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RUSSIA.

The act of grace and amnesty granted by the Emperor on his coronation, appears to have been of a more creditable character than was at first supposed. After decreeing a medal to all persons who, in the civil or military service, took any part in the events of the late war, it specifies that special immunities are to be granted to those provinces of the empire which bore the brunt of the campaign, and next, that the entire country is to be exempted from every kind of recruiting or conscription for four years. Arrears of taxes, amounting to about $20,000,000, are also to be remitted and the tax on passports to foreign parts to be abolished. Next, those criminals who have behaved well since their condemnation, are to be indulged with a cessation or a commutation of punishment, and finally all state prisoners are to have their lot alleviated, the majority being entirely restored to freedom, except that they are not to reside in Moscow or St. Petersburg. These state prisoners, moreover, are to regain their rights of nobility, both as regards themselves and their legitimate heirs. The Jews throughout the empire are to be freed from the special burdens that their recruitment has hitherto imposed on them. Lastly, the children of the soldiers, seamen, &c., (cantonists,) born during the service period of their fathers, and who have hitherto belonged to the army, will be given up for the future to their parents, and may take upon themselves any condition they think fit.

STEAMSHIPS.—Though but eighteen years have elapsed since the first vessel wholly propelled by steam crossed the Atlantic, now there are fourteen lines of steamers, comprising forty-eight vessels, plying between Europe and the United States. Recently not less than fifteen arrivals of foreign steamers have taken place in a single month. Out of these forty-eight steamers, but twelve are of American construction. For nine years the British had the monopoly of the Atlantic steamships, before American enterprise undertook to compete with them. Four of our most valuable Atlantic steamers have been entirely lost; two having been driven ashore and broken up; a third was sunk by a collision, with nearly all on board; and a fourth, the noblest of the fleet, has never been heard from, but is supposed to have struck an iceburg. The foreign companies have lost, in all, four ships from their American lines. The value of these eight steamships is set down at $3,537,000, exclusive of cargoes. On the California route there have been lost seven fine steamers, mostly on the Pacific coast, viz., the Independence, which sunk in the Pacific, with 120 lives, and the Tennessee and St. Louis—total wrecks. The San Francisco, valued at $300,000, was lost in the Atlantic in the same year, with many valuable lives: the Yankee Blade in the year following, beside the ill-fated Rhode Island, and the North Carolina in the year 1855. It is estimated that one thousand four hundred and twenty lives, and $7,930,000 in property, have been lost in steamships since the year 1853. In a pecuniary point of view the Atlantic steamers, it is said, have not been profitable to their stockholders.

MISS DIX.—Miss Dix has returned from Europe in the Baltic. During her absence she travelled extensively through Great Britain, and in nearly every country of Europe, investigating the condition of the insane; and on many occasions was the means of carrying out measures of great importance for securing to the afflicted the wisest and best system of management.

BELIEVETH.—Mr. James Ruthven of New York, not long before his death, recited slowly, emphatically, and with great weakness of voice, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.' What a contrast!" said he, "there is none in the universe like it! What vast consequences hinge on the question!—BELIEVETH—I would like to see that word printed in capitals. How simple and easy is it; and yet how many refuse to believe, and perish! Unbelief is the only sin which the gospel does not meet. For this it has no cure. 'Ye will not come to me that ye might live.'"

DRED;

A TALE OF THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP.

BY HARRIET BEECHER STOWE,
AUTHOR OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN."

CHAPTER I.

THE MISTRESS OF CANEMA.

"BILLS, Harry?—Yes.—Dear me, where are they?—There!—No. Here?—O, look!—What do you think of this scarf? Isn't it lovely?"

"Yes, Miss Nina, beautiful—but—"

"O, those bills!—Yes—well, here goes—here—perhaps in this box. No—that's my opera-hat. By the by, what do you think of that? Isn't that bunch of silver wheat lovely? stop a bit—you shall see it on me."

And, with these words, the slight little figure sprang up, as if it had wings, and, humming a waltzing-tune, skimmed across the room to a looking-glass, and placed the jaunty little cap on the gay little head, and then, turning a pirouette on one toe, said, "There now!"

"There, now!" Ah, Harry! ah, mankind generally! the wisest of you have been made fools of by just such dancing, glittering, fluttering little assortments of curls, pendants, streamers, eyes, cheeks, and dimples!

The little figure scarce the height of the Venus, rounded as that of an infant, was shown to advantage by a coquettish morning-dress of buff muslin, which fluttered open in front to display the embroidered skirt, and trim little mouse of a slipper. The face was one of those provoking ones which set criticism at defiance. The hair, waving, curling, dancing hither and thither, seemed to have a wild, laughing grace of its own; the brown eyes twinkled like the pendants of a chandelier; the little, wicked nose, which bore the forbidden upward curve, seemed to assert its right to do so, with a saucy freedom; and the pendants of multiplied brilliants that twinkled in her ears, and the nodding wreath of silver wheat that set off her opera-hat, seemed alive with mischief and motion.

"Well, what do you think?" said a lively, imperative voice,—that you might have expected from the figure.

The young man to whom this question was addressed was a well-dressed, gentlemanly person of about thirty-five, with dark complexion and hair, and deep, full blue eyes. There was something marked and peculiar in the square, high forehead, and the finely-formed features, which indicated talent and ability; and the blue eyes had a depth and strength of color that might cause them at first glance to appear black. The face, with its strongly-marked expression of honesty and sense, had about it many care-worn and thoughtful lines. He looked at the little, defiant fay for a moment with an air of the most entire deference and admiration; then a heavy shadow crossed his face, and he answered, abstractedly, "Yes, Miss Nina, everything you wear becomes pretty—and that is perfectly charming."

"Isn't it, now, Harry? I thought you would think so. You see, it's my own idea. You ought to have seen what a thing it was when I first saw it in Mme. Le Blanche's window. There was a great hot-looking feather on it, and two or three horrid bows. I had them out in a twinkling, and got this wheat in—which shakes so, you know. It's perfectly lovely?—Well, do you believe, the very night I wore it to the opera, I got engaged?"

"Engaged, Miss Nina!"

"Engaged!—Yes, to be sure! Why not!"

"It seems to me that's a very serious thing, Miss Nina."

"Serious!—ha! ha! ha!" said the little beauty, seating herself on one arm of the sofa, and shaking the glittering hat back from her eyes. "Well, I fancy it was—to him, at least. I made him serious I can tell you!"

"But, is this true, Miss Nina? *Are* you really engaged?"

"Yes, to be sure I am—to three gentlemen; and going to stay so, till I find which I like best. May be you know I shan't like any of them."

"Engaged to three gentlemen, Miss Nina?"

"To be sure!—Can't you understand English, Harry? I *am* now—fact."

"Miss Nina, is that right?"

"Right?—why not? I don't know which to take—I positively don't; so I took them all on trial, you know."

"Pray, Miss Nina, tell us who they are."

"Well, there's Mr. Carson;—he's a rich old bachelor—horridly polite—one of those little, bobbing men, that always have such shiny dickies and collars, and such bright boots, and such tight straps. And he's rich—and perfectly wild about me. He wouldn't take no for an answer, you know; so I just said yes, to have a little quiet. Besides, he is very convenient about the opera and concerts, and such things,"

"Well, and the next?"

"Well, the next is George Emmons. He's one of your pink-and-white men, you know, who look like cream-candy, as if they were good to eat. He's a lawyer, of a good family,—thought a good deal of, and all that. Well, really, they say he has talents—I'm no judge. I know he always bores me to death; asking me if I have read this or that—marking places in books that I never read. He's your sentimental sort—writes the most romantic notes on pink paper, and all that sort of thing."

"And the third?"

"Well, you see, I don't like *him* a bit—I'm sure I don't. He's a hateful creature! He isn't handsome; he's proud as Lucifer; and I'm sure I don't know how he got me to be engaged. It was a kind of an accident. He's real good though—too good for me, that's a fact. But, then, I'm afraid of him a little."

"And his name?"

"Well, his name is Clayton—Mr. Edward Clayton, at your service. He's one of your high-and-mighty people—with such deep-set eyes—eyes that look as if they were in a cave—and such black hair! And his eyes have a desperate sort of sad look, sometimes—quite Byronic. He's tall, and rather loose-jointed—has beautiful teeth; his mouth, too, is—well, when he smiles, sometimes it really is quite fascinating:—and then he's so different from other gentlemen? He's kind—but he don't care how he dresses; and wears the most horrid shoes. And, then, he isn't polite—he won't jump, you know, to pick up your thread or scissors; and sometimes he'll get into a brown study, and let you stand ten minutes before he thinks to give you a chair, and all such provoking things. He isn't a bit of a lady's man. Well, consequence is, as my lord won't court the girls, the girls all court my lord—that's the way, you know;—and they seem to think it's such a feather in their cap to get attention from him—because you know, he's horrid sensible. So, you see, that just set me out to see what I could do with him. Well, you see, I wouldn't court him;—and I plagued him, and laughed at him, and spited him, and got him gloriously wroth; and he said some spiteful things about me, and then I said some more about him, and we had a real up-and-down quarrel;—and then I took a penitent turn, you know, and just went gracefully down into the valley of humiliation—as we witches can; and it took wonderfully—brought my lord on to his knees before he knew what he was doing. Well, really, I don't know what was the matter, just then, but he spoke so earnest and strong, that actually he got me to crying—hateful creature!—and I promised all sorts of things, you know—said altogether more than will bear thinking of."

"And are you corresponding with all these lovers, Miss Nina?"

"Yes—isn't it fun? Their letters, you know, can't speak. If they could, when they come rustling together in the bag, wouldn't there be a muss?"

"Miss Nina, I think you have given your heart to this last one."

"O, nonsense, Harry! Haven't got any heart!—don't care two pins for any of them! All I want is to have a good time. As to love, and all that, I don't believe, I could love any of them; I should be tired to death of any of them in six weeks. I never liked any thing that long."*

"Miss Nina, you must excuse me, but I want to ask again, is it right to trifle with the feelings of gentlemen in this way?"

"Why not?—Isn't all fair in war? Don't they trifle with us girls, every chance they get—and sit up so pompous in their rooms, and smoke cigars, and talk us over, as if they only had to put out their finger and say, 'Come here,' to get any of us? I tell you, it's fun to bring them down!—Now, there's that horrid George Emmons—I tell you, if he didn't flirt all winter with Mary Stephens, and got everybody to laughing about her!—it was so evident, you see, that she liked him—she couldn't help showing it, poor little thing!—and then my lord would settle his collar, and say he had'nt quite made up his mind to take her, and all that. Well, I haven't made up my mind to take him, either—and so poor Emma is avenged. As to the old bach—that smooth-dicky man—you see, he can't be hurt; for his heart is rubbed as smooth and hard as his dicky, with falling in love and out again. He's been turned off by three girls, now; and his shoes squeak as brisk as ever, and he's just as jolly. You see, he didn't use to be so rich. Lately, he's come into a splendid property; so, if I don't take him, poor man, there are enough that would be glad of him."

"Well, then, but as to that other one?"

"What! my lord Lofty? O, he wants humbling!—it wouldn't hurt him, in the least, to be put down a little. He's good, too, and afflictions always improve good people. I believe I was made for a means of grace to 'em all."

"Miss Nina, what if all three of them should come at once—or even two of them?"

"What a droll idea! Wouldn't it be funny! Just to think of it! What a commotion! What a scene! It would really be vastly entertaining."

"Now, Miss Nina, I want to speak as a friend."

"No, you shan't! it is just what people say, when they are going to say something disagreeable. I told Clayton, once for all, that I wouldn't have him speak as a friend to me."

"Pray, how does, he take all this?"

"Take it! Why, just as he must. He cares a great deal more for me than I do for him." Here a slight little sigh escaped the fair speaker. "And I think it fun to shock him. You know he is one of the fatherly sort, who is always advising young girls. Let it be understood that his standard of female character is wonderfully high, and all that. And, then, to think of his being tripped up before me!—*too* funny!" The little sprite here took off her opera-hat, and commenced waltzing a few steps, and, stopping midwhirl, exclaimed: "O, do you know we girls have

* As our readers may have not the book to refer to, we may inform them, that Harry is a young Quadroon, who has the management of Miss Nina's Estate.—[Ed. H. Gaz.]