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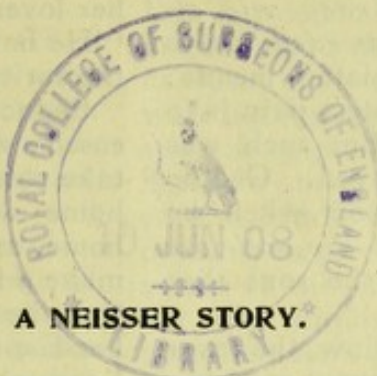
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A NEISSER STORY.

BY E. S. M'KEE, M.D.,
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In transition from sweet sixteen to sour seventeen was Little Eva (pseudonym) when first I met her, and how well do I remember the beauty! Her cheeks had the soft glow of a combination of youth and health, and her eyes the hue of the campanilla. When she blushed there came to them a shade midway between that of the Alpine rose and the California peach, though she herself was an American Beauty. In the act of respiration her bountiful bosom rose and fell like the gentle swelling and sinking of the pacific Pacific. Under the effects of that abundant mirth which we find only in healthy youth, there was observed a panorama of subdued swells and backing billows. She carried about her a mingled expression of timidity and fearlessness, the fearlessness of the consciousness of her own spotlessness. She was frequently brought to blushes at the praises of her own loveliness.

"How beautiful is youth! Ah, if youth had but discretion and old age ability! Remember the truth of the old Spanish proverb, "*El melon y la mujer, malos sont de conocer*" (hard to judge by senses human are a melon and a woman). That this girl was not as sweet as she looked, was very sad indeed. Her surroundings influenced her detrimentally. Her grandmother—she did not live with her mother, with whom she should have lived—and her grandmother's sister, an old maid who lived with her, were to my mind the meanest women on earth—and who can be meaner than a woman? Dishonest, dirty, vile, scandal-mongers, belonging to that class of whom it is too truly said, "At

every word a reputation dies," and who could

"Convey a libel in a frown
And wink a reputation down."

Little did they dream that to them were coming home the lies they told about every one they knew. These things all told badly on the beauty's temper, and recall the words the Mexicans used in describing the Aztec mistress of Cortez—"Hermosa comma Diosa"—(beautiful as a goddess), to which we will add, "*Perro endimoniado*" (but possessed of the devil). Her commingling of beauty and temper led to the following lines original with the author:

When Eva smiles and shows her teeth,
I sigh and feel a deep relief;
Her rose-red lips between unfurl
Two glistening rows of prettiest pearl.
I treasure more that radiant smile
Than many a millionaire his pile.

When shown her teeth without a smile,
I wish myself a thousand mile
Up Egypt's bullrush bordered Nile;
Hastily seize my coat and hat,
Absent myself, avoid a spat,
And feel just like an old door-mat.

The girl grew in stature and in beauty. Lovers came—singly, doubly, in triplets—and went. That "poor girls have more lovers than husbands" seemed proven, and "fair flowers remain not long by the wayside" seemed disproven. At last the one came. There was—

"An undefined and sudden thrill,
Which made the heart a moment still,
Then beat with quicker pulse."

They were in love. Ah, the commingled pleasure and pain! All other pleas-

ures are not worth love's pains, and one cannot always differentiate between pleasure and pain in love. "*Es giebt kein Schmerz so gross auf Erden wie zu lieben und nicht geliebt zu werden*," says Goethe, which, being translated, means: "Of all great pains the greatest pain is to love and love in vain." But such was not their luck; they both loved. Goethe also gets off something good when he says: "*Glücklich allein ist die Seele die liebt*." (Happy alone is the soul that loves.)

Her lover was ardent but slow, the fever lasting months and years without reaching a crisis. It was Shirley who said, "Suits of love should not, like suits of law, be rocked from term to term."

One winter's day the last of January, her grandmother brought her to me and said she had not been well since Christmas, when she was on a month's visit to a distant city. She was out of sorts, grumpy, nervous, pains peculiarly placed and no satisfactory symptoms. I prescribed and they left. A few weeks later she came to me *without* her grandmother, and said she had not been *unwell* since Christmas. She consented to a vaginal examination with surprising readiness, and I told her I feared she was pregnant. She acknowledged the opportunity and declared she would get rid of it. She kept her word, and in due time I was sent for to attend her in a flooding spell. She recovered promptly and the grandmother seemed none the wiser. This occurred just subsequently to one of George Washington's numerous birthdays. She dropped out of view, did not even stop to pay her bill. Disasters, like vultures, however, seldom come singly. In June she came to me looking the perfect wreck of her former self. Vaginal examination revealed all the symptoms of a badly neglected gonorrhea. To make assurances doubly sure, I submitted a specimen to the city bacteriologist, who found numerous and healthy specimens of the gay gonococcus discovered by A. Neisser. Where did she get it? Hear Lanphear:

"Full many a gleet of purest germ serene
The dark urethras of the golfers bear;
Full many a maid with blushes all unseen,
Receives the coccus in the open air."

Love's alternates, joy and woe. She had her joy and now her woe. It was

Spencer who said, "Thou wilt not love to live unless thou live to love." What have we now? Blucher or Grouchy? And her lover—let's leave him to Shakespeare: "He hath outvillained villainy so far that the rarity redeems him."

Seduced, impregnated, aborted, diseased; who but he should marry her and take care of her the rest of her days? Her home was hell, he deserved hell for a home, and I was sure she could and would make a hell of a home for him. I knew that she loved him and that this was about her last chance. If he did not marry her I saw old maidenhood ahead of her, and if she made such an old maid as her grandmother's sister made, who made life miserable for everyone who came under her domain, the alternative was appalling. Lean, thin, sick, weak; the long-neglected gonorrhea had involved the vulva, vagina, cervix, uterus, tubes and ovaries; vulvitis, abscess of the vulvo-vaginal glands, vaginitis, cervicitis, salpingitis and ovaritis. Fortunately for this unfortunate girl, the urinary tract was but slightly affected. She dragged slowly through the summer and in the fall began to regain some of her good looks and good health, but the half of each seemed gone forever. About this time, after strenuous efforts, I collected my bill, which offended her very much. Rather more free to act now, my bill being paid, the question recurs, ought I to tell her what is the matter with her and raise trouble generally? Ought I to tell her her real condition? Ought I to tell her grandmother her condition? Ought I to tell her lover her condition?

The law on privileged communications is that the doctor, lawyer or minister cannot be compelled to testify in court and should not tell elsewhere what professional knowledge he has obtained about his patient, client or parishioner, unless he or she wishes him to do so.

Devotion devout was her lover, but he seemed not to be matrimonially inclined. Ought I to try to hasten the wedding, and by so doing would I do good or harm? It was the wise Mrs. Wiggs who said:

"In the mud and scum of things,
Something always, always sings."

The following verse kept singing through my head, in spite of "the mud and scum" of this case:

A maiden forsaken,
A true love may get;
A hymen once broken
Can never be set.

Jack when in love is no judge of Gill's beauty, and he remained devoted in spite of the fading of the flower from her cheek and the disappearance of the embonpoint. Lovers, it is said, lose their self-possession to gain possession of another self, and love and jealousy are really selfishness. 'Tis Balzac who says: "To the lovers all the world is only landscape." I have already mentioned that her cheeks were like the roses. I meant red roses. After her miscarriage and gonorrhea they were like the white roses. After she had partially recovered her lost health and settled down to chronic invalidism they were like the yellow roses.

Ben Johnson said: "To tell our own secrets is folly, to tell those entrusted to us is treachery." It has been truly written, "Three may keep a secret provided two of them be dead." A secret is seldom safe in more than one living breast. None are so fond of secrets as those who cannot keep them. We should always remain faithful to our trusts, and a professional trust is the most delicate of trusts. We should lock our patients' secrets in our memory, give them the key and then forget. The French physician who, finding the gossip which he carried with him on his rounds more acceptable to his patients than his physic, and thereupon established the *Paris Gazette*, said to be the first newspaper, was a pedder of gossip, not a physician.

The cranium-cracking complications of the case are these: When she came to me first with her grandmother she had just been on a visit to a distant city, where she had a lover. Her Cincinnati lover, more cupidus than avarus, had allowed his case to get into the chronic stage. The suspicion came into my mind, had she not conceived while on this visit, and was her distant lover the father of her fetus instead of her Cincinnati lover? What tended to confirm this suspicion was the fact that she would not allow me to mention or hint

to her Cincinnati lover the fact that she had been pregnant and had a miscarriage. That he was the father of her gonococci I do not doubt, but that he was the father of her fetus I do doubly doubt. I believe, in truth, that while she was away they were both untrue. In fact, on her return she was suspicious of him, probably from her own guilty conscience, and demanded of him had he been true to her. Celtic of descent, he gave her an evasive answer in words of the following moment: "Doth the lily inquire of the hummingbird, hast hummed and fluttered about other flowers?" What complicated matters the more was the fact that when she came to me in a family way, to save herself, in my opinion, she said she had been secretly married in Louisville the October previous. Inquiry at the Falls City could find no record of the marriage. I took this up with her and she answered that she had been married and it did not matter to me where. It was Pope who said, "Woman at best is but a contradiction still." Poor girl, she had lived to learn that "sadder than being plain was to have been pretty."

Perplexing to a degree was the fact that the Cincinnati lover paid for the gonorrhea and also for the attention at the miscarriage. Was it wrong to let him pay for the other fellow's fetus? I did not allow this to be an etiological factor in a case of personal insomnia.

Love lagged. Ought I to try to force the wedding, or would I thereby do more harm than good?

"Those who in quarrels interpose,
Must often wipe a bloody nose."

I decided inaction to be the better part of valor. The result was as good, if not better, than could have been hoped for. The placenta nuptialis was passed about nine months after the placenta fetalis had been passed. In plain English, they were legally married. The wife at least is happy, as the marriage is sterile and she is a modern matron.

Verily, truth hath driven fiction into exile.

