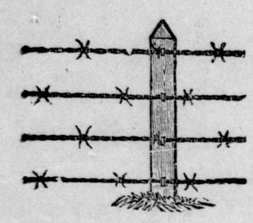

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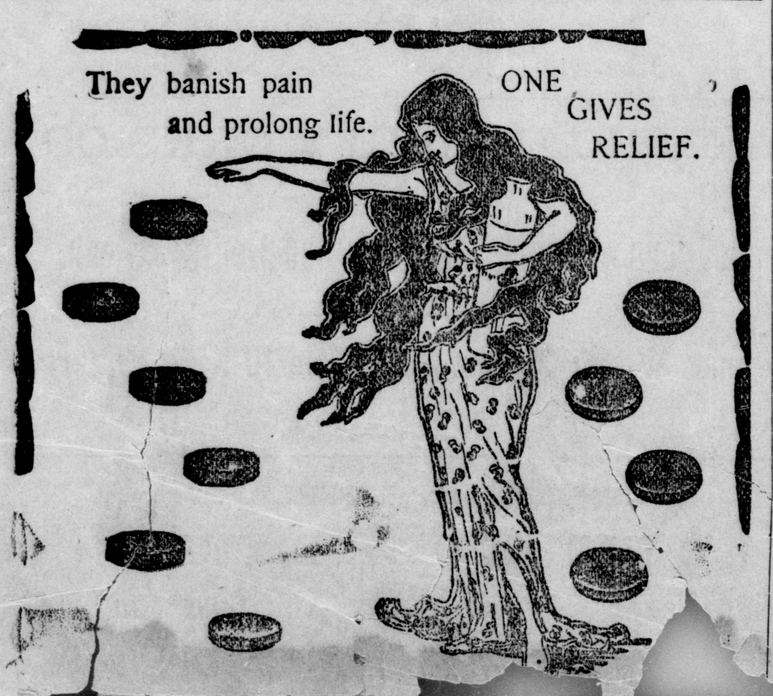

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Literature.

A SHARP LESSON.

It is not at all pleasant to be the auditor of a dispu c between husband and wife, a jangling of sweet bells that never ought to be in discord. And Robert Hume, confined to a sofa by a badly-sprained ankle, execrated, internally, the arrangements of the Swiss hotel that had made a curtain the only division between the room where he lay and the adjoining one.

In vain did he cough and whistle to remind the disputants that he was within hearing.

They were too much absorbed to notice the sounds.

He could not reach the crutch stick, without which it was impossible to limp away, so was compelled to be a listener while his friend, Harry Wilsdon, and Harry's charming young wife, wrangled over a grievance.

"I don't see that I am unreasonable in objecting to your going across the lake—alone, too."

"I need not be alone, Harry," the lady interposed, significantly. "I thought—that is, I hoped—you would go with me."

"And leave Hume till the eve

"You did so yesterday, when risons pressed you to be their the mountain."

"That was not a case in point; o were, it would be an additional re why I should be with him today. Beside, I do not like Mr. and Mrs. Ormsby. It is purgatory to me to spend an hour in the society of such a prosy old couple."

"They are my relatives, Harry," Mrs. Wilsdon pleadingly reminded her husband. "And I have often told you how good they were to me when papa died. They have neither friends nor acquaintances in the neighborhood of the house they've taken; and when they wrote on learning that we were within a few miles, and asked me to go and see the how could I refuse?"

"That wa before Hume's accident. he met with it in saving you from a you can easily allege the close attend he requires as an excuse for not visiting the Ormsbys; and if your conscience i still uneasy about them, we will increas the distance as soon as we can hire an invalid carriage and take Hume with us."

"But, Harry, I don't want to excu myself. Mr. Hume would be the person to wish me to behave ungratefu to such old friends; neither does he quire such close attendance. Such a as that ght br dear old Mr. O

Mr. Wil pause, bro at last, by Mrs. Wilsdon asking, pettishly:

"I should like to know what I am to do. Do you forbid—absolutely forbid—my going to the Ormsbys?"

"That you may represent me to them as a tyrant? Certainly not. Please yourself, Evelyn."

Another pause, and then the lady spoke with more decision:

"I cannot think it would be right to break the promise you permitted me to make. Had you said at the time——"

But here she was angrily stopped.

"For Heaven's sake, do not drag me into a discussion that can only come to one end. Your friends are of more importance to you than my wishes, and you have made up your mind to go to them. Do so, then. The steamer starts in half an hour. Fritz will carry your wraps down to the pier."

He could be heard stalking toward the door; but lighter, more rapid footsteps flew after him.

"Bid me good-bye, Harry, dear?" entreated a soft, appealing voice. "I am so sorry to have vexed you. Do let us make a compromise. I still think I must go to the Ormsbys, because they expect me, and would feel hurt at any neglect; but be a dear, kind boy, and accompany me? Then I promise not to stay for more than a greeting and a good-bye. Say you will? It is such a lovely morning. It will be charming on the lake, and you know you never tire of its beauty."

But Mr. Wilsdon was not to be conciliated. He was—though he would have scouted the idea—jealous of the affection with which his wife regarded her relatives; and that she, his bride of a few months, should assert herself, and not yield him ready obedience, was too provoking to be endured.

"I have no doubt," he cried, sarcastically, "that you will enjoy yourself a great deal more without than with me. You have chosen to go your own way; you must allow me to do the same."

Still fond arms sought to detain him.

"But kiss me before we part. Do, Harry! I shall be miserable all the morning if you are really, really vexed with me."

To this there was no other reply than the slamming of a door, and Mr. Hume fancied he could detect the sound of low sobbing.

But he did not see Mrs. Wilsdon till she ran into the room, her swollen eyes hidden by a veil, to bring him some newspapers just arrived from England, and apologize for leaving him for a few hours.

"I shall come back by the boat that reaches here early in the afternoon. Will you kindly tell Harry—I do not know where he has gone—kindly tell him to expect me then?"

And away she went, trying to smile and seem at her ease, but vainly hoping her husband would yet appear, if only to wave her a farewell in token that his wrath was appeased.

Although Mr. Wilsdon did not show himself before the steamer carried off its gay freight of tourists, he joined Mr. Hume soon after, and insisted on being allowed to wheel him in an invalid chair about the gardens of the hotel.

Apparently he was in the best of spirits; but his friend had known him too long and too intimately not to descry that they were forced.

That he was not regretting his harshness to his wife was evident from the manner in which he answered a remark on the time the return boat was due.

"Evelyn coming by it? Oh, dear, no. I do not expect her till the evening. What woman can resist the pleasure of being made much of by a couple of old foggies eager to supply her with all the gossip of the family? She will be able to tell us how many of her cousins, to the remotest degree, have been born, married, and buried, since we left England, six months ago."

"Mrs. Wilsdon would be very unwomanly if her marriage had killed her interests her own relatives," replied Mr. quietly.

left them for me, of her own free torted the aggrieved husband.

I hope you will never give her regret it."

she been complaining of me?" demanded Mr. Wilsdon, suspiciously.

"My dear fellow, what a ridiculous question! It think it's the other way about. It is you who seem disposed to complain of her. Shall we go in now? One of these sudden storms that sweep across the lake must be coming in this direction, for the air has grown quite chilly."

Mrs. Wilsdon did not arrive by the next boat; and her husband, annoyed that his prediction should have been verified, grew more gloomy and irascible as the hours went on.

She knew he had disapproved of her visiting the Ormsbys at all; yet here she was lingering with them, for hours and hours, careless or defiant as to what he thought of her!

Too thoroughly out of humor to make an agreeable companion even to Mr. Hume, he went off for a solitary walk, coming back at twilight, jaded and fatigued.

Several parties of the tourists, now m the hotel their headquarters, assembling in the hall, or lounging eranda, to compare notes on cusions, or to watch for the r that was to k a few still missing from their

This few was supposed to include Mrs. Wilsdon, and her husband, standing sulking apart, was debating in his mind how he should receive her.

The steamer swung up to the landing-place, where a merry group had hastened to meet their friends, but Harry Wilsdon was not amongst them.

He had decided to stay where he was, and he flung himself into a chair beside Mr. Hume's sofa. She might seek him, he would not seek her.

A step—was it hers? The door was gently unclosed; was it Evelyn?

No; but the wife of the hotel proprietor, looking rather grave and anxious.

"Apparently, Madame Wilsdon has not arrived," she said.

"Not arrived? Then she proposes remaining with those Ormsbys."

This was muttered under his breath, and then a question was eagerly asked.

"But there is a letter, or a message for me?"

"No," Madame made answer. "The captain of the boat had nothing for Mr. Wilsdon, but he brought a very sad report. There had been a storm, and a boat upset; a lady, and the gentleman who was rowing her, had sunk, and the bodies were not yet recovered."

"Why do you come and tell this to me?" demanded Harry Wilsdon, growing deadly pale, and reeling back, so that Mr. Hume put out an arm to steady him.

"Oh, pardon, monsieur; all is well, doubtless; only I could not but remember that, before Madame started this morning, she inquired how she should most easily find Belchamp, and les Anglais who are residing there; compatriots whose name she called Ormsby."

"Then it is my poor Evelyn's old friends who are drowned. What a shock for her!" and Harry repented all his ill-natured remarks concerning them.

"The lady was young," said madame, in a half-whisper, "the gentleman was old; she was not his wife, but a visitor. The older lady was nervous, and remained on land. She witnessed the misfortune, and her grief is terrible."

"Why do you tell me this? What is it to me?" asked Harry Wilsdon, hoarsely. But, ere he could be answered, he threw up his hands, exclaiming, "I know, I know! it is my wife! my Evelyn, who has perished! Oh, my lost darling, and I was not there to save or die with you!"

Mr. Hume tried to urge the possibility of the report being untrue, but mine hostess insisted that it was only too-well founded.

He gave up this point, and contented himself with reminding the distracted husband that, beyond the name of Ormsby, there was nothing to connect Mrs. Wilsdon with the accident.

He argued in vain, he could not obtain a hearing. To start for the scene of the disaster, to hurry the men who were putting a pair of horses into a light carriage, was all Harry Wilsdon could do or think of just then.

Within a quarter of an hour after hearing the evil tidings, the young man had wrung his friend's hand, and left the hotel, promising to double the payment to the driver if he would hasten—hasten!

And then he sank back in his seat, and covered his ghastly face.

Was it a hideous dream, or could it be a still more hideous fact, that he was hurrying through the darkness to find his young wife, not flying to meet him with outstretched arms, nor even clinging tearfully to his neck, as she had done a few hous earlier; but DEAD, drowned? His no longer, but a pale, mute corpse, on whom he might lavish caresses, but never more obtain a response.

And they had parted—oh, Heavens! how they had parted!

He had been cold and unjust, he had refused the kiss, or the kind word for which she had pleaded so lovingly; he had brooded over her fancied offences all the live-long day, refusing to see that it was he who was in the wrong: that his conscience justified her, although his lips had not acknowledged his own jealous folly.

He could never tell her this now. Oh, Evelyn, sweetest and fondest of wives, how could he live his life without you?

Faster, man! Make your horses go faster still, or get fresh ones, no matter at what cost, so that they bear him to the spot where Evelyn was lying!

Mr. Hume limped on to the veranda to watch the departure of his friend, who was carried out of sight by the galloping horses before the news had been disseminated in the hotel.

No one on the boat had heard it, the captain prudently keeping it to himself till he had landed his passengers; but, when it was spoken of at the table d'hote, many were the expressions of sympathy and sorrow it elicited.

Someone presently inquired where was the gentleman who had joined the Wilsdons here, and how had he borne the tidings of the fate of the missing bride?

But no one could answer, for Robert Hume had shut himself in his chamber, and gone to bed, if not to sleep.

Early on the morrow, however, he had his chair wheeled to a little eminence in the garden that commanded the road bordering on the lake, and there he watched and waited till a carriage came in sight.

The driver waved his hat as soon as he saw Mr. Hume. Then Harry Wilsdon sprang from the vehicle, no longer white and frenzied with despair, for with him, radiant with happiness, came his beautiful wife.

"There had been a sad accident," Evelyn explained, "and the Ormsbys were connected with it, but only so far that the unfortunates, whose lives were lost through their own rashness, in venturing on the water in the frailest of boats and in doubtful weather."

It was a father and daughter who were drowned, the bereaved wife and mother standing on the shore unable to render any assistance.

So great was this poor creature's distress, that Mrs. Ormsby had volunteered to remain with her while Mr. Ormsby went to fetch her brother, the clergyman of a French Protestant church, distant about half a day's journey.

But Mrs. Ormsby had overtaxed her own strength, and when Evelyn arrived she found her services as nurse and consoler so greatly in requisition that she could not tear herself away.

"But I wrote," she added; "I sent a mounted messenger with a note to you, Mr. Hume, for I remembered that I had forgotten to return to you the key of your travelling bookcase, and knew you might be wanting it. I asked you to tell Harry what had happened, and beg of him to join me at Belchamp. I was quite frightened, when, long after midnight, he burst into the room, where I was writing letters for the poor widow, looking quite ill and strange, and behaving like——"

"Chut, you need not describe to sober-minded Hume all the foolish things I said and did when I saw my wee wifie alive and well," interposed Harry, laughing, yet with a break in his voice as he threw his arm across her shoulders and drew her closer.

"But it was so provoking," Evelyn went on, "that you never had my note. The man seemed honest, and, as far as I could understand his patois, he declared that he had given it into your hand. It is extraordinary, isn't it?"

"Most extraordinary," said Mr. Hume, who neither then nor afterwards confessed that the note was in his pocket.

He had longed to give Harry Wilsdon a sharp lesson, to make him aware that he was not treating his young wife with the consideration she merited; and when the opportunity occurred he could not resist taking advantage of it.

Harry had suffered severely during the brief period he believed Evelyn lost to him; and it made him a better husband for the rest of his days.

Perhaps Robert Hume never proved himself a better friend than when permitting him to endure the pangs of suspense respecting his wife's safety; and often, in the future, when the cares of business or other trials ruffle Harry Wilsdon's temper, and make him peevish, Evelyn, recalling his anguish at her supposed death, his unutterable delight at finding her still living, will feel how dear to his heart she must be, and, with the soft answer and tender caresses of a good wife, bring him back to his better self.

C.

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