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THE WISCONSIN LITERARY MAGAZINE

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VOLUME IV

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***THE PRINCE OF PARTHIA.**

WILLIAM J. NEIDIG.

Thomas turned abruptly to the window, and, with a quick movement of the wrist, sent the ring into the bushes outside. When he again spoke his voice had a queer little rising inflection in it; and he said something either irrelevant or stupid, it would be hard to say which. Then he clumsily closed the door behind him and found himself alone in the street.

Thomas set out at a rapid pace, he cared not whither. He walked for hours, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, save only Thisbe's white face and the tumult in his brain. When the numbness began to wear off he saw that he was among the trees and fields of the country. So much the better! And then he began to try and untangle the knots about his heart.

He allowed his mind to wander up and down the surface of the day, to see if he could discover where he had lost the battle. Strange that he, Thomas Godfrey, in the year 1759, should be sent away from Thisbe's door! Thisbe! He had come to feel that she was a part of himself. She *was* a part of himself, in spite of— But he remembered that he had been sent away, and bit his lip, and sunk his finger-nails into the palm of his hand, and went over it all again.

*The name of the first play written by an American. The play was refused by Douglass, the theatrical manager.

That much at least was plain. He had been sent away—irrevocably dismissed—and life lay a blank ahead of him. He wondered, if he were to give up Thisbe should he ever become as well acquainted with another girl. And then in thought he passed in review before him the girls that he knew. Some of them were very beautiful. Like other men, he had had preferences, even when the one great light blazed brightest before his eyes. There was slender Helen, blonde, brilliant, a writer herself. Not a bad match for a poet! If the worst came to the worst, and he lost Thisbe, why, comparisons might be made there! But comparisons could not be made! Give up Thisbe? He would *never* give up Thisbe! But—his mind made the circle always and came back to it—he would *have* to give her up. He was dismissed!

Then, being a poet, Thomas began to analyze the situation for its causes. What were Thisbe's motives? Why had she led him on through the sweet-scented orchards of her favor, *only* to throw him aside? What were the probable reasons for her action? What were the gossamer-threads that had swung the two plummet-lines apart? Why had she ceased to love him—if, indeed, she ever *had* loved him?

He began by imagining another man in his position, and another woman in Thisbe's—any man, any woman. That was easy. The devil whispered to him at once that the woman was a coquette. The man, maybe, was a poet. That furnished an adequate explanation of her action in arbitrarily dismissing him. She was tired of him. She craved a change—probably had already made a change—and so gave him his finish. Now, apply the test to his own case. But it would not in any way apply! He might well enough have been the man—but Thisbe! Thisbe was no coquette! Thisbe would never trifle with a man's attentions for the purpose of inflating her self-love! Thisbe was not that kind of a woman; he knew her too well not to know that. The explanation was beneath contempt.

The next reason whispered to him by the devil was the

one suggested by her own words. She was piqued because he had bought her a bauble ring, thus seeming to take too much for granted. No! he said at once. They had never mentioned rings—the subject had somehow been avoided—but they had known one another for a long time. Surely Thisbe had not misunderstood him! Notwithstanding her own words, the motive seemed one that would not apply to Thisbe. And yet it may have been the true one, after all. Thomas was only a man, and the devil may have known!

Then the third possibility advanced itself: that Thomas was not rich enough to support her in the luxury to which she was accustomed. Thisbe's place was in a palace; and Thomas well knew that at a word from herself she could step into a palace, ready-furnished. It might be she had been thinking of his worldly prospects, compared with those of her other suitors. But no! Thisbe was not a girl to let worldly advantage interfere with her ideals. They two had talked over the matter, in the abstract or by parable, many a time. What room for faith, if fame and fortune be demanded in advance?

The matter always came to this, that Thisbe had dismissed him. There was nothing he could do about it, nothing that would in any way make the thought tolerable. And yet, it seemed to him that he would *have* to do something. Lose Thisbe? If only he knew *why* he had lost her! Was it that Thisbe shrank from entrusting herself to a man of such frail physique? He had never been a strong man, as men go. Perhaps, after all, he had *not* lost her. Perhaps she was *testing* his love. Perhaps she merely intended to discipline him for one of his countless blunders. But there he came back to the same garden wall—it was not like Thisbe to do either the one or the other. Now that the catastrophe had fallen, he could see that Thisbe had been preparing him for a long time to hear that final sentence. No question but it was a dismissal!

Dismissal be it, then! Like the old Spartan he will be self-controlled and shown no sign of his hurt. He will play the

Indian, and watch the fire burn away his hand as he holds it in the flame. And if it costs him more to find out things, being a poet, than most men, by reason of his thin skin, at least he need never give Thisbe the pain of knowing the price at which her frowns and smiles were purchased.

By the time Thomas Godfrey had arrived at this moral position the moon was low in the west. It had not occurred to him that he was tired and hungry. His battle fought, he now turned to retrace his steps; but it was not until towards morning that he let himself into his own room and sank exhausted into bed.

Thisbe watched the defeated Thomas with a strange wrench at the heart; for she was not one of the cat kind of women that delight in playing with their mice. Her head ceased to toss, and the goodbye on her lips died away into something very like a sob. She remembered, however, that it was her duty to be harsh now, in order that irremediable disaster might be kept from their lives. So she waited until his tall figure had disappeared down the street, and then she went out into the yard and searched diligently among the bushes for the ring. It was a long and tedious search, but what did Thisbe care? She proposed to do her duty, at whatever cost in thorns or heart-burn to herself.

Alas, her duty was only too plain! She, Thisbe, was in love—very desperate love—with Thomas Godfrey, who in turn loved her with his whole heart; and she could not marry him, because—well, because! For one thing, she told herself, there was no place for her in his career. She could not help him in any way. Thomas was a dramatist, a great dramatist. He was a man born for honors, great honors. His friends already were men she stood in awe of. She would never know what to say to men as wise as Dr. Franklin, for instance, when they came to see him, and that would be a great shame to Thomas. Plainly she was not a suitable companion for him. She would be a clog upon his talents all his life. He ought to marry a talented woman like Mary Pierce, a woman who

would be able to understand him and help him. It would be like mating the wren to the eagle for her to marry that brilliant man. "The Prince of Parthia" was bound to be a great success, she knew, for she had read it. In some respects it resembled Shakespeare's tragedies. No question, Thomas was destined to be the first American dramatist. She, Thisbe, was only a housekeeper.

At this point in her meditations she came upon the ring. She thrust it into her bosom and burst into tears.

But it is not so easy to say what should and what should not be, in this world! Why should a woman like Thisbe, a gentle lady, who, instead of learning to read Latin and French, has learned only to live a beautiful life; this Thisbe, clear-skinned, bright-eyed, glad-hearted; sweet-faced, swift-fingered Thisbe, with never a thought in the world but of them she loves; head of exquisite black-brown hair, softer than fairies' tresses (Thomas's words); no master of learning, not even wise in the affairs of the world, but only a homemaker; why should she be loved by America's greatest genius? And why should Thisbe, hungering as only this Thisbe can hunger for a love such as only this Thomas can offer, why should this Thisbe be judge and jury and send her Shakespeare unheard into purgatory? Thisbe, willing to bless the meanest creature on this sad earth by kind act and word in season, says that she can not make Thomas happy whom she loves, and Thomas has no hope more of heaven because of it.

Thomas slept for three or four hours the sleep of utter weariness; then he awakened and tossed about in his bed with the pang of Thisbe at his heart. All kinds of impossible plans for compelling her admiration surged through his brain, plans connected for the most part with his writing. He would show her what he could do! He arose and dressed; then he tried to concentrate his thoughts upon an essay he had on the easel, tried to complete a poem, tried to tighten a knot in the plot of a new play, tried to write a business

letter with regard to some land he owned, tried to read Milton, Shakespeare, Addison: all to no purpose. He could not read, he could not write; he could think of nothing but Thisbe's brown eyes that refused to meet his own. Thisbe's brown eyes! He threw his papers in a heap upon the floor and strode out into the street; and when he returned it was again past midnight.

The next morning he came to a decision. He would see Douglass at once, submit his play to him as it was—an excellent play, there!—and try to force matters to a conclusion. He had no difficulty in finding the place; but when he arrived before the playhouse his courage failed him. Of a sudden he became conscious of a myriad possibilities of failure. Would the manager be too busy to look at his play? Would he be prejudiced against it from the beginning, because its author was unknown, and a native? Would he in any event, being an Englishman, be able to see its beauties? Would he approve of the meter? Was the subject one that he thought would interest an audience in Philadelphia? Would the play require too much scenery, or too many characters, or a star actor of special, and therefore impossible, ability? Almost he was on the point of giving up the interview in advance as useless: then he remembered Thisbe and brushed all doubts aside.

Thomas found himself behind the scenes in the presence of a mild-featured man of middle age, whom he knew at once to be the manager. His face was of the mobile actor type. He was inspecting a new set of scenery that had just arrived from somewhere. His stock was off, his sleeves rolled back, his waistcoat, like Benjamin West's, stained as though it were a painter's palette; his shoes through much use were bent like a bow, with three fold-like wrinkles across the top where the leather had become loose; his linen was soiled past redemption. Thomas saw at once that it was Hamlet in old clothes, neither more nor less.

The young playwright stood there for a moment, hat in

hand, and then Douglass with the courtesy of a gentleman made everything easy for him. He received his explanations, took the manuscript deferentially, promised it immediate attention, explained the possible value of his company of a native drama, talked easily of his successes in New York and Boston, and hoped that his visitor would see the new play Garrick had lent him; after which he paid him the compliment of a rare smile, and bowed him out of the door as if he had been a prince.

Success is the only wine to suit a young man's palate. "The Prince of Parthia" to be staged! He, Thomas Godfrey, in possession of the secrets of its authorship; able, abundantly able, to repeat and improve and perfect until the last! Nothing for him beyond that! His feet pulled upward upon him as if shod with the winged sandals of Hermes (a good figure, there!). His body no longer possessed weight. He was a professional writer, a dramatist! His name was already enrolled upon the honorable scroll of fame! The people he passed today did not know him; tomorrow they would turn their heads! Thus he planted his pearl-seed on the hill of dreams as he slipped light-footed back to his room; for he never doubted now that Douglass would accept his play.

It is a characteristic of the poetic imagination that, while continually seeing unsuspected conjunctions, beauties, truths, in the accidents of life, it is at the same time continually bringing the poet's personal experiences of life into false relationships, because continually outstripping the actual course of events. It continually confuses tomorrow with today. For a week Thomas Godfrey lived among the Olympian gods. And then one morning a messenger knocked at his door, and after that there was no more illusion for him. Inside the packet was a polite note from Douglass, to the effect that the play had been found unavailable.

The next six months saw a great change in Thomas. He did not entirely abandon the career of literature, but he made little headway with his work. He seemed to have lost

his grip in some way. Nothing any more that he did seemed worth the doing. His poetry ran about on wooden legs that had no spring in them. His essays were labored and heavy. He tried to start a new play, but the plot had a will of its own, like Balaam's ass. Yet, because he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve, no one suspected him of disappointment. A few added lines in the face, a graver note in the expression of the eye—how is the world to notice records like these? Thisbe will notice them when she sees him to-night; but the world—no!

Ah, when she sees him to-night!

The anxiety of young men to conceal their feelings sometimes leads them into actions that do not conceal, but expose. Thomas, wishing especially to preserve his self-respect, not so many days after his dismissal sends Thisbe flowers. He means them to tell her nothing at all, except that he desires to remain on friendly terms with her. Thisbe it seems regards them in a different light. She looks upon them much as men look upon tears that spring from a woman's eyes—that is to say, as an expression of feeling; and, being Thisbe, she thinks she ought to do penance for working so much harm upon Thomas Godfrey. She places the flowers in a vase in her own room; then she throws herself upon her bed and sobs herself to sleep.

The same evening, Thomas, like his namesake doubtful, walks stealthily past the house to see if his flowers have been thrown into the gutter.

But tonight! Tonight, as he sits alone beside his smoldering fire, he finds his heart more nearly filled with peace than it has been since the days of Thisbe. Thisbe he has not seen for months. Her image has become hazy and indistinct in his mind. Some day he intends to call on her and talk over old times. It would be very awkward for him not to call on her. It would be a confession of weakness, in fact. And then a not unpleasant thought seems to steal upon him, and he leans back in his chair to ponder upon it. Some day? Why not tonight?

Who but Thisbe herself? Who but the old Thisbe, when Thomas clattered upon the familiar knocker, opened the door for him and curtsied as the Thisbe he remembered was wont to do? Who but Thisbe could have greeted him without surprise, as though she expected him? No awkward confusion, no stupid stammering, no embarrassment—only the frank hand-clasp and the honest welcome of an old friend! Thisbe was the most comfortable woman in the world to be near! Always she avoided the rocks, said the right word, explained when explanations were soothing, drew out the best from her company. Thisbe never shone—not she! She was too busy thinking of the comfort of others! Thisbe was everything that a man's woman ought to be; and her voice was like the music of a silver bell.

Thomas now heard Thisbe ask him would he take his old chair by the fire, or sit upon the divan? In some way it was made easier for him to take the chair. Thisbe talked about this and that of interest for awhile, then she touched frankly upon the old subject that used to lie so near the surface. What had he done with the "Prince of Parthia?" Was he not to publish it? O, she knew all about its refusal! She had missed it from the playbills and had caused inquiries to be made. Douglass was a stupid fellow! She made him know in her simple way that she had faith in his work just the same.

Ah, Thomas Godfrey! Do you realize now how much it costs to be a genius? Do you realize how much you have lost in this Thisbe, who has faith and is able to make your way smooth forever, but will not? How much is your play worth, against Thisbe? How much all the plays in the world? It seems that you might well exchange that of which you possess enough for a little of that which your heart needs!

When Thomas rose to go, Thisbe asked him prettily if he would wear a flower for her. She went to the mantle, and there Thomas saw a bouquet of withered flowers, out of

which she plucked a shrivelled rose. And the flowers that he saw were his own flowers, preserved with that care as if they had been of gold!

Thomas saw more than this. He saw upon Thisbe's finger a ring—the same ring that had been refused of him and thrown out of the window, long ago. And the ring was upon the third finger of the left hand. Was not that a sight to send the blood to a poet's face? And there was more still! For Thomas lifted his eyes quickly higher, even to the level of Thisbe's eyes, and there he saw—he saw his soul's hope shining out upon him! And then this Thomas began to understand. And then, there being nothing else he could do, he, Thomas Godfrey, crushed this Thisbe in his arms until she cried out; and when she cried out he kissed her white face upon the brow and upon the eyes a thousand times until she was silent! And then for the first time his own eyes were wholly opened, and he looked through the gates of Paradise. His play a failure? The star that dazzled housekeeper Thisbe no star, but only a lantern? So much the better: Thisbe thinks that he needs her! Happy Thomas Godfrey!



AN INVITATION.

KATHARINE HALL.

Come, come out and play with me,
Golden-haired Euphrosyne,
'Neath the ancient apple-tree
Sways the grape-vine swing for thee.

Sweetmeats hath the honey-bee,
Secrets have the birds for thee;
Come, come out and play with me,
Golden-haired Euphrosyne.

THE VILLAIN'S CHRISTMAS.

ALICE L. WEBB.

"It's a dog's life," growled the villain, kicking his heels against the property trunk on which he sat in a dim corner of the wings. The whole world looked sour just then to the lonely young man, and he grumbled away to himself. What sort of a Christmas would he have? As far back as he could remember there was but one alternative,—to get drunk and lose his place in the company, or to sit around the cafés and watch gay groups having merry times in which he had no part. Truly, it was the life of a stray dog.

"What! Cross on December twenty-fourth, Toddie Potter! That's 'again' the law,'" laughed the little *ingénue*, as she passed him.

"Well, don't I cheer with the rest of the crowd when I've anything to be glad about?"

"Never heard you do such a thing in my life," she called back from her dressing-room near. She paused in her hurried dabbing of the rouge, and looked gravely at the round face reflected in her mirror. It was true. In the three years he had been with the company she had never known him to join in the gaieties of the rest; he was always out of it all. Old Kohlrausch, the 'cello man of the orchestra, used to chum with him, but now that the old German was gone, the young actor was utterly alone. She wondered why he was always outside their circle as though by tacit agreement among them. Mac, her big, jolly husband, always said it was because the villain had "turned teetotaler," and was afraid of breaking his pledge. Maybe, but then, she mused, he must be horribly lonely. When she had finished fastening her gown for the first act of the matinee performance, she called to the man out in the dark.

"Come here, I want to talk."

"That's a habit of yours—but a mighty pleasant one," he replied, as he took a chair in the doorway and found a cigar for a "dry smoke." He liked to hear her chatter.

"What are you going to do tonight or tomorrow?" Christmas was naturally uppermost in her mind. Immediately his face clouded and he dropped his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and sat staring at the floor. What was there to say? She looked up sharply. Poor man! Was it so bad as that? She had not known, and she and Mac had planned a gay little supper after the night performance, at the Crete Café.

"Won't you come out to supper tonight with Mac and me? The others all have their parties made up, and we two were to be alone. We'd like to have you join us."

"Miss Muffet! Would you really?" His eagerness was pathetic. "Do you know, that is the first Christmas invitation I ever received. Nobody ever wanted me in their good times. Before I came here I usually got drunk or tramped around town, looking in windows, feeling sour and mean. Dear old Kohlrausch was too poor to celebrate, and so the two Christmas days he was here we sat and smoked and talked. He will have a brighter day with his niece there in Germany, dear old boy."

He was talking to himself now, unconscious that he spoke aloud, and the little *ingénue* knew it so she made no reply. But her eyes were soft, and she revolved a little plan in her mind.

"It has always been that way with me," he continued in an undertone. "Guess I was born to it. They never had anything extra at the orphan asylum, and after I had run away to shift for myself, it was work like a good one or starve; sometimes a little of both. There was no 'Lady Bountiful' like those who rescue street waifs in the story books."

"There's your cue, Toddie, run along." She gave him a

friendly pat on the shoulder, and ran into her husband's dressing-room.

"Mac, I've got a lark. I've asked Toddie Potter to have supper with us to-night, and I am planning a surprise."

"Call that a lark, to take that old sour-apples into our crowd? It was going to be such a cosy little spree, just us two. But if you want him—"

"Now Mac! If you knew the poor boy's hard luck story! He don't pose as a man with a 'terrible past,' but it just slipped out. Everyone always did make a confidante of me, you know," poking her head under his arm and smiling up into his face. "And listen,"—she whispered in his ear a minute, and he had just time to cry, "Capital," and catch her in his arms, when she heard her cue and made a dive for the wings.

All through the matinee she was busy with her plans, and as soon as her make-up was washed off and her hat was on, she hurried to the foyer and spent a full fifteen minutes in the telephone booth. Then she and Mac made a short shopping tour, from which they turned toward their flat laden with bundles and followed by a small boy with more packages. There were minute instructions to the maid, a jolly Irish girl, who caught the spirit of the fun and sailed about accomplishing wonders, while the bell rang at intervals and men ran in and out with more parcels.

At the theater that night Mac and "Miss Muffet" asked all the members of the company to meet at their flat after the several supper parties.

"We'll make a night of it," laughed the *ingénue*, "and you will miss the fun if you are not there by 12:15 sharp."

It was a wonderful night for the villain. He had never had such a good time in his life. There was the little supper, the three of them laughing and chatting and telling stories as though they had always been chums, and had sat around one table together for years. The girl and her big, boyish husband found an unsuspected fund of whimsical humor in Pot-

ter. He told stories of his many strange, exciting and interesting experiences encountered in nomadic wanderings, and proved himself hugely entertaining.

At the door of the flat Norah met them beaming and whispering loudly to "Miss Muffet," "It's all right ma'am; I did it all but the lightin' up an' the things on that table, an' shut the door, for sure Miss Terrence an' Mrs. Fritz is here a'ready."

Then followed the finest fun of the night for the villain. The *ingénue* and Mac asked him to help them, and he it was who lighted all the dozens of colored candles, while they hung packages tied with ribbons to the boughs of the first Christmas tree Potter had ever seen outside of a shop window. During the examination of the tree and the distribution of the gifts there was much joking and laughter. There was something for everyone, not elaborate, but little things that just suited the taste of each. The villain had a fat book of kodak views taken that summer when Mac and the *ingénue* were on their wedding journey.

"We have the films, Mac. We can easily make us another," she had said.

Late that night, or rather, early next morning, Toddie Potter sat on the edge of his bed in the hotel, holding the book in his hands. When he had considered himself the most desperately wretched of men, these friends had come into his life, and they had really cared enough to take thought for his happiness. He was a lucky dog!

BILLY DOWNS A RIVAL.

ELSIE BULLARD.

Billy and I have been room-mates since our freshman year, and have arrived at that pleasant stage of friendship where each one knows the other like a book. So when Billy refused a second helping of plum pudding for dinner I knew something serious was up. Plum pudding is Billy's failing. He loves it like a brother, and the unhappiest days of his life are the forty days of Lent, during which he heroically refuses to gratify his appetite.

Moreover, for the past week Billy had been morose, sullen, and touchy as an old maid, all of which is so different from his usual good nature that it caused me considerable anxiety. Therefore, as soon as dinner was over and Billy had flung himself moodily into a chair, I took it upon myself to find out what was bothering him.

I was quite sure it wasn't another 'con' for they come as a matter of course, and never worry Billy. In fact, I believe he would be lonely without them. He had just received a letter from home saying all the folks were well; his allowance was not overdrawn; the coach had taken particular pains to praise his punting, and, lastly, his pet pup Nebby was in perfect health. Therefore none of these could be the cause of his sorrow, and, as far as I knew, but one other thing was capable of depressing his exuberant spirits to any great extent.

When he had finished his second cigar I sauntered slowly over to his chair, placed a fatherly hand on his shoulder and inquired, sympathetically, "Who is she?"

"Shut up!" Billy politely requested.

I maintained an aggrieved silence.

At the end of fully two minutes Billy cast a sheepish, con-

ciliatory look in my direction, but I turned my back and began whistling softly, 'You Make Me Tired.'

"Oh, come now," coaxed the thoroughly penitent Billy, 'let's be good friends again. I'll even let you work all my 'trig' problems for me.'

"Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love,"

I quoted glibly, and went on whistling.

"Well, you would be rather down in the mouth, too, if you had all the troubles I have," Billy sighed wearily.

I knew now the story wouldn't be long in coming, so lit one of Billy's best cigars and prepared to listen.

"Miss Lawrence hasn't smiled at me for a whole week," Billy went on musingly, "although I've been a perfect angel. I bet my best hat that little Frenchman with the dreamy eyes and fetching smile is trying to make an impression."

Light suddenly dawned on me. Miss Lawrence was Billy's latest infatuation.

Billy has a remarkable propensity for falling in and out of love. Indeed, he transfers his affections so rapidly that I am kept constantly guessing whether it is Mary, Maud or Margaret who is laying claim to his heart. I no sooner decide that Mary holds first place than Billy calmly informs me that Maud is his present divinity, though he liked Mary awfully well last week. The following week I learn that Margaret reigns supreme.

"Hughes told me he saw her and Lavasseur at the play the other night," Billy continued, "I guess—"

But I was destined never to know what Billy guessed. He chuckled suddenly; a funny little gleam came into his eyes and he refused absolutely to say another word. When I asked him what in the world had happened, he only winked at Nebby and answered concisely, "Don't bother me; have an idea; am thinking." And I had to be content.

About midnight I awoke conscious that all was not well. Intending to wake Billy, I turned over. The next moment I sprang out of bed, snapped on the electric light and stared

stupidly around the room. Billy was gone. Frantically I searched every corner of the room, the closet and even the chiffonier drawers. But no Billy could be found.

Just as I had finished ransacking everything for the third time, only succeeding in making the place look as though a small hurricane had struck it, the door opened and Billy stood on the threshold. In one hand he held his shoes, in the other, tied round with Billy's flaming red tie, were the raven locks that had once adorned the head of the hated rival, Lavasseur. Trotting at Billy's heels and yapping delightedly, was that disreputable canine, Nebby.

As Billy caught sight of me, wild-eyed, standing in the midst of the havoc I had wrought, he threw his shoes under the bed with a resounding bang, sat down on the floor and laughed like one possessed. No doubt I was a pretty looking sight, but his laughing didn't improve my temper any, and I straightway threw a book at him.

"Oh, don't," Billy pleaded, weak with laughter. "Be quiet and I'll tell you the whole story. I suppose I'll have to now, anyway. But, say," he giggled, "you certainly do look wild. You'd make a dandy Ophelia if you only had a few flowers in your hair."

"Quit your fooling and tell me what you've gone and done," I exclaimed angrily, forgetting my grammar in the excitement of the moment.

"I gave Lavasseur a hair cut, that's all," Billy obligingly explained, dangling the Lavasseur locks before my nose. "His forehead is very high now, and he looks quite intellectual. I took all the hair off from ear to ear across the top of his head. I bet fifty cents he doesn't go to the theatre again with Miss Lawrence. Guess I'll be expelled if he finds out who did it, but I don't care two bits. It was worth the price.

"Begin at the beginning, "I ordered, breaking in, and Billy obeyed.

"Well, you see this was the train of thought that led to my bright idea. Actors—long hair—Lavasseur—transfor-

mation. Do you see the connection? After you were asleep I slipped out as quietly as possible because I wanted you to prove an alibi for me if I should be suspected. But you spoiled all that by waking up before I could get back. After I had gone a little way I found that Nebby had followed me, and it was lucky he did, too. He came in handy.

When we got to the Frenchman's house I took Nebby up close under Lavasseur's window and then stepped on his tail. You know how Nebby howls when his tail is stepped on. Well I tell you what, he certainly broke all his previous records then. I never heard such an unearthly sound in my life before.

Within two minutes by the clock the window went up with a bang and Lavasseur threw some furniture at Nebby. Neb was silent for a minute, then I gave him the signal and he began again. My, I wish you could have heard all the pretty things that Frenchman said. Just as Nebby was executing a most beautiful crescendo, with tremulous, arpeggios, trios and piano-leggieros all thrown in, Lavasseur got excited and threw his clock out. Then he had to come down after it and—well—half-Nelson and a pair of shears, you know—I took these lovely locks as a souvenir of the occasion. I do hope he doesn't catch cold in the head, though."

With this thoughtful remark the degenerate Billy went to bed, and in three minutes was sleeping the sleep of the just.

Two days later Billy, who with his usual good luck had escaped detection, burst into the room like a whirlwind and executed a war dance on the rug before the fire place. Then he dragged the reluctant Nebby from under the cheffonier, where he had taken refuge at the first sign of danger, and throwing his arms about the pup's neck began to call him all sorts of ridiculous, endearing names.

"What's up," I ventured, when the atmosphere had cleared to some extent.

"Heads," Billy answered.

"What!" I asked mystified.

"Heads," Billy repeated, "I win. Lavasseur has left."

THE SKULL.

ALAN DONN.

Over my hearth rests a fathomless skull,
Deep are its sockets and brown the bone.
The frail partitions, crumbling and dull
Dissolve into clay, their task is done.

No name, no rank, no thought of care
Invades the silence of the shell:
What matters who be grim or fair?
What matters Earth or Heaven or Hell?

A crude memorial, bereft
Of that which fashions one from all:
Naught of the truant past is left
Save this dumb relict of the pall.

Mayhap some deed that ne'er can die
Found birth within this transient dome;
Some gleaming thought in harmony
With laws unchanging here had home!

Mayhap a conquering joy had birth
And grew to bless a favored race,
Within this tenement of earth,
This frail and brief abiding-place.

Then drifts no saddening dust away,
Regrets need burial more than bone.
Gloom has no harbour in this clay;
The raven of despair has flown.

A SEASHORE TRAGEDY.

ERNST JUNG.

They sat at the seashore—she in a chair with a book in her lap—he in the sand at her feet. She read eagerly, and paid little attention to her companion. He listened to the waves and dreamed—principally dreamed, and finally ventured timidly, without taking his eyes from the sea:

“Shall I go, Betty?”

She gave a start and closed her book.

“Shall I go?” he repeated.

“Why, no, Jack,” answered Betty, kindly, “unless you had rather sit somewhere else.”

Jack moved a little closer to her, but otherwise made no answer; he knew she was teasing him.

Betty opened her book again and read another half hour, while Jack sat there quietly. He was satisfied, for he loved her, and she—well, perhaps she loved him; he did not know. But they could not marry, and therein consisted the tragedy.

He closed his eyes and dreamed of her. He had come to the seashore three weeks ago with his mother, and Betty had crossed his path like a vision. She was twenty, and for many a day he had not seen such charms; and now that he had met her and was in her company daily, he was happy. To sit at her side, fulfill her slightest wish and meditate on the future was his favorite pastime. For the present he dared not expect her love in return; just now he only wished her to tolerate his presence. Later on she would learn to love him, and then—then some day perhaps he could marry her. But the figure of Mr. Armstrong constantly disturbed his happy dreams. He paid considerable attention to Betty and she seemed to tolerate it.

The story was done and Betty closed the book. She

looked down at her friend; his head rested against her knee and his eyes were closed. She stroked his head and he instantly opened them.

"I thought you had fallen asleep," said she.

Jack shook his head. "Only dreaming."

"Dreaming of what?"

"Of you."

Betty laughed and then hummed:

" 'Nothing's worth while but dreams of you,
And you can make every dream come true.' "

"No, I was just wondering whether you liked me as much as you did the first day I came here."

"You're a funny fellow," laughed Betty, "you always want me to tell you how much I love you. That's not my custom."

Jack was at a loss what to answer.

"Of course I like you, Jack," began Betty again, "and I always want you to be my friend, that is as long as you'll remember me; or don't you love me?" It was the sweetest question he had ever heard and he scarcely dared to answer it.

"Love you," he repeated; "who doesn't love you."

"Oh, very many people don't, Jack, and then you forget this is only the sea-side. These sea-shore friendships are so easily forgotten, you know."

"No, I don't know," said Jack, looking straight at her.

"Yes you do," said Betty. "How often are we girls persuaded to believe that we are the best friends, often even told that we are the only ones. But how long does it last, this friendship? Scarcely as long as the sea-shore season."

Jack wished to say something in defense of his sex, but Betty continued calmly: "But we expect that; we take everything with a grain of salt,—add ten and divide by a hundred, and then we get closer to what is really meant. I'll wager you'll forget Betty a week after you leave."

Jack spoke earnestly, "I never bet."

"Oh!" And Betty smiled, "You'll learn."

"I'll learn if you wish it, said Jack apologetically. "Does Mr. Armstrong bet?"

"Mr. Armstrong," repeated Betty, "yes I think he does; I won a pair of gloves from him yesterday."

There was a pause and then Betty asked timidly: "What do you think of him?"

Jack drooped his head and made no answer.

"Won't you tell me?" she asked again.

Jack drooped his head still lower and said almost inaudibly: "No."

"Why not? Too bad?"

"No."

"Too good?"

"Oh no, not too good."

Betty became interested. "Don't you like him?" she asked.

Jack shook his head. "No." She could scarcely hear him. "Do you?"

"Why yes, I thought everybody did." Betty plainly wanted to laugh.

Jack plainly did not. "No, everybody doesn't."

"So she liked Armstrong. And he liked her; that he knew. Jack watched the waves break upon the shore and dreamed,—dreamed of the sweetest girl on earth.

"Do you think you could ever like me as well as you like Mr. Armstrong?" he asked without looking up.

"Jack you ask the most embarrassing questions of any young man I know."

"I want to know," said Jack, reaching the climax, "I—I want to ask you to marry me."

"Marry you!" Betty repeated the words again and again as if to see whether they really were the same words Jack had spoken. "You know I love you, Jack," she said, then, "I've often told you so; but you also know that we can never marry."

"Never marry!" repeated Jack.

"Our ages, Jack, are so different that— —"

"But I'll wait, cried Jack, "I'll wait a thousand years."

"You'll wait, yes, but — — oh there's — —"

Jack looked up. "Mr. Armstrong," he finished.

"I must go now," said Betty, and then she bent down and whispered something in Jack's ear.

"Engaged to — —!" Betty quickly put her hand on his mouth to cut off the rest of his words. Then she took her book and walked toward Mr. Armstrong.

Jack's lips began to quiver as the distance grew between them. There she walked,—his angel, leaving him alone. He looked after them until they disappeared in the distance. When at length he turned around he saw his mother sitting in an arm-chair a little ways off. He ran to her and buried his head in her lap.

"Mother! mother!" he cried, "she's engaged to Mr. Armstrong! She's engaged to Mr. Armstrong!"

He cried as though his heart would break; but what could be done? It is true he loved her but he could not marry her; he was only seven years old.



TOMORROW.

E. O. L.

Dark is the winding road ahead,
But now the west'ring sun shines red,
And all the storm-clouds will have fled
Tomorrow!

The load that weighs me down today
Will lightened be, and gone for aye,
And all my cares will pass away
Tomorrow!

Then I'll march on, with heart of cheer;
I'll vanquish doubt and banish fear,
And to my Land of Dreams draw near
Tomorrow!

A FLOWERY ADVENTURE.

MU.

"Dear Bobby:" (the note ran) "Of course you're going to bring me an Xmas present, and I know just what it's going to be. It's going to be a bracelet, isn't it? But, Bobby dear dear, do stop and reflect. You've been bringing me bracelets for the past three years. Can't you think of something different? I just know you can't, so I'm going to make it easy for you.

"Do you know that I'm just starving for flowers! I haven't seen a 'blooming thing' down here in Edgewater since August. Mother's century plant is positively the only green thing on the landscape. Can't you bring me some fine American Beauties and forget that annual appointment with the jeweler?"

Your loving sister,

RUTH."

I flipped the note down upon the table rather impatiently. Hot-house flowers had always been my particular abomination. In spite of my dislikes, moreover, I did not think for a moment of disobeying the commands of the letter. Disregarding all that's said about the other fellow's sister, it's a fellow's own sister that holds the secure place in his affections after a five month's absence, and *he will do much* rather than disappoint her.

Possibly it was the fact that the note was dated the thirteenth of the month, or possibly it was my own concealed dissatisfaction with my errand, I never knew, but, from the moment of the note's arrival until my exciting entrée at Edgewater, my flower mission was a chapter of annoyances and accidents. Misfortune began as I stepped into the hall to call up the greenhouse. An inadvertent misstep on the hall rug precipitated me headlong down the front stairway,

at the bottom of which I was brought up very suddenly and conveniently against the wall beneath the telephone.

The florist could not have been more accommodating if he had tried, and that fact was in itself most exasperating. I was disposed to quibble about the varieties, about the prices and about the time of delivery, but, throughout all, the invisible at the other end of the line remained most gracious and conciliatory. A bargain was inevitable. I placed an order for a miscellaneous assortment of hot-house products to be delivered, at my address at twelve o'clock on the twenty-first instant, and hung up the receiver with a feeling of relief.

It was half-past three on the afternoon of the twenty-first. Berkeley, who was to accompany me as far as Rockford, had been tearing in and out of my room for the past fifteen minutes. I was bordering on distraction. The flowers had not yet arrived. Repeated calls by phone had assured me that "they were on the way." But where! It lacked but fifteen minutes of train time. Another five minutes dragged by and Berkeley deserted me. He took my suit case, agreeing to purchase my ticket and wait for me until the last moment at the depot. Another agonizing five minutes passed. I was on the front porch gazing wildly down the street. On a sudden I descried the expected delivery wagon. I flew to meet it. I halted the driver in the middle of the street and dove into the rear of the wagon for my parcel. I seized it rapturously. It had the size, shape and suggestion of an infant's coffin, but I was not appalled. Thrusting a bill into the hand of the astonished delivery-man, I clasped the package to my bosom and sped away to make my train.

As I raced down the crossing at the station the engine whistled. By a desperate spurt I reached the rail of the last coach, only to have my bundle fall crosswise in front of me and effectually block my passage up the steps. In this extremity I was saved by Berkeley and the conductor, who dragged me and my precious burden up the rear platform of the moving car—amid the wild cheers of the holiday crowd that was loitering about the depot.

I recovered my composure and my breath, thanked my rescuers, and, summoning as much dignity as was possible with the load I was carrying, entered the crowded coach.

"Why, hello, Bob!" and a detaining hand was thrust from one of the seats. "Going to essay the role of best man, eh? Good work." And before I could explain— "Say, that was fine sprinting you did just now. We all saw you from the windows. By the way, did you know you cast a rubber down the block a ways?" It was Edwards, good, kind-hearted soul, whose sympathy overcame me quite. "Robert, I do hope that this does not mean grief in your family, right in your holiday vacation." I reassured Edwards and dropped into a vacant seat near the front of the car. The train officials, a traveling man and a woman's rights exponent made my journey miserable through the medium of my objectionably bulky package. It was with a feeling of infinite relief that I stepped out upon the platform at Carlton, the nearest railway station to Edgewater.

A solitary figure walked into the flickering light of the station lamp to meet me. It was Hank Brophey. Hank and I had once been classmates in high school. Hank had left school to follow the lucrative calling of stage-driver from Carlton to Edgewater. I had remained at school to follow the thorny path of penury and higher education.

"Hello, Bob," said Hank, shaking my hand heartily, "Glad to see you back with us again. The governor sent word for you to ride with me tonight. The weather's too bad for him to meet you."

I could hardly conceal my chagrin. Meeting the prodigal had evidently lost its charms for the governor.

"Come right around this way," ventured Hank, noticing my piqued look, "I'll carry your grip. What the deuce have you got there?" and he pointed to my parcel.

"Mary, aged four," said I, resenting his familiarity, and then, with a Lackeye sob—"she's my oldest and best beloved."

Hank strutted away and I followed. A minute later I was sitting in the rear of the wagonette while the team splashed homeward through the darkness and mud. Wrapped warmly in comfortable furs I was lost in pleasant reflection over the home scenes drawing near — the farm house standing on the hillside overlooking the valley of the Fox; the river itself winding beneath the arched bridge down the roadway, and beyond it, the little village of Edgewater nestling quiet and peaceful on the river bank. What an ideal spot I reflected, for one to call home.

It was Hank's voice that aroused me. "Got a new horse, Bob, since you rode last."

I aroused myself. "Thought we were moving a little slower than usual," I suggested rather testily.

"O, that's all right, too. You just ought to see the little grey devil when he gets started. If he ever gets his tail over the line, you'll think you're going some—" Hank never finished his sentence, and I never knew just what happened, but I rather suspect that "the little grey devil" performed some such unique feat as Hank had reference to. There was a crashing blow against the buckboard, a shrill cry from the driver, and the wagonette shot forward with the speed of a meteorite.

The shock flung me violently against the opposite side of the wagonette, driving my head through the crown of my stiff hat, at the imminent risk of severing both my ears. A second lurch sent me back to my former position, where I grasped the seat and clung desperately. I saw my suitcase fly out of the rear of the wagonette into the roadway. Instinctively I grabbed with my free hand for a large white bundle that loomed near me on the left. It was the sacred box of flowers. Looking through the opening of the curtain in front, I realized the sudden advent of a crisis. In a moment more we would be passing the gateways of home. Below us lay the lights of the village twinkling in the blackness. The river and the bridge lay near at hand.

"Jump out behind," cried Hank. hoarsely, "I can't hold 'em. Jump quick. I'll follow you."

I obeyed instructions and leaped wildly. My head encountered something hard on the roadway and though not seriously hurt, a blissful unconsciousness came over me. I did not know what followed, I did not hear the crash as the wagonette struck the steel girders of the bridge. I did not hear the shout of the villagers as they found Hank lying, slightly bruised, among the sumacs by the roadside where he had leaped to safety.

The "governor" is fond of one detail of the mishap, however, over which he laughs heartily. It is the melodramatic moment wherein he finds the prodigal lying humbly at the driveway gates, the crown of his Derby hat encircling his throat, his feet stuck fast in the heavy clay, while his hands clasp a floral offering. The offering was a large cross of white and purple flowers, bearing the inscription on a white card, "A Tribute From Eliza." So, after all, the incident had the semblance of a tragedy.

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WALTER S. UNDERWOOD, EDITOR
614 Langdon Street

ASSOCIATES

IRVING P. SCHAUS
EDITH SWENSON
GEORGE B. HILL

JOHN V. MULANY
CORA C. HINCKLEY
F. P. BAGLEY, JR.,

F. P. BAGLEY, JR., BUSINESS MANAGER
237 Langdon Street

A. C. KREY, CIRCULATION MANAGER

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EDITORIAL.



THE LIT extends its happiest wishes to all of its friends, and trusts that they may enjoy a real old-fashioned Christmas, inspired by the spirit of St. Nicholas. Were THE LIT given to philosophising it would go on to describe that spirit, but it believes that many pleasant matters are spoiled utterly by analysis, and so will content itself with hoping that each of its friends may be the first in his own family to cry "Merry Christmas."

THE CREW.

One might have supposed that with the close of Wisconsin's successful football season, athletics would run on quietly for a time, but scarcely had the total score been counted, when the *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* opened the annual attack on the Eastern trip of the crew. The *Daily Cardinal* took up the defence, and the newspapers chose sides.

There is nothing new in the situation. The crew, clean beyond suspicion, was unaffected by the late upheaval in athletics, and stands today practically in the position it occupied a year ago. The arguments used against the Eastern trip are in the main the old ones—distance, expense, probability of defeat and the like,—and the substitutes proposed, the familiar hypothetical Western regatta, or, hardly less illusory though less attractive, the inter-college affair at home. The answers to the attack are the logical ones,—the value of fostering the true spirit of sportsmanship, and the reputation for the same gained for the University by the Eastern race, the fact that all the obstacles urged have been overcome in the past, the absurdity of destroying the goal of a system which trains more men than any other two branches of athletics combined, and the hopeless inadequacy of the only possible substitute proposed. These are arguments which have proved strong enough to send the crew East in the face of more forceful opposition than the present.

We are heartily in favor of retaining the eastern trip, for we believe that if it be done away with, rowing at Wisconsin will materially suffer. So much has been said, however, in the recent revival of the controversy that we have but one specific item to add. In a recent communication appearing in the *Daily Cardinal*, it was pointedly intimated that Dr. Hutchins wished to abandon the eastern trip. The writer's information must, we think, have been mistaken, for it is no slight argument in behalf of the trip that Dr. Hutchins, the Athletic Department, the Athletic Council and the Athletic Board all enthusiastically favor it. Here's to Wisconsin and her crews, and may they row every year on the Hudson!

THE ATHLETIC BOARD.

The new athletic system, we believe, is the best that Wisconsin has had, and one that has solved many difficulties, but it is not to be expected that a system so comprehensive as this will be perfect in all its particulars. Flaws are bound to

appear. The flaw we wish to deal with here is one just now under general discussion,—the method of choosing the members of the Athletic Board.

The one great evil of the present method of choosing the board is political influence. For years past the cry against the board has been that its members were bound to the persons who selected them, and made their appointments accordingly. The cry has not been idle; appointments for political reasons have been made in the past, and are still possible, in spite of the fact that candidates must serve a nominal apprenticeship of two years. We believe that with a board not politically selected the chief incentive to political appointments would be gone, and that with a board whose members owed their positions not to political constituents, but to their work on and for the various athletic teams, there would result a more concentrated effort for the benefit of athletics. For these reasons we favor and urge the substitution for the present method of popular election of board members, a method whereby the captains and managers of the football, basketball, baseball and track teams, and the the captain and commodore of the crew be members of the Athletic Board, *ex-officio*.

This method preserves the desirable combination of "W" and "non W" men secured by the present method, represents one more department, and if it does not eliminate, at least vastly reduces the chances that favoritism will influence appointments. Let us lift athletics out of politics. We are not criticising the present board, but the present method of choosing it. While we have a good board let us guard against the evil which a board less good may do in the future.

THE LIT is very fortunate this month in being able to publish a story by Mr. William J. Neidig. While Mr. Neidig is perhaps most widely known as a poet, he is a recognized authority on early American drama, which fact lends an added interest to "The Prince of Parthia," a tale of the first American playwright.

Ballads of Christmas Bards.

GEORGE HILL.

The poet of the Christmas-tide
Attunes his nickel-plated lyre
To themes by usage sanctified:
"How Santa's Whiskers Caught A-fire,"
Or "Crippled Willie's Heart's Desire,"
"The Christmas Tree of Deadshot's Pard,"
From jingling mirth to pathos dire,
(Sing hey the festive Christmas bard.)

You know about the brat that died
(He did it for your grandsire's sire)
As Santa's bells were heard outside.
The auto-modern you require?
The lovers tack the villain's tire—
Live happy ever afterward—
For Christmas soothes the Old Man's ire.
(Sing hey the merry Christmas bard.)

The poets who are sorely tried
To meet the duns of Levi Meyer,
Remove their cuffs and let her slide.
The joints of type-machines perspire
Propelled by men who write for hire,
Producing by the cubic yard
The pomes that harrow or inspire,
(Sing hey the festive Christmas bard.)

Prince, do you foolishly admire
This thing, or think that it was hard?
E'en we can do it, by the quire,
(Sing hey the festive Christmas bard.)