

## IN LENT.

Ashes of roses she's wearing today;  
Humility's hers, let whatever befall;  
Sadly she walks in the narrowing way,  
Penitence following dinner and ball.

Ashes of roses she's wearing today;  
Mark the soft lines of her trim-fitting gown;  
How like an angel she's fitted to sway  
The hearts and the souls in this backslidden town.

But ashes of roses or what not she wears,  
The rapture of heaven—what tale do they tell?  
It's dollars to doughnuts she murmurs not prayers,  
But smiles that her garments become her so well!

Roe L. Hendrick, in *Harlem Life*.

## THE MALMAISON EMERALD.

"What!" Uncle Venable cried; "you—want—to—get—married?"

Verbena dropped her pretty head, while a blush crept over her face.

"If you don't mind, sir."

"But what nonsense that is!" said Mr. Venable, shutting his cabinet drawers, leaning back in his chair, and looking at Verbena with eyes like gimlets. "Who is the young man then?"

"Please, uncle, it's Fritz!" whispered Verbena, half inclined to run away and hide herself.

"Fritz!" exclaimed Mr. Venable. "That farmer fellow?"

"He's a farmer," admitted Verbena, "but he owns his farm, sir. And his mother is very anxious for me to come there, because—"

"Oh, I can imagine that!" said Mr. Venable, with a sneer. "You—a Venable—talking of marrying a farmer! You, the heiress of the Malmaison emerald! You, that might take any place in society that you wish, when once the value of the gem is known, to talk of allying yourself to a clodhopper like that who doesn't know an opal from a moonstone!"

Verbena burst into tears.

"He isn't a clodhopper," said she. "And I wish there wasn't any such thing as the Malmaison emerald!"

Mr. Venable transfixed his niece through his spectacles with a glare that might have paralyzed her.

"Silence!" said he. "Do you know it is on the Malmaison emerald that the Venables will go down to fame? The Empress Josephine—"

"I don't care for the Empress Josephine," said Verbena, who, having drawn the sword, was now minded to cast the scabbard away.

"And I'm not particular about fame, for I don't suppose I shall be a Venable forever."

"That sort of talk won't do, Verbena," said the old gentlemen, solemnly. "Where would society be if everyone refused to bear the responsibility and shoulder the cares of their stations? You are not merely my niece, Verbena. You are the representative—the last surviving representative—of the Venables. To you, in my will, is left the guardianship of the Malmaison emerald."

"I'm sick of hearing of it!" vehemently protested Verbena.

"And," went on Mr. Venable, "I desire you to give up the idea of marrying this young man. It's entirely out of the question—entirely!"

"But what is this about the Malmaison emerald?" asked Fritz Elcombe, in a bewildered way, when he found Verbena crying by the sitting-room window a few hours later.

"You don't mean," said she, "that you have never heard of the famous Malmaison emerald?"

"That's my meaning exactly," admitted Fritz. "Do consider in my behalf that I've only been here a year and have lots still to learn."

"Well, listen," said Verbena, half crying, half angry. "It's a famous unset gem."

"Oh, it is, is it?"

"And it is used to belong to the Empress Josephine."

"Did it, indeed?"

"And she wore it in those days at Malmaison."

"Hence the name, eh?"

"I suppose so. And Queen Hortense gave it to some one who sold it to somebody else, and it was finally given to one of the Venables, who was a surgeon in the English Army, by a dying officer out in Hindostan, to whom he had been able to render kind offices; and so it has come down to us. It really is a wonderful gem."

"I should suppose so"—politely incredulous.

"They do say," went on Verbena, "that when uncle kept it in the little iron safe let into the guest chamber wall, whoever slept there used to dream of a beautiful, sad-faced lady who walked up and down under the trees and wrung her hands. That was Empress Josephine, of course, Fritz."

"Of course"—still more incredulously.

"And my uncle declares that the color in the stone is always dim and turbid when the anniversary of the poor lady comes around," further added Verbena.

"Yes, that is exceedingly probable," dryly observed Mr. Elcombe.

"My uncle has been offered a great deal of money for the gem," said Verbena, with a sigh, "and I wish to goodness he'd sell it! But he won't; and, what is worse, he wants me to marry a hateful, spectacled old man in New York, who, next to himself, is the best judge of jewels in the State, and who owns a green ruby which is a dead match to Uncle Venable's unset emerald. He calls it an archaeological alliance."

"Well, I should think it partook somewhat of that nature," said Fritz, thoughtfully.

"He is going up to London tomorrow to the Lapidaries' Convention," said Verbena, "and I suppose he will bring Mr. Twistleton back with him. Oh, Fritz!"

"Don't be alarmed, heart's dearest," said Fritz, consolingly, encircling her waist with his arm. "The only way, I think, in which we can effectually guard against this complication of ills is—"

"Yes, Fritz."

"To get married while Mr. Venable is gone."

"Oh, Fritz, I wouldn't dare openly to defy him like that! He has been very kind to me," fluttered Verbena.

"I'll be good to you, too, my darling."

"Nonsense, Fritz! You're spoiling my hair. Do stop, Fritz!" protested the girl.

"Then promise me, Verbena."

"No, I'll promise nothing."

At the Lapidaries' Convention there was a stormy session that year. Herr Heidelberg was there—a snuffy, dried-up old man, of great age, and still greater arrogance, who had apparently come out of his spider web in Vienna for the sole purpose of discomforting all the antiquaries of England.

"De Malmaison emerald!" said Herr Heidelberg. "Dat ish a mistake. Vat you call one big lie. It occupies all you time to chase dese lie, and den nail him down. I haf the Malmaison emerald in mine collection."

"How can that be," said Mr. Venable, choking with rage, while Mr. Twistleton stood by ready to espouse his friend's cause, "when here it is—the very stone itself?"

He opened the velvet case which contained the drop of green fire. It blinked at the circle of eager faces above it like a baleful eye.

Herr Heidelberg laughed a shrill cackle of derision.

"Dat de Malmaison emerald!" said he. "Oh! how easy are some folks hoodwinked! A ferry good imitation, I grant. Oh, yes! I can tell you all about him. But de genuine Malmaison emerald it was sell me in 1850 at Vienna by one Captain Giles Venable—"

"Verbena's father," thought Mr. Venable, with a start and a sinking of the heart.

"For de gracious Empress Augusta, who was making the collection for a necklace which should outshine all the courts of Europe. I pay Captain Venable three thousand florins for him, and I engage my best workmen to make him an imitation Malmaison emerald which shall deceive the very jeweler himself. 'I tink I made my fortune, but I am wrong—oh, yes, I am wrong! De captain he pockets his florins and rides away. De gracious Empress, she change her mind. She gets tired of emeralds, and she tink she will haf pearls. But I know dere will some day be market for de Malmaison emerald. I keep him. I haf him yet. Here he is, and here is de letter from Captain Giles Venable which proves his genuineness. Eh? Are you to be satisfy now?"

And the green blaze of the real gem put the artificial imitation to shame at once.

Mr. Venable came home without waiting for the adjournment of the convention. He did not bring Mr. Twistleton home with him.

"A man who couldn't tell even a bogus stone from a real one," sputtered Venable, "and calls himself a judge of gems! Verbena, come here!"

Verbena came accordingly.

"I've got something to tell you," said Venable.

"Yes, uncle," murmured Verbena, her heart giving an ominous throb.

"The Malmaison emerald is a humbug!" said Mr. Venable, distinctly.

"Oh, uncle!"

"And Cabel Twistleton is a charlatan and an adventurer!"

And he proceeded to impart to his niece the revelation of Herr Heidelberg.

"Your father has wrecked the family fortunes and also broken my heart, my dear!" said he. "I'll give up the study of gems, and I will devote myself to roses. They cannot imitate flowers. And, Verbena—"

"Yes, uncle."

"You may marry young Elcombe if you wish. Twistleton doesn't deserve a wife, after this."

"Thank you, uncle," said Verbena, demurely.

Recent Reforms in Taxation.

Tax reform is everywhere in the air. Demanded in some countries because of the divergence between economic conditions and fiscal methods, it is urged in others as a concession to those that have hitherto had less than justice. In both cases it is a product of modern industry and of modern democracy.

Great changes have recently been introduced in such widely different countries as England and Holland, New Zealand and Prussia—changes, all of them effected within a period of scarcely more than twelve months, and springing from the same general desire to realize the principles of justice in the relation of the citizen to the public purse. As in so many other domains of political science, England has here again taken the lead. They are not much given to abstract reasoning in politics. But when it comes to the practical working out of the ideal, England has usually led the way. So in finance. As England was the first important nation to break with exaggeration in the principle of indirect taxation and to introduce the income tax, so at the present time, while scientists the world over are debating the problems of lessening the burdens on the lower and middle classes, England boldly takes a step which in many other countries would be deemed premature, to say the least. The three great reforms just accomplished in England are the extension of the inheritance tax, the introduction of the progressive principle, and the increase of the minimum of subsistence.

The principle of the inheritance tax is not a new one in England. But its application has hitherto been very unsatisfactory. The act of 1894 endeavored to remove the inequalities and imposes a new Estate Duty, in lieu of most of the previously existing taxes. The new Estate Duty is a tax on the capital value of all property, real or personal, which passes on the death of any person. The most significant feature of the new Estate Duty is the final acceptance of the graduated scale or the system of progressive taxation. But even these figures do not adequately represent the real change. In addition to this new Estate Duty there still exists a Legacy Duty and a Succession Duty. The Legacy Duty is a tax at the rate of 3 per cent., 5 per cent., 6 per cent., and to 10 per cent., on personal property going to collaterals, being graded according to the relationship. The Succession Duty as changed by the new law is an exactly

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similar tax applicable to realty. The two duties together thus form a collateral inheritance tax, which must be paid in addition to the Estate Duty, with the important exemption that estates not exceeding £1,000 are subject only to the Estate Duty, not to the additional Legacy and Succession Duties. The net result is that the rate of inheritance tax in England varies from one per cent. to eighteen per cent. of the value of the property.

These are remarkable figures. They considerably exceed those to be found in any other part of the world. Compared to the paltry amounts levied by inheritance taxes in America, the English figures are certainly striking. The introduction of the progressive principle was indeed hotly opposed, and the familiar cry of socialism was again raised, but all in vain. The Chancellor of the Exchequer regarded the principle of progression as firmly established by the weight of recent economic authority. He even went so far as to say that, in principle, it was equally applicable to the income tax, and that the sole reason for not introducing it there was of an administrative nature. The definite acceptance of the progressive principle in English politics marks a most important step in the history of public finance.

Side by side with this extension of the principle of faculty or ability to pay, went its enlargement in another direction. In the inheritance tax the large amounts have to pay increased rates. In the income tax, where this was deemed impracticable, a somewhat similar result was reached by making the smaller amounts pay decreased rates. As a result of successive changes, the tax had been so arranged that incomes below £150 were entirely exempt, while incomes between £150-400 received an abatement of £120. To use technical language, while the progressive principle is introduced in the inheritance tax the degressive principle is extended in the income tax. But both are manifestations of the idea of graduation, according to the doctrine or faculty in taxation.

The new budget thus marks a turning point in English finance. It has already proved itself very popular. The name of Sir Vernon Harcourt, it may safely be affirmed, will hereafter be indissolubly linked in the annals of British finance with those of Peel and Gladstone.—Prof. E. R. A. Seligman, in the *Yale Review* for February.

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## Not Much on Boys.

A little girl is said to have written the following bright essay:—"Boys are men that have not got as big as their papas, and girls are women that will be ladies by and bye. Man was made before woman. When God looked at Adam, he said to himself, 'Well, I think I can do better if I try again.' And He made Eve. God liked Eve so much better than Adam that there have been more women than men. Boys are a trouble. They wear out everything but soap. If I had my way half the world would be girls and the rest dolls. My papa is so nice that I think he must have been a little girl when he was a little boy. Man was made, and on the seventh day he rested. Woman was then made, and she has never rested since."—*Kit in Mail and Empire*.

## A Nightmare Indeed.

"Hang it all!" savagely exclaimed the candidate for alderman, "I had an awful dream last night, and I ain't had no sleep."

"What's the matter?" enquired his friend.

"I dreamt," replied the aldermanic candidate, "I dreamt that the people of this here ward had decided not to elect no man except he could read an' write English correct."—*Chicago Record*.

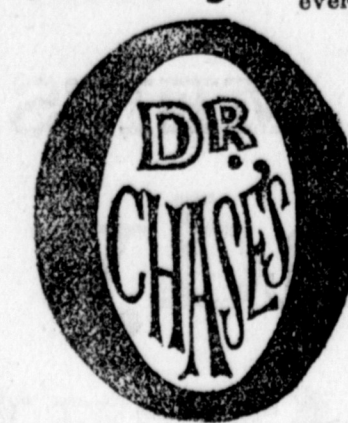
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