

hood that had it, special' poor people, helpin' about everything, down to the very last in the graveyard, and havin' nothin' ag'in' anybody in the wide world exceptin' them aforesaid females. And now she were widder ag'in, and been widder long enough for another weddin', 't were n't she were that oppoged to the very idee of sech a thing, that she declar' she mean to dewote her time to the raisin' o' her children and Sally Gunnell's children the best she know how, with the good Lord's he'p, and doin' what little good it lay in her power to do outside among her neighbors, as ev'ybody acknowledge in that they ain't her ekal. It look strange to me how come a ruther smallish female have buried two big, strong, young husbands, and to all appearance because on her dyin' beds they would n't promise her like she wanted, and judgment come on 'em, both a-layin' silent side by side there the back o' the gyarden where she planted 'em. And I have give' my advices to Harry Brister and Sammy Pounds, that both of them val'able young men been layin' for her ever sence not so very long arfter Billy Gunnell went, and was now open and aboveboard a-tryin' to over-persuade her, as both of 'em well might, considerin' what a fine ketch she were, and picked up powerful sence she been a widder, like most of 'em tries to do, and does; that my advices to them boys was, the first I should say to P'ninny, if it was me, I should promise P'ninny, at the very offstart, that in the ewent of her

a-goin' before me, I should never even think about takin' of another companion; and both of 'em done it, but to no e-fects up till yit."

No; not Harry Brister, or Sammy Pounds, or any other one of I could not say how many other widowers and bachelors that lay siege to her gates, could ever take them. To all offers, backed by whatever promises and oaths, she smiled calmly, answering:

"No; the sheer I 've had of marrying is as much as any one woman ought reasonable to wish for in a vale where, as the Scriptor' say, there 's so many tears. I have had a very much happiness with two husbands as good, to my opinions, as any that went; and I do not think I ought to take the resk another and a third time, and have my feelings all worked up in anxiety about stepmothers to my children and Sally Gunnell's the same, that as for them I 've tried to do a good part. I acknowledge such anxiety was vain and foolish, as both my husbands frequent said, that they both went before, and I have tended both their graves as the good Lord give me strength and light. As for them two women that I hated with every bit of heart was in me, a-notwithstanding they was nothing but idle tales in my own mind, I hope the good Lord will not seemeth him meet to let 'em rise up in judgment against me not expected; but my mind is made up final that never — no, never — will I take the resk of another of 'em."

Richard Malcolm Johnston.

REGRET.



MAMZELLE AURÉLIE possessed a good strong figure, ruddy cheeks, hair that was changing from brown to gray, and a determined eye. She wore a man's hat about the farm, and an old

blue army overcoat when it was cold, and sometimes top-boots.

Mamzelle Aurélie had never thought of marrying. She had never been in love. At the age of twenty she had received a proposal, which she had promptly declined, and at the age of fifty she had not yet lived to regret it.

So she was quite alone in the world, except for her dog Ponto, and the negroes who lived in her cabins and worked her crops, and the fowls, a few cows, a couple of mules, her gun (with which she shot chicken-hawks), and her religion.

One morning Mamzelle Aurélie stood upon her gallery, contemplating, with arms akimbo, a small band of very small children who, to all intents and purposes, might have fallen from the clouds, so unexpected and bewildering was

their coming, and so unwelcome. They were the children of her nearest neighbor, Odile, who was not such a near neighbor, after all.

The young woman had appeared but five minutes before, accompanied by these four children. In her arms she carried little Élodie; she dragged Ti Nomme by an unwilling hand; while Marcéline and Marcélette followed with irresolute steps.

Her face was red and disfigured from tears and excitement. She had been summoned to a neighboring parish by the dangerous illness of her mother; her husband was away in Texas — it seemed to her a million miles away; and Valsin was waiting with the mule-cart to drive her to the station.

"It 's no question, Mamzelle Aurélie; you jus' got to keep those youngsters fo' me tell I come back. *Dieu sait*, I would n' botha you with 'em if it was any otha way to do! Make 'em mine you, Mamzelle Aurélie; don' spare 'em. Me, there, I 'm half crazy between the chil'ren, an' Léon not home, an' maybe not even to fine po' *maman* alive *encore!*" — a harrow-

ing possibility which drove Odile to take a final hasty and convulsive leave of her disconsolate family.

She left them crowded into the narrow strip of shade on the porch of the long, low house; the white sunlight was beating in on the white old boards; some chickens were scratching in the grass at the foot of the steps, and one had boldly mounted, and was stepping heavily, solemnly, and aimlessly across the gallery. There was a pleasant odor of pinks in the air, and the sound of negroes' laughter was coming across the flowering cotton-field.

Mamzelle Aurélie stood contemplating the children. She looked with a critical eye upon Marcéline, who had been left staggering beneath the weight of the chubby Élodie. She surveyed with the same calculating air Marcélette mingling her silent tears with the audible grief and rebellion of Ti Nomme. During those few contemplative moments she was collecting herself, determining upon a line of action which should be identical with a line of duty. She began by feeding them.

If Mamzelle Aurélie's responsibilities might have begun and ended there, they could easily have been dismissed; for her larder was amply provided against an emergency of this nature. But little children are not little pigs: they require and demand attentions which were wholly unexpected by Mamzelle Aurélie, and which she was ill prepared to give.

She was, indeed, very inapt in her management of Odile's children during the first few days. How could she know that Marcélette always wept when spoken to in a loud and commanding tone of voice? It was a peculiarity of Marcélette's. She became acquainted with Ti Nomme's passion for flowers only when he had plucked all the choicest gardenias and pinks for the apparent purpose of critically studying their botanical construction.

"T ain't enough to tell 'im, Mamzelle Aurélie," Marcéline instructed her; "you got to tie 'im in a chair. It 's w'at *maman* all time do w'en he 's bad: she tie 'im in a chair." The chair in which Mamzelle Aurélie tied Ti Nomme was roomy and comfortable, and he seized the opportunity to take a nap in it, the afternoon being warm.

At night, when she ordered them one and all to bed as she would have shooed the chickens into the hen-house, they stayed uncomprehending before her. What about the little white nightgowns that had to be taken from the pillow-slip in which they were brought over, and shaken by some strong hand till they snapped like ox-whips? What about the tub of water which had to be brought and set in the middle of the floor, in which the little tired, dusty, sun-browned feet had every one to be washed sweet

and clean? And it made Marcéline and Marcélette laugh merrily — the idea that Mamzelle Aurélie should for a moment have believed that Ti Nomme could fall asleep without being told the story of Croque-mitaine or Loup-garou, or both; or that Élodie could fall asleep at all without being rocked and sung to.

"I tell you, Aunt Ruby," Mamzelle Aurélie informed her cook in confidence; "me, I 'd rather manage a dozen plantation' than fo' children. It 's *terrassent!* *Bonté!* don't talk to me about chil'ren!"

"T ain' inspected sich as you would know airy thing 'bout 'em, Mamzelle Aurélie. I see dat plainly yistiddy w'en I spy dat li'le chile playin' wid yo' basket o' keys. You don' know dat makes chillun grow up hard-headed, to play wid keys? Des like it make 'em teeth hard to look in a lookin'-glass. Them 's the things you got to know in the raisin' an' management o' chillun."

Mamzelle Aurélie certainly did not pretend or aspire to such subtle and far-reaching knowledge on the subject as Aunt Ruby possessed, who had "raised five an' bared [buried] six" in her day. She was glad enough to learn a few little mother-tricks to serve the moment's need.

Ti Nomme's sticky fingers compelled her to unearth white aprons that she had not worn for years, and she had to accustom herself to his moist kisses — the expressions of an affectionate and exuberant nature. She got down her sewing-basket, which she seldom used, from the top shelf of the armoire, and placed it within the ready and easy reach which torn slips and buttonless waists demanded. It took her some days to become accustomed to the laughing, the crying, the chattering that echoed through the house and around it all day long. And it was not the first or the second night that she could sleep comfortably with little Élodie's hot, plump body pressed close against her, and the little one's warm breath beating her cheek like the fanning of a bird's wing.

But at the end of two weeks Mamzelle Aurélie had grown quite used to these things, and she no longer complained.

It was also at the end of two weeks that Mamzelle Aurélie, one evening, looking away toward the crib where the cattle were being fed, saw Valsin's blue cart turning the bend of the road. Odile sat beside the mulatto, upright and alert. As they drew near, the young woman's beaming face indicated that her homecoming was a happy one.

But this coming, unannounced and unexpected, threw Mamzelle Aurélie into a flutter that was almost agitation. The children had to be gathered. Where was Ti Nomme? Yonder in the shed, putting an edge on his knife

at the grindstone. And *Marcéline* and *Marcélette*? Cutting and fashioning doll-rags in the corner of the gallery. As for *Élodie*, she was safe enough in *Mamzelle Aurélie's* arms; and she had screamed with delight at sight of the familiar blue cart which was bringing her mother back to her.

THE excitement was all over, and they were gone. How still it was when they were gone! *Mamzelle Aurélie* stood upon the gallery, looking and listening. She could no longer see the cart; the red sunset and the blue-gray twilight had together flung a purple mist across the fields and road that hid it from her view. She could no longer hear the wheezing and creak-

ing of its wheels. But she could still faintly hear the shrill, glad voices of the children.

She turned into the house. There was much work awaiting her, for the children had left a sad disorder behind them; but she did not at once set about the task of righting it. *Mamzelle Aurélie* seated herself beside the table. She gave one slow glance through the room, into which the evening shadows were creeping and deepening around her solitary figure. She let her head fall down upon her bended arm, and began to cry. Oh, but she cried! Not softly, as women often do. She cried like a man, with sobs that seemed to tear her very soul. She did not notice *Ponto* licking her hand.

Kate Chopin.

A CHAPTER OF MUNICIPAL FOLLY.

THE SQUANDERING OF NEW YORK'S PUBLIC FRANCHISES.



HE importance financially of a proper control and regulation of the valuable public franchises of a city cannot be overestimated. The comptroller of New York, in his report for the year 1892, stated:

Franchises which the city of New York has yet to offer are immensely valuable; and it is not too much to say that upon the due care-taking and growth of the revenues of the general fund depends the sound prosperity of New York's fiscal future.

In all the large European capitals municipal franchises have been granted under such conditions that they now pay a very large proportion of the total municipal outlay. Gas- and electric-light works, street railroads, and even the cab and omnibus systems, are operated either directly or indirectly by the city, and with a view of contributing largely to the city's revenues. The city of Berlin pays 18 per cent. of its municipal expenditures from revenues derived from such sources, while Paris pays more than 20 per cent. of its expenditures in that way. The net income of Berlin from its gas-works in the year 1892, over and above all the cost of street lighting and the lighting of public buildings, was in excess of \$1,250,000, and in the same year it received nearly \$300,000 from the street railroads. In the year 1890 the city of Paris obtained from the private gas companies a net revenue of \$3,700,000, of which it repaid \$1,360,000 for public lighting, so that, over and above all cost of public lighting, the net revenue of the city from this source alone was in excess of \$2,300,000. From licenses for omnibuses and cabs, and rentals from the street-car companies, more than

\$1,030,000 additional was secured for the city's treasury. Of the \$34,000,000 necessary to meet municipal expenditures, about \$7,500,000, or 22 per cent., was obtained from such sources.

In England the development in this direction for the last twenty years has been very considerable. Dr. Albert Shaw sums up the result in his recent work as follows:

I can only say that it is almost the universal testimony in Great Britain that municipal gas enterprises are a brilliant success. They have steadily reduced the selling price, and largely increased the consumption. Their management has been as efficient and economical as that of the private companies. They have been able, while selling gas at a low price, to pay expenses and interest, accumulate sinking funds, enlarge the plants, make good all current depreciations, and still pay net profits into the municipal treasuries. The price in each town is generally 50 to 75 cents per thousand feet.

In Great Britain public companies supply more than half the gas consumed outside of London. Almost exactly one third of the mileage of street railways in Great Britain has been constructed, and is owned, by the municipal authorities.

This statement is made in order that it may be clearly understood that the great European cities, and even the smaller ones, have already shown an appreciation of the importance and value of the control or ownership of the street-car companies. The form of control differs. Some of the cities own and operate these public functions; others own, but do not operate, leasing the rights to private companies for very substantial considerations. But none of them