

LOVE FOR SALE.

A little innocent, with eyes
The color of the summer skies,
And clear and limpid as a well
Of water in a moss-lined cell,

Boldly cropt upon my knee,
Prattling with childish glee,
And though we never had met before,
It hugged and kissed me 'er and o'er.

I'll have to change my creed, I thought
"That love is always sold or bought,"
For children's love is freely given,
And pure as air—the gift of Heaven.

The kissing and the prattling ceased,
While solemnly the urchin gazed,
And spoke in hissing murmurs low,
"Fo' fy 'ents I will lub oo mo'."

THE MECK FAMILY.

I don't know what I had done to merit the spite of fortune, which led me to No. 132 Peckover street in search of lodgings.

Were the apartments dingy? Decidedly so. The paper was of a very trying pattern—in two drabs; the carpet rather more trying in yellows and browns, with this advantage, that its pattern was almost worn threadbare and pleasantly effaced. The yellow drapery was of similar hue to the paper, and muslin curtains, drawn partially across, had become reduced by dust and smoke to the same subdued color.

There were one or two striking portraits (family ones probably) on the walls, and a yet more striking fire-stove ornament in the grate. I forget further details.

The landlady was elderly and flump, with a sort of washed-out and plaintive aspect, and a tendency to sigh and fold her hands. She was very attentive, however, and anxious to show her "first floor" to the best advantage.

"The curtains will wash?" said I, looking around.

"Dear, yes, sir, surely! We was lettin' 'em hang to save the others, which the sun fades 'em so, being the worst of stuffs and such like. Like all earthly things, as fades mostly, don't they sir?"

The landlady sighed gently and folded her hands again. She wore black worsted mittens.

"I hope," I said, in my polite way, "you don't mind my naming it—but, of course—your—ahem—the—the bed—is free, you know—from any little annoyances?"

I had had my experience—preceding those three years of paradise and Mrs. Chick, and I was nervous, partly from dread of the indignation I had before aroused in the housekeeping breast by the above delicate question and partly from the recollection of results that had followed on the assurance of landladies of another class that their knowledge of natural history did not extend to the species alluded to, and that they were at fault to comprehend my meaning.

Mrs. Maule (that was her name) adopted neither of these extremes; she only shook her head pensively and said: "To my knowledge there ain't a living flea in this house;" (I didn't mean fleas, though) "but you know, sir, we live in a vale of tears, and in course there will be such trials for all at times. If I am so tried, I hope to bear it meekly."

And I think Mrs. Maule shed a tear, "I am very glad to hear it," said I cheerfully, "now about terms, if I arrange to come."

"Oh, don't speak of terms, sir; I'm sure what you've been in the habit of paying will suit us, or less, maybe, as it's more for the keepin' of the rooms aired, bein' as the house is too big for us, and the protection of havin' a gent like yourself, under our roof, Maule bein' low in his nerves of late years and myself haven't that sperrit as some have, which, I'm sure, sir, anything we can do to make you comfortable and feel at home, as there's no place like it—"

"Ah! thank you—thank you." The light—when the windows were cleaned—would suit my work, the exchequer was somewhat low, time was an object, and, taking all in all, I closed with my obliging landlady's terms, which gave her much pensive satisfaction.

"And if you'll be pleased to name your wishes, sir, in all respects," said Mrs. Maule with a faint sigh in conclusion, "we hope to do our humble best to meet 'em."

"You're very good," said I; "I don't think you'll find me exacting; I confess to a few weaknesses. I dislike damp salt and smoky potatoes. I object to a hot dinner on a cold plate, and I'm partial to clean linen. That's about all, I think."

Mrs. Maule readily acquiesced in these modest requirements, observing that "a hangel couldn't want less," and thereupon we parted.

In due time myself and my few belongings were conveyed in a cab to 132 Peckover street. I had dined, and beyond a cup of coffee wanted nothing. Mrs. Maule brought me the coffee herself.

"I'm sure, sir, I hope it's as you like," said she, meekly; "but, if not, you'll kindly name it. And Sophonisba Ann will bring you your water at any hour 'till mention in the mornin', sir. So-

phonisba Ann mostly waits on Lodgers, sir (that's my daughter), and I'm sure always willin', though that timid and soft-hearted—but there! don't mind me a sayin', as a mother, perhaps more than I ought respectin' my own."

I said I was much obliged to her and her daughter for their kind intentions, and wished her good night. She sighed audibly, and held the door handle for another minute, then, with an air of resignation, retired.

Morning brought breakfast and Sophonisba Ann. This young person was, if possible, meeker and more depressed than her parent. She carried her head a little on one side and sniffed with every breath as if from chronic influenza. Her complexion was pale, not to say pasty, and her hair and eyebrows whitey brown. Sophonisba Ann's figure was remarkable for depression where fullness might be expected and a curious bulging tendency wherever the opposite effect was usual. Her attire was chiefly notable for hooks and eyes—with a difference of opinion that materially hindered friendship, and refractory hair-pins, which I found had a way of dropping out into all sorts of odd places. I found one, one day, at the bottom of my jug of porter, at dinner!

This interesting young person contrived to make a surprising clatter with the breakfast ware, upset a chair and threw down a pile of my books before making her exit. I attributed this to the timidity which her mother had assured me was counterbalanced by so many virtues, and could not in reason, complain; but when, in removing the breakfast things, the same pile of books underwent precisely the same fate, and gave me such a start that I nearly cut off a finger in mending a pen, I could not help saying, rather brusquely, "For heaven's sake, my good girl, be careful what you do next," which produced quite an attack of sniffing and a hasty retreat on the part of the unlucky maiden.

A little later in the day, my landlady knocked timidly at my door.

"Come in!" said I.

She came in folding her hands and looking up at the ceiling.

"I'm sure, sir, you'll excuse it, though a liberty, but as I'm a mother, which it's nothing after all, and I've no call to worry, I'm certain, but it's my daughter, sir, a takin' on so after you spoke to her this mornin', and if you'd be so very kind, seein' as Sophonisba Ann is so tender-hearted—"

"What is it about?" I said, as the tearful lady paused to take breath. "I don't understand."

"Oh! and I'm sure you didn't mean for to hurt her feelin's, sir, and she owns it she's said as much in that kitchen down below to me. 'His way seemed harsh,' she says, 'but his heart's in the right place,' she says; 'I'm certain sure of it,' she says, and she's been a cryin' her eyes out, which Sophonisba Ann is rather 'sterical at times, sir. I tell her I'm sure you don't mean nothing, and likely it won't so occur again."

"Bless me?" said I, "this is very foolish; of course I didn't mean to hurt your daughter's feelings, ma'm; pray tell her so; I'll remember to speak less abruptly since you've named it."

"Oh! sir, you're the most feelin' gent as ever I did know, I'm sure, I don't know whatever my gurl'll say—and the last gent we had so different—so violent in his language; not to speak of banging the door. O dear! what it is to have a sperrit, which is what me and mine never had, and so the world tramples on us," said Mrs. Maule.

"I hope not," said I. "You should take a more cheerful view of life, Mrs. Maule."

I was very busy, and wished she would go, but she didn't.

"Well, sir," she observed with a sigh, "I always was one of the downhearted ones; and Maule's nerves that low! I never shall forget when he asked me to have him—that's seven-and-twenty-year ago—'Mariar,' he says to me (that's my name)—'but there, sir, don't mind me, which as a wife I hope I have a wife's feelin's;'" and Mrs. Maule shed tears.

I did mind her very much, and devoutly wished her at the North Pole, as she stood in the doorway wiping her eyes with her apron, and evidently awaiting my sympathy.

"I'm sure Mr. Maule's choice does him credit," I said desperately, "he couldn't do better than take a good wife to sooth the path of life for him; wasn't that your door-bell?"

"Sophonisba Ann will answer the door sir, which I think you was mistaken, and it didn't ring," said Mrs. Maule. "I am sure I never did meet with a gentleman so thoughtful and feelin'; a real friend, as one may say, already, and I'm only thankful—"

"I'm afraid I must trouble you to shut that door, Mrs. Maule," I gasped. "I'm subject to ear-ache, and the draught—I hope I shall be forgiven for the fibs that woman caused me to invent. She slowly withdrew, murmuring motherly compassion, and faintly suggested pepper plasters and other mild remedies for ear-ache, while I took up my pen and tried to collect my scattered ideas.

I had not yet seen Mr. Maule, the state of whose "nerves" kept him mostly confined to an armchair in the kitchen, but from occasional sounds of melody, something like feebly rendered choruses of a jovial nature, in which a slight confusion of consonants was perceptible, I concluded that even Mr. M. had intervals of comparative cheerfulness. Moreover, I discovered that there was a son of the house—a tall youth, with whitey-brown hair and skin, and a stoop in his shoulders—whose avocation seemed to be near at hand, by his punctual return to meals at stated hours in the day. With this young man I was

fated, alas! too soon to become acquainted.

One evening, a little before my dinner, Mrs. Maule waited on me with an air of meek mystery, to ask if her son might "step up by-and-by" and speak to me, if so be that I had no objections.

His name, his mother told me, was Cincinnatus; he was rather low-spirited, and had, in fact, something on his mind.

"Dear me!" I said, "poor fellow! any trouble? Nothing serious, I hope?" "Oh, dear, no, sir—leastwise, nothing wrong. Cin's as innocent as the babe unborn, as to evil ways, sir; no, its the mind, that's where it is; (mysteriously) 'he's got a soarin' mind, sir, and the world's too little for him.'"

"Indeed?" said I, mentally regretting that the young gentleman had selected me as the confidant of his mental trials; but, alas! I little guessed what was to come. Scarcely was the cloth removed when a modest rap announced my new acquaintance, and Cincinnatus entered, bearing a huge brown paper parcel, which he deposited with a jerk on the table, violently shaking back a long wisp of hair which kept falling rebelliously into his eyes, and sinking immediately into the first chair near, with an air of profound dejection.

This young man had a large nose of the solid Roman type, very red eyelids, and a sonorous voice with a twang in it. He told me he was in an attorney's office, but that the work was very distasteful to him, and he had thought of giving it up and turning author.

He had begun several works of importance, one of which (his "chef d'oeuvre," he called it,) he had brought up with him.

"Blank verse mostly, sir," he exclaimed; "in ten books, revealing the mysteries of a human soul to the moon, who is supposed to be listening—poetical license, of course—you understand. The first three books—"

"Isn't it a risk," interrupted I, shrinking from the prospect of being pressed into the same service as the moon, and resolved to be as practical as possible; "isn't it a risk to give up steady work for an uncertainty like literature?"

"Well, sir, mother talks like that, and she's right—and you're right, in one point of view," said the youth, meekly; "but when you've a soul, and when your soul mounts beyond the office stool, where are you then?"

He waved his hand descriptively, as if were of an aerial flight; his nails were inky and very long.

"Well, I don't know," said I, "but hadn't you better—?"

But he had risen, and hurriedly commenced undoing the brown paper, with drawing from it about fifty sheets of foolscap, well written over.

"Listen!" he cried oracularly, and slowly recited as follows:

Hail! cold, unfeeling orb, tho' thy bright ray
Mocks the absorbing madness of my soul!
Soon, soon thy last quarter will draw nigh;
But sooner still for me the funeral bell shall toll.

"That's the opening lines," said he; "the next—"

"My friend," I said, "I am afraid you will find the public hard to satisfy; you must look for disappointment."

"That's all I look for, sir," he interrupted, "that and an early grave," he added, with a certain air of satisfaction.

"And as mother and father aren't as well off as they were, I daresay there won't even be a recordin' marble to tell the world that Cincinnatus Maule lies below—but that's of no consequence."

He sighed.

"Aren't you a little out of health?" I asked at this point.

"Oh, yes, sir," he smiled. "I'm journeying to the tomb. I've no sort of a doubt about it myself, but the cold world will pass heedless by and think nothing of it. The world's so very sublimary! Don't you find it so, sir?"

"Well, yes; I suppose it is that," I said, never having had cause to doubt it as a fact. "Yes, I suppose it is. But now let me advise you as a friend."

He looked up softly.

"I knew you would," he cried; "that's just it, you will assist me, and I'll step up of evenings and we'll go through it together gradual like. Yes I felt sure you'd be the friend to do it; when mother said, 'Cin, that's our first floor going out,' I felt as if I could open my heart to you like a brother; I did indeed, sir."

"Look here," I said, when he paused and shook back the excited wisp of whitey-brown hair, with joyful vehemence; "Look here, I'll let you know when to bring it up. The fact is, I'm awfully busy just now; I haven't a minute to spare for study or the delights of the muse."

I smiled grimly as I almost pushed him out of the door, bearing his precious brown paper parcel, and overwhelming me with undeserved thanks. Inwardly I resolved never to have five minutes' leisure to listen to those "revelations to the moon" which would henceforth haunt my waking and sleeping hours even should the meek Cincinnatus sink into his early grave the sooner for lack of brotherly sympathy.

The next morning, when I entered my sitting-room, Sophonisba Ann was there, a little belated, I concluded, as she was finishing the operation of dusting, which I never observed to produce much result. Something in the street had caught the damsel's notice, for she did not observe my entrance, as she stood with her hands on her hips, the duster hanging idly by her side; her mouth open, and vacantly fixed eyes; the refractory hair-pins in open rebellion, and stray wisps and tails of hair protruding where they were off duty; while the books and eyes at variance completed the effect of the bulgy

lines of Sophonisba Ann's figure before hinted at.

Now it happened that I was engaged in making a series of sketches for a comic journal, and Sophonisba Ann, as she now stood, was the very model I wanted for one of them. The opportunity was too good to be lost. I seized paper and pencil.

"One moment, my good girl!" I cried. "Stay as you are; oblige me by not moving."

Of course she did not stay "as she was," but nearly enough so to enable me to throw on paper the outline which had caught my fancy.

"Thanks—that will do," I said as blandly as I could.

She simpered and actually forgot to sniffle.

"La, sir! whatever could you take me like this for?" she cried at last. If I'd only been in my afternoon frock, at least, and done my hair up a bit tidy—if you had told me; but la! now."

"Don't name it," I said; "I'd rather not, in fact, I wanted you just as you are."

The next evening Mrs. Maule came up a smiling—yes, actually smiling!—with a cheerful serenity, if not a little excitement in her demeanor, as she placed before me a photographic likeness of Sophonisba Ann.

"Which Maule and me, sir, couldn't hear of your puttin' up with such a sketch like, all of a hurry; and being' as our girl wasn't tidied up, as she'd wished, in course, so Sophonisba Ann's been and had this took at Mr. Daubley's round the corner, if you'll accept it; and I'm sure a good hearted, well-disposed gurl is my girl, though I say it, and not took up with follies like some, and that steady, almost too steady for her station in life, as her father tells her; and I'm sure both her father and me—but there, sir, when you're a parent you'll know what a parent's feelin's are."

All this was said in one breath, without any pause whatever. I sat bewildered, wondering if it would be unparadoxically rude to reject the offer of a lady's portrait, and what I could say in excuse.

"I'm afraid," I began, "you're very kind—the fact is—I think I didn't make myself quite understood."

"Oh, yes, sir, you did. Pray don't name it. You was all a gentleman should be; and Maule and me are proud"—here Mrs. Maule, without proceeding further, conveyed herself down stairs in a tremulous condition between tears and smiles that fairly stunned me. What could the stupid people think I wanted with their daughter's likeness? I stuck it on the mantelpiece (it was not a very flattering photograph,) resolving to take no more notice of the thing; but next time Miss Maule came up I observed she wore a flaming red ribbon in her hair and an assertive brooch in the front of her dress.

She stole furtive glances at the mantelpiece, half shy, half smirking. I caught her eye by chance, when, overcoming her maidenly modesty, with a preliminary sniffle, she said, sweetly: "Oh, if you please, sir, about walkin' out on Sundays after chapel; for mother's quite agreeable, bein' as you're such a gentleman and—"

"What do you mean?" I said, sharply enough, and quite forgetting the "tender heartedness" of Sophonisba Ann in the excess of my bewilderment; but, instead of answering me, that young person flew to the window, crying: "If there isn't that man—crossing the street again. Oh! whatever'll father do? But Cin is at the door, and you'll protect poor father, I know," and she rushed downstairs without further explanation.

Another minute and rapid and it must be added, stumbling footsteps began ascending the stairs, accompanied by the cries of Sophonisba Ann and the fainter sobs of her mother in the rear, and Mr. Maule entered, supported by his son and closely followed by a rough and ready-looking person with a paper in his hand.

I stared.

Mr. Maule waved his hand. "I—I—My dear friend—sir—'scuse—abrupt visits," he cried, in a hazy sort of voice. "F—friends may—waive sheremony."

Here Mr. Maule swerved suddenly, but Cincinnatus propped him up again.

"And I—I believe I'm correct saving a f—friend in need's a friend indeed." (This very rapidly spoken.) Under these shircumstance, I—I'm bound to forego a parent's feelings—"

"Yes, Maule, that's it," cried Mrs. M., from behind the apron she held to her eyes; "we know what you'd say—what we'd both say, and feel likewise—and thank our stars as sent you, sir, to our aid, which I'm sure we can never repay, as it's 14£ 12s. 6d."—

"£14 17s. 9d.," interrupted the rough-and-ready-looking person, with a hoarse cough.

"Yes, take my child, and bless you!" cried Maule, extending his arms like the "heavy father," in a play—and tell this—minion of the law, that—that his claim satisfied and a helpless, aged parent saved from—rain and—distress!"

Here Mr. Maule broke off, weeping. "Happy day!" said Cincinnatus, "I said you were like a brother when first I saw you, and I'll put it all in my great work, that an 'ollow-hearted world may read and be ashamed of not doing likewise!" with which rather ambiguous speech Cincinnatus again dutifully propped up his ailing parent, whose emotions were too much for him.

"May you both—be—happy!" murmured Mr. Maule.

"O la, father!" cried Sophonisba Ann, hysterically.

"What does it all mean?" I was forced

ed to ask the bearer of the mysterious paper, who was the only coherent one of the party.

"Why, sir, this here's a distress for the sum of £14 17s. 7d. owing to the parties as sent me here; and the olc gent, he says—leastwise he don't seem to know exactly what he's sayin'—hall his time—he says as you're a goin' to marry his daughter and pay up square but I ain't goin' to be gammoned no more, so if so be, sir, of course I have your word as well as his'n."

I waited for no more. "Gracious alive!" I exclaimed "are you all idiots or lunatics, or what? Grant me my senses to get clear of this! Here, take the rent—take a week—take a month over for the notice—only let me begone." And flinging the money on the table, I rushed to collect my traps, thrusting the things into bag and portmanteau as if for life or death, and never pausing till I strode forth—minus two pairs of boots, an umbrella and cigar case, left behind in the hurry—in search of the first friendly cab which should bear me far from the region of Peckover street to any destination under the sun, rather than consign me in future to the tender mercies of a "Meek Family."—Home Chimes.

General Paragraphs.

The Clyde ship-building report for September, just published, shows that there have been launched twenty-five vessels of 37,012 tons, which is 5,500 tons over the corresponding month last year; but, taking the three-quarters of the year, a decline of 100 to 70,000 is shown, compared with 1898. At the English ports the figure shows a corresponding falling off.

During the civil war the bounties were in some instances as high as \$1,500 per recruit. In the war of 1812 bounties were found to be indispensable in recruiting; each recruit in 1814, received a bounty of \$124. "In fact," says an eminent authority, "after the subsidence of the first burst of patriotism it has generally been found necessary to appeal to mercenary motives in soliciting recruits. The only ultimatum is conscription, which, while less expensive, is more unpopular, and furnishes unwilling recruits instead of volunteers."

California ought to make a good deal of money out of her wine plantations if the ravages caused by the phylloxera are going to continue in England, says the New York Sun. The reduction of value of the wine-growing districts of Malaga is estimated at \$1,250,000. In Portugal the disease is so bad that a suspension of the production of wine is feared. It amounted in former years to over \$22,000,000. In France the total loss is so large that M. Lalande said in the senate that France had lost as much by the phylloxera as by the payment of the German indemnity, and this was 1,000,000,000.

The fine old stone building in Kingston N. Y. known as the "Senate House," is again offered for sale by auction. This is now the oldest public building in the United States, so far as known, having been erected in 1676. The interior was burned out by the British in October, 1777, when Kingston was burned. In that same year the first Senate of New York State held its first sessions in this building, adopting the original State Constitution there. The structure was rebuilt and occupied by General Armstrong, who was war secretary under Washington. He resided there until 1804. The old house has sheltered many of the old statesmen and military heroes of those early days of the republic. The old walls are to-day as firm as ever, defying the mason's hammer and chisel as they did the British torch.

The London Lumber Trade Journal states that a new method of tree-felling by dynamite has been successfully introduced. A cartridge of the explosive substance is placed in a channel bored directly under the tree to be operated upon, and when exploded the tree is simply forced up bodily and falls intact on its side. If this system works as well as it is represented to do, and the tree is not fractured by the force of the explosion, a large proportion of valuable wood at the base of the trunk can be utilized which is now lost.

The number of dwelling houses in Paris is 90,000. The area of the whole city is 25 square miles, and the population over 2,000,000. A recent measure of the Conseil d'Etat ordains that henceforward no flats shall be less than eight feet high; that in streets 25 feet wide the height of the houses must not exceed 40 feet; in streets between 25 and 32 feet wide the height must not exceed 50 feet; in streets between 32 and 65 feet wide the height must not exceed 60 feet; in streets above 65 feet wide the height must not exceed 65 feet, and no buildings are to have more than seven stories, all included.

The famous Phillips well near Butler, Pa., is said to be the most phenomenon ever discovered in the oil regions. It has produced 100 barrels an hour, and during the last five weeks no less than 15,000 barrels have flowed from it. Though surrounded by rival shafts sunk to tap the supply, none have approached it in abundance—even the Johnson, the most promising of the number, lagging far behind. The oil from the Phillips flows from an almost perfect pebble sand, at a depth of 1,577 feet. Large numbers of people visit the well, which flows with the regularity of clockwork, the oil gushing out at intervals of nine minutes and a half, the flow lasting about four minutes.