

## Autobiography of an Old Sofa.

BY HELEN MAITLAND.

I first saw the light—it matters not where—about the year 1780. As the consciousness of existence dawned upon me, I heard the commendations bestowed upon my appearance, and with the emotions of vanity thus coeval with my birth, began to pride myself not a little on the brilliancy of my exterior. Nay, as I looked on my robe of crimson and gold, and then about me, I could not suppress a feeling of contempt for my humble neighbor in mohair, who seemed to shrink into insignificance by my side. I could not help observing that the customers of my master invariably looked first at me; thus yielding as I thought an involuntary and well merited tribute to my superior excellence. I heard many a fair dame lament her inability to purchase so splendid an ornament to her drawing-room; yet even these acknowledgments of my magnificence sometimes occasioned me chagrin. I had the mortification to see my humble neighbor in mohair and several others of like pattern carried off in triumph, while I remained despised, but unappropriated; and destined, I began to fear, to find my beauties tarnished by time without having administered to the pride even of one individual. I was one day absorbed in these melancholy reflections, and did not observe an unusual bustle around me, till I heard my master very volubly descanting upon my merits to a young and beautiful woman, who was evidently regarding me with much complacency. After a little discussion, she put some bright pieces into my master's hand, and said in a sweet but authoritative voice—“Send it home, to —— street, No. 37.—Who can paint my delight at the prospect of being emancipated from these dull rooms, and seeing the gay world! The manner of transportation, it is true, was barbarous enough; I was placed in a rough wagon, and jolted over the pave to the jeopardy of my very life, before being finally set down before my new abode. Shaken as I was, curiosity kept me from despair. I longed to see the place I should occupy, and to know what treatment I should receive. My outer covering being at length removed, I was respectfully conducted up stairs into a spacious and superb room, where to my astonishment I saw a number of companions in dresses quite as gorgeous as my own, and, indeed, precisely like it—all glittering in the blaze of numerous wax lights in various parts of the room. I recognized my fair mistress. She was standing near the place which was henceforth to be mine; and it gave me pleasure to observe that it was a place of distinction. I must here confess to a little spirit of jealousy, (which I hardly acknowledged to myself,) lest some rival might share the homage I would willingly have monopolized. In those days, furniture was too solid and stately for the present eccentric fashion of locomotion about a room, so that, as I remarked, the place assigned me became permanently mine. Near the lady stood a gentleman, whom I soon discovered to be her husband;—a man of grave and dignified aspect, but with something of a sarcastic expression about his mouth. In answer to the admiring looks of his wife, he said—

“So this is your new purchase?

“Yes; and it is so pretty and so comfortable—only try it!”

With that she sank down, reclining on one of my arms, and pointed to the other unoccupied seat, smilingly adding, as she gathered her full robes around her—“My dress will afford you no more room.” For then

“The hoop's enchanting round

Gave even the toe the power to wond.”

My master took the seat with an indifferent air; at which, and his failing to appreciate my beauty, I felt not a little indignant—hardly suffering my anger to be soothed by

his admission that the sofa was in truth more comfortable than he imagined, (my fine looks went for nothing.)

“I dare say,” he added, “by the time the gloss is fairly off, I shall like it quite as well as the one you banished on account of its ungentle appearance.”

I was one of a reflective turn, and this instance of my mistress's caprice towards an old and faithful servant, gave me uneasiness. Such may one day be my fate, thought I—and self-love received a wound. Nevertheless, I still wore my first gloss, and the gay groups that soon filled the room seemed to admire me, and the sad feeling was lost in gratified vanity. The next day, however, I was enveloped in a dark overdress, which was never taken off unless there were others besides the family to admire my beauty. Every evening my mistress occupied the seat she had at first taken, and often beguiled my master to sit beside her, when he read aloud to her, or gave her instruction in the modern languages, with which he seemed to be perfectly acquainted. He was much older than her wife, and she regarded him with as much reverence as love. I began to lose even my admiration of self in contemplating their quiet happiness.

More than a year passed in this way, when I one evening missed my fair mistress from her accustomed seat. My master came as usual, but walked restlessly to and fro, as if devoured by anxiety. At length he rushed out of the room, and I saw him no more for several days. Then the drawing room was closed, and I and my companions remained in utter darkness for several weeks. I felt unhappy, but it was less on my own account than of my mistress, to whom I had become truly attached. One morning the windows were all thrown open in haste, our coverings taken off, and we received such a dusting from the housemaid, that I am sure the strength of my frame alone enabled me to survive it. A few hours passed, when I heard footsteps and voices approaching; and my mistress, leaning on her husband's arm, walked slowly to her wonted seat. She was pale and thin; so very thin, I hardly felt her weight; and my master, seating himself beside her, drew her towards him and kissed her white cheek tenderly. Soon afterwards, others came in; and among the last, a gentleman of dignified appearance, dressed in flowing robes. Then came a servant bearing a rich silver bowl filled with water, and last of all a fat old woman with a bundle of something white in her arms. The grave gentleman began to read from a book, and taking the white burden in his arms, sprinkled it with some of the water, which action produced a faint sound, like a suppressed cry. My mistress seemed agitated; the burden was brought and placed on her lap, and caressed fondly by her and my master. From that day the mother occupied her accustomed place continually, accompanied by her little son. Years rolled on, and a succession of bright little forms were in turn nursed upon my lap, and I looked on them with love unutterable. I thought no longer exclusively of myself.

A change came upon this happy family. The father, from day to day, was placed upon me, supported by pillows; and he seemed to suffer much. I heard the consultation of physicians, and the expressed desire of the invalid to travel in search of health to foreign lands. The family departed, and it was long, very long, before they returned. When they did return, the merry children who had so often clambered up my sides, were grown to noble looking men; and there were besides two bright-eyed girls, light and graceful as fairies. No longer young and vain, I expected not to hear exclamations of rapture or admiration; but I was not prepared for the speech which followed the first laughing glance of one of them at me.

“Gracious, mamma! do have all this antediluvian furniture taken away. That old

sofa must be the exact model of the one Noah took into the ark!”

“You must first prove, Melanie,” said her graver sister Nannette, “that Noah was luxurious enough to desire a sofa!”

“Spare me an argument, my matter-of-fact sister, upon the subject, and employ your energy much more worthily in assisting me to coax mamma to get rid of the present annoyance. But here comes papa, and he is always my champion.”

The happy creature ran up caressingly to her father, who parted the bright ringlets on her brow and kissed her fair forehead. “Would be a hard heart, indeed, he said which could withstand the eloquence of his favorite.”

“Now for the proof, papa. I have been urging the expediency of new-furnishing our drawing-room, and sending away all this old-fashioned trumpery. Mamma does not look propitious, and seems to have an unaccountable affection for that old cynic of a sofa!”

The low musical laugh that followed gave me a deeper pang than all the rest. My time at last was come; but I was better disciplined than formerly to bear reverses. Old age, I reflected, was not dishonorable; and I had been much flattered and admired in youth. I must bow meekly to the decree of fate. My master's reply consoled me.

“I too, Melanie, have an affection for that old sofa. We will coax mamma to let us have it removed my library, where she and I can often enjoy it together as we have done in days of yore; and you may furnish this room according to your giddy fancy.”

The young lady and her mother expressing satisfaction at this arrangement, next day the chairs, &c., were sent out of the house, and I was removed into the library to occupy still a grave and dignified station. My master spent most of his time in this room, and my mistress often stole from the gay circles in the drawing room to seat herself by his side, and join in his studies, or talk over the past. My young masters, too, were frequent guests, and received instruction from their father's lips as from an oracle. But one by one they married and left the paternal roof, till the old people were quite alone. They now scarcely left me for a day.

One evening, never by me to be forgotten, my master and mistress had been conversing long and pleasantly on some of the passages of their life, and the happiness they now enjoyed in their amiable children. My mistress retired to her chamber; my master remained absorbed in thought, when suddenly he put his hand to his head and fell forwards insensible. How I longed for a voice to proclaim his situation. No one came; and more than an hour passed while he lay without animation. About that time a sleepy servant, fancying he heard the bell, came into the room; and the alarm was speedily given.

My master was placed on me, and means taken to restore sense and consciousness.

These were successful; but a paralytic stroke had deprived the excellent old man of the use of his limbs, and after months of a miserable existence, I one morning received his last sigh.

For months I did not see my mistress; and when I did it was but a farewell look. She came to me and regarded me steadfastly for some time; and as she bent over the cushion on which my poor master's head had repose, I felt the hot tears falling on my arm. She then slowly left the apartment, and I saw her no more.

Rude hands then seized me. I was placed

in a cart, and carried, with many other pieces

of furniture, to a shop not unlike the one

in which I first saw the light. In a few days

I underwent an entire metamorphosis, being

stripped and scraped, and beaten and hampered till I thought my last hour had come.

But this process was necessary to my renovation. I gradually increased in size

and weight, and was soon

again a sofa.

“I am not fond of such vanities,” as the pig said to the ring in his snout.

Buy your provisions by wholesale,

somewhat resembling that of my youthful prime, though shorn forever of my gorgeous dress. My present garb was sober and demure as that of a quaker. I liked it, however, as befitting one who had seen much of the vanity of life, and was heartily tired of it all. I felt a sort of sad resignation as I was placed in the show-rooms of the establishment. Not long was I left in quiet. A lady and gentleman, whom I will call Mr. and Mrs. H —, saw me as they entered the shop, and declared I was the very thing they wanted for their country establishment.

Thither I was soon conveyed. Mr. and Mrs. H — had been married some years, and were blessed with many children, who tormented me not, a little by climbing and running over my clean dress, to say nothing of the thumps and kicks by which I was honored in their imaginary drives. The eldest son, Henry, had long passed the age of childhood, and frequently reproved the younger ones for their rude assaults on my person. He was a noble youth, and the idol of his mother. For hours he would sit beside her, telling her of all his bright anticipations, of the time when he should be a man and the artificer of his own fortunes. I loved the mother and son whose hearts were so closely knit together, and mourned for them; for even my brief experience had taught me that continued happiness is not allotted to mortals. Time sped swiftly on. Henry was nineteen, and gave promise of being no common man when years had nurtured his intellect. One sultry afternoon in June, he came gaily into the room, and kissing his mother, bade her come to the door and see how well he managed his horse, a superb but wild animal lately purchased for him. The mother smilingly obeyed; and as the manly youth, graceful and beautiful as fearless, dashed his spurs into his horse and rode away, the throb of pride in that mother's heart might well be forgiven. A few hours later, and there was a fearful storm; and as the hoarse thunder rattled overhead, or rolled in the distance, and the lightning flashed at intervals, the anxious mother moved restlessly about, looking frequently towards the road her son was to return. There was a presentiment of evil at her heart. With a sigh, she came to the small table on which her bible was laid, and taking that blessed book, tried to gather comfort and resignation to whatever might happen. She had been reading perhaps an hour; the storm was over, and the rain drops on the leaves were glittering in the rays of the setting sun. Closing her book, and walking slowly to the door, she opened it; when the first sight she saw was her son's horse quietly grazing on the lawn before the house! The saddle was crushed and torn, and the horse's sides covered with mire. She called Henry! but no voice answered.

Mr. — was instantly summoned, and with his domestics followed the fresh tracks of the horse in search of his rider. They had not far to go. On the edge of a small stream, at the foot of a steep and slippery bank, lay the unfortunate young man. Apparently his horse, in excessive fright, had attempted to scale the bank, and falling backwards had crushed his rider. He was yet alive—the bloody foam was slowly oozing from his lips as they brought him in and laid him upon me: while the stricken mother knelt, and kissed those lips in tearless agony. She knew there was no hope—her idol was shattered, and the stillness of death was upon her soul. Henry expired that night without recognizing any one. His poor mother shed no tear, nor did she ever smile again; but went about mechanically performing her accustomed duties. Each day she pined, and I saw her become pale and languid, until at last she ceased to take her wonted seat; and I knew from the sobs around that she was dead. The other children were all daughters save one, and were mild and gentle creatures, to whom the sense of their motherless condition

gave an habitual sadness. They were doomed to be yet more sad! Mr. H — married again; the new wife had no sympathy with her stepchildren, and was tyrannical to all under her control. She was jealous of merit in others, and suspicious to a degree that rendered it unpleasant even to converse with her. The daughters, tremblin and with many tears, submitted to her iron sway; but their brother Edward rebelled, and at last set

himself at open defiance. Mr. H —, instigated by his wife, banished his son, though a mere boy, from his home.

The night before he quitted the paternal mansion, poor Edward came, after all the family had retired, into the room in which I was, and throwing himself upon me, sobbed as if his young indignant heart would break.

Some years afterwards I was sent by Mr. H — to a retired little cottage owned by him, in a remote part of the country, where I rarely saw any of the family. Here I remained till Edward grew up to man's estate, and the cottage and its furniture were given to him. His father died soon after he came into possession. I am still owned by Edward's children. Their fortunes like my own, have been changeable, and are now humbler than at first. But content and peace are theirs, and the battered, time-worn sofa, with its covering of modest chintz, now treated with a degree of consideration not always accorded to it in its days of youthful splendor. I enjoy the luxury of being useful, and of imparting a truthful lesson; and never regret my past magnificence. The dreams of vanity are faded, and vanished to return no more. But I am far happier in my present unobtrusive simplicity, and wait with patience for the inevitable hour of my dismissal from the homes of the living.

## POMPEY'S BARGAIN AT AUCTION.

“Pompey, what you gib for dat fine hankecher dat you got stickin' out ob yer pocket?”

“Why, Jim, I done gin half dollar for um.”

“Whar you b'ot um from, Pomp?”

“I jest now b'ot um—Im zammon it—and gib us yer ideas, wheder yer don't tink dat Ize got a bargain?”

“I gosh, Pomp, it looks in stylee gow yambo—wher you git um?”

“Wy, you see, Jim, dare at the ole Afreky stand, dare is ockshun house, out of doors, so I tort dat I would just stop—and—

“You hab b'ot um dare. Wy, Pomp, dem men lie die debble—less see de hankecher again.”

“Here um is—look at um—dare aint a nudder hankecher in dis toun like um—zammon it, an' you'll agree wid me.”

“Haven't a doubt but it will,” said the Creole, still talking in a whispering tone,

“then the cause of his eternal croaking is, he dines every day on frog soup.”

The young doctor seemed overjoyed at the discovery, and said that at the next session of the medical college, he would lay before the board an essay on the direct influence of the gastric juices over the nervous system.

*Taking the Census.*—Marshall—How many males were there in this family on the first day of June, under five years of age?

Female—Males! what's that?

Marshall—Boys, madam; how many boys were there?

Female—Yes, four.

Marshall—What! four under five years of age?

Female—No, there ain't no twins neither.

Marshall—How many males over five and under ten?

Female—None of your business. You next ask how long I have been married. In fine times if folks have got to tell all they have done in their lives!

Female—Damp yourself with honey and you never want flies. The way to get a plenty of custom is, to keep a good article.

*JONATHAN'S HUNTING EXCURSION.*—“Did you ever hear of the scrape that I and uncle Zeke had duckin' on't on the Connecticut?” asked Jonathan Timbertoes, while amusing his old Dutch hostess, who had agreed to entertain him under the roof of her log cottage, far, and in consideration of, a bran new tin milk pan.

“No, I never did—do tell it,” was the reply.

“Well—you must know that I and uncle Zeke took it into our heads on Saturday afternoon to go a gunning arter ducks, in father's skiff; so in we got and skulled down the river; a proper sight of ducks flew backwards and forwards, I tell ye—and biomey a few on 'em lit down by the marsh, and went to feeding on muscles. I catched up my peanader horn to prime, and it slipped right out of my hand and sunk to the bottom of the river. The water was amazingly clear, and I could see it on the bottom. Now I couldn't swim a jot, so I sez to uncle Zeke, ‘You're a pretty clever fellow—jest let me take your peanader horn to prime, and don't you think the stingy critter wouldn't.’ ‘Well,’ sez I, ‘you're a pretty good diver, an' if you'll dive and git it, I'll give you a primin.’ I thought he'd leave his peanader horn, but he didn't; but stuck it in his pocket, and down he went—and there he staid.”

Here the old lady opened her eyes with wonder and surprise, and a pause of some minutes ensued, when Jonathan added—

“I looked down, and what do you think the critter was doin’?”

“Lord!” exclaimed the old lady, “I sure don't know.”

“There he was,” said our hero, “settin' right on the bottom of the river, puttin' the peanader out of my horn into hizen.”

*FUN AND PHYSIOLOGY.*

“Why, what is the cause of that merciful Frenchman's eternal croaking?” asked a young medical student of a Creole gentleman in the St. Louis Exchange yesterday. [He alluded to a very small man with very large whiskers, who was using very vehement gestures, and predicting in very desponding terms, as he had done for years, the immediate downfall of Louis Philippe.]

The Creole, who is a wag, looked significantly mysterious at the querist, and bringing his face near his organ of hearing, said in a subdued voice, “as he had done for years, the immediate downfall of Louis Philippe.”

“I do,” said the son of Galen; “perhaps the information may illustrate some unreviewed principle in the animal economy.”

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“then the cause of his eternal croaking is, he dines every day on frog soup.”

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