

eth of noble acts, feats of arms, of chivalry, prowess, hardiness, humanity, love, courtesy and very gentleness." These were the elements which constituted the gentleman. What we see now is that they might be as truly manifested in William Caxton, simple person, as in any of the high-born knights whose deeds he chronicled.

Milton, in memorable words, pointed out the transition which must take place from the gentleman of romance to the

gentleman of enduring reality. After narrating how, in his youth, he betook himself "to those lofty fables and romances which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and thence had in renown through all Christendom," he says, "This my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect a gilt spur or the laying on of a sword upon his shoulder."

S. M. Crothers.

THE CONTRIBUTORS' CLUB.

I WAS going downhill, feeling tired and discouraged. The landscape was monotonous, the hills seemed low, and the birds sang only occasionally in the hedges.

Suddenly it came to me how good, how very good, everything had been to my palate as a child. I thought how much easier the journey would be if I could go back just for a few minutes.

I turned quickly, retraced the few feet of descent from the brow of the hill over which I had come; then I made a desperate leap across the chasm of middle life, and passed rapidly back over the highway of time.

I stood for a moment by the enchanted pool of youth, where those who sail know not whether the boat be in the sky, or the sky in the water, but sit watching the reflections of themselves and their companions entangled with the stars.

I passed through the white birches on the bank to the further side, then along the fields till I came to the brown house by the river; I did not look carefully at the house, but I knew that the shutters were closed. I went through the orchard, up the hill, climbed the fence, and found myself at the edge of the beech woods. There, on a stone, exactly where

I expected to find him, sat the little brown kobold.

"Good-afternoon," said I.

"Good-afternoon," he returned pleasantly.

"I am glad to find you here," said I.

"I expected you," he answered.

"Then you know what I want?"

"I can guess," replied he.

I sat down on a stone near him, for my knees felt tired after my climb. The kobold looked exactly like the picture of him in my heart, which was taken directly from a portrait that was in an old book I once had.

I waited for him to speak, but as he sat still I said, "What is it that I want?"

"You want checkerberries and birch bark to taste just as they did when you were a child."

"I do indeed," I returned. "What else?"

"You want to fight violets with me."

"What else?"

"You want to make a burdock basket with a handle that won't fit on straight, and that breaks every time you lift the basket."

"Oh, I do," and I laughed. "What else?"

"You want to make a whistle out of willow, yellow willow, in early spring when the sap is running."

"Of course I do. What else?"

"You want to dig flag-root, and boil it in sugar till it is all sweet; and then when it is cold, but still sticky, you want to carry it round in your pocket."

"Yes, yes, I do. What else?"

"You want to squeeze the blue juice out of the spiderwort flowers and call it ink" —

"Yes. What else?"

"Don't interrupt me so. I had n't finished. And you want to be always *thinking* that you are going to make some ink out of pokeweed berries, so you want to be always looking for the berries that you *think* you are going to make ink of."

"Oh *yes*, I understand."

"You want to eat sassafras leaves because they are sticky, and sassafras bark and sassafras root because they smart, and to cut spicewood because it is spicy, and chew beech leaves because they are sour, and suck the honey-bags of columbine flowers because they are sweet, and eat the false apple of the wild azalea because it has no taste."

"And other things, too?"

"Oh yes: you must eat the young roots of early grass, and call them onions."

"Anything else?"

"You want to make horsehair rings, three of them, — one pure black, one a yellowish-white, and one mixed, — fasten them very clumsily together, and wear the prickly knot on the inside of your finger."

"Dear me, — yes, yes, yes."

"You want to make a doll out of the rose of Jerusalem, with sash and bonnet-strings of striped grass."

"Of course, and" —

"You want to squeeze the yellow juice of a weed that grows by the stone step on the north side of the house and put it on your fingers to cure warts."

"Yes, I will, and" —

"You *never* must kill a toad, because if you do you will find blood in the milk that you have for supper."

"I never will kill a toad," said I.

"You want to tell all the lady-bugs to fly away home, because their houses are on fire and the children alone."

"Yes, to be sure."

"You want to chew the gum of the spruce, also the gum of cherry-trees."

"I do."

"And to eat the cheeses that grow on marshmallows."

"Yes."

"And you want to make trumpets out of pumpkin-vine stalks, and corn-stalk fiddles; you can't make the fiddles ever play, of course."

"Oh no, of course not, never."

"But you must go on making them, just the same."

"Indeed I shall."

"You want to brew rose-water wine."

"Yes."

"And eat the seeds of sweet-fern."

"Of course."

"You must steal cinnamon sticks and ground cinnamon and sugar, and carry them round in a wooden pill-box."

"Must I *steal* them?"

"*Certainly* you must, a good many times; and then some evening when the frogs are piping, and the sky is a green-blue, and there is one very white star looking at you, you must tell your mother all about it."

"Oh — yes." After a pause I asked, "What else?"

"Did I mention eating violets with salt?" inquired the kobold.

"No, you said '*fight* violets.'"

"Well, you must eat them, too, sometimes with salt and sometimes with sugar."

"I'll remember that. What else?"

"Whenever you eat oysters you must always look for a pearl, — *always*, no matter whether they are stewed or raw; remember that, — always expect to find a pearl."

"I will," said I, "always."

"And you must have a secret hoard."

The kobold said this impressively in a low, hollow voice, and I asked him in a whisper, "What of?"

"Of a piece of shoemaker's wax, of one big drop of quicksilver in a homœopathic glass bottle, a broken awl, and four pieces of chalk, — one piece red, soft and crumbly, one yellow, and two white bits of different lengths; they must all be so dirty that you have to scratch them to know which is which, — you understand that?"

"Oh yes, I understand."

"And you must have one leather shoestring, a piece of red sealing-wax and one very small, 'teenty' bit of goldstone sealing-wax, one piece of iridescent button-paper that crinkles when you bend it, and a button-mould."

"What shall I do with the button-mould?"

"Make a top, of course, with a match for a stem."

"Kobold, should I be happy if I had all these things?"

"Perfectly," said he, with decision; "but you would n't *know* that you were happy."

"Why should n't I?"

"The answer to *that* is a question."

"What is it?"

"Do you know it now?" asked he, with his eyes suddenly turned in toward his own nose, till I could n't tell whether he was looking at me or not.

UNTIL a few years ago, we were able to revel in the proposal and acceptance, and in the love scenes which gradually led up to them. There were the happy accidental meetings, the occult way one knew when the other was in the room, and the electro-magnetic hand-clasp, — all fortunate precursors to a certain moonlight night, with the soft splashing of the fountain, and softer music in the distance (a conservatory has long been the favored spot). The *mise en scène* was

perfect; so seemed the proposal and acceptance.

But the woman with a mission is now upon us, the head of a large and rapidly increasing army. With their nursing and college settlement work, the Avises and Marcellas of fiction have almost thrown the proposal out of date.

Nor is it to be wondered at when the favored replies are something like this: "I do not know whether you will believe me or not, but, unlike other women, I have never thought of marriage." Sometimes it is: "I do care for you, but life means more to me than individual happiness. Marriage is for some women, but not for me." And it is the hard-heartedness of these modern heroines which has caused the decline of the lover on bended knee, since it is difficult for even a novel-hero to get up gracefully, after a refusal, without an awkward pause. He must be able at once to "turn on his heel and stride toward the door."

Richardson and the earlier novelists had no refractory heroines like ours of to-day. They were often coy and seemingly indifferent, but always to be won at the end of the fifth or seventh volume.

The priggish Sir Charles Grandison makes his offer first to Harriet's grandmother, and then humbly asks for an interview in the presence of both grandmother and aunt; "for neither Miss Byron nor I can wish the absence of two such parental relations." Through seven volumes he is beset with all the becoming doubts and fears of a modern lover, until his "Can you, madame?" and her "I can, I do," close the scene.

Miss Burney's Evelina ushers in an array of tearful and moist heroines, especially at proposal time. "The pearly fugitives" are constantly chasing one another down the cheeks of Queechy, and of Gertrude in *The Lamplighter*. These heroines do not sob, as many children do, but utter "a succession of piercing shrieks." When the proposal comes, and

The Changed Fashion of the Proposal in Fiction.