"If it is very bad you can leave the room, Mrs. Paige," I remarked.

"Well, here goes," broke in Jo., as he reached across for the tobacco jar that was standing on the table between us. "You see the checks are signed by Teddy Sherman and Dan Salisbury? And you remember that each of them thought he was going to marry Belle, don't you? Sit still, Belle, I may as well tell Arthur the facts without dressing them up any. Dan and Teddy made a bet between them, but I won it. They were at the Fairfax Club one day, and got to discussing their chances of success. Each of them was dead sure the other hadn't the ghost of a show, and finally the discussion got pretty hot. At last, old Dodge, who was the only other person in the room at the time, and who was a good deal bothered by their noise, looked up from his paper and asked them why they didn't bet on it, and then keep quiet. That struck Teddy and Dan as a bright idea.

"'I tell you what I'll do,' said Dan. 'The one that gets the mitten shall pay all the expenses of the other's wedding, and the wedding journey.'"

"But, suppose she refuses us both, what then?" Teddy suggested. He always prided himself on being far-sighted.

"'O, the two of us shall do it for the lucky man; but, you know just as well as I do, that will never happen,' answered Dan. 'Dodge here will be stake-holder.' So they each made out a check and gave it to old Dodge, whom they swore to absolute and eternal secrecy. He has kept his oath, too. That was about Thanksgiving time, and for the next month things were very lively. Belle, here, the little flirt, smiled on both alike, and enjoyed it immensely. I thought it was all up with me. Then came that Christmas house-party at Jess Putnam's. We were all down there. About that time Belle began to think things were getting a little dangerous, so she frowned on them both just a little, and was not quite so cold to me. Before I knew it, I lost my senses and proposed to her myself."

"You mean thing," broke in Mrs. Paige from the stool by Jo., where she was sitting. "I wish I'd refused you."

"Now, don't get sarcastic, Belle. You know I don't mean I regret that I lost my senses then. I think I was the most surprised of the three when Belle said yes, and I know I was the happiest. That's all there is to tell. Old Dodge presented us with the checks the day before the wedding, which was the next June, and told their story. Of course Belle and I couldn't refuse them, so we changed our plans and went to England on the Paris? Did we have a good time, Belle?"

Jo. finished his story, and Mrs. Paige stared into the fire in silence for a moment. Then she got up from the stool and calmly sat down on Jo.'s knee. "'You haven't told all the story, Jo., dear.'"

"That's all I know of it, Belle. I'll make up a few more incidents if you'll like it any better."

Belle thought an instant, and then said slowly: "Dan and Teddy both proposed the afternoon before that Christmas Eve when you did, Jo."

Mr. Paige's face was a study, but I felt that it was an opportune time to go out on the piazza and see what was the state of the weather.

G. P. D.

Sonnet.

We think we could enjoy what we have not,
Poor foolish mortals, ever upward striving,
But when with toil at each far height arriving
Yet higher summits loom and must be sought.
Ah, ever by experience untaught,
Still hoping to find joy in sweet possession,
We struggle toward those peaks that in succession
Unending rise with mystic magic fraught.
Their splendor fades when they at last are gained,
The raptures flown that in anticipation
Of our heart's wish when finally attained.
What matter? Were the soul's ambition chained,
The world were long since dead beyond salvation.

E. H. P.