

MANY MEN of MANY MINDS

By EDITH WYATT

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In the northwestern part of Chicago, not far east of the river, in a place of silent streets and empty lots, stand several large frame houses, with picket fences, built before the fire. Tall poplar and cottonwood trees hang clouds of pale, glimmering foliage over the wooden sidewalks. An occasional electric car with one or two passengers shrills past under the rustling shade, and cows are sometimes pastured on the frequent brown lots.

In one of the houses of this place there lived two American gentlemen, different as the poles, Judge Amos Parker and Mr. Paul Haviland. Judge Parker, the house owner, an old settler, was a plain man, the father of a large family.

His wife had died when the children were little. His sons were gone into business in distant towns, and his daughters, combining piety and flirtation in a neighboring church, had sported actively through their respective courtships till they were all married and gone, and their father was left alone with Edna, the servant girl, and Nick, her brother, who had accompanied the family when they moved from Indiana forty years ago.

Judge Parker was a ponderous, easy going man, of tremendous legal information, with a long, white face and almost no nerves. He scarcely perceived the loneliness of his remote house, and he did not miss his family too sensitively, as when they were with him he had been only very slightly acquainted with them.

His taste was not for men as individuals, but in bulk. He loved the public and public life, and he would have preferred almost any discomfort out of doors or in a hall to sitting in a parlor through an evening.

The judge could not for an instant bear exclusive society. Indeed, the only moment when he experienced uneasiness was when he was forced into the presence of a group of people selected by a delicate social tact instead of by the rude hand of chance or political organization. If he had no lecture, no Republican rally or G. A. R. meeting to attend, he would go out and sit on the fence of his grass plot to smoke and to talk to Nick or to any casual loafer.

Paul Haviland, on the other hand, enjoyed almost no society but that of his betrothed, Margaret Alden, and a literary friend, Richard Elliott.

He read law in the law office of Judge Parker's former law firm for three winters. It was during this time that he lived with the judge, to get far away, he said, from the grime and sordidness of the city, and in the evenings, while the judge was off with the public in the grime and sordidness, he sat in the old Parker house and wrote long introspective letters to Margaret Alden and composed verses called "Retrospect," "Circumstance" or "If," which gave its name to his volume of collected verse.

IF.

If I had known—bah—there it is!
What does it matter now?
Yet this pressed spray of clematis
Again reminds me how—
But, never mind—it's gone and past.
What does it matter now?

Had you but spoken or I not stayed
There on the lawn with her
This clematis had been, I wis,
A different messenger.
Perhaps—high ho! The play is done—
And you in Peshawar.

If they had told me what was true
Or I had eyes to see,
Earnest been gone or it been you
There on the lawn with me—
Bah! What's the odds? Or rose or rue—
What is the odds to me?

Richard Elliott wrote a preface almost entirely of margins for the book, commenting favorably on the restraint, suggestiveness and perfect good breeding of Mr. Haviland's lines, and Paul had great fun in his own way in writing them in the evenings, while the judge had great fun in his own way in seconding motions and introducing politicians in long, heavy addresses at political clubs.

It was a curious circumstance of Paul's art that, while he himself was of a very sensitive and impressible nature, the attitude he chose to assume in his verse, one described by Richard Elliott in a magazine article on "Haviland and Indifferentism," was exactly Judge Parker's attitude, and that gentleman might have asked with far more sincerity:

Bah! What's the odds? Or rose or rue—
What is the odds to me?

In the spring of Paul Haviland's stay at the old Parker house Margaret Alden came to visit Chicago, and at the time of her visit she and her lover passed through a long period of mental suffering.

Their trouble arose on the day of a heavy spring rain. They were to have met in the Art Institute, and Paul Haviland, supposing that Margaret Alden would not keep her tryst in the worst storm of the year, had not kept his.

He was overwhelmed with contrition

at his mistake when he visited her in the evening.

But when he said, "It never occurred to me that you would be there," and she replied, "Where there is a question I always do the more strenuous thing," he was wounded. He disliked being less strenuous than any one, even than Margaret Alden. He did not enjoy himself in her presence as he ordinarily did, and he began thinking that the first beauty of their feeling had vanished and wrote verses called "The Lost Treasure," "Ashes" and "Disillusionment."

Meanwhile Margaret wrote in her diary:

"April 14.

"Paul was here today, but not the Paul of yesterday. Something is gone between us—just what I cannot say, but something.

"He has, of course, failed me and can never be again to me what he was before his inconsideration of today.

"Do I really love him when I cannot any longer perfectly admire him? Must question myself further on this point.

"It is true I am disillusioned, but I feel it more dignified on the whole to keep our relations as they have always been. The world need not know.

"This is not sincere, of course, but I am disturbed and in doubt."

Paul Haviland, too, was disturbed and in doubt, and it was while he was in this mood that he went one morning to the law office and found, with astonishment, that a blow had fallen on Judge Parker.

He had been responsible for a brother living in Wisconsin, a bank cashier, who, after a long probity, had absconded with the bank funds, leaving behind enough debts to ruin the judge.

The men in the office said that if such a thing had to happen to some one it might as well happen to Judge Parker, as he never took anything hard.

Paul felt the incident, an instance of the injustice of life, already symbolized to him in his own wrongs. He mentioned his friend's disaster to Margaret in the evening, considering it an episode in keeping with the melancholy tone of their meeting, but they talked very little about it, being still too occupied with their own delicate, moral and temperamental problems.

However, when Paul went home that night and saw the judge sitting on the front steps with his hat on the back of his head talking to Nick as he had before his house was disgraced and his fortunes ruined, he felt among his own troubles a sense of sympathy for a fellow sufferer.

As he passed he touched the judge's coat sleeve lightly, as a subtle sign of regret, but his intention was evidently quite imperceptible to the judge, for the next morning at breakfast he observed ruminatively with an air of intelligent, judicial interest:

"Well, Paul, d'you hear about Brother Will?"

Paul stared at his plate and then said delicately, "In life we cannot always account for everything."

"That's what the bank directors think," returned the judge jocosely. "Well, it's a queer thing—a mighty queer thing. I knew a man who did something like it here—and he resembled Brother Will too."

This was the only allusion the judge ever made to the matter. Everything in the old Parker house remained as it was before Brother Will's lapse. The judge had never been extravagant. He was not obliged to change in any way his domestic or social customs, and it will be seen that his spirits and life had been less affected by his ruin than had Paul Haviland's by the remotest shadow of adverse criticism.

Perhaps this sketch will be supposed too decided in its contrasts to be a thing of facts. On the other hand, it may be truthfully said that it is a very moderate presentation of the vivid variety of persons, perhaps in the world; certainly on the north side of Chicago.

A Reply From Tennyson.

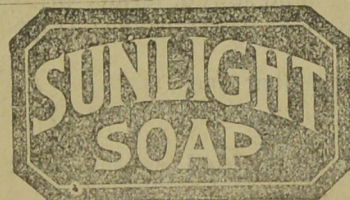
On one occasion it was publicly stated that Tennyson had drawn his inspiration from Horace and Keats, and a correspondent wrote to ask him if this were so. "No," he replied; "Horace and Keats were great masters, but not my masters."

The Aggravation of It.

"Whenever I'm inclined to lose my temper," said the philosophic man, "I just think to myself, 'Oh, there's no use getting mad!'"

"So do I," replied the excitable person, "and that makes me all the madder."

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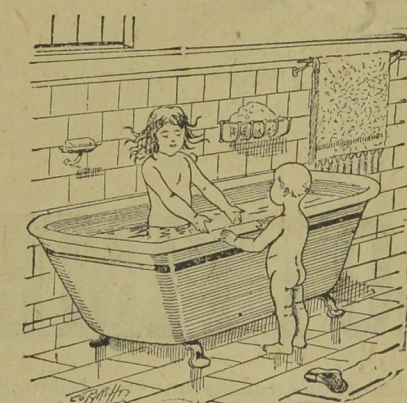
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