

# THE THREAD OF LIFE

O. R.  
SUNSHINE AND SHADE.

## CHAPTER XXXV.—RETRIBUTION.

On the horror and drudgery of those next few weeks, while Hugh, in a tower of shame and disgust, was anxiously and secretly making difficult arrangements, financial or otherwise, for that hopeless fitting to the sunny South, that loomed ahead so full of gloom and wretchedness for himself and Winifred! There was nothing for it left now but to face the unappealable, to endure the unendurable. He must go through with it all, let it cost what it might. For at least in the end he had one comfort. At San Remo, Winifred would find out she was mistaken; there was no Elsie at all, there or elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Winifred grew rapidly worse, so ill, that even Hugh began to perceive it, and despatched of being able to carry her in safety to San Remo. The shock at the Relfs had told seriously upon her weak and shattered constitution; the constant friction of her relations with Hugh continued to tell upon it every day that passed over her. The motherless girl and childless mother brooded in secret over her great grief; she had no one, who truly no one on earth who could sympathize with her in her terrible trouble. She longed to fling herself upon Elsie's bosom—the dear old Elsie that had once been, the Elsie that perhaps could still understand her—and to cry aloud to her for pity, for sympathy. When she got to San Remo, she sometimes thought, she would tell all—every word—to Elsie; and Elsie at least must be very much changed if in spite of all she could not feel for her.

Proud as she was, she would throw herself on Elsie's mercy. Elsie had wronged her, and she would tell all to Elsie. But not to Hugh. Hugh was hard and cold and unyielding as steel. It would not be for long. She would soon be released. And then Hugh—she shrank from thinking it.

At last the day came for their journey South. They were going alone, without even a maid glad to have paid the servants their arrears and escape alive from the clutches of the butchers and bakers. November fogs shrouded the world. Hugh had completed those vile transactions of his with the attorneys and the money-lenders, and felt faintly cheered by the actual metallic clink of gold for the journey rattling and jingling in his trousers' pocket. But Winifred sat very weak and ill in the far corner of the first-class carriage that bore them away from Charing Cross Station. They had come up the day before from Almondham to town, and spent the night luxuriously in the rooms of the *Metropole*. You must make a dying woman comfortable. And Hugh had dropped round with defiant pride into the *Cheyne Row Club*, assuming in vain the old jaunty languid postural air—"of the days before he had degenerated into land-owning." Hatherley said afterwards—just to let recalcitrant Bohemia see for itself it hadn't entirely crushed him by its jingling jibes and its soothing critiques of *A Life's Philosophy*. But the protest fell flat; it was indeed a feeble one: heedless Bohemia, engrossed after its wont with its last new favorite, the rising author of *Lays of the African Lakeland*, held out to Hugh Massinger of White-Strand all its blabbiest right hand of lukewarm welcome. And this was the Bohemia that once had grasped his landless fingers with fraternal fervour of sympathetic devotion! The chilliness of his reception in the scene of his ancient popularity stung the Bard to the quick. No more for him the tabour, the cymbals, and the oaten pipe; no more the blustful *Cheyne Row Hippocrene*. He left himself *demode*. The rapid stream of London society and London thought had swept eddying past and left him stranded. Oh for some enchanted carpet of the Arabian Nights, to transport him back with a bound from his present self to those good old days of Tairds and Elsie! But enchanted carpets are now unhappily out of date, and Channel steamers have quite superseded the magical shallops of good Haroun-al-Raschid. In plain prose, the Straits were rough, and Winifred suffered severely from the tossing. At Calais, they took the through train for Marseilles, having secured a *coupe-lit* at Charing Cross beforehand.

That was a terrible night, that night spent in the *coupe-lit* with Winifred; the most terrible Hugh had ever endured since the memorable evening when Elsie drowned herself.

They had passed round Paris at gray dusk, in their comfortable through carriage, by the *Chemin de Fer de Ceinture* to the Gare de Lyon, and were whirling along on their way to Fontainebleau through the shades of evening, when Winifred first broke the ominous silence she had preserved ever since they stopped at St. Denis. "It won't be for long now," she said dryly, "and it will be so convenient for you to be at San Remo."

Hugh's heart sank once more within him. It was quite clear that Winifred thought Elsie was there. He wished to heaven she was, and that he was no murderer. On the weight that would have been lifted off his weary soul if only he could think it so! The three years' misery that would rise like a mist from his uncertain path, if only he did not know to a certainty that Elsie lay buried at Orfordness in the shipwrecked sailors' graveyard by the *Low Lighthouse*. He looked across at Winifred as she sat in her place. She was pale and frail; her wasted cheeks showed white and hollow. As she leaned back there, with a cold light gleaming hard and chillily from her sunken blue eyes—those light blue eyes that he had never loved—those cruel blue eyes that he had learned at last to avoid with an instinctive shrinking, as they gazed through and through him with their flabby persistence—he said to himself with a sigh of relief: "She can't last long. Better tell her all, and let her know the truth. It could do no harm. She might die the happier. Dare I risk it, I wonder? Or is it too dangerous?"

"Well!" Winifred asked in an icy tone, interpreting aright the little click in his throat and the doubtful gleam in his shifty eyes as implying some hesitating desire to speak to her. "What lie are you going to tell me next? Speak it out boldly; don't be afraid. It's no novelty. You know I'm not easily disconcerted."

He looked back at her nervously with

bent brows. That fragile creature! He positively feared her. Dare he tell her the truth? And would she believe it? Those blue eyes were so coldly glassy. Yet, with a sudden impulse, he resolved to unburden his guilty soul of all its weight of care to Winifred.

"No, Winifred, but the solemn truth," he blurted out slowly, in a voice that of itself might have well produced complete conviction—on any one less incredulous than the wife he had espoused and deceived so often. "You think Elsie's at San Remo, I know.—You're wrong there; you're quite mistaken.—She's not in San Remo, nor in Australia either. That was a lie.—Elsie's dead—dead three years ago—before we were married.—Dead and buried at Orfordness. And I've seen her grave, and cried over it like a child, too."

He spoke with solemn intensity of earnestness; but he spoke in vain. Winifred thought, herself, till that very moment, she had long since reached the lowest possible depth of contempt and scorn for the husband on whom she had thrown herself away; but as he met her then with that incredible falsehood—as she must needs think it—on his lying lips, with so grave a face and so profound an air of frank confession, her lofty disdain rose at once to a yet sublimer height of disgust and loathing of which until that night she could never even have conceived herself capable. "You hateful thing!" she cried, rising from her seat to the centre of the carriage, and looking down upon him physically from her point of vantage as he cowered and slunk like a cur in his corner. "Don't dare to address me again, I say, with lies like that. If you can't find one word of truth to tell me, have the goodness at least, since I don't desire your further conversation, to leave me the repose of your polite silences."

"But, Winifred," Hugh cried, clasping his hands together in impotent despair, "this is the truth, the very, very truth, the whole truth, that I'm now telling you. I've hidden it from you so long by deceit and treachery. I acknowledge all that: I admit I deceived you. But I want to tell you the whole truth now; and you won't listen to me! O heaven, Winifred, you won't listen to me!"

On any one else, his agonised voice and pleading face would have produced their just and due effect; but on Winifred—in possible.

"Go on," she murmured, relapsing into her corner. "Continue your monologue. It's supreme in its way—no actor could beat it. But be so good as to consider my part in the piece left out altogether. I shall answer you no more. I should be sorry to interrupt; so finished an artist!"

Her scathing contempt wrought up in Hugh a perfect fury of helpless indignation. That he should wish to confess, to humble himself before her, to make reparation! and that Winifred should spurn his best attempt; should refuse so much as to listen to his avowal! It was too ignominious. "For heaven's sake," he cried, with his hands clasped hard, "at least let me speak. Let me have my say out. You're all wrong. You're wronging me utterly. I've behaved most wickedly, most cruelly, I know: I confess it all. I abuse myself at your feet. If you want me to be a sinner, I'll grovel before you, I admit my crime, my sin, my transgression.—I won't pretend to justify myself at all.—I've lied to you, forged to you, deceived you, misled you!" (At each clause and phrase of passionate self-condemnation, Winifred nodded a separate sardonic acquiescence.) "But you're wrong about this. You mistake me wholly.—I swear to you, my child, Elsie's not alive. You're jealous of a woman who's been dead for years. For my sin and shame I say it, she's dead long ago!"

He might as well have tried to convince the door-handle. Winifred's loathing found no overt vent in angry words; she repressed her speech, her very breath almost, with a spasmodic effort. But she stretched out both her hands, the palms turned outward, with a gesture of horror, contempt, and repulsion; and she averted her face with a little cry of supreme disgust, checked deep down in her rising throat, as one averts one's face instinctively from a loathsome sore or a venomous reptile. Such hideous duplicity to a dying woman was more than she could brook without some outer expression of her outraged sense of social decency.

But Hugh could no longer restrain himself now; he had begun his tale, and he must run right through with it. The fever of the confessional had seized upon his soul; remorse and despair were goading him on. He must have relief for his pent-up feelings. Three years of silence were more than enough. Winifred's very incredulity compelled him to continue. He must tell her all—all, utterly. He must make her understand to the uttermost just, willy, nilly, that he was not deceiving her!

With eager lips, he began his story from the beginning, recapitulating point by point his interview with Elsie in the Hall grounds, her rushing away from him to the roots of the poplar, her mad leap into the swirling black water, his attempt to rescue her, his unconsciousness, and his failure. He told it all with dramatic completeness. Winifred saw and heard every scene and tone and emotion as he reproduced it. Then he went on to tell her how he came to himself again on the bank of the dike, and how in cold and darkness he formed his Plan, that fatal, horrible, successful Plan, which he had ever since been engaged in carrying out and in detesting. He described how he returned to the inn, unobserved and untracked; how he forged the first compromising letter from Elsie; and how, once embarked upon that career of deceit, there was no drawing back for him in crime after crime till the present moment. He despised himself for it; but still he told it. Next came the episode of Elsie's bedroom: the theft of the ring and the other belongings; the hasty flight, the fall from the creper; and his subsequent horror of the physical surroundings connected with that hateful night adventure. In his agony of self-accusation he spared her no circumstance, no petty detail: bit by bit he retold the whole story in all its hideous inhuman ghastliness—the walk to Orfordness, the fitting of the watch, the furtive visit to Elsie's grave, his horror of Winifred's proposed picnic to that very spot a year later. He

ran, unabashed, in an ecstasy of humiliation, through the entire tale of his forgeries and his deceptions: the sending of the ring; the audacious fiction of Elsie's departure to a new home in Australia; the long sequence of occasional letters, the living lie he had daily and hourly acted before her. And all the while as he truly said, with slow tears rolling one by one down his dark cheeks, he knew himself a murderer: he felt himself a murderer; and all the while, poor Elsie was lying, dishonoured and unknown, a nameless corpse, in her pauper grave upon that stormy sandspit.

Oh the joy and relief of that tardy confession! the gush and flow of those pent-up feelings! For three long years and more, he had looked it all up in his inmost soul, chafing and seething with the awful secret; and now at last he had let it all out, in one burst of confidence, to the uttermost item.

As for Winifred, she heard him out in solemn silence to the bitter end, with ever-growing contempt and shame and hatred. She could not lift her eyes to his face, so much his very earnestness horrified and appalled her. The man's aptitude for lying struck her positively dumb. The hideous ingenuity with which he accounted for everything—the diabolically clever way in which he had woven in, one after the other, the ring, the watch, the letters, the picnic, the lonely tramp to Orfordness—smote her to the heart with a horrible loathing for the vile wretch she had consented to marry. That she had endured so long such a miserable creature's bought caresses filled her inmost soul with a sickening sense of disgust and horror. She cowered and crouched closer and closer in her remote corner; she felt that his presence there actually polluted the carriage she occupied; she longed for Marseilles, for St. Remo, for release, that she might get at last farther and farther away from him. She could almost have opened the door in her excess of horror and jumped from the train while still in motion, so intense was her burning and goading desire to escape for ever from his poisonous neighbourhood.

At last, as Hugh with flushed face and eager eyes calmed down a little from his paroxysm of self-abasement and self-revelation, Winifred raised her eyes once more from the ground and met her husband's—an, heaven!—that she should have to call that thing her husband! His acting chilled her; his pretended tears turned her cold with scorn. "Is that all?" she asked in an icy voice. "Is your romance finished?"

"That's all!" Hugh cried, burying his face in his hands and bending down his body to the level of his knees in utter and abject self-humiliation. "Winifred! Winifred! it is no romance. Won't you even now believe me?"

"It's clever—clever—extremely clever!" Winifred answered in a tone of unnatural calmness. "I don't deny it shows great talent. If you'd turn your attention seriously to novel writing, which is your proper métier, instead of to the law, for which you're too exuberant an imagination, you'd have succeeded ten thousand times better than that you could ever do at what you're pleased to consider your divine poetry. Your story, I allow, hangs together in every part with remarkable skill. It's a pity I should happen to know it all from beginning to end for a tissue of falsehoods.—For all your acting, you know you're lying to me even now, this minute. You know that Elsie Chalton, whom you pretend to be dead, is awaiting your own arrival to-night by arrangement at San Remo."

Hugh flung himself back in the final extremity of utter despair on the padded cushions. He had played his last card with Winifred, and lost. His very remorse availed him nothing. His very confession was held to increase his sin. What could he do? Whither turn? He knew no answer. He rocked himself up and down on his seat in hopeless misery. The worst had come. He had blurted out all. And Winifred, Winifred would not believe him.

"I wish it was true!" he cried; "I wish it was true, Winnie! I wish she was there. But it isn't; it isn't! She's dead! I killed her! and her blood has weighed upon my head ever since; I pay for it now! I killed her! I killed her!"

"Listen!" Winifred had risen to her full height in the coupe once more, and was standing, gaunt and haggard and deadly wan like a shrunken little tragedy queen above him. Her pale white face showed paler and whiter and more death-like still by the feeble light of the struggling oil-lamp; and her bloodless lips trembled and quivered visibly with inner passion as she tried to repress her overpowering indignation with one masterful effort. "Listen!" she said, with fierce intensity. "What you say is false. I know you're lying to me. Warren Relf told me himself the other day in London that Elsie Chalton was still alive, and living, where you know she lives, over there at San Remo."

Warren Relf! That serpent! That reptile! That eavesdropper! Then this was the creature's mean revenge! He had lied that despicable lie to Winifred! Hugh hated him in his soul more fiercely than ever. He was baffled once more; and always by that same malignant intriguer!

"Where did you see Relf?" he burst out angrily. His indignation, flaring up to white-heat afresh at this latest machination of his ancient enemy, gave new strength to his words and new point to his hatred. "I thought I told you long since at White-Strand to hold no further communication with that wretched being!"

But Winifred by this time, worn out with excitement, had fallen back speechless and helpless on the cushions. Her feeble strength was fairly exhausted. The fatigue of the preparations, the stormy passage, the long spell of travelling, the night journey, and added to it all, this terrible interview with the man she had once loved, but now despised and hated, had proved too much in the end for her weakened constitution. A fit of wild incoherence had overtaken her; she babbled idly on her seat in broken sentences. Her muttered words were full of "mother" and "home" and "Elsie." Hugh felt her pulse. He knew it was delirium. His one thought now was to reach San Remo as quickly as possible. If only she could live to know Warren Relf had told her a lie, and that Elsie was dead—dead—dead and buried!

Perhaps even this story about Warren Relf and what he had told her was itself but a product of the fever and delirium! But more probably not. The man who could open other people's letters, the man who could plot and plan and intrigue in secret to set another man's wife against her own husband, was capable of telling any lie that came uppermost to hurt his enemy and to

serve his purpose. He knew that lie would distress and torture Winifred, and he had struck at Hugh, like a coward that he was, through a weak, hysterical, dying woman! He had played on the mean chord of feminine jealousy. Hugh hated him as he had never hated him before. He should pay for this soundly—the cur, the scoundrel!

## CHAPTER XXXVI.—THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIELD.

The self-same night, another English passenger of our acquaintance was speeding in hot haste due southward to San Remo, notified by the Calais and Marseilles express, but by the alternative route via Boulogne, the Mont Cenis, Turin, and Savona. Warren Relf had chosen the alternative road by deliberate design, lest Hugh Massinger and he should happen to clash by the way, and a needless and unseemly scene should perhaps take place before Winifred's very eyes at some intermediate station.

It was by the merest accident in the world, indeed, that Warren had heard, in the nick of opportunity, of the Massingers' projected visit to San Remo.

In the cosy smoking-room at the *Cheyne Row Club*, he had found Hatherley already installed in a big armchair, discussing coffee and the last new number of the "Nineteenth Century."

"Hallo, Relf! The remains of the Bard were in here just now," Hatherley exclaimed as he entered. "You've barely missed him. If you'd dropped in only ten minutes earlier, you might have inspected the interesting relics. But he's gone back to his hotel by this time, I fancy. The atmosphere of *Cheyne Row* seems somewhat too redolent of vulgar Cavendish for his refined taste. He smokes nothing nowadays himself but the best regalias!"

"What, Massinger?" Relf cried in some slight surprise. "How was he, Hatherley, and what was he doing in town at this time of year? All good Squires ought surely to be down in the country now at their hereditary work of supplying the market with a due proportion of hares and partridges."

"Oh, he's a poor wreck," Hatherley answered lightly. "You've hit it off exactly—sunk to the level of the lauded aristocracy. He exhales an aroma of vested interests. Real estate's his *Mohel* at present, and he bows the knee to solidified seamun in the temple of Rimmon. He has no view on anything in particular, I believe, but riparian proprietorship: complaints still of the German Ocean for disregarding the sacred rights of property; and holds that the sole business of an enlightened British legislature is to keep the sand from blowing in at his own inviolable dining room windows. Poor company, in fact, since he descended to the Squirearchy."

"How long's he going to stop in town—do you know?" Relf asked curiously.

"Thank goodness, he's not going to stop at all, my dear fellow. If he were, I'd run down to Brighton for the interval. A month of Massinger at the *Cheyne Row* would be a harvest for the seaside lodgings. But I'm happy to tell you he's going to remove his mortal remains—for the soul of his dead—dead and buried, long ago, in the White-Strand sandhills—to San Remo to-morrow. Poor little Mrs. Massinger's seriously ill, I'm sorry to say. Too much Bard has told at last upon her. Bard for breakfast, Bard for lunch, and Bard for dinner would undermine in time the soundest constitution. Sir Anthony finds it's produced in her case Suppressed Gout, or Tubercular Diathesis, or Softening of the Brain, or something lingering and humorous of that sort; and he's ordered her off post-haste, by the first express, to the Mediterranean. Massinger objected at first to San Remo, he tells me, probably because, with his usual bad taste, he didn't desire to enjoy your agreeable society; but that skimp little woman, gout or no gout, has a will of her own, I can tell you; San Remo she insists upon, and to San Remo the Bard must go accordingly. You should address have seen him chafing with an internal fire as he let it all out to us, hint by hint, in the billiard room this evening. Poor skimp little woman, though, I'm awfully sorry for her. It's hard lines on her. She had the makings of a nice small hostess in her once; but the Bard's ruined her—sucked her dry and chucked her away—and she's dying of him now, from what he tells me."

Warren Relf looked back with a start of astonishment. "To San Remo?" he cried.

"You're sure, Hatherley, he said San Remo?"

"Perfectly certain. San Remo it is. Observe, *hi presto*, there's no deception. He gave me this card in case of error: Hugh Massinger, for the present, Poste Restante, San Remo." No other address forthcoming as yet. He expects to settle down at a villa when he gets there."

Relf made up his mind with a single plunge as he knocked his ash off. "I shall go by to-morrow's express to the Riviera," he said shortly.

"To pursue the Bard? I wouldn't, if I were you. To tell you the truth, I know he doesn't love you."

"He has reason, I believe. The feeling is perhaps to some extent mutual. No, not to pursue him—to prevent mischief.—Hand me over the Continental Bradshaw, will you?—Thanks. That'll do. Do you know which line? Marseilles, I suppose? Did he happen to mention it?"

"He told me he was going by Dijon and Lyons."

"All right. That's it. The Marseilles route. Arrive at San Remo at 4.30. I'll go round the other way by Turin and intercept him. Trains arrive within five minutes of one another, I see. That'll be just in time to prevent any *contresens*."

"Your people are at San Remo already, I believe?"

"My people—yes. But how did you know? They were at Mentone for a while, and they only went on home to the Villa Rossa the day before yesterday."

"So I heard from Miss Relf," Hatherley answered with a slight cough. "She happened to be writing to me—about a literary matter—a mere question of current art-criticism—on Wednesday morning."

Warren hardly noticed the slight hesitation; and there was nothing odd in Elsie's writing to Hatherley; that best of sisters was always jogging the memory of inattentive critics. While Elsie lived, indeed, her brother's name was never likely to be forgotten in the weekly organs of artistic opinion. She insured it, if anything, an undue prominence. For her much importance, the sternest, of them all, like the unjust judge, was compelled to notice every one of her brother's performances.

So Warren hurried off by himself at all speed to San Remo, and reached it at almost the same moment as Massinger. If Hugh

and Elsie were to meet unexpectedly, Warren felt the shock might be positively dangerous.

As he emerged from the station, he hired a close carriage, and ordered the *cocher* to draw up on the far side of the road and wait a few minutes till he was prepared for starting. Then he leaned back in his seat in the shade of the hood, and held himself in readiness for the arrival of the Paris train from Ventimiglia.

He had waited only a quarter of an hour when Hugh Massinger came out hastily and called a cab. Two porters helped him to carry out Winifred, now seriously ill, and muttering inarticulately as they placed her in the carriage. Hugh gave an inaudible order to the driver, who drove off at once with a nod and a smile and a cheery "Si, signor."

"Follow that carriage!" Warren said in Italian to his own cabman. The driver nodded and followed closely. They drove up through the narrow crowded little streets of the old quarter, and stopped at last opposite a large and dingy yellow-washed mansion, in the modern part of the town, about the middle of the Avenue Vittorio-Emmanuele. The house was new, but congenitally shabby. Hugh's carriage blocked the way already. Warren waited outside for some ten minutes without showing his face till he thought the Massingers would have engaged rooms; then he entered the hall boldly and enquired if he could have lodgings.

"On what floor has the gentleman who just arrived placed himself?" he asked of the landlord, a portly Piedmontese, of august dimensions.

"On the second story, signor."

"Then I will go on the third," Warren Relf answered with short decision. And they found him a room forthwith without further parley.

The pension was one of those large and massive solid buildings, so common on the Riviera, let out in flats or in single apartments, and with a deep well of a square staircase occupying the entire centre of the block like a covered courtyard. As Warren Relf mounted to his room on the third floor, with the chatty Swiss waiter from the *canton Ticino*, who carried his bag, he asked quietly if the lady on the *segondo* who seemed so ill was in any immediate or pressing danger.

"D'ng, signor? She is ill, certainly; they carried her up stairs; she couldn't have walked it. Ill—but ill." He expanded his hands and pursed his lips up.—"But what of that? The house expects it. They come here to die, many of these English. The signora no doubt will die soon. She's a very bad case. She has hardly any life in her."

Little reassured by this cold comfort, Warren sat down at the table at once, as soon as he had washed away the dust of travel, and scribbled off a hasty note to Elsie:

DEAREST E.—Just arrived. Hope you received my telegram from Paris. For heaven's sake, don't let Elsie stir out of the house till I have seen you. This is most imperative. Massinger and Mrs. Massinger are here at this pension. He has brought her South for her health's sake. She's dying rapidly. I wouldn't for worlds let Elsie see either of them in their present condition: above all, she mustn't run against them unexpectedly. I may not be able to sneak round to night, but at all hazards keep Elsie in till I can get to the Villa Rossa to consult with you. Elsie must of course return to England at once, now Massinger's come here. We have to face a very serious crisis. I won't write further, preferring to come and arrange in person. Meanwhile, say nothing to Elsie just yet; I'll be able to tell my myself.—In breathless haste, Yours ever, very affectionately, WARREN.

He sent the note round with many warnings by the Swiss waiter to his mother's house. When Elsie got it, she could have cried with chagrin. Could anything on earth have been more unfortunate? To think that Elsie should just have gone out shopping before the note arrived—and should be going to call at the Grand Hotel Royal in that very Avenue Vittorio-Emmanuele.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Keep up Your End.

"When I was a boy in the lumbering region in Maine," said the old doctor, "the fellow who would not hold up his end of the log, but let the weight sag on the others, was looked upon with contempt by all the camp. Wherever I go now, I think I see logs carried; one end held up by hearty, willing hands, and others dropping out of lazy, selfish ones."

"When I see an old father tiling to give his son the education that is to help him through life, and the boy yawning over his books, tricking his teachers, smoking cigarettes and swearing, I feel like calling out, 'For the sake of your own soul, oop, grip your end of the log, and hold it up!'"

"Sometimes I see a man working hard all day, and too tired to rest at night, while his wife and daughters read novels, embroider, and gossip with women as useless in the world as themselves. Do they keep up their end of the log?"

"Or, quite as often, it is the wife who stints and saves, until her life is barren and bare as a dusty road at noonday, while the husband spends his time at saloons or pool-rooms."

"Or I see one bright, courageous member of a family usually, a woman, working, joking, hopeful, while the others crawl along, groaning, complaining, dropping every day and hour their burden of poverty, disease, tooth-ache, or bad weather on her shoulders. She has all of the log to carry."

"Again, it is a human being for whom God has done much in birth, rank, education, friends, who, for the love of a glass of liquor or pack of cards, allows his life to drop into the slough. St. Paul bids him 'work' out his own salvation, and I feel like telling him to hold up his own end of the log."

What does our reader think of the doctor's homely lesson? What is burden in life? Somebody shares it with him; no man bears his load alone. Does he carry his part with hearty good will? Or does he drop it on weak and willing shoulders?

A fac simile of a full dress shirt in oxidized silver is the latest freak in match-suits.

Scarlet pins are out in the form of a dead black enamel shoe rimmed with tiny brilliant diamonds.

Diamonds of rich yellow, cinnamon and pink tints are very much sought after just now.