

THE POLK COUNTY ITEMIZER.

INDEPENDENCE, OREGON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 1882.

A Word or Two to an Old Lady.

The Northwest answers our arguments of week before last. The answer is clear, final, and conclusive of the invulnerable strength of our own position. The gist of the reply is that we are "boys," the crime of being youthful, in the language of Pitt, is one we seek neither to palliate nor deny. Our age is no criterion of the truthfulness of our statements, nor of the force of our logic. These must stand or fall upon their own merits. Youth is not a badge of fraud nor evidence of folly. Grey hairs may be a crown of glory, but it should not be forgotten that the fool grows as well as the wise man, and even the wise have once been "boys." And even if the fact that we are "boyings" should warrant a closer scrutiny of our argument, we gently remind the old lady who puts us on the head, that second childhood is even a more pitiable spectacle than first childhood. For the one is the beginning of strength, the other a symptom of decay. The one is the unfaded beauty of the bud; the other the loosened leaves of the faded rose whose freshness and sweetness have been kissed away by the licentious breezes of the summer days. But not that account should we despise the latter. The "buds" here bend to the withered flower and acknowledge that while they cannot admire, they may, at least, pity the infrangible decay of their ancient cousin.

Mrs. Duniway pays us the compliment of saying that we had help in writing what she pleases to term "an ingeniously wrought distortion of palpable facts." Mrs. Duniway is mistaken. We wrote every line of the editorial referred to without help or suggestion from any one. And it is not an "ingeniously wrought distortion," nor any kind of distortion of facts. That is the advantage truth has over error. The simple truth is not hard to relate. It requires no ability to write it. But once written its clearness and force are so apparent that it sometimes happens, as in this case, that the writer receives the credit, which is only due to the strength and beauty of the truth he is telling. That is why Mrs. Duniway puts that editorial so far above her humble attainments. That is why even so vigorous and experienced a writer as the "senior editor" must desert the facts and the argument and expend her force in calling names.

"The fool's first argument is a bet, the second is an oath." But the good lady makes an effort to evade the dilemma held up for her choice two weeks ago. We again present it to her. Either she made an untruthful statement concerning Mr. Chittenden's reputation for truth and veracity, or she confessed her willingness to use him as her witness, knowing him to be, as she alleges in effect, a confirmed liar. Here are the two horns. Impale yourself, dear madam, upon one or the other. It will not do to smile away the difficulty by writing such piousness as this: "Why, bless your purrle veridicality, Mr. Chittenden was the Government's witness." That gentleman was the Duniways' witness for all the purposes of this argument. He came at the request of the Duniway Publishing Company, who, if we have been correctly informed, paid or promised to pay his expenses. However that may be, it is a certainty that Mr. C. was called by the prosecutors; that he would not have been here to testify but for their own motion. Neither the "Government" nor the defense are responsible for his production. Therefore, whatever odium might attach to him as an habitual liar attaches also to the Duniways, who, as they allege, knew him to be such when they brought him on the stand. We have no doubt in the world that if Mr. C.'s testimony had been in favor of the prosecution instead of the defense, and the defense had attacked his character, the Northwest would even now be defending him with as much ardor as it is now nagging him.

Mrs. Duniway asks if we remember making the remark "after the battle" that it is considered a part of an attorney's business to tamper with witnesses. Yes, we remember it. But the old soul has mistaken the irony of the remark for an actual confession. The "boys" must, in the absence of a better explanation, hold the dullness of old

age as a valid excuse for this utterance of perception. Mrs. Duniway would like to know upon what authority we state that the company was willing to withdraw its charges against Hodgkin if he would apologize. We reply, upon the authority of Mrs. Duniway herself. If the ancient dame has forgotten it, our "veridicality" must charitably attribute her defect of memory to the wasting effects of a garrulous old age.

In conclusion, old heart, we extend our sympathies. Boys though we be, we have not lost our reverence for old ladies. We love them, and when the infirmities of age make one of them querulous, and unjust, and contradictory, we say to ourselves, "Never mind her; be gentle with her; she's growing old, she's growing old!"

Rowena.

"For some must laugh while others weep, Thus runs the world away."—Hamlet. Somebody must leave the dear little home at Thorp-Enden, and leave it at once, and perhaps forever! But if that somebody did not go, then everybody must; even poor, dear, ugly little Brace, the sky-terrier, and Smudge, the kitten.

In one grand lump, for paupers we undoubtedly were, unless money was immediately forthcoming. And where to look for it—that was the rub! Money is not plucked like our ripe leaves from consumptive and braubly gooseberry-bushes. And there was not a living mortal soul who would be likely to lend us any, even had we scraped up the courage to ask for it.

It is true, there were any quantity of mythical suns in the shape of debts to poor papa during his wild, spendthrift days—when Ro and I were at boarding-school—but dear little helpless mamma had no more idea of how to begin to collect this outstanding wealth, or in what quarter of the earth to look for the scandalous wretches who had defrauded us of our just rights, than I have of the Northwest passage this moment.

It never once entered her mind that a retributive justice might have overtaken some of them with the plague, or railway accidents. She believed firmly that they were traveling continually; rolling in luxury arising from papa's little patrimony which he had once so freely lavished on his friends. Poor, dear, large-hearted papa! I am sure that Ro and I would rather have worked like slaves for mamma, than that he should have lost all the gratification of helping some one.

We had mooned away a good many years in the Thorp-Enden house, waiting for a prince to come and marry Ro; as both mamma and I thought Ro beautiful enough for any grandee of the earth. Such links and rolls of dead-gold hair; such china-blue eyes, as deep as wells; such baby cheeks and tiny little ears; such dimpled hands and elbows! Ah, Ro was our idol! She was too beautiful for the society about Thorp-Enden, and we had always determined at the end of our sober conferences—mamma and I—that our Ro should be queen of a world of her own, and wear violet-velvet dresses, with round, pointed stonachers, and a cap of pearls like Amy Rolsart's.

I sat for hours blinking at the dull-red coals in the fireplace, tracing a future for Ro, and could always see myself braiding those maiden locks, or bearing her train on my arm, or handing rich India shawls into her carriage. I was content to make a sober background for myself, as of course, she must. In our darkest, most horrid seasons, mamma and I believed in a future state, as we called it, for Ro.

"You know yourself, Rachee, that such beauty will be too gaily snatched up some day by a high-born some one. What is beauty for, I should like to know?" "Yes, ah, certainly, mamma!" I replied, with a genuine pang at my heart; thinking of those two fatal little lines shut in within two brown leather backs on the mean little parlor-table.

lives of all the Rowenas in the family. This book had been purposely kept from us, and our old nurse, Betty Hawley, said that we would rue the day we ever dragged the secrets from that musty tomb.

Somebody had to leave Thorp-Enden and go out into the wide world and wrestle with the men and women there for that horrible money which we heartily despised, but needed ridiculously. We were getting out of everything, even hair-pins, which is a dreadful state for three women.

Somebody had to go, and mamma was out of the question! So was Ro, likewise Betty Hawley, and that lazy old Brace, and that scatter-brained Smudge. That somebody was I, Rachel Cowarden, spinster, and go I did.

It was dreadfully unromantic, not a bit like a book, for I was not the heroine that was setting to work in a mean way to keep the real heroine from starving, and doing without ribbons and hair-pins.

"I am certain the disgrace of it will kill me, Rachee; but I suppose that would be a small affair! You are just as headstrong as ever your father was in his life."

Headstrong with scarcely anything to get out in the house, and those three helpless women and Smudge and Brace to look after!

"Don't mind mamma, Rachee!" said Ro, squeezing my things into my box, before the apothecary's boy came to take it to the station. "You're a good soul, and mean well. I know, though I am sure papa would turn over in his coffin to think of his child going out to service!"

I swallowed a great many lumps bidding them good-bye at Thorp-Enden, but only realized the awfulness of my undertaking when Brace ran his cold nose in my hand, and began to shake and whine as if he knew the family house had gone to rats and lats.

"Good-bye, Rachee! We'll die if you don't write often!"

And Ro, with watery eyes and towed curls, flung herself in a jimp heap over the gate, looking her last, while Smudge and Brace followed me with wistful, unknowing eyes.

And ah, how bitterly I cried on my first night out in the unknown life to which I was going! My cup kept running over, but still the tears flowed on.

Ah, could I have been an empress, how gladly would I have exchanged worlds for that honey cottage at Thorp-Enden, with all that it contained!

It was never to be the same again! But how could I see the back shadow that settled over it from that fatal night.

"Hugh is going to let me have a new pony for my birthday, and I shall go with him to see Miss Carew, too," unconsciously forging a link.

"Miss Carew doesn't wish a great silky boy to visit her! Does she, Miss Cowarden?"

"Is Miss Carew a great lady, Florence?" I asked, quite calmly in spite of a dull, savage hate—for this woman, of whom I had never even heard before—growing at my heart.

"Oh, yes, indeed! Miss Carew is a great person, and means to marry my brother Hugh, who is coming home to-morrow. Shouldn't you like to see Hugh, Miss Cowarden—I'll manage it if you would! You will think him very handsome, I know!"

And Florence forsook all study in anticipation of several *felix* days in the near future.

Two days after I sat in an accustomed nook in Flynnchly Park, hearing the wind moan through the trees, and thinking of our stunted crab-apples at Thorp-Enden where the blue birds sang in Spring, when a tall, dark-haired man approached, coming from the hall, intent upon a letter, over which he alternately smiled and frowned. With his disengaged hand he whisked the dead leaves from his path with a Hawthorn stick. It was Hugh.

Luckily a clump of young trees hid me. He laughed, dryly without heart or mirth, and tearing the paper into not very minute particles, went his way, whistling an air from "Don Sebastian," and I moved toward the poor little letter, like a sleep walker. It was the first time in my life that Rachel Cowarden did a dishonorable action.

I began to piece out the letter idly, when a cry escaped my lips. And yet from the first I had suspected that Rowena had written that letter, but the certainty of it was no less cruel.

Why did I not fling it from me as she would have done had our positions been reversed?

"I will not speak of it to any one, dearest! I am sorry that the happiest time of my life must be clouded by a secret, but here the connection of it was lost! Then it began again, in a tremulous hand—"explain all, and all will be well."

I knew that my heart was breaking, but I seemed turned into stone. As I walked back and forth under the trees, over the wet leaves, I mourned as if she were dead and in her coffin.

Oh, Ro! Ro! Why did I ever leave you? But who could have dreamed that any wolf would have broken into the little fold at Thorp-Enden!

"Ah, never from her tree would fly, The mother-robber forth in quest, And have the wanton robber high, Or danger meana that pretty nest."

the skies still blue and bright at Thorp-Enden.

But, no! There were no clouds anywhere more threatening and portentous than those breaking over Thorp-Enden.

Hugh was now paying assiduous court, and evidently intended to push matters with the heiress. But he could not feel comfortable or safe until he should feel his hands closing on the marriage-settlement.

Two weary days had dragged themselves away with their interminable hours, and brought a windy, moonless night again. I stifled in my close room, and throwing on a shawl and muffler, left the side-door, and struck into a gravelled walk to the portico-lodge used by the servants.

The figure of a woman—a slight, graceful woman—advanced toward me rapidly, a long traveling cloak completely covering her from head to foot. A housemaid, perhaps, from Blackwood. Nearer and nearer came the small pale face.

Good God! It was Rowena Cowarden!

I seized her arm. She did not utter a sound, but shrank a little. "Rowena!"

"What are doing here? What have you come here for?"

"To see Miss Carew's intended husband. You will help me?"

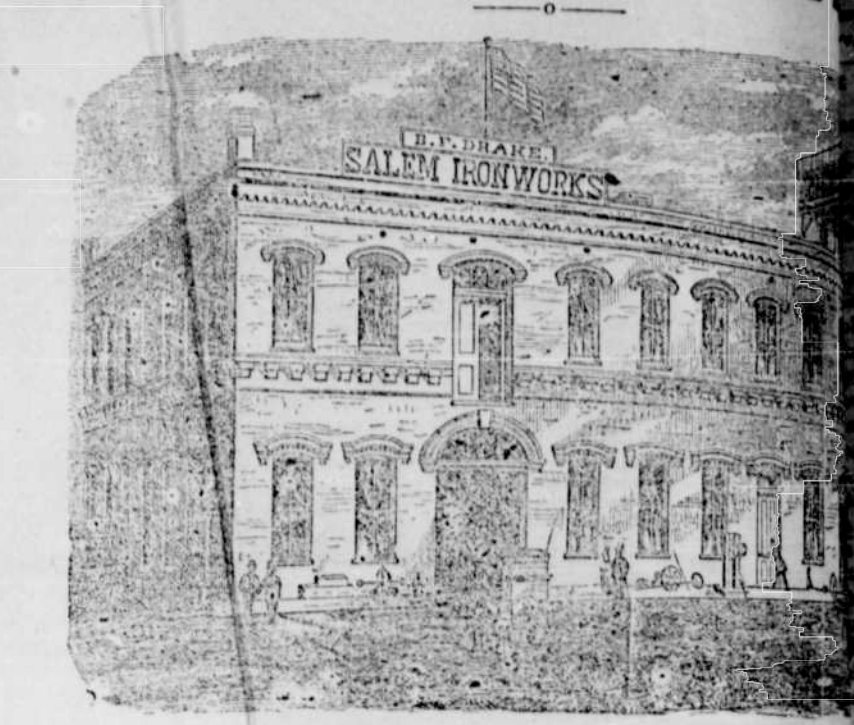
"I must know why you wish to see him."

"I will tell you afterward."

No one had ever forced Ro to do anything.

I had her supper fetched up on a tray, which I took at the door. She was wonderfully calm, but as white as a ghost, and did not much resemble the old childish Ro who had cried herself sleep when Smudge had got a thorn in her foot.

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