

## AN ELIXIR OF LOVE

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"An Elixir of Love" first appeared in the 1876 Christmas Number of *The Graphic*. It was reprinted, without the "Bab" illustrations, in *Foggerty's Fairy and Other Tales* (London: Routledge, 1890). The text below is from *The Graphic* ("GRAPHIC"), emended where that source appears to be in error. Variants in the book ("BOOK") are footnoted.

We have preserved the punctuation, spelling and layout of GRAPHIC in most cases. There is generally more capitalisation in GRAPHIC, *e.g.*, Love Philtres, Divining-Rod, Mechanics' Institutes—all lower-case in BOOK. The capitalisation in GRAPHIC has been silently retained.

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## CHAPTER I.

PLOVERLEIGH was a picturesque little village in Dorsetshire, ten miles from anywhere. It lay in a pretty valley, nestling amid clumps of elm trees, and a pleasant little trout stream ran right through it from end to end. The vicar of Ploverleigh was the Hon. and Rev. Mortimer De° Becheville, third son of the forty-eighth Earl of Caramel. He was an excellent gentleman, and his living was worth 1,200*l.*° a year. He was a graduate of Cambridge, and held a College Fellowship, besides which his father allowed him 500*l.* a year. So he was very comfortably "off."

Mr. De Becheville had a very easy time of it, for he spent eleven-twelfths of the year away from the parish, delegating his duties to the Rev. Stanley Gay, an admirable young curate, to whom he paid a stipend of 1200*l.* a year, pocketing by this means a clear annual profit of 1,080*l.* It was said by unkind and ungenerous people that, as Mr. De Becheville had (presumably) been selected for his sacred duties at a high salary on account of his special and exceptional qualifications for their discharge, it was hardly fair to delegate them to a wholly inexperienced young gentleman of two-and-twenty. It was argued that if a colonel,° or a stipendiary magistrate, or a superintendent of a County Lunatic Asylum, or any other person holding a responsible office (outside the Church of England), for which he was handsomely paid, were to do his work by cheap deputy, such a responsible official would be looked upon as a swindler. But this line of reasoning is only applied to the cure of souls by uncharitable and narrow-minded people who never go to church, and consequently can't know anything about it. Besides, who cares what people who never go to church think? If it comes to

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De] de GRAPHIC, but "De" in all later occurrences.

1,200*l.*] £1,200 BOOK, and thus for all money amounts. (The italic *l* was a former way of indicating the sterling pound sign.)

colonel,] BOOK; ~, GRAPHIC

that, Mr. De Becheville was *not*° selected (as it happens) on account of his special and exceptional fitness for the cure of souls, inasmuch as the living was a family one, and went to De Becheville because his two elder brothers preferred the Guards. So that argument falls to the ground.

The Rev. Stanley Gay was a Leveller. I don't mean to say that he was a mere I'm-as-good-as-you Radical spouter, who advocated a redistribution of property from mere sordid motives. Mr. Gay was an æsthetic Leveller. He held that as Love is the great bond of union between man and woman, no arbitrary obstacle should be allowed to interfere with its progress. He did not desire to abolish Rank, but he *did* desire that a mere difference in rank should not be an obstacle in the way of making two young people happy. He could prove to you° by figures (for he was a famous mathematician) that, rank notwithstanding, all men are equal, and this is how he did it.

He began, as a matter of course, with  $x$ , because, as he said,  $x$ , whether it represents one or one hundred thousand, is always  $x$ , and do what you will, you cannot make  $w$  or  $y$  of it by any known process.° Having made this quite clear to you, he carried on his argument by means of algebra, until he got right through algebra to the "cases" at the end of the book, and then he slid by gentle and imperceptible degrees into conic sections, where  $x$ , although you found it masquerading as the equation to the parabola, was still as much  $x$  as ever. Then, if you were not too tired to follow him, you found yourself up to the eyes in plane and spherical trigonometry,




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*not*] BOOK; not GRAPHIC

you] BOOK; ~, GRAPHIC

process.] paragraph break added BOOK

60 where  $x$  again turned up in a variety of assumed characters, sometimes as “cos  $\alpha$ ,” sometimes as “sin  $\beta$ ,” but generally with a  $\sqrt[3]{}$  over it, and none the less  $x$  on that account. This singular character then made its appearance in a quaint binomial disguise, and was eventually run to earth in the very heart of differential and integral calculus, looking less like  $x$ , but being, in point of fact, 65 more like  $x$  than ever. The force of his argument went to show that, do what you would, you could not stamp  $x$  out, and therefore it was better and wiser and more straightforward to call him  $x$  at once than to invest him with complicated sham dignities which meant nothing, and only served to bother and perplex people who met 70 him for the first time. It’s a very easy problem—anybody can do it.

Mr. Gay was, as a matter of course, engaged to be married. He loved a pretty little girl of eighteen, with soft brown eyes, and bright silky brown hair. Her name was Jessie Lightly, and she was the only daughter of Sir Caractacus Lightly, a wealthy baronet who had a 75 large place in the neighbourhood of Ploverleigh. Sir Caractacus was a very dignified old gentleman, whose wife had died two years after Jessie’s birth. A well-bred, courtly old gentleman, too, with a keen sense of honour. He was very fond of Mr. Gay, though he had no sympathy with his levelling views.

80 One beautiful moonlit evening Mr. Gay and Jessie were sitting together on Sir Caractacus’s lawn. Everything around them was pure, and calm, and still, so they grew sentimental.

“Stanley,” said Jessie, “we are very, very happy, are we not?”

85 “Unspeakably happy,” said Gay. “So happy that when I look around me and see how many there are whose lives are embittered by disappointment—by envy, by hatred, and by malice” (when he grew oratorical he generally lapsed into the Litany) “I turn to the tranquil and unruffled calm of my own pure and happy love for you with gratitude unspeakable.”

90 He really meant all this, though he expressed himself in rather flatulent periods.

“I wish with all my heart,” said Jessie, “that every soul on earth were as happy as we two.”

95 “And why are they not?” asked Gay, who hopped on to his hobby whenever it was, so to speak, brought round to the front door. “And why are they not, Jessie? I will tell you why they are not. Because——”

“Yes, darling,” said Jessie, who had often heard his argument before. “I know why. It’s dreadful.”

100 “It’s as simple as possible,” said Gay. “Take  $x$  to represent the abstract human being——”

“Certainly, dear,” said Jessie, who agreed with his argument heart and soul, but didn’t want to hear it again. “We took it last night.”

105 “Then,” said Gay, not heeding the interruption, “let “ $x + 1$ ,  $x + 2$ , and  $x + 3$ ” represent three grades of high rank.”

“Exactly—it’s contemptible,” said Jessie. “How softly the wind sighs among the trees.”

110 “What is a duke?” asked Gay—not for information, but oratorically, with a view to making a point.

“A mere  $x + 3$ ,” said Jessie. “Could anything be more hollow? What a lovely evening!”

115 “The Duke of Northumberland,°—it sounds well, I grant you,” continued Gay, “but call him the  $x + 3$  of Northumberland,° and you reduce him at once to——”

“I know,” said Jessie, “to his lowest common denominator,” and her little upper lip curled with contempt.

120 “Nothing of the kind,” said Gay, turning red. “Either hear me out, or let me drop the subject. At all events don’t make



94 not?] BOOK; not,” GRAPHIC

106 and  $x + 3$ ]  $x + 3$ , BOOK

113, 115 Northumberland] Buckingham and Chandos BOOK

125 ridiculous suggestions.”

“I’m very sorry, dear,” said Jessie, humbly. “Go on, I’m listening, and I won’t interrupt any more.”

But Gay was annoyed, and wouldn’t go on. So they returned to the house together. It was their first tiff.

CHAPTER II.

130 IN St. Martin’s Lane lived Baylis and Culpepper, magicians, astrologers, and professors of the Black Art. Baylis had sold himself to the Devil at a very early age, and had become° remarkably proficient in all kinds of enchantment. Culpepper had been his apprentice, and having also acquired considerable skill as a  
 135 necromancer, was taken into partnership by the genial old magician, who from the first had taken a liking to the frank and fair-haired boy. Ten years ago (the date of my story) the firm of Baylis and Culpepper stood at the very head of the London family magicians. They did what is known as a pushing trade, but  
 140 although they advertised largely, and never neglected a chance, it was admitted even by their rivals that the goods they supplied could be relied on as sound useful articles. They had a special reputation for a class of serviceable Family Nativity, and they did a very large and increasing business in Love Philtres, “The Patent  
 145 Oxy-Hydrogen Love-at-First-Sight Draught,” in bottles at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 3d.° (“our leading article,” as Baylis fondly° called it),° was strong enough in itself to keep the firm going, had all its other resources failed them. But the establishment in St. Martin’s Lane was also a “Noted House for Amulets,” and if you wanted a neat,  
 150 well-finished Divining-Rod, I don’t know any place to which I

132 had become] became GRAPHIC

146 2s. 3d.] ~” GRAPHIC

146 fondly] om. BOOK

146 it),] ~, GRAPHIC, BOOK

would sooner recommend you. Their Curses at a shilling per dozen° were the cheapest things in the trade, and they sold thousands of them in the course of the year. Their Blessings—also very cheap indeed, and quite effective—were not much asked for.  
 155 “We always keep a few on hand as curiosities and for completeness, but we don’t sell two in the twelvemonth,” said Mr. Baylis. “A gentleman bought one last week to send to his mother-in-law, but it turned out that he was afflicted in the head, and the persons who had charge of him declined to pay for it, and it’s been returned to us. But the sale of penny Curses, especially on Saturday nights, is  
 160 tremendous. We can’t turn ‘em out fast enough.”

As Baylis and Culpepper were making up their books one evening, just at closing time, a gentle young clergyman with large violet eyes, and a beautiful girl of eighteen, with soft brown hair, and a Madonna-like purity of expression, entered the warehouse.  
 165 These were Stanley Gay and Jessie Lightly. And this is how it came to pass that they found themselves in London, and in the warehouse of the worthy magicians.

As the reader knows, Stanley Gay and Jessie had for many months given themselves up to the conviction that it was their duty to do all in their power to bring their fellow men and women together in holy matrimony, without regard to distinctions of age or rank. Stanley gave lectures on the subject at Mechanics’ Institutes,  
 170 and the mechanics were  
 175 unanimous in their approval of his views. He preached his doctrine in workhouses, in beer-shops, and in lunatic asylums, and his listeners supported him with enthusiasm. He addressed navvies at the roadside on the humanising advantages that would accrue to



180

151-52 at a shilling per dozen] BOOK; at per dozen GRAPHIC

185 them if they married refined and wealthy ladies of rank, and not a  
navvy dissented. In short, he felt more and more convinced every  
day that he had at last discovered the secret of human happiness.  
Still he had a formidable battle to fight with class prejudice, and he  
and Jessie pondered gravely on the difficulties that were before  
190 them, and on the best means of overcoming them.

"It's no use disguising the fact, Jessie," said Mr. Gay, "that the  
Countesses won't like it." And little Jessie gave a sigh, and owned  
that she expected some difficulty with the Countesses. "We must  
look these things in the face, Jessie, it won't do to ignore them. We  
195 have convinced the humble mechanics and artisans, but the  
aristocracy hold aloof."

"The working-man is the true Intelligence after all," said Jessie.

"He is a noble creature when he is quite sober," said Gay. "God  
bless him."

200 Stanley Gay and Jessie were in this frame of mind when they  
came across Baylis and Culpepper's advertisement in the *Connubial  
Chronicle*.

"My dear Jessie," said Gay, "I see a way out of our difficulty!"<sup>o</sup>

And dear little Jessie's face beamed with hope.

205 "These Love Philtres that Baylis and Culpepper advertise—  
they are very cheap indeed, and if we may judge by the testimo-  
nials, they are very effective. Listen, darling."

And Stanley Gay read as follows:—

*From the EARL OF MARKET HARBOROUGH.*<sup>o</sup>

210 I am a hideous old man of eighty, and every one avoided me. I took a  
family bottle of your philtre, immediately on my accession to the title and  
estates, a fortnight ago, and I can't keep the young women off. Please send  
me a pipe of it to lay down.

*From AMELIA ORANGE BLOSSOM.*

215 I am a very pretty girl of fifteen. From upwards of fourteen years past I  
have been without a definitely declared admirer. I took a large bottle of

203 difficulty!] ~. BOOK

209-18 In BOOK, the testimonials are not printed in smaller print, and the headings are  
not centred on a separate line, as they are in GRAPHIC.

your philtre yesterday, and within twenty-four<sup>o</sup> hours a young nobleman  
winked at me in church. Send me a couple of dozen.

220 "What can the girl want with a couple of dozen young  
noblemen, darling?" asked Jessie.

"I don't know—perhaps she took it too strong. Now these  
men," said Gay, laying down the paper, "are benefactors indeed, if  
they can accomplish all they undertake. I would ennoble these  
men. They should have statues. I would enthrone them in high  
225 places. They would be  $x + 3$ ."

"My generous darling!" said Jessie, gazing into his eyes in a  
fervid ecstasy.

230 "Not at all," replied Gay. "They deserve it. We confer peerages  
on generals who plunge half a nation into mourning—shall we  
deny them to men who bring a life's happiness home to every door?  
Always supposing," added the cautious clergyman, "that they can  
really do what they profess."

235 The upshot of this conversation was that Gay determined to lay  
in a stock of philtres for general use among his parishioners. If the  
effect upon them was satisfactory he would extend the sphere of  
their operations. So when Sir Caractacus and his daughter went to  
town for the season, Stanley Gay spent a fortnight with them, and  
thus it came to pass that he and Jessie went together to Baylis and  
Culpepper's.

240 "Have you any fine fresh Love Philtres this morning?"<sup>o</sup> said  
Gay?

"Plenty, sir," said Mr. Culpepper. "How many would you like?"

245 "Well—let me see," said Gay. "There are a hundred and forty  
souls in my parish, but thirty-two of them are married. That leaves  
nine dozen."<sup>o</sup>

217 twenty-four] fourteen BOOK

240 fine fresh Love Philtres this morning] fresh love philtres to day BOOK

244-45 parish, but thirty-two of them are married. That leaves nine dozen.] parish,—  
say twelve dozen. BOOK

"I think, dear," said little Jessie, "you had better<sup>o</sup> take a few more than you are likely to<sup>o</sup> want, in case of accidents."

250 "In purchasing a large quantity, sir," said Mr. Culpepper, "we would strongly advise you taking it in the wood, and drawing it off as you happen to want it. We have it in four-and-a-half and nine-gallon casks, and we deduct ten per cent. for cash payments."

"Then, Mr. Culpepper, be good enough to let me have a nine-gallon cask of Love Philtre as soon as possible. Send it to the Rev. Stanley Gay, Ploverleigh."

255 He wrote a cheque for the amount, and so the transaction ended.

"Is there any other article?" said Mr. Culpepper.

"Nothing to-day. Good afternoon."

260 "Have you seen our new Wishing Caps? They are lined with silk, and very chastely quilted, sir. We sold one to the Archbishop of Canterbury not an hour ago. Allow me to put you up a Wishing Cap."

"I tell you that I want nothing more," said Gay, going.

265 "Our Flying Carpets are quite the talk of the town, sir," said Culpepper, producing a very handsome piece of Persian tapestry. "You spread it on the ground and sit on it, and then you think of a place, and you find yourself there before you can count ten. Our Abudah Chests, sir, each chest containing a patent Hag, who comes out and prophesies disasters whenever you touch this spring.—We<sup>o</sup> can sell the Abudah Chest complete for fifteen guineas."

270 "I think you tradespeople make a great mistake in worrying people to buy things they don't want," said Gay.

"You'd be surprised if you knew the quantity of things we get rid of by this means, sir."

275 "No doubt, but I think you keep a great many people out of your shop. If  $x$  represents the amount you gain by it, and  $y$  the

246 had better] are better to BOOK

247 are likely to] really BOOK

269 spring.—We] spring, are highly spoken of. We BOOK

amount you lose by it, then (if  $\frac{x}{2} = y$ )<sup>o</sup> you are clearly out of pocket by it at the end of the year. Think this over. Good evening."

And Mr. Gay left the shop with Jessie.

280 "Stanley," said she, "what a blessing you are to mankind. You do good wherever you go."

285 "My dear Jessie," replied Gay, I have had a magnificent education, and if I can show these worthy but half-educated tradesmen that their ignorance of the profounder mathematics is misleading them, I am only dealing as I should with the blessings that have been entrusted to my care."

As Messrs. Baylis & Culpepper have nothing more to do with this story, it may be stated at once that Stanley Gay's words had a marked effect on them. They determined never to "push"<sup>o</sup> an article again, and within two years of this resolve they retired on ample fortunes, Baylis to a beautiful detached house on Clapham Common, and Culpepper to a handsome chateau<sup>o</sup> on the Mediterranean, about four miles from Nice.

### CHAPTER III.

295 WE are once more at Ploverleigh, but this time at the Vicarage. The scene is Mr. Gay's handsome library, and in this library three persons are assembled—Mr. Gay, Jessie, and old Zorah Clarke. It should be explained that Zorah is Mr. Gay's cook and housekeeper, and it is understood between him and Sir Caractacus Lightly that Jessie may call on the curate whenever she likes, on condition that Zorah is present during the whole time of the visit. Zorah is stone deaf, and has to be communicated with through the medium of pantomime, so that while she is really no impediment whatever

277 (if  $\frac{x}{2} = y$ )] parentheses om. BOOK

289 "push"] push BOOK

292 chateau] BOOK; chateau GRAPHIC



305 to the free flow of conversation, the chastening influence of her presence would suffice of itself to silence ill-natured comments, if such articles had an existence among the primitive and innocent inhabitants of Ploverleigh.

The nine-gallon cask of Love Philtre had arrived in due course, and Mr. Gay had decided that it should be locked up in a cupboard in his library, as he thought it would scarcely be prudent to trust it to Zorah, whose curiosity might get the better of her discretion. Zorah (who believed that the cask contained sherry) was much scandalised at her master's action in keeping it in his library, and looked upon it as an evident and unmissable sign that he had deliberately made up his mind to take a steady course of drinking. However, Mr. Gay partly reassured the good old lady by informing her in pantomime (an art of expression in which long practice had made him singularly expert) that the liquid was not intoxicating in the ordinary sense of the word, but that it was a cunning and subtle essence, concocted from innocent herbs by learned gentlemen who had devoted a lifetime to the study of its properties. He added (still in pantomime) that he did not propose to drink a single drop of it himself, but that he intended to distribute it among his parishioners, whom it would benefit socially, mentally, and morally to a remarkable<sup>o</sup> extent. Master as he was of the art of expression by gesture, it took two days' hard work to make this clear to her, and even then she had acquired but a faint and imperfect<sup>o</sup> idea of its properties, for she always referred to it as sarsaparilla.

330 "Jessie," said Gay, "the question now arises, How shall we most effectually dispense the great boon we have at our command? Shall we give a party to our friends, and put the Love Philtre<sup>o</sup> on the table in decanters, and allow them to help themselves?"

"We must be very careful, dear," said Jessie, "not to allow any married people to taste it."

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331 remarkable] considerable **BOOK**

334 imperfect] feeble **BOOK**

338 Love Philtre] love philtre **GRAPHIC, BOOK**

335 "True," said Gay. "Quite true. I never thought of that. It wouldn't do at all. I am much obliged to you for the suggestion. It would be terrible—quite terrible."

And Stanley gay turned quite pale and faint at the very thought of such a contretemps.

340 "Then, said Jessie, "there are the engaged couples. I don't think we ought to do anything to interfere with the prospects of those who have already plighted their troth."

345 "Quite true," said Gay. "We have no right, as you say, to interfere with the arrangements of engaged couples. That narrows our sphere of action very considerably."

"Then the widows and the widowers of less than one year's standing should be exempted from its influence."

350 "Certainly—most certainly. That reflection did not occur to me, I confess. It is clear that the dispensing of the philtre will be a very delicate operation: it will have to be conducted with the utmost tact. Can you think of any more exceptions?"

355 "Let me see," said Jessie. "There's Tibbits, our gardener, who has fits; and there's Williamson, papa's second groom, who drinks, oughtn't be allowed to marry; and Major Crump, who uses dreadful language before ladies; and Dame Parboy, who is bed-ridden; and the old ladies in the alms-houses—and little Tommy, the idiot—and, indeed, all children under—under what age shall we say?"

"All children who have not been confirmed," said Gay. "Yes. These exceptions never occurred to me."

360 "I don't think we shall ever use the nine gallons, dear," said Jessie. "One table-spoonful is a dose."

"I have just thought of another exception," said Gay. "Your papa."

365 "Oh! papa must marry again! Poor dear old papa! Oh! You must let him marry."

"My dear Jessie," said Gay, "Heaven has offered me the chance of entering into the married state unencumbered with a mother-in-law. And I am content to accept the blessing as I find it. Indeed, I prefer it so."

370 "Papa does so want to marry—he is always talking of it," replied the poor little woman, with a pretty pout. "O indeed, indeed,

my new mamma, whoever she may be, shall never interfere with us. Why, how thankless you are! My papa is about to confer upon you the most inestimable treasure in the world, a young, beautiful, and devoted wife, and you withhold from him a priceless blessing that you are ready to confer on the very meanest of your parishioners.”

“Jessie,” said Gay, “you have said enough.° Sir Caractacus shall marry. I was wrong. If a certain burthen° to which I will not more particularly refer is to descend upon my shoulders, I will endeavour to bear it without repining.”

It was finally determined that there was only one way in which the philtre could be safely and properly distributed. Mr. Gay was to give out that he was much interested in the sale of a very peculiar and curious old Amontillado, and small sample bottles of the wine were to be circulated among such of his parishioners as were decently eligible as brides and bridegrooms. The scheme was put into operation as soon as it was decided upon. Mr. Gay sent to the nearest market-town° for a gross of two-ounce phials, and Jessie and he spent a long afternoon bottling the elixir into these convenient receptacles. They then rolled them up in papers, and addressed them to the persons who were destined to be operated upon. And when all this was done Jessie returned to her papa, and Mr. Gay sat up all night explaining in pantomime, to Zorah that a widowed aunt of his, in somewhat straitened circumstances, who resided in a small but picturesque villa in the suburbs of Montilla, had been compelled to take a large quantity of the very finest sherry from a bankrupt wine-merchant,° in satisfaction of a year’s rent of her second floor, and that he had undertaken to push its sale in Ploverleigh in consideration of a commission of two-and-a-half per cent. on the sales effected—which commission was to be added to the fund for the restoration of the church steeple. He began his ex-

384 enough.] BOOK; -, GRAPHIC  
 385 burthen] burden BOOK  
 395 market-town] BOOK; market town GRAPHIC  
 404 wine-merchant] BOOK; wine merchant GRAPHIC

planation at 9 p.m., and at 6 a.m. Zorah thought she began to understand him, and Stanley Gay, quite exhausted with his pantomimic exertions, retired, dead beat, to his chamber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning, as Sir Caractacus Lightly sat at breakfast with Jessie, the footman informed him that Mr. Gay’s housekeeper wished to speak to him on very particular business. The courtly old Baronet directed that she should be shown into the library, and at once proceeded to ask what she wanted.

“If you please, Sir Caractacus, and beggin’ your pardon,” said Zorah as he entered, “I’ve come with a message from my master.”

“Pray be seated,” said Sir Caractacus. But the poor old lady could not hear him, so he explained his meaning to her in the best dumb show he could command. He pointed to a chair—walked to it—sat down in it—leant back, crossed his legs cosily, got up, and waved his hand to her in a manner that clearly conveyed to her that she was expected to do as he had done.

“My master’s compliments and he’s gone into the wine trade, and would you accept a sample?”

After all, Mr. Gay’s exertions had failed to convey his exact meaning to the deaf old lady.

“You astonish me,” Said Sir Caractacus; then, finding that she did not understand him, he rumbled his hair, opened his mouth, strained his eyeballs, and threw himself into an attitude of the most horror-struck amazement. Having made his state of mind quite clear to her, he smiled pleasantly, and nodded to her to proceed.



"If you'll kindly taste it, sir, I'll take back any orders with which you may favour us."

Sir Caractacus rang for a wine-glass, and proceeded to taste the sample.

435 "I don't know what it is, but it's not Amontillado," said he, smacking his lips; "still it is a pleasant cordial. Taste it."

The old lady seemed to gather his meaning at once. She nodded, bobbed a curtsy, and emptied the glass.

440 Baylis and Culpepper had not overstated the singular effects of the "Patent Oxy-Hydrogen Love-at-First-Sight Draught." Sir Caractacus's hard and firmly-set features gradually relaxed as the old lady sipped the contents of her glass. Zorah set it down when she had quite emptied it, and as she did so her eyes met those of the good old Baronet. She blushed under the ardour of his gaze, and a tear trembled on her old eyelid.

445 "You're a remarkably fine woman," said Sir Caractacus, "and singularly well-preserved for your age."

"Alas, kind sir," said Zorah, "I'm that hard of hearin' that cannons is whispers."

450 Sir Caractacus stood up, stroked his face significantly, smacked his hands together, slapped them both upon his heart, and sank on one knee at her feet. He then got up and nodded smilingly at her to imply that he really meant it.

Zorah turned aside and trembled.

455 "I ain't no scollard, Sir Caractacus, and I don't rightly know how a poor old 'ooman like me ought to own her likings for a lordly barrownight—but a true 'art is more precious than diamonds, they do say, and a lovin' wife is a crown of gold to her husband. I ain't fashionable, but I'm a respectable old party, and can make you comfortable if nothink<sup>o</sup> else."

460 "Zorah, you are the very jewel of my hopes. My dear daughter will soon be taken from me. It lies within you to brighten my desolate old age. Will you be Lady Lightly?"

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435 us] me Book

468 nothink] nothing Book

465 And he pointed to a picture of his late wife, and went through the pantomime of putting a ring on Zorah's finger. He then indicated the despair that would possess him if she refused to accept his offer. Having achieved these feats of silent eloquence, he smiled and nodded at her reassuringly, and waited for a reply with an interrogative expression of countenance.

470 "Yes, dearie," murmured Zorah, as she sank into the Baronet's arms.

After a happy half-hour Zorah felt it was her duty to return to her master, so the lovers took a fond farewell of each other, and Sir Caractacus returned to the breakfast-room.

475 "Jessie," said Sir Caractacus, "I think you really love your poor old father?"

"Indeed, papa, I do."

"Then you will, I trust, be pleased to hear that my declining years are not unlikely to be solaced by the companionship of a good, virtuous, and companionable woman."

480 "My dear papa," said Jessie, "do you really mean that—that you are likely to be married?"

485 "Indeed, Jessie, I think it is more than probable! You know you are going to leave me very soon, and my dear little nurse must be replaced, or what will become of me?"

Jessie's eyes filled with tears—but they were tears of joy.

"I cannot tell you papa—dear, dear, dear, papa—how happy you have made me."

490 "And you will, I am sure, accept your new mamma with every feeling of respect and affection."

"Any wife of yours is a mamma of mine," said Jessie.

495 "My darling! Yes, Jessie, before very long I hope to lead to the altar a bride who will love and honour me as I deserve. She is no light and giddy girl, Jessie. She is a woman of sober age and staid demeanour, yet cosy<sup>o</sup> and comfortable in her ways. I am going to marry Mr. Gay's cook, Zorah."

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503 cosy] easy Book

“Zorah,” cried Jessie, “dear, dear old Zorah!” Oh, indeed, I am very, very glad and happy!”

500 “Bless you, my child,” said the Baronet. “I knew my pet would not blame her poor old father for acting on the impulse of a heart that has never misled him. Yes, I think—nay, I am sure—that I have taken a wise and prudent step. Zorah is not what the world calls beautiful.”

505 “Zorah is very good, and very clean and honest, and quite, quite sober in her habits,” said Jessie warmly, “and that is worth more—far more than beauty, dear papa. Beauty will fade and perish, but personal cleanliness is practically undying, for it can be renewed whenever it discovers symptoms of decay. Oh, I am sure you will be happy!” And Jessie hurried off to tell Stanley Gay how nobly the potion had done its duty.”

510 “Stanley, dear Stanley,” said she, “I have such news—Papa and Zorah are engaged!”

“I am very glad to hear it. She will make him an excellent wife; it is a very auspicious beginning.”

515 “And have *you* any news to tell me?”

520 “None, except that all the bottles are distributed, and I am now waiting to see their effect. By the way, the Bishop has arrived unexpectedly, and is stopping at the Rectory, and I have sent him a bottle. I should like to find a nice little wife for the Bishop, for he has Crawleigh in his gift—the present incumbent is at the point of death, and the living is worth 1,800*l.* a year. The duty is extremely light, and the county society unexceptionable.° I think I could be truly useful in such a sphere of action.”

518 duty] work **BOOK**

530 unexceptionable] unexceptional **BOOK**

CHAPTER V.

525 THE action of the Patent Oxy-Hydrogen Love-at-First-Sight Philtre was rapid and powerful, and before evening there was scarcely a disengaged person (over thirteen years of age) in Ploverleigh. The Dowager Lady Fitz-Saracen, a fierce old lady of sixty, had betrothed herself to Alfred Creeper, of the “Three Fiddlers,” a very worthy man, who had been engaged in the public trade all his life, and had never yet had a mark on his license. Colonel Pemberton, of The Grove, had fixed his affections on dear little Bessie Lane, the pupil-teacher, and his son Willie (who had returned from Eton only the day before) had given out his engagement to kind old Mrs. Partlet, the widow of the late sexton. 530 In point of fact there was only one disengaged person in the village—the good and grave old Bishop. He was in the position of the odd player who can’t find a seat in the “Family Coach.” But, on the whole, Stanley Gay was rather glad of this, as he venerated the good old prelate, and in his opinion there was no one in the village at that time who was really good enough to be a Bishop’s wife, except, indeed, the dear little brown-haired, soft-eyed maiden to whom Stanley himself was betrothed. 540

545 So far everything had worked admirably, and the unions effected through the agency of the philtre, if they were occasionally ill-assorted as regards the stations in life of the contracting parties, were all that could be desired in every other respect. Good, virtuous, straightforward, and temperate men were engaged to blameless women who were calculated to make admirable wives and mothers, and there was every prospect that Ploverleigh would become celebrated as the only Home of Perfect Happiness. There was but one said soul in 550

532–33 Patent...Philtre] enclosed in quotes **BOOK**

535 Fitz-Saracen] **BOOK**; FitzSaracen **GRAPHIC**



555 the village. The good old Bishop had drunk freely of the philtre, but there was no one left to love him. It was pitiable to see the poor love-lorn prelate, as he wandered disconsolately through the smiling meadows of Ploverleigh, pouring out the accents of his love to an incorporeal abstraction.

560 "Something must be done for the Bishop," said Stanley, as he watched him sitting on a stile in the distance. "The poor old gentleman is wasting to a shadow."

The next morning, as Stanley was carefully reading through the manuscript sermon which had been sent to him by a firm in Paternoster Row for delivery on the ensuing Sabbath, little Jessie entered his library (with Zorah) and threw herself on a sofa, sobbing as if her heart would break.

565 "Why, Jessie—my own little love," exclaimed Stanley. "What in the world is the matter?"

570 And he put his arms fondly round her waist, and endeavoured to raise her face to his.

"Oh, no—no—Stanley—don't—you mustn't°—indeed, indeed, you mustn't."°

"Why, my pet, what can you mean?"

575 "Oh, Stanley, Stanley—you will never, never forgive me."

"Nonsense, child," said he. "My dear little Jessie is incapable of an act which is beyond the pale of forgiveness."

And he gently kissed her forehead.°

"Stanley, you mustn't° do it—indeed you mustn't."°

580 "No, you musn't° do it, Muster Gay," said Zorah.

"Why, confound you, what do *you*° mean by interfering?" said Stanley in a rage.

"Ah, it's all very fine, I dare say, but I don't know what you're a-talking about."

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583, 584 mustn't] musn't GRAPHIC, BOOK

589 And he gently kissed her forehead.] continuation of previous paragraph BOOK

590, 591, 602 mustn't] musn't BOOK

592 *you*] you BOOK

585 And Stanley, recollecting her infirmity, explained, in pantomime the process of confounding a person, and intimated that it would be put into operation on° her if she presumed to cut in with impertinent remarks.

"Stanley—Mr. Gay——" said Jessie.

590 "Mr. Gay!" ejaculated Stanley.

"I mustn't° call you Stanley any more."

"Great Heaven, why not?"

"I'll tell you all about it, if you promise not to be violent."

595 And Gay, prepared for some terrible news, hid his head in his hands and sobbed audibly.

"I loved you—oh so, so much—you were my life—my heart," said the poor little woman. "By day and by night my thoughts were with you, and the love came from my heart as the water from a well!"

600 Stanley groaned.

"When I rose in the morning it was to work for your happiness, and when I lay down in my bed at night it was to dream of the love that was to weave itself through my life.

He kept his head between his hands and moved not.

605 "My life was for your life—my soul for yours! I drew breath but for one end—to love, to honour, to reverence you."

He lifted his head at last. His face was ashy pale.

"Come to the point," he gasped.

610 "Last night," said Jessie, "I was tempted to taste a bottle of the Elixir. It was but a drop I took, on the tip of my finger. I went to bed, thinking but of you. I rose to-day, still with you in my mind. Immediately after breakfast I left home to call upon you, and as I crossed Bullthorn's meadow I saw the Bishop of Chelsea seated on a stile. At once I became conscious that I had unwittingly placed myself° under the influence of the fatal potion. Horrified at my involuntary faithlessness—loathing my miserable weakness—hating myself for the misery I was about to weave around the life of

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598 on] upon BOOK

625–26 unwittingly placed myself] placed myself unwittingly BOOK

the° saint I had so long adored—I could not but own to myself that the love of my heart was given over, for ever, to that solitary and love-lorn prelate. Mr. Gay (for by that name I must call you to the end), I have told you nearly all that you need care to know. It is enough to add that my love is, as a matter of course, reciprocated, and, but for the misery I have caused you, I am happy. But, full as my cup of joy may be, it will never be without a bitter after-taste, for I cannot forget that my folly—my wicked folly—has blighted the life of a man who, an hour ago, was dearer to me than the whole world!”

And Jessie fell sobbing on Zorah’s bosom.

Stanley Gay, pale and haggard, rose from his chair, and staggered to a side table. He tried to pour out a glass of water, but as he was in the act of doing so the venerable Bishop entered the room.

“Mr. Gay, I cannot but feel that I owe you some apology for having gained the affections of a young lady to whom you were attached—Jessie, my love, compose yourself.”

And the Bishop gently removed Jessie’s arms from Zorah’s neck, and placed them about his own.

“My Lord,” said Mr. Gay, “I am lost in amazement. When I have more fully realized the unparalleled misfortune that has overtaken me I shall perhaps be able to speak and act with calmness. At the present moment I am unable to trust myself to do either. I am stunned—quite, quite stunned.”

“Do not suppose, my dear Mr. Gay,” said the Bishop, “that I came here this morning to add to your reasonable misery by presenting myself before you in the capacity of a successful rival. No. I came to tell you that poor old Mr. Chudd, the vicar of Crawleigh has been mercifully removed. He is no more, and as the living is in my gift, I have come to tell you that, if it can compensate in any way for the terrible loss I have been the unintentional means of inflicting upon you, it is entirely at your disposal. It is worth 1,800*l.*

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629 the] a BOOK

per annum—the duty is extremely light, and the local society is unexceptionable.”°

Stanley Gay pressed the kind old Bishop’s hand.

“Eighteen hundred a year will not entirely compensate me for Jessie.”

“For Miss Lightly,” murmured the Bishop, gently.

“For Miss Lightly—but it will go some way towards doing so. I accept your lordship’s offer with gratitude.”

“We shall always take an interest in you,” said the Bishop.

“Always—always,” said Jessie. “And we shall be so° glad to see you at the Palace—shall we not, Frederick?”

“Well,—ha—hum—yes—oh, yes, of course. Always,” said the Bishop. “That is—oh, yes—always.”

The 14th of February was a great day for Ploverleigh, for on that date all the couples that had been brought together through the agency of the philtre were united in matrimony by the only bachelor in the place, the Rev. Stanley Gay. A week afterwards he took leave of his parishioners in an affecting sermon, and “read himself in” at Crawleigh. He is still unmarried, and likely to remain so. He has quite got over his early disappointment, and he and the Bishop and Jessie have many a hearty laugh together over the circumstances under which the good old Bishop° wooed and won the bright-eyed little lady. Sir Caractacus died within a year of his marriage, and Zorah lives with her daughter-in-law at the Palace. The Bishop works hard at the art of pantomimic expression, but as yet with qualified success. He has lately taken to conversing with her through the medium of diagrams, many of which are very spirited in effect, though crude in design. It is not unlikely that they may be published before long. The series of twelve consecutive sketches, by which the Bishop informed his mother-in-law that, if

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663 unexceptionable] unexceptional BOOK

671 so] so BOOK

683 Bishop] prelate BOOK

*An Elixir of Love*

she didn't mind her own business, and refrain from interfering between his wife and himself, he should be under the necessity of requiring her to pack up and be off, is likely to have a very large sale.