

## Literature, &amp;c.

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## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING;

OR THE REASON WHY MRS. TODD DIDN'T

SPEAK TO MRS. JONES.

By T. S. Arthur.

'Did you see that?' said Mrs Jones to her friend Mrs Lyon, with whom she was walking.

'See what?'

'Why, that Mrs Todd didn't speak to me.'

'No, I thought she spoke to you as well as to me.'

'Indeed then and she didn't.'

'Are you sure?'

'Sure? Can't I believe my own eyes? She nodded and spoke to you; but she didn't as much as look at me.'

'What in the world can be the reason, Mrs Jones?'

'Dear knows.'

'You certainly must be mistaken. Mrs Todd would not refuse to speak to one of her old friends in the street.'

'Humph! I don't know. She's rather queer sometimes. She's taken a miff at something, I suppose, and means to cut my acquaintance. But let her. I shall not distress myself about it. She isn't all the world.'

'Have you done anything likely to offend her?' asked Mrs Lyon.

'Me?' returned her companion, 'no, not that I am aware of. But certain people are always on the look out for something or other wrong, and Mrs Todd is just one of that kind.'

'I never thought so, Mrs Jones.'

'She is, then. I know her very well.'

'I am sorry,' said Mrs Lyon, evincing a good deal of concern. 'Hada't you better go to her in a plain, straight-forward manner, and ask the reason of her conduct? This would make all clear in a moment.'

'Go to her, Mrs Lyon,' exclaimed Mrs Jones, with ill-concealed indignation. 'No, indeed—that I will not. Do you think I would demean myself so much?'

'I am not sure that by so doing you would demean yourself, as you say. There is, clearly, some mistake, and such a course would correct all false impressions. But it was only a suggestion, thrown out for your consideration.'

'Oh no, Mrs Lyon!' replied Mrs Jones, with warmth. 'You never find me cringing to people, and begging to know why they are pleased to cut my acquaintance. I feel quite as good as any body, and consider myself of just as much consequence as the proudest and best. Mrs Todd needn't think I care for her acquaintance. I never valued it a pin.'

Notwithstanding Mrs Jones's perfect indifference towards Mrs Todd, she continued to talk about her pretty much after this fashion, growing more excited all the while, during the next half hour, at the close of which time the ladies parted company.

When Mrs Jones met her husband at the dinner table, she related what had happened during the morning. Mr Jones was disposed to treat the matter lightly, but his wife soon satisfied him that the thing was no joke.

'What can be Mrs Todd's reason for such conduct?' he asked, with a serious air.

'I can't tell for my life.'

'She must have heard some false report about you.'

'It's as likely as not. But what can it be?'

'Something serious to cause her to take so decided a stand as she seems to have done.'

Mr Jones looked grave, and spoke in a grave tone of voice. This made matters worse. Mrs Jones's first idea was that Mrs Todd had heard something that she might have said about her; and that wounded pride had caused her to do as she had done. But her husband's remark suggested other thoughts. It was possible that reports were in circulation calculated to injure her social standing, and that Mrs Todd's conduct toward her was not the result of any private pique.

'It is certainly strange and unaccountable,' she said, in reply to her husband's remark, speaking in a thoughtful tone.

'Would it not be the fairest and best way for you to go and ask for an explanation?'

'No, I can't do that,' replied Mrs Jones, quickly. 'I am willing to bear undeserved contempt and unjust censure, but I will never humble myself to any one.'

For the rest of the day, Mrs Jones thoughts all flowed in one channel. A hundred reasons for Mrs Todd's strange conduct were imagined, but none seemed long satisfactory. At last she remembered having spoken pretty freely about the lady, to a certain individual who was not remarkable for his discretion.

'That's it,' she said, rising from her chair, and walking nervously across the floor of her chamber, backward and forward, for two or three times, while a burning glow suffused her cheek. 'Isn't it too bad that words, spoken in confidence, should have been repeated. I don't wonder she is offended!'

This idea was retained for a time, and then abandoned for some other that seemed more plausible. For the next two weeks Mrs Jones was very unhappy. She did not meet Mrs Todd during that period, but she saw a number of her friends, to whom either she or Mrs Lyon had communicated the fact already stated. All declared the conduct of Mrs Todd to be unaccountable; but several, among themselves, had shrouded suspicions of the real cause. Conversa-

tions on the subject, like the following, were held,—

'I can tell you what I think about it, Mrs S—. You know Mrs Jones is pretty free with her tongue.'

'Yes.'

'You've heard her talk about Mrs Todd?'

'I don't remember, now.'

'I have, often. She doesn't spare her sometimes. You know, yourself, that Mrs Todd has queer ways of her own.'

'She is not perfect, certainly.'

'Not by a great deal; and Mrs Jones has not hesitated to say so. There is not the least doubt in my mind, that Mrs Todd has heard something.'

'Perhaps so. But she is very foolish to take any notice of it.'

'So I think. But you know she is touchy.'

In some instances, the conversations assumed a grave form,—

'Do you think what has struck me in this matter of Mrs Jones and Mrs Todd?' says one scandal-loving personage to another, whose taste ran parallel with her own.

'No. What is it?' eagerly asks the auditor.

'I will tell you. But you mustn't speak of it for your life.'

'Never fear me.'

The communication is made in a deep whisper.

'Bless me!' exclaims the recipient of the secret. 'It surely cannot be so?'

'There is not the least doubt of it. I had it from a source that cannot be doubted.'

'How in the world did you hear it?'

'In a way not dreamed of by Mrs Jones.'

'No doubt Mrs Todd has heard the same.'

'Not the least in the world. But don't you think her to blame in refusing to keep Mrs Jones's company, or even to speak to her?'

'Certainly I do. It happened a long time ago, and no doubt poor Mrs Jones has suffered enough on account of it. Indeed, I don't think she ought to be blamed in the matter at all. It was her misfortune, not her fault.'

'So I think. In fact, I believe she is just as worthy of respect and kindness as Mrs Todd.'

'No doubt of it in the world; and from me she shall always receive it.'

'And from me also.'

In this way the circle spread, so that before two weeks had elapsed, there was no less than twenty different notions held about Mrs Todd's behaviour to Mrs Jones. Some talked very seriously about cutting the acquaintance of Mrs Jones also, while others took her side and threatened to give up the acquaintance of Mrs Todd.

Thus matters stood, when a mutual friend, who wished to do honor to some visitors from a neighbouring city, sent out invitations for a party. Before these invitations were despatched, it was seriously debated whether it would do to invite both Mrs Jones and Mrs Todd, considering how matters stood between them. The decision was in favor of letting them take care of their own difficulties.

'If I thought Mrs Todd would be there, I am sure I wouldn't go,' said Mrs Jones, on receiving her card of invitation.

'I hardly think that would be acting wisely,' replied her husband. 'You are not conscious of having wronged Mrs Todd. Why, then, should you shun her?'

'But it is so unpleasant to meet a person with whom you have been long intimate, who refuses to speak to you.'

'No doubt it is. Still we ought not to go out of our way to shun that person. Let us, while we do not attempt to interfere with the liberties of others, be free ourselves. Were I in your place, I would not move an inch to keep out of her way.'

'I have not your firmness. I wish I had. It was only yesterday that I crossed the street to keep from meeting her face to face.'

'You were wrong.'

'I can't help it. It is my weakness. Three times already, have I put myself about to avoid her; and if I could frame any good excuse for staying away from this party, I certainly should do so. I would give anything, for a good sick headache on Tuesday next!'

'I am really ashamed of you, Ellen! I thought you more of a woman,' said Mr Jones. The night of the party at length came round. During the whole day preceding it, Mrs Jones could think of nothing but the unpleasant feelings she would have upon meeting with Mrs Todd, and her heart was in her mouth all the time. She wished a dozen times that it would rain. But her wishes availed nothing. Not a cloud was to be seen in the clear blue firmament from morning until evening.

'Oh, if I only had some good excuse for staying at home!' she said over and over again; but no good excuse offered.

Mr Jones saw that his wife was in a very unhappy state of mind, and tried his best to cheer her, but with little good effect.

'It is no use to talk to me, I can't help it,' she replied to his remonstrance, in a husky voice. 'I am neither a stock nor a stone.'

'There's Mrs Jones,' said one friend to another, on seeing the lady they named enter Mrs —'s well filled parlors.

'Where is Mrs Todd,' asked the lady addressed.

'Sure enough! where is she? replied the other. 'Oh, there she is in the other room. I wonder why it is that she does not speak to Mrs Jones.'

'No one knows.'

'It's very strange.'

'I'll tell you what I've heard.'

'What?'

'That she's jealous of Mrs Jones.'

'Ridiculous!'

'Isn't it?'

'I don't believe a word of it.'

'Nor I. I only told you what I had heard.'

'There must be some other reason.'

'And doubtless is.'

Meantime Mrs Jones found a seat in a corner, where she ensconced herself with the determination of keeping her place during the evening, that she might avoid the unpleasantness of coming in contact with Mrs Todd. All this was, of course, very weak in Mrs Jones; but she had no independent strength of character it must be owned.

'Poor Mrs Jones, how cut down she looks,' remarked a lady that knew all about the trouble that existed. 'I really feel sorry for her.'

'She takes it a great deal too much to heart,' was the reply. 'Mrs Todd might refuse to speak to me a dozen times if she liked; it wouldn't break my heart. Where is she?'

'In the other room, as gay and lively as ever I saw her. See, there she is.'

'Yes, I see here. Hark! you can hear her laugh here. I must confess I don't like it. I don't believe she has any heart. She must know that Mrs Jones is hurt at what she has done.'

'Of course she does, and her manner is meant to insult her.'

Seeing the disturbed and distressed state of Mrs Jones's mind, two or three of her friends held a consultation on the subject, and finally agreed that they would ask Mrs Todd, who seemed purposely to avoid Mrs Jones, why she acted towards her as she did. But before they could find an opportunity of doing so, a messenger came to say that one of Mrs Todd's children had been taken suddenly ill. The lady withdrew instantly.

Mrs Jones breathed more freely on learning that Mrs Todd had gone home. Soon after she emerged from her place in the corner, and mingled with the company during the rest of the evening.

Mrs Todd, on arriving at home, found one of her children quite sick; but it proved to be nothing serious. On the following morning, the little fellow was quite well again.

On that same morning, three ladies, personal friends of Mrs Todd, met by appointment, and entered into grave consultation. They had undertaken to find out the cause of offence that had occurred, of so serious a character as to lead Mrs Todd to adopt so rigid a course towards Mrs Jones, and if possible to reconcile matters.

'The sickness of her child will be a good excuse for us to call upon her,' said one. 'If he is better, we can introduce the matter judiciously.'

'I wonder how she will take it,' suggested another.

'Kindly, I hope,' remarked the third.

'Suppose she does not?'

'We have done our duty.'

'True. And that consciousness ought to be enough for us.'

'She is a very proud woman, and my fear is, that, having taken an open and decided stand, she will yield to neither argument nor persuasion. Last night she over-acted her part. While she carefully avoided coming in contact with Mrs Jones, she was often near her, and on such occasions talked and laughed louder than at any other time. I thought, once or twice, that there was something of malice exhibited in her conduct.'

'To this, one of the three assented. But the other thought differently. After some further discussion, and an ineffectual attempt to decide which of them should open the matter to Mrs Todd, the ladies sallied forth on their errand of peace. They found Mrs Todd at home, who received them in her usual agreeable manner.

'How is your little boy?' was the first question, after the first salutations were over.

'Much better than he was last night, I thank you. Indeed, he is quite as well as usual.'

'What was the matter with him, Mrs Todd?'

'It is hard to tell. I found him with a high fever when I got home. But it subsided in the course of an hour. Children often have such attacks. They will be quite sick one hour, and apparently well the next.'

'I am very glad to hear that it is nothing serious,' said one of the ladies. 'I was afraid it might have been croup, or something as bad.'

There was a pause.

'It seemed a little unfortunate,' remarked one of the visitors, 'for it deprived you of an evening's enjoyment.'

'Yes, it does appear so, but no doubt it is all right. I suppose you had a very pleasant time.'

'Oh, yes. Delightful!'

'I hadn't seen half my friends when I was summoned away. Was Mrs Williams there?'

'Oh, yes.'

'And Mrs Gray?'

'Yes.'

'And Mrs Elder?'

'Yes.'

'I didn't see either of them.'

'Not a word about Mrs Jones,' thought the ladies.

A light running conversation, something after this style, was kept up, with occasional pauses, for half an hour, when one of the visitors determined to come to the point.

'Mrs Todd—ahem!' she said in one of the pauses that always takes place in uninteresting conversation.

The lady's tone of voice had so changed from what it was a few moments before, that Mrs Todd looked up at her with surprise. No less changed was the lady's countenance. Mrs Todd was mistified. But she was not long in doubt.

'A-hem! Mrs Todd, we have come to—to— as friends—mutual friends—to ask you—'

The lady's voice broke down, but two or

three 'a-hems!' partially restored it, and she went on.

'To ask why you refused to—to—speak to Mrs Jones?'

'Why I refused to speak to Mrs Jones?' said Mrs Todd, her cheek flushing.

'Yes. Mrs Jones is very much hurt about it, and says she cannot imagine the reason. It has made her very unhappy. As mutual friends we have thought it our duty to try and reconcile matters. It is on this errand that we have called this morning. Mrs Jones says she met you for the last time about two weeks ago, and that you refused to speak to her. May we ask the reason?'

'You may, certainly,' was calmly replied.

'What then, was the reason?'

'I did not see her!'

'What? Didn't you refuse to speak to her?'

'Never in my life. I esteem Mrs Jones too highly. If I passed her, as you say, without speaking, it was because I did not see her.'

In less than half an hour, Mrs Todd was at the house of Mrs Jones. What passed between the ladies need not be told.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

## THE BOY AND THE MAN.

A few years ago there was in the city of Boston, a Portrait painter, whose name was Copley. He did not succeed very well in his business, and concluded to go to England, and try his fortunes there. He had a little son, whose name was John Singleton Copley.

John was a very studious boy, and made such rapid progress in his studies, that his father sent him to college. There he applied himself so closely to his books, and became so distinguished a scholar, that his instructors predicted that he would make a very eminent man.

After he had graduated, he studied law. And when he entered upon the practice of his profession, his mind was so richly stored with information, and so highly disciplined by his previous diligence, that he almost immediately obtained celebrity. One or two cases of very great importance being intrusted to him, he managed them with so much skill and wisdom, as to attract the attention of the whole British nation.

The king and his cabinet, seeing what a learned man he was, and how much influence he had acquired, felt it to be important to secure his services for the government. They therefore raised him from one post of honor to another, till he was created Lord High Chancellor of England—the very highest post of honor to which any subject can attain; so that John S. Copley is now Lord Lyndhurst, High Chancellor of England. His father was a poor portrait painter, hardly able to get his bread. Now John is at the head of the nobility of England, one of the most distinguished men in talent and power in the House of Lords, and regarded with reverence and respect by the whole civilized world. This is the reward of industry. The studious boy becomes the useful and respected man.

Had John Singleton Copley spent his school boy days in idleness, he would probably have passed his manhood in poverty and shame.

## THE BATTLE OF MOUNT TABOR.

BY J. T. HEADLY.

Forty-seven years ago, this month a form was seen standing on Mount Tabor, with which the world has since become familiar. It was a bright morning, and as he sat on his steed in the clear sunlight, his eyes rested on a scene in the vale below, which was sublime and appalling enough to quicken the pulsations of the calmest heart. That form was Napoleon Bonaparte, and the scene before him the fierce and terrible Battle of Mount Tabor. From Nazareth, where the Saviour once trod, Kleber had marched forth with three thousand French soldiers in the plain, when at the foot of Mount Tabor, he met the whole Turkish army drawn up in order of battle. Fifteen thousand infantry and twelve thousand splendid cavalry moved down in majestic strength on this band of three thousand French. Kleber had scarcely time to throw his handful of men into squares, with the cannon at the angles, before those twelve thousand horse, making the earth smoke and thunder as they came, burst into a headlong gallop upon them. But round those steady squares rolled a fierce devouring fire, emptying the saddles of those wild horsemen with frightful rapidity, and strewing the earth with the bodies of riders and steeds together. Again and again did those splendid squadrons wheel, re-form and charge with deafening shout, while their uplifted and flashing scimitars gleamed like a forest of steel through the smoke of battle; but the same wasting fire received them. Those squares seemed bound by a girdle of flame, so rapid and constant were the discharges. Before their certain and deadly aim, as they stood fighting for existence, the charging squadrons fell so fast that a rampart of dead bodies was soon formed around them. Behind this embankment of dead men and horses, this band of warriors stood and fought for six dreadful hours, and was still steadily thinning the ranks of the enemy, when Napoleon debouched with a single division on Mount Tabor, and turned his eyes below. What a scene met his gaze. The whole plain was filled with marching columns and charging squadrons of wildly galloping steeds, while the thunder of cannon and fierce rattle of musketry, amidst which now and then was heard the blast of thousands of trumpets, and strains of martial music filled the air.

The smoke of battle was rolling furiously over the hosts, and all was confusion and chaos in his sight. Amid the twenty-seven thou-