not for one during the last twenty years. She walked the earth, a state of unstrung nerves an incarnation of stirred on and sighed. Chancing to stirred on and sighed. Chancing to look out of the window, I saw Uncle look out of the window, I saw ble to, a specimen of utter misery and living martyrdom. From the crown of Aunt looked up also her smooth brown head down to her pretty feet there was no sound health in her. So she would assure us ten times a day.

And she might have been so bright and nappy! The wife of Thomas But- be jealous. But I shall not be in the terfield, substantial yoeman and fail and whose house was filled with followed by that most comely woman's more cheerful day by day. Her dress fail and whose house was lined with lollowed by that most comery woman's studied, her servants, household, entrance, "fair, fat and forty." As she was studied, her servants, household, entrance, "fair, fat and forty." As she and children were actively cared for. could have. Her children were hearty, of health, and the prime of a beauty to church on Sundays; she invited her friends true. But that health of which time had improved rather than friends to little parties at home. The hers ruined everything. 'Any husband impaired, the contrast was too painful. pills and herbs and physics and decocless sunny tempered than Uncle Butterfield would have become morose ere

hydropathy; she had consulted various kinds of practitioners—botanic, elec- "My wife tric, magnetic, and mesmeric. She worse," said Uncle Butterfield. "That fident hope in her voice. "Only yesteronce travelled to London to consult a renowned medium.

There came into the village hard by a man of medicine, and he set up his tent there for a day or two, He called Magnetic Healer," and he came her- reproachfully. "I feel that my days are nicest possible way, that Mrs. Berrow, and by bills as large as life, professing healthy, woman, whose ailments won't Mona's parlor, a smile on her everto cure everything. Aunt Mona was in trouble you. One that's got money, pleasant face. a flutter of hope. She wrote to him too," she added, significantly and spiteto say she was coming, and she took you've had to pay for me." me with her. Her own children were not old enough, and Uncle Butterfield would as soon have paid a visit to the

bowed aunt into a big chair, and me to a smaller one.

"I am so miserable." said Aunt Mona. "I have such terrible dreams."

"Do you drink green tea?" asked the Great Healer

"Ne; occasionally hot pork chops and apple fritters for supper," replied Aunt Mona, sobbing.

"I have a sure cure for you," said he. "It is called the 'Elixir of Life and Universal Panacea. This small bottle of medicine which a will give you," he Berrow. It is impossible to keep such added, producing a little white phial filled with a lemon-colored liquid, "is sufficient to cure any mortal disease, lent stepmother." and-"

"It don't look much of it," interrupt-

ed aunt. "My good lady it will last you your lifetime. You may take one drop on rising in the morning, one drop at noon, and one drop before retiring at night, Continue this course for a fortnight, then one drop only every other day, until you are cured, will be sufficient."

renowned Magnetic Healer bowed us out, my aunt clasping the treasured indignant, as the echo of her light footbottle.

cried. "If he had but come here a few think you are heartless to Aunt Mona years ago! What do you think of him, -unfeeling.?" Maria?"

be a good thing." said i.

golden remedy. Some few days later a second wife. I don't see that I could Johnny, the youngest of the little ones, choose a nicer one than Mrs. Berrow.' aged seven, saw the phial on his mother's dressing table, got hold of it, long strides to overtake Mrs. Berrow. and drank the whole at a draught.

mother was frightfully put out, and sterical tears, and sorely in need of Johnny got a whipping.

life! I see it; I feel and know it. I abundant and beautiful hair, which had confidence in that Elixir. And it during these years of illness, real or must be next to a miracle that that imaginary, she had worn plainly tucked wicked Johnny is not dead! I was so under a cap. There was a fire in her much better for the few days I took it! eye, a flush upon her cheek, and a look And now I must bear the return of all of determination in her face which my old ailments and die! Woe's me!" augured anything but well for the pro-

And the old ailments did return-as spects of the Widow Berrow. Aunt Mona said; and she made life a

over to my Aunt Mona's.

ing very merrily.

I had gone in the back way. "Groaning and moaning somewhere about-as she always is, Miss Maria,"

replied the old nurse, who had lived with them for years and had a habit aunt; I am sure of that, though she does of saying what she pleased. In a little room opening from the

and crouching disconsolately over the with my years of suffering, look eightgrate, in which roared a fire more be- and forty. fitting January than June.

you any worse than usual?" "Ah, my dear, don't ask. I am mis-"But what makes you so."

a porcelain saucepan, whose contents | regard to your health, but only to your she was languidly stirring with a spoon. husband's money. And now I want "Why, aunt, what are you doing you to promise me never to take anthere? Is that a witch's caldron?" "It is a decoction of herbs to be ed by him." taken inwardly." meekly sighed she. "I never will."

not cure me I shall just give up medi-

run about out of doors in the sunshine." very morning! Think of her setting her "It's cruel of you to talk so," she ugly widow's cap at your uncle before whined. "How can I stir that awful I am dead."

one of them, Maria?" path with that pretty widow, Mrs. over her face.

Widow Berrow, as usual! If he is settling up her husband's property, it's went to the penny reading-concert, takno reason why she should be running ing Kate and Louisa. Uncle Butterafter him always. If I wasn't the most | field was there, sitting beside Mrs. Berunsuspecting woman on earth I should

cheeked bright eyed, in the exuberance She took to visiting again and to going

She had tried allopathy, homeopathy, lent thing in woman "—" I was hoping, did not give up his visits to the Widow

magnetic what-d'ye-call-him, a month his gentle hand and said I looked as ago, didn't seem to do you much good, young and pretty in his eyes as I did did it, Mona?

sufferings and to save the life of his It was a month or two after this, all poor, dying wife," replied Aunt Mona, things having been going on in the

"I am glad to see you in so desirable a little at that. a frame of mind," said Mrs. Berrow,

laughing merrily. "I know how unfeeling you can be. It vitation, Maria, and yours too," she man with a black beard. He solemnly is not the first time you have made added, nodding to me. "You are to replace me. I and my sufferings will see me married." soon be released from this world of

you would like as a mother to your chil- Stanton-a very distant cousin, as you dren f"

I don't much think Aunt Mona expected the ready acquiescence; she looked startled. Mrs. Berrow ran out to Kate and Louisa Aunt Mona was then growing hysterical.

"To tell you the truth, Mona," said from the first. my uncle, "I have thought of Caroline ideas away when one's wife is in your state of health," he added with deprecation. "She would make a most excel-

"Yes, I see you have been thinking of her," returned Aunt Mona, rising from her chair in a fever of hysterical anger. Then my uncle went out and joined Mrs. Berrow, and we could hear distinotly what they were talking about. 'Mona only told me yesterday that she could not live a week," quoth she.

"She kissed me last Sunday when I was going to church and said she should not live to see another," spake uncle. "And now she is going to live a hundred years," sighed Mrs. Berrow, in

"Uncle Butterfield," I said, feeling senses. steps sounded on the path and the two there never was a woman more free "What a mercy I went to him!" she girls ran after her, "I-I have no right, from "nerves" and imaginary aches

"I am sorry for it, if I am," replied "If it cures you, Aunt Mona, it will my uncle. "but I'm only taking your aunt at her word. For years she has been telling me she was going to die, But now a dire musfortune befell this and that I had better be looking out for He set off down the garden with his

Up-stairs ran I to Aunt Mona's room No evil ensued to Johnny, but his expecting to find her drowned in hyconsolation. Not a bit of it. She sat "It would have been the saving of my before a mirror arranging her still

"I've heard every word you have been burden to herself and everybody about saying below," she exclaimed angrily, glancing at the open window. "I thank Upon the morning of one of those per- you for taking my part, Maria. You fect days, cloudless, serene and balmy, seem to be the only friend I have. The which only the month of June can bring | idea of that mean, low-lived, contemptito earth I took my sewing and started ble Widow Berrow being here in my place and the mother of my children Passing through the garden, I found If I were dead and buried and she came my eousins, Louisa and Kate, sitting as Thomas's wife, I'd rise from my under the arbor of roses and honey- grave and haunt her. But I'm not dead suckles, shelling a dish of early green yet; no, and I don't intend to be while peas for dinner and chatting and laugh- that miserable jade walks the earth. I suppose she paints and powders to Where is your mistress?" I said to make herself look young and fair, for Sarah, who sat in the best kitchen-for she's every day as old as I am, and when we were girls together she was not half as handsome as I was. Mark

you that, Maria." "She does not paint or use powder,

look so fresh and young. "She is eight-and-thirty this summer, dining parlor, I found Aunt Mona, an and she does not look eight-andold woollen shawl around her shoulders | twenty," snapped Aunt Mona. "And I

"Aunt-Aunt Mona," I cried, "I want Your illness during all these years has be used for the purpose of treatment." been more imaginary than real; your natural nervousness has rendered you Aunt Mona gave a deep sigh and bent an easy prey to quack doctors and paover the fire again. On the trivet stood | tent medicine vendors, who have had no other drop of medicine unless prescrib-

"I got the receipt from the old herb. "And oh, Aunt Mena, try to be cheer- saly. doctor. I sent for him here yesterday, ful and to make home a happy place for That's all right, said the Sultan. We and he gave it me. I am going to try your husband and children. Think how intend merely a temporary occupait." she added resignedly. "and if it does | terrible it would be to lose their love." | tion-similar to that of Egypt.

deny that Caroline Berrow has turned "Give up medicine and arise and live," out a deceitful crocodile. Think of her land live, display of friendship for me up to this

"But you know, aunt, you have been might be believed, had hardly been well your uncle—he talks to me so, like your as good as dead—in speech—telling for a day throughout her life, certainly papa—but I can't from you. Men are them, week in, week out, that you shall so hard hearted. Don't you every marry be in week in the next! But She tapped her foot on the ground and | you like; and circumvent-pardon the

"There's your uncle, Maria, with that And she began forthwith. That very evening she dressed herself up and

How wonderfully from that time her appearance and manner changed you A burst of clear, ringing laughter at would hardly believe. She grew young this moment reached us. It was soon again; she grew cheerful, cheerful and "Mrs. Butterfield," said the widow, was charmingly sunny tempered in the in her soft, musical voice—that "excel- house, as he always had been—but he

"My wife seems to be growing aunt privately to me, a world of conthe day we were married.'

"A kind, loving husband ought not to Yes, aunt, you are winning him speak of money paid to relieve the back, you see. I knew it would be so. Thomas, you can marry some strong, come in, presented herself in Aunt

Mrs. Berrow, coming in, with her fully. "Yes, money to make up for all bright face, went straight up to aunt and kissed her. Aunt Mona did color

"I am come to ask you to my house for the 6th of January," she said. "You, "Now, Caroline Berrow, I think you Mona, and your husband and the two had better not say more," spoke aunt. girls. Your mamma has already her inyou can be looking out for somebody to attend me to church beforehand-and "Married!" I cried, staring at her.

"Yes, my dear, I have been engaged "Have you any particular person in these many months past," she answered view?" asked uncle gravely; "any one with equanimity. "It is to my cousin

"And-you have been engaged to marry him all that while!" gasped aunt in her surprise. " All that while and longer. Since last April. Your husband has known it

"Oh. Caroline!" "And has been transacting all kinds of business for us both, preparatory to

the marriage." "Why did you not tell me?" Caroline Berrow laughed. "Then-was that-that nonsense that you and Thomas talked together-about -about your succeeding me a joke?" "Why, of course, it was, you silly

thing. As if your husband could have cared for me or I for him-in that way. He has never cared, he never will care, for any one but his wife, Mona. Aunt Mona burst into happy tears and put her face down upon her old

friend's neck to sob them away. We all went to the wedding, but neither of them told Aunt Mona what Pocketing his fee of two guineas, the anything but a pleasureable tone. "But I learned—that the plot was concect-

And it did it, as you have seen. And

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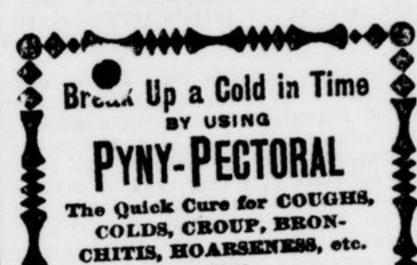


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