The Damsel and the Sage: A Woman's Whimsies

Elinor Glyn



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THE DAMSEL

AND

THE SAGE

A WOMAN'S WHIMSIES

By ELINOR GLYN

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To

THE SUN'S RAYS

A tree stood alone surrounded by high and low hills. It could be observed from all sides, and it appeared different from each elevation.

The tree was the same, only the point of view differed.

Everything depends upon the point of view.

"And as to the meaning, it's what you please."

"***C. S. C.***"

THE DAMSEL AND THE SAGE

A

nd the Damsel said to the Sage:

"Now, what is life? And why does the fruit taste bitter in the mouth?"

And the Sage answered, as he stepped from his cave:

"My child, there was once a man who had two ears like other people. They were naturally necessary for his enjoyment of the day. But one of these ears offended his head. It behaved with stupidity, thinking thereby to enhance its value to him—it heard too much. Oh, it conducted itself with a gross stupidity. 'Out upon you,' cried the man; 'since you have overstepped the limit of the functions of an ear, I shall cut you from my head!' And so, without hesitation, he took a sword and accomplished the deed. The poor ear then lay upon the ground bleeding, and the man went about with a mutilated head."

"And what was the good of all that?" said the Damsel.

"There was no good in it," replied the Sage. "But he was a man, and he had punished the too-fond-and-foolish ear—also he hoped a new and more suitable one would grow in its place. 'Change,' he said, 'was a thing to be welcomed.'"

"And tell me, Sage, what became of the ear?" asked the Damsel.

"The ear fared better. Another man of greater shrewdness came along, and, although he had two ears of his own, he said, 'A third will not come amiss,' and he picked up the ear and heard with three ears instead of two. So he became knowing and clever because of the information he

acquired in this way. The grafted ear grew and flourished, and, in spite of its remaining abnormal, it obtained a certain enjoyment out of existence."

"But who *really* benefited by all this?" inquired the Damsel.

"No one," said the Sage; "the first man went about with only one ear; the second man made himself remarkable with three—and the cut-off ear, although alive and successful, felt itself an excrescence."

"Then what *could* be the pleasure of it all?" demanded the Damsel.

"Out upon *you*!" exclaimed the Sage, in a passion. "You asked me what was life—and why the fruit tasted bitter in the mouth? I have answered you."

And he went back into his cave and barred the door.

The Damsel sat down upon a stone outside.

"It seems to me that men are fools," she said, and she clapped her hands to her two ears. "When I am angry and offended with one of you, I will cut the ear from off the head of some one else."

And she picked up an apple and ate it. And it tasted sweet.

A man will often fling away a woman who has wronged him although in doing so he is deeply hurting himself. A woman will forgive a man who has wronged her because her own personal pleasure in him is greater than her outraged pride. Hence women are more unconscious philosophers than men.

The Damsel returned again to the cave of the Sage. There were other questions she wished to ask about life. The door was hard to push ajar, but at last she obtained entrance.

"What do you want now?" he demanded, with a voice of grumbling. "Were you not content with my last utterances?"

"Yes—and no," said the Damsel. "I came to quite other conclusions myself. I would have kept the ear on my head, since cutting one off, however it had angered me, would have upset my own comfort."

"We have finished with that matter now," said the Sage, showing signs of impatience—he was still a man. "What next?"

"I want to know," said the Damsel, "why a woman who has Diamonds and Pearls and Emeralds and Rubies in her possession should set such store upon a Topaz—a yellow Topaz—the color she dislikes—and a Topaz of uneven temper and peculiar properties. She never wears this stone that it does not bruise her, now her neck, now her arm. It is restless and slips from its chain. It will not remain in the case with the other jewels. And at last she has lost it—she fears for good and all. And so now all the other stones, which seemed very well in their way, have grown of even less value in her eyes, and she can only lament the loss of her Topaz. 'I am brilliant,' cries the Diamond. 'I set off your eyes, and I love you.' 'I am soft and caressing,' whispers the Pearl. 'I lie close to your white skin and keep it cool, and I love you.' 'I am witty,' laughs the Emerald. 'I make your thoughts flash, and I love you.' 'I am the color of blood, and I would die for you,' chants the Ruby, 'and I love you.' And all these things the stones say all the day to her, and yet the woman only listens with half an ear, and their words have no effect upon her because of the charm of this tiresome Topaz. What does it all mean, Sage?"

"It means, first of all," said the Sage, "that the woman is a fool, as what is the value of a Topaz in comparison with a Diamond or a Ruby? It means, secondly, that the Topaz is a greater fool, because it would be more agreeable surely to lie close to the woman's soft neck than to be picked up by any stranger or lie neglected in the dust. But, above and beyond everything, it means that cherries are ripest when out of reach, and that the whole world is full of fools of either opinion, who do not know when they are well off."

Upon which the Sage, with his usual lack of manners, retired into his cave and slammed his door.

The Damsel sat down upon the rock and came again to her own conclusions. The stone that apparently was a Topaz was in reality a yellow Diamond of great rarity and worth, and that was why the woman valued it so highly. Her instincts were stronger than her reason. But if she had not made herself so cheap by adoring the stone, it would not have become restless and she would not have lost it. Even stones cannot stand too much honey. If ever the woman should find this yellow Diamond again she must be told to keep it in a cool box and not caress it or place it above the others.

The Damsel thought aloud and the Sage heard her—he strode forth in a rage.

"Why do you come here demanding my advice if you moralize yourself? Out upon you again!" he thundered. "The woman will not find her Topaz, which is now revelling in the sun of freedom and will soon go down into nothingness and be forgotten. And after lamenting until her eyes look gaunt, the woman will begin to see some beauty in a Sapphire and become consoled, and so all will be well."

"I do not care what you say," said the Damsel. "*It is better to have what one wants one's self than to try and learn to like anything else that other people think better*."

And she refastened a bracelet with great care—which contained two cat's-eyes of no value—as she went on her way.

Drop Capital S

eize the occasion lest it pass thee by and fall into the lap of another.

No man likes shooting tame rabbits.

Most men like the hunt more than the quarry—therefore the wise woman is elusive.

It is a good hostess who never inclines her guests unconsciously to look at the clock.

Some things cause pride, some pleasure. There is only one thing which causes infinite bliss and oblivion of time, and this one thing, unless bound with chains, is called immoral.

It is a wise man who knows when he is happy and can appreciate the divine bliss of the tangible *now*. Most of us retrospect or anticipate and so lose the present.

Seize Love at whatever age he comes to you—if you can avoid being ridiculous.

M

ore questions?" exclaimed the Sage, as the Damsel tapped gently upon the door of his cave.

"Women are never satisfied; they are as restless as the sea, and when they have received all the best advice they invariably follow their own inclinations."

"It was not to discuss women," replied the Damsel, timidly; "this time it is of a man I wish to ask."

"Begin, then, and have done quickly," growled the Sage, averting his head. The Damsel had an outline against the sky which caused ideas not tranquillizing for Hermits.

"I wish to know why a man who possessed the most beautiful and noble Bird of Paradise—a bird of rare plumage and wonderful qualities—should suddenly see more beauty in an ordinary Cockatoo, whose only attraction was its yellow feathers—a Cockatoo that screamed monotonously as it swung backward and forward on its perch, and would eat sugar out of the hand of any stranger while it cried 'Pretty Poll.' The man could not afford to buy this creature also, so he deliberately sold his exquisite Bird of Paradise to a person called Circumstance and with the money became the possessor of the Cockatoo, who pierced the drums of his ears with its eternal 'Pretty Poll' and wearied his sight with its yellow feathers. Why did the man do this?"

The Sage laughed at so simple a question.

"Because he was a man, and even a screaming Cockatoo belonging to some one else has more charm at times than the most divine Bird of Paradise belonging to himself."

"But was it worth while to sell this rare thing for a very ordinary one?" demanded the Damsel.

"Certainly not," said the Sage, impatiently. "What childish questions you ask! The thing was a folly on the face of it; but, as I said before, he was a man—and the Cockatoo belonged to some one else!"

"Then what will happen now?" asked the Damsel, placing herself in the direction in which the Sage had turned his head.

"The Bird of Paradise will still be the most beautiful and glorious and desirable bird in the world; and when the man realizes he has lost it forever he will begin to value its every feather, and will spend his days in comparing all its remembered perfections and advantages with the screams and the yellow feathers of the Cockatoo."

"And what will the Cockatoo do?" inquired the Damsel.

"It will probably continue to shriek 'Pretty Poll,' and eat sugar out of the hand of any stranger," replied the Sage, plucking his heard.

"And the man?"

"The man will go on telling every one he has bought the most divine bird in the world, in the hope that some one will offer him a large sum of money for it. The only person who gains in the affair is the Bird of Paradise, who, instead of being caged as when in the possession of the man, is absolutely free to fly with its new master, Circumstance, who only seeks to please and soothe this glorious bird and make life fair for it."

"But what will be the very end?" persisted the Damsel.

The Sage turned and looked full at her. He was angry with her importunity and would have answered sternly.

Then he saw that the ripples of her hair were golden and his voice softened.

"That will depend—upon Circumstance," he replied, and he closed his door softly in her face.

A man wishes and a woman wishes, but Circumstance frequently wins the game.

L

ife is short—avoid causing yawns.

It is possible for a woman to retain the amorous affection of a man for many years—if he only sees her for the two best hours out of each twenty-four.

P

lease open the door, Sage," entreated the Damsel, "and I will tell you a story."

The Sage pushed it ajar with his foot, but he did not come out.

"There was once upon a time a man," she said, "who unexpectedly and for no apparent reason became the possessor of a Tiger. It had been coveted by numbers of people and was of a certain value and beauty. It had an infinite variety of tricks. It was learned in caresses. It was fierce, and gentle, and it could love passionately. Altogether a large price would have been offered the man for it by many others if he had wished to sell it. In the beginning he had greatly valued the possession of this strange beast, and had fed it with his own hand. The little anxiety as to whether it would eat him or not, or rush away, had kept him interested. But gradually, as he became certain the Tiger adored him, and would show none but velvet claws and make only purring sounds, his keenness waned. He still loved it, but certainty is monotonous, and his eyes wandered to other objects. 'The Tiger is nothing but a domestic cat,' he said; 'I will pet and caress it when the mood takes me, and for the rest of the time it can purr to itself by the fire.' At last one day, after the Tiger was especially gracious and had purred with all essence of love, the man

yawned. 'It is really a charming beast,' he said, 'but it is always the same; and then he went away and forgot even to feed it. The Tiger felt hungry and restless. Its quietness and gentleness became less apparent. The man on his travels chanced to think of it and sent it a biscuit. So the Tiger waited, and when the man returned and expected the usual docile caresses, it bit his hand. 'Vile beast!' said the man. 'Have I not fed and kept you for weeks, and now you bite my hand!' Now tell me, Sage, which was right—the man or the Tiger?"

"Both, and neither," said the Sage, decidedly. "The man was only obeying the eternal law in finding what he was sure of monotonous; but he mistook the nature of the beast he had to deal with. Tigers are not of the species that can ever be really monotonous, if he had known. The Tiger was foolish to allow its true nature to be so disguised by its love for the man that he was deceived into looking upon it as a domestic cat. It thought to please him thereby and so lost its hold."

"And what will be the end?" asked the Damsel.

"The man's hand will smart to the end of his life, and he will never secure another Tiger. And the Tiger will go elsewhere and console itself by letting its natural instincts have full play. It will not be foolish a second time."

But the Damsel's conclusion was different.

"No," she said. "The man's hand will heal up, and the Tiger will caress him and make him forget the bite, and they will love each other to eternity because they have both realized their own stupidity."

And without speaking further she allowed the Sage to close the door.

It is wiser to know the species one is playing with: do not offer Tigers hay—or Antelopes joints of meat.

Next day, in a pouring shower of rain, the Damsel knocked at the Sage's door. It was for shelter, she said, this time, until the storm should pass.

The Sage was fairly gracious, and to while away the time the Damsel began a story.

"A man once owned a brown Sparrow. It had no attractions, and it made a continuous and wearying noise as it chattered under the eaves. It did the same thing every day, and had monotonous domestic habits that often greatly irritated the man, but—he was accustomed to it, and did not complain. After several years a travelling Showman came along; he had a large aviary of birds of all sorts, some for sale, some not. Among them was a glorious Humming Bird of wonderful brilliancy and plumage, a creature full of beauty and grace and charm and elegance. The man became passionately attached to it; he was ready to perpetrate any folly for the sake of obtaining possession of it, and indeed he did commit numbers of regrettable actions, and at last stole the bird from the Showman and carried it away. Then, in a foreign palace, for a short while he revelled in its beauty and the joy of owning it. The Humming Bird did its best to be continually charming, but it felt its false position. And the worry and annoyance of concealing the theft from the Showman, and the different food the Humming Bird required, and the care that had to be taken of it, at last began to weary the man. He chafed and was often disagreeable to it, although he realized its glory and beauty and the feather it was in his cap. Finally, one day, in a fit of desperation, the man let the Humming Bird fly, and crept back home to the homely brown Sparrow, with its irritating noises and utter want of beauty. Why was this, Sage?"

The Sage had not to think long.

"Custom, my child," he said. "Custom forges stronger chains than the finest plumage of a Humming Bird. The man had to put himself out and exert himself to retain the Humming Bird in a way that was not

agreeable to his self-love, whereas the brown Sparrow lived on always the same, causing him no trouble, and custom had deadened the sense of its want of charm."

"Then it seems to me it was rather hard upon the poor Humming Bird!" said the Damsel.

"It is always hard upon the Humming Birds," replied the Sage, and his voice was quite sad.

The rain did not cease for a long time. It was more than an hour before the Damsel left the cave

If you are a Humming Bird it is wiser for you to remain in the possession of the Travelling Showman.

A

LONG period elapsed after this before the Damsel again tapped at the Sage's door. He looked out morning and evening, and attributed his lack of enthusiasm for his devotions to an attack of rheumatism from the damp of his cave. At last, one morning he spied her sauntering slowly up the hill, and he retired into the back of his cell, and the Damsel had to knock twice before he opened the window shutter. She was in a gay mood, and demanded a story, so the Sage began:

"There was once upon a time a Fish with glittering scales who swam about in a deep river. It had been tempted by the flies of many Fishermen, but had laughed at them all and swam away, just under the surface of the water, so that the sun might shine on its glittering scales to please the eyes of the Fishermen and to excite their desire to secure it. It was a Fish who laughed a good deal at life. But one fine day a new Angler came along; he was young and beautiful, and seemed lazy and happy,

and not particularly anxious to throw the line. The Fish peeped at him from the sheltering shadow of a rock. 'This is the most perfect specimen of a Fisherman I have ever seen,' it said to itself. 'I could almost believe it would be agreeable to swallow the fly and let him land me and put me in his basket.' The young Fisherman threw the line, and the sun caught the glittering scales of the Fish at that moment. The laziness vanished from the Fisherman, and he began to have a strong desire to secure the Fish.

"He fished for some time, and the Fish swam backward and forward, making up its mind. It saw the hook under the fly, but the attraction of the Angler growing stronger and stronger, at last it deliberately decided to come up and bite. 'I know all the emotions of swimming on the surface and letting my scales shine in the sun,' it mused, 'but I know nothing about the bank and the basket, and perhaps the tales that are drilled into the heads of us Fish from infancy about suffocation and exhaustion are not true.' And it mused again: 'He is a perfectly beautiful Fisherman and looks kind, and I want to be closer to him and let him touch my glittering scales. After all, one ought to know everything before one dies.'

"So, its heart beating and its eyes melting, the Fish deliberately rose to the surface and swallowed the fly. The hook caught in a gristly place and did not hurt much, and the novel experience of being pulled onto the green meadow delighted the Fish. It saw the Fisherman close, and felt his hands as he tenderly disengaged the hook. He was full of joy and pride at securing the difficult Fish and admired its scales. He talked aloud and told it how bright he found it, and he was altogether charming and delightful, and the Fish adored him and was glad it had been caught.

"Then after some time of this admiration and dalliance, the Fisherman put it in the basket among the cool rushes. The Fish lay quiet, still content. It had not yet begun to pant. For an hour almost the Fisherman gloried in his catch. He opened the lid frequently and smiled at the Fish.

"Then he lay down on the bank beside the basket and let his rod float idly in the stream. The sun was warm and pleasant.

"'I wish,' he said to himself, 'after all, I had not secured the Fish yet; the throwing of the fly and the excitement of trying to catch the creature are better fun than having it safely landed and lying in the basket,' and he yawned, and his eyes gradually closed and he slept.

"Now the Fish heard very plainly what he had said. Tell me, Damsel—you who ask questions and answer them finally yourself—tell me, What did the Fish do?"

The Damsel mused a moment. She stirred with her white fingers the water in the basin of the fountain that sprang from the rock close by. Then she looked at the Sage from under the shadow of her brows and answered, thoughtfully:

"The Fish was stunned at first by this truth being uttered so near it. It suddenly realized what it had done and what it had lost. 'I, who swam about freely and showed my glittering scales in the sun, am now caught and in a basket, with no prospect but suffocation and death in front of me,' it said to itself. 'I could have even supported that, and the knowledge that my scales will become dull and unattractive in the near future, if the Fisherman had only continued to lift the lid and admire me a little longer.' And it sighed and began to feel the sense of suffocation. But it was a Fish of great determination and resources. 'I have learned my lesson,' it gasped; 'the Fisherman has taught it to me himself. Now I will make a great jump and try to get out of the basket.'

"So it jumped and opened the lid. The Fisherman stirred in his sleep and put out his hand vaguely to close it again, but he was too sleepy to fasten the catch, and with less noise the Fish bounced up again and succeeded in floundering upon the grass. It lay panting and in great distress, but it looked at the beautiful Angler with regret. He was so beautiful and so desirable. 'I could almost stay now,' the Fish sighed. Then it braced itself up and gave one more bound, and this time reached the rock at the edge of the stream.

"Again the Fisherman awoke, and now casually, with his eyes still closed, fastened up the basket before he slept again; but the Fish with its third bound reached the river, and darted out into the middle of the stream.

"'Good-bye, Beautiful Angler!' it said, sadly. 'You were sweet, but you have taught me a lesson, and freedom is sweeter.'

"The splash of its reaching the water fully awakened the Fisherman, but he saw the basket with the lid shut, and had no anxieties until his eye caught the pink of the water where the Fish sheltered under the rock. Its gill was still bleeding from the hook wound, and colored a circle round it. Then he opened the lid and found the basket empty.

"'Good-bye,' said the Fish. 'Your wish has been granted, and your pleasure can begin all over again!'

"But the Fisherman suddenly realized that his rod, while he slept, had fallen into the river, and was floating away down the stream.

"'Good-bye again,' said the Fish; 'I have suffered, but I have now experience, and I am grateful to you, and my gill will heal up, and I will smile at you sometimes from just under the surface of the water, and so all is well!' And it flashed its glittering scales in the sun before it darted away out of sight in the strong current."

And the Damsel folded her hands and looked into distance.

"Thank you, Damsel," said the Sage, gently for him; "but the Fisherman could procure another rod—rods are not rarities. What then?"

"That would be for another day," said the Damsel; "and—for another Fish!" And she tripped away down the hill, and was deaf to the Sage, who gruffly called after her.

When you have caught your Fish, it may be wiser to cook it and eat it.

T

he sun was setting when the Damsel next came to the Cave. She had a pet falcon with her, and kept caressing it as she propounded her question.

"There lived a woman in a Castle who had three Knights devoted to her. She loved one, and her vanity was pleased with the other two. While she continued to play with them all, they all loved her to distraction; but presently her preference for the one Knight became evident, and the two others, after doing their utmost to supplant the third without success, at last left the Castle and rode away. They were no sooner gone, and things had become quiet, and no combats occurred to interrupt the lovers' intercourse, when the chosen Knight began to weary, and he, too, at last rode away, although before he had been the most ardent of all. Why was this, Sage? And what should the woman do?"

"It was because the Knight had won the prize and the woman gave him no trouble to keep it," replied the Sage. "He was bound to weary. When a man's profession is fighting and he has fought hard and succeeded, after sufficient rest he wishes to fight again. So if the woman wants her lover back, she had better first summon the other two."

For once the Damsel had nothing to say, and had no excuse to remain longer in the cave.

The Sage, however, was not in the mind to let her go so soon, so he began a question:

"Why do you caress that bird so much? It appears completely indifferent to you. Surely that is waste of time?"

"It is agreeable to waste time," replied the Damsel.

"Upon an insensible object?"

"Yes."

"More so than if it returned your caresses?"

"Probably—there is the speculation. It might one day respond, while certainly if it repaid warmly my love now, one day it would not. Nothing lasts in this world. You have told me so yourself."

The Sage was nettled.

"Yes, there is one thing that lasts, that is friendship," he said.

"Friendship!" exclaimed the Damsel; "but that is not made up of caresses. It does not make the heart beat."

"We were not talking of beating hearts," said the Sage, sententiously.

"Very well. Good-bye, then, Sage." laughed the Damsel. "You must think of more stories for me before I come again."

And, continuing to caress the falcon, she walked away, stately and fair, into the setting sun.

When she had gone the Sage wondered why there was no twilight that evening, and why it had suddenly become night.

Most men prefer to possess something that the other men want.

I

t would be a peaceful world if we could only realize that the fever of love is like other fevers. It comes to a crisis, and the patient either dies or is cured. It cannot last at the same point forever.

T

he Damsel came back again next day. She had remarked, the day she spent with him in the rain, that the Sage was not so old or so uncomely as she had at first supposed. "If he were to shave off his beard and wear a velvet doublet, he would look as well as many a cavalier of the Court," she mused. And she called out before she reached the door:

"Sage, I have come back because I want to ask you just another question. Will you not come out and sit in the sun while you answer?"

So the Sage advanced in a recalcitrant manner, but he would not sit down beside her.

Then the Damsel began:

"A woman once possessed a ball of silk. It was of so fine and rare a kind that, although of many thousand yards, it took up no space, and she unwound it daily for her pleasure without any appreciable difference in the size of the ball. At last she suddenly fancied she perceived some alteration. It came upon her as a shock, but still she continued to use the silk with the casual idea that a thing she had employed so long *must* go on forever. Then again, in about a week, there came another shock. The ball was certainly smaller, and felt cold and hard and firm. The thought came to her, 'What if it should not be silk all through and I have come to the end of matters? What shall I do?' Now tell me, Sage, should the woman go on to the end and find perhaps a stone? Or should she try to rewind the silk? Which is the best course?"

The Damsel took up the Sage's staff, which he had dropped for the moment, and with its point she drew geometrical figures in the sand. But the sun made shadows with her eyelashes, and the Sage felt his voice tremble, so he answered, tartly:

"That would depend upon the nature of the woman. If she continues to unwind the silk she will certainly find a piece of adamant, which has been cunningly covered with this rare, soft substance. If she tries to

rewind, she will discover the thread has become tangled, and the ball can never again look smooth and even as before. She must choose which she would prefer, a clean piece of adamant or an uneven ball of silk."

"But that is no answer to my question," said the Damsel, pouting. "I asked which must she do for the best."

"Neither is better nor worse!" replied the Sage with asperity. "And there is no best."

"You are quite wrong, Sage," returned the Damsel. "There is a third course. She can cut the thread and leave the ball as it is, a coating of smooth silk still—and an undiscovered possibility inside."

"You are too much for me!" exclaimed the Sage in a fury. "Answer your own questions, to begin with, in future! I will have no more of you!" and he went into his cave and ostentatiously fastened the door.

The Damsel smiled to herself and continued to draw geometrical figures with the point of the Sage's staff in the sand.

There are always three courses in life: the good, the bad, and the—indifferent. The good gives you calm, and makes you sleep; the bad gives you emotions, and makes you weep; and the indifferent gives you no satisfaction, and makes you yawn, so—choose wisely.

O

ne can swear to be faithful eternally, but how can one swear to love eternally? The one is a question of will, the other a sentiment beyond all human control. One might as sensibly swear to keep the wind in the south, or the sun from setting!

And yet we swear both vows—and break both vows.

A woman is always hardest upon her own sins, committed by others.

A man is sometimes lenient to them.

A fool can win the love of a man, but it requires a woman of resources to keep it.

T

he Damsel did not go away from the cave, as was her custom. She continued to draw geometrical figures in the sand. Presently she called to the Sage once more.

"Come out again, dear Sage! Listen, I have something more to say."

He unfastened the window and stood leaning on the sill.

"Well?" he said, sternly. "Well?"

"A Ring Dove once was owned by a man. It was the sweetest and most gentle of birds, besides being extremely beautiful. It adored the man and lived contentedly in its cage. The perches, which the man had had prepared especially for it, were endeared to it from association with the happy hours when it had been caressed by the man. Altogether to it the cage appeared a palace, and it lived content.

"The man was a brutal creature, more or less, and at last he cruelly ill-treated the Ring Dove, and exalted a Cuckoo in its place. This conduct greatly saddened the sweet Dove, but it over and over again forgave its tormentor, so great was its love, and even saw the Cuckoo advanced to

the highest honors without anger, only a bleeding heart. How long things would have continued in this way no one knows; but the man suddenly gave the Cuckoo the Ring Dove's cage, and let the Cuckoo sleep on the perches which the Dove was accustomed to consider its very own. This overcame the gentle Dove. Its broken heart mended, and it flew away. Tell me, Sage, why did this action cure the Dove of its great love for the man, when it had borne all the blows and cruelty without resentment?"

"That is an easy question to answer," replied the Sage. "The Dove was really growing tired and seized this as a good opportunity to be off."

"Oh, how little you know of the female sex, even of Doves!" laughed the Damsel. "I can give you the true reason myself. It was the bad taste of the man in giving the Cuckoo the cage and perches of the Ring Dove, which he had consecrated to her. That cured her, and enabled her to fly away."

And the Damsel curtsied to the Sage and sauntered off, laughing and looking back over her shoulder.

An action committed in bad taste is more curing and disillusionizing to Love than the cruelest blows of rage and hate.

A

man would often be the lover of his wife—if he were married to some one else.

There come moments in life when we regret the old gods.

Time and place—temperature and temperament—and after the sunset the night—and then to-morrow.

A

ll the winter passed and the Damsel remained at the Court and the Sage in his cave. Both found the days long and their occupation insufficient.

At last, when spring came, the Damsel again mounted the hill one morning before dawn and tapped at the Sage's door.

His heart gave a bound, and he flew to open it without more ado.

"So you have come back?" he said; and his voice was eager, though it was a gray light and he could not see her plainly.

"Yes," said she; "I want you to tell me one more story of life before I go on a long voyage."

So the Sage began:

"There was once upon a time a man of half-measures, whose brain was filled with dreams for his own glory, and he possessed a woman of flesh and blood, who loved him, and would have turned the dreams into realities. But *because* he was happy with her, and because her hair was black and her eyes were green, and her flesh like alabaster, he said to himself, 'This is a fiend and a vampire. Nothing human can be so delectable.' So he ran a stake through her body, and buried her at the cross-roads. Then he found life an emptiness, and went down into nothingness and was forgotten—"

"Oh, hush, Sage!" said the Damsel, trembling; "I wish to hear no more. Come, shave off your beard, and put on a velvet doublet, and return with me to the Court. See, life is short, and I am fair."

And the Sage suddenly felt he had found the philosopher's stone, and knew the secret he had come into the wilds to find.

So he went back to his cave, and shaved his beard, and donned a velvet doublet, long since lain by in lavender. And he took the Damsel by the hand, and they gladly ran down the hill.

And the zephyrs whispered, and the day dawned, and all the world smiled young—and gay.

Remember the tangible now.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

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