

MY NEIGHBORS' DOGS.

BY EUGENE J. HALL.

I have a fine suburban home,
With garden, house, and lawn,
With thrifty garden plot,
That those who pass oft' have to see,
And tell me to my face
How very much they envy me
In having such a place.

It has no beauty to my sight,
No charm or power to please;
I find no pleasure, day or night,
No mirth, no rest, or glee;
I sleep with joy, a storied morn,
Like one who quits a tomb;
I have no walk with soul forlorn,
And mind oppressed with gloom.

I hear no music in the air,
No sound that makes me glad;
I find no recreation there,
My heart is always at a stand;
I live in tomes all the time,
My neighbor's dogs delight;
To walk to go, to sleep and howl
The livelong day and night.

My sweet young wife a fretful grown;
To sleep, in vain she tries;
She's sick, and turns aside to side;
The baby wakes and cries.
There's n't a bracket or a stone
On the place to stay;
For every so thing I have thrown
To drive the curs away.

They chace my costly chickens down—
They kill them one by one;
They loosely prowl about the town—
They own no home;
They steal our p's and meat;
My little children cannot walk
With safety on the street.

They nearly crawl 'neath my fence;
They never show a sp'k of sense;
By driving cows away;
And, if a nightingale just
To sing a solo song,
Calls me unkind in names,
In manner n'est-unkind.

Ah, well, there is frie all this
But I'll escape, I'll try
To catch my mete and go—
If any man will buy.
Dear Lord, I thank thee gratefully
That, when beyond the tide,
My neighbor's p's pass the yearly gates,
Their dogs are left outside.

BUDELL'S PROPOSAL.

This time two years ago our Square Club was flourishing; now I am sole member. Budell, Marby, Smithers and myself had formed ourselves into a private bachelors' club, for the purpose of whist and other intellectual occupations, and a very good time we contrived to have together. We hadn't many rules and by-laws for our club. We were sworn bachelors and each of us had to allege a reason why he did not intend to wed; but we had so far recognized the possibility of a change in our sentiments as to solemnly bind ourselves to inform the club at once if we should ever meditate "halving our pleasures and doubling our expenses." Smithers said he hadn't time to marry; I was too poor, and Marby, who was regarded as our romantic member, gave us indefinitely to understand that "blighted affections" stood between him and the hymeneal altar. Budell at first laughed at the idea of assigning a reason, and he wished to allege that he hadn't met Mrs. Budell yet. That was unanimously rejected by the rest of the club; whereupon he insisted upon our accepting as an alternative that he was afraid of ladies. We were willing to stretch a point in favor of Budell, who was one of the jolliest possible fellows at a bachelor supper, and so we received this second reason. For the rest we nobly resolved not to fly, but to withstand temptation; our maxim was that every lady is charming so long as one is not married to her, and we were all ready to go into society, and even sustain the reputation of being "dancing men." We used to relate to each other over our celibate pipes wonderful stories of narrow escapes from guileful women every season; but if these were all as dependent upon the narrator's fancy for their important details as my contributions to the conversation, the escapes were somewhat more than hair's-breadth. Budell was especially a favorite in society; he was one of those rare phenomena, young barristers with some practice, and he had beside a very comfortable allowance from his father. Like the rest of the club, I had taken as a joke his assertion that he was afraid of ladies; but I gradually came to see that there was some truth in it. So long as Budell was in a large company—in a ball-room or any place that—he was quite at his ease and as bold as a lion; but by any chance he happened to fall a temporary captive to a solitary damsel's bow and spear; he was almost overwhelmed with nervousness, and his usual powers of conversation completely deserted him. I once met him at the Royal Academy, escorting a very pretty young lady, and looking as uneasy as if he had a worse conscience than King Herod; and I have seen him tremble at a mere passing mention of the conservatory by his partner at a dance. However, in the Square Club he was our most enthusiastic member, and horror and indignation filled our souls when we realized the direful fact that Budell was in love and doing his best to get married. Had we been women we might probably have seen the symptoms of the advancing malady; but we were only obtuse and shortsighted men. Now as I look back over these months I recall incidents that might have been warnings. The gradual decrease of Budell's hilarity at the club and the gradual increase of his excursions into society could hardly, indeed, have been portents, for Budell always did go into society more than the rest of us. The first allusion that he made to me about the lady who was afterward to play Beatrice to his Benedict was at a concert—or rather in a cloak-room after a concert. "That's what I call a pretty girl," he whispered to me, "that dark-eyed girl over there in the warm, fleecy brown shawl—none of your fussy white opera cloaks." The girl was pretty in a fresh piquant sort of way; and even a sworn bachelor might have been excused for being pleased at receiving such a frank smile as she greeted Budell with. Again, not many days after he remarked to me apropos des bottes: "Met rather an interesting girl last night; quite agrees with me on the subject of names." I may be excused for neglecting this hint; Budell I think would have found a mollusco "interesting" if it had only agreed with him that there was nothing more objectionable than to have one's name murdered. He was nervously anxious that his name should be pronounced with the accent on the second syllable; and I afterward

found that he had been introduced (for the second time), to this "interesting girl" as "Boddle." "Just as though I rhymed to noodle"—as he indignantly expressed it. But the most important hint was given the night after Mrs. Burton's ball, at which we had all been present. We were lounging in Budell's rooms, and Smithers was giving us a highly-colored and graphic illustration of the frivolity that passes for conversation between young men and maidens. "That's all nonsense," broke in Budell; "it's your own fault at any rate. Why, last night I had quite a serious and interesting conversation 'about woman's education, with a 'maiden.' I even quoted Scripture to her."

"Bet you a hat you misquoted," said the irreverent Smithers, who thought every one was as ignorant as himself.

"No, I'm not joking; it's a fact, and I got an idea or two, let me tell you." Had he only told us that he had ventured into the conversation in order to carry on his conversation without interruption, I am convinced that I, at least, would have surmised that the acquisition of an idea or two was not the only result. However, I was not long in my state of ignorance. One day, a month or so after, Budell hunted me up to confide to me that the bachelor's club was all bosh; he was over head and ears in love, and did I think he ought to tell the other men? Then there followed a shower of aphorisms in which "soft brown eyes" and goodness "knows" what other personal attractions were prominent. When I received breath I assured him that I thought it was quite incumbent upon him to inform the club. I was rigid and cold with him, for I felt indignant; it was almost an insult to select me as his confidant, as though my celibate principles were less fixed than Marby's or Smithers'.

His announcement that evening was received in silence by the Square Club; even Smithers had at first nothing to say. At last Marby asked: "Is it permitted to inquire the lady's name, and when the marriage is to take place?" Budell looked uncomfortable. "Well, the fact is," he said, "I thought I ought to tell the club at once; but I haven't—that is, I don't quite know how to set about asking the lady."

Budell looked so comically distressed as he made this confession that the club hailed it with a shout of laughter. The notion of the bold and confident Budell finding himself muzzled by the tender passion was too suggestive for our risibility. Budell was seriously annoyed. "I don't think," he said, "that my courtesy to the club has been met with courtesy." He glared at me as if I especially had been guilty of revealing his confidence. We apologized humbly, and at last pacified him. He really was puzzled as to how to accomplish his proposal. Marby suggested the old-fashioned plan of plumping down on his knees, like a swain in a valentine; but Budell paled visibly. "My dear Budell, you must make your opportunity. Do it to-night."

"To-night! Why, it's dinner time already; and after dinner we're to have those blessed tableaux vivants; and goodness knows what Smithers will do while I'm looking after the wretched affairs. And then, to-morrow, I've promised Carlyon to start for the east moor at 9 o'clock."

I endeavored to comfort him by suggesting that possibly Miss Maxwell might refuse Smithers; but Budell shuddered at the possibility of being forestalled. He was palpably upset, and he looked nervous and anxious all dinner-time. The company generally attributed it to the theatrical responsibility, but they were wrong, Budell was too old a hand to be anxious about anything so simple as tableaux vivants. Smithers, on the other hand, had secured a seat beside Miss Maxwell, and seemed to be making himself vastly agreeable.

The tableaux began immediately after dinner, and they were a great success. Budell had skillfully arranged them, without attempting to make them into series, and music, supposed to be appropriate or to have reference to each tableau, was played while the curtain was up. Curiously enough in the second last tableau, Miss Maxwell, Smithers and Budell were to appear by themselves, and still more curiously the subject of it was "The Rivals." Where Budell had got it I don't know; probably in his inner consciousness. It was supposed to be woodland scene in the paint-and-powder days. A young lady was discovered seated on a bank with a lover kneeling at her seat, and holding one of her hands. At a little distance, and unseen by either of the lovers, was a rival glaring from among the trees at the unsuspecting pair. The tableau was very effective. Miss Maxwell, who had very charming in her costume, and Smithers glared splendidly. Budell's face was impossible to see, for his back was turned to the audience. Up till now the performers had all managed to remain as rigid as statues, but in this tableau Miss Maxwell, who had already appeared several times, seemed to lose her nerve. The curtain had not been up a minute when she started, looked down at Budell, and at last, flushing crimson, fairly ran off the stage. However, the last tableau went off without a hitch, and the slight mistake did not affect the general verdict. An adjournment was made to have a dance in the hall, and I was standing idly looking on when Budell, once more in his usual garb, rushed up to me in a fever of excitement.

"By George, sir," he whispered, "I've done it; it's all right." And he dragged me along with him from the hall into the empty library. "What on earth do you mean, man?" I exclaimed. "What have you done?" "I've proposed, sir, and I've been accepted."

I cordially congratulated him, and then I inquired: "How did you manage it—when did you find the time—and where the courage?"

"I'll tell you. I did it in that tableau. Under cover of music I told Edith that in all sober earnestness I was at her feet, not in jest alone; and I asked her to be my wife. That's why she ran away."

"No wonder!" I interjected.

"Wasn't it splendid doing it under

Smithers' very eyes? And then,

of course, I saw Edith afterward in the little drawing-room; and she'll be here directly, whenever she has changed her costume."

"Well, I'm glad you've settled it;

and I think Smithers was right when he

said you would end by proposing in

some extraordinary way. And it seems

to me that it was decidedly embarrassing for Miss Maxwell."

Smithers married Edith Maxwell's

sister eighteen months after the tab-

leau.

A DRESDEN artist has made a watch

entirely of paper, which keeps good

time. Coming Benedict I shall be surprised. Anyhow, we have plenty of birds."

When I arrived I found the house full of pleasant men and agreeable girls; while the grousse gave very fair sport. The club was there in full force. Budell was in tolerable spirits, and came out in grand style as master of the ceremonies, and as the originator of all sorts of amusements. He was too busy to inflict any more confidences, but I had no reason to suppose that he had yet accomplished his purpose.

One afternoon a heavy rain-storm had driven the sportsmen in sooner than usual; I was examining my breech-loader in the gun-room when Smithers mysteriously requested me to come to the smoking-room at once. There I found Budell and Marby. Smithers had convened the club, and we had the room to ourselves. He briefly explained his object. "I have an announcement to make," he said, "similar to one made by Budell not long since. I'm going to follow his example, and I hereby invite you all to the wedding. Like Budell, I haven't yet put the final question, but I am not afraid of the answer. I have no objection to tell you that the young lady is at present in this house, and that her name is Miss Maxwell."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Budell. "Well," said Marby, "I may as well take this opportunity of informing the club that I, too, am going to follow suit. Only I've taken the precaution to speak to the lady first, and Fanny Carlyon is shortly going to become Mrs. Marby."

I was thunderstruck. "In that case," I said, with dignity, as I strode from the room, "I am the only member of the Square Club."

Just as I was tying my necktie a few minutes before dinner, and reflecting that, through nervousness, want of leisure and even blighted affections might be got over, I, at least, had a reason that would preserve me from matrimony, Budell hurried into my room.

"Look here," he said, "I'm in a den of a box of a Smithers is going to propose to Miss Maxwell, and hang it that's Edith!"

"What! You both in love with Miss Maxwell?"

"Yes, and that forward beast, Smithers, will be sure to propose right off; and I've never had a good opportunity."

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AMERICAN DRESS FABRICS.

Their Great Improvement of Late Years.

Fashion plays a more important part in the distribution of dress goods than in any former period in the history of the country. The two primary causes for this fact are, first, the increasing wealth of customers, enabling them to purchase costlier fabrics; and, second,

the improved taste of the masses,

growing out of the more rapid communication between large cities, where fashion holds court and rural communities.

The fashionable styles of ladies'

costumes in metropolitan cities are soon

copied and adopted in the interior

towns and villages. Fashion plates

have become almost as important as

weekly price-lists of market quotations,

and women are as eager to learn about

the new shades and texture of dress

fabrics as they are of their cost.

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