

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Sartain's American Magazine.

## THE BACHELOR AND MARRIED MAN.

BY H. C. KNIGHT.

Time went on its ceaseless round. It was all business, business, business;—sales and receipts,—discount and interest,—bills of exchange and notes of hand. It was a period of unusual expansion and activity in all branches of trade, and the whole energies of men were thrown into the exciting and absorbing struggles of that day. I, too, plunged into their stirring scenes, until all my time, study, waking and sleeping thoughts, were given to the one great, all-absorbing aim,—*making money*. Success stimulated desire, desire tasked the energies, and success again crowned our efforts. The appetite grew with what it fed upon. My associates were almost all business men, and we never met but in the busy haunts where men most do congregate; and there our judgement were.

'A parcel of our fortune; and things outward did draw the inward quality after them.'

Three years slipped away:—three years, and never a visit to Maysville. Did I not need its hallowed associations to tranquilize my spirit, and lead my mind to higher and better things? Alas! the *tie of home affection* was broken; and there was no longer any counter-current to that which set my whose energies into the mighty channels of active life. Misfortune, disappointment, ill-luck, might have disgusted me, and sometimes cast me back to the thoughtful retirement of my old home; but success,—it sharpened and whetted my appetite for greater and wider schemes. I now seldom heard from Maysville. Phœbe was no pen-woman, and Hope—her delicacy forbade a correspondence so feebly supported on my side.

Five years went by, when Hope's uncle made me an offer for my Maysville patrimony. It was a *business letter*, and I paused to consider. I was alone in the counting-room when it came. Maysville! I leaned my head on my hand, and Maysville memories came flooding over me. I was again in the old haunts of early days, coursing over Bear Hill, paddling in the trouting brooks, or basking on the hay-cocks. And Hope! where was she? How my mother loved Hope! how much we 'used to' do together! Linked with a happy past, Hope flitted pleasantly before me. I began to calculate how many months since I had been there, when months swelled to years, until my heart reproached me for her ill-requited love, not to me, but to mother. After replying that I would soon be at Maysville, I felt a hungering to depart. Maysville, the old place, and Hope; nor was it many weeks before the stage-coach dropped me at the tavern, and I walked one morning into the old man's yard.

'Robert, my boy!' he cried, throwing down and old harness he was trying to mend, after becoming unmistakably convinced it was Robert, besides convincing me by a hearty grip that I was myself; 'Robert! but, bless me! you are Mister Robert now! odds bobs! you are Mr.—: Well, Mr.—, I am glad to see you, though I'm nothing but an old farmer, as ye see.'

I was too glad to hear my boy name to allow him to change it, and so cordially spoken. I wanted to throw off the load of care, and feel like a boy again. Among the 'how do's,' I asked for Hope.

'Why, you are a large fellow!' exclaimed the old man, taking my bearings; 'larger than your father, and handsomer favoured. But, bless me! walk in, and let everybody answer for themselves. Have you thought how much you'll take?'

'Not yet; not now, sir,' I said, eagerly, once out of the city, glad of a respite from business. I ran up the steps. What a cordial greeting!—It was 'Robert!' 'Robert!' Hope said nothing, but I felt the trembling of her small hand in mine. Old Phœbe cried for joy. I felt it was good to be there. How naturally looked the old wall on the opposite side of the way! then, to hear the birds sing, the cows low, the cocks crow! And it was all so quiet; the wagon wheels going so noiselessly by. They all cared for me, also,—not for my marketable value. And Hope—there was something in her modest gentleness which pleased me more than ever. She was less plump and rosy than formerly; but as we talked of old times, her face lighted up, and I thought her beautiful. We visited together the old haunts, and sat under the lilac tree;—the same truthfulness, sincerity, and sweetness; and the tones of her voice tell upon my ear like.

'A little song,  
Neither sad nor very long.'

In fancy, I began to transfer Hope to the city. The longer I was with her, the more I felt the sweet and sober influences of her purity and worth. But Hope in the city, in the drawing room, without accomplishments and finish! Hope in the feathers and fashion! Of course there was an absence of that style and bearing to which I of late had become accustomed, and which had insensibly begun to direct my taste and bias my judgment; and yet she had traits of character which, I was sure could make me happy. We had the same treasured memories of the past; we knew and could trust each other. But Hope in the city without accomplishments and

finish! Alas! the worldliness of the world had robbed me of my independence; the genuine and spontaneous within me was fast receding before the artificial and intrinsic.—The spiritual meaning of Christianity might have helped to clear my vision, and set things in their true value; but this I had not then attained, while worldly views, maxims, and principles, were making a clean sweep over my affections, rolling their sediment into every inlet of my soul.

I stayed at Maysville three days;—three happy tranquil days. On the third day I could not sell the homestead; oh, no! I could not for ever part with the only spot where the ark of my affections ever rested. I only gave Hope's uncle a lease of it for a term of years. Besides, I meant to come every year after this.

'Do, do,' they all urged heartily. 'Do,' said Hope's eyes. As we all stood in the little front yard, she gathered a bunch of violets, and, tying them with a blade of grass, placed them in my hand. It was a great thing for Hope to do, she was so modest. 'Dear Hope,' I said, inly; and then, aloud, 'Next summer I shall be back.'

'Next summer,' they all repeated; 'remember, next summer.'

Next summer! how many hopes are garnered up for 'next summer.' What of my next summer? It found me in foreign lands;—and the next summer—and the next.—Where then? Time went on, fast and still faster. Years rolled away, and it was all business, business, business,—stocks, bonds, and notes,—notes, stocks, and bonds. In spite of depressions, panics, and crisis, our firm went on, prospering and to prosper. Every thing turned to our advantage. True, it was life work with us. For months and years I stood within the stern, hard, cold walls of commerce, threading its slippery paths, and diving into its sunless hollows. I walked in the crowded streets, with the jostling, elbowing, anxious, restless multitude, and went to my lonely room to sleep under the risks of to day, to wake upon the success of to-morrow.—We beheld the returning values of every fresh investment; and when my uncle died I was his heir. The 'money power' was now in my hands, and I was accounted a rich man, even among merchant princes. Now I was flattered and fawned upon; my society was sought and courted; many an elegant drawing room was thrown open to me. 'Me or my money?' I sometimes asked myself; for I had not now the frank and unsuspecting spirit of earlier time.

I could number but one intimate female friend,—Mrs Sands, the wife of one of the firm, into whose house I occasionally dropped for an evening chat. I liked her; not that she was one of my model women; her notions were too worldly for that; but she was an agreeable talker, and especially did she keep alive in my mind a subject which I never indeed wholly overlooked or forgot, but which the older I grew, looked more formidable and far off.

'Marry! Indeed you must, and believe me, soon or never,' she said one night. 'You are not yet quite confirmed,—not a sworn Benedict;—soon or never.'

A pleased yet disbelieving 'Ay, ay,' was my reply, and she took it affirmatively or negatively, as the mood was.

Sick at a boarding house,—dying at a hotel,—solitary, unloved, uncared for, forgotten, unlamented,—think of it! she urged, in graver tone. It was certainly horrible to think of.

'But where shall I get a wife?' The A's, B's, C's passed muster before me. I had no heart for them, and I dare say they had none for me; for, with some lingerings of the old romance, I fancied there must be some heart-work to oil and sweeten the matrimonial tie.

'Suppose I go into the country and make a search,' I once said, with a secret leaning towards other days.

'Oa, you must marry according to your standing—your wife must be accomplished, equal to the sphere in which you can place her.' Mrs Sands, I suspected, was fishing for a cousin, as she went on expatiating upon the 'must haves' of my future establishment; in which, of course, my wife was the most elegant article of furniture, and only an article of furniture.

'Sarah Sands does not care a fig for me,' I said.

'For you?'

'For my money.'

'You are getting romantic,' cried my companion; 'of course no wise woman would be so imprudent as to marry without a maintenance.'

'But would she help me to get one?'

'How absurd! such tests are gone by with a past generation; no sensible man would now think of applying them. Even were the thing possible, a person should run no risks, when great issues were at stake.'

Talk as she might, and her sprightly tones amused me, her notions never met my case. I certainly did not mean to live and die a bachelor. I did not mean to end my days an unloved, uncared for, solitary old man. But I had never yet found time to stop and consider, and make up my mind, who and when to marry. Agreeable and lovely women I had often met, but the impression they made was the next day effaced by some new scheme of the head. What time had I to think about the heart? Thus it went on.

One day, it was December, I sat gloomily at my desk. The book keeper came in and handed me a paper: 'For your subscription sir—Howard Society—your name.'

'Subscription! subscription! and nothing else! Howard, better *Humbog*—take it! I've

nothing to give!' I cried savagely. 'Take it and say "no!"—one must learn to say no in these days.'

Mr Swain took it hesitatingly from my hand.

'Take it and say "no!"' I reiterated sternly. He hastily disappeared.

I felt cross; my head ached. All the societies in Christendom seemed preying on my vitals. 'Don't let me see a subscription list for the next six months,' I said aloud, 'I won't have one here,' and societies, for that day, were the scape-goat of my spleen. Between three and four I left the office; the early darkness of a December day had already crept over the city; a cold sleet was driving from the northeast; buttoning up my warm overcoat, and drawing on my fur gloves, I issued into the street. Something left undone by Mr Swain, led me out of the principal thoroughfares, through some narrow lanes where I had seldom been. Turning a corner, a wail met my ear, and a sight of woe burst upon my eye—such sights and sounds as I never met before;—a stricken mother and her little ones, cast by a remorseless landlord into the street, and on such a night as that! 'Where are the city authorities? the poor laws? the police?' I cried; the proper officers to look into a case like this? as the eldest girl cast an imploring look into my face.

'Enough of just such sort of work,' said a bystander. I flung a pocket full of change at the group, and passed by on the other side. My head aching and my teeth chattering. I reached the hotel. A fire had just been made in my room; ordering a strong cup of tea, I was glad to escape dinner, human voices, and subscription lists. Hauling off my boots I threw myself into a rocking chair, the only luxury which I allowed myself; I was alone with my ill-humour, my head-ache, and my conscience, for my heart to all intents and purposes, had long been a nullity. The mood now upon me, had lately grown frequent; life, at times, wore a vinegar aspect; I hated nearly all the world, especially its want and beggary, as it well might have hated me for all the good I ever done it: yet the world had used me well; it had given me all I asked. How was it?

With my feet on the fender, and my head thrown back, I closed my eyes and thought. The world was shut out, and I had time to think. Ah, how many, who elsewhere had envied me, had they now seen me, would have exchanged places? I was sick. I did not go out for ten days or so. With the exception of a few business calls, I was alone. The gong regularly sounded, steps passed to and fro my door, waiters obeyed my call, the distant hum of the busy streets came upon my ear; while I—I sat alone, dreary, none caring for me, I caring for nobody. For what purpose was I living? For whose sake was I toiling? What good had I ever done? Who had been made better or happier because of me? What account could I render of my stewardship? Then the stricken mother and the subscription list, which I well knew were for such as her, began to upbraid me. I thought of my mother, and with what delight I used to be the almoner of her widow's mite. With thousands at my disposal, had I now no heart for the wants and woes of my fellows? I was startled, nay I was frightened at my own hardness? Had selfishness quite eaten me up? Had I sold my Christian manhood to the god of this world? I could neither sleep nor rest until Swain came in, and a check of fifty dollars was sent to the Howard Society; it was small relief, for it was wrung from me by the lashings of an accusing conscience; it was not the heart service which fertilizes and enriches the soul. Then I began to yearn for the days of my childhood. 'Oh give me back my early days!' I cried aloud; 'give back the time when there was something to live for—when I was good and glad, and happy and loved.' Alas that could never be, and I almost wished I had been early laid by my mother's side. Among my fellows, I was accounted rich and strong, and proud and wise; I could do as I pleased, go where I pleased, with no encumbrance to saddle my wishes or burden my thoughts. In my room, I was a fitful, impatient, desolate old bachelor; large as was my capital in stocks and notes, I had not even a single share in home affections, the only earthly capital which will yield sufficient income to make the heart happy, and support it through the waste and worldliness of a business life.—Here I was a bankrupt.

I thought of Hope. I hunted up a little desk, which had long been set aside, and began to rummage over old papers. Something dropped from a torn bill. I looked down at my feet, and beheld a bunch of withered violets. Were my affections, like these, quite dried up? I unfolded the paper, and read a date in pencilled characters. 'Twelve years!' I ejaculated. 'Twelve years! I am growing old—I am old—youth gone—life wasting.' Death and the scythe seemed already knocking at the door. I took up the withered violets and replaced them on the paper.—'Hope! dear Hope!'

'Now or never!' I cried, rising up and pacing to and fro my narrow precincts; 'yes, now or never; now, while the warm tides of memory are flowing in upon the soul—now—next week, and I shall fall back on old habits—now! once in Wall Street, and I am doomed for life; and with desperate haste, I determined to take the flood tide of my re-awakened sensibilities, and start for Maysville. The next morning, and I was gone!

To all persons similarly situated, I would say, 'Act!' You know there is a tide in the affections, as well as the affairs of men, which,

if taken at the flood, leads on,—if not to fame and fortune, to what is far better,—to domestic happiness and human sympathies. Do not allow old habits, selfish and worldly influences, to regain their power, until the favourable opportunity is lost, perhaps irrevocably, but act before the social and moral necessities of your nature are quite crushed, while their pleading is yet heard above the din and selfishness of life.

Maysville, like myself, was changed; on me, the grey hairs were beginning to come; there many a grey head had gone. I was not recognised at the village tavern. New faces were at the door. On my way to the old spot, I stopped many times to look around; things looked familiar and yet strange. I wanted to go forward, and yet dreaded to find still greater changes. Hope—where was she? How would she look? I, at last, stepped aside from the main road, and went towards the churchyard. It was good to stand again by my mother's grave; dead grass was all around, except where patches of snow hid in the hollows, and a chilly wind swept through the neighbouring pines, making a mournful music, which was in harmony with my mood. Passers-by on the high road stared at me. I felt formal and strange. I tried to realize the joyful bounding of the boy, when I used to visit Maysville, but without success. I wished I could see Hope unobserved. I wished I could meet her here in the churchyard—or alone—by ourselves. Such things happen in romance, but I had to take life as it was,—go out and meet events; events would not come to me. At last I set my face in the direction of the dear old place. No one was in sight. The dogs did not know me. I opened the gate, went up the little walk, and knocked at the door. Who would answer to the call? Old Phœbe had long since gone, and Hope—she might be far hence. The heart of a stranger was within me. I drew the fur collar around my face, as steps bounded into the entry. A little child peeped forth; with a blushing and frightened face, she shrunk back and ran away. The door again opened, and—it was Hope who stood before me. The same sweet and retiring expression as she bade me enter,—'it is so very bleak,' she said.

'Hope!' I exclaimed, casting back my fur, 'Hope, you do not know me?'

'Robert?' and the warm glow spake eloquently in every feature.

A few evenings after, as we sat together by ourselves, I drew forth the bunch of withered violets. 'Then you promised to come back next summer,' she said.

'Shall it be next summer now, Hope—our summer time? Spring voices were already murmuring in my heart—icy letters were breaking—there was a bright light shining on the frost work of years.'

Behold me yet once more. I have a wife, children, and home! It is still summer time, yet not all sunshine; heavy clouds have hung over our sky; our two eldest are not, for God took them; but the clouds had a silver lining, and everything became more green and beautiful than before.

The United States Bank sunk thousands for me, so that my property is much less than formerly. I am not now regarded a rich man by the world. Ah, it does not know all my income. I have other and better investments than bank stocks and state securities: moreover, I have enough and to spare, and once it was not so.

The two boys have gone with their mother, while our latest-born, our youngest, Hope, is playing beside me as I write.

'Her presence is like sunshine, sent down to gladden earth,  
To comfort us in all our griefs, and sweeten all our mirth.'

But Hope, my eldest Hope, has come back; she sits beside me and repeats a tale of woe; the boys listen and are sad. A poor mother is dying in our neighborhood, and two hungry little ones are homeless and in want of all things. I do not now ask as once, 'Where are the city authorities, the poor laws, the police?' then turn away on the other side. We all say here is something for us to do. Efficient as the 'proper officers' may be, there is still much, oh, how much of want and wretchedness to be relieved by the kind charities of private individuals. I look at mine and think of them, destitute, friendless, homeless; and shall I not do unto others, as I would that others should do unto me and mine? The law of human brotherhood has a new and deeper significance. Let me share my comforts with the comfortless, and sympathize with the bruised and sorrowing.

The boys ask; 'How shall I help, father? Robert empties his pockets;—only two filberts; they will do little. Their dear mother is hastening to prepare something for the sick one; meanwhile we the boys and I, will devise plans for more permanent relief. I am so happy to do this, so grateful in doing it! There was nothing like it in all the success, flatters, fashion, or travelling before I was married. And now I will close this brief reminiscence by a remark of Dr. Arnold, which sums up the whole matter, a great deal better than I can. 'A man's life in London (or New York) while he is single, may be very stirring, and very intellectual, but I imagine it must have a hardening effect, and that this effect will be more felt every year, as the counter tendencies of youth become less powerful. The most certain softeners of a man's moral skin, and sweeteners of his blood, are, I am sure, domestic intercourse in a happy marriage, and intercourse with the poor. It is very hard, I imagine, in our present state of society to