

SICK HEADACHE.

A HYGIENIC LOVE STORY.

Cocks had crowed and hens had cackled for a full hour at least. This was a world of scratching, they said to themselves, and eggs were not built in a day. Early to bed and early to rise make fowls healthy and lively and wise. The robins in the apple trees, the swallows in the barn, the little brown phoebe that held town meetings in the meadow, had been piping and trilling that it was day, day, day, till they half expected to hear the noon bell ring. The shy quail in the hedge-fow had called their warning of "hot and dry, hot and dry," over and over, to any ears that would listen. The spiders had long since hung out their glittering webs a-drying on the wild-rose bushes. The bells of the morning-glory, blue and pink and purple, had swung for hours outside the buttery window, before the delinquent Aunt Larkin lifted the latch and entered, not as her wont was, quickly, as with desire, but on leaden feet of dull resolve, and looking white as her own linen.

There stood the row of milk pails waiting to be emptied, to be washed, to be spread in the sun, already fierce and hot outside. There was the long array of pans mantling with yellow cream. There, in the corner, waited the exacting churn, the dasher leaning toward her hand with what seemed a malevolent readiness. As she took up the skimmer the kitchen clock struck six.

"Oh, dear," sighed Aunt Larkin; "'morin' lost, evenin' crossed."

But when, with conscientious care, she had stripped the third pan of its rich abundance, she laid down her weapons, so to speak, and capitulated to the one foe able to conquer that resolved soul.

"Thanny," she called, at the foot of the stairs. "Yes, mother," answered a cheerful voice from among the lilac bushes, and a brown, curly head, set on the slender shoulder of young manhood, showed itself in the doorway. "What! another of the evil brood! Go straight to bed, mother. I'll go right over for Obadiah's Sarah; and I'll make you some tea, and manage my own breakfast. Don't you worry about me. But you see I was right, mother; you must have a girl. Shall I help you up stairs?"

"No, dear; you just see to yourself. The coffee's ready, and the bread's in the stone pot, and there's plenty of doughnuts, and a currant pie, and dried beef, and cheese in the buttery; and if you want to fry yourself a slice of meat, there is the fat in the red jar, and the veal's out in the spring-house."

But though the mother-instinct insisted on thus making the way easy for its young, human nature shuddered at this catalogue, and poor Aunt Larkin staggered to her bed too horribly ill to speak again for hours. Sight and sound were alike dreadful. The swift jingle of the wooling bobolink swinging outside in the golden ropes of the laburnum pierced her sensitive ears like the steely clash of swords. And the droning hum of the bees, plunging deep in the white sweetness of the syringas, was like the bray of a trombone. Her heavy limbs ached, to ache the more as she tried to rest them in new positions. It seemed to her that the deadly nausea was in her feet, in her arms, in her spine—everywhere.

That the entrance of any human being, even her beloved Thanny, would be unendurable, she knew. But oh, if some phantom, some invisible, inaudible agency, would but turn the swivel of the blind, where a ray of horrible sunlight was already creeping in! How could she ever have let that bottle of Bohemian glass stand on her bureau, even though Thanny had given it her filled with cologne for her poor head! Its vivid red seemed to smite her through the cloud of dull pain above her brows. And if she shut her eyes, it did but glare the redder. Thanny brought her the tea, and it was vile. Presently Obadiah's Sarah came in with demonstrative quietness, in shoes that creaked and gawn that crackled, to set down a tinkling tray by the bedside. Aunt Larkin, who would have mourned over a lie as over a lost soul, had she been capable of telling one; feigned sleep to dismiss that amiable vandal. But when she opened her eyes and saw the yellow butter, the deep-blue plate, the brown toast, the red milk pitcher, the black earthen tea-pot, she felt that sex alone, not gratitude nor Christian-grace, bridled her tongue from profane and vain babbling.

Meanwhile, Nature, who did not include sick headaches, or any other mortal malady, in her scheme of existence, went about her usual business. The sun mounted higher and higher, cattle browsed, sheep fattened, buds blossomed, crops grew. Among these, the plantage at the village academy flourished apace. Here lay the daily toll of Mr. Nathan Larkin, assistant principal, a sensitive, conscientious fellow, of indomitable will, loving work, and toiling to kindle in duller brains and lighter natures his own enthusiasm and his own resolve. The Reverend Edward Graniss, D. D., Ph. D., LL. D., principal of the Quabog Seminary, being a gentleman of phlegmatic temperament, much addicted to heavy dinners at noonday, was quite willing to let his esteemed young friend do most of the pulling of the double team, especially through the hard places, though simply for his own improvement, of course.

Thus the youth, taking no rest, spending of his intense personality with prodigal readiness, inheriting from his mother a set of tense and swift-responding nerves, found himself beset, once a fortnight or so, by the same fiend, sick headache, which had devastated years of her useful life. He was young and heroic. Sometimes he could grapple with it, hold it still, and thus hampered go through the routine of his work after a dull fashion. Sometimes he yielded, undergoing tortures greater than his mother's, as his imagination was more vivid. But, either way, he counted a month out of each year an unredeemed sacrifice to this Moloch.

On this Summer day he felt wonderfully alert and alive. The boys thought he made Caesar and the Anabasis almost interesting, with his vivid sketch of the splendid life of the republic, and his showing up of hot-headed Cyrus, and cool, cruel, able Artaxerxes, "long-remembered" for his wrongs. But in secret he was much disquieted; for Miss Allis Putnam was to come that afternoon, and he felt that his poor mother would "worry" more than was needful. Not that he had not his own misgivings. A strong-minded young woman who had graduated first from her class in the medical college, and walked the hospitals abroad for a year, who had written a prize-essay on some disgusting and sanguinary subject, and no doubt

practiced vivisection, should be, to his thinking, though for opposite reasons, like Wordsworth's Lucy.

"A maid whom there was none to praise, And very few to love."

He fancied he knew how she would look; slight, sandy-complexioned, her light characterless hair very neat and wholly uninteresting, her dress very upright and uncompromising about the blases, collars and cuffs prim and spotless—no "sweet neglect" about her, nor even "th' adulteress of art," which, notwithstanding Ben Jonson, he thought most bewitching. She was so distant a cousin that kinship had not made the invitation obligatory. But his mother had dearly loved her mother, and when that gentle widow wrote that her dear Allis had returned, and that she longed to have her ever-beloved Candace know her before she settled down to her profession, the ever-beloved and ever-obliging Candace replied at once that the young traveler should be made welcome.

A caravan of unexpected guests could not upset Aunt Larkin's perfect order, nor find her garrison unprovoked. But she confided to Thanny that she "expected a girl 't had lived to Paris would find their way of livin' dreadful old-fashioned and common." And he guessed that she secretly dreaded the incursion, as he did. Polite he would certainly be, but he thought he would move his books out to the stable loft, and live as little as possible at home while Dr. Allis remained. He wished women would keep to their own sphere, and let men's work alone. By the time the two sessions were over, the compositions inspected, all the school "chores" done, and his face turned homeward, he was sure that he detested unwomanly women, and of these sinners he reckoned women doctors chiefest.

As he opened the kitchen door, Abadiah's Sarah stood revealed, buxom, red-armed, good-natured, carefully straining aromatic broth into a china bowl. "'Twas her notion," she explained. "I shouldn't never have teched the best set—no, nor made the soup neither—'thout tellin'. I took her up the toast and tea, 's you said, 's she never looked at 'em. But she said she must take suthin', an' she made it herself. You never see sech a handy little thing. My! I guess the full soul could eat that mess. Honey-comb's cloyin' alwus. I never see the force of that text.' An' she's gave her some sort-o' revivin' medicine 't didn't have no taste or smell, 's fur 's I see, an' she's a-settin' up 'ready, an' sez her headache is 'most gone, an' I never knowed her out o' bed before in less'n two days, when 't really took hold on her."

What meaning even so close a translator of difficult tongues as Mr. Nathan Larkin would have distilled from this speech may not be known. For at this pause there appeared in the opposite door the most satisfactory glossary imaginable. A fluffy head, all blonde curls, puffs, frizzes, he knew not what; pink cheeks; laughing brown eyes; shining teeth; a cambric gown that might have awed him, had it not been even more picturesque than fashionable; trim slipped feet beneath its abbreviated crispness—behold the key to Sarah's voluble obscurity!

"I am Allis Putnam," said the phantom of delight, coming forward, with frank hand outstretched; "I beg your pardon for coming unannounced. But we found the late train did not connect. And mamma said Aunt Larkin could not be taken at a disadvantage. Having come, my professional nose sniffed action at once. Sarah was the best of assistants—shedding a brilliant smile on that starting neophyte, which Nathan was inclined to consider a waste of riches—"and between us we have really set your mother on her feet again. Now I'm going to administer my next remedy, and then you may talk with her as long as she'll listen. I think we can persuade her out on this lovely veranda."

And the doctor disappeared with her savory broth.

"Don't she beat all?" inquired the bustling Sarah, intent on the impending supper. "Poity's that wild rose, an' smarter 'n lightning.' 'Tain't strange the old doctors, that jest look owlish, an' don't do no good, don't want women inter the business. They'd steal the trade in no time. There's sour cream enough, an' I told her I'd make some tip-top flapjacks for supper. 'Don't you take an extra step for me, Sarah,' she says. 'I'm going to feast on brown bread an' milk while I stay.' There ain't nothin' better than sour cream flapjacks, but she's so 'fraid o' givin' trouble! That's what I call a real lady."

If Nathan guessed that the name of this extolled delight was written on Dr. Allis' Index Expurgatorius, he nevertheless ate his own share with due satisfaction, and equally enjoyed the rich preserves, the fruity cake, the crumbling tarts, and the delicate, strong tea, set forth in the best china to honor the visitor, who, much to Sarah's disappointment, elected brown bread and milk, after all.

How it was brought about, neither Aunt Larkin nor Nathan could have told; but Obadiah's Sarah, whose Declaration of Independence had always read that she "would live out for nobody," found herself permanently installed in that cool and spotless kitchen within three days of Dr. Allis' advent. Aunt Larkin having repeated for thirty years that she "didn't see the sense of havin' a girl clatterin' round to pick up after," and her son being accustomed to accept as final whatever domestic views his mother promulgated, received the new dispensation with submission on the one part and rejoicing on the other. The doctor's luggage appeared to consist in great part of "Franklin Square" novels, and the infinite riches, in a little room, of the "Half-hour Series." And when Nathan came home one afternoon to find his mother comfortably rocking in her large chair on the veranda, deep in the fortunes of the "Greatest Heiress in England," instead of stirring up pancakes or making button-holes, he said to himself, "Allis is a witch, bless her!" Yes, already 't had gone so far that the unwomanly doctor was "Allis" to him, and at tea this studious young sage, who spent all his leisure in gardening among classic roots, announced that as to-morrow would be Saturday, he was sure they could not do better than to drive over to Bethesda Springs, all of them, and spend an idle day in that great Vanity Fair.

But to-morrow it was Nathan's turn. His head was chained to his pillow with shackles of pain. It was seasickness, he said to himself, without the palsy of the will. It was fever, without the blessed interval of unconsciousness. It was the rack, the thumb-screw, the iron boot. If the faint stirrings of desire might be called hope, he hoped his mother would not prescribe magnesia, or bring him the dreaded "cup o' tea."

By and by came Dr. Allis, with noiseless presence, cool hands, low voice, and potent prescription. As the slow hours dragged on, the headache yielded grudgingly, irrationally, with spasms of reasserting power. Next day Nathan was free from pain, but tired out and despondent. Sitting

in the cool dusk of the honeysuckles, he said: "I'd give a third of my life, Allis, to buy off these headaches from the rest of it. Sometimes I think they will shut me out from any career whatever. Can't you cure them, little Galen?"

"No, Herr Professor, not while you invite them, solicit them, compel them."

"I, Allis? I don't give them an inch of vantage. I rise early, go to bed early, don't even smoke, and fight them to the death when they come."

"Nathan, I should like to talk to you for your good, though you'll hate me for it. You've half forgotten that I am a woman doctor, and as a person I am less objectionable than you feared. 'Twere pity of my life to disturb this state of amity. But at heart I'm professional above all things, and you see I can't advise your mother lest I seem disrespectful."

"Lay on, Macduff! I dare say I shan't know when I'm hit. And if I do feel 'th whiff and wind of your fell sword, I won't whimper."

"Nathan, do you know that your mother killed those six children whose little graves she showed me to-day?"

"Allis!"

"Yes; although she would have died for any one of them. And but that you were tougher fibred, as well as finer-fibred, than the rest, you would have completed the hecatomb. Your grandmother, mamma says, was exactly like your mother, all 'faculty,' energy and thrift. She would clean two rooms in a day—paint, windows, and all—churn, get the dinner for a great family of 'men folks,' take care of her children, and make a pair of pantaloons before bed-time. Of course she was 'worryin', with all her nerves on the surface, and of course she had to bequeath to her girls this same overwrought mental and physical condition. Aunt Larkin, with less muscular strength than her mother, has emulated her achievements, and, half starved herself, has half starved her children, first, in their inheritance, and second, in their rearing."

"Allis, you are wild. Mother, and grandmother before her, made generous living a primal duty." "That's just what I say, child. 'Generous living' is sure to be semi-starvation. You have had the finest of bread, and delicious, fatal 'light biscuit,' and cake, and preserves, and pastry, and insidious flapjacks, and rich doughnuts, and incessant coffee, and salt fish fried with pork scraps, and heavy 'boiled dishes' veiled in a film of fat, and fresh meats dried, and sausages, and spare-rib, spare-rib, *toujours* spare-rib. What has your brain found in this Barmecide feast—what food for your delicate, tense nerves? Do you think it any wonder that they collapse, as it were, from inanition twice a month or so? All your life you have gorged yourself (pardon the expression, but I am in a temper—professional, of course) on hydro-carbonaceous foods, imposing monstrous tasks on your rebellious liver, which 'strikes,' and spreads disaffection throughout the ranks of its associates. You are starving for vital phosphates. Didn't you study physiology at school? Perhaps you teach it, even, and what do you care for its sacred teachings? Yes, I mean sacred. There's a religion of the body, let me tell you, unregenerate boy. I've no doubt you render into beautiful English that story of Marysas and Apollo, and what do you know or care about your own skin, that texture of miraculous skill? You read that Minerva sprang from the brain of Jove. But why should you expect wisdom to be born from yours? You use it without mercy sixteen hours a day. You are subject to that fatal drain which stupidity is always making upon cleverness. There's no vampire like it. You never play. Why don't you swim, ride, dance, row, play base-ball, practice archery, whist, and go to town every vacation for an instructive course of theaters?"

"When, Allis? Why, there isn't time. I leave out half the work I ought to do as it is."

"Ought! ought! Oh, dear! how shall we stop the roll of that Juggernaut which crushes all your race? You have no pure joy in existence. It doesn't even seem that you have any love of life in itself. It is only useful for the work you can wring out of it. You make yourselves less than your moods and tempers, less than your butter and cheese. 'Time! if there isn't time to get well and keep well, you'd better change for eternity, as you will, my dear young friend, if you don't reform. I know that the kind of headache which you and Aunt Larkin are cursed with never comes except with overwork and under feeding. She must go on to suffer, poor thing, though less, I hope. But you can cure yourself if you will. Obey me, and you shall be a new man in a year, giving me that delight in your growing health which an artist feels in his growing picture."

"Dear Allis, I abhor bran, and mother would never cook it."

"Dear simpleton, who asked you? No, you shall have delicious soups, and inviting meats, and salads of celestial lineage, and vegetables, and milk, and such bread as you have never tasted, made of flour whose whole value has not paid tribute to the miller."

"But Obadiah's Sarah—" "Oh, yes, she can. I'll teach her. We can do it all, and more, if only you will persuade your mother that it is my lark, or whim, or what you will, so that we do not seem to subvert the law of generations, or reproach the old order with the new. Don't you see what a new creature she is since I made her rest? And when she says, plaintively, as in her moments of rebellion she does, 'The house is not what it was' (if, peradventure, Sarah has forgotten to set the salt-box on the right hand of the sugar-crock, instead of the left), I reply, 'Never mind, dear Aunt Larkin, the home is more.' Did you ever see Nathan so happy about you, as now that you tuck up your feet and read in the afternoons, or go out riding with me? Then she is silenced, and takes another turn at 'The Mall of Sker' with visible satisfaction. Do you suppose anything in life would make her so happy as for you to escape your headaches? And I have shown you the way."

"Having put myself in your hands, Doctor Putnam, I am bound to follow your prescription, I suppose. The preserves shall mold upon the shelves, the cake-box shall rust upon its hinges, flapjacks from henceforth shall be called accursed, and the majestic shades of Sylvian Graham and Dio Lewis command my obedience."

"Slowly their phantoms arise before us, Our loftier brothers, but one in blood: At bed and table they lord it o'er us, With looks of beauty and words of good."

"Admirable, Master Nathan! I can stay two weeks longer to see my remedies in action, and then you are to be on honor. At the Thanksgiving vacation come to town, and I will administer the course of theaters and measure your improvement. To-morrow afternoon, if you please, we will go to the top of that beautiful purple hill, up which you have not had the ability to invite me. As a young lady, and your guest, I could not of

course mention the omission; but as your physician, and in a strictly remedial manner, I proceed to rectify it."

From that day a new king arose over Egypt. No sparkling brook hid itself so cunningly among the leaves that Nathan and Allis did not find it in the long Summer afternoons, when work was done. No hill was too difficult for their nimble feet, no berry patch too far, no lily-bearing pond too inaccessible. Sometimes Aunt Larkin joined them in their frolic, wondering at herself for electing play when work waited to be done, feeling herself apostate to the faith of her fathers, yet delighting in the fun of these children, and rejoicing to see her son so brown and hungry.

Then Dr. Allis had to say good-by, and betake herself to town, evolving what she called her "office" from a confusion of books, pictures, flowers, patterns of wall-paper, white muslin, and the spoils of her life abroad. When Nathan saw it, in November, his notions of the fitness of professional life for women underwent further disintegration.

"Nothing could be more refined," he said, to himself. "My mother's house, even, does not look half so feminine."

But if the canny Mrs. Putnam had expected that her pretty and professional daughter would establish herself in another vocation when she sent her on a missionary visit among the Franklin hills, hers was a hope deferred. For it was a year after this before the correspondence, of which a specimen is appended, enriched the Department.

HE TO HER.

"So I have been offered the Professorship of the Classics at — College. Will you come too? I would not ask you while my lines were fixed at Franklin, wanting to leave you free to live your own life of books and thought and work, which there you could not do. At — the society is delightful, and I think you would be happy. If it is your wish still to practice your profession, I have no more right, as I trust I have no more wish, to object than you would have concerning mine. And, indeed, I hold that there is no nobler work in the world than yours. Personally it would ill become me to limit your beneficence. For know, Doctor Allis, that I have not had a vestige of sick headache in six months. I said I would give a third of my life to save the other two from its ravages."

Take, O doctor, thrice the fee; Take, I give it eagerly; For, invisible to thee, Devils blue have gone from me.

Does not this sound like a love-letter? If I do not say that I adore you with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, it is because you found it out, as you found out everything else about me; by witchcraft, I believe, months on months ago. And if I seem too jolly for the attitude of prayer I assume, it is because the hope of having you always has gone to my brain (weakened, as who knows better than you, by intervals of agonizing pain from my birth) and intoxicated me, as with the mead of the gods. Would not 'Doctor Larkin' serve every end as well as 'Doctor Putnam'? Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar. "I use this form of entreaty rather than another more familiar to poets and lovers because you assured me that, before all things, you were professional. My little darling, I am hedged about with dangers. At — the other day I was even offered and pressed upon with—PRE! If I have a house-keeper, I doubt not that poisonous compound will be daily on the table, and presently, in an unglorious moment, perhaps when I am lost in reflection on a doubtful *lectus*, I shall fall! My life, or at least my digestion, which in your view is more than life, I lay at your feet. We are rich for country folk, little Allis. I have bought a charming house at —, and the reception-room seems to me peculiarly eligible as an office. You shall have it on the most favorable terms, and permanently, by addressing at once Your devoted N. L."

SHE TO HIM.

"Dear Sir:—My diagnosis is favorable. Your summary of symptoms I find satisfactory. No headache in six months. Good. A capacity to laugh over serious issues and make the best of things, such as would have been quite impossible to you a year or so ago. Better. A hopeful, because gradually developed, sense of the necessity of obedience to your medical adviser in all things. Best. What you say of the advantages of the office you offer me has received my attention. I consider myself well placed, with a rapidly growing practice. But as my greatest success has been in the relief of maladies of the nerves and digestion, and as a college town in a settlement of dyspeptics, martyrs to sick headache, the temptation to enlarge knowledge in my specialty is overmastering. I will therefore take the office on the terms proposed, reserving to myself the right to use it for boudoir, reception-room, or private growlery for the Professor of Greek and Latin at — College, should it seem to me advisable. I will trouble you to have the key ready whenever I demand it; and remain, with recommendation to follow treatment as previously advised, Truly yours, A. P."

"P. S.—It was the belief of the ancients that the liver was the seat of the affections. 'This was some time a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.'"

"Mr. and Mrs. Shoddy are spending the Summer at Dashaway Beach." The above is a sample paragraph from our exchange list. Mr. and Mrs. Shoddy's Summer at Dashaway lasted through one entire day.—Boston Transcript.

"If the red-haired and squint-eyed woman who sits under one of the galleries, wearing a green shawl, and a large yellow flower in her bonnet, doesn't stop talking," said the preacher, "she will be pointed out to the congregation."

The dust on the roads is becoming dreadful, especially to the man who thinks he owns a trotter, and finds he is just fast enough to be dusted by everything except a funeral procession.—Evansville Argus.

Edison has perfected a fog-horn that can be heard ten miles, but when it comes to an invention for getting his hired girl up in the morning, he smiles sadly and falls to musing on the infinite.

Of all the boys young Jenkins has ever heard of, the one he most envies is the harbor buoy, because it goes into the water so early in the season and stays in all Summer.—Lowell Citizen.

An Irish gentleman, with that peculiar perspicuity of statement characteristic of his race, says the chief pleasure in kissing a pretty girl is when she won't let you.