SETTLED OUT OF COURT

By Walter Bliss Newgeon.

I.

Cause.

OLD SI GRANNISS was dead. His fine large sharpie, the Pandora, was tied up beside the tiny dock in instant readiness for a fly down the harbor after her customary cargo of delicious bivalves, but the hand that for 20 years had guided her upon her many trips was cold and lifeless. No more would the drawbridge tender hear the hearty morning salute of the good natured old oyster man as the Pandora glided swiftly through the open draw. No more would the large oyster firms in Boston receive the customary annual visit from the old man who supplied them with the best oysters that ever tickled the palate of a rich Bostonian.

Old Si Grannis was dead and all Shellbank mourned his loss. From bridge to bridge, the shops were closed; the customary music of the many oyster hammers were hushed. All was silent along the river front save for the constant swish of the rising tide as it eddied in and out among the water-soaked piles that formed the foundations of the docks and shops. At nearly every dock one or more snow-white sharpies lay idly waiting, while here and there the tall black smokestack of a steam dredger designated the shop of a large dealer. An occasional foreign-born laborer might be seen engaged upon some odd job or other, but every native Shellbacker was in the old cemetery behind the tall steepled church, paying his last tribute to the memory of his much respected neighbor.

The boyish-looking preacher pronounced the benediction and the assembled company began slowly to disperse. Singly, in pairs and in groups, the oystermen and their "wimmen folks" turned from the grave and walked slowly homeward. Of immediate mourners there were but two, both women, and only one of them was related to the deceased by blood. This only relative was old Si's daughter, Edna, a beautiful girl of 20 and the belle of Shellbank. Her companion was Maggie Saunders, a Scottish woman, who for 30 years had performed the household duties in the Grannis homestead, and who, since the death of Mrs. Grannis, 15 years before, had been sole mistress indoors. These two were the last to leave the cemetery.

That evening Jerry's lunch room was crowded with oyster men. The one topic of conversation was old Si's death, and many a weatherbeaten river man showed unmistakable signs of moisture about the eyes as he related some anecdote connected with the life of his late comrade. The company was an interesting one. There were Harry and Bill, Gus and John, Pete and Jim, Matt and Walt, Joe and Bob and many others. There was not a two-syllabled name uttered in the place during an entire evening.

"Si knowed how ter raise lysters," remarked one of the company.

"Waal, now, ye bet yer best four-year-old bed he did," assented old Harry Smith. "I wonder who'll wuk his beds now he's gone," he added.

"Mos' likely the gal'll run things an' have some feller ter do the heavy wuk an' look after the shop. She kin 'tend ter the books an' such like. She'd kinder looked after the bus'ness fur a year or more back," replied Gus Jones, who thought he knew all there was to be known in Shellbank.

"A good chance fur ye, Les," he continued, addressing a tall, broad-shouldered young oyster man, who was at that moment leaning against the lunch counter, holding a glass of cider up to the light.

"I don't want the job, Gus," replied the one addressed, "my own bus'ness takes all my time."

"But, man, old Si's are the best beds in Long Island sound," continued Jones.

"'Taint so much the beds as 'tis the care old Si give 'em," answered Les. "If they wuz left to themselves they wouldn't amount to no more than Cap'n Charlie's mud bank off Bilford. I own a bed next east an' Shoutin' Davie owns on the west. Both beds are as good as Grannis's'."

"Ef Shoutin' Davie owns nex' to her the gal'd better keep them bright eyes o' hearn wide open or she won't have any lysters ter open," said an old man who sat off in the corner by the stove puffing on an old black "T. D."

A loud laugh followed this remark, for Shoutin' Davie, local preacher though he was, had the reputation of sometimes forgetting where the boundary buoys were set and helping himself to oysters from other people's beds. During the laugh the young oyster man called Les left the room. After his departure several remarks, not all of a complimentary nature, were made concerning him, but another sally from the corner put an end to it.

"Les Barnes is all right, boys. You jest leave him alone an' he'll come out ahead. He's makin' more money this season than enny man along the river. Mis' Edna won't hev to trouble on his side o' her bed, but she'd better keep a sharp watch out to the west'ard," said the old man.

"You love Shoutin' Davie, don't you, Uncle Billy?" laughed one of the company.

"I hev good reason fur enny opinion I express, boys," he retorted as he arose to leave them.

Within a few moments' walk of Jerry's lunch room and upon the street that skirted the river bank stood an old-fashioned white house adorned with the greenest of green blinds. To this house Silas Granniss had brought his bride more than 30 years before and from this house had five tiny coffins been carried out, until only Baby Edna was left. Then the broken-hearted mother gave up the struggle and now Silas Granniss himself had been carried forth, borne by the strong arms of six white-haired oystermen. With that silent form departed all the light and joy of the household.

Within the cozy sitting-room of the Granniss homestead sat Edna Granniss, bowed and grief-stricken. She was sitting in an old-armed rocking chair, and she rocked forward and back as though in deepest agony. Her comely face was tense and drawn; her wavy brown hair lay loosely about her forehead and her great brown eyes were red and swollen. Such was the present condition of she at whose feet knelt half the youth of Shellbank. She was kind to them all, but not one word or sign of encouragement had one of them received. She had often told them that her father was her only lover. Her whole life had been spent in ministering unto her father's comfort and she had given no thought to matters of love or marriage. Therefore now that her father was gone there were no manly arms to support her and no lover's voice to whisper words of cheer and comfort. She was alone with her grief and sorrow.

A loud knock upon the front door aroused her and she hastened to answer the summons. The unexpected guest proved to be Shoutin' Davie Cooke, the local preacher, who at that moment was the topic of conversation in Jerry's lunch room. He was a man but little past middle life, but gray and bent as one who had a great trouble, as indeed he had, thanks to his own stern nature. He had once been a handsome man but now his features had grown to express nothing but greed and avarice. Edna, however, knowing little of the man save his semi-clerical character, received him cordially. He bowed a silent acknowledgement to her welcome and followed her into the parlor. After giving expression to a few sentiments of sympathy and the like he plunged directly into business.

"Perhaps it's too soon to talk about affairs, but I am so anxious to help you I couldn't help running into talk with you," he began. "Of course Miss Granniss, a slip of a girl like you can't run such a business as growing oysters. So I thought I'd make you an offer to take the whole thing off'n your hands, just to help you, you understand, not that I want it. I've got about all the land and room I want, but I just to help you out I'll give you a thousand dollars for the beds and another thousand for the shop and dock and boats and such. You may think they're worth more, but you know yourself everything's been running down lately. The Pandora needs a lot of fixing up and I'd have to put in a lot of new spiling before I could tie my steamers up to the dock. Then there's the shop and—"

"You may say no more, Mr. Cooke," interrupted Edna, her eyes flashing. "I know the value of my father's property better than you think for, and when I get ready to give it away you'll not be the one I shall send for."

"Go slow, Miss Edna, go slow. You know times is bad. Your father told me himself his meats was thin and poor this year and it cost him all he could make to watch the beds. You know that sneaking Lee Barnes owns next east of you and he's the worst oyster thief in Long Island Sound."

"Mr. Cooke, you may go. Go at once, please, before I say things I should afterwards be ashamed of. As for Lester Barnes I shall not believe one word concerning him until it is proven on good authority."

The schemer saw he had gone too far and that former efforts along the line he had chosen would be useless at present. Therefore he beat a hasty and at the same time rather undignified retreat. Edna so far forgot herself as to slam the door behind him. She returned to the sitting-room and resumed her seat in the old rocker, but her mood was changed. Her encounter with Davie had so aroused her spirit as to lift her for the time from her grief-stricken inaction and make her more like her restless, charming self. Her indignation at the preacher-oysterman had been aroused far more by his insinuations against the young riverman, Lester Barnes, than by his misrepresentations of the truly valuable property left her by her father. From childhood up she had known the young fellow and never before had she heard a slur cast upon his character, nor would she believe anything now, she declared resolutely.

She had reached this commendable decision and lay back in her chair for a "think," when there came another knock at the front door. This visitor proved to be her father's old sharpieman, Matt Davis. Were I called upon to draw a composite picture of the Shellbank riverman, that portrait would be Matt Davis. On this occasion he didn't look himself, for he had no hip boots on and an oysterman without those badges of his profession always looks to me as I imagine a turtle would look without his shell. He was dressed in his Sunday best and when a Shellbank oysterman is attired in his best he isn't to be sneezed at, for remember, their business is a lucrative one, an average sharpieman making as high as $5 a day. Matt's suit was of black worsted and was of Deacon Merwin's best cut. He wore a white shirt with a turndown collar and a carelessly tied cravat. The latter, however, was seldom visible, only fleeting glimpses of it being allowed by the bushy red beard that covered Matt's face almost to his eyes.

Edna made this guest welcome. She well knew how faihtfully this man had served the Grannis's shop, how for 20 years in fair weather and in foul, in heat and in cold, he had made his daily trip down the harbor returning at night with a load of the bivalves that made Shellbank famous. Matt now sat uneasily on the edge of the old hair cloth sofa twirling his Sunday hat. He had something to say but knew not how to say it with those brown eyes fastened so intently upon his face.

"What is it, Matt?" she asked, to put him at his ease.

"Waal, I'll tell ye, Miss Edna, it's about the bus'ness I cum. I hate ter trouble ye so soon, but I wanted ter know what's a goin' ter be did. Thar's orders on hand and we hain't done nothin' at all in the shop sence the cap'n died an' somethin's got ter be did right straight off ef the Granniss shop air a goin' ter run at all."

"I haven't made up my mind yet what I will do with the business eventually. It don't seem as if I could run it alone, but I shall have to for the present. I will leave the river work and the shop to you for the present and I will look after the accounts," she answered.

"Thank ye, Miss, thank ye," said Matt heartily. "I'll do the best I can fur ye. I han't much on head wuk, but I do know an lyster from spawn to table. I'll go down bright an' early in the mornin' an' git es big a load es I kin. I'll hev the openers come on 'bout 2 in the arternoon an' I guess we kin make a shipment ter Boston 'fore freight closes."

"All right, Matt. I'll depend on you. We must get caught up if we have to hire a steamer for a day or two."

"By the way, Matt," she continued, "do you think Lester Barnes would steal oysters?"

"Les Barnes! Steal lysters!" cried Matt almost leaping from his chair in amazement. "Who in creation put that idee in yer pretty head?"

"Mr. Cooke was here a few moments ago and warned me that Lester was in the habit of taking oysters from other people's beds."

"Shoutin' Davie be dam—; acuse me Miss, I cum near cussing then, but thet tarnal hypocrite do make an honest man mad. He'll bar watchin' himself. I'll kinder keep an eye on Les, but I won't b'lieve it till I see him at it."

Shortly before 6 o'clock the following morning Matt reached the Granniss dock, clad in his working clothes and hip boots with a huge sou'wester crowning all, for the sky was overcast. He passed around the shop to the slip where the Pandora lay ready to do her part in continuing the business of her late owner. There was a strong ebb tide running and the wind was from the southwest, so Matt did not step his mast but let the sharpie swing out into the river, where the tide caught her and bore her rapidly down stream. Matt leisurely sculling to accelerate her speed. Because his mast was not stepped there was no waiting for drawbridges, that delay so exasperating to an oysterman, for the bridgetenders will not open the draws for a single sharpie, but wait for a group. Down past the big New York boats lying idly at her dock receiving in her capacious hold the great load of freight awaiting movement, past the coal wharves where the great colliers lay, past the old Long wharf where a veteran steamer lay rotting out her old age, they flew along. A long sculling oar and an ebb tide work well together. As they neared the buoy on Pardlee's bar Matt looked out toward the open sound and saw a sight that made his blood boil with indignation. Just over the breakwater (there was but one in those days) the tip of two large leg-o'-mutton sails could be seen.

"Cracky, thet's on our bed," cried Matt. "I'll catch the scamp this time, I'll bet it's Amen Davie."

As Matt had not yet stepped his mast he was able to skirt the edge of the breakwater, turn quickly around the round red lighthouse at its eastern end and appear to the unconscious thief before the latter was aware of his existence. Matt gave a low whistle of surprise as he recognized the intruder. Instead of the stooping shoulders of the local preacher he saw the erect athletic form of Lester Barnes. With him in the boat was his assistant, Bob Lewis. At the moment Matt swept around the lighthouse they were hauling in the port dredge after a drift over the bed. It was filled with Grannis' best four-year-olds. Matt stopped sculling and stood up, astonished, unable to believe the testimony of his own eyes. In a moment Lester looked up and, upon beholding Matt, he hastily dumped the dredge, emptying the oysters back into their native element. Then both taking their shovels he and Bob shoved overboard the two or three dredgefuls already in the boat. That done Lester sprang to the stern, hauled in his sheets, put his tiller up and sailed away to his own ground.

The remainder of the morning passed slowly and wearily for Matt Davis. In common with the majority of our people he admired Lester Barnes. The orphan boy, who at 24, was one of the six largest growers in Shellbank, could hardly have worked himself to his present position without exciting some admiration on the part of our honest citizens. He was liked also for his whole-hearted manly ways. Against all this record there was arrayed one fact in Matt's mind. Lester Barnes had stolen oysters. Not a serious crime say you, but in Shellbank an oyster thief was held in much the same contempt as a horse thief is in the west. All the morning as Matt tugged away alone at his dredges his mind dwelt upon the act of Lester Barnes, its causes and its proper consequences. Matt's mind was a lumbering affair, slow in its action but sure in its results. Once that mind was decided upon its duty no amount of persuasion could prevent the man following the line of action dictated. So he pondered upon the question of his duty to his mistress.

Of late the minds of the oystermen upon both sides of the Hamaquag had become as one upon the subject of oyster stealing. The first man caught was to be made an example of. All this came to Matt Davis as he worked alone there beside the breakwater, but still he liked Les. The thought of exposing him was distasteful to the kind hearted fellow, but Lester had been robbing a woman, a defenseless girl.

When at last the dull road of the railroad shop whistle came floating over the water to him Matt Davis had accomplished two important results. He had caught up the necessary amount of oysters to keep the openers going through that afternoon and the following morning, and he had decided upon his duty in connection with the crime that morning committed by Lester Barnes.

"A HAPPY SMILE CAME INTO HER BENEVOLENT OLD FACE."

II.

Effect.

That evening the customary groups were gathered in Jerry's back room, pursuing their customary evening occupation. At a table in the farther corner of the room "Uncle Billy" Bunnell, "Uncle Harry" Smith, Lester Barnes and Jerry himself were deep in a game of cribbage. Around them sat some five or six lookers-on, for these four were famous "crib" players and something of note was sure to turn up before either side pegged out. They were hard at it. It was nip and tuck, not a mistake was being made. Each man was playing as though his life depended on it. The two uncles, who were partners were almost out and the crib was theirs. Les Barnes, with a poor hand, was studying closely how to discard. His fingers were upon the two cards selected but—they were never discarded. At that moment a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder and he glanced up quickly to meet the gaze of Charlie Bradley, the policeman.

"Come, Lester," he said gently, "you'll have to step over to the precinct with me for a few moments."

Barnes turned red and then the blood left his face. He essayed to rise but his knees were so unsteady he barely succeeded.

"All right, Charlie," he stammered, "I'll go. Don't send for the wagon."

"No, Les, we'll take the car," said the officer gently. He was an ex-oysterman and one of us still at heart.

"Uncle Billy, can you come?" asked Lester when he was recovered somewhat from the first shock.

Was there anything Uncle Billy Bunnell wouldn't do for a Shellbank man or woman, boy or girl? He arose silently, threw down the unplayed hand that would have won the game and the trio left the place. They boarded a passing car and took seats inside. Charlie Bradley from a fine sense of delicacy stayed outside.

The business at the precinct was soon settled. The desk sergeant read the warrant charging Lester Barnes with trespassing with intent to steal upon certain oyster lands belonging to the estate of the late Silas Granniss and located beneath the waters of Long Island sound. Uncle Billy's eyes opened at the charge and he looked gravely at the young oysterman whom he loved as a son. The sergeant made out a bond for Lester's appearance and Uncle Billy signed it without a word. The old man's heart was sad. He had watched this orphan boy as he had grown to stalwart manhood, he had rejoiced at the youth's phenomenal rise in business; he had been proud of him as a father is proud of a son. Now all his pride was gone. Lester Barnes, an oyster thief, the worst criminal Shellbank could imagine! When they were outside the station house and stood by the railroad crossing waiting for a horse car to come, Uncle Billy faced Lester sternly.

"Tell me, Les," he said, and his voice was dry and harsh, "is this charge true?"

The young man was silent. His face was white and drawn. Uncle Billy believed it, he could plainly see, and he realized how he had fallen in the good old man's estimation. It was a hard moment for him, but he answered truthfully.

"Uncle Billy, I must be frank with you, the best friend I've got or ever had. Matt Davis caught me this morning on the Grannis bed."

"Then, Lester Barnes, I'm disappointed in ye. Ef ever I loved a boy I love ye. Someway ye seem jest what my poor Dannie would a' ben ef he hadn't jumped inter the river an' got drown-ded. I don't regret agoin' bonds fur ye. Ye ain't quite so low as ter sneak off an' leave old Uncle Billy ter settle. No, I don't think quite so bad on ye es that, Lester, but, God knows this affair's well nigh scrunched me. Les Barnes, I wouldn't a ben more s'prised ef Doctor Watkins had been caught a stealing oysters. Stealin' from a poor weak gal, too, Les, thet couldn't watch her rights."

Uncle Billy paused for breath and Lester looked at him helplessly, piteously, but the old man was stern and unforgiving.

"Les," he began again, "I'm glad Matt Davis ketched ye. I be, Les, an' I hope ef ye're found guilty the judge'll give ye the extent o' the law, an' I guess he will. Jedge Post is a terror ter evildoers fur sartin."

The young man could stand no more. He glanced up the avenue and saw a car coming.

"Here comes the car, Uncle Billy," he said hoarsely, "I'm goin' ter walk."

He turned away and struck off briskly in the direction of Shellbank. Uncle Billy looked after him sadly but made no move to follow him.

"Can it be possible?" he murmured. "Must be so, 'cause Les admits it."

On Ruby street stood the tidy cottage occupied by Uncle Billy Bunnell and his sweet little wife, Aunt Susan. Ah, what associations that humble cottage has for me. What evenings I have spent there listening to Uncle Billy's stories and Aunt Susan's pleasant conversation. Here on the night of Lester Barnes' arrest Aunt Susan sat alone beside the sitting room light knitting a stocking, for rubber boots are death to hosiery and Uncle Billy lived in his. Aunt Susan was often alone. She didn't seem to mind it, but I sometimes thought she was lonesome after all. Uncle Billy's spending so many evenings away from home was his chief fault. Aunt Susan told me once he didn't begin to go out so evenings until after Dannie was drowned. She said it was so lonesome for him without Dannie. Poor soul! Wasn't Dannie her boy too and wasn't the old house lonesome for her without him?

Aunt Susan heard a well known step coming up the walk. She glanced at the clock. He was an hour earlier than usual. She knew this meant something, but she was not prepared for what followed. Uncle Billy burst into the room, slammed the door behind him and, throwing himself upon the old sofa, burst into tears, weeping bitterly. All dear Aunt Susan's gentle sympathy was aroused. She walked quickly across the room to the sofa, knelt beside it and began stroking her husband's weatherbeaten face.

"Tell me, Billy, tell me what's the matter. Are you thinking of Dannie again?" she whispered.

"No, wife. It's worse than that."

"Worse than that?" she cried aghast.

"Yes, worse'n that, Susan," he cried, springing to his feet. "Our Dannie's dead and God knows we miss him, but wife, he died like a brave boy a tryin' ter save another's life an' we're proud o' him an' his death. I'd rather bury Dannie over again, wife, than ter have what's happened ter Les Barnes happen."

"Lester Barnes!" she exclaimed. "The poor boy. Tell me all about it, Billy."

He turned on her almost savagely, so deep was his grief.

"He's under arrest fur—fur stealin' lysters off'n Si Granniss' beds."

Aunt Susan gave a little scream and fell into her easy chair throwing her apron over her head as she did so, a habit the dear old lady had when anything agitated her.

"Oh, Billy," she said presently, "we compared him to our Dannie."

"I know it, Susan, I know it. It's a bitter disappointment. I loved Lester, wife, next ter you an' Dannie, an' sence Dannie went he's seemed kinder like a son."

There was silence in the room for some moments. Aunt Susan was thinking and Uncle Billy was waiting to hear what she would say next. What she did say brought him to her side.

"Billy, s'pose it aint so?"

"But Les acknowledged it," he said, seating himself on the broad arm of her chair.

"What'd he say?"

He told her word for word. Had not every syllable burned itself into his brain?

"Billy," she said, "he didn't answer ye straight an' true. There was a reservation somewhere. Now you see Lester Barnes tomorrow an' tell him ter come an' see Aunt Susan right off."

Then they went to bed, hopeful for the best, but both sad at heart.

The police court was crowded next morning. All Shellbank was there to see Lester Barnes tried for theft from Edna Granniss' oyster beds. Uncle Billy, sad and sick at heart, was there ready to help if he could, but hardly daring to hope. A large bunch of drunks and disorderlies was disposed of first and then the case of Lester Barnes was called. The tall young oysterman walked slowly but fearlessly across the court room to the prisoner's chair at the end of the long table. Here he stood facing the judge while the warrant was read. He pleaded not guilty.

The prosecuting attorney hastened the case as much as he could in order to get it disposed of before noon. Matt Davis told his story simply and Bob Lewis, who had been Les' companion, corroborated it. They were the only witnesses, but as they were the only ones present on the occasion their testimony was sufficient to convict. Lester refused to say anything in his own behalf. Squire Sanford made a brief but eloquent plea for his client, dwelling particularly upon Lester's previous good character, but it was without avail. Judge Post promptly sentenced Lester Barnes to six months in jail, but the words were hardly pronounced ere Squire Sanford gave notice of appeal to the superior court. Uncle Billy again gave his bond and the case was laid over until the January term of the higher court.

Lester Barnes walked slowly homeward, afraid to take the car for fear of meeting his townsmen. Now that a judge had found him guilty and sentenced him to jail not a soul but would believe him guilty. All the way home he was trying to decide if it wouldn't be best to sell out his business and what property he had acquired and leave town. He could give Uncle Billy enough to settle the bond when it was called. This indeed might have been his course of action, but for one consideration and that consideration was —Edna Granniss.

Lester ate little dinner that day. He was a convict and where once he was loved he would now be loathed. He felt his life to be blighted for ever. Wherever he wandered he was sure his crime would follow him. After he finished his meal he headed for his shop, but suddenly remembering the peremptory invitation Uncle Billy had given him after court he turned down Ruby street instead. After all, a half hour with Aunt Susan might do him good. It had before. He remembered now, how, as a motherless boy, he had gone to Aunt Susan with all his childish troubles and had always found comfort. With this pleasant remembrance in mind he knocked boldly at Aunt Susan's door.

When he saw the tearful loving face of Aunt Susan as she let him in, he stooped down impulsively and kissed her broad high forehead.

"Thank God, Aunty," he said in a voice that trembled, "I have one friend left."

"Not one, Lester, two, and I doubt not many more besides."

He shook his head sadly but he was glad to learn from her that Uncle Billy had not given him up entirely.

He took a seat opposite Aunt Susan and they fell to talking. Before he realized it he had told her what neither judge nor lawyer had been able to extract from him, his story of the affair. When he had finished Aunt Susan crossed to him and, putting one arm about his neck, she kissed him on the cheek.

"God bless you, my boy," she said. "I knew you couldn't steal. Oh, if my Dannie had lived to your age and been as noble a man as you, wouldn't I be proud of him?"

He held her there while he tried to find his voice, but it wouldn't come. Finally he burst into tears and sobbed like a great boy with his head on Aunt Susan's ample bosom. A half hour later he arose to take his leave, but before he was allowed to go Aunt Susan made him promise to come back to tea.

When Lester Barnes knocked on Aunt Susan's door for the second time that day he was admitted by Uncle Billy. The old man said nothing beyond a simple welcome, but the pressure of his hand spoke volumes. Uncle Billy conducted his guest to his own little room where his desk, his few well read volumes and many mementoes of his youthful voyages, for Uncle Billy had been a sailor before he donned hip boots. Here they sat and chatted until Aunt Susan, all aglow from her labors over the fire, came and called them to tea.

As Lester entered the roomy kitchen he stopped and took a step backward. He stood there gazing awkwardly into the room. There beside the tea table stood Edna Granniss, blushing to the very roots of her glorious brown hair. She blushed, but as Lester gazed upon her, he saw no sign of welcome, no indication of friendship or forgiveness. His heart smote him as he realized she believed him guilty of stealing from her.

Uncle Billy awkwardly presented Lester, but she barely acknowledged it. A moment later they took their seats. Uncle Billy said a simple grace and the meal commenced. Aunt Susan's cookery was up to its usual standard, but it was not a pleasant occasion for all that. Lester was sad to think of Edna's considering him a thief and Edna was angry at the good old couple for their simple strategem. They, good souls, did all in their power to arouse their guests. Aunt Susan chatted gaily and Uncle Billy told his best stories, but it was all of no avail. The young people tasted of Aunt Susan's cookery in gloomy silence. All were glad when the meal was finished and they pushed back their chairs.

"Now Billy, you go up to Jerry's," said Aunt Susan, authoritatively.

Uncle Billy protested, but his wife was firm and at length he obeyed.

"Now you Edna and you Lester, come with me," she said in the same decided tone after her husband had taken his departure.

They followed her into the cosy little parlor and took seats upon the same side of the room so they wouldn't have to look at each other. Aunt Susan sat opposite where she could look at both.

"Edna," she began, "do you remember a man's coming to you the night following your father's funeral?"

"Yes," answered Edna, "Mr. Cooke."

"Exactly. Well after he left you he met a young man on the street and told him you were in trouble. He said you had many important orders on hand, which, if not filled, would mean loss of customers. He said Matt Davis had left you and you had no way o' gittin' the oysters to fill the orders.

"Next mornin' that young man took his boat an' his man, an' leaving his own bus'ness went down ter git you a load of oysters. He caught up some and was hauling in another dredge when he see Matt Davis comin' round the light. He was so 'shamed o' bein' caught doin' a kind act he jest threw all the oysters overboard an' run away like the great foolish boy that he is.

"Now, I say, Edna Grannis, air you agoin' ter send that young man ter jail fur tryin' ter help ye when he thought ye was in trouble?"

"No, a thousand times, no!" cried the girl, bursting into tears.

"Oh, how could I believe it of him, how could I," she moaned, her face buried on Aunt Susan's shoulder, the good soul having sprung to her side the moment the tears appeared.

A few moments later the little boy from the next house (which was ourself) knocked on the door and asked Aunt Susan to come over and show his mother about some sewing she was doing. I didn't know it until years afterwards, but this was a part of Aunt Susan's carefully laid plan.

When the kind soul returned she entered the parlor, and as she took in the state of affairs a happy smile came into her benevolent old face and she had great difficulty in controlling her tears.

"Aunt Susan," said Lester, with quiet dignity, "Edna and I have been talking matters over with a view to preventing further trouble over our adjoining property. We have decided to consolidate our interests, including our hearts and lives."

Then Aunt Susan hugged them both and cried over them to her heart's content.

Thus was settled out of court the famous case of The People vs. Barnes.

WILL THE HOTEL BANISH *The* CITY HOME?--Continued From the First Page *of* This Section

Nights, wherein the rooms were done in gold and filled with great salvers of gems.

In furnishing a new hotel in New York the lessee bought outright the entire contents of a French palace, at a cost of $200,000. Bric-a-brac and pictures cost $750,000; bedroom furniture, $700,000; mantels, $100,000; marble, $200,000; statuary, $300,000. And these were only a few of many items.

One hotel has chairs in the lobby purchased at $400 apiece. The dining-room chairs at another cost $60 each. In these places you will find such trifles as a clock of Marie Antoinette and a sword of Napoleon. Oh, yes, and among the hotels you will find many works of art—good art—as, for instance, in one you will find, if you observe, as most guests don't, Schlessinger's "Pan and Baccahnte" in bronze, Tonachi's "Diver," Romanelli's "Drumming Lesson" and Ball's "Eve" in marble.

Even the barrooms boast of gems of art; in that of one is the great painting of Maxnerd Parrisa, "Old King Cole." In a wing of a great dining-room is another masterpiece, James Wall Finn's "The Mask of Flora." And in the grill that type of American art which Frederick Remington represents in the "Unites States Cavalry Charge."

But don't forget that the modern hotel must be cosmopolitan in its art, its rooms and its bric-a-brac. In one, for instance, there are an Italian garden, where flowering plants and trailing vines subdue, lights shedding a radiance as soft as moonlight; a German hunter's room, filled with trophies of the chase; a college room, patronized by college men, where Ionic columns are surmounted by college crests; Yale room, fitted like the saloon of a ship, with portholes showing imitations glimpses of the sea, companionways and rope railings; a rathskeller, deep down under Broadway, and innumerable private dining-rooms besides.

In another hotel there are a romanesque banquet hall, a Moorish room, a Turkish room, a Persian room, a Dutch smoking-room, and a writing-room for ladies furnished a la Elizabethan.

What home could offer all these luxuries and novelties?

What home can offer such concerts as are given in the great hotels, where the finest artists sing, where great musicians are glad to come? How many homes offer filtered air, for instance?

Then, what home could offer the conveniences of the hotel? There the servant question is solved. A push of a button will bring a manicurist or a table-d'hote with a full dinner, a cocktail or a messenger boy!

So far as one's wants and desires for entertainment are concerned, one need never go out of the hotel. Entertainments are always in progress, libraries offer standard works and the latest fiction, art treasures are there, flower stores, drug stores, confection stores—yes, innumerable stores on the ground-floor offer the best things, at, incidentally, the highest prices.

And what else?

Your apartments are hung in gobelin tapestries. You sleep on a bed of tulip wood which once was the reposing place of a great French princess; your bath water is perfumed, the fittings in your bathroom are of silver; your wants, sent in envelopes through the pneumatic tube, are attended to as though by magic; your clock is regulated by Washington Observatory time, the heat and light in your room can be regulated to suit you—and what else?

One might go on—

And on—

Repeating the modern fairy tale of wonders of luxuries indefinitely.

And—you pay what?

Ah! We are becoming a nation of hotels—and also a nation of reckless spenders.

However, if we would have luxuries we must pay the bill. One can get rooms in good hotels for from $2.50 to $150 a day.

Food extra.

Manicurists extra.

Tips extra.

Everything—extra; and extra fine, for that matter.

You would have dinner. Green turtle soup looks good. Yes, waiter, green turtle soup—$1.25 a portion. How about turkey—would you like some turkey? Five dollars! Or grouse today? A very small portion—$3.50. Some tea? Only 60 cents a cup! How about dessert—cantaloupe, $1 a portion, or grapes for $1.50.

Your dinner is served by liveried servants—lordly creatures, stiff in gold lace.

Their dignity is oppressive—but it does condescend to tips. A page boy will nonchalantly receive a $1 note with a hurried "thanky."

But this is a picture of the ultra magnificent hotels in big cities, where ultra prices are paid. In New York and other cities you can get a room and bath in the best hotels for $3.50, with an excellent dinner for $1.

But to people with money to spend, desiring luxuries, and personal cares reduced to a minimum, the high-class hotels offer a seventh heaven. No doubt-less many a millionaire finds them more satisfactory than a home.

Then, too, there are the small apartment houses, where palatial suites can be obtained for from $1,500 to $10,000 a year. In New York alone the population of apartment houses exceeds a million.

What, many foreigners ask, is the secret of the success of American hotels? It does not take long to find out.

A Long-Distance Catch.

Each summer when the days are hot,
When leaves hang listless on the tree;
When green grass stifles in its plot,
The fishing fever gets on me,
Dies on my ear the trolley's clang.
The rush of fortune-chasing fools,
And in my nostrils is the tang
Of woods and banks and cloistered pools.

A swish of waters at my feet,
The leaves above in lullaby,
No crush, no rush, no dust, no heat,
No beings but the bass and I.
The swish and running of the line;
A dashing of fin-cloven spray.
Pay out! Reel in! A net! He's mine!
Who says I have not lived today?

I sit, the folder in my hands,
And wonderful the things I see;
Dreams of that fair and finny land—
Of water—whispering to me.
The eddy where the swift trout hides,
The sun upon a dashing spray,
Where the bass shows his silver sides—
Ah, me—I cannot work today.

The basket with its leaves and grass,
So moist, so fresh, so cool, so sweet,
Laid with its rows on rows of bass;
No spires, no flags, no rails, no street,
No puts, no calls, no bulls, no bears,
No hours by minutes speeding by,
No stocks, no margins, and no shares—
Just woods and pools and fish—and I.

So when the debts and frets and ills
Grow heavy, there are mountain streams,
Done in the books and woods and hills—
Let's go a-fishing in our dreams.
Let's close our desks half down and play
The stream's right there—do you not see
That bass a-whirl?—well, that's the way
The fishing fever gets on me.
—J. W. Foley in New York Times.

Pensions for Widows.

In stating that the Australian state of Queensland in 1879 began a system of subsidizing widows in the care of their children, Consular Agent Asbury Caldwell of Brisbane writes of its further development:

"The idea has steadily grown, and it has been found wiser for the state to pension the mother for the care of her children than to condemn her to such employment which would cause her to neglect the children. The following new scale of weekly allowances was authorized by the recent parliament, to take effect May 1, 1908: For one child, $1.72; two children, $1.10 each; three children, 78 cents each; four children, 91 cents each; more than four children, a maximum of $4.34."

WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN

By Cara Reese

WHEN her ignorance ceases, then yours begins, and thus you keep on, both of you, displaying your destitution of knowledge, your lack of genuine information, the absence of culture.

And wasting good breath and earning the reputation of pretenders in the royal circle of wisdom and learning. When you do not know what you are talking about, why don't you keep quiet. This thing of having your positive "say" on every topic that is introduced, and of participating in every argument, no matter what the main discussion is about or of adding your quota of irrelevant or misleading information to a line of legitimate talk, is a painful display of your standing as an ignoramus.

Even should your companion be one of the verbose sort and, like a sieve, let out every possible drop of information on a given theme, you should still keep quiet and not endeavor to force the impression that you are just as fully, if not better, informed.

And when the public speaker makes a "hit," as you suppose, and the argument starts, you might refrain now and then from contributing your budget in your hasty effort to be recognized as one who is up to the times. You will never regret a still tongue; but you will regret a gagging one.

It is not always necessary to do one's part in conversation; if the company be a large one, for instance, the listening group extended the assembly numbering more than self and one, there is always a possible chance of the presence of some individual who is thoroughly informed and who rates you henceforth by your silliness and ignorant tongue.

There is too much of this open display of minds uninterested in art, literature and science; too much flaunting, as learning, a little superficial knowledge; too much digging up from the untutored depths a short order opinion to suit some emergency argument; too much flippancy and nimbleness of speech just to put to rout the genuine and well-studied, well constructed affirmative of the debate.

Ignorance in general, and ignorance on particular subjects, will always be in the midst; but it does not necessarily follow that ignorance need be displayed. There are times to keep quiet, and one time is when you for the first have heard a new truth expounded, or a novel subject introduced, or an original idea expressed, and when you have heard for the first some information presented by cold, calm, science, or some investigation revealed by a student and expert.

You may always ask questions, and you may always present relevant facts, and quote statements from authorities. But to come from the dishpan or the family wash, without any previous study of the subject to be discussed, without any vocation or avocation as student, without any inclination, special gift, or leading from the gods, and to enter nimbly into a positive line of defense or rebuttal on a topic or theme of which you do not know what the name means, let alone what is being talked about, is ignorance displayed, and ignorance too offensive for words.

Neither one of you know what you were talking about in the car today; both of you were uninformed and the one who knew the truth and was laughing inwardly at you, was the man with the dinner pail. He could have told you a thing or two that would have played havoc with your learned speech and made both of you sit straight. After this, when her ignorance ceases for lack of breath, don't you clack in and display yours!

For a Dear Good-Night.

For a dear good-night, for a dear good-night,
She will wait for me in the evenlight;
For a dear good-night she will necklace me
With her arms of child in a clasp of glee;
For a dear good-night she will clasp and cling
Till the cares depart and the shadows sing.

For a dear good-night she will linger there,
Where the hopes are sweet and the dreams are fair;
Rose of the roses on cheek and chin,
And a little rose smile with the dew-drops in;
Honey of heartlove and bearer of light,
She will wake, she will wait for a dear good-night.

For a dear good-night when the day has been long,
And lonely and weary and sad for a song;
For a dear good-night when the path-way brings
My feet to the gate where her dear voice sings;
For a dear good-night she will leap, and will play,
With love in the twilight to fold us away.
—Baltimore Sun.

Both Time and Money.

From the Philadelphia Inquirer.

He—Grace is looking as young as ever, isn't she?

She—Yes, but she says it costs her more every year.