

ORPIMENT & GAMBOGE.

THE firm was in leather, down in "the Swamp," and Mr. Orpiment used to ride down-town every morning from his house in Bank street, regular as the almanac, in a Bleecker street car. His house was one of those eminently respectable, high-stooped dwellings, between Fourth street and the old Greenwich road—quite the court end of what used to be Greenwich village three score years or so ago, and about as pleasant an abiding-place as you will find to-day in all the city of New York. This house was unnecessarily large for Mr. Orpiment's family—for the whole of his family was himself; but as he seemed to be entirely satisfied with it, no one ventured to suggest to him that he had better move. Indeed, there were few people in the world who, knowing Mr. Orpiment, would have willingly ventured to suggest to him anything whatever, for he was not a person who took suggestions kindly. In point of fact, he usually took them with a snap.

When young Orpiment, in a suggestive sort of way, observed modestly from under his blonde mustache that his uncle would be doing a good thing if he would rescind the edict under which he, young Orpiment, was going through the form of learning the leather business, and would permit him to betake himself to the study of Art,—when young Orpiment made this suggestion, I say, Mr. Orpiment fell into such a rage that his counting-house—large though it was and small though he was—would not hold him; in his wrath he strode out into his warehouse, among the kips and hides, and used language in their presence strong enough to tan them. The upshot of the matter was that young Orpiment was given twenty-four hours in which to make up his mind whether he would stick to leather and his bread and butter, or be an infernal idiot (such was Mr. Orpiment's unparliamentary language) and starve among his paint-pots. And young Orpiment, his crisp blonde hair fairly bristling with determination, every muscle in his large, well-built body tense with energy, in something less than twenty-four seconds elected for starvation and the pots of paint.

But for all his high temper and defiant way of dealing with things, there was one thing that Mr. Orpiment could not deal with defiantly. One morning—only a few weeks after this battle royal of the paint-pots had been

fought—to the astonishment of all the people in Bank street, his front door did not open at precisely twenty-seven minutes after eight o'clock; and the conductor of the Bleecker street car concluded that in some mysterious way he must have got ahead of his schedule, because at 8.30 Mr. Orpiment was not standing, like a block-signal, with his neatly-folded umbrella thrust out straight before him, at the Bank street crossing; and Mr. Gamboge got into a nervous fluster, and said that he knew that something must be wrong, when the counting-house clock struck nine and Mr. Orpiment did not make his appearance, as was his invariable custom, between the sixth stroke and the seventh. And something *was* wrong: Mr. Orpiment was dead.

As through all his life Mr. Orpiment had been setting himself to go off, like an alarm clock, at definitely determined points in the future, so did he carry this habit into the testamentary disposition of his estate. His will, so to speak, was double-barreled. The first barrel went off immediately upon his decease, and, as it were, set the alarm. After devising certain small legacies to a few friends and dependants, to be paid out of accruing income, and a round ten thousand dollars in Government bonds to the Protestant Home for Half-Orphans,—an institution in which, for many years, Mr. Orpiment had taken the liveliest interest, probably because in his early life he had been a half-orphan himself, and knew how very disagreeable it was,—after these rational and commendable bequests, the will took a new departure, and the rest of it was as eccentric and as arbitrary as even Mr. Orpiment himself had been; and that is saying a good deal.

It declared that all the rest, residue, and remainder of Mr. Orpiment's estate, real and personal, whatsoever and wheresoever, was given, devised, and bequeathed unto his executors,—Mr. Gamboge and Mr. Mangan Brown were the executors,—in trust, to collect and receive the income thereof, and to pay thereout all necessary charges and expenses, and to invest the surplus income each year, and to add the same to the principal of Mr. Orpiment's estate, and thus to reinvest and accumulate for the period of five years after Mr. Orpiment's decease; and at the expiration of the said period, to hold the said principal, with its additions and accumulations, upon the further trusts set out in a codicil

to this Mr. Orpiment's will, which codicil would be found in the top drawer of the small fire-proof safe in Mr. Orpiment's library; and (here was the queerest part of all) that until the expiration of the said five years this codicil was not to be opened under any circumstances whatsoever. The will further provided that until the five years should be ended Mr. Gamboge should carry on the business of the firm under the firm name; and, in an extremely peremptory clause, he was forbidden to give employment, in any shape or way, to young Orpiment. The leather business and the art business, the will stated dryly, were inharmonious; and inasmuch as young Orpiment had chosen the latter, the testator wished to leave him entirely free to carry it on undisturbed by the claims of the former upon his thought and time.

With this parting shot the will ended, as a sailor would say, short — without giving, save as such was to be found in the tidy legacy to the Protestant half-orphans, the least hint or suggestion as to what was to become of Mr. Orpiment's fortune at the end of the five years; without throwing the faintest ray of light upon the mystery that all this waiting and trust-creating involved. It was as queer a will as ever went to probate; indeed, had there been anybody besides young Orpiment to contest it, the probabilities are that it would not have been admitted to probate at all. But young Orpiment was Mr. Orpiment's sole kinsman; and, as matters stood just then, his pride was so thoroughly up that had he been called upon to choose between breaking the will and breaking his own neck, he would have chosen the latter alternative with all possible celerity.

And so, although he was dead and buried, Mr. Orpiment had arranged matters in such a fashion that for these five years at least it by no means could be said with any sort of truthfulness that he had perished from off the earth.

ABOUT this time there was not a happier family in all Greenwich, nor anywhere else, for that matter, than the Browns. Mr. Mangan Brown, in the large-hearted way that became his big body and big voice, and acting, of course, with the warm approval of Miss Caledonia, had urged Vandyke and Rose so heartily to bring the baby and come and live with them, that a refusal really was quite out of the question. So it came to pass that Mr. Mangan Brown, without the perceptible quiver of so much as an eyelash, signed a check big enough to pay for one of those delightful houses, with gardens in front of them, and broad verandas all the way up to their third stories, in West Eleventh street—which

also is a part of Greenwich village, as may be mentioned for the information of the mass of New Yorkers who know nothing of New York.

And in this pretty home, one bright May day, when the trees and gardens were glad in their fresh loveliness of delicious green, they all harmoniously took up their abode. Mr. Mangan Brown had the second-story front, and Miss Caledonia and Verona had the two second-story backs, and the third floor was given over to the baby and Vandyke and Rose. If anything could make brighter the bright spring-time, it was the sight of Rose and the baby on the veranda in the early morning sunlight—Rose, prettier than ever, laughing delightedly at the baby's earnest efforts to reach out over the row of flower-pots, and clutch the swaying branches of the trees. Before going to his big studio on Fourteenth street, to begin the work of the day, Van liked to smoke his after-breakfast pipe on the veranda and contemplate this pretty picture.

In the two years which had slipped away since his marriage a good deal more than he ever had dared even to hope for had come to pass. Thanks to his own pluck and hard work, which had won for him Uncle Mangan's substantial backing, he now was as successful an artist as there was to be found in all New York. At times, in contemplation of his good fortune, he was rather more than half inclined to think that he must be somebody else; an excess of mysticism that Rose resolutely refused to countenance—for in such a case who was she married to? she pertinently asked. As to Mr. Mangan Brown, from being rather a grumpy sort of an old fellow, he had come to be positively beaming—a sort of overgrown fairy godfather, as it were, to the whole household. Not even the most remote allusion did he now make to the commercial rather than natural genesis of Miss Caledonia's back hair; and by this sign Miss Caledonia knew that he had experienced a change of heart. Moreover, he was instant in good works to each of the several members of the family; indeed, the extraordinary gifts which he constantly brought home to little Madder (named for his grandfather, of course) kept Rose constantly in a condition between laughter and tears.

"What can Madder possibly do with a grindstone, Uncle Mangan?"

"Possibly nothing at present, my dear. But I remember when I was a boy and lived in the country, I wanted a grindstone more than anything else in the world—especially after David Heaton, the wheelwright, you know, said that I couldn't use his; and I am

sure that Madder will be glad enough, when he is a little older, to have one of his own. It can go in the cellar until he wants it, and in the mean time it will be useful to sharpen the carving knife."

Rose shuddered as her imagination conjured up a ghastly picture of Madder more or less cut to pieces with the knives which the grindstone had made cruelly sharp; and she registered a mental vow that only over her dead body should her offspring ever come into possession of this shocking gift.

Now two of the most constant of the rather numerous visitors to this exceptionally happy household were young Orpiment and Mr. Gamboge. All the way along for the past twenty years or so, Mr. Gamboge had been in the habit of spending one or two evenings in each and every week in company with Mr. Mangan Brown—his friend and also his associate in trade. Mr. Gamboge and Mr. Mangan Brown had known each other ever since they were boys; and M. Brown & Co. and Orpiment & Gamboge owned in partnership a tannery in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, and in various other directions the interests of the two firms were identical. Ostensibly, the visits of Mr. Gamboge were for the purpose of quietly and comfortably talking over the affairs of the tannery; but it was an open secret—in part revealed by the exceptionally careful brushing bestowed upon his fuzzy, close-cropped, grayish hair, by the exceeding smoothness of his smooth-shaven, fresh-colored face, by the admirable precision of the cut and fit of his neat black clothes—that their real object was Miss Caledonia. And there was a pleasant twinkle in his kindly gray eyes when they happened to meet—as they very often did—Miss Caledonia's kindly brown ones, that made this open secret more open still.

In point of fact, for nearly the full term of the twenty years during which Mr. Gamboge had been making his weekly visits, he had held toward Miss Caledonia the somewhat trying position of an earnest but undeclared lover. His earnestness could not for a moment be doubted; but although Miss Caledonia—in a strictly proper and maidenly manner, be it understood—had contrived that he should have at least one opportunity in each week during the past twenty years for making to her a formal tender of the heart that she well knew without such tender was hers, it was a melancholy fact that each of these ten hundred and forty opportunities successively had been wasted.

"Did he say anything to-night, Caledonia?"

"No, brother, not to-night. I think—I think that next week——"

"Um. Possibly. Good-night, Caledonia."

"Good-night, brother."

This conversation between Mr. Mangan Brown and Miss Caledonia had come to be stereotyped. Before Mr. Mangan experienced his change of heart this was the occasion that he usually took for referring to the commercial characteristics of her back hair in terms as pointed as they were unkind. And not seldom would he go even further, and advise that Miss Caledonia should investigate into the requirements precedent to admission into Saint Luke's Home for Aged Couples, on Hudson street—assuring her that if ever she and Mr. Gamboge got so far along as to want a home for couples of any sort, this certainly would be the only home at all suited to their needs. Many and many a night, her night-cap being drawn well down over the thinly-thatched region that was covered luxuriantly by the hair of commerce by day, did Miss Caledonia fall asleep with tears in her gentle brown eyes and heaviness in her heart. But, being a round little woman of sanguine temperament, she managed on the whole to keep up her courage pretty well. Each week, when Mr. Gamboge meaningly pressed her plump little hand as he bade her good-night, yet left still unsaid what he had come expressly to say, she believed that the next week would see his moral strength established firmly at last; that then the words would be spoken which he so earnestly longed to utter, and which she so earnestly longed to hear. And so believing, Miss Caledonia lived on always in hope.

Now the trouble with Mr. Gamboge that made him keep silence in this provoking fashion was a constitutional indecision that he could in nowise overcome. Never did there live a man with less of positiveness in his nature than Mr. Gamboge had in his. This was the reason why he and Mr. Orpiment always had got along so well together. Mr. Orpiment, on the shortest notice, could be positive enough about anything for six ordinary people, and upon this superabundance of resolution Mr. Gamboge was accustomed to draw in order to make good his own lack. Indeed, he could not have adopted any other line of conduct without getting into difficulties, for Mr. Orpiment, as is the way with positive people the world over, could not tolerate even the most remote approach to positiveness on the part of anybody else. He might admit, perhaps, though certainly disdainfully, that in the abstract two or more opinions might be entertained upon a given subject; but the moment that the matter became concrete, his view narrowed into the unalterable conviction that there was just one single tenable opinion concerning it—and that was his. And, if

peace was to be preserved, that opinion had to be adopted in a hurry. Mr. Gamboge, whose love of peace was so great that it was the only thing in the world that he would have fought for, always adopted his partner's opinions with a becoming alacrity. Nor did he, while Mr. Orpiment's convictions were in course of formation, venture to have any of his own. If appealed to under such conditions, his answer invariably was: "I am waiting to confer with Mr. Orpiment." And upon the rare occasions when, in some matter foreign to the affairs of the firm, he ventured so far as to express views distinctively his own, it had come to be his habit to preface his remarks with some such phrase as "Under these conditions, I think that Mr. Orpiment would say," or "In a case of this sort, I think that Mr. Orpiment would do." The fact was observed, however, by people who knew both the members of the firm well, that what Mr. Gamboge thus said or did under the supposititious shelter of Mr. Orpiment's mantle, usually had a deal more of quiet good sense about it than probably would have been manifested had the matter really been settled by Mr. Orpiment himself.

For some time after that morning when Mr. Orpiment staid at home and died in his bed instead of coming down-town in the Bleecker street car, the habit of referring to his late partner's opinions increased upon Mr. Gamboge greatly. Not a hide, not even a kip, did he buy or sell without having something to say to the seller or buyer as to what Mr. Orpiment would have thought about the terms upon which the transaction was concluded. But again it was observed by certain long-headed leather-men down in the Swamp, that since the decease of the senior partner the firm of Orpiment & Gamboge was doing a much larger and also a much safer business than ever it had done while the very positive Mr. Orpiment was alive.

However, the habit of a life-time cannot be given over in a day. It is true that Mr. Gamboge, now that Mr. Orpiment was buried and done for, was beginning gradually to have a few opinions and a trifling amount of positiveness of his own; but as yet it was all too soon to expect him to possess, still less to act upon, a positive opinion touching this momentous matter of his own heart and Miss Caledonia's hand.

As to the other visitor at the Brown's, young Orpiment, matters were entirely different. With an energetic promptness that was strictly in keeping with the traditions of his family, he had declared his love for Verona under the most unfavorable circumstances and in the most unmistakable terms. With a

disregard of prudence and reason that was positively heroic, he had made this avowal on the very day that his uncle had bidden him begone to his paint-pots and starve. Whether he thought that love, being had in sufficient quantities, would make starvation impossible, or that if he must starve it would be pleasanter to do it in loving company, I am not prepared to say; but it is a fact that in less than three hours after he had, as he put it, disinherited his uncle, he had asked Verona Brown to marry him—and Verona Brown, collapsing from the pinnacle of dignity upon which usually she was exalted, suffered her beautiful dark hair to be shockingly tumbled upon young Orpiment's shoulder, and, with infinite tenderness and infinite love in her sweet, low voice, told him very frankly that she would!

There was a suggestion, at least, of poetic justice in this reckless entanglement of Verona's affections by young Orpiment; for it was Vandyke Brown who had been very largely the cause of the entanglement of young Orpiment's affections by the goddess Art, to the utter ruin of his exceptionally brilliant prospects in the leather business. Young Orpiment had artistic talent, possibly artistic genius, and Brown had the wit to perceive it. Without thinking of the harm that he might be doing, he urged young Orpiment to abandon the leather that he hated and to give himself to the art that he loved; and it was not until his advice was taken, and he was called upon to behold the pretty kettle of fish that had come of it, that he perceived what a serious responsibility the giving of advice involves. With his own dreary experience still fresh in mind, he realized far more clearly than young Orpiment did, or could, how nearly hopeless is the struggle for artistic success when the artist has to earn his daily bread as he goes along. But he kept these cheerful reflections to himself—that is to say, to himself and Rose. They were quite agreed that young Orpiment and Verona had a sufficiency of troubles in hand without being called upon to take any upon interest.

To be sure, there was a ray of hope for a moment when Mr. Orpiment died, for young Orpiment was his legal and only heir. But this hope was promptly extinguished, or pretty nearly so, by Mr. Orpiment's extraordinary double-barreled will—with that ominous legacy in the first barrel to the Protestant half-orphans.

"It will be just like the old wretch to have left those miserable half-orphans every cent of his money, Van," said Rose with energetic determination. "And a nice thing that will be, to be sure; turning all their heads by making so many millionaires of them!"

"The 'ome 'alf-orphan," observed Jaune d'Antimoine, who happened to be present when Rose thus freed her mind. "Ah, 'e is the establisment most curious in Tens street. I've much vondered at 'im. Tell me, my Van, what is this 'ome 'alf-orphan?"

"It's a place where they take care of children born with only one leg and one arm. Of course, children like that have to be taken care of by somebody. It's a capital charity. We'll go down there some day and see 'em. They're a jolly queer lot; all go about hopping, you know."

"Nonsense, Van. Don't believe him, M. d'Antimoine. They are called half-orphans because they have only one father or one mother. I'm a half-orphan myself."

"Eh? But, truly, Madame Brown, it is not most common for the child to 'ave more than one father or one mother — not, that is, is it thought well that 'e should 'ave more. Ah, pardon! I forget that Madame says that she is 'erself 'alf-orphan. No doubt to be so is most well in this country. In America is not as in France."

M. d'Antimoine no more comprehended why Brown went off into such fits of laughter, nor why Rose blushed a little and laughed too, than he did the laborious explanation of the constituent elements of a half-orphan that Brown, under the circumstances, felt called upon to make to him.

But whether Mr. Orpiment's money was or was not destined for the use of this excellent charity, there was no ground for hoping that any part of it was destined for his nephew; the spiteful clause in the will forbidding Mr. Gamboge to give employment to young Orpiment cut hope in this direction short off. Obviously, this clause was put in to serve as a check upon any indiscretion that Mr. Gamboge might be led into by what Mr. Orpiment always had styled his absurdly soft heart; and it was a patent declaration of a tolerably positive sort that young Orpiment was disinherited. His sole fortune, under these circumstances, was a little property that had come down to him from his father, and that yielded him the magnificent income of four hundred and seventy-one dollars a year. However, this was enough to keep a roof over his head, and to feed him and to give him at very long intervals something in the way of new clothes. Mr. Gamboge, by artfully representing the solitariness of his own home, did his best to make young Orpiment come and share it with him; but his uncommonly tall stories about his melancholy loneliness — stories, let us hope, which were promptly blotted out in the celestial account against him by the friendly tears of the recording angel — did

not deceive his auditor. Gratefully, but decidedly, the tender thus made of exceedingly comfortable free quarters was declined. But the invitations to dinner that Mr. Gamboge and the Browns showered upon him could not be refused — at least not without giving pain; and so, while his raiment was anything but purple and fine linen, young Orpiment at least fared sumptuously pretty nearly every day. And he was cheered and comforted, as only the love of a good woman can cheer and comfort a man, by the love of Verona Brown.

Verona certainly manifested a most conspicuous lack of worldly wisdom in thus lavishing her affections upon a man whose fortunes were so near to being desperate. But then — excepting in the case of Mr. Mangan — worldly wisdom was not a prominent characteristic of the Brown family; and even Mr. Mangan had less of it now than he had before he experienced his change of heart. Only a couple of years earlier in his life, acting in the capacity of Verona's guardian, he would have shown young Orpiment to the door with amazing promptitude and energy, had he ventured to present himself, under such circumstances as at present existed, in the guise of Verona's suitor. And, in truth, he had no great liking for what was going on now; but now, at least, he took a larger, a more liberal view of life than had been his habit in the past, — for the lesson that he had learned from his relations with Van had made him more tolerant. Therefore it was that, instead of heaping maledictions upon young Orpiment's head, he ordered a landscape from him. In due time this order was filled, and the picture was sent home. There was ever so much of it, and its light and shade were ever so queer, and there was something dreadfully wrong in its perspective; but, for all its eccentricities, there were in it hints of genuine good quality. It was a harrowing thing to look at, of course; but its badness was the badness of a crudity in which there was hope.

So they had young Orpiment to dinner, and after dinner the picture was hung solemnly over the mantel-piece in the front parlor. This was an honorable position for it to occupy, and it was a position that possessed certain practical advantages; for when the gas was lighted, unless you climbed over one of the diagonally placed sofas and got quite into one of the corners of the room, the picture had such a glitter upon it that it simply was invisible. Old Madder, who also was dining with them that night, began to comment upon this fact — and only made matters worse by asking Rose, in an aggrieved tone, what he was saying that he shouldn't say to make her pinch him so.

Of course this was not a genuine sale, looking at the matter from an artist's standpoint; and certain other sales—to Mr. Gamboge and to some of the friends of these two purchasers—were not genuine either; but they served their well-meant purpose of keeping the fire going under the pot that young Orpiment so gallantly was striving to make boil.

Old Madder, by the way, much enjoyed dining with the young people, and they and Mr. Mangan and Miss Caledonia made him very welcome. At these dinners he conducted himself upon the lines of a serious dignity, and seriously talked art to Mr. Mangan, whose knowledge of art was limited to a commercial appreciation of the value of gilt decorations on red leather boot-tops designed for the Western trade; or, when he happened to be in a cantankerous mood, made vicious thrusts at Van and the young geniuses generally, under the guise of lamentations over the degeneracy of modern painters. His own work, of course, continued to be as exasperating as ever. He nearly drove Van wild by insisting upon painting a portrait of little Madder, that was hung on the line at the Academy, and that was described in the catalogue as "Grandfather's Darling." From the degenerate modern painters with whom he associated Van did not hear the last of that horrible caricature of his first-born for years. Among the League men the picture was styled "The Slaughter of the Innocent"—which naturally enough led somebody to speak of the artist as Herod, and so won for old Madder the nickname of Herod Madder that he bore, without knowing it, to the end of his days. After this bitter experience, when old Madder wanted to paint Rose and the new baby, little Caledonia (to all intents and purposes his "Soldier's Widow and Orphaned Child" over again), and call it "The Young Mother's First Love," Brown put his foot down firmly and said that it should not be done. And not until several months had passed—in the course of which old Madder gradually had convinced himself that Brown was jealous of his superior work, and that, under these circumstances, he could afford to be magnanimous—did old Madder and Brown get along well together again.

By the time that this second baby was born Brown had conquered so firm a standing-place and was so crowded with work that his acceptance of an order had come to be considered something of a favor. Young Orpiment, being present one day when an order actually was rejected, and knowing that Brown had fought and won just such a battle as he was fighting, felt himself stirred with hope.

And, in truth, as the season of his apprenticeship wore away, there came to be a good deal for young Orpiment to feel hopeful about. Working steadily and earnestly, the weeks and the months slipped by until he found behind him, since the day when he forswore Leather as a master and took for his mistress Art, three whole years; and three years of honest hard work, if a man has got anything in him to begin with, is bound to tell. His little pictures—after those first orders he had the sense not to paint big ones—had a fair sale now on their merits. They did not sell for much, it is true, and they still were a long way off from being really good work; but at least the good quality that was in them no longer was obscured by bad perspective and by doubtful light and shade. They had a clear, fresh tone, moreover, that was distinctively their own. Being sent to the exhibitions, they no longer were rejected; and some of the more recent ones had taken a most encouraging step downward from the sky toward the line. The newspapers began to mention his work respectfully, and "The Skeptic," with an amiable exercise of its powers of prophecy based upon its faculty for recognizing genius in embryo, even went so far as to say that in him another landscape-painter had been born.

All this was tremendously encouraging, of course, and young Orpiment was heartened and comforted by it greatly; but even with such good fortune attending him, he could not but find weariness in his long time of waiting for an income from his work that would enable him to make Verona his wife. Both Mr. Mangan Brown and Mr. Gamboge had offered repeatedly to discount for him the future that now pretty certainly was his; but this good offer, with Verona's entire approval, he decidedly refused. If Verona would wait for him while he worked, he said,—and the light of a strong resolution shone in his blue eyes,—he would work on until his success was won. And Verona, with the gentle dignity that was natural to her, drew up her tall, graceful figure to its full height, and answered simply that she would wait—would wait, she said, and with out the least intention of irony, for forty years.

For these expectant lovers, the example set them by Miss Caledonia and Mr. Gamboge was most encouraging. What was their three years of probation in comparison with the three-and-twenty years of probation that their elders had endured? And the encouragement thus given was all the greater because, as time went on, the matrimonial prospects of Mr. Gamboge and Miss Caledonia apparently stood still. In the past three years Miss Caledonia had contrived near eight-score fresh

opportunities for the long-delayed proposal; and on each of these several occasions Mr. Gamboge had hesitated until his opportunity was lost. On the whole, however, Miss Caledonia's sanguine nature found cause for encouragement in the perceptible change that had come over Mr. Gamboge as these three years sped by. No less than twice, to her certain knowledge, had he expressed positively a positive opinion of his own. On a memorable Saturday he had said, in a firm voice, before the whole family assembled at the dinner-table, that rare roast beef was much improved by horse-radish. On a memorable Thursday evening he had said, addressing Mr. Mangan Brown, and in a tone of bold effrontery that thrilled her soul with joy, that "this idiotic tinkering at the tariff on foreign leather was simply unpardonable." On neither of these occasions did Mr. Gamboge refer even remotely to Mr. Orpiment: not a word about Mr. Orpiment's preferences in the matter of applying horse-radish to roast beef; not a word about Mr. Orpiment's opinions in regard to the customs duties on foreign hides. Here was living proof that Mr. Gamboge was getting to have a mind of his own; and here, consequently, was substantial ground upon which Miss Caledonia could found her conviction that a happy ending to her long courting was near at hand.

Nor was this all. To the best of Miss Caledonia's belief, Mr. Gamboge actually once had got so far as to make a real start toward speaking the momentous words which would resolve into a glad certainty their three-and-twenty years of doubt. It was upon a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the late spring-time that Mr. Gamboge got started,—in the mellow weather when the buds of May were bursting into the blossoms of June, and all nature was glad with the bright promise of the coming summer's generous life. They two were seated alone upon the veranda, screened from the too-curious gaze of passers-by by festoons of the climbing plants which had shot up blithely since the warm days began; and Mr. Gamboge, in a state of post-prandial contentment, was smoking an especially satisfactory cigar. After the fashion of a dove-like serpent, Miss Caledonia by degrees had shifted the ground of their talk until it had come to be of the dreary life that Mr. Gamboge was leading in his great house wherein he dwelt alone. There was a tender solicitude in Miss Caledonia's tone that sunk deep into the heart of Mr. Gamboge and wrought great havoc there. Her low, gentle voice sounded sweetly in his ears; her suggestions for his comfort were practical without being revolutionary; he felt—but more keenly than ever before in

all the twenty-three years—that in Miss Caledonia he would find a helpmate indeed. His excellent dinner,—prepared, as he well knew, under Miss Caledonia's supervision,—his excellent cigar, the soft spring weather, Miss Caledonia's pleasingly plump person and sympathetic words: all these agreeable forces, acting upon his newly acquired disposition to have a mind of his own and speak it, conspired to make him utter the decisive words. A nervous thrill went over him, and he straightened himself in his chair. Miss Caledonia saw what was coming, and was struck with awe. She ceased speaking; her hands fluttered with her handkerchief; there was a trembling of her lips.

"In regard to our personal relations, Miss Caledonia, I am sure that Mr. Orpiment would have said—that is, I know that under these conditions Mr. Orpiment would have done—in fact, I am confident that Mr. Orpiment would have approved—"

"Oh, confound old Orpiment," said that wretched Vandyke Brown, stepping out upon the veranda through the open window in time to hear this last mention of Mr. Orpiment's name. "Of course you know, Mr. Gamboge," he went on, "I don't want to hurt your feelings, or anything,"—for he saw that Mr. Gamboge was very much upset,—“but when I think what a lot of good that old screw might have done by leaving his money to his nephew, and so giving him a fair start in the world, I really can't help hating the very sound of his name.

"Aunt Caledonia, Rose wants to know if you can tell what on earth has gone with Madder's light cloak. You had him out yesterday, you know, and Rose can't find it anywhere."

"You will find it where it belongs," answered Miss Caledonia frigidly, "on the third shelf of the closet in the back room."

And so good fortune had come sailing down over the sea of hope to Miss Caledonia,—even had stopped to signal her,—and then had sailed away! After that rude interruption the perturbed spirit of Mr. Gamboge—although Miss Caledonia did her best to bring it—could not be brought back to the tender mood that so fairly had promised a fair solution of the long-vexed problem of their lives. Still, having come thus close to happiness, Miss Caledonia felt more than ever certain that happiness yet would be hers.

So THE months went rolling on and on, and the time drew near when Mr. Orpiment's five years' lease upon posterity would end. Under the judicious management of Mr. Gamboge, his late partner's estate had increased prodigi-

giously, and the prospects of the Protestant half-orphans were amazingly fine.

"I don't doubt that the miserable little creatures will get fifty thousand dollars apiece—and I hope that it will choke them!" said Rose in a fine burst of indignation and in a fine mixture of metaphors. Nothing that Van could say could convince Rose that Mr. Orpiment's property would not be divided up among the individual half-orphans in the asylum at the time when the bequest became operative.

As to young Orpiment, he really did not care very much now whether the half-orphans got his uncle's money or not. He was fairly on his legs by this time, with a steady income of two thousand dollars or so a year, and he and Verona were to be married very soon. Of course, they would have to live in a very quiet way, and some of the things which they most wanted to do—the trip to the glorious mountain region of northern New Mexico, for instance—would have to wait awhile. But the great point was that at last he was earning enough by his own work to permit him, without utterly defying Mr. Mangan Brown and worldly wisdom, to make Verona his wife.

For young Orpiment had fought bravely and had won gallantly his battle for the standard of Art. And wasn't Verona proud of him, though! For Verona knew that his fight for success as an artist was only the visible form of his fight for success as a lover; and all the wealth of her strong love, all her honoring esteem, went out to this her hero, who, for her love's sake, had conquered the world!

With the solemnity befitting so decisive an occasion, Mr. Gamboge wrote a formal invitation to young Orpiment to be present, on the fifth anniversary of the day after the day of Mr. Orpiment's death, at the going off of the second barrel of Mr. Orpiment's will. But in order to mitigate the formality a little, and to make somewhat less solemn the solemnity, Mr. Gamboge himself handed the written invitation to young Orpiment, and added to it a verbal invitation to come and dine with him as a preliminary to the reading. Under the circumstances, the fact was obvious that Verona had a constructive right to be present when the will was read; and as Verona could not with propriety be present alone, the necessity presented itself of asking Miss Caledonia to come with her. Naturally, this suggested the advisability of asking Mr. Mangan Brown too. And having got this far, Mr. Gamboge concluded that he might just as well go a little farther and ask Van and Rose and old Madder; and so he did.

It was only a lucky accident, however,

that saved the party from being entirely broken up by a rash act of little Caledonia. Van wanted Rose's hands for something that he was painting, and she had gone up to the studio the day before the will dinner-party—as she styled the feast that Mr. Gamboge was to give—taking the baby along with her. There was not much of this baby, and she was not quite two years old, but she had a faculty for getting into pickles far beyond her size and years. However, there did not seem to be much chance for her to get into trouble on the studio floor.

The fact must be confessed that, although they had been married for five years, Rose and Van had a shocking habit of philandering; and so it fell out, when he had put in her hands to his satisfaction, that he had laid down his palette and brushes on the foot of his easel, and somehow they had drifted into the big chair, and had got to talking about that autumn morning when "Lydia Darragh" perished, and the great happiness of their lives began.

"It was dreadful, Van, the way that I told you, right out before all those men, that I loved you! I never can think of it without blushing." (Rose was blushing most charmingly, and that was a fact.) "But I really never thought of them at all, and that's the solemn truth. All that I thought of was your ruined work, and of what you were working for—it was me that you were working for, you know, and I knew all about it!—and of trying to comfort you. *Did* it comfort you, dear? Are you *sure*, Van, that you are glad that you married? Have I *really* made you happy? You are so good to me——"

"Caledonia! *Caledonia!* STOP! Merciful heaven, Van, she's got your palette and is eating the paints! Our child is poisoned! She will die!" And Rose shot up, much as she would have done had Van been a catapult and suddenly gone off, and caught the chromnivorous infant in her arms.

Van was pretty badly scared too, but he had his wits about him, and looked at the palette before giving his assent to Rose's alarmed proposition that death by poison must be the inevitable result of Caledonia's unnatural repast.

"Steady, Rose. I guess it's all right. She's begun at the black end of the palette, luckily, and she's eaten only as far as asphaltum. No doubt she'll have a lively time in her little inside, but she hasn't had a scrap of the light colors, and there's nothing in the dark ones to damage her much. But we'd better rush her off to the doctor, all the same."

And Van was right. Caledonia did not perish, but she had a tremendously large



"PHILANDERING."

stomach-ache for so small a stomach, and she kept her bed for the remainder of the day. Mr. Mangan Brown, in a well-meant endeavor to mitigate the severity of her sufferings, the very next morning bought her a concertina, and a pair of skates, and a richly illustrated octavo *Life of Washington*. That these appropriate gifts inured to her betterment is problematical, but she certainly was so completely recovered by the ensuing evening that her illness was no barrier to the success of the will dinner-party given by Mr. Gamboge.

The dinner in every way was excellent—although Miss Caledonia secretly noticed certain shortcomings in the service, which she promptly resolved should be corrected when she was called upon to take command. But for all the excellence of the dinner, the assembled company was disposed to slight it—to hurry through with it in order to get at the reading of the will. Even the fact that young Orpiment on that very day had sold his big picture, "Spring on the Hudson Highlands," for \$450,—the highest price that anything of his so far had brought,—scarcely made a ripple upon the strong stream of curiosity that was sweeping forward toward the moment when positive knowledge would determine what part the Protestant half-orphans were to play in the final disposition of Mr. Orpiment's estate.

"If it wasn't for Verona, he might pick out the nicest looking of the girl half-orphans for a wife, and get part of it back that way," said Rose under her breath to Van,

as they passed from the dining-room to the library, where Mr. Gamboge was to read the will. "But as things are, though," she added with a touch of melancholy in her tone, "that is quite out of the question."

"Yes," said Van, "it is. And you are a goose." And he stopped her in the shadow to leeward of the eight-day clock and kissed her.

"Of course you all know," said Mr. Gamboge in a slightly oratorical tone, holding the sealed will in his hand, "that I have no knowledge whatever of the contents of this document. Should its contents be what I fear they are, you all know that I shall feel, as you all will feel, that a great injustice has been done to our young and gifted friend; to our friend, who by his noble force of character, not less than by his great genius—"

"Don't," said young Orpiment, appealingly.

"Well, I won't," said Mr. Gamboge, dropping suddenly from his oratorical heights. "But I will say this: if the estate don't come to you, my dear boy, I shall think less of Mr. Orpiment's judgment than I ever did—and I never did think much of it, anyway."

At these spirited words Miss Caledonia's heart gave a bound—for she perceived that now, beyond a doubt or a peradventure, Mr. Gamboge had come into the kingdom of his personal independence at last; and she was his waiting queen! As for Mr. Mangan Brown, his lower jaw dropped as though the muscles had parted; and Van gave utterance

to a prolonged whistle that Rose had the presence of mind to conceal by coughing violently.

Oblivious to the sensation caused by his revolutionary declaration, Mr. Gamboge adjusted his spectacles, broke the three black seals, and began the reading of the will. It set out with the affirmation that Mr. Orpiment feared God and was in his right mind,—statements which caused Miss Caledonia to click her heels together doubtfully,—and went on with a list of the testator's possessions: the house in which he had lived, and some other houses; his share in the tannery in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania; some warehouses down-town; some building-lots on Seventy-ninth street; various stocks and bonds; and his interest in the leather business carried on by the firm of Orpiment & Gamboge.

"I wonder how the half-orphans will settle about the houses and building-lots?" Rose whispered inquiringly as Mr. Gamboge paused at the end of the list.

"Draw lots for 'em, probably," Van whispered in reply.

Mr. Gamboge read on: "Whereas, by my will to which this codicil is supplement, I gave all my residuary estate to my executors upon certain trusts, now I appoint the further trusts referred to in said will as contained in this codicil."

At last Mr. Orpiment's intentions were to be made plain. Everybody bent forward, listening eagerly, and Mr. Gamboge could not keep his voice from trembling: "At the end of the said period of five years from the time of my decease I direct my executors to assign, convey, and pay over the whole of my residuary estate with its increase and accumulations to the person who, when the same is payable, shall act as treasurer to the Society for the Relief of Half-Orphan and Destitute Children in the city of New York, to be applied to the charitable uses and purposes of said society under its direction." Mr. Gamboge gave an audible groan, laid the will down on his knee, took off his spectacles, which suddenly had grown misty, and with his silk handkerchief wiped them dry.

"The unfeeling, unnatural, heartless old wretch!" cried Rose.

"Never mind, dear; you have conquered fortune for yourself, and I love you a thousand times more for it," said Verona in a low voice, as she took young Orpiment's hand in both of hers.

"It is shameful!" said Miss Caledonia.

"It is just what I expected," said Mr. Mangan Brown; "but I'm uncommonly sorry for you, all the same, Orpiment."

"It's all my fault, for leading you off into painting; I hope devoutly that you may live

long enough to forgive me, old fellow," said Van ruefully.

"Nonsense, Van. You've been the making of me, and I never can be sufficiently thankful to you," young Orpiment answered in a cheery tone that had a thoroughly genuine ring to it.

"Art alone is worth living for, Mr. Orpiment," said old Madder. "Because you have escaped the thralldom of riches, I congratulate you with all my heart!"

"There's another page of the thing," said Mr. Gamboge dismally, and making as he spoke a suspicious dab at his eyes with his big handkerchief. "We may as well get done with it," and he turned the page and read on:

"Provided, that at the end of said period of five years from the time of my decease my nephew shall not have proved, by earning from the sale of his pictures an income of not less than \$2000 yearly, that in abandoning the leather business and in adopting the business of picture-painting, he was right in the choice of his vocation and I was wrong. Should this very improbable contingency arise, then at the time aforesaid I direct my executors to assign, convey, and pay over to him, my said nephew, the whole of my residuary estate with its increase and accumulations, to him, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns forever."

"God bless you, my dear boy!" fairly shouted Mr. Gamboge, dashing down the will and his spectacles and his handkerchief upon the floor, and rushing over to young Orpiment and hugging him. "God bless you, my dear boy, the estate really is yours after all!"

And everybody—everybody, that is, but Verona and old Madder—in the delight and excitement of the moment, followed Mr. Gamboge's exhilarating example. Even the staid Mr. Mangan Brown, even the decorous Miss Caledonia, hugged young Orpiment as hard as ever they knew how. Verona just sat still and looked at him, and through the tears in her lovely brown eyes there shone the light of a great joy and the tenderness of a greater love. The thought that she also was a gainer by this revolution in young Orpiment's fortunes never once crossed her mind; all that she thought of was that his life of toil and struggle now was at an end; that for her hard-working hero the chance to do good work restfully had come at last.

(It was not until an hour or so later, when they were walking home together, that another phase of the matter presented itself to Rose—she was a great hand for seeing things in original lights. "Do you know, Van," she said in a

very melancholy voice, "I can't help feeling dreadfully sorry for those poor little Protestant half-orphans? To think of their coming so near to being heirs and heiresses, and then not getting a single bit of their fortunes after all!")

Old Madder, waiting till the storm had subsided a little, and standing, as it were, afar off, did what he could to throw a wet blanket over the general joy by saying mournfully:

"I hope that this is for the best, Mr. Orpiment; but I fear that it is for the worst. Art is a jealous mistress, and Wealth is her sworn foe. You have my sincere pity, sir; for I sincerely believe that you are a ruined man!"

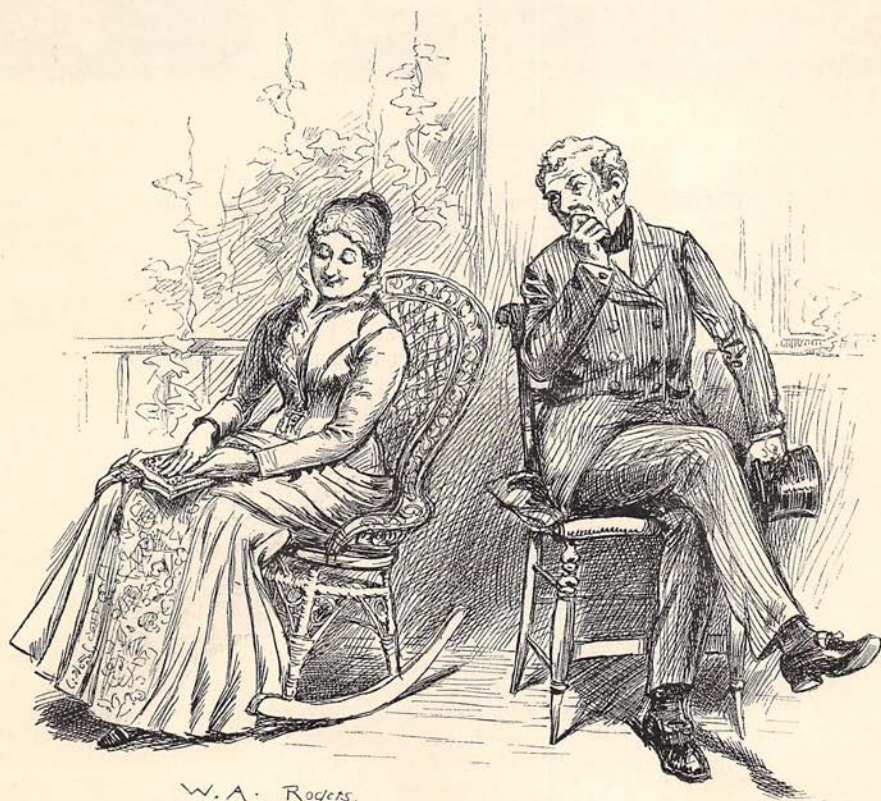
However, old Madder's wet blanket was not a success, for his genial gloom no more could stay the eruption of happiness that had begun than a real wet blanket could stay an eruption of Vesuvius. Indeed, nobody paid the least attention to what he was saying, for just as he began his cheerful remarks Mr. Gamboge, looking rather nervous, but also looking very much resolved, rose to his feet with the air of a man who is about to make a speech. Somehow there was that in

his manner that made all the blood in Miss Caledonia's body rush tumultuously to her heart. Her prophetic soul told her that it was coming now in very truth!

"My dear Brown," said Mr. Gamboge, addressing Mr. Mangan, "there is a matter very near to my heart, concerning which I long have desired to speak with you. Possibly you may have noticed that my attentions to your sister, Miss Caledonia, for some time past have been rather marked?"

"I have observed the phenomenon to which you refer," answered Mr. Mangan, for Mr. Gamboge had spoken interrogatively, and had paused for a reply—"I have observed the phenomenon to which you refer, my dear Gamboge, pretty constantly for the past twenty-five years."

"Precisely," said Mr. Gamboge, in a tone indicating that he felt encouraged. "You are right, my dear Brown, as you always are. My reckoning of the number of years during which my attentions to Miss Caledonia have been, as I say, rather marked corresponds with yours exactly. And it seems to me, my dear Brown, that this period has been of a sufficient extent to enable us—that is, to enable Miss



W.A. Rogers.

Caledonia and me—to acquire such ample knowledge of each other's tastes, habits, and moral characteristics as will justify us in deciding now whether or not we prudently may advance to a yet closer relationship.”

“Looking at the matter dispassionately, my dear Gamboge, I should say that it had.”

“My own sentiments, my dear Brown, I may say, are, and for some years past have been, unalterably established. I revere your sister, Miss Caledonia, as the best and wisest of women. Under the existing circumstances, Mrs. Brown and Miss Verona will pardon, I am sure, this expression of what, under any other circumstances, might be considered, if not a too exalted, at least a too exclusive, estimate of her virtues.”

“Certainly,” said Rose.

“Of course,” said Verona.

“Entertaining these unalterable sentiments, therefore, my dear Brown, the strongest, the

holiest wish of my life is to make her my wife. To you, as her natural protector, to her, as the arbiter of her own destiny, I now appeal—on this auspicious occasion when my young friend Orpiment wears proudly in our presence his tripartite crown of riches, genius, and requited love. My dear Brown, may I have her? Miss Caledonia, will you be mine?”

“May he have you, Caledonia?”

“Oh, brother! how can you ask? It—it shall—be just as you say.”

“Then I say, and I say it heartily, my dear Gamboge, take her—and God bless you both!” and Mr. Mangan Brown led the blushing Miss Caledonia to Mr. Gamboge and placed her hand in his.

And so, young Orpiment having come into his fortune, and Mr. Gamboge having come into his kingdom, Mr. Orpiment's lease upon posterity was canceled, and he really was dead at last.

Ivory Black.



UNLOOKED-FOR RETURN.

WHEN I had said good-bye, chance brought me back,
And I went softly in, by friendship's right;
The room so lately left was lone and black,
The next, all gay with laughter and the light.

I listened. Just one voice I cared to hear,
That lately gave sweet answers unto mine;
But when it reached me, with a tone as dear,
It proffered others graceful things in wine.

Bitter at heart, I yet could hardly go
Without a reassurance for my doubt;
And gave a sign, it seemed my friend would know,
That, for a moment, she might slip without.

Nay! far too loud for that, the mirth and jest,
So I withdrew, my presence all unknown;
Naught left to show that I had been a guest,
The secret of my coming, mine alone.

Now, can I fancy well how it may be
If, after death, I sometimes so steal in,—
Newly engrossed the soul I come to see,
While lone and dark the room where I have been.

Charlotte Fiske Bates.