

The Spirit Lamp.

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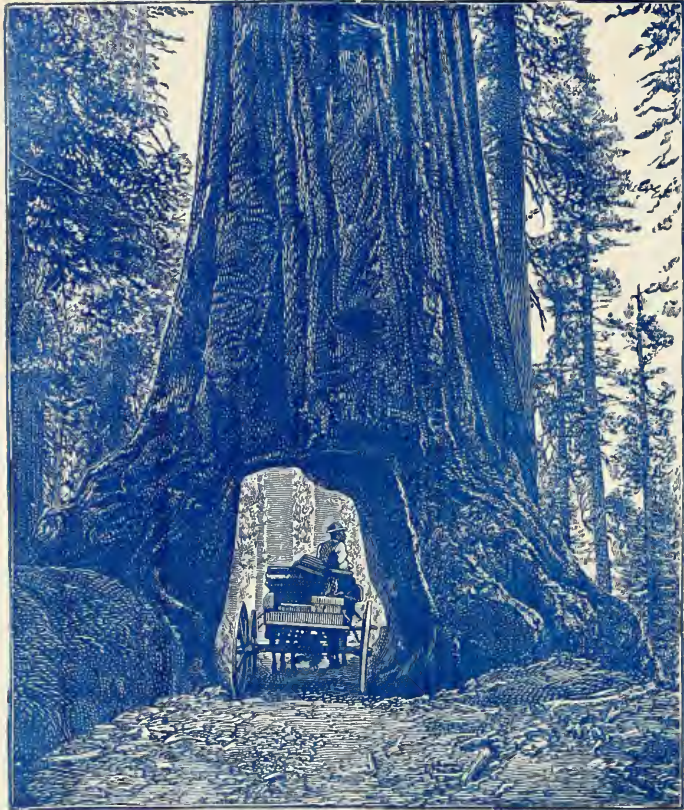
THE HOUSE OF JUDGMENT.—Oscar Wilde.

EDITED BY LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS.

PRICE 6D.

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETOR BY
JAMES THORNTON, HIGH STREET,
OXFORD.





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The Spirit Lamp.

VOL. 3. No. II.

FEB. 17, 1893.

TO LEANDER.

(In sunset by the Southern Sea.)

FROM what diviner air hast thou
Descended to these sombre skies ;
What mighty god enwreathed thy brow
With flaky flame, and filled thine eyes,
Those wells deep-set, with light too clear,
Too ardent, for our mortal sphere ?

Motionless, like a heaven-born thing,
Which earthly vapours overwhelm,
Still striving with the spirit's wing
To reach thy antenatal realm,
Thou standest on this craggy cove,
Live image of Uranian Love.

The liquid waters dream at ease
Around thy billow-beaten throne ;
Pearly horizons of grey seas
Melt into skies of amber tone,
With rose incarnadined to warm
The flawless pallor of thy form.

'Tis gold, 'tis honey, faintest flush
Of crimson playing round each limb,
Bathing thy body in a blush
So all-pervasive, lustrous, dim,
That gazing we are fain to feel
Those hues from thee their radiance steal.

Why prate of gods and heaven-born things ?
Be thou thyself, victorious boy !
There need no wide aerial wings,
No immortalities of joy.
Thine is the true, the sole ideal :
Man knows nought lovelier than the real.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

A LARGE number of critics are continually telling us that the plays of Shakspeare are for the study and not for the stage.

To some extent we are inclined to agree with them ; for though many of Shakspeare's works do indubitably give finer opportunities to an actor of displaying his genius than do those of any other writer, yet no less indubitably do most of them lose half their charm and illusion when transferred from the library to the theatre. Certainly Mr. Lang and his partizans might look far and find no such striking support for their arguments as the play chosen by the O. U. D. S. for production this year.

Of course it is well known that the choice of the O. U. D. S. is limited ; only a Greek play or one of the Shakspearian dramas may be produced. A foolish restriction, doubtless ! There are so many masterpieces which possess all the charms of novelty. Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus" or "Edward II." would both be most effective stage plays ; but, indeed, there are other Elizabethan dramas which none have seen acted and few perhaps even read.

But, in spite of restrictions, we think many a wiser choice might have been made than "The Two Gentlemen of Verona."

We cannot help wondering when we consider the enormous success of "The Frogs" last year, that another comedy of Aristophanes was not produced ; or if variety were needed, one of the tragedies of Æschylus or Sophocles.

Of all performances given by Oxford amateurs, the "Alcestis" and "The Frogs" secured the greatest successes. The representation of "King John" was so lamentably bad that the O. U. D. S. has shewn decided courage in attempting another of Shakspeare's plays so soon.

The fact is, that the works of England's greatest genius are far too difficult for amateurs to give an efficient render-

ing of them. Where professionals frequently fail, it can hardly be expected that undergraduates will succeed. Even in the elaborate revivals at the Lyceum there are certain defects which must jar upon any one endowed with artistic taste, and in an amateur performance these crudities are amplified and exaggerated until the whole effect is often so ludicrous that it is more provocative of tears than laughter.

It would be absurd then, taking into account as we must, the enormous difficulties which any work of Shakspeare's presents even to actors exceeding intelligent and skilled, to criticise this performance in a harsh or intolerant spirit. The players must be praised or found wanting solely by the standard of other amateurs. Faults must be expected, and as far as possible, condoned.

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona" cannot be called a very interesting comedy, and it is certainly much more charming to read it than to see it acted. When reading it we are so captivated by the delicate fancies and dainty conceits of the poetry, that we do not notice how the action hangs fire, or how slight the plot is. But on the stage all is changed; we have no time, when we see the comedy played, to linger lovingly on word or phrase of surpassing beauty; it is with the story and action of the play we are now concerned, and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" does not possess enough of either to preserve us from boredom.

Unfortunately the piece was not sufficiently well played to give it an interest which it did not really possess. There was a langour and lack of verve about the performance; at times it dragged painfully. The actors did not play well together and even upon the second night several of them were still not word-perfect.

The chief success of the evening was gained by Mr. Ponsonby as "Launce"; he is decidedly the best amateur Oxford has produced for a long time. The part of "Launce" is a difficult one, but it was played throughout with admirable discretion and humour;

especially clever was the scene with the shoes in the second act. His other scenes would have been more successful if he had been more ably seconded by "Speed."

Of the "two gentlemen" Mr. Whitaker as "Valentine" looked his part to perfection and spoke his lines beautifully. The subtle and difficult character of "Proteus" received unfortunately but indifferent treatment at the hands of its interpreter, whose gestures were decidedly awkward and ineffective, and whose elocution was monotonous in the extreme.

Of the ladies we need only mention Mrs. Charles Sim, who acted sympathetically as "Julia" especially in the scenes where she is disguised as a page; though perhaps to make "Julia's" masquerade seem at all probable the part should be taken by a young lad of comely appearance and voice as yet unharshened by approaching manhood.

The minor characters were most of them played in a manner only to be called mediocre, though exception should be made in the case of Mr. Booker who as the "Duke of Milan" enunciated clearly and moved about the stage in an easy way not too common with amateurs. The piece was well mounted and some of the dresses almost sumptuous, especially the robe of pale amber hue worn by "Sylvia."

This performance at least serves one purpose—to show clearly and once for all that Shakspeare is not for amateurs. The truth of this statement all who have seen the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" this week must acknowledge, however biassed they may be.

When Oxford becomes less conservative perhaps the O. U. D. S. will be allowed to perform pieces which do not lay so heavy a tax upon the players. Certainly the result would be more pleasing, although the effort might be less ambitious.

STANLEY ADDLESHAW.

LE MODERNE.

CE que j'aime le mieux, c'est le troisième sexe ;
Après, la femme mûre, et la fange, et le fard,
Et les charmants propos chrestomathiques d'art,
Et les macabres nurits dont le haschisch nous vexe.

Je hais le duel, et les encolures d'athlète ;
Je fuis les teints voyants—je fuis le patchouli ;
Je déteste Schubert, Massenet et Verdi ;
Les gens savants me vont ainsi qu'un mal de tête.

J'adore les pastels ... puis, en fait de nature,
La pénombre me plaît : du soleil, c'est grossier ...
Que le champagne ennuie ou ne saurait nier :
On ne saurait nier non plus que rien ne dure.

J'aime en mars le Japon, en juillet la Hongrie ;
J'aimais Whistler—c'est du faux goût depuis deux mois.
Aujourd'hui j'aime Huysmans, comme Sade autrefois.—
J'aime ... ne pas mourir—et j'exècre la vie !

VEAU-MARIN.

TOUT VIENT À QUI SAIT ATTENDRE.

FEW people perhaps have ever regarded the life of a waiter, as a life capable of romance or beauty ; to the ordinary man or woman, on the contrary, the occupation of waiting at dinner, of placing knives and forks, of taking orders, of pouring out wine, or of performing the thousand and one menial duties which are the lot of the waiter, has probably appeared a mean and sordid occupation ; an occupation tending rather to dwarf or even subdue altogether, the romantic, intellectual, or beautiful side of the nature. Instances are not wanting, and indeed are numerous, of the introduction of waiters to the arena of fiction ; they have been made the subject of sketches, they have appeared on the stage, they have even figured in poetry ; but at all times they have been regarded as legitimate exponents of low comedy, or at most of humorous eccentricity ; and the suble fascination of a waiter's life have so far, apparently, escaped the notice of the novelist, the playwright, and the essayist. Of course there is one point of view, a very obvious one, from which a waiter appears in a vulgar or humourous light ; he drops plates on the stage, he drops h's in *Punch*, he is upraided by angry old gentlemen, he flirts with chamber-maids, he extorts outrageous tips from innocent customers, and altogether behaves in a very commonplace and sometimes offensive way. The true waiter does none of these things ; but then the true waiter is rare and—he he is not English ! No Englishman will ever make a true waiter (the Prince of Wales's famous motto notwithstanding) ; the lioness may consort with the ox, the dove may become a ranger from its love, but the Englishman cannot be a waiter. Of course it is obvious that an Englishman may put on a black swallow-tail coat, an evening waistcoat and a white tie, he may tie a long apron round his waist, he may attend at dinner, he may remove dirty plates and replace them with new ones, but he is a sham, the essence of waiting is not there ; he is either too proud or too stupid to drink in

the true spirit of waiting, he is sure to err either on the side of insolence and indifference, or over humility and nervousness, he cannot attain the perfect *manner* of the real waiter ; he may assure you that the soup is of excellent quality but he will not convince you, he may promise you a good dinner but you will not believe him till you have tasted it ; and, above all, he cannot speak French ! Better a dinner of herbs with French, than roast beef where English is spoke. It is not necessary that a waiter should be a Frenchman, he may be Italian, German, or Pole, but he must *speak* French, and if ever he does speak English, it must be with a broken accent. I do not mean to contend that every foreign waiter is a perfect one, by no means ; but unless he is foreign he cannot be perfect. I have, alas ! known foreign waiters who have become so contaminated by the influence of their English brethren, or so demoralized by the badness of the dinners that they have become as inattentive as rude and as commonplace as the very worst of English waiters. The fact is that a good waiter, like everything else that is rare and precious, requires a congenial atmosphere in which to thrive, and, deprived of that atmosphere, he will languish and die like some costly exotic which has been removed from the sheltering warmth of its glass palace into the cold regions of the outer air.

There are certain conditions without which a good waiter cannot exist, among these perhaps the two most important may be mentioned as, first, *a good cook* ; this will give him confidence ; it is useless to expect a good waiter to thrive if he is not supported by good cooking ; he may be a paragon, he may possess all the virtues of perfect waiting, he may speak in a low fascinating voice, he may shape with graceful gestures of his hands each dish as he names it to the expectant guest, he may place the dishes on the table and remove the covers with the most perfect grace and loving care, he may speak in short and hurried whispers to his subordinates, giving that impression of mystery and expectation which

is so much to be desired in a dinner, he may even tell you, in response to your query, that his name is François or Giacomo (not 'enery, Sir, or Robert), but if the dinner is bad, poor man, what can he do? what he *can* do he will, and you may be sure that your dinner will be more pleasant than it would have been but for his efforts, but it cannot but be painful and distressing both to him and to yourself to think of what might have been if the dinner had only been as good as the waiting. It is indeed a tragic thing to order a dinner which has all the sound and appearance (on paper) of being a good one, and then after all to have to fall back on the waiter. But Heaven help the man who in this dire plight finds that he leans upon a broken reed. Then indeed he will know the true bitterness of life, then he will know what it is to be told that several other gentlemen have had the same dinner and have found it excellent; or worse still, his remonstrances will be greeted with an extremely respectful, but wholly indifferent, "Yes, Sir."

Another condition necessary to a good waiter, perhaps the most important of all, is *appreciation*. Nothing will more quickly destroy the finer spirit of waiting than a continued course of indifference on the part of customers to the little refinements and subtleties of good waiting; and we may here lay it down as an axiom that a man who omits to enquire the nationality of a good waiter, or at least to ascertain his name, is a philistine, and is liable to do a great deal of harm. Perhaps we ought to qualify this by saying that no one should ever omit to enquire the name of a waiter if there is good ground for supposing that he is French or Italian, especially the latter, but if there is any reason to suppose that a waiter is German, it is better that no such enquiry should be made, the result might be fatal to whatever romance had gathered round him; German names are as a rule hideous, while French and Italian names are invariably beautiful; and in addition to this it is well that a German waiter's nationality should be

kept as much as possible in the background, for German waiters occasionally become obtrusively patriotic, and some have been even known to speak German quite suddenly, which of course is absolutely fatal to a good dinner.

Having now mentioned the two most important conditions for a good waiter, to wit, a *good cook* and *appreciation*, let me go on to consider what temperament should distinguish him; and let me say at once that I have no hesitation in premising that the great leading quality which marks a good waiter and without which he cannot possibly attain to perfection, is *intense sympathy*.

This is the keystone to the good waiter's character, his sympathy is more than human, it is divine; he will sympathize intensely with a man who cannot bear some particular flavour in a dish, he will be so grieved that the insidious poison should have crept into it that the sight of his grief will cause the angry guest to forget his own grievance, and regret that he had ever mentioned it; all this he will do. But this is human. But now mark what he must do besides; he must have a sympathy equally sincere and equally heartfelt for the gentleman who, by some unlucky chance, has been deprived of that very flavour whose presence causes such distress to his neighbour: and thus the waiter's sympathy must be so large, so vast, and so comprehensive as to cover these two directly opposite cases; and this I contend is Divine. Another distinctive feature of the good waiter is the readiness with which he catches at and almost anticipates the wishes of his guests; to order a dinner from a good waiter is an education in itself; a man need but throw out the vaguest of hints as to the sort of thing he desires, and he is ready with a dozen suggestions; he guesses instinctively what sort of eater his guest is, whether he is an unsophisticated novice who can be dazzled by one brilliant dish, or a trained and fastidious gourmet who will appreciate rather a quiet steady high level of cooking; he will even sacrifice his

own feelings and consent to the roast beef and mutton or cutlets of the truly British customer. It is not necessary that a waiter should be beautiful, but if he is beautiful he should be told so.

There is another kind of waiter who, though perhaps his lines are not cast in such brilliant surroundings as the waiter in a restaurant, yet sees much of the wonderful things of life, and is by no means unendowed with the spirit of the higher philosophy of waiting: I refer to the café waiter. Of course the real café is rare in England, and I am at present taking cognizance only of waiters who practise their calling in England, which practically means London, for, outside London, the true philosophy of waiting is almost entirely unknown. The real café, I say, is rare in London, though there are many places which partake of the nature of a café; but, here and there, there are a few of these genuine ones to be found, and here the waiter flourishes and has many opportunities. In these places we may see him less smartly dressed perhaps, less scrupulously shinning in shirt front and apron, but yet showing in all his expressions and actions that the spirit of waiting is as strong within him as in the case of his more fortunate brother of the restaurant. Hither resort the Bohemians of London, uncouth and marvellous looking; many Frenchmen and other foreigners with long and unkempt hair; shabbily attired, but often with that indefinable stamp that marks the man of genius or talent. Some of them are real poets who have added to their poems the record of their own unruly passions and reckless lives; they walk into such a café and at once seek out their own especial seat which they have occupied so often that it becomes associated with them and seems to belong to them; and then their own particular waiter comes forward with his smile of greeting and his bow and his "Bonjour M'sieu;" for the waiters, not the seats, are the attraction which brings them to the same corner day after day and year after year. One seat is much the same as an other, but each little corner or

words that fall from the unguarded lips of genius at the feast, who has drunk in the philosophy of pleasure poured out from the golden cup of youth, can it be that this man becomes an ordinary member of the lower middle classes? Can he whose lightest suggestion on the quality of a vintage is gospel, whose manner of removing a dish cover is a thing to envy and admire at a distance, can *he* ever quarrel with his wife, or have difficulties about his rent? Perish the thought. Even if it is true I prefer not to believe it, the waiter is an artist, and an artist does nothing ignoble or vulgar. If, when he is attired in mufti, he does anything that is not absolutely charming, he is not the same man, and is not to be considered as the same man, any more than the ugly grub with its crawling habits and Christian qualities of humility and insignificance, is to be considered as the same creature as the beautiful butterfly, with its paint and pride, and wicked ways of roving and sipping from every flower. Again, do waiters ever eat and drink? I have come to the conclusion that they do not. Anyone who has seen the pride and joy with which a real waiter regards a beautiful dish when he has set it on the table could no more suspect him of eating it than he could accuse him of eating his own children; such a thing is impossible. I am aware that sham waiters eat and drink; they gorge! nothing escapes them, they eat of every dish as it goes out, they drink the wine behind screens, their children grow fat on the food they bring home in their pockets, but the real waiter does not eat or drink: no one has ever seen him do so, and the moment he did eat or drink he would cease to be a real waiter. How, then, it may be asked, do waiters live? I do not know or care, I do not seek to explain waiters, anything that is explained becomes tedious, I do not understand waiters, I accept them as beautiful facts. Perhaps, when they have left their restaurants and gone home to their families, or when they are "en vacances" they eat and drink; but, as I have already explained, they

are not then the same people, and what they do does not concern the question of waiters, but falls more suitably under some such head as "the housing of the middle classes," or "how the poor live." I do not uphold that waiters do not eat or drink, because I think it vulgar to eat or drink, certainly not. Eating and drinking can be and are made refined and beautiful, and it is not on that account that I have come to this conclusion about waiters, but it is simply a fact I have arrived at by personal observation that they do not eat and drink, besides if they did who would wait upon them? for obviously they cannot wait upon themselves.

But enough of this subject. Let us leave the region of fruitless speculation, and return to the contemplation of the life of the real waiter as he is in his glory and at his best in the very best restaurants at night. What a life it is! How strange! how exciting! He stands at the beck of pleasure, he bears the cup of luxury; he sees the joy, the madness, the festal hours of life, he catches the words born of imprudence and the red wine in the wine cup, he sees the pageant of life and its comedies, the actors move before him while he watches impassive and silent, they feast and laugh, the lips of pleasure are joined with the lips of youth, sin in a golden dress sits down to feast with innocence while he looks on—and presently tragedy creeps in, but the waiter does not often see the end. And then how splendidly every one comes out before him, how the merry ones laugh, how the wits talk, and how beautiful are some of the faces he sees, and how delightfully reckless they all are. What things they say! what monstrous and improbable things! what friendships are sworn! what words are whispered! ah, if the waiter only repeated everything that he heard, how many people would be astonished? and how many more would be scandalized? but he hears it all, he is in the confidence of everybody and he never betrays their confidence.

Who but the waiter knows how lightly Lord — the great politician talks of the affairs of the nation

to his friend Mr. Dot, who advocates temperance for the working classes and drinks such a lot of champagne at dinner ?

And what would not the Charles Greville of the future give to be standing in the shoes of our waiter behind the chair of ——— the brilliant poet and dramatist, who is saying such curious things to the young man with a flushed face and very bright eyes who is dining with him ?

Or who but our waiter knows the exact reason why Lady This left Lord This and went off with young Mr. That, as all the world knows she did, and quite properly too thinks our waiter now that he has heard what Mr. So-and-so has been saying confidentially to one of his guests.

Yes, everyone is happy and charming, and at their best, and the waiter gets the benefit of it all.

Of course it will readily be seen that the waiter who has all these advantages is not often to be met with, there are perhaps half-a-dozen places in London where such a scene as I have alluded to could be viewed, and it is only at such places as those that a real waiter can be found, except at a few little out of the way restaurants where the Bohemians do congregate at nights, and create the demand which must be met with a supply. For the secret of the paucity of good waiters is very easily explainable by the laws of supply and demand ; wherever extravagance, luxury, brilliance, wit, humour, beauty, good-fellowship, and a fastidious palate meet together and demand a restaurant, there will the good waiters consort to attend them ; and wherever respectability, dullness, religion, ugliness and a taste for roast beef are combined in a demand for an eating-house, there will the bad waiters be gathered together ; and their name is legion.

ALFRED DOUGLAS.

SONNETS.

HEARTSEASE AND ORCHID.

HEARTSEASE it was from his dear hand I took,
A dainty flower that loves the garden air,
Breathing the freshness of his boyhood fair.
So it was treasured in a golden book.

There came another with a far-off look,
His hand an orchid gave ; 'twas strange and rare,
And caught my senses in a beauteous snare,
Till sunlight for the furnace I forsook.

My heart grew drowsy with a sweet disease ;
And fluttered in a cage of fantasy ;
And I remembered how his face was pale,
Yet by its very paleness more did please ;
Now hath the orchid grown a part of me,
But still the heartsease tells its olden tale.

Dec. 1892.

HYLAS.

THIS ever is my fear, lest love-beguiled
Some nymph should steal the Hylas whom I love,
And I should seek him thro' the woodland wild,
And all in vain the wanton theft reprove ;
When I have seen him in the glassy stream
Bend on the image of his countenance,
And e'en as one, led captive by a dream,
Watch languidly the ripples in their dance,
Then have I caught him back, as tho' me-thought
Some nymph should woo him in his own despite,
For they but err, who deem the legends nought,
Of Hylas stolen by the watersprite ;
And how a brook betrayed the young Narcisse,
Whose very beauty kept him poor in bliss.*

* V, 14 of Ovid, in which Narcissus says " Inopem me copia fecit."

CORYDON.

Now Corydon is gone, the Loves lament,
And with the Loves lament a troop of boys,
For cruel laws have slain Love's sweet content,
And cruel men have mocked at gentle joys.
The Rose is sighing in the garden-close,
While Morning weeps her pearly tears of dew ;
But a white rosebud comforteth the rose,
" Love will return, and Joy his reign renew."—
Shall love return ? Nay love hath never gone ;
Love lives, tho' he be reft of all that's dear.
Weep, weep, Alexis for thy Corydon,
But love him more, because he is not here ;
What day hath ta'en, night shall give back to thee,
And dreams tell o'er thy lost felicity.

May, 1892.

P. L. O.



LOVE OR POWER.

MRS. CODDRINGTON was sitting alone in her drawing room. The children had gone to bed, and it was getting late. It was a good many years now since Emma Lawson had married John Coddrington. He had been, or had been supposed to be, a promising barrister at that time. A few briefs had found their way to him soon after he had been called, and an uncle's influence had helped him into political circles, where he had played the smallest of small parts in that drama. But as time went on he had gradually dropped out of the routine of political hackwork, and, though in its place had come an increase of work more proper to his profession, he was not a man overburdened with briefs or greatly sought after. And why should he have been? He had work enough to occupy him, and money enough to keep him and his family in comfort. Accordingly John Coddrington was a happy and contented man. But this was not the case with his wife. Merry and haughty as she had always been as a girl, to those who knew her, her marriage with sober minded John Coddrington had always been a mystery. Yet the first years of her married life had not changed her disposition. Latterly, however, a change could have been remarked. Her family were growing older, and the number was increasing, and this meant an increase in her cares and anxieties. Gradually and silently one might have noticed a spirit of gloom creeping over her. Though still to the world she offered a front of boldness as of old, it needed no keen eye to see that she was a woman sad, and weary, perhaps. Sitting this night in her drawing room, with her work laid aside, she looked almost an invalid, tired and faint.

The door opened and her husband entered, and passed over to the fireplace.

"My dear," he began, "You look very tired again to-night. I think you ought really to go away for a change."

"Oh, no! that will do no good," said the woman with a sigh. She picked up her work, and began again. In a few minutes she remarked, "Have you already finished your work, John."

"Oh, yes!" he said, "I never have much, and to-night less than usual."

"I do wish you could get more work," said his wife in a voice fervent and husky.

"How good of you!" replied her husband, fondly sitting on the arm of his wife's chair; "In some ways I should like to have more work," he continued with a sigh, "but still one cannot expect too much. Many men of my standing would gladly have the work I have, and after all I am but an ordinary man."

Half groan, half sob, seemed to escape his wife, but it was barely noticeable.

There was a pause for a few moments.

John Coddington gazed at his wife and rose.

"Emma, I don't like to see you so sad. Why is it? Year by year I've noticed you getting more and more melancholy. Do tell me, Emma. Do tell your husband."

The woman did not answer, but large tears filled her eyes. At last she spoke.

"John, I am sad, and have been sad for long. You are quite right. I want, John, to see you get more work; I want to see you sought after; I want to see you loaded with briefs. That is why I am sad."

Her husband paced up and down, then turned:

"You are a dear, good girl, Emma. You always think so much of me, and wish me to get on. But you shouldn't fret. Do let us be content with what we have got. Why? Tell me why, my dear," he said, putting his arm fondly round her, and kissing her, "Why do you want me to get on?"

The woman gave to his embrace, then breaking away with tears standing in her eyes:

"I want to see my husband a great man, I want to be the wife of a great man. I want to be the mistress

of a large house, to have carriages and horses, to have large parties, to have my house thronged with people, and to know that all this is won by my husband."

John Coddington looked wistfully at his wife, and kissed her.

"I wish, Emma, I could gratify your ambition, but I cannot." And then with a smile, "You must remember, Emma, I am but an average man. If you had wanted all these things you should have married a genius. And yet, after all, we have much to be thankful for. I daresay before long I may get some appointment, a magistracy, a recordership; that is all I can expect. Don't grieve, dear, let us take what is granted unto us and be thankful."

Next morning Mrs. Coddington left the breakfast room and came into the drawing room. This was her daily practice. But on this morning her daily routine was not carried out; for after laying a handful of letters on her desk, she sank back on to the sofa, still keeping one letter in her hand. She picked it up:

"DEAR SIS,—Just a hurried line. I have only this moment returned from dining with Lady Walston, where I met our old friend, Sir William Greenfield. You know, I presume, he is going to stay in this country and go into Parliament. He spoke very kindly of you, asked after you, and told me he would call at once. This only to forewarn you. Excuse haste, and believe me—Your affectionate brother—HARRY LAWSON."

"Fancy Willie Greenfield now Sir William! My brother's schoolfellow and playmate! To think of poor Willie, whom we all knew so well, going to Australia, making a fortune, coming back here as leader of a delegation, getting knighted, invited to join the Conservative party. How funny! How well I remember the day he tumbled into the duck pond! And how good he is not to forget us; but he always was very nice."

And then with a genuine sweet smile she sat down at her desk and began her correspondence.

A ring at the door bell roused her. Good gracious, she thought, not a caller at this hour!

The drawing room door opened, and Sir William Greenfield was announced. An iron grey wizened man entered, aged beyond his years, but his step was firm and his eye still warm.

"Mrs. Coddington," he began, moving towards her, "you remember Willie Greenfield, I hope. I have not yet forgotten Emma Lawson."

The woman welcomed her old friend warmly. For a few minutes they bandied mutual civilities and mutual compliments.

"I cannot stop long," he said, at length, "I am so dreadfully busy; but meeting last night my old friend, your brother, I heard all about you. I've been here in old England such a short time, and there's been so much to do, that it has been like a dream, but I had always wanted to see you, Emma. I may call you Emma, I hope, in memory of the time that is gone?"

"Oh! do, Willie, do"

"Ah!" he said, "how all has changed! Emma," he continued, "you never knew it, but I must tell you. I loved you in days gone by, and yes, I hoped to make you my wife, but that could not be. However, I love you still, and I want to be your brother, I want to help you, to help your husband, your children. You know, after all, I have not many interests here; there's politics and all that, but that is nothing. What I want is to comfort you; may I?"

Emma Coddington's heart was too full for words.

"Yes, I can help you. I'll get your husband on, I'll assist your children, I'll do all for you, Emma. I must go off now, you'll come and see me and we'll talk it all over when I am not quite so busy. But remember I am your brother, Emma."

He rose and left the room.

Was it all a dream? or reality? She sat immovable. A sweet smile played on her face. Then a cloud passed over it. A storm came up, and she burst into tears.

Suddenly the door opened, and a man hurriedly entered. Emma Coddington quickly pulled herself together.

"Oh! Sis," said the new comer, "I saw old Willie Greenfield driving away from your door. I presumed he had called, and hurried in to see you."

The woman made no answer.

"Why, Sis, you've been crying! What's up?"

"You come and ask me!" hissed the woman. "Why, pray, does he come and flaunt his success in my face? Why does he come and torture me and insult me? He asks me to be his sister, to assist my husband, my children—" and a wild flood of tears came and ended her words.

Harry Lawson stood unmoved.

"Emma," he said, firmly, "dry your tears and listen to me. I know you and I know your troubles, and I will tell you all about them. But first you must withdraw those foul thoughts about Willie Greenfield. He is a fine and noble fellow and always has been, and it is only out of the goodness of his heart that he has spoken to you this day. This pain you now feel, is all your own doing. You have only just now become aware of what I have known for long, that you might have been Willie Greenfield's wife. You, like all your sex, love power, and in days gone by you made your choice, and took John Coddington. You thought he was a great man, and passed by poor Willie. And for this error of judgment you have now to pay. You women are so foolish. Trust your emotions, and we men cannot come near you. Try your reason, and you become simpletons. You married at the impulse not of your emotion, but of your reason, and you now suffer. But pray lay the blame on yourself, and not on others."

"But—" interposed the woman.

"Silence! I am not going to listen to you. I am quite disgusted with you, imputing such motives to dear Willie. I am going. I'll come and see you again, when I hope to find you in a better frame of mind."

He had gone. With flushed face and tear-bedimmed eyes she rose. She started to go after him : paused. Slowly she turned and hid on the sofa.

A cry of childish laughter and merriment rose on the air from the next room and died away.

A door opened, a merry child with flowing golden hair, darted in.

"Oh ! mummy, you here," it said, "we are just going out before dinner," and passed away.

The clock ticked on the mantelpiece.

The passage door opened, and John Coddington slowly entered reading a paper studiously, and passed over to the fire. Standing before the fire reading his paper, not noticing anything, two arms gently clasped him, and he turned his face to receive the warm fond kisses of his wife.

C. J. N. FLEMING.



A WINTER SUNSET.

THE frosty sky like a furnace burning,
The keen air, crisp and cold,
And a sunset that splashes the clouds with gold ;
But my heart to summer turning.

Come back, sweet summer ! come back again !
I hate the snow,
And the icy winds that the North lands blow,
And the fall of the frozen rain.

I hate the iron ground,
And the Christmas roses,
And the sickly day that dies when it closes,
With never a song or a sound.

Come back ! come back ! with your passionate heat,
And glowing hazes,
And your sun that shines as a lover gazes,
And your day with the tired feet.

ALFRED DOUGLAS.

THE HOUSE OF JUDGMENT.

AND there was silence in the House of Judgment, and the Man came naked before God.

And God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man, "Thy life hath been evil, and thou hast shown cruelty to those who were in need of succour, and to those who lacked help thou hast been bitter and hard of heart. The poor called to thee, and thou did'st not hearken, and thine ears were closed to the cry of the afflicted. The inheritance of the fatherless thou did'st take unto thyself, and thou did'st send the foxes into the vineyard of thy neighbour's field. Thou did'st take the bread of the children and give it to the dogs to eat, and the lepers who lived in the marshes, and were at peace and praised Me, thou did'st drive forth on to the highways, and on Mine earth, out of which I made thee, thou didst spill innocent blood."

And the Man made answer and said, "Even so did I."

And again God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man, "Thy life hath been evil, and thou did'st seek for the seven sins. The walls of thy chamber were painted with images, and from the bed of thine abominations thou did'st rise up to the sound of flutes. Thou did'st build seven altars to the sins I have suffered, and did'st eat of the thing that may not be eaten, and the purple of thy raiment was broidered with the three signs of shame. Thine idols were neither of gold nor of silver, which endure, but of flesh that dieth. Thou did'st stain their hair with colours, and set pomegranates in their hands. Thou did'st stain their feet with perfumes, and spread carpets before them. With antimony thou did'st stain their eyelids, and their bodies thou did'st smear with myrrh. Thou did'st bow thyself to the ground before them, and the thrones of the idols were set in the sun. Thou did'st show to the sun thy shame and to the moon thy madness."

And the Man made answer and said, "Even so did I."

And a third time God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man, "Evil hath been thy life, and with evil did'st thou requite good, and with wrongdoing kindness. The hands that fed thee thou did'st wound, and the breasts that gave thee suck thou did'st despise. He who came to thee with water went away thirsting, and the outlawed men who hid thee in their tents at night thou did'st betray before dawn. Thine enemy who spared thee thou did'st snare in an ambush, and the friend who walked with thee thou did'st sell for a price, and to those who brought thee Love thou did'st ever give Lust in thy turn."

And the man made answer and said, "Even so did I."

And God closed the Book of the Life of the Man, and said, "Surely I shall send thee to Hell. Even unto Hell shall I send thee."

And the Man cried out, "Thou canst not."

And God said to the Man, "Wherefore can I not send thee to Hell, and for what reason?"

And the Man made answer and said, "Because in Hell have I always lived."

And there was silence in the House of Judgment.

And after a space God spake, and said to the Man, "Seeing that I may not send thee to Hell, surely I shall send thee to Heaven. Even unto Heaven shall I send thee."

And the Man cried out, "Thou canst not."

And God said to the Man, "Wherefore can I not send thee to Heaven, and for what reason?"

And the Man made answer and said, "Because never, and in no place, have I been able to imagine Heaven."

And there was silence in the House of Judgment.

OSCAR WILDE.



ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Starik.—The title of your poem is very beautiful, but I don't like the poem.—ED.

J.B.H-B.—Your poems are tainted with ethics. I suspect you of being a don.—ED.

Cygnets.—Thanks. But you have not done justice to a good idea. Your story is not psychological enough.—ED.

Caliban.—You should certainly give up poetry. Why not emigrate? Literature is unknown in the colonies.—ED.

Narcissus.—Thanks for your photograph, it is perfectly charming. But why try and write? Why not be content to exist beautifully?—ED.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL communications, which must be accompanied by the writer's name and address (not necessarily for publication), should be addressed

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