

# THE THREAD OF LIFE;

OR,  
SUNSHINE AND SHADE.

## CHAPTER XXII.—HOLY MATRIMONY.

The way of the transgressor went easy for a while with Hugh Massinger. His sands ran smoother than he could himself have expected. His two chief bughars faded away by degrees before the strong light of facts into pure nonentity. Relif did not know that Elsie Challoner lay dead and buried in a lonely grave at Orfordness; and Winifred Meysay was not left a ward in Chanercy, or otherwise inconvenienced and strictly tied up in her plans for marrying him. On the contrary, the affairs of the deceased were arranged exactly as Hugh himself would have wished them to be ordered. The will in particular was a perfect gem; Hugh could have thrown his arms round the blameless attorney who drew it up; Mrs. Meysay appointed sole executrix and guardian of the infants; the estate and Hall bequeathed absolutely and without remainder to Winifred in person; a life interest in certain specified sums only, as arranged by settlement, to the relict herself; and the *rest* all clear for Hugh Massinger.

Everything indeed had turned out for the best. The late Squire had chosen the happiest possible moment for dying. The infant and the guardian were on Hugh's own side. There need be no long engagement, no tremulous expectation of dead men's shoes now; nor would Hugh have to put up for an indefinite term of years with the nuisance of a father-in-law's perpetual benevolent interference and well-meant dictation. Even the settlements, those tough documents, would be all drawn up to suit his own digestion. As Hugh sat, decorously lugubrious, in the dining-room at Whitestrand with Mr. Heberden, the family solicitor, two days after the funeral, he could hardly help experiencing a certain subdued sense of something exceedingly akin to stifled gratitude in his own soul towards that defective breech-loader which had relieved him at once of so many embarrassments, and made him practically Lord of the Manor of Consumption per Mare, in the hundred of Danwich and county of Suffolk, containing by admeasurement so many acres, rods, and perches, be the same more or less—and mostly less, indeed, as the years proceeded.

But for that slight drawback, Hugh cared as yet absolutely nothing. One only trouble, one kill-joy, darkened his view from the Hall windows. Every principal room in the house faced due south. Wherever he looked, from the drawing room or the dining room, the library or the vestibule, the boudoir or the billiard-room, the White- strand poplar rose straight and sheer, as conspicuous as ever, by the brink of the Chad, where sea and stream met together on debatable ground in angry encounter. Its rugged boles formed the one striking and beautiful object in the whole prospect across those desolate flats of sand and salt marsh, but to Hugh Massinger that ancient tree had now become instinct with awe and horror—a visible memorial of his own crime—for it was a crime—and of poor dead Elsie in her nameless grave by the Low Lighthouse. He grew to regard it as Elsie's monument. Day after day, while he stopped at Whitestrand, he rose up in the morning with aching brows from his sleepless bed—for how could he sleep, with the breakers that drowned and cast ashore his dear dead Elsie thundering wild songs of triumph from the bar in his ears?—and gazed out of his window at the dreary outlook, to see that accusing tree with its gnarled roots confronting him ever, full in face, and poisoning his success with its mute witness to his murdered victim. Every time he looked out upon it he heard once more that wild, wild cry, as of a stricken life, when Elsie plunged into the careering current. Every time the wind shrieked through its creaking branches in the lonely night, the shrieks went to his heart like so many living human voices crying for sympathy. He hated and detested himself in the very midst of his success. He had sold his own soul for a wasted strip of swamp and marsh and brake and sandhill, and he found in the end that it profited him nothing.

Still, time brings alleviation to most earthly troubles. Even remorse grows duller with age—till the day comes for it to burst out afresh in fuller force than ever and goad its victim on to a final confession. Days and weeks and months rolled by, and Hugh Massinger by slow degrees began to feel that Ohello was himself again. He wrote, as of old, his brilliant leaders every day regularly for the *Morning Telephone*: he slashed three-volume novels with as much vigour as ever, and rather more cynicism and cruelty than before, in the *Monday Register*: he touched the tender stops of various quills, warbling his Doric lay to Ballade and Sonnet, in the wonted words of the *Pimlico Magazine* with endless versatility. Nor was that all. He played high in the evening at Pallavicini's, more recklessly even than had been his ancient use; for was not his future now assured to him? and did not the horrid picture of his dead drowned Elsie, tossed friendless on the bare beach at Orfordness, haunt him and sting him with its perpetual presence to seek in the feverish excitement of rollette some momentary forgetfulness of his life's tragedy? True, his rhymes were sadder and gloomier now than of old, and his play wilder: no more of the rollicking, humorous, happy-go-lucky ballad-mongering that alternated in the *Echoes from Callimachus* with his more serious verses: his sincerest laughter, he knew himself, with some pain was fraught, since Elsie left him. But in their lieu had come a reckless abandonment that served very well at first sight for real mirth or heartfelt geniality. In the old days, Hugh had always cultivated a certain casual vein of cheerful pessimism: he had posed as the man who drags the lengthening chain of life behind him good-humouredly; now, a grim sardonic smile usurped the place of his pessimistic *bonhomie*, and filled his pages with a Carlyle gloom that was utterly alien to his in-born nature. Even his lighter work showed traces of the change. His wayward articles "Is Death Worth Dying?" in the *Nineteenth Century*, was full of bitterness; and his clever skit on the Blood-and-Thunder school of fiction, entitled the *Zuluia*, and published as a Christmas "shilling shocker," had a sting and a venom in it that were wholly wanting to his earlier performances in the same direction. The critics

said Massinger was suffering from a shallow spasm of Byronic affection. He knew himself he was really suffering from a profound fit of utter self-contempt and wild despairing carelessness of consequence. The world moves, however, as Galileo remarked, in spite of our sorrows. Three months after Wyville Meysay's death, White- strand received its new master. It was strange to find any but Meysays at the Hall, for Meysays had dwelt there from time immemorial; the first of the bankers, even, though of a younger branch, having purchased the estate with his newly-gotten gold from an elder and ruined representative of the main stock. The wedding was a very quiet affair, of course; half mourning at best, with no show or tomfoolery: and what was of more importance to Hugh, the arrangements for the settlements were most satisfactory. The family solicitor wasn't such a fool as to make things unpleasant for his new client. Winifred was a nice little body in her way, too; affectionately proud of her cap i re poet; and from a lordly height of marital superiority, Hugh rather liked the pink and white small woman than otherwise. But he didn't mean to live much at Whitestrand either—"At least while your mother lasts, my child," he said cautiously to Winifred, letting her down gently by gradual stages, and saving his own reputation for kindly consideration at the same moment. "The good old soul would naturally like still to feel herself mistress in her own house. It would be cruelly to mothers-in-law to disturb her now. Whenever we come down, we'll come down strictly on a visit to her. But for ourselves, we'll nest for the present in London."

Nesting in London suited Winifred, for her part, excellently well. In poor papa's day, indeed, the Meysays had felt themselves of late far too deeply impoverished—since the sandhills swallowed up the Yond-stream farms—even to go up to town in a hired house for a few weeks or so in the height of the season, as they had once been wont to do, during the golden age of the agricultural interest. The struggle to keep up appearances in the old home on a reduced income had occupied to the full their utmost energies during these latter days of universal depression. So London was to Winifred a practically almost unknown world, rich in potentialities of varied enjoyment. She had been there but seldom, on a visit to friends; and she knew nothing as yet of that brilliant circle that gathers round Mrs. Bouverie Barton's Wednesday evenings, where Hugh Massinger was able to introduce her with distinction and credit. True, the young couple began life on a small scale, in a quiet little house—most aesthetically decorated on economical principles—down a side-street in the remote recesses of Phillistine Bayewater. But Hugh's coterie, though unsuccessul, was nevertheless *excellent* distinguished: he was hand-in-love with the whole Cheyne Row set—the Royal Academicians still in embryo; the Bishops Designate of fate who at present held suburban curacies; the Cabinet Ministers whose budget yet lingered in domestic arrears; the germinating judges whose chances of the ermine were confined in near perspective to soup at sessions, or the smallest of small devilling for rising juniors. They were not rich in this world's goods, those discounted celebrities; but they were a lively crew, full of fun and fancy, and they delighted Winifred by their juvenile exuberance of wit and eloquence. She voted the men with their wives, when they had any—which wasn't often, for Bohemia can seldom afford the luxury of matrimony—the most charming society she had ever met; and Bohemia in return voted "little Mrs. Massinger," in the words of its accepted mouthpiece and spokesman, Hatherley, "as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria." The little "arrangement in pink and white" became, indeed, quite a noted personage in the narrow world of Cheyne Row society.

To say the truth, Hugh detested White- strand. He never wanted to go near the place again, now that he had made himself in very deed its lord and master. He hated the house, the grounds, the river; but above all he hated that funeral poplar, that seemed to rise up and menace him each time he looked at it with the pains and penalties of his own evil conscience. At Easter, Winifred dragged him home once more, to visit the relict in her lonely mansion. The Bard went, as in duty bound; but the duty was more than comonly distasteful. They reached Whitestrand late at night, and were shown up stairs at once into a large front bedroom. Hugh's heart leaped up in his mouth when he saw it. It was Elsie's room: the room into which he had climbed on that fateful evening; the room bound closest up in his memory with the hideous abiding nightmare of his poisoned life; the room he had never since dared to enter; the room he had hoped never more to look upon.

"Are we to sleep here, Winnie?" he cried aghast, in a tone of the utmost horror and dismay. And Winifred, looking up at him in silent surprise, answered merely in an unconcerned voice: "Why, yes, my dear boy; what's wrong with the room? It's good enough. We're to sleep here, of course—certainly."

He dared say no more. To remonstrate would be madness. Any reason he gave must seem inadequate. But he would sooner have slept on the bare ground by the river-side than have slept that night in that desecrated and haunted room of Elsie's.

He did not sleep. He lay awake all the long hours through, and murmured to himself, ten thousand times over, "Elsie, Elsie, Elsie, Elsie!" His lips moved as he murmured sometimes. Winifred opened her eyes once—she felt her open them, though it was as dark as pitch—and seemed to listen. One's senses grow preternaturally sharp in the night watches. Could she have heard that mute movement of his silent lips? He hoped not. No: it was impossible. But he lay awake till morning in a deadly terror, the cold sweat standing in big drops on his brow, haunted through the long vigils of the dreary night by that picture of Elsie, in her pale white dress, with arms uplifted above her helpless head, flinging herself wildly from the dark black poplar, the gloom of evening, upon the tender mercies of the swift dark water.

Elsie, Elsie, Elsie, Elsie! It was for this he had sold and betrayed his Elsie!

In the morning when he rose, he went over to the window—Elsie's window, round

whose sides the rich wistaria clambered so luxuriantly—and looked out with weary sleepless eyes across the weary dreary stretch of barren Suffolk scenery. It was still winter, and the wistaria on the wall stood bald and naked and bare of foliage. How different from the time when Elsie lived there! He could see where the bough had broken with his weight that awful night of Elsie's disappearance. He gazed vacantly across the lawn and meadow towards the tumbling sandhills. "Winifred," he said—he was in no good mood just then to call her Winnie—"what a big bare bundle of straight tall switches that poplar is! So gaunt and stiff! I hate the very sight of it. It's a great disfigurement. I wonder your people ever stood it so long, blocking out the view from their drawing room windows."

Winifred rose from the dressing-table and looked out by his side in blank surprise. "Why, Hugh," she cried, noting both his unwonted tone and the absence of the now customary per form of her name, "how can you say so? I call it just lovely. Blocking out the view, indeed! Why it is the view. There's nothing else. It's the only good point in the whole picture. I love to see it even in winter—the dear old poplar—so tall and straight—with its twigs etched out in black and grey against the sky like that. I love it better than anything else at White- strand."

Hugh drummed his fingers on the frosted pane impatiently. "For my part, I hate it," he answered in a short but sullen tone. "Whenever I come to live at Whitestrand, I shall never rest till I've cut it down and stubbed it up from the roots entirely."

"Hugh!"

There was something in the accent that made him start. He knew why. It reminded him of Elsie's voice as she cried aloud "Hugh!" in her horror and agony upon that fatal evening by the grim old poplar.

"Well, Winnie," he answered much more tenderly. The tone had melted him.

Winifred flung her arms around him with every sign of grief and dismay and burst into a sudden flood of tears. "O Hugh," she cried, "you don't know what you say: you can't think how you grieve me.—Don't you know why? You must surely guess it.—It isn't that the Whitestrand poplar's a famous tree—a seamount for sailors—a landmark for all the country round—historical almost not to say celebrated! It isn't that it was mentioned by Fuller and Drayton, and I'm sure I don't know how many other famous people—poor papa knew, and was fond of quoting them. It's not for all that, though for that alone I should be sorry to lose it, sorrier than for anything else in all Whitestrand. But, oh, Hugh, that you should say so! That you should say, 'For my part, I hate it.'—Why, Hugh, it was on the roots of that very tree, you know, that you saw me for the very first time in my life, as I sat there dangling my hat—with Elsie. It was from the roots of that tree that I first saw you and fell in love with you when you jumped off Mr. Relf's yawl to rescue my poor little half crown hat for me.—It was there you first won my heart—my poor little heart.—And to think you really want to cut down that tree would nearly, very nearly break it.—Hugh, dear Hugh, never, never, never say so!"

No man can see a woman cry unmoved. To do so is more or less than human. Hugh laid her head tenderly on his big shoulder, soothed and kissed her with loving gentleness, swore he was speaking without due thought or reflection, declared that he loved that tree every bit as much in his heart as she herself did, and pacified her gradually by every means in his large repertoire of masculine blandishments. But deep down in his bosom he crushed his despair. If ever he came to live at Whitestrand, then, that hateful tree must for ever rise up in mute accusation to bear witness against him!

It could not! It could not! He could never stand it. Either they must never live at Whitestrand at all, or else—or else, in some way unknown to Winifred, he must manage to do away with the Whitestrand poplar.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## A Stream of Silver.

There is a stream of silver pouring into Washington at the rate of half a million dollars' worth a day. It comes in the shape of fresh, glittering new dollars, standard silver dollars of the vintage of 1888, with the milling unnickel and the face of the Goddess of Liberty fresh from the stamp. The stream is flowing at present from the Philadelphia mint, but before long the sluice gate will be awitched around and the shining flood will be turned in from New York, then, after a time, from New Orleans, and finally from San Francisco, thus giving the United States a silver belt that will outshine even that of a champion pugilist. The Adams Express Company carries the silver in trunks or iron-bound boxes, guarded by armed men. At this end of the line the silver is carried direct to the Treasury Department in great iron-latticed waggons, that look like the animal cages in a menagerie. At the treasury the boxes are taken into the building and into the basement, then down a winding stairway in the north-east corner of the building into the sub-basement, where the air at present has an odour of soft mustiness that brings thoughts of mysterious treasures, hidden gold, stories of Capt. Kidd, and similar ideas. The visions of the mystic are suddenly dispelled by a prosy, business-like door of grated iron that bars the way and brings the visitor to a halt.

## A Wise Old Horse.

There is hardly a person in Gallatia, Ill., but what knows "Old Sam," a large gray horse belonging to J. W. Watkins. Last Saturday "Old Sam" visited the blacksmith shop so often that he was led out several times during the day. Sunday morning early he took his stand in front of the shop, and there he remained all day in the hot sun, never leaving except when led away by his owner. Monday evening, as soon as unhitched, he left his feed, which had been placed in the wagon bed, and again took up his stand in front of the blacksmith shop. By this time considerable of a crowd had gathered at Weber's store, and it was suggested that "Old Sam" wanted shoeing. The blacksmith was sent for, and on opening the shop door "Old Sam" walked in and stood perfectly still without bridle or any one holding while the shoes were being nailed on. As soon as the job was completed he went back to his feed, and has not visited the shop since. The people are proud of "Old Sam" and think him a very smart horse, and why shouldn't they?

## Quick Temper.

A matter not unworthy of remark is the almost universal claim laid to that supposed-to-be undesirable possession, a quick temper. "I have a frightfully quick temper!" is an assertion often made without any sign of regret, rather with evident self-complacency. And how often, when, with the intention of saying something pleasing, we remarked upon the sweetness of a friend's disposition to the friend in person, are we met with the reply, "Oh, you're quite mistaken; I'm one of the quickest-tempered people in the world!" given in a tone that does not imply modest depreciation of a compliment, but a decided sense of unappreciated merit.

Now this willingness—eagerness, it may even, without exaggeration, be called—to be convicted of what is acknowledged to be a fault, strikes one as a curious anomaly. No one would answer, if told, "You are very truthful." "Oh, no, I'm a constant liar;" nor, if complimented upon consistent attention to her own business, would respond, "On the contrary, scandal-mongering is my favorite occupation." At least, no one would give either of these answers in the serious way in which the claim to the possession of a hot temper is made. May there not be, underlying this inconsistency and explaining it, a misconception of the real meaning and source of a quick temper? To many minds, this undesirable trait seems to be the outcome of many very admirable qualities. To be hot-tempered means, inferentially, in such mental vocabularies, to be generous, and large-minded, and unselfish, and—after a little lapse of time—forgiving. But I maintain that it means exactly the reverse of all these things. If a man be quick-tempered, if he give way to anger quickly and un-righteously (for I leave out of the question entirely that righteous wrath which rises for good reason only, and is quite a different matter from temper), he is not generous, for he shows no regard for the comfort of those around him; he is not unselfish, for it is safe to say that in nine cases out of ten, if not in ten out of ten, his fury is kindled by some fancied slight to himself, and is allowed to blaze simply as an illumination in honor of his self esteem; he is not forgiving, because, though he may recover quickly from his aberration, and soon be perfectly urbane to the whom victim of it, the restoration is simply forgetfulness, and to forget the injury inflicted upon another by his own hasty words is by no means synonymous with forgiveness of injuries he himself may have received. Last of all, he is not large-minded. I am convinced that a quick temper is an unfailing indication of a limited intelligence and a lack of mental quickness. If the mind were large enough to grasp the true relations of things, to see how small a point in the universe this temper-rousing episode occupied, and if it could see this quickly—in a flash of thought—the outburst would be averted.

## Hawks Useful to Farmers.

The Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for 1887, recently issued, includes a report of the assistant ornithologist of the Department, Dr. A. K. Fisher, on the food of hawks and owls. This is based on the examination of one thousand and twenty-two stomachs of these rapacious birds, and will prove of special interest to farmers. In Massachusetts, for instance, the three common large hawks are the marsh hawk, usually seen flying low over meadows and marshes, and conspicuous for its white rump, and the red-tailed and the red-shouldered hawks.

The two latter are most often noticed soaring high in air, and among people generally are known as "hen-hawks," implying that they prey upon poultry.

Dr. Fisher and his associates examined the stomachs of three hundred and eleven red-tailed hawks, with the following results: Twenty-five contained poultry; four contained quails; five contained crows; thirty-five contained other birds—sparrows, etc.; two hundred and three contained mice; fifty-five contained other mammals; and twenty-four contained insects.

Of red-shouldered hawks, one hundred and two stomachs were examined. Out of this number, only one contained poultry, while sixty-one contained mice, twenty contained other mammals, and forty contained insects. No farmer ought to be long in deciding that such "hen-hawks" as these are friends rather than enemies. Two hundred and three stomachs of the red-tailed hawks contained two hundred and seventy mice. Such efficient farm-hands may surely be spared a chicken or two now and then.

Concerning our two other common summer hawks, Cooper's and the sharp-shinned, the verdict is rather less favorable. Out of forty-six stomachs of Cooper's hawks, eight contained poultry, while only one contained mice. The larger part contained other birds, from pigeons to sparrows. Of sharp-shinned hawks, forty-eight stomachs were examined. Only one contained poultry, four mice, and thirty-six sparrows, warblers, and other birds.

All in all, these figures are not very alarming, and for the present at least, after so many years of persecution, it seems that our hawks may safely be left alone, to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."

## Selling a Chinese Girl.

A man named Menzies has been sentenced at Victoria, B. C., to eight months' imprisonment for selling a Chinese girl for \$150 to a Chinaman. Menzies, who does not seem to have known the serious nature of the offence he was committing, took the girl to several of the clergymen of the city, but all refused to perform a ceremony which would be incomprehensible to the Chinese couple and therefore not binding upon their consciences. Menzies then gave the girl to the Chinaman and told them they were married. Judge Gray, in sentencing the accused, was very severe upon Menzies for trying to misuse a sacred ordinance of the Christian Church to carry out his unholy purpose, and declared: "If the contracting parties are heathens, let them be married according to heathen rites binding on their consciences, or if necessary that there should be a civil marriage let them go to a civil magistrate or the registrar. I cannot understand the sacred service of a Christian church being so prostituted and dishonored. It is no answer to say the Chinese buy and sell these women, and not regard marriage in the light we do. You belong to what we believe a higher scale of civilization and ought to feel that bartering children for prostitution, whether under the form of marriage or otherwise, is a disgrace as well as a crime."

## Chinese Laundrymen.

The question has frequently been asked by Americans, "Do these Chinamen wash clothes in China? How is it that nearly all who come here enter the laundry business? Do they love it?" No, they do not love it any more than any other kind of labor. They did not even know what the "Melican man's" shirt looked like, much less how to dress one, before they came to America. Laundry work in China is invariably done by women, and when a man steps into a woman's occupation he loses his social standing.

They become laundrymen here simply because there is no other occupation by which they can make money as surely and quickly. The prejudice against the race has much to do with it. They are fine cooks, neat and faithful servants, and above all, very skillful mechanics at any trade they have a mind to try. In the western states, where their value is better understood, they are used in as many different positions as any other foreigners, and the laundry business is occupied only by those who fail to find other employment.

## NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE.

But here in New York as yet there is no other alternative. Many an able minded man as well as skillful mechanic who came to America to better his condition may be found wielding the polishing irons in a New York Chinese laundry. It takes from seventy-five dollars to two hundred dollars to start one of these Chinese wash houses, and the way most of these laundries are started would give valuable tips even to an American Wall street deacon. The main expenditure in a Chinese laundry is a stove and a trough for washing and partitions for dry room and sleeping apartment, and a sign.

As a rule it requires \$100 to open a laundry in New York. But this amount is a fortune to a newly arrived Chinaman, and unless he starts immediately into the laundry business, he would become a burden to some of his friends. The Chinese immigrant, unlike his European compatriots, never comes here unless he is safely surrounded by friends or relatives upon his arrival. These immediately initiate him into the mysteries of the laundry business. In some friendly laundries the newcomer is placed under a six months' apprenticeship, beginning at the wash tub, until he reaches the ironing table, and lastly the polishing board. An apprenticeship begins with \$3 per week and board, and a gradual addition of \$1 per week after the first month, until he is able to take charge of a laundry himself. Then if he has money he hires a place and hangs out his sign. If not he goes to one or two friends, and they will call a "whey" or syndicate for his benefit in the following manner.

## MYSTERIES OF THE "WHEY."

Suppose I have an established laundry, and want to borrow \$200 at a certain per centum premium, but I cannot find any one Chinaman who is able to loan me the amount. I put up a notice in *Mott street* that upon such and such a day I wish to make a "whey" of twenty men, who all are supposed to be situated like myself, each wanting to borrow \$200. When we twenty borrowers all come together we each put down \$10. Then each one secretly writes upon a slip of paper the amount of interest he is willing to give to get the \$200. These slips are carefully sealed and thrown into a bowl. At a given time they are opened, and to the highest bidder goes the \$200, less the interest, which is invariable deducted immediately from the principal.

Frequently as high as \$4 is offered for the use of \$10 for a single month. In such cases each of the nineteen other borrowers gives to the lucky one only \$6 apiece for the \$10 apiece which they make him pay next month. Then the next highest bidder gets the \$200, less the interest he offered, and so on, until the entire twenty, at twenty different times, have obtained the use of this \$200; but the one that comes the last, having offered the least interest of them all, reaps the harvest of the "whey." This method is adopted by most Chinese laundrymen in New York and other large cities to open new laundries. It partakes of the gaming flavor which is captivating to every true Celestial.

## The Stars.

How many stars do you see when you look up to the sky, on a clear, moonless night? Some people would say it they were asked this question: "Oh, hundreds!" or "thousands!" And some might even go to the length of millions; but very few would give an exact answer.

Well, astronomers tell us that on a good night, with good eyes, we can see from two to three thousand stars. The actual number of stars which may be seen without a telescope, is two or three thousand overhead; five or six thousand round the whole world. But, with the help of the telescope, Sir William Herschel, the astronomer, calculated twenty million stars round the whole world—twenty million suns; for stars are only distant suns.

They must be very distant indeed, you will say, because they look so much smaller than the sun. And they are very distant. Alpha Centauri, the nearest star, whose distance we know is two hundred and twenty-five thousand times as far away as the distance of the sun from the earth—two hundred and twenty-five thousand times ninety-one millions of miles, or millions of millions of miles! The light from Alpha Centauri, which we see, started three and a half years it ago. All those three and a half years it has been flashing onward at the rate of one hundred and eighty-eight thousand miles each second—it has traveled one hundred and eighty-eight thousand miles with each tick of the clock! That shows us how very far off Alpha Centauri is.

Perhaps you know the bright star called Sirius—that star which blazes in the southern sky, shining by turns red and blue, green and white? That light from Sirius left its surface twenty years ago. Sirius is so far off that it has taken the light twenty years to reach the world.

Wife—John, dear, if it should be my misfortune to die before you do, do you think you would marry again? Husband—Well, I dunno, my love. Until it comes to him, no man can tell how he would be able to stand prosperity.

Jinks—Johnson wants to borrow \$100 from me. Is he good? Binks—Yes, with proper securities. Jinks—What would you suggest? Binks—"A chain and padlock, a pair of handcuffs and a dog. That would be enough, I think, to hold him."