

The Christian Plan.

Revised for the Torch of Reason.

"I WOULDN'T read those journals that Infidels put forth For all the gold and silver this blessed planet's worth. As sure as I should read it my eyes would open be, Just like the eyes of Adam when he ate of that there tree— To see just what he oughtn't, what he should ne'er a known, The damning, devilish knowledge he should a let alone. My faith in holy Jesus is firm as any rock So long's I keep my eyelids close under seal and lock; But, ah! I know full surely should I ope my eyes to see, My soul would roast forever in the pit of misery: But if I keep 'em blinded, as my teachers bid me to, I'll mount at last to glory and there sing Hallelu!"

"So I'll not read the papers of that godless, wicked clan Who carry with them ever the church's bitter ban. I want no carnal knowledge to make me fear and doubt; Why, if my eyes are peering ones, by God, I'll pluck them out! For that's the gospel teaching, Christ's own delightful way, To lead us all in blindness up to his glorious day. And though the skeptic laughs so and treats it all as fun, To blind or pluck your eyes out's the way to see the sun."

—Liberator.

Mr. Main's Suicide.

BY CLARA AUGUSTA.

MR. ALPHEUS MAIN had an extremely small bump of self-esteem; and doubtless it is all very fine for a man to be modest, and not thrust himself forward too much under the impression that he is a person of consequence, but really it is about as bad to think too little of oneself as it is to think too much.

"Respect yourself, or nobody will respect you," says the old adage—and it is quite correct, as the world goes.

Alpheus labored constantly under the impression, or rather the fear, that nobody cared for him. He married the woman he loved, and as she chose him from a half-dozen other young men who were suitors for her hand, he surely ought to have believed that she preferred him.

But he was full of doubts on the subject. If at any time Annie was less talkative than common, or if she did not kiss him so many times as usual on his return from business, or if she forgot that his particular passion was hot griddle cakes, and neglected to fry him a steak for the morning meal—then Alpheus' heart grew cold at once, and if he had been a woman he would have spent the night in tears but as he was only a man he spent it in sulking.

He found a sort of delight in self-torture—just as some people who are ill like to make themselves as bad as possible when they tell over their diseases.

He used to lie awake nights long after Annie was asleep, pondering over what he called the change in her, and wondering how she would

feel if anything happened to him—if he should die, for instance.

Would the sight of his face, cold and white and still in the shadow of the coffin, wring from her a tear of affection—a kiss warm with the old love? Would she wish, when she saw him thus, that she had taken more pains to wear blue, his favorite color, and that she had fried him griddle cakes every morning?

Day by day he grew more morbid on the subject, until he was so unhappy that he hardly cared whether he lived or died.

It is curious how we are always distressing ourselves with imaginary woes! and it is quite certain that full half of our troubles are imaginary ones. Those afflictions which never come to us are much worse than those that do come.

At last matters reached such a pass that Annie did not get up from her work to kiss Alpheus when he came into the house, and she did not cry when he announced his intention of going to New York for a couple of days on business. She packed his shirts, and put in a pair of stockings in case he should wet his feet, she said, and Alpheus vowed she was heartless if she could think of wet feet when he was to be away from her for two whole days!

He was wretched all the time he was gone, but tried to solace himself with the hope that the warmth of her greeting on his return would amply atone for everything. Falcacious hope!

When he reached home old Miss Mills was there with her knitting, and old Miss Baker with her netting, and Annie only shook hands and told him privately that there were cinders in his ears and he had better wash before coming to the table.

But Alpheus scorned to complain—he told his sorrows to no one, and no one suspected them. He "let concealment like a worm i' the bud" etc. You know the remainder of the quotation too well to need that I should write it out. At length Alpheus reached a determination. He would commit suicide!

He would be happier out of the world than in it, and he felt sure his wife would love him after he was dead—most widows did—and she would have a long obituary after his name in the Bangville Bulletin, and a speaking inscription on his tombstone. He even went so far as to fancy her on sunny days going to strew flowers on his grave—and he was sure she would wear deepest mourning, and never, never marry again.

And to a person of his disposition the prospect was absolutely glowing. It fascinated him so completely that he resolved to die; only he could not help wishing that he could die and be alive too, that he might see how Annie "took it".

He thought over the different methods of self destruction most in

style, and gave the preference to hanging. There was such a nice place for the business in a little unfinished chamber which adjoined his cabinet of shells and minerals. A large hook had been driven into a beam, and for what purpose he never could imagine, but now he knew.

He fixed upon Friday as the fatal day. Everything was prepared. He wrote Annie a pathetic note, telling her that as her love for him had decayed, he desired no longer to dwell in this cold vale of tears, and he had determined to cut in twain the thread of existence, and to launch himself into the deep voids of extremity!

He did not mention the exact method by which he contemplated accomplishing the launching; he considered it unnecessary. If Annie knew he had destroyed himself, of course she would search every inch of ground in the town until he was discovered.

Friday came. Annie went to the next town shopping, and there was nobody at home but the servant and Sallie Miller, Annie's cousin; and as Walter Clare was coming up the walk to join Sallie, why there would be no danger of her interfering. Verily, the fates were propitious.

Alpheus braced himself for the dread effort. He fixed the rope around his arm and tried its strength by sundry jumps and springs. Out came the big hook, and over went Alpheus on his back, splitting his best coat completely across and knocking the wind out of him wonderfully.

"Blast the hook!" cried he, rubbing his back. "I don't try that game again! It's more than it's worth. I'll run away instead of hanging myself. It will answer the same purpose. The river is so near she'll think I drowned myself! Fortunately I did not say in my letter what method I would take to do the deed. And I'll get a disguise, tomorrow, and call at our house and see how she feels."

So Alpheus made his escape from the premises he called home as secretly as possible, and crawling into the hay in a neighbor's stable, lay there till morning. Then he cut across lots to the house of an old friend of his, whom he took into his confidence.

Said old friend gave him the clothes of one of his female servants—dirty and shabby enough, too, they were—and set him up in the plaster-of-paris-image business.

So about the hour of noon next day, behold Alpheus, clad like an old woman, ringing the bell of his own house.

The girl admitted him into the parlor, and there was his wife, gay and cheerful as he had ever seen her; her hair profusely curled, a scarlet ribbon at her throat and the

very white dress he admired above all her other dresses.

Sally Miller was present—so was Walter Clare.

Sally had a letter in her hand, and had evidently been reading it to Walter, and all three were laugh-merrily. With a thrill of fierce indignation Alpheus saw that it was his farewell note to his wife! And they, evidently, were making fun of it!

"What have you to sell, my good woman?" asked Annie, at length, and Alpheus managed to stammer out a lame inventory of his wares.

"Walter, dear, come and see if there is anything worth buying," said Annie, very tenderly, and the young man obeyed, putting his arm around her waist as he did so.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Alpheus as he saw the caress.

"What did you say, ma'am?" asked Walter.

"Nothing," growled Alpheus, drawing into his bonnet, and resisting, with great effort, the inclination he felt to smash something.

"Oh, by the way, Annie, aren't you going to have the river dragged?" asked Mr. Clare. "He may have drowned himself, you know."

"It's his own fault if he has," returned Annie, indifferently. "Nobody asked him to. And, dear Walter, you know we at least ought to thank him for—" Here she hesitated and looked confused. Walter finished the sentence: "For leaving us free to love each other."

Alpheus grew hot with anger. Here was a new revelation. He had always thought Mr. Clare's visits at his house were meant for Sally, and here was evidence enough that the wretch was in love with his wife!

"Thank the Lord!" he thought, "I am not dead yet! I'll spite 'em that way."

"And your husband was such a sullen fellow!" said Walter, in a low voice, but still distinctly audible to the jealous ears of the listener—"always doubting you! I'll never doubt you, darling."

"You won't!" shouted Alpheus—"you won't, eh? I'll make you doubt your own existence! I'm alive, I am—I ain't drowned nor hanged! and that woman is my wife! Take that!" and the peddler woman lifted her foot in a very unfeminine way and gave Walter a kick.

That young gentleman quickly left the house, and Alpheus felt quite sure that a look of intelligence passed between him and Annie, which was shared in by Sally.

It was not until after Walter and Sally were married that Alpheus knew that the lovers had been in the cabinet adjoining the room where he had intended to hang himself, and had overheard his whole soliloquy. And after that Walter had watched his movements, and all the sweetness between him and Annie was put on, for the benefit of the old image