

## At Thompson's Inn.

"What you need, Herbert Brant, my boy, is quiet and rest—I mean, rest and quiet," said my old friend the doctor, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes which belied the genuineness of the mistake. "You have been burning the candle at both ends; you must now be chary of the butt, or there'll be no but about it. Remember Dean Swift, and that blasted oak tree, and the Biblical prophecy that the race was not for him. Remember, or rather, don't remember anything; just give your brain sunlight and pure air and let it vegetate."

"And thus raise cabbages, eh?"  
"There is many heads less significant of a sound heart, my son. Now, let me see. The seashore is too depressing; the mountains too exhilarating. Ah! I have it. My birthplace, as you know, is Armway. The hills begit it like the garden of the Lord, and a primeval forest still protects the hills. Through a break in them, thirty miles distant, runs the old post road, and there stands Thompson's Inn. The very place for you, set on a plateau at just the barometrical height of tranquillity. So far as travelers are concerned, it might well be the old folks' private house, for no one ever stopped there. But they are a warm, hearty couple, and enjoy make-believe fully as much as they did the rushing days of the stage coach. There's a lake near by, overstocked with fish; and the air is an elixir, the food the perfection of countryside tradition, the—"

"Of course, of course," I interrupted; "for further particulars we beg to respectfully refer to, etc., etc."

"You are not going a bit too soon, Herbert, by going to-morrow," continued my mentor, unmoved. "If your nerves were as irritable as mine, you would soon be crazy. There, there, do as I advise. Use my name with Thompson; 'tis the best prescription I can give you."

"Your name is great in mouths, then?" I retorted. "Well, how do I get there?"  
"You must ride or drive from Armway. Get a saddle horse, I should say—"

"And a retinue of slaves, and a bejeweled cimeter, and a camel's train, bearing treasure," I added, with sarcastic thought of my salary. But all the same, that day week I was astride a stout little mare on my way to Thompson's Inn. The doctor was right. I was hipped, and did need rest and quiet. There had been no censure, either, in his inversion; he knew that in my search for news for that insatiable monster, the public, I must need turn night into day, and deem Bedlam a depot for novelties. I was hipped, but what difference did it make? There was no one that cared for me, save this old man; truly, the escape from a sense of loneliness had been the chief incentive of my labors.

Ill health, doubtless, canes enthusiasm to flicker, but it's old age had clasp on the stopper. Little by little as I progressed, I felt delights reviving within me. Such a beautiful country—a gradual rise through the woodland, with here and there a clearing showing the sweet hues of cultivation, but rarely those curls of smoke that wreath the letters of home. Such a wild and solitary country! It hardly required the aid of imagination to believe that the road under the arched trees was merely the run of deer; or, better still, an aisle found by the nymphs and fauns through their dancing. Indeed, it seems as if, amid the murmuring anthem of nature, kept alive by the breeze, I could hear snatches of their very song.

Faint and fragmentary were these sounds, yet even my stout little mare picked up her ears, as, in unison with her galloping, they grew clearer and more constant. As we swept around a bend on our way, so thrilling was this melody that I felt I must have penetrated the magic ring of those sylvan divinities. I glanced from side to side and then upward and my eyes increased my faith. For there, high on an overhanging crag, itself shaded and converted into a bower of leafy luxuriance, sat a fair wild creature, a maiden, if maidens are wont to suffer their tresses to encompass them like a golden shower, if maidens are apt to choose so remote an eyrie for the weaving of sweet garlands to sweeter music. I looked up and smiled.

She smiled in return, then sprang to her feet, caught a broad straw hat from the ground, and vanished. Vanished like a fantasy escaping analysis; except that, doubtless through kindly chance, a flower fell and settled like a kiss on my hand. Like a vanished fantasy, and yet certain faint details lingered, as did the rose, a type of the scattered garlands. I remembered that her eyes were large, and round, and as azure as the depths of the sky. I remembered that she was clad in some soft clinging stuff of blue, which revealed her lovely outlines as if from an artist's touch. I even remembered that the little hand, which I was fain to believe had poised over my head in benediction, had sparkled with jeweled rings. I would surely know her again, surely, if only there were likelihood of our meeting. But I was at least ten miles distant from Thompson's and her home might be yet further away. I put the flower in my pocketcase and patted my mare's neck, that I had not only come within beauty's bailiwick, but possessed the means of often traversing it.

"This path will be a familiar one to you, old girl," I murmured. I remembered, and yet at heart this charming vision there was a shade of indefinite melancholy. In an evanescent expression, which I also recalled, there lurked something which, if I could interpret, I felt would touch the sources of sorrow. Vague though it was, its possibility sobered me as I rode on

and on. There seemed less sunshine streaming through the arches; the shadows on each side glowered more densely. I caught myself glancing hither and thither, and listening, not in hope, but in apprehension. "Well," I soliloquized, "it was about time for you to knock off, if your nerves are thus easily shaken."

Time passed along in accord with my horse's amble, the miles leisurely elapsed; I was surely nearing my journey's end, and still that sombre expectancy pervaded me. What was it I anticipated? Not another glimpse of the wood nymph entwined with garlands; not another flower caressing my hand. No, her smile would have startled me, while at the series of piercing screams which did finally break the suspense I felt a certain satisfaction as if a prophecy were fulfilled. I struck spurs and dashed forward whence the outcry proceeded. The way was steep and rocky, leading from the open again into the twilight of the forest.

My mare's hoofs rang out sharply ere we breasted the brow. Beyond, in a declivity, a maiden was standing, alone, with her back toward me. On her shapely head, over a splendid coil of wheat-hued hair, rested a broad-brimmed straw hat. Her form was elegantly clad in blue material, soft and clinging, as if anxious to share its felicity. She turned—it was she; of course, that fair, wild creature whom I had left ten miles in the rear—she, but ah! how vastly changed! Her face was calm and serene, her expression one of gentle inquiry. Her little hand was gloved, and so faultlessly as to forbid the presence of rings underneath. Evidently she had dropped that rose without intention; evidently she had smiled without returning my smile. I felt all manner of embarrassing qualms as I reined up beside her.

"I beg your pardon," I stammered, "can't be of any service? Surely I heard a cry for help?"

"No," she answered simply, "you see I am unmostrated and in no trouble. Did I scream? How foolish of me! It must have been—yes, it was a—snake in my path-way," and she gravely bowed in dismissal. I bowed in return, shaken, abashed, and called to my horse. As we moved away she looked at me with firm, brave eyes. "Thank you, sir," she said. "By Jove!" I soliloquized remembering certain marks on the bank "that snake must have been heavily shod. Would that I might ring his neck!"

Once more certain personal details lingered with me, but no longer did they induce regret. They seemed the evidence of a nature richly endowed, of a heart true, tender, enduring; of a beautiful shrine inclosing still more beautiful treasure. A sense of restfulness permeated me, as if a long-striven-for end was nearing, as if I were approaching my kingdom after a dreary banishment. And so, until I reached my destination, I was buoyed by new mysterious impulses, which gave me happiness despite the perplexity which again and anon would arise when I strove to conciliate the face which was on incentive with that which has been a disappointment.

My old friend, the doctor, like a prudent physician, had not been liberal in his praise. I found Thompson's Inn as replete in all points of cozy comfort as if it were on the metropolitan stage. My host, too, was a welcome and its fulfillment all in himself, and his beaming wife a reduplication.

"There's no one here!" he shouted with a hearty laugh, as if stagnation were an especial cause for thanksgiving; "you'll have the hull house to yourself, with no one but me and the missus to hide, except, of course, Mr. Mereness."

I was about to ask who this conceded exception might be, when the sight and the aromas of supper concentrated all my efforts in a single line. Shall I say tenderly? No, that would be ungratefully ignoring the hot, fluffy biscuits, the generous chicken pie, the crisp bacon under the watchful eye of its friend, the egg—Arcades ambo—for the sake of a scurvy jest.

Afterward, when I was lazily burning the incense of a cigar on the porch, as a benediction to my repast, that gentleman in person obviated the necessity of inquiry. A tall, slender man of about my age, arrayed in shooting clothes and long boots, courteously greeted me. Courteously—yet in his calm assurance I seemed to detect a sneer; in fact, I did not fancy him. I liked a play of features, a succession of light and shade accompanying the thought. Now Mr. James Mereness, as he introduced himself, possessed a face, regular, intelligent, handsome, if you please, but as changeless as that of the Sphinx. And I have always believed that the secret over which that monster keeps brooding is simply secret malignity. No, I did not fancy this face, its smug conceit I felt sure could survive battle, murder, and sudden death.

"You come hither for the shooting, I presume, Mr. Brant," he said. "Well, its worth a trial, I think I can give you some valuable points, and shall gladly do so."

"No," I replied, "I am more an invalid regarding health than a sportsman. I think the lake will be all the preserve I require. Besides, the season is not yet open, the game laws—"

"Tut, tut!" he interrupted, "I should like to see a constable risk his bones on this countryside; he would be apt to take a ducking or camp out all night against the trunk of a tree."

"There's a plenty of charcoal-burners in this region, sir," explained the landlord, who had been paying far more attention to our talk than to the vine he was ostentatiously trailing, "a rough, hardy folk, and, of course, they would make 't unpleasant for them that interfered with Mr. Mereness here."

"Of course," I responded, though I

kept wondering why. "But I met a type of a far different class, I assure you, not ten miles away; such a lovely young lady, with hair like an aureole, quite putting the birds to shame with her song. Perhaps you can tell me who she is?"

"Don't know nothing about it," said the landlord, doggedly, turning away. Through the open window leading into the dining room I could see my good hostess busied, to use her own expression, "setting things to rights." She had already bestowed on me several sympathetic and encouraging smiles, the mead of invalidism; now she placed her forefinger on her lips and shook her head significantly. What the duce could it all mean? Was that fair vision in truth one of the fairies of whom it is ill-luck to speak?

"I think you say that you were an author, Mr. Brant?" drawled Mereness. "A newspaper man," I replied modestly.

"Ah! very much the same thing, I presume. See, Thompson, what a gift it is to have imagination. Through it our friend here has been able to transform a stout country wench into a houri. Hum! I wish I shared that faculty; my stay here would be less tedious," and he sauntered down the steps and through the shrubbery, with the air of one to whom smoking is an infinite exertion.

I was very angry, especially as Thompson straightway slunk around the angle of the building. Very well then. Since they were so childish, I would not explain that I had met this stranger again, and only a short distance back. I would ask no questions either, except of my bonny-faced landlady. This opportunity came shortly, when I sought her for my night lamp. We were standing together in the passage between the rooms where her cupboard was stationed.

"Why?" I asked with emphasis. Mr. Thompson colored like a girl and glanced around uneasily.

"She is not for you," she whispered. "Why?" I repeated with increased eagerness.

"There, there!" she coaxed, as she forced the lamp into my hand, which she patted soothingly. "Such a nice young man, so thin, so interesting! You must think of nothing but sleep and food and good fresh air. As for poor Miss Annabelle, she's not right here," and she tapped her brow. "Don't speak of her, there's a dear, he's her cousin and sensitive on the subject." The "he" in reference was clearly indicated by a nod toward the veranda, where Mr. Mereness was still languidly smoking.

I didn't think of sleeping when I went to my room. I thought of Annabelle—what a charming name and so charmingly appropriate! And the more I thought the more indignant I became; not toward my simple hostess; she had merely repeated what she had heard and believed, but toward that sleek, composed, and certain Mr. Mereness, her cousin, if a snake may claim kinship with a dove! A snake! Aye, there was an explanation of her very words. It was he who had so frightened her, and then had fled at my approach. These prints on the bank might have easily been made by his boots. Instantly my imagination, that quality which he had so derided, took its revenge. That divine creature, whose calm, brave glance I recalled as an inspiration, insane! Then it were well that black should be white and the whole world go daff! Of course, however practical she was, she had a strong poetic side; that had been apparent from her weaving garlands to her song; but could an angel have been angelically employed?

Yet, doubtless it was this enthusiasm that gave Mereness a chance to spread such an evil report about her. He, her cousin! Then, indeed, he was more kin than kind. The man was a villain; crafty, unscrupulous; he was working some mechanism against this hapless girl! Well, she should be hapless no more, for I would be her champion, acute, prudent, tireless; so resolving, I went to sleep to dream of winning a true knight's reward.

Thenceforward I was intent on seeing Annabelle, on learning what I could about her, on assuring her of my services. Little by little, from piecing together chance remarks of the rude folk of the neighborhood, I learned that her name was Hastings, and that she lived with her aunt in the old homestead but a mile away from Thompson's Inn.

Gradually, too, I learned her favorite drives and nooks, and we met. From a chance acquaintance I advanced at least to the borderline of friendship, although I was conscious of a certain caution that militated against me. But never mind; it served to strengthen my preconceptions. There was some mystery. Since the most respectful inquiry distressed Annabelle I would ask no questions. I was content for I felt that a communion of sympathy told her that if she ever needed reliance, on me she might rely.

One twilight I saw her with her cousin in the land, and for the first time since our acquaintance did she look as she had when her hand had dropped the flower from the eyrie over the road. Her tresses were loose, her gloves were off, and the sparkling jewels revealed; her expression was blithe and gay, yet afterward I remembered it with sadness. I passed by without speaking, for latterly the man had been insolent in his treatment of me.

And yet, the very next day I felt that in so thinking I had wronged him, for he seemed anxious as to my entertainment. He offered me the use of his boat, a light, well-built craft, far superior to what I could get for hire, which I rather shame-facedly accepted. And, later, when he noticed how blistered my hands were from rowing, he insisted on my accepting a pair of gloves, which he pronounced "the very

thing." True, I only wore them twice for the water made them stiff, but still his thoughtfulness remained a fact, and I was forced to give the devil his due, without doubting, however, his diabolic identity.

I thoroughly enjoyed my solitary trips on the lake at twilight. There was a demure and gentle melancholy in the soft farewell blending of air and water which was consonant to my mood. One who feels one's strength returning while debility is yet more evident in its retreat, is peculiarly susceptible to all those influences which lurk beyond the source of tears. Each day brought me closer to Annabelle, yet no nearer.

I felt misgivings, which reason annihilated, yet which straightway showed stronger than before. If Mereness was so repugnant as to be a snake to her, which I believed, why were they gaily chatting together in the evening as I knew? Was not the friendship of such a man more dangerous than his hatred, since, indeed, it only masked it? Why should not pure, single devotion, from its very essence, be more potent than manifold deceit? Could she not see, as I did see, and so seeing, trust? Such questions would come to me in mournful iteration, but kept from bitterness by the permanent serenity. For, as the shades settled around me I seemed to feel the light stroke of regretful pity, and when the stars glimmered, and then sparkled, so, too, they said, shall hope revive and promise and fulfil.

One evening I thus lingered in reverie until the darkness overtook me. I knew that the moon was in the full, and therefore had heeded not the flight of time. But the skies were overcast, sending down an unbroken gloom to meet the still heavier line of the encircling hills. I was helpless, for I could not tell in what direction my destination lay, yet this stress for the moment made me good-humored and even jovial. What difference did it make? I was safe and comfortable in the soft, balmy tranquillity. After a little, doubtless, the moon would take pity and send her rays to guide me home.

So I stretched myself in the stern and soon I slept, lulled by the regular vibrations of our good mother's bosom. I slept peacefully; I awoke with a start in a paroxysm of terror. Something had touched me, something chill, damp, uncanny, like the hand of death. Something was near me, in that awful blackness, something dreadful, unhuman, like death itself. But, pshaw! how ridiculous I was. It was only the breeze, the kindly breeze, which would sweep away the clouds and bring light, that source of mortal courage. True, oh, true, it was the breeze likely enough which had touched me; but that something near by—that presence which I could feel I knew not how—the light would reveal it! Die away, oh, breeze, and leave me to my ignorance!

Gradually the obscurity parted, gradually the semi-lucent masses rolled away; down came a shaft of effulgence, as if cast by destiny. It touched the waters with golden life unspeakably cruel in its contrast to their burden; for there, within arm's reach of my skull, floating among the lilies, with upturned face colder and fairer than their bloom, was my Annabelle—alas! my Annabelle never to be, as she never had been, for the lily she exceeded in loveliness was a dead one. Alas, yes, alas! What shall I say? How can I describe my blinding tears, my fierce maledictions, my output exertions—strenuous, unnatural. I raised that dead body. I supported it somehow over the rail with its drapery trailing decorously behind like ceremonies. Through the sparkling ripples I roved for the landing like Despair doggedly forcing a way through Merrimack.

Mechanically I strove, with my eyes fixed on one heart-rending object, a little bare hand on the throat, bedecked with rings which derided its lividness. Mechanically I approached, not noticing that here and there on the bank and from the woodland lights were flashing and harsh voices summoning a gathering. As I touched the shore a crowd of fierce men, the half-civilized charcoal-burners, plunged into the water around me; some with violent hands seized me, others with singular tenderness uplifted my precious charge. The air hurried with vile imprecations, accusations, threats of vengeance; yet I uttered not a word, until in the encompassing armistice I recognized the face of my landlord, pale and sympathetic.

"Tis Annabelle—'tis Miss Hastings," I said brokenly.

"Aye," replied Thompson solemnly. "Tis poor Miss Annabelle, sure enough; but how did you find her, lad, how did she come to her death? She's been missing this twenty-four hours. Stand back, men, would you refuse him the chance of proving his innocence?"

"Who dares to speak of innocence and this stranger?" asked a cold steady voice, and Mereness stepped into the circle, as composed, as inexorable of me, as if God summoned to duty. "I accuse him of the murder of my cousin. You have all witnessed how he has spied on her; how he has invaded her privacy with his inquisitiveness. How does it happen that he has found her while we have failed? Because he knew where to look. He has killed her because she rejected the evil fascinations he brought hither from the city. Let us give him in turn the rough justice of our countryside. What would delay mean for such as he, except escape? Do you doubt? See in her very hand she holds the proof!" and, stooping, Mereness raised I know not how, nor from where, one of the gloves he had given me. There was one continuous row of rage, and a mad sweep forward to the edge of the woodland; when a sudden halt came, a spreading to either side of the men, and like a Queen through an aisle of

her subjects, a sorrowing Queen, but one obliged to regal decree, advanced a maiden—

I gasped, I shook myself free from my captors, I covered at her feet. "Annabelle! Annabelle!" I implored. "Are you alive? Are we both dead? Oh, speak to me, speak to me!"

She laid her bare unjewelled hand on my shoulder.

"Be a man," she said, and I straightened myself. "Annabelle, my dear twin sister, is dead. I am Gertrude, whom you have taken for her. Pardon an innocent deception to cover that poor child's insanity. And do you pause my good friends before you add another crime to crimes. Who, then, hoped to profit from her death? Not this stranger who was unwary of her very identity, but he who betrayed her guilelessness, who drove her distraught, who saw in his fond victim an obstacle to hopes of marriage, of fortune. Who dared to raise his impious eyes to the sister—"

"Who is he?" "Who is the man?" "Let us have him!" roared the throng. "He has fled in terror from my words," cried Gertrude. "The seducer, the villain, the murderer, is James Mereness."

There was a frantic burst into the forest, and we were alone, Gertrude and I, with our dead. Despite my trepidation, despite her anguish, there and then came a deep enduring peace; for she looked to me for comfort, and I knew that I could give it to her.

### Deviled Tomatoes.

Deviled tomatoes are one of the excellent new and sample dishes that may be cooked in the chaffing dish. In preparing them you will need two tablespoonfuls of butter, one teaspoonful of mustard, one raw egg, two tablespoonfuls of hot vinegar, one level teaspoonful of powdered sugar, one-quarter of a teaspoonful of salt and a dash of pepper to every three tomatoes. Select tomatoes that are large, ripe and firm, pour over them enough boiling water to loosen the skins, peel, cut in thick slices and set in the ice box. The sauce may be served hot or cold. It is best cold. In combining it, cream the butter, add to it the powdered sugar, the mustard, which may be dry or "made mustard," and mix well. Add the salt and pepper and rub into the mixture the yolk of a hard-boiled egg. For this use a little sieve. Heat your vinegar, then add that, and finally a beaten raw egg. Set over hot water and cook until the consistency of a thick cream. If it cooks too rapidly the sauce will become too thick. To prevent this lift from the fire several times while cooking and stir constantly to make it smooth. Set aside to cool. When ready to use put a teaspoonful of butter in the chaffing dish, add the slices of tomato, and, when hot, serve from dish. Pass the sauce. If cooked in the kitchen, send to the table on a garnished dish and turn the sauce over them.

### The Antwerp Streets.

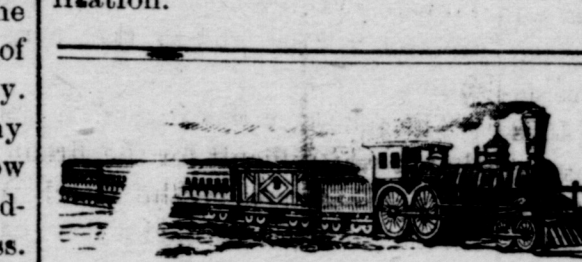
The streets of Antwerp present an unlimited number of unusual spectacles. Over hundreds of shops, including those set apart for the sale of grog, there is an image of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Saviour, and projecting from almost every house in the entire city is a long flagstaff, at the end of which the people hang out their flags on certain days.

Although Belgium is in Flanders nearly every one speaks French, and hitherto French coins have been used. In the future, however, the value of the coins and all inscriptions on them will be stamped in two languages—Flemish and French.

The harness in Belgium are carved and gorgeously gilded, and look very much like city state carriages. Each horse is covered from head to feet with a large black paul, in which two little holes are cut to enable the animal to see.

The shopkeepers, generally, are dealers in miscellaneous goods. One man in a small way, for instance, sells beer, foreign stamps, fruit, cotton, biscuit, penknives, cheese and second-hand hair. Everywhere one finds a mania for glaring lights. One evening, when I was out, I saw tremendous light in the distance, and I thought it must surely be an advertisement for a music-hall. When I got nearer, I found that the light merely conveyed the intelligence that sardines were sold on the premises!

Cardinal Lavigerie's plan for civilization of Africa is to be tested. The first caravan of 100 African pioneers reared on the Algerian and Tunisian farms of the confraternities founded by him have just left Marseilles for Madagascar, where they are to settle as agricultural colonists. Another hundred will be sent as soon as these are established, and other companies are under orders to go to the Sudan, the Touareg country, the Tchad region, and the Congo, where they will spread the Catholic faith and French civilization.



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