Solitaire.

Patience? Yes, that's the woman's game,
The dull delight of solitude,
Where rank on rank she tries to frame,
And speech and laughter ne'er intrude.

Night after night, beside the fire,
When evening's lonely lamp is lit,
Oppressed with thoughts that vex and tire,
Among the cards her fingers flit.

The woman's game! On some poor king
The sequence of her play is built;
The queen comes after, hapless thing!
And next the knave with grinning guilt.

Then all her treasures, one by one,
Are thrown away to swell the pile;
At last and least; when that is done,
Begin again; the night beguile.

A woman's game; to sit and wait;
Build and rebuild, though fate destroy,
Shuffle the cards, for soon or late
There comes an end to grief and joy.

A man may fight, or sow or reap,
Divide the seas, or traverse the earth;
She can but drudge, or pray or weep,
What is her life or loving worth?

She sits there when the day is dead,
Lonely and listless. Do you dare
Deny, when all is done and said,
That woman's game is solitaire?

"Pastoral Poetry."

A minister may love his wife,
From every ill protect her;
But love her as he may, alas!
At last he's only Rector.

—*Toledo American.*

And though she may quite rapid be,
No race-horse going faster,
She'll find, however wild and free,
That he is always Pastor.

—*Railway Journal.*

They studied grammer in the school
Together out in Carson,
And after they were both made one
She found him still a Parson.

—*Yonkers Statesman.*

And though he boasts he feels as young
As when he first beheld her,
His congregation all assert
That he is yet the Elder.

THE CHOICE OF THREE:

A NOVEL.

"Oh, no, don't pity me. Everybody has his troubles—this is mine."

"O Ernest, but you have been unfortunate, and now your sight has gone; but perhaps Critchett or Couper will be able to do something for that."

"All the Critchets and Coupers in the world will never do anything for it, my dear. But you must remember that, where I only lost my sight, many others lost their lives, and it is supposed to be better to lose your sight than your life. Besides, blindness has its advantages; it gives you so much more time to think, and it humbles you so. You can have no idea what it is like, Doll. Intense, everlasting blackness hedging you in like a wall, one long, long night, even when the sunlight is beating on your face; and out of the night, voices and the touchings of hands, like the voices and touchings of the departed spirits. Your physical body is as helpless and as much at the mercy of the world as your spiritual body is in the hands of the Almighty. And things grow dim to you too; you begin to wonder what familiar faces and sights are like, as you wonder about the exact appearance of those who died many years ago, or of places you have not seen for years. All of which, my dear Doll, is very favorable to thought. When next you lie awake for five or six hours in the night, try to reckon all the things which occupy your brain, then imagine such wakefulness and its accompanying thoughts extended over the period of your natural life, and you will get some idea of the depth and breadth and height of total blindness."

His words struck her, and she did not know what to answer, so she only pressed his hands in token of her mute sympathy.

He understood her meaning; the faculties of the blind are very quick.

"Do you know, Doll," he said, "coming back to you and to your gentle kindness, is like coming into the peace and quiet of a sheltered harbor after bearing the full brunt of the storm?" Just then a cloud which had obscured the sun passed away, and its full light struck upon his face. "There," he went on, "it is like that. It is like emerging into the sweet sunshine after riding for miles through the rain and mist. You bring peace with you, my dear. I have not felt such peace for years as I feel holding your hand to-day."

"I am very glad, dear Ernest," she answered; and they walked on in silence. At that moment, a little girl, who was trundling a hoop down the gravel-path, stopped her hoop to look at the pair. She was very pretty, with large dark eyes, but Dorothy noticed that she had a curious mark upon her forehead. Presently Dorothy saw her run back toward an extremely tall and graceful woman, who was sauntering along, followed at some distance by a nurse with a baby in her arms, and turning occasionally to look at the beds of spring flowers, hyacinths and tulips which bordered the path.

"O mother," she heard her call out in the clear voice of childhood, "there is such a nice blind man! He isn't old and ugly, and he hasn't a dog, and he doesn't ask for pennies. Why is he blind if he hasn't a dog and doesn't ask for pennies?"

Blindness, according to this little lady's ideas, evidently sprang from the presence of a cur and an unsatisfied hunger for copper coin. Sometimes it does.

The tall, graceful lady looked up carelessly, saying, "Hush, dear!" She was quite close to them now, for they were walking toward each other, and Dorothy gave a great gasp, for before her stood Eva Plowden! There was no doubt about it. She was paler and haughtier-looking than of yore; but it was she. No one who had once seen her could mistake that queenly beauty. Certainly Dorothy could not mistake it.

"What is the matter, Doll?" said Ernest, carelessly. He was thinking of other things.

"Nothing; I hurt myself." They were quite close now.

And Eva, too, looked at them, and she, too, saw the face she had never thought to see again. With all her eyes, and with her lips parted as though to cry out, she gazed at the sight before her—slowly, slowly, taking in all it meant.

They were nearly level now.

Then there leaped up into her eyes and face—the eyes and face which a second before had been so calm and statue-like, a wild light of love, and intensity of passionate and jealous desire, such as is not often to be seen on the faces of women.

"Ernest there, and Ernest blind, and being led by the hand of Dorothy, and looking happy with her!" How dared she touch her love? How dared he look hapy with her? Those were the thoughts which flashed through her troubled mind.

She made a step toward them as though to address him, and the blind eyes fell upon her lovely face and wandered over it. It made her mad. His eyes were on her face, and yet he could not see her. O God!

Dorothy saw the motion and moved by an overmastering instinct threw herself between them in an attitude of protection not unmixed with defiance. And so, for a second, their eyes flashing and their bosoms heaving with emotion, the two women stood face to face, and the blind pathetic eyes wandered uneasily over both, feeling a presence they were unable to define.

It was a tragic, almost a dreadful scene. The passions it revealed were too intense for words, as no brush can justly paint a landscape made vivid by the unnatural fierceness of the lightning.

"Well, Doll, why do you stop?" he said, impatiently.

His voice broke the spell. Eva withdrew her arm, which was half-outstretched, and touched her lips with her finger as though to enjoin silence. Then a deep misery spread itself over her flushed face; her head sank low, and she passed thence with rapid steps. Presently the nurse with the baby followed her, and Dorothy noticed vaguely that the child had also a mark upon his forehead. The whole thing had not taken forty seconds.

"Doll," said, with a wild voice, and commencing to tremble, "who was that passed us?"

"A lady," was the answer.

"A lady; yes, I know that—what lady?"

"I don't know—a lady with children." It was a fib, but she could not tell him then; an instinct warned her not to do so.

"Oh! It is strange, Doll, strange; but do you know, I felt just now as though Eva were very near me? Come, let us go home!"

Just then the cloud got over the sun again, and they walked home in the shadow. Apparently, too, all their talkativeness had gone the way of the sun. They had nothing to say.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

INTROSPECTIVE.

Eva Plowden could scarcely be said to be a happy woman. A refined woman who has deliberately married one man when she loves another is not as a rule happy afterward, unless indeed she is blessed or cursed with a singularly callous nature. But there are degrees and degrees of unhappiness. Such a fate as Eva's would have killed Dorothy, and would have driven Florence, bad as she might otherwise be, to suicide or madness. But with Eva herself it was not so; she was not sufficiently fine strung to suffer thus. Hers was not a very happy life, and that was all about it. She had been most miserable; but when the first burst of her misery had passed, like the raving storm that sometimes ushers in a wet December day, she had more or less reconciled herself—like a sensible woman—to her position. The day was always rather wet, it is true, but still the sun peeped out now and again, and if life was not exactly a joyous thing, it was at least endurable.

And yet with it all she loved Ernest in her heart as much as ever; his memory was inexpressibly dear to her, and her regrets were sometimes very bitter. On the whole, however, she had got over it wonderfully, better than anybody, who could have witnessed her agony some years before, when Florence told her the whole truth immediately after the wedding would have thought possible. The Sabine women, we are told, offered every reasonable resistance to their outrage by the Romans, but before long gave the strongest proof of reconciliation to their lot. There was something of the Sabine woman about Eva. Indeed, the contrast between her state of mind as regarded Ernest, and Ernest's state of mind as regarded her, would make a curious study. They each loved the other, and yet how different had the results of that love been on the two natures! To Eva it had been and was a sorrow, sometimes a very real one; to Ernest, the destruction of all that made life worth living. The contrast, indeed, was almost pitiable, it was so striking; so wide a gulf was fixed between the two. The passion of the one was a wretched thing compared to the other. But both were real; it was merely a difference of degree. If Eva's affection was weak when measured by Ernest's, it was because the soil in which it grew was poorer. She gave all she had to give.

As for Mr. Plowden, he could not but feel that on the whole his matrimonial speculation had answered very well. He was honestly fond of his wife, and as he had a right to be, very proud of her At times she was cold and capricious and at times she was sarcastic; but, take it altogether, she made him a good and serviceable wife, and lifted him up many pegs in the social scale. People saw that though Plowden was not a gentleman, he had managed to marry a lady, and a very lovely lady too; and he was tolerated, indeed to a certain extent courted, for the sake of his wife. It was principally to attain this end that he had married her, so he had every reason to be satisfied with his bargain, and he was, besides, proud to be the legal owner of so handsome a creature.

Eva often thought of her old lover, though, except in the vaguest way, she had heard nothing of him for years. Indeed, she was, as it happened, thinking of him tenderly enough that very morning when her little girl had called her attention to the "nice blind man." And when she at last, in a way which seemed to her, little short of miraculous, set eyes again upon his face, all her smoldering passion broke into flame, and she felt that she still loved him with all her strength, such as it was.

At that moment indeed she realized how great, how bitter, how complete was the mistake she had made, and what a beautiful thing life might have been for her, if things had gone differently. But, remembering how things were, she bowed her head and passed on, for the time completely crushed.

Presently, however, two points became clear in the confusion of her mind, taking shape and form as distinct and indesputable mental facts, and these were—first, that she was wildly jealous of Dorothy; second, that it was her fixed determination to see Ernest. She regretted now that she had been too overcome to go up and speak to him, for see him she must and would; indeed, her sick longing to look upon his face and hear his voice filled her with alarm.

Eva reached her home, after the meeting on the Hoe, just before luncheon-time. Her husband was now acting as *locum tenens* for the rector of one of the Plymouth parishes. They had moved thus from place to place for years waiting for the Kesterwick living to fall vacant, and Eva liked the roving life well enough—it diverted her thoughts.

Presently she heard her husband enter, bringing somebody else with him, and summoned up the sweet smile for which she was remarkable to greet him.

In another instant he was in the room, followed by a fresh-faced subaltern, whose appearance reminded her of the pictures of cherubs. Mr. Plowden had changed but little since we saw him last, with the exception that his hair was now streaked with gray, and the whole face rather stouter. Otherwise the cold gray eyes were as cold as ever, and the countenance of Plowden was what the countenance of Plowden had always been—powerful, intelligent and coarse-looking.

"Let me introduce my friend Lieutenant Jasper to you, my dear," he said in his full, strong voice, which was yet unpleasant to the ear. "We met at Captain Johnstone's, and, as it is a long way to go to the barracks for lunch, I asked him to come and take pot-luck with us."

The cherubic Jasper had screwed an eyeglass into his round eye, and through it was contemplating Eva with astonished ecstasy; but like most beautiful women, she was used to that sort of thing, and it only amused her faintly. Mr. Plowden, too, was used to it, and took it as a personal compliment.

"I am delighted," she murmured, and held out her hand.

The cherub, suddenly awaking to the fact, dropped his eyeglass, and, plunging at it, seized it as a pike does a little fish, and shook it with enthusiasm.

Eva smiled again.

"Shall we go to lunch?" she said, sweetly; and they went to lunch, she sailing down in front of them with the grace of a swan.

At lunch itself the conversation flagged rather; that is, Mr. Plowden talked with all the facility of an extemporary preacher; the cherub gazed at this pale, dark-eyed angel; and Eva, fully occupied with her own thoughts, contributed a few appreciative smiles, and a few random remarks. Just as they were, to her intense relief, nearing the conclusion of the meal, a messenger arrived to summon Mr. Plowden to christen a dying baby. He got up at once, for he was punctilious in the performance of his duties, and, making excuses to his guest, departed on his errand, thus forcing Eva to carry on the conversation.

"Have you been in Plymouth long, Mr. Jasper?" she asked.

The eye-glass dropped spasmodically.

"Plymouth? oh, dear, no, I only landed this morning."

"Landed? Indeed! Where from? I did not know that any boat was in except the Conway Castle."

"Well, I came by her, from the Zulu War, you know; I was invalided home for fever."

The cherub suddenly became intensely interesting to Eva, for it had struck her that Ernest must have come from there.

"Indeed! I hope you had a pleasant passage. It depends so much on your fellow-passengers, does it not?"

"Oh, yes, we had a very nice lot of men on board, wounded officers mostly. There were a couple of very decent civilians, too, a giant of a fellow called Jones, and a blind baronet, Sir Ernest Kershaw."

Eva's bosom heaved.

"I once knew a Mr. Ernest Kershaw; I wonder if it is the same? He was tall, and had dark eyes."

"That's the man; he only got his title a month or two ago. A melancholy sort of a chap, I thought; but then he can't see now. That Jones is a wonderful fellow, though—could pull two heavy men up at once, as easily as you would lift a puppy-dog. Saw him do it myself. I knew them both out there."

"Oh! Where did you meet them?"

"Well, it was rather curious. I suppose you heard of the great disaster at that place with an awful name. Well, I was at a beastly hole called Help Makaar, when a fellow came riding like anything from Rorke's Drift, telling us what had happened, and that the Zulus were coming. So we all set to and worked like mad, and just as we had got the place a little fit for them, somebody shouted that he saw them coming. That was just as it was getting dark. I ran to the wall to look, and saw, not the Zulus, but a great big fellow carrying a dead fellow in his arms, followed by a Kafir leading three horses. At least I thought the fellow was dead, but he wasn't he had been struck by lightning. We let him in, and such a sight as there were you never saw, all soaked with blood from top to toe!"

"Ah! And how did they come like that?"

"They were the only survivors of a volunteer corps called Alston's Horse. They killed all the Zulus that were attacking them, when the Zulus had killed everybody except them. Then they came away, and the blind fellow, that is, Sir Ernest, got struck in a storm—fellows often do out there."

Eva put further questions, and listened with breathless interest to the story of Ernest's and Jeremy's wonderful escape, so far as the details were known to Mr. Jasper, quite regardless of the pitiless fire that young gentleman was keeping on herself through his eyeglass. At last, reluctantly enough, he rose to go.

"I must be off now, Mrs. Plowden; I want to go and call on Sir Ernest at the hotel. He lent me a Derringer pistol to practice at a bottle with, and I forgot to give it back."

Eva turned the full battery of her beautiful eyes upon him. She saw that the young gentleman was struck, and determined to make use of him. Women are unscrupulous when they have an end in view.

"I am so sorry you must go, but I hope you will come and see me again, and tell me some more about the war and the battles."

"You are very kind," he stammered; "I shall be delighted."

He did think it necessary to add that he had not the luck to see a shot fired himself. Why should he?

"By-the-way, if you are going to see Sir Ernest, do you think you could give him a private message from me? I have a reason for not wishing to be overheard."

"Oh, yes, I can. Nothing would give more pleasure."

"You are very good." Another glance. "Will you tell him that I wish he would take a fly and come to see me? I shall be in all this afternoon."

A pang of jealousy shot through the cherubic bosom, but he comforted himself with the reflection that a fine woman like that could not care for a "blind fellow."

"Oh, certainly, I will try."

"Thank you," and she extended her hand.

He took it, and intoxicated by those superb eyes, ventured to press it tenderly. A mild wonder took possession of Eva's mind, that anybody so very young could have developed such astonishing amount of impudence, but she did not resent the pressure. What did she care about hand her hand squeezed when was a question of seeing Ernest? Poor deluded cherub!

CHAPTER L.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

Within an hour after the departure of Lieut. Jasper, Eva heard a fly draw up to the door. Then came an interval and the sound of two people walking up the steps, one of whom stumbled a good deal; then a ring.

"Is Mrs. Plowden at home?" said a clear voice, the well-remembered tones of which sent the blood to her head and then back to her heart with a rush

"Yes, sir."

"Oh! Wait here, fly-man. Now, my good girl, I must ask you to give me your hand, for I am not in a condition to find my way about strange places."

Another pause, and the drawing-room door opened, and the maid came in leading Ernest, who wore a curious, drawn look upon his face.

"How do you do?" she said, in a low voice, coming and taking him by the hand. —"That will do, Jane."

He did not speak till the door closed; he only looked at her with those searching blind eyes.

Thus they met again after many years. She led him to a sofa and he sat down.

"Do not leave go of my hand," he said, quickly; "I have not yet got used to talking to people in the dark."

She sat down on the sofa beside him feeling frightened and yet happy. For a while they remained silent; apparently they could find nothing to say, and after all silence seemed most fitting. She had never thought to sit hand in hand with him again. She looked at him; there was no need for her to keep a guard over her loving glances, for he was blind. At length she broke the silence.

"Were you surprised to get my message?" she asked, gently.

"Yes; it was like getting a message from the dead. I never expected to see you again; I thought that you had quite passed out of my life."

"So you had forgotten me?"

"Why do you say such a thing to me? You must know, Eva, that it is impossible for me to forget you; I almost wish that [illegible] passed out of my outward life, for out of my mind you can never pass."

Eva hung her head and was silent, and yet his words sent a thrill of happiness through her. So she had not quite lost him after it all.

"Listen, Eva," Ernest went on, gathering himself together, and speaking sternly enough now, and with a suppressed energy that frightened her. "How you came to do what you have done you best know."

"It is done; do not let us speak of it. I was not altogether to blame," she broke in.

"I was not going to speak of it. But I was going to say this, now while I have the chance, because time is short, and I think it right that you should know the truth. I was going to tell you first that for what you have done I freely forgive you."

"O Ernest!"

"It is," he went on, not heeding her, "a question that you can settle with your conscience and your God. But I wish to tell you what it is that you have done. You have wrecked my life, and made it an unhappy thing; you have taken that from me which I can never have to give again; you have embittered my mind, and driven me to sins of which I should not otherwise have dreamed. I loved you, and you gave me proofs which I could not doubt that I had won your love. You let me love you, and then when the hour of trial came you deserted and morally destroyed me, and the great and holy affection that should have been the blessing of my life has become its curse."

Eva covered her face with her hands and sat silent.

"You do not answer me, Eva," he said, presently with a little laugh. "Perhaps you find what I have to say difficult to answer, or perhaps you think I am taking a liberty."

"You are very hard," she said in a low voice.

"Had you not better wait till I have done before you call me hard? If I wished to be hard, I should tell you that I no longer cared for you, that my prevailing feeling toward you was one of contempt. It would perhaps mortify you to think that I had shaken off such heavy chains But it is not the truth, Eva. I love you now, passionately as ever, as I always have loved you, as I always shall love you. I hope for nothing, I ask for nothing; in this business it has always been my part to give, not to receive. I despise myself for it, but so it is."

She laid her hand upon his shoulder. "Spare me, Ernest," she whispered.

"I have very little more to say, only this: I believe all this I have given you has not been given uselessly. I believe that the love of the flesh will die with the flesh. But my love for you has been something more and higher than that, or how has it lived without hope, and, in spite of its dishonor, through so many years? It is of the spirit, and I believe its life will be like that of the spirit, unending, and that when this hateful life is done with I shall in some strange way reap its fruits with you."

"Why do you believe that, Ernest?"

"Why do I believe it? I can not tell you. Perhaps it is nothing but the phantasy of a mind broken down with brooding on its grief. In trouble we grow toward the light like a plant in the dark, you know. As a crushed flower smells sweet, so all that is most beautiful and aspiring in human nature is called into life when God lays His heavy hand upon us. Heaven is sorrow's sole ambition. No, Eva, I do not know why I believe it, certainly you have given me no grounds for faith, but I do believe it, and it comforts me. By-the-way, how did you know I was here?"

"I passed you on the Hoe this morning walking with Dorothy."

Ernest started. "I felt you pass," he said, "and asked Dorothy who it was. She said she did not know."

"She knew, but I made a sign to her not to say."

"Oh!"

"Ernest, will you promise me something?" asked Eva, wildly.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. I have changed my mind—nothing at all."

The promise that she was about to ask was, that he would not marry Dorothy, but her better nature rose in rebellion against it. Then they talked awhile of Ernest's life abroad.

"Well," said Ernest, rising after a pause, "good-by, Eva."

"It is a very cruel word," she murmured.

"Yes, it is cruel but not more cruel than the rest."

"It has been happiness to see you, Ernest."

He shrugged his shoulders as he answered; "Had it? For myself I am not sure if it has been a happiness or a misery. I must have a year or two of quiet darkness to think over before I make up my mind. Will you kindly ring the bell for the servant to take me away?"

Half unconsciously she obeyed him, and then she came and took his hand and looked with all her eyes and all her soul into his face. It was fortunate that he could not see her.

"O Ernest, you are blind!" she cried, scarcely knowing what she said.

He laughed—a hard little laugh. "Yes, Eva, I am as blind now as you have been always."

"Ernest! Ernest how can I live without seeing you? I love you!" and she fell into his arms.

He kissed her, and then somehow, he never knew how, found the strength to put her from him. Perhaps it was because he heard the servant coming.

Next moment the servant came and led him away.

As soon as he was gone Eva flung herself on the sofa and sobbed as though her heart would break.

When Dorothy saw a fresh-faced young officer, who had come up to see Ernest, mysteriously lead him aside, and whisper something in his ear, which caused him to turn first red and then white, she, being a shrewd observer, thought it curious. But when Ernest asked her to ring the bell and then ordered a fly to be brought round at once, the idea of Eva once flashed into her mind. She and mother must be at the bottom of this mystery. Presently the fly was announced, and Ernest went off without a word, leaving her to the tender mercies of the cherub who was contemplating her with his rod eye as he had contemplated Eva, and finding her also charming. It must be remembered that he had but just returned from South Africa, and was prepared *tout jeune*, to fall in love with an apple-woman. How much more then would he succumb to the charms of the stately Eva and the extremely fascinating Dorothy It was some time before the latter could get rid of him and his eye-glass. On an ordinary occasion she would have been glad enough to entertain him, for Dothy liked a little male society, and the cherub, though he did look so painfully young, was not half a bad fellow, and after all his whole soul was in his eyeglass, and his sting was meant to be complimentary. But just now she had a purpose in her little head, and was heartily glad when he started to reflect over the rival attractions of the two charmers.

(To be continued.)

Late Railway News.

A conference was held on Tuesday at Owen Sound between the Town Council and Board of Trade and Mr. Wragge, Chief Engineer of the Grand Trunk, at which the latter gentleman promised to report favorably to Mr. Hickson on the proposed extension from Tara or Alendale to Owen Sound.

Work will be commenced immediately on the railway from Winnipeg to the international boundary, arrangements for connection with the Northern Pacific Railway at the boundary having already been made.

An absolute denial is given at Winnipeg to the reported negotiation for the sale of the Manitoba & Northwestern Road to the Grand Trunk.

The pay car of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is now out on the Western division, was ditched near Medicine Hat on Tuesday and was badly damaged.

Mr. Pugsley, President of the Regina & Long Lake Railway, who arrived at Winnipeg from the East yesterday, said construction operations would be commenced as soon as the weather permits, and that the line will be built to the South Saskatchewan before the snow comes next fall.

Compromising With the Day.

"No, Bobby," said his mother, "you cannot go skating to-day. It's Sunday, you know."

"Well, ma," persisted Bobby, "can't I go if I'll just skate straight ahead and not try to do any fancy work?"—*Puck.*

Life in Utah.

Mormon wife (to husband)—Are you going out, dear?

Mormon husband—Yes: I have an engagement with Miss Brigham. She is to give me her answer to-night.

The ancient Peruvians used to flatten their heads.

In an old valise belonging to O. O. Putney, a miner who was killed by an avalanche at Bay Horse, Idaho, were found some faded love letters, a few bones, and a note saying, "I wish these bones buried with me."

A Dubuque, Prohibition Iowa, undertaker recently ordered stock from a Michigan coffin manufactory, and added this postscript to the order: "Put in one of the caskets a gallon of Old Crow whiskey and bill as embalming fluid."