

LITERATURE.

[From the Boston "Carpet Bag."]

THE BACHELOR OF HEARTS.

BY PAUL CREYTON.

One fine morning in June, Caleb Picton was enjoying a quiet conversation with his Uncle Jasper, over their coffee, when a domestic called the attention of the latter to a note which had been received during the preceding day.

"Ha!" said Uncle Jasper, breaking the seal "an invitation? In a lady's hand, too? Hem! you see, my boy, your uncle, miserable bachelor as he is, is still obliged to suffer persecution for woman's sake. Gad! I don't know how the tender creatures would get along without me, after all."

"Is the tender creature, in this instance, young and handsome, uncle?" asked Caleb, slyly.

"Hem!—well! sir—not precisely—but—"

"A wealthy widow, I presume?"

"Why, no—not a widow—but—"

"An old maid!"

"No, sir—impudent fellow!" exclaimed Uncle Jasper, carefully folding the note.

"Married, if you please—but though she is neither young, nor pretty, nor single, my boy, she has a daughter who is all that! I am invited to dine with the family. What does that mean, eh?"

Caleb understood the weakness of his venerable bachelor uncle. For some twenty years, the good-natured and self-complacent Jasper had suspected every marriageable woman of his acquaintance, of designs against his heart.

"Handsome—rich—gallant," he used to say, regarding himself in his glass—"how can the dear creatures help it?—I forgive 'em! I forgive 'em!"

Caleb, I say, understood this amiable weakness; and Caleb was dependent on his uncle's bounty; and therefore it was Caleb's business to humor the old fellow in all innocent whims.

Accordingly, the nephew remarked, his eyes twinkling over his coffee-cup, opposite the uncle,

"It is singular that, among so many who are aiming to secure your heart, not one has been able to succeed."

"Eh!" said Uncle Jasper, giving Caleb a sharp look.

The truth is, the bachelor had, at different times, bestowed his affections, and sought to bestow his hand, on a variety of interesting belles; and supposing these facts might have come to Caleb's knowledge, he suspected the fellow of quizzing. But Caleb had dropped his eyes, and taken up his knife and fork, and while Uncle Jasper was endeavoring to penetrate his meaning, he was gravely endeavoring to penetrate the "short joint" of a cold chicken.

The bachelor's suspicions were quieted.

"It is true," he said, in an undulating, self-complacent voice, "I have not always been cold and cruel towards the sex.—And even now I don't know but I might fancy Miss Carey—"

"Miss Carey?" echoed Caleb.

His knife and fork dropped. He fixed his eyes with a startled look upon his uncle.

"Ha! you know her, then?"

"Why—yes—I—I have seen her," stammered Caleb.

"And don't you call her handsome?"

"Oh—passable—passable, I grant you, uncle."

"Passable!" cried the bachelor, striking his spoon in the cup with a clash. "I call her a paragon! No less a beauty could induce me to go out to dine to-day; but I shall dine with the Careys, without fail!"

Caleb was evidently troubled.

"Well, what's the matter now, my boy?—Envious? piqued because your name is not mentioned in the invitation? Well, I am sorry; but it can't be helped; and remember, it is sinful to indulge in envy!"

So saying, Uncle Jasper withdrew.

"Envious!" muttered Caleb, showing his white teeth through his curling lips. "What a vain old fellow!—But if he should fall in love with Sophia, he would never consent that I—Oh! how unfortunate that the invitation should come just at this time!"

After a moment's reflection, the nephew resolved to see Miss Sophia Carey at once, to

place her on her guard against the vanity of the good-natured bachelor.

Unfortunately for our hero, Miss Carey was not in, at the time he called, and he learned to his dismay that she would not probably return until the time for dinner.

"The fates are against me!" muttered Caleb, "but—"

He had conceived a luminous idea. In three minutes he had pencilled the following note, and left it for Sophia:—

"*Sunshine of my Soul!*—The gracious uncle of thy humble planet is to indulge in the pleasure of the table with thy family to-day. Remember that he hath a weakness for the sex, and look out for him. A word to the wise, &c., Truly and forever,

"THY TRUE WORSHIPER."

Caleb felt that he had acted the part of a cautious man, and that, Sophia being placed on her guard, there was no danger to be apprehended from his uncle's visit.

But misfortunes lurked in his path. Scarcely had the young man reached home, when a letter was received from the friends of a classmate, who had ever been like a brother to him, and who, lying dangerously ill, was anxious to see him, without the delay of a day.

Everything but the duties of friendship and the adieu of love, was forgotten. Caleb wrote again to Sophia without mentioning his uncle; left a few lines of explanation for that respectable individual; and set out for the bedside of his friend.

Seven days and nights, the nephew of Uncle Jasper watched over the pillow of Henry Winslow, and waited, hopefully, for a favorable change in his disease. He did not hope in vain. At length the change took place; and Caleb joyfully returned to town—and to Sophia.

Panting with impatience to meet his beloved—for the reader has undoubtedly acknowledged Miss Carey's claim to that distinction—burning to see her after so long an absence, I say, Caleb would have paused under his uncle's roof only long enough to shake the dust of travel from his garments, had not that affectionate relative detained him.

"Look here, my boy!" said Jasper Picton, taking him familiarly by the arm.

"Oh, sir—I will be with you soon," replied Caleb—"but I am in a hurry—a little business—important—"

"Good news before business—always! Ha! ha! come into the library. I am going to make your two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres—with wonder. Oh! your miserable uncle! ha! ha! ha!"

Caleb thought the old bachelor took uncommon delight in calling himself miserable that day; and whenever Uncle Jasper called himself miserable, it was on occasions of decided happiness.

The young man followed him into the library. Uncle Jasper chuckled audibly—caressed his bald forehead with peculiar satisfaction—stroked his smoothly shaved chin, as if his whole face had been some kind of fruit for which he had a peculiar partiality.

"I am anxious to hear the good words," said the impatient Caleb.

"It wouldn't do to divulge it too suddenly, my boy. I tell you, you are going to be astonished. Perhaps you won't be very well pleased, either. You'll envy your miserable old uncle—ha! ha!" roared the bachelor, slapping Caleb's shoulder.

"Then again, you may think there is danger of your fortunes falling into decay; but 'pon my soul, I will do as well by you as I should if I were never to marry."

"To marry!" burst from the lips of the astonished Caleb.

"Ha! ha! I knew you wouldn't believe it! But it's all settled. I am caught—ensnared—drawn into the net matrimonial. Oh! I am a miserable fellow! ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed Caleb, heartily.

"Eh?" faltered Uncle Jasper, suspiciously.

"You laugh?"

"For joy, uncle! for joy! give us your hand! Really, I am astonished—but I am delighted!"

Glory be to the woman who caught—ensnared—drew you into the net matrimonial!"

"You are a nephew after my own heart!"

cried the old bachelor, his eyes glistening with pleasure.

"There isn't a grain of selfishness

in your disposition—more than there is in mine. I'll do well by you—but what are you going for?"

"Business—rather important—" murmured the lover of Sophia.

"Sit down!" cried Uncle Jasper. "You say glory be to the woman—"

"Who caught—ensnared—drew you into the net matrimonial—"

"Yes! and you have no curiosity to know who that woman is?"

"Oh! to be sure! the woman! But I know, to begin with, she must be the paragon of her sex—"

"She is! No other could win me! She is a bright particular star in the galaxy of beauty!"

"And her name?"

"Is Miss—SOPHIA—CAREY!"

Ten thousand exclamation-points filled Caleb's eyes—then became concentrated in the single word—or rather gasp—

"No!"

"Fact!" cried Uncle Jasper. "All settled—Sophia's the charmer!"

Caleb sank upon the chair like a man of rags. He felt like a man of rags. For a moment he was half inclined to believe he was rags—sold—very cheap, by the pound.

"Eh?" articulated Uncle Jasper, who was always suspicious of Caleb's talent for quizzing. "Don't like Sophia?"

"Oh! I—I assure you—I don't object to her—morally—you know—but—" stammered poor Caleb—"it strikes me—and I—leave it to your good sense, if it does not strike you the same!"

"What strikes me—how?"

"Oh! didn't I—express myself clearly?"

"Clearly!"

"Ah—I mean," said Caleb, "it strikes me you may be rather premature in this business—"

"Premature, sir?"

"That is—consider how short a time you have been at all acquainted with Miss Carey."

"So much the better!" exclaimed Uncle Jasper. "Love, my boy," he added with enthusiasm—"Love is like gun-powder! Drop a living coal upon it—a spark of the real fire—and look out! whiz! bang! off it goes! What's time? Nothing to reckon, in cases of true love. There! now go and attend to that rather important business of yours, my boy. We'll talk more about this at another time."

A minute after Caleb found himself in the street, with a rather indistinct idea of the manner in which he had arrived there. Then he found himself mechanically proceeding in the direction of Sophia's residence. It was not until he stood upon the threshold, that he was entirely recovered from the consternation into which he had been precipitated by his uncle's intelligence.

He was shown into the parlor, and there, while awaiting the appearance of Sophia, he paced to an fro, alone, with his arms folded across his breast.

Hearing a light footstep approaching, he struck a tragical attitude; his head seemed to bend under the weight of the thunder-cloud on his brow; his eyes—to imitate certain writers, who indulge in bold comparisons—his eyes were like fires built in caverns—only a great deal brighter!

And there he stood, with his arms crossed upon his breast, while Sophia sprang into the room.

Imagine a lamb bounding to the willow-shaded bank of a stream, to meet its dam, and finding a wolf. Picture to yourself a mountain-stream,—foaming, flashing, and dazzling the eye with its beauty,—falling into a black chasm. Fancy, if you please—but what comparison can give an idea of the beautiful, joyous, pure-souled, impulsive Sophia springing to meet her lover, in all the radiance of loveliness and love, and recoiling from the sight of his black brow and burning gaze, with a sort of fright.

A glance at the brightness of that innocent brow—a single look at those eyes of tender light—brought Caleb to the forcible conviction that he had been playing the fool.

Although a tolerably reasonable fellow under ordinary circumstances, he was in love; and young persons in love are subject to alienations of sense; and it is not so much a matter of wonder, as some cool, inexperienced readers

may suppose, that the young man indulged in the folly of being jealous with his uncle,

But he was jealous no longer. He remembered Uncle Jasper's weakness—strange he did not remember it before! and he remembered Sophia's truth and elevation of soul—strange that he should have forgotten what she was, at all! In an instant the cloud cleared from his brow. The storm passed away, without any violent tumult—without any quick cross lightnings. There was one report—but it sounded much more like a kiss than any kind of thunder ever invented.—(Conclusion in our next.)

A BOLD STROKE FOR A HUSBAND.

We copy from Galignani's Messenger the following romantic story, the incidents of which had very naturally excited a great deal of interest in the vicinity of their occurrence, and will prove scarcely less interesting to our own circle of readers. Mlle. Lehoux was certainly born to be a heroine!

Leonie Lehoux, daughter of the driver of the diligence which plies between Chartres and Dreux, conceived in November last, the ambition to become a heroine of romance, though she possessed none of the beauty or graces which are generally supposed to be necessary for that part. In execution of the design which she had formed, she borrowed a sum of 100f. from a fishwoman, named Vire, for, she said, a lady of high rank, named Raymond, who had taken her under her protection. The money not having been paid, Madame Vire went to Leonie's mother. At first the mother did not know what was meant, but Leonie produced a letter purporting to come from the Bishop of Chartres, and stating that he intended to marry Leonie to a young man of good family, to give her father and mother 20,000f. a year, and to give Leonie herself a fortune of 100,000f.

All this the mother appeared devoutly to believe, and she made her husband believe it too. The latter accordingly made no hesitation in paying Madame Vire the 100f. The Bishop in his letter recommended that his benevolent intentions to the girl should be kept a secret for the present. But the father, in the pride of his heart, could not refrain from talking of it to some rather wealthy farmers, named Brunet, where he was accustomed to stop to change horses. Brunet's son, a young man, thought that a fortune of 100,000f. was a very tempting thing, and he asked whether Leonie was really to be married to the Bishop's protegee—hinting that if she were not, he would have no objection to take her himself. But the father, though willing enough to accept him as a son-in-law, assured him that there was no hope. He showed the young man the Bishop's letter, and the latter could not help remarking that it was couched in rather strange language, as it began, "Dear Madame,—I the Lord Bishop of Chartres, Monsiegnieur Clausel de Montals, write these lines to you to produce an effect on your heart," and as moreover there were sundry faults of spelling.

But the father eagerly answered that when a Bishop was 80 years of age, he was at liberty to write strangely and to spell badly, and this profound observation removed all the scruples of the young man. About a month later another letter arrived from the Bishop; it told the Lehoux that they should live with him in his palace after the marriage of his beloved Leonie, and that he had already received the first year's rent of 20,000f. for them, though he could not send it for a few days as he was short of money. He directed that a new bonnet and a muff should be bought for Leonie, and a cravat for himself. His intention was, he said, to spend 90,000f. for wedding garments and jewels for her, and to increase her intended fortune from 100,000f. to 400,000f. He also promised that when Henry V. should come to the throne, he would make her "Regent of the Court," and would confer titles on her parents. Dazzled by this approaching good fortune, Lehoux, the father, resigned the post of diligence driver, and took special delight in talking to tradesmen and neighbors of his own and his daughter's future greatness.

It was not without envy that the humble friends and acquaintances of the family heard of their extraordinary fortune, and when the tradespeople heard of it too, they were naturally