteen a physician, who carried her off to Hindostan in her honeymoon. And we could none of us feel the wedding a happy thing. But prosperity did come at last. I had worked hard for it, and anything a man makes his sole object in this life he is sure to attain. We were comfortable—easy. Ah, what a word that is after

years of struggle! At last we were rich. But by that time I was five-and-forty—a large, dark, middle-aged man, with a face that looked to myself in the glass though it were perpetually intent on figures. The girls were married. Dick had taken to sea, and we saw him once a year or so, and Ashton was at home with mother and myself—the only really handsome member of our family, and just two-and-twenty. And it was on his birth day, I remember, that that letter came to me from poor Hunter—the letter which began: "When these lines reach you, Ned Sandford, I shall have my six feet of earth—all I ever owned or would if I had lived to be a hundred."

We had been young together, though he was really older than I; and we had been close friends once, but a roving fit had seized him, and we had not met for years. I knew he had married a young Kentucky girl, and knew no more; but now he told me that his dearest wife was dead, and that his death would leave a daughter an orphan.

She is not quite penniless, he wrote; for her mother had a little income, which, poor as I was, I was never brute enough to meddle with, and it has descended to her. But I have been a rolling stone, gathering no moss, all my life, and we stand long enough in one place to make friends. Will you be her guardian? It is a dying man's last request.

And then he wrote some words, coming from his heart, I knew, which being of myself, I cannot quote even here—I could not think that I deserved them.

And the result of that letter, and of another from the lawyer who had Annie Hunter's little fortune in charge, was that one hot spring day found me on board of a steamer which lay at rest after a voyage in the protecting arms of Liverpool, with two little hands in mine, and a pair of great brown eyes lifted to my face, and a sweet voice choked with sobs saying something of "poor papa," and of how much he had spoken of me, and of the lovely voyage, and the green graves left behind; and I, who had gone to meet a child and found a woman, looking at her and feeling toward her as I had never looked upon nor felt for any other.

Not to Elsie Hall. It was not the boyish love dream come again.

Analyzing the emotion, I found only a great longing to protect and comfort her—to guard her from every pain and ill, and I said to myself: This is as a father must feel to a loving daughter. I can be a parent to George Hunter's child in very truth. And I took her home to the old house and to my old mother. I thought of only those, somehow, I never thought of Ashton.

Shall I ever forget how she brightened the sombre rooms! How, as her sadness wore away, she sang to him in the twilight; how strangely a something which made the return home, and the long hours of the evening seen, so much brighter than they had ever been before, stole into my life. I never went to sleep in church row. I kept awake to look at Olive Hunter—to listen to her pure contralto as she joined in the singing.— Sometimes I caught her eye, her very great unfathomable brown eye, for she had a habit of looking at me. Was she wondering how a face could look so stern and grim? I used to ask myself.

Ashton used to look at her also. He had been away when she first came to us, and when he returned she was a grand surprise to him.

Oh, how lovely she is! he had said to me. She is very pretty, I replied. Ashton laughed. May I never be an old bachelor

if it brings me to calling such a girl very pretty, he said; and I felt conscious that my cheek flushed, and I felt angry that he should have spoken to me thus, though I never could before.

They liked each other very much—those two young things. A pretty picture they made in the Venetian window in the sunset. He a fair-headed, blue-eyed, Saxon looking youth; she so exquisitely dark and glowing.

Every one liked her. Even my old clerk, Stephen Hadley, used to say her presence lit the office more than a dozen lamps, the nearest approach to a poetical speech of which old Stephen was ever known to be guilty; and I never knew how much she was to me until one evening, when coming home earlier than usual, I saw in that Venetian window where Ashton and Olive had made so many pleasant pictures for me, one that I never forgot—that I never shall forget as long as I live.

She stood with her back to me. Ashton was kneeling at her feet. The sound of the opening door dissolved the picture; but I had seen it, and I stole away to hide the stab that it had given me.

I sat down in my room and hid my face in my hands, and would have been glad to hide it beneath my coffin lid. I knew now that I loved Olive Hunter; that I loved her not as an old man might love a child, but as a young man might love the woman who ought to be his wife—better than I had loved Elsie Hall; for it was not boyish passion, but earnest, heart-felt love.

I love! I arose and looked in the mirror, and my broad shouldered reflection blushed before my gaze. The spring-time of my life had flown, and my summer had come and gone, and in the autumn I had dreamt of love's bud and blossom.

I knelt beside my bed and prayed that I might not hate my brother—that I might not even envy him. His touch upon my door startled me. He came in with something in his manner not usual to him, and sat down opposite me. For a moment we were silent. Then he said, speaking rapidly and blushing like a girl: Ned, old fellow, you—you saw me making a fool of myself just now I suppose?

I saw you on your knees, I said.

And thought me silly, eh? But you don't know, Ned. You can't understand—you've been so calm and cool all your life through, you know. She's driving me mad, Ned. I do believe she likes me, but she won't say yes. I'd give my right hand for her love. I must have it, and I think you can help me, Ned. From something she said, I believe she thinks you would disapprove; perhaps you are one of these old fellows who want every one to marry for money. Tell her you're not. Ned, dear old fellow—tell her you have no objection, and I'll never forget it—indeed I won't!

Tell her I have no objection, I repeated mechanically.

You know you are master here, and as much my father as if you were one instead of a brother, said Ashton. If I did not know how kindly you had always felt to us both, I shouldn't confide in you, Ned, and you may thank Heaven you know nothing about it.

Know nothing about it. Ah, if he could have read my heart just then!

I'll do what I can, Ashton, I said at last. I'll try my best. And he flung his arm about me in his own boyish fashion, and left me alone—alone with my own thoughts. He had said truly; I had been like a father to him. I was old enough to be here; and no one should know my silly dream.— I would hide it while I lived.— As I said once: I've only the

old folks and the children now. I said then: I will only think of mother and Ashton. Let my own life be as nothing I have lived for them—if needs be, I will die for them.

But I would not see and speak to Olive that night, nor until the next day was quite gone.— Then in the twilight, I sat beside her and took her hand.

Olive, I said, I think you know that Ashton loves you. I am sure he has told you so. A girl can't you love him?

She drew her hand from mine and said not one word. I should rejoice in brother's happiness. I should think him happier in having your love than anything else could make him. I told him I would tell you so.

And then she spoke.

You wish me to marry Ashton.

Reproach was in the tone—reproach and sorrow.

If you can love him, Olive, I said.

She arose. She seemed to shrink from me, though in the dark I could not see her face.

I do not love him, she said.

And we were as still as death. Then suddenly, Olive Hunter began to sob.

You have been so kind to me. I love you all, she said, but I cannot stay here now.— Please to let me go somewhere else. I must—I cannot live here.

Go from us, Olive? I said. Nay, we are not tyrants; and once assured you do not love him; Ashton will—

Hush! she pleaded—hush! Please let me go away! please let me go away!

The moon was rising. Her new born light fell upon Olive's face. Perhaps its whiteness made her look pale.

She leaned against the wall with her little hand upon her heart, her unfathomable eyes full of pain. How had I hurt her so? A new thought struck me.

Perhaps you love some one else, Olive?

And at that she turned her face from me, and hid it in her hands.

Too much—too much. You might have saved me that, she said. Let me go away. I wish you had never brought me here.

And I arose and went to her. I bent over the woman I loved. I touched her with my hand; her soft hair brushed my cheek.

Olive, I said, if coming here has brought pain upon you, I wish I had not. I would have died to make you happy.

And my voice trembled, and my hand shook, and she turned her face towards me again and looked into my eyes. What she saw in mine I do not know—the truth I think. In hers I read this: I was not old to her; not too old to be loved.

I stole my arm about her, she did not withdraw it. I entered her name, Olive, huskily.— Afterwards I told her of my struggle with myself, not then. I said: Olive, I love you, but it cannot be that you care for me. I am old enough to be your father.

And again I saw in her eyes the happy truth and took her to my heart.

But we kept our secret for a while, for we both loved Ashton, and both knew that his wound was not too deep to find a balm; and within a year, when the boy brought home a bride, a pretty creature whom he loved, and who loved him, I claimed Olive.

And she is mine now; and the autumn blossoms of my heart will only fade on earth to bloom again throughout eternity in paradise.

Two things needing light to enjoy—a kiss and a good cigar are worthless in the dark.

The cigar, we admit, is; but, the individual who says a kiss is not enjoyed in the dark, has certainly never tried the experiment.

"Gentle Kerfloumism."

When a young man, says the *Raleigh Sentinel*, who has just reached the years of goslinghood, has his boots blacked regularly twice a day, puts on a new paper collar before each meal trims his finger nails every half hour, keeps his three-fuzz power mustache perpetually dyed and scented and his hair solemnly done up and elaborately parted behind, with semi-occasional practicing of graceful attitudes and seductive smiles in the reflective bottoms of new tinware, you can bet your last "rag baby" that some girl's heart or his'n is in a state of "gentle kerfloumism." You bet.

The Difference Between 'Em.

There is a vast difference, says the *Danbury News*, in the conduct of a man and a woman in new clothes. When a woman gets a new suit she immediately prances down town, and for hours will walk contentedly along a crowded thoroughfare, receiving fresh impulses of joy every time another woman's eyes scan her wardrobe.

But a man is so different. He won't put on his new clothes for the first time until it is dark. Then he goes down town so cautiously as to almost create the impression that he is sneaking along. If he sees a crowd on a corner he will slip across the way to avoid them, and when he goes into his grocery he tries to get behind as many barrels and boxes as he can. All the time he is trying his level best to appear as if the suit was six months old, and all the while realizes that he is making an infernal failure of it. We hope the time will come when new principals will be so folded by the manufacturer that they won't show a ridge along the front of each leg when the wearer first puts them on.

Distribution of the Bible.

An English paper, in speaking of efforts for the distribution of the Bible among the heathens, says: "Supposing the Bible Society to continue its operations on the same scale as during the last two years, it will take upwards of 615 years to supply the Holy Scriptures to the world."

A Clerk's Story.

"When I used to tend store the old man came around one day, and says he 'Boys, the one who sells the most between now and Christmas gets a vest pattern as a present.' Maybe that we did not work for the vest pattern. I tell you there were some tall stories told in praise of goods about that time; but the tallest talker, and the one who had the most check of any of us, was a certain Joe Guire, who roomed with me. He could talk a dollar out of a man's pocket when the man only intended to spend a sixpence; and the women—Lord bless you!—they just handed over their pocket-books to him and let him lay out what he liked for them.— One night Joe woke me up with: 'By jove old fellow, if you think that 'ere's got cotton in it, I'll bring you down the sheep it was cut from, and make him own his own wool.' 'Twon't wear out, either; wore a pair of pants of that stuff for five years, and they are as good as when I first put them on. Take it 30 cents, and I'll say you don't owe me anything. Eh—too dear? Well, call it 28 cents. What d'ye say?' All right; it's a bargain.' I could feel Joe's hands playing about the bed clothes for an instant; then rip, tear, went something or another, and I hid my head under the blankets, perfectly convulsed with laughter, and perfectly sure that Joe had torn the last sheet from top to bottom. When I awoke the next morning I found the back of my night shirt split from the bottom to the collar band.

To the Point.

An exchange says: "Compare the publisher of a newspaper, who has got to go all around the country to collect his pay, to a farmer who sells his wheat on credit, and not more than a bushel to any person. If any farmer will try the experiment of distributing the proceeds of his labor over two or three counties, with an additional one in two or three distant States for one year, we will guarantee that he will never, after that year's experience, ask a publisher to supply him with a paper a year or two without the pay for it."

Wilmington is going to send to the Centennial an old chest that has been in use since 1749.

Maryland has been touched with earthquake.

Japanese Women.

The Japanese women are usually small and dumpy, yet are often very beautiful, with small hands and feet, and are exceedingly neat in dress and coiffure. Their hair is not as is generally supposed, a true black, but is a very dark brown; in some instances it is a pronounced red. Its blackness, and, unfortunately, coarseness also, is promoted by the custom of shaving the heads of children from their very birth.

It is made to appear very black and glossy by the use of unguents and hennin made from a mucilaginous plant. Like the other sex (and this custom is universal among people of every age in Japan) they bathe daily in hot water, a public bath costing only half a cent. Since 1868 the government has prohibited the promiscuous bathing of both sexes, formerly a common habit. The women above twenty years old, from time immemorial have blackened their teeth with a mixture of galls and powdered iron; but the Empress does not, and many ladies are now abandoning the fashion. The former custom of married ladies shaving off their eyebrows is also falling into disuse. The peculiar style of coiffure at once distinguishes a Japanese maiden, wife, widow or prostitute. All women are carefully educated in household duties; but the lower classes acquire very little book learning, though nearly all women can read and write. The young women of the higher classes devote much time to fancy work, their bright colored robes being embroidered with gay silks and gold. They are carefully taught from various books devoted to the duties of a wife, mother and house-keeper. The three principal duties as set forth in a large volume, entitled, "Woman's Great Study," are: 1. Obedience to parents when a child.— 2. Obedience to her husband when a wife. 3. Obedience to her eldest son when a widow.— Half their education is in books of etiquette. There is no distinction between politeness and morals. Lying, cheating, deceiving, slandering, and like vices are "not polite," and so are not permissible.

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